




**PRESS KIT
2024**

klub | 2024

80^E ANNIVERSAIRE DE LA LIBÉRATION

JUIN $\frac{1944}{2024}$ BAYEUX

La liberté s'écrit ici



ANIMATIONS - SPECTACLES - CONCERTS - EXPOSITIONS - COMMÉMORATIONS / PROGRAMME COMPLET SUR 80e.bayeux.fr

80TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LIBERATION OF BAYEUX

Freedom started here...

In June, Bayeux will be celebrating its liberation. The streets of the town, spared from the bombings of 1944 and liberated on 7 June by British troops, are decorated with banners in the colours of their liberators every year. For this 80th anniversary of D-Day and the Battle of Normandy in 2024, a large variety of activities and ceremonies are being organised.



A FESTIVE ANNIVERSARY FOR ALL THE FAMILY

With concerts, a parade of historic vehicles, guided tours, exhibitions... From 1st to 28th June the town council, voluntary organisations, the tourist office and local shops and businesses will be inviting locals and tourists alike to celebrate the Liberation of Bayeux. From the traditional Freedom Ball to a historic 1930s train, not forgetting a presidential visit or an international basketball match, this anniversary promises to be unforgettable!

THE TOWN PAYS ITS RESPECTS

Notwithstanding the popular activities, the town has never forgotten the sacrifice made by thousands of French and foreign soldiers, nor the civilian losses resulting from the conflict. So ceremonies are being held with the British Legion and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission to honour the men and women who perished during the fighting.



FREEDOM STARTED HERE

On 7 June 1944, the day after the Allied Landings on the beaches of Normandy, Bayeux was liberated by British troops who entered the town at dawn. They had landed the previous day in the zone code-named "Gold Beach". The small Calvados town, the "hospital town" which had been spared from bombing attacks, experienced a summer like no other. Until the liberation of Paris on 25 August 1944 Bayeux was **the administrative capital of Free France.**

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» THE PROGRAMME OF THE 80TH IN BAYEUX – EVENTS

Unless otherwise specified, all events are free of charge and reservation is not required.

SATURDAY 1ST JUNE

» CHOIRS CONCERT

By the *Orpheon of Bayeux*

The Main Choir, the Men's Choir and the Little Choir join forces to sing the Liberation in 1940s songs.

★ Saint-Patrice church Ⓛ 8.30 p.m.

.....
Voluntary donation
.....

WEDNESDAY 5TH JUNE

» BAYEUX WITH CANDLES AND GIANT VIGIL

By the *CWGC*

Projections combining words, music and song telling a moving story of the D-Day Landings. Followed by a giant vigil during which the 4,654 headstones in the Military Cemetery will be lit up.

★ City Hall square Ⓛ From 10.00 p.m.



THURSDAY 6TH JUNE

» CONCERT BY THE ACADEMY CHOIR

Concert of choral music from 3 U.S. Services Academies: Navy, Army, Air Force.

★ Bayeux Cathedral Ⓛ 8.00 p.m.

FROM 6TH TO 8TH JUNE

» SOUVENIR STAMPS

By the *Amicale philatélique bayeusaine*

Sale of souvenir stamps in the commercial gallery of the E. Leclerc centre.

★ E. Leclerc Centre Ⓛ From 10.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.

FROM 6TH TO 9TH JUNE

» LICHTJESROUTE (ILLUMINATIONS)

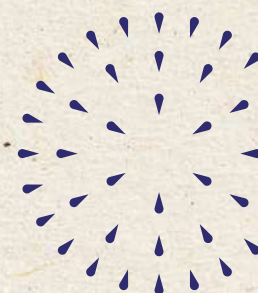
Eindhoven and Bayeux are celebrating freedom by lighting up the streets in a celebratory installation symbolising friendship 80 years after both towns were liberated.

★ From Vaucelles round-about to the Eindhoven sports centre – Main street and rue Larcher (deportees monument)

FRIDAY 7TH JUNE

» PRESIDENTIAL VISIT

★ Place de Gaulle
More informations page p. 11



FRIDAY 7TH JUNE

» FREEDOM BALL

By the *town of Bayeux*

Jazz with *Big Band E2M* and swing with *Madame Swing* and then *Glenn's Swing Orchestra* to dance to the most famous tunes of the 1930s and 1940s, and all celebrate the liberation of Bayeux.

