



**Overloon War Chronicles Foundation
presents:**

FACES FROM THE PAST (episode 3)

Author: Arno van Dijk

3 men, 3 British soldiers, buried in 2 different cemeteries. But still forever connected. Because of that one fateful afternoon, that one fateful minute, there in that Brabant village.

Hubert Orr (1910 – 1944)

Buried in the CWGC cemetery in Overloon, grave number 14, section III, row E

David Silvertop (1912 – 1944)

Buried in the Roman Catholic churchyard in Sint Anthonis, grave number 4

Maurice Lock (1915 – 1944)

Buried in the Roman Catholic churchyard in Sint Anthonis, grave number 3

The fatal fork junction

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1. Introduction

"We've got a troop attachment on that other road, haven't we?"

"Yes, of course we have."

"But I don't think that was one of ours. It sounded a bit like a German machine gun."

"Yes, it did a bit."

(Source: quote from 'Roscoe the bright shiner', Biography of Charles Barnet 'Roscoe' Harvey)

In the bright sunlight, the monument in Sint Anthonis casts its shadow over the stones.

A few cars, cyclists and pedestrians pass this spot.

Now it is a rustic spot in the village.

But at the same time, it is the spot that was the dramatic finale of a series of rapidly successive events all those years ago. Where the liberation of the village seemed to go without too many problems, but where that day suddenly turned into a very dark day.

And where 3 men would totally unexpectedly become forever connected: Hubert Orr, David Silvertop and Maurice Lock.

2. Biography: from birth to Normandy

2.1 Hubert Orr

Born on Friday 15 April 1910, Hubert Gerald Orr is the second son of Colonel Gerald Maxwell Orr and Evelyn Constance Orr – Leir, who married on 11 February 1904 at Holy Trinity Church in Exmouth, a coastal town near Exeter (Devon).

Evelyn Leir is the daughter of Lieutenant Colonel Leir.

Gerald Orr, born in 1876, the same year his wife is born, is a military man. He serves, among others, in India (The Indian Army) on the northwestern border and rises to the rank of Colonel. Gerald has been highly decorated throughout his military career with the CBE (Commander of the Order of the British Empire) and the DSO (Distinguished Service Order) awarded to him for his bravery and actions during World War I.

In 1906 Gerald and Evelyn's first child is born, a son: Cecil William Bannon Orr, followed by their second son Hubert Gerald in 1910.

In 1922 the Orr family moves to Bristol. Gerald holds various positions there, including President of the Bishopton and Horfield branch of the British Legion, he works for the Bristol Local Employment Committee, the Executive Committee of the King's Roll, the British Legion Relief Fund Committee and the War Pensions Committee. Finally, he is the Honorable Secretary of the Bristol War Memorial Fund.

In 1926 the Orr family moves from Bristol to Camberley and takes up residence on Tekels Avenue.

One day in Camberley, Hubert meets Helen Mary Buckley, who also lives in Camberley. Born on 24 February 1911, Helen is the youngest daughter of James Buckley and his wife Constance Buckley – Barlow. Helen's father James dies on 8 April 1918, when Helen is 7 years old.

Hubert and Helen fall in love and get married on Saturday 1 July 1933.

The newspaper The Surrey Advertiser has already announced the engagement of Hubert and Helen on 15 April 1933.

The same The Surrey Advertiser reports on 1 July that Hubert and Helen's wedding will take place quietly that same day at St Peter's Church in Frimley at 2 o'clock.

Even though the ceremony will take place quietly, the newspaper writes that all friends are welcome in the church.

On 20 August 1934, Hubert's father Gerald dies in London at the age of 58.

At that time Hubert and Cecil have already joined the army.

Because on 31 January 1930, Hubert enters the army and will enlist in the Durham Light Infantry. His career goes well: on 22 April 1931 he is promoted to 2nd Lieutenant, on 29 January 1934 to Lieutenant and on 1 August 1938 to Captain. Between 28 July 1939 and 18 August 1940 he is Staff Captain and gets promoted to Acting Major at the end of that month, on 30 August 1940. He will be Acting Major until 29 November 1940. A day later he is promoted to Temporary Major.

In 1940, Hubert and Helen become the proud parents of their first child: Timothy Gerald Orr.

During World War II, Hubert's brother Cecil Orr is a Lieutenant Colonel in the Duke of Wellington's Regiment (the infantry regiment nicknamed 'The Dukes') and fights in Dunkirk, North Africa, Italy and France, among others.

In September 1944 Hubert is the Lieutenant Colonel, Battalion Commander, of the Durham Light Infantry, 3rd Battalion Monmouthshire Regiment (3MONS).

This battalion is mobilised at the outbreak of World War II as part of the 159th Infantry Brigade (also known as the 159th Brigade). Training follows in Northern Ireland and England.

However, it will take until 1944 before the battalion will be deployed. On 14 June, 8 days after D-Day, 3MONS lands on the Normandy beaches as part of the total 8th Corps.



*Lieutenant Colonel Hubert Orr
(Photo: various publications, but actually
an edit of the group photo below)*



*Lieutenant Colonel Hubert Orr
(Photo: source unknown)*



Lieutenant Colonel Hubert Orr and the officers of the 3rd Battalion The Monmouthshire Regiment.

50070 was Orr's Service Number in the British Army.

KIA 25/9/44 (34) stands for Killed In Action on 25 September 1944 at the age of 34 years.

(Photo: via Robert Curtis)

2.2 David Silvertop

David Arthur Henry Silvertop is born on Wednesday 10 January 1912 in Southsea, near Portsmouth. He is the son of Arthur Edward Silvertop and of Dorothy Silvertop, maiden name Dalglish, who is born in Goulburn, New South Wales, Australia. The family also consists of 2 sisters. David's eldest sister Diana Mary Caroline is born on 22 August 1907 and his younger sister Pamela Mary Dorothy is born on 12 April 1913.

David comes from a very wealthy Catholic family from the county of Northumberland. In the 18th century, his ancestor Albert Silvertop buys a number of fields and cottages near the town of Consett, about 14 miles southwest of Newcastle upon Tyne, in County Durham. At that time the Silvertop dynasty is already a prominent Catholic dynasty that has overcome centuries of religious persecution and prospered in the coal trade in the Newcastle upon Tyne region.

The following generations continue to expand the estate. Albert's son George builds the mansion house Minsteracres and a mission is established, a place where the still oppressed Catholics can gather to practice their faith. George's successor, his son John, dies suddenly in 1801, unwillingly leaving considerable financial debt behind. But his well-respected son George manages to restore the fortunes and even visits Napoleon during his exile on Elba. He also manages to expand the estate considerably to 110 acres (445,000 square meters).



The Silvertops' Minsteracres estate, now a retreat center of The Passionists. Since the purchase in 1949, the house (seen here from the south side) has been renovated, but the church on the left is still in the old style. In the church is the memorial plaque in memorial of David Silvertop, which was placed in 1947.

(Photo: Collection Thecatholictravelguide.com)



*Minsteracres, hall and church in 1906.
(Photo: Collection Hexham Local Historian Society/PC430)*

Despite the pedigree, David Silvertop should not have been called Silvertop with his surname. Because when George Silvertop dies in 1849, he is single and childless. As a result, George's cousin Henry Charles Englefield (David's grandfather) inherits the Minsteracres estate. In order not to let the dynasty of the Silvertops die a silent death, this cousin then changes his last name from Englefield to Silvertop. And from the line of the Englefields David is born 63 years later. There are all kinds of links to aristocrats in the family.

Henry Charles Silvertop builds a church on the estate, which is consecrated by the Bishop of Hexham in 1854. However, this is the beginning of a long period of unhappiness in the family. Henry's wife Elizabeth dies in childbirth in 1860. Henry remarries, but dies in 1887. His eldest son Henry Thomas dies in 1893 of food poisoning from eating a can of salmon.

His other son Arthur Edward Silvertop (David's father) starts his naval career in 1891, as a cadet in the Royal Navy and follows his education in Dartmouth, Devon (now the Britannia Royal Naval College).

In 1905 he marries his great love, the Australian Dorothy Dalglish. The marriage takes place in London, in the Brompton Oratory, a Roman Catholic church in the Knightsbridge district. But Arthur is killed in action during World War I as a Commander in the Royal Navy on the HMS Defense during the Battle of Jutland, on 31 May 1916. Henry Thomas' eldest son Francis thus becomes the heir to Minsteracres. But Francis dies at the front in Flanders in May 1917, as well as his younger brother William who dies there in November 1917.

When David's father dies in 1916, David is 4 years old. His mother Dorothy remarries in 1922 to Major William Ernest Guinness, in Kensington, London. But Dorothy dies on 22 February 1923 in Odzi, Manicaland in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), where Guinness owns a farm. There she reportedly dies from malaria.

David and his 2 sisters are then raised by Lady Heathcote, their father's sister.

In 1922, when David is 10 years old, he goes to Ampleforth College in Yorkshire. In 1930 he continues his education at the Magdalen College of the University of Oxford.

But he will only stay at Oxford for a year, he does not think an extension will be necessary: he chooses a military career.

After his training he enters the army, serving in the 9th/14th Lancers and in the 14th/20th King's Hussars.

He serves in Egypt and India during those years. In India he becomes a star player in polo and wins the Bombay Cup with his team in 1937.

On 1 September 1939, when Germany invades Poland and World War II has begun, David is on holiday in England. On 12 September he is assigned to the 417 Kings Dragoon Guards. In November 1940 he is sent to the Middle East, in the meantime he is Captain. There he takes part in General Wavell's offensive against the city of Benghazi. Silvertop is lucky there, as it so happens that he is sent to Haifa (at the time in British Mandate of Palestine, now Israel, AVD) for a course for members of the General Staff, just a few days before the retreat of the British around Benghazi, including the capture by the Germans of the General Staff of which he was also a member.

Silvertop is a good student and is promoted to Major. He takes part in the battle against the German General Edwin Rommel and his Afrikakorps during the First Battle of El Alamein (1 July 1942 – 27 July 1942, commanded by General Auchinleck) and the Second Battle of El Alamein (23 October 1942 – 11 November 1942, commanded by General Bernard Montgomery who then launches a major offensive). Silvertop is distinguished for his bravery and receives the Military Cross.

In February 1943 he is promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and is given command of the 3rd Battalion Royal Tank Regiment (3RTR).

In March 1943 he distinguishes himself again during the Battle of Medenine, in Tunisia, but gets wounded during this Battle. He spends 3 months in a hospital.

In December 1943 David and 3RTR return to England and become part of the 11th British Armoured Division. Major General Philip 'Pip' Roberts becomes commander of this armoured division and Brigadier Charles 'Roscoe' Harvey is given command of the 29th Brigade, of which 3RTR is now part.

This is followed by a long period of intensive training in preparation for D-Day, an all-important project that is still top secret at the time. During an inspection, David is given the honor of hosting (then) Crown Princess Elizabeth in his tank.

On 13 and 14 June 1944, exactly one week after D-Day, David and his tank division cross The Channel to the Normandy beaches between Bernières-sur-Mer and Courseulles-sur-Mer.



*Lieutenant Colonel David Silvertop
(Photo: various publications)*



*Lieutenant Colonel David Silvertop
(Photo: source Paula Silvertop)*

*At the time Silvertop was killed in Sint Anthonis, he was still a Lieutenant Colonel. His promotion to Colonel was literally already underway at that time and was awarded to him posthumously.
That is why both ranks are mentioned in this file on Silvertop, Orr and Lock, depending on the moment in time to which the description relates.*



General Montgomery, together with Lieutenant Colonel David Silvertop, inspects the 3rd Royal Tank Regiment (3RTR) at the base in Bridlington.

(Photo: Sgt. Morris, General Montgomery's tour of Army Units, IWM)

Photo taken by Sgt. Morris 1/9.2.44.

Original wartime caption: The C-in-C inspecting the 3rd R.T.R. with Lieutenant Colonel D.A.H. Silvertop, MC., at Bridlington.

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The 3rd Royal Tank Regiment (3RTR) goes into action on the first day of Operation Goodwood, 18 July 1944, the attempt to capture the French city of Caen from the Germans. From the turret of his tank, regimental commander Lieutenant Colonel David Silvertop orders his regiment to advance towards the railway line Caen – Troarn in Demouville and will come under German anti-tank fire there.

(Source: still from the movie The 3rd Royal Tank Regiment goes into action on the first day of Operation 'Goodwood' [allocated title])

Creator: Directorate of Public Relations, War Office (Production sponsor)

Army Film and Photographic Unit (Production company)

Laws, George EJ (Production individual)

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2.3 Maurice Lock

Maurice Charles Lock is born in April or May 1915 in St Thomas in the district Exeter, in Devon. St Thomas is an area of Exeter and is only separated from the city itself by the river Exe. He is the son of Arthur George Lock and Eloise (Elsie) Lock (maiden name Welshman). Father Arthur serves in the Essex Regiment during World War I and is killed at the front on 19 September 1918.

The Lock family moves to Newton Poppleford, a village east of the city of Exeter. Maurice Lock is a talented football player. In 1933, at the age of 18, he starts playing for Exeter City Football Club on an amateur basis. He first plays in the reserves in the Western League and Southern League. Maurice makes such an impression that he signs a professional contract with the club on 29 December 1933. The next day, 30 December 1933 he already plays his first professional game, the away game against the Taunton Town Reserves, which will result in a 3 – 2 defeat for Lock's team.

In The Grecian Archive, the archives of Exeter City FC, there is an official match report of Lock's debut, mentioning among others:

"Exeter had Stan Barnes in their team at right half for the first time this season, and Maurice Lock, of Newton Poppleford, making his bow as a professional, he having accepted the City's terms yesterday. (...)

After fifteen minutes Risdon scored for Exeter, Mason equalising. Ten minutes after the interval E. Curtis gave Taunton the lead from a penalty against Lock for fouling Smith. Boundy then scored for Exeter and Willcox for Taunton."

During the season, Lock is added to the first-team squad.

The first half of the 1930s is a successful period for the club, with good results being achieved in both the League and the FA Cup. In 1934 the Football League Third Division South Cup is won. But then lean years start for the club, until the start of World War II when British football comes to a complete standstill.

At that time Maurice Lock has not played for the club for a number of years, but has become a police officer. Prior to joining the British Army, he works as a PC (Police Constable) in the Devon Constabulary. His last station is the village of Dartmouth, in south Devon.

Lock marries Una Jessmee Quayle in London in 1942.

Born in 1920, Una is the daughter of Walter Quayle (from the Isle of Man) and his wife, Hester Mabel Quayle (maiden name Hargraves) from Southborough, London.

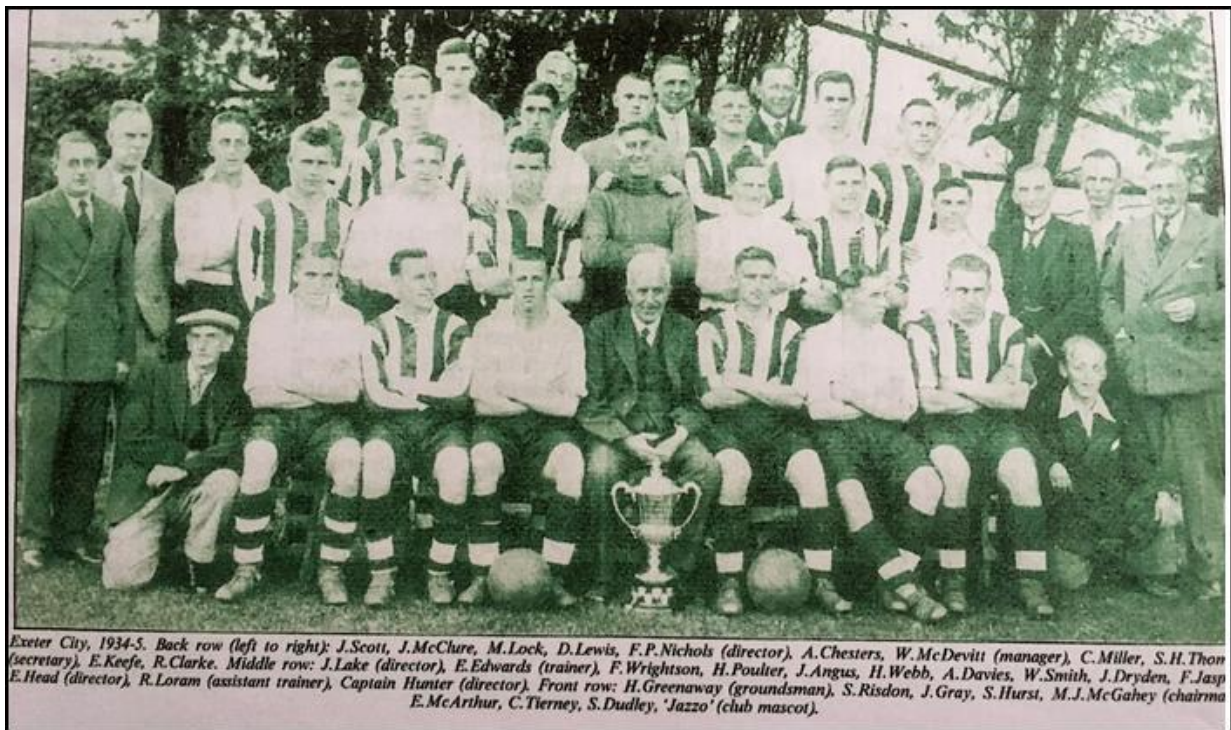
Una has 1 sister, Hester Mary Quayle.

Maurice and Una have 3 children. (1 name is known, their daughter Beverly Lock, AVD).

Maurice enters the army, gets promoted to Lance Corporal in Silvertop's 3rd Royal Tank Regiment (3RTR) and lands with 3RTR on the beaches of Normandy between Bernières-sur-Mer and Corseulles-sur-Mer on 13 or 14 June 1944.



Maurice Lock, both photographs date from his football career in the 1930s.
(Photographs: Collection The Grecian Archive – The history and heritage of the Exeter City Football Club)



Squad photo of Exeter City FC season 1934-1935 in which Exeter finished 11th in the Division Three South. Also in this picture the 3rd Division South Cup, won in the previous season. In the back row, 3rd from the left, Maurice Lock.
(Photo: Collection The Grecian Archive)



*Squad photo season 1934-1935, Maurice Lock in the middle of the front row.
 (Photo: Collection The Grecian Archive / Western Morning News Photo)*

3. The 11th Armoured Division

The 8th Corps is under command of Lieutenant General Richard O'Connor and consists of a number of divisions, including the 11th Armoured Division under the command of Major General Philip 'Pip' Roberts.

This division is created in March 1941 in response to the continued successes of the German panzer divisions. The 11th Armoured Division is nicknamed The Black Bull, as the badge symbol for the division is a black bull on a yellow background.

Part of the 11th Armoured Division is the 29th Armoured Brigade under the command of Brigadier Charles 'Roscoe' Harvey and also the 159th Infantry Brigade under the command of Brigadier John Churcher.

Part of the 29th Armoured Brigade is the 3rd Royal Tank Regiment (3RTR) under the command of Lieutenant Colonel David Silvertop.

Part of the 159th Infantry Brigade is the 3rd Battalion Monmouthshire Regiment (3MONS) under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Hubert Orr.

11th Armoured Division:

Commander Philip 'Pip' Roberts

29th Armoured Brigade:

Commander Charles 'Roscoe' Harvey

23rd Hussars Regiment

3rd Royal Tank Regiment

2nd Fife and Forfar Yeomanry

8th Motor Battalion The Rifle Brigade

159th Infantry Brigade:

Commander John Churcher

4th Battalion King's Shropshire Light Infantry

3rd Battalion Monmouthshire Regiment

1st Battalion Herefordshire Regiment

Furthermore the 11th Armoured Division consists of several other divisions:

Divisional Royal Artillery

Divisional Royal Engineers

Divisional RASC (Royal Army Service Corps)

Divisional RAOC (Royal Army Ordnance Corps)

Divisional REME (Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers)

Royal Army Medical Corps

Also other divisional troops are added to the 11th Armoured Division, among others:

15th/19th The King's Royal Hussars (Reconnaissance Regiment)

Also within the 11th Armoured Division, regiments from the 29th Armoured Brigade are linked to regiments of the 159th Infantry Brigade. Thus, the 3rd Royal Tank Regiment of Silvertop and the 3rd Monmouthshire Regiment of Orr are linked together, creating the ideal combination of tank and infantry regiment to go into battle together and to support each other where and when necessary.

The 23rd Hussars Regiment is attached to the 1st Battalion Herefordshire Regiment and the 2nd Fife and Forfar Yeomanry is attached to the 4th Battalion King's Shropshire Regiment. All linked regiments are assisted by the supporting divisions such as the Royal Artillery, the Royal Engineers etc.

An important task within the links is also reserved for the 15th/19th The King's Royal Hussars, the reconnaissance unit.



Original 1944 uniform badge of the 11th Armoured Division, the Black Bull. This formation badge was chosen at the establishment of the Division in March 1941 and all regiments under the Division wore the badge on both shoulders of their combat outfit/uniform. So also all men of 3RTR and 3MONS, who both belonged to the 11th Armoured Division, wore this badge. Even the men of 15/19H, who were officially assigned to 8th Corps but attached to the Division, wore the bull badge on their shoulders, but the bull was not depicted on their combat vehicles. (Photo: Collection Piet Peters)



Major General Philip 'Pip' Roberts (on the right), commanding the 11th Armored Division, with Charles 'Roscoe' Harvey (on the left)', Brigadier of the 29th Armored Brigade, and a Sherman tank in Normandy, 15 August 1944.

(Photo: Sgt. Laing, no. 5 Army Film and Photo Section, Army Film and Photographic Unit)

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*Charles Barnett 'Roscoe' Harvey DSO, passion for horses and with excellent equestrian skills.
(Photo: published by the 10th Royal Hussars, Prince of Wales's Own)
Britishempire.co.uk/forces/10thhussarscharlesharvey.htm*



*Major General Philip 'Pip' Roberts.
(Photographs: WW2gravestone.com)*

4. From the Normandy beaches to Sint Anthonis

When arriving on the Normandy beaches, 3RTR and 3MONS immediately go into battle, including the Battle of Caen (July 1944). For his part in valor in Operation Goodwood, the capture of the last part of Caen (18 – 20 July 1944), Silvertop is recommended for the Distinguished Service Order (DSO), the British military decoration for the rank of Major and above for meritorious and distinguished service in time of war.

The advance continues towards the north of France, advancing no less than 650 kilometers in a week. 3RTR is in the front lines of the division by default, and in 3RTR Silvertop can always be found in the front positions. Via Calais they reach the Belgian border and enter Flanders. In all places that are liberated, the regiments are enthusiastically applauded. On 4 September Antwerp is liberated under Silvertop's leadership. An unprecedented party breaks loose in the city.

But the result of the very rapid advance is that fuel shortages and stock shortages have arisen in the division, which must be supplemented before the advance towards the Netherlands can be continued.

In Operation Market Garden, the planned capture of the bridges over the Maas, Waal and Rhine in the Netherlands in order to push to the north and enter Germany, the 8th Corps, of which the 11th Armoured Division and therefore 3RTR and 3MONS are part, is given the task of securing and guarding the eastern flank of the troops advancing to Arnhem. This means the conquest of the area east of the line Valkenswaard – Eindhoven – Grave and the river Maas (Meuse).

Operation Market Garden starts on 17 September, but does not go as planned. Enormous fierce German resistance on several fronts also means that the advance of the 29th Brigade, of which 3RTR and 3MONS are part, is slower than planned.

Soerendonk is liberated on Wednesday 20 September by the 29th Brigade, followed by Maarheeze, Geldrop and Nuenen a day later. After a German counter-attack from Helmond, the Brigade advances and Asten is liberated. Helmond follows a day later, after considerable resistance of German troops in the eastern part of the city.

