

“Lest We Forget” – by Bob G Filby, very proud at 89 years of age.

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I had a lovely experience this summer as I was asked by my Regimental Association if I would go over to Normandy for the 67th Anniversary events in Bayeux celebrating D-Day 6/6/1944. I originally said I could not go because of Joyce's health problems and I am now her registered 'carer'. However, the family came to my aid and looked after Joyce, and moreover, my son, Nigel, took me to Bayeux in his car.

There are only three Officers of the 'Pompadours, who landed in Normandy 1944, still alive and I was the only one well enough to make the journey, so there was a lot of pressure on me to represent the D-Day soldiers, although younger Regimental people came with me. We stayed for four days and visited all the places where memorials have been erected in honour of the 2nd Essex (we captured Bayeux on D-Day plus 1 without destroying the beautiful city), but in other battles we suffered terrible casualties and the local French people are very appreciative of the sacrifice made by our soldiers.

There were, of course, sad moments for me when I visited the graves of all my men killed in action, but the gratitude of the locals is something I shall always remember. Nigel was well received and was asked to lay wreaths at some of the cemeteries, which was quite an honour.



Photo—Bob Filby in a very pensive mood having just visited some of the graves of the many soldiers killed in action. In just one battle when he was a very young Platoon Commander, he lost 17 of his Platoon of 28!!

For the first time we were able to attend a Memorial Service in Bayeux Cathedral and it was magnificent and beautiful. There were dignitaries present from all over the world and Sir Peter Ricketts GCMG, Her Britannic Majesty's Ambassador to France, read one lesson; John Farmer, The National Chairman of the Royal British Legion gave the Exhortation, and I was given the great honour of being asked to recite the Kohima Epitaph in front of the huge congregation. When I went to pay my bill for four days accommodation in Hotel Le Bayeux, the management would not accept any money from me and said they owed me far more than I owed them - I was most grateful. Perhaps the fact that amongst my medals was a Military Cross and Croix de Guerre (presented to me by President de Gaulle) stood me in good stead!!

I have written a report on the visit for the final edition of our Regimental journal 'The EAGLE'.