



Salisbury Military History Society

March 2021 eNewsletter

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

Parish Notices

Reconvening

While people may return to cinemas and sports venues from mid-May, we are looking ahead to June for the possible recommencing of our in-person talks. We'll keep members and visitors up-to-date via these monthly eNewsletters and our social media accounts, plus you can contact us directly via SalisburyMilHist@gmail.com. We continue to reschedule postponed talks so our programme doesn't omit any sought-after topics or high-profile speakers.

Members' content

Our feature focusing on new books, articles, documentaries, podcasts and more.

'Borodino Field, 1812 & 1941' by Robert Kershaw

"The name Borodino Field resonates with patriotism and Mother Russia for Russians. The battle in September 1812 is known to most as one of the epic climaxes in Tolstoy's War and Peace. Napoleon's pyrrhic victory there took the French Grande Armée to the gates of Moscow and on to catastrophe during the subsequent winter. Another lesser known, but equally bitter battle was fought at Borodino Field in October 1941. This time Hitler's SS and panzers came up against elite Soviet Siberian troops defending Stalin's Moscow. Remarkably, they fought in the same woods and gullies that follow the line of the Koloch River flowing through the middle of the historic battlefield. Tsarist and Soviet troops twice faced invaders here, coming from the west in 1812, and again in 1941. Only rarely in the history of human conflict do key battles occur in the same place."

Available to pre-order from bookshops and online marketplaces. Read more on Bob's website – [see here](#).

Military History News

Why the first battle of the Civil War was called the 'picnic battle'

The armies of the American North and South met in battle in July 1861, three months after Fort Sumter had fallen. As the United States had not fought a war for over a decade, neither side knew what to expect. Neither could commit vast numbers of experienced troops, but confident Senators and the families of Union soldiers travelled with picnics to observe the first battle of what would doubtless be a short war, a belief demonstrated by the North enlisting men on 90-day terms. The First Battle of Bull Run – as it was known in the North and the First Manassas to the Confederates – was anything but a picnic. Though numerically equal, the South boasted the more experienced commanders and only the inexperience of the two armies meant a rout did not ensue. While journalists would soon accompany the belligerents on long-ranging campaigns, picnickers would not again consider the war an afternoon's entertainment. [Read more](#)

Discovering WW1 tunnel of death hidden in France for a century

On 4th May 1917 a fearsome French artillery bombardment targeted the entrance and exit of the Winterberg Tunnel on the north side of the crest along the Chemin des Dames. Trapped inside were 270 German soldiers of the 10th and 11th companies of the 111th Reserve Regiment. Over the following three days only three managed to escape. A century later the authorities must decide how to handle the rediscovered tunnel and the soldiers and artefacts inside, as looters have already started to scour the surroundings at the surface. [Read more](#)

The untold story of the world's fiercest tank battle

Last month retired U.S. Army colonel and historian Gregory Fontenot recalled Operation Desert Sabre – in which the United States cavalry fought three of the largest tank battles in American military history – as

comparable to the Nazis and Soviets meeting at Kursk in 1943. Over a 100-hour period, the battles of 73 Easting, Medina Ridge and Norfolk (also known as “Fright Night”) pitched M1A1 Abram tanks against Iraqi conscripts and then the infamous Republican Guard. While the news programmes back home broadcast inspiring videos of tanks charging across dusty desert plains, the reality was far more sodden as rain turned the sand to mud. Thirty years later, ‘tankers’ are still haunted by the risk-filled nights of firing at silhouettes and hoping they were the Iraqi’s Soviet tanks. [Read more](#)

A definitive ranking of the US military’s worst animal projects

Animals have always had a part to play in warfare. No doubt we’ve all heard of the dogs sent under advancing tanks with bombs strapped to their backs or dolphins and seals spying on the hulls of enemy navies. Perhaps a little surprising, is that the U.S. Army established a Camel Corps before the Civil War. Also, while we’ll be familiar with bomb-sniffing dogs, extensive research has been conducted on how effective elephants are at performing the same task. [Read more](#)

Online talks and podcasts

Click on the links below for the next (and future) webinars from a range of historians and societies. Some of these talks may charge a small fee to join.

[Western Front Association](#)

Next talk: Lloyd-George: the man who won the war (Wednesday 17th March)

[Classic Battlefield Tours](#)

Next talks: Battle of Dien Bien Phu (Friday 19th March)

[Royal Engineers Historical Society](#)

Next talk: Operation SEALION (Wednesday 24th March)

[The Battlefields Trust](#)

Next talk: The Battle of Maldon, 991 (Thursday 25th March)

[British Modern Military History Society](#)

Next talk: Secrets and Spies - How German spies lost the Battle of Britain (Tuesday 6th April)

[Army Flying Museum: Lockdown Lectures](#)

Next talk: Service Under the Disc: Life as a Ground Crewman during the Cold War (Monday 12th April)

[Manchester Military History Society](#)

Next talk: Boadicea and the Battle for Britain (Tuesday 13th April)

[Old Front Line](#)

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

[Peter Hart’s Military History](#)

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’ll keep you all up-to-date regarding our future plans and welcome your continued correspondence.

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Useful links:

Website - <https://salisburyhistory.com>

Who’s who:

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