

The Society for Army Historical Research 2015 Christmas Booklist

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Stumped for a Christmas present for the military historian in your house?

In the hope of helping fill up a few Christmas wish-lists, the Society asked a number of military historians from various backgrounds for their book recommendations. This year, the brief was for five favourite books on the British Army (including Imperial, Dominion, and Commonwealth forces). After requests by several distinguished contributors, the remit was opened out to include allies and enemies as well, so hopefully there will be something here to suit every interest.

Dr David J. Blackmore Author of *Destructive and Formidable: British Infantry Firepower 1642 – 1765* (Frontline, 2014); *British Cavalry in the Mid-18th Century* (Partizan Press, 2008).

On my shelves there are two ‘go to’ books that I could not do without. The first of these, and by far the oldest, is Sir Charles Firth, *Cromwell’s Army*, which was first published in 1902 and the revised third edition of 1921 was reprinted as recently as 1992. It is true that some of what Firth writes is now outdated and not entirely accurate, but as a starting point for anything to do with the nature of the warfare of the English Civil Wars, it has never been bettered.

The second book is more recent, but not very recent, J.A. Houlding, *Fit for Service, The Training of the British Army, 1715 -1795* (Oxford University Press, 1981). Apart from being a superb study of the Army’s training in the 18th Century it also contains the most comprehensive and valuable guide to military manuals and publications during that period.

It is perhaps an indication of the recent dearth of good military history that deals with anything before 1914 that my next two books are not particularly recent either. The first is Stephen Brumwell, *Redcoats: The British Soldier and War in the Americas, 1755-1763* (Cambridge University Press, 2002). He provides a fascinating insight into the nature of the French and Indian War.

Also dealing with the British Army in North America is Matthew H Spring, *With Zeal and with Bayonets Only, The British Army on Campaign in North America, 1775-1783* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2008). I have to say that I do not agree with all of Spring’s conclusions, but it is an informative and thorough examination of the way the British infantry fought the American rebels.

Turning to more recent works, Andrew Bamford, *Gallantry and Discipline: The 12th Light Dragoons at War with Wellington* (Frontline, 2014) is to be recommended. Drawing on material about the 12th Light Dragoons it is nonetheless a very useful guide to the interior workings of any cavalry regiment during the Napoleonic Wars.

Dr Stephen Brumwell Author of *Redcoats: The British Soldier and War in the Americas, 1755-1763* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), *Paths of Glory: The Life and Death of General James Wolfe* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006), *George Washington: Gentleman Warrior* (Quercus, 2012).

All five recommended titles are available in paperback editions from the listed publishers.

John Prebble, *Culloden* (Pimlico). I first read this classic account of the 1746 battle that ended the dynastic ambitions of Bonnie Prince Charlie in my early teens, and have returned to it many times since. Focusing upon the experience of humble participants rather than commanders, it remains a ground-breaking work of 'popular history', exploring a grim subject in powerful and moving prose.

Cecil Woodham-Smith, *The Reason Why* (Penguin). A brilliant exploration of the factors - both long-term and immediate - behind the tragic Charge of the Light Brigade in 1854, giving centre stage to the role played by the clashing personalities of Lords Lucan and Cardigan. First published in 1953 in time for the centenary of the Crimean War, it is an enduring example of how careful research, and an understanding of character, can underpin a compelling narrative.

Piers Mackesy, *British Victory in Egypt: The End of Napoleon's Conquest* (Tauris Parke). This punchy monograph by a distinguished historian recounts the extraordinary reformation of the jaded British Army under the leadership of Sir Ralph Abercromby, and its spectacular vindication against the veteran French during the Egyptian campaign of 1801. The hard-won tactical successes in Egypt paved the way for many more on the long road to Waterloo. A worthy winner of the Templer Medal for 1995.

George MacDonald Fraser, *Flashman in the Great Game* (Harper). Compared to the Royal Navy, the British Army has attracted relatively few front-rank novelists. An outstanding exception is George MacDonald Fraser, whose Victorian-era Flashman chronicles combine pacy story-telling with humour and an uncanny evocation of time and place. Of all the many fine Flashmans, this instalment, set against the backdrop of the bloody Indian Mutiny of 1857, is my personal favourite.

Siegfried Sassoon, *The Complete Memoirs of George Sherston* (Faber and Faber). Given the on-going centenary commemorations of the First World War, this list would not be complete without a representative of the impressive crop of British Army writers that the conflict inspired. Spanning both his youth and military service, Sassoon's autobiography is all the more fascinating in revealing the context for his searing and compassionate poetry, arguably the best to emerge from the Great War.

Major Robert Burnham U.S. Army Retired, Editor of the *Napoleon Series* Website. Co-author of *Inside Wellington's Peninsular Army* (Pen & Sword, 2006). Author of *The British Army against Napoleon*, (Frontline, 2010); *Charging against Wellington: the French Cavalry in the Peninsular War* (Frontline, 2011).

Gareth Glover, *Waterloo: the Defeat of Napoleon's Imperial Guard* (Frontline, 2015). The title of this book is a bit of a misnomer. Although it is about the defeat of Napoleon's Imperial Guard at Waterloo, it is really a history of the Wellington's 2nd Division at Waterloo. The best book I have ever read on Waterloo.

