



The Society for Army Historical Research

Serving scholars, enthusiasts and soldiers

NEWSLETTER – SPRING 2021

RECENT EVENTS – on-line presentation

Wed 10th Feb 2021: The Iraq War: Tactical Realities of the Campaign

For our first event of 2021, we were privileged to welcome Justin Maciejewski DSO MBE, Director of the National Army Museum, to speak on-line about ***The Iraq War: Tactical Realities of the Campaign***. His talk ranged from his time as a Major (SO2 G3 Ops/O&D in Headquarters 1st (UK) Armoured Division), through Lieutenant Colonel (CO, 2nd Bn, The Rifles), up to Colonel (Chief of Staff, 3rd (UK) Division).

Despite the focus of his talk being on tactical realities, he provided excellent strategic and operational context, which was seldom grasped nor explained in the popular media. Our speaker saw, at first hand, the erosion of good will from his first days in Basra, and the malign influence of foreign-backed militias until, as a Battalion Commander, almost every one of his soldiers was in contact every day.

He reminded the audience that south-east Iraq was policed by a 'coalition within a coalition' and explained that the Iraqi Army there received resources as a lower priority than the central region. His comparison of

force ratios in Belfast at the height of 'The Troubles', and in Basra went a long way to explaining the challenges of policing there. He described Operations SINBAD and CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS, this last being a successful Iraqi initiative to strike at and drive the militias from Basra's streets. The development of collective and individual kit, of intelligence, and of British doctrine were covered, as were the practical challenges of multi-national operations. It was an eye-opening talk, but which returned again to those enduring truths, to the importance of low-level leadership and rituals, and to ordinary soldiers' resilience and ability to rise to the occasion.

The talk was followed by a lively Q&A session. The Society is grateful to Dudley Giles for his superb facilitation of the lecture on-line. 116 people registered to hear the talk, a mixture of Society members and Friends of the National Army Museum, including listeners in Austria, Canada, Ireland and the United States of America, the furthest listening in from Hawaii.



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MARKING THE SOCIETY'S CENTENARY 1921-2021

As members will know, this year sees the Society's centenary. We had intended to hold two full days in London, in April, with a mix of venues for lectures, for a convivial dinner and for the Templer reception. Council has reviewed the options and it will come as no surprise that such arrangements are simply not viable: even if the COVID-19 lockdown is lifted by then, restrictions on venue capacities would render large physical gatherings unworkable. So it is with regret that Council unanimously agreed that the Society should switch to a virtual programme.

This revised programme will commence on the evening of Wednesday 21st April 2021 (effectively what would have been the first of our two days). We plan to run a series of evening packages, each Wednesday for five to six weeks, the final number to be agreed when we have confirmed speaker willingness to broadcast virtually. Each package will consist of one main lecture by one of our principal speakers, followed by a short break, then a cluster of shorter talks by up-and-coming academics and a panel discussion. We estimate

that each package will last about two and a half hours. By holding each package in the evening, we hope that this will allow members from abroad to tune-in.

We would recommend that members monitor the Society website, and their inboxes for further notices. Recent experience has shown that it is better for members wishing to join the broadcast to register promptly after it has been advertised and to test their connectivity in advance, rather than to do so just before the start of the package.

The Society is fortunate to have received so many expressions of interest from potential speakers that we plan to run a third day, on Wednesday 22nd September 2021. It may be that circumstances will allow us to gather physically by then. If so, we would plan to assemble at the National Army Museum. If not, we will return to the internet. Lastly, of course, our esteemed Journal will continue to be distributed throughout the year.

Chairman, Ewan Carmichael



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DOCTORAL DISSERTATIONS & RESEARCH THESES ON BRITISH MILITARY HISTORY

Professor Ian Beckett has compiled this annual list since 1983, for which Council is profoundly grateful. He has now indicated that he intends to retire from undertaking the annual survey with his last list published in the 2020 Autumn Journal (see page 304 therein).

Any SAHR member who is prepared to offer their services to assume responsibility for this valuable annual survey should contact the Editor at editor@sahr.org.uk. *Hon. Editor SAHR Journal, Dr Andrew Cormack*

TEMPLER AWARDS

For the 2020 competition the judges received 53 entries (1 in 2 volumes) ranging from the seventeenth to the twenty-first centuries from 26 publishers on 3 continents, ending up within hailing distance of the record crop in 2019 (a 54th entry was promised but was not, in the event, published). That was a remarkable result and far more than anyone expected in what was a very challenging year for authors and publishers. There was a dearth of entries for much of the year. However, my coaxing and prodding of authors and publishers finally paid off when a trickle of entries in the autumn turned into a cascade in November and December, which

made for a very busy end to the year. I am especially gratified at the large number of first books submitted in 2020 – fifteen.

Currently my four fellow judges and I are deliberating on the Medal winner and two runners-up, as well as the first book prize winner and two runners-up.

