



Overloon War Chronicles Foundation
presents:

THE INVESTIGATION

Silvertop and Orr: the hand grenade and cover up theory

The truth behind the Sint Anthonis drama, 25 September 1944

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1. Introduction

Even though an OWC file appears to have been definitively compiled because all available information about the soldier, his history and the circumstances has been included, definitive is sometimes not definitive. Because memories or facts that have not yet been described can still emerge. Memories and facts that still deserve to be told and will then be added to a new version of the file.

If there is one file that is still being developed intermittently, it is the joint file on Orr, Silvertop and Lock and the dramatic events in Sint Anthonis on Monday afternoon 25 September 1944.

In 2021 I wrote the first version of that file for the Overloon War Chronicles Foundation. During my research for that file and also after the publication of the first version, I met very helpful people who were willing to provide me with the necessary new or additional information. I spoke to dear old people who, sometimes literally on the edge of their lives, still wanted to tell their war memories of those September days in 1944. What they had seen, heard or experienced. And who liked that their memories would be recorded via OWC and in the file for future generations.

There were elderly people who, in response to my specific questions, visited each other to reminisce about those war years together and to see if they could come up with an answer together. Visits that sometimes led to new memories and facts that I could then process in the respective updates of that file.

Because it is partly through the cooperation of those individual people, institutions and local history associations, knowledge experts and fellow researchers, that a file can be compiled.

All this meant that my file on Orr, Silvertop and Lock became increasingly extensive. And the most recent version will undoubtedly not be the last version.

Yet, for a long time, I had not been comfortable with one aspect of that file. A rumour that is still going around, but which I previously identified as completely untrue in my biography file on Orr, Silvertop and Lock. Because research into that rumour at the time gave no indication that the rumour could be true.

But then in June 2023 fellow OWC researcher Hans Ooms forwarded me exclusive new information about that rumour, information coming from the Silvertop archives. Then it was clear to me: now is the time to prove that rumour once and for all, or to declare it untrue for good.

Since its initial publication in 2023, this study has undergone several updates and additions. This current version, published in the fall of 2025, will undoubtedly not be the last.

Arno van Dijk
(Researcher/biographer/author Overloon War Chronicles Foundation)



2. The case

On Monday afternoon 25 September 1944 around 4.30 pm, the British officers Lieutenant Colonel Hubert Orr and Lieutenant Colonel David Silvertop, while consulting with 2 other British officers on a fork junction in the Dutch village of Sint Anthonis, are suddenly fatally hit by German bullets. Those bullets are fired from suddenly passing German half-tracks fleeing from British troops, then end up in the village and, in panic, look for a way out of the village by shooting heavily.

That is a fact.

Or not?

Because is the truth completely different, as a persistent rumour and several publications still claim? And is it even true, as some claim, that there is even a cover up and the real truth should not be told?

The official version of the drama

Strengthened by the Allies' halted offensive at Arnhem in September 1944, the Germans decide to reinforce their bridgehead Venlo. Part of this will be a defensive line to be set up in the woods between the Brabant villages of Stevensbeek and Overloon.

Kampfgruppe Walther then decides, in order to stay out of the hands of the advancing British army, to leave the village of Gemert in the night of Sunday 24 September to Monday 25 September and move via Elsendorp and Oploo to that German defensive stronghold between Stevensbeek and Overloon.

This Kampfgruppe is a collection of fanatical troops drawn from the Luftwaffe, the Waffen-SS and the Wehrmacht.

The route followed by the Kampfgruppe is twofold: the heavier equipment will go via De Rips and Oploo and the lighter equipment via Elsendorp and Oploo. To cover those routes from Gemert to Overloon, the Germans set up half-track vehicles and their crews at various strategic locations along the routes that Sunday late afternoon. Including 5 half-tracks at the Gemertseweg – Peelkant fork junction, west of the villages of Sint Anthonis and Oploo. Some of those 5 half-tracks are equipped with the infamous Drilling machine gun, an anti-aircraft 3-barreled 15mm or 20mm machine gun.

During the night, however, the Kampfgruppe's leadership decides to no longer march via Elsendorp and Oploo, but via the safer Hazenhutsedijk, halfway to De Rips.

Whether it is due to a communication breakdown or not, in any case, after the last soldier passes the fork junction on Monday morning, the 5 half-tracks at this Gemertseweg – Peelkant fork junction remain at their posts and continue to wait for the next units of their Gruppe. Until the moment in the afternoon when those half-track crews see no Germans approaching in the distance, but the first British tanks and fighting cars.

In panic and pursued by the British, the 5 half-tracks immediately flee across the Peelkant towards Sint Anthonis. But when they arrive at the village entrance, the Germans are shocked because there is a British anti-tank gun! The German vehicles slow down and some German soldiers who, when the vehicles drove away from the fork junction were just able to cling to the sides of the half-tracks, now jump from the half-tracks.

But also sudden confusion among the British soldiers who post near the anti-tank gun, because where do those Germans suddenly come from? And do they want to surrender here and now? Because one of the half-tracks carries a white cloth, the international sign of surrender.

Lance Corporal Maurice Lock walks towards the half-tracks, but then the half-tracks suddenly give full throttle and Lock is immediately fatally hit by German bullets fired from the half-tracks.

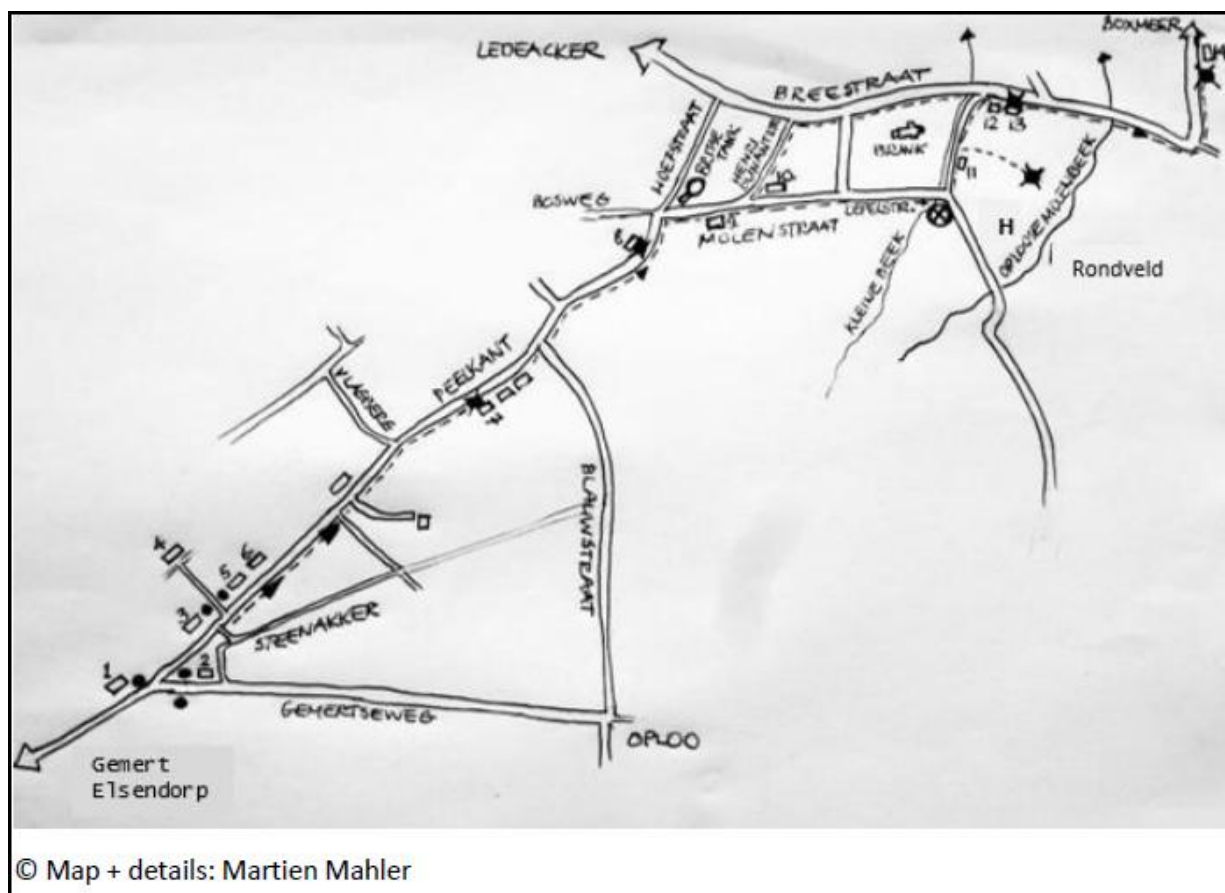
In full panic the Germans try to flee through the streets of the village with their half-tracks at full speed and firing away their guns. But to their horror the village turns out to be full with British troops who came in from the other side, from the direction of Oploo. Whereupon 2 of

the half-tracks on the other side of the village of Sint Anthonis at the fork junction Lepelstraat – Perdschemel unexpectedly pass 4 British officers (Brigadier Harvey, Brigade Major Thompson, Lieutenant Colonel Silvertop of the 3rd Royal Tank Regiment / 3RTR and Lieutenant Colonel Orr of the 3rd Battalion Monmouthshire Regiment / 3MONS) who are in the middle of an urgently scheduled meeting there at that fork junction.

Harvey and Thompson are wounded by German bullets, but Silvertop is killed right there on the spot. And Orr is so badly wounded that he dies on the way to the field hospital in Deurne.

(The full extended version of the Orr, Silvertop and Lock file, including all events in the days leading up to the tragedy and those following and an extensive photo section, can be found on the Overloon War Chronicles website).

Map Gemertseweg, Peelkant and Sint Anthonis:



- 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

The alternative truth?

But a persistent rumour is still that the deaths of Silvertop and Orr were allegedly not caused by shots from the passing German half-tracks.

Their deaths, according to those rumours, would be caused by a group of SS men captured in the village who were walking through the streets of Sint Anthonis accompanied by the British that afternoon. At the moment the group of SS men passed Silvertop's regiment's tanks at the fork junction and walked past the British officers Silvertop, Orr, Harvey and Thompson who were consulting there, one of the SS men allegedly threw a hand grenade at the 4 officers. Resulting in the deaths of Silvertop and Orr. After which the British troops allegedly retaliated immediately by shooting all the SS men on the spot.

According to the proponents/believers of this alternative truth, the hand grenade scenario and the executions thereafter had to be hushed up as the executions would have meant possible war crimes committed by the British in Sint Anthonis. And therefore the bullet scenario (the shots fired from the half-tracks) would have been established as the official truth as early as 1944.

So all in all, this alternative truth (the hand grenade scenario) indicates a cover up, or sounds like a conspiracy theory.

In this 21st century, we increasingly live in a world in which doubting the truth seems to have become a permanent part of society. Whether it concerns topics in politics, crime, or medical matters such as covid. Conspiracy theories and cover up theories can now occur in any area. Especially due to the enormous expansion of social media and the internet in general in this century, searching for like-minded people or evidence that matches one's own beliefs or opinions has become very easy.

Yet doubting a valid truth is not wrong. For thousands of years it was also thought that the sun revolved around the earth, until Copernicus began to doubt this and later Galileo proved Copernicus' theory that it was indeed the other way around.

But that is precisely the crux: because at any time someone can say that a valid truth is not correct and that current facts are incorrect, but then evidence, sources or witnesses must be provided which/who can actually demonstrate that it is indeed not true and that the truth is therefore different.

The investigation case

The case has now been established, the core of the research to be conducted is clear:

- To what extent can the hand grenade scenario, the executions and the associated cover-up theory be correct and can they still be proven with facts and sources?
- How strong is the existing evidence, the sources and arguments for the truth that has prevailed since 1944: the bullet scenario and the half-tracks?



*Lieutenant Colonel Hubert Orr
(Photo: various publications)*



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



*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 in my biography file on Silvertop, Orr and Lock as well as in this investigation file both ranks of Silvertop are mentioned, depending on the moment in time to which the description relates.



Lance Corporal Maurice Lock.

(Photo: Collection The Grecian Archive – The history and heritage of the Exeter City Football Club)



Major General Philip 'Pip' Roberts (on the right), commanding the 11th Armoured Division, with Charles 'Roscoe' Harvey (on the left)', Brigadier of the 29th Armoured 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)
iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205195344 © IWM B 9184

3. The hand grenade scenario

The departure in this investigation is the question of what exactly is being claimed in that hand grenade scenario. And where is that scenario discussed, where is that scenario published?

Well, in more places than expected.

Nationaal Comité 4 en 5 Mei (Dutch National Committee 4 and 5 May)

Amazingly, this already starts on Dutch websites such as even the official site of the National Committee 4 and 5 May. This is the official government foundation that among others has overall responsibility for the national commemorations and events on Dutch National Remembrance Day (4 May) and Dutch National Liberation Day (5 May).

On the committee website, under the category War Monuments, all kinds of Dutch war monuments are discussed. Including Wim Rijvers' monument *The sun of our hope*, unveiled in Sint Anthonis at the fork junction Lepelstraat – Kolonel Silvertoplaan in 1995. There, the monument stands opposite the location where Silvertop and Orr were fatally shot in 1944.

The National Committee says on its site about the memorial:

“Het monument ‘De zon van onze hoop’ herinnert de inwoners van Sint Anthonis aan de herwonnen vrijheid en vrede. Ook worden met het gedenkteken kolonel Silvertop en twee van zijn manschappen herdacht, die hier in 1944 door een handgranaat om het leven zijn gekomen.”

("The monument 'The sun of our hope' reminds the residents of Sint Anthonis of the regained freedom and peace. The memorial also commemorates Colonel Silvertop and two of his men, who were killed by a hand grenade here in 1944.")

In this short text 2 striking issues:

- First, the hand grenade. But on this website the committee does not directly refer to the source where they read or heard their information concerning that hand grenade. The committee does mention 2 sources on the site page regarding the overall specific site page:
 - The Land van Cuijk municipality. This municipality was created on 1 January 2022 by the merger of five municipalities in the region north-east Brabant. Including the former municipality of Sint Anthonis.
I am inquiring with the new municipality of Land van Cuijk. There I receive confirmation that since the creation of the new municipality, there has been no contact or consultation with the National Committee from the municipality. Former employees of the former Sint Anthonis municipality whom I speak to afterwards also cannot remember anything about previous communication with the National Committee (i.e. communication before 1 January 2022).
 - Second source quoted by the committee is a 1995 small commemorative guide, according to the committee published by the then Sint Anthonis municipality. Via Jan de Kleijnen of Heemkundekring Sint Tunnis in Oelbroeck, the local history society of Sint Anthonis, I receive a scanned copy of the guide from their society archives. It turns out that this guide was indeed published in 1995 by the Sint Anthonis municipality on the occasion of 50 years of liberation. The guide includes a description of the monument by Rijvers himself, plus poems and photos of artworks by local lyricists and local artists.
The only poem in that collection that relates directly to Silvertop and his death is the poem *Perdshimmel*, written by Nils van Beek. But in his poem, Van Beek mentions the word *shot*, not a *hand grenade* or something similar. So the guide has no connection to the committee's comment that Silvertop would have been killed by a hand grenade.

- The second thing that stands out in the text on the committee's site is that the committee mentions '*Silvertop and two of his men*' who were allegedly killed together with Silvertop at that spot. But the personal names of those two men are not mentioned by the committee there.

Does the committee perhaps mean Lance Corporal Maurice Lock, of Silvertop's regiment 3RTR? But Lock was killed just a minute before Silvertop and Orr by German bullets from the half-tracks, but at the junction Molenstraat – Peekant, on the other side of the village. Lock who is buried next to Silvertop in the churchyard in Sint Anthonis.

And does the committee also perhaps mean Hubert Orr, who was seriously injured on the spot alongside Silvertop and died on the way to the field hospital? But Orr was Lieutenant Colonel of the 3rd Battalion Monmouthshire Regiment / 3MONS and in that position he was exactly equivalent to Lieutenant Colonel David Silvertop of 3RTR. And therefore certainly not subordinate to Silvertop.

So the committee site is inconclusive on what exactly the committee means.

In addition, the committee also posts on their site page a Google Maps map, showing the pinpoint where that monument is located in Sint Anthonis.

But that pinpoint does not mark the right location of the monument: the map shows the pinpoint halfway down the Kolonel Silvertoplaan on the left. While the text does correctly indicate that the monument is at the corner of Kolonel Silvertoplaan/Lepelstraat.

Following this indistinctness, I approached the committee. But unfortunately the committee does not reply to my questions about their text passage on their site and which sources exactly the committee used, so I remain pending.

To the Victor the Spoils

The hand grenade scenario is also described quite extensively by British author/historian Sean Longden in his 2004 book *To the Victor the Spoils*.

Longden has done a lot of World War II research and published several books about it.

Books written from unique perspectives, using oral interviews with those directly involved at the time as a source. He is also associate producer of a number of TV documentaries on World War II.

His book *To the Victor the Spoils* is an impressive and unique book. But at the same time controversial because in this book Longden describes the daily lives of British and Canadian soldiers during their battle in Western Europe, from D-day to VE-Day (Victory in Europe Day, the end of World War II). In doing so, he also focuses on all kinds of excesses of the British and Canadian troops such as vandalism, theft, excessive violence, atrocities, alcohol consumption and murders of their own unpopular officers.

On pages 271 – 272, Longden describes the fatal event in Sint Anthonis.

"The 3rd Royal Tank Regiment learnt, to their cost, the danger of failing to watch prisoners. After the capture of St Anthonis, on the border between Belgium and Holland, a group of SS prisoners were marched through the town. As they passed the tanks of 3rd RTR one prisoner threw a hand grenade at a group of British officers, killing the regiment's commander Lieutenant Colonel Silvertopp. The tank crews took swift revenge and every one of the SS prisoners was shot. However, the deaths of those prisoners was no consolation for the loss of a popular commander. In reviewing the retribution exacted for the death of Silvertopp one of his men admitted that under the Geneva Convention their behaviour was a war crime, yet the morality of such acts of revenge was irrelevant to the officers and men involved. The killing was not premeditated but a reaction to the situation that had been imposed on them. There would be no reports, no enquiries and no punishment. The most significant legacy was a heightened awareness of the threat posed by POWs."

(POW's = prisoners of war, AVD)

A very remarkable text passage, but unfortunately here Longden does not mention the source regarding this text passage about the hand grenade and the executions. Nor the name of the soldier who allegedly admitted that their retaliatory action would be judged a war crime under the Geneva Convention. Nor does his extensive bibliography and source list at the back of the book provide any clarity.

In addition, it is notable that Longden does not mention the half-tracks at all in his text passage and writes the name of David Silvertop with 2 p's, hence Silvertopp, which is incorrect.

The fact that Longden names Sint Anthonis as a border town between Belgium and the Netherlands also proves that Longden has not done sufficient geographical research on this particular part.

These observations do not alter the fact that this text passage is highly remarkable. For how did Longden get this story, who is his source, or are his sources for this text passage?

I decide to contact Longden by approaching his literary agent in the UK. The agent is very helpful and sends my request directly to Longden. But unfortunately Longden does not respond to my request and questions.

I think that is a pity. I quite understand that a journalist or researcher does not always want to reveal his sources; that is his right. Nor do I doubt the fact that Longden included the text passage in his book with full conviction that it is the truth. But in this case, more information on this text passage from Longden himself could be a breakthrough in this case.

Forgotten war hero

British amateur historian and David Silvertop-interested Bill Lawrence also once asked Longden about Longden's sources on that text passage in that book. But Lawrence too got no answer to that question.

Bill Lawrence, who died in 2021, often visited Brussels and Antwerp because of his profession, as he worked in Brussels for both the European Federation of Building and Woodworkers and the European Commission Social Dialogue Committee for the construction and building industry. He was also an advocate for workers' rights and an expert on asbestos.

Lawrence had become interested in the Silvertop family history when Lawrence became involved with the Passionist Retreat Centre at Minsteracres. Minsteracres had been the Silvertop large estate in the northern county of Northumberland for centuries. Most of the estate was sold by the last Silvertop in 1949 to the Passionists, who then turned it into a successful retreat centre.

Ten years after the publication of Longden's book, Lawrence wrote an article entitled *Largely forgotten war hero still honoured in Belgium* in the British newspaper The Northern Echo of 24 September 2014 under the auspices of Echo journalist Chris Lloyd.

Lawrence's article is about the fact that war hero David Silvertop is almost totally forgotten in his own country, but is still hugely revered as a hero in Antwerp and the surrounding area as their liberator.

