

6 juin 2024 - Seul le prononcé fait foi

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# Prise de parole du Président de la République à l'occasion de la remise de décoration à Christian Lamb.

Your Majesties,  
Mr. Prime Minister, Ministers,  
Veterans of the D-Day landings,  
Mrs. Christian LAMB,  
ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you, Your Majesty, for your word and your presence. I think it means a lot for all your veterans today and for us. And the way you express yourself, your history, our history, even for our civilians, but I would say the presence of both of you here today, means a lot for everybody in France.

Around this memorial, standing upright on the soil of Normandy, these 1 475 silhouettes represent each British soldier who fought whilst making a heroic sacrifice on D-Day. The 1 475 silhouettes from history are your brothers in arms, and I know that today you remember, and they are with us.

Let me say that nobody here in France, in Normandy, can forget their sacrifice and your sacrifice and your presence today with us in such an important day. You are already honoured by the French Republic, but we wanted to have just a special moment for you, Mrs. LAMB.

You were one of those heroes in the shadows, I would say, a Wren, as the female Royal Navy officers were known in their blue and white uniforms. Before you, your father fought bravely in the First World War. Your family loved France, and at the age of 18, you left school and came to live with the family here to learn our language. But just a few months in 1939, you received a telegram from your father telling you that the war was imminent and to return to London immediately.

Shortly after that, you began working as a clerk for the Royal Navy and then became an official plotting officer, responsible for locating your ships based on data sent from your radar stations. This led to one of the most dramatic moments of your life when you had to plot the ship of your own fiancé, a lieutenant commander on a Royal Navy destroyer engaged in a battle with some 40 German U-boats.

The story ended well, and the British destroyer rammed and sank a U-boat, and you were able to marry your fiancé at the end of 1943. But in fact, the story was just beginning. In 1944, you were assigned to help plan the D-Day's landings from Winston Churchill's secret war room in London. When all of Europe was speculating about the location of the landings, when Nazi Germany did not know where to send its defences, you knew the exact location as it was pinpointed on a large-scale map of the Normandy coast on the wall of your small below-stairs office.

Your brief was to delineate each landing position visible from the bridge of an approaching landing craft so that the troops could get their bearings. It required precision planning, and it was intense and exciting work.

As you said, you were just one piece of the jigsaw, but the success of the entire operation hinged on the jigsaw. And the stillness of your office was the first step leading to the din of the battlefield. And when you heard the official radio announcement of the landings on 6 June, you were in your own way among those figures in the shadows of D-Day.

You were not there in person, dear Christian LAMB, but you guided each step they took. After that life resumed, you left the Navy, but you have never forgotten those intense heroic hours.

Fifty years later, you recounted them publicly to honour the memory of all those who experienced those bitter yet glorious hours with you. You have set us an example which we will not forget. France will never forget the British troops who landed on D-Day and all their brothers in arms, that faith in freedom which you have never lost, that constant selflessness and devotion both guide us and serve as a duty to us.

We are honoured by the ties of remembrance, friendship, and loyalty, which you have forged between our two countries. And let me thank all of you for this bravery.

C'est pourquoi aujourd'hui, j'ai l'honneur, au nom de la République française, Madame, de vous remettre les insignes de Chevalier de la Légion d'honneur.