On Saturday 23 September both the 29th Brigade and the 159th Brigade advance to Deurne, which is liberated the following day, Sunday 24 September.

Then follows the order to move forward towards Oploo and Sint Anthonis.

In that run-up on Sunday 24 September, the British 11th Armoured Division advances in three directions: the 29th Brigade with 3RTR and also 3MONS in the direction of De Rips and Oploo, the 159th Brigade (among others the 2nd Fife and Forfar Yeomanry, the 4th King's Shropshire Light Infantry and the 15th/19th The King's Royal Hussars) partly towards the east side of Helmond to eliminate the Germans present there and partly towards Bakel and Gemert.

The regiments of Orr and Silvertop are the 2 furthest forward regiments, the leading battalions. Orr's and Silvertop's regiments advance together.

But the next day, Monday 25 September, they meet little resistance on their route to De Rips and Oploo. From Oploo, the British advance cautiously towards the next village: Sint Anthonis.

5. The fatal fork junction

5.1 Unrest and changes

The trigger for the drama in Sint Anthonis on that Monday afternoon 25 September 1944 can be traced back to a sudden decision by a German Kampfgruppe the night before, on the night of Sunday to Monday. That decision sets in motion a chain reaction, a series of successive events that will end with the tragedy in Sint Anthonis the following day.

Because in these days of Operation Market Garden, there is also considerable unrest in this eastern part of Brabant, with several skirmishes between the British and German troops regrouping and stationing.

On Saturday 23 and Sunday 24 September, the village of Sint Anthonis even sees a coming and going of British units and German troops. The situation can be described as chaotic and even resembles a cat and mouse game where when one side withdraws the other reappears in the village afterwards. Also, both sides drive on each other's route to and from Boxmeer without seeing or running into each other. It is a sometimes surreal sight for the inhabitants of Sint Anthonis.

That Saturday the first British patrols and scouts of 2Hcav, a reconnaissance unit of the Guards Armoured Division, part of the XXX Corps, come from Grave to Sint Anthonis with their fighting cars and also reach Boxmeer. In Sint Anthonis as well as Boxmeer they get into a gunfight with Germans accidentally present in the villages.



Saturday 23 September, a group of British combat vehicles makes a daring reconnaissance ride from their base, the recently liberated Grave, through areas that have not yet been liberated: via the villages of Mill, Wanroij and Ledeaeker they arrive here in Sint Anthonis, in the Breestraat. On the left (not visible in the photo) the Brink and on the right, between the electricity pole and the café, the entrance to the former Noordkant (now Peter Zuidstraat). The British are from 2Hcav, a reconnaissance unit of the Guards Armored Division, part of the XXX Corps.

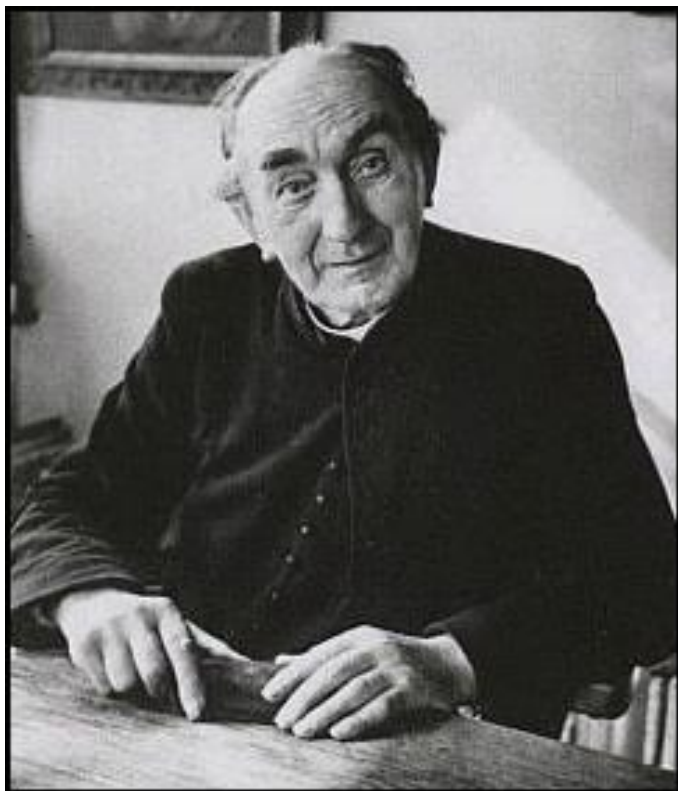
After Sint Anthonis, the group of combat vehicles will continue their journey, now towards Boxmeer where in the St. Rochus square they get into a short gunfight with a group of unsuspecting Germans who came from the Beugenseweg with horse and cart. After gunfight the British combat vehicles drive back to Grave.
(Photo: Collection Heemkundekring Sint Tunnis in Oelbroeck)



The same combat vehicle, now on the Brink in Sint Anthonis..
(Photo: Collection Heemkundekring Sint Tunnis in Oelbroeck)

On Sunday morning, the British appear again in Sint Anthonis, occupying a number of strategic points in the village.

That Sunday morning, Father Van Bortel celebrates the Holy Mass, the High Mass, in the church that is once again full. Pastor van Delft himself is in the sacristy. The sacristy is a room attached to the church with its own outside entrance and inside the room is a door to the church section. In the sacristy, among other things, holy vessels and ecclesiastical vestments are stored. It is also used as a dressing room for the pastor and the altar boys before leading the church service.



Pastor Antoon van Delft, pastor in Sint Anthonis from 1927 to 1956.

Photo was taken in 1943/1944.

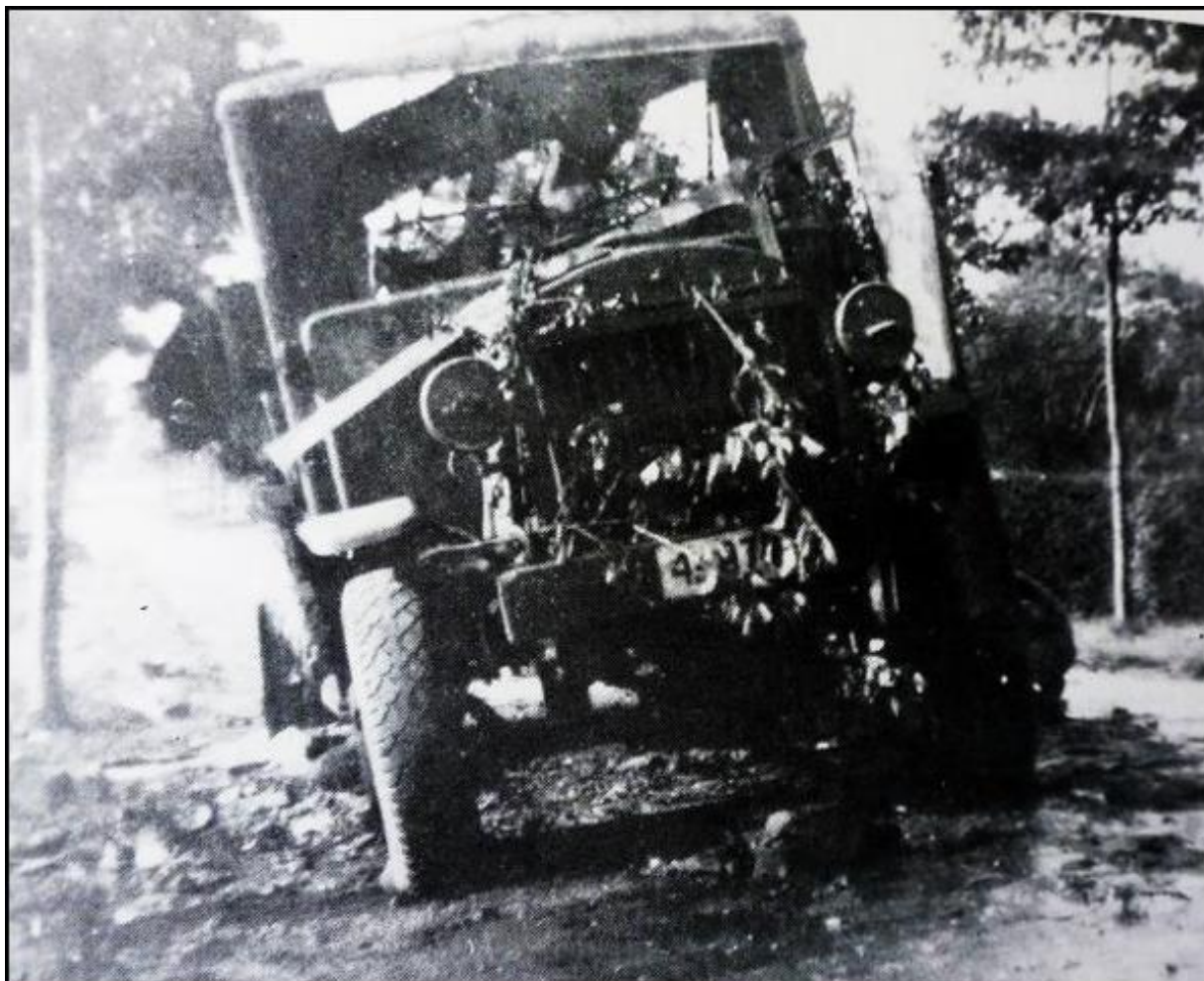
(Photo: Collection Martien Coppens)

While the High Mass is in full swing, a number of Catholic British soldiers enter through the entrance of the sacristy. Not all at once, but sometimes alone, sometimes with two. Those soldiers are in Sint Anthonis that morning and, as part of their Catholic faith, would like to be given the host (a slice of unleavened bread as a symbolic repetition of the Last Supper, the body and blood of Christ) by the pastor on Sunday. The soldiers know how to find the door to the sacristy because someone shows them the way in at the outside door. In the sacristy, the soldiers put their rifles against the wall for a moment and put their helmets on the ground. After which, while the service in the church is in full swing, the pastor walks into the church to get the hosts and chalice from the tabernacle at the altar and walks back to the sacristy. After the presentation, the soldiers leave the sacristy again and Van Delft walks back into the church to put the hosts and chalice back in the tabernacle. Until the next soldier appears in the sacristy and Van Delft has to repeat the action.

While the parishioners in the church initially wonder why Van Delft keeps walking up and down and disappearing into the sacristy every time, they soon realize that it must undoubtedly have something to do with the British forces.

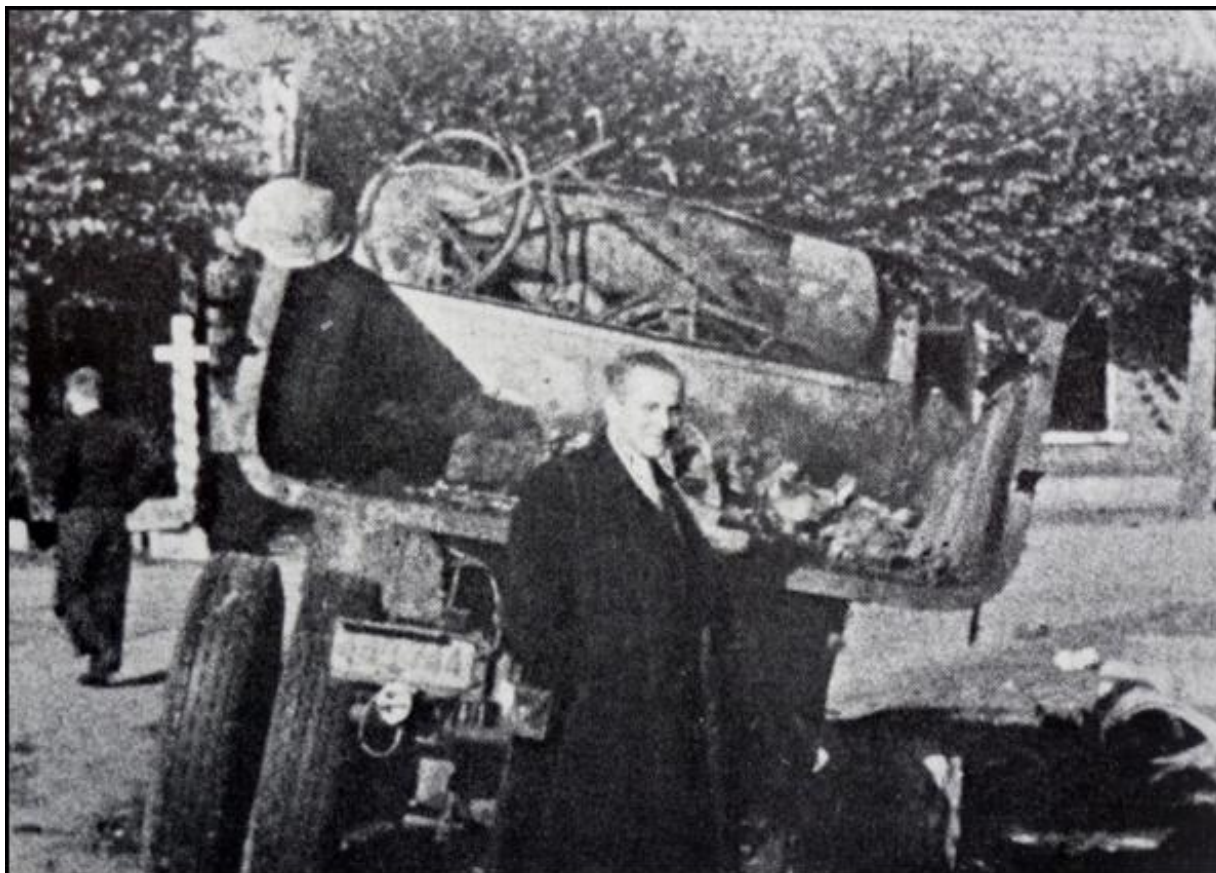
After the church service, Van Delft warns the packed church from his pulpit that everyone should go home as quickly as possible, because there might be shots fired.

That information is correct, because by the end of the morning during new gunfights, the British eliminate a German ammunition car at the corner Perdschemel – Breestraat. German cars and motorbikes also come under British fire. A total of four Germans are killed and several wounded. Some 40 Germans are made prisoners of war, as well as 2 Dutch NSB members (National Socialist Movement, a Dutch movement that cooperated with the Germans during the war).



Sunday 24 September. That Sunday morning British soldiers again come to Sint Anthonis and during gunfights with the Germans, this German ammunition wagon is eliminated on the corner of Breestraat – Perdsheem.

(Photo: still from the film of Charles Manders, Sint Anthonis 1944. Collection Piet Peters)



*The back of the ammunition wagon, note the bicycle that the Germans captured and wanted to take in the bin. The man in the middle of the picture is Charles Manders.
(Photo: still from the film of Charles Manders, Sint Anthonis 1944. Collection Piet Peters)*

Three British reconnaissance vehicles drive from Sint Anthonis through the hamlet of Den Hoek (then called Sambeeksche Hoek, AVD) to Oploo. They drive through the village and reach the Deurneseweg. There, 2 immediately turn around again, they must have seen 2 German Opel Blitz transport vehicles between the school building at the junction Blauwstraat – Gemertseweg and the Loonseweg exit.

The third British reconnaissance vehicle, however, turns into the Loonseweg towards Westerbeek and Overloon and drives down the Loonseweg for about 2 kilometers until café Duivenbos. There, the British vehicle is suddenly shelled by Germans and then, in reverse gear, quickly drives back some distance, away from the field of fire. When it is safe, the British stop on that Loonseweg near the Veldpaus family and make contact with them. Then the British turn their vehicle and drive back to Oploo and Sint Anthonis.

In the meantime, people in surrounding villages, who now know that the British are in Sint Anthonis, send every German who asks them for directions, regardless of where that German should actually go, directly to Sint Anthonis. Partly because of this, in the evening the British return to Grave fully loaded with German prisoners of war.

But that very same night again German troops appear in Sint Anthonis.

5.2 Change of plan

That late Sunday afternoon a number of German half-tracks, part of the 107th Panzer Brigade, to be precise of the 2107. Panzergrenadier-Bataillon, drive from their location Gemert to Oploo and Sint Anthonis to occupy strategic points.

But why are those specific places chosen? For that answer we have to go back to the origin of the brigade and the whereabouts from that moment on.

5.3 The 107. Panzer-Brigade

The 107. Panzer-Brigade (or Panzer Brigade 107) is formed on 28 July 1944 from the 25. Panzergrenadier Division (or Württemberg Panzergrenadier-Division), which had lost most of its equipment and men in the central sector of the Eastern Front during an encirclement east of Minsk in July 1944 during the Russian Operation Bagration, the code name for the large-scale Soviet attack on German forces two weeks after the start of Operation Overlord on the Western Front.

Part of the 107. Panzer-Brigade is also the 2107. Panzergrenadier-Bataillon (or Panzerabteilung 2107) which was created from the remains of Panzerabteilung 125, as well as the remains of, among others, Reserve-Panzerabteilung 8.

The 107. Panzer-Brigade, under the command of Major Berndt-Joachim Freiherr van Maltzahn, is therefore immediately a unit with a lot of front experience, gained in Africa and the Eastern Front. The new brigade is formed and trained in just six weeks, starting on 6 August 1944 at the Mielau training ground in East Prussia. For the formation of the Panzer Brigade, an organizational headquarters is established in Insterburg (from 1946 the city bears the Russian name Chernjakhovsk and is located in the Russian oblast Kaliningrad, AVD). That headquarters is largely responsible for the rapid formation of these units.

These half-tracks are striking cars, with 2 wheels at the front and 2 caterpillar tracks at the rear. This makes this vehicle suitable for excellent progress on different types of surfaces. They are all basic type Hanomag Sd.Kfz 251 cars, but there are many different variants, each with its own additional type number. From open troop transport vehicles to variants with machine guns and flamethrowers mounted on the box, but also ammunition vehicles. The most notable variant is the type Sd.Kfz 251/21 fitted as standard with the infamously powerful Drilling MG151 machine gun, an anti-aircraft 3-barrelled 15 mm or 20 mm machine gun served by a Panzergrenadier/Richtkanonier (the air gunner). And also a number of this Drilling type half-track is sent to Oploo and Sint Anthonis that afternoon.

The 107th Panzer Brigade is created on 28 July 1944 from the remains of the 25th Panzer Grenadier Division. The 2107. Panzergrenadier-Bataillon (or Panzerabteilung 2107), part of this 107th Panzer Brigade, is created from the remains of Panzerabteilung 125 as well as the remains of, among others, Reserve-Panzerabteilung 8.

The 107th Panzer Brigade, led by Major Berndt-Joachim Freiherr van Maltzahn, has gained a lot of front experience in Africa and Russia and is being brought from the Eastern Front to participate in the counterattack of the 5th Panzer Army (5. Panzerarmee, officially Panzerarmee-Oberkommando 5) in the Épinal area of France.

The new brigade is soon deployed to take part in the counterattack of the 5. Panzerarmee (the 5th Panzer Army, officially Panzerarmee-Oberkommando 5) in the area around Épinal in France.

The movement of the entire 107. Panzer-Brigade to the west starts on 15 September, with destination the station of the city of Aachen in Germany. However, the train is diverted to Venlo because it is easier to unload there than in Aachen and the Panzer Brigade now has to be deployed at Son to attack the right flank of the advancing British 2nd Army there. The unloading of the equipment of the Panzerbrigade at Venlo station starts on the evening of 18 September. The next day the unloading is finished and the Panzer Brigade moves under continuous Allied air raids to the Zuid-Willemsvaart and then to Helmond en Son. But on 20 September the Panzerbrigade has to give up the battle in Son and retreat to Nuenen. On the evening of 21 September the Panzerbrigade is ordered to move to Bakel and to join Kampfgruppe Walther and their fight.

This Kampfgruppe, named after its commander Colonel Erich Walther, is an improvised unit of fanatical German troops from the Luftwaffe, the Waffen-SS and the Wehrmacht and is set up shortly before to recapture the lost important bridge number 9 (British nickname *Joe's Bridge*, AVD) over the canal at Lommel, Belgium.



*Joe's Bridge over the Bocholt – Herentals canal, near Lommel. From here, the British XXXth Army Corps enters the Netherlands on 17 September 1944. The battle for the bridge was fierce; a week earlier, it had been captured from the Germans in a surprise attack by the Irish Guards. The subsequent German counterattacks also resulted in several civilian casualties.. But the Guards held their ground and the bridge was named after their commander John Ormsby Evelyn (J.O.E.) Vandeleur.
(Foto: via Liberationroute.com)*



Joe's Bridge.

(Photo: via Liberationroute.com)

But despite fierce German attacks, the bridge cannot be recaptured and the Kampfgruppe then becomes embroiled in the battle for the Corridor, the Allied supply route to Nijmegen during Operation Market Garden. Heavy fighting at Son, Nuenen and Veghel are the result.

Despite attacks on 22 and 23 September, the Kampfgruppe is unable to stop the British. Due to the heavy losses on 23 September, the Germans withdraw to Gemert. Colonel Erich Walther and his Kampfgruppe are now ordered by General Hans von Obstfelder to defend the crucial weak spot in the north of the Venlo bridgehead, near Venray and Overloon,



*Colonel Erich Walther
Commander of the Kampfgruppe Walther.
(Photo: Military Wiki)*



*Major Berndt-Joachim Freiherr von Maltzahn
Commander of the 107. Panzer-Brigade.
(Photo: Armedconflicts.com)*



*General Hans von Obstfelder, in Hendaye (France), 9 February 1944.
(Photo: Wikimedia Commons/ commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/
File:Bundesarchiv_Bild_101I-263-1595-32/Baumann/CC-BY-SA 3.0,
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5.4 Bridgehead Venlo (Brückenkopf Venlo)

The Venlo bridgehead is a front formed by the Germans in the bend of the river Maas between Sambeek and Venlo. The Germans have entrenched themselves behind a combination of natural and man-made obstacles, which over a length of 30 kilometers represent an almost insurmountable barrier to the advance towards Germany. It consists of 2 canals (the Peel Canal and the Deurnes Canal) that together form a long border that is difficult to overcome, behind which lie the wide, inaccessible peat bogs of the Peel.

In order to capture the Venlo bridgehead and be able to advance further east, this Peel area had to be bypassed by the Allies from the north or from the south. An attack from the south means that the 2 canals must be captured and crossed. But in the north, part of the Peel Canal is already in Allied hands.

And so it is obvious that the Allied attack will take place there, near the village of Overloon. To prevent this, the Germans set up a first line of defense in the woods between Stevensbeek and Overloon.

In the meantime the Germans have already stationed some troops in that area, under the command of Generalmajor Gotsche:

- 2. Luftwaffenfestungs-Bataillon IV at Stevensbeek
- 2. Luftwaffenfestungs-Bataillon X at Mullem
- Marsch Bataillon 437 in between

The Kampfgruppe decides, in order to stay out of the hands of the advancing British army, to leave Gemert that night from Sunday to Monday and march via Elsendorp and Oploo to that German defensive stronghold between Stevensbeek and Overloon.

To cover that route from Gemert to Overloon, the Germans set up the half-tracks and their crews at several strategic locations that late Sunday afternoon: in Ledeacker, in the hamlet of Den Hoek and in the woods on the Deurneseweg near Oploo.

5.5 The half-trackkompanien

On 19 september (so two days before the start of Operation Market Garden) the 107. Panzer-Brigade consists of, among others, 5 half-trackkompanien:

- 1. Kompanie (under the command of Oberleutnant Von Wedemeyer)
- 2. Kompanie (under the command of Hauptmann Karl)
- 3. Kompanie (under the command of Oberleutnant Bartels)
- 4. Kompanie (under the command of Oberleutnant Von Varnbüler)
- 5. Kompanie (under the command of Oberleutnant Hütten)

These half-tracks are remarkable vehicles, with 2 wheels at the front and 2 caterpillar tracks at the back. This makes this vehicle suitable for excellent forward movement on various types of ground. They are all vehicles of the basic Hanomag Sd.Kfz 251 type, but there are many different variants, each with their own additional type number. From open troop transport vehicles to the variants with machine guns and flamethrowers mounted on the body, but also ammunition vehicles.

The most remarkable variant is the Sd.Kfz 251/21 type, which is equipped as standard with the notoriously powerful Drilling MG151 machine gun, an anti-aircraft 3-barrel 15 mm or 20 mm machine gun/artillery that is operated by a Panzergrenadier/Richtkanonier (the gunner). And a number of this specific type are also sent to Oploo and Sint Anthonis that afternoon.



The half-track Sd.Kfz. 251/1 Ausf. A APC. Photographed in 1940 in Berlin on Unter den Linden, at the location where Am Lustgarten connects to Unter den Linden. The Altes Museum is on the left and the Berliner Dom on the right.

(Foto: Wikimedia Commons/ commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bundesarchiv_Bild_101I-801-0664-37,_Berlin,_Unter_den_Linden,_Schützenpanzer.jpg)

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August 1942, a Hanomag Sd.Kfz. 251 Ausf. C at the front in the south of Russia.
(Foto: Geller/Wikimedia Commons/commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bundesarchiv_Bild_101I-217-0493-31,_Russland-Süd,_Schützenpanzerwagen.jpg)

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Sd.Kfz. 251/1 Ausf. C in Russia in 1942.

(Foto: Gerd Habedank/Wikimedia

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Hanomag Sd.Kfz 251/21 – German half-track with the three-barrelled 15 mm or 20 mm machine gun.

(Photo: Wikimedia Commons/Catalogue of enemy ordnance materiel, edition 1, Chief of Ordnance, 1 April 1945, Unclassified – free for publication, Public Domain Mark)

In this photo no photo changes or photo adjustments were made by the author and/or Stichting Overloon War Chronicles / Overloon War Chronicles Foundation

nl.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bestand:Sdkfz_251.21_drilling.jpg



This photo shows the interior of an Sd.Kfz. 251, version armed troop transport vehicle, of the Wehrmacht. We're looking through the open back doors here.

In the front left, lower in the vehicle is the driver's seat and, to the right of it, the co-driver seat at the same level. Above the steering wheel there is the small viewing hole through which the driver could look outside and determine the road, on the right the viewing hole for the co-driver.

At the top center we see the structure for the machine gun to be placed.

The benches for the other crew members are on the left and right.

The vehicle in this photo was built in 1950 by Skoda and Tatra for the Czech army, the builders expertly adhered to the construction standards of 1944.

(Foto: Norbert Kaiser, 6 oktober 2006/Wikimedia

Commons/commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sd.Kfz.251_(03)_2006-10-06.JPG)

In this photo no photo changes or photo adjustments were made by the author and/or Stichting Overloon War Chronicles / Overloon War Chronicles Foundation

Commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sd.Kfz.251_(03)_2006-10-06.JPG

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Within each Kompanie, the half-tracks each have a serial number, the first digit of which indicates the number of the Kompanie.

This 4. Kompanie consists of the following half-tracks on the aforementioned 19 September:

- 2 half-tracks Sd Kfz 251/1
- 10x half-tracks Sd Kfz 251/21 (with 15 mm Drilling artillery)
- 1 half-track Sd Kfz 251/21 (with 20 mm Drilling artillery)

Of the five half-tracks that line up this Sunday at the Gemertseweg – Peelkant fork junction, it is known from later photo and video material that at least two of those five half-tracks are part of the 4. Kompanie and that Drilling artillery is mounted on at least three of the five half-tracks.

Further on in the village of Oploo, a number of German vehicles also set up. The troops posting on that location are part of SS Richter, a group SS men who serve under the command of SS-Hauptsturmführer Friedrich Richter (I./SS-Panzer Grenadier-Regiment 21).

Together with soldiers from 3. and 4./SS-Panzer-Aufklärungs-Abteilung 10, they guard the route from Deurne and De Rips, assisted by the half-tracks in the woods on the Deurneseweg. And at Blauwenhoek, west of Oploo, 5 half-tracks line up to guard the tactically important Gemertseweg - Peelkant fork junction (then called Blauwenhoek – Peelkant fork junction, AVD). Three of these 5 half-tracks choose position at the fork junction and 2 a little further at a side road of the Peelkant.

The inhabitants of the 3 farms near that fork junction get nervous about these half-track crews. For the crews turn out to be troublesome young men who shout a lot and behave rather belligerently and martially. The residents flee to a farm down the road, whereupon the half-track crews take possession of the abandoned farms and steal what they can use. From shirts to butter.

5.6 SS Sperrverband Heinke

The 5 half-tracks that post at the fork junction Gemertseweg – Peelkant are halftracks of the 107. Panzer-Brigade. But a number of soldiers who man these half-tracks are part of the Sperrverband Heinke within Kampfgruppe Walther, a group of fanatical SS men led by SS-Stürmbahnführer Heinke.

Sperrverband Heinke itself also consists of various groups of SS men, such as the group SS Segler and the aforementioned SS Richter, each consisting of a few hundred men. But also the complete armoured division SS Panzerjäger Abt. 10. belongs to Heinke.

Most of Heinke's parts are added to the Kampfgruppe Walther just before 14 September. But the armoured division does not arrive until 20 September.

5.7 Apocalyptic

It's getting dark, that Sunday evening 24 September 1944. The dark night is coming.

While the first troops and vehicles of the large Kampfgruppe move in groups and set off from Gemert via Elsendorp to Oploo, it is during the course of that night Kampfgruppe Walther will suddenly choose to follow a different route. To keep out of sight of the British fighters and bombers, who are shelling and bombarding the retreating German troops in abundance every day, the Kampfgruppe now decides to drive the heavy equipment via a sheltered route via Bakel and Milheeze towards De Rips instead of taking the less sheltered route of Elsendorp and Oploo.

They will also travel from De Mortel straight through the woods towards the Stippelberg.

Major Von Maltzahn is one of the last to leave Gemert, in a Panther tank.

Arriving at the gamekeeper's house on the Stippelberg, in the middle of the woods on the road from Milheeze to De Rips, the first vehicles and men of the Kampfgruppe stop in front of the door. In the house on the top floor, there are 3 men who closely follow the troop movement from there and eagerly make notes: Hendrik Jan Ledeboer and brothers Jas and Noud van der Ven (both central figures in the local resistance). Suddenly, they hear 2 Germans coming up the stairs and 2 of the 3 Dutchmen are forced at gunpoint to go with the Kampfgruppe and show them the way to Venray. That road is the Gemertsche Dijk (now Hazenhutsedijk, AVD), a little further on the right. It must be a surreal and frighteningly apocalyptic image to suddenly have dozens of German tanks and vehicles and hundreds of soldiers standing at your doorstep in the middle of the night in that abandoned location and being forced to show the way to the enemy. But the 3 men do as they are asked, they have no choice. The next morning after the last Germans of the Kampfgruppe have passed the house, the men see the first British troops passing by on the same road a few hours later.



On the night of Sunday 24 to Monday 25 September, Kampfgruppe Walther left the village of Gemert, the departure lasted until the morning.

Father Eduard Loffeld of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit and living in the castle monastery in Gemert, took a series of photos of the departing German troops with his camera on the side of the street that morning, some of which we can publish here in this file.

Taking these photos was not without danger, which is why we see the vehicles in these photos photographed from the back and not from the front.

(Photo: Father Eduard Loffeld / Collection Piet Peters)



(Photo: Father Eduard Loffeld / Collection Piet Peters)



(Photo: Father Eduard Loffeld / Collection Piet Peters)



Father Eduard Loffeld, photo taken on 19 December 1935.

(Photo: Collection Heemkundekring "De Kommanderij Gemert", via Brabantserfgoed.nl)

6. The fatal Monday

6.1 Movements

Meanwhile, from the night until mid-Monday morning, German troops also move in groups from Elsendorp along the Gemertseweg towards Oploo. They pass their colleagues of the half-tracks still present at the Gemertseweg – Peelkant fork junction and turn right there, taking the last part of the Gemertseweg to Oploo. In Oploo, they turn into the Vloetweg to the village centre, before turning right at the windmill, into the Watermolenstraat towards the hamlet of Driehoek. From the hamlet it is an almost dead straight road to Overloon, where halfway on the intersecting Mullemsedijk they cross the German defense line already set up there in the woods between Stevensbeek and Overloon.

These German groups moving through Oploo consist mainly of men on foot, trucks with men, Kübelwagens and other light equipment.

But then suddenly mid-morning the flow of vehicles and troops stops on the Gemertseweg from Elsendorp. The crews of the half-tracks at the fork junction look at each other. Where does that leave the rest of their Kampfgruppe?



As far as known, the oldest photo of the Gemertseweg – Peelkant fork junction, known locally as Ut Kruus (The Cross). Photo dates from the second half of the 1960s. Apart from the lines and more modern ANWB signposts, this situation does not differ from the situation in 1944 in terms of layout, houses and trees. The name Gemertseweg did not yet exist in 1944, the fork junction was part of the Blauwenhoek.

The house in the middle was built in 1928.

This photo was taken before the house in the middle of resident Sjef Beckers (who already lived there during the war and therefore saw the half-tracks in front of his door) had to make way for the extension of the road from Gemert to Boxmeer, the new N272, in the year 1970, redesigning the entire fork junction.

The crucifix on the right in this photo is not the same cross as in the 1940s, but a more modern abstract variant that is still standing on the Gemertseweg.

(Photo and source: Heemkunde Oploo)



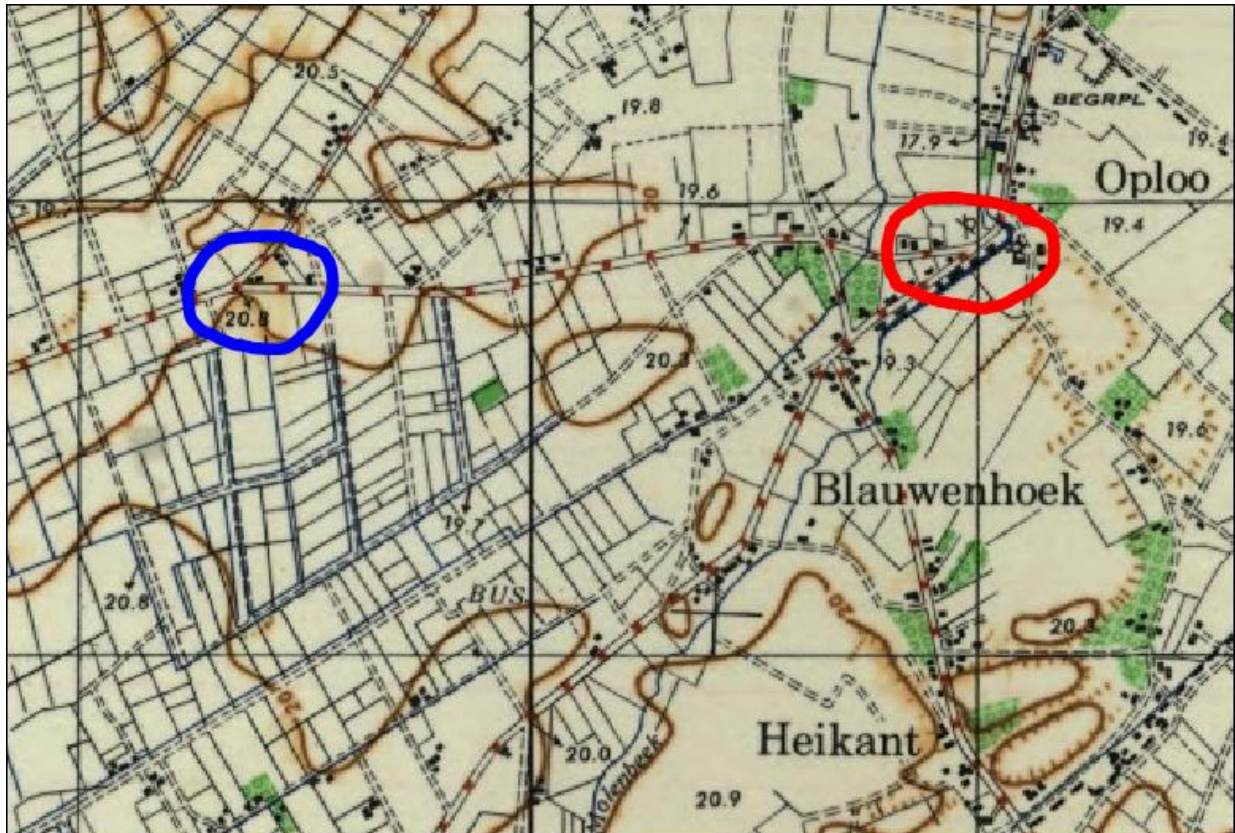
This wooden cross was placed at the fork junction in 1935 and solemnly consecrated by the parish priest of Oploo in collaboration with the local guild of Saint Matthias (the guild flags are visible in this photo).

(Photo and source: Heemkunde Oploo)



The abstract cross that replaced the wooden cross in 1962.

(Photo: Wim Arts)



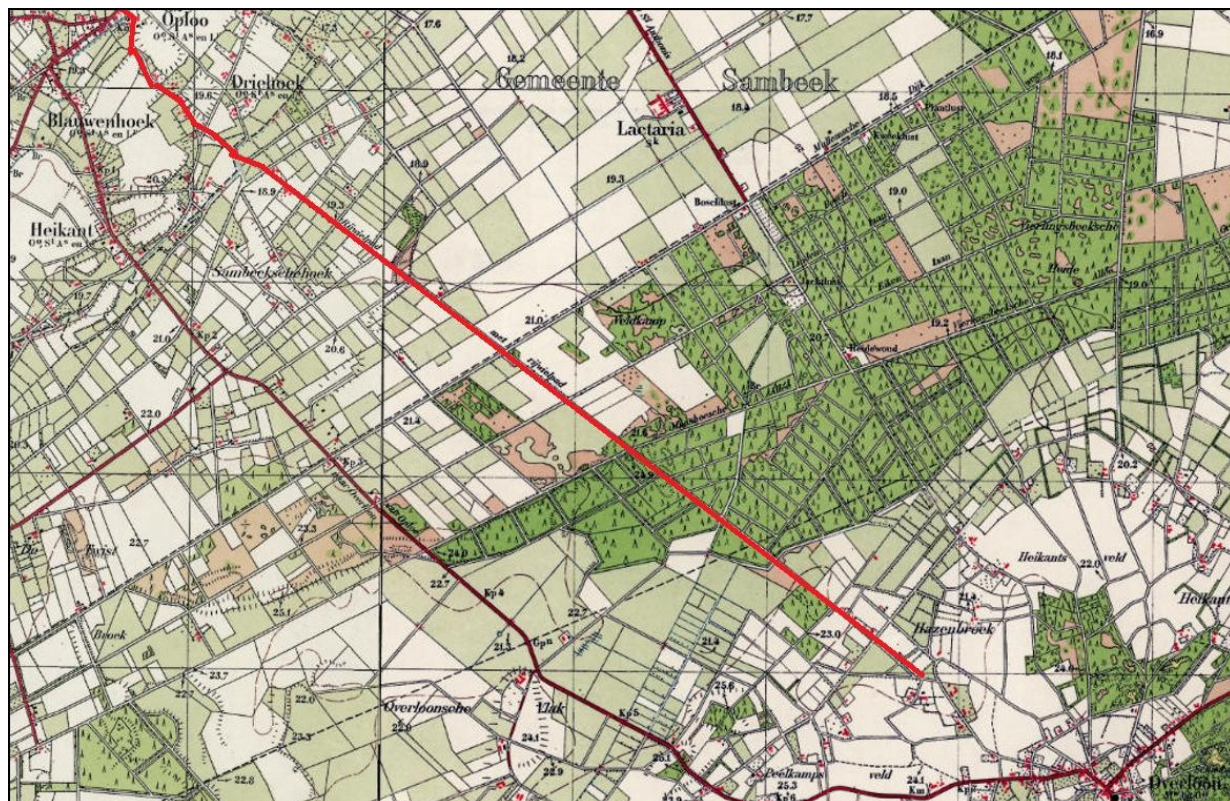
Detail from a military map used by the Americans in 1944. This map was originally compiled in the period 1921 – 1935 and was adjusted in 1943 based on aerial photographs.

The Overloon War Chronicles Foundation indicates on this map the German positions on 25 September 1944 in the afternoon, just before the arrival of the British:

Blue = position of the 5 half-tracks at the fork junction Gemertseweg – Peelkant (Blauwenhoek)

Red = position of the vehicles and men of SS Richter, I./SS-Panzer Grenadier-Regiment 21, together with soldiers of 3. and 4./SS-Panzer-Aufklärungs-Abteilung 10

(Source map: Collection Piet Peters)



Map dated 1944, showing the village of Oploo and the hamlet of Driehoek at the top left. A little southwest of Driehoek, the dead straight road begins (here with a bicycle path) that runs straight through the woods between Stevensbeek and Overloon and eventually ends in Overloon. This is the route that the German troops followed from Oploo. (Source map: Collection Piet Peters)

Unaware of their Kampfgruppe's sudden route change during the previous night, on Monday afternoon the 5 half-tracks are still lined up at the Gemertseweg – Peelkant fork junction. There has been no more communication with their Kampfgruppe or with their colleagues of SS Richter in Oploo or at the Deurneseweg. Strange, seeing that the Drilling-half-tracks have got a Funker (radio operator) on board as standard. Still the 5 half-tracks are awaiting the arrival of new vehicles and troops of their group from the direction of Elsendorp. Waiting and waiting. Could something have gone wrong?

6.2 The advancing British

Meanwhile, one and a half kilometer away on the Deurneseweg, things have already gone wrong for the Germans stationed overthere. The SS men hastily leave their positions around 3 pm when they see the first British troops of the 3rd Battalion Royal Tank Regiment (3RTR) rolling in from the direction of De Rips.

Yet at that point there are casualties among the Germans. At least 5 Germans, including 3 SS men of the Aufklärungs-Abteilung, are killed by British bullets and are buried in Oploo the same day.

The forward British troops now arrive in Oploo via the Deurneseweg and take position in the village centre via the Vloetweg. At the same time, at the junction Deurneseweg – Vloetweg a small section drives directly right into the Loonseweg towards Overloon, stopping after a few hundred meters at Verbruggen's farm on the edge of the village at the Oploosche Molenbeek. That southern exit road is now covered.

At the same time, another small section enters the Blauwstraat at the junction Deurneseweg – Vloetweg, to cover the northern exit road. There, the British ignite a number of smoke pots from which orange smoke rises to identify themselves towards the British observation aircraft flying overhead.

From then on, the now-entering Brits drive safely into the Oploo village centre via the Vloetweg, which turns into the Grotestraat, they pass the Oploo church and move on to Sint Anthonis.

During the Brits' entry into Oploo, parish priest Verhofstad is in the village on his bicycle on his way to the presbytery. He is in a hurry and meanders in all sorts of ways between the British troops and their vehicles.



*Pastor Franciscus Verhofstad, pastor in Oploo from 1927 to 1945.
(Photo: Openarchieven.nl)*

Meanwhile, British units have entrenched themselves in the Oploo's church tower, an important observation point. From the church tower, the British shoot 7 more Germans who hide in the cornfield some 100 meters away.

The British move on, to the hamlet of Sambeeksche Hoek, a kilometer away.

At that moment, the German half-track crew posting on Den Hoek, near the dairy *De Eendracht* and Jan Hendriks' bakery, hears tank sounds swelling in the distance. One of the Germans grabs a bicycle parked near the factory and goes on reconnaissance. He cycles towards Oploo to see if German tanks are approaching. But to his horror, he sees British tanks rolling in after the first corner! Immediately he is shot at by the British, he drops his bike, flees through the ditch back to the dairy and shouts to his colleagues from a distance that they should flee. The Germans jump onto the half-track and immediately flee in the direction of Sint Anthonis.

The British drive slowly on and now pass Den Hoek and the dairy, they are welcomed by the residents. Now to Sint Anthonis, one kilometer away!

Caution, because the British have been informed that there still would be Germans in the village. Nevertheless, the first British, including Lock and his men, arrive in Sint Anthonis without any problems. It turns out that the Germans who were still in the village earlier that afternoon have already fled when they learned that the British were on their way. Upon arrival in the Lepelstraat, the southeast entrance of the village, Lock and his men are ordered to immediately cover the southwest entrance of the village, the strategic intersection Peelkant – Bosweg – Hoefstraat – Molenstraat, with their anti-tank gun. When a little later all other access roads to the village are also covered by the British, there now seems to be no problem for the British in the village.



The cooperative dairy factory De Eendracht in Den Hoek, built in 1907.

When the dairy factory was about to be established, there was a lot of quarreling between the farmers from Oploo and Sint Anthonis about the exact location, because both parties wanted the factory in their own village. In the end, a location between the two villages was chosen: Den Hoek.

The photo shows the entrance to the loading and unloading area of the factory.

Also in the photo, in front of the factory, is the main road that runs from Oploo to Sint Anthonis. That Monday, the regiments of Silvertop and Orr moved from Oploo towards Sint Anthonis on this road (so in the photo from right to left) and were welcomed here in front of the factory by residents of the hamlet of Sambeeksche Hoek (Den Hoek).

(Photo: Publication book St. Tunnis en 't Leker op de foto!)



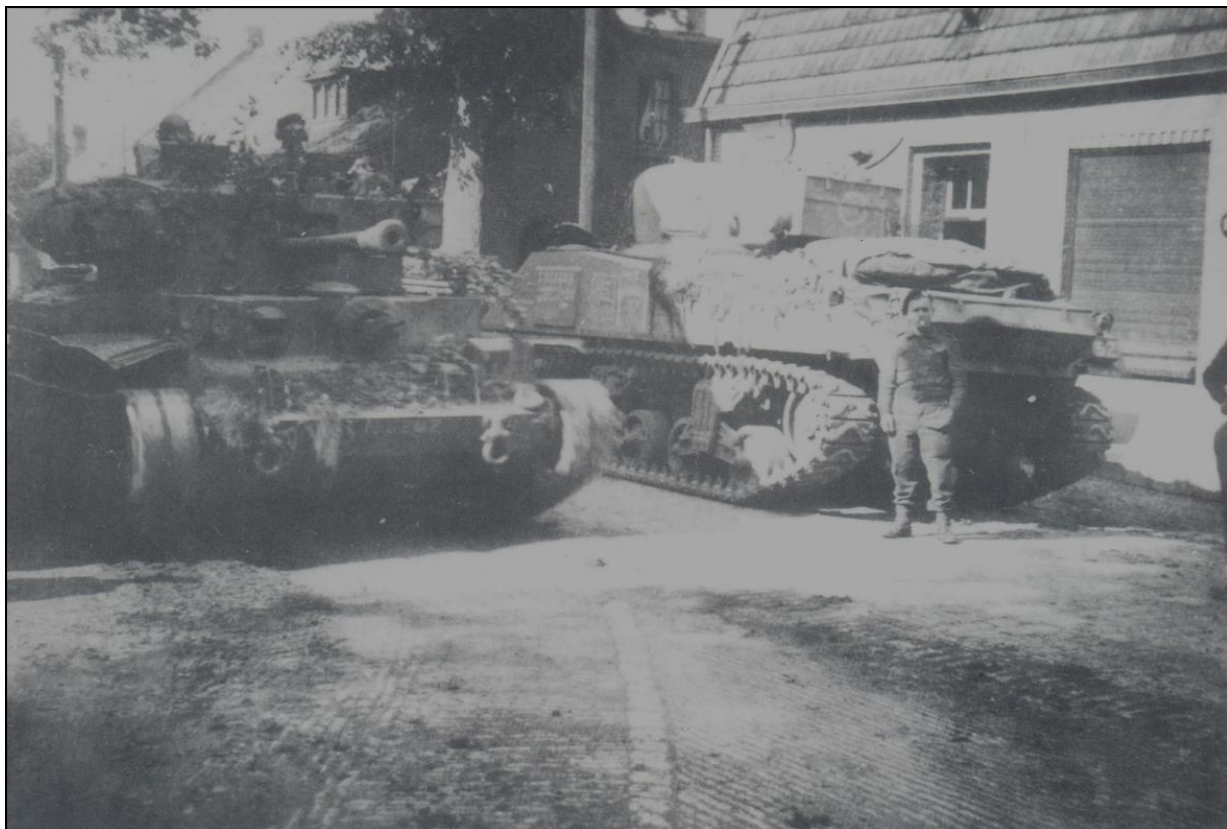
*Village square de Brink in Sint Anthonis, northern side, just before World War II. In the middle the town hall with the grand staircase. On the left the former Bondshotel Oelbroeck.
(Photo: Publication book St. Tunnis en 't Leker op de foto!)*



*A Sherman tank of 3RTR near the churchyard wall in the Breestraat and is greeted by villagers. This tank drove into the village from Oploo, drove into the Perdshemel, turned left at the end of the Perdshemel into the Breestraat and stopped there at this churchyard wall.
(Photo: still from the film of Charles Manders, Sint Anthonis 1944. Collection Piet Peters)*



*The same tank, but different filmshot by Charles Manders.
(Photo: still from the film of Charles Manders, Sint Anthonis 1944. Collection Piet Peters)*



On the left a moving Cromwell MK4 tank of the 15/19H (15th/19th The King's Royal Hussars) and on the right a Sherman tank of very likely 3RTR, in the Breestraat, fork junction Breestraat – Brink (to the left).

