



The author of this article retains the copyright of the material. No part of this article may be reproduced or distributed in any form other than for private use without the express permission of the author. Permission may be sought via the [BCMh Newsletter Editor](#)

**Patrick Hennessey *The Junior Officers' Reading Club* Allen Lane £16.99
ISBN: 978-1- 846-14186-7, 330 pages**

It is very poignant that on the day I am writing this review (14th July), the bodies of eight soldiers killed fighting the insurgents in Afghanistan are being repatriated. This book is required reading to help understand the modern activities of the British army on war fighting operations in Afghanistan.

It is written by Patrick Hennessey who joined the Army in 2004 after reading English at Balliol and who was commissioned into the Grenadier Guards.

He writes about his commissioning course at Sandhurst, public duties in London, service in Bosnia, Iraq, Afghanistan and finally the Falklands. The title of the book comes from the time his battalion was serving in Iraq. A small group of young officers established a club in a concealed area of the camp behind their accommodation where they could sunbathe, relax in unauthorised clothing, read novels and have discussions to put the world to rights.

Patrick Hennessey describes himself as a member of the I-pod and video generation and he is also of the generation of graduate army officers. He also makes the point that in 2004 the number of graduates attending the Sandhurst commissioning course had increased to 85 per cent from 15 per cent in 1984.

The book is written in colourful youthful language and is very readable. It is also peppered with very amusing examples of military humour.

His description of his time at Sandhurst recognises how through tried and tested methods, it produces officers but at the time he did not see the full benefit. He then describes his time on public duties in London followed by a tour in Bosnia. The Battalion was then deployed to Iraq but the real meat of the book is about his time in Afghanistan.

The intensity of the fighting and of defending Patrol Base Inkerman is described in gritty language which enables the reader to begin to appreciate the difficulties and dangers. He highlights the very different experience and dangers in Afghanistan between the soldiers fighting in the battle groups in places such as Patrol Base Inkerman and individuals based in Camp Bastion.

After his period in the army and after the incredible and raw experience of Afghanistan the author decided to leave the army and is now training to become a barrister. He hopes to specialise in Conflict Law and International Humanitarian law.

This is an excellent book describing life as an infantry officer at the very sharpest end of the army on operations and at the same time covering officer training, and other tours of duty.

Stephen Foakes