

24.6.1944...The Day when Disaster Struck

On the 24th of June 1944 the men of 6th Guards Tank Brigade Workshop (REME) had gone to work as usual. They were billeted nearby at 'Newlands' in Charing and worked in the Nissan huts just across the road.

The men worked on an important project, the details of which were possibly even unknown



The Gates to the cemetery are a memorial to the victims of incident.

to them. They equipped the Churchill tanks with larger armaments and plough blades in order to make them fit for the difficult terrain in Northern France which had to be conquered after the Normandy Landing.

It was a day like many others, and nothing prepared the men for the hit by a V1, flying bomb. Unfortunately, this Doodle Bug had not fallen because its motor stopped working, it had been shot down by friendly aircraft fire and its engine was still working when it hit the ground. 52 men lost their lives that the morning. 46 were killed instantly and another 6 men died later of their injuries. One officer and 20 other ranks were also injured. The Nissan Huts, stores, offices and 14 vehicles and 16 motorbikes were destroyed. For the regiment, this incident is the largest loss of life in one event in their entire history.

Because of the secrecy of the men's work the funeral took place in the night in Lenham Cemetery. They were buried in an 'active service burial' where the servicemen were buried in one large grave which had been dug by Scots, Grenadier and Coldstream Guards.

Since the disastrous event 80 years ago, a special relationship expressed by gratitude and remembrance developed between Lenham and REME. This special relationship was expressed when Lenham Parish Council granted the Freedom of the Parish of Lenham to the Corps.