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# HISTORY

MAGAZINE

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November 2015

## VIKINGS vs ANGLO-SAXONS

How England survived the invasions of the Norsemen



**PLUS**

**Who were the Celts?**

The lost Tudor princess



Alison Weir on the tragic story of Margaret Douglas

**The Royal Navy's American disaster**

**World War Two spies**  
Max Hastings' espionage heroes

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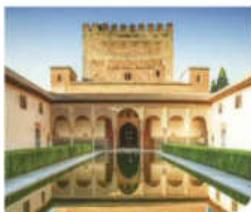
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NOVEMBER 2015

# WELCOME

“ A major new BBC historical drama, *The Last Kingdom*, is due to hit our screens in the next few weeks. The eight-part series is based on novels by **Bernard Cornwell** and will take viewers into the world of late ninth-century England when the country was divided between the **Vikings and the Anglo-Saxons**. Historian Ryan Lavelle has acted as a consultant for the series and for this month's cover feature (page 22) he explores the complex relationship between the Norse invaders and those who sought to repel them, most notably **Alfred the Great**. As Ryan explains, diplomacy was just as important as warfare when it came to Anglo-Saxon survival.

Britain's most recent battle for survival occurred in the **Second World War**, when facing the march of Nazi Germany. This conflict was fought on land, sea and air but also in the shadows, as Max Hastings reveals in his survey of the 'secret war' of **spies, code-breakers and deceptions**. Turn to page 50 to find out more about some of the war's most extraordinary individuals.

Max is one of almost 40 historians to be speaking at our upcoming **Malmesbury History Weekend**, alongside the likes of Joann Fletcher, Sam Willis, Loyd Grossman, Alison Weir, Dominic Sandbrook and Michael Wood – all of whom have also written for this edition of the magazine. I look forward to meeting many of you at the event and, even if you're not able to attend, I hope you will enjoy these authors' contributions in the pages that follow.

**Rob Attar**  
Editor



## THIS ISSUE'S CONTRIBUTORS



**Ryan Lavelle**  
I've been fascinated by the Anglo Saxons' defence against and accommodation with Viking invaders. This was a time when people's identities could be shaped according to circumstances, and the Anglo Saxons saw and dealt with Vikings as more than just pagan foes.

● *Ryan explores Anglo-Saxon England on page 22*



**Alison Weir**  
Recently I have been exploring the story of a royal intriguer who dabbled perilously in Tudor politics at the courts of Henry VIII and Elizabeth I. She's largely forgotten now, however, so I've been working to retrieve a feisty lady from obscurity.

● *Alison traces Margaret Douglas's life on page 60*



**Loyd Grossman**  
Benjamin West's life is a rags to riches story worthy of a novel, which also illuminates some of the key artistic and intellectual trends of the 18th century.

● *Loyd discusses the great Georgian artist Benjamin West on page 44*

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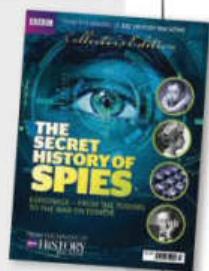


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# CONTENTS

## Features



**Read about the princess who got on the wrong side of Henry VIII, on page 60**

### 22 Anglo-Saxons vs Vikings

Ryan Lavelle reveals how Alfred the Great confronted the marauding Danes

### 29 The Royal Navy's American disaster

Sam Willis explains why Britain lost the naval war against the American colonies

### 38 Who were the Celts?

Barry Cunliffe traces the origins of this most enigmatic of ancient peoples

### 44 The Georgian craze for popular history

Loyd Grossman investigates an 18th-century obsession with the past

### 50 Spies who surprised me

Max Hastings profiles some of the most remarkable agents of the 20th century

### 56 Ancient Egypt uncovered

Joann Fletcher answers the big questions of this amazing civilisation

### 60 The lost Tudor princess

Alison Weir explores the colourful life of Margaret Douglas, Henry VIII's niece

## Every month

### 6 ANNIVERSARIES

### 11 HISTORY NOW

- 11 The latest history news
- 14 Backgrounder: the migrant crisis
- 16 Past notes: weather forecasts

### 18 LETTERS

### 21 MICHAEL WOOD'S VIEW

### 36 OUR FIRST WORLD WAR

### 63 EVENTS

### 65 BOOKS

The latest releases, plus Andrea Wulf talks Alexander von Humboldt

### 77 TV & RADIO

The pick of this month's new history programmes

### 80 OUT & ABOUT

- 80 History Explorer: the Brontës
- 85 Five things to do in November
- 86 My favourite place: Bali

### 93 MISCELLANY

- 93 Q&A and quiz
- 94 Samantha's recipe corner
- 95 Prize crossword

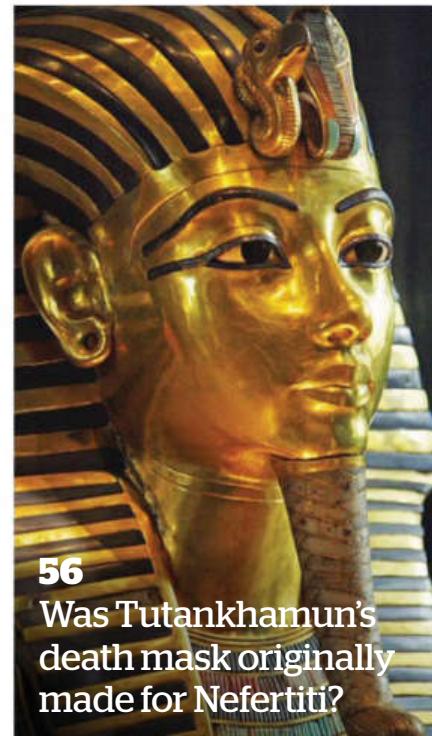
### 98 MY HISTORY HERO

Brian Blessed chooses Hypatia

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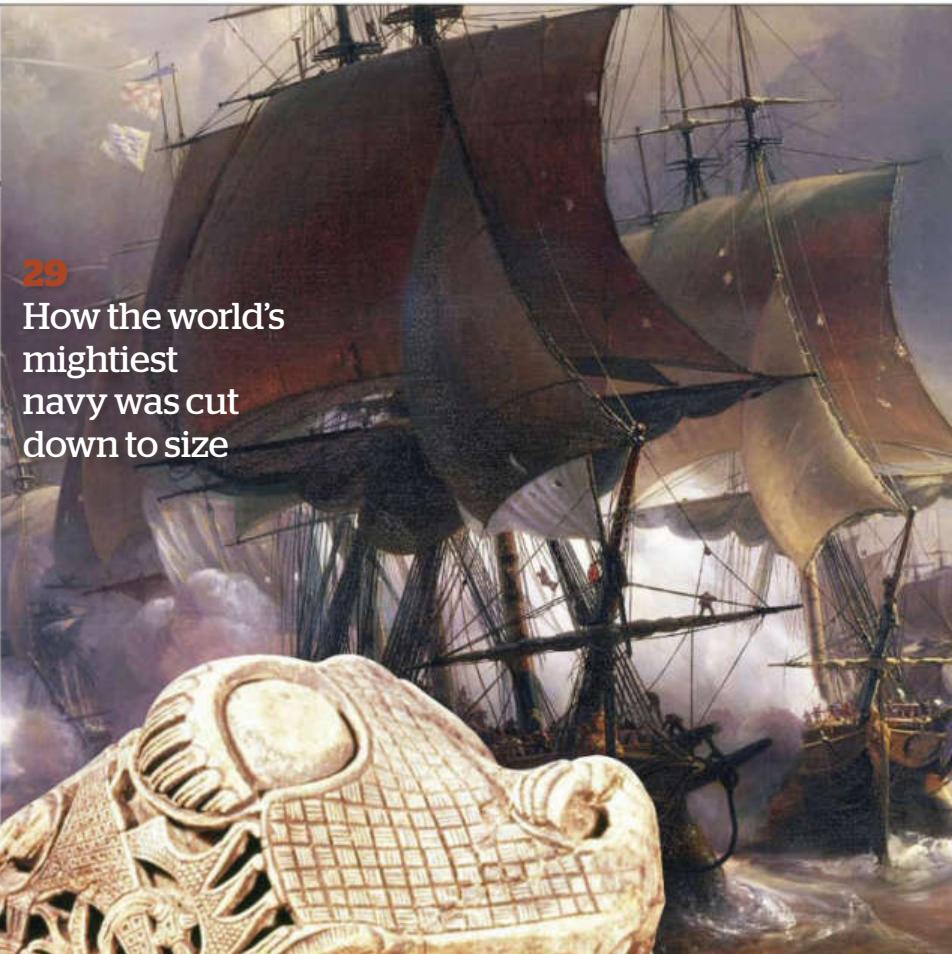


**56**  
**Was Tutankhamun's death mask originally made for Nefertiti?**



ALAMY/GETTY/BRIDGEMAN/RUIKSMEIJER

**50**  
**The British spies who outwitted the Nazis**



29

How the world's mightiest navy was cut down to size



44

The Georgian intellectuals who put history on the map



22

**"IT MUST HAVE SEEMED THAT THE VIKINGS HERALDED THE APOCALYPSE"**

38

How Celtic were the ancient Britons?

**Dominic Sandbrook** highlights events that took place in **November** in history

# ANNIVERSARIES

**23 November 1963**

## The Doctor steps inside the Tardis for the very first time

*An unpromising BBC schedule-filler takes its first strides towards becoming a British cultural institution*

**S**itting down before the television in the early evening of 23 November 1963, few people could have imagined they were about to witness the start of a British cultural institution. Indeed, many were still in shock at the news from across the Atlantic, where, a day earlier, John F Kennedy had been shot dead in Dallas, Texas.

Even as its unearthly title music filled the air, few knew what to expect from *Doctor Who*. The *Radio Times* had billed the programme as “an adventure in space and time”, explaining that its heroes might find themselves in “a distant galaxy where civilisation has been devastated by the blast of a neutron bomb or they may find themselves journeying to far Cathay in the caravan

of Marco Polo”. Yet most of the first episode was set in a contemporary London secondary school. Indeed, the programme itself had unpromising origins, having been designed as a schedule-filler to follow *Grandstand*.

Later, the BBC’s audience research report began with the verdict of a “retired naval officer” who described the show as a “cross between Wells’ *Time Machine* and a space-age *Old Curiosity Shop*, with a touch of Mack Sennett comedy”. It was, he told the BBC, “in the grand style of the old pre-talkie films to see a dear old police box being hurtled through space and landing on Mars or somewhere. I almost expected to see a batch of Keystone Cops emerge on to the Martian landscape.”



William Hartnell (right) plays Doctor Who in the first episode, which was described as “a cross between Wells’ *Time Machine* and a space-age *Old Curiosity Shop*”

**25 November 1120**

## Henry I's heir drowns at sea

*William Ætheling finds “his grave in the bellies of fishes” off the coast of Normandy*

**O**n the morning of 25 November 1120, William Ætheling, son and heir of England’s king Henry I, was in the prime of life. He and his father were in Barfleur, Normandy, preparing to return to England, when they were approached by sea captain Thomas FitzStephen. “Stephen, my father, served yours all his life by sea, and he it was who steered the ship in which your father sailed for the conquest of England,” said Thomas. “Sire king, I beg you to grant me the same office... I have a vessel called the *White Ship*, well equipped and manned with 50 skilful mariners.”

Henry had made other arrangements. But William fancied a trip home on a fast new ship. Alas, he also liked a drink. By the time the clerics arrived to bless the ship, William and his friends were already the worse for wear. So were many of the crew, whom the prince had encouraged to join them. By the time the ship left, it was packed with some 300 people – many of them roaring drunk.