The Cromwell came in from the Peelkant and drove through the present Henri Dunantstraat, turned right into the Breestraat, up to this point. 15/19H chased the German half-tracks all along the Peelkant and into the village. The same route that half-track 3 took before it was eliminated 300 meters further in the Breestraat and crashed into a farm at that point.

(Photo: still from the film of Charles Manders, Sint Anthonis 1944. Collection Piet Peters)



*Soldiers of 3MONS walk through the Lepelstraat towards the Molenstraat. On the left the lawn that separated the Lepelstraat from the central square Brink, of which the part near the church is visible at the back left of the photo. On the right the house called Botermien.
(Photo: still from the film of Charles Manders, Sint Anthonis 1944. Collection Piet Peters)*



*An officer of 3MONS gives his men directions in front of the house of the family Remmen in the Breesstraat. The entrance to the Perdshemel which leads to the Lepelstraat is visible at the top right of this photo..
(Photo: still from the film of Charles Manders, Sint Anthonis 1944. Collection Piet Peters)*



A strange car on the Brink in Sint Anthonis on Monday 25 September 1944: a German Kübelwagen previously captured by the British, which came with 3TRT or 3MONS, with the allied attack star painted on it in the meantime.

(Photo: still of the film of Charles Manders, Sint Anthonis 1944. Collection Piet Peters)

The 5 half-tracks at the Gemertseweg – Peelkant fork junction are not aware of the entry of the British in the village of Sint Anthonis. In the meantime, a Kübelwagen has also arrived at the fork junction Gemertseweg – Peelkant. The Germans do keep a close eye on the area, because from that location they also hear the incessant sounds of a few kilometers away, the British regiments on the Deurneseweg moving towards Oploo and Sint Anthonis. However, the Germans at the fork junction have the impression that it must still be their own troops moving overthere. And therefore they are not aware that they are getting more and more cut off at their fork junction. But suddenly, the half-track crews hear the sound of moving tanks approaching, coming from the direction of Elsendorp. Will that be a new group of their Kampfgruppe? Finally!

Meanwhile, moving in from the direction of Oploo, the village of Sint Anthonis continues to fill up with British troops of Silvertop's 3rd Battalion Royal Tank Regiment (3RTR) and Orr's 3rd Battalion Monmouthshire Regiment (3MONS). The British troops will wait in Sint Anthonis for reinforcements of the 159th Brigade. At that time there is no German left in the village and in the meantime the various access roads are all covered by the British.

It is 4.20 pm.

While the German half-track crews at the Gemertseweg – Peelkant fork junction expect to have the next vehicles of their Kampfgruppe in sight soon now, in Sint Anthonis Silvertop leaves his safe tank. His driver takes him in a jeep to the agreed meeting location a little further away in the village, the fork junction Lepelstraat – Perdshemel. Hubert Orr is also coming to that location. Silvertop arrived in Sint Anthonis via Oploo around 3.30 pm, Orr slightly earlier.

Both were called shortly before via radio by Brigadier Charles Barnet 'Roscoe' Harvey (Brigade Commander 29th Armoured Brigade) with the announcement that he (Harvey) and his Brigade Major J. Thompson are almost in Sint Anthonis. Harvey wants an urgent meeting with Silvertop and Orr concerning conflicting reports on the exact positions of the leading British troops.

The selected meeting location, the fork junction Lepelstraat – Perdschemel at the edge of the village, is a fairly open spot where the Lepelstraat turns south towards Oploo. The choice for this open fork junction as a meeting location is a strange decision. Under these dangerous circumstances it would have been more logical to meet in a sheltered secure location.

6.3 It goes wrong!

It is 4.25 pm.

At the Gemertseweg – Peelkant fork junction, the half-track crews now look down the Gemertseweg in suspense. The noise from the direction of Elsendorp is getting louder. Any moment now a new group and vehicles of their Kampfgruppe must appear in view. Finally, there they are and... To their horror, they suddenly see no vehicles of their Kampfgruppe approaching, but British Cromwell tanks! Get out! NOW! They have to get out of here!

The British tanks of A Squadron 15th/19th Hussars of the 159th Brigade have moved from Deurne towards Gemert to expel the Germans there, but the Kampfgruppe had already left. Immediately the British move on, via Elsendorp towards Sint Anthonis in order to join Silvertop's and Orr's regiments.

Possibly the 159th Brigade was already informed about the exact position of the 5 half-tracks at the Gemertseweg – Peelkant fork junction by a British reconnaissance plane that flew over the Peelkant earlier in the day and must have seen the half-tracks.

The British tanks and combat vehicles on the Gemertseweg now see the half-tracks at the fork junction and at a distance of a few hundred meters a carrier and a tank open fire on the half-tracks.

But the 3 half-tracks standing on the fork junction have just enough time to get away. At the cost of some stragglers and wounded, though. A few others still manage to grab hold of the half-tracks just in time and hang onto the side of the vehicles, which take off at full throttle! They flee towards the Peelkant, towards Sint Anthonis! In doing so, they pass the 2 other half-tracks posting on the side road. These 2 crews have not seen the British coming, but also these 2 half-tracks manage to get away at once via the Peelkant, following the other 3, continuously hunted by the fighting cars of the 15th/19th The King's Royal Hussars!.

From the road Vlagberg the British manage to eliminate the rear half-track (near the present Peelkant 45, AVD), killing 2 Germans. The rest of the crew of this half-track flees into the direction of the Blauwstraat, into the fields towards Oploo. But they are spotted by the British observation post in the church tower of Oploo, after which British troops defuse these Germans. Six Germans are killed and a few manage to escape.

After noticing the British tanks the German driver and passenger of the Kübelwagen who were also present at the fork junction immediately drive off. In their panic, however, they do not choose the Peelkant to Sint Anthonis, but the Gemertseweg to Oploo!

Another 100 meters and they are in the village! Suddenly they are fired upon by machine guns from Oploo! The driver pulls his steering wheel over to the right in full panic, the Kübelwagen lands in a ditch along the road. The 2 Germans get out of their car and run away.

Machine gun fire comes from British tanks positioned on the outskirts of the village, at the Gemertseweg – Blauwstraat junction. British troops now run after the 2 Germans, who run across the farmyard and through Derks' orchard on the Gemertseweg and then, with an athletic leap, end up over a high hedge in Van de Steeg's garden.

One of the Germans then runs further on, into the field, but is hit by British bullets from a Bren gun placed on the hedge by a pursuing British soldier, giving him a considerable field of fire.

As the British search for the 2 Germans, a Sherman tank positions itself behind the hedge on the Gemertseweg to warmly welcome any more possible Germans, and another tank drives down the road towards the Gemertseweg – Peelkant fork junction.

In the garden, one of the British soldiers sees one of the 2 Germans emerge from between the one-and-a-half-metre-high tobacco plants with his arms in the air as a sign of surrender. Held at gunpoint by the British soldier, the German then has to walk backwards along the path towards the British soldier, after which the German is captured and taken away.

Moments later, the local residents and British soldiers hear someone in the distance shout "*Hilfe! Hilfe!*" ("Help! Help!") It is the wounded other German who has managed to hide among some bushes behind Van den Berg's farm. He is picked up by the British, accompanied by a local resident, as well as by the already arrested German. The wounded German is then loaded into Van den Berg's manure wheelbarrow, which then has to be pushed by the already captured German. Both Germans are then taken away by the British.

It is now nearly 4.30 pm.

At the same time as the half-tracks drive at full speed across the Peelkant towards Sint Anthonis and are almost in the village, in Sint Anthonis at the fork junction Lepelstraat – Perdschemel, Silvertop and Orr are waiting for the arrival of Harvey and Thompson.

Harvey gets a strange sense of danger upon arriving at the fork junction. When Harvey and Thompson get out of their jeep, Harvey orders his driver not to leave the Jeep on the road, but to park it on the side, next to one of the hedges. No, Harvey doesn't have a good feeling about it... He immediately starts the meeting. No time to lose!

The Germans in and hanging on to the 4 remaining half-tracks are fully feared, nervous to the bone. The first 3 half-tracks now approach the entrance to the village! One last turn on the Peelkant and then.... To their horror they see at the entrance to Sint Anthonis on the strategic junction Peelkant – Bosweg – Hoefstraat – Molenstraat a British anti-tank gun! Brits! Brits in front of them and behind them in pursuit! The Germans feel they have nowhere to go! However, the British at the anti-tank gun are completely surprised by the sudden arrival of those half-tracks. And confusion arises among the British, as one of the half-tracks is fitted with a white cloth. Do these Germans want to surrender? Is the Brits' confusion increased by the fact that the half-tracks, on seeing the British soldiers, hesitate for a splitsec, therefore slow down and the Brits take this as an additional signal that those Germans want to surrender right now?

The fact is that some of the German soldiers who have been hanging on the sides of the 3 now almost stationary half-tracks are now jumping off the half-tracks and indeed want to surrender. Lance Corporal Maurice Lock walks from the British anti-tank gun up the road to the half-tracks, but suddenly the driver of the first half-track accelerates and Lock is immediately fatally hit by bullets from the now rapidly passing half-tracks! The British fire back and the half-tracks can do nothing but drive quickly into the Molenstraat, looking for the escape route. The British anti-tank gun turns left and fires another anti-tank grenade at the 3 half-tracks, but misses target and the shell lands in a house in the Molenstraat!

The British must immediately turn their gun back to the right, because suddenly the 4th half-track now appears in view from the Peelkant! The British manage to eliminate this half-track with just 1 shot, killing 3 Germans and capturing 1. (Eliminated opposite the present Peelkant 22, AVD)

At the time the anti-tank gun fires the deadly shot at the 4th fourth half-track, the 3 half-tracks drive in full panic through the Molenstraat. The machine gun shots they hear coming from the the junction and the missed first anti-tank gun shot immediately alert the British soldiers stationed 100 meters away at the next fork junction, near the Van de Mortel's house located at the point of that fork junction. There, a number of British soldiers use the cellar holes (cuckoo holes) of the Van de Mortel's house as foxholes, and they suddenly see the half-tracks rapidly approaching! The British do not hesitate and shoot directly from the cellar holes at the half-tracks.

Panicked by the British shots at the fork junction near Van de Mortel, the 2 front half-tracks turn right into the second part of the Molenstraat, which turns into the Lepelstraat. At the same fork junction, the 3rd half-track is forced by the shots to turn left and at the end turn right into the Breestraat. During these shots at the fork junction near Van de Mortel, 2 Germans are shot off the half-tracks.

All 3 half-tracks then pass the village square near the church, the Brink, almost simultaneously. One half-track via the northern square side (Breestraat) and the other 2 via the southern square side (Lepelstraat). All 3 crews panic at that moment, because suddenly they see on the Brink the already large group of arrived British troops and their vehicles. The Breestraat and the Lepelstraat are also full of British vehicles and troops. For the Germans, it

feels like a huge trap from which there seems to be no escape! Stopping is no option for the Germans and turning around is totally impossible. Keep going! They have to keep going! At full speed, they drive past the British, firing their machine guns at anything that moves. Utterly surprised by the sudden arrival of the half-tracks, the British shoot with everything they have at the passing half-tracks and immediately set off in pursuit with their fighting cars.

Dozens of meters away, at the Lepelstaat – Perdschemel fork junction, Harvey, Thompson, Silvertop and Orr are in consultation. They have staff maps unfolded on the bonnet of one of the Jeeps and are leaning forward to study the maps in full concentration, discussing the positions on the maps.

At first the men pay no attention to the increasingly loud machine gun noise further up the Lepelstraat.

Harvey suddenly doubts what he is hearing and asks Silvertop: *"We've got a troop attachment on that other road, haven't we?"*

Silvertop replies, *"Yes, of course we have."*

But Harvey observes: *"But I don't think that was one of ours. It sounded a bit like a German machine gun."*

Silvertop now also hesitates: *"Yes, it did a bit."*

But it's too late! The 2 German half-tracks come fiercely shooting around the bend. Harvey, Thompson, Silvertop and Orr have no chance to get away and are hit by the barrage of German machine-gun bullets fired by one of the Germans in a green camouflage jacket on half-track 1.

One of the bullets pierces one of Thompson's lungs, but he will survive. Silvertop dies instantly on the spot and Orr is seriously injured. Harvey is slightly injured, manages to draw his pistol and to hit the gunman and the driver of the 2nd half-track while they are making the turn to the left into the Perdschemel, where this half-track bumps into one of the oaks opposite of the Perdschemel, the half-track then bounces back and hits Harvey's jeep which was parked there, but the half-tracks manages to escape! A British soldier lying with his Bren gun in the dry shallow stream (the Kleine Beek, AVD) near Harvey, manages to kill with his Bren gun several Germans still clinging to the side of the half-tracks! Their bodies fall onto the street, while the half-tracks continue to drive in full panic!

Years later, Harvey would state in his biography *Roscoe the bright shiner* (author Tim Fitzgeorge-Parker, 1987) that if one of the German bullets had come a few millimeters higher he (Harvey) would have been hit in the middle of his crotch:

"It was the only time I was ever wounded in the war and I nearly lost my balls. (...) It was nothing, just a little graze, but, believe me, it was a bit too close for comfort."

Or as Colonel Geoff Phipps Hornby afterwards said to Harvey:

"Lucky it was a cold day!"

Two of the 3 half-tracks don't get very far after the shooting.

Chased by the British fighting cars and heavily under fire, the half-track that chose the Breestraat drives into a house there (the present Breestraat 47, AVD). Several crew members of the half-track are killed.

The 2 half-tracks that chose at the fork junction to escape via the Pershemel, the 2nd (which was hit by Harvey) turns immediately right into a field road on the Hoogveld, ending in a ditch there and gets knocked out by one of Silvertop's tanks.

The 1st half-track manages to reach the end of the Perdschemel and turns right into the Breestraat. Full throttle the half-track continues! The route to Stevensbeek and Overloon and also Boxmeer lies ahead of them! But at the moment the half-track reaches the Boxmeerseweg – Stevensbeekseweg fork junction after a few hundred meters, the Germans see in front of them a British tank stationed on the corner of the Stevensbeekseweg! The driver of the half-track chooses quickly to turn left onto the road to Boxmeer, their only chance! If only they could stay out of that tank's field of fire! The half-track is now moving more and more away from the tank, towards Boxmeer. Faster, they must go faster! Will they succeed? Yes, it will work and.... With a loud bang the half-track collides with a tree on the left side of the road, 200 meters further than the Majoca house and comes to an immediate standstill due to

the impact. To what extent a grenade fired from the British tank contributed to the elimination is the question. As well as how many Germans were killed or were able to escape.

The whole situation makes the British in Sint Anthonis quite nervous and when a little later the first British tanks of the 2nd Fife and Forfar Yeomanry, who have meanwhile reached Sint Anthonis and want to enter the village via the same Peelkant, are those tanks almost fired upon by own troops!

Meanwhile, villagers who because of the sudden violence in the streets and on the fork junction, fled into houses, dived into cellars or roadside ditches are catching their breath. Near the fatal junction they see a number of German soldiers who have just been captured by the British, Germans with despondent faces. But there is also 1 German from Hamburg with a happy face who says: *"Glücklich ist der Krieg für mich zu Ende."* ("Luckily for me the war is over.")

The fork junction must be cleared, the British move Silvertop's body a few meters further and place it next to a hedge in the Lepelstraat.
The injured Thompson is taken away.

The seriously injured Orr is rushed to an emergency hospital in Deurne, it is a race against time. But it is too late, he dies on the way near the village De Rips. Orr's last words are: *"It was foolish of me to be standing there at the crossroads. I should have known better."*

When Silvertop dies, he is still Lieutenant Colonel. His promotion to Colonel was already on its way by then. But now he will be awarded that promotion posthumously. After the war, the Perdshemel, the connecting street between the Lepelstraat and the Breestraat, is renamed Kolonel Silvertoplaan.

A salient detail is that Silvertop had always warned his men never to stand still at a junction, a too risky location. The one time he did so himself became immediately fatal.

The tragedy in Sint Anthonis takes the lives of 3 British: Orr, Silvertop and Lock. Despite the many German bullets fired, the British do not suffer any more deaths or injuries. The exact number of killed and wounded on the German side is unknown. Especially as it is not exactly clear how many crew members were in the 5 half-tracks. Also, several Germans, wounded or not, were still able to flee through the fields.

After the death of David Silvertop, Major N.H. Bourne temporarily takes over the command of 3RTR as from the same day.

After the death of Hubert Orr, Major W.P. Sweetman temporarily takes over the command of 3MONS as from the same day. Until 30 September, when Lieutenant Colonel R.C. Stockley arrives in Westerbeek to take over the command of 3MONS.

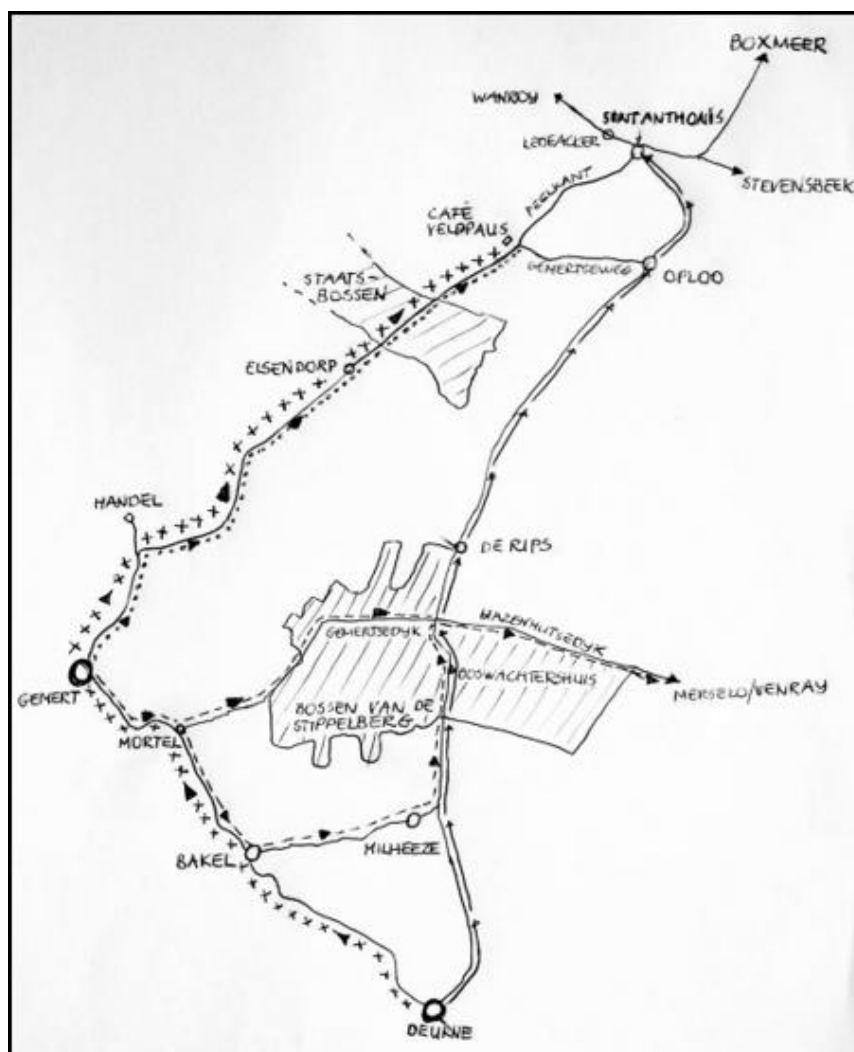
On Tuesday 26 September 1944, one day after Silvertop's death and when Sint Anthonis is firmly in the hands of the British, Father Ryan holds a memorial service for David Silvertop in the Roman Catholic church in Sint Anthonis at 5.30 pm.

Two days later, on 28 September, a second memorial service will be held for Silvertop and Orr and fallen comrades, now in the church of Westerbeek, at 6.00 pm.

Orr, Silvertop and Lock. Three men, forever linked.

7. The maps, routes and the fork junction

Map A: The Kampgruppe, the half-tracks and the British:



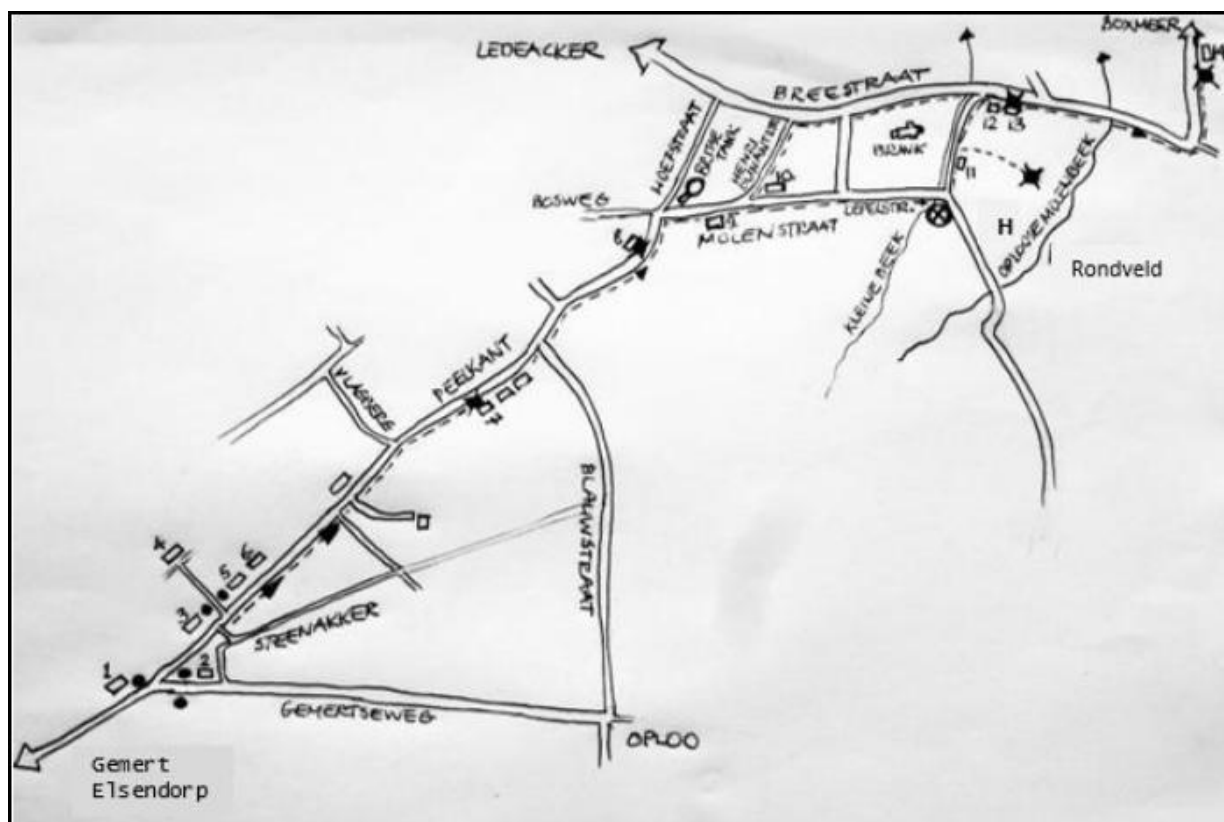
© Map + details: Martien Mahler

- ▶ routes Kampgruppe Walther.
(Sunday night 24 September - Monday morning 25 September 1944).
-▶ route of the 5 half-tracks (late Sunday afternoon 24 September 1944).
- ▶ route main force 29th Brigade with David Silvertop en Hubert Orr.
(Monday 25 September 1944).
- x x x x x x x x ▶ route main force 159th Brigade (Monday 25 September 1944).