★ Baron Gerard stadium, Impasse du stade
Ⓛ From 7.00 p.m.
★ Food on site or bring your own picnic



» THE PROGRAMME OF THE 80TH IN BAYEUX – EVENTS

SATURDAY 8TH JUNE

» MASS FOR PEACE

By the Diocese of Bayeux-Lisieux

Inauguration and blessing of a commemorative stone at Bayeux Cathedral bearing the names of 138 clerics and religious figures from the diocese who disappeared during the Second World War.

★ Bayeux Cathedral Ⓛ 6.00 p.m.

SATURDAY 8TH JUNE

» CONCERT BY THE LOVE BEATLES

By the town of Bayeux

Known both in France and internationally, *The Love Beatles* perpetuate the fabulous music with its timeless hits! Spend almost two hours being transported to the Abbey Road studios in London with John, Paul, George and Ringo.

First part: *Madame Swing*

★ Baron Gerard stadium, Impasse du stade
Ⓛ 8.30 p.m. (open from 7.00 p.m.)
🍴 Food on site or bring your own picnic



! *The Freedom Ball and The Love Beatles concert will be organized at Baron Gerard stadium and not on the place de Gaulle.*

SUNDAY 9TH JUNE

» BAYEUX LIBERTY PARADE

By the Tourist office of Bayeux Intercom

As part of the British D-Day Week, the traditional parade of 300 historic vehicles, in particular British ones, will take place for the first time on the southern by-pass* of the first town in mainland France to have been liberated.

Opening by a pipe band. Flypasts by classic planes (to be confirmed).

★ Liberty Alley

Ⓛ 11.00 a.m

*Boulevards du 6 juin and Fabian Ware: British Military Cemetery and Memorial Museum of the Battle of Normandy.



SUNDAY 9TH JUNE

» PACIFIC VAPEUR CLUB

The passengers will be travelling on a historic 1930s train to get to Bayeux and make the most of the festivities and the grand parade of historic vehicles. Arrival at Bayeux railway station expected at 10.47 a.m.!

★ Bayeux train station Ⓛ 10h47

» THE PROGRAMME OF THE 80TH IN BAYEUX – EVENTS

SATURDAY 15TH AND SUNDAY 16TH JUNE

» INTERNATIONAL BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT

By the Cercle Sportif Basket

With (id), Lübeck, school event linking sport, youth history.

CANCELED

- ★ Yvan Mainini sports hall, 1 rue Pierre de Coubertin
- Ⓘ Saturday from 2.00 p.m. to 6.30 p.m.
Sunday from 9.00 a.m. to 4.30 p.m.

SUNDAY 16TH JUNE

» HIKE

By the Cercle Sportif Bayeux Basket

Departure at 8.30 a.m. from the British Memorial in Ver-sur-Mer. Arrival at 1.00 p.m. in Bayeux. A 12 miles' route on the footpath of the Bayeux liberating regiments.

- ★ British Memorial in Ver-sur-Mer
- Ⓘ Departure at 8.30 a.m.
- 👤 Open to all.
Registration on bayeux-basket.com



» THE PROGRAMME OF THE 80TH IN BAYEUX – GUIDED TOURS

FROM 27TH MAY TO 14TH JUNE

» BRITISH MILITARY CEMETERY

By the CWGC

Guides are available at the Cemetery entrance to answer visitors' questions and give them a guided tour. A visit to learn about the history, architecture and upkeep of the Cemetery and Memorial. Guides will tell about the stories of some of the soldiers buried in the Cemetery or commemorated on the Memorial.

★ Boulevard Fabian Ware

⌚ From 11.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.



THURSDAY 6TH JUNE

» MEMORIAL MUSEUM OF THE BATTLE OF NORMANDY

By the mediation department of Bayeux Museum

Quick visits: “The Allies’ machinery in the Battle of Normandy”

★ Boulevard Fabian Ware

⌚ At 2.30 p.m. and 3.30 p.m - Duration 30 min

€ Included in the museum entrance fee



FRIDAYS 14TH AND 21ST JUNE

» EARLY EVENING VISITS TO THE MILITARY CEMETERY

By the mediation department of Bayeux Museum

★ British Military Cemetery.
Boulevard Fabian Ware

⌚ 6.00 p.m. – Duration: 1 hour



» THE PROGRAMME OF THE 80TH IN BAYEUX – EXHIBITIONS

Unless otherwise specified, all events are free of charge and reservation is not required.

