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# ROBERT HARDMAN: Prince Charles goes into battle for D-Day memorial charity to remember fallen troops

By ROBERT HARDMAN FOR THE DAILY MAIL

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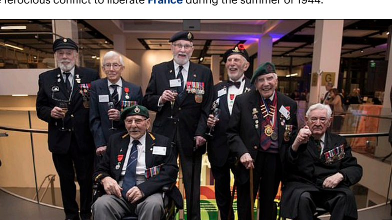
The charity behind a memorial to British troops killed during D-Day and the Battle of Normandy received a substantial boost last night with the news that the Prince of Wales is to become its royal patron.

The Prince described the proposed memorial, supported by the Daily Mail and its readers, as 'long overdue'.

It would be a fitting tribute, he said, to the 'selflessness and resolve' of all who fell in the ferocious conflict to liberate France during the summer of 1944.



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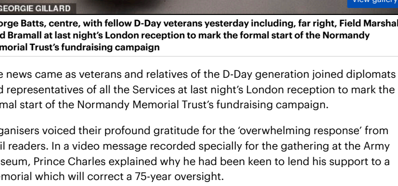
George Batts, centre, with fellow D-Day veterans yesterday including, far right, Field Marshal Lord Bramall at last night's London reception to mark the formal start of the Normandy Memorial Trust's fundraising campaign

The news came as veterans and relatives of the D-Day generation joined diplomats and representatives of all the Services at last night's London reception to mark the formal start of the Normandy Memorial Trust's fundraising campaign.

Organisers voiced their profound gratitude for the 'overwhelming response' from Mail readers. In a video message recorded specially for the gathering at the Army Museum, Prince Charles explained why he had been keen to lend his support to a memorial which will correct a 75-year oversight.

While all the other allied nations involved in the invasion of France have a national memorial in Normandy, Britain does not.



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Above, one of the figures that will form part of the memorial. A 50-acre site for the memorial has already been acquired at Ver-Sur-Mer overlooking Gold Beach where thousands of British troops came ashore on June 6th 1944

'The indefatigable spirit of the surviving Normandy veterans is a reminder to us all of the immense debt we owe to all those brave men and women who took part in the D-Day landings and in the subsequent Battle of Normandy,' the Prince said last night.

'I have long been concerned that the memory of these remarkable individuals should be preserved for generations to come as an example of personal courage and sacrifice, for the benefit of the wider national – and, indeed, international – community.

'I was therefore delighted to learn of the plans by the Normandy Memorial Trust to create what I believe is a long overdue British Memorial in northern France to the 22,500 service personnel under British command who gave their lives in Normandy in the summer of 1944.'

A 50-acre site for the memorial has already been acquired at Ver-Sur-Mer overlooking Gold Beach where thousands of British troops came ashore on June 6th 1944.

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The Normandy Memorial Trust is now seeking £9million to complete the project which will be engraved with the names of all who gave their lives during three months of intense fighting.

The first phase of the project will take shape this summer with the unveiling of the central statue during commemorations for the 75th anniversary of D-Day itself.

Last night, the Prince expressed his enthusiasm for the designs by memorial architect, Liam O'Connor.

He said: 'The memorial – on its evocative site overlooking Gold Beach – will provide a place of private and perpetual contemplation where visitors will be able to reflect on what we owe to all those who so gallantly carried out their duty with such extraordinary selflessness and resolve.'

The Prince described the proposed memorial, supported by the Daily Mail and its readers, as 'long overdue'. It would be a fitting tribute, he said, to the 'selflessness and resolve' of all who fell in the ferocious conflict to liberate France during the summer of 1944 [File photo]

The Prince added: 'I take great pride in offering my wholehearted support and I hope that others who cherish the memory of those gallant men and women, and who value the freedoms for which so many of them gave their lives, may also wish to offer the project their support.'

At last night's gathering, the chairman of the trustees, Lord Ricketts, former ambassador to Paris, voiced his appreciation for the generous support of our readers since the Mail began its campaign for the memorial last weekend.

'Their response has been overwhelming and extremely encouraging,' he said. 'We are extremely grateful to each and every one.'

Among those present last night was George Batts, a former National Secretary of the Normandy Veterans' Association and one of the original campaigners for the memorial.

Now 93, Mr Batts, formerly of the Royal Engineers, was among the first British troops to land on Gold Beach in 1944 where his job was to clear a path through the minefields.

'I saw many of my mates die on that beach,' Mr Batts said. 'It has never seemed right that Britain does not have a memorial in Normandy which records the names of all those who lost their lives fighting to rid Europe of tyranny.'

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