



Salisbury Military History Society

January 2020 eNewsletter

Hello and welcome to our January eNewsletter, the first of 2020.

If you've missed any previous editions, you can find them on our website – [click here](#).

Hopefully you have all had a very enjoyable Christmas and New Year and that those resolutions are still holding up!

Our first talk is on Wednesday 22nd January when Lieutenant Colonel Mike Watson will be discussing:

The Curragh to Le Cateau, August 1914

Mike will be providing some insights into the background and experiences of some of the Gunners, including three VCs – Captain Douglas Reynolds, Drivers Job Drain and Fred Luke, who deployed from Ireland to France in August 1914 – as relayed to him by some of those 37 Battery veterans, including Fred Luke, whom he met at Le Cateau 50 years later in August 1964. There was an urgent need to prevent the Retreat from Mons becoming a rout by checking the momentum of the following 1st German Army on the Cambrai/Le Cateau ridge. So that is why 5th Division, including 37 Battery of 2nd British Corps fought their renowned rear-guard action near Le Cateau on Wednesday 26 August 1914. Those Gunner veterans stated that they were 'The Cheese in the Le Cateau Mouse-trap!' and they fought hard much to the admiration of their supported infantry.

Mike is a former BAOR Cold War Field Gunner and technical Staff Officer who saw active service in Aden, Dhofar and Northern Ireland. Recently, he was awarded the 2017 Alfred Burne Memorial Medal for his book 'A Concise History of the Royal Regiment of Artillery'. He is also a founding member of the Salisbury Military History Society.

Refreshment break & bookstall

During the break there will be a cash bar, supplying refreshments and also a Book Stall selling a number of second-hand books. If you have any surplus books on military subjects that you are willing to donate, do please bring them in. All proceeds go to the Society.

As always, **the talk will start at 7.30pm** and be at:

St. John's Place
Lower Road
Bemerton
Salisbury
SP2 9NP

Parking available [here](#).

Wednesday 26th February: For our February talk we are very fortunate to have [Professor Jeremy Black MBE](#) addressing the question:

Could the British have won the American War of Independence?

Opposition to London's insensitive colonial policies on taxation and governance was provoked into outright rebellion when British soldiers attempted to disarm Massachusetts patriots in April 1775. British forces enjoyed initial tactical successes around Boston, but these were not enough strategically to prevent the city's encirclement by the newly-formed Continental Army under George Washington. Seaborne evacuation followed in the spring of 1776. For the next 18 months the revolt hung in the balance with substantial British

reinforcements taking Philadelphia and New York. But if London's plan for a two-pronged attack from Canada and New York had not ended in failure at Saratoga, would the Continental Army have survived, and would the French have got involved at all?



Jeremy is a British historian and a professor of history at the [University of Exeter](#). He is a senior fellow at the [Center for the Study of America and the West](#) at the Foreign Policy Research Institute in Philadelphia. He is the author of over 100 books, principally but not exclusively on 18th Century British politics and international relations, and has been described as "the most prolific historical scholar of our age".

Jeremy Black MBE

Parish Notices

Saturday 4th April: There are still two places left for our visit to [The Infantry and Small Arms School Corps Weapons Collection](#) at Waterloo Lines, Warminster. Please note that this is a Full Members-only visit. Should you wish to add your name to the list please contact us via the website.

Future dates for your diary:

Wednesday 25th March: British Volunteers and the Spanish Civil War - [Ray Wilkinson](#)

Wednesday 22nd April: Reflections on the First World War – Brig. [Alan Mallinson](#)

Wednesday 27th May: Victory in Burma – Lt. Col. Mike Tickner

Wednesday 24th June: Seapower States: Culture, Identity and Strategy – [Prof. Andrew Lambert](#)

Posters/flyers for future events can be downloaded from the website – [click here](#)

Military History News:

The annual [World Ship Society](#) naval meeting is in Bristol on 6th June with an eclectic set of subjects and speakers. There will be a naval themed quiz and also second-hand books, pictures, magazines and literature for sale. Membership of the WSS is NOT a requirement for attendance. Email Dr Richard Osborne for details of the lectures, venue and admission prices: drosborne@blueyonder.co.uk

Neuve-Chapelle, France Was the First Town Ever Mapped from Aerial Photos

In the Great War, when Frenchman Georges Bellenger showed his commanding officer photographs he'd taken from the air, the response was that he already had a map. However, a few days before the Battle of Neuve-Chapelle, Brigadier General John Charteris wrote that "My table is covered with photographs taken from aeroplanes. We have just started this method of reconnaissance, which will I think develop into something very important." Consequently, this small French town near the Belgian border became the first to be photographed in such detail and enabled British artillery to accurately deliver in the space of 15 minutes more firepower than all British troops in the three-year Boer War. [Read more](#)

Statistics show how the Luftwaffe could have won the Battle of Britain

New research conducted by the University of York has demonstrated scenarios in which the Luftwaffe could've defeated the RAF in 1940. What if Goering had targeted fighter airfields rather than London? What if the attacks across the Channel had begun in 1939 immediately after the fall of France? Using the weighted bootstrapping technique, if we believe the chance of a British victory was originally 50:50, these changes in German focus would've reduced that likelihood of an RAF victory to just 10%. [Read more](#)

In All U.S. Military History, These Are the 5 Worst Generals

Michael Peck opens his list of shame by asking "How might Vietnam or Iraq have turned out if a George Washington, a Ulysses Grant or a George Patton had been in command?" before revealing those who would be prime candidates for replacement.

- Horatio Gates (American War of Independence)
- George McClellan (U.S. Civil War)
- Lloyd Fredendall (World War Two)
- Douglas MacArthur (World War Two and Korean War)
- Tommy Franks (Iraq War)

[Read more](#)

These Military History Clichés Really Need to Die

Whilst compiling his next roundup for the 'New York Times Book Review', Tom Ricks started jotting down the biggest clichés he hates finding in military history texts. These include:

- Wars almost always last longer than anyone expects
- Logistics always prove key
- The first commanding general is almost never the general who wins the war
- Mountain tribes are always fiercely independent
- ...and so on

[Read more](#)

Current and forthcoming events in Salisbury (and around Wiltshire/the SW)

Temporary exhibition: "WW1", Fordingbridge Museum ([click here](#))

21st January – "Meet me in St Lewis", Boscombe Down Aviation Collection ([click here](#))

30th January – "The Long Hard Road to Victory: the Tank Corps 1918", Royal Green Jackets Museum ([click here](#))

5th February – "South-West Wiltshire in the Roman Period", The Salisbury Museum ([click here](#))

12th February – "SOE Air Operations", Army Flying Museum ([click here](#))

12th February – "Digging Up Britain", Stonehenge ([click here](#))

15th Feb to 28th Nov – "Dunkirk", The Rifles Berkshire & Wiltshire Museum at The Wardrobe ([click here](#))

Well, that's it for another month. Hopefully we will be seeing you at our next meeting at 7.30pm on 22nd January.

Kind regards,

Keith Rigden
Membership Secretary

Dave Simons
Marketing Officer

Useful links:

Website - <https://salisburymilhist.com>

Email - SalisburyMilHist@gmail.com

Facebook - [SalisburyMilHist](#)

Twitter - [SalisburyMHS](#)

Who's who:

Joint-Chairman & Speaker Secretary: Alan Rooney

Joint-Chair: Bob Kershaw

Treasurer: John Loades

Marketing Officer: Dave Simons

Secretary: Andy Sharpe

Membership Secretary: Keith Rigden