Note: the route of Kampgruppe Walther via Elsendorp and the Gemertseweg is not drawn separately in this map.

- The 15th/19th The King's Royal Hussars were attached to the 2nd Fife and Forfar Yeomanry and the 4th Battalion King's Shropshire Light Infantry, but that 25th September largely first went with the main force of the 29th Brigade towards De Rips. In De Rips the 15th/19th The King's Royal Hussars went into the direction of Gemert and later moved together with the 2nd Fife and Forfar Yeomanry via Elsendorp to Sint Anthonis. Soldiers of the 15th/19th The King's Royal Hussars in their fighting cars were the chasers of the German half-tracks from the Peelkant further towards the village of Sint Anthonis.

Map B: Gemertseweg, Peelkant and Sint Anthonis:



© Map + details: Martien Mahler

● Line-up of the 5 German half-tracks from Sunday afternoon 24 September 1944 until Monday afternoon 25 September 1944.

⌘ Locations where the 5 German half-tracks were disabled

⊗ Location of the present monument at the fork junction. Opposite of the monument the location where Harvey, Thompson, Silvertop en Orr held the meeting

8. The fork junction



July 2023, partly due to the 2023 extensive research carried out by the author, the exact meeting location has now been definitively determined. The exact meeting location (now the low vegetation, then a piece of roadside) of Harvey, Thompson, Silvertop and Orr at the Lepelstraat – Perdschemel junction (the current Kolonel Silvertoplaan), as seen from the front of the monument.

- On the left the Lepelstraat, from where the 2 half-tracks came. Then the bend to the left into the Perdschemel (the current Kolonel Silvertoplaan) and on the right (out of the picture) the second half of the Lepelstraat, into the direction of Oploo.
- In the middle of this photo a bus shelter is visible in the Kolonel Silvertoplaan, at that point the 2nd half-track turned into the field road on the Hoogveld.
- On the right side of this part of the Kolonel Silvertoplaan there are now smaller trees, but until the beginning of the 21st century (and therefore also in 1944) there were Canadian oaks, the 2nd half-track collided with one of these oaks before it drove into the field road.
- In 1944, the walking path in the middle of the photo was a small most of the time dry shallow stream, the Kleine Beek, that ran under the Lepelstraat at this point. Later that stream was covered with pavers to form the walking path.
- The low vegetation in the middle was a piece of roadside in 1944.
- On the left the corner hedge that was already there in 1944 with exactly the same height as now, just over 2 meters. Silvertop's body lay next to the hedge on the Lepelstraat side, that exact location still visible here in the photo on the far left. Please note: Silvertop's location near the hedge is definitely not the location where Silvertop was fatally hit by the German bullets. The location where he was hit and immediately died is a few meters away, the low vegetation. In the minutes following the drama, the British cleared the fork junction and chose to move Silvertop's body to the corner hedge.

(Photo: Collection Arno van Dijk)



The meeting location of Harvey, Thompson, Silvertop and Orr seen from the Lepelstraat. At the fork junction left to the Perdschemel (the current Kolonel Silvertoplaan), right to the second part of the Lepelstraat, into the direction of Oploo. Silvertop's body lay on the left near the corner of the hedge.

(Photo: Collection Arno van Dijk)



The junction with a view of the Lepelstraat from which the 2 half-tracks came. On the left (out of the picture) the monument, on the right the meeting location. In front of the high hedges on the left and right that were already there in 1944, there was a stream of water called the Kleine Beek, now walking paths.

(Photo: Collection Arno van Dijk)

9. The half-tracks and the elimination



On the morning of Monday 25 September, a camouflaged German half-track drives through the Breesstraat in Sint Anthonis on its way to Overloon and Venray. Filmed by retailer/shopkeeper Charles Manders who was standing in front of his house. Also visible the house of the Remmen family (background right). Contrary to what some sources report, this is not the half-track that would hit a house further on and then be towed away (see the other photos in this file).

The half-track in this photo was therefore not part of the 5 half-tracks described in this file and therefore has nothing to do with the deaths of Orr, Silvertop and Lock. This is probably the half-track that flees from the previously chosen position in Ledeaeker.

(Photo: still from the film of Charles Manders, Sint Anthonis 1944. Collection Piet Peters)



The first half-track that was eliminated on the Peelkant. The church tower of Oploo is visible on the far right of the photo.

The white band around the arm of the man on the right is the band of the LKP (Landelijke Knokploegen). An armed resistance branch that, among other things, raids the offices of the German occupiers during the war in order to obtain identity cards and distribution and food vouchers for people in hiding. The LKP also liquidates Germans and collaborators and commits sabotage.

(Photo: Collection Heemkundekring Sint Tunnis in Oelbroeck)

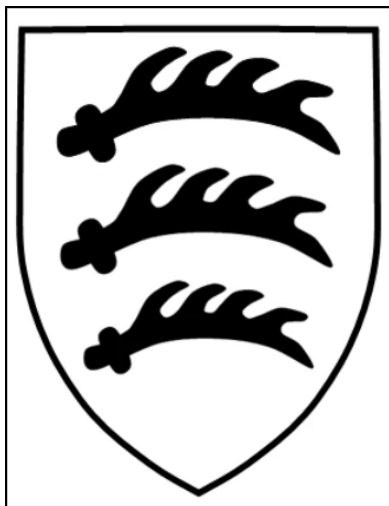


The second eliminated half-track on the Peelkant (overall photo). Since this half-track does not appear to have a Drilling machine gun on it, this is most likely an ammunition vehicle or grenadier vehicle with no additional armament.

(Photo: still from the film of Charles Manders, Sint Anthonis 1944. Collection Piet Peters)



*The same half-track, but now in close-up.
SdKfz 251/21 Ausf. D, Pz.Brigitade 107, Pz.Gren.Batl. 2107 with number plate WH-1787981.
The insignia of the 107. Panzer-Brigade is visible on the front.
(Photo: still from the film of Charles Manders, Sint Anthonis 1944. Collection Piet Peters)*



*Insignia of the 107. Panzer-Brigade, three antlers placed on top of each other.
For the history of this badge, see chapter 14 The deepening.
(Photo: Collection Overloon War Chronicles Foundation)*



Sint Anthonis, first part of the Molenstraat circa 1930 (but still actual in 1944), the fork junction Molenstraat - current Henri Dunantstraat where the routes of the 3 half-tracks separated.

The 3 half-tracks came into the photo from the left, the intersection with the Peelkant, not visible here, where they shot Lock.

On the far right of the photo is the Van Sambeek family's home and in the middle of the photo, on the other side of the street, is the family's orchard and chicken coop.

Opposite the house of the Van Sambeek family, the house of the Van de Mortel family is visible, from where the half-tracks were shot at by the British soldiers present there.

Half-track 3 turned left at this fork junction, continued along the street visible here in the photo and turned right into Breestraat at the end of that street in front of the house in the distance.

Half-track 1 and 2 turned right at the fork junction into the second part of the Molenstraat and drove between the houses of Van Sambeek and Van de Mortel in this photo.

Photo was taken from the former mill in the Molenstraat.

(Photo: Collection Frans van Sambeek).



The grenade impact of the British anti-tank gun in the house on the Molenstraat, this first shot missed the 3 half-tracks and the half-tracks where able to continue their escape into the Molenstraat.

(Photo: still from the film of Charles Manders, Sint Anthonis 1944. Collection Piet Peters)



There are still bullet holes in this former house of the Van de Mortel family, the house at the fork junction Molenstraat – Henri Dunantstraat. These are German bullet holes, bullets fired from the 3 German half-tracks that raced past in front of and to the side of the house.

(Photo: Collection Leo Janssen)



First part of the Lepelstraat, just after World War II.

On the left the lawn that borders the Brink.

On the right the shop of the shoemaker Cranen and the cafe Janssen with the sofa and chairs. The house ahead on the right with the tobacco billboard on the side is the shop of Helm Jansen.

The 2 half-tracks that opted for the 2nd part of the Molenstraat at the fork junction at Van de Mortel automatically entered the Lepelstraat at this point (right side of the photo). The street and square were full of British soldiers and vehicles at that time. The half-tracks drove straight ahead, firing. After the bend visible in the far back of the photo, the Lepelstraat – Perdshemel fork junction appeared in front of them.

(Photo: Publication book St. Tunnis en 't Leker op de foto!)



Again the Lepelstraat, now Helm Jansen's shop seen from the other side (with also on this side of the shop tobacco advertising on the facade). At the back right again the lawn that borders the Brink.

(Photo: Publication book St. Tunnis en 't Leker op de foto!)



The Lepelstraat – Perdschemel fork junction shortly after the war, when the Perdschemel was already called Kolonel Silvertoplaan. Visible in the photo is the shallow Kleine Beek that ran under the Lepelstraat here. The first part of the verge on the far right of the photo is the point where the 4 officers held their meeting. In the photo, the roadside area is fenced off with posts and wire, in 1944 those posts and wire were not there. Between the 2 houses in the photo was the field road to the field of the Hoogveld, the road that half-track 2 chose during the ultimate escape attempt. (Photo: Publication book St. Tunnis en 't Leker op de foto!)



De Perdshemel just after the war, towards the Breestraat, this is the route that half-track 1 chose. On the right in the photo the warehouse of Marinuske and the blacksmith shop of Koos van Tienen.

The signpost is visible at the end of the street. There the half-track turned right into the Breestraat in the direction of Boxmeer.

(Photo: Publication book St. Tunnis en 't Leker op de foto!)



Again the Perdshemel, but now seen from the other side, from the Breesstraat. The large building on the left was the Agricultural School, built in 1925.

Half-track 1 came here from the Perdshemel and turned right (is left here on the photo) into the Breesstraat into the direction of Boxmeer.

Half-track 3, which previously at the fork junction at Van de Mortel chose to drive directly to the Breesstraat and then passed the Brink on the north side, came from the right at the point of this photo and drove out of the photo to the left where the half-track was eliminated by the British after a few tens of meters and drove into a farm there.

(Photo: Publication book St. Tunnis en 't Leker op de foto!)



A British Cromwell ARV (Armoured Recovery Vehicle) tows away the half-track that crashed into a house in the Breestraat.

(Photo: still from the film of Charles Manders, Sint Anthonis 1944. Collection Piet Peters)



Follow-up scene. In this still the insignia of the 107. Panzer-Brigade is visible on the bottom left of the car. The number on this half-track is 412. The first number indicates the company this half-track was part of, the second number the battalion, the third number the vehicle number. So here the 4. Kompanie, 1. Bataillon, vehicle 2.

(Photo: still from the film of Charles Manders, Sint Anthonis 1944. Collection Piet Peters)



*Follow-up scene in which this half-track with number plate WH-1787988, now visible from the front, is towed away by the British, attracting the interest of the local population.
(Photo: still from the film of Charles Manders, Sint Anthonis 1944. Collection Piet Peters)*



*The same half-track during the tow away action, now the front. Note the Drilling MG151 machine gun.
(Photo: still from the film of Charles Manders, Sint Anthonis 1944. Collection Piet Peters)*



*The Drilling MG151 machine gun of the half-track that was eliminated in the field on the Hoogveld,
(Photo: still from the film of Charles Manders, Sint Anthonis 1944. Collection Piet Peters)*



*The remains of the half-track that was eliminated in the field on the Hoogveld.
(Photo: still from the film of Charles Manders, Sint Anthonis 1944. Collection Piet Peters)*



The unknown photo that suddenly turned up after 80 years in July 2024 and could be added to this file. Showing the half-track with number plate WH-1787983 from which Lock, Silvertop and Orr were shot and fatally hit. The half-track that tried to escape via the Boxmeerseweg and crashed into a tree, 200 meters after the Majoca house. On the left the damaged tree. In the background the farm with the current address Zandkant 5-5A. On the left is the direction to Sint Anthonis, on the right to Boxmeer (!)

And it was precisely that direction that made this photo so confusing in terms of research. Because it shows the vehicle, against all expectations and logic, with its nose in the direction of Sint Anthonis!

In July 2024, in response to this photo, former resident of the Zandkant Johan Peters (eleven years old in 1944) stated to Arno van Dijk that he heard the bang of the vehicle against the tree (here on the left in the photo). Shortly afterwards he went to look and saw the vehicle with the damaged side against the tree on the left, with a dead German soldier hanging halfway out of the back of the box. The vehicle was then pointing towards Boxmeer. The next day the vehicle was turned by the British. Two British battle cars pushed the half-track that was standing diagonally on the road and thus blocking the passage of the road. The half-track turned almost 180 degrees around its axis by this pushing action and then came to stand in this position, now with its nose in the direction of Sint Anthonis until the moment that the car was taken away by the British.

On the half-track the Drilling gun is visible, of which 1 barrel is still mounted here. The outer two barrels are missing.

The story that this half-track was eliminated by a grenade fired by a British tank at the Boxmeerseweg – Stevensbeekseweg fork junction and exploded does not seem to be true. This photo does not show an explosion impact, but an accident impact.

In July 2024 Will Trienekens (WWII vehicle and weapon expert) reported to Arno van Dijk regarding the damage to the vehicle in this photo:

“At that time, there were basically three types of grenades. Two were often used to eliminate armored vehicles:

- The armor-piercing grenade: that was a grenade that worked purely on kinetic energy, which went straight through it. Given the thin armor, there are no indications of that in the photo.*

In case of the hollow charge: then you should have seen more damage and there would have been almost 100% certain fire given the enormous heat that had been generated. There are no traces of that.

- The high explosive round (HE round): then the vehicle would have disintegrated like a tin can and there are no indications of that in the photo either.*

You could argue that it might have been an anti-tank rifle. The British used the Boys anti-tank rifle. But that was at the beginning of the war. Towards the end you didn't see that rifle anymore. It was simply no longer effective, so the chance that this weapon was still used here is extremely small. In short: everything points more to simply an accident. And not to an external effect by a grenade.”

This means that the British tank at the junction could have fired a grenade at the half-track that was getting further and further out of sight, but that was not a hit that led to the elimination of this half-track.

(Photo: Collection Museum Van postzegel tot tank)



Close up of the photograph with clearly visible the number plate WH-1787983 and the logo of the 107. Panzer-Brigade.

(Photo: Collection Museum Van postzegel tot tank)



Close-up of this half-track with license plate WH-1787983, with the number 414 visible on the side. This combination of numbers proves that this vehicle, like the half-track with number 412, was part of the 4. Kompanie, 1. Bataillon and that this is therefore vehicle 4 within that Bataillon.

Whether the other three half-tracks also had a number that started with the number 4 cannot be deduced from the images and photos available so far. However, the chance that they did have such a number starting with 4 is very likely.

(Photo: Collectie Museum Van postzegel tot tank)



Map of the Boxmeerseweg in 1944 (left) with the exact location (see red arrow) where half-track 1 came to a stop against the tree, exactly 200 meters after the house named Majoca. The British tank was positioned at the T-junction on the far left. From that point, the British tank had the perfect field of fire towards Boxmeer.

On the right is the 2024 map where the T-junction has become a roundabout. The yellow line on this map is the old Boxmeerseweg, so the same as the red line on the left map. The red line on the right map is the Provinciale Weg N272 between Sint Anthonis and Boxmeer, which was completed in 1970. The old Boxmeerseweg (the yellow line) then automatically became a parallel road for local and agricultural traffic.

To avoid confusion, the circled number 2 on this map has nothing to do with the location where the half-track was eliminated in 1944. (Source map: Piet Peters)



*The architecturally remarkable house named Majoca, built in 1934, with the business area/cow shed on the right (not visible in this photo from the 1930s).
(Photo: Photographer unknown, photograph as published in the book George Rasker Architect)*

10. The graves

The grave of Hubert Orr

Orr is temporarily buried in De Rips near the Roman Catholic primary school and is transferred to the CWGC cemetery in Overloon on 27 May 1947. In October 1944, he posthumously receives the DSO, the Distinguished Service Order.

Hubert Gerald Orr is the highest-ranking military officer buried in the CWGC cemetery in Overloon.



Hubert Orr's gravestone in the CWGC cemetery in Overloon.
(Photo: Collection Leo Janssen)

The funeral of David Silvertop

Egbert Peters, who lives in Den Hoek in 1944, states in 1969 to authors Goossens and Van Goch for their book *Oorlog en bevrijding in Oploo c.a. (War and liberation in Oploo c.a., 1969 edition)* that he (Peters) leaves his hiding place 5 minutes after the shooting stops and then sees English tanks in the streets. At the corner hedge at the fork junction of Lepelstraat and Perdschemel, (the corner hedge belonging to the address Lepelstraat 15, the hedge that is still there, with the same height as in 1944 of just over 2 meters, AVD) he sees the body of a fallen soldier (Silvertop, AVD) lying on the Lepelstraat side. At that moment, Peters does not see any other wounded or fallen soldiers there, Orr and Thompson are already on their way to the hospital. Peters then fetches a stretcher with someone else (name unknown) and uses it to carry Silvertop to the churchyard. Silvertop is dressed in a coat with a fur collar and his body is wrapped in a blanket.

At the churchyard Peters sees how 2 German prisoners of war have been ordered by the British to dig a grave for Silvertop. According to Peters, the 2 Germans are very scared and then stand with their hands up against the church wall.

Peters then leaves the churchyard. In 1969 he also states that he himself picks up several dead Germans that same evening and buries them in the left corner of the churchyard.

On 26 October 2024, Johan Peters (not related to Egbert Peters) states to researcher/author Arno van Dijk that on the afternoon of 25 September, pastor Van Delft receives a request from the British to bury the Catholic Silvertop with a short ceremony in the churchyard near his church. Van Delft agrees and asks the 11-year-old altar boy Johan Peters, who is present in the church and rectory at that time, to assist him with the ceremony.

Around 6 pm Van Delft in his sacerdotal vestment and Peters in civilian clothes walk with a holy water chalice and holy water brush from the church to the churchyard. When they arrive in the churchyard and walk to the far corner where Silvertop will be buried, they see that the number of people present in the churchyard is small. Deliberately small, because there is no time for a long ceremony. Because the threat of a German counterattack on Sint Anthonis is still present and the British are still extremely vigilant after the events in the village that afternoon.

Van Delft and Peters arrive at the far right corner of the churchyard, close to the church wall, where they see a freshly dug grave. At that moment there are a total of about 6 men standing there. Between 2 British soldiers are 2 German prisoners of war, from the half-tracks, in grey combat trousers, who dug the grave. They are also still wearing their grey combat jackets over their white shirts, but their jackets have been stripped of all insignia and other military references. The laces have also been removed from their shoes. The 2 German prisoners, who were still very scared and stood against the church wall with their hands up, when Egbert Peters arrived in the churchyard with Silvertop's remains, now seem calm and are not being held at gunpoint by the British.

The British have already placed Silvertop's remains in the grave, in a grey-white body bag. Van Delft says a short prayer in Latin and then blesses the grave by sprinkling holy water over the grave with the holy water brush. Van Delft and Johan Peters then quickly leave the churchyard and the 2 German prisoners of war are ordered to close the grave.

All in all, the short ceremony lasted no more than 2 minutes.

Maurice Lock will also be buried later, in a grave next to Silvertop's, but Johan Peters nor Egbert Peters are present at that funeral.

Silvertop, Lock as well as Ellis (killed 27 September) and Wilson (killed 15 November) who are also buried in the churchyard, are not transferred to the then new CWGC cemetery in Overloon in 1947. Regulations are that bodies buried in an official churchyard may not be transferred. This explains why Orr does get transferred to Overloon from his temporary grave in De Rips in 1947.

Silvertop's gravestone states his rank at the time he was killed in Sint Anthonis: Lieutenant Colonel. His promotion to colonel was already underway and was subsequently awarded posthumously.

However, the rank on the gravestone will remain Lieutenant Colonel, as the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, manager and owner of all British war graves worldwide, including the 4 graves in the cemetery in Sint Anthonis, always applies the rule that the gravestone will continue to show the rank that the soldier had at the time of his death.



*The 4 British war graves in the cemetery in Sint Anthonis in 1945. From left to right Captain Ronald Ellis (who was killed on 27 September 1944 during the tank attack on Stevensbeek), Lieutenant John Wilson (who died on 15 November 1944 in a flying accident above the airfield between Stootershutweg and Tweede Stichting, one kilometer north of the Gemertseweg), Lance Corporal Maurice Lock and Colonel David Silvertop. This photo still shows the original wooden crosses on the graves, which were then replaced by the aforementioned metal crosses.
(Photo: Collection Heemkundekring Sint Tunnis in Oelbroeck)*



The original 4 metal crosses from 1945 which stood on the 4 graves. Over time, these have been replaced by the stone columns. Heemkundekring Sint Tunnis in Oelbroeck then restored these crosses and they are now in the cemetery standing against the church wall near the 4 graves.

(Photo: Collection Arno van Dijk)



(Photo: Collection Arno van Dijk)



(Photo: Collection Arno van Dijk)



*Gravestone of Maurice Lock
(Photo: Collection Arno van Dijk)*



*Gravestone of David Silvertop
(Photo: Collection Arno van Dijk)*

11. The German casualties

On the evening of 25 September, after Silvertop's funeral, eight bodies of German soldiers who died that day in Sint Anthonis are buried in the same cemetery in Sint Anthonis. They are laid in a row in eight unmarked graves in the far left corner of the cemetery, without a cross or stone.

On 27 October 1955, more than 11 years later, their remains are exhumed and transferred to the German War Cemetery in Ysselsteyn where they are reburied a day later, 28 October 1955.

The identity of only a few of these eight soldiers could be determined.

A detailed analysis of who these soldiers are can be found on this website in the separate file:

THE INVESTIGATION

Silvertop and Orr: the hand grenade and cover up theory

The truth behind the Sint Anthonis drama, 25 September 1944

12. The aftermath and tributes

The village

After the drama in Sint Anthonis, in the days that follow, the British carry out attacks on the newly constructed German defense line in the woods between Stevensbeek and Overloon. But in the meantime, the Allied High Command has decided that the British will not continue the battle there, but that the Americans will take over command. And they call in their 7th Armoured Division (nicknamed 'The Lucky 7th') which comes all the way from Metz (France) and arrives in Sint Anthonis on 29 September.

