

# Salisbury Military History Society

May 2019 eNewsletter

Hello and welcome to the eNewsletter for May 2019.

## Rorke's Drift

A full house was present on the 24th of April at St. John's Place for Colonel Christopher Newbould's talk on Rorke's Drift. Thanks are due to Christopher for his excellent talk, guiding us through the complexities of the battle and treating us to his equally impressive range of accents and Zulu pronunciation!

War was inevitable once Cetshwayo's warning that "if the Great White Queen sent her red soldiers into Zululand, his amabutho would eat those red soldiers up" was ignored.

Exacerbated by Chelmsford's utter failure to realise the speed at which an impi could cover ground, and they were only covering 40 miles a day instead of their usual 60, as they had been instructed to march slowly; a scenario developed which saw the destruction at Isandlwana of the camp and near annihilation of the garrison of the 24th Foot.

As Christopher described, the secondary action at Rorke's Drift unfolded and was expertly brought to life by his memorable quotes. The Natal Native Infantry Contingent described as "The untrained untrainables" fleeing the debacle at Isandlwana, calling out to the defenders at Rorke's Drift, "you fellows ..... everyone has been dismembered and the same fate awaits you shortly". It must have been a chilling warning, especially when swiftly followed by "Here they come: as black as hell and thick as grass", you knew you were in for a fight for survival.

None more so than that of Padre George 'Ammunition' Smith who had remained unwillingly, as his Groom had stolen his horse to escape, but earned his nickname by dispensing ammunition throughout the battle, calling out "Don't swear lads, just shoot"!

The detachment at Rorke's Drift prevailed but it was a very close-run thing against a fearless opponent. "Lieutenant Chard, RE, had for 12 hours made the most gallant resistance I have ever heard of against the determined attacks of some 3,000 Zulus, 370 of whose dead bodies surrounded the post". Despatch dated 27th January 1879 Lord Chelmsford.

The discrepancy in casualty figures couldn't have been starker. Only 15 killed at Rorke's Drift whereas 1,329 lost their lives at Isandlwana.

Finally, the wonderful quote of Colour Sergeant Bourne when asked "why us?" responding "because we are here", bringing back visions of Nigel Green's memorable portrayal of the Colour Sergeant in the epic film, Zulu!

Our sincere thanks to Christopher for treating us all to such fascinating evening's talk.

If you were intrigued by the battle and wish to find out more about the conflict, then the [Anglo Zulu War Historical Society](#) is an essential port of call. Administered by Doctor Adrian Greaves, it is a treasure chest of information. The Society produces a Journal twice a year, for members, which is filled with hundreds of copies of original documents and articles covering every aspect of the war. Highly recommended.

If you are interested in an accompanied tour to the Zulu war battlefields then [The Cultural Experience](#) provides a luxury option with the highly esteemed Zulu war expert and tour guide [Ian Knight](#).

I have visited these battlefields independently and can highly recommend [Fugitives Drift](#) as a base. Their accommodation, food and tours are first rate.

## Hitler's Heralds

On the 22nd of May our talk will be by [Nigel Jones](#), the author of "Hitler's Heralds". This promises to be a intriguing insight into the fertile breeding ground of the chaos of interwar Germany that helped produce the Nazi movement.

"One hundred years ago in the wake of the Great War, defeated Germany was in chaos. Convulsed by strikes, mutinies and open revolution, its embattled government needed a new military force to put down revolts and restore order. The result was the Freikorps. A mix of battle-hardened veterans, eager students and mystic nationalists, these volunteers crushed revolts across Germany with bloody savagery. But when their task was done, dissolving the Freikorps proved easier said than done. Civil War became murderous terror as the embittered warriors morphed into the rising Nazi movement".

## Members Presentation

Following "Hitler's Heralds" and after the refreshment break, David Kirkpatrick will be giving a 10-15-minute presentation on his analysis of American Civil War battles, seeking to validate or disprove Lanchester's Square Law; this is a combat model which stresses the importance of superior numbers.

As always, the talks will be at St. John's Place, Lower Road, Bemerton, Salisbury, SP2 9NP.

On Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> May at 7.30pm, £10 (cash) at the door, to include wine and nibbles. Parking details [here](#).

