

T. E. Lawrence Society's Sixteenth Symposium St John's College Oxford

Friday 24th to Sunday 26th September 2021

*Please note that this programme may be subject to change,
and could be affected by local or national restrictions or limitations.*

Members and guests are invited to a long weekend of lectures, exhibitions and good company in the beautiful surroundings of this historic Oxford College. Accommodation is in college rooms, or your choice of hotel, with all meals available, including a formal dinner in the Great Hall and a traditional English Sunday lunch. Enjoy three days of presentations, exhibitions, browsing the bookstall, meeting Lawrence authors and more.

Friday 24th September, 2021	
09:00	Registration opens
09:30	A visit and tour of Jesus College, Oxford. We will view their interesting Lawrence archives and also explore parts of the college associated with him.
13:00	Buffet lunch
14:30	<p>James Stejskal: Lawrence of Arabia and Hedgehog: Antecedents of modern special operations</p> <p>T. E. Lawrence was one of the earliest practitioners of modern unconventional warfare. The tactics and strategies he developed during the Arab Revolt were used by men like Mao Zedong and Võ Nguyên Giáp in their wars of liberation. This presentation explores how Lawrence and the British Military Mission supported unconventional tactics in the Hejaz during the Arab Revolt, with the creation of the Hedgehog force and formation of armoured car sections and other units. Hedgehog has continued to influence special operations and unconventional warfare since the revolt, including Field Marshal Wavell, the Long Range Desert Group, David Stirling's SAS, and modern US and UK special forces.</p> <p>James Stejskal is a military historian and conflict archaeologist who specialises in the research and investigation of irregular warfare. An author of numerous articles and four books, his thirty-five years of special forces, special operations and intelligence experience with the US Army and the CIA in hot spots around the world give him unparalleled insight into unconventional warfare. James holds a Master's Degree (Honors) in National Security Studies with an emphasis in Irregular Warfare, and a Bachelor's Degree in History.</p>
15:30	Refreshments
16:00	<p>Dick Benson-Gyles: The SA riddle. A mystery solved?</p> <p>There are many conundrums to be found in the life of T. E. Lawrence and one of the most intriguing is who or what was 'S.A.', the dedication of <i>Seven Pillars of Wisdom</i>. Since 1935 many explanations have been suggested, none of which can claim to have solved the S.A. riddle satisfactorily. Dick Benson-Gyles's 2016 biography of Lawrence, <i>The Boy in the Mask: the hidden world of Lawrence of Arabia</i>, is the latest to pick up the gauntlet and try to crack the S.A. code. Follow Dick's research down many strange, winding roads, ultimately at journey's end to find yourself spirited back to the Middle Ages, troubadour poetry, and perhaps to the true meaning of S.A.</p> <p>Dick Benson-Gyles is a writer, biographer and poet who has been interested in Lawrence since his undergraduate days at Trinity College, Dublin University. His 2016 Lawrence biography is the first to relate the full story of this enigmatic man's lost Anglo-Irish family and to have unravelled the mystery of his mother's true identity. Dick was for many years a feature-writer and news and sports reporter on the <i>Western Morning News</i> and the <i>Evening Herald</i> in Plymouth. He has appeared in TV documentaries and, in his early years, was an archaeologist with the British School of Archaeology in Iraq. He presented a paper on Lawrence's Chapman forebears at the 2016 Symposium.</p>
17:15	Close
19:30	Evening free or a social meal with delegates