Lawrence opts for the middle in his article: he does write in his article about the half-tracks in Sint Anthonis and the deadly shots from the half-tracks, but says that the circumstances are unclear. He then also mentions the text passage about the hand grenade and the executions of the SS men by the British, the text passage that seems to have been copied by him from Longden's book.

But unfortunately his article does contain a number of errors that prove that he did not conduct additional research himself in Sint Anthonis prior to his article.

Among other things, he writes that David Silvertop is buried in the small cemetery of St Matthias Catholic Church in Oploo and that the municipality commemorated Silvertop by naming the central square Kolonel Silvertoplaan.

And that while Silvertop really has been buried in the churchyard next to the church in Sint Anthonis since 1944, the central square in Sint Anthonis has been called Brink for centuries and in the village Kolonel Silvertoplaan is the replacement name for the former street Perdschemel.

It is also notable that Lawrence says in the article that the aforementioned monument *The Sun of Our Hope* stands in the middle of the Kolonel Silvertoplaan.

This may have been caused by the pinpoint on Google Maps already mentioned, the pinpoint that was also placed incorrectly in the Google Maps screen on the website of the National Committee 4 and 5 May. And which Lawrence therefore probably literally copied as the location of the monument.

The most remarkable error Lawrence makes when he describes the text on the monument plaque. For that text by former teacher and local historian Martien Mahler on the monument plaque reads in reality and since its unveiling of the monument in 1995:

*“Waar onderdrukten gastvrijheid wordt geboden
worden grenzen verlegd
muren geslecht
en poorten ontsloten”*
(“Where oppressed are offered hospitality
boundaries are pushed
walls demolished
and gates unlocked”)

According to Lawrence, however, there is a very different text on that plateau, namely:
“To remind the people of Sint Anthonis of the regained freedom and peace with this memorial to Colonel Silvertop and two of his men killed by a hand grenade.”

It seems to be a literal translation of the aforementioned text as it already appears on the site of the National Committee 4 and 5 May.

Unfortunately, also Lawrence does not provide any sources or evidence for the hand grenade or where exactly he got his information from in his article.

Yet Bill Lawrence does appear to have been in Sint Anthonis, namely during the commemoration of 70 years of national liberation between 3 and 5 May 2015, together with John Trappes-Lomax. John Trappes-Lomax is the son of Diana Trappes-Lomax - Silvertop, the sister of David Silvertop. John is therefore David's nephew.

Bill Lawrence and John Trappes-Lomax then came to St Anthonis at the invitation of Jan de Kleijnen of the Heemkundekring Sint Tunnis in Oelbroeck (the local history society).

That means Lawrence was in Sint Anthonis just over five months after his article in The Northern Echo. Whether he then also discovered on the spot his errors made in his article is unknown. As far as is known, after that he never published a correction or follow-up article on Silvertop in The Northern Echo, or in any other newspaper or magazine.

The cover up

And there are more articles and websites that refer to the hand grenade, sometimes literally copying passages from each other.

But nowhere do they cite any concrete sources, references, or names of witnesses.

Despite the lack of sources and evidence concerning the hand grenade scenario and/or the executions, some, as mentioned earlier, still see in this proof that it is a cover up. According to them, the truth about what really happened that afternoon in Sint Anthonis is being deliberately withheld. According to them, the shots from the half-tracks did not take place. Or

did take place, but then at least were not lethal. Because that variant, according to them, would only have been contrived or further elaborated to withhold the real cause of death (the hand grenade version, which may or may not have included the executions).

But in that case, why shouldn't the hand grenade version just be told? Then why a cover up? The answer can be found in the text passage of Lynton and Longden:

- If the British did indeed shoot the German prisoners on the spot after the hand grenade was thrown and that shooting was their immediate reaction to the thought that others in that German group might still have weapons or hand grenades with them, then taking out (read: shooting) the German prisoners can still be somewhat explained as self-defence by the British.
But if that was not the thought of the British, then it would be direct reprisal by the British and direct reprisal executions. And that is completely contrary to the Third Geneva Convention (1929) in which international agreements/treaties were signed on the treatment of prisoners of war at the time of an armed conflict.

In line with that, prior to the hand grenade throwing and executions:

- In that case, when capturing the Germans in Sint Anthonis, the British would not have done their job carefully, so one of those Germans was able to keep a hand grenade with him and thus managed to kill 2 British senior officers.

Clues

But with all these references to the hand grenade scenario, there must be clues and sources somewhere, right? And what can be found about the official bullet scenario and the half-tracks, how strong is the evidence?

I will approach this investigation with an unbiased, objective approach and I am open to all information and indications for both scenarios.

In search of clues, evidence and sources for both scenarios, I will approach a number of experts who, each in their own field, can contribute to more insights and hopefully the final solution.

My research will be a dive into known and completely unknown material. And even exclusive material that has never been made public, but which is provided to me and Overloon War Chronicles especially for this research. It will be a journey through unexpected things.

And that journey starts for me in the village I've known for so many years, in which I know every street and street corner: Sint Anthonis.



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

4. The fork junction

It is a sunny and warm summer day in 2023 when I ring the doorbell of Wim van de Mortel. For decades, Wim was the florist in Sint Anthonis with customers all over the region. Wim has often been able to give me important information regarding other OWC files, information that on a number of occasions even led to a breakthrough towards the solution of that file.

Today, I come again for Wim's memories.

Because as a child in 1944 Wim lived with his family in the house at the fork junction Molenstraat – Henri Dunantstraat, where on that 25 September the 3 remaining German half-tracks drove, while heavily firing, at full speed in front of his house (half-tracks 1 and 2) and along the side of his house (half-track 3). The German bullet holes are still in the side wall of the house today. During that exchange of gunfire, the family was in the large basement under the house, while on the ground floor, British troops who had arrived moments before were setting up a radio post.

Wim is still one of the very few witnesses full of conscious memories of what happened in Sint Anthonis during the war and memories of that Monday afternoon 25 September 1944. From him I would like to hear exactly what the fatal junction Lepelstraat – Perdschemel (now Kolonel Silvertoplaan) looked like in the September days of 1944 in order to better understand the possibilities of both scenarios.

He and I drive through the Molenstraat and the Lepelstraat, the exact route half-track 1 and 2 also drove towards the fork junction. I park my car in the little square opposite the bakery and we leave the car. It is the cobbled square in front of the old girls' school where, in earlier times, the Sisters of Charity, from the convent on the Brink, taught toddlers and girls. In later years, it was no longer a school, but the village library, later wedding hall and also charity shop.

In August 1944, education in this school stopped. And immediately after the liberation of the village, in those September days, on that square in front of the building, 4 local *Kraut girls* (young women from the village who had a relationship with a German soldier during the occupation) were cut bald, humiliated and booed by villagers. That too does war.

From the little square, Wim and I walk the last dozens of metres to the fork junction and stop at the monument *The Sun of Our Hope*, unveiled in 1995, partly in memory of the tragedy. In 1944, this spot where the monument stands and the present turnoff to the residential area, was a large vegetable garden belonging to Wim's family. In those years, that vegetable garden was separated from the Lepelstraat and the fork junction by a long somewhat lower but sturdy hedge. Wim confirms that the vegetable garden and hedge remained completely intact during the British entry on 25 September 1944. This proves that Harvey, Thompson, Silvertop and Orr in any case did not stand in that vegetable garden with their vehicles or during their meeting.

So the monument is not at the exact meeting site, which, however, is what many people think.

In his story, Wim takes me back to 1944, what the fork junction looked like then. The 1944 fork junction still looks almost exactly like today's fork junction in terms of layout. Apart from the newer paving, striping and an road elevation. On both sides of the Lepelstraat, there are large dense hedges over 2 metres high. Those hedges with this height look exactly like they did in 1944. And where straight narrow footpaths now lie along both hedges, there then was a very shallow and dry stream/ditch called The Kleine Beek. The Kleine Beek came from the

direction of Oploo and ran here under the Lepelstraat along the Perdschemel (now Kolonel Silvertoplaan) towards the Breesstraat and out of the village.

The course of this stream along the hedges at the fork junction is an important factor.

For Major General Philip 'Pip' Roberts of the 11th Armoured Division, which included the regiments of Silvertop (3RTR) and Orr (3MONS), wrote in a letter dated 27 September 1944 (2 days after the tragic event) to his wife, among other things, about the half-tracks:

"This half-track got nearer + there were several men on the outside of it who were all killed by a fellow in a ditch next to Roscoe with a Bren gun."

A very important text passage, because that text passage in that letter, part of the Silvertop archive, combined with what Wim now tells me about the undamaged vegetable garden and the course of the former dry stream/ditch, it is now possible to deduce the fact that the soldier was then directly across the street from the current monument in the dry stream/ditch and therefore Harvey, Thompson, Silvertop and Orr had their exact meeting location directly there on the verge next to the stream/ditch.

Wim also points out to me the exact location near one of the hedges where, on that 25 September 1944, then residents Egbert Peters and Helm Jansen (independently) saw the body of the fallen Silvertop shortly after the tragedy. Incidentally, that is not the exact location where Silvertop was killed; it was a few metres away at the fork junction where the meeting took place. But in order to clear the fork junction, the British laid his body in front of the hedge before he was to be buried in the churchyard about one and a half hours later.

Now that I have a thorough impression of what the fork junction looked like in 1944 and now I also know which residents lived in which house near the fork junction and where exactly Harvey, Thompson, Silvertop and Orr had their meeting at the fork junction, and I have thus been able to establish driving directions and firing directions, I can start checking both scenarios further.



Wim van de Mortel (1934 – 2025), in front of the house where he grew up and experienced the war. Fork junction Molenstraat – Henri Dunantstraat.
(Photo: Trots Sint Tunnis, no. 60, March 2025)

The fork junction Lepelstraat – Perdschemel (photo section)



The exact meeting location of Harvey, Thompson, Silvertop and Orr at the Lepelstraat - Perdschemel fork junction (the current Kolonel Silvertoplaan), where the low vegetation now stands (then a roadside). Location seen from the front of the monument on the other side of the street.

- *Coming from the left, the Lepelstraat from where the 2 half-tracks came, then follow the bend to the left into Perdschemel (Kolonel Silvertoplaan) and on the right (out of view) the second half of the Lepelstraat, towards Oploo.*
 - *In the middle of this photo a bus shelter is visible in the Kolonel Silvertoplaan, at which 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 oak tree before it turned onto the field road.*
 - *In 1944, the narrow walking path in the middle of the photo was an open, mostly dry shallow stream, called the Kleine Beek, which ran under the Lepelstraat at this point of the fork junction. Later, this stream was completely covered at this point with pavers to form a walking path. The bed in the middle was a stretch of roadside in 1944.*
 - *On the left the corner hedge that was already there in 1944 with exactly the same height as now, just above 2 metres. After he was killed and until he was buried in the churchyard about one and a half hours later, Silvertop's body lay next to the hedge, the Lepelstraat side, so just visible here in the photo on the far left.*
- Please note: Silvertop's lying 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 killed immediately is a few metres away, here in the middle of the photo, near the low vegetation. In the minutes after the tragedy, the British cleared the fork junction and opted to move Silvertop's body to the corner hedge.*

(Photo: Collection Arno van Dijk)

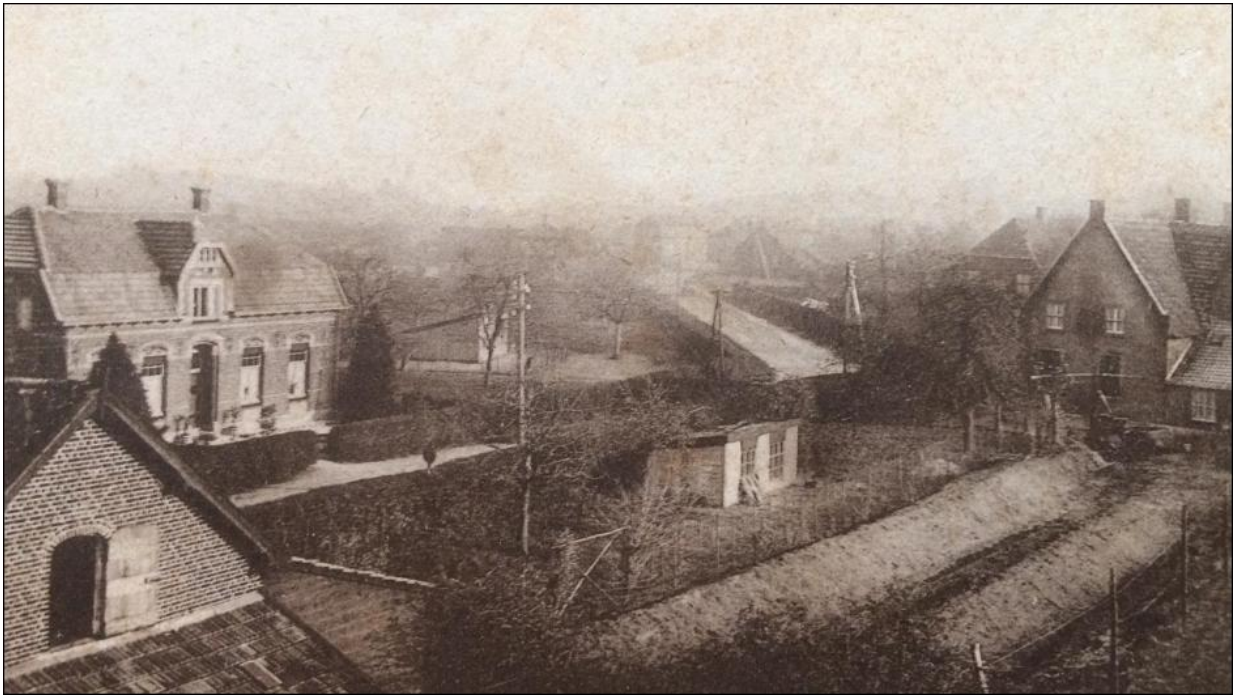


The meeting location of Harvey, Thompson, Silvertop and Orr seen from the Lepelstraat. At the fork junction left to Perdshemel (the current Kolonel Silvertoplaan), at the right to the second part of the Lepelstraat, towards Oploo. Silvertop's body lay to the left near the corner of the hedge. (Photo: Collection Arno van Dijk)



The fork junction overlooking the Lepelstraat from which the 2 half-tracks came. On the left (out of view) the monument, on the right the meeting location. In front of both high hedges, which were already present in 1944, the Kleine Beek flowed, now a walking path. (Photo: Collection Arno van Dijk)

The route of the half-tracks in the village (photo section)



Sint Anthonis, first part of the Molenstraat circa 1930 (but still current 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, 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 at the end of that street, in front of the house in the distance, turned right into the Breestraat.

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

Photo was taken from the former mill on the Molenstraat.

(Photo: Collection Frans van Sambeek).



First part of the Lepelstraat, just after World War 2. On the left the lawn that borders the village square Brink. On the right the shop of the shoemaker Cranen and the cafe Janssen with the wooden bench 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 the Van de Mortel house automatically entered the Lepelstraat at this point (right side of the photo). This street and also 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). In the back of the photo, on the right side, again the piece of 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.

At the end of the street the signpost is visible. 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 Perdschemel, but now seen from the other side, from the Breestraat. The large building on the left was the Agricultural School, built in 1925.

Half-track 1 came here from the Perdschemel and turned left here on the photo into the Breestraat into the direction of Boxmeer.

Half-track 3, which previously at the fork junction at Van de Mortel chose to drive directly to the Breestraat and then passed the Brink on the north side, came from the right at 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 metres and drove into a farm there.

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

5. The War Diaries

Are there perhaps any clues about the hand grenade or executions to be found in the official War Diaries of the British regiments that entered Sint Anthonis during that afternoon?

During World War II, British regiments each kept their own war diaries. Each regiment kept a daily record of its activities or operations that day and at which locations. Shown briefly, but complete and therefore tactical and strategic information for the higher command and directly from the field. The Overloon War Chronicles Foundation has a large collection of war diaries from that period in the OWC archive. OWC researcher Piet Peters is, among others, an expert on war diaries and thus the right person to provide me with the materials I am looking for.

5.1 The schedule

Important to know is where in the divisional chart the regiments were located.

We are talking about the 11th Armoured Division:

- Part of that 11th Armoured Division was 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 was the 3rd Royal Tank Regiment (3RTR) under the command of Lieutenant Colonel David Silvertop.
- Part of the 159th Infantry Brigade was the 3rd Battalion Monmouthshire Regiment (3MONS) under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Hubert Orr.

Schematically:

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)

During the course of that 25 September 1944, British battalions and regiments arrived in Sint Anthonis from various sides.

3MONS and 3RTR entered the village via De Rips and Oploo.

2FFY and 15/19H entered Sint Anthonis via Gemert, Elsendorp and then via the Peelkant. In which the A Squadron fighter cars of 15/19H, having seen the German half-tracks on the Gemertseweg – Peelkant fork junction, immediately began to hunt down the 5 half-tracks and chased them towards the village.

4KSLI arrived in Sint Anthonis the next day.

In the war diaries of these 5 battalions and regiments involved, the following is written about that particular day, 25 September 1944:

5.2 The Regiment War Diaries

War diary 3rd Battalion Monmouthshire Regiment (3MONS, Lieutenant Colonel Hubert Orr) 25 September 1944:

DEURNE taken over by LINCOLNS of 3 (Br) Div and Bn advances to ST. ANTHONIS

Lt.Col. H.G. Orr seriously wounded, and died later at C.C.P.

Maj W.P. Sweetman (2IC) assumed command of Bn. 4 O.Rs wounded.

- This war diary mentions that Orr was seriously wounded and later died in the C.C.P. (Casualty Clearing Post = field hospital, also called C.C.S. = Casualty Clearing Station). No separate report on the half-tracks.

War diary 3rd Royal Tank Regiment (3RTR, Lieutenant Colonel David Silvertop) 25 September 1944:

1600 Leading squadron covering approaches from WEST, NORTH & NORTHEAST beyond ST. ANTHONIS.

1630 Brigadier visits colonel in ST. ANTHONIS, Lt.Col. D.A.H. Silvertop, DSO, MC, killed by armd car which came through village. 2 armd cars + 2 half-tracks K.O.

1630 Major N.H. Bourne, DSO takes command.

1700 RHQ in ST.ANTHONIS and in process of covering all approaches.

1800 Bn & 3 Mons firmly in ST. ANTHONIS.

- This war diary includes the report that Silvertop was killed by an armoured car coming through the village at 4.30 pm. It is also separately reported that 2 armoured cars and 2 half-tracks were knocked out. That description is remarkable, because in reality there were 5 half-tracks, but the first half-track that was eliminated half way down the Peelkant is apparently not included in this war diary.

War diary 2nd Battalion Fife and Forfar Yeomanry Inns of Court Regiment (2FFY, Lieutenant Colonel A.B.J. Scott) 25 September 1944:

During a 29 Armd Bde "O" Group at St ANTHONIS, two German half-tracks coming round the corner firing M.Gs shot up the party, wounding the Brigadier and the B.M., and killing Colonels Silvertop and Orr.

- This war diary reports the shooting machine guns (M.Gs/machine guns) from the half-tracks, the wounded Brigadier (Harvey) and B.M. (Brigade Major Thompson) and the deaths of Silvertop and Orr, where their rank is here called Colonel instead of Lieutenant Colonel.

War diary 4th Battalion King's Shropshire Light Infantry (4KSLI, Lieutenant Colonel I.L. Reeves) 25 September 1944:

- In this war diary no separate mention of the death of Silvertop, Orr and Lock or the half-tracks. 4KSLI arrived in Sint Anthonis only the next day.

War diary 15th/19th The King's Royal Hussars Regiment (15/19H, Lieutenant Colonel A.D. Taylor) 25 September 1944:

No opposition was met up to rd junc 6935 (the Gemertseweg - Peelkant junction, AVD) where about 4 enemy half track vehs mounting big calibre MGs were met. 29 Armd Bde were just in front of us on their route and reached ST. ANTHONIS half an hour before us. These half track vehs were chased into the village by the leading tp of 'A' Sqn and on reaching it most unfortunately shot up the Brigadier (Brigadier Harvey - Comd 29 Armd Bde), his Bde Major and 2 of his C.O.'s. Lt-Col Silvertop DSO.MC, Comd 3rd RTR and Lt-Col Orr DSO, Comd 3rd Mons who were in conference in the village. The two latter were killed and the Brigadier and his Bde Major wounded. All 4 enemy vehs were knocked out by 29 Armd Bde before they got away from the village.