FROM MAY TO SEPTEMBER

» PATHS OF MEMORY AND GRATITUDE

By the D-Day Landing Committee

Ten portraits exhibited in the open air along Liberty Alley pay tribute to the soldiers, nurses and members of the French resistance who gave their lives to restore peace and democracy.

★ Liberty Alley, boulevard Fabian Ware

FROM 18TH MAY TO 22ND SEPTEMBER

» THE COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES COMMISSION CEMETERIES IN NORMANDY

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) maintains the graves of more than 25,000 men and women of the Commonwealth armed forces who died in Normandy during the Second World War. They rest in peace in cemeteries in Normandy that are maintained by the Commission's dedicated teams. About twenty panels provide information about the cemeteries in Normandy and the personal stories of those buried in them.

★ Outside the Memorial Museum of the Battle of Normandy – Boulevard Fabian Ware

FROM 18TH MAY TO 22ND SEPTEMBER

» JEUNESSE ET RÉSISTANCE

By the town of Bayeux

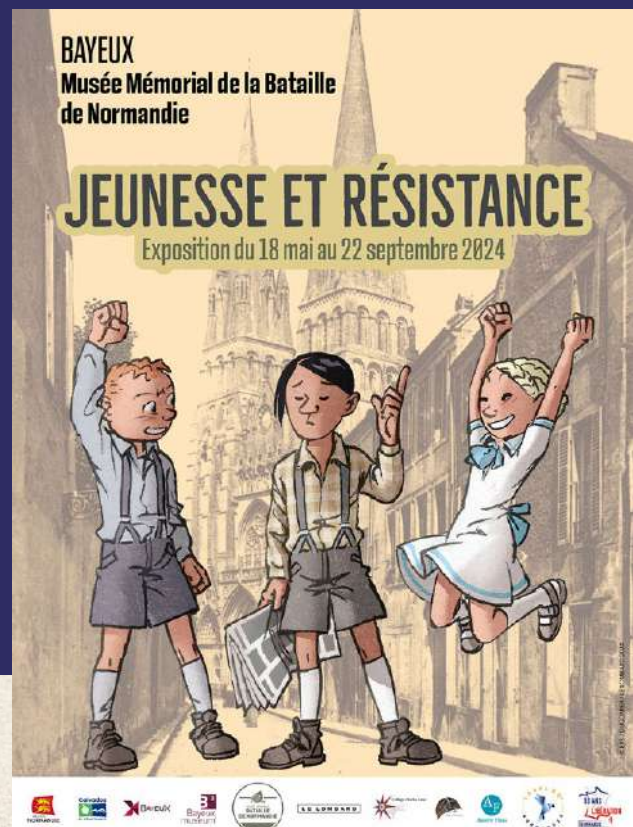
Avec pour point de départ la bande dessinée à succès « Les enfants de la Résistance », aux éditions Le Lombard. L'exposition propose de découvrir l'histoire vraie d'adolescents et d'enseignants impliqués dans la Résistance locale sous l'Occupation.

★ Memorial Museum of the Battle of Normandy, boulevard Fabian Ware

Ⓛ Everyday from 9.30 a.m. to 6.30 p.m.

BOOK-SIGNING SESSIONS

- + « Les enfants de la Résistance » with the authors Benoît Ers and Vincent Dugomier
 - Ⓛ Thursday 23rd May from 6.00 p.m. to 8.00 p.m.
- + « Crash à Bayeux : la dernière mission du Sergeant Ferguson » by François Oxéant
 - Ⓛ Sunday 23th June from 2.30 p.m. to 5.30 p.m.



» THE PROGRAMME OF THE 80TH IN BAYEUX – EXHIBITIONS

FROM 25TH MAY TO 16TH JUNE

» LOIN DE L'ENFANCE

By Catherine Lopes-Curval

In her pictures Catherine Lopes-Curval paints a poignant blend of the past of her region, scarred by History, and the present, where children today live and play among the relics of war, hardly noticing them.



- ★ Hôtel du Doyen
- 🕒 Everyday from 2.00 p.m. to 6.00 p.m.

FROM JUNE TO SEPTEMBER

» EXHIBITION IN BAYEUX TRAIN STATION

As the first town in mainland France to be liberated on 7 June 1944, Bayeux became the administrative capital of France until the liberation of Paris on 25 August 1944. An exhibition of historic photos of the town during the summer of 1944 includes General de Gaulle's visit, the setting up of the military hospital, construction of the 'Bypass' and the hosting of thousands of refugees.