Saturday 25th September, 2021	
09:00	Registration opens
09:45	Welcome and Introduction
	<p>Jonathan Tubb: A fine way to dig?: The British Museum at Carchemish</p> <p>In 1920, following the Turkish War of Independence, the great Hittite and Neo-Hittite site of Carchemish on the Euphrates, then the focus of British Museum excavations, was in an area strictly controlled by Turkish military authorities. With the work abruptly terminated and the site totally inaccessible for some ninety years, it is only recently that the military control has been partially lifted and excavations by an Italian mission directed by Nicolo Marchetti have been made possible.</p> <p>With new and spectacular results already appearing from this new campaign, it seems appropriate to re-evaluate the work of the British Museum at Carchemish in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, in particular that of Sir Leonard Woolley and his assistant, T. E. Lawrence, between 1912 and 1914. This lecture critically examines the Carchemish excavations in terms of their quality, interpretation and, perhaps most significantly, their contribution to our understanding of the archaeology of Syria.</p> <p>Jonathan Tubb is Keeper (Head) of the Middle East Department of the British Museum, President of The Palestine Exploration Fund and a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries. A specialist in the archaeology and history of the Levant, he studied at the Institute of Archaeology in London (now a part of University College) and began his field career in Syria and Iraq in the 1970s. In 1984 he excavated the Early Bronze Age site of Tiwal esh-Sharqi in the Jordan Valley (Jordan) on behalf of the British Museum, and between 1985 and 1996 conducted nine seasons of excavations at the nearby major site of Tell es-Sa'idiyeh. An expert on Canaanite civilization, he is the author of many articles and several books on Levantine archaeology, and lectures internationally. Jonathan is Director of the British Museum's Iraq Emergency Heritage Management Training Scheme.</p>
11:15	Refreshments
11:45	<p>Professor Nicholas Saunders: Desert Insurgency: Archaeology, T. E. Lawrence and the Arab Revolt</p> <p>Between 1916 and 1918, the Arab Revolt in southern Jordan created an extraordinary archaeological record of a desert insurgency which changed the Middle East and brought modern guerrilla warfare to the world. Between 2005 and 2014, Bristol University's 'Great Arab Revolt Project' discovered and investigated Turkish Army camps, Rolls-Royce Armoured Car raiding camps, ruined Hejaz Railway stations, hilltop forts and the remains of Lawrence's iconic train ambush, immortalised in David Lean's epic <i>Lawrence of Arabia</i>.</p> <p>Professor Saunders of Bristol University's Department of Anthropology and Archaeology specialises in the archaeology and anthropology of twentieth-century conflict. He is co-director of the 'Great Arab Revolt Project' in southern Jordan (2005-14), and works in France, Belgium and Slovenia. His books include: <i>'Killing Time': Archaeology and the First World War</i> (2010), <i>The Poppy: A History of Conflict, Loss, Remembrance and Redemption</i> (2014), and <i>Desert Insurgency: T. E. Lawrence, Archaeology and the Arab Revolt</i> (Oxford University Press, 2020).</p>
13:00	Lunch
14:15	<p>Dr Barbara Cooke: Jim Ede, T. E. Lawrence and the making of Kettle's Yard</p> <p>This paper explores the seven-year friendship, conducted mostly through letters, that developed between Lawrence and the art curator and theorist H. S. 'Jim' Ede between 1928 and 1935. In later years, Ede claimed that the memory of Lawrence had a profound influence on the way he founded and ran his Cambridge-based 'anti-gallery', Kettle's Yard. This statement will be explored, looking at the shared philosophy of the two men and asking whether, in the culmination of his most famous curating project, Ede can be said to have finally laid to rest Lawrence's ghost.</p> <p>Dr Barbara Cooke is a biographer, editor and lecturer who focuses on twentieth-century creative figures whose lives did not conform to the gender and sexual norms of their times. She is co-executive editor of the OUP's <i>The Complete Works of Evelyn Waugh</i> edition, and teaches English and Creative Writing at Loughborough University. She is currently at work on a biography of Ede.</p>
15:30	Refreshments

16:00	<p>Professor George Thompson: Reliving Arabia: T. E. Lawrence's post-war life</p> <p>This presentation examines how Lawrence's aspirations, formed before and during the war, set the stage for his post-war life from 1918 to 1926. It will explore how they led to his roles as an advocate, diplomat, celebrity, author and patron, all of which required him to relive Arabia, and which would eventually lead him to renounce not only his roles, but also his aspirations and even his name. The examination of the cognitive process he used to write and publish <i>Seven Pillars of Wisdom</i> will include a study of his visual thinking as revealed by his patronage of the arts. This new interpretation explains how this cognitive process not only satisfied his aspiration to be an author and a patron, but also reveals how it sowed seeds of doubt that would haunt him for the rest of his life.</p> <p>George Thompson resides in the United States where he devotes his time to lecturing, writing and developing programs on the First World War. After twenty-five years in higher education as a professor and assistant dean, with graduate degrees in Modern European History and a Master of Fine Arts in Painting, he chose in 2011 to research British wartime photographs, illustrations, their interpretation and dissemination. He presented <i>Seeing Arabia: The personal photographs of T.E. Lawrence taken between 1916 and 1918</i> at the 2016 Symposium. An exhibition and book for the National WWI Museum and Memorial in Kansas City, USA, on Lawrence's wartime photographs, is scheduled for Autumn 2022.</p>
17:15	Close
19:00	Drinks reception
19:30	<p>Symposium Dinner at St John's College, Great Hall</p> <p>After Dinner Speaker (to be confirmed and announced)</p>