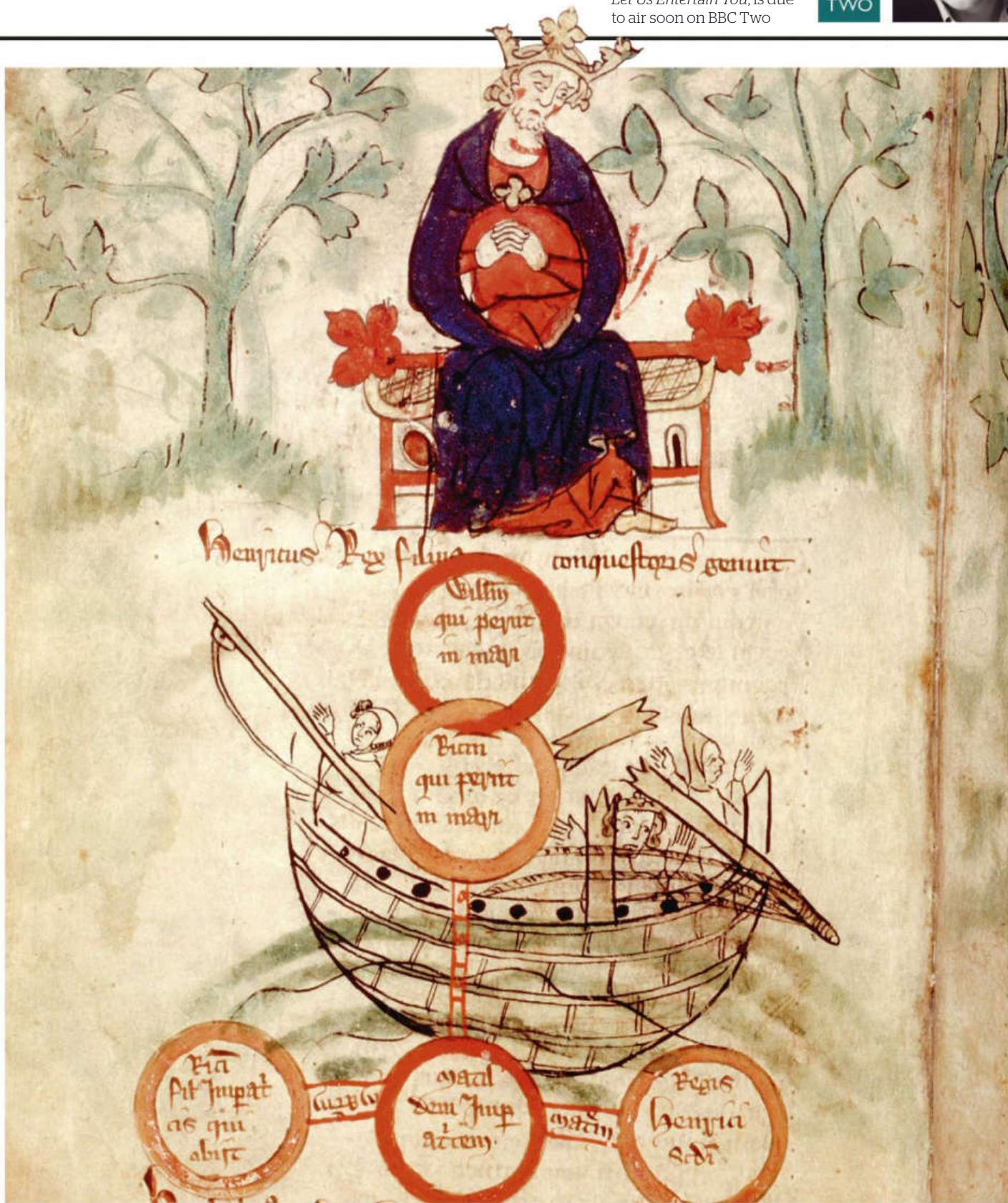
What followed was one of the worst disasters in the history of the English monarchy. The *White Ship* had barely left port when it hit a rock and began to sink. William managed to escape in a small boat, but when he turned back to rescue his half-sister Matilda, other survivors crowded aboard and the boat promptly capsized. “The head which should have worn a crown of gold,” wrote the chronicler Henry of Huntingdon, “was rudely dashed against the rocks; instead of wearing embroidered robes, he floated naked in the waves; and instead of ascending a lofty throne, he found his grave in the bellies of fishes at the bottom of the sea.”

BBC

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TWO



**Dominic Sandbrook** is a historian and presenter. His next series, *Let Us Entertain You*, is due to air soon on BBC Two



Henry I looks on in dismay in a 14th-century illustration as the *White Ship*, carrying his son and heir William Ætheling, is dashed to pieces. William's death shattered prospects of a smooth succession to the English crown

## Anniversaries

### 8 November 1520

In Sweden, invading Danish forces under the command of King Christian II murder dozens of noblemen in a massacre known as the Stockholm Bloodbath.

### 30 November 1939

After weeks of tension, Soviet troops storm across the Finnish border, bombing Helsinki and launching the Winter War.

### 17 November 1839

At Milan's famous La Scala opera house, a young composer called Giuseppe Verdi (left) premieres his first opera, *Oberto*.



Spectators gape at the mock hill and Greek temple in the cathedral of Notre Dame during the Festival of Reason, in an image from 1793. In the foreground, the 'flame of truth' burns brightly

### 10 November 1793

## Paris echoes to the Festival of Reason

*The altar-smashing and looting of the French Revolution gives way to a celebration of the human spirit*

Paris, 10 November 1793. Inside the cathedral of Notre Dame, an astonishing spectacle is about to unfold.

For months, reports from across France had spoken of gangs breaking into churches, demolishing altars and looting the treasuries. Revolution against the monarchy had escalated into revolution against authority itself; to many of the political radicals who had seized power in Paris, Christianity represented the supreme enemy. By

mid-1793, many had pledged allegiance to the new Cult of Reason, born of the Enlightenment and devoted to the human spirit. As one radical agitator put it, there was now "one God only – the people".

On 10 November, the anti-religious movement reached its climax. Under the direction of radical writers Jacques René Hébert and Antoine-François Momoro, churches across France were stripped of their remaining Christian

trappings and rededicated as Temples of Reason. At Notre Dame, the most famous church in the land, activists tore down the altar and replaced it with a mock hill, topped with a round Greek temple. On the top were carved the words 'To Philosophy', while inside the temple burned a torch of truth.

Spectators watched in astonishment as two lines of torch-bearing girls proceeded down the nave, past hastily erected busts of Voltaire, Rousseau and other Enlightenment thinkers, bowing solemnly before the so-called altar of Liberty. As in cities across France, a scantly clad woman in Roman dress played the part of the Goddess of Reason. The Parisian version, played by Momoro's wife, was generally thought the best – although, as Thomas Carlyle rather ungallantly remarked, "her teeth were a little defective".

28 November 1660

## The Royal Society is born

*A group of 'natural philosophers' formalise their commitment to science*

The oldest scientific academy in continuous existence was born in an age of extraordinary turbulence. It was during the mid-1640s, with England convulsed by war and revolution, that a group of 'natural philosophers' began meeting informally to discuss their ideas. Within a few years, two groups had formed, one in Oxford, the other in London. For the best part of a decade, the London group met at Gresham College in Holborn. But when the army occupied their rooms during the anarchy that followed Oliver Cromwell's death in 1658, meetings were suspended.

It was only after the restoration of Charles II two years later, which brought order to the capital, that the natural philosophers felt safe to resume their deliberations. On 28 November 1660, Christopher Wren was due to give an



King Charles II – depicted here in his role as patron of the Royal Society – took a lively interest in science

astronomy lecture at Gresham College. Afterwards, a group of 12 men, including Wren, piled into the rooms of Gresham professor Lawrence Rooke. They were a mixed bunch: astronomers, mathematicians, physicians and inventors. Some were parliamentarians; others had links with the royal court. What united them, though, was a commitment to science.

That evening, as the 12 men discussed Wren's lecture, they also debated their journal – later named 'A Designe of Founding a Colledge for the Promoting

of Physicall-Mathematicall Experimental Learning'. According to the journal, they agreed to meet every Wednesday at 3pm, with an initial membership fee of 10 shillings and a regular fee of a shilling a week. Seven days later, at the next meeting, royalist intellectual Sir Robert Moray reported that no less a person than "the king had been acquainted with the design of this meeting. And he did well approve of it, and would be ready to give encouragement to it." The Royal Society was up and running. ■

### COMMENT / Dr Patricia Fara

#### "By the 19th century, scientific societies had put science into society"

London's Royal Society was the most important scientific invention of the 17th century. The first of its kind, it was soon imitated in cities all over Europe.

Previously, natural philosophers had met privately to discuss why things happen. In contrast, the new experimental investigators banded together to *make* things happen. By creating scientific societies, they made knowledge public and acquired the collective influence they lacked as individuals. By promoting the advantages of scientific research, these societies attracted government investment and were celebrated as major contributors to the booming industrial economy. By the 19th

century, scientific societies had put science into society.

The greatest hero of the early Royal Society was Francis Bacon, the former lord chancellor who had laid down guiding principles for scientific enquiry in the early 17th century. Inspired by him, the Fellows aimed to collect observations, establish scientific laws, and use their new-found knowledge for technological inventions that would benefit the nation.

Membership was restricted to those men (not women!) who could afford the fees, and the society reached a large effective membership through its journals, which provided detailed reports of the latest

experiments and observations. Spreading knowledge through print became a fundamental component of scientific activity.



**Patricia Fara** is the author of *Science: A Four Thousand Year History* (OUP, 2009) and a senior tutor at Clare College, Cambridge. She is currently writing a book on science and suffrage during the First World War



# The British Museum

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## A Rothschild Renaissance Treasures from the Waddesdon Bequest

The Waddesdon Bequest is a superb collection of nearly 300 important and beautiful medieval and Renaissance pieces, left to the Museum by Baron Ferdinand Rothschild. It was originally displayed at Waddesdon Manor, the Baron's home in Buckinghamshire, after which the Bequest is named. Visit the stunning new gallery now and discover more about the Bequest's amazing story through a series of events.

### The Waddesdon Bequest: a new look

Wed 21 Oct, 13.15  
A gallery talk by Gina Murphy, British Museum.  
Free, just drop in

### Waddesdon Manor: a Rothschild creation

Fri 23 Oct, 13.30  
Pippa Shirley, Head of Collections and Gardens at Waddesdon Manor, offers a fascinating account of the Manor with a focus upon its founders the Rothschild family, the formation of their magnificent collections and legacy.  
Free, booking essential

### Cabinets of curiosity in English and Irish country houses

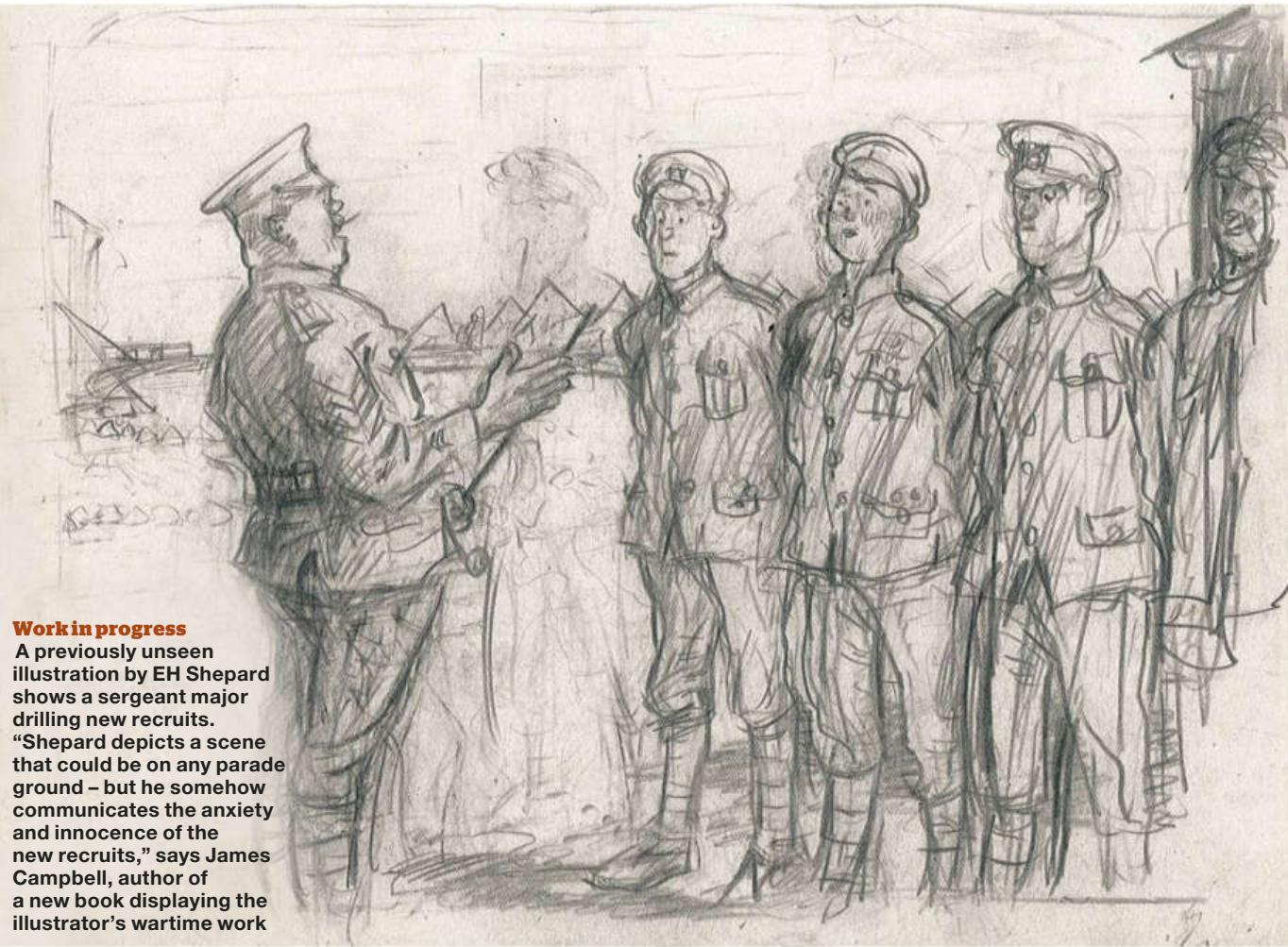
Fri 23 Oct, 18.30  
Tim Knox, Director of the Fitzwilliam Museum, introduces the extraordinary world of collectors of curious objects and how this fashion developed throughout the 17th to 20th centuries in England and Ireland.  
£5, Members/concessions £3

Information and booking:  
[britishmuseum.org](http://britishmuseum.org)

The latest news, plus **Backgrounder 14** **Past notes 16**

# HISTORY NOW

Have a story? Please email Matt Elton at matt.elton@immediate.co.uk



#### Work in progress

A previously unseen illustration by EH Shepard shows a sergeant major drilling new recruits.

"Shepard depicts a scene that could be on any parade ground – but he somehow communicates the anxiety and innocence of the new recruits," says James Campbell, author of a new book displaying the illustrator's wartime work

EXCLUSIVE

## From Tigger to the trenches: EH Shepard's war drawings revealed

Newly rediscovered work by the *Winnie-the-Pooh* illustrator offers fresh insights into the hardships and humour of the First World War. By **Matt Elton**

**H**e is most famous for his illustrations for *Winnie-the-Pooh*, AA Milne's popular series of children's books. Yet EH Shepard did far more than draw what he came to regard as "that silly old bear": he also created an array of work from the First World War, an archive of which has just been compiled.

The images, one of which is exclusively reproduced above, have never been publicly

available before. They were created while Shepard was serving at the Somme, Arras and Passchendaele, and depict daily life for British soldiers in the Great War. While they show the style familiar from Shepard's children's books, they more closely reflect the political and social sketches he regarded as his main strength.

"Much coverage of the war has inevitably been about the enormous casualties, but



**Battle lines** One of Shepard's war illustrations, dating from 1916. In the caption, the officer enquires: "So you want me to read your girl's letter to you?" The soldier replies: "Sure, sir, and as it's rather private, will you please stuff some cotton wool in yer ears while ye read it?"



A photograph of EH Shepard taken before he left for war in 1915. The illustrator sent drawings home from the front throughout the conflict

"Shepard shows us behind the scenes of the war, into both the domestic and the personal"

Shepard shows us behind the scenes, into both the domestic and personal, and also the aftermath – sometimes poignant and sometimes humorous,” says James Campbell, the curator of a new book featuring the illustrator’s drawings and letters. “He often looks at the lighter side of the war, gently mocking well-known national stereotypes.”

The fact that the illustrations were split between a number of institutions, including the University of Surrey, meant that the full extent of the collection had not previously been known. They often take the form of unfinished sketches, and together reveal more about Shepard’s life and career. Having already worked on illustrated editions of books including *Aesop’s Fables*, he served as an army officer from 1915 until the end of the war – continuing to send back work for the satirical magazine *Punch* while he did so.

“These war illustrations act as a bridge between Shepard’s early work and the later maturity of his images for *Winnie-the-Pooh*,” says Campbell. “They

demonstrate an increasing confidence and economy of line that nonetheless conjures up life and movement – something that he was to exploit so successfully in his later animal drawings.”

As with many men of his generation, however, Shepard also had a tragic personal connection to the war. Letters included in the new collection relate the death of his brother, Cyril, who was killed on the first day of the battle of the Somme on 1 July 1916. “This material offers a very personal view of the war, from the tragedy of Shepard’s brother’s death to the humour of cartoons teasing the Germans and the British ‘Tommy’ alike,” says Campbell. “The incredible range of his talent, from technical drawings to cartoons and sketches, shows the highs and lows of this conflict.”

**Shepard’s War has just been published by LOM Art. An accompanying exhibition runs at House of Illustration in London until 10 January 2016: [houseofillustration.org.uk](http://houseofillustration.org.uk)**

## WHAT WE'VE LEARNED THIS MONTH

### Debate rages over 'Nazi gold train' discovery

Two men who claim they have found a Nazi train laden with gold in Poland say they have "irrefutable evidence" of its existence, despite so far failing to publicly substantiate the claim. Local legend says that a train filled with gold, guns and gems went missing near the city of Walbrzych in late 1944 or 1945, but officials have cast doubt on stories of its discovery. The Polish military is now thought to be investigating the potential site.

### A 'ritual arena' has been found near Stonehenge

The remains of a huge stone monument have been discovered by archaeologists working two miles from the site of Stonehenge in Wiltshire. The series of between 90 and 100 standing stones are thought to be 4,500 years old and formed a C-shaped 'arena' directly facing the river Avon. Researchers used ground-penetrating radar to reveal evidence of the stones, some of which would have measured up to 4.5 metres tall.

### A major temple in Syria has been destroyed

Islamic State militants have destroyed the main temple in the Syrian city of Palmyra, satellite images confirm. The militants captured the Temple of Bel, a Unesco World Heritage site, in May, and a huge explosion was reported in the area late in August. As well as the temple – seen as one of the most important religious buildings of the period – a line of nearby columns is also now known to have been destroyed.



The Temple of Bel in Syria, which has now been reduced to rubble



**Emotional scars** Experts in a Dublin drawing room work to remove a patient's malignant tumour in this 1817 illustration. How surgeons regarded their work, and their relationship with their patients, is the subject of new research

#### MEDICINE

## Surgery without anaesthetic: painful for patient *and* doctor

What did surgeons feel about their operations in the days before pain relief? A new study aims to find out

**G**ory stories of people who underwent operations in the days before anaesthetic understandably feature heavily in our impression of historical medicine. Yet new research is exploring the other side of the story – how surgeons dealt with the prospect of causing pain.

The study, being led by Michael Brown from the University of Roehampton and funded by the Wellcome Trust, will draw on official documents and personal records to discover surgeons' thoughts and emotions, as well as the relationships that they established with their patients. It also aims to challenge the emphasis on 'clinical detachment' that previous studies have ascribed to medical experts.

"Surgeons' overarching emotions, it seems to me, were fear and sympathy," says Brown. "Very few got to perform a major operation before they qualified, and naturally most were anxious at the prospect. Despite the common percep-

tion of surgeons as emotionally detached, many also felt – or at least claimed to feel – deeply sympathetic towards their patients in most instances. They often spoke about managing their patients' emotional states, determining if they were capable of withstanding the rigours of the procedure and the pain and suffering that they would experience."

Brown will also explore what the experiences of these surgeons may be able to tell us about 21st-century medicine. "The transition offered by anaesthetic, from operating on conscious patients who could feel every movement of the knife to operating on those who were more or less unconscious, was utterly transformative," he says. "I don't intend to lecture surgeons about being more compassionate. But I do think that this research will enable them to think in different ways about their own emotional relationships with patients." *ME*

The historians' view...

# How noble is Europe's tradition of welcoming refugees?

To what extent can Britain and Germany's responses to the current migrant crisis be explained by similar episodes in the past? Two historians offer their perspectives

Interviews by **Chris Bowlby**, a BBC journalist specialising in history

**“Alongside the history of British hospitality, there is also the long-established practice of governments closing the door”**

**DAVID FELDMAN**

As they confront the desperate attempts of undocumented migrants to enter Europe, both the Conservative government and its critics agree on one thing: namely, that Britain has a noble tradition of welcoming refugees. The prime minister says the government is living up to this tradition; critics say it is being betrayed.

As they justify their positions, both sides invoke a pageant of victimised peoples who have made their home here: from Huguenots in the 16th and 17th centuries to political exiles, royalists and revolutionaries alike, in the 18th and 19th centuries; Jews fleeing tsarism before the First World War and Jews escaping the Nazi regime in the 1930s; followed by Hungarians, Ugandan Asians, Vietnamese, Kosovans and others in the decades after the Second World War.

Yet there is another, different, story we

could narrate. For alongside the history of hospitality and asylum there is also the long established practice of governments closing the door and failing to support those refugees who do make it into the country.

One of these two stories – the one that presents Britain as a beacon of decency – has a secure place in public memory. The other is buried and forgotten. Yet a Janus-faced response to refugees is an abiding feature of British history over the last century.

While more than half a million Jews sought refuge from Nazi persecution in Britain, just 80,000 were allowed into the country, with the intention that most would re-emigrate. The celebrated Kindertransport brought 7,482 children to this country but, unable to obtain visas, their parents perished. Ministers and officials feared that the Jewish refugees would never leave, would take British jobs, arouse anti-Semitism in Britain and become a charge on the public purse. This view of how a refugee crisis impinged on the national interest squeezed the space in which humanitarians could work.

A similar tension arose three decades later when, on 4 August 1972, President Idi Amin announced the expulsion of 50,000 Ugandans of Asian descent, the great majority of whom held British passports. Just one year earlier the Conservative government had passed the 1971 Immigration Act. This was the culmination of a decade of legislation enacted by Conservative and Labour



Migrants in Macedonia on a train bound for Serbia, 15 September 2015. More than 350,000 were detected at the EU's borders between January and August this year

governments designed to drastically reduce the entry to Britain of people of colour, even if they carried a British passport. Responding to Amin's announcement, many in the Conservative party and some local authorities protested that the country was full. Faced with a Powellite challenge, Edward Heath's government agreed to accept a little more than half – just 27,000 – of the Ugandan Asians.

Our selective recall plays a role as we confront the refugee crisis today. Refugee campaigners draw on the partial history of British humanitarianism as they try – with little success – to get the government to adopt a more benevolent policy. But the government itself insists its actions are in line with the nation's best traditions. It has always been thus. Anthony Eden's words, written in 1943, could equally provide the watchwords for ministers now: “We should avoid any reproach that we are not doing all

we can to rescue these unfortunate people.”



**Professor David Feldman**  
is director of the Pears Institute for the Study of Antisemitism at Birkbeck, University of London



“I have a grudging respect for the way in which West Germany faced up to the challenge of mass immigration following the Second World War

**EVE ROSENHAFT**

The spectacular opening and panicked closure of Germany's borders in recent weeks could be a metaphor for a migration history that is more complex and ambivalent than many imagine.

Germany under Kaiser Wilhelm II had large Polish-speaking populations who were regarded as Germans and Prussians – integration was organic. But when they moved west to industrialising areas of the Ruhr, they became a ‘problem’. They spoke a different language, they were Catholics in largely Protestant areas, they had too many children. Yet over the long haul they developed their own political organisations, and integrated themselves.

During the 1930s and 40s the Nazis promoted the idea of the *Auslandsdeutsche* – ethnic Germans all over the globe who were seen as part of the greater Reich, to be ‘brought home’ and reintegrated.

Ironically such a homecoming occurred after the war when 12 million refugees – mainly ethnic Germans – were expelled from eastern territories as punishment for Nazi aggression. Most settled in the new West Germany, where they were integrated.

Having studied the worst of German history, I retain a grudging respect for the way in which West Germany (at least at the official level) faced up to these challenges.

With later arrivals, the picture changes. As the economy boomed, so-called *Gastarbeiter* (‘guest-workers’) arrived from places like Turkey and southern Europe. Their reception confirmed that, in terms of long-term German national identity, the country still saw itself as *kein Einwanderungsland* (not a country of immigration).

My own research into ‘black Germans’ reinforces this point. In the 1920s there was a terrible backlash when France used African troops to occupy the Rhineland. That licensed a kind of colour-based racism on a large scale. The ‘Rhineland children’ (born from relationships between German women



A Kindertransport document from c1939. This rescue operation saw 7,482 children given sanctuary in the United Kingdom, yet many of their parents would perish

and French African troops) became an icon of German racism. And the vision of Germany as a society of white people is still deeply embedded today.

In the German response to the current crisis we've again seen both sides of the story. Before the emergence of more public sympathy in August, what dominated the news was evidence of popular opposition. There was violence against refugees and hostile demonstrations. More recently we've seen the re-emergence of a tradition of humanitarian engagement in Germany, strong in the churches since 1945.

Demography also seems to be playing a new role in German thinking. Germans are increasingly aware that the country's population is shrinking and it will need more young people. For decades policy-makers were too anxious about anti-immigrant feeling to suggest that new blood could be ‘imported’, but something does now seem to be shifting here. ■



**Eve Rosenhaft** is professor of German Historical Studies at the University of Liverpool

**DISCOVER MORE**

**BOOK**

► **The Unwanted** by Michael Marrus (Oxford University Press, 1985)

## PAST NOTES THE WEATHER FORECAST

### OLD NEWS

#### *Choked by a billiard ball*

**Grantham Journal/  
11 November 1893**

An inquest was held in London for the death of a young man, Walter Cowle, who had previously been employed as an envelope-cutter. On a recent night out in Soho, Cowle had visited the Carlisle Arms Tavern, on Bateman Street, to meet with friends.

