D-Day beaches gain World Heritage status

The French beaches on which Allied forces landed on June 6, 1944, have been added to the UNESCO World Heritage List, recognising their historical significance and association with the Allied invasion of German-occupied Western Europe.

The new World Heritage property comprises six areas stretching along approximately 50 miles of Normandy coastline, and includes the five landing beaches – Utah, Omaha, Gold, Juno and Sword – as well as Pointe du Hoc, where US Rangers scaled the cliffs to destroy German gun positions overlooking the beaches. UNESCO recognised the cultural property under Criterion (VI), relating to places directly associated with events of outstanding universal significance. The inscription was approved at UNESCO's 48th World Heritage Committee session in Busan, South Korea, in July.



British Commandos of 1st Special Service Brigade coming ashore at Queen Red, Sword beach on June 6, 1944 OFFICIAL PHOTOGRAPH

Britain's 'House of Secrets' open doors

A London mansion that played a hidden role in Britain's wartime intelligence effort has opened its doors as a new museum, revealing the story of the 'Secret Listeners' who gathered vital information from captured German officers during World War Two.

Trent Park House of Secrets, in Enfield, has been restored as a permanent attraction following a decade of work to preserve the historic house. The museum explores two contrasting chapters of Trent Park's history: the glamorous interwar world of owner Sir Philip Sassoon, and the covert intelligence operation that unfolded behind closed doors after the outbreak of war.

Following its requisition by the government, Trent Park became a Combined Services Detailed Interrogation Centre where senior German POWs were held in apparent comfort. Unaware that the house had been fitted with a network of concealed microphones, the officers' conversations were recorded and analysed by teams of 'Secret Listeners' working in basement rooms. The intelligence gathered at Trent Park included information on German weapons programmes, military plans and the V2 rocket.

Visitors can now explore the recreated basement listening rooms, alongside restored state rooms that show the contrast between the house's public elegance and its secret wartime purpose.

Tickets cost £14 for adults but Museums Association members can visit for free. For more information, see: trentparkhouse.org.uk



Trent Park House of Secrets is open every Tue-Sun, 10am to 5pm TRENT PARK MUSEUM TRUST

Record-breaking Gurkha mountaineer killed in avalanche



Nirmal 'Nims' Purja MBE pictured in 2021 Credit: Iamthanes

Former Gurkha and SBS operative Nirmal Purja MBE, the mountaineer who broke numerous high-altitude records, has died aged 43 following an avalanche on Pakistan's Broad Peak.

Purja, known as 'Nims' or 'Nimsdai', was leading an international expedition on the 8,047m mountain when the avalanche struck between Camp 2 and Camp 3 at an altitude of 6,600m. He was among ten climbers killed in the disaster, which also claimed the lives of Nepalese, American, Omani, Chinese and Pakistani mountaineers. Rescue efforts were hampered by the remote location and dangerous conditions.

Born in Nepal, Purja joined the Brigade of Gurkhas in 2003 before becoming the first Gurkha to serve in the SBS. During his 16-year career he completed numerous operational deployments before leaving the Army to pursue mountaineering. He achieved worldwide recognition in 2019 when he climbed all 14 of the world's 8,000m peaks in six months and six days, a record-breaking feat was documented in the Netflix *film 14 Peaks: Nothing Is Impossible*. He later led the first successful winter ascent of K2, one of the world's most dangerous mountains.

Nelson orders found preserved in rare notebook

A pocketbook kept aboard HMS *Bellerophon* has revealed a record of Vice-Admiral Nelson's command, including the order for a sailor convicted of threatening a superior officer to be hanged from the yardarm.

Kept by Captain Henry D'Esterre Darby between April and October 1799, when the ship was serving with Nelson's squadron in the Bay of Naples, the pocketbook contains transcripts of 46 memoranda and orders issued by or on behalf of Nelson. Thirty-five were copied from originals bearing Nelson's signature, while others were issued by his flag captains Thomas Hardy and Sir Edward Berry. Further orders came from Earl St Vincent, Sir John Duckworth and Sir Robert Calder.

At the heart of the manuscript is the court martial of William White, *Bellerophon's* boatswain's mate. On August 21, 1799, while confined in irons, White was accused of behaving "in a mutinous manner", seizing Lieutenant John Glover by the collar and threatening that he would "split his head". The court found White guilty under the 22nd Article of War, covering striking, offering violence to, or quarrelling with a superior officer in the execution of his office. He was sentenced "to suffer Death by being Hang'd by the neck at the Yard Arm", after which Nelson issued his own memorandum ordering that the sentence be carried out the following morning. His order instructed the boats of the squadron to be turned out and marines to attend the punishment.

The manuscript also records a strikingly different side of Nelson's command. A memorandum issued from HMS *Foudroyant* on August 1, 1799 – marking the first anniversary of the Battle of the Nile – declared it "a Day so glorious to our Country by the noble exertions of British Seamen". Nelson ordered that faults committed up to that date should be forgiven "that no heart may have cause to be sad on such a Day" and directed that every man in the squadron receive half a pint of wine to drink the King's health.

Other entries reveal the demands placed on Nelson's squadron, including intelligence-gathering on the French Brest Fleet, casualty reports from fighting in Italy, information on prisoners held in irons, restrictions on letters and communication, victualling and the supervision of ships and men. One intelligence order stresses the "utmost importance" of establishing the probable destination of the Brest Fleet, instructing officers to examine logs and question masters about their courses, bearings and distances from land.



Captain Henry D'Esterre Darby's pocketbook COURTESY OF ARCH BOOKS