- Here is a detailed description of the pursuit of the half-tracks by the fighting cars of 15/19H, the wounded Harvey and Thompson by shots from the half-tracks and the killed Silvertop and Orr. But remarkably also here 4 half-tracks instead of 5 are reported, again not mentioning the 1st half-track that was eliminated on the Peelkant.

5.3 The Brigade War Diaries

War Diary Headquarters 29th Armoured Brigade (Brigadier C.B.C. Harvey) 25 September 1944:

16.30 hrs 3 R Tks firm in ST ANTHONIS looking E. It was understood that W of ST ANTHONIS 15/19 H were in posn. Bde Comd went fwd with BM and held short conference with COs of 3 R Tks and 3 Mons. Without warning two German ½ tracks raced through the village shooting their MGs. CO's 3 R Tks and 3 Mons were both killed instantaneously. BM wounded and Bde Comd slightly wounded. These two ½ tracks together with two more were all destroyed by 3 R Tks.

- This war diary reports the meeting, half-tracks and machine gun shots from the half-tracks. Here, the bullet scenario is followed. Also mentioned are the wounded Harvey and Thompson, and Silvertop who died immediately on the spot. About Orr, here it is said that he too died immediately on the spot, but that is not correct: he died near De Rips, on his way to the field hospital in Deurne.
Also noticeable: 4 half-tracks, again forgetting the 5th half-track, which was the first to be eliminated.

War Diary 159 Infantry Brigade (Brigadier J.B. Churcher) 25 September 1944:

At approx 1800 hrs the Bde suffered some very unfortunate casualties when four half-tracks belonging to Battle Group Heinke of 10 SS Pz Div, trying to escape from ST ANTHONIS, shot up an 'O' Gp consisting of Brigadier Harvey DSO, MC, his BM, Maj Thompson - both suffering severe wounds, Lt-Col H.C. Orr of 3 MON and Lt-Col Silvertop - both being killed. During the night no reports came in and the Bde remained firm.

- Also this war diary reports 4 half-tracks, not 5. It also mentions shots from the half-tracks and the wounded Harvey and Thompson, as well as the deaths of Silvertop and Orr.
Remarkable here, however, is that this war diary is the only one to report that the half-tracks were part of Battle Group Heinke of the 10th SS Armoured Division.
However, the 5 half-tracks that stood at the Gemertseweg – Peelkant fork junction were from the 107. Panzerbrigade, part of Kampfgruppe Walther (see also the photos in chapter 6).
But a number of soldiers manning the 5 half-tracks were, within Kampfgruppe Walther, part of Sperrverband Heinke, a group of fanatical SS men led by SS-Stürmbahnführer Heinke.
Sperrverband Heinke itself also consisted of several groups of SS men, such as the group SS Segler and the group SS Richter of several hundred men each.
But also the complete armoured division SS Panzerjäger Abt. 10. fell under Heinke's command.
Most of Heinke's units had been added to Kampfgruppe Walther just before 14 September. But the armoured division did not arrive until 20 September.

5.4 The Division War Diary

War diary 11th Armoured Division (Major General C.P.B. Roberts), 25 September 1944:

At this moment four enemy half-tracks decided to make a bolt to the south from inside St Anthonis. In doing so they ran into Tac HQ 29 Armoured Brigade who were holding an Order Group at the time. Unfortunately the C.Os of 3 R Tks and 3 Mon were both killed in the ensuing melee. The Brigade Major was seriously wounded and the Brigadier very slightly. All the four half-tracks were destroyed.

- This war diary mentions the half-tracks, even though there is no specific mention of lethal bullets from the half-tracks. It does mention that Silvertop and Orr were both killed in the ensuing melee (battle turmoil, commotion).
This war diary also mentions 4 half-tracks instead of 5.

Conclusion: none of the war diaries of the regiments involved mention anything about a hand grenade, or German prisoners, or executions on the spot in relation to that day or in relation to the deaths of Silvertop and Orr.

6. The books and documentation

The war diaries, as mentioned, were written on the same day or the following day. But over the years, might more information have turned up about the events in Sint Anthonis within the regiments? Information that therefore could not be recorded in a war diary at that time?

It calls for a dive into all kinds of books. With the following results.

Several book publications do indeed write briefly about the tragedy in Sint Anthonis, but this is often limited to just the comment that Silvertop was killed by German bullets. So no hand grenade is mentioned. Whether or not the text passage in question, or just a sentence, is a cut-and-paste action from another publication. So with all due respect to the authors, we won't get anywhere with that now.

In order not to drown in the large number of books written over the years about the advance of the Allies from D-Day to VE-Day and the liberation of the Netherlands, books which could possibly contain a text passage about the tragedy in Sint Anthonis, I have to make a selection.

I focus on 6 important books directly related to the battle in the south of the Netherlands, or related to the history of the divisions/regiments in Sint Anthonis or related to the history of the village of Sint Anthonis.

Taurus Pursuant

The book *Taurus Pursuant - A history of 11th Armoured Division* was published in 1946. The word taurus is a direct reference to the black bull, the symbol/logo of the division. In the book, author Edgar W.I. Palamountain describes the entire history of this division. But does this official biography of the 11th Armoured Division say anything about the deaths of Silvertop and Orr?

Yes. On page 66, there is a text passage about the tragedy in Sint Anthonis:

"In the ensuing melée, the Brigadier was slightly wounded and his Brigade Major seriously; but the two commanding officers, Lieutenant-Colonel D.A.H. Silvertop and Lieutenant-Colonel H.G. Orr, were both killed. The division had no better leaders than these two and could ill-afford to lose them. It was of very little consolation that the halftracks were destroyed."

Palamountain unfortunately does not go into detail about the tragedy. He does mention the German half-tracks, the injuries of Harvey and Thompson and the deaths of Silvertop and Orr. Literally he does not directly mention as the cause of death the bullets fired from the German half-tracks. He does mention the word *melée*, which means: battle chaos, commotion.

Yet his description in this passage of text is closer to the bullet scenario than to the hand grenade scenario.

After Antwerp: the long haul to victory

In the war diary of 25 September and 26 September of the 4th Battalion King's Shropshire Light Infantry (4KSLI), there is no report on the tragedy in Sint Anthonis, as previously mentioned. Yet in his 1993 book *After Antwerp: the long haul to victory*, author Major Ned Thornburn, the chronicler of the 4th King's Shropshire Light Infantry, writes a short passage about that day and about the half-tracks who shot Silvertop and Orr in Sint Anthonis during their rush:

"Brigadier Harvey, commander of 29 Brigade, had gone forward to meet his commanding officers when two German half-tracks were flushed out by tanks from the other Brigade. They bolted for safety southwards, their machine-guns firing at random. The Brigadier was slightly wounded but his two commanding officers, Lieut-Colonel Silvertop of 3 Royal Tanks and Lieut-Colonel Orr of the Monmouths, both outstanding leaders, were killed outright. It was indeed an expensive 11 mile advance and another gross piece of ill-fortune."

Einddoel Maas (Final target Maas)

Authors Jack Didden and Maarten Swarts published this book in 1984 about the battle in the south of the Netherlands during September – December 1944.

It also mentions Sint Anthonis on pages 104 and 105 and describes the drama:

“Op datzelfde moment hield de 29^{ste} brigade een bespreking vlak bij het dorpscentrum. Brigade-generaal Harvey, de bevelhebber, pleegde juist overleg met twee van zijn bataljonscommandanten, Silvertop (3e Royal Tanks) en Orr (3e Monmouths) toen de halfrupsen het dorp in kwamen stuiven. De Duitse bemanning vuurde in het voorbijgaan met hun mitrailleurs en de stafofficieren die in een groepje bijeen stonden werden allemaal geraakt. Silvertop en Orr sneuvelden. Harvey werd licht gewond en de brigade-majoor, Thompson, raakte zwaar gewond.”

(“At the same time, the 29th brigade was holding a meeting close to the village centre. Brigadier-General Harvey, the commanding officer, was just consulting with two of his battalion commanders, Silvertop (3rd Royal Tanks) and Orr (3rd Monmouths) when the half-trucks came dashing into the village. The German crew fired their machine guns when passing and the staff officers gathered in a group were all hit. Silvertop and Orr were killed. Harvey was slightly wounded and the Brigade Major, Thompson, was badly wounded.”)

On the same pages, a separate text passage describes:

“Vol gas stoven de Duitse halfrupsen langs de Shermans door de Lepelstraat, terwijl ze uit hun Drilling-mitrailleurs vuurden. Op de hoek van deze straat en de huidige Silvertoplaan werden de vier Britse officieren getroffen.”

(“At full speed, the German half-trucks passed the Shermans down the Lepelstraat, firing their Drilling machine guns. At the corner of this street and today's Kolonel Silvertoplaan, the four British officers were hit.”)

Apart from the fact that Orr was not killed immediately, but died on the way to the field hospital, here the bullet scenario is directly followed. So in this book there is no report concerning a thrown hand grenade or executions by the British in Sint Anthonis.

In the first text passage, the authors mention machine guns (i.e. a broader description), but in the second text passage they specifically mention the Drilling machine guns. However, here they do not mention that specifically Silvertop and Orr were hit by bullets from the Drilling. I refer here to chapter 9 in my investigation: Machine-gun bullets or bullets from the Drilling. In that chapter I discuss this topic in more detail.

Kampfgruppe Walther and Panzerbrigade 107

Another book by authors Jack Didden and Maarten Swarts, but this time a 2017 English-language book on the history of the Kampfgruppe. A big book, 428 pages, with lots of details and photos. The tragedy in Sint Anthonis is also described, on pages 250 to 254 to be precise. With on page 254 the important text passage:

“Harvey was the first to notice that they sounded like German machine-guns. But it was already too late. A Panzergrenadier fired the triple 1,5 cm machine-guns with deadly effect as the half-tracks came racing towards the fork in the road. Bullets blew at the officers. Silvertop was killed on the spot and Orr was so seriously wounded that he died at the Casualty Clearing Post.”

In this book, the authors again follow the bullet scenario, i.e. shots from the half-tracks as the cause of death. Here is mentioned that Orr died at the Casualty Clearing Post (field hospital), but he died on the way to the field hospital.

But the most important thing is that the authors once again follow the bullet scenario in this book. So again, do not mention a thrown hand grenade or executions by the British in Sint Anthonis.

However, there is a remarkable passage of text that should be mentioned:

The authors write in this Kampfgruppe book on page 253 that at the Molenstraat junction (the location where Lance Corporal Lock was killed), the British tank commander of the

Shermantank that stood there and a platoon sergeant were killed by bullets from the suddenly advancing half-tracks.

But as far as we know, no Sherman tank stood at that site at all. Lock's anti-tank gun did. So there can be absolutely no question of a killed tank commander at that location, nor of a killed sergeant, because Lance Corporal Maurice Lock is the only one killed at that location.

But the tank commander and sergeant, in that case, just as Lock was, would be directly part of Silvertop's 3RTR.

The tank commander and the sergeant, 2 killed men of Silvertop's regiment. Hey, where did we come across this claim about 2 fallen men of Silvertop's regiment before? Indeed, on the website of the National Committee 4 and 5 May. Because on that committee site, as stated earlier, it says:

"The monument 'The sun of our hope' reminds the residents of Sint Anthonis of the regained freedom and peace. The memorial also commemorates Colonel Silvertop and two of his men, who were killed by a hand grenade here in 1944."

But: in this case, however, the hand grenade would not relate to the deaths of the tank commander and sergeant. According to the authors, both were killed by bullets at the other end of the village.

Since I want to know the source of the authors regarding the presence of that tank commander and platoon sergeant, I manage to reach author Didden. He is prepared to answer my questions and will look for the sources at the time. But unfortunately, at this moment his reply is still pending.

Roscoe the bright shiner

In 1987 author Tim Fitzgeorge-Parker published the biography of Roscoe Harvey, the Brigadier of the 29th Armoured Brigade, and 1 of the 4 officers who fell victim to the tragedy. In the biography, Harvey himself speaks very widely and manages to relive his memories of his career with a great sense of humour, but also realism and an eye for detail.

When asked by Fitzgeorge-Parker, Harvey himself describes on pages 228 – 229 his recollection of the fatal meeting in Sint Anthonis, in which he (Harvey) was injured:

"We were talking about what we were going to do next and I could hear a gun going off, getting closer. There were two roads coming together and I remember saying to David Silvertop, 'We've got a troop attachment on that other road, haven't we?' and he said, 'Yes, of course we have.'"

"I said, 'But I don't think that was one of ours. It sounded a bit like a German machine gun.' David said, 'Yes, it did a bit.'"

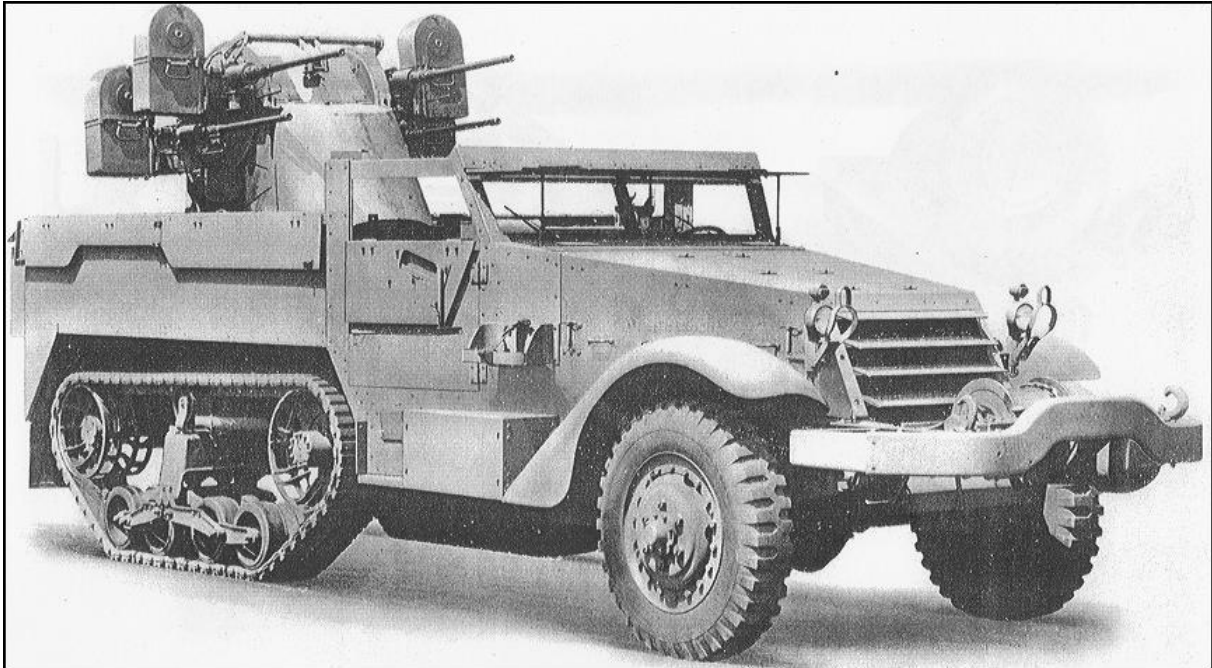
'Damn me but round the corner came this six-wheeled German half-track with machine guns blazing. It got poor old David Silvertop and killed him stone dead and it got Hubert Orr who died in hospital immediately afterwards. My Brigade Major said, 'I've been hit!' So I told him, 'Christ! Lie down for God's sake!' He was alright, as it happens. Thank God he didn't die, but it wasn't a bad do for the Germans to get two Commanding Officers and a Brigade Major in one go!"

This statement by Harvey is one of the most important witness statements mentioning the half-tracks and shots. He was there himself and survived the tragedy.

However, three things do stand out in his statement:

- Harvey mentions 1 half-track, but there were 2 half-tracks that turned up one after the other at the fork junction.
- Orr did not die in the hospital, but on his way to the field hospital.
- The standard German half-tracks did not have 6 wheels as Harvey mentions, but 2 standard wheels with rubber tires at the front and 2 tracks at the rear. Those tracks each ran over 8 idler wheels, the front wheel of those 8 wheels was the sprocket/drive wheel on which the entire half-track was driven.
So a total of 18 wheels under the Sd.Kfz.251 half-track.

Possibly Harvey is confused as far as the number of wheel is concerned with the US White M16 half-track. This half-track also had 2 standard wheels with rubber tires at the front and 2 tracked wheels at the rear. Disregarding the 4 small idler wheels on each side, we indeed count 6 wheels in total under this US half-track.



The American M16 Multiple Gun Motor Carriage, also known as the M16 half-track, of which 2700 were built by White Motor Company between May 1943 and March 1944. A total of 3550 when including the M13 and T10 models converted to M16.

The vehicle in the photo, here without the allied white star, is equipped with four .50 caliber (12.7 mm) M2 Browning machine guns in an M45 Quadmount anti-aircraft gun.

This car is ready to fire, because the armored flaps on the sides and rear are folded down. Also visible in the photo are the notches in the side armor that allow the free rotation of the turret.

Considering the similarity of this M16 with 6 wheels (not counting the 8 small running wheels) with the German Sd.Kfz. 251, it can then be explained that Harvey mentions the 'six-wheeled German half-track with machine guns' in his biography.

(Photo: Standard Nomenclature List G-102 / afvdb.50megs.com).

7. The priest and the Captain

In the village of Stevensbeek, south of Sint Anthonis on the road to Overloon, there was a boarding school run by the Fathers of the Holy Sacrament SSS (also known as the Fathers of the Most Holy Sacrament, Sacramentine Fathers or simply Sacramentines, where SSS stands for the Latin *Societas Sanctissimi Sacramenti*) under the name *Joseph Protector*.

Due to space constraints in their monastery in Brakkenstein (Nijmegen), the fathers began searching for a new location for their juniorate, a boarding school for boys who wanted to become monks and could follow the first phase of their training there.

In 1934, opposite the convent of the sisters in Stevensbeek, land became available and was purchased. On 16 September 1936, the monastery was opened and consecrated.

When the war front suddenly reached this region in September 1944, classes were temporarily suspended. In October, during the Battle of Overloon, the monastery was even converted into a fully equipped barracks by the British.



Joseph Protector Convent in Stevensbeek in the late 1930s.

(Photo: Collection Heemkundekring Stevenbeek)

One of the priests who lived in the monastery during the war was Father Harrie van den Tillaart, who later went on to teach history and, according to his students, was a fantastic storyteller, especially when it came to ancient Greek battles and wars.

During the war years, Van den Tillaart maintained his own diary. The diary, which covers the period from 1 September 1944 to 18 October 1944 (liberation of Stevensbeek), provides a clear insight into what was happening in the area at that time, including the Battle of Overloon, which greatly affected the monastery and its inhabitants.

Van den Tillaart and his diary are of great importance to local history. Over time, his diary will often be quoted in various publications relating to the war.

In his diary, Van den Tillaart writes on Monday 25 September:

“Vandaag zoals gisteren veel geschoten in het westen en de tijding kwam na de middag dat de Engelsen Oploo binnenrukten vanuit de Rips.

Gauw waren veel kloosterlingen op weg omdat mee te maken en interessant was ‘t! Er werd druk geschoten en iedereen moest dekking zoeken, want er waren nog enkele Duitse weerstandsnesten waar de Engelse tanks korte metten mee maakten.

Voor ‘t eerst hoorden we nu dichtbij ‘t blaffende knallen van ‘t tankgeschut. Maar de hevigste knal kwam van ‘t kleine bruggetje bij Boxmeer op de weg naar St. Anthonis, dat door de D. (Duitsers, AVD) werd opgeblazen.

Ook in St. Anthonis werden een paar D. (Duitse, AVD) pantserwagens buiten gevecht gesteld.”

("Today, like yesterday, there was a lot of shooting in the west, and after noon the news came that the English had entered Oploo from the Rips.

Many monks quickly set off to see what was happening, as it was very interesting! There was heavy shooting and everyone needed to take cover, as there were still a few German pockets of resistance that the English tanks dealt with quickly.

For the first time, we heard the barking of tank fire nearby. But the loudest bang came from the small bridge near Boxmeer on the road to St. Anthonis, which was blown up by the D. (Germans, AVD).

In St. Anthonis, too, a few D. (German, AVD) armoured cars were put out of action.")

Van den Tillaart refers to armoured cars here, but he is actually talking about the half-tracks. However, he writes nothing about the death of Silvertop and Orr, not even in the days that follow. In his diary there are no further details about what happened that afternoon in Sint Anthonis.

