



Manchester Military History Society

Available Speakers and Topics

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The Manchester Military History Society

The Manchester Military History Society is an informal group united by a common interest in Military history.

We meet at the East Manchester History and Gaming Centre, Knivton Street, Godley, Hyde, SK14 2PU on the 2nd Tuesday of every month from 7:30pm. All are welcome regardless of age, sex or ethnicity. There is a small admission charge cover venue rental costs; an annual membership is also available.

Each month we have a speaker on a military related subject followed by a discussion around that subject or related topics. Many of our speakers are published authors and professional historians including the late Paddy Griffith, Andy Callan, John Ellis and the late Ian Darglish.

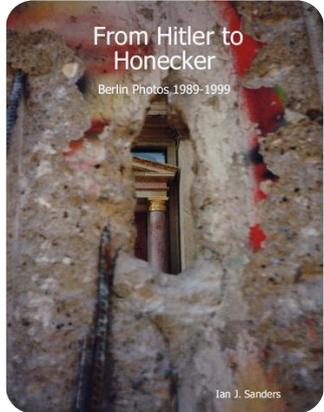
We believe what sets us apart from the usual lectures is the quality of our speakers, the eclectic range of our subjects, and our informality. You are guaranteed a lively discussion afterwards with our mix of professional historians and enthusiastic amateurs!

Over the years, key members of the Society have presented talks on topics near to their heart or that they have a special interest in; we are now making these available to other groups and societies who may wish to share in our members' knowledge. If your group or society would like to discuss booking one of our speakers, please contact us via any of the methods below; alternatively, an email to info@mcrmilhist.org.uk will do the trick.

Available Speakers and Topics

<i>The World War 2 Invasion Defences of North West England</i>	
Period	WW2
Speaker	Ian Sanders
<p>Brief Details</p> <p>In 1940 a network of defences was hastily built all over the British Isles to prevent an anticipated German invasion.</p> <p>This talk covers the varied types of these defences in the North West including "fortified pubs"! We also show where to find the surprisingly still intact defences that remain today.</p>	
	

<i>Manchester during World War 2</i>	
Period	WW2
Speaker	Ian Sanders
<p>Brief Details</p>	
	<p>The Blitz, Prisoner of War escapes, Doodle Bugs, ghosts and more. This talk, originally presented as part of the Manchester Histories Festival, weaves together some well-known and less well-known tales of wartime Manchester.</p>

<i>From Hitler to Honecker - A tour of Berlin</i>	
Period	WW2
Speaker	Ian Sanders
<p>Brief Details</p> <p>Berlin has always held a fascination for me. Growing up in the Cold War era I was intrigued by how a city could be divided physically in two on the basis of ideology.</p> <p>Berlin has been at the centre of two world wars and was until 1989 the potential flashpoint for a third and in this talk we tour Berlin viewing the less well-known remains of the Cold and Second World Wars.</p>	
	

<i>"Poland has not perished yet so long as we still live" - The 1944 Warsaw Uprising</i>	
Period	WW2
Speaker	Ian Sanders
<p>Brief Details</p> <p>In 1944 the population of Warsaw rose up against the Germans believing the Red Army was on the verge of liberating the city after 5 years of occupation.</p> <p>This is the story of the tragic 63 day rising where the population of Warsaw fought for the dream of a free Poland.</p>	
	

<i>Searching for Sydney - Discovering a lost relative of World War 1</i>	
Period	WW1
Speaker	Ian Sanders
<p>Brief Details</p> <p>Reminiscing with my father one autumn evening triggered a long forgotten memory of an uncle who had been killed in World War 1. All he could recall was his name. This began a journey of discovery and remembrance from the streets of North London to the battlefields of Northern France.</p>	
	

<i>“The Germans came over like a Bank Holiday Crowd”</i>	
Period	WW1
Speaker	Ian Sanders
<p>Brief Details</p>	
	<p>The Battle of Cambrai in 1917 was the first major tank battle of World War 1 and the greatest single Allied advance since trench warfare had begun. This talk details the triumph and the tragedy of this battle by focussing on the experiences of 6th Royal West Kent Regiment at Cambrai in 1917.</p>

