

In November 2009 I had the opportunity to visit Normandy and to see some of the battlefields sights and memorials from June 1944. It was a sombre, thought provoking yet strangely uplifting visit and, as I sometime do, I started the poem as a way of putting into some semblance of order my jumble of thoughts from the visit. I didn't finish the poem but put it to one side without thinking that I would return to it eight months later.

In June 2010 my nephew Richard Hollington who was serving in 40 Commando Royal Marines was hit by an IED in Helmand province, Afghanistan. He was brought back to Selly Oak Hospital in Birmingham, and for a week it seemed that he would survive as each day there was progress in his condition, to the extent that we had high hopes that he would regain consciousness on Sunday 20th June – Fathers' Day. Sadly between 4.00am and 5.00am on that Sunday morning he suffered catastrophic failure and died.

It was obviously a devastating blow to all the family but it was made even more difficult as he was the 300th Service Personnel to die in Afghanistan since 2001 so the family grief was played out amidst the glare of the national media. After his funeral on 7th July, I returned to the poem and completed it. The final version was written specifically for my brother Robin, his wife Jenny and their two remaining sons – Nicky and Charlie.

I spent 24 years in the Royal Marines retiring in 1995, and Robin also served in the Corps. In all my times, I never met any service personnel who would have wanted us to grieve and mourn for them. Everyone who joins the Services does so out of their own choice, and knows the inherent risk that they could face at some stage in their careers. They would of course want us to remember them, to commemorate them, and to celebrate the brilliance of their lives, but they would not want our lives to stop just because they have died. They would want us to continue to live full, active and joyous lives – in fact they would not just want us to do that – they would *demand* it of us!

Written for my family – if it touches a chord in yours and helps in whatever way to come to terms with your loss, then I am pleased that it has helped.

Simon Hollington – 4th October 2011

Weep Not For Me

Weep not for me, my gallant duty now is done
In dust and dirt, with searing thirst 'neath foreign burning sun
Think this instead, of others who will take my place
And day and night their fears in private they do face
Weep not for me, I simply am another son

Weep not for me, there still is much left to be done
It was my choice to join and be as one
With other souls who long for family close at hand
Yet find support within their mates – their tight knit band
Weep not for me, I've done what others never will have done

Weep not for me, remember me as one who won
And had adventure, travel and much fun
Think this instead of those who wait the call at night
That simply says 'he's gone, he did not win this fight'
Weep not for me, my soul rests calm, and peace has come

Weep not for me, the country knows what I have done
And shows support by all of those who come
To Wooten Basset in the rain, and there to stand
In silent sombre tribute to that growing band
Weep not for me, duty's over, now I'm gone.

Weep not for me, I am my mother's - and my father's - son
Like countless others who their time had come
But look to future, whatever that might bring
And laugh and play, and shout and sing
And with the family, be as one

Weep not for me