

Story of the five SILVERTOP family members

Today 77 years ago, Lieutenant Colonel DAVID ARTHUR HENRY SILVERTOP was killed in action in a small Dutch village. Three of his relatives also paid the ultimate price, they died during WW 1, a fourth family member survived the horrors of the war

This story is about both World War One and World War Two. I hope this is allowed by the admins of the group, especially since the deceased relative who died during WW2 was responsible for the liberation of the Rupel region and the city of Antwerp and the port of Antwerp, 77 years ago.

World War II

Lieutenant Colonel DAVID ARTHUR HENRY SILVERTOP



David Arthur Henry Silvertop was a son of Commander Arthur Edward Silvertop, Royal Navy (killed in action at The Battle of Jutland 31st May. 1916 on the HMS Defence) and of Dorothy Silvertop (nee Dalglish). He was born on 10 January 1912 in Southsea, near Portsmouth. His mother died on 22 February 1923. He and his two sisters were raised by their father's sister.

David Silvertop attended the Ampleforth College and later was educated at Magdalen College at Oxford University. He decided to join the Army and served with the 9th/14th Lancers.

Silvertop served with the 3rd Tank Regiment in the 14th/20th King's Hussars. He was awarded the Military Cross, being injured at the crucial battle of Medenine in Tunisia in March 1943. In Africa he was promoted to Captain and then Major. He spent three months in hospital after he was wounded. After he returned he was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and was given command of the 3rd Royal Tank Regiment, 11th Armoured Division.

After D-Day he took part in the July 1944 operation near Caen and then the breakout and rapid advance into Belgium. For his role in Operation Goodwood he was recommended for the Distinguished Service Order (DSO).

On September 4, 1944, the tanks of the 3rd Royal Tank Regiment, 11th Armored Division commanded by Lieutenant Colonel DAVID ARTHUR HENRY SILVERTOP reach the bridges of Boom (nowadays know for Tomorowland). Two bridges on the A12, the first over the Rupel-Brussels canal and the second over the Rupel river, both ready to be blown up by the German troops. Due to the daring actions of the Belgian engineer Robert Vekemans, some tanks were diverted along a much smaller toll bridge that was actually not suitable for these heavy tanks. They crossed the Rupel River and attacked the German troops who were waiting on the large bridges from the side flank. Completely surprised by this action, the large bridges (A12) fell into British hands unscathed. As a result, the road to the city of Antwerp and its harbor was open and in the early afternoon the first tanks arrived in the center of Antwerp. The much-needed harbor also fell completely intact into British and Belgian hands, The German troops taken completely by surprise.

After the liberation of Antwerp SILVERTOP and his unit received orders to cross into The Netherlands.

Five SdKfz 251/21 Hanomag half-tracks from the 107. Panzerbrigade, which were equipped with MG 151 Drilling triple barrelled machineguns, were sent straight to Oploo, a few kilometers northwest of Overloon, to guard the crossroads there. The rest of the Kampfgruppe followed a more covered route. This move took place just hours before the British tanks headed off in roughly the same direction.

After some skirmishes near Bakel and Gemert the Shermans and Cromwells rumbled on towards St.-Anthonis without meeting any serious resistance. But this relatively peaceful advance would end in horror for the British. By 18.30 hours the majority of the 29th Armoured Brigade reached St.-Anthonis while the 129th Brigade was fast approaching. Suddenly the leading British troops came upon the five German half-tracks along the road from Gemert. A brief exchange of fire followed, but soon the Hanomags drove off in the direction of St.-Anthonis. Before they reached the village three were knocked out. The two survivors increased their speed. Ahead they suddenly noticed, to their horror, British troops, blocking their escape route. In sheer desperation they turned right on to a parallel road, the Lepelstraat, south of the church. The Germans now decided to try and shoot their way out. Even though the Lepelstraat was jam-packed with British vehicles their crews were as surprised as the Germans were and with blazing guns the two half-tracks raced ahead. On the corner where they were to turn left Brigadier Roscoe Harvey (29th Armoured Brigade) had just called an O Group.

Silvertop was killed on the spot and Orr was so seriously wounded that he died at the Casualty Clearing Post. Reputedly his last words were, 'It was foolish of me to be standing there at the

crossroads. I should have known better.' Thompson and Harvey were both wounded. Thompson was shot through one of his lungs, but Harvey was only wounded lightly.....The incident was a heavy blow to the two battalions and both officers, beloved, highly decorated and skilled professionals, were sorely missed."

David Arthur Henry SILVERTOP Died 25 September 1944 Age 32 years old and is buried at **OPLOO (ST. ANTHONIS) ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCHYARD Grave 4.** Netherlands

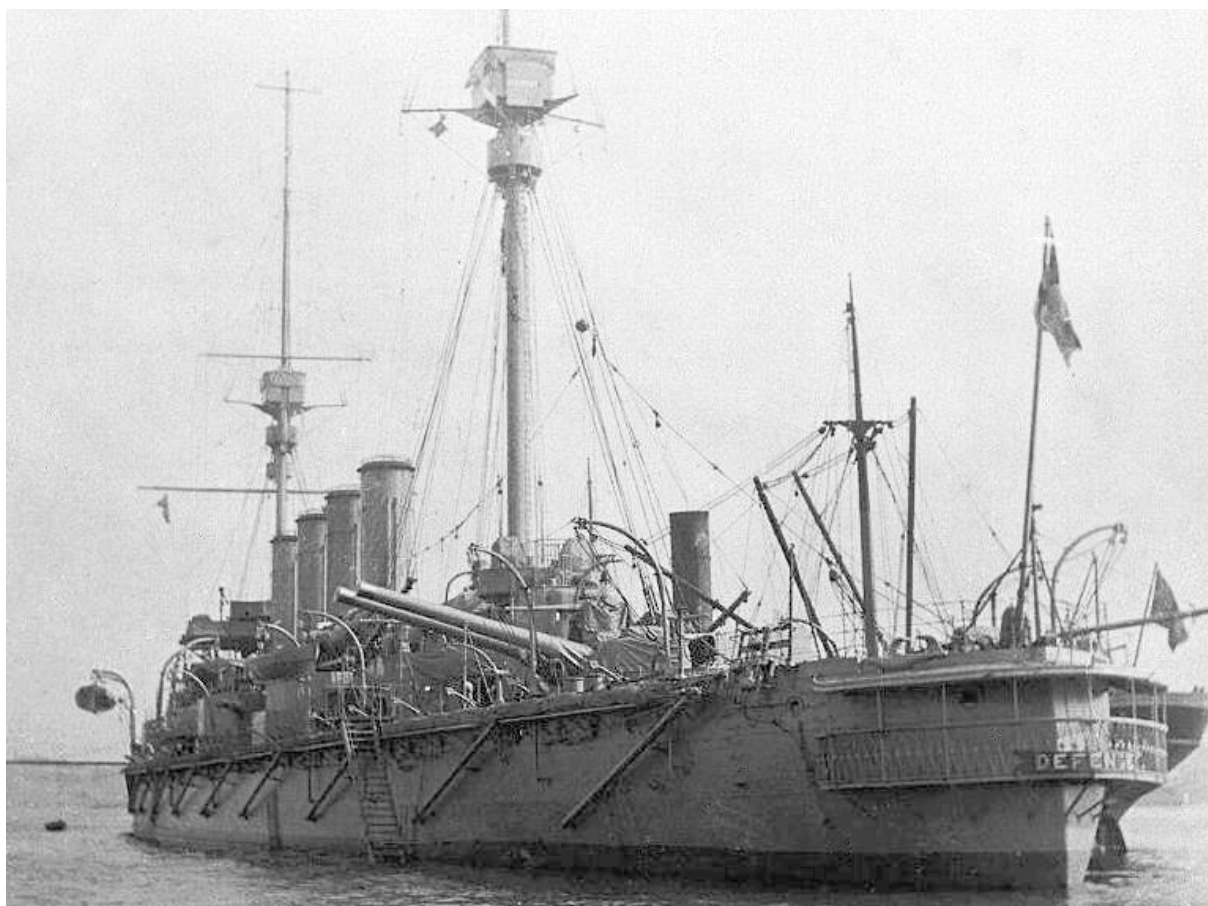
Lieutenant Colonel SILVERTOP received the DSO posthumously.

Streets in Anwerp, Boom and Sint Anthonis have been named after him.

World War I

His father, **Commander Arthur Edward SILVERTOP** Royal Navy H.M.S. "Defence", Born 29th November 1877, who was killed In Action, 31 May 1916 Aged 48, at the Battle of Jutland. "Defence" was sunk on 31 May 1916 during the Battle of Jutland, the largest naval battle of the war. Escorting the main body of the Grand Fleet, the ship was fired upon by one German battlecruiser and four dreadnoughts as she attempted to engage a disabled German light cruiser. She was struck by two salvos from the German ships that detonated her rear magazine. The fire from that explosion spread to the ship's secondary magazines, which exploded in turn there were no survivors, 903 lives lost.

He is Commemorated at the **PLYMOUTH NAVAL MEMORIAL Panel 10.** U.K.



H.M.S. "Defence"

Two sons of Commander Arthur Edward SILVERTOP his half brother Henry Thomas SILVERTOP also died during World War One

Lieutenant **FRANCIS SOMERLED JOSEPH SILVERTOP** Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars, was Killed in Action 20 May 1917 Age 33 years old. Son of Henry Thomas and Rachel Mary Josephine Silvertop, of Minster Acres, Northumberland. Born 1st August 1883. Husband of Nevill Shorrocks (formerly Silvertop), of Helens, Sidmouth, Devon. His Brother William Alexander SILVERTOP was killed 6 months later.

He is buried at **TEMPLEUX-LE-GUERARD BRITISH CEMETERY Plot II. E. 41.** France

Captain **William Alexander SILVERTOP MC** 20th Hussars, was Killed in Action 27 November 1917 Age 32 years old. Son of Henry Thomas and Rachel Mary Josephine Silvertop, of Minster Acres, Northumberland. Born 10th December 1884. His brother Francis Somerled Joseph SILVERTOP was also killed.

He is Buried at **ANNEUX BRITISH CEMETERY Plot II. F. 28.** France

A third brother survived the war

Private M2/194299 **Charles Randall SILVERTOP** Army Service Corps. Son of Henry Thomas and Rachel Mary Josephine Silvertop, of Minster Acres, Northumberland. Born 22nd April 1889, Minsteracres, Northumberland. He died 6th April 1959 at the age of almost 70 years old, at Newton Abbot, Devon.

MAY THEY ALL REST IN PEACE