The fact that he does not know the exact details of what happened in Sint Anthonis at the time of writing is understandable: Stevensbeek is four kilometres from Sint Anthonis and news did not necessarily travel quickly between villages during those chaotic days.

However, Van den Tillaart does make an important contribution in another document relevant to this investigation.

One of the British soldiers who reported to the monastery in Stevensbeek during the Battle of Overloon was Captain E.A. Campbell of the 3rd Battalion Monmouthshire Regiment (3MONS, Orr's regiment). Campbell had won a Military Cross during the liberation of Antwerp on 4 September for his actions in quickly securing the docks and capturing crucial lock gates. This action also earned him the Belgian Croix de Guerre and the Chevalier de l'ordre de Leopold.

Campbell commanded the Carrier Platoon throughout the battle in the Netherlands and was also the first to drive his carrier into the Markt in Deurne in the early afternoon of 24 September, during the liberation of that town.

In any case, he could always be found at the front of the column in his carrier.

In Stevensbeek, Campbell meets Father Van den Tillaart. They remain in contact after the war.

In March 1967, Van den Tillaart and Ant. Kaas translate part of Campbell's war memoirs into Dutch. Specifically, Campbell's battle in the Netherlands between 20 September 1944 and 8 January 1945.

On pages 8 to 12 of the translation, we find Campbell's memories of that 25th of September and the events in Sint Anthonis that day.

Please note: unfortunately, Campbell's original English text cannot be traced; only the text translated into Dutch by Kaas and Van den Tillaart is known and is now reproduced here verbatim:

"We bleven niet lang in Deurne. De volgende dag, 25 september, namen we de weg in noordelijke richting. We trokken door De Rips en Oploo zonder moeilijkheden. Klaarblijkelijk trok de vijand terug. Als er geen tegenstand geboden werd aan beide zijden van de weg, dan reed de infanterie mee op de tanks en mijn gevechtswagens bevonden zich bij de tanks in de voorhoede.

Toen we St. Anthonis naderden, trokken we voorzichtig verder. De infanterie klom van de tanks en ging met mijn gevechtswagens verder terwijl de tanks de achterhoede vormden, gereed om hulp te bieden als er moeilijkheden kwamen.

Aan de wegkruising bij de kerk gingen we uiteen: de marcherende troepen namen de ene weg, en ik leidde mijn gevechtswagens langs de andere weg naar het dorpsplein (de Brink) en verder, totdat we de andere colonne ontmoetten, die de weg van (ik geloof) Gemert genomen had.

Er was geen vijand te bespeuren, maar toch namen mijn gevechtswagens posities in op het dorpsplein met waakzame ogen en oren.

Tezelfdertijd sloten we vriendschap met de dorpsbevolking.

We waren er nog maar pas, toen plotseling de lucht vervuld werd van het lawaai van automatische wapens, vanuit een noordelijke richting komend (Ledeacker?)

Onmiddellijk waren we op onze hoede: we zagen twee Duitse vrachtwagens (half-trucks) langs het plein stormen in de richting van waaruit wij gekomen waren. Ze vuurden wanhopig en wij vuurden terug met alles waarmee we konden schieten. Uiteindelijk nam het lawaai af, maar wij op het plein konden ons niet ontspannen. We wisten niet waar de vijandelijke wagens vandaan kwamen en wat er nog meer in de buurt was.

Even later hoorde ik op mijn radio dat de radiotelegrafist van de bataljons-commandant vroeg of een officier naar de radiowagen van de bataljons-commandant wou komen.

Ik was waarschijnlijk de verst vooruitgeschoven officier van het bataljon, en daar ik niet persoonlijk werd opgeroepen, bleef ik waar ik was.

Een van de officieren uit de achterhoede zou wel gehoor geven aan de oproep en naar de wagen van de bevelhebber gaan. Later ontdekte ik dat de twee Duitse vrachtwagens die in deze streek verbleven, waren opgejaagd door onze troepen, die uit Gemert kwamen. Ze hadden een stoutmoedige poging gedaan om te ontsnappen. Het was dramatisch dat op dezelfde tijd onze brigade-generaal op de wegkruising (driesprong) bij de ingang van het dorp in gesprek was met onze bataljons-commandant (luitenant-kolonel H.G. Orr) en de bataljons-commandant van de tanks (luitenant-kolonel Silvertop). In de verwarde strijd werd de brigade-generaal gewond, luitenant-kolonel Silvertop sneuvelde en onze bataljons-commandant Orr werd zwaar gewond.

Terwijl hij daar lag te sterven herinnerde hij ons aan de les, die hij ons altijd had ingepompt: Het was dwaas van me, om daar op die wegkruising te gaan staan: ik had beter moeten weten".

We hadden een zeer bekwaam aanvoerder verloren en het was maar een schrale troost, dat beide Duitse wagen vernietigd waren.

Voor die nacht vestigde ik mijn hoofdkwartier in de bakkerij van Schik die onze maaltijden klaar maakte en ons hartelijk welkom heette. Ik heb nog altijd een herinnering aan hen, een zilveren medaille van de Heilige Moeder Gods Maria."

When we translate the above Dutch text back to English, it gives the following result:

("We did not stay long in Deurne. The next day, 25 September, we took the road north. We passed through De Rips and Oploo without difficulty. Apparently, the enemy was retreating. When there was no resistance on either side of the road, the infantry rode along on the tanks and my combat vehicles were with the tanks in the vanguard.

As we approached St. Anthonis, we proceeded cautiously. The infantry climbed off the tanks and continued with my combat vehicles, while the tanks formed the rearguard, ready to provide assistance if difficulties arose.

At the crossroads near the church, we split up: the marching troops took one road, and I led my combat vehicles along the other road to the village square (the Brink) and on until we met the other column, which had taken the road from (I believe) Gemert.

There was no enemy to be seen, but my combat vehicles took up positions in the village square with watchful eyes and ears.

At the same time, we made friends with the villagers.

We had only just arrived when suddenly the air was filled with the noise of automatic weapons coming from a northerly direction (Ledeacker?).

We were immediately on our guard: we saw two German trucks (half-tracks) storming across the square in the direction from which we had come. They fired desperately and we fired back with everything we had. Eventually, the noise subsided, but we in the square could not relax. We did not know where the enemy vehicles had come from or what else was in the vicinity.

A little later, I heard on my radio that the battalion commander's radio operator was asking if an officer would come to the battalion commander's radio vehicle.

I was probably the most advanced officer in the battalion, and since I was not called personally, I stayed where I was.

One of the officers from the rear responded to the call and went to the commander's vehicle.

Later, I discovered that the two German trucks that had been in this area had been chased by our troops coming from Gemert. They had made a daring attempt to escape. It was dramatic that at the same time our Brigade General was talking to our battalion commander (Lieutenant Colonel H.G. Orr) and the battalion commander of the tanks (Lieutenant Colonel Silvertop) at the crossroads (three-way intersection) at the entrance to the village. In the confusion of battle, the Brigade General was wounded, Lieutenant Colonel Silvertop was killed and our battalion commander Orr was seriously wounded.

As he lay there dying, he reminded us of the lesson he had always drummed into us: 'It was foolish of me to stand there at that crossroads: I should have known better'.

We had lost a very capable leader, and it was only a small consolation that both German vehicles had been destroyed.

That night, I set up my headquarters in Schik's bakery, where they prepared our meals and gave us a warm welcome. I still have a memento of them, a silver medal of the Holy Mother of God, Mary.")

Campbell thus describes in detail what he remembers happening in Sint Anthonis that afternoon. His recollection corresponds to the official scenario, the bullet scenario.

A number of things stand out in his version:

- Quote: *"At the crossroads near the church* (Campbell must have meant the junction here, because when entering the village from Oploo there is no crossroads, only the junction of Lepelstraat and Perdschemel, or the fatal junction where the fatal consultation would take place a little later, AVD) *we split up: the marching troops took one road* (correct, the Lepelstraat to the Brink, where film footage was recorded by local shop owner Charles Manders, AVD) *and I led my combat vehicles along the other road to the village square (the Brink) and on, until we met the other column, which had taken the road from (I believe) Gemert."* (Gemert cannot be correct at that stage, otherwise that column would have long since encountered the five German half-tracks at the Gemertseweg – Peelkant junction. It is not clear where the column Campbell is referring to came from, AVD). Incidentally, the term *junction* in English refers to both a crossroads and a fork in the road. It is therefore up to the translator to decide how to translate the word *junction* in this case.
- Campbell mentions two half-tracks that he saw storming past the square. These were the two that passed the square on the south side and drove towards the fatal junction. The third half-track that passed the square on the north side was therefore not seen or noticed by Campbell.

Campbell also quotes Orr's last words in his memoirs:

"It was foolish of me to stand there at the crossroads. I should have known better."

It's impossible that Campbell heard these words from Orr himself at the scene. Campbell wasn't at the fork junction at the time, and Orr was quickly taken to the emergency hospital in Deurne. Given the content of his memories, Campbell likely heard these words afterward.



Father Harrie van den Tillaart

(Photo: Collection Heemkundekring Stevensbeek. Close-up of the group photo taken during the visit to Stevensbeek by the Superior General, Father Lodovico Longari, on 23 December 1948).



Captain E.A. Campbell, standing left in front of a carrier together with men from his carrier platoon. In the photo from left to right, on the carrier:

Private W.A.D. Boyes (London), Corporal I. Harry (Swansea), Sergeant K. James (Swansea), Private J. Squires (Swansea), Corporal J.D. Lewis (LLanelly).

In front of the carrier, Captain E.A. Campbell (Neath) and Corporal D.E. Lewis (Swansea).

This photo was taken in February 1945 near Baexem, a village in the south of the Netherlands, between Weert and Roermond.

Photo taken on the occasion of the ten-day visit to the Western Front by Mr D.H.S. Powell of the South Wales Evening Post in Swansea.

Photo: Sgt. Norris / IWM (BU 1829) / IWM.org.uk)

(Facility visit. The following photographs were taken in connection with the ten-day visit to the Western Front by Mr. D.H.S. Powell, of the South Wales Evening Post, Swansea.

Men of the carrier section commanded by Capt. E.A. Campbell, who captured the lock gates at Antwerp. Left to right: - On carrier Pte. W.A.D. Boyes (London), Cpl. I. Harry (Swansea), Sgt. K. James (Swansea), Pte. J. Squires (Swansea), Cpl. J.D. Lewis (LLanelly).

In front of the carrier, Captain E.A. Campbell (Neath) and Corporal D.E. Lewis (Swansea).

3rd Battalion Monmouthshires. 11th Armoured Division. Baexem.

Taken by Sgt. Norris. February 1945

Men of the carrier platoon of 3rd Monmouthshire Regiment, 11th Armoured Division, February 1945.

Creator: de la Mare Norris, Peter

No. 5 Army Film and Photo Section, Army Film and Photographic Unit.

Image: IWM (BU 1829) / IWM.org.uk)

8. Private Norbury

Another remarkable passage can be found in the online article published on the Monmouthshire Beacon website on Thursday 29 May 2025.

The Monmouthshire Beacon is a newspaper that has been published every Wednesday in print in the district of Monmouthshire and western Gloucestershire since 1837. Its sister newspaper, The Ross Gazette, is published in southern Herefordshire.

The online version naturally contains daily news and reports.

In the online article *The 3rd Mons and the Second World War*, local author and historian Douglas McArthur focuses on the heroism of this regiment during the Second World War. The regiment was based in the town of Abergavenny in Monmouthshire.

The article also contains a few lines about the events in Sint Anthonis on 25 September 1944:

"All seemed quiet, and the enemy was proving elusive, but they were there somewhere. Patrols were sent out to find the whereabouts and strength of the enemy, but little was found. But then the battalion suffered a grievous loss. Commanding Officer Lieutenant Colonel H.G.Orr was fatally wounded by small arms fire from a German half-track which suddenly appeared making a hurried escape attempt, but was accounted for by the C.O's driver, Private Norbury. Col Orr was buried in the grounds of the local school and later reburied in a military cemetery in Holland. The battalion then moved on to Westerbeck where it remained until the end of the month. September had seen the battalion suffer five officers and 29 other ranks killed in action."

This article describes the bullet scenario. And it immediately poses a problem, because what is the meaning of "was accounted for"?

What immediately stands out here is the name of Orr's previously unknown driver: Norbury. Both Orr and Silvertop drove separately in their own vehicles, each with their own driver, to the junction for the meeting. It is known from the statement made by Silvertop's radio operator, Sergeant Lionel Witcher, to authors Goossens and Van Gogh in 1969 that Silvertop's driver (whose name is still unknown, but who is known to have been driving a jeep) returned in panic to Witcher about fifteen minutes after Silvertop's departure for the junction to report what had happened there. I refer to chapter 9 in my investigation. Orr's driver, who now appears to be called Norbury, must therefore have done something at the junction in relation to the half-tracks. But what exactly? Norbury has not been mentioned in any other publication to date. How did McArthur come up with that name? And is there perhaps a statement from Norbury himself about the events at the junction?

I contact Douglas McArthur, who replies immediately. He refers me to a publication by Hedley J. Bunce about 3MONS: *A history of the 3rd Battalion The Monmouthshire Regiment 1939-1946 an infantry battalion / The illustrated history of soldiering with the 3rd Bn. The Monmouthshire Regiment 1939-1946*.

This has never been published in book form, only as separate documents, but its contents has been scanned by volunteers at the Royal Welsh Museum in Brecon, which McArthur kindly sends me as a PDF file.

That book contains the passage in which Norbury is mentioned, as well as further information:

"Lieutenant Colonel H.G.Orr, our Commanding Officer, was fatally wounded by small arms fire from a German half-track which suddenly appeared making a hurried escape attempt, but which was accounted for by the C.O.'s driver, Private Norbury. The men were stunned by the loss of our C.O., whom every man had learned to love and respect for his courageous leadership. He was buried in the grounds of the local school and later reburied in a military

cemetery in Holland. We stopped our war for a few hours to hold a memorial service for him in the church at St. Anthonis."

It remains difficult to determine what the correct meaning of the words "*which was accounted for*" should be in the sentence "*...from a German half-track which suddenly appeared making a hurried escape attempt, but which was accounted for by the C.O.'s driver, Private Norbury.*" I ask several experts and language purists, but the 100% correct meaning cannot be determined.

The fact is that this Norbury may now suddenly play a key role in this investigation. Could Norbury himself have given a written statement somewhere about what he experienced at that junction?

Through Douglas McArthur, I get in touch with Martin Everett, also a veteran of the Royal Regiment of Wales. Everett manages to uncover more information, including Norbury's place of birth and place of death.

It turns out to be Richard Alexander Norbury.

His rank is listed as Pte (A/LCpl). Pte stands for Private, LCpl stands for Lance Corporal (the rank between private and corporal and is therefore the first promotion class).

The letter A stands for *Acting*. This means that Norbury did hold the rank of Lance Corporal and therefore wore the corresponding single chevron on both arms, but he was not paid for that rank. He was still paid as a Private.

A few days later, Everett sends a PDF of a book by Major J.J. How of The South Wales Borderers, 24th Regiment. The title: *History of The South Wales Borderers and The Monmouthshire Regiment*. Specifically, Part IV, which deals with The 3rd Battalion The Monmouthshire Regiment 1939–1947.

On page 74, the chapter on the battle of 3MONS in the Netherlands begins, and on page 78, we find ourselves in Sint Anthonis on 25 September.

Major How describes the events involving the half-tracks in considerable detail. He faithfully follows the bullet scenario. He also describes Lock's death, without mentioning Lock's name, and then reports that the half-tracks continue into the village. This leads to the final passage on page 79:

"The two leading half-tracks, tearing through the village, suddenly came upon the Brigadier, the Commanding Officer of the "Mons" and 3rd Royal Tank Regiment, and the Brigade Major who were standing at the crossroads. Both Commanding Officers were killed; the Brigade Major was seriously wounded and the Brigadier slightly wounded. Lt.-Col. Orr's driver showed great courage by standing exposed from the waist up in the C.O.'s armoured car; heedless of the hail of cannon shells exploding around him, he fired continuously with the twin machine guns mounted on top of the vehicle. The death of Col. Orr was a great blow to the Battalion, which he had commanded since October 1942."

This suddenly clarifies Norbury's action and thus also the previously unclear meaning of the words "*which was accounted for*".

The armoured commanding officer's vehicle from which Norbury fires can only be the M3A1 Scout Car.

The M3A1 Scout Car was armed with a .50 calibre M2 Browning machine gun and one or two .30 calibre M1919 Browning machine guns. Everything was mounted on a skaterail on which the axles could be moved. Thanks to the open top, the occupants could also use their personal weapons.



M3A1 Scout Car, on which armament could be mounted.

(Photo: Lt. Spender, H17571 IWM)

The British Army in the United Kingdom 1939-45

White Scout Car of the Grenadier Guards, Guards Armoured Division, 3 March 1942.



Interior of an M3A1 Scout Car, here with mounted armament.

(Photo: US Army photographer)

Now that we know that Norbury was at the scene and that he fired at the half-tracks, this raises other interesting questions. Did Norbury, as Orr's driver, try to help while Orr was lying fatally wounded on the ground? Did he ride in the vehicle that took Orr to the emergency hospital in Deurne?

And above all, was it Norbury who, in his presence at the crossroads or in the car on the way to the hospital, heard Orr's last words: *"It was foolish of me to be standing there at the crossroads. I should have known better"*?

OWC then manages to compose Norbury's family tree and we try to contact a surviving relative of Norbury to check whether any additional information is available regarding the above questions. Unfortunately, we have not received any response.

The memorial service in Sint Anthonis mentioned by Major Hedley J. Bunce in his publication did indeed take place. However, it was on Tuesday 26 September 1944, one day after the deaths of Silvertop, Orr and Lock, and when Sint Anthonis was firmly in British hands. That evening at 5.30 p.m., Father Ryan held a memorial service for David Silvertop in the church of Sint Anthonis.

However, it seems more likely that Bunce, as part of 3MONS, is referring to the memorial service for Orr, Silvertop and fallen comrades held at 6 p.m. on 28 September in the church of Westerbeek, the village where 3MONS moved immediately after Sint Anthonis and where the regiment would remain until the end of September.



*Hedley James Bunce, here in the rank of Sergeant.
Photo taken in January 1943.
(Photo: Collection Douglas McArthur)*

9. Oorlog en bevrijding in Oploo c.a.

On Tuesday 29 April 1969, a remarkable meeting takes place in Sint Anthonis. Local historians and authors Martien Goossens and Jan van Gogh want to publish a book marking the 25th anniversary of liberation, focusing on the liberation of the municipality. Anyone who can tell a story about the liberation of the municipality in 1944 is invited to attend. During and after the meeting, so much information comes to light that the authors decide to include the period from May 1940 onwards in the book.

However, their initiative originates from a few months earlier, when Goossens and Van Gogh receive a request from the then commander of 3RTR, who is looking for information for his rewriting of the history of that regiment, including information about 3RTR in Sint Anthonis in 1944.

The subsequent appeal to the local population via the municipal council in the newspapers for information and memories of 3RTR is a great success. Many other matters related to the liberation also come to light.

Ultimately, the results of that appeal and the meeting that same year lead to the comprehensive standard work by Goossens and Van Gogh on the war years in the municipality of Oploo and surroundings, to which Sint Anthonis belongs at the time (1969): *Oorlog en bevrijding in Oploo c.a. (War and Liberation in Oploo and Surroundings)*.

Note: until 1994, the village of Oploo gave its name to the municipality of Oploo c.a., which stood for the municipality of Oploo, St. Anthonis and Ledeacker (with two other church villages that were not mentioned in the municipality name: Stevensbeek and Westerbeek). After a municipal reorganisation in 1994, when the municipality of Oploo was merged with the neighbouring municipality of Wanroij, the new name became municipality of Sint Anthonis. On 1 January 2022, it became part of the new large municipality of Land van Cuijk.

This book also provides a very detailed account of the events that take place on 25 September 1944 in Sint Anthonis. This subject is covered on pages 57 to 74.

The chapter contains various eyewitness accounts from former residents of Oploo and Sint Anthonis about, among other things, the five half-tracks. But it is not only former residents who have their say here; Goossens and Van Gogh also contacted British veterans who were present at the time and asked them to describe their memories.

The authors also spoke with Helen Orr, the widow of Lieutenant Colonel Hubert Orr.

