

Welcome, everyone, to today's live Q&A session with battlefield historian Julian Humphrys. A big thank you to Julian for his wonderful talk. I'd heard of the siege but knew very little about it, so it was very interesting to learn more. Please feel free to ask questions about the siege, other battles, Julian's research and his work for the Battlefields Trust.

Just in case you missed his talk, it can be found at <https://www.tudorsociety.com/the-great-siege-of-malta/>

RealTudorLady23:58

Hi Lorna and Bill.

Lorna Wanstall23:58

Good to see you again Julian

Julian Humphrys23:59

And you

Claire Ridgway23:59

Hi Bill! Hi Lorna! I hope everyone is keeping well.

Lamorna23:59

Good evening everyone and thank you Julian for joining us.

Lorna Wanstall22/5/2020 23:59

Yes I'm good.

Julian Humphrys22/5/2020 23:59

Nice to see RTL has been to Malta. Very evocative place. Anyone else been?

RealTudorLady0:00

I was wondering, Julian, I heard Elizabeth I offered prayers but no assistance, but was England asked for help?

Claire Ridgway0:01

No, never been, but now I want to!

Lorna Wanstall0:01

What was the strategic importance of Malta.

Julian Humphrys0:01

Well the Pope put out a general appeal but I don't think he expected any

Claire Ridgway0:01

Hi Laurie! Hi Lamorna! Hi Alana! Hi everyone!

Laurie Duerr0:01

Hi everyone!

Lamorna0:01

I've been once and was so impressed by the amazing historical range from very early prehistory through to WW2 and every era in between. Fantastic place, would love to go back.

Alana Ask0:01

Hello!

Julian Humphrys0:02

Strategic importance was it controlled sealane between sicily and italy. vital if Ottomans wanted to enter the western med,

Julian Humphrys0:02

also could be used as a base for an invasion of sicily and s italy

Clare Shepherd0:02

Evening everyone.dorry I'm late, was watching bats.

RealTudorLady0:03

Thanks, Julian, no probably didn't want to get involved with a Catholic alliance and England was involved with building relations with the Ottoman Empire or was that later?

Claire Ridgway0:03

What are the key sites that can still be seen today that are connected with the siege?

Claire Ridgway0:03

Hi Clare!

Clare Shepherd0:03

Hi Claire

RealTudorLady0:04

Medina is beautiful.

Julian Humphrys0:04

Key sites: ancient capital , Mdina then the Forts, St Elmo and St angelo though they have been rebuilt a lot. Valetta itself was built immediately after the siege and named after the Hospitaller Grand Master

Claire Ridgway0:04

Thank you!

Julian Humphrys0:05

Mdina certainly is. Very narrow streets. Very windy!

Claire Ridgway0:05

Hi Roland!

ADMIN Tim0:05

I have a question about how you're coping with the lockdown of all the battlefield sites you regularly visit, and whether you know any that are doing online things to keep the public aware of their importance?

Shelley Varran0:06

hi

RealTudorLady0:06

When you think that the Grand Master was 70,_he was doing well in command of such an important strategic island and fighting off a huge Islamic army.

Claire Ridgway0:06

Hi Shelley!

Julian Humphrys0:06

England not building alliance with Ottomans at this stage. Paid lip service to supporting Christendom but rather appreciated the distraction the siege caused the Spanish. I discuss this at the end of the talk

Lamorna0:06

Mdina was hugely impressive, an amazing mediaeval walled city, would be incredible to live there. Fantastic views over Malta.

Julian Humphrys0:07

RTL Absolutely! Valette was a remarkable man. Interesting that most of the key commanders were very elderly

RealTudorLady0:08

Thanks, Julian. Yes, the Spanish being kept busy would suit Elizabeth lol.

Julian Humphrys0:08

Tim We do what we can online - people are going through photos and creating talks. Ive been making videos

Julian Humphrys0:09

RTL Yes indeed. William Cecil expressly said that in one of his writings

Clare Shepherd0:09

My dad was on frigate escort duty to convoys to Malta during WWI, it was similarly strategic ally important then too.

Julian Humphrys0:10

Clare. You are so right! My grandad was stationed there during the war in the big hospital

Lorna Wanstall0:11

Sulieman I believe intended to use Malta as starting point to conquer Europe via Italy.

RealTudorLady0:11

Hi Clare, the people of Malta were very heroic during WWI, the Island was awarded the George Cross.

Clare Shepherd0:12

My dad had an infection from washing in salt water, he got a salve at the hospital. I wonder if they met.