Some way into the evening the conversation turned to tricks and feats each could perform, and, perhaps on a dare, Cowle claimed he had the ability to place a large billiard ball in his mouth and close his teeth. His friends were eager to see this trick performed, and so the landlord was requested to produce one – which he did after several assurances that Cowle would not actually put the ball in his mouth, but would use sleight of hand to amuse and trick the gathered company.

Unfortunately something went wrong, and Cowle attempted to swallow the ball, immediately choking. There was little the collected crowd could do. They held him upside down, slapped his back, and tried to remove the ball from his mouth, but nothing worked and Cowle was soon pronounced dead. A good friend of Cowle's insisted he had seen Cowle do the trick many times, and it had never gone wrong before.

News story sourced from [britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk](http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk) and rediscovered by

**Fern Riddell.** Fern regularly appears on BBC Radio 3's *Free Thinking*

ILLUSTRATION BY BEN JONES



Michael Fish makes his first televised weather forecast in 1974

As the Met Office digests the news that it has lost its BBC weather forecasting contract, **Julian Humphrys** looks at the origins of a national obsession

#### When did public weather forecasting begin in Britain?

In 1854 Britain's Board of Trade established its Meteorological Department (today's Met Office), headed by former naval officer Robert Fitzroy. Five years later, nearly 500 people drowned when the steam clipper *Royal Charter* was wrecked in a storm off Anglesey. This led Fitzroy to develop weather charts to allow 'forecasts', as he called them, to be made to improve safety at sea.

In 1861, using data telegraphed from 15 land stations across the UK, Fitzroy produced the first daily weather forecast in *The Times*, and, that same year, he launched a gale warning system for ships using a system of cones which were hoisted at ports around Britain.

#### How long have weather forecasts been broadcast?

For more than a century. The Met Office broadcast its first forecasts via radio in 1911. The BBC launched its Shipping Forecast in the mid-1920s. It has become a cultural icon, featuring prominently in the opening ceremony of the 2012 Olympics. As the forecast has to go out at a predictable time,

listeners to Test Match Special on long wave in 2011 famously missed the climax of all three English victories because each time the programme had cut to the forecast.

#### When did weather forecasts appear on our TVs?

The BBC transmitted its first weather chart at the start of a trial series in November 1936. BBC Television closed down during the Second World War but, in July 1949, it began broadcasting weather maps with captions again. On 11 January 1954, it put out the first live weather forecast from Lime Grove Studios in London.

#### Who was the first TV weatherman?

George Cowling made that first five-minute broadcast. Armed with pencils, a rubber and a pair of dividers, he informed the viewers that the following day would be a good one to hang out washing. Subsequent presenters have included Bert Foord, Barbara Edwards, who became the first female presenter in 1974, Ian McCaskill and Michael Fish, whose dismissal in 1987 of the prospects of a hurricane has entered national folklore. ■

YOUR ANCESTORS WERE

# PRETTY AMAZING

A black and white photograph of a man with red hair sitting in a chair, getting his hair cut by a woman in a dark uniform. He is wearing a patterned shirt and holding an open book titled "The Golden Manster" by Eric Ruchan. In the background, a propeller aircraft is visible.

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# LETTERS

## Educating Turin

**LETTER  
OF THE  
MONTH**

I was pleased to see that you included with Joel Greenberg's recent article about Alan Turing (*Alan Turing: The Man, The Enigma*, October) a photograph of the 16-year-old Alan

Turing taken in 1928 while at Sherborne School. But I was sorry that no mention was made of his time at the school.

The years Turing spent at Sherborne School (1926–31) played an important part in his later development. We can trace Turing's interest in cryptography directly back to his school years. In 1928, Turing borrowed a copy of Rouse Ball's *Mathematical Recreations and Essays* from the school library. The book includes a chapter on the art of constructing cryptographs and ciphers, stating: "Their usefulness on certain occasions, especially in time of war, is obvious, while it may be a matter of great importance to those from whom the key is concealed to discover it."

Turing also studied German while at Sherborne, although his German master's comments on his school report, "He does not seem to have an aptitude for language", suggests that he wasn't a natural linguist. However, there is an interesting twist to this story. During the Second World War, the

same German master worked in military intelligence and would have seen many of the Ultra messages decoded by the Turing machine, although neither would have known that the German master was reading the messages decoded by his former pupil.

When Turing left Sherborne, his housemaster wrote to him saying: "I will guarantee that Turing will be a household word until the present generation has disappeared."

**Rachel Hassall**, school archivist, Sherborne School, Dorset

● We reward the letter of the month writer with our 'History Choice' book of the month. This issue it is *The German War: A Nation Under Arms* by Nicholas Stargardt.

Read the review on page 69



Star pupil: The 16-year-old Alan Turing, while at Sherborne School



## The shock of abolition

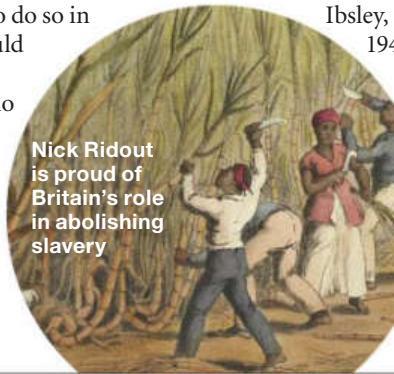
Matt Elton writes eloquently on the shocking normality of the slave trade (*News*, September). However, I believe what was really shocking about slavery was its abolition. Slavery had been an accepted institution in human societies for millennia – the ancient Greeks and Romans had it, the contemporary Ottomans and Persians had it, as did virtually every civilised nation in western Europe and the states of northern Africa (who supplied the raw material to European slave traders).

Given that historical and contemporary context, I can understand why we indulged in slavery and the trade. Slavery was an accepted and legally sanctioned institution in the colonies (although not in England, as proved by the court case *Somerset v Stewart* in 1772). It took very British notions of fairness, justice and

decency to work out, with no external pressure, that the trade was cruel, immoral and wrong.

Banning the trade in 1807, followed by abolition of the institution itself in 1833, were actions that we took of our own account. Yes, we should never have instituted slavery in the empire in the first place, but I am immensely proud of the role that we played in stopping it (bearing in mind, particularly, that it took a four-year civil war to do so in the United States). We should also never forget the thousands of British seamen who gave their lives in the early 19th century off west African shores, both to disease and to combat, in order to enforce the ban on the trade.

**Nick Ridout**, Lincolnshire



Nick Ridout is proud of Britain's role in abolishing slavery

## The relief of Hiroshima

I have just read your article on Hiroshima (*Should America Have Dropped the Bomb?*, August). My father fought in the Indian army in Burma and told us many stories of what they had to endure. For these soldiers fighting in jungle terrain in a monsoon and having to endure foot-rot and having no access to medical care – unable to light fires for fear of detection and in some instances unable to smoke or even talk – Hiroshima couldn't come soon enough.

He was fortunate to miss the battle of Imphal as he had been recalled to India for a few days but had several friends killed in that most ferocious battle around a tennis court. The Indian army then started pushing the Japanese back down Burma and they had to repeat all the horror of the retreat campaign again, but this time with the upper hand.

Although we all regret the civilian deaths at Hiroshima and again at Nagasaki, for those Allied troops who were on the ground it came as a massive relief that there would be no more loss of life there. We can argue as much as we like over the point but we weren't the ones facing death every day. Hiroshima was horrific but what price would our troops have had to pay without it?

**Louise Kelly**, Johannesburg

## Spitfire solution?

I have now discovered the following information regarding the Spitfire depicted on page 19 of your August issue (*Letters*). Squadron code DV B was on a mark 1X Spitfire which joined 129 (Mysore) squadron on 14 August 1943 and was destroyed on the ground in a raid on RAF Hornchurch when with 504 squadron on 23 February 1944.

129 squadron moved from Tangmere to Ibsley, Hampshire on 13 March 1943, to Hornchurch on 28 June 1943 and to Peterhead on 17 January 1944. It is likely therefore that your picture was taken at RAF Hornchurch between 14 August 1943 and 17 January 1944.

**Derek Tilson**, aircrew volunteer, 1943, Norwich



## Marching for the vote

I have recently been commissioned to write a major social history, *Hearts and Minds*, to mark the centenary of votes for women in 2018. This book will be based on first-hand accounts of those involved, including tens of thousands of women (and men) who were not suffragettes but suffragists. They campaigned without violence, and in 1913 accomplished an astonishing six-week march from all points around the UK to London.

Titled ladies marched with colliery girls; academics with housewives; grandfathers with schoolgirls – it was the greatest mass demonstration the country had ever seen. Yet now, it's all but forgotten. Was anyone in your family a suffragette or a suffragist? If so, I'd be delighted to hear from you on [jane@jane-robinson.com](mailto:jane@jane-robinson.com) or c/o David Higham Associates, 7th Floor, Waverley House, 7–12 Noel Street, London W1F 8GQ.

**Jane Robinson, Oxfordshire**

## A taste for crepes

Reading Mark Stoyle's article about Brittany (*My Favourite Place*, October) brought back many happy memories of holidays in Brittany when our children were younger. We went from Portsmouth to St Malo, with Brittany Ferries, and were always impressed by the start of the journey through Portsmouth dockyard seeing all the Royal Navy ships including HMS *Victory*, the Sallyport and Southsea Castle. It was a great start to any holiday.

However, I think Mark's article was missing one important ingredient: crepes! Holidaying in Brittany introduced us to crepes, which not only tasted fabulous but allowed our children to

**A leaflet produced by the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies in 1913**

speak French and be understood: "Oeuf et Jambon crepes"!

**Archie Whymark, Lancashire**

## Corrections

As a couple of readers have spotted, the caption for the image at the top of page 26 in October's issue (*The Glorious Caesars*) incorrectly states that Livia was the wife of Tiberius. She was in fact his mother. There is also debate about whether the figures shown are Tiberius and Livia at all, as some believe this might be a depiction of Claudius's brother and sister-in-law, Germanicus and Agrippina the Elder.

## WRITE TO US

We welcome your letters, while reserving the right to edit them. We may publish your letters on our website. Please include a daytime phone number and, if emailing, a postal address (not for publication). Letters should be no longer than 250 words.

**email:** [letters@historyextra.com](mailto:letters@historyextra.com)

**Post:** Letters, BBC History Magazine, Immediate Media Company Bristol Ltd, Tower House, Fairfax Street, Bristol BS1 3BN

## SOCIAL MEDIA

What you've been saying on Twitter and Facebook



### @HistoryExtra: Which British battle do you think affected us the most and why?

**Eric Jay** The battle that changed 'us' most has to be Hastings, 1066. Its Norman v Saxon aftermath is still largely underestimated for the radical changes that flowed from this battle – for everyone, not just the nobility

**Richard West** The Somme. Nearly a century on and we're still coming to terms with the casualties, especially in the north of England

**Philip L Meers** The battle of Culloden, 1746. The failure of the Jacobite cause strengthened the position of a Protestant monarchy. Arguably this enabled the country to settle into a relative peace at home, enabling the rapid expansion of the middle class and allowing the country to focus upon the growth of its international influence

**David Bailey** Ethandun in 878. If Alfred, king of Wessex had lost, maybe there would be no England, no Great Britain. We might have had a Daneland instead, and history would probably have been written in Danish

### Who do you think was the best monarch in history?

**Susan Ellis** It's got to be Elizabeth I. Under her, the middle class prospered and grew, making for a strong economy

**Athena Tsipnis** Richard III. He was never given enough time to prove how great a monarch he could have been

**Nicole Khan** George VI saved the monarchy. He was our greatest king yet he wasn't meant to be king. He saw us through the Second World War, and showed that a king could be a loving father. He is so underrated

### You've also been saying...

**@oliviamyfanwy** "Studying history is the ultimate passport to the future." Brilliant article in @HistoryExtra by @AnnaWhitelock Definitely inspired me

**@battingpractice** I just found an old @HistoryExtra magazine in which I'd never attempted the crossword puzzle. It's like Christmas!

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Michael Wood on... **the Labour party**

## "The 'Featherstone massacre' was Keir Hardie's great call to arms"

**“**I went to Featherstone the other day. A small stop on the local line from Pontefract to Wakefield, it was the scene of dramatic events in the Great Miners' Lockout of 1893. By the cemetery I stood where Keir Hardie made his speech calling for the creation of a Labour party, and I found myself musing on the party's history at this moment of what the commentators are already calling "cataclysmic change": the golden time of 1945; Wilson's four victories; the heady days of New Labour; and now the travails of the last few years culminating in doom-laden predictions of Labour's demise. From Hardie to Corbyn, it has been an extraordinary story.

