



■ Prince Charles chats to David Buurma of Mor Design.



■ St Nazaire veterans, left, and Major General Corran Purdon (right) at the dedication ceremony, with the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall (centre).

# War heroes remembered at monument's rededication



■ Karen Sleight laying some flowers.

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SEVEN veterans of the raid on St Nazaire, three of whom were held prisoners of war with the Duchess of Cornwall's father, attended the rededication service and were humbled by the experience.

Lt Colonel Bob Montgomery, Major General Corran Purdon and Dr Bill Watson, were all held at Spennenburg Castle with Major Bruce Shand.

They were joined on Friday by fellow veterans, Hugh Arnold, Eric de la Torre, Frank Pritchard and Fred Catton.

Also standing with the veterans was Nicholas Beattie, elder son of Lt Commander S H Beattie, who commanded HMS *Campbeltown* and was captured during the raid and later awarded the Victoria Cross.

Dr Watson said after the ceremony: "I have found it all very humbling.

"I am just an ordinary man and my colleagues are just ordinary men and we have been so honoured. We do not deserve it."

Major General Purdon added: "We are all so delighted that the memorial has been made to look so excellent - it is beautiful. We all appreciate

the generosity of the town council." At a civic reception after the ceremony, Mr Beattie, who is secretary of the St Nazaire Society, said: "It is our aim to keep the memory of the St Nazaire raid alive forever, certainly for the next century.

"I would like to congratulate everybody in Falmouth for what you have done for us today and we thank you from the bottom of our hearts for creating this memorial.

"I am sure it is going to strike a chord with anybody who comes along and sees it."

After the reception, the veterans attended the grave of Able Seaman WA "Bill" Savage who died on the raid and was subsequently awarded the Victoria Cross. He is buried at Falmouth Cemetery and on Friday a wreath was laid on his grave.

The raid on St Nazaire was considered to be the turning point of the war, but at a high cost with 168 British lives lost.

It was on March 28, 1942 that Operation Chariot was launched which saw 622 sailors and commandos leave Falmouth for France.

The aging destroyer, HMS *Campbeltown*, was packed with explosives and disguised as a German frigate. Accom-



■ Prince Charles with pupils from St Mary's School, Falmouth.

panied by 16 launches and two destroyers, she made her way across the Channel to St Nazaire, the largest port in Europe and a stronghold of the Germans.

The objectives of the operation were to destroy the drydock, its pumping stations and the nearby U-boat pens. All of these aims were accom-

plished under intense fire and many men were wounded and killed. Prisoners were sent to camps and only five men made it directly back to England.

Following the raid, and that on Sark, Hitler declared that any Special Forces soldier captured should be shot and that the terms of the Geneva Convention would not apply to

Commandos. After the operation, five Victoria Crosses were awarded; four Distinguished Service of Order; 17 Distinguished Service Crosses; 11 Military Crosses; 24 Distinguished Service Medals; four Conspicuous Gallantry Medals and 51 men were Mentioned in Dispatches.



■ The Duchess of Cornwall meets local youngsters.



■ ABOVE: St Nazaire veterans around the memorial.

Pictures: Colin Ross