Rory Muir, *Wellington: the Path to Victory 1768 – 1814* and *Wellington: Waterloo and the Fortunes of Peace, 1814 – 1852* (Yale University Press, 2015). This new two volume biography is the definitive work on the life of the Duke of Wellington.

Mark S. Thompson, *Wellington's Engineers: Military Engineering in the Peninsular War 1808 – 1814* (Pen & Sword, 2015). The Royal Engineers were one of the smallest elements assigned to the British Army in the Peninsula. Yet their impact on the success of that army was indirectly proportional to their size. Wellington may still have won without them, but it would at a far greater price in the blood of his men. Mr. Thompson does a great job in telling their story.

Andrew Bamford (ed.), *With Wellington's Outposts: the Peninsular and Waterloo Letters of John Vandeleur* (Frontline, 2015). Tells the story of the daily life of a junior officer in a light cavalry regiment of the British Army in the Peninsula and at Waterloo. Because they are letters written within a few days of the events he is describing, there is a freshness about them that one does not get when reading memoirs written several decades later.

Paul Cowan (ed.), *With Wellington in the Peninsula: the Adventures of a Highland Soldier, 1808 – 1814* (Frontline, 2015). A highly entertaining but thought-provoking account of a private in Wellington's Army. At times he enjoyed being a soldier but after six years of war was tired of fighting. Unlike most memoirs of the period, the author was very candid and tells what he felt about his officers, being in the army, and being exposed to danger for years on end.

Professor Lloyd Clark Professorial Research Fellow in Modern War Studies at the University of Buckingham. Author of *Blitzkrieg: Myth, Reality and the Fall of France 1940* (Grove Atlantic, 2016)

Thomas E. Ricks, *The Generals – American Military Command from World War II to Today* (Penguin, 2012). A wonderfully researched book which covers generalship up to Iraq. Its arguments are thought-provoking and tramples over received wisdom about US Army professionalism.

Christopher L. Elliott, *High Command – British Military Leadership in the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars* (Hurst & Co., 2015). Provides a superb insight into British strategic direction during the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Required reading for those wishing to understand the recent relationship between politicians, civil servants and the armed forces and to learn lessons from them.

Niall Barr, *Yanks and Limeys – Alliance Warfare in the Second World War* (Jonathan Cape, 2015). An incisive exploration of the relationship between the Americans and British during the Second World War. A book that provides excellent context and busts a number of annoyingly persistent myths.

Robert Kershaw, *A Street in Arnhem – The Agony of Occupation and Liberation* (Ian Allan, 2014). Bob Kershaw focusses his unrivalled knowledge of the Battle of Arnhem on the experiences of British and German troops and Dutch civilians on a single, critical street – the Utrechtseweg. Its new research and ability to mix social and military history makes this book a worthy addition to the subject.

John Hackett, *I Was A Stranger* (Chatto and Windus, 1978). An unusual memoir about Hackett's time evading capture by the Germans after the battle of Arnhem during which he had commanded 4th Parachute Brigade. Hackett is a thoughtful, sensitive and skilful writer whose ponderings on life and war are as relevant now as they were a generation ago.

Professor Charles Esdaile Professor in History at the University of Liverpool. Author of *Napoleon's Wars: An International History, 1803-1815* (Penguin, 2007); *Outpost of Empire: the Napoleonic Occupation of Andalucia, 1810-1812* (University of Oklahoma Press 2012); *Women in the Peninsular War* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2014).

David Howarth, *A Near-Run Thing: The Day of Waterloo* (Collins, 1968). Neither the latest nor the best book on Waterloo, but a childhood favourite that I have continued to read and enjoy to this day, and that arguably played a considerable part in making me the historian that I am.

Gareth Glover, *Waterloo: Myth and Reality* (Pen and Sword, 2014). The book to read if you only have time to look at one of the many new offerings on Waterloo – succinct, sharp and utterly destructive of many of the sillier theories that have been advanced about the Waterloo campaign.

Guy Dempsey, *Albuera, 1811: the Bloodiest Battle of the Peninsular War* (Frontline, 2008). A truly great study of one of the most interesting and hard-fought battles of the Peninsular War.

Rory Muir, *Salamanca, 1812* (Yale University Press, 2001). A work comparable to that of Dempsey on Albuera, this is not just a very detailed study of an important battle, but also a detailed study of how the men who fought in it remembered it.

Julian Thompson, *Dunkirk: Retreat to Victory* (Sidgwick and Jackson, 2008). A choice that reflects a boyhood determination to find out about things-WWII other than Alamein, Stalingrad and D-Day, this is a useful corrective to the tendency to pour scorn upon the British Army's inferiority in 1939; that things were not entirely satisfactory no-one would deny – the image of the Matilda I clanking into battle against the German 88's at Arras calls to mind nothing more than a slow-motion Charge of the Light Brigade! – but Thompson reminds us that the BEF nonetheless put up a very good fight that inflicted heavy losses on the Germans.

Andrew W. Field Author of *Waterloo: The French Perspective* (Pen & Sword, 2012); *Prelude to Waterloo. Quatre Bras: The French Perspective* (Pen & Sword, 2014).

Guy Dempsey, *Albuera, 1811: the Bloodiest Battle of the Peninsular War* (Frontline, 2008). A detailed and really well written account of this bloody and fascinating battle. One of the best battle narratives I have read.