For me it was a sentimental journey. My first job after university was as a journalist in Leeds, and I went to Featherstone a few times then, to watch the Rovers, and in search of history. This was during the seventies pit strikes, and it was a real baptism of fire. In the smoke-filled bars of miners' welfare clubs, there were very different takes on history and politics. Here in Yorkshire, history was nothing if not real.

Featherstone is an ancient place (it's in Domesday Book). Coal has been mined here since at least the 13th century – there's wasteland still pockmarked by primitive bell pits. But it was transformed in the mid-19th century when the pits were sunk to provide coal for the factories and battleships of empire. One of them, Ackton Hall, was owned by Samuel Lister, 1st Baron Masham, and there, on 7 September 1893 during the lockout of miners protesting for a living wage, soldiers brought in by Masham shot and killed two men and wounded 16.

The 'Featherstone Massacre' became a byword in Labour history. Among the speakers at the funerals was Robert Cunningham-Graham, Liberal MP, Scottish socialist and founder of the SNP; and Robert Blatchford, who published an inspiring account of the day in his paper *The Clarion*, calling for the formation of a united socialist party. Most of all, there was the greatest single

figure in the creation of the Labour party, Keir Hardie.

Hardie had been elected to parliament the previous year and had been instrumental in starting the Independent Labour Party in January 1893. He was a lay preacher, and it's often said Labour owed more to Methodism than to Marx. But though some (like EP Thomson) have argued that its quietism inhibited direct action, Hardie was anything but quiet. In a brilliant, fiery speech he told the people of Featherstone that a national Labour party was now the priority. It would come in 1900.

The story was never forgotten by working people. Home secretary HH Asquith, even years later as prime minister, would be heckled as the 'Murderer of Featherstone'. One old man in Featherstone even told me that it was Winston Churchill (another bogeyman because of the General Strike) who gave the order to fire!

I heard the story not long into my job in Leeds and, with more enthusiasm than skill, I made a film for regional TV – my first. And that was how I came to meet Nellie Alexander who, as an 11-year-old, had seen it all from her little terraced house near the pit gates, spine-tinglingly telling the tale over tea in her front room. Yet, to my great chagrin, she refused to appear on camera "for fear of bringing more trouble onto Featherstone!"

The film came and went, as films do. But a couple of years later Featherstone School turned the story into a play. I went along, and it was incredibly moving to see the kids reliving their ancestors' story.

Since then the village has experienced huge changes. The pits have disappeared, first to go Ackton Hall after the 1984 miners' strike. On the centenary, a monument was erected in the shopping precinct. But with coal gone, it's a new world now.

A new world for Labour too. The high noon of 1945, when the nation was behind the blueprint for social change, seems another age. So what happens in the next chapter of the party's story will be a real pointer to where we stand today... and to whether history still has lessons to offer. ■

**Michael Wood**  
is professor of public history at the University of Manchester. He is currently working on *The Story of China*, a series for BBC Two

BBC



## Anglo-Saxons vs Vikings

Alexander Dreymon plays Uhtred in *The Last Kingdom*. The drama – based on Bernard Cornwell's Saxon novels – depicts Anglo-Saxons and their Viking 'foes' learning to co-operate. But was this scenario played out for real in ninth-century Wessex?



BBC

# HOW ENGLAND RODE THE VIKING STORM

**Ryan Lavelle**, historical advisor on the new Anglo-Saxon drama *The Last Kingdom*, argues that Alfred the Great's relationship with the Danes was defined by compromise as well as the power of the sword

Accompanies a new BBC Two drama, *The Last Kingdom*



**A**n early scene in the new BBC TV series *The Last Kingdom* sees the hero (or anti-hero) Uhtred, dispossessed claimant to the Northumbrian fortress of Bamburgh, entering the city of Winchester for the first time. Uhtred and his companion, both raised in a Danish household and in many ways more habituated to Danish customs than Anglo-Saxon ones, gain rapid access to the royal court of Alfred of Wessex. At the heart of the court, the pagan Uhtred is granted an audience with the Christian prince – and their discussions range from knowledge of the world to military strategies. From this, we get an insight into Alfred's relationship with Uhtred, how each sees the other – and, crucially, how each intends to use the other.

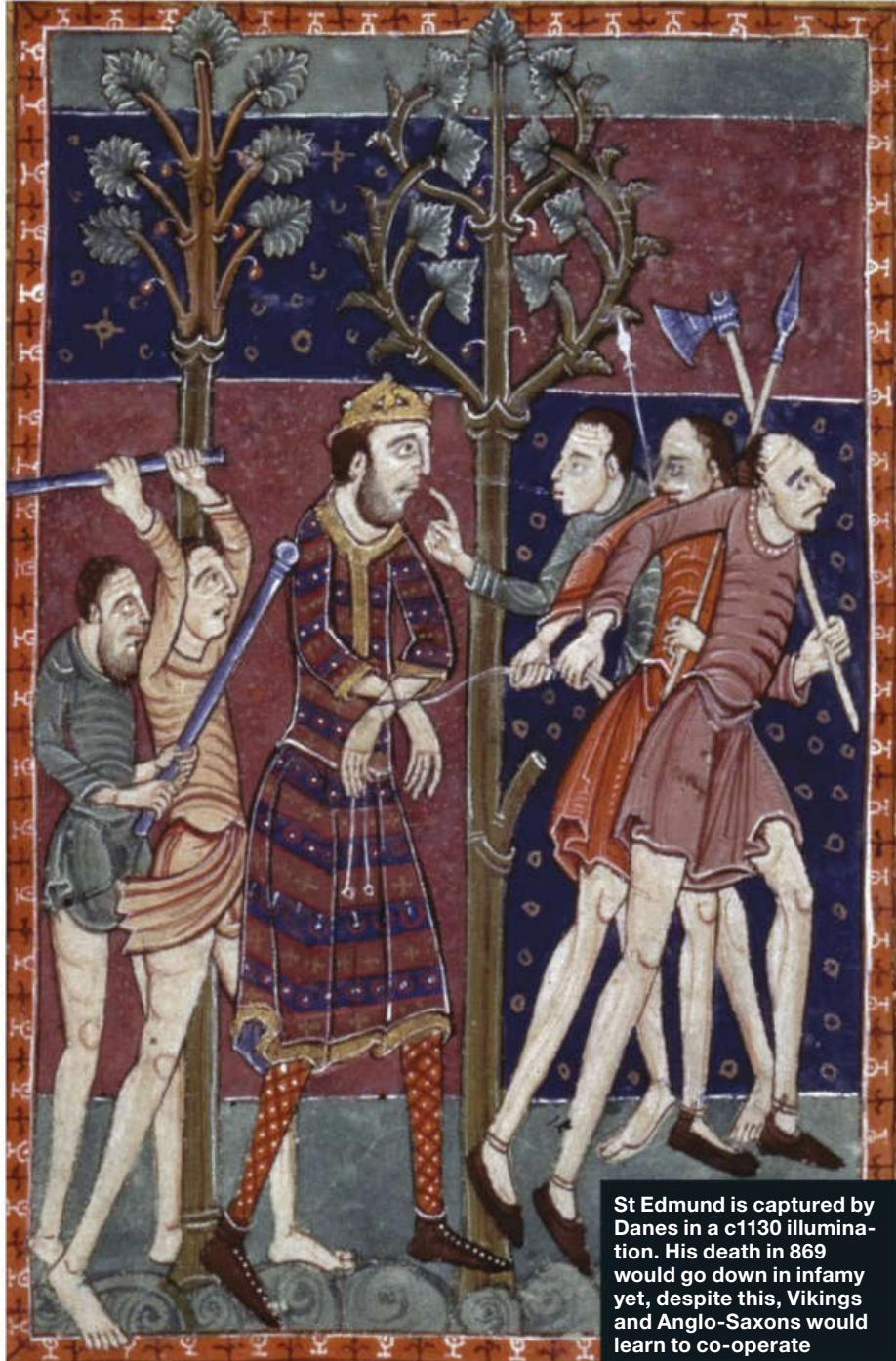
Could such a scene have played out in ninth-century Winchester? Why was a prince of the West Saxons extending the hand of friendship to a pagan – a Dane, no less – at some point in the early 870s? The stereotypes dictate that a Danish Viking was too intent on pillaging to engage in any communication but violence. Received opinion also has it that the West Saxons were far too pious to accept Scandinavians as anything but the scourge of God, to be resisted by warriors and suffered by holy men.

## Viking onslaught

In many ways, the West Saxons' attempts to defend their realm in the face of the Viking onslaught – particularly under Alfred 'the Great' in the final decades of the ninth century – is a story of conflict, of battles and stratagems, peace treaties made and broken, and of military leaders straining for victory in the direst of circumstances.

According to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and *Life of King Alfred* – the West Saxons' main courtly products telling the story of these years – that military leadership was provided by Alfred himself. But no matter whether Alfred can really be personally credited with the successes of the West Saxon kingdom in repelling the Viking threat, there is more to the story than conflict and the imposition of a West Saxon peace. Compromise, trust and understanding between the two peoples – as portrayed by the fictional Uhtred and Alfred in *The Last Kingdom* – was also at the heart of what it meant to be English in the 9th and early 10th centuries.

Where early medieval 'Englishness' was once regarded as binary – either you were English or you weren't – and the West Saxons' defence against the Vikings was seen as a part of the making of that Englishness, there is now



St Edmund is captured by Danes in a c1130 illumination. His death in 869 would go down in infamy yet, despite this, Vikings and Anglo-Saxons would learn to co-operate

"To many religious writers, it must have seemed that '**Northmen**' did indeed herald **the apocalypse**, but by the late ninth century these attitudes were beginning to change"

room for a more nuanced story. The Vikings who came to England in the ninth century were woven into this story in a way that made them so much more than the pagan 'other'.

That is not to say that Danes did not represent an existential threat to Anglo-Saxon rulers and their kingdoms, particularly Wessex. During the later part of the ninth century, the West Saxon kingdom was defined by its difference to the Danish-held territories – and the need to defend themselves against

the Danish threat drove much of the West Saxons' policy forward. The Danes launched numerous attacks on Wessex, and the kingdom itself was almost lost to at least one well-organised incursion.

From the introduction of military service to the building of 'burhs' (fortifications), the character of the West Saxon kingdom was determined by a Scandinavian threat outside it.

One of the terms that Christian writers

most often employed to describe the pirates who exploded upon the western European scene in the late eighth and early ninth centuries was 'Northmen', a word that, while (mostly) being more geographically accurate, recalled the apocalyptic idea, trumpeted in the Book of Jeremiah, that evil would come from the north. To many religious writers, it must have seemed that these 'Northmen' indeed *did* herald the end-time. But by the late ninth century, we see fewer 'Northmen' in Anglo-Saxon sources, as the term gave way to 'Dane'. And the reason for this may lie in the increasing representation of Vikings as people who you could do business with.

### Danes and Northmen

It seems that this was a meaningful distinction – and one that may have been reflected in the pages of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. While an early English text had labelled the instigators of an attack on Dorset in c789 as 'Northmen', a later account of the very same incident in the *Chronicle* refers to the aggressors as 'Danes'. It was perhaps a telling editorial modification.

This important, if tentative, change in attitude was reflected in the growing number of peace agreements that the two sides signed in the late ninth century. The most important of these was the 'Alfred-Guthrum' treaty, sealed following Alfred's 878 victory at the battle of Ethandun (Edington, Wiltshire) which shattered the Vikings' ambition of conquering Wessex. The surviving document that records Alfred's triumph probably represents a renegotiation of the territory between the two leaders.

In many ways, this treaty recognised how 'Danes' and 'Englishmen' were separated and subjected to different legal systems. However, the fact that both groups were subject to the same law – which was agreed by two sets of leaders, "confirmed with oaths, for themselves and for their subjects, both for the living and for the unborn" – created a sort of unified identity that had not before existed in the area that is now referred to as England.

That sense of peace was important. The Venerable Bede, the eighth-century Northumbrian author of a work long recognised as providing Alfred's 'blueprint' for the idea of an *Angelcynn* (English realm), had reported that an early Anglo-Saxon king, Edwin, had provided the conditions in which a woman could travel with a newborn child from sea to sea without fear. Whether the conditions in late ninth-century England really allowed for such journeys is immaterial. Alfred's allusion to those "unborn" might have been intended with Bede's sense of peace in mind; a king who provided peace for an *Angelcynn* was one who recognised

## "I became a historical helpline"

Being the historical advisor on *The Last Kingdom* meant working fast and remembering that the story comes first, says Ryan Lavelle



Alexander Dreymon and Emily Cox star as Uhtred and Brida in the "entertaining, interesting and thought-provoking" *The Last Kingdom*

I have been a fan of Bernard Cornwell's books on early medieval England since my student days, so it was a great pleasure – and an honour – to work with Carnival Films on *The Last Kingdom*, their adaptation of his Saxon novels.

Cornwell often uses an outsider to tell a story, like his famous Napoleonic creation, the working-class British Army officer Sharpe. In *The Last Kingdom*, it is the Saxon Uhtred, whose Danish upbringing creates a conflict of identity that propels the storyline. It's been fascinating to witness the production developing as the book's first-person narrative and biographical storyline has had to pick up a pace for a series of TV episodes.

While I would love to take some credit for that, my own role meant leaving the storytelling to the experts, and simply being available to respond when needed to provide some costume advice, comment on scripts, and make occasional set visits. In many ways I became a historical helpline, getting questions like "tell us how a marriage would be arranged", "what could happen at a coronation?", "how should this name be spelt/pronounced in Old English?"

To answer such questions meant putting what I've learned about the early Middle

Ages beyond rarefied academia into a 'real' world of creative imagination populated by such real historical characters as Alfred 'the Great' (not always a likeable fellow, it appears). I've had to avoid the historian's temptation to respond to questions with a list of footnotes and caveats leading into a range of other possibilities based on the slimness of the surviving evidence. That sort of thing cuts no ice in a multi-million-pound production.

I quickly learned that, because what happens in one version of the script can change quickly – and change again a dozen times before it is shot – clear and concise answers are essential.

I have also had to keep reminding myself that *The Last Kingdom* is not a historical documentary series. The overriding principle has always been to drive the story forward, but I've constantly had to think: "Is this possible – does it work on screen?"

What the team came up with didn't always match my interpretation of Anglo-Saxon history, but that usually needs footnotes! However, the production is a valid interpretation: it's entertaining, interesting and, for me as a historian of the period, it's thought-provoking. To that end, I couldn't have asked for more.

'Danes' as potential subjects. There was precedent to be followed here, but it was not an English precedent. Instead it came from across the Channel, in the land of the Franks (roughly equivalent to modern-day France).

Historians have largely debunked the old myth of there being a great chasm between the dealings of the Western Franks and Alfred with the Vikings – the former traditionally damned as a failure; the latter hailed as a spectacular success. In fact, Frankish treaties with Vikings not only worked but also enhanced the standing of a number of rulers – these were not embarrassing episodes of compromise but moments to be celebrated. And they may have influenced Alfred – who had visited the court of Charles the Bald in West Francia as a young boy in the 850s – for he, too, was aware of the value of bringing Vikings into the Christian fold.

Although not particularly successful in the long term, the baptism by Charles the Bald's father, Emperor Louis the Pious, of the Danish ruler Harald Klak in 826 had been a seminal event in the Carolingian court. Here we might trace the transformation from 'Northmen' to 'Danes', as Frankish authors took the event to their hearts as a means of depicting the imperial idea of Frankish kingship.

Around this time, Frankish writers started to take a serious interest in who 'Danes' were, and, given the Anglo-Saxons' preoccupation with Frankish affairs, it is perhaps not surprising that this is echoed in England a generation or two later. Charles the Bald had been a young boy at the ceremony and it evidently had a major effect on him, just as Alfred's visit to the Frankish court had an impact on the Anglo-Saxon ruler's life.

## Moment of triumph

An example of how a spirit of compromise had permeated Alfred's Wessex is provided by the fact that Vikings were serving in the community of the Somerset monastery of Athelney, a site founded to celebrate Alfred's great moment of triumph in 878. The famous biographer of Alfred's life, Asser of St David's, described them as "pagans" (*pagani*). Yet clearly they were not really pagans in the religious sense – they were, after all, part of a Christian community.

Around the same time, Alfred received the Scandinavian sea captain, Óttarr (Anglicised as Ohthere), at court. Óttarr is described in an Old English text as "most northern of the North-men". Just as the fictional Uhtred comes to the West Saxon court in *The Last Kingdom*, this ninth-century view of Alfred has the king using Óttarr to discover more about the lands and peoples of Scandinavia. This provides further evidence that, though

the Viking threat had by no means disappeared, these 'North-men' were very different from those who had perpetrated the apocalyptic attacks of a few decades earlier.

The lands they lived in were no longer mysterious. The understanding of them was more subtle, more complex, and far more human. Indeed, an object similar to the so-called 'Alfred Jewel', an artefact described by an Old English text as an *æstel*, has been found during excavations of a chieftain's complex at Borg on the Lofoten Islands in northern Norway. Did Óttarr carry the 'Borg Æstel' back home after his stay at the West Saxon court? If so, it showed that a symbol of Alfred's lordship – these objects were, after all, closely linked with Alfred's court – had huge resonance in Scandinavia.

Óttarr was not an 'Englishman' but in some respects his relationship with "his lord Alfred" demonstrates that relationships between peoples were about more than just ties of blood and clearly-defined nationhood.

This remained the case well into the 10th century. For though the West Saxons' expansion in the early 900s saw English Christians forcing Danes and other Vikings into submission through strongarm tactics, 'Danes' and 'English' continued to make agreements and negotiate over territory in a way that mirrored their predecessors' diplomacy.

In fact, the descendants of ninth-century Scandinavian lords became the 'men' of English rulers – particularly Edward the Elder (899–924) and Æthelstan (924–39) – who allowed their new subjects to keep their lands in return for a submission to lordship.

So this was not purely a story of nationhood or of the triumph of one group over another. Instead, the Vikings' role in the making of 'England' demonstrated that different peoples' dealings with one another needed to be defined by flexibility as much as by factionalism and conflict. ■

Ryan Lavelle is reader in medieval history at the University of Winchester. He has co-edited *Danes in Wessex* (Oxbow), which is out later this year

## DISCOVER MORE

### TELEVISION

► Ryan Lavelle is the historical consultant on the drama series ***The Last Kingdom***, which is due to air on BBC Two later this year



## ON THE PODCAST

Bernard Cornwell discusses Anglo-Saxon England and the novels on which *The Last Kingdom* is based on our weekly podcast  
[► historyextra.com/bbchistorymagazine/podcasts](http://historyextra.com/bbchistorymagazine/podcasts)

# Living in the shadow of the Vikings

From Cornish rebellions to puppet kings, our map shows how the Norsemen's raids impacted on the kingdoms of Britain in the ninth century...

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM JAY

## Strathclyde

A Welsh ('British') kingdom whose territory ranged across modern-day Scotland and Cumbria in north-western England, it was dealt a blow when Dumbarton Rock was besieged by Dublin Vikings in 870. With Govan (now in Glasgow) as its likely religious centre, Strathclyde still continued as a political force well into the 10th century.

## Welsh kingdoms

A range of kings with a variety of extents of power and layers of lordship appears to have been the order in early Wales, with Gwynedd in the north-west coming to the fore. Although Rhodri Mawr ('the Great') suffered at Viking and English hands, probably killed by Mercians in 878, his successors asserted dominance over many of the neighbouring kingdoms, making alliances with Vikings and Anglo-Saxons according to circumstances.

## Cornwall

Cornwall was coming under the West Saxons' direct control in the ninth century. At least some Cornishmen resisted, including allying with Vikings in 838. The death of the last known Cornish king is recorded in a Welsh annal in 875 but the survival of Celtic place-names in Cornwall shows how the old kingdom never became a full part of the Anglo-Saxon world.



## Alba

By the late ninth century, the areas controlled by kings of the Picts and Scots were beginning to be referred to as Alba, the Gaelic word for 'Britain', suggesting change was in the air. The kingdom of Alba was controlled by a line of rulers, of the house of Alpin, who emerged during the ninth-century upheaval of Viking attacks to assert domination over large swathes of territory which would form the core of a later Scottish kingdom.

## Northumbria and the Kingdom of York

The kingdom of the Northumbrians had been created by the merging of the southern kingdom of Deira, focused on York, and the northern kingdom of Bernicia. Vikings controlled York from the 860s and settled soon after, while Bamburgh remained a seat of continuing Anglo-Saxon power in the north.

## Mercia

Kings of Mercia had held overlordship over other Anglo-Saxon kingdoms during the eighth century, but remained a force to be reckoned with in the ninth. Years of hard campaigning led to the replacement of the Mercians' king in 874 by a ruler who may have been a Viking 'puppet', then by Æthelred, an ealdorman (governor) likely to have been subordinate to King Alfred.

## East Anglia

The last independent Anglo-Saxon king of the East Angles was killed by Vikings in 869 and is remembered as St Edmund. East Anglia became a Viking kingdom under the control of Guthrum, christened Æthelstan in 878. A decade of peace led to control by other Vikings after Guthrum's death, but their coins bearing the name of St Edmund reveal how they 'bought into' Anglo-Saxon politics.

## Wessex

Ruled by the descendants of Ecgberht, who had seized power at the start of the ninth century, the West Saxon kingdom controlled much of the south of England by the time of Alfred the Great (reigned 871–99), who managed to hold onto his throne in the face of Viking attacks.



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## THE HISTORY ESSAY



HMS *Ramillies* founders in a storm off the coast of Newfoundland in 1782. Bad weather was one of many factors that led to Britain's unexpected defeat in America's fight for independence

# THE ROYAL NAVY'S AMERICAN DISASTER

Britain was the world's greatest naval power, so why did its ships fail to prevent the American revolutionaries securing independence?

**By Sam Willis**

**H**ere is a historical conundrum that has fascinated me since the day, as a student, I opened a slim book in my university library that briefly discussed the role of sea power in the American Revolution. The book described how, between 1775 and 1782, a loose collection of colonies, without any

standing army or navy, won its independence from Great Britain, the most powerful country in the world, a country 3,000 miles away, which could wield such sea power that it could block out the sun with its sails and hide the surface of the sea with its ships; a country that had so dominated its rivals at sea in a previous conflict, the Seven Years' War, that it now commanded a maritime empire of unprecedented geographical scale and financial resources.

The bare facts are compelling. At the start of the war, the Americans had no navy of any sort and no allies at all, and Great Britain committed nearly half of its navy, the largest in the world, to America. They also successfully transported nearly 50,000 troops across the Atlantic and maintained those men with clothes, weapons and food via a maritime umbilical cord that ran all the way back to Britain – an unprecedented logistical feat. So how could it be that they then went on to lose the war?

An aspect of this historical conundrum that particularly charmed me was that there was a clear bridge between past and present. As I dug further, it soon became apparent that contemporaries also boggled at the idea and struggled to come to terms with how, as one observer put it, “such an army [as the British], so well appointed, served by so large a train of artillery, and attended by so numerous a fleet, could fail of success against a divided people, destitute of officers, soldiers, magazines, fortified town, ships of war, or any apparent resources”.

George Washington himself, commander-in-chief of the American rebels, believed that, in future, the story would be considered as nothing less than fiction: “For it will not be believed that such a force as Great Britain has employed for eight years in this country could be baffled in their plan for subjugating it by numbers infinitely less, composed of men oftentimes half starved; always in rags, without pay, and experiencing, at times, every species of distress which human nature is capable of undergoing.”

In our collective national consciousness we are so often reminded of the strength and resilience of British sea power – a narrative dominated in the age of sail by men such as Drake, Cook and Nelson, who wielded colossal power with ingenuity and courage and in doing so were

supported by a host of brave tars, their hearts of oak beating out of their chests behind the beloved wooden walls of their indefatigable navy.

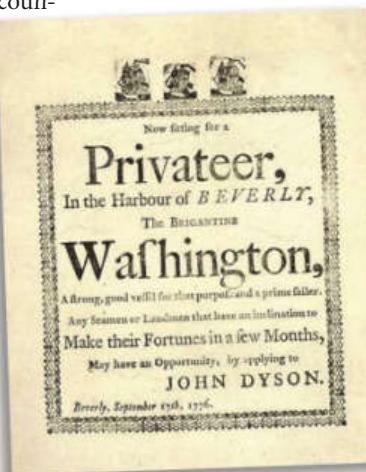
The idea that this might not, actually, be the case, and in particular that the great cleaving of the British empire and the independence of America, one of the clearest foundation blocks in the formation of our modern world, might have been the result of naval weakness – dare I even think it, *incompetence* – sparked a fascination with this period for me that has lasted nearly 20 years. It was also clear that these bald facts were largely responsible for a subsequent tendency for many Americans to believe that their independence was somehow pre-ordained. This is one of the most powerful inspirations for any historian, for such a tendency towards disbelief draws us to research like moths to a flame.

