



4

The walk continues onto Weymouth promenade. As you proceed towards the promenade, you will pass on your left, Devonshire Buildings, a terrace of blue and white fronted properties. It was around this building that the American GIs queued, awaiting their turn to embark vessels bound for France. Beneath a perspex sheet, just above the "Esplanade" sign, can be seen the names or initials of some of the Gi's, inscribed into the wall using their bayonets.

Continue walking along the promenade for approximately 400 metres, until on your left-hand side is the Royal Hotel. In front of the hotel, on the promenade, can be seen the Memorial to American Servicemen.






The plaque upon it reads:

"The major part of the American Assault force which landed on the Shores of France, 6 June 1944, was launched from the Weymouth and Portland harbours. From 6th June 1944 to the 7th of May 1945, 517,816 troops and 144,093, vehicles embarked from these harbours. Many of these troops left Weymouth Pier. The remainder of the troops and all vehicles passed through Weymouth en route to Portland points of embarkation."

5

This brings us to the end of this historical walk. To return to Hope Square please retrace your steps or alternatively walk back through St Mary's Street, where gifts and souvenirs can be purchased. St Mary's Street can be found immediately behind the statue of George III, which as you face the Royal Hotel, is to your left. On reaching Custom House Quay, turn right climb the steps, cross the bridge, and return to Hope Square.

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This is a 2 mile (3.2km) walk from Hope Square, which on 4 June 1944 would have been bustling with workers from the local brewery, Weymouth residents, and servicemen making their way to the harbourside for embarkation to France in what would be the largest military operation on sea, air and land ever attempted.

Over 500,000 soldiers from the American, Canadian and British armies, together with 140,000 tanks and armoured vehicles, left Weymouth and Portland to cross the English Channel to attack the German Army in Northern France.



80th Anniversary D-Day Walk

from Hope Square,
Weymouth, DT4 8TR



Welcome to
Weymouth
and Portland



1

The large building to the south side of the square is the former home of Devenish Brewery. Currently (Summer 2024) the building is shrouded in scaffolding as it undergoes significant redevelopment, with the building being converted into flats and apartments on the upper floors and the new home of Weymouth Museum at street level.

Facing away from the brewery building can be seen the Red Lion public house. To the right is Pilgrim House. Whenever enemy raids were threatened, American troops would release a smoke screen from its roof. White smoke would drift across the harbour and town, masking the D-Day preparations. "The acrid stench of the smokescreen seemed to penetrate everything, and sometimes the whole of Weymouth was completely enveloped by thick, choking clouds."

Walking in front of Pilgrim House, along Hope Street, proceed to the Harbours edge. Throughout the War, the quayside was the main loading and liberty point for British Troops manning the Breakwater Forts of Portland Harbour. In 1942, American servicemen began to join their British counterparts. Men and supplies were constantly ferried between Weymouth Harbour and the Forts; with the supply ships bravely contending with bad weather, air attacks and mines.



2

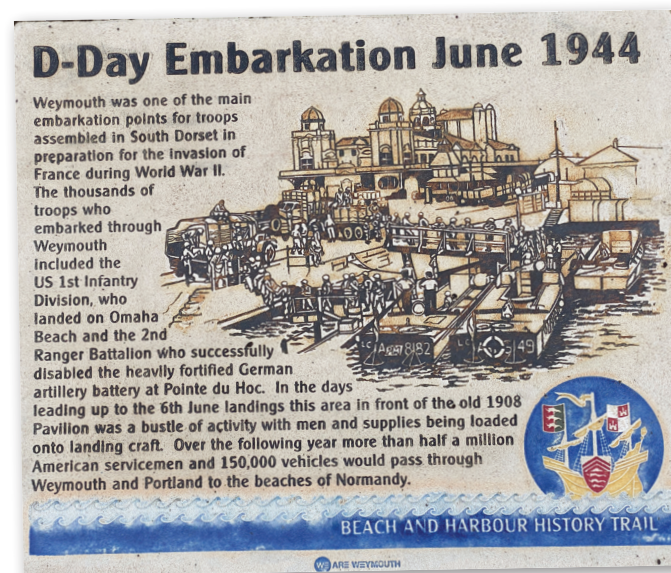
Walk along the harbourside (Cove Row) towards Weymouth Lifeboat station. During the Second World War, the Weymouth Lifeboat, named "William and Clara Ryland" set out on search and rescue missions for survivors from bombed or torpedoed vessels, and for fighter pilots whose planes had ditched into the sea during dogfights.

Continue walking along the harbourside until you see a flight of steps on your right-hand side. Climb the steps and at top, turn left, walking towards the Nothe Fort. The Fort is now a multi award winning museum and visitor attraction and well worth a visit! In 1944 the guns of this historic Fort guarded the approach to Weymouth Harbour and the Bay from air and sea attacks. Weymouth and Portland were subject to many bombing raids which brought death and destruction in their wake.

From June 4th 2024, the fort will be presenting a new exhibition to mark the 80th anniversary of D-Day.

On leaving the Fort, walk straight ahead, passing under the tunnel in front of you. After exiting the tunnel, vistas will begin to emerge, with views across Weymouth Bay and Portland Harbour. Both were filled with battleships and amphibious craft the eve of D-Day. The safe, shallow shore of Weymouth Bay, so popular with visitors, was barricaded while the threat of enemy invasion was high as the Bay presented easy access for enemy landings.

Continue walking straight ahead, passing the Nothe Tavern on your right-hand side. Shortly afterwards will be seen Red Barracks (now Wellington Court). The Barracks housed many servicemen during the War. Continue straight ahead until you reach Hill Lane, again on your right-hand side. Descend the lane. This will bring you back in to Hope Square.



3

Walk in front of the Red Lion and follow the road to the right, returning to the Harbourside. To your left, you will see Weymouth Town Bridge. Cross the bridge, then descend the steps to your right onto Custom House Quay. Continue walking along the harbourside. After passing Deheers Ebike Café, ahead of you, to your right, you will see a flight of steps, leading to a landing platform. Ascend the steps and walk to the end of the platform where you will see a sunken information slab (pictured).

Imagine the scene in Weymouth Harbour on 5th/6th June 1944... contingents of American servicemen had marched down Weymouth Esplanade towards the Harbour, which was filled with landing craft waiting to take them to "Omaha Beach" in Normandy. They boarded the landing craft from the Harbour Steps adjacent to the information slab, and were packed into these craft like sardines into cans, waiting on the weather to begin their "longest day".

Finally, the D-Day orders came through and a vast armada set sail.

The Pavilion Theatre ahead of you marks the site of the former Ritz Theatre, destroyed by fire in 1954. The huge forecourt area would have been piled high with stores and equipment to support the invading army. Other adjacent buildings were used as headquarters for the D-Day co-ordinators.