Barney White-Spunner, *Of Living Valour – The Story of the Soldiers of Waterloo* (Simon & Schuster, 2015). Braving a high chance of Waterloo fatigue this bi-centenary year, this is a really well written account of the battle, skilfully weaving in some fascinating and less well known first-hand accounts of the fighting. There are one or two minor mistakes that may irritate the *aficionados* amongst you, but I can forgive these in what is otherwise an excellent account.

Colonel Jean-Nicolas-Auguste Noël, *With Napoleon's Guns – The Military Memoirs of an Officer of the First Empire*, edited, translated and introduced by Rosemary Brindle (Greenhill, 2005). A fascinating memoir of the Napoleonic wars written by an artillery officer of Napoleon's army. Noel campaigned through Italy, Germany, the Peninsular (where he fought against the British in Portugal and in Spain), in Russia (1812), Germany again in 1813 and the campaign in France (1814). Most interesting is how his attitude towards the French Emperor changed as he became embittered and disillusioned by Napoleon's insatiable ambition.

Dominic Lieven, *Russia Against Napoleon* (Viking, 2010). Winner of the Wolfson Prize for History, this book follows Czar Alexander I and Russia through the later Napoleonic Wars. It concentrates on the period between 1807 to 1814 and traces not just the campaigns and battles, but also politics and military organisation. It is particularly interesting reading about the terrible sufferings of the Russian army during Napoleon's retreat.

T.E. Crowdy, *The Incomparable – Napoleon's 9th Light Infantry Regiment* (Osprey, 2012). The author follows the highs and lows of a regiment of Napoleon's *Grande Armée* through all the major campaigns of the First Empire. Drawing on the surviving memoirs of many of the regiments' officers and men the reader gets a real feel for life in the French army that finishes with its role under command of Marshal Grouchy during the Waterloo campaign.

Gareth Glover FINS Treasurer of Waterloo Association. Author of *Waterloo: Myth and Reality* (Pen and Sword, 2014); *Waterloo: the Defeat of Napoleon's Imperial Guard* (Frontline, 2015).

This year, being the two hundredth anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo, my reading has largely centred around this event and trying to find the good amongst the mass of banal and re-hashes of the now thoroughly discredited traditional history of the campaign.

Brian Cathcart, *The News From Waterloo* (Faber & Faber, 2015), explores a unique aspect of the battle in a very novel and entertaining way. Dealing as it does in great detail, using contemporary newspaper accounts, with how the news of the momentous events of Waterloo got to our shores and how they shaped the subsequent public reaction.

Stephen M. Beckett II, *Waterloo Betrayed* (Mapleflower House, 2015), sets out an intriguing theory of the betrayal of Napoleon's plans and troop movements by Marshal Soult during the Waterloo campaign, a man who is rarely challenged for his performance, or if he is, it is usually attributed to incompetence. I do not say that I fully concur with Stephen's conclusions but it is an interesting and new avenue of exploration on a campaign that never ceases to perplex.

Andrew Bamford (ed.) *With Wellington's Outposts* (Frontline, 2015), publishes the letters of John Vandeleur 12th Light Dragoons in Spain and at Waterloo. I never cease to be amazed how many of these Napoleonic memoirs continue to be discovered and each of them brings something new.

In a welcome break from Waterloo, I thoroughly enjoyed Mark S. Thompson, *Wellington's Engineers* (Pen & Sword, 2015), who looks in great detail at this oft ignored aspect of military campaigning and brings a vast amount of new light onto the subject by utilising a number of previously unpublished journals of engineer officers in the Peninsular War. I am glad to see that Mark is now in the process of publishing some of these invaluable sources.

This year has also seen the publication of the second volume of Janet & David Bromley's, *Wellington's Men Remembered* (Pen & Sword, 2015), a huge tome itemising the memorials to soldiers who fought in the Napoleonic Wars, covering from letters M to Z and quite a few A to L's which have been discovered since the previous volume came out in 2012. It is an invaluable source for researchers like me and sumptuously illustrated with images of the memorials (many more included in an accompanying CD). Apparently so many more memorials are still being discovered that a volume 3 will eventually appear.

Finally, I cannot finish without mentioning *Waterloo 1815* (Extraordinary Editions, 2015) which is by far the most expensive book out on the campaign this year, but is also the most beautiful and sumptuous book ever produced on the subject, brimming with superb illustrations of the battle, many rarely seen before. A real collector's item to mark this historic anniversary.

Donald E. Graves, Author of *South Albertas: A Canadian Regiment at War* (Robin Brass Studio, 1998); *Dragon Rampant: The Royal Welch Fusiliers at War, 1793-1815* (Frontline, 2010); the Forgotten Soldiers Trilogy – *Field of Glory: The Battle of Crysler’s Farm, 1813* (Robin Brass Studio, 1999); *Where Right and Glory Lead: The Battle of Lundy’s Lane, 1814* (Robin Brass Studio, 1997); *And All Their Glory Past: Fort Erie, Plattsburgh and the Last Battles in the North* (Robin Brass Studio, 2013).

At the top of my list would be Rory Muir’s two-volume biography of Wellington: *Vol. 1, The Path to Victory, 1769-1814*, (Yale University Press, 2013) and *Vol. 2, Waterloo and The Fortunes of Peace, 1814-1852*, (Yale University Press, 2015). Broadly and deeply researched, written in a fine narrative style and displaying an impressive and welcome fund of plain common sense, these titles will be the definitive biography of the man for the foreseeable future.