- ★ Bayeux Train Station



FROM JUNE TO JULY

» LES ÉPAVES SOUS-MARINES (UNDERWATER WRECKS)

By the CCAS of Bayeux and the CERSUB

Photographic exhibition of underwater wrecks from the D-Day Landings in partnership with the CERSUB diving club.

- ★ Espaces Argouges and Saint-Jean, Residence Clemenceau

CONFERENCE ABOUT THE UNDERWATER WRECKS AND SUBMARINE LIFE



Wednesday 12th June at 3.00 p.m. at the Residence Clemenceau by the CERSUB.

SATURDAY 15TH AND SUNDAY 16TH JUNE

» EYE-WITNESS ACCOUNTS

By the Cercle Sportif Bayeux Basket

Eye-witness accounts collected from residents of the care home by young members of the club.

- ★ Salle Yvan Mainini, 1 rue Pierre de Coubertin
- 🕒 Saturday from 2.00 p.m. to 6.30 p.m.
Sunday from 9.00 a.m. to 4.30 p.m.



+ Author Jérôme Autret will be present with his book *21st Panzer Division Normandie 1944*

FROM 21ST TO 28TH JUNE

» LIBERTÉS

By Peintres du Bessin

30 local amateur artists present a selection of works on the theme of freedom.

- ★ Espace Saint-Patrice
- 🕒 Everyday from 10.00 a.m. to noon and from 2.00 p.m. to 6.00 p.m. – Saturday from 10.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m.

» THE OFFICIAL CEREMONIES – YESTERDAY AND TODAY

General de Gaulle came to Bayeux on 14 June 1944. Since that day, a succession of heads of state and crowned monarchs have attended the ceremonies commemorating 6 June. As the town was liberated by British troops, the British royal family has always been represented at the major anniversaries and will be once again in 2024.

1984

Queen Elizabeth II, accompanied by Prince Philip, joined Président François Mitterrand in Bayeux for the 40th anniversary of D-Day

1989

The Queen Mother, aged 89, was welcomed by Jean Lecarpentier, Mayor of Bayeux. She unveiled a commemorative stained glass window in the Cathedral, given by British veterans.

1994

Queen Elizabeth II was in Bayeux for the 50th anniversary of D-Day, once again alongside Président François Mitterrand, and also joined by Harald V, King of Norway, and Jean, Grand Duke of Luxembourg.

14TH JUNE
1994

French Prime Minister Édouard Balladur celebrated the 50th anniversary of General de Gaulle's famous speech. With him were Charles Pasqua, Interior Minister, Philippe Seguin, President of the National Assembly, Jacques Chirac, Mayor of Paris at the time, and Admiral Philippe de Gaulle.

2004

President Jacques Chirac welcomed Queen Elizabeth II for the 60th anniversary.

2009

The Queen was represented by Prince Charles, accompanied by British Prime Minister Gordon Brown.

2014

The 70th anniversary of D-Day was the last to be celebrated with Her Majesty the Queen present. She was accompanied by Prince Charles, Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall and Prime Ministers Manuel Valls of France and David Cameron of the United Kingdom.

2019

Prince Charles and Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall represented the Queen at Bayeux. Alongside them were Theresa May, the British Prime Minister, and Nicola Sturgeon, First Minister of Scotland.

Dwight D. Eisenhower, Montgomery... Many other famous personalities passed through Bayeux, as can be seen in the photos exhibited in the Bar of the Hotel-Restaurant Le Lion d'Or.



» THE OFFICIAL CEREMONIES IN 2024

WEDNESDAY 5TH JUNE

10.00 A.M. » TRIBUTE TO DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER ⚡ Eisenhower roundabout

5.00 P.M. » MEMORIAL CEREMONY *By the Royal British Legion attended by veterans*

⚡ British Military Cemetery ⚡ Invitation only

7.00 P.M. » FRANCO-BRITISH MEMORIAL CEREMONY *By the CWGC*

⚡ Bayeux Cathedral ⚡ Invitation only

7.45 P.M. » PROCESSION FROM THE CATHEDRAL TO THE BRITISH MILITARY CEMETERY

Led by a pipe band and made up of regimental delegations.

THURSDAY 6TH JUNE

11.00 A.M. » TRIBUTE CEREMONY BY THE CWGC ⚡ British Military Cemetery ⚡ Invitation only

FRIDAY 7TH JUNE

» PRESIDENTIAL VISIT

Bayeux, symbol of the State's restored authority, Place de Gaulle: Emmanuel Macron, President of the French Republic, will commemorate the permanency of the French Republic, reinstated at Bayeux in the days following the 6 June Landings.

