BARBER, Albert Robert



Private, 6146152
2nd Battalion, Kings Shropshire Light Infantry
Place of Birth: Haverhill
Killed in Action: Tuesday 18th July 1944
Cemetery: Ranville War Cemetery, Normandy
Aged: 28 years



Albert Robert Barber, known as Bob**,** was born in Haverhill on 8th September 1915, the son of agricultural labourer, Albert Barber from Great Wratting and his wife Alice nee Pask who had grown up in Kedington. He had two sisters, Dulcie born in 1911 and Muriel born in 1917.

Photo left; Alice with Bob as a baby and Dulcie.

Sadly, Alice died in 1918 leaving Albert with three young children to bring up.

The following year Albert married Eliza Kimmence who lived at 50 High Street. Eliza's first husband, William had been killed on 27th August 1917, while in action near Passchendaele, leaving her with four young children.

In 1920 a baby, Kitty, was born and Albert and Eliza were now responsible for eight children. 50 High Street became (Albert Robert) Bob's new family home.



As a teenager growing up in Haverhill, Bob would have attended the Council School and we can see from the photo that he was member of the Scouts.



Bob left Haverhill, moving to London where he met and married dressmaker Olive Alice Piper from 44 Carlisle Avenue, Acton in January 1940.





It was from East Acton that Bob enlisted, joining the East Surrey Regiment (TA).

He was posted to the Infantry Training Centre on 13th June 1940. After completing initial training he joined 2/6th Battalion on 9th October 1940.

On 21st June 1943, he transferred to the 8th Battalion, Somerset Light Infantry before being transferred once more on 5th September 1943, this time to 2nd Battalion, Kings Shropshire Light Infantry.

His military records tell us he was 5ft 7ins tall with brown hair and brown eyes. His religion was noted as being Congregationalist.

From the time that Bob joined the Kings Shropshire Light Infantry in September 1943 until March 1944 the battalion was constantly on the move from one training area in Scotland to another. At the end of March 1944, the battalion moved to a camp near Haywards Heath that was one of the multitude set up for the concentration of the troops prior to D Day.

The 2nd Battalion Kings Shropshire Light Infantry sailed for Normandy from Newhaven at 2pm on 5th June. There was a strong westerly wind and a grey sky. The voyage proved uneventful but it was not an easy landing in 4 to 5 ft of water and a heavy swell. Soldiers of the 2nd Battalion of the King's Shropshire Light Infantry landed on Sword beach near Hermanville shortly after 10am on 6th June 1944.

Some did not live to step foot on the Normandy beaches, perishing through mines or gunfire in their landing craft or drowning in the water. Bob, however, did and he was one of the men of the Shropshire regiment who distinguished themselves on that epic day. Their job was to advance inland on the back of Sherman tanks of the Staffordshire Yeomanry but there was a logjam on the invasion beaches and the tanks did not turn up so the Shropshires walked, following the D60 road to take part in the capture of Caen.

Military diaries for the battalion indicate that on 14th July, the battalion moved out of CAEN and crossed the River Orne to the woodlands near RANVILLE. Over the next

two days they were part of a large concentration of allied troops preparing to launch a major attack on German positions beyond CAEN.

2 KSLI, with the Staffs. Yeomanry [tanks] were to attack LIROSE, LEQUAI, MANNEVILLE and CUILLERVILLE - clearing each village before moving on to the next, as resistance dictated. 2 KSLI would initially be carried forward on the tanks. The attack went in at 9.30 am on the 18th, the first objective being LIROSE.

The battalion, now dismounted from tanks, experienced heavy firing from LIROSE village, which turned out to be strongly held and defended, but the village was captured by 2 KSLI with some casualties.

As the advance to the next objective began, very heavy opposition was experienced from German troops concealed in nearby woodlands in front of MANNEVILLE.

The battalion advance was halted by the strength of enemy resistance from these woodlands, and they suffered very heavy casualties from machine gun fire whilst trying to clear the woods.

The 2 KSLI attack was then called off, the battalion being halted along the railway line, where they waited while reinforcements were brought forward to continue the attack which took MANNEVILLE that evening.The battalion spent the night dug in along the railway line and on the 19th moved into the chateau at MANNEVILLE. Casualties amounted to at least 17 Other Ranks (and several officers) killed and many more wounded on that day.



Bob was one of those who died from his wounds.

Private Albert Robert Barber was buried in Ranville War Cemetery.



Bob's widow Olive gave birth to a daughter, Sandra, six months after his death. He was probably unaware that he was to be a father when he lost his life.

Olive had an inscription added to Bob's Commonwealth Grave headstone that reads:

'TO THE WORLD HE WAS ONE; TO US HE WAS THE WORLD. WIFE OLIVE AND DAUGHTER SANDRA'



Bob's grandson and Sandra's son Daniel Evans kindly provided cherished family photographs for this tribute to his grandfather.



Following his mother Sandra's death in November 2017, Daniel and other family members scattered her ashes over the final resting place of the father she never knew.

Together at last!