In the year of the bicentenary of Waterloo, many new titles have appeared about the battle. My favourite is Nigel Sale’s painstaking reconstruction of the latter part of the engagement, *The Lie at the Heart of Waterloo: The Battle’s Hidden Half Hour* (The History Press, 2015) even though Sale produces evidence that Wellington downplayed the role of the 52nd Foot in the defeat of Napoleon. This is an example of historical detective work at its best.

The contribution made by the Canadian Corps to the defeat of the German army on the Western Front is too often overlooked. In his two-volume study: *Canadians Fighting the Great War: Vol. 1, At the Sharp End* (Penguin, 2007) and *Vol. 2, Shock Troops* (Penguin, 2008), Tim Cook has provided a very readable and human history of what was arguably the finest fighting formation in the BEF.

In a similar fashion, the Canadian participation in the campaign in North West Europe, 1944-1945, is frequently ignored by British and American historians. The balance has been corrected by Brian A. Reid, whose book, *No Holding Back: Operation Totalize, Normandy, August 1944* (Stackpole, 2009) is a detailed study of the largest offensive carried out by First Canadian Army in the war up to that time. A retired professional soldier, Reid explores the background of TOTALIZE, stresses its innovations – including the first operational use of fully-tracked armoured personnel carriers – and even includes a detailed appendix on the sound Canadian case for having killed the German tank ace, Michael Wittman.

Last but most certainly not least is Jonathon Riley’s new biography of one of Britain’s finest soldiers in the post-Second World War period: *‘Oft in Danger!’ The Life and Campaigns of General Sir Anthony Farrar-Hockley* (Helion, 2015). Farrar-Hockley’s military career is of near mythic proportions. After fighting in Italy and Greece during the Second World War, he then served in Palestine, Korea (captured but made six escape attempts), Cyprus, Suez, Radfan, Borneo and Northern Ireland. Following retirement from the Army in 1982, ‘Farrar the Para’, as he was affectionately known, launched a successful career as an historian, producing many fine works of military history including the official British history of the Korean War. His biographer, himself a distinguished soldier and a retired lieutenant-general, has produced a well-researched but readable story of a fascinating man and a great soldier.

Dr Victoria Henshaw Teaching Associate at the University of Birmingham. Author of *Scotland and the British Army 1700-1750: Defending the Union* (Bloomsbury, 2014).

Robert Beaken, *The Church of England the Home Front 1914-1918* (Boydell Press, 2015). A well written and informative re-examination of the role of the Church of England during the First World War through the prism of Colchester. I very much recommend this for an alternate view of the First World War that will help with understanding the thoughts and motivations of the people who did the planning and the fighting.

Catriona Pennell, *A Kingdom United. Popular Responses to the Outbreak of the First World War in Britain and Ireland* (Oxford University Press, 2012). A fascinating examination into the ordinary man's (and woman's) response to the lead up to and outbreak of the First World War. A more considered and resigned British public is revealed, instead of a jingoistic or naive rush to war as is still sometimes portrayed. A separate examination of Ireland's experience is an added bonus.

Edward M. Spiers, Jeremy A. Craig & Mathew J. Strickland (eds.), *A Military History of Scotland* (Edinburgh University Press, 2012). A *tour de force* through Scotland's military history from prehistory to a post-Cold War world, including a section examining the 'cultural and physical dimension', that is military dress, music, monuments and aspects such as archaeology and portrayal in literature. At 812 pages, excluding bibliography and index, this is less a 'light' read but is a must for anyone interested in Scotland's contribution to its own and Britain's military history. Extensively illustrated throughout.

Jeremy Black, *War in the Eighteenth-Century World* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). This deceptively small book is a literal world tour of the state of warfare in the eighteenth century. Five of the seven chapters take a chronological approach of twenty years each, while two address the themes of naval warfare and the effect of war on society, each covering a vast range of geography. A certain amount of prior knowledge is needed to follow the whirl-wind of locations and examples, but frequent subsections and a large further reading and notes section help make this a springboard to many new and different aspects of eighteenth century warfare.

Michihido Hachiya, *Hiroshima Diary. The Journal of a Japanese Physician, August 6-September 30, 1945* (University of North Carolina Press, 1955). Though not strictly speaking a book about the British Army, this little book is a must for anyone with an interest in military history. Dr Hachiya's seemingly simple account is all the more affecting as he describes surviving the blast of the world's first atomic bomb used in anger, and then his own and his patients' symptoms as they attempt to understand what has happened to them, both physiologically and emotionally, as rumour and speculation eventually turn into the dreadful truth.

Dr James Kitchen Senior Lecturer in War Studies at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst and JSAHR Reviews Editor. Author of *The British Imperial Army in the Middle East: Morale and Military Identity in the Sinai and Palestine Campaigns, 1916-18* (Bloomsbury 2014).

William Mulligan, *The Great War for Peace* (Yale University Press, 2014). This is a superb overview of the First World War that takes a truly comparative and international perspective. It also masterfully places the conflict into the wider history of early twentieth-century international relations.

Jim Beach, *Haig's Intelligence: GHQ and the German Army, 1916-1918* (Cambridge University Press, 2013). One of the best studies of the BEF's command and intelligence system to be written in the past few decades. The depth and breadth of research undertaken by Beach is stunning and makes for a compelling case on the development of Haig's command style. This is the cutting edge of scholarship on the BEF.

