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In memory of Professor Sir Michael Howard

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SIR MICHAEL HOWARD

PROFESSOR SIR MICHAEL HOWARD, 1922-2019*

Professor Sir Michael Howard, a long-standing and in later years honorary member of the British Commission for Military History died on 30 November 2019, aged 97. Sir Michael was the foremost military historian of the second half of the twentieth century. After wartime military service in the Coldstream Guards in Italy and studies at Oxford University, he embarked on an academic career at King's College London. Here he founded the War Studies Department in the early 1960s, from which root grew the expansion and diversification of military history in British universities over the last sixty years. An advocate of what he called 'total history', he believed that the history of strategy and military operations could not be properly understood separately from the history of the societies that went to war. This philosophy was reflected in his scholarly output, such as his masterful history of the Franco-Prussian war published in 1961. An official historian and translator of Clausewitz, generations of students will best know his work from his short but seminal textbook, *War in European History*, first published in the 1970s and which is still recommended today. He had the gift of summarising the complexities of history in short, erudite and readable texts: two published collections of lectures, *War and the Liberal Conscience* (1977) and *The Continental Commitment: The Dilemma of British Defence Policy in the Era of the Two World Wars* (1971), remain widely read and cited. After leaving King's Sir Michael was Chichele Professor of the History of War and Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford University. His final academic post was Robert A. Lovett Professor of Military and Naval History at Yale University.

Sir Michael educated several generations of military history scholars at King's and Oxford. I myself had the good fortune to be taught by him as a final-year undergraduate shortly before his retirement from Oxford – his special subject on British strategy in the First World War era directed me onto the path which I have followed as a scholar. Many BCMH members and military historians will have experienced his warmth and encouragement to students and scholars. Those who had the chance to hear him speak, which he did with verve well into his 90s, will remember his engaging, witty and thought-provoking lecturing style. To an older generation he was a colleague and mentor, to the younger generation an inspiration or legend. I commend to you his autobiography, *Captain Professor* (Continuum, 2006). The modern military history profession has lost its creator and colossus.

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