

David Tildesley Founder member of the Dovey Sailing Club

Died on Monday 20th Feb 2018. A former commodore and trustee of DYC and one of the people instrumental in the building of the new clubhouse, David was one of life's great characters.

At 101 years old he played an innings that was truly inspirational to most people. Well into his 90's he was still a force to be reckoned with on the start line of a DYC cruiser race and his name is on most of the cruiser trophies in the club.

He will be remembered for his energy and enthusiasm for life and those around him and leaves behind an extensive family of children, grand children and several great-grandchildren.

## At the helm of Witchfinder



### **Colonel David Tildesley: Brave war hero known for his cool courage**

By [Peter MadeleyReal Lives](#) Published: Mar 28, 2018 Last Updated: Mar 28, 2018

Colonel David Tildesley, who has died aged 101, was praised for his 'determination and cool courage' in the course of winning two Military Crosses during the Second World War.



David Tildesley who has died at the age of 101  
But despite his heroism, Mr Tildesley rarely spoke about the conflict and bore no grudges towards Germany. After the war he even trained German soldiers how to ski.

Born in Wolverhampton on January 11, 1917, his father was the managing director of W H Tildesley, a family company manufacturing drop forgings.

He went to Wolverhampton Grammar School before going to Jesus College, Cambridge, where he read Law. He rowed for his college and was trialled for the university eight.



David Tildesley

He joined the Army in September 1939 and was fast-tracked to the Officer Cadet Training Unit (OCTU). In March 1940, he was commissioned into the Royal Artillery and posted to 71st Field Regiment RA (71 FR).

Mr Tildesley's war was characterised by acts of bravery, and on several occasions he dived with death.

On September 9, 1943, his regiment was attached to 'B' Company 6th Bn The Lincolnshire Regiment, in south-west Italy.

Occupying a hill that formed part of the defensive perimeter, he set up his observation post (OP) on top of a ridge, and for the next 10 days he and his comrades came under relentless mortar and shell fire.

On September 23 he took part in a night advance to Santa Croce, where they were to form up and attack a dominating feature.

On the way, they were ambushed, with Mr Tildesley later recalling that they made a dash for a wooded area while under heavy German fire.



David Tildesley

He and his second-in-command rallied their small force of 14 survivors and launched an attack in broad daylight with no artillery support.

Mr Tildesley reached the objective, but 50 rounds of 'friendly fire' from 25-pounder guns fell on the position, reducing numbers still further.

Someone had spotted troop movement on the hill and, mistaking this for the enemy, had given the order. Mr Tildesley was awarded the first of his MCs.

Early in 1943 Mr Tildesley's battery was tasked with stopping Rommel's armour, which had broken through the Allied defences at Kasserine, Tunisia.

His unit was supporting a squadron of the 17th/21st Lancers, which were equipped with Valentine and Crusader tanks that were already obsolete and no match for the German Tigers.

Setting up on a ridge, Mr Tildesley saw a large German force camped below him about half a mile away.



David and Leslie Tildesley

He called down fire from his guns and the shells landed right on target, but in his excitement he blew his cover and was almost hit.

At this point, a single Tiger tank came down the road, and despite coming under heavy fire, managed to knock out the Lancers' tanks one after the other.

"After this hectic 20 minutes," Mr Tildesley later wrote, "the firing stopped. I looked around and I seemed to be the only one left."

He drove up the hill and, as he stopped on the crest to pick up a few survivors, a burst of machine gun bullets whistled into the ground a few feet away.

A few moments later, one of his signallers was hit by an armour piercing shell and killed.

Mr Tildesley was exhausted and fell asleep in a deep rut made by some heavy vehicles. He awoke to find the huge tyre of another truck a few inches from his head. Later that day, he was wounded by shrapnel.

As he lay on a stretcher in the school house at Thala, which had been turned into a casualty clearing station, a bomb fell nearby showering him with plaster from the ceiling.



David Tildesley

After several weeks in hospital in Algiers, he returned to 71 FR to take command of a troop. His predecessor had been killed a few days earlier.

By January 1944, Mr Tildesley had been in action in the Italian campaign for almost four months.

He was attached to 'C' Company, 6 Lincolns, who were defending a precarious bridgehead on the River Garigliano against German counter-attacks.

His OP was on the upper floor of a farmhouse. The Lincolns were pinned down and he brought down heavy fire on the enemy to within 200 yards of his own position.

He was continually under short-range machine gun fire and when this demolished the roof, showering him with slates, he moved downstairs and carried on.

The citation for the award of a Bar to his MC praised his determination and cool courage.

After the war Mr Tildesley commanded the British Army Ski School in Austria, where he trained German soldiers.

He was demobilised in 1946 and returned to the West Midlands to run the family engineering business. Two of his sons eventually succeeded him as managing directors.

Mr Tildesley, who lived in Patshull Park, joined the Territorial Army and retired in the rank of Colonel.

He loved drumming and formed a prize-winning regimental band. For 20 years he was master of the Shropshire Beagles. He was a member of the Bewdley Rowing Club, an enthusiastic skier and was still playing golf at the age of 98.

As a founder member and commodore of Dovey Yacht Club, he sailed his yacht until he was 96. He was a Justice of the Peace and deputy lieutenant of Staffordshire.

His great-nephew, Henry Carver, said: "He never talked about the war and never spoke ill of the Germans.

"He was a quiet and gentle man, and understandably the war had a huge impact on him. I think that was why he went to train the new German army how to ski after the war. He was trying to come to terms with it all."

David Tildesley married Leslie Duder in September 1939. She predeceased him, as did a son and a daughter. He is survived by two sons and two daughters.

Col David Tildesley, born January 11 1917, died February 20 2018.