⚡ Place de Gaulle ⚡ From 10.30 a.m. ⚡ Registration needed (link to come on the website 80e.bayeux.fr)

» OFFICIAL CEREMONY COMMEMORATING THE LIBERATION OF BAYEUX *By the town of Bayeux*

The town of Bayeux pays homage to its liberators in the presence of veterans representants of the Sherwood Rangers and the Essex Regiment Association. With musical accompaniment provided by a pipe band.

⚡ Memorial Museum of the Battle of Normandy ⚡ 6.00 p.m.

+ An opportunity to discover the S-112 model Scraper, recently installed in front of the Museum of the Battle of Normandy. Originally intended as a machine for public works, it was used in the construction of the Bayeux Bypass. More information page 18

FRIDAY 14TH JUNE

TRIBUTE TO GENERAL DE GAULLE

80th anniversary of General de Gaulle's return to French soil and the re-establishment of the Republic's institutions on 14 June 1944 in Bayeux, the first Sub-Prefecture in France to be liberated.

1.15 P.M. » PROCESSION FOLLOWING THE ROUTE TAKEN BY GENERAL DE GAULLE ON JUNE 1944

⚡ Departure from place aux Pommes

2.00 P.M. » OFFICIAL CEREMONY ⚡ Place de Gaulle

Press kit – 80th Anniversary of the Liberation of Bayeux

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» JUNE TO AUGUST 1944 – A SUMMER LIKE NO OTHER

Having been spared from bombing attacks and liberated in the morning of 7 June by British troops who had landed on Gold Beach the day before, Bayeux quickly became a reception and treatment centre for wounded civilians and soldiers. It was the only town in liberated territory to have a functioning hospital. Bayeux thus became a “hospital town” in co-operation with Allied forces.



© Imperial War Museum

Arrivée des volontaires françaises de la MMLA à Bayeux
(Mission Militaire de Liaison Administrative)

From June until September 1944 the Seminary, the clinic and every school in Bayeux was requisitioned by the authorities. Classrooms were quickly turned into hospital wards and large numbers of volunteers helped provide medical care to the many refugees arriving in Bayeux. In order to help the staff and ensure the necessary equipment was available the Prefect launched an appeal to the people of Bayeux, who donated beds, linen and clothing to those who were most in need. After this sadly unforgettable summer the makeshift hospitals closed at the end of September 1944 and the children, who had seen their school year suddenly finish early, went back to school from the beginning of October. Many of the volunteers subsequently took up careers in the medical professions.

A REAR BASE FOR THE TROOPS

In addition to being the reception centre for many civilian refugees Bayeux also became a rear base for many Allied soldiers, providing them with medical care and rest before they returned to the front. Journalists covering the conflict set up their headquarters in the Lion d’Or Hotel-restaurant.

+ The Prix Bayeux Calvados-Normandie for War Correspondents was created on the 50th anniversary of D-Day in tribute to freedom and democracy. To find out more, go to prixbayeux.org

BAYEUX, A MIRACULOUS ESCAPE

Although Bayeux is located only 7 kilometres from the D-Day Landings beaches, it was not destroyed by bombing raids. There are several explanations for this. Firstly, the town was not of strategic importance for air and naval defence forces, which mainly concentrated on pounding the German coastal defences or places with major road intersections such as Saint-Lô or Caen. Secondly, the Allies had been planning to make Bayeux a place of refuge for the many wounded expected to be coming from the battlegrounds. Lastly, local tradition has it that Dom Aubourg, a priest, went to see the British troops to tell them that the Germans had withdrawn from Bayeux and that there was no need to use force to enter the streets of the town.



» BAYEUX RESIDENTS WHO RESISTED

The first Resistance networks in France began to organise in 1940. At Bayeux and in the Bessin region, the zone for which military landings were being planned, intelligence work was especially important. Some local people risked their lives by mobilising to fight against the enemy.



© Imperial War Museum

GERMAINE LIMEUL AND JULIA PICOT

“THE DOVES IN THE TOWER”

Germaine Limeul and Julia Picot, aged 35 and 41 respectively in June 1944, were teachers at La Poterie primary school. Members of the Alliance network at first, they joined the OCM* in November 1943 after their first group had been dismantled by the Gestapo. They then continued their intelligence missions. The Hôtel du Gouverneur where they lived - a mansion house in the Rue Bourbesneur which had an external tower - became the network’s “letterbox”, where the two women would centralise the information gathered in the field before

reporting up to their superiors in Caen. The network’s radio system also transmitted from the tower. Their address, together with their activities, earned them the nickname “the Doves in the Tower”.

