



Salisbury Military History Society

October 2022 eNewsletter

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

Parish Notices

Wednesday 26th October

7.30pm (arrive from 7pm) - 'Counter-Insurgency in Malaya: An Imperial Success Story' with Dr Robert Lyman

Lots of recent commentary (after Iraq and Afghanistan) deprecates the British Counter-Insurgency (COIN) experience, suggesting that the British Army took as universal truths the lessons from the end of Empire. But that criticism ignores the reality that COIN in Malaya was, after a sticky start, tremendously successful, and the two independent states of Malaysia and Singapore are testament to that success. [Read more](#)

For Full Members, the cost of entry is included in your annual subscription. For all other attendees, you can pay £10 on the door.

We accept cash, card and cheque payments at meetings. Cheques should be made out to the 'Salisbury Military History Society'. For bank transfers, the Society's account details can be found on the [membership form here](#). As we approach 2023, part-year fees apply ([see here](#)).

The bookstall will return for the last time.

Upcoming talks

Wed 23rd Nov - 'What does a Curator of Artillery do?' [title TBC] with Philip Magrath

Wed 25th Jan - 'The Great Game: Anglo-Russian Rivalry in Central Asia' with Major Gordon Corrigan

Wed 22nd Feb - 'The Battle of Minden, 1759' with Major General Ewan Carmichael

Wed 22nd Mar - TBC

Wed 26th Apr - 'Why does the British government never talk about Nuclear Weapons?' with Dr. Andy Corbett

Wed 24th May - TBC

Wed 28th Jun - 'Alfred the Great and the campaign of 878 – What can we know?' with Prof. Ryan Lavelle

For more information on all our talks, click through to each from [our 'Events' webpage](#)

Review: 'Dunkirchen 1940: The German View of Dunkirk' with Robert Kershaw (Wednesday 28th September)

The 'Dunkirk Myth' emerged from Churchill's histories and the likes of John Mill's 1958 'Dunkirk' movie, but Robert Kershaw had a wealth of German material in his possession that simply required dedicated time to explore. When the Covid lockdowns presented that opportunity, he began what is now his highly-acclaimed 'Dunkirchen 1940' book. Firstly, we must consider that the vast majority of the 'Blitzkrieg' forces were not mechanised – just 16 of 150 divisions were motorised and, in terms of manpower, one-third were WW1 veterans and one-third were fresh-faced conscripts. Against these forces, the Belgians were seen as vastly inferior until they dealt some significant bloody noses, the French were worthy adversaries but rather ill-disciplined, and the British had a great core of NCOs but poor officers and territorials in reserve. As German Army Group A and Army Group B converged on the 20-mile-wide by 6-mile-deep Dunkirk perimeter they lost control of the situation as roads became congested by outgoing Panzer units and incoming infantry trucks, and the flooded countryside became increasingly impassable. The Luftwaffe never had local air superiority and sorties were flown from Germany, with no air command at the front line to contribute to mission planning and intelligence. Once troops were on boats departing the beaches, the Luftwaffe lost any potential assumed advantage, as the bombs used to attack shipping are quite different from those used to flatten infantry positions, and more importantly they had no experience of attacking seaborne targets. However, this was not a significant moment for Germany. They

had destroyed 62 Allied divisions and wrecked 17 more. The 10 that escaped to Britain would surely surrender once Paris fell anyway.

Your feedback

After this month's talk, you'll receive a very short survey that will invite you to share your views on our talk topics, speakers and any other comments you have to help improve the member (or casual visitor) experience.

AGM and your 2023 Committee

At our AGM in November, we will elect our 2023 Committee, which books speakers, hosts talks, organises events and fulfils a range of administrative duties. Your current Committee has served for over three years and so we're always keen to invite new people to join us in order to encourage fresh ideas. Please do reply to this email or speak to any Committee member at the next meeting if you're interested in any post.