On pages 64 to 70, we read specific witness statements regarding the deaths of Silvertop and Orr.

In addition to the aforementioned text passage from Captain Campbell, translated by Father Van den Tillaart, this chapter also contains a text passage from a letter written by Brigadier C.B.C. Harvey D.S.O., the former commander of the 29th Brigade, to Goossens and Van Gogh:

“Wij stonden op 25 september 1944 op een T-vormige kruising ten zuiden van de dorpskern van St.-Anthonis om de verder tactiek te bespreken. Plotseling kwamen twee Duitse gevechtswagens, al schietende, uit het dorp recht op ons af. Kolonel Silvertop was op slag dood en Kolonel Orr werd zo zwaar gewond, dat hij onderweg naar het hospitaal stierf. Mijn Brigade-Majoor J. Thompson kreeg een schot door de long, maar hij is weer hersteld van zijn verwondingen. Ik zelf werd slechts licht gewond. Wij hadden de Duitsers niet meer verwacht, omdat het regiment, dat op de linkerflank oprukte, reeds in het dorp was binnengedrongen.”

Note: Only the Dutch translation of this letter is known and published in the book. The original English version of this text/letter is unfortunately untraceable.

When we translate the above Dutch text back to English, it gives the following result:

"On 25 September 1944, we were standing at a T-junction south of the village centre of St.-Anthonis to discuss further tactics. Suddenly, two German combat vehicles came out of the village, firing at us. Colonel Silvertop was killed instantly and Colonel Orr was so badly wounded that he died on the way to hospital. My Brigade Major J. Thompson was shot through the lung, but he is recovering from his injuries. I myself was only slightly wounded. We had not expected the Germans to return, because the regiment advancing on the left flank had already entered the village."

Sergeant Lionel Whitcher, the radio operator in Colonel Silvertop's tank, wrote about his memories of that afternoon in 1944 in a letter to Van Gogh on 24 September 1968:

"The Brigadier called Col. Silvertop on the radio and arranged a rendezvous with him and also the Lt. Col. in command of the infantry regiment supporting our tanks (...) to meet and discuss further tactics. Accordingly, Colonel Silvertop left his tank, in which I was the radio operator, got into his jeep with his driver and drove off to the rendezvous, which I believe was in St. Anthonis, fairly close to the church. (...) After about 10/15 minutes, the Colonel's jeep came back very fast with only the driver, who was in a very distressed and incoherent state, but he told us that a German half-track armoured vehicle had suddenly come upon them while the conference was taking place in the roadway and had opened fire on the small group with its machine gun. The Colonel's driver, realising he could do nothing against the half-track with only his Sten gun and unarmed jeep, drove back to my tank to report the situation. The first priority was to deal with the German half-track before it could escape or do any more damage, especially as we all believed we had cleared this particular area of all the enemy. Accordingly, the tanks were alerted over the radio and dispositions made to cut off this enemy vehicle, and it was very soon trapped and blown up with all its crew by one of our tanks. I heard that when our troops reached the scene, Colonel Silvertop was already dead and the infantry colonel died soon afterwards. The brigadier was wounded and I understand eventually recovered. I couldn't be there when they were actually buried later that day (...) but I was able to go to the Church in the early evening of that same day to see where they were buried. As I remember it that evening 24 years ago, the Church seemed to stand apart from other buildings with a small brick or stone semicircular wall enclosing the Church Yard in front of the Church. Col. Silvertop was buried close against the small wall where it meets the left end of the Church as you face it,"



Sergeant Lionel Whitcher, the radio operator of the commander of 3RTR, seen here looking out of the turret of this 3RTR Sherman. Photo taken on 25 December 1944. (Photo: Mikeresearch.com)

Whitcher's statement is also included in the book by Goossens and Van Gogh.

In any case, we need to conclude that even in this book by Goossens and Van Gogh, there is no mention in any of the testimonies from either the local population or British soldiers of the hand grenade scenario or executions on the spot by the British.

10. The anonymous witness

However, perhaps the most important testimony in the context of this investigation into the deaths of Silvertop and Orr can be found in the aforementioned book by Goossens and Van Gogh on page 67.

This statement comes from a resident of Den Hoek, the hamlet halfway between Oploo and Sint Anthonis, where 3RTR and 3MONS passed on their way to Sint Anthonis.

This man told Goossens and Van Gogh in 1969:

“Toen de Engelse colonne vanuit de richting Oploo mijn huis passeerde, nam ik mijn fiets om in St. Anthonis te gaan kijken. Op de hoek bij Simons (de familie Simons woonde in september 1944 aan de splitsing Lepelstraat – Perdshemel, AVD) stond een aantal hoge officieren, waarvan twee met rode petten (kolonels en hogere rangen droegen een pet met rode band, AVD) over stafkaarten gebogen een bespreking te houden. Plotseling hoorde ik schieten en zag een Duitse pantserwagen vanuit de Lepelstraat komen. Een Duitse militair met een groene camouflagejas schoot als een razende met een mitrailleur vanuit de koepel van de gevechtswagen. Ik zag een van de Engelse officieren dodelijk getroffen neervallen, maar ben toen in een sloot langs de weg gedoken om dekking te zoeken.”

(“When the English convoy passed my house from the direction of Oploo, I took my bicycle to go and see what was happening in Sint Anthonis. On the corner at Simons (the Simons family lived at the fork junction of Lepelstraat and Perdshemel in September 1944, AVD), there were a number of high-ranking officers, two of whom wore red caps (Colonels and higher ranks wore caps with a red band, AVD), bent over staff maps, holding a discussion. Suddenly, I heard shooting and saw a German armoured car coming from the Lepelstraat. A German soldier in a green camouflage jacket was firing furiously with a machine gun from the turret of the combat vehicle. I saw one of the English officers fall, fatally wounded, but then I dived into a ditch along the road to take cover.”)

This is a detailed description of what happened at the fork junction!

And according to this witness, it concerns bullets. Not a hand grenade.

Unfortunately, it is not clear from his statement whether the officer who, according to him, fell fatally wounded was Silvertop (killed instantly) or perhaps Orr (seriously wounded and died later).

This witness mentions nothing about the British shooting of SS men on the spot.

It is unfortunate that this resident is not named in the book, but not everyone from the local population who gave testimony to the authors in 1969 wanted to be named in the book. That is understandable, of course, and it is up to each individual to decide for themselves.

This book by Goossens and Van Gogh describes how the officers were shot by a German soldier who fired his machine gun wildly from the combat vehicle.

Both books by Swarts and Didden describe how the officers were shot with Drilling rifles.

In both situations, we are talking about machine guns, but in terms of calibre, there is quite a big difference.

Here, too, I would like to refer to chapter 14: Machine gun bullets or bullets from the Drilling.

11. Letters to Diana

From the Silvertop archive my OWC colleague Hans Ooms has now received a number of letters that were written separately by various British officers to Diana Trappes-Lomax – Silvertop, in the days after David's death.

David was not married, his parents had both died years earlier. His sister Diana was now the most direct blood relative and in this case also the direct contact person.

In their letters, the officers personally express their condolences to Diana. The officers also write about how David died.

What exactly do those text passages in their letters say?

(Note: the following letter quotes are published here with the exclusive permission of John Trappes-Lomax, Diana's son).

- Quote from the letter dated 27 September 1944, of Major General Philip 'Pip' Roberts, Headquarters 11th Armoured Division to his wife in the UK, but then at the request of his wife also forwarded to Diana:

"They were discussing plans at a crossroad in the village when a couple of Bosche half-tracks were (....) from the other end of the village and came dashing down the street firing their machine guns (.....)."

(*"Boche / Bosche"*, pronounced: *Bosch*, the British swear word for Germans, AVD).

- Quote from the letter dated 30 September 1944, of Major N.H. Bourne, Commanding Officer 3RTR, successor to David Silvertop as commander 3RTR:

"He was killed instantly when some enemy armoured cars broke into a town in which he had gone to visit the leading squadron."

- Quote from the letter dated 1 October 1944, of Brigadier Roscoe Harvey:

"A German armoured car which had been cut off came (....) the corner. David was killed instantly."

- Quote from the letter dated 9 October 1944, of Reverend C.S. Edgington (3RTR):

"An enemy vehicle came flying into the village trying to escape, gave the group a burst of machinegunfire and shot off round the corner."

In all letters, the letter writers refer to the half-tracks and gunshots as the cause of death, and nowhere is any reference to a thrown hand grenade.

Despite further OWC research into letters that could have been sent by the same letter writers to Hubert Orr's widow, Helen Orr, or other relatives of Hubert Orr during the same period, so far it has not been possible to trace those letters. It may be assumed that letters were indeed written regarding Orr and in that case those letters contained the same content as the letters written regarding Silvertop.



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 churchyard 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 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)

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Follow-up photo of the commemoration on 27 September 1966 at the grave of David Silvertop in the churchyard 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)

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12. The German side of the story

Do the German War Archives offer more insight into what might have happened from their side or point of view on that 25 September 1944 in Sint Anthonis? That is the question I ask Richard Schoutissen of the Stichting Oorlogsslachtoffers (War Victims Foundation). Richard is a World War II (war) historical researcher and in the Netherlands an expert concerning the German side.

Unfortunately, after research it turns out that the official records, both the Bundesarchiv Abteilung Personenbezogene Auskünfte in Berlin and the Bundesarchiv Abteilung Militärarchiv in Freiburg, do not contain any information about the tragic events in Sint Anthonis on that day. So nothing about the half-tracks, but also nothing about a hand grenade or about British executions of German prisoners.

Unfortunately, that official entry on the German side now comes to a dead end.

But even without that official entry, several things can be traced and calculations can be made regarding the German side of the story.

Because, as we know, the 5 half-tracks were part of the 107. Panzerbrigade, part of the infamous Kampfgruppe Walther. That Kampfgruppe was an improvised unit of fanatical German troops commanded by Colonel Erich Walther and consisted of a collection of troops from the Luftwaffe, the Waffen-SS and the Wehrmacht. Fanatical to the bone and not giving up! So the scenario that one of the captured half-track crew members would have thrown a hand grenade when passing by the 4 British officers could in principle fit into that picture.

The question is how many Germans might have been captured by the British in the village that Monday afternoon. Is this just a few, or can we indeed speak of a larger group, which in terms of numbers could correspond to the aforementioned term 'a group of SS men'?

It is known that by the time the first British arrived in the village, there were already no Germans left in the village. For all the Germans present in the village that morning had already left the village during the same morning and early afternoon, because they knew the British were approaching and could arrive in the village at any time.

So that means that all the Germans captured on that late afternoon must have come from the half-tracks.

How many Germans captured?

Nowhere is the exact number mentioned, but that number can be approximated via a workaround.

To make that calculation, I seek the advice of Will Trienekens, World War II weapons and vehicles expert.

Because it is important for the calculation to know whether or not a Drilling machine gun was mounted on these half-tracks of the Hanomag Sd.Kfz 251 type.

When indeed a Drilling was mounted, then it concerned the specific type Hanomag Sd.Kfz 251/21 (or officially called Schützenpanzerwagen 251/21 mit Flak-Drilling).

Drilling stands for Drilling MG151 machine gun, an anti-aircraft 3-barrel 15 mm or 20 mm machine gun that was operated by a Panzergrenadier (air gunner). This 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.

The Drillingslafette (or affuit, the undercarriage of a cannon or other heavy firearm) had two triggers for firing as standard: one for the 2 outer barrels, so those barrels fired simultaneously as a result. And a trigger for the middle barrel. When the gunner pulled both triggers simultaneously, all 3 barrels fired simultaneously.

The Drilling's theoretical firing rate is 680 to 740 shots per minute. But in reality, this is not possible, as the 3 large ammunition drums attached to the Drilling hold 2x 250 bullets for both outer barrels and 1x 400 bullets for the middle barrel.

These drums empty quickly and replacing them on site takes time. Moreover, the 3 barrels are air-cooled and they cannot handle a continuous load.

Due to the presence of the Drilling and the other crew members, the interior space of that half-track was so limited that it could carry a maximum of 1 extra case of ammunition and standard 3 spare rifle barrels.

Therefore, the half-track with Drilling was often supported by an additional ammunition truck, also a half-track, which could carry up to 3,000 bullets.

Now that we know the above data, how does this affect the maximum number of crew per half-track?

- A half-track with the Drilling could carry a maximum of 6 people
- A half-track without the Drilling, but with automatic armament mounted, could carry a maximum of 9 people.
- And a half-track version without the Drilling and without automatic armament on board could carry a maximum of 12 people.

Next, is it possible to check how many of the 5 half-tracks had a Drilling mounted on them? Yes.

Charles Manders was an electronics retailer in Sint Anthonis for many years and was also a film pioneer during the war years. On 25 September he first filmed retreating Germans and in the afternoon the entry of the British forces. He also shot footage of the half-tracks immediately after their elimination. From his film, copy present in the OWC archives, we can select and review the necessary stills.

The photo of half-track 1, which surfaced in 2024 after 80 years, also provides clarity about what was mounted on it.

- Concerning half-track number 5, which was the first to be eliminated halfway down the Peelkant, there is no film image available. But there is a photo. In that photo, no Drilling appears to be mounted on the vehicle, so that could be an extra ammunition half-track or troop half-track.
- Concerning half-track 4, which was eliminated by the British anti-tank gun at the entrance to the village, Manders' film footage shows that no Drilling was mounted on it. So this half-track too was probably an extra ammunition or troop half-track.
- Concerning half-track 3, which drove into a house in the Breestraat, Manders' film footage shows it being towed away. A Drilling can clearly be seen on the vehicle.
- Concerning half-track 2 that drove past Silvertop and Orr and ended in the field on the Hoogveld, film footage from Manders shows that a Drilling was mounted on this vehicle.
- Concerning half-track 1 that drove past Silvertop and Orr first and from where the fatal shots were fired and that ended on the Boxmeerseweg, the photo shows that a Drilling was also mounted on it.

Assuming the maximum theoretical situation applicable in this case of 3 half-tracks with Drilling + 2 half-tracks without Drilling and also without further automatic armament mounted, then in the maximum situation there would therefore be 3 x 6 persons and 2 x 12 persons = a maximum of 42 German half-track crew members who posted at the Gemertseweg – Peelkant fork junction.

This number does not include the 2 German soldiers in the Kübelwagen who were also present at that fork junction, but fled to Oploo when British tanks came in sight from Elsendorp.

Again: the 42 Germans mentioned is purely the theoretical maximum calculation, in reality the number of crew present at the Gemertseweg – Peelkant fork junction will have been lower.

But when at the fork junction the 5 half-tracks had to flee in panic and raced full throttle up the Peelkant, an unknown number of crew and wounded could not keep up in time and were left behind at the fork junction. Others just managed to grab hold of the departing half-tracks and hung on to the side of the half-tracks the entire route.

Question then is: how many Germans were in, on or hanging from the fleeing half-tracks?

In the aforementioned book *Oorlog en Bevrijding in Oploo c.a.*, authors Goossens and Van Gogh describe what happened to those 5 half-tracks and their crews after they fled.

Putting those details together now gives the following overview:

- Half-track 5, eliminated halfway down the Peelkant (near current Peelkant 45):
When eliminated, 2 men were killed immediately, the rest fled towards Oploo, 6 of whom were killed in a cornfield, some escaped.
- Half-track 4, eliminated at the Peelkant, village entrance (near current Peelkant 22):
When eliminated, immediately 1 was killed, 1 captured, 1 shot, 1 mortally wounded.
- Half-track 3, ends in house Breestraat (current Breestraat 47):
Several crew members were killed immediately, unknown how many and whether any were captured or managed to escape.
- Half-track 2, drives into the Hoogveld field and is destroyed.
Unknown number of killed, wounded or fled crew.
- Half-track 1, according to the authors hit by a British direct hit and exploded at Majoca (current Boxmeerseweg 14):
Entire crew killed.
However, the photo of this half-track that surfaced in 2024 shows no explosion damage. Now is known that the half-track collided with the tree with a huge bang, causing the damage in the photo. So it must be concluded that in this case it is unknown how many crew members were killed and how many were able to escape.

The above overview therefore only gives certainty about 1 German captured in Sint Anthonis out of the total theoretically maximum possible number of 42 half-track crew members.

But in reality, that number of prisoners will have been higher.

Because in the book by Goossens and Van Gogh there is a testimony by an unnamed hider who was in hiding at Den Hoek. He saw a number of German prisoners that afternoon near the fork junction Lepelstraat – Perdschemel shortly after the tragedy.

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

Also in the book of Goossens and Van Gogh is the testimony of Egbert Peters, then a resident of Den Hoek, who, shortly after Silvertop's death, carried Silvertop's body to the churchyard with a stretcher and saw how in the churchyard 2 captured terrified Germans were digging the grave for Silvertop by order of the British.

But even if, in addition to this described number of captured Germans, a number of half-track crew members were taken prisoner of war, it can be established that at least it was not a large number or a whole group of Germans.

And so it cannot have been a large group of captured SS men who would have walked through the streets of Sint Anthonis on that afternoon. That SS men did get captured is a fact; earlier I wrote that some of the half-track crew belonged to SS Sperrverband Heinke (see chapter 5).

Date confusion

Perhaps there is confusion with the date? Because Saturday 23 and Sunday 24 September are also chaotic days in Sint Anthonis. During those days in the village it is also a coming and going of British units and German troops.

For example, on Sunday 24 September, towards the end of the morning, in Sint Anthonis, during renewed firefights with the Germans in the village, the British eliminate a German ammunition car on the corner Perdschemel – Breesstraat. German cars and motorbikes are also fired upon by the British. A total of 4 German soldiers are killed and several wounded that morning. Some 40 Germans are taken prisoner of war by the British, as well as 2 NSB members (Nationaal Socialistische Beweging, translated: National Socialist Movement, a Dutch fascist movement which collaborated with the Germans).

People in the surrounding villages of Sint Anthonis, who by now know that the British are in Sint Anthonis, send any German who asks them for directions, no matter where the German is actually supposed to go, straight to Sint Anthonis. Partly as a result, in the evening the British return to Grave fully loaded with German prisoners of war.

But after that other German soldiers arrive in the village that same evening.

The British have deported these 40 German POWs the same evening. And during their deportation that large group of prisoners may indeed have walked a short distance through the village.

So is that the group of POWs referred to?

In any case, they are not referred to as being SS men, also no hand grenade is mentioned, nor executions by the British.

And the 4 British officers are not even near Sint Anthonis on that Saturday and Sunday.

So we can rule out this possible date confusion as a component of the hand grenade scenario.

The prisoner deportation

But suppose that on that Monday 25 September, the captured Germans in the village indeed did walk through the streets during their deportation. Could they then have passed Harvey, Thompson, Silvertop and Orr while they were still busy with their meeting at the Lepelstraat – Perdschemel fork junction?

Yes.

Because the POWs had to be taken away anyway, they could not stay in the village. It is unknown where the captured Germans that Monday afternoon were gathered by the British and where to and when exactly they were taken away.

If they were taken away shortly after the half-tracks were eliminated, there is a possibility that they were taken away from the village towards Oploo. And in that case, the POWs did indeed pass the fork junction Lepelstraat – Perdschemel and thus passed the 4 officers.

It should also be noted that Harvey, Thompson, Silvertop and Orr certainly will not have called a long meeting at that fork junction. Their meeting had to be short, partly given the risky conditions under which the meeting took place at that spot.

It does mean that the time span of the passing half-tracks, then eliminating the half-tracks and the deportation of the prisoners and throwing the hand grenade at the officers must then have been time-wise very short, or even almost impossible.

But also the British must have known beforehand that deporting the German prisoners along the location where the 4 officers had their meeting would create major security risks. So why in that case would the British have made a conscious decision to take that security risk anyway?

13. The German graves

The German graves in the churchyard

Do the names of 8 German soldiers killed in action and buried in the churchyard in Sint Anthonis on that 25 September 1944 and the following day provide any additional information by the German authorities?

Richard Schoutissen gives me detailed information on my question.

The 8 German graves in the churchyard were situated in line with the 4 graves of Ellis, Wilson, Lock and Silvertop. The 8 Germans were buried there anonymously in the earth against the churchyard wall at the corner Breestraat – footpath and their graves were not marked with a cross or gravestone.

On 27 October 1955, more than 11 years later, their remains were exhumed by the Bergings- en Identificatiedienst Koninklijke Landmacht (Royal Netherlands Army Salvage and Identification Service) and transferred to the German cemetery in Ysselsteyn where they were reburied the next day, 28 October 1955.