Martin Thomas, *Fight or Flight: Britain, France, and their Roads from Empire* (Oxford University Press, 2014). A beautifully written account of British and French de-colonisation that unpicks the myths of exceptionalism spun about both nations' end of empire stories. Comparative history as it should be written.

Emile Simpson, *War from the Ground Up: Twenty-First-Century Combat as Politics* (Hurst, 2012). This is a thought-provoking study of recent conflicts that applies Clausewitzian theories in an interesting, yet never intimidating, manner. Simpson served with the Royal Gurkha Rifles in Afghanistan and integrates his own experiences well into an analysis that also draws on a range of historical case studies, most notably a chapter that unpicks British strategy during the Borneo confrontation.

Christopher Elliott, *High Command: British Military Leadership in the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars* (Hurst, 2015). *High Command* is one of the more insightful and measured analyses of British strategy, or the lack thereof, to appear in recent years. It offers an interesting look into the workings of the Ministry of Defence and Permanent Joint Headquarters in particular, and raises a raft of questions – on resourcing, training and education of officers, policy development, and senior officer command ability – that are relevant to the current state of British defence.

Dr Andrew Macdonald Author of *Passchendaele: The Anatomy of a Tragedy*, (HarperCollins, 2013); *First Day of the Somme: The Complete Account of Britain's Worst-Ever Military Disaster*, (HarperCollins, 2016).

Christopher Pugsley, *The Anzac Experience: New Zealand, Australia and Empire in the First World War* (Reed, 2004). A finely detailed and immensely readable analysis centred on the tactical-level trials and tribulations of the New Zealand Infantry Brigade, New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigade and the New Zealand Division in the period 1914-1918.

Thomas Weber, *Hitler's First War* (Oxford University Press, 2011). A richly researched, incisive and highly readable analysis centred primarily on Adolf Hitler's First World War experience. This book, in the context of its subject, reveals just how much unpublished information is still available in German archives.

J.P. Harris, *Douglas Haig and the First World War* (Cambridge University Press, 2009). This biography of Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig provides many insights into its subject's command style, character and life. This is essential reading when it comes to popping the hood on Haig and his operational-level decision making in the First World War.

Peter Burness, *The Nek* (Exisle, 2015). This re-published book is a gem that explores the tactical-level Australian military disaster at The Nek on Gallipoli, which was also the focus of a feature-length film. Insightful, measured and multi-dimensional in its analytical approach, this book is one of my favourites.

Peter Kilduff, *Red Baron: The Life and Death of an Ace* (David & Charles, 2007). The most detailed narrative of First World War air ace *Rittmeister* Manfred Freiherr von Richthofen's life and military career yet published. There is much more to be said about Richthofen and his warfighting style, however.

Philip McCarty Book Review Supplement Editor, Society of Friends of the National Army Museum Newsletter.

John Keegan, *The Face of Battle* (Jonathan Cape, 1976). An unoriginal choice, but a book that is truly deserving of the label “seminal”. Sad that Sir John recanted some of his findings in *The Mask of Command*, but it put modern military history writing into a new era away from the battles of the memoirs towards a necessary readjustment in favour of the fighting man.

Alexander Baron, *From The City, From The Plough* (Jonathan Cape, 1949). My father, an infantry officer in North-West Europe and in Palestine after the war, held this book in high regard. Reading in maturity (as opposed to in my teens when first given it) the robust left wing leanings of Baron had originally passed me by, but it remains for me one of the best accounts, albeit fictionalised, of the infantry war in North-West Europe.

Gregory Blaxland, *The Regiments Depart* (William Kimber, 1971) In the early days of my serious interest in military history, there was a dearth of writing on the operations of the post-Second World War British Army. Now an historically significant book, as it ends on the cusp of operations in Northern Ireland yet covers the “National Service” wars and the retreat from Empire in commendable detail given the lack of access to official records.

Corelli Barnett, *The Desert Generals* (William Kimber, 1960). Certainly a book which put the cat among the pigeons; the calculus was simple – Monty’s reputation was unassailable as the architect of victory from 1942 on. Auchinleck – and most of his subordinates – were not up to the job. Barnett dared to challenge the orthodoxy regarding the Western Desert and reclaim some of the Auk’s reputation in the face of political and resource pressures. This writer still thinks it an injustice that the “8th Army” clasp to the Africa Star was only awarded for the period after Monty took charge of it.

Jonathan Fennell, *Combat and Morale in the North African Campaign: The Eighth Army and the Path to El Alamein* (Cambridge University Press, 2011). My last choice is more modern and one where I do not fully agree with the final, core conclusion, but still admire how it was arrived at. Dr Fennell found and developed sources that previous historians had passed by or used superficially and produces a masterful analysis of the impact of morale on combat motivation. Its discussion of how morale can be influenced and maintained is of tremendous value to historians. An outstanding example of how history can be constantly re-examined with new scholarship.

Charles Messenger Author of *The Last Prussian: A Biography of Field Marshal Gerd Von Rundstedt* (Pen & Sword 2012); *Broken Sword: The Tumultuous Life of General Frank Crozier 1897-1937* (Pen & Sword 2013); *Call to Arms: The British Army 1914-18* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2015).

