# The Untold Heroines of D-Day: Women's Role in the Invasion of Normandy



One hundred years ago this week, on June 6, 156,000 Allied troops landed on the beaches of Normandy, France, an event known as D-Day. This operation marked a significant turning point in World War II, initiating the liberation of Europe from Nazi occupation. While the heroics of the soldiers are well-commemorated annually on the Normandy beaches, the role of women in preparing for the invasion has often been overlooked.

Two notable women of the Women's Royal Naval Service, known as the Wrens, were Christian Lamb and Patricia Owtram. Christian Lamb, who meticulously created detailed maps for the landing forces, ensured British troops were precisely positioned as they stormed Normandy's beaches under enemy fire. Working alone in a London office, Lamb's maps, depicting every possible terrain feature, were crucial for the success of the landings.

Lamb joined the Wrens shortly after war was declared in 1939, following her father’s advice to return home from France. She first managed degaussing ships in the Thames estuary to mitigate magnetic mine threats. Later, she monitored ship movements as a plotting officer in Portsmouth. Following this, she took up a similar role in Belfast. Lamb had a personal motivation to help reclaim French territories rich in art and culture, where she had previously studied.

Concurrently, Patricia Owtram, leveraging her German language skills acquired from Austrian refugees, intercepted German communications at listening bases across England. Stationed on the white cliffs of Dover as D-Day approached, Owtram observed key figures like Winston Churchill and General Montgomery, part of a deception strategy to mislead the Germans about the invasion location. Her intelligence work was vital and highly secretive, even from her sister, who was also involved in codebreaking.

Lamb later became a gardening author, and Owtram had a career in television production, contributing to shows like University Challenge. Both women authored memoirs discussing their wartime contributions and highlighting the often-unrecognized roles women played behind the scenes as spies, resistance members, and codebreakers.