Sunday 26th September, 2021	
09:15	Annual General Meeting of the T. E. Lawrence Society
10:00	Welcome and Introduction to Members' Presentations Day
10:15	<p>Alison Jolley: 'One brother in India very remarkable': T. E.'s favourite brother, Will</p> <p>Ned and Will Lawrence were said to be almost like twins and devoted to one another. Yet while today it is the elder brother's extraordinary life that we remember, it is intriguing that many of those who knew them considered Will to show comparable potential to Ned. This presentation will aim to highlight some of the parallels between their lives, perhaps most remarkably how both brothers would become involved in separate national movements in Arabia and India.</p> <p>Alison Jolley was a speaker at the 2014 Symposium on the friendship between T. E. Lawrence and Lady Kathleen Scott, from whose diary the quotation in the title is taken. Alison's research took her to St. Stephen's College in Delhi, where Will was a lay teacher, to investigate some of the significant social reformers who would be his colleagues. Using material she has discovered during her research, she aims to show how things might have turned out very differently for Will had the Viceroy of India heeded the advice in a letter sent to him shortly before Will's return to England to serve in the war.</p>
11:15	Refreshments
11:45	<p>Colin Palma: The Thousand and Second Knight</p> <p>Lawrence rose to fame in 1919 and has remained in the public imagination ever since. This presentation considers the changing representations of T. E. Lawrence, from Lowell Thomas's hagiographic creation of 'Lawrence of Arabia' in 1919, to David Lean's eponymous 1962 film. Lawrence was framed within war and the social attitudes towards empire, colonialism, orientalism and masculinity.</p> <p>Colin attended King Alfred's College, Winchester, to train as a teacher. He spent thirty years teaching history and working in the Senior Management Team in a large comprehensive school in Hampshire. He gained a BA from the Open University and was awarded an Honorary BA from the University of Winchester in 2013. In retirement he returned as a 'very mature' student to Winchester to take an MA in history. Having maintained an interest in Lawrence from the late 1960s, he determined Lawrence to be the subject for his Masters Dissertation.</p>

13:00	Lunch
14:30	<p>Dr Peter Clark: From Damascus to Damascus: Subhi al-Umari, a Syrian volunteer in Faisal's Army</p> <p>Subhi al-Umari, born in Ottoman Damascus, served in the Ottoman army and defected to join Faisal's Arab Army in Aqaba. His three-volume memoirs describe the background of Arab volunteers, and the campaigns between Aqaba and Damascus. They present an authentic but unfamiliar perspective on Lawrence and much valuable social and military data on the Arab Revolt.</p> <p>Dr Peter Clark OBE, writer and translator, has lived (among other places) in Turkey, Jordan and Syria. He has translated nine books from Arabic, mostly fiction but also a Sudanese account of the Battle of Omdurman. His latest books have been <i>Churchill's Britain, from the Antrim Coast to the Isle of Wight</i>, which was nominated by the <i>New Statesman</i> as one of the Books of the Year 2020, and in 2021 a translation from Arabic of <i>Rida Said, A Man for All Seasons</i> by Sabah Kabbani.</p>
15:45	Refreshments
16:15	<p>John Johnson-Allen: 'Rosy' Wemyss, Admiral of the Fleet: the man who created Armistice Day</p> <p>Rosslyn Wemyss was a most distinguished admiral who was in command at Gallipoli and created Armistice Day. The main thrust of his command was supporting the Arab Revolt and helping T. E. Lawrence and the Arabs oust the Turks from all the ports of the Red Sea. Without his support, the Arab Revolt would have collapsed and the legend of 'Lawrence of Arabia' would not have been created. As First Sea Lord, he represented British naval interests at the Versailles Peace Conference.</p> <p>John Johnson-Allen holds an MA in Maritime History. He is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society and of the Royal Institute of Navigation, Chairman of the Institute of Seamanship and a member of the Society for Nautical Research. His book, <i>T. E. Lawrence and the Red Sea Patrol: The Royal Navy's Role in Creating the Legend</i>, was short-listed for the Mountbatten Maritime Literary Award. His new book, <i>'Rosy' Wemyss, Admiral of the Fleet: the Man who created Armistice Day</i>, is published in 2021.</p>
17:30	Symposium Close

Book your place now by contacting hon.secretary@telsociety.org or by post at The T. E. Lawrence Society, P.O. Box 728, Oxford OX2 9ZJ, England.