



Salisbury Military History Society

May 2020 eNewsletter

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

We trust this finds you all well.

Victory in Burma (27th May) – POSTPONED

As restrictions on public events and movement remain, next week's talk is postponed. However, we will endeavour to reschedule for a future date.

Please be assured that we are determined to re-start our monthly talks as soon as the situation allows, and we will update you as soon as we have any further information.

Parish Notices

Information request:

We've received a request from someone seeking assistance with service records:

"I am a Salisbury resident writing about the Read family in c.19 Salisbury. One of the members, Raphael, served as a Military surgeon from 1844 to 1869. I have his obituary from the local paper [supplied] and wonder if I sent it to one of your members, they might be able to answer a couple of questions about his service; i.e. what were we doing in India when he was there, etc? Apart from knowing what we might have been doing in India at the time, I can't work out from the obituary whether he actually went to the Crimea or not.

"Since I wrote to you a friend of mine has found some military records on Ancestry/Find My Past, but it is not clear where he was serving in 1856 though he volunteered to go to the Crimea. It looks as if he was given a retirement promotion in rank - was that common practice then - is it now?"

If anyone is able to assist, the Committee will gladly pass on your details to the enquirer.

Future dates for your diary (if circumstances permit):

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

Wednesday 23rd Sept: The Battle of Britain - [Col. Paul Beaver](#)

Re. our 'The Light Division in the Peninsular War 1808-1811' talk in January 2021:

A message from Tim Saunders: "[we are] due to give a talk to our Society on the subject of our latest book... perhaps some members would be interested in reading the first of the two volumes, which is out now. It is in print now and imminently in various e-formats." [Pen and Sword](#)

Military History News

The Main Civil War Generals Who Helped Define the War

This article by Roy Morris Jr has also been published by *National Interest* with the title 'Who Were the Ten Most Important Generals of the American Civil War?' and the two titles provide insight into the content of his piece: these are the commanders who shaped the war by their genius and/or errors of judgement. Robert E. Lee receives the most criticism and William T. Sherman is also deemed overrated, while Ulysses S. Grant, Nathan Bedford Forrest and Stonewall Jackson come in for the highest praise. [Read more](#)

Why Germany surrendered twice in World War II

As we held street parties on 8th May, it's interesting to note that this commemorated the second surrender signed by Nazi Germany; the first being on 7th May. Admiral Donitz's instruction to General Jodl to sign a surrender at Reims on 7th May infuriated Joseph Stalin who wanted the Soviet Union's top commanders to receive the capitulation. Citing the post-Great War 'betrayal' narrative, Stalin argued that the surrender could only be signed by Germany's top commander and so, at Karlshorst on the outskirts of Berlin, on 8th May Field Marshal Keitel conceded to General Zhukov. [Read more](#)

Czech-Russian relations plunge amid differences over history

As Europe celebrated the 75th anniversary of the end of World War Two, tensions between the Czech Republic and Russia are increasing over the role of Soviet Marshal Ivan Konev in Czechoslovakia's liberation. The diplomatic spat revolves primarily around the statue erected in Konev's honour, which has since been removed from a square in the capital and placed in a museum. To some, Konev led the liberation, but to others he took the first step in the country's occupation. The bitterness between the two countries has led Prague officials to claim that an assassin has been sent by Moscow to kill local mayors. [Read more](#)

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

This segment will return when restrictions on movement are lifted.

Alternative histories and 'faction'

In 1992 Robert Harris published 'Fatherland', possibly the most famous work of 'faction'; a work of fiction based on fact or featuring real people or events. Here are some of the best novels that may pique your interest...

'Napoleon and the Conquest of the World 1812-1832: A Fictional History', Louis Geoffroy

Napoleon subdues Russia in 1812, invades England in 1814 and goes on to become the enlightened ruler of the Earth. The book details with great and methodical precision the conquest of the rest of the world by the Emperor, and the technical and scientific achievements made by a united planet under Napoleon's wise leadership: electric-powered dirigibles, weather control, flying automobiles, typewriters (called "writing pianos"), miracle cures, making sea water drinkable, and even the discovery of a new planet, Vulcan.

'Bring the Jubilee', Joseph Ward Moore

The point of divergence occurs in July 1863 when the Confederate States of America wins the Battle of Gettysburg and subsequently declares victory in a conflict referred to within the book as the "War of Southron Independence" on 4th July 1864, after the surrender of the United States of America. The novel takes place in the impoverished rump United States in the mid-20th century as war looms between the Confederacy and its rival, the German Union.

'The Man in the High Castle', Philip K. Dick

[The] acclaimed cult novel gives us a horrifying glimpse of an alternative world - one where the Allies have lost the Second World War. In this nightmare dystopia the Nazis have taken over New York, the Japanese control California and the African continent is virtually wiped out. In a neutral buffer zone in America that divides the world's new rival superpowers, lives the author of an underground bestseller. His book offers a new vision of reality - an alternative theory of world history in which the Axis powers were defeated - giving hope to the disenchanted. Does 'reality' lie with him, or is his world just one among many others?

'Fatherland', Robert Harris

Fatherland is set in an alternative world where Hitler has won the Second World War. It is April 1964 and one week before Hitler's 75th birthday. Xavier March, a detective of the Kriminalpolizei, is called out to investigate the discovery of a dead body in a lake near Berlin's most prestigious suburb. As March discovers the identity of the body, he uncovers signs of a conspiracy that could go to the very top of the German Reich. And, with the Gestapo just one step behind, March, together with an American journalist, is caught up in a race to discover and reveal the truth - a truth that has already killed, a truth that could topple governments, a truth that will change history.

'Dragon Strike', Humphrey Hawksley and Simon Holberton

It is the early-21st century. The world is plunged into crisis following an attack by Chinese warplanes on Vietnamese naval and airforce installations. Three days later reports appear of the covers being removed from Chinese silos and the warming up of missile engines.

What's that you're reading...?

Currently, Alan Rooney is reading "the fast paced, racy espionage 'Angel' series of books by Christopher Nicole in which MI6 have turned a German SD agent [Anna Fehrbach] to become a double agent for them. So far, she has been prevented from assassinating Churchill and Stalin, has met the Fuehrer and is about to facilitate Heydrich's assassination in Prague." [Read more](#)

Meanwhile, keeping it local, Dave Simons is partway through 'The Skripal Files' by Mark Urban ([see here](#)). However, for a far more engrossing Cold War non-fiction thriller, he recommends 'The Spy and the Traitor' by Ben Macintyre, author of the excellent 'Operation Mincemeat'. [Read more](#)

It would be great to introduce a new monthly feature with your recommendations so do please let us know what books you can't put down!

Our thanks again for your commitment to and engagement with the Society in these precarious times and we look forward to welcoming you back soon. For now though, to recap, our "**Victory in Burma**" talk on 27th May has been postponed due to the current restrictions on public events and movements.

Keep well!

Kind regards,

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Membership Secretary

Dave Simons
Marketing Officer

Useful links:

Website - <https://salisburymilhist.com>

Email - SalisburyMilHist@gmail.com

Facebook - [SalisburyMilHist](#)

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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

Joint Events Officer: Alex Howie

Joint Events Officer: Sandy Forrest