PIERRE AND LUCIEN DESPRAIRIES

The Desprairies brothers, aged 23 and 19 in June 1944, were quick to join the OCM*. Their intelligence-gathering mission did not end with the D-Day Landings: the Allies depended on the resistance networks to gather information about the situation behind the enemy lines and adjust their strategies accordingly. Pierre and Lucien were among the 31 volunteers to be specially trained for this task. In an account that can be read in the book *Été 44 : Bayeux, ville-hôpital*, Lucien quotes his father Henri Desprairies, chief doctor at the Bayeux hospital, who told him on his return from a particularly dangerous mission near Tilly-sur-Seulles that it would be “*better to get on with his work at the hospital rather than playing the idiot between the lines*”. The young medical student would start work at the auxiliary Jeanne d’Arc hospital on 12 June 1944 before joining the French army at the end of the summer of 1944. As for Pierre, he became chief of staff for François Coulet, the first Regional Commissioner of the Republic, thereby playing a part in setting up the administration of Free France in Bayeux.



© Collection L. Desprairies

* OCM, Civil and Military Organization, is a French resistance network. Guillaume Mercader became local manager at the end of 1943, after the forced departure of Robert Delente.

Sources :

Bayeux et le Bessin 1940-1944, Vie quotidienne, résistance, déportation, libération – Mai 1996

Été 1944 : Bayeux, ville-hôpital – Édition spéciale de la SABL de Bayeux – 33^e volume – 2004

» BAYEUX RESIDENTS WHO RESISTED



© Imperial War Museum

ANTOINE MERCADER

Antoine Mercader was the brother of Guillaume Mercader, the famous leader of the OCM* in the Bessin region, and he too played an important rôle in the network. Along with the Desprairies brothers (see previously) he was one of the volunteers trained by the Allies to continue performing intelligence missions after D-Day. He worked with Lucien on the mission near Tilly-sur-Seulles. He was wounded in the arm but was brought back safe and sound to Bayeux thanks to his friend's determination. Antoine Mercader can easily be identified on the photos immortalising General de Gaulle's visit to Bayeux on 14 June 1944: he's the man with his arm wrapped in a scarf!

MADELEINE BRANELLEC AND HER SON DENYS

Madeleine Branellec – code-name “Françoise” – was Guillaume Mercader's deputy in the OCM*, and was aged 42 in June 1944. In addition to her intelligence work, she was in charge of recruiting new members and organising the groups within the network. Her son Denys was a liaison officer. He volunteered along with thirty other young men to continue carrying out intelligence missions after D-Day. Both also provided invaluable help to those refusing to be drafted for for the Vichy government's compulsory labour scheme: together with the network they arranged for false papers to be produced, printed and distributed. Denys is also thought to have taken part in distributing anti-occupation propaganda journals.



© Imperial War Museum

© Photo Normandie LCO00805



Although Germaine Limeul, Julia Picot, Madéleine and Denys Branellec, the Desprairies brothers and Antoine Mercader escaped arrest, deportation and execution, this was not the case for all underground fighters. Twelve people from Bayeux alone were deported, and four did not return from the death camps. Others were arrested or shot. And among those who did return from the camps, some died as a result of their captivity.

* OCM, Civil and Military Organization, is a French resistance network. Guillaume Mercader became local manager at the end of 1943, after the forced departure of Robert Delente.

Sources :

Bayeux et le Bessin 1940-1944, Vie quotidienne, résistance, déportation, libération – Mai 1996

Été 1944 : Bayeux, ville-hôpital – Édition spéciale de la SABL de Bayeux – 33^e volume – 2004

» BAYEUX, FREEDOM STARTED HERE

Just a few days after D-Day General de Gaulle visited the capital of the Bessin region to give a speech in which he both confirmed that the liberating troops included French forces and re-established the rule of Republican law on French soil.

ADMINISTRATIVE CAPITAL OF FREE FRANCE

In his speech of 14 June 1944 General de Gaulle entrusted the administration of the liberated parts of France to a Regional Commissioner of the Republic – Bayeux thus became the administrative capital of Free France until the liberation of Paris on 25 August.

