Charing

Second World War
1939 – 1945

Despite having local Second World War dead interred in the village cemetery at Charing, Ashford, Kent, it have thus far been unable to locate any form of remembrance for those of the parish who lost their lives during the years of that conflict. It has to be said that the non-commemorations are in stark contrast to an impressive memorial plaque located in the parish church to commemorate the officers and men of the 9th Battalion, Royal Tank Regiment who were stationed in the village prior to the invasion of Normandy 1944, who subsequently gave their lives in the liberation of North West Europe 1944-1945.

BURBRIDGE, JOHN. Trooper, 7902413.
Royal Armoured Corps.
Died 11 May 1940. Aged 26.
Born and resided Kent.
Buried Charing Cemetery. Grave Ref: Plot A. Grave 209.
It has not been possible so far (April 2005) to ascertain if John was either native or resident of Charing, Ashford, Kent.

CLARK, WILLIAM JOHN CRANFORD. Petty Officer Supply, C/MX 45481.
Royal Navy, H.M.S. Wryneck. (D21).
Died 27 April 1941.
Commemorated on the Chatham Naval Memorial. Panel 48. Column 3.
William is also commemorated on the headstone of his parents grave in the cemetery at Charing, Ashford, Kent.
Built by Palmers Shipbuilding & Iron Co Ltd of Jarrow-on-Tyne, H.M.S. Wryneck was a 1188 ton V&W class fast escort destroyer, that was commisioned on Armistice Day 11 November 1918. At the commencement the Second World War, H.M.S. Wryneck was stationed at Gibraltar as part of the British Mediterranean Fleet. When she was lost, the destroyer was commanded by 45 year old Commander, Robert H.D. Lane R.N. of Westward Ho, Devon. H.M.S. Wryneck was sunk in the Eastern Mediterranean, approximately twenty nautical miles East of Cape Malae, Greece, by German Stuka JU-87 dive-bombers during the evacuation of Crete. When she was sunk, 108 perished from the ships compliment of 146, including her commander. In company with the Royal Navy destroyer H.M.S. Diamond, the officers and ratings were rescuing about 700 soldiers and crew from the 11,600 ton Dutch liner 'Slamat' which had been attacked and damaged earlier. 'Slamat' had been converted as a British troopship and was at that time under British control.

LLOYD, ALBERT Lance Corporal, CH/X109573.
Royal Marines.
Died 28 June 1947. Aged 23.
Son of Harry and Winifred Lloyd of Stalisfield, Ashford, Kent..
Husband of Elizabeth Ada Lloyd of Bermondsey, London.
Buried Charing, Ashford, Kent, Cemetery. Grave Ref: 402.
Brother of the next casualty commemorated.

LLOYD, ABRAHAM EDWARD. Leading Seaman, C/JX155279.
Royal Navy, H.M.L.S.T. 302.
Died 11 March 1944. Aged 23.
Son of Harry and Winifred Lloyd of Stalisfield, Ashford, Kent..
Buried Charing, Ashford, Kent, Cemetery. Grave Ref: 24A.
H.M. Landing Ship Tank 302, that Abraham served on was built at the Charleston Shipyard, New York, U.S.A. in mid 1942, and went to Great Britain in November 1942. Out of 1,051 L.S.T. class ships built, over a thousand survived through the end of the Second World War, but H.M.L.S.T. 302 was wrecked East of Ostend, Belgium, on 5 November 1944.

SINCLAIR, PETER GORDON. Signalman 14311770.
Royal Corps of Signals, 53rd Division Signals.
Died 11 September 1943. Aged 21.
Born Kent. Resided South East London.
Son of Albert James Sinclair and Frances C. Sinclair of Charlton, London.
Buried Charing, Ashford, Kent, Cemetery. Grave Ref: 18A.
Originally enlisted in the General Service Corps.