Brian Bond, *From Liddell Hart to Joan Littlewood: Studies in British Military History* (Helion, 2015). A very perceptive and, at times, provocative collection, covering the two World Wars, the inter-war period, and public perceptions of the Great War. Especially good is his analysis of the May 1940 Arras counter-attack

John Cooksey & David Griffiths (eds.), *Harry's War: The Great War Diary of Harry Drinkwater* (Ebury, 2013). Quite the best personal account of 1914-18 that I have read for many a day. Drinkwater served in the ranks of the 15th Royal Warwicks and as an officer in its sister 16th Battalion in France and briefly in Italy, winning an MC. His descriptions are very real, increasing one's admiration of the Great War British infantryman.

Richard Holmes, *Soldiers: Army Lives and Loyalties from Redcoats to Dusty Warriors* (HarperPress, 2011). A fascinating history of the British Army, told thematically. It is littered with little known facts and individual soldier examples, as well as written in Holmes' highly readable style. A fitting epitaph to one who did much to open up Military History to a wider audience.

Jonathon Riley '*Oft in Danger!*' *The Life and Campaigns of General Sir Anthony Farrar-Hockley* (Helion, 2015). This biography of Britain's most decorated soldier of his day, and one who was also a highly regarded Military Historian, is what a biography should be. Well researched and written in a way that makes the subject's character shine through, it also provides useful detail of some of the many conflicts in which the British Army was engaged during the second half of the twentieth century.

Peter Simkins, *From the Somme to Victory: The British Army's Experiences on the Western Front 1916-1918* (Pen & Sword, 2014). Another collection of papers, many previously presented or published, which provide a synthesis of Professor Simkins' thoughts on the British conduct of the war in France and Flanders, especially in terms of the 'learning curve'. Very well reasoned and researched.

Dr John Rumsby Editor of *The Life of a Lancer in the Wars of the Punjaub, or, Seven Years in India, 1843-50*, by *James Gilling* (Helion, 2014). Author of *Discipline, System and Style: The Sixteenth Lancers and British Soldiering in India, 1822-1846* (Helion, 2015).

Janet and David Bromley, *Wellington's Men Remembered: A Register of Memorials to Soldiers who fought in the Peninsular War and at Waterloo* (2 vols, Praetorian Press, 2012 and 2015). These volumes, produced under the aegis of the Waterloo Association, are the result of many years research by the authors and their many contributors. It is therefore fitting that the second volume marks the two hundredth anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo. The entries give a satisfying amount of detail for each memorial: name, description and location, full inscription, and details of the life of the person commemorated. There are also many photographs, as well as a CD Rom of all the memorials. Inevitably readers will discover omissions, but 'Bromley' is likely to remain a standard reference for many years. Perhaps a regular spot could be found in JSAHR for additions?

Major M.J. Stanley, *Blood and Dust. The 6th Dragoon Guards (Carabiniers). The Indian Mutiny 1857-8* (Hillgate Press, 2015). This is a one-campaign, one-regiment history, produced by a former Dragoon Guards officer. It is therefore rather a 'micro-history,' enabling the author to provide not only the details of the regiment's movements and actions, but a wide range of other material. This includes several verbatim journals and letters written by officers and men of the Regiment, which give a broader picture of how the campaign was experienced from the ranks. A medal roll of the Carabiniers also gives details of birthplace, trade, and other regiments they served in, providing a database for further studies. Excellent use has been made of illustrations and other sources from the Regimental Museum in Edinburgh.

Thomas Scotland and Steven Heys, *Wars, Pestilence and the Surgeon's Blade. The Evolution of British Military Medicine and Surgery during the Nineteenth Century* (Helion, 2013). Those of us trying to interpret the many and varied diseases and injuries to which soldiers were exposed in the nineteenth century will be grateful to the authors of this book. As surgeons, they bring a detailed and evidence-based knowledge and experience to the subject, covering a wide range of ailments, campaigns and personalities. It is not, however, perhaps the book to read over one's Christmas dinner!

Andrew Bamford (ed.), *With Wellington's Outposts. The Peninsular and Waterloo Letters of John Vandeleur* (Frontline, 2015). This book presents the letters written by Vandeleur whilst serving in the 71st Light Infantry, 12th Light Dragoons and 10th Hussars, as printed in a rare 1894 edition. The book is, however, far more than yet another reprint of a Napoleonic memoir. Drawing on other sources, especially in National and Regimental archives, the author has produced a fully contextualized work that complements his previous book *Gallantry and Discipline: The 12th Light Dragoons at War with Wellington* (Frontline, 2014). A model of how a first-hand account should be presented.

Sönke Neitzel and Harold Welzer, *Soldaten: On Fighting, Killing and Dying. The Secret Second World War Tapes of German Prisoners* (Simon and Schuster, 2013). This work is based on an extraordinary source discovered at the National Archives in 2001: transcriptions of secret recordings made of conversations amongst German POWs. Unaware of being overheard, the soldiers, sailors and airmen discuss freely their feelings about their war experiences, their hopes for final victory, and their views of their officers and their Führer. Many of the experiences described are deeds that would never be recorded in published

memoirs or even letters home, especially the atrocities committed against civilian populations, not only by the SS but also the Wehrmacht, the Navy and the Luftwaffe. The authors arrange and tease out many of the meanings and significance of these experiences – each of the chapters could be expanded to make a book in themselves – and one would like to see more of the *verbatim* transcriptions published in future.