Traditionally, the results are announced and the Medal with associated prizes are awarded at a ceremony following the AGM. Sadly, that was not possible last April and again will not be possible this April. Hopefully, an awards ceremony will be possible later this year.

Templer Medal Sub-Committee Chair, Dr John Peaty

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See our website: www.sahr.org.uk



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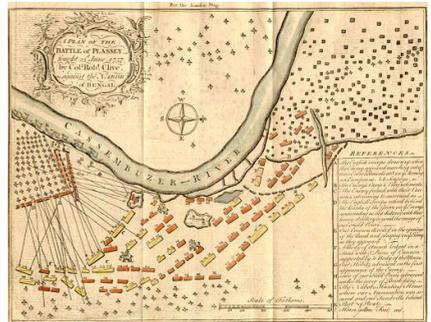
THE SOCIETY'S SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE

When we ran a survey last year canvassing opinions on the Society's online presence, one point that was raised was that would-be members wanted to see a sample of what they would be signing up for. To that end, three sample articles from the Journal have been made available on the website, and are being promoted via our social media channels. With the assistance of the Hon. Editor, these will be rotated at approximately six-month intervals to showcase different areas of our coverage. If you have friends or contacts who might be interested in joining us, do consider pointing these samples out to them. They can be found at <https://www.sahr.org.uk/journals.php>

Social Media Co-ordinator, Dr Andrew Bamford

SAHR RESEARCH GRANTS

The Society provides grants to encourage and support research undertaken both by those studying at university and by those researching outside of the university environment. Grants are made for research that relates to the British Army or the Land Forces of the British Empire and the Commonwealth.



*The battle of Plassey (June 23, 1757
Engraving from the London Magazine, 1760*

University Research Grants (URGS)

Each year the grants consist of one up to £1,000, and two of up to £500 each. Applications are welcomed world-wide from any student who is currently studying at a university or similar institution.

Independent Research Grants (IRGS)

Each year, the SAHR will award a sum up to £1,000 to a successful applicant who is not a student. Applications are welcomed world-wide but are restricted to members of the SAHR.



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INTERNATIONAL SUBSCRIPTION RATE CHANGES

Subscription rates are determined by the membership at an Annual General Meeting – see the Constitution para 4 b. As Membership Secretary, I will be submitting a request to the next AGM (2021) to raise our subscription rates for overseas memberships quite substantially. The formal request is contained in the accompanying insert, titled Proposed Amendments to the Constitution – Spring 2021.

The reasons for the need to increase the overseas subscription rates are as follows:

- The Journal is increasing in weight from 180 gms twenty years ago to 320 gms today.
- The collapse of the historical Universal Postal Union in September 2019 has allowed countries to set unilaterally their own international rates, which U.K.'s Royal Mail has done aggressively. See, <https://www.govexec.com/management/2019/09/us-remain-international-postal-agency-after-securing-more-favorable-deal-american-mailers/160182/>.

Royal Mail now charges £15.18 for a 320 gm Journal to be mailed to the USA, £13.20 to Australia, and £11.25 to Canada at the printed paper rate. While we are able to take advantage of bulk mail rates, a cheque for US\$60.00 received for an International subscription nets us only £39.25 after bank charges, and so does not cover the annual overseas postage cost, let alone printing costs. In comparison, the same Journal posted domestically in UK costs us £1.83 (large letter, 2nd Class).

The new International subscription rates I am proposing will allow us to continue to offer heavily-subsidized subscriptions to qualifying international students.

Members may want to refer back to the Autumn 2020 Newsletter (page 3) to see the distribution of international memberships.

Hon. Membership Secretary, Chris Palmer

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GOVERNANCE

Two Constitutional Amendments are to be submitted to the forthcoming AGM (2021) for approval by the Membership. The formal Amendments proposals are tabled in the accompanying insert, titled Proposed Amendments to the Constitution – Spring 2021.

1. *To extend the period during which current members of Council may continue to remain in post.*

The Society's Council is considering the options for the 2021 Annual General Meeting. It was hoped that it could form part of the planned meetings being organised for the Society's Centenary. Given these are to be held virtually, then separate arrangements will be made for the Annual General Meeting. As this may not be possible in April 2021, the proposal seeks to extend the period during which current members of Council may continue to remain in post.

Hon. Secretary, The Revd Dr Peter Howson

2. *Grace period for the payment of annual membership subscriptions.*

Our Constitution para 4c. indicates that we allow a grace period for subscription payments up to 31st March each year. This is confusing in that Para 4a. already states that subscriptions are due in the month of January each year. Extending the payment grace period to 31st March compromises the Membership Secretary's ability to compile an accurate mailing list for the Spring Journal, which has to be sent to our printers by 20th Feb, incurring wasteful over-production to include as yet unpaid memberships.

Further, an increasing number of subscriptions are being paid using PayPal's automatically-renewing subscription service, and can fall outside the dates referred to in this paragraph of the Constitution.

Your Membership Secretary is asking for this para 4c to be deleted in its entirety.

Hon. Membership Secretary, Chris Palmer