SMITH, CHARLES KENNETH. Private, 6289225.
2nd Battalion, The Buffs (Royal East Kent Regiment).
Died at sea 17 June 1940. Aged 21.
Born and resided Canterbury, Kent.
Son of Harry William Smith and Sarah K Smith of Charing, Ashford, Kent.
Buried Les Moutiers-en-Retz Communal Cemetery, Loire-Atlantique, France.
Grave Ref: Collective grave 8. (Screen Wall Panel 48).
Charles was amongst the many died aboard H.M.T. Lancastria. Contrary to popular belief which now seems to prevail in some quarters, the evacuation of the British and French troops from France in 1940 did not end with Dunkirk. British and French forces were still being rescued at least two weeks later when Britain's worst maritime disaster of the Second World War took place. On 17 June 1940, the 16,000 ton Cunard liner which was in use as a troopship. H.M.T. Lancastria lay approximately five miles off St Nazaire, France in the estuary of the River Loire, and was embarking soldiers, Royal Air Force personnel, and also civilian refugees, including women and children, all of whom were being evacuated from France, when the country was on the verge of collapse. The exact numbers onboard the ship will almost certainly never be known, but probably exceeded 6000; although some commentators have estimated the casualty number as high as 9000, but that figure is almost certainly wild speculation. H.M.T. Lancastria was attacked and hit by bombs from German Junkers Ju 88 aircraft which were **probably** of KG 30, which caused her to roll over and sink within twenty minutes. Although it is not

known for certain which Luftwaffe formation the bombers belong to, or even for certain exactly what type of aircraft they were, but the general consensus has been that they were Ju 88s. Aircraft of II./ KG 30 who exclusively flew Junkers Ju 88 aircraft, are known to have been attacking shipping in the estuary of the River Loire, at the time of the loss of H.M.T. Lancastria.

STEWART, ERIC PETER. Sergeant (Flight Engineer), 1722688.
Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. No.1656 Heavy Conversion Unit, R.A.F.
Died 17 June 1943. Aged 19.
Son of John and Elsie Stewart of Charing, Kent.
Buried Charing, Ashford, Kent, Cemetery. Grave Ref: 9A.
Eric was based at 1656 Heavy Conversion Unit, R.A.F. and was the Flight Engineer on Lancaster bomber ED381, which was flown by Sergeant (Pilot), Matthew P. Brown, that took off from R.A.F Lindholme, Yorkshire, at 2145 hours to undertake a cross country night flying training exercise. At approximately 0140 hours a tragedy occurred above Brize Norton, Oxfordshire, when the Lancaster collided with a Wellington bomber BJ845, of 27 Operational Training Unit. Flown by 27 year old Flight Sergeant, Mervyn B. Fettell of Earlwood, New South Wales, Australia, who was the only fatality amongst the Wellington's six crew, his aircraft came down near Bibury, Cirencester, Gloucestershire, where he is buried. The seven crew of the Lancaster all lost their lives during the collision, which resulted in the bomber crashing near Wicksted Farm, Highworth, approximately five miles from Swindon, Wiltshire. Two of the bodies of the Lancaster's crew had their funeral arrangements made by their respective home Royal Air Force bases, whilst the others were claimed by their next of kin, including Eric, and all were laid to rest in their respective home locations. Re-opened for flying in late October 1942, No.1656 Heavy Conversion Unit moved in with a few Lancasters and Manchester's from R.A.F. Breighton to serve No. 1 Group's conversion to the former type. Now an operational training base, over the next two years. Lindholme was host to other units with an instructional mission. Both Lancaster and Halifax crews were tutored here with No.1667 HCU being established on the airfield here in June 1943, moving out to R.A.F. Faldingworth in October. In November the same year, No.1 Lancaster Finishing School was activated using existing flights with a similar mission. On November 3, 1944, the station became No.71 Base under the new training organisation - No.7 Group. Meanwhile, No.1656 H.C.U. remained at R.A.F. Lindholme until November 1945 when many Bomber Command units were disbanded. During the war, a total of 76 bombers were lost on operations flying from the airfield, they being 40 Hampdens, 35 Wellingtons and a single Lancaster, it being ED381, on 17 June 1943 when Eric was killed.

WATSON, GEORGE EDWARD. Lance Corporal, 5819859.
Pioneer Corps.
Died 2 February 1943. Aged 41.
Born and resided Hastings.
Husband of Winnifred Iris Watson of Charing, Ashford, Kent.
Buried Charing, Ashford, Kent, Cemetery. Grave Ref: 7A.
Pre war member of the Royal Sussex Regiment.