- + The history of 14th June 1944, see page 17
- + Event “In the footsteps of General de Gaulle” Friday 14th June 2024, see page 11

THE BAYEUX SPEECH

General de Gaulle, who had resigned as president of the Provisional Government of France in January 1946, chose the second anniversary of the liberation of Bayeux to return to the town and make his political comeback. On **16 June 1946** he returned to the place where two years earlier he had given his first speech in liberated France. This time, in the “**Bayeux Speech**”, he set out the basic principles of what would become the Fifth Republic. The speech of 16 June 1946 would result in the square where it took place being given its present name.

LIBERTY, A FUNDAMENTAL VALUE IN BAYEUX

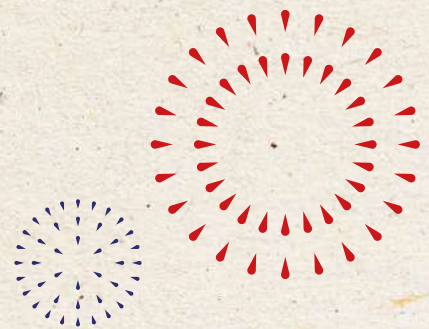
As the first town in mainland France to be liberated, located only a few kilometers from the Normandy Landings beaches, custodian of the renowned Bayeux Tapestry which is listed in the UNESCO Memory of the World register, and host to the Prix Bayeux Calvados-Normandie for War Correspondents....Bayeux is a town where the word “Liberty” means many things. In the historic heart of the town, at the foot of the majestic Cathedral, the Tree of Liberty which was planted in 1797, just after the French Revolution, sits proudly in the centre of the square which bears its name.

- + In Bayeux the name “Liberty Alley” serves to link the town’s places of memory: the Memorial Museum of the Battle of Normandy, the British Military Cemetery and the Reporters’ Memorial. This last is a space unique in Europe in recognition of the journalists killed in the exercise of their profession since 1944.



General de Gaulle in the streets of Bayeux on June 14, 1944.

© Imperial War Museum – Musée Mémorial de la Bataille de Normandie



» WHEN GENERAL DE GAULLE CAME TO BAYEUX

Alongside William the Conqueror he is without doubt the historical personality with the closest links to Bayeux. On two occasions General de Gaulle trod the streets of the city of Bayeux. On two occasions he came to meet the inhabitants of Bayeux and through them, to address the people of France.

14th June 1944. It was a little over a week since the Allies had landed on Norman soil. Fierce fighting was going on in the region. General de Gaulle, who had not set foot on French soil in over four years, disembarked between Graye and Courseulles-sur-Mer. Invited by Winston Churchill to visit the bridgehead that had been established by the Allies, the General's greatest priority was to use the opportunity provided by his visit to re-establish the legality of the Republic in the liberated territories. His fear of seeing the Allies taking decisions as to the future of France had appeared justified a few days earlier: the D-Day operations had been launched without him. He was met by the British on the beach, and allowed himself to be driven to the headquarters of Montgomery, head of British military operations, who was installed at the château of Creullet (Creully). The allies from across the Channel had prepared a very detailed itinerary for General de Gaulle. But the future President of France, not a man to be directed, was wary. He wanted to speak to the French, to the Norman people, and he wanted to do so at Bayeux, the nearest town. So he sent some of his most trusted men as scouts: Rear-Admiral Thierry d'Argenlieu, Colonel Hettier de Boislambert and Gaston Palewski, his chief of staff. General Koenig and François Coulet, the future Regional Commissioner of the Republic, were also part of the convoy. The men were to let the inhabitants know that the General would be arriving in the afternoon. In Bayeux everything was prepared with all speed: the inhabitants were informed by megaphone, a little podium was hastily installed in the Place du Chateau (now called Place du Général de Gaulle), and an electrician was called to set up a microphone

and loudspeakers. Maurice Schumann, the voice of the resistance on Radio London, had arrived in Bayeux on 7 June, and Guillaume Mercader, the leader of the local resistance movement (OCM – Organisation Civile et Militaire) were in the forefront and accompanied the delegation. At 3.30pm General de Gaulle arrived in Bayeux. Accompanied by General Béthouart, he walked, with his men, up the main street. Rue Saint-Jean, Saint-Martin, Saint-Malo, Général de Dais: street by street the procession swelled with admiring and emotional inhabitants. After a brief visit to the Sub-Prefecture General de Gaulle rejoined the crowd. The podium had been set up under the trees: the fighting was not yet over and planes flew overhead: the greatest figure of the French resistance had to be protected. In his speech the General called on the French to continue the fight and promised *“to ensure the country's sovereignty over every inch of liberated territory”*. Before leaving for Isigny-sur-Mer General de Gaulle appointed François Coulet and Raymond Triboulet (as Sub-Prefect of Bayeux and first Sub-Prefect of Free France) to their new functions. Bayeux would be the administrative capital of the liberated territories of France until the liberation of Paris on 25 August.