In my work since then I have set out to explain that conundrum and I have discovered that the explanation lies not in black and white – in large or small numbers of ships and men, in experience and innocence, in skill and incompetence – but in the most complex quilt of influence and effect that rests like a blanket over the entire period. To study it helps us to understand this key moment in the shaping of the modern world, as well as broader questions of the influence of sea power upon history – for this, ultimately, is a war at sea that encourages you to think about what a war at sea actually is.

Histories of the American War of Independence no longer treat the naval battle as the merest of afterthoughts. One can easily discover how sea power affected the revolution, though it is usually restricted to a single example: the battle of the Chesapeake of 1781,

when a French naval fleet defeated a British fleet leading to the isolation and subsequent surrender of the British general Charles Cornwallis and his entire army at Yorktown. Cornwallis's surrender directly led to the fall of the British government and its replacement with one committed to ending the war. Thus the link between sea power and American independence is traditionally made manifest.

But to understand how sea power actually affected the war in its myriad ways, one must consider together a vast number of themes which include – but are by no means restricted to



A 1776 advertisement appealing for crew to join the American privateer ship *Washington* to fight the British navy



A Franco-American force captures HMS *Serapis* following a four-hour battle off the coast of Flamborough Head, Yorkshire in September 1779. Victory in the clash helped secure further European support for the colonies' cause

“With insufficient ships at the start of the war, the British were unable to adequately police the growth of American sea power or blockade the coast effectively”

– the role of the French navy, the Spanish navy, the ‘Continental Navy’ (the American navy representing the rebellious colonies acting together), 12 of the 13 rebellious colonies who formed their own navies, the Royal Navy, the Dutch navy, the Russian navy, the Indian navy, the role of native Americans in fleets of canoes, the maritime economy, shipping, logistics, hurricanes and tidal waves, shipbuilding, invasion, slavery, fashion, evacuation, law, politics and economics.

And all of these themes must be applied to a conflict that was, unquestionably, the greatest naval war of the age of sail. From first gasp to last whimper it lasted a decade; it was the longest war in American history until Vietnam two centuries later; it involved 22 (yes, 22!) different navies and thousands of privateers from tens of different nations; it was fought in five different oceans as well as on land-locked lakes and majestic rivers; it included the most strategically significant naval battle in all of British, American or French history and one of the most one-sided and tactically decisive naval battles in history; it involved more fleet battles than any other naval war in history; it included some of the largest fleets of sailing warships ever gathered together and some of the strangest and most eclectic fleets ever to sail to war, including a fleet that was taken to pieces, dragged through a forest and then re-built on an inland lake. The amphibious operations – and particularly the role of sailors fighting *on land* – are especially important and interesting: on more than one occasion ‘land’ battles were contested entirely by sailors firing naval guns.

This was also a war in which sea power affected the lives of non-combatants in profound ways. The American Revolution meant that the lives of many more people were touched by the sea than before it. Many Europeans – soldiers, sailors and civilians – took to the sea in the military operations or the many forced evacuations that so characterised the war. Thousands crossed the Atlantic and visited America, the Caribbean, Central America, Canada and Newfoundland for the first time. Others voyaged into the North Sea and Baltic, to the Mediterranean, and around Good Hope to India.

The result is a gold mine of historical sources unique to the period: diaries filled with awe at the majesty of nature – narwhals and flying fish, icebergs and islands covered in thousands of sea birds – and fascination and astonishment when the populations of different nations collided. Before he saw his first real Frenchman, one American believed them to be “pale, ugly specimens who lived exclusively on frogs and snails”. There is also tangible shock at the unique life of the sailor – the smell, the cramped conditions, the heat, the cold, the damp, the noise, the seasickness – and horror at the

experience of naval battle.

All of these people were, essentially, baptised in the maritime world, and in the peculiarities of sea power, during this war. For them, the scale and potential of the world had expanded, their horizons had broadened. This war was nothing less than a key moment in the western human race reconnecting with each other and painting the Atlantic world and beyond in a new colour.

**W**hen we come to analyse the reasons for Britain’s failure, one can explore innumerable themes and campaigns which all influenced the war’s outcome.

But what we can say is that the initial rebellion was in part provoked and then inflamed by both perceptions of British sea power and the methods of its implementation. The subsequent war, of necessity played out in part at sea, led to the Americans forming their own navies and allying themselves with Britain’s two traditional naval enemies, France and Spain. The war thus spilled out from the American seaboard and became a global struggle with far more than just the future of the American colonies at stake.

Both before and after this key moment, the British failed to use their naval advantages at the appropriate times and in the appropriate ways. In particular, with insufficient ships at the start of the war, they were unable to adequately police the growth of American sea power or blockade the coast effectively.

Furthermore, when the war spread, they chose not to contain French and Spanish fleets in European waters and struggled with the challenge of wielding sea power in numerous theatres, all distant from the logistical infrastructure of the home dockyards. On numerous occasions the very survival of the British empire hung on a spider’s silk. Smelling British blood, Britain’s traditional allies, the Dutch, then also turned against them. Weighed down on all sides, the British war effort creaked and groaned until, entirely unexpectedly, by applying *exactly* the right amount of pressure in *exactly* the right place at *exactly* the right time, the Americans and their allies made it break at the battle of Yorktown, where British hopes of victory were dashed for good.

One abiding theme in this narrative concerns just how extraordinarily difficult it was for *any* nation to wage naval war of any type in this period and the different ways in which it was possible to experience that difficulty.

Naval warfare, for example, raised unique problems at the level of strategy and inter-theatre operations simply because of the slowness of communication. It would usually take at least a month for

American soldiers haul cannons from Lake Champlain, scene of one of the first naval battles of the Revolutionary War



TOPFoto

"Weighed down on all sides, the British war effort creaked and groaned until, entirely unexpectedly, the Americans and their allies made it break"



**Admiral Augustus Keppel's 30-strong British fleet clashes with 29 French ships in the battle of Ushant on 27 July 1778. This was the first major engagement between the two nations since France entered the war earlier that year, and neither side was able to claim victory**

a message to travel across the Atlantic, and obviously at least twice as long to receive a reply – and this was not just about communication but propaganda. Often, after crucial engagements, the British and Americans found themselves in a race to get news across the Atlantic and any advantage that could be manufactured in this race was crucial.

The idea of a naval 'strategy' as we know it was also non-existent. The phrase did not even exist. This was not an era of men leaning over huge chart tables, moving little model ships around: so many here to meet this threat; so many there to put pressure on that government; so many here to defend trade. Quite to the contrary: war planners had only a loose understanding of exactly how each theatre of war would affect the other, and capability was so limited and un-

predictable that, when combined with the slowness of communication, any real planning was far more likely to fail than succeed. Indeed, if there is one prominent theme from the numerous operations I've studied it is that, with only a handful of exceptions, *none* of them work out as planned.

The weather played an immense part. Naval warfare in the age of sail was always influenced by the weather, but it seems to have been particularly so, and particularly severe, for this war. All of this meant that sea power was hardly a surgical instrument of war – more of a heavy blunt club wielded by a blind and drunk weakling.

At the level of tactics, naval operations were confounded by limitations in signalling and by the fact that there was no shared inter-ser-

## THE HISTORY ESSAY

“The British repeatedly sent ‘fresh’ fleets to America, where their weight was expected to shift the balance of the war – but they often sailed from British shores sick as dogs”



The Royal Navy defeats a French fleet in the West Indies in April 1782. For Britain, losing the American colonies would, paradoxically, usher in a period of utter domination of the seas

vice doctrine. In essence, this meant that a fleet under one commander in one part of the world would operate with different signals, tactics and a different understanding of expected behaviour to another fleet elsewhere in the world. It is in fact more helpful to think of it like this: a ‘navy’ was not a ‘navy’ but consisted of numerous different ‘navies’ that worked in different ways. This did not make for reliable performance. Fleets working in international alliances suffered particularly severely from this type of problem. It was almost impossible to get different fleets within a single navy to co-operate with each other, let alone different fleets from different navies.

Economically and administratively, navies presented enormous difficulties too. They were both immensely expensive to run and also very difficult to maintain at any level of strength. Men had to be found to man the ships, and those men had to be fed, clothed and kept healthy. In some theatres, such as the Caribbean, this was an insurmountable problem at which every administration failed, even in the comfort of home waters. In the early years of the war, the British repeatedly sent ‘fresh’ fleets to America, where their weight was expected to shift the balance of the war – but, with inadequate infrastructure in home waters,

they often sailed from British shores sick as dogs. The French and Spanish were simply unable to keep their men healthy for any significant period of time.

Old established navies like the British and French faced the same problems as one another, but at a different scale from new ones such as the Continental Navy or the various state navies. However every navy also faced its own unique challenges. While the British, for example, were struggling with the problem of protecting their supply lines to America, and the French with how to source sufficient nails to secure sheets of copper to their ships’ hulls, the Americans struggled with problems specific to fledgling navies: what rules and regulations should the men abide by at sea? How were prizes to be distributed and administered without prize courts? Even the most basic questions took up time: who was going to design the uniform?

This is one of the most important themes of this war. More than anything else, the story of the conflict is a story of the struggle for sea power and of how the difficulty of wielding it shaped the modern world. It remained the case in every country that, in spite of staggering naval expenditure, politicians who made policy had no detailed knowledge of naval affairs and few expert advisers. Chance and the weather could ruin everything as easily as bad planning. For the historian, the idea of a ‘chain’ of events is therefore almost completely unhelpful. Events in this war were not strong and joined to each other by iron links but were flimsy, like a house of cards.

The result was an almost constant sense of apprehension and drama from 1774 right up until the Peace of Paris, which ended the war in 1783. All of which makes this one of the most fascinating conflicts in history to study, and also one of the most exciting to discover.

And there’s a twist in the tale... for the Americans won their independence after eight long years of war at *exactly* the moment that Britain’s superior naval, logistical and financial infrastructure achieved an unassailable position of strength at sea. This was a position that, after the war was over, would herald the Royal Navy’s greatest period of imperial reach and power. ■

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**Sam Willis** is an author and historian who has written several books on the Royal Navy. He will be discussing the naval aspect of the American Revolution at *BBC History Magazine*’s History Weekend at Malmesbury see [historyweekend.com](http://historyweekend.com)

### DISCOVER MORE

#### BOOK

► **The Struggle for Sea Power: A Naval History of American Independence** by Sam Willis (Allen and Unwin, 2015)

**Next month's essay:** Alastair Bellany and Thomas Cogwell examine the plots to kill James VI and I



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**Days 6-7. To Cardiff, Blaenavon and The Steam Railway.**

Day 6 is spent travelling to Cardiff on a local service from Shrewsbury. On Day 7 we visit the UNESCO-listed site at

Blaenavon. Here we ride the vintage rail service and explore the Steam Railway Museum. After an exclusive tour around the train yard, we continue by vintage service to the Big Pit Halt and National Coal Museum. The day finishes with a tour of Blaenavon Ironworks.

**Days 8-9. Bristol, Clifton Bridge and the Journey Home.** We depart for Bristol and enjoy a guided tour of the SS Great Britain, the first steamship to cross the Atlantic. After some time to explore, we make the trip to Brunel's spectacular Clifton Suspension Bridge, where we enjoy an informative talk on the iconic industrial landmark, which has connected Bristol to Leigh Woods in North Somerset since 1864. On Day 9, your tour concludes and you are free to depart at your leisure.



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# A ravenous war

In part 18 of his personal testimony series, **Peter Hart** takes us to November 1915, when the carnage at Gallipoli and the western front made the need to blood new recruits ever more pressing. Peter will be tracing the experiences of 20 people who lived through the First World War – via interviews, letters and diary entries – as its centenary progresses

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JAMES ALBON



## Joe Murray

Joe grew up in a County Durham mining community. He arrived in Gallipoli with the Hood Battalion of the Royal Naval Division in April 1915 and was soon moved to engineering duties as a sapper.

**Out in Gallipoli, Ordinary Seaman Joe Murray was still attached to the VIII Corps Mining Company. The weather had been getting cooler but on 26 November a terrible rainstorm lashed down on them. Flash floods engulfed the gullies, building up behind the trench lines and then breaking through by sheer weight of water.**

**“**All of a sudden the dam would break and the whole volume came down carrying everything before it. Corpses, all sorts of gear, some people drowning.

The Turks were standing about and so were we. There was no trench to go in – they were all full up with water. It was raining like hell. They were standing there, and we made no attempt to do anything. We couldn't. Half of us didn't have any rifles – they'd been flooded in the trench somewhere.

The Turks could have walked through as far as they liked. There was no defence at all. Not where we were. Everywhere was washed up. Fellows ill with dysentery had fallen down and drowned in their own communication trenches and of course

other people were going down walking on them. It wasn't till after the storm that we realised what a lot of people were drowned.

