

## Captain John Mellor Simonds

Born August 1 1915. Died at Arnhem 25 September 1944.



Captain John Mellor Simonds was the son of Viscount Simonds and Mary Simonds and the husband of Barbara Simonds, of St Helens, Lancaster. They mainly lived in Windsor. He was first cousin to my father Duncan Simonds.

The Simonds twins went from Horris Hill to Winchester, Morshead's and Beloe's in September 1928. Whilst at Winchester John Simonds played rackets for Princes, representing the school at Queens in 1934. He also edited The Wykehamist. He was a Senior Prefect in his last year.

He went on to Magdalene College, Cambridge. John was exceedingly bright and became President of the Cambridge Union as well as a very active member of the Oxford University Labour Federation, running campaigns and fund raising to help Spanish Socialists against Franco. He was admitted to the Inner Temple in 1939 entitled to practise as a Barrister-at-Law.

He was the second husband to Barbara Robinson, daughter of T. Robinson, married on 12 August 1944. It was to be a short marriage. John had known her at University.



Army service ref;138581

Major John Simonds rose to Officer Commanding HQ Company 2nd Battalion of the North Staffordshire Regiment.

He volunteered for airborne forces and was part of 1st Airborne Division from its formation. As Captain he also took part in the invasion of Sicily in July 1943 and was rescued from the sea when his glider was released short of the land. So three of our family took part in the invasion of Sicily.

Before leaving to Arnhem, John wrote a long moving letter to his three-year-old Stepson Klim as he headed for Arnhem it was published in a national newspaper by his wife Barbara shortly after his death. It told of the horrors of war, that he had a job to do flying high over France, and once done they would be

together for ever and that they would work hard and long for a just peace.

Klim's father, Flying Officer Tony Willcock was shot down over France in 1943. Klim's mother Barbara married again after John Simonds died, Klim became Klim Mcpherson, later a leading Professor Of Public Health & Epidemiology.



By 1944, he was Second-in-Command of the Battalion and of the OC HQ Company. John's battalion landed in Arnhem by glider as part of Operation Market Garden. He was wounded on 19 September 1944 and died of his wounds on 25 September, aged 29. His grave has never been found and indeed many Arnhem dead were never found as the Germans made mass burials and burned many bodies.

He is commemorated on the Groesbeek "Memorial to the Missing" as well as at Lincoln's Inn where he practiced law.

**Gavin Alexander Simonds**  
**Born 1 August 1915. Died 19 March 1951**

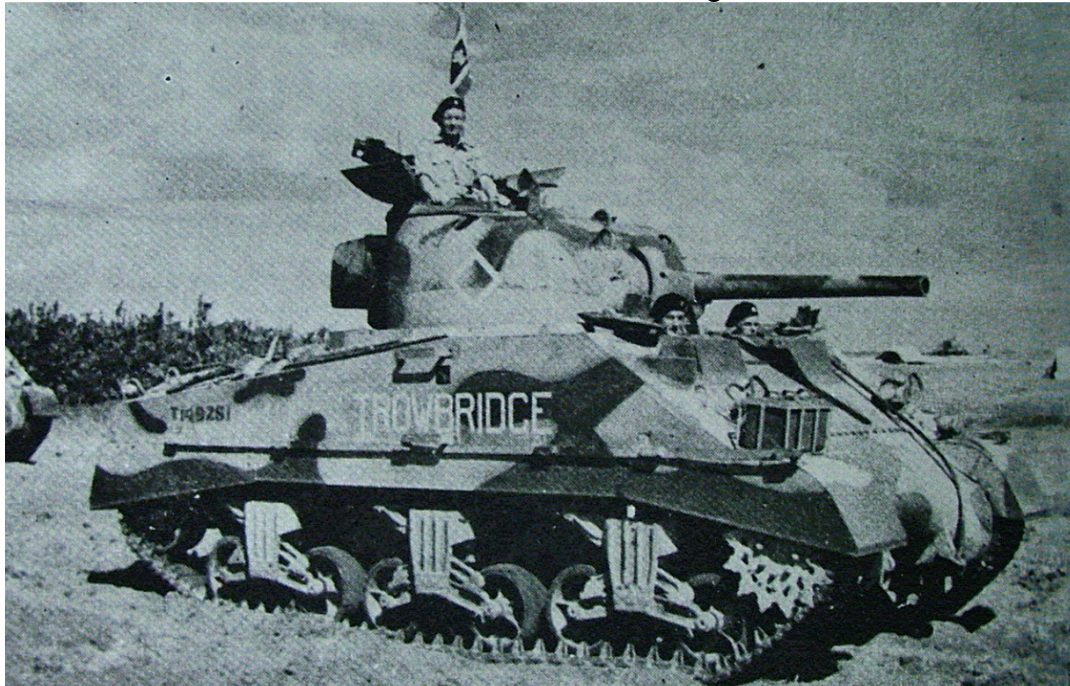
Twin Brother to John Mellor  
Army number 470148.

He was educated at Winchester College, Then at New College, Oxford University. He was in a light aircraft crash, on the way to watch his horse race in South Devon. He was too injured to complete his finals due that week - so left with no degree. He was admitted to Lincoln's Inn in 1945 entitled to practise as a Barrister-at-Law. He fought in the Second World War, rising to the rank of Captain in the Royal Wiltshire Yeomanry.

We have information on his personal war, but The Royal Wilts regiment fought in the Middle East, seeing action in Syria against Vichy French forces, as well as operations in Iraq and Iran. It then became the 9th Armoured Brigade, seeing action in North Africa and Italy. With this formation, it took part in the Second Battle of El Alamein, spearheading the break-out of the 2nd New Zealand Division during Operation Supercharge on 2 November 1942. So we can assume Gavin was part of this.

On the night of 1-2 November 1942, the Eighth Army attacked again in the north, with 2nd New Zealand Division in the lead. Freyberg placed 151 Brigade on the right and 152 Brigade on the left. The aim was to attack directly westwards across the Rahman track, with the infantry leading the night assault and 9th Armoured Brigade (now commanded by Brigadier John C. Currie) again passing through to break the enemy gun line and allow X Corps to break out. The assault went to plan except that opposition on the left was heavier than expected which slowed the advance. As a result, the advancing tanks were highlighted against the dawn sky in the east and began to be picked off by Axis anti-tank fire. The Regiment was in the centre of the 9th Armoured Brigade, and the CO lost touch with both his artillery support and close anti-tank support. In the growing light, the B Squadron commander (Major M. St.J. V. Gibbs) realised that he was in a ring of enemy anti-tank guns, ahead and to both flanks. He gave the order to 'Charge' and B Squadron overran the anti-tank positions, losing some vehicles but destroying the enemy gun line.

The CO's tank. Each tank had a town or village name in Wiltshire.



In an account of the battle published to mark its 25th anniversary, Montgomery wrote: "I must mention the magnificent fight put up by 9th Armoured Brigade — 3rd Hussars, Wiltshire Yeomanry, Warwickshire Yeomanry.... If the British armour owed any debt to the infantry of 8th army, the debt was paid on November 2nd by 9th Armoured Brigade in heroism and blood."

Gavin Alexander Simonds died in 1951 as a result of illness contracted on active service. Because their elder brother Robert Francis Simonds had died in infancy, their father's title of Viscount became extinct when [Viscount Gavin Simonds](#) died in 1971.

Prepared by; Raymond & Colin Simonds for the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of VE Day on May 8<sup>th</sup> 2020