Maurice Schumann (foreground), General de Gaulle behind in June 1944

2F689 © Archives du Calvados

+ 16th June 1946. For the second anniversary of the Liberation, General de Gaulle – who had not spoken publicly since resigning as President of the Provisional Government in January 1946 – chose Bayeux for his political comeback. Thus on 16 June 1946 he returned to the place where two years earlier he had given his first speech in liberated France. This time, in the “Bayeux Speech”, he laid down the bases of what would become the Fifth Republic. In July of that same year the Place du Chateau would be renamed Place du Général de Gaulle as a reminder of his two historic visits to Bayeux.

» THE SCARS OF WAR

Although an atmosphere of popular jubilation still fills the streets of Bayeux in June every year, the scars of the summer of 1944 are still very much in evidence as well. Great importance is attached to respecting and transmitting memory, especially through the British Military Cemetery and the Memorial Museum of the Battle of Normandy.

BAYEUX BRITISH MILITARY CEMETERY

The British Military Cemetery at Bayeux, spread over 3.2 hectares (about 8 acres), is the largest Second World War Commonwealth cemetery in France. A total of 4,654 soldiers are buried there. In addition to the 3,935 British soldiers, there are 466 Germans and soldiers from several other nationalities. It has been managed, funded and maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGW) since its inception.



MEMORIAL MUSEUM OF THE BATTLE OF NORMANDY

The Memorial Museum of the Battle of Normandy in Bayeux devotes 2,300m² (about 23,000 sq ft) to showing the military operations undertaken during the Battle of Normandy during the summer of 1944. Inaugurated in 1981, it is the only museum in the region which provides a chronological presentation of all the military operations which took place on Norman soil over the summer of 1944, starting from 7 June.

THE “BYPASS”, BAYEUX’ RING ROAD

Bayeux is a medieval town with narrow cobbled streets, which made traffic conditions very difficult for the British troops’ vehicles. So the Allies decided to build a large road around the city, known by the British as a “bypass”. This little ring road which is still used today has kept its name, but the people of Bayeux pronounce it with a French accent – and so the “beepass” was born!



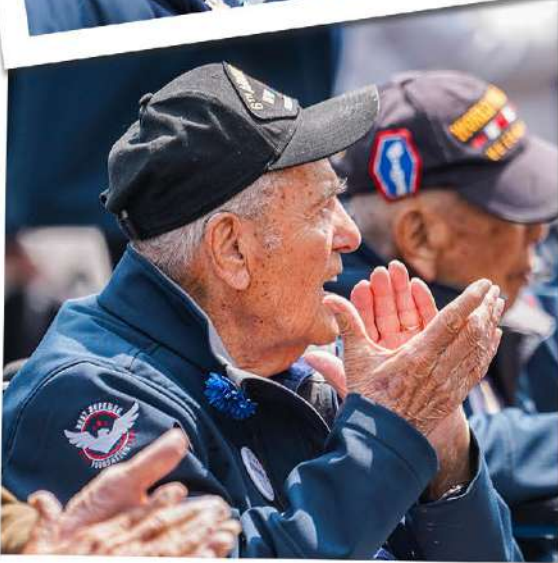
+ Tuesday 2nd April 2024, a « scraper » was added to the collections of the Memorial Museum of the Battle of Normandy in Bayeux. This type of American machine, unloaded in 1944 along with other large items of machinery needed to help rebuild infrastructure in Normandy, was used to scrape and flatten the ground. It enabled landing strips for Allied aerodromes and the Bayeux bypass to be traced out.



+ The “TT40” sign in the Rue des Bouchers

At the corner of the Rue Foch and Rue des Bouchers there is still an inscription. “TT40” is the badge of the 50th Infantry Division which liberated Bayeux on 7 June 1944 and was used mainly as a road sign. British troops entering Bayeux would thus know that the officers of the division were located a bit further up the street should they be needed.







**FULL PROGRAMME TO DOWNLOAD
ON 80E.BAYEUX.FR**

TRAFFIC ON 6TH JUNE 2024

More informations on 80e.bayeux.fr

CRÉDITS PHOTOS

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