Military History News

Churchill's secret underground army

In mid-1940 a secret resistance force began training across the UK. Technically part of the Home Guard, they were recruited by MI6's Section D and were initiated into the world of guerrilla tactics and sabotage. Over just a couple of years 3,500 farmers, gamekeepers and other often land-based workers were brought into this ultra-secretive group – the Auxiliary unit. Trained at Coleshill House near Swindon, they would then return to their towns and villages and operate in groups of four, not knowing who was in their neighbouring unit or even how near or far it was in case Germany invaded, captured any Auxilers and tortured them for information. Ultimately, their skills were never called upon and they were instructed to destroy their Operational Bases (OB) – often simple buried Anderson shelters accessed by a hidden hatch in woodland – when they were demobilised or reallocated to units in northern France and pushing into Germany. A replica OB can be visited at Coleshill House, which is run by the National Trust.

Read more - [Winston Churchill's Secret Army who would have fought on](#)

'Respectfully forgetting' Vietnam

At the start of October Dr. Bill Allison delivered the Gary R. Hess Lecture at his alma mater, Bowling Green State University. His research follows how perceptions of the war and its veterans have changed markedly, in part due to popular culture and the conduct of subsequent conflicts. While many more served in supporting roles than came face to face with the VietCong, Hollywood has often depicted veterans as "damaged", with the unlikely exception of Magnum P.I. in late-1980. Attachment changed too. While many felt war guilt in the 1980s, the resurgence of more successful military operations in the 1990s - for example, the Gulf War and actions in Balkans - saw many begin saying they *had* fought in Vietnam and created fictional service histories. All this effects the representation of the war and its veterans, as you're always writing for a particular audience. In fact, Ken Burn's seminal work, 'The Vietnam War', was a monumental endeavour, but perhaps its accuracy is lessened as it took 10 years to make (considering the changing tide of opinion over that time) and focuses too heavily on one Marine. Now, for Allison, we are entering a period of "respectful forgetting" as older veterans pass away and their stories are no longer in the public eye as much.

Read more - ['Historian explores the shifting views of the Vietnam War'](#)

Other articles

[The Most Fearsome Military Units of All Time](#)

[The Fall of the Templars: How to destroy a military order](#)

[Captured Spanish ensign flags up Trafalgar's history](#)

[The role of the Marine Corps during the Civil War](#)

[US Army WILL rename nine forts that honor Confederate generals at a cost of \\$63M](#)

[Jagdtiger: The German Tank Destroyer That Was Both Devastating and Problematic](#)

[Inside Abandoned Underground WWII Fortress Built by Mussolini](#)

[RAF drew up plans to bomb Argentina during Falklands War](#)

Local events, online talks and podcasts

[Click here](#) to see a wealth of upcoming events in Salisbury and surrounding areas.

While online talks continue, we'll include them in our eNewsletters. Click on the links below for the next (and future) webinars from a range of organisations. Some of these talks may charge a small fee to join.

[British Modern Military History Society](#)

Next talk: '273 Squadron RAF' (Tuesday 1st November)

[Manchester Military History Society](#)

Next talk: 'Dambusters with Frank Plezak' (Tuesday 8th November)

[Institution of Royal Engineers](#)

Next talk: 'Lt Col Sir Richard Fletcher' (Wednesday 16th November)

[Old Front Line](#)

A fortnightly World War One podcast featuring 30-45min episodes.

[Pete and Gary's Military History: Peter Hart and Gary Bain](#)

For more than 40 years historian Peter Hart has interviewed thousands of veterans about their experience of war.

[New Books Network](#)

A series of interviews with authors of military history books.

We look forward to seeing you all at St John's Place next week.

Dave Simons
Marketing Officer

Keith Rigden
Membership Secretary

Useful links:

Website - <https://salisburymilhist.com>

Email - SalisburyMilHist@gmail.com

Facebook - [SalisburyMilHist](#)

Twitter - [SalisburyMHS](#)

Who's who:

Chairman & Speaker Secretary: Alan Rooney

Vice Chair: Bob Kershaw

Secretary & Bookstall Co-ordinator: Andy Sharp

Secretary (incoming): Ian Thomas

Treasurer: John Loades

Membership Secretary: Keith Rigden

Marketing Officer: Dave Simons

Events Officer: Sandy Forrest