Emile Simpson Ernest May Fellow in History & Policy, Harvard Kennedy School. Author of *War from the Ground Up: Twenty-First-Century Combat as Politics* (Hurst, 2012).

John Masters, *Bugles and a Tiger* (Michael Joseph, 1956) and *The Road Past Mandalay* (Michael Joseph, 1961) – both now available in paperback from Cassel. I consider these two books as one since they form a two-part military autobiography. *Bugles and a Tiger* is a recollection of youth. We find Masters running around the hills of Dehra Dun with Gurkha recruits, taking us into the boisterous mess life of late imperial India, and offering classic glimpses of action on the North West Frontier. For example, Masters observes how he found Pustun tribal “enemies” coming down from the hills after a fighting season to the local British political officer to collect campaign medals, as if King George were putting on a show for them! *The Road Past Mandalay* is a testament to the end of youth, crushed in the jungles of Burma. Although he gives only rare glimpses of his inner state of mind, the book seems to me to be a recollection of trauma. Like unstructured flashes of memory, we find him reacting to one Japanese counter-attack after another when in command of a Chindit Brigade surrounded behind enemy lines: bayonet fighting in the dark; dispatching his best platoon commander to clear a ridgeline, who is killed in the effort, Masters writes the VC citation in the midst of battle; the endless casualties, and their agony. It is precisely the absence of any attempt to structure his account by reference to a higher ideal or a rationalising account of battle in Masters’ account that I think makes it an authentic, all too vivid, and moving account of combat experience.

Barney Campbell, *Rain* (Michael Joseph, 2015). Barney Campbell served in Helmand with the Household Cavalry and has now left the Army. *Rain* is clearly in some ways autobiographical, since it is a novel about a young officer in the run up to his first deployment to Helmand, and then on operations. By using the novelistic form, Campbell puts distance between himself and the reader through the intermediation of his protagonist that in many ways take the reader more intimately into the human experience of the moment than most veterans are comfortable with when discussing their own experience. The result is a novel so intense that I read it in one sitting.

Daniel Marston, *The Indian Army and the End of The Raj* (Cambridge University Press, 2014). Daniel Marston provides a richly sourced history of how the British Indian Army was able to hold together through the throws of Indian independence. The book fills an important gap in the literature and explains how the army was able to become a truly national force. Given the collapse of the Iraqi Army as a national force in the face of ISIS, and the rise of ISIS partly as a result of a failed army-building effort, this book could not be more timely.

Karl-Heinz Frieser, *The Blitzkrieg Legend: The 1940 Campaign in the West* (Naval Institute Press, 2005). This book is not about the British Army, so much as one of its key campaigns albeit from a German perspective. I include this book, however, because it is the work of a master military historian and a classic of the genre of campaign history. Frieser overturns received arguments about the development of Blitzkrieg and explains, in a highly readable yet meticulously empirically grounded account, how doctrine, technology, and instinct came together in the German invasion of France in 1940. In terms of contemporary relevance, he disturbs the British Army’s interpretation of the history of its own “manoeuvrist” approach, and its reduction to relatively rigid British doctrinal formulations in the late 1980s through to the present. Frieser makes a powerful revisionist argument that Blitzkrieg was not based on strong doctrinal foundations.

Walter Walker, *Fighting On* (Harper Collins, 1973). General Sir Walter Walker had a remarkable career, having fought on the North-West Frontier, then served in Slim's staff in Burma before commanding a Gurkha battalion there. He fathered modern British counter-insurgency jungle tactics in the Malayan Emergency where he commanded a brigade and then the jungle warfare school, and then was the mastermind behind the successful and not sufficiently known British campaign in Borneo from 1962-66. He was less successful at the NATO level, where he ended up getting sacked because his relentlessly aggressive operational approach was not appreciated in a nuclear war context! This is his autobiography, and it is not a modest account; indeed Walker regularly comes across as an arrogant person. But he was nonetheless one of the Army's great post-war leaders, and this book is full to the brim of genuinely valuable observations about leadership and operational planning.

Professor Edward M. Spiers, Professor of Strategic Studies at the University of Leeds. Co-winner (with Jeremy A. Craig & Mathew J. Strickland) of the 2012 Templer Medal, for *A Military History of Scotland* (Edinburgh University Press, 2012). Author of *The Army and Society 1815-1914* (Longman, 1980) *The Late Victorian Army 1868-1902* (Manchester University Press, 1992); *A History of Chemical and Biological Weapons* (Reaktion Press, 2010).

With the commemoration of 1916 coming into view, the first two books on my Christmas list would be William Philpott, *Bloody Victory: The Sacrifice on the Somme and the Making of the Twentieth Century* (Little, Brown, 2009) and Peter Simkins, *Kitchener's Army: The Raising of the New Armies 1914-1916* (Pen & Sword, 2007). Of all the books on the Somme, Bill Philpott's account is a must read. Meticulously researched and wide-ranging in its analysis, it not only describes the physical conditions, combat and bravery of so many participants on the Somme but also provides a thought-provoking account of the battle's longer-term significance. It richly deserved the award of the Templer Medal. In many ways the remarkable account by Peter Simkins of how Kitchener raised some 2,466,719 men for his New Armies between August 1914 and December 1915 provides a perfect context for the Philpott volume. *Kitchener's Army* reviews the political, social and economic effects of the wartime recruiting campaign, exploring the motives for enlistment, and examining how the men were fed, housed, equipped and trained before they set off for active service abroad.

