

Welcome, ladies, gentlemen, honoured guests. Today sees the 75th anniversary of the V2 rocket attack, and my thanks go to John Meakins, who not only first proposed that we mark this event with some form of memorial, but also sponsored it. Thanks are also due to Hextable Parish Council for their staunch support, and to Reverend Johnny Douglas for helping to coordinate today's proceedings. This is the first plaque in the village, and we hope it won't be the last.

In my position as chairman of Hextable Heritage Society, I have been asked to say a few words about this event. Searching through our society's records, I found the following, an eye witness account from Stan Robinson, a resident of Rollo Road at the time, whose words are far more appropriate than anything I could put together. Stan was one of a group of children for whom the war was an adventure, playing soldiers, with sticks for guns, and collecting shrapnel and sometimes, unexploded incendiary bombs to trade with friends, until his ARP warden father found his little collection.

I quote ....

“By now, at ages 7 to 9, we had become expert observers, so the introduction of the V2 rockets was very exciting to us. We used to sit on the top of our hill facing east from the Copse that's to the top right of the new recreation ground, watching and counting the launch vapour trails from the French coast in fine weather, then listening for the twin booms when they started down over us (breaking the sound barrier although we didn't know this at the time). You could see the puffs but never spot a rocket until the final explosion. Even when one went boom, boom, then bang over us, we were not frightened, just excited with the shower of red hot aluminium trophies that rained down all around us, amazingly hitting no one!!

I don't ever recall any of us ever being frightened during the war apart from the very real fear of evacuation!

One night, I woke suddenly to find two large front sash windows gone, the blinds and curtains standing straight out, into a blinding white light. Then the ceiling fell on me, and I've been a bit deaf ever since.

A V2 had hit the butchers shop in Main Road, destroying 3 or 4 houses, plus the large detached house next door to the butchers', killing about 11 and injuring many more, including one of our group. The large house was just a pile of rubble, and the ARP found a baby still in its cot, uninjured, on top when they got there a few mins. later. That horrible smell was back, and there was total silence when we went round a bit later, I don't recall any fire.

Somehow after that it all became serious, and the fun went out of it.”

Mrs Sharon Mitchell,  
Hextable Heritage Society