



# Royal Star & Garter

Care with courage

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **WWII Switchboard Operator remembers hearing horrors of war during D-Day landings**

A WWII veteran has recalled hearing the “sounds of hell” when she worked as a Switchboard Operator during the D-Day landings.

Marie Scott was serving with the Women’s Royal Naval Service (WRNS) and passing coded messages between the front line and the leaders of Operation Overlord – the codename for the Normandy landings – when she was exposed firsthand to the horrors of warfare.

The 99-year-old was speaking during a respite stay at Royal Star & Garter in Surbiton, and ahead of the 82<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of D-Day on 6 June. The charity provides loving, compassionate care to veterans and their families living with disability or dementia, from Homes in Solihull, Surbiton, High Wycombe and Worthing. It also has services reaching out into the community including Day Care, Lunch Club and a national Telephone Friendship Service.



*Figure 1 Marie holds her Légion d'honneur, given to her by the French Government in recognition of the role she played in the liberation of the country from Nazi Germany*

Marie had joined the WRNS in March 1944 and in June that year was based at Fort Southwick, a secret underground communications centre near Portsmouth where the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF), led by General Dwight D. Eisenhower, was operating ahead of D-Day.

Aged just 17 at the time, she was tasked with using new VHF radio systems to verbally relay coded messages to frontline troops. It was during these exchanges that Marie was given her terrifying insight into the utter devastation unfolding across the Channel. She said: “When they gave their responses to me, I couldn't believe my ears. Because what I heard was incessant machine gunfire, the sound of cannons, and bombs dropping. I could hear men shouting orders and I could hear men screaming. And I suddenly



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realised that what I was listening to was the actual invasion of the beaches. Those men were storming the beaches of Normandy, and I was hearing the accompaniment of war. I'll never forget that day. Never. It was the sound of hell."

Marie left the Armed Forces in 1946. She would later receive the Légion d'honneur – France's highest decoration – from the French Government, in recognition of the role she played in the liberation of the country from Nazi Germany.

Eighty-two years later, Marie still finds herself thinking of that day and the lives that were lost. She said: "I remember all those desperately young men that didn't survive D-Day. There were so many thousands killed on D-Day alone, it was an enormous number. For a few moments, I was there that day, listening to the hell those young men were in. I can't help but think of them and their families – I often do."



*Marie joined the WRNS at 17*

The D-Day assault marked the start of the successful campaign to liberate Western Europe from Nazi occupation.

Royal Star & Garter's Homes mark special days in the Armed Forces calendar, such as D-Day, VE Day, Remembrance and Armed Forces Day. The charity's Veterans' Voice project also aims to give a platform to its residents and the people who use its services, ensuring they are not overlooked because of their disability or dementia.

Royal Star & Garter in Surbiton is welcoming new residents. For more information on this, its other services or to work at the Home, go to [www.starandgarter.org/surbiton](http://www.starandgarter.org/surbiton)

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## About Royal Star & Garter

Founded in 1916, Royal Star & Garter provides care, support and friendship for veterans and their families so that they can live well. The charity delivers nursing and dementia care through Homes in Solihull, Surbiton, High Wycombe, and now in Worthing, having recently merged with the military charity Care for Veterans. It also offers a range of services reaching into the community, including Lunch Clubs, Day Care and a national Telephone Friendship Service.

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