It will be the first step in what will soon turn out to be the bloody Battle of Overloon, in which Sint Anthonis will have to deal with a stream of 2,250 evacuees from Overloon, Vierlingsbeek, Vortum, Maashees, Holthees, Smakt, Venray and Wanssum, from the beginning of October. In addition to the 1,500 military personnel already present in the village, who will be accommodated in public buildings and, just like the evacuees, in private homes.

Many sick and wounded are also nursed by the sisters (officially of the Order Zusters van Liefde/Sisters of Charity) in their nunnery on the Brink, in the middle of the village.

A difficult period it is for Sint Anthonis, because food, footwear and clothing are becoming scarce due to the enormous number of people in the village. But the village manages to provide everyone, among others through fundraising campaigns and with the help of the Red Cross. Over time, various evacuees are also moved to other locations in Brabant, which reduces the pressure on Sint Anthonis.

On 9 May 1945, 4 days after the Netherlands is officially liberated, the entire municipality celebrates enormously, the lost freedom is now finally back! The reconstruction of the village, which had already begun, can now be continued with even greater steps.

Sint Anthonis will grow into a beautiful village.

11th Armoured Division

After Sint Anthonis, the division enters Germany and will achieve many successes there.

In 1946 that total success is aptly described by author and 11th Armored Division expert Edgar W.I. Palamountain in his book *Taurus Pursuant – A history of 11th Armored Division*:

"It continually hounded the German units facing it and crashed through defences on numerous occasions thanks to superb leadership at all levels and also a dash, élan, skill and determination that could be matched by few other divisions during the war. It can truly be recognised as one of the prize armoured divisions of the British Army at its zenith during the latter part of the war."

3MONS

The day after the drama in Sint Anthonis 3MONS moves to the area around the village of Westerbeek and stays there during the Battle of Overloon.

After the Battle of Overloon the regiment takes part in the Battle of Broekhuizen to roll up the German bridgehead of Venlo.

In February 1945 they break through the Schlieffen Line and move back to Belgium for reinforcements. In April 1945, 3MONS crosses the Rhine, advances into the Teutoburger Wald (Teutoburg Forest), but fails to secure the road to Ibbenbüren due to massive German resistance. At the cost of many losses, 3MONS is withdrawn and sees no further action during the war.

In January 1946 the 3rd Battalion Monmouthshire Regiment is disbanded.

After the Territorial Army is re-established in 1947, only 1 Monmouthshire Regiment returns.

After many shifts and regimental changes, this regiment is disbanded in 1967.

Since 2006, the Royal Welsh infantry regiment has been the true successor.

3RTR

The regiment stays in Sint Anthonis after the drama and will assist 3MONS in the Westerbeek – Oploo area.

After Overloon and after Brückenkopf Venlo is finally rolled up, the regiment will move on into Germany and will continue to have successes until the end of the war.

In 1969 3RTR merges with 6RTR, without changing its name and in 1973 - 1974 the regiment is deployed to Northern Ireland during the Troubles (1960 - 1998).

In 1992 3RTR merges into 2RTR and the name 3rd Royal Tank Regiment disappears.

Orr

After the war, Hubert's brother Cecil manages to climb even further in the army to Brigadier-General.

Hubert's and Cecil's mother, Evelyn Orr, dies in London on 19 January 1961.

Cecil Orr dies in Westminster, London, on 3 July 1963.

In 1969 Helen Orr is one of the sources consulted by the authors Martien Goossens and Jan van Gogh for their book *Oorlog en bevrijding in Oploo c.a.* (translation: *War and liberation in Oploo c.a.*, AVD).

Helen dies in Richmond, Surrey, in 2010, at the age of 98.

Silvertop

In 1947 a memorial plaque in the Minsteracres Church is placed, the Silvertop estate, in tribute to David.

Today the Minsteracres estate is no longer owned by the Silvertop dynasty. The last male heir, Charles Arthur Silvertop, who was only 3 years old when his father Francis was killed in action, sells the house, church, stables and 60 acres of land to the Passionist Congregation in 1949. The remaining part of the estate, including 15 farms, cottages and 5,000 acres of land, will be sold to Tyneside industrialist Charles Cookson (the entire urban area north and south of the River Tyne, Newcastle region).

The Passionists then turn Minsteracres into a monastery and successful retreat center.

Diana Silvertop, David's eldest sister, and her husband Brigadier-General Basil Charles Trappes-Lomax visit David's grave in Sint Anthonis a number of times over the years.

Diana's son John Trappes-Lomax also comes to the village on Tuesday 5 May 2015 on the occasion of 70 years of liberation of the Netherlands, at the invitation of Jan de Kleijnen (Heemkundekring Sint Tunnis in Oelbroeck) to visit his uncle's grave and the monument, the monument that was established in 1995.

David Silvertop is also still honored as a hero in Belgium (see chapter 14: The Deepening).



*The memorial plaque that was placed in the church on the Minsteracres estate in 1947. Some sources report that this plaque was placed by David's mother Dorothy. That is impossible, because she died in 1923. There may be confusion with Lady Heathcote, the sister of David's father Arthur. After Dorothy's death, she took care of raising David and his sisters.
(Photo: Tony Harding/newmp.org.uk)*



The annual commemoration of the liberation of Sint Anthonis, Tuesday 27 September 1966. The silent procession from the square in front of the church leads to the grave of Colonel David Silvertop in the cemetery next to the Breestraat. From left to right: Mr. Van den Daele (National Association of Belgian War Crosses, department Antwerp - Limburg), Mrs. Diana Trappes-Lomax - Silvertop (the sister of David Silvertop) and Mayor Jan Jans (of the municipality of Oploo c.a. to which Sint Anthonis belonged until 1994). The boy scouts of the Sint Patrick association from Sint Anthonis form a guard of honour.

(Photo: Fotostudio Jan Waarma, copyright holder Waarma, Jan (Riet Waarma))

Photo is the royalty-free download from the BHIC website (Brabant Historical Information Center, photo identification number ANT0280). Origineel Beeldcollectie Jan Waarma.



Follow-up photo of the commemoration on 27 September 1966 at the grave of David Silvertop in the cemetery next to the Breestraat in Sint Anthonis. Diana Trappes-Lomax - Silvertop lays a wreath at her brother's grave. In the background Jan Bellenmakers (chairman of the commemoration committee) and Gerdien Toonen (Sint Anthonis boy scouts). (Photo: Fotostudio Jan Waarma, copyright holder Waarma, Jan (Riet Waarma) Photo is the royalty-free download from the BHIC website (Brabant Historical Information Center, photo identification number ANT0281)



Detail of the Liberty monument / Silvertop monument on the Kaai in the city of Boom (Belgium), unveiled by John Trappes-Lomax, nephew of David Silvertop, on 2 September 2017.

(Photo: Original total photo on website Wereldoorloginbeeld.be)

Lock

After the war widow Una Lock will marry William J. Barnes and later they emigrate to the USA.

A commemorative plaque is unveiled on 4 August 1948 at the County Police Headquarters (now the Devon and Cornwall Police Headquarters) in Middlemoor/Exeter, Devon. The plaque lists 9 names of the policemen and employees of the Devon Constabulary who lost their lives during World War II.

The official unveiling takes place in the presence of relatives of the fallen. Maurice Lock is also mentioned on this commemorative plaque.

After the war, in Newton Poppleford the already existing memorial outside St Luke's Church, bearing the names of all local fallen during World War I, is expanded to include the names of all local fallen during World War II. The name of Maurice Lock is also present on this monument.

In 2001, Una dies in Kentucky (USA) at the age of 81.

And in 2017, a plaque bearing Lock's name is added to the memorial wall at St James Park, the stadium of Exeter City FC, containing all the names of the club's players and officials who died in service during World War I and World War II .



Memorial plaque at the Devon and Cornwall Police Headquarters Middlemoor/Exeter (Devon) with the names of 9 members of this force who fell during World War II. Bottom left the name of Maurice Charles Lock.

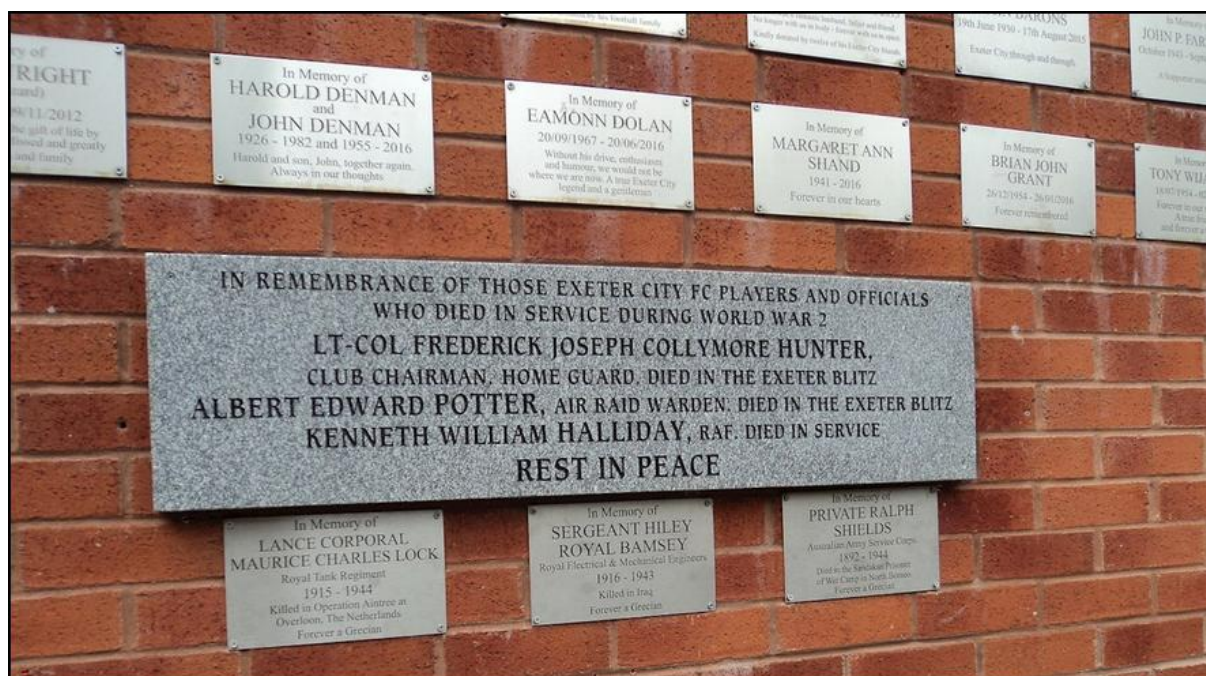
(Photo: Mark Newton 20.09.2016 © IWM/WMR-25191)



*The Newton Poppleford War Memorial, with the upper stone depicting the fallen from the village during World War I and the lower stone depicting the fallen from this village during World War II. The name of Maurice Lock is also mentioned on this lower stone.
(Photo: Devonheritage.org, Richard J. Brine)*



(Photo: Close-up of the roll of honour 1939 – 1945, detail of the full photo of Mark Newton 08.05.2015. Source Mark Newton 08.05.2015 / iwm.org.uk)



The memorial wall at St James Park, the stadium of Exeter City FC, containing the names of Exeter City FC players and officials who lost their lives during World War I and World War II. In this photo the plaque of Maurice Lock, added in 2017, can be seen in the lower left. (Photo: Collection Exeter City History Group/exectercityfc.co.uk)



Close-up of the memorial plaque of Maurice Lock. The text 'Forever a Grecian' refers to the nickname of the club: 'The Grecians'. The text 'Killed in Operation Aintree at Overloon, The Netherlands' is incorrect unfortunately. Operation Aintree was the first phase of the British attack on Overloon. That British attack started on 12 October, well after Lock's death in Sint Anthonis on 25 September. (Photo: Collection Exeter City History Group/exectercityfc.co.uk)



*July 2023, a beautiful tribute by fans of Exeter City FC (the club Maurice Lock played for in the 1930s), who laid a wreath in the churchyard in Sint Anthonis.
(Photo: Collection Overloon War Chronicles Foundation)*

The Sint Anthonis monument

On 5 May 1995, in Sint Anthonis a monument by sculptor Wim Rijvers is unveiled, entitled: *The sun of our hope*. It is unveiled opposite of the spot where the fatal event took place in 1944.

It is not only in memory of the tragic event on that 25th September 1944, but it is also a monument relating to all wars. Past, present and future. Whereby hospitality to oppressed people in war zones is offered in peace-loving countries.

The beautiful and impressive monument text on the plateau is by Martien Mahler, historian in Sint Anthonis:

*Waar onderdrukten gastvrijheid wordt geboden
worden grenzen verlegd
muren geslecht
en poorten ontsloten.*

Translated in English it says:

*Where oppressed people are offered hospitality
borders are shifted
walls are demolished
and gates are opened.*



Monument De zon van onze hoop (The sun of our hope) by Wim Rijvers, fork junction Lepelstraat – Kolonel Silvertoplaan in Sint Anthonis.
(Photo: Collection Arno van Dijk)

The monument De zon van onze hoop is a 4 meter high monument made of bronze. It consists of three human figures standing between two pillars that symbolize a gate. At the top between the pillars is a flat disc, representing the sun.

In 1995 Rijvers gave the following explanation concerning his monument in Sint Anthonis:

“The people symbolize togetherness; needing each other, essential for survival. The gate, two slender forms rising high above the three figures, protecting and also representing a passage, has become a symbol of freedom for me. Freedom to go beyond borders, but also imaginative freedom of the human spirit, of thinking, in short: a symbol of democracy. After all, dictatorships always close their borders, limit their own initiative, disrupt thinking. Art can be a means of signaling this. After all, art has to do with wonder and emotion, but sometimes art also has to disturb. Finally, the sun is a symbol of hope and light. The sun ushers in the new day and acts as a link between day and night and therefore has to do with the future.”



*The plaque on the monument De zon van onze hoop, with the text by Martien Mahler.
(Photo: Collection Arno van Dijk)*



*Design by Wim Rijvers of the monument De zon van onze hoop, 1995.
(Photo: Collection Wim Rijvers / Herdenkingsbundel municipality of Sint Anthonis, 1995)*

Lights on the War Graves

Every year on Christmas Eve, during the event Lights on the War Graves, candles are placed on all 281 graves in the Overloon War Cemetery by the Overloon War Chronicles Foundation, together with the adopters of the graves and the Veterans of the municipality of Land van Cuijk.

In addition, all known portrait photos of the 281 soldiers are placed on the graves.

Candles and photographs are also placed on the 4 graves in the churchyard in Sint Anthonis, as well as on the 2 other war cemeteries in the municipality of Land van Cuijk: Westerbeek and Grave.

Every year this event is an impressive tribute, with many visitors on both Christmas Eve and Christmas.

Also during the National Remembrance Day (4 May) and Liberation Day (5 May) the photos of the soldiers in the 4 cemeteries are placed on their graves. And in Overloon this also takes places during the Overloon Liberation Day (October 14).



Christmas Eve: the impressive yearly tribute Lights on the War Graves. Candles are placed on all 281 graves in the Overloon War Cemetery as well as all known portrait photos of the 281 soldiers, including Hubert Orr.

(Photo: Geert Arts / Stichting Overloon War Chronicles/Overloon War Chronicles Foundation)



Candles and photos are also placed on the 4 graves in the churchyard in Sint Anthonis (Ellis, Wilson, Lock and Silvertop), as well as on the 2 other war cemeteries in the municipality of Land van Cuijk: Westerbeek and Grave.

(Photo: Collection Leo Janssen)

13. The hand grenade scenario

A strange rumour that also continues to circulate and can be found on some Dutch and British websites is that Silvertop's and Orr's death would not have been caused by shots from German half-tracks.

Silvertop's and Orr's death, according to sources from those websites, was allegedly caused by a group of captured SS men walking through the streets of Sint Anthonis escorted by the British. The moment the group of SS men passed Silvertop's 3RTR tanks, one of the SS men allegedly threw a hand grenade, killing Silvertop and Orr.

In 2023 OWC researcher Arno van Dijk, also researcher and author of this Orr – Silvertop – Lock file, investigated this rumour on behalf of the Overloon War Chronicles Foundation. The investigation results are present on this website in the separate file:

THE INVESTIGATION

Silvertop and Orr: the hand grenade and cover up theory

The truth behind the Sint Anthonis drama, 25 September 1944

14. The deepening

In this section, various facts and parts of the story are further explained and, if necessary, placed in context. These explanations are listed below in the order in which they appear in the story above.

- Even though 25 September 1944 is a tragic day in the history of Sint Anthonis, weather-wise it was a beautiful sunny day, but with a maximum autumn temperature of 15 degrees. The wind was quite moderate and came from the west. In the evening it started to rain lightly.
- The history of the 3rd Monmouthshire Regiment, officially abbreviated 3MONS, of which Hubert Orr was Lieutenant Colonel, dates back to 1859. Then Volunteer Forces were established in various counties, civilian armies/reservist armies to further supplement the official British army. Similarly in the county of Monmouthshire in Wales, where 3 regiments were raised. At first those Forces operated autonomously, but after the Childers Reforms in 1881 that changed. In that year Hugh Childers, then Secretary of State for War, restructured the entire British armed forces. In addition, these Volunteer Forces were also placed in the British army. The 3 Welsh regiments in Monmouthshire became part of the South Wales Borderers. In 1908 the regiment became part of the Territorial Force and was named Monmouthshire Regiment, (1st, 2nd and 3rd). During World War I, several battalions of the Monmouthshire Regiment served on the Western Front. At the outbreak of World War II, the 3rd Battalion was also mobilized as part of the 159th Infantry Brigade and trained in Northern Ireland and England. The deployment did not come until 1944. On 14 June, 8 days after D-Day, 3MONS landed in Normandy, but the further advance was delayed for several weeks due to the fierce German resistance at Caen. Supplemented with reinforcements, the battalion succeeded, after the Germans had withdrawn, to start the advance through northern France and Belgium, during which, together with Lieutenant Colonel Silvertop's 3RTR, Antwerp was liberated on 4 September. Then on to the Netherlands where they were ordered to protect the flanks during Operation Market Garden. However, Market Garden did not go as planned and so 3MONS arrived together with 3RTR of Silvertop in the village of Sint Anthonis on that fateful Monday 25 September 1944.
- The 3rd Royal Tank Regiment, officially abbreviated 3RTR, of which David Silvertop was Lieutenant Colonel, was formed in 1917 under the name C Battalion Tank Corps as part of the Royal Tank Regiment, which had been formed a year earlier, which in turn was part of the Royal Armored Corps . During World War I, the need arose for the British to achieve more effective fighting power through the use of heavier machine guns and other possible options. To this end, the Machine Gun Corps was founded in 1915. Part of the Machine Gun Corps was the Heavy Section, later renamed Heavy Branch, which was the first division to use tanks on the Western Front. The name Heavy Branch was changed to Tank Corps and that name became Royal Tank Regiment in 1916. C Company was based at Bisley, in Surrey. After the World War I, the letter C, the third letter of the alphabet, was replaced by the numerical 3rd Tank Corps and in 1939 the official name was changed into 3rd Royal Tank Regiment. The regiment fought in France in 1940 during the Battle of France, in particular the Siege of Calais, but at the cost of many casualties and material loss, the regiment managed to escape to Dunkirk for the crossing to England. In the years 1941 and 1942 the regiment saw action in Egypt and Greece. At the end of 1943 it became part of the 29th Armored Brigade and was deployed from 1944 on

the Western Front, liberating Antwerp, among others. Subsequently, it entered the Netherlands, where the regiment arrived in Sint Anthonis on 25 September 1944.

- The insignia of the 107. Panzer-Brigade consisted of three antlers placed on top of each other. These antlers are also the symbol of Grafschaft Württemberg. As mentioned earlier, the 107. Panzer-Brigade was formed from, among others, the 25th Panzergrenadier division, or the Württemberg Panzergrenadier division. That division also used this same insignia.
- The county of Württemberg was a historical area with its origins in the realm of the House of Württemberg, the heart of the old Duchy of Swabia (duchy proclaimed in the year 915). The capital of the county of Württemberg was Stuttgart. From the 12th century until 1495 it was a county within the Holy Roman Empire. Later it became a duchy and after the collapse of the Holy Roman Empire it became a kingdom.
- The three antlers also appear in coats of arms and emblems in the constitutional successors of the county of Württemberg, including in the coat of arms of the free people's state of Württemberg during the Weimar Republic (1918/1919 – 1933). The antlers are still part of the coat of arms of the German federal state of Baden Württemberg and can also be found in the logo of car manufacturer Porsche.
- The first known coat of arms of the county of Württemberg dates from 1228, showing three black deer antlers in a field of gold. At that time, however, the three antlers were still placed vertically instead of horizontally.
- Colonel Erich Walther (5 August 1903 – 26 December 1948) took part in the invasion of Norway as a Captain in April 1940. A month later, in May 1940, he took part in air raids during the German invasion of the Netherlands, after which he was promoted to Major. He then served on the Eastern Front near Leningrad, after which he was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and then Colonel. After fighting in Sicily and Italy, in September 1944, he was appointed responsible commander in the Arnhem region and became leader of his own improvised Kampfgruppe. On 13 October, after Overloon was captured by the British, Walther was promoted by the German supreme command to responsible commander of the Fallschirm-Panzergrenadier-Division 2 'Hermann Göring' in the East Prussia region, on the ever retreating Eastern Front. Walther was then succeeded in the Netherlands by Superior Goltzsch. In doing so, Goltzsch took with him his own units of the 344th Division, which were stationed south of Kampfgruppe Walther. Thus the name Kampfgruppe Walther ended and the new 344th division was created, which was now named Kampfgruppe Goltzsch. Walther was promoted again during the battle on the Eastern Front, this time to Generalmajor, on 30 January 1945. On 8 May 1945, the end of World War II, he surrendered to the Red Army. He was imprisoned by the Soviets in the former Buchenwald concentration camp near Weimar, which was used by the Soviets as a POW camp between August 1945 and March 1950 under the name NKVD No 2. In that camp, Walther died on 26 December 1948.
- Kampfgruppe Walther's initial task was to recapture the bridge near Lommel, Belgium. That bridge was over the Maas – Scheldt Canal, also known as the Bocholt – Herentals Canal. Because earlier, on 10 September, by launching a surprise attack, the Irish Guards got the undermined bridge intact. While the Germans fought fierce battles further on in the Battle of Hechtel, this British attack cut the Germans off. In the following days, the Kampfgruppe tried to retake the bridge with fierce fighting, including bayonet battles and civilian casualties. But the Germans failed to recapture it and moved towards the Netherlands. The bridge was then named *Joe's Bridge* by the British, their tribute to the commander of the Irish Guards, Lieutenant Colonel John Ormsby Evelyn Vandeleur. His initials JOE formed the basis for the bridge name.

Field Marshal Montgomery then designated the bridge as a bridgehead for the Allied attack on the strategic Dutch bridges and the planned push from the Netherlands into Germany, Operation Market Garden. On 17 September, the first British troops moved across this bridge into the Netherlands.

- September 2004 saw the opening of the Airbornepad Market Garden, a walking trail from *Joe's Bridge* in Lommel to the John Frost Bridge in Arnhem. The trail passes numerous places that recall the Allied advance. The bridges, of course, but also monuments, cemeteries and museums. The total walking distance is 225 kilometers.

- The half-track, officially known as Sd.Kfz. 251 (Sonderkraftfahrzeug 251) was a German military vehicle built between 1938 and 1945. During these years 4 different basic versions were produced, Ausführung A to D.

