



Salisbury Military History Society

September 2019 eNewsletter

Hello and welcome to the eNewsletter for September 2019.

Only a week to go before 25th September and our first talk of the season:

The 1973 Yom Kippur War

[Colonel Tony Malkin](#) will be taking us through the conflict based on his intimate knowledge of the area gained from living there for 5 years while establishing a Leadership Academy for the Palestinian Security Forces in Jericho in close cooperation with the Israeli military authorities. He has guided several UK Ministry of Defence battlefield tours to the area and will be guiding 'The Birth of Modern Israel' Cultural Experience tour to the area in [November](#). His insights will make for a fascinating talk.

As always, **the talk will start at 7:30pm** and be at:

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



Parking is available [here](#).

For those who wish to do some pre-reading before the talk, this [link](#) may be of interest to you.

Refreshment break and book stall

During the break there will be a cash bar, supplying refreshments and also a Book Stall selling a number of second-hand books donated from the estate of the late Major General Freddie Plaskett CB MBE. Our thanks go to Roger Stockton for arranging this kind donation. All monies from any book sales go into the Society funds.

Do please come prepared with some cash in your purse, or wallet, both for the books and for a "tipple" from the cash bar!

On the subject of books, The History Bookshop has now moved to Fisherton Mill in Salisbury. The owner, Patrick Hillman, offers a wide selection of quality second-hand books. Please see the attached file.

Wednesday 23rd October

Our October talk will be on **"The Battle of Balaclava"** with our Joint Chairman, [Colonel Bob Kershaw](#). Topically, the talk is just two days prior to the 165th anniversary of the famous cavalry charge.

The charge of the Light Brigade, during the Battle of Balaclava on 25 October 1854, is one of the most famous military exploits during the Crimean War of 1854-55. The war was truly a Victorian epic, pitting the British and French armies, allied for the first time after many years of enmity, against the might of Russia. Just two days before the 165th anniversary, historian Bob Kershaw presents a fascinating talk based upon his recent book in which he provides step-by-step analysis of the course of the charge, the various personalities and compares the reality with Tennyson's famous poem and the 1968 film.

The poster for the talk can be downloaded [here](#).



Col Bob Kershaw's book "24 Hours at Balaclava" is available [here](#).

Parish Notices

Membership:

Thank you to all of you have already submitted your completed membership forms. Those who opted for Full Membership will be able to collect their membership cards at the next meeting they attend.

For those who haven't yet responded: **Please act now. Complete your membership form and return it, ideally before our next meeting on 25th September.**

If, for any reason, you cannot do that, then please bring the completed form and payment if applicable, to the next meeting you attend.

Note that the Full Membership of £45 is a 50% saving over the monthly rate and will entitle you to attend any future trips or functions!

Membership forms are available to download from the website [here](#).

Future dates for your diary:

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| Wednesday 23 rd October: | The Battle of Balaclava
- Col Bob Kershaw |
| Wednesday 27 th November: | Lost Roman Legions
- Chris Hewitt |
| Wednesday 22 nd January: | 37 Howitzer Battery RFA: The Curragh to Le Cateau, August 1914
- Lt Col Mike Watson |
| Wednesday 26 th February: | Could the British have won the American War of Independence?
- Prof Jeremy Black |
| Wednesday 25 th March: | British Volunteers and the Spanish Civil War
- Ray Wilkinson |

Non-Society Military History News:

New Agincourt museum to dispel myths

For those of us that attended Professor Anne Curry's revealing talk in June, the truths of the Battle of Agincourt still resound. As well as recounting the myths and presenting the realities of Henry V's force and the events of the battlefield, Prof. Curry also told us about the new exhibition to open in the town of Azincourt. This new exposition will open at the Centre Historique Médiévalin Azincourt today (17th September). [Read more](#)

Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact papers released 80 years on

With eight decades having passed, Moscow has declassified a number of top-secret pre-war documents including those relating to the infamous Nazi-Soviet pact that declared their non-aggression towards each other and divided Polish and Baltic lands. A key letter released in the papers is a 31-page document written by Red Army Chief of General Staff Boris Shaposhnikov in which he conveys fear of the Soviet Union facing a war on two fronts, such as Germany was also seeking to avoid. Some commentators are drawing parallels between the pre-war Soviet fear of western aggression and President Putin's modern-day pre-emptive actions to combat western influence in Ukraine, for example. [Read more](#)