**The rain was followed by a terrible freeze, bringing Arctic conditions to Gallipoli. Hundreds of men died and thousands had to be evacuated suffering from severe hypothermia. Yet Joe discovered that not even entombment in a block of ice could rid his shirt of lice.**

**“**I spread my shirt on a stone in the trench behind me – it had been three days in a solid block of ice. And do you know, I looked at this shirt and, believe it or not, the blinking lice were still alive and crawling all over it! They'd been three days in a block of ice. You'd have thought that would have killed the damn things – but it didn't!



## John Palmer

John Palmer joined the army as a regular in 1910. He served as a signaller with the Royal Field Artillery on the western front.

**At the start of November 1915, Bombardier John Palmer was still suffering the aftereffects of wounds sustained during the battle of Loos. Despite this, he was posted back to the front to join the 105 Battery, 22nd Brigade, Royal Field Artillery. He would not last long. On 5 November he was on duty at a forward observation post.**

**“**We got mixed up with a German attack and I came out of it with a broken rib caused by a bayonet thrust. As the Jerry lunged at me, I turned slightly and the point of the bayonet caught my rib, broke it and skidded off. I do not know actually just what happened after that, but we struggled for the rifle and that was the last I knew – until I was dug out of the trench some time later. I was told that a shell had burst on the parapet and we were both buried. I was underneath, drenched in blood,

none of which was mine. The hilt of the bayonet was against my breast and the blade had completely transfixes the Jerry – it was his blood which was soaking me. It was a miracle which must have caused it. How the bayonet became detached from the rifle I shall never know.

Carted away to the dressing station where the doctor was quite sarcastic. He just said: “An eighth of an inch higher, an eighth of an inch lower, and I should not have to worry about you, as it is all you have got is a cracked rib!”

That was not all I had though. I knew it now. I was cracking up. Frightened by the shells however far away. I feel I have changed a lot since we first landed in this country some 15 months ago. Then we were all thrilled and anxious and eager to meet the Germans and show them just what we were made of. Now we really know what war means. The loss of so many of our pals, the death, destruction, blood and mud. All I long for now is home and to get out of this living hell.

**On 13 November, John Palmer was finally sent home. He would be back to face a new hell on the Somme in 1916.**

***“I looked at this shirt and, believe it or not, the blinking lice were still alive and crawling all over it! They'd been three days in a block of ice”***



## Hawtin Mundy

Hawtin was brought up in Buckinghamshire and served as an apprentice coach-builder. At the outbreak of war, he and his pal Sid Carroll joined the 1/1st Battalion of the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry at Aylesbury.

**Hawtin Mundy had been wounded on the western front in May 1915. After recovering, he was sent to recruit in Newport Pagnell under the new Derby Scheme which had been introduced in October 1915. War was ravenous for men and the stream of willing recruits had dried up. Under this new scheme, men aged 18–40 years old could enlist voluntarily or attest (enrol) with the obligation to report for duty if called up later in the war. This was a clear pointer that compulsory conscription was being considered.**

**“** Those that wouldn't join the Derby Scheme, we had to hunt for them. We were allowed a penny a mile on our bicycles to go round to the villages and farms in the district.

Those that did come and sign up often told us: "Farmer so and so, he's got two sons, they won't join up, they don't intend joining up until they're forced to!" As soon as we got a tip like that, away we went. We got to the farm, see the farmer, his sons would be in the fields, we'd find

them and what they had to do was sign a form so that they could be called up eventually – not to join straight away – but to be called up when the time came. Well they used to try and dodge that!

We were tipped off about this farmer. He'd got a big, strapping son who was having nothing to do with the war. The farmer took me into his sitting room and we had a chat. I'd got my forms in my pocket for him to sign. He said: "Would you like a drink?" I said: "Yes!" We sat at the table near the window and he brought an old-fashioned stone jar full of whisky. He totted it out and he asked if it could be possible if I could "leave it" for a time. I said: "Oh no! No! They're all joining, all signing these forms now – he can't get out of it."

He kept topping the whisky up, topping it up! When I came out I'd got the forms in my pocket but I hadn't got his signature, and how the hell I got back to Newport on my bike, I don't know!



## Jack Dorgan

Northumberland-born Jack Dorgan took part in the attack on St Julien during the second battle of Ypres. After the battle he was promoted to sergeant and continued to serve on the western front throughout 1915.

the rum sergeant!

Everybody would be up and waiting for it. Word soon spread: "The rum ration's on the job!" The officer would carry the rum jar and I would have a large spoon and the ration consisted of one spoonful. The rum we had was much stronger than the rum we have today!

The spoon was always licked by the fellow when he received his ration. That cleaned it ready for the next man!



## Edmund Williams

Edmund was born on 10 January 1894 in Formby, to a fairly well-off family. After studying chemistry at technical college, in September 1914 he had volunteered to join the 19th King's Liverpool Regiment with his brother.

**On 5 November 1915, the 19th King's Liverpool Regiment, their home training complete, crossed over to France. With them was Private Edmund Williams, and as they moved up towards the front line they stopped for a while at the village of Vignacourt.**

**“** Vignacourt was quite a nice little village, but it was an unfriendly village... because some of the troops had misbehaved themselves there and left the results of their misbehaviour behind.

In the billets there was this young girl, she might be 16 or 17 years old. She had what the French called *le petit mal* – in other words, slight epilepsy. She was far gone in pregnancy and the people looked at us and cursed us – because we took the blame for what the predecessors had done.

Vignacourt was the silent

village. I think we could just – if we listened carefully, with the wind in the right direction – hear the boom from somewhere far away on the eastern horizon.

**They would not have to wait long before they were introduced to the front line.**

**Peter Hart** is the oral historian at the Imperial War Museum. His books include *The Great War: 1914–1918* (Profile Books, 2013)

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## The Celts



A man wears a decorated headband on this silver coin, produced by Danube Celts. By the time the coin was minted in the first century BC, Celtic tribes had made their presence felt everywhere from the British Isles to Asia Minor

# WHO WERE THE CELT<sup>S</sup>?

Historians have been puzzling over this most enigmatic of ancient peoples for centuries, but are we any closer to establishing their origins?

**Barry Cunliffe** investigates

Accompanies a new BBC Two series *The Celts*



“ **T**he whole race... is war-mad, high-spirited and quick to battle... And so when they are stirred up they assemble in their bands for battle quite openly and without forethought.” So wrote the Greek historian Strabo about the Celts at the beginning of the first century AD. It is a generalisation that has coloured our view of the northern neighbours of the Romans and Greeks ever since.

Celts first came into the consciousness of early modern historians in the 16th and 17th centuries when the works of classical writers like Strabo, Caesar and Livy were becoming widely available. These texts describe how the many barbarian tribes of western and central Europe came into conflict with the Roman and Greek worlds. The writers called these disparate peoples ‘Celts’ or ‘Gauls’ – a tradition that is at least as early as the sixth century BC, when the ethnographer Hecataeus of Miletus wrote of Celts living in the hinterland of the Greek colony of

Massalia (Marseilles). Later, in the fourth century BC, the Greek historian Ephorus of Cymae believed that barbarian Europe was occupied by only two peoples, the Scythians in the east and the Celts in the west, and Strabo adds the gloss that Ephorus considered Celtica to be so large that it included most of Iberia as far as Gades (Cadiz). These early generalisations were accepted by the later Roman authors when they came to write about their growing contacts with the peoples of central and western Europe.

In the fifth century BC, quite possibly as a result of an exponential increase in population, the tribes occupying a broad arc including the Loire valley, the Marne region, the Rhineland and Bohemia began to take on a new mobility, thousands of people moving en masse out of their homelands. These were the Celts. One of the migrating hordes thrust southwards through the Alpine passes to the Po Valley, where the disparate tribes settled down in reasonable harmony. Another moved eastwards to the fertile country of Transdanubia (Hungary) and beyond that

to the middle and lower Danube region (Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania). Once settled in their new homelands, the various Celtic tribes could indulge in raiding – a socially embedded system that enabled individuals to display and enhance their status. From the Po Valley, raiding parties swept across the Apennines deep into the Italian peninsula, confronting Roman armies and, in 390 BC, besieging Rome itself.

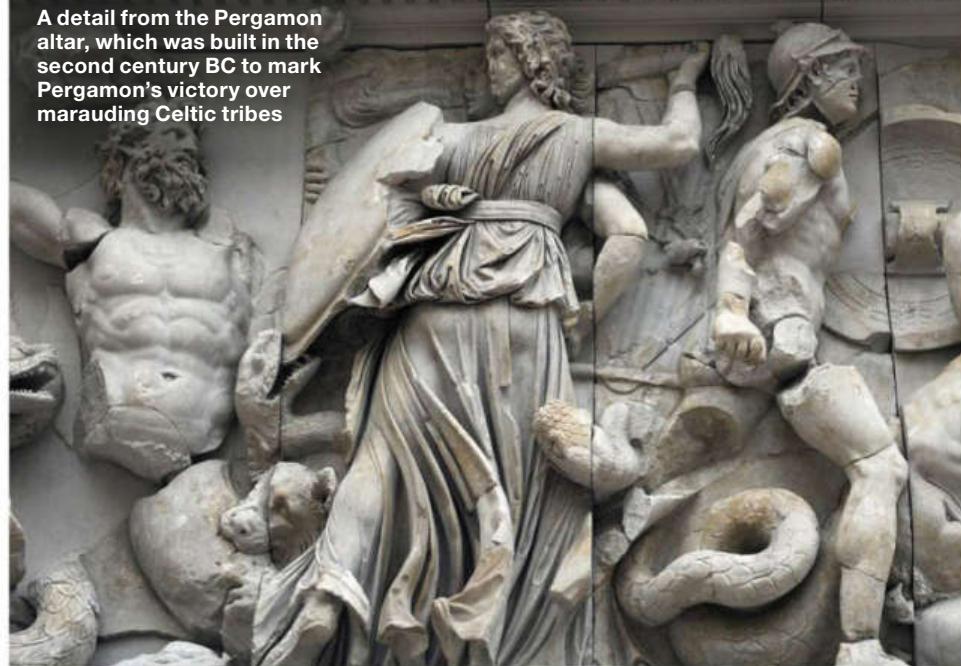
Later, from the middle Danube, other tribes penetrated Greece, ravaging the temple of Apollo at Delphi in 279 BC. Deflected from Greece, these migrating bands later crossed the Dardanelles and the Hellespont into Asia Minor and eventually settled in the vicinity of modern Ankara, from where they began to raid the Hellenistic cities of the Aegean coast. The raids lasted until the powerful state of Pergamon successfully defeated the marauders in a series of engagements. To commemorate these campaigns, a victory monument was erected at Pergamon depicting the defeated enemy. The famous statue of the Dying Gaul, now in Rome, is a copy of one of the figures.

## Image problem

The classical world, then, came into conflict with Celts in Italy, Greece and Asia Minor. As victors, they wrote of these strange barbarians, carefully depicting them as ‘other’ by emphasising the characteristics that distinguished them from the civilised Mediterraneans: the Celts were brave fighters, but lost heart and ran away – unlike the steadfast Romans; the Celts drank wine undiluted and got drunk – unlike the Romans, who diluted theirs and remained sober; the Celts fought naked in battle – unlike the well-armed Romans, and so on. It was a biased picture – a caricature almost – but, like any good caricature, it had within it some elements of the truth.

Much of our popular picture of the Celts comes from these very biased sources. Later, in the middle of the first century BC, when Julius Caesar campaigned in Gaul, we get from his *Commentaries* a rather more balanced picture of many different tribal groups, often centred on well-established towns, in various forms of alliance, with stable systems of government, able to come together to act in unison against the external threat posed by Rome. Caesar was reluctantly impressed by the belief systems of the Gauls and the centralising power of the druids. One tribe, the Aedui, sent their chief magistrate, Divitiacus, who was also a druid, to seek Roman aid against their enemies. Divitiacus addressed the Roman Senate and met Cicero, who wrote that Divitiacus “declared that he

A detail from the Pergamon altar, which was built in the second century BC to mark Pergamon's victory over marauding Celtic tribes



**“Cicero paints a picture of a sophisticated people quite different from the stereotype of the hairy, naked savages rushing blindly into battle”**

was acquainted with the system of nature that the Greeks call natural philosophy and he used to predict the future both by augury and inference”. The orator was impressed. The picture we can glean from these engagements is of a sophisticated people, quite different from the image of hairy, naked savages rushing blindly into battle.

The archaeological evidence too offers a far more reliable and unbiased picture of tribal societies at the time and also enables us to understand the earlier formative centuries. By about 1000 BC, much of western and central Europe shared a broadly similar culture and set of belief systems, reflecting a society in which warrior prowess was important. The foundation of Massalia around 600 BC saw Mediterranean luxury goods, such as wine vessels and wine itself, being traded northwards to the chiefdoms (called Hallstatt) occupying a wide zone north of the Alps