- A from 1938 to ?
- B of ? until the mid-1940s
- C from mid-1940 to 1943
- D from 1943 to 1945

These versions were produced by the following factories:

- Hanomag in Hanover (chassis)
- Auto Union, (Werk Horch) in Zwickau (chassis, 1943 – 1945)
- Weserhütte in Bad Oeynhausen (chassis)
- Büssing-NAG in Berlin-Oberschöneweide (structure/superstructure)
- Deutsche Werke in Kiel (structure/superstructure)

- Many different variants of each version could be supplied. Officially 23, but there were also unofficial variants that were put together by the troops themselves on the Eastern and Western Front. The first variant (Sd.Kfz 251/1) was first deployed during the German invasion of Poland in September 1939.

A total of 15,252 half-tracks were built in the period 1938 – 1945, including all versions and variants.

- The maximum speed of the half-track on a flat road was 52.5 km per hour.
- The half-tracks with the Drilling were of the Hanomag Sd.Kfz 251/21 type. The Sd.Kfz stands for Sonderkraftfahrzeug and 21 indicates the variant number
- The Drilling machine gun was so powerful that at a combined rate of fire of 2,000 rounds per minute, it fired more than 3,000 bullets in just 90 seconds.

In addition to the gunner, the half-track crew of such a half-track with a Drilling consisted of the Fahrer (driver), the Funker (radio operator), 2 Ladeschützen (ammunition loaders with regard to the gun) and a Beobachter (observer with, among other things, a rangefinder). Due to the size of the Drilling, no more people would fit in such a half-track.

There were also variants without the Drilling, but often equipped with lighter automatic machine guns. That half-track version consisted of the driver and co-driver + a maximum of 7 other soldiers who fitted in the box.

The half-track version without additionally mounted armament on board, i.e. a troop transport version, consisted of the driver + co-driver + a maximum of 10 other soldiers who fitted in the box.

- The Drilling's theoretical rate of fire was 680 to 740 bullets per minute. But in reality this was not possible, because the 3 large ammunition drums linked to the Drilling held 2x 250 bullets for the two outer barrels and 1x 400 bullets for the middle barrel. These drums were empty quickly and replacing them on the spot took time. In addition, the 3 barrels were air-cooled and could not handle a continuous load.

Due to the presence of the Drilling and the other crew members, the interior space of the half-track was so limited that a maximum of 1 extra box of ammunition could be carried in addition to the standard 3 spare gun barrels.

Therefore, the half-track with Drilling was often supported by an additional ammunition half-track, which could carry up to 3000 bullets.

- The German crews of the half-tracks, while waiting for their Kampfgruppe at the Gemertseweg – Peelkant fork junction, took up residence in a couple of farms located there. The inhabitants of those farms had fled to a farm a little further away. The

Germans stole from the farms what was of their liking. After the tragedy in Sint Anthonis, shirts belonging to the Jans family were found in one of the half-tracks and also butter that came from the butter factory in Volkel.

- That not all half-track crews behaved badly is proven by the crew of the half-track stationed at Den Hoek. That crew did behave nicely and was still eating at the home of the then present occupants of the house at noon on that Monday 25 September.
- By the time British reconnaissance vehicles were carrying out reconnaissance missions from Sint Anthonis to Oploo on Saturday 23 and Sunday 24 September, men of the local resistance in Oploo had already removed plates from the signposts (also known as *hand signs*) and thrown them out of sight into the ditches. With the aim of making the Germans' imminent retreat more difficult.
- The British reconnaissance vehicle that drove up to Café Duivenbos on 24 September, where it was shelled by German troops, then drove back a bit in reverse. The British stopped near Jac van Kempen and his uncle Jan and made contact with them. Jan was even offered an English cigarette. With his own field of home-grown tobacco in the background, this was a big surprise for Jan. The British vehicle then turned around and drove back towards Oploo.
- The history of the village of Sint Anthonis goes back to 1312. In a will from that year, the village is mentioned as *Oelbroec*. *Oele* means a grove on a high sandy soil and *broeck* meant the surrounding marshy lowland. The village was also located on a sandy ridge parallel to the Meuse river. Only in the 20th century the last areas of lowland and moorland were reclaimed. Oelbroeck was part of the free Heerlijkheid Boxmeer (the free Manor Boxmeer). In 1477, Oelbroeck's chapel was elevated to a parish church and dedicated to the Egyptian saint Anthony (251 – 356, also known as Anthony of Egypt and father of monasticism). From then on, the village was called St Anthonius in Oelbroeck. Around 1590, Oelbroeck disappeared completely from the name and the village was officially called Sint Anthonis, but officially written as St. Anthonis. In 1994, when the new merged municipality of Sint Anthonis was created, the new municipal council chose to always write the word Sint in full from then on instead of the abbreviation St. Anthonis, which had been used for centuries.
- The name Oploo is a compound of the Germanic word *upa* (higher place) and the word *loo* (reference to a forest). Oploo's history begins in 1393 in which the Heerlijkheid Oploo is first mentioned, a possession of a landlord (in the sense of ruler) to which various rights were attached, known as delicious rights. This system was established in the Middle Ages by a feudal subdivision (a feudal system), of governmental authority. The last residents of the Oploo castle were 3 ladies, mother and daughters Van der Noot. They were nicknamed *The 3 Juffers of Oploo* (The 3 ladies of Oploo), so the castle was called *'t Juffere*. In 1778, the manor was sold to governor Willem V, but he had no interest in the castle, which was eventually demolished around 1800. Under the bridge to the castle, there are still two original supporting posts from the former drawbridge and underground there is still a subterranean corridor that runs between *'t Juffere* and small castle *Bekensteyn*. *Bekensteyn* is located on the road from Oploo to Sint Anthonis in the Sambeekse Hoek. *Bekensteyn* may be called a castle, but it was actually a fortified manor farm. Also in Oploo, on the Gemertseweg, is the estate and nature reserve de Groote Slink, purchased as a reclamation area in 1907 by the Twente bankers and also brothers Adam and Jan-Berent Roelvink. After which the estate was laid out in English landscape style and a villa was built that was once called *Groote Slink*, but is now called *Bronlaak*.
- Until 1994, Oploo was namesake of the municipality of Oploo c.a., or in full: the municipality of Oploo, St. Anthonis and Ledeacker (with 2 other church villages not

named in the municipality name: Stevensbeek and Westerbeek). After a municipal redivision in 1994, when the municipality of Oploo was merged with the neighbouring municipality of Wanroij, the new name became municipality of Sint Anthonis. It became part of the new large municipality of Land van Cuijk on 1 January 2022.

- The name Gemertseweg did not exist in 1944. The road was part of the Blauwenhoek, an area that belonged to Oploo. It was only after the war that the road's name officially became Gemertseweg.
The name Peelkant already existed in 1944, that area belonged and still belongs to the village of Sint Anthonis.
- Today, the Gemertseweg still runs from Gemert directly to Oploo. At the junction with the Peelkant, the Gemertseweg bends half right and ends a little further on in Oploo. In 1944, the Gemertseweg ran into the Peelkant, while the turn-off to the right led to Oploo.
On the main Gemertseweg – Peelkant road there was asphalt by then. The stretch from the fork junction to Oploo was more of a glorified gravel road, a combination of gravel and tar. This stretch of road to Oploo was a so-called B-road, meaning that the axle load was limited to 2 tonnes.
In those years, then road worker Mantje (Herman) Thielen regularly came to renovate that stretch of Gemertseweg by repairing the holes with a watering can of liquid tar and his wheelbarrow of gravel.
- In 1970, due to increasing traffic and to make the connection between Gemert and Boxmeer shorter, a redesign took place from the Gemertseweg – Peelkant fork junction to Boxmeer.
The Gemertseweg was extended from the fork junction, between the villages of Oploo and Sint Anthonis, to the fork junction just outside Sint Anthonis with the road to Boxmeer. This involved crossing the Lepelstraat just outside the village of Sint Anthonis by means of a viaduct that was modern for the time.
At the same time, the section from Sint Anthonis to Boxmeer was also renewed, a new road was laid next to the old narrower road giving this old road to Boxmeer the status of a parallel road.
Also, the entire stretch from Beek en Donk to Boxmeer was given the road code N272. The new road section between the Gemertseweg – Peelkant junction and the Blauwstraat got the official name Steenakker, the new road section between the Blauwstraat to the junction in Sint Anthonis got the official name Provinciale Weg. However, the new section between the Gemertseweg – Peelkant junction and Boxmeer was not asphalted. As was customary in more places at the time, thick concrete slabs were used, a so-called concrete lane. The problem, however, was the joints between the slabs and the slabs sagging over time. These factors often made a car journey along the new stretch a bouncy one.
- In 1944, from the fork junction Gemertseweg – Peelkant towards Elsendorp, the first 100 meters on either side were tall oak trees. After those 100 meters, after Swinkels' farm on the right, the road continued in an open area without trees. So an extremely vulnerable stretch for the Germans.
So the 5 half-tracks deliberately chose the shelter of the trees at the fork junction and the Peelkant to line up.
- The Gemertseweg – Peelkant fork junction had been known as *Ut Kruus* (*The Cross*) for years before the war, until even after the mentioned road extension in 1970. Indeed, at the fork junction there was a wooden cross. On Easter Sunday, villagers always walked together in prayer to the cross.
A new wooden cross was placed in 1935 to replace the earlier wooden version. This was solemnly blessed by the Oploo parish priest in collaboration with the local guild of St Matthias.
In 1962, this wooden cross was replaced by a modern contemporary cross that was placed on the Gemertseweg towards Oploo after the road was widened in 1970.
There was also a house in the fork junction at the time of the half-tracks, the house of Sijf Beckers. That house was demolished during the road extension.

- Stippelberg, through which over the road first the Kampfgruppe moved and a few hours later over the same road the British, was originally part of the vast heathland in De Peel.
Two acquisitions changed this area forever.
In 1884, Amsterdam lawyer and notary Walther Simon Joseph van Waterschoot van der Gracht bought a section and commissioned the Heidemij to start clearing to create forest and agricultural land.
In 1893, textile manufacturer Abraham Ledeboer bought another part and founded De Stippelberg estate.
Between 1890 and 1950, a lot of production forest was planted and forestry began.
The area was also used intensively for hunting and a gamekeeper was appointed who lived in the mentioned gamekeeper's house on the main road.
In 1993, most of the area was sold to Vereniging Natuurmonumenten.
- From the Stippelberg, in that night of 24 – 25 September, the Kampfgruppe's big equipment moved a little further on the right onto the Gemertsche Dijk. That road is now called the Hazenhutsedijk. In 1944, the Gemertsche Dijk ran directly into the Bakelsche Dijk and ended in the village of Merselo to the west of Venray. Thereafter, these sections of the Kampfgruppe moved northwards, ending up directly behind their own lines of defence, the front lines which were in the woods between Stevensbeek and Overloon.
- In all documentation and publications so far known to the Overloon War Chronicles Foundation concerning the events on 24 and 25 September 1944 in Sint Anthonis and the route taken by the Kampfgruppe during those 2 days, nothing is mentioned about columns of vehicles and men who drove or walked along the Gemertseweg to Oploo. Thanks to the testimonies handed over to the Overloon War Chronicles Foundation in June 2021 by Oploo brothers Johan and Herman van de Steeg (aged 12 and 9 respectively in 1944 during the events), it has now been proven that columns of light German vehicles and men from Kampfgruppe did indeed cross the Gemertseweg, along the half-tracks at the fork junction to Oploo that night and morning.
- The 2 brothers woke up in the early morning to the constant noise of groups of vehicles driving past their house on the Gemertseweg (in 1944 Blauwenhoek, AVD), just outside the Oploo town centre. From that moment, the 2 brothers watched the passing German troops and vehicles from their bedroom window for hours that morning. At one point, in a group, a truck passed by with a row of German soldiers in the open box. Suddenly, one of the soldiers pointed his gun at the two brothers, who immediately ducked in fear. The lorry drove on, the two brothers curiously raised their heads above the windowsill again and saw the next group of vehicles pass by. The memory of that German soldier pointing his rifle at them would stay with both brothers all these years and made them write down their exclusive memories of that day.
- From the village centre in Oploo near the windmill, the Germans turned right into the Watermolenstraat, towards the hamlet of Driehoek. After which they followed the route over the present Striep towards the Mullemsedijk and then straight on to Overloon. Where they crossed their own defensive line in the woods behind the Mullemsedijk. Until 1998, an almost dead straight road ran without interruption from the hamlet of Driehoek to Overloon, merging into Oplose Dijk and Baansestraat just before Overloon. In 1998, that dead straight connection was interrupted at the junction with the Mullemsedijk by expansion of the livestock farm already located there.
- Upon their arrival in Oploo from the direction of Deurne, a number of British troops immediately turned right onto the Loonseweg towards Overloon. To stop after 200 meters near Verbruggen's farm on the left, just after the Oploosche Molenbeek. This covered the southern entrance road and the British began manning positions there. The farm was and is the last house of the village on this road, overlooking the fields. To the surprise of the British, a short time later a German soldier on a motorbike suddenly

appeared there from the direction of Overloon, who in turn was greatly startled at the sight of the British. The British opened fire, but the German managed to escape.

- Upon their arrival in Oploo, the British lit smoke pots with orange-coloured smoke at the Gemertseweg – Blauwstraat junction. A number of tanks also wore orange-coloured cloths. This colour had nothing to do with the Netherlands or the Dutch royal family, but was a striking distinctive colour to identify to their own aircraft that:
 - The British had now reached this destination
 - These were Britain's own troops and so there was no need to bomb or fire on them

- The Kübelwagen that drove in panic towards Oploo came from the Gemertseweg – Peelkant fork junction. But this Kübelwagen has not been mentioned in any documentation so far. However, it was mentioned in the witness statements of the aforementioned brothers Johan and Herman van de Steeg, who lived on the Gemertseweg at the time. To this day, it is not 100% certain when this Kübelwagen arrived at the Gemertseweg – Peelkant fork junction:
 - Did this Kübelwagen come directly with the 5 half-tracks on Sunday?
 - Did it arrive during the night or Monday morning as part of a group of vehicles from the direction of Gemert?
 - Did the Kübelwagen come from the group of SS Richter posting at the Deurneseweg, perhaps for consultation?
- The Kübelwagen was a rear-wheel-drive car built by Volkswagen at its Wolfsburg factories. The car was used by the Luftwaffe and the Waffen-SS. In total, some 55,000 were built.

The Kübelwagen, designed by Ferdinand Porsche and based on the Kraft durch Freude-Wagen, the basic 1934 design of the later Volkswagen Beetle, was the Jeep's counterpart among the Allies. But because the Jeep was four-wheel-drive, it meant that off-road performance by the two-wheel-drive Kübelwagen was a lot worse.

The first Kübelwagen appeared as a prototype in 1937, but testing and deployment during the German invasion of Poland in 1939 did not prove extremely successful.

After some technical modifications, production began in February 1940 and the capacity of the boxer engine was further increased in the following years.

The car was used all over Europe and also in the deserts of North Africa.

The development of a four-wheel-drive Kübelwagen was halted in favour of the development of the Schwimmwagen, an amphibious vehicle based on the Kübelwagen.

Nevertheless, the engine used to develop the four-wheel-drive Kübelwagen (1086 cc) was reused by Porsche after the war, but in a passenger car: the legendary Porsche 356.

- A few weeks after the incident with the 2 Germans and their Kübelwagen in Oploo, witness Herman van de Steeg found a loaded German pistol with magazine in the garden behind his parental home among the tobacco plants. Lost there or left there by the German soldier who had hidden among the tobacco leaves during his escape. Due to the many rains in that period, which at the same time made the neighbouring Battle of Overloon a true hell, this weapon was too rusty to function. Whether this firearm was a Luger, Mauser or any other German type is unknown and, unfortunately, no longer traceable.
- From the Oploo church tower, the British shot 7 Germans who were hiding in a maize field a hundred meters away. That location of the Germans was near today's Holtmeulen street and the Lepelstraat (cycle path) towards Sint Anthonis.
- Residents of the hamlet of Sambeeksche Hoek, between Oploo and Sint Anthonis, which centrally included the then dairy factory ('Romfabriek') *De Eendracht* and the bakery of Jan Hendriks, were among the last to see Silvertop and Orr alive on that 25 September, when both, separately from each other, drove along this road to Sint Anthonis and were cheered on by the residents ('Hoekers'). From the factory, it is only a few hundred meters to the fatal fork junction Lepelstraat – Perdschemel.

- At that time, people used the name Sambeeksche Hoek or Sambeekse Hoek for the hamlet of Den Hoek. The area belonged to the municipality of Sambeek until 1942. Den Hoek is a street name of later date.
- Brigadier Charles Barnet 'Roscoe' Harvey (19 July 1900 – 28 March 1996) is known as one of the best British soldiers during World War II. Among others, he fought in the Battle of El Alamein, the Battle of Caen and was with David Silvertop and Hubert Orr at the liberation of Antwerp.
- For his leadership of the Battle of Overloon and Venray, Harvey received his third DSO (Distinguished Service Order), a high British military decoration. He received it for, as the jury report states, 'fine leadership, military skill and offensive spirit which permeated to all ranks'.
- After Overloon and Venray, Harvey headed for the Ardennes because of the Germans' Ardennes offensive. After the German defeat there, he again went full speed ahead into Germany. His finishing point in May 1945 was Lübeck in northern Germany, where he arrived just before the Red Army was due to arrive there. On the way to Hamburg and Lübeck, his men also liberated the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, 60 kilometers north-east of Hanover.
- Harvey was also responsible for the capture of American fascist William Joyce (who was active in setting up Nazi parties in the UK and made propaganda for the Germans as a radio presenter. Because of his nasal voice and made upper-class accent, his nickname was Lord Haw-Haw. Joyce fled from the UK to Germany in 1939, after which he assumed German citizenship).
Harvey was also responsible for the arrest of Heinrich Himmler, the leader of the SS, on 20 May 1945.
- Harvey was an excellent horse rider, an excellent steeplechase jockey and polo player. In the 1920s, at an Irish steeplechase competition, he was found to be 2 pounds overweight to be allowed to compete. He was then compared by a senior officer to Roscoe 'Fatty' Arbuckle, the American actor/comedian/director and movie star of the American silent film of the time, who struggled with being considerably overweight (obese).
The name Roscoe then stuck as a nickname to Harvey, who wore it with honour.
- Various arrival times are mentioned of Orr and Silvertop in Sint Anthonis on 25 September. Orr's exact arrival time is so far unknown, but he was earlier than Silvertop in Sint Anthonis.
Silvertop is known to have arrived in Oploo at around 3 pm. It is also unknown whether he stayed in Oploo for some time before driving on to Sint Anthonis.
The distance Oploo – Sint Anthonis is minimal. Should Silvertop have driven straight on to Sint Anthonis from Oploo, he would certainly have arrived in Sint Anthonis no later than 3.15 pm – 3.20 pm.
- There are also sources that report that after Silvertop was cheered by residents of the hamlet of Sambeeksche Hoek, halfway between Oploo and Sint Anthonis, as he passed there, he was shot dead 10 minutes later at the fork junction Lepelstraat – Perdschemel. Since the shooting took place around 4.30 pm, it would mean that Silvertop only passed the hamlet around 4.15 pm – 4.20 pm.
- It is not entirely clear who proposed the fork junction Lepelstraat – Perdschemel that day as a meeting location and to what extent the danger risk of an open space was weighed up or discussed in advance.
In the Harvey biography, *Roscoe the bright shiner*, the author Tim Fitzgeorge-Parker writes that it is Harvey who arranged the meeting location.
It is indeed understandable to some extent that it would be Harvey:
 - At that time there was an urgent need for consultation about the exact positions of the troops, a consultation location had to be urgently found.

- Harvey did not know Sint Anthonis and therefore did not know the fork junction exactly beforehand, probably only from military maps, and was therefore unable to estimate the exact risk situation on site.
- Harvey, as well as Silvertop and Orr, may have estimated that the meeting only needed a few minutes.
- The entrance roads of Sint Anthonis had meanwhile been secured by British tanks and anti-tank guns.
- Given the hierarchy of ranks between Harvey on the one hand and Silvertop and Orr on the other, it might have been that Silvertop and Orr might not have wanted to contradict Harvey directly about the choice of location. Even though Silvertop and Orr might have had reservations as they were in the village before Harvey and could therefore estimate the risk of the location. One of the 3 could have suggested another, safer location at the time of arrival. However, that did not happen.

It is almost impossible that Silvertop suggested the fork junction as a meeting point, as he always warned his men not to stop at intersections, not even for a few minutes. Orr can also almost be ruled out, given his last words: *"It was foolish of me to be standing there at the crossroads. I should have known better."* So he too knew the danger of intersections and fork junctions.

- The distance from the then fork junction Gemertseweg – Peelkant to the fork junction Lepelstraat – Perdschemel (now Kolonel Silvertoplaan) has remained unchanged in all those years.
This means that it is possible to determine exactly how many kilometers there were between the location of the 3 half-tracks (at the junction Gemertseweg – Peelkant) and the meeting location of the 4 British officers in the village (at the junction Lepelstraat – Perdschemel).
That distance is 3.7 kilometers. At the mentioned top speed of the half-tracks of 52.5 km per hour on a flat road (and those were the Peelkant, Molenstraat and Lepelstraat indeed), but also taking into account starting and upshifting to that top speed + the hesitation of whether or not to continue driving facing the British anti-tank gun at the entrance of the village, a total calculation shows that the distance of 3.7 kilometers could be covered by the half-tracks in just under 5 minutes.
- The 2 Germans who were killed during the elimination of half-track 5 (the last half-track to leave the fork junction Gemertseweg – Peelkant) at the current Peelkant 45 were temporarily buried at the fork junction Peelkant – Vlagberg. Later, their remains were transferred to the German cemetery in Ysselsteyn.
- The name Perdschemel, translated from the dialect it means *Paardenhemel*, (translated in English: Horse heaven) is the then connecting street between Lepelstraat and Breestraat. Perdschemel was named after a burial site of horses found there when the garden of the local monastery was expanded at that location.
During the Eighty Years' War between the Netherlands and Spain (1568 – 1648), horse corpses were buried at that location by Spanish troops.
- One of the 3 German half-tracks that arrived in the Molenstraat and there faced the anti-tank gun of Lock and his men, carried a white cloth. Unknown until now was what that white cloth was doing there, what its function was. When the Germans arrived in the Molenstraat, that cloth led to confusion among the British, as white is the colour of surrender. With disastrous consequences and Maurice Lock's death.
But that cloth, contrary to what some sources claim, was certainly not a deliberate deception by the Germans to the British. Because the half-tracks did not stop on the Peelkant during their flight to attach that cloth on the car, there was no time for that at all.
As is known now, the British in Oploo after their arrival at the Gemertseweg – Blauwstraat junction ignited pots of orange smoke to signal to their own aircraft that

they (the British troops) had reached their target destination (Oploo) at that moment. To this end, a number of British tanks and vehicles also wore orange cloths so that the British troops would not be shot at by their own aircrafts.

Reasoning further on that, these Germans, with exactly the same intention, also could have worked with a cloth, the white cloth in question, to show their own fighters that it were German vehicles posting at the fork junction and therefore not to be fired upon.

