

The Good Soldiers by David Finkel.

Atlantic Books 2010.

Over the years since Dubya's war with Saddam began, several books have been written by journalists embedded with both American and British troops; the stories of heroism that they tell, of dogged determination, of acts of brutality on both sides, of errors and successes, and above all of camaraderie and esprit de corps are powerful, painful and frequently haunting, especially when they deal with the serious injury or death of individuals whom the reader, like the author, has come to know.

The Good Soldiers is the story of David Finkel, a Pulitzer prize winner, and his fifteen month tour of duty in one of the worst parts of Baghdad with the young men of an infantry battalion known as 2-16. It brings to life the officers and NCOs, and the grunts, faced with an enemy whose savagery towards them, and to their fellow citizens, challenged them almost every day of their tour, of the ways they coped and the losses they endured. Just as valuably, Finkel brings to life the fate of those invalided home, the suffering of their families, and the inadequacies from the US authorities with which they sometimes had to cope.

The Good Soldiers is another important contribution to the Iraq bibliography, as well as a potent reminder of the high price paid by brave young men for the stupidity of their unlamented ex-President.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh