

Captain Raymond Harold Stevens
Born 7 Nov 1917 Wandsworth London. Died c24 September 1944

Remembered on the memorial in St Peter's Church, Seaview and by his family



Father: Arthur Harold "Dodie" Stevens M.C. (WW1) (1886-1974)
Mother: Clarinda Napier "Clara" Stevens, née Harrower (1890-1978)
Long time SVYC members, Regatta President, and Seaview lovers

Raymond spent many happy days as a child in Seagrove bay with his brother Edwin and with sisters Monica and Helen (Simonds and Holbrook).

Monica worked for a while in the WAAFS up on Culver Down radio station, Isle of Wight.



Education; Cobham House, Stowe School

He left Stowe in April 1936 and went on to Trinity College Cambridge

Raymond joined the Territorial Army (Artists Rifles) after the Munich Crisis in 1939, then the 156th Parachute Regiment.

His initial army training was after a long day's work at Moyses Stevens the family flower business, at the Honourable Artillery Company, Finsbury Pavement.

In January 1940 he passed out from the Officers Cadet Training Unit in Aldershot, was drafted to 225 Brigade, and sent to France.

In May 1940, he fought the rear-guard action from the Albert Canal in Belgium to Dunkirk and remained firing the guns to defend the northern flank until the final evacuation.

They were then posted to Egypt with the 4th Royal Horse Artillery, 7th Armoured Division (Desert Rats) where on May 25th 1942 he was wounded near El Alamein and sent to Baragwanath Hospital, in Johannesburg, South Africa.

([Duncan Simonds](#) also fought and was wounded in North Africa as a gunner as well though they never knew each other.)

Raymond returned to England weighing only 9 stone and having largely lost the use of his left leg from above the knee. Partly recovered, he was posted to 81/9 Medium Regiment Southern Command in Felixstowe, Suffolk.

Again he applied for active service and joined the 156 Battalion, Parachute Regiment, 1st Airborne Division learning to jump at Catterick.

Promoted Captain in December 1943.

In September 1944 in 'Operation Market Garden' the battalion was dropped in and around Arnhem, Holland where he commanded a platoon of infantry in the 'Battle of Arnhem' a doomed attempt at capturing an essential bridge over the river Rhine.

Wounded, he was found & taken in by Mr & Mrs Valkenburg in Oosterbeek, who nursed him hidden in their basement for several days until he died on about 24th September 1944. (Raymond's exact date of death is uncertain)

His father and mother Harold and Clarinda Stevens became lifelong friends and supporters of the Valkenburg's after the war. Their daughter Rikki Valkenburg went to convalesce with the Stevens family, where she remained for several years, becoming the nanny to Raymond Simonds, Captain Raymond's namesake & nephew.

(On September 23rd, Major John Mellor Simonds, a first cousin of Duncan Simonds, was also killed at Arnhem.)

This is an extract of the Commonwealth War Graves commission entry:

Name: RAYMOND HAROLD STEVENS

Rank: Captain

Cemetery: ARNHEM OOSTERBEEK WAR CEMETERY

The Arnhem Oosterbeek War Cemetery was established in 1945 and is home to 1759 graves from the Second World War. His namesake Raymond (Simonds) has visited several times.

Raymond was engaged to Patsey Kneeshaw in 1943, sadly - they never married.

Researching this certainly reminded us how grateful we should be to our previous generations and that we never faced another world war.