



Salisbury Military History Society

November 2023 eNewsletter

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

Parish Notices

Wednesday 22nd November

7.30pm (arrive from 7pm) - Members-only social: Debate and quiz

Our next talk will be on 24th January (see below), but next week we'll be hosting a social event for card-carrying Full Members. Details were emailed to members last Wednesday (8th November).

Upcoming talks

Wed 24th Jan – 'The Austerlitz Campaign' with Alan Rooney

Wed 28th Feb - 'Special Operations Executive (SOE), 1940-46' with Ashley Barnett

Wed 27th Mar - 'Barba del Puerco: A tactical engagement with strategic consequences' with Major-General Ashley Truluck

Wed 24th Apr - 'Recollections of the Falklands War' with Sir Max Hastings

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

Parking

There is a small car park and lay-by opposite St John's Place on Lower Road (for approx. 20 cars). Parking is also allowed on single yellow lines on Lower Road after 18:00.

Alternative car parking is available at The Clubhouse, Salisbury and South Wilts Sports Club (SP2 9NY) and a pathway connects to St John's Place.

2024 membership subscriptions

Rather than queuing to pay your 2024 subscription on the door at the January meeting, we encourage everyone to pay in advance by bank transfer if possible. The Committee proposes to keep the annual subscription at just £45.

Sort code 40-40-14

Account No. 02293544

Please include your name as the payment reference

Alternatively, if you'd prefer to receive an invoice, please email our Treasurer, John Loades (at john.loades@hotmail.com), who will arrange for a Subscription Invoice to be emailed to you from Zettle.com. Upon opening the emailed invoice, there is a link to an online payment page

Review: 'Removing Assad's Chemical Weapons: UN Operations in an Age of Great Power Competition' with Jerry Smith O.B.E. (Wednesday 25th October)

Following a career that included the Royal Engineers and eight years at Porton Down before joining the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), we were privileged to welcome Jerry Smith last month. The OPCW's remit is to investigate if chemical weapons have been deployed, but not by whom (though that is often clear). Regarding Syria, as the Arab Republic was not a signatory of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), the OPCW couldn't act directly, but could support U.N. operations. Initially, OPCW staff from U.N. Security Council member states were not permitted to enter the country, but when Russia convinced Syria to sign the CWC to avoid U.S. airstrikes, they rejoined the team. The OPCW team worked to a four-phase plan:

1. Liaison and disclosure (late-September)

2. Identify, verify and disable (October)
3. Pack, move and embark (November)
4. Ship and destroy (December-February)

Having completed the first two phases within the 30-day U.S. deadline, Syrian co-operation slowed with the threat of airstrikes averted. Did Syria reveal all their chemical weapons? Did the regime only reveal weapons that were at risk of being captured by rebels? Regardless, the OPCW supervised the removal and destruction of a significant cache of chemicals.

Call for Committee members

As we approach the end of the year, our thoughts are on 2024. A key part of our upcoming AGM will be the election of Committee members and we're always keen to invite new postholders to ensure our thinking and planning is as fresh, dynamic and forward-looking as possible. You can see your [current Committee members on the website](#) and we encourage you to talk to any of them about their roles and any you may be interested in.

Military History News

How a half-century career took a boy from Private to Field Marshal

William Robertson joined the 16th Lancers in November 1877 and, through sporting excellence and instructor responsibilities, was promoted to Corporal in 1879 and Sergeant in 1882. By the age of 25, Robertson became the Regiment's youngest ever Sergeant Major. This swift progression came at a time of sweeping changes in the British Army, heralded by the 1881 Childers Reforms. Within just a decade, Robertson became an officer in the 3rd Dragoon Guards. He retired as Chief of the Imperial General Staff in February 1918 and was promoted to Field Marshal two years later. To this day, Sir William Robertson remains the only soldier to have held every rank in the British Army from Private to Field Marshal.

Read more: [Sir William Robertson: The incredible career of the only British Army soldier to hold every rank from private to field marshal](#)

Other articles

[The 5 Weirdest Military Fortifications in History](#)

[British Templars at War – The Doomed Band of 1185-1187](#)

[The place where the Visigoth king Rodrigo was defeated by the Muslims has been located](#)

[The deadliest bombings in military history](#)

[The Myth of Dresden in Germany's Past and Future](#)

[How the Bomber Became One of the Most Powerful and Enduring Weapons in Modern Warfare](#)

[5 Scholars who Fought the Nazis with their Brains](#)

[Why Did the UK's RAF Retire the Avro Vulcan Bomber?](#)

Local events, online talks and podcasts

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

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.

Institution of Royal Engineers

Online talk: [Sappers in the Infantry Role – March 1918](#) (Wednesday 15th November)

National Army Museum

Museum and online talk: [The Boer War: Winston Churchill's Great Escape](#) (Friday 17th November)

National Army Museum

Museum and online talk: [The 'Conchie Corps'](#) (Friday 24th November)

British Modern Military History Society

Online talk: [Montgomery](#) (Tuesday 5th December)

National Army Museum

Museum and online talk: [Making the British Army Officer](#) (Friday 8th December)

Institution of Royal Engineers

Online talk: [The History of RE Bomb Disposal](#) (Wednesday 13th December)

[Old Front Line](#)

A 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 welcoming you all to 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

Secretary: Ian Thomas

Treasurer: John Loades

Membership Secretary: Keith Rigden

Marketing Officer: Dave Simons

Without Portfolio: Andy McCafferty, Andy Sharp,

Bob Kershaw, Mark Vincent