Before the exhumation the 8 graves in Sint Anthonis, first a code number was assigned to the 8 graves: from right to left D-1323 to D-1330. The remains were also identified. After which, 4 of the 8 Germans buried in Sint Anthonis could still be given a name and the remaining 4 are still registered as unknown German soldier.

D-1323:

Unknown German soldier

Reburied in Ysselsteyn on 28 October 1955, grave AM-10-245

D-1324:

Obergefreiter Erwin Rohrer (19 September 1911 – 25 September 1944)

Infanterie-Geschütz-Ersatz Kompanie 25 (motorisiert) / I.G.Ers.Kd.(mot.) 25-1357

Reburied in Ysselsteyn on 28 October 1955, grave AM-10-246

D-1325:

Untersturmführer/ SS-Oberscharführer Kurt Manfred Brinker (16 May 1914 – 25 September 1944)

15./SS "Der Führer"

Reburied in Ysselsteyn on 28 October 1955, grave AM-10-247

Note: When checking the back of the RvO (Rapport van Overbrenging/Report of Transfer) this person was wearing a Luftwaffe uniform with the rank distinction of Oberfeldwebel – *"remains of German mil. uniform (Luftwaffe) with rank distinction for Ob.Feldwebel. Very heavy built person."*, the underlined part of which does not correspond to his file.

There must have been a mistake during the reburial of the 8 German soldiers in Ysselsteyn. Presumably Brinker was mixed up with one of the unknown remains during the re-identification, since Brinker did not belong to the Luftwaffe.



Kurt Brinker
(Photo: Oorlogsslachtoffers.nl)

D-1326:
Unknown German soldier
Reburied in Ysselsteyn on 28 October 1955, grave AM-10-248

D-1327:
Unteroffizier Hermann Münzer (? – 16 October 1944)
177- Stammkompanie Infanterie-Ersatz-Bataillon (motorisiert) 119
Reburied in Ysselsteyn on 28 October 1955, grave AM-10-249
Note: Münzer's date of death was later changed from 17 October to 16 October. However, there are many differences in the identification and re-identification at the time that make them seem like two different people, both in terms of height and skull circumference, shoe size and teeth. In addition, it seems somewhat strange that someone who died on 16 October 1944, 3 weeks after 25 September, would then be buried in the churchyard in Sint Anthonis among 7 other soldiers who had been buried there in a row since 25 September. Why was Münzer specifically buried in that churchyard in Sint Anthonis, literally among those other 7?

D-1328:
Unknown German soldier
Reburied in Ysselsteyn on 28 October 1955, grave AM-10-250
Note: Luftwaffe collar emblem (collar badge) indicates the rank Gefreiter or the rank Unterfeldwebel.

D-1329:
Oberfeldwebel Heinz Neumann (1 May 1915 – ? September 1944)
Fliegerschule Görlitz Schuler-Kompanie A/B 38 / Fl.Schüle A.B.Görlitz Schüler Komp.38
Reburied in Ysselsteyn on 28 October 1955, grave AM-10-251

D-1330:

Unknown German soldier

Reburied in Ysselsteyn on 28 October 1955, grave AM-10-252

Note: There are doubts whether the person in this grave is Kurt Manfred Brinker, but it has been officially chosen to assign grave AM-10-247 to the name Kurt Manfred Brinker.

The German field graves

Six years earlier, on 21 December 1949, 5 German field graves were also cleared in the vicinity of Sint Anthonis and their remains were transferred to Ysselsteyn where they were reburied the next day, 22 December 1949. This concerns:

Fahnenjunker-Gefreiter Gerhard Arndt (21 May 1925 – 12 October 1944)

52- SS-Unterführerschule Radolfzell.

Temporary grave near the then address Peelkant 7, Sint Anthonis.

Reburied in Ysselsteyn on 22 December 1949, grave AA-10-241

Note: the RvO (Rapport van Overbrenging/Report of Transfer) states that the remains in grave AA-10-241 are those of an unknown person, as no identification tag was found.

A pocket knife was found on the remains in the temporary grave in Sint Anthonis. This depositing of a pocket knife on the body was supposedly prescribed somewhere by the Germans or the Allies and was intended to make it easier to locate the body or remains at a later time with a metal detector.

A Soldbuch was also found of Wilhelm Ballo, born on 7 March 1914 in Duisburg (also a member of the same tank crew as the person in grave AA-10-241). Ballo was originally supposed to have been buried in Oploo, he was a bearer of the Erkennungsmarke A-52-SS-Unterführerschule Radolfzell.

However, during a re-identification in 1963, the same identity tag was linked to Fahnenjunker-Gefreiter Gerhard Arndt. That rank does not seem to match that of someone with an Erkennungsmarke of the SS because this was a rank of the Wehrmacht, within the Waffen-SS this would be a Sturmmann. Arndt's date of death, 8 March 1945, was later changed to *Vermisst seit 12.10.44* (missing since 12 October 1944).

The field grave of this soldier was located 60 metres north of the then address Peelkant 7 and then 6 metres away from the road. Peelkant 7 was located at the entrance to the village and was the shop of Hubertus Verstegen at the time. Nowadays that is the address Peelkant 22.

It was also the location where half-track 4 was eliminated by the British. But due to the difference in dates (elimination half-track on 25 September and Arndt missing on 12 October) it is impossible that Arndt was one of the crew members on the half-track. Nevertheless it remains strange that someone who went missing on 12 October 1944 or died on 12 October, when there were no more Germans in Sint Anthonis, was temporarily buried on the Peelkant at the entrance to the village.

The questions that have not been answered so far are where and how exactly Arndt died and why was he buried in that specific place on the Peelkant?

Unknown German soldier

Temporary grave near the then address Peelkant 33, Sint Anthonis

Reburied in Ysselsteyn on 22 December 1949, grave AA-10-242

Heinrich Rheinfelder (6 September 1925 – 25 September 1944)

-04626-Rekr.Dep.d.Waffen SS / 3./ SS-Panzer-Aufklärungs-Abteilung 10

Reburied in Ysselsteyn on 22 December 1949, grave AA-10-245

Note: Rheinfelder was part of the 3./ SS Panzer-Aufklärungs-Abteilung 10 (10. SS-Division), part of Sperrverband Heinke which in turn was part of Kampfgruppe Walther. He is one of the 2 Germans who were shot by the British in the Molenstraat in Sint Anthonis from one of the

half-tracks and then was temporarily buried next to the manure heap next to the Van Sambeek residence on the Molenstraat.

At the time Rheinfelder was buried, his identity was unknown. An identification tag was present, but it had no name on it.

Only 4. Kompanie SS-Panzer-Aufklärungs-Abteilung 4 was mentioned on that tag.

A cross without a name was placed at his grave.

A remarkable detail is that Rheinfelder was carrying a wallet containing 28 photos at that time. Unfortunately, the wallet did not contain his name either.

A British Red Cross soldier who was present when Rheinfelder was buried gave the portfolio to Van Sambeek.

On 21 November 1949, the Nederlandse Dienst Identificatie en Berging (Dutch Identification and Recovery Service) exhumed Rheinfelder's remains from the Van Sambeek's grounds and a report was drawn up, including Rheinfelder's teeth.

The remains were eventually transferred to the German cemetery in Ysselsteyn and reburied there on 22 December 1949. During the exhumation in Sint Anthonis, Van Sambeek gave the portfolio with the 28 photos to the service staff and the portfolio ended up with the staff of the service 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 finally be informed about the fate of Heinrich, who had been considered missing for all those years.



*Heinrich Rheinfelder
(Photo: Oorlogsslachtoffers.nl)*

Brinkmann

Reburied in Ysselsteyn on 22 December 1949, grave AA-10-246

Johann Rogos (24 June 1924 – ?)
3958-St.Kp.G.E.B.211
Reburied in Ysselsteyn on 22 December 1949, grave AA-10-247

Crew members on the half-tracks

When we look at who of those 4 now known names actually died on that 25 September 1944 in Sint Anthonis according to official documents, 3 names remain:

- Heinrich Rheinfelder
- Erwin Rohrer
- Kurt Brinker

That Rheinfelder was present on half-track 1, 2 or 3 is 100% proven. Whether Rohrer and Brinker were also crew members of one of those half-tracks is unfortunately not 100% possible to determine at this stage.

There is no information about this concerning Rohrer.

About Brinker, his file in the Bundesarchiv in Berlin states that he was seriously injured on that Monday, 25 September, in Oploo and was then nursed in a nunnery. But was he indeed seriously injured earlier that afternoon in the village of Oploo during firefights with the British who were then invading there, or later in Sint Anthonis as a crew member of one of the half-tracks?

Because when a British or German file reports that someone was killed at a certain location or place, that does not always have to be the actual 100% location. A better location description would be: Oploo area. In which case Sint Anthonis would be directly eligible. Because Oploo did not have a nunnery. Sint Anthonis did have a nunnery, next to the rectory, on the Brink square. In that monastery lived the Sisters of Charity, full name “Congregatie van de Zusters van Liefdadigheid van Jezus en Maria, de Moeder van den Goeden Bijstand” (“Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary, the Mother of Good Help”). It is known that German wounded were indeed cared for in the monastery, but it is unknown who or during which exact period.

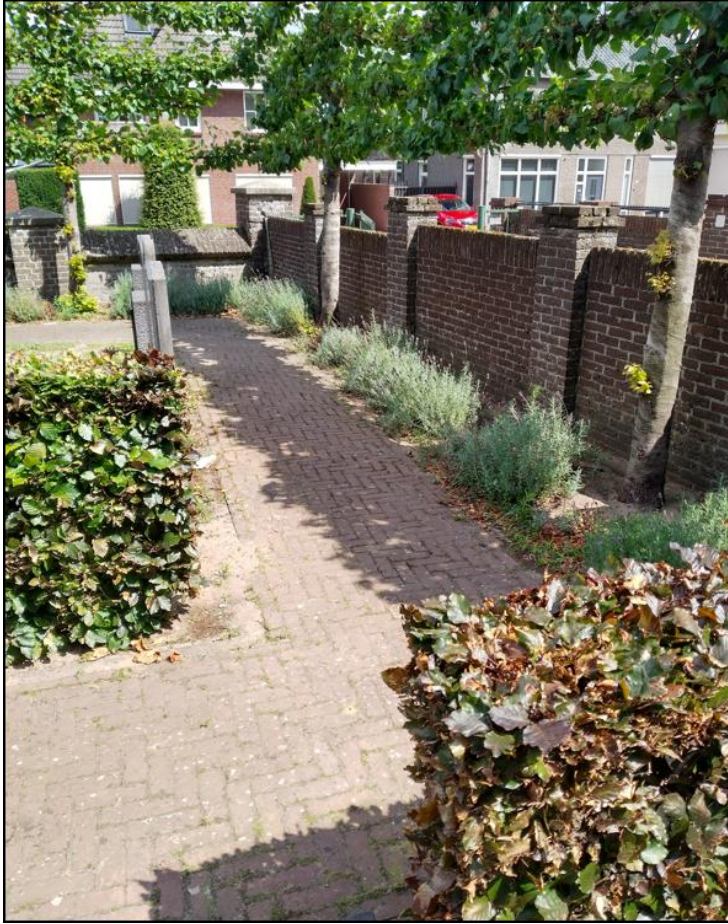
If Brinker had indeed been seriously injured as a crew member of the half-tracks, then he would have been injured on that 25 September around 4.30 pm, the time when those half-tracks raced through Sint Anthonis and shot Orr and Silvertop.

If Brinker was then transferred from his elimination location to the nunnery by the British, he would have died there that same evening (still 25 September).

It is also possible that Brinker was one of the wounded from the previous day, Sunday 24 September, during the fighting between the British and Germans in the village and was then left wounded by the British and taken to the nunnery by the Germans who returned in the village afterwards. Or was there an inhabitant of the village who found the German and brought him to the nunnery?

In both the latter cases, Brinker lived another day and died in that monastery the next day (25 September). But probably this can never be proved exactly and also this trail comes to a dead end.

The spot in the churchyard in Sint Anthonis where those 8 German graves lay was never filled with new graves after the 1955 exhumation, but always remained an empty corner. Until a few years ago a section of paved walkway was laid over it.



*The far corner of the churchyard today, the exact location where the bodies of the 8 fallen German soldiers were buried in a row and remained there in the period 1944 – 1955.
(Photo: Collection Arno van Dijk)*

The eliminated half-tracks (photo section)



Hanomag Sd.Kfz 251/21 – German half-track with the three-barreled 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*



On Monday morning 25 September a camouflaged German half-track drives through the Breestraat in Sint Anthonis on its way to Overloon and Venray, here near the house of Charles Manders and the Remmen family (background right). This is not the half-track that would drive against a house further away, therefore not part of the 5 half-tracks 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 towards Overloon.

(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)

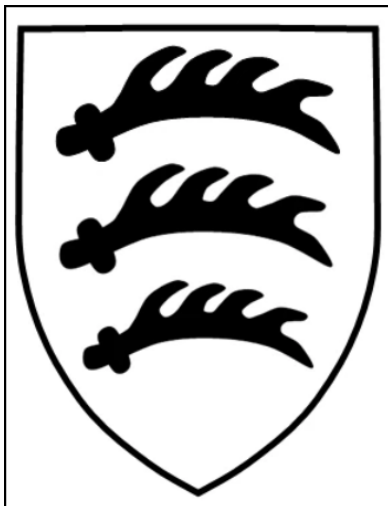


The second eliminated half-track on the Peelkant (overall photo). Since this half-track does not appear to have a Drilling machine gun on it, this is most likely an ammunition vehicle or grenadier craft with no additional armament.

(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.Brigeade 107, Pz.Gren.Batl. 2107 with number plate WH-1787981.
The insignia of the 107. Panzerbrigade is visible on the front.
(Photo: Still from the film of Charles Manders, Sint Anthonis 1944. Collection Piet Peters)*



*Insignia of the 107. Panzerbrigade
(Photo: Collection Overloon War Chronicles Foundation)*



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. Panzerbrigade is visible on the bottom left of the car. The number on this half-track is 412. The first number indicates the Kompanie this half-track was part of, the second number the Bataillon, 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 of the Hoogveld.
(Photo: still from the film of Charles Manders, Sint Anthonis 1944. Collection Piet Peters)*



The unknown photo that suddenly surfaced 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 (11 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 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 that 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. Panzerbrigade.

(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)

14. Machine gun bullets or bullets from the Drilling?

Back to the bullet scenario.

Because there is another unclear situation that needs to be looked at.

Indeed, there is the aforementioned eyewitness testimony in Goossens and Van Gogh's book *Oorlog en bevrijding in Oploo c.a* that says the 4 officers were hit by machine gun bullets fired from the half-tracks.

Countering that explanation are the text passages by authors Swarts and Didden who write in their books *Einddoel Maas* and *Kampfgruppe Walther and Panzerbrigade 107* that Silvertop and Orr were hit by bullets from the Drilling machine gun.

It is possible that the Germans fired shots with the Drilling during their drive through the Molenstraat and the Lepelstraat, but so far no Drilling shot impacts have been known along the route driven by the half-tracks in the village, including the fork junction. Drilling shots are also not specifically mentioned in the witness statements concerning that 25 September 1944. The question now, however, is to what extent bullets from the drilling can be plausible as the cause of death of Silvertop and Orr.

Here too I want to know what Swarts and Didden's source is for their text passages that bullets from the Drilling are the cause of death of Silvertop and Orr. In addition to my aforementioned question about the presence of the tank commander and the platoon sergeant, it is a second question that I submit to Didden. But as mentioned, at this moment unfortunately his reply is still pending.

Will Trienekens, World War II weapons expert, confirms that due to the Drilling's enormous firepower, the physical injuries caused by the calibre of the Drilling bullets will immediately be very large.

Even though that again depends on the type of ammunition fired by the Drilling. But even though there is a difference between a solid shot (or round shot, or simply called 'ball', a solid spherical projectile with no explosive charge) and a shot with Aufschlagzünder (explosion), even with a solid shot fired by the Drilling the damage is then already very significant and in the extreme case, body parts are irreparably broken or even completely torn off. So the affected person almost certainly dies from shock or blood loss.

So the question of whether Orr, Silvertop, Harvey and Thompson were hit by bullet shots from the Drilling can now be answered with almost 100% certainty with: no.

- We have already established that Silvertop, Orr, Harvey and Thompson were all hit by the same calibre of bullet at the same time.
Considering, on the one hand, the (fatal) wounds of Silvertop (died immediately) and Orr (who did not die immediately, but was conscious and died later on the way to the hospital) and, on the other hand, the non-fatal (lighter) wounds of Harvey and Thompson, these are definitely machine gun bullets and not the larger calibre Drilling bullets.
- By default, the Drilling cannot technically be aimed down so far that it can then hit persons at a distance of less than 10 metres. Subsequent observations on site at the fork junction reveal that the 4 British officers did stand less than 10 metres from where the half-tracks passed.
That lower aiming of the Drilling, can be done when the half-track starts hanging quite skewed on the side in the shooting direction.
But when taking the turn Lepelstraat – Pershemel (left turn), the vehicle will indeed logically have tilted to the right due to that direction of turn and speed, which is opposite to the direction of shooting that took place at the fork junction. This means

that the Drilling could then not be aimed downwards far enough to the left at all to hit the 4 officers.

Thus, the aforementioned eyewitness testimony of the Den Hoek resident who told authors Goossens and Van Gogh in 1969 that on that tragic Monday 25 September 1944 he had seen a German in a green camouflage jacket firing his machine gun from the half-track like a madman, killing a British officer, is completely reliable.

Machine gun type and calibre

Now that we know definitively 100% that no Drilling bullets killed Silvertop and Orr, but machine gun bullets as the eyewitness testimony already claimed, is it possible to determine what type of machine gun the Germans fired from the half-tracks? And by what calibre of bullet Harvey, Thompson, Silvertop and Orr were hit?

Since the 4 officers were standing together and the splitsec in which they fell victim, it is almost 100% certain that all 4 were hit by the same calibre of bullet. And thus not by different calibres fired from different weapons by different German soldiers on the 2 half-tracks.

The graze on Harvey or the punctured lung on Thompson give no direct indication as to what calibre was used by the Germans.

And Silvertop was buried in the churchyard in Sint Anthonis within hours of his death. As far as we know, no documents were drawn up there prior to his burial describing exactly which fatal injuries he had suffered.

In Orr's case it is different: in his case it might be known by which calibre of bullet he was mortally wounded, as he was transferred from his temporary grave in De Rips to the Overloon War Cemetery in Overloon in 1947, under the administration of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC).

For these transfers and/or reburials, an Initial Burial Report was drawn up for each fallen soldier by the British Grave Registration Unit and/or the Grave Concentration Unit. It contained an exact overview of which remains were buried in the grave. Perhaps the Orr report can tell us which calibre was involved.

But unfortunately my enquiry with the CWGC about the report on Orr is rejected.

Because such a report is never made public, nor is any further information provided by the CWGC or other UK commissions or authorities on the exact individual contents of an Initial Burial Report.

So we have to determine in another, indirect way what calibre and weapon was used by the Germans on the half-tracks that 25 September.

And that is why I am going to look for a drainpipe.

The mystery of the drainpipe

In the 1990s, an exhibition on World War II with a focus on the local aspect took place twice in Sint Anthonis in the then union building on the Brink/Breestraat (now restaurant *De 3 Burgemeesters*). The first exhibition was in May 1991 and the second was held in May 1995, at the time of the unveiling of the monument *The Sun of Our Hope* at the fork junction.

One of the items then on display in the union building was a one-and-a-half-metre piece of metal drainpipe from one of the houses at the fork junction Lepelstraat – Perdschemel/Kolonel Silvertoplaan. Namely the current address Kolonel Silvertoplaan 9, or the first house on the right when standing at the fork junction and thus the house where both half-tracks passed. In that exhibited piece of drainpipe were still the bullet holes from 1944 fired from the German half-tracks.

If now, in this investigation, the diameter of those bullet holes in that pipe could still be measured, it would then be possible to deduce with what calibre the Germans then fired at the fork junction.

Note: in any case, this calibre calculation could never prove 100% that the 4 officers were actually shot with that same gun or calibre. But given the then exact location of that drainpipe and the location of the house at the fork junction, this calibre could still provide a bordering certainty.

At my request, the Heemkundekring starts investigating where that drainpipe might be nowadays. But unfortunately, the pipe turns out to be unknown within the society. Other people I talk to concerning the drainpipe don't know anything about it either, or they know about it, but unfortunately don't know where it is at the moment. Perhaps the drainpipe has been discarded or ended up on the scrap heap somewhere in the past 30 years.