Julian Humphrys0:12

Lorna. Yes that appears to be a possibility. Pope Pius IV certainly thought that was the case. I think that one of the results of the Ottoman defeat at Malta and then at Lepanto 6 yrs later was that they concentrated on C Europe and would do so for a century

Clare Shepherd0:13

Yes I know RTL. My dad said they suffered many privations, like during the siege we are discussing

Julian Humphrys0:13

Clare. I wonder!

Claire Ridgway0:14

Julian, do you have any book recommendations for anyone who wants to do further reading on the Ottoman Empire, the Knights Hospitaller or Malta at this time?

Shelley Varran0:14

So neat to learn of this battle....really enjoyed the talk and played it over to learn more.

RealTudorLady0:15

Suleiman was a great scholar and builder as well as having great plans for the Empire, but I am glad Christian Europe was saved eventually, even though it took a long time.

Lorna Wanstall0:15

I guess Suleiman hoped to try and regain all the territory they lost when Isabella and Ferdinand drove the Muslims out of Spain.

Shelley Varran0:15

Any interesting facts that came up about the battle after doing the video?

Julian Humphrys0:16

Hi Clare - the classic book on the siege is called, rather predictably, the siege and is by Ernie Bradford. One of the defenders, a man called Balbi wrote an account of the siege - it's full of amazing detail like the fact that Valette had a jester follow him round throughout the siege and crack jokes. Balbi is in print

Roland Hui0:17

What was the role of Spain, if any, during this?

Claire Ridgway0:18

Thank you!

Lorna Wanstall0:18

Roland Philip 2nd organised the largest naval fleet seen.

RealTudorLady0:18

I have also been to Istanbul and was very impressed with the mosques and university and palaces there as well. Granada is also very impressive.

Julian Humphrys0:18

Yes, Suleiman was a highly impressive leader. I guess we tend to focus on his defeat at Malta but he and his father had really expanded the empire. As you rightly say, he was something of a polymath

Claire Ridgway0:18

I love that Valette took a jester!

Clare Shepherd0:19

Thanks for the book recommendations, Julian.

Lorna Wanstall0:19

Julian, what led you to research the siege of Malta.

Julian Humphrys0:20

Role of Spain crucial. As has been pointed out they assembled a large fleet for the relief of Malta and provided many of the men in the relief force. It should be remembered that just a while before the siege a largely Spanish fleet had been destroyed by the Ottomans at Djerba so Philip II had to be a bit careful

Julian Humphrys0:22

Lorna. I have always been interested in fortifications and took a special paper on the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem at University. That plus the fact my grandad was there got me hooked

RealTudorLady0:22

Did the Order of Saint John remain in Malta and elsewhere for much longer?

Lorna Wanstall0:22

Thank you

Julian Humphrys0:24

RTL. Yes, they basically ruled the place until Malta was occupied by Napoleon. French were soon ousted by Britain and of course it remained an important Br naval base for 150 yrs. It still has a very British feel to it... despite the weather!

RealTudorLady0:26

Thanks, Julian, yes, I was very impressed at how British everything felt, the union flag in a lot of homes and pictures of the Queen. Now I am getting nostalgic. Cheers.

Claire Ridgway0:26

Was there a turning point in the siege or was it down to several factors. I know you talked about the gun battery and then Don Garcia's force arriving.

Julian Humphrys0:27

Other stories connected with the siege: it was extraordinarily brutal. The Ottomans nailed the decapitated bodies of Christian soldiers onto crucifixes and floated them across the Grand Harbour. The Maltese replied by firing the heads of captured Turks from their cannons

Claire Ridgway0:28

Ew!

Bill Wolff0:28

Firing heads! Imaginative!!

Lorna Wanstall0:28

The Ottomans were brutal people.

Julian Humphrys0:29

Was there a turning point? Good question. Wellington once said about Waterloo that every moment was a crisis and I think the siege was like that. I think the Ottomans came closest to victory during their 2nd attack on Senglea but when their camp got raided by some cavalry from Mdina they thought it was a relief force and pulled back

Julian Humphrys0:30

The Ottomans were a complex mix of culture and cruelty. But then so were the Christians

Claire Ridgway0:30

Thank you!

Lorna Wanstall0:31

Sadly Julian there is still a lot of cruelty in this world of ours

Lamorna0:31

@RTL There is a square with a statue of Queen Victoria that looks like it should be in a square in London or Windsor! The culture is amazing, both British but uniquely Maltese as well, especially the language, I loved the Maltese place names.