More extensive in scope but still quite sensitive in its subject matter is another prize-winning volume by Sir Hew Strachan, *The Politics of the British Army* (Oxford University Press, 1997). While the British Army has always claimed to be apolitical, and has never mounted a *coup d'état*, Hew Strachan shows that numerous senior officers from Marlborough onwards have been intimately involved in the formation and implementation of policy, and that this relationship retains a contemporary relevance. Just as important in some respects is the reputation of the British Army, and after Malaya and Northern Ireland, the army had a reputation for proficiency in counter-insurgency operations. Unfortunately this is no longer the case, as Frank Ledwidge argues in *Losing Small Wars: British Military Failure in Iraq and Afghanistan* (Yale University Press, 2011). Of all the many books on the British performance in Iraq and Afghanistan, this work, based upon extensive research, interviews with senior officers, and personal experience, asks how and why it went wrong, and what the failure reflects about contemporary British strategic thinking and culture.

For lighter relief but excellent value is Barney White Spunner, *Horse Guards* (Macmillan, 2006). As a 350-year history of one of the key institutions of the British Army – the Life Guards and the Blues and the Royals – this work spans the period from Cromwell, the English Civil Wars and James II, through Wellington and Waterloo, to the Boer War and the two World Wars. Beautifully illustrated in full colour with paintings, objects and maps from the Household Cavalry's archives and museum, this is an outstanding history about the three oldest and most senior regiments in the British Army.

Professor Richard Vinen Professor of History at King's College London. Winner of the 2014 Templer Medal for *National Service: A Generation in Uniform 1945-1963* (Allen Lane, 2014).

George Macdonald Fraser, *Quartered Safe Out Here* (Harvill, 1992) is a wonderful corporal's-eye description of the war in Burma – though I have the uncomfortable feeling that his barbs about academics who know nothing of real war might be aimed straight at me.

Michael Howard did know about real war. His *Captain Professor: The Memoirs of Sir Michael Howard* (Cunivium, 2006) is very moving about his memories of being a Guards officer in Italy during the war and, for that matter, of being a young gay man in London during the 1950s.

'Any McNab' is, in some ways, the most influential contemporary writer about the British Army and there must be teenage boys who know more about the small botched operation that McNab led behind Iraqi lines in 1991 than they do about the Battle of Waterloo. The best of McNab's books is *Seven Troop* (Bantam, 2008). It is less gung-ho than the better-known *Bravo-Two-Zero* and it gives chilling detail about the long-term careers of some of his comrades from the SAS.

Roger Broad, *The Radical General: Sir Ronald Adam and Britain's New Model Army, 1941-1946* (The History Press, 2013) describes the extraordinary feat of organization that was required to create Britain's wartime army.

Alan Allport, *Browned Off and Bloody-Minded: the British Soldier Goes to War* (Yale University Press, 2015) is a clear-eyed account of the uniformed civilians who did most of the fighting in the Second World War.

Jonathan Walker Author of *Operation Unthinkable* (The History Press, 2014); *Aden Insurgency: The Savage War in Yemen 1962-67* (Pen & Sword, 2014).

Geoffrey Husbands, *Joffrey's War* (Salient Books, 2011). The remarkable Great War memoir of Geoffrey Husbands. Edited by Dr. John Bourne and the late Dr. Bob Bushaway, this splendid book provides a comprehensive view of the life of a ranker on the Western Front. A testament to the pluck and valour of Britain's citizen soldiers.

Nicholas Stargardt, *The German War: A Nation Under Arms, 1939-45* (Bodley Head, 2015). Using evidence gleaned from a wide variety of primary sources, the author roundly nails the canard that the German population was unaware of atrocities carried out by its soldiers. Copious letters relate what life was like on the Home Front and what drove the Germans to support Hitler right up to the end. Powerful and moving.

Patrick Cockburn, *The Rise of Islamic State* (Verso, 2015). In-depth analysis of the creation of the self-declared caliphate by the Middle East correspondent for the *Independent*. Fascinating trail of terror and deceit that can be traced to the organisation's sponsors in Turkey, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. A well-written warning that ISIS can only be defeated by a united opposition.

Helena Schrader, *Codename Valkyrie: General Friedrich Olbricht and the Plot Against Hitler* (Haynes, 2009). A revisionist view of the plot to assassinate Hitler in 1944 placing Friedrich Olbricht, rather than the often cited Claus Stauffenberg, at the centre of the conspiracy. Well-paced narrative, which includes good analysis of the depth of internal opposition to the Führer.

Francis Suttill, *Shadows in the Fog: The True Story of Major Suttill and the Prosper French Resistance Network* (The History Press, 2014). Written by the son of SOE's Major Suttill, the book is an investigation into the betrayal and collapse of one of the most legendary French resistance networks during WWII. Although rather top-heavy in detail, it is nonetheless a great read and a useful addition to the growing resources on Britain's Special Operations Executive.

If you have not met us before, who are we?

Founded in 1921, we are one of Britain's oldest military history societies. Our purpose is to encourage the study of the history and traditions of the British Army from the late middle ages to modern times.

Our main activity is the publication of a quarterly peer-reviewed Journal reflecting the members' interests and the results of their own research. We also hold regular speaking events and public lectures. To recognise outstanding research in British military history, the society awards the Templer Medal Book Prize as well as a number of lesser prizes and research grants.

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