'Military theatre' of the Dambusters raid boosted British morale and standing

Sir Max Hasting's latest book turns its attention to 617 Squadron in 'Chastise: The Dambusters Story 1943'. The Lancaster raid on the night of 16th/17th May 1943 struck the Möhne and Eder dams in the Ruhr Valley and Wing Commander Guy Gibson entered RAF history. However, in addition to the 53 airmen lost, around 1,300 German civilians and prisoners of war died. Additionally, some question the raid's success, as the Sorpe dam was not attacked and not attacking the Möhne and Eder dams when under-repair ahead of the autumn rains were missed opportunities. For Sir Max, the real significance of the raid was to boost faltering British morale and reinvigorate American and Russian faith in their embattled ally. [Read more](#)

131 nuclear weapons and 60-mile/day advance to conquer France

With pre-war Soviet documents being released in August, some 1960s Warsaw Pact war plans resurfaced too. Discovered in Czechoslovakia, the plans envisaged the Soviet Eighth Guards Army breaking through on the northern flank, the Czech First and Fourth Armies pushing through Bavaria to the Franco-German border and the Hungarians attacking on the southern flank. The seven-day attack would require a speed-of-advance totalling 60 miles per day; more than the Afrika Korps' rapid 350-mile burst in ten days in June 1942. However, the Soviets planned to execute such a swift advance by nullifying NATO defences with 131 nuclear weapons. The battle plans were dated 1964, by which time the French Air Force carried nuclear weapons so, although the Soviets envisaged an initial parity in terms of force size, fortunately the threat of mutually assured destruction (MAD) was never realised. [Read more](#)

The 'short war' illusion

In his latest book, Boston University's Cathal J. Nolan declares that there is no such thing as a decisive battle or war-winning 'genius general'. "In fact, from at least the 17th century, most wars fought among major powers were not won and lost in a decisive battle led by genius generals directing tactical movements. They were long contests of endurance of fire and starvation, of marching armies ravaging the countryside, of months' and even years' long sieges of towns and cities. Even if there are geniuses present at a battle, war is too complex for even genius to control." This new text urges historians not to elevate tactical victories by ignoring their significance in the war's context. [Read more](#)

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

23rd April - 5th October – "Women of REME" exhibition, REME Museum ([click here](#))

19th September – "Changing Times: The Impact of Total War in Wiltshire and its Effects Post-War, 1939-1955" lecture, Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre ([click here](#))

19th September – "The Ashcroft Victoria Cross Collection", The Royal Green Jackets (Rifles) Museum ([click here](#))

21st September – Wilton History Festival Symposium, Wilton Parish Church ([click here](#))

21st/22nd September – Free guided tours, The Rifles Berkshire and Wiltshire Museum ([click here](#))

25th September – "How to Care for Old Books", Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre ([click here](#))

26th September – "Wiltshire's Enemy Aliens: The Internment of Foreigners in the Second World War" lecture, Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre ([click here](#))

28th/29th September – "South West Model Show", The Tank Museum, Bovington ([click here](#))

3rd October – "Malta 1940-43 - some surprising facts", Army Flying Museum ([click here](#))

4th October – "A Tale of Two Sieges", Old Wardour Castle ([click here](#))

5th/6th October – "Wargames Weekend", Fleet Air Arm Museum ([click here](#))

15th October – “Canberra Operational Flying”, Boscombe Down Aviation Collection ([click here](#))

17th October – “Reserve Collection Tour - Archives and Small Objects”, Fleet Air Arm Museum ([click here](#))

...and finally:

If you would like to become involved with the Committee and the running of the Society, please do get in touch, we could always do with a little extra help!

Should you know of anyone who may be interested in our Society, please do forward this eNewsletter to them. If you know of any institution or workplace that would be happy to advertise our up-coming talks, again do let us know.

Alternatively, for direct action, posters for the future talks can be downloaded [here](#).

I hope that you can join us on the 25th September at 7:30pm for Tony's talk on the 1973 Yom Kippur war... and please, don't forget your **completed membership forms**.

Kind regards,

Keith Rigden
Membership Secretary

Dave Simons
Web & Marketing Officer

Useful links:

Website - <https://salisburymilhist.com>

Email - SalisburyMilHist@gmail.com

Facebook - [SalisburyMilHist](#)

Twitter - [SalisburyMHS](#)

Who's who:

Joint-Chair & Speaker Secretary: Alan Rooney

Joint-Chair: Bob Kershaw

Treasurer: John Loades

Web & Marketing Officer: Dave Simons

Secretary: Andy Sharpe

Membership Secretary: Keith Rigden