Julian Humphrys0:31

Back to turning points, obviously the arrival of the mainly Spanish relief force under Don Garcia was crucial and Philip II milked it for all it was worth

Julian Humphrys0:32

Lamorna. Absolutely!

RealTudorLady0:32

Intimidated the enemy and germ warfare. Bits of dead bodies being fired would cause disease and sometimes it was to demoralize but the others did the same. You are fighting to survive against a huge force and you don't know if the reinforcements are coming. You can't afford to feed the prisoners so you chop the heads off and fire them over the falls and cause mayhem. I like that at Medina the people dressed up as the garrison to make the Turks think the place was heavily defended.

Julian Humphrys0:32

Lamorna. on both your points

Lamorna0:32

I heard the Ottomans nailed live Christian soldiers to the crucifixes and set them afloat on the sea to die - is this correct do you know?

Claire Ridgway0:33

RTL, yes, I liked that, dressing them all up as soldiers was genius.

Julian Humphrys0:33

RTL agreed. Lamorna. I think they were dead

Lorna Wanstall0:34

Still a very barbaric and sacriligious thing to do though

Julian Humphrys0:34

Does anyone know about what happened when the Ottomans captured Cyprus 6 years later?

RealTudorLady0:34

Lamorna, yes, that's what I loved, that and sitting on the canons outside of a Cathedral for my photo.

Claire Ridgway0:35

No, what happened?

Julian Humphrys0:36

They got Bragadon the commander of the defenders and skinned him alive. His skin and memorial is in San Zanipol in Venice. I think that the Hospitallers on Malta probably knew that if they were taken alive their fate would be a messy one,

Clare Shepherd0:36

It was a cruel period. The naval fights between the Spanish and English weren't exactly a walk in the park. The sailors on both sides lived in fear of capture

Claire Ridgway0:37

Is his skin on display??!!

Lorna Wanstall0:38

Clare S indeed as the Armada showed... I wonder just how many Spanish ships there is at the bottom of the sea..

Lorna Wanstall0:38

I believe some were wrecked up towards Scotland as well

Clare Shepherd0:39

There are a few of the coast of Cornwall.

RealTudorLady0:39

Where English sailors really burnt by the Inquisition if they were captured or is that a myth?

Julian Humphrys0:39

Clare. Very true. If you did get captured there was a good chance you could end up as a galley slave, Even Valette the Grand Master of the Hospitallers had spent time as one. Both sides did this so when the Ottoman fleet at Lepanto got destroyed a lot of Christian galley slaves died as a result.

Julian Humphrys0:40

Claire. Poor Bragadin's skin is in a casket if I remember rightly. His memorial has a gruesome picture of him being flayed. Fortunately the details are obscured in the dark

Clare Shepherd0:41

Life as a galley slave must have been horrendous

RealTudorLady0:41

Why did the Spanish ships depend on galley slaves or was that normal?

Julian Humphrys0:41

RTL To be honest I don't know

Lorna Wanstall0:42

Clare S John Knox lived as a galley slave..

Claire Ridgway0:42

Poor Bragadin!

Julian Humphrys0:42

RTL Both sides used galleys. If you look at the painting of Lepanto in the Doges Palace in Venice there are oars literally everywhere

Clare Shepherd0:42

Galleys were part of the Spanish fleet for long after we had abandoned them. I wonder if it was due to light winds in the Med

Lorna Wanstall0:43

Clare S there is a funny story of John Knox's time as a galled slave.

Lorna Wanstall0:43

Galley slave

Julian Humphrys0:43

Clare. I'm sure you're right

Julian Humphrys0:43

Lorna go on!

Clare Shepherd0:43

I'll look it up Lorna, thanks.

Lorna Wanstall0:43

Clare S I can tell you

RealTudorLady0:44

Thanks, Julian, something to look into. Getting off subject. Did many people die of starvation and disease during the siege and fighting?

Clare Shepherd0:44

Ok

RealTudorLady0:45

Oh yes, the Venetian navy used them as well. Thanks.

Julian Humphrys0:46

Disease yes. Starvation I think that Valette had laid in supplies, especially of corn But thirst and heat played a major role

Lorna Wanstall0:47

Every morning John Knox and others were shown a wooden image of Mary and told that they should beg for her forgiveness and their soul would be saved John Knox got a bit cheesed off over it, and grabbed it one morning and threw it into the sea.. and said "Our lady is light enough let her save herself."

Julian Humphrys0:47

Classic Knox!