## Parish Notices

Thank you to the 50% of members who have provided additional contact details. These give us alternative ways to contact you should the normal email fail to be delivered. A situation that has occurred 4 times already.

As a number of you had commented, the current set-up of the sound system at St. John's is less than ideal. To that end, the Committee for St. John's Place arranged for a sound engineer from Wessex Sound to visit. He tested the system, made adjustments and provided some guidance on how best to configure the sound mixing portion of the system. Prior to our next talk on the 22nd of May there will be another sound check done which will, hopefully, confirm that we now have a clearly audible, operational sound system. After the talk, please do let us know of your experience with the "improved" set-up. Either face-to-face with any committee member or via the email link [here](#), or on the website.

The sound engineer also answered some of the queries and suggestions that had been made. Namely, he confirmed that a wireless system would not be affected by someone using a mobile phone. He also confirmed that strategically placed fabric dividing screens would not make any difference, because the sound is primarily bouncing off the higher parts of the building.

Another point that we were made aware of is that there is a "Sound Loop" system at the Church, although it was not tested by the engineer. If you have the opportunity to test it we would be grateful to have your thoughts on its operation.

The History Bookshop in Salisbury will be closing its doors on its Fisherton Street shop on Saturday 18 May. So, until then all his stock is half price. The good news is that the new History Bookshop will be opening its doors at Fisherton Mill on 1 June.

## **Non-Society Military History News:**

### Museum of the Year 2019 shortlist released

HMS Caroline, a veteran of Jutland, has been short-listed for 2019 Museum of the Year. [Click here](#) to read why Dan Snow believes this Belfast attraction deserves to win the award.

### Study into Great War centenary arts programme published

14-18 NOW commissioned British Future to study the impact of the arts programme witnessed nationwide during the Great War centenary years. In addition, the research looks to the future of similar arts programmes. [Click here to open the report](#)

### **New book reveals more photos of 'the Few'**

Dilip Sarkar's new book '*Spitfire! The Full Story of a Unique Battle of Britain Fighter Squadron*' includes new photographs of Squadron 19; the first to receive Spitfires to battle the Luftwaffe over Britain. [Click here to open the Daily Mail's pictorial review](#)

### **Ghost Army**

Based on Rick Beyer's book, '*The Ghost Army of World War II*', Ben Affleck's new movie depicts the story of over 1,100 actors and art school graduates recruited to deceive the Nazis. The film is in pre-production and doesn't yet have a release date. [Read more here](#)

### **D-Day anniversary coin minted**

To mark the 75th Anniversary of the D-Day Landings, the Royal Mint has launched a new £2 coin. The coin will not enter into general circulation, but may be purchased from the Mint, with a donation from each purchase being made to the Imperial War Museum. [Click here to see the coin](#)

### **The Cold Blue**

A new documentary telling the story of the American bomber crews who fought and died in the skies over The Third Reich is about to be released.

Using similar colourising techniques to those used in Peter Jackson's 1918 World War One documentary, 15 hours of archival footage shot in the spring and summer of 1943 have been digitally enhanced and linked with original sound recordings from the B-17 missions.

The result should be stunning: [The Cold Blue](#).

### **...and finally:**

Please do 'get it off your chest'. Not confined solely to the sound system, do let us know of any thoughts, suggestions, observations or even criticisms that you may have. For the Society to flourish it needs to be open and responsive to ideas and requests from all of its membership.

To that end, 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 upcoming talks, again do let us know.

Alternatively, for direct action, the poster for the "Hitler's Heralds" talk can be downloaded [here](#).

A future date for your diaries: Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> June, our upcoming talk on "Agincourt: Myth and Reality" with Professor Anne Curry. The poster for the talk can be downloaded [here](#).

Kind regards,

Keith Rigden  
Membership Secretary

Dave Simons  
Web & Marketing Officer

#### **Useful links:**

Website - <https://salisburymilhist.com>

Email - [SalisburyMilHist@gmail.com](mailto:SalisburyMilHist@gmail.com)

Facebook - [SalisburyMilHist](#)

Twitter - [SalisburyMHS](#)

#### **Who's who:**

Joint-Chairman & Speaker Secretary: Alan Rooney

Joint-Chairman: Bob Kershaw

Treasurer: John Loades

Web & Marketing Officer: Dave Simons

Secretary: Andy Sharpe

Membership Secretary: Keith Rigden