- In the late afternoon of 25 September, the British buried 2 dead Germans next to the dunghill near the house of the Van Sambeek family in the Molenstraat, opposite Van de Mortel's house.
They were 2 Germans who had been shot from the passing half-tracks by the British earlier that afternoon, from the cellar holes of Van de Mortel's house.
That it involved 2 Germans is based on local testimonies. Official reports, however, mention only 1 German who was buried there: Heinrich Rheinfelder (6 September 1925 – 25 September 1944), 3./ SS Panzer-Aufklärungs-Abteilung 10 (10. SS-Division).
At the time Rheinfelder was buried, his identity was unknown. However, an identification plate was present with him, but it did not bear his name.
Only 4. Kompanie SS-Panzer-Aufklärungs-Abteilung 4 was mentioned on that record.
A cross without a name was placed at his grave.
A striking detail is that Rheinfelder was carrying a portfolio containing 28 photographs at the time. Unfortunately, the portfolio did not contain his name either.
A British Red Cross soldier who was present when Rheinfelder was buried gave the wallet to Van Sambeek.
On 21 November 1949, the Nederlandse Dienst Identificatie en Berging (Dutch Identification and Salvage Service) exhumed Rheinfelder's mortal remains on the Van Sambeek property, making a report, including Rheinfelder's teeth.
The remains were eventually transferred to the German cemetery in Ysselsteyn and reburied there. In the process, Van Sambeek gave the portfolio containing the 28 photographs to the service staff and the portfolio ended up with the service staff in The Hague.
It was not until September 1957, 13 years after his death, that Rheinfelder's identity could be officially established and his family could be informed of the fate of Heinrich, who had been missing for all those years.
- The identity of the possible second German is as yet unknown.
Possible names are known to the Overloon War Chronicles Foundation, but no definitive evidence yet.
- A rumour that still circulates is that these 2 Germans were POWs from those disabled half-tracks and would have been executed by the British later that afternoon in retaliation for the deaths of Orr, Silvertop and Lock.
This rumour contradicts the 100% reliable testimony that the 2 Germans in question were shot from the half-tracks by British troops near Van de Mortel's house. Further research by the Overloon War Chronicles Foundation has also found no indications or evidence that these would have been British executions.
- Harvey states in his 1987 biography that as the half-tracks passed, he himself drew his pistol, firing bullets, hitting the half-track's gunner and driver. However, Major General 'Pip' Roberts, who was not present at the drama in Sint Anthonis, writes in a letter to his wife (letter dated 27 September 1944, so 2 days after the drama) that Harvey hit the commander of the second half-track while the commander was sticking his head above the roof of the half-track.
- Roberts also writes in his letter that the second half-track (so after Harvey shot and hit the commander of the second half-track, according to Roberts) hit a tree opposite Harvey and then hit Harvey's Jeep, then succeeded to escape but was destroyed by one of Silvertop's tanks.

- The inhabitants of Sint Anthonis were logically shocked when they heard the gunfire and took refuge along the routes by diving into (dry) ditches, fleeing into houses or hiding in cellars.
- Immediately after the incident with the half-tracks in Sint Anthonis, Father Matthias Goossens (Leo Goossens) took care of the residents at the locations in the village where the half-tracks had passed and where the shock still was great. After the liberation of Sint Anthonis, at the request of resistance hero Peter Zuid (Jan Borghouts), Goossens became chaplain to the shock troops, 1st Company. (For more information about Father Goossens, also see the OWC files about George Chisholme, Roy Abbott and Lionel Abbott).
- The number plates of 3 of the 5 half-tracks are known, see chapter 10: The Photos.
 - WH-1787981 = half-track 4, which was eliminated on the Peelkant at the entrance to the village. Visible in the film by Charles Manders, then electrical retailer in Sint Anthonis on the Breesstraat and a pioneer in the field of film in the 1940s. That day, he filmed the departing Germans in the morning, the arrival of the British in the afternoon and also 3 of the eliminated half-tracks.
 - WH-1787988 = half-track 3, which ended against a house in the Breesstraat. Also visible in the film by Charles Manders.
 - WH-1787983 = half-track 1, which ended against a tree on the Boxmeerseweg. Visible in the photo that turned up in 2024, after 80 years.
 It is remarkable that these 3 number plates are only 7 numbers apart.
- At least one of the half-tracks eliminated by the British was then transported to the meadow of Handrie de Mulder (Handrie van Sambeek) in the Molenstraat, opposite blacksmith Gieben. Children played in and around the remains of this half-track.
- Locals also scrapped all kinds of items from the half-track to reuse them. A cart was made from 2 track wheels. The signal key was dismantled and later served as a light switch in a room. Harrie Gieben, the blacksmith, scrapped armour plates from the half-track with his cutting torch and from these he forged various working tools for local farmers, such as hieps (machetes) and shovels.
- In the afternoon/evening of 25 September 1944, the Divisional REME (the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers) placed a large army tent in that meadow, to the right of Van de Mortel's house. For a long time the tent served as their improvised repair site for British army equipment. Every day the British cleaned that part of the Molenstraat of all the mud that the army vehicles to be repaired brought with them, because the inhabitants of Sint Anthonis had to be able to safely pass through the Molenstraat without slipping through the mud. Another British maintenance site was established on the Bosweg, at the edge of the forest (near the current Heksenboom).
- Van de Mortel's house immediately took on an important function on that 25 September, partly because the repair shop was located there: the British troops turned the house into a telephone communications center. Telephone connections were made to the front. Even after the front moved further away from Sint Anthonis, that communication center remained with Van de Mortel until April 1945. All that time, the Van de Mortel family lived in the large vaulted basement under the house.
- The exact location mentioned by Egbert Peters where he had seen the body of Silvertop next to the hedge in the Lepelstraat, was confirmed in July 2023 by the grandson of Helm Jansen who confirmed that his grandfather Helm, in 1944 living in the Lepelstraat in Sint Anthonis, had seen Silvertop's body at that exact same location next to the hedge.
- The data and details reported in this file about the funeral of Silvertop on 25 September 1944 are known through the testimony of the then altar boy Johan Peters who assisted pastor Van Erp during the funeral. Peters gave his testimonial to researcher/author Arno van Dijk on 26 October 2024.

- Unfortunately, no testimonies or further details are known about the funeral of Maurice Lock on September 25, 1944 or September 26, 1944 in the same cemetery in the grave next to that of Silvertop.
- Only the aforementioned statement by Egbert Peters from 1969 is known about the funeral of the 8 Germans who were temporarily buried in the churchyard in the far left corner on 25 September.
- A number of crew members of the half-tracks, wounded or not, who managed to escape the British that afternoon, then hid in the area between Lepelstraat and Peelkant, in the then small and large dikes. Whether the British have carried out another action to trace them in that area is unknown.
These Germans managed to flee during the evening and night, covered by the darkness, towards Stevensbeek. The book by Goossens and Van Gogh (*Oorlog en bevrijding in Oploo c.a.*) reports that a few of those Germans, with a seriously wounded comrade-in-arms in their midst, were spotted on the Rondveld that evening, where they inquired at a farm (possibly the way to Stevensbeek and Overloon).
- The house named Majoca on the road from Sint Anthonis to Boxmeer is a remarkable house where architecture is concerned. Built in 1934 and designed by architect George Rasker (1989 – 1973) on behalf of Harrie Kuppens. Rasker was born in Amsterdam and moved to Boxmeer with his parents in 1893, where he was responsible for the designs of dozens of houses and blocks of houses as an architect until his death. The name Majoca is a combination of the names of the 3 Kuppens sisters who were in the convent: Mathilda, Johanna and Catharina. The Kuppens family was very proud of that fact, because not only does the house in Sint Anthonis bear the name Majoca, but also a brother of Harrie Kuppens who had a house built in Heeswijk-Dinther at the same time put the name Majoca on that house in large letters.
- After the war, as a tribute to David Silvertop, streets were named after him both in Antwerp and Sint Anthonis.
In Sint Anthonis the Perdschemel was renamed Kolonel Silvertoplaan.
Antwerp still honors its liberator David Silvertop in various ways, including:
 - Kolonel Silvertopstraat, a 4 lane road south of the centre. The 2x2 lanes are separated in the middle by a double tram rail. The street is part of the route of the N148.
 - This street also has its own tram station: Antwerp Kolonel Silvertop.
 - The Silvertoptorens or Silvertopblocks: 3 apartment complexes located in the Kiel district in Antwerp on the Kolonel Silvertopstraat, but with Jan Denucéstraat as the official address. The towers are clearly visible from the Antwerp Ring and surroundings.
Architect is Jul de Roover. Start of construction was 1974, end of construction was in 1978.
Two towers are 71 meters high, the third tower is 68 meters high. The towers consist of a total of 525 social apartments.
Characteristic are the 3 different color accents that are visible, especially on the roofs of the towers. Tower 1 blue, tower 2 red and tower 3 green. The towers are owned by the social housing company Woonhaven.
 - Meeting center Silvertop, located at the bottom of the green Silvertop tower and also owned by Woonhaven.
 - Supermarket chain Silver Top Supermarkt BVBA, founded 7 November 7 2013, headquartered in Hendriksem, south of Antwerp.
- David Silvertop and the British liberators are also still honored in the town of Boom, south of Antwerp. A monument was unveiled at the Kaai on 2 September 2017. Prominently on that monument, under the text, is a large photo of David Silvertop.
- In the United Kingdom David Silvertop is quite unknown. The only memorial of him is the memorial plaque put up in the church at Minsteraces in 1947.

- The monument *De zon van onze hoop* (The sun of our hope) is located at the fork junction Lepelstraat – Perdschemel (now Kolonel Silvertoplaan) opposite the meeting place of Harvey, Thompson, Silvertop and Orr. In 1944 there was a large vegetable garden belonging to the address Lepelstraat 19 at this present monument location and the present adjacent access road to the residential area. That vegetable garden was then separated from the fork junction by a lower hedge over the entire length along the street.
- Limburg sculptor Wim Rijvers (1927 – 2010) is known for several sculptures in the provinces of North Brabant and Limburg. Including several monuments commemorating World War II. Rijvers' war memorials can also be found in among others Baarlo, Blerick, Kessel and Meijel.
He received his sculpture training in Maastricht, at the Jan van Eyck Academy. He used several basic materials in his early work, but only bronze in his later work. For Rijvers' explanation concerning the monument *De zon van onze hoop*, see the photosection in this file, 10.9 The graves, monuments and tributes.
- Martien Mahler was a primary school teacher in Sint Anthonis for many years, is a historian and has published a series of publications on the history of Sint Anthonis and the later municipality of Sint Anthonis, including detailed historical walks.
He also made an important contribution to making Sint Anthonis an art village. In 2017, he received the prestigious Sint Anthonis culture award *Ut Pèèrd* for his entire oeuvre.
- People living or coming from Tyneside are also called *Geordies*, due to their distinctive dialect and accent. One explanation is that the nickname derives from the region's miners, who used George Stephenson's special safety lamp in the mines.
Another explanation is that in the years 1715 – 1745 during the Jacobite movement, in which supporters of the House of Stuart wanted to reinstall those descendants on the British throne, the neighbouring county of Northumberland chose to support that movement, while Tyneside then chose to support King George I and George II from the House of Hanover.
- The Congregation of Passionists (also called the Congregation of Passionists and Passionist Women), to whom part of the Minsteracres estate was sold, was founded in 1720 in Ovada, Italy, in the province of Alessandria (Piedmont region). The congregation was founded by the holy Italian priest Paolo Francisco Danei (1694 – 1775), also known as Paul of the Cross.
Officially called Congregation of the Passion of Jesus Christ, the Italian word for suffering is *Passio*.
In the Netherlands, monasteries of this congregation were located in Haastrecht, Grave, Molenhoek and (the convent for women Passionists) in Sittard, among others.
- St Thomas, where Maurice Lock was born, is directly connected to Exeter by the Exe Bridge. The old Exe Bridge, a medieval arch bridge, dates from the year 1190 and although now a ruin, it is the oldest surviving bridge of its size in England.
- Newton Poppleford, the village where Lock lived when he became a football player for Exeter City FC, is a village in eastern Devon, between Exeter and Sidmouth, on an old Roman road from Axmouth to Exeter.
The village name means *The new town by the pebble ford* and comes from its geographical location across the River Otter. This was once a Saxon settlement and officially became a new village in the 13th century when the Lord of the Manor of Aylesbeare was granted the rights to hold a market there.
The area is famous for *market gardening* (i.e. growing fruits, vegetables and flowers) due to its excellent soil quality.
- The full match report of Lock's debut match, as presented on the The Grecian Archive website is:
"TAUNTON TOWN 3 EXETER CITY RESERVES 2.

Exeter had Stan Barnes in their team at right half for the first time this season, and Maurice Lock, of Newton Poppleford, making his bow as a professional, he having accepted the City's terms yesterday.

Taunton:- Packer; E. Curtis, C. Curtis; Sullivan, Townrow, Hutchings; Smith, Hawkes, Mason, Willcox, Bradshaw.

Exeter:- Chesters; Lock, Hughes; S.Barnes, Angus, Tait; Welsby, Risdon, Boundy, Ditchburn, J.Barnes.

After fifteen minutes Risdon scored for Exeter, Mason equalising. Ten minutes after the interval E.Curtis gave Taunton the lead from a penalty against Lock for fouling Smith. Boundy then scored for Exeter and Willcox for Taunton."

- The maiden name of Maurice Lock's mother, Eloise (Elsie) Lock, is Welshman. But on the site roll-of-honour.com it is mentioned that her maiden name is Auton.
- The British genealogy site Myheritage.co.uk lists Walter Quayle (from the Isle of Man) as the father of Una Jessmee Quayle, wife of Maurice Lock. But the British genealogy site Ancestors.familysearch.org lists Matthey Quayle (from Kent) as the father.
- Major General 'Pip' Roberts mentioned the term *Boche* in his letter to his wife (letter dated 27 September 1944).
The Allies, especially the British, called the Germans *Jerries* or *Jerry's*. The origin of that nickname lies in World War I, when the German Stahlhelm (introduced in 1916) was compared to a *jeroboam* (a toilet bowl for the bedroom).
Another explanation is the name *German* of which the first 3 letters *Ger* are pronounced in English as *Jer*.
Other British nicknames for the Germans in World War II were *Fritz* and also *Boche* (pronounced 'Bosch', from the French word *Caboche*, meaning big fat head).
The nickname *Kraut* (derived from *Sauerkraut*) was used by the Americans, while the nickname *Heinie* was also used by the Canadians in addition to the Americans.
After the war, the nickname *Boxhead* (again a reference to a large square head) was widely used by the British troops stationed in what was then West Germany.

15. Inspiration

The dramatic events in Sint Anthonis on September 25, 1944 still provide inspiration for dioramas and model building

15.1 Diorama *Nasty surprise at Sint Anthonis, Lepelstraat, 25 September 1944*

The dramatic events in Sint Anthonis on 25 September 1944 inspired diorama artist and military researcher Marcel Zwarts to create this beautiful, highly detailed diorama on a scale of 1:35 with the title *Nasty surprise at Sint Anthonis, Lepelstraat 25 September 1944*.

This diorama construction started in 2006 and was completed in 2017.

In October 2017 the diorama was awarded 1st prize in the Best of Standard Scale Modelling Contest 2017 category during the SMC show in Veldhoven, The Netherlands.

In September 2023 Zwarts gave the following explanation to the author of this file concerning the diorama, or 3D painting, the word Zwarts himself prefers:

“The two Sherman tanks were built first. As usually happens, it was by no means a standard job.

The M4A4 Sherman was a special one-off resin version and the M4 Hybrid at the front was a combination of many different parts. Much of it was self-made, such as the caterpillar tracks. All this effort was made to get the most perfect possible representation of the tanks I intended. After this, construction of the diorama began. I had already been on location a number of times to see what would work best for the setting.

I could not find any pre-war photos at that time, so the house at Lepelstraat number 14 was chosen. During the next site visit, the house was extensively photographed and thanks to an old friend who had been a carpenter all his working life, I learned what happened after the war. had been changed at the house. This was, for example, the division of the house, the window frames, the dormer window and the gutter.

With this information, construction drawings were made and construction began. Due to the lack of pre-war photos, things had to be invented.

The construction of the half-track, bicycle, figures, garden bench, tree and many other things obviously took a lot of time because nothing was and/or is for sale as standard.”



The diorama including the 2 Sherman tanks of the 3rd Royal Tank Regiment from Silvertop and the German half-track passing at full speed.
The house chosen for this diorama, Lepelstraat 14, is in reality only 40 meters away from the fatal fork junction. (Photo: Collection Eric Rijts / Marcel Zwarts)



(Photo: Collection Eric Rijts / Marcel Zwarts)



(Photo: Collection Eric Rijts / Marcel Zwarts)



*Detail photo. Clearly visible here is the yellow insignia on the Sherman tanks, the Black Bull of the 11th Armored Division.
(Photo: Collection Eric Rijts / Marcel Zwarts)*



(Photo: Collection Eric Rijts / Marcel Zwarts)

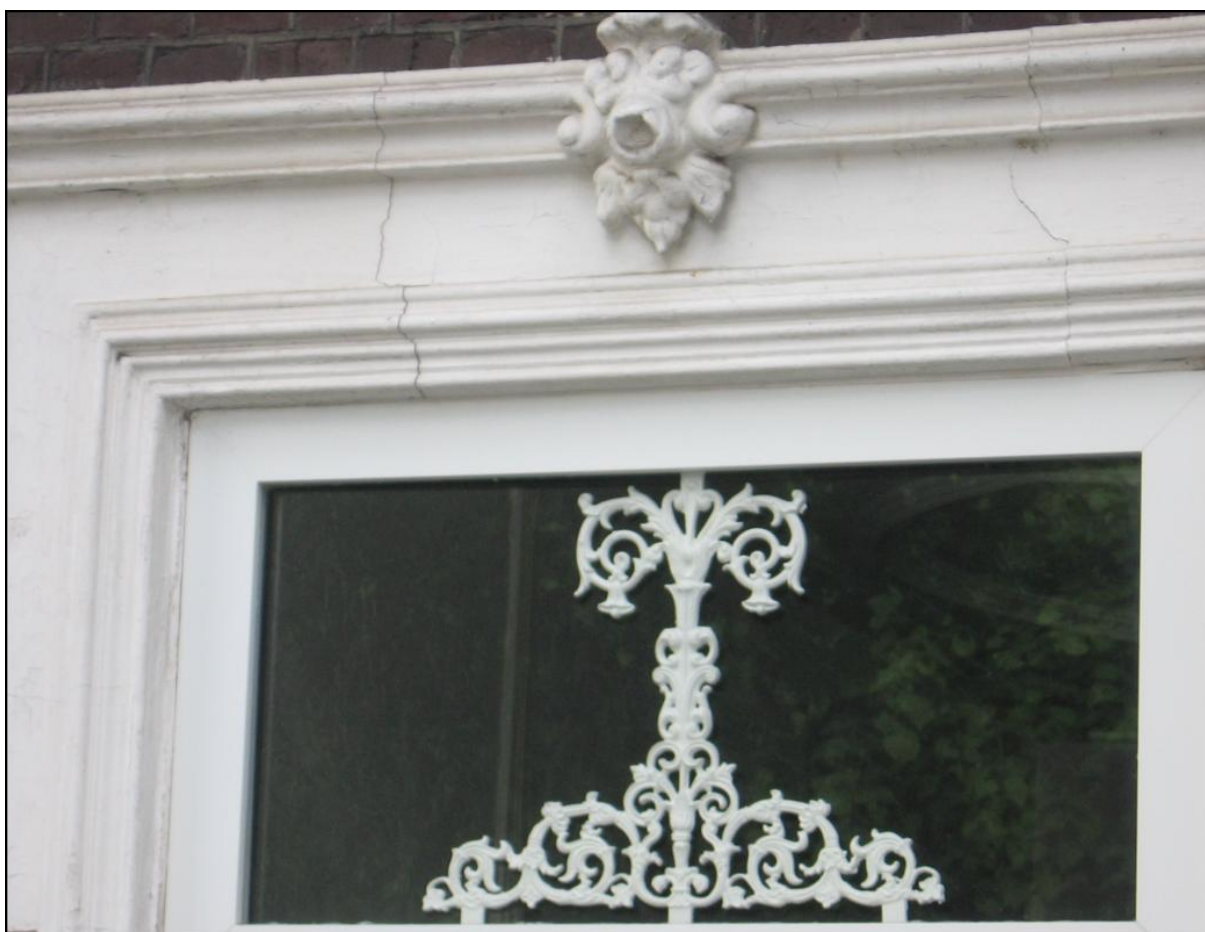


The half-track in the diorama was also made separately as an item by Zwarts, here on the pedestal with the German title *Es wird aus dem Gebüsch geschossen.* (Translated: Shots are fired from the bushes = reference to the camouflage on the half-track). Also note the insignia of the Kampfgruppe Walther, both on the front right of the car and on the text plate.

(Photo: Collection Martijn Visser / Marcel Zwarts)



*The diorama house under construction, note the door ornament that has been copied down to the smallest detail from the photo below showing the real door ornament.
(Photo: Collection Marcel Zwarts)*



(Photo: Collection Marcel Zwarts)



*Detail photo. View into the house including many 1944 details created by the maker.
(Photo: Collection Marcel Zwarts)*



Rear of the M4A4 Sherman tank, the second tank in the diorama.

Note the with chalk handwritten text on the back of the tank:

"Silvertop Bedankt

Pietje Boersma"

("Silvertop, Thank you

Pietje Boersma")

A fictional tribute to liberator Silvertop and his men, written on the tank by Pietje.

The name Pietje Boersma was made up by Zwarts, but is a regional name. That fact and the fact that sometimes texts were indeed written on tanks and vehicles makes this a very realistic detail.

(Photo: Collection Marcel Zwarts)

15.2 War game half-track 251/21

By model building specialist and war game specialist Rob Berends

In 2025 Berends made 3 half-tracks in the 20mm scale as part of a historical war game, which roughly corresponds to the model building scale 1:72.

The basic models of these half-tracks are of the Britannia brand and were built and painted by Berends after the half-tracks in Sint Anthonis. These models contain the Drilling and are provided with the numbers 411, 412 and 413.

Number 412 is, as is known, the number of the half-track that is pulled out of a house in images by Charles Manders.

In March 2025 Berends gave the following explanation of his models and the war game as a whole to the author of this file:

"I have been playing historical war games for a long time, in which battles from distant or recent history are reenacted with models and figures on a reconstructed, usually simplified, playing field based on a historical terrain. There are different scales (sizes) in which the game is played and different rule sets. At the moment we are using the rule set 'Rapid Fire Reloaded'.

The battles that resulted from the Allied operation Market Garden in the Netherlands are of course a popular subject because they are directly related to our own living environment.

The events in Sint Anthonis on 25 September 1944 are a direct result of Operation Market Garden and the units involved (the English 11th Panzer Division and the German 107th Panzer Brigade) had also been involved in the campaign earlier. The Sonder Kraftfahrzeuge 251/21 (FlaK 1.5cm Drilling) Ausfuhrung D, formed an important part of the equipment of the 4th company of the Panzergrenadierbataljon 2107 and these are also the vehicles that we mainly see in the images of the events on 25 September 1944 in Sint Anthonis.

A number of these vehicles could not be missing from the unit as I have set it up for Operation Market Garden in a broader sense (in particular the battles at Son en Breugel and Veghel). The models are made of synthetic resin and tin and manufactured by the British company Britannia. The construction and painting was done by myself. The exact camouflage pattern for the various vehicles is difficult to determine, so this version is mainly based on known color schemes from the period without claiming that this is the correct one.

Rebuilding and reenacting units and events from the history of the immediate living environment is therefore an interesting pastime that combines a bit of creativity and history. For example, in the past we have also extensively studied and reenacted the battle at Mill 1940."



*The 3 half-track war game vehicles numbered 411, 412 and 413.
(Photo: Collection Rob Berends)*

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Original series of Faces from the past created by author Arno van Dijk.

All episodes in this series Faces from the past have been written and composed by the author without the aid of any kind of artificial intelligence.

The Overloon War Chronicles Foundation aims, among other things, to retrieve the photos and stories of as many graves as possible in the CWGC cemetery, to pay tribute to the fallen there and thus keep this history alive. More information about the project and the Overloon War Chronicles Foundation at:

Internet: [overloonwarchronicles.nl](https://www.overloonwarchronicles.nl)

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