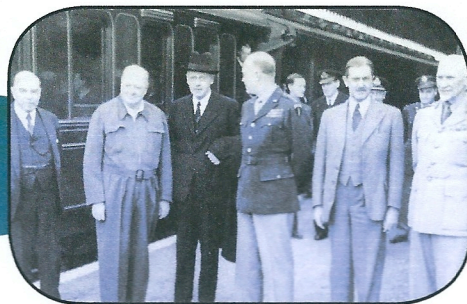


# D-DAY AT



# DROXFORD

## D-DAY VILLAGE PLANS WEEK OF EVENTS

For centuries the tiny village of Droxford had drowsed peacefully in the Hampshire countryside.

But for two days in June 1944 Droxford and its railway station played a critical role in the run-up to 'Operation Overlord', the greatest invasion in history, and villagers plan to mark a unique piece of local and national history during the week leading up to this year's 70th anniversary.

With General Eisenhower's HQ just 10 miles away in Southwick House, near Portsmouth, it was vital for the Allied leaders to meet somewhere nearby that was easily accessible and safe from any stray Luftwaffe attack so they could put the finishing touches to D-Day.

Droxford, more used to handling farmers' produce and livestock, was chosen because it was on the Meon Valley rural railway line and had a deep cutting with a siding where a train could be hidden, with the added advantage of a tunnel in the other direction.

On June 2, 1944 Winston Churchill's special train with 8 carriages codenamed 'Rugged' arrived at Droxford and on to the platform stepped the Prime Minister in his siren suit, followed by other allied leaders.

They met in a carriage in the siding closely guarded by the Army and security men; two days later, June 6, 1944, the Allies landed in Normandy. Droxford's 48 hours of fame were over and it lapsed back to bucolic slumber.

The Meon Valley railway is long gone and is now a bridle path, but the siding where the train stood is still clearly visible and the historic 112-year-old station has been splendidly restored by private owners – the only one of the seven along the 26-mile line to survive.

Several villagers clearly remember those stirring days and their memories will be recorded for screening during Droxford's D-Day Week, which will include a re-enactment, an exhibition, lectures, a visit to the famous wall map of the landing beaches at Southwick House and a major design project by children at Droxford Junior School.

Events co-ordinator Michael Profit says: "There are probably former residents, Armed Forces personnel, evacuees, ex-railway staff and their families who were there, or have memorabilia, photographs etc, and I would really appreciate it if they could contact me."

Portsmouth's D-Day Museum is helping with the project and Hampshire County Council has awarded £950 to the D-Day at Droxford organisers to ensure that this momentous occasion in the village's history is preserved.

END

# PRESS RELEASE

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