RealTudorLady0:48

Yes, thanks, war was dreadful. Sieges could cause a lot of suffering for the ordinary people, especially if they went on for a long time.

Julian Humphrys0:48

RTL So true

Clare Shepherd0:48

Yes, but he wasn't s comfortable man to be in company with. My Scots gran would often quote him.

Clare Shepherd0:49

Great story Lorna

Julian Humphrys0:49

We won't mention monstrous regiments...

Lorna Wanstall0:50

Clare from what I have read about him he was very bombastic and short tempered, especially when it came to woman in particular Mary QoS

RealTudorLady0:50

Should have thrown him over board. His battle with Mary Q of Scots is legendary. Wasn't he sent there by her mother, Marie of Guise?

Lorna Wanstall0:51

He often railed so fiercely at Mary that she would be reduced to tears and run out of the room

Clare Shepherd0:51

Neither the Knox one nor the Terry Pratchett's

Julian Humphrys0:51

I love the Virgin Mary story. It's said that at the defenestration of Prague when the Imperial agents were thrown out the window of the castle the catholics said they were saved by the intervention of the BVM, the Protestants said they were saved because they landed in a huge pile of dung

Claire Ridgway0:51

Julian, what's your favourite battle and also your favourite battle location?

Lorna Wanstall0:52

RTL I believe it was the French King who sent him to Galleys, although I think Marie de guise would have wanted him to go to the Scaffold

RealTudorLady0:52

Our Lady of Lapanto.

RealTudorLady0:53

Aye, he could get under her skin that's for sure, Lorna.

Julian Humphrys0:54

Claire, I don't really have a favourite battle as such, I'm horrified and scared by all of them. But I am fascinated by them and one of my faves to visit is one I've spoken about here in the past: Flodden, 1513. Terribly sad but very evocative and you can really get a feel for what happened by walking the ground

Laurie Duerr0:54

Julian, are you working on any current campaigns or projects with any specific battlefields?

Claire Ridgway0:54

Thank you!

Julian Humphrys0:55

Hi Laurie. Yes a couple of Civil War battles - Langport and Cheriton - I do a bit of lecturing at Winchester University about the latter,

Laurie Duerr0:56

Interesting, thanks!

RealTudorLady0:56

Ha, the Protestants saved by landing in dung, love it.

Lorna Wanstall0:56

Julian is it true, that Richard 3 made a terrible mistake at Bosworth.. In short he and his army got bogged down giving HT the chance he needed to finish richard off.. If so why did richard make that mistake...

Clare Shepherd0:58

It didn't help that part of Richard's army held back and then came in on Henry's side.

Claire Ridgway0:58

Thank you so much to Julian for his talk and for today's chat. It's been a wonderful hour of history talk. I haven't added them to the schedule yet, but June's informal chat is the 20th June at this time, and Sarah-Beth Watkins' expert one is 26th June at an hour earlier. It's on Sir Francis Bryan.

Claire Ridgway0:59

Thank you, everyone, for joining in and for the excellent questions.

Lorna Wanstall0:59

True Clare.. But it wasn't just the Stanley's who held back

Julian Humphrys0:59

I know that there have been books about Bosworth detailing who was where and who did what. My belief is that the sources don't really allow us to do that - all we know is rather sketchy. My personal view is that the bog made it difficult for Richards army to deploy - that it hampered Richard's escape at the end forcing him to fight to the death

RealTudorLady0:59

Richard is supposed to have spotted Henry and took the opportunity to chase him down and finish him, which he almost did. However, the ground was boggy and he is supposed to have lost his horse, but really he was trapped when Stanley took the opportunity to come behind him and cut through his ranks.

Clare Shepherd1:00

Gracious, didn't that hour go quickly. Thanks so much Julian.

Lorna Wanstall1:00

they always do Clare..

Julian Humphrys1:00

Thanks so much everybody for some great questions. I was worried nobody would be interested!

Claire Ridgway1:00

Time flies when you're having fun!

Claire Ridgway1:00

Julian, it was a fascinating topic. Thank you.

Julian Humphrys1:01

Thanks for having me!

Claire Ridgway1:01

Right, off to bed. Take care, everyone! Good night!

Laurie Duerr1:01

Thanks Julian and Claire!

Julian Humphrys1:01

Good night

Lorna Wanstall1:01

Julian battleground history is always interesting... it seems with some battles the same mistakes are made over and over again

Lamorna1:01

Thanks Julian for spending your time with, that was really interesting.