



Press release

Mass picnic planned in Coventry for 6th June to mark the 75th anniversary of D-Day

A Coventry charity is planning to set a record for the largest number of people at a picnic in Coventry.

The Normandy campaign, which began with the D-Day Landings on 6th June 1944, was the turning point of the 2nd World War. It was the largest seaborne invasion force ever assembled before or since. Much of the battle took place in the apple orchards of Normandy. Local Normandy veteran and founder of the Normandy Day UK charity, Dennis Davison, 96, wants to mark the 75th anniversary by celebrating the freedom and peace enjoyed in Europe since the war with a record-breaking picnic.

The charity has been working with Coventry City Council and local schools to create a 3.5 acre Peace Orchard at Coundon Hall Park as an outdoor classroom for environmental and peace education. This is where the picnic will be held. As well as planting over 650 native apple trees and fruit hedging plants, children from local schools have helped design a web site, information boards, seating and plaques, which are all due to be completed in time for the picnic on 6th June, along with a new footpath.

Dennis said, "It's important to remember those who fought for our freedom in the war, as well as members of the Armed Forces who continue to protect our way of life. For the sake of our children, it's equally important to work for peace and unity every day. That's what the Peace Orchard and the peace picnics are all about - bringing people of all backgrounds together to create something we can proudly leave to future generations."

Marina Kelly, head teacher at Cardinal Newman, said, "The Peace Orchard has been brilliant for our students. From start to finish, they've been involved in its design and learned so much in the process. Students have researched content for the web site, designed benches, worked with a carpenter, created plaques and planted trees and wildflowers – things they could never have done in the classroom alone without the charity's help. We now have an outdoor classroom on our doorstep. The Peace Picnic on 6th June will be a real celebration of what has been achieved and a joyful community event."

The charity also wants to make contact with families and relatives of those who served in the Normandy Campaign to invite them to a civic reception hosted by Coventry's Lord Mayor on 6th June. If this applies to anyone you know, please email the charity at contact@normandy-day.co.uk

To visit the Peace Orchard, park in the Tamworth Road car park CV6 8NJ (opposite Sandpits Lane junction). A new footpath will link the Orchard to the car park. Registration for the event can be made at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/community-peace-picnic-tickets-60804183951>





Dennis Davison with his Legion D'Honneur medal from the French people

Further information

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For the Peace Orchard web site, see www.peaceorchard.co.uk which contains a fascinating insight into the Normandy experience, how to manage a native apple orchard and a schools' peace and reconciliation teaching resource.

The Peace Orchard was created with specialist expertise from one of the UK's prominent native fruit growers, and with practical support from Coventry City Council's Parks Team. The 3.4 acre site has over 30 species of native apple trees and fruit hedging, and hundreds of native wildflowers. Thousands of native bulbs will be planted later this year. Seating, signs and plaques are being designed and assembled by Cardinal Newman school students. On 16th & 17th May, a mobile saw mill will cut fresh timber for students to make seats in time for the 6th June.

As a way of bring symbolically spreading the message of peace, 100 Wyken Pippin trees are being specially grown in time for Autumn/ Winter this year. They will be offered at a discount to the first 100 people applying, and at no cost to constituted groups for local green spaces. More on this to follow.

The project is funded from by the Veolia Environmental Trust, Lottery Communities Fund, Heritage Lottery, People's Postcode Lottery, Kew Gardens and Edward Cadbury Trust and supported by Coventry City Council and Cardinal Newman Catholic School.