<i>Tsingtao 1914 - The Battle for Germany's Gibraltar of the East</i>	
Period	WW1
Speaker	Ian Sanders
Brief Details	
	<p>Tsingtao was home of Germany's East Asia Naval Squadron and Germany's only Asiatic base.</p> <p>On 2 September 1914 23,000 Japanese backed by 142 guns began a bombardment of the port. Britain, wary of Japanese intentions in the region, decided to send 1,500 troops to assist the Japanese and to keep a watchful eye upon proceedings. A fascinating story of one of the first battles of World War 1 that made it a true world war.</p>

<i>The First Battle of World War 2 - Westerplatte 1939</i>	
Period	WW2
Speaker	Ian Sanders
Brief Details	
<p>On September 1, 1939, at 0448 local time, Germany began its invasion of Poland, starting World War II when the Schleswig-Holstein suddenly opened broadside salvo fire on the Polish garrison of Westerplatte held by 182 soldiers and 27 civilian reservists. Major Sucharski radioed "SOS: I'm under fire".</p> <p>This is the story of the surprise attack and desperate defence against massive odds of the beleaguered Polish garrison.</p>	 <p>1. Sept. 1939 Uhr 4.45 Schulschiff „Schleswig-Holstein“ eröffnet das Feuer auf die von den Polen zur Festung ausgebaut Westerplatte im Danziger Hafen. Foto-Sönke 11. 1939</p>

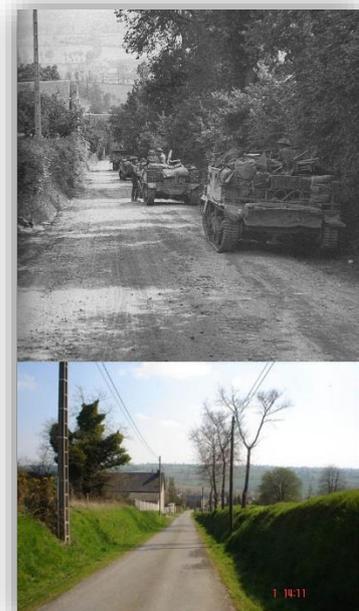
<i>The Men in the Shed – a wartime conundrum</i>	
Period	WW2
Speaker	Colin Foster
<p>Brief Details</p> <p>In 2004, Colin Foster began an investigation to unearth the story & personalities behind a set of names of 18 Allied Servicemen recorded on the inside wall of a wooden shed in Normandy owned by a friend of his. Nine years later, with much French wine, Cider, Calvados and beer drunk, the research is still ongoing... lots of answers have been found... and plenty more questions raised! This talk summarises the results so far and sets out the plans for the future; hopefully it will also act as a point of encouragement for any other members beginning their own research project.</p>	
	

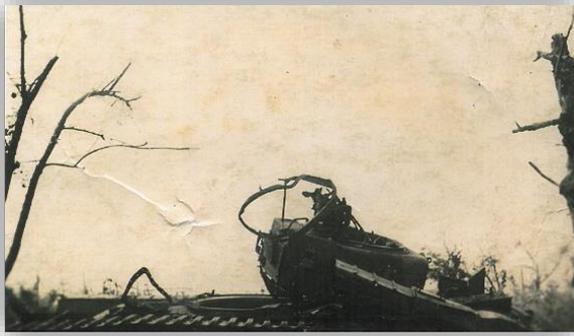
<i>Operation EPSOM</i>	
Period	WW2
Speaker	Colin Foster
<p>Brief Details</p> <p>Before EPSOM in late June 1944 there remained the chance that a German counter-stroke might seriously threaten the bridgehead. After EPSOM, the Allies retained the strategic initiative through to the liberation of France and Belgium. This was a battle in which highly trained but largely inexperienced British 'follow-up' divisions, confronted some of the best equipped, best led and battle-hardened formations of the Third Reich.</p>	
	

<i>Debut at Caumont – 3rd Bn Scots Guards at Caumont 31st July 1944</i>	
Period	WW2
Speaker	Colin Foster
<p>Brief Details</p> <p>Hill 226 - 30th July 1944, 3rd Battalion Scots Guards (part of 6th Guards Tank Brigade) took part in the opening phases of Operation BLUECOAT in their first engagement in the Normandy fighting. This talk focuses on the conclusion of the Scots Guards' part in the first phase of the Operation when on Hill 226, their initial objective, they were subjected to an attack by three German JagdPanthers of Schwere Panzerjäger Abteilung 654</p>	



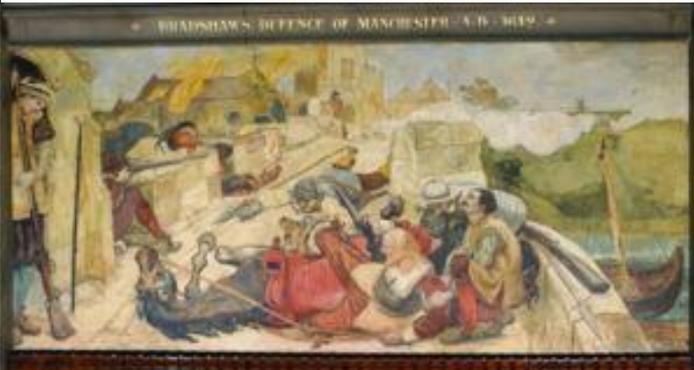
<i>Visiting Normandy Battlefields</i>	
Period	WW2
Speaker	Colin Foster
<p>Brief Details</p> <p>Visiting battlefields following in a unit's footsteps through veterans' accounts or with a guide (paper or human) and trying to compare the same road or stretch of countryside with contemporary photographs is both an enormously rewarding and at the same time frustrating experience with the reduction or removal of hedges and the introduction of motorways across the battlefield. Whilst focusing on the speaker's experience in Normandy, the tips, ideas and considerations discussed in this talk can be generally applied to most battlefield tours and will help you get the most out of your own tour</p>	

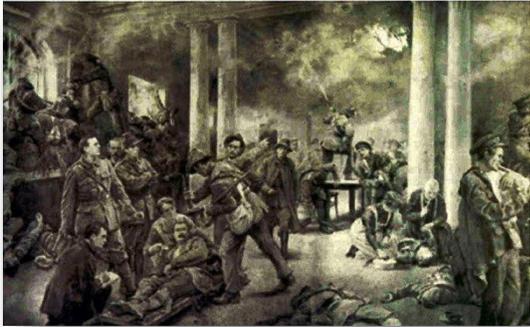


<i>Understanding battles</i>	
Period	WW2
Speaker	Colin Foster
Brief Details	
<p>A number of military historians have suggested that to really understand a battle you not only need to read a number of accounts (to have a “rounded” view), but you also need to visit the battlefield to see the lie of the land for yourself and also wargame the battle.</p>	
	<p>Colin Foster will try to address some of these questions by revisiting the events of 30th July 1944 as 3rd Battalion Scots Guards (part of 6th Guards Tank Brigade) took part in the opening phases of Operation BLUECOAT in their first engagement in the Normandy fighting.</p>

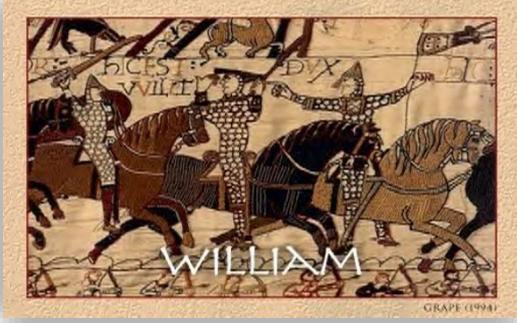
<i>Battlefield Tourism – or Battlefield Tours, for fun but no profit!</i>	
Period	General
Speaker	Tim Cockitt
Brief Details	
	<p>Tim Cockitt is a member of the Battlefields Trust, a keen visitor to Battlefields, in UK and beyond. In this talk Tim explores various aspects of “Dark Tourism”, and in visiting sites of historic importance, with a view of getting a better appreciation of, and insights into, the battles fought in those locations. Examples of such places include world famous battles, such as Waterloo in Belgium, and lesser known, but local, sites – such as Deansgate in Manchester, where there was fighting at the start of the English Civil War.</p>

<i>Battlefield Preservation – Gettysburg and Flodden</i>	
Period	General
Speaker	Tim Cockitt
<p>Brief Details</p> <p>As an enthusiastic member of the Battlefields Trust, Tim has a keen interest in what happened in battlefield locations “on the day”, and then how the location has been preserved (or not) afterwards. Tim includes the examples of Flodden (a very significant defeat of the Scots by the Army of Henry VIII, in 1513) and Gettysburg, probably the most famous battle of the American Civil War.</p>	
	

<i>The Military History of Manchester</i>	
Period	General
Speaker	Tim Cockitt
<p>Brief Details</p>	
	<p>Manchester has a long military history, in terms of written history; it was founded by the Romans as a small fort on the road between Chester and York. In this talk, Tim takes in a wide historical sweep – to include Vikings, Roundheads and Cavaliers, Bonnie Prince Charlie ... and then on to the two World Wars. The Lancaster Bomber was possibly Manchester’s greatest contribution to the defeat of the Third Reich. ... and look out for “The Gates of Hell”.</p>

<i>The Military History of Ireland: 1166-1916</i>	
Period	General
Speaker	Tim Cockitt
	<p>Brief Details</p> <p>This is an ambitious talk, which attempts to cover over 1000 years of Irish history! It is very difficult to speak on the relationship between Ireland and Britain and be impartial. Tim tries to present both sides as</p> <p>objectively as he can. The talk begins with the Norman's seizing power in Ireland, touches on Cromwell's invasion, and on to the Williamite Wars, and the battle of the Boyne. The talk concludes with the Easter Rising of 1916.</p>

<i>The Jacobite Rebellion, 1745</i>	
Period	18th Century
Speaker	Tim Cockitt
<p>Brief Details</p> 	<p>This talk offers an introduction to the Jacobite cause, and then concentrates on the 1745 rising of Bonnie Prince Charlie. Tim will talk about the Jacobite Invasion of England, with particular reference to Manchester's role. We then follow the retreat of the Jacobites back to Scotland, and conclude with the Battle of Culloden.</p>

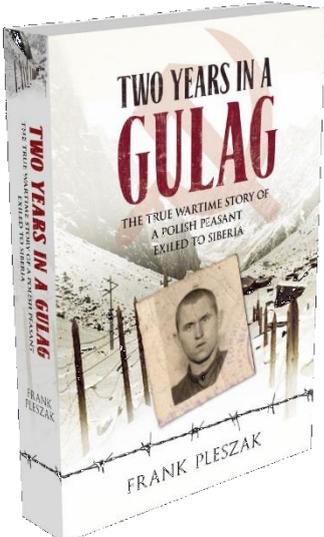
<i>1066, all THREE Battles</i>	
Period	Early Mediaeval
Speaker	Tim Cockitt
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 30%;">  </div> <div style="width: 65%;"> <p>Brief Details</p> <p>The Battle of Hastings (Senlac Hill) is a very significant, and well known, event in English History. Tim will explain the events leading up to Duke William’s invasion – using the Bayeux Tapestry (Norman Propaganda!) to illustrate the Norman perspective. The talk covers the earlier battles of Gate Fulford (just outside York – a battle site under threat) and Stamford Bridge (Yorkshire). Tim will explain why King Harold Godwinson is one of his heroes, and how Hastings was a “near run thing”.</p> </div> </div>	

<i>Blenheim, 1704, and the 1st Duke of Marlborough</i>	
Period	18th Century
Speaker	Tim Cockitt
<p>Brief Details</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 30%;">  </div> <div style="width: 65%;"> <p>The Battle of Blenheim 1704 - Tim Cockitt presents the Duke of Marlborough's spectacular victory over the hitherto undefeated army of Louis XIV. The Duke of Marlborough has been identified by many military historians as one of Britain's greatest generals. For some time, Tim Cockitt has been intrigued by this, and has investigated why Marlborough is so highly regarded, and why Blenheim has been declared his greatest victory. This has caused Tim to read several books (some with very few pictures in them), and to visit the battlefield of Blenheim in person</p> </div> </div>	

<i>1815, Waterloo: History and Controversy</i>	
Period	19th Century / Napoleonic
Speaker	Tim Cockitt
Brief Details	
 <p>The Battle of Waterloo 200 Years On: Tim Cockitt produced this talk about the Waterloo Campaign for its 200th anniversary year. The presentation includes some of the controversial and lesser known aspects ... including the debate – “Who won the Battle, Wellington, or the Germans?”</p> <p>Features dodgy promises, a mad Prussian, Abba, false teeth, chip shops – and more! More fun than you would ever expect with real history!</p>	

<i>Verdun, 1916</i>	
Period	WW1
Speaker	Tim Cockitt
 <p>Brief Details</p> <p>The battle of Verdun, in 1916, was the longest battle in WW1. Huge numbers of French and German soldiers were involved, and many killed, but the battle is generally not well known in UK (There were no British soldiers directly involved). Tim Cockitt will explain the causes, details, and consequences of this extremely significant battle</p>	

<i>Wargaming and Military History</i>	
Period	General
Speaker	Tim Cockitt
<p>Brief Details</p> <p>The hobbies of wargaming historic periods, and studying military history, are closely related. Tim Cockitt explores the history and development of Wargames, as used by the Military, and as enjoyed by hobbyists. Tim enjoyed a close friendship with the late Dr. Paddy Griffith, who was both a highly respected military author, and an enthusiastic exponent of developing new ways of wargaming. This talk is partially a tribute to Paddy Griffith.</p>	
	

<i>Two Years in a Gulag</i>	
Period	WW2
Speaker	Frank Pleszak
<p>Brief Details</p>	
	<p>The harrowing story of Frank's father, a Polish farmer, arrested by the Russian secret police at the start of WW2 and exiled to Siberia. After being release he undertook an incredible journey through the Middle East before fighting alongside the British Army in Italy. But like so many Poles he was never able to return home.</p>

<i>The Battle of Lake Naroch - 1916</i>	
Period	WW1
Speaker	Frank Pleszak
<p>Brief Details</p> <p>The Battle of Lake Naroch 1916 - Under pressure from the Germans at Verdun in early 1916, the French Commander-in-Chief Joseph Joffre pressed his allies to launch offensives of their own to draw forces away from Verdun wherever possible and to place Central Powers forces under increased pressure. Russia, under Chief of Staff Alexeyev, responded with an offensive drive in the Naroch area (Belarus today). 500,000 Russian forces facing just 75,000 German. The Russian prospects appeared good...</p>	



<i>Anders Army - the Polish 2nd Corps</i>	
Period	WW2
Speaker	Frank Pleszak
<p>Brief Details</p> <p>The tragic story of the short lived 2nd Polish Army Corps, born in Russia's frozen steppes from the emaciated remnants of a Polish nation exiled to Stalin's brutal hard labour camps of Siberia, who against all odds developed into an elite fighting force in a hopeless struggle to liberate a homeland that would never be free.</p>	



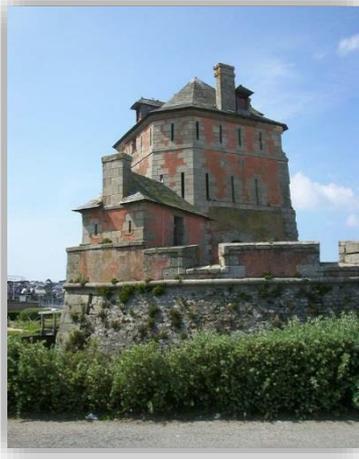
<i>The Battles of Monte Cassino</i>	
Period	WW2
Speaker	Frank Pleszak
Brief Details	
	<p>Frank Pleszak tells the story of the largest land battle in Europe. Cassino was the bitterest and bloodiest of the Western Allies' struggles with the German Wehrmacht on any front of the Second World War. On the German side, many compared it unfavourably with Stalingrad.</p>

<i>The Souliotes</i>	
Period	19 th Century
Speaker	Paul Beckmann
Brief Details	
<p>In the extremely mountainous north-east of present day Greece not far from the regional capital city of Ioannina lies an area of high plateau surrounded by high mountains and accessed through high passes. In such barren and inhospitable surroundings, the inhabitants of Souli turned to the one possible way of eking out a living, - banditry. They persistently raided nearby Albanian and Greek villages and roads far across northern Greece. The Souliotes became a powerful force in the area and after the destruction of their homeland, a powerful force in the wars which ended in the foundation of the Kingdom of Greece in 1832.</p>	

<i>The Battle of Winwick Pass / The Red Bank 1648</i>	
Period	English Civil War
Speaker	Paul Beckmann
<p>Brief Details</p> <p>Pursuing a Scots army down the route of the A49 having inflicted an initial defeat on them at the Battle of Preston, Cromwell was checked at the point where the road crossed the valley of St Oswald's Brook. After a wide outflanking movement by Cromwell's cavalry the Scots were harried down the road first to Winwick church and then into Warrington, where all the Scots foot soldiers surrendered and their remaining cavalry continued south only to surrender in their turn.</p>	
	

<i>The Siege of Athlone and the Battle of Aughrim</i>	
Period	C 17 th
Speaker	Paul Beckmann
<p>Brief Details</p>	
	<p>Following William of Orange's victory at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690, his campaign in Ireland bogged down and failed. In 1691, he renewed his campaign with General Ginckel in command, only to meet a refreshed and reinforced Jacobite army with French troops and officers. In a remarkable series of events, Ginckel's troops took the fortified town of Athlone from under the noses of the Jacobites before engaging them in a decisive battle at Aughrim – a soldier's battle.</p>

Tangiers 1661 - 1684	
Period	C 17 th
Speaker	Paul Beckmann
Brief Details	
	<p>In 1661 England gained Tangiers as part of the dowry of Catherine of Braganza. The result was a desperate struggle to expand the defences of the city and build it as a trading base. At first, Moroccan resistance was weak and poorly co-ordinated, but with the accession of the Emperor of Morocco the threat to Tangiers grew very strong. After some twenty years of fighting, the English decided to evacuate the city, destroying it as they did so. During this period Tangier became a training ground for many distinguished English soldiers, including the future Duke of Marlborough.</p>

Brest 1694	
Period	C 17 th
Speaker	Paul Beckmann
Brief Details	
<p>‘The Anglo-Dutch attack on Brest 1694, continuing amphibious operations in 1694-5 - and some thoughts on Operation Jubilee, 1942’. The attacks on the French and Spanish coasts in the Nine Years War and the rise of the ‘Blue Water’ school.</p> <p><i>‘I said that whilst we had a fleet in being, they would not dare to make an attempt’</i> (to invade England) Admiral Sir Arthur Herbert, Lord Torrington (Wm. Blaythwayte to Southwell 3(?) July 1690.</p>	

In Preparation

<i>Operation BLUECOAT</i>	
Period	WW2
Speaker	Colin Foster
<p>Brief Details</p> <p>Operation Bluecoat could be said to be the turning point in the Battle of Normandy and the key to the defeat of Germany in the Second World War.....yet it is an Operation which has received almost no coverage and certainly, no credit at all! Why? Was it Montgomery’s fault; was it the Americans, or was it Eisenhower? We will examine the reasons.....the facts and the myths!</p>	
	

<i>Operation GOODWOOD</i>	
Period	WW2
Speaker	Colin Foster
<p>Brief Details</p> <p>Having captured the northern part of Caen during Operation Charnwood, General Montgomery, on 9 July 1944, began planning a new offensive. Operation Goodwood aimed to capture the southern half of Caen and the Bourguébus Ridge. Seizing these locations would allow further Allied operations to unfold to the south across the excellent tank terrain of the Falaise plain as well as securing vital ground for airfields.</p> <p>In the event, it looked as though this was the “Death Ride of the British Armoured Divisions” reminiscent of the Light Brigade’s famous Charge. This talk will examine the plans, aims and real effectiveness of this Operation.</p>	
	

<i>Hill 112</i>	
Period	WW2
Speaker	Colin Foster
Brief Details	
<p>Hill 112 was an unimpressive stretch of country covered with wheat two or three feet high, and with a few wooded copses and several villages on its slopes. From this elevation the entire valleys of the Odon and Orne could be seen, and the Germans said, "He who controls Hill 112 controls Normandy." Tenacious fighting, more reminiscent of the First World War, characterised this "slogging match"</p>	

<i>The Italian invasion of Abyssinia 1935-6</i>	
Period	WW2
Speaker	Paul Beckmann
Brief Details	
	<p>In 1935, Mussolini created a pretext for the Italian invasion of Abyssinia, a blatant piece of colonialism, which was the last nail in the coffin of the ineffective League of Nations. The invasion was conducted with a brutality which shocked the world against a brave but totally outclassed Abyssinian army. Despite strong resistance which initially shocked the Italians, the Abyssinian army lost and Haile Selassie had to flee.</p>

The South African 'Blitzkrieg' – part of the East African Campaign 1940-41

Period	WW2
Speaker	Paul Beckmann

Brief Details

In 1940 Britain was suffering at the hands of the Axis powers. The large Italian army in East Africa represented a major threat to Sudan and the Middle East and launched a successful attack on British Somaliland. The British and their allies struck back, the green South African forces with a speed and aggressiveness which shocked the British command and especially the Italians.