The outer wall

Still, there is another way to find out which possible weapon and calibre we are talking about. From the fatal fork junction we have to go back 400 metres on the Molenstraat – Lepelstraat route for this. Back to the Van de Mortel's house at the Molenstraat – Henri Dunantstraat fork junction. Because the bullet holes still present today in the outer wall of that house are from one or more of the 3 half-tracks that passed there.

Lance Corporal Maurice Lock, with his men and their anti-tank gun, was the furthest forward British position in the south-west side of the village that Monday afternoon 25 September 1944 at 4.30 pm. They were ordered to line up at the strategic intersection Peelkant – Bosweg – Hoefstraat – Molenstraat after the British entry of the village, coming from Oploo. Thus covering the village entrance from the Peelkant and Bosweg at that time.

The next cover position on that side of the village were British soldiers who were in the so-called cuckoo holes of the basement of Van de Mortel's house at the strategic fork junction Molenstraat – present-day Henri Dunantstraat. Cuckoo holes are openings in the basement to the outside to provide light and ventilation to the basement. The British could create a sort of foxholes in them and thus had a good open view across the stretch of the Molenstraat from Van de Mortel's house to the junction where Lock and his men were present.

After shots from the 3 remaining half-tracks hit Lock at the junction the half-tracks then approached the Van de Mortel's house on their route through the Molenstraat, the surprised British shot at those half-tracks from the cuckoo holes. At least 1 German was shot from one of the half-tracks during the passage, who was killed instantly (13 years later, in 1957, his identity was determined: it concerned the in 1944 20-year-old SS man Heinrich Rheinfelder, who had been missing all those intervening years).

The fact that Van de Mortel's house was shot at by the Germans provides an entry into the possible calibre determination. This does include:

- Even though it can be established by the quantity of impacts in the wall and the concentration of the impacts in the wall that it is an automatic weapon, unfortunately the impacts do not lead to only 1 type of machine gun, but several options.
- Were the impacts caused by shots from the 1st half-track or the 2nd half-track that passed in succession at the front of the house towards the Lepestraat, or by shots from the 3rd half-track that was the only one passing on the left side of the house, towards the Breestraat?

Because if the bullets originated from the 1st half-track, it is possible that the shooter at this location is the exact same shooter who shot the 4 officers at the fork junction moments later, or the aforementioned soldier in the green camouflage jacket.



*There are still bullet holes in this former house of the family Van de Mortel, the house at the fork junction Molenstraat – Henri Dunantstraat. These are German bullet holes, bullets fired from the 3 German half-tracks that passed by in front of and to the side of his house.
(Photo: Collection Leo Janssen)*

Will Trienekens confirms that these impacts in the wall lead to several possibly used automatic weapons, not just 1. Still, we can eliminate some automatic weapons from the list. That leaves 4 possible weapons in the end.

- Kar98K, or the Mauser Karabiner 98k, an infantry carbine and therefore not a machine gun. So basically out of the question in this situation. Unless the half-track crews were shooting simultaneously with each their own weapon towards the house. Does not sound plausible, but should be mentioned here as an option in order to completeness.

Calibre: 7.92 x 57 mm

The Kar98K was a bolt action rifle in which the next bullet had to be pushed from the magazine into the chamber each time via a manual bolt.



Kar98K.

*(Photo: Wikimedia Commons, public domain. In this photo no photo changes or photo adjustments were made by the author and/or Stichting Overloon War Chronicles / Overloon War Chronicles Foundation.
Site: Commons.Wikimedia.org. File: 98K.png).*

- StG44, or Sturmgewehr 44, a light automatic rifle.
Calibre: 7.92 x 33 mm
Experts call the StG44 the best automatic rifle during World War II. It is the precursor of the AK-47 (Kalashnikov) and the M16, among others.



StG44.

(Photo: Wikimedia Commons, file is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Share Alike 4.0 International license. In this photo no photo changes or photo adjustments were made by the author and/or Stichting Overloon War Chronicles / Overloon War Chronicles Foundation. Site: Commons.Wikimedia.org File: Sturmgewehr44noBG.jpg. Source: Armémuseum (The Swedish Army Museum) through the Digital Museum).

- MP38 and its successor MP40, or the most widely used machine gun by the German Wehrmacht.
Calibre: 9 x 19 mm
The weapon included a shoulder rest that could be unfolded, giving extra stability when firing.



MP40.

(Photo: Wikimedia Commons, file is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Share Alike 3.0 Unported license. In this photo no photo changes or photo adjustments were made by the author and/or Stichting Overloon War Chronicles / Overloon War Chronicles Foundation, Site: Commons.Wikimedia.org File: MaschinenpistoleMP40.jpg).

- MG34 (Maschinengewehr 34, introduced in 1934) and its successor MG42 (Maschinengewehr 1942, introduced in 1942)
Calibre: 7.92 x 57 mm
The MG34 was the first modern machine gun.



MG34.

(Photo: Wikimedia Commons, file is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Share Alike 3.0 Unported license. In this photo no photo changes or photo adjustments were made by the author and/or Stichting Overloon War Chronicles / Overloon War Chronicles Foundation. Site: Commons.Wikimedia.org File: Mg34.jpg).

We now know for sure that the impacts at the Van de Mortel's house came from 1 of these weapons. It also means that 1 of these automatic weapons must almost certainly have been the lethal weapon with which the 4 officers were shot at a little further on the fork junction Lepelstraat – Perdschemel.

To this we can also deduce the following: the Kar98K and the MG34/MG42, due to the length of their ammunition (57 mm vs. 33 mm), also produced more severe injuries, think half a skull knocked away, etc. But none of the 4 British officers suffered that kind of more severe injuries, as far as known.

So in this case it will most likely be bullets fired from an StG44, an MP38 or an MP40.

15. Deliberately shot?

The question I finally want to look at in the bullet scenario: is it possible to verify whether the German half-track crews, when passing the 4 officers, deliberately fired at Harvey, Thompson, Silvertop and Orr from the half-tracks and thus deliberately targeted them? Or were the 4 officers suddenly in the line of fire?

A number of components play a role in this:

- The aforementioned testimony: the testimony of the (unfortunately) anonymous resident of Den Hoek in Goossens and Van Gogh's book is of course the core value. That witness indicated that when the half-tracks came driving in from the Lepelstraat, the German soldier with the green camouflage jacket fired a machine gun around like a madman, during which he (the witness) saw one of the officers fall down fatally hit. It should be noted here that the witness either saw Silvertop (killed instantly) fall down or Orr (badly wounded and later died) fall down. The testimony does not report the name of that officer.
But in this case, it is about the observed fact that this German soldier is shooting around him like a madman, i.e. not first setting up a target and then firing aimed at that target.
- The panic factor: the Germans were panicking and desperate for the escape route. At that stage and with those emotions, there is no basis for choosing your target, positioning it and firing in a targeted manner. So as much as possible self-fire in order to cover the escape and to surprise the opponent and not allow them to counter fire due to the covering fire.
In that situation of panic and with only one goal, namely: getting out of the village, the Germans will not have cared whether their victims were officers or soldiers of lower ranks
- The time factor: the whole tragic event at the fork junction Lepelstraat – Perdschemel happened in just a few seconds. Apart from the panic factor, in those few seconds in that position, it is also almost impossible for the German crew members to select and fire the chosen targets.
- The view: at the moment when the half-tracks in the Lepelstraat near the bakery followed the last kink in the Lepelstraat to the right towards the fork junction, the Germans on the first half-track could see in front of them the fork junction Lepelstraat – Perdschemel at that very moment, which was exactly 50 metres away from that kink point in front of the bakery. If, as this investigation shows, in that view the 4 officers were slightly off-centre to the left of the fork junction, then they could indeed have been seen as targets by the Germans from the aforementioned kink, and the 4 officers could have been targeted.

But there are two other aspects concerning this visual field factor:

- The speed of the half-tracks: it is impossible to establish the exact speed at which the half-tracks drove through the Molenstraat and the Lepelstraat, they will not have reached the maximum speed of such a half-track (52.5 km per hour), but they will certainly not have driven slowly. Because in panic, looking to escape, being chased by the British and being shot at from all sides by the British, such an escape attempt is not going to succeed at a low speed.
The distance between the kink in the Lepelstraat in front of the bakery to the fork junction is, as mentioned, 50 metres. When that short distance is combined with the driven higher speed of the half-tracks on the stretch, it is almost impossible for the Germans in that very short space of time at that 50 metres to start aiming and firing specifically at the 4 officers. Regardless of whether the Germans fired their first bullets at the fork junction from the kink in the street or only during the 50 metres from the kink to the fork junction.
- The corner hedge: just before the fork junction, there was a corner hedge just over 2 metres high on the left side of the Lepelstraat in 1944. That hedge is still

there today (with still the same height). If the 4 officers were visually halfway behind the hedge to the left of the centre of the fork junction, they only came into view of the 2 half-track crews at the point when the 2 half-tracks were already close to the fork junction. That distance from that viewpoint to the location where the 4 British officers were standing is then short, far too short for the Germans to take aim and to fire deliberately.

- The height of the half-track and the hedge: the mentioned hedge in the Lepelstraat was and still is just over 2 metres high. So the 4 British officers standing on the ground did not rise above the hedge in terms of body height.
The height of this type of half-track (measured to the upper limit of the so called box on the half-track) was 1.75 metres, the standing level inside the box was 40 cm above the ground.
Means that a person with a body height of 1.80 metres standing in the box would rise a total of 2.20 metres above the ground (40 cm + 180 cm = 220 cm).
So even if the Germans were standing upright on the half-tracks, coming from a total of plus minus 2.20 metres in terms of eye level, they could only see those 4 British officers near the hedge at a later stage. Even then, the argument applies that the distance was too short for the Germans to aim deliberately and fire deliberately.

With these 5 components, it can be almost 80% established that the 4 officers suddenly found themselves in the German line of fire and thus were not deliberately targeted by the Germans because of their British senior officer ranks.

16. The shots of Harvey

But there is another situation to be clarified: in *Roscoe the bright shiner*, the aforementioned biography about Harvey, on pages 228 – 229 is the passage about the deaths of Silvertop and Orr, narrated by Harvey himself.

The follow-up question that author Tim Fitzgeorge-Parker asks Harvey on that page 229 immediately afterwards is:

"What about you?"

To which Harvey replies:

"Well, I got the bugger, didn't I? Got him and his driver with my pistol!"

Harvey says here that he was able to shoot the German gunman who killed Silvertop and fatally wounded Orr, and who also wounded himself (Harvey) and Thompson. Also Harvey claims that he (Harvey) hit the driver of that half-track.

Whether these Germans were indeed directly killed by his bullets or merely wounded is unfortunately not clear from his quoted testimony in the book.

Harvey says he shot with his pistol, but does not mention any brand name or calibre.

Can we still retrace what kind of pistol he fired with?

Yes.

Because if it was indeed literally a pistol, then only 1 pistol is in the picture:

- The Browning High-Power, calibre 9 mm, produced by the John Inglis factory in Toronto, Canada. In the years 1944 – 1945, hundreds of thousands were produced by this factory, including for the British army.

But when we draw it wider, now to the revolver category, there are two in that category that fit the bill:

- The Enfield No. 2 Mk I* or its successor Mk I**, both a .38, calibre 9 mm. Initially the standard service revolver in the British Army during World War II.

But when Enfield could not meet the large production demand, the British government chose as the replacement standard for the British Army:

- The Webley Revolver Mk IV .38/200, calibre 9 mm, also known as the Webley Break-Top Revolver and the Webley self-extracting Revolver.

The question that needs to be clarified here is the following: is it plausible, with all the data including exact location determination that emerged in the course of the investigation, that Harvey could have hit the shooter and driver of half-track 1 from his position in those mere few seconds?

The fact is that the 4 officers were standing on the inside bend of the fork junction Lepelstraat – Perdschemel when the half-tracks came towards them from the Lepelstraat. The location where Harvey was standing, in his case, the half-tracks came from the right and the vehicles turned with the curve to the left into the Perdschemel.

The fatal shots came from half-track 1 and Harvey was slightly injured in the process.

When Harvey then manages to draw his pistol in a flash and while aiming, turns with the curve to the left, going along with the movement of the half-tracks, it is indeed in terms of seconds and turning movement possible that he manages to hit German crew members on or hanging from the 2 half-tracks.

That Harvey manages to hit the shooter of the first half-track, which is in the open box, is therefore possible in the process.

But whether he hit the driver of the first half-track?

- The driver is in the half-track on the left behind the wheel, so indeed on the side where he passes Harvey. At the front in the half-track are only 2 viewing hatches (1 for the driver, 1 for the co-driver, see the photos as published in this investigation).

The same kind of viewing hatches are also located to the left of the driver and to the right of the co-driver. But those hatches are so small that it is difficult to hit the driver or co-driver from outside the half-track.

- Unless the side hatch on the driver's side was wide open during the passage, but that doesn't make sense given the counterfire from the British that they were already experiencing on the way in the Molenstraat and the Lepelstraat.
- Adding to this, the half-track must have already almost passed when Harvey was able to fire his shots towards the gunman and driver.
- But the biggest argument for saying that it was almost impossible for Harvey to hit the driver is the fact that the armour/plating of the half-track is so thick that it is impossible to shoot through it with a pistol bullet or revolver bullet. Which makes it clear why the official name of the half-track Hanomag Sd.Kfz is Schützenpanzerwagen.

So again, that Harvey could hit the shooter in the open box at that moment from behind or from diagonally sideways is quite possible. But hitting the driver in the car, that is still a doubt. Also because half-track 1 was able to continue towards the Breesstraat and ended against a tree on the Boxmeerseweg opposite the Majoca house. If the driver of that half-track had been killed or seriously injured by shots fired by Harvey, then it would be almost impossible for that half-track to travel all that way.

Major General Philip 'Pip' Roberts, however, has a slightly different story about Harvey's shots.

In his aforementioned letter of 27 September 1944 to his wife and later forwarded to Diana Trappes-Lomax - Silvertop, he writes that the first half-track, responsible for the fatal shots towards Silvertop and Orr, was eliminated by one of Silvertop's tanks. However, as previously noted in this investigation, the elimination by the British tank is not clear, given the photo that turned up in 2024 where damage to the half-track caused by a grenade impact appears to be missing.

But where Harvey claims he (Harvey) shot the gunman and driver of half-track 1 at the fork junction Lepelstraat – Perdshemel, Roberts writes in that letter:

"This half-track (half-track 1 that is, AVD) was closely followed by another which ran into a tree just opposite of Roscoe who succeeded in killing the commander with his pistol while he had his head out of the top."

So Roberts confirms Harvey did shoot with his pistol (he does not mention a revolver), but Roberts is talking about the German commander of that half-track 2 killed by Harvey, not the shooter or driver of half-track 1.

That the second half-track collided with a tree at the fork junction in that chaos at that location when taking the turn (but was able to continue its rush for a short while after the collision, but soon ended up on the field road on the Hoogveld) is indeed possible. Because on the opposite side in the Pershemel on the side of the outside turn, there were indeed Canadian oaks then. These were cleared at the beginning of this century.

That Harvey managed to kill one or more Germans in those few seconds at the fork junction through his quick action and accuracy of aim is absolutely possible. But exactly which of the Germans on or in the half-tracks were hit by him will probably never be fully resolved, given, on the one hand, the current observations at the site and, on the other, the opposing statements of Harvey and Roberts.

17. The conclusion

Considering all of the above, everything still points to Silvertop and Orr being killed by shots from the half-tracks that afternoon in 1944. Not by a hand grenade.

Because unlike the bullet scenario, for which evidence exists in varying degrees and the circumstances and situations can be explained, for the hand grenade scenario and the executions there is still no evidence whatsoever and no independent source can be found.

In short: case closed.

Closed?

No.

Because then suddenly a letter from 1945 turns up in the Silvertop archive, a letter from Madeleine Kreglinger.

A letter that will turn everything upside down...

18. The lawyer

On Tuesday 25 September 1945, exactly 1 year after the dramatic events in Sint Anthonis, Belgian Madeleine Kreglinger visits the grave of David Silvertop in Sint Anthonis. Kreglinger (1912 – 2002) was then a young lawyer from a very wealthy Antwerp family and befriended Silvertop during the liberation of Antwerp in September 1944.

On that day in 1945, Silvertop's grave in the churchyard is covered in full with flowers on the occasion of the commemoration of the liberation of Sint Anthonis.

That day, Kreglinger meets the parish priest in Sint Anthonis and they talk about Silvertop's death a year earlier, among other things. Kreglinger speaks fluent Dutch, so there are no translation misunderstandings between her and the parish priest.

On Wednesday 26 September 1945, a day after the meeting with the parish priest, Kreglinger writes a letter to Diana, David Silvertop's sister. In this letter Kreglinger also recounts her conversation with the parish priest.

Kreglinger does not mention the name of the parish priest in her letter, but without any doubt it must be Father Antoon van Delft (1876 – 1958), parish priest in Sint Anthonis from 10 June 1927 to 10 July 1956.

From the beginning, Van Delft was a widely respected person who had more power in Sint Anthonis than the mayor, the head teacher, the doctor and all other notables put together. Van Delft is also known for his always long sermons during church masses and his socially and politically involvement. From the very beginning, he therefore warns his parishioners about the rise and danger of fascism and Nazism.

Also during the war years, he is an important support for parishioners in the village and he is not afraid of the Germans.

Kreglinger writes the following remarkable text passage in her letter to Diana:

"The priest told me how David had been killed next to his tank by a German who had pretended to surrender and how that German had been killed by David's friends. The German is buried in the same cemetery, but just only laid in earth."

That Van Delft points her to the graves of the Germans in the churchyard is possible because, as we know, the 8 Germans were still buried in that cemetery at that time in 1945. And one of those unnamed Germans is thus the perpetrator, according to Van Delft.

Kreglinger's letter to Diana is 100% reliable, she also has no reason to mislead Diana. Van Delft is also a very trustworthy person and has absolutely no reason to tell untruths to Kreglinger. And since there is only one year between Silvertop's death and the conversation between Van Delft and Kreglinger in the churchyard, Van Delft's memories have not yet faded or become coloured.

In her letter, Kreglinger does not write that Van Delft spoke to her about a hand grenade allegedly being thrown. According to her, Van Delft only said that it was a German who pretended to surrender. But if Van Delft did not mention a hand grenade, was the hand grenade a later assumption by third parties, an assumption that then took on a life of its own over the years?

But hand grenade or not, still Van Delft's explanation to Kreglinger raises the important question of how Van Delft got that information about that German who pretended to surrender and then killed Silvertop. Did Van Delft hear this himself on that tragic Monday 25 September 1944, from a villager who saw something? Or from one of the hundreds of British soldiers present in the village?

Or perhaps Van Delft himself saw something at the scene?

Van Delft wrote and published a lot in his lifetime, not only on theological subjects, but also literary works. Could Van Delft perhaps have written down something specifically about that 25 September 1944 in Sint Anthonis, somewhere during or after the war?

Van Delft and his works are mentioned on a number of websites, but there is nothing there about specifically his memoirs or any other possible book about his time in Sint Anthonis. I ask that question to the diocese of Den Bosch, which includes the parish of Sint Anthonis. A few days later the archivist of the diocese is able to answer me that they don't know any possible memoirs by Van Delft. Nor any other book or publications in which Van Delft writes about those war years.

I also ask the question to Jan de Kleijnen of Heemkundekring Sint Tunnis in Oelbroeck, the historical society. And Jan can immediately confirm that something is present in their collection.

It appears to be a copy of a handwritten manuscript by Van Delft and some of his predecessors about Sint Anthonis.

The manuscript has a Latin title: *Registrum memoriale Parochiae S. Antonii* (The Memorial Register of the Parish of St Antonius). It covers the period 1840 – 1956 and in the oldest years is mainly a survey of various donations to the parish church.

But in that same manuscript, Van Delft writes, among other things, 5 pages about the war years in Sint Anthonis, including a highly remarkable text passage about that 25 September 1944:

“De Duitschers lieten zich bij dezen strijd nog kennen als eerlooze Herren.

In den Paardenhemel ontmoetten elkaar Eng en Duits.

De Duitschen SS commandant sprong van zijn wagen met opgestoken handen tot overgave. De Eng commandant trok op hem toe en viel. De Duitscher had hem doodgeschoten met zijn verraderlijk opgestoken handen.

Er werd natuurlijk korte metten met den Herr gemaakt. Toen hij in het graf moest gelegd worden, lieten ze hem als een hond van de kar in het gat rollen.

De Paardenhemel werd ter eere van den Engelschen kolonel omgedoopt in “Kolonel van Silvertopstraat”. Zijn graf wordt op het kerkhof in eere gehouden. Deze Engelsche officier was Katholiek.”

("The Germans still showed themselves as dishonourable Herren at this battle.

In den Paardenhemel (Perdshemel, AVD) Eng and German met. (English and German, AVD)

The German SS commander jumped from his car with raised hands to surrender.

The Eng (English, AVD) commander went to him and fell. The German had shot him dead with his treacherously raised hands.

Naturally, the German was dealt with briefly. When he had to be laid in the grave, they made him roll like a dog from the cart into the hole.

The Perdshemel was renamed "Kolonel van Silvertopstraat" in honour of the English colonel, and his grave is kept in honour in the churchyard. This English officer was Catholic.")

A few things are highly remarkable in this tekst passage.

Van Delft writes Kolonel van Silvertopstraat instead of Kolonel Silvertoplaan, a bit strange, but we should most probably consider this a rare mistake by Van Delft.

But the point here is that Van Delft here specifically mentions that the German commander, who supposedly wanted to surrender, then shot Silvertop. So it should have been a pistol or revolver, not a hand grenade.

Unfortunately, Van Delft does not mention how he got this information. So here's another question: who is his source?

Is his source a villager who actually saw the incident happen, or is his source perhaps a British soldier who spoke to Van Delft after the tragic incident? Or did Van Delft see something himself?

Van Delft also writes that afterwards the British dealt briefly with the German. In other words: the British shot the German commander dead immediately afterwards.

Van Delft also describes how the British let the dead German roll off the cart into the grave.

Van Delft's description now suddenly sounds like an eyewitness account, thus indirectly indicating that Van Delft was on the spot in the churchyard when the German was buried there. This also sounds logical, because the British will really not have just started digging in the churchyard or ordered German prisoners of war to dig there. No, because the British will have had to ask permission to Van Delft first (it was his churchyard, or at least of the parish) and so it is almost 100% clear that Van Delft himself was there when that German was rolled into the grave. And so Van Delft knows exactly which of the eight German graves that were dug there is the grave of the one he says killed Silvertop. And that is precisely the grave that Van Delft pointed out to Madeleine Kreglinger in 1945.

Unfortunately, in his manuscript Van Delft does not mention which one of the 8 graves is the particular grave he is talking about. Nor does Kreglinger mention which exact grave was pointed out to her by Van Delft that afternoon in 1945.

Whether Van Delft specifically mentioned Kreglinger the word pistol or revolver during their conversation in the churchyard cannot be deduced from Kreglinger's letter. However, the elements Kreglinger mentions in her letter do recur in the text passage as Van Delft writes it in his manuscript. So Van Delft told Kreglinger the facts as he himself knew them at the time.

However, there is one passage in Van Delft's story that could indirectly refer to Lock's death. And therefore not to Silvertop. It concerns this passage:

"The German SS commander jumped from his car with raised hands to surrender.

The Eng (English, AVD) commander went to him and fell. The German had shot him dead with his treacherously raised hands."

When we analyze this passage, it contains a few elements that could relate to the half-tracks that, coming from the Peelkant, suddenly saw the British anti-tank gun of Lock and his men at the entrance to the village on the corner of Peelkant - Bosweg - Hoefstraat - Molenstraat.

- "The German SS commander jumped from his car raised hands to surrender."
It is possible, it is known that a number of men jumped from the vehicles at that location and were captured.
- "The Eng (English, AVD) commander went to him and fell. The German had shot him dead with his treacherously raised hands."
Fact is that Lock walked toward the half-tracks and fell when he was shot dead from the first half-track. It is unknown whether the gunner or other crew members on the half-track actually raised their hands in surrender and then continued on their way while shooting.

John Trappes-Lomax, the nephew of David Silvertop, appears to have met Madeleine Kreglinger several times through the years. But no further details emerged from those conversations besides those shown here.

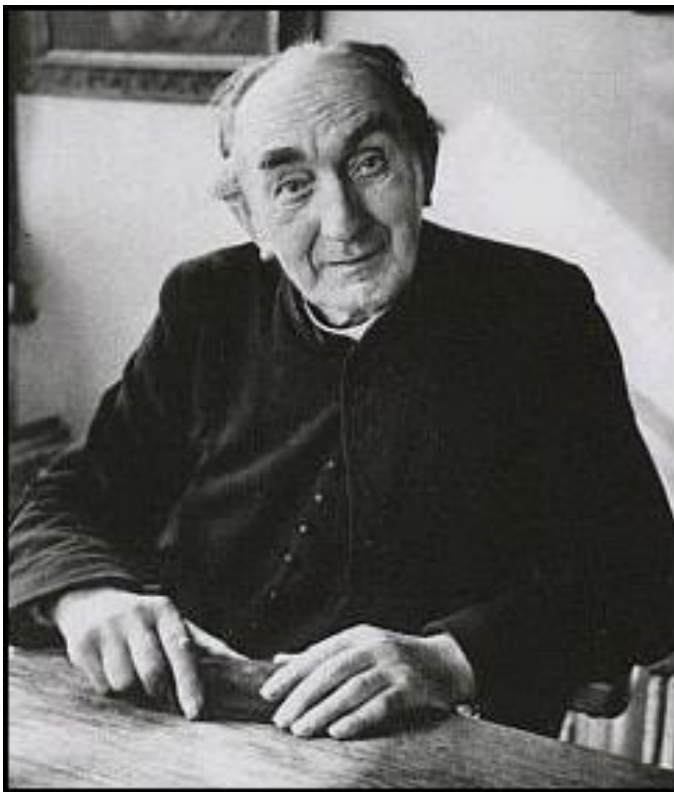
Kreglinger also never reported to Trappes-Lomax which grave Van Delft pointed out to her in the churchyard in 1945.

So unfortunately this track in this investigation is still a dead end until further notice.

(Note: the letter quote of Madeleine Kreglinger is published here with the exclusive permission of John Trappes-Lomax, Diana's son).



*The 4 British war graves decorated with flowers in the churchyard in Sint Anthonis in 1945, as Madeleine Kreglinger must have seen them during her visit. From left to right the graves of Ellis, Wilson, Lock and Silvertop. This photo still shows the original wooden crosses on the graves, which were then replaced by metal crosses and later on by official gravestones.
(Photo: Collection Heemkundekring Sint Tunnis in Oelbroeck)*



*Parish priest / Pastor Antoon van Delft in 1943/1944
(Photo: Collection Martien Coppens)*



*On the left in the picture, parish priest Van Delft, on his bicycle in Sint Anthonis with residents of the village. Recording of 25 or 26 September 1944.
(Photo: Still from the film of Charles Manders, Sint Anthonis 1944. Collection Piet Peters)*

19. The sudden eyewitness?

In July 2025, something unexpected happens again. A British reader of my research, as published on our OWC website at the time, contacts our foundation. In his email, he mentions a book he is currently rereading, a book which was previously unknown to us. It concerns the war memoirs of a tank commander of the 3RTR. Attached to the email, the reader sends a photo of the two pages in which the tank commander describes the events in Sint Anthonis, including a particularly remarkable passage:

“There were, of course, some Third RTR members whom I remember vividly, starting with the three regimental commanders I served under. David Silvertopp, another famous veteran of the desert, where he had won both an MC and a DSO, was a textbook commander: decisive, competent, humorous, and humane. He led the Third RTR brilliantly from Normandy to St. Anthonis, on the Dutch-Belgian border, where he was killed. We were all standing in the market square when some captured SS troops were brought in, whom obviously no one had thought to search. One of them threw a grenade, which killed David and a couple of other officers; shooting everyone in that SS group was no consolation.

This may seem a rather cavalier way of referring to what, under the Geneva Convention’s rules for the humane treatment of prisoners of war, was clearly a war crime. It is not that the Geneva Convention articles were hardly bedside reading at that time, it is just that such incidents did, on occasion, happen.

War crimes, isolated and unreported, involving shooting, looting or rape, are an inevitable part of an ongoing war. When committed on a large scale, such as at Malmédy or My Lai (not to mention the Russian advance through Germany), the media will report them, and, if the perpetrators also eventually happen to lose the war, they may be brought to trial. Revenge, such as for Silvertopp’s death, however, did occasionally happen and was never reported or punished, any more than instances where, carried away by the “heat of battle”, people did shoot men on the other side who no longer presented a real threat. It did not happen often, but it happened.

Note: this passage specifically mentions Malmédy and My Lai as examples of war crimes.

1. Malmédy: massacre on 17 December 1944, during the Battle of the Bulge, perpetrated by German troops from Kampfgruppe Peiper, in which 84 American prisoners of war were murdered that day. The total number of prisoners of war murdered by this Kampfgruppe during that period is estimated to be between 538 and 749.
2. Mỹ Lai: mass murder on 16 March 1968, during the Vietnam War, perpetrated by American soldiers from an infantry company. The victims in this Vietnamese village were more than 500 unarmed civilians, mainly women and children.

It now suddenly becomes clear where author Longden got his information about Silvertop and Sint Anthonis for his book *To the Victor the Spoils*: from this book, which was published years earlier.

Compare the quoted passage by Longden in my chapter 3 with the above passage by the tank commander: in both cases, David Silvertop's name is incorrectly spelled with two p's, and Sint Anthonis is incorrectly referred to as a border town between Belgium and the Netherlands. The passage about the Geneva Convention is also cited in Longden's book. Now that we know the title of these memoirs and the name of the tank commander, this book appears to be included in Longden's aforementioned bibliography at the back of his book.

No name

As mentioned, this entire passage by the tank commander is remarkable in its content. It also describes the direct shooting of the captured SS soldiers, citing revenge as the reason. Under the Geneva Convention, this constitutes a war crime, which unintentionally reflects on other British soldiers in the regiment.

As previously mentioned in my chapter 3, Longden chose not to name this soldier, now also known to us, in his book, *To the Victor the Spoils*. In that light, it's now clear why. And perhaps that's also the reason why Longden didn't respond to my email request in 2023 for more information about that source.

In this case, I now see that this is commendable to Longden as an author and researcher. Given this very direct passage and the precarious content describing a war crime, I decide, following Longden's example, to deliberately omit the soldier's name and the title of the memoirs in my research as well. Especially since the man in question appears to have died in the 1990s and therefore a hearing can no longer take place.

Eyewitness testimony

Now that the source of Longden's text passage is known and we can read the full text passage about the hand grenade and the British executions in the exact original words written by the tank commander, we can analyze that text. The text now suddenly reads like direct eyewitness testimony:

"We were all standing in the market square when some captured SS troops were brought in, whom obviously no one had thought to search. One of them threw a grenade, which killed David and a couple of other officers; shooting everyone in that SS group was no consolation."

The sentence *"We were all standing in the market square when..."* indicates that several British soldiers witnessed the throwing of the hand grenade. And that would mean that there need to be more sources that can confirm this hand grenade scenario and the killing by the British of the German SS group.

But when we objectively examine all the information that has emerged during my research, and all the indications and statements from both military personnel and locals, we must conclude that so far no indication or evidence has emerged that confirms the aforementioned hand grenade and/or British executions in Sint Anthonis on 25 September 1944.

How to read it?

The question that then arises is: should we interpret the tank commander's text passage as direct eyewitness testimony? Or did he perhaps mean something else?

A reader of that text passage who is unfamiliar with the events in Sint Anthonis and does not have access to the statements from soldiers and the local population mentioned in this investigation file will indeed read it as eyewitness testimony.

I'm focusing on the beginning of the sentence, *"We were all standing in the market square when..."*. It's clear that the tank commander here means the village square, the Brink, near the church. There is no other square in Sint Anthonis. The Brink and the surrounding streets were also where the 3RTR (along with the troops and vehicles of Lieutenant Colonel Orr's 3MONS) positioned their tanks and vehicles upon entering the village.

But the key to this quoted sentence isn't the word *"market square."* The key is the word *"We."* Everything depends on how that word is interpreted in this context. There are two options:

1. By the word *"We,"* does the tank commander really mean himself and other fellow soldiers who were physically standing as a group on that square at the precise moment Silvertop was killed? In other words, is he literally saying with that single word *"We"* that he and his colleagues were eyewitnesses to Silvertop's death in that market square by that hand grenade and were also eyewitnesses to the shooting of the SS men in retaliation?
2. By the word *"We,"* does the tank commander really mean himself and other fellow soldiers who were physically standing as a group on that square at the precise moment Silvertop was killed, but were they not direct witnesses to the hand grenade

and Silvertop's death, and did they only learn later from other soldiers that Silvertop had been killed by a hand grenade and that the SS men had been shot in retaliation by the British troops?

Option 1: the eyewitness account, but that no longer seems feasible. Silvertop was indeed on the square until he left for the intersection for the meeting, but he was killed at the fork junction, not on the square.

Option 2: hearsay, seems more appropriate.

Speculation?

Because it could be, and now with option 2 we're venturing into purely speculative territory, but still... Could it be that in the chaos and panic that reigned among the British troops during and immediately after the incident with the half-tracks and the deaths of Silvertop, Orr, and Lock, that during those chaotic moments, a rumor started somewhere among the British troops that there had been, or might have been, a hand grenade, and that the British had shot the SS in retaliation?

The fact is that both the Germans from their vehicles and the British fired at each other incessantly. The British not only fired with machine guns, Bren guns, and Sten guns, but also from tanks and from their combat vehicles. It is also a fact that among these German half-track crews were SS men. It is also a fact that during the elimination of the five half-tracks, SS men were killed who were shot from the vehicles by the British and found lying in the street.

The square where the 3RTR, including the tank commander, stood with their tanks, the Brink, has a total area of approximately 7,150 m². Standing on one side of the square among the vehicles, it's impossible to see or determine what's happening on the other side, or who is there. Did that rumor start somewhere in the enormous chaos in the village at that moment? Perhaps it then reached the square where a large group of 3RTR and their tanks were stationed? And in that chaos, that rumor was accepted as true, with all the confusion and subsequent incorrect assumptions that entailed?

As mentioned, this is speculative, but not unrealistic.

The fact is that, amidst the constant fighting and operations, the British troops didn't have much time to reflect on events. Not even on the deaths of Silvertop, Orr, and Lock. The war didn't stop; it simply continued. New orders, new transfers, new replacement officers, constant vigilance, new potential threats, or even new immediate dangers. What was briefly news today would be followed by other news or sudden developments tomorrow. Moreover, an individual soldier didn't have the time or opportunity to fact-check every development or event.

Although we must conclude that the tank commander's text passage is quite flawed, I am convinced that he committed his memory to paper in good faith.

20. Final conclusion of the investigation

All in all, the final conclusions of this investigation are:

- There is no concrete source or testimony, neither then nor now, that actually proves or makes plausible the hand grenade scenario and/or British executions of the German prisoners in Sint Anthonis.
- Many publications and websites cut and paste each other's texts about the hand grenade scenario, but without doing their own research.
The resulting number of publications and websites that mention the hand grenade scenario makes it seem as if there is evidence for the hand grenade scenario (under the heading "if so many sites say it, then it must be true"), but ultimately the entire hand grenade scenario and/or the executions do not contain any concrete evidence or sources.
- It is almost impossible to imagine that the official war diaries of the various regiments written on or just after 25 September would not contain the truth, but that a deliberate agreement had been made immediately by the higher army leadership with the regimental leadership to conceal or adapt facts in the war diaries from the hand grenade scenario to the bullet scenario.
- It is almost impossible to imagine that the various letters to Diana, Silvertop's sister, written shortly after the tragic incident in Sint Anthonis, would not contain the truth about how her brother died.
They are personal letters from the various letter writers, written on personal initiative. It would be very unlikely if the same letter writers had made deliberate agreements in advance to all use the bullet scenario in their letters instead of the hand grenade scenario.
- In their 1969 book, authors Goossens and Van Gogh recorded many local testimonies about the tragic events on that 25 September 1944, including specific testimonies about the machine gun bullets fired from the half-track. None of the witnesses interviewed in that book, both local residents and British soldiers, mentioned or saw anything about a hand grenade or a German soldier who personally shot Silvertop. Nor about executions by the British of German prisoners of war.
No one can ignore this book by Goossens and Van Gogh. In any case, the villagers interviewed had no interest whatsoever in a possible cover up of the truth or a possible obligation of confidentiality.
- Parish priest Van Delft may have caused great confusion in this investigation by the text in his manuscript, but he also did not indicate from whom he received his information in 1944 about the German who wanted to surrender and subsequently shot Silvertop. He also did not tell Madeleine Kreglinger who his source was. So there is no direct evidence or source from Van Delft's side either.
- But the most important argument for assessing the hand grenade scenario including executions as false is the following: if the hand grenade scenario, including the executions, had indeed happened and it had been replaced by the bullet scenario, it would be a major cover up and would affect all. If a duty of confidentiality had been imposed on all those involved, then someone must have told, released or made something public over time. Both from the military at the time or from the villagers at the time who, as mentioned, had no interest in a possible cover up of the real cause. It is impossible to imagine that all those hundreds of people (soldiers and villagers) would have kept their mouths shut about a cover up for all those decades and would not have dared to say anything.

Therefore, the final conclusion of this investigation is:

Silvertop and Orr were hit in Sint Anthonis on Monday afternoon 25 September 1944 around 4.30 pm by bullets from a German automatic machine gun (no Drilling), fired from 2 passing half-tracks on the run, more specifically from half-track 1, the first half-track entering the fork junction.

Silvertop was killed immediately on the spot, Orr died of his wounds on the way to the field hospital (C.C.P./C.C.S.).

Before publication, I shared the above research results and conclusions with colleagues at the Overloon War Chronicles Foundation and with various third-party experts (each in their own field). I asked them all to critically review the content and conclusions of my research. I can hereby confirm that they all support the findings and conclusions I presented in this research.

If there is anyone who has concrete evidence or concrete sources regarding the hand grenade scenario or British executions in Sint Anthonis, we request that person to contact the Overloon War Chronicles Foundation:

overloonwarchronicles@gmail.com

All information will be carefully and thoroughly checked.



*The 4 war graves in the churchyard in Sint Anthonis. 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 kilometre north of the Gemertseweg), Lance Corporal Maurice Lock and Colonel David Silvertop.
(Photo: Collection Arno van Dijk)*



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



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

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.

21. Final word

As I said in chapter 2, doubting a valid truth is not wrong.

The subtitle of this research is as stated on the title page *The truth behind the Sint Anthonis drama, 25 September 25 1944*. Perhaps a high-sounding title and it is up to the reader to decide for himself what he thinks of this research and whether or not he agrees with the final conclusion.

It is up to the reader to decide to what extent the reader will follow the bullet scenario or opt for the hand grenade scenario and the cover up.

Someone who chooses the latter option will be able to argue that in the event of a cover-up, nothing would ever come out anyway, no matter how much evidence for the bullet scenario I could provide in my research.

Finally, back to 2023. While I am writing the final lines of the first version of my investigation report I receive a reply email from the National Committee 4 and 5 May, one of the sites that refer directly to the hand grenade (see Chapter 3).

The Committee informs me in the reply email that, in response to my questions, it subsequently conducted its own investigation into the origin of the hand grenade text on their site, but was unable to identify the source or determine how long ago the text appeared on the site.

The Committee proposes to adjust the text on the site.

The pinpoint on the Google Maps map will also be adjusted to the correct location and the Overloon War Chronicles Foundation will also be included as a source with a link to the OWC website.

I propose that they include the following text on their website and that request is granted:

Het monument 'De zon van onze hoop' is opgericht om saamhorigheid, vrijheid, democratie en hoop te benadrukken.

Ook worden met het gedenkteken Colonel David Silvertop, Lieutenant Colonel Hubert Orr en Lance Corporal Maurice Lock herdacht die alle drie op 25 september 1944 tijdens de bevrijding van Sint Anthonis om het leven kwamen.

(The monument 'The Sun of Our Hope' was erected to emphasize solidarity, freedom, democracy and hope. The memorial also commemorates Colonel David Silvertop, Lieutenant Colonel Hubert Orr and Lance Corporal Maurice Lock, all three died during the liberation of Sint Anthonis on 25 September 1944).

A text that does justice to both the monument and the history.

22. Sources and credits

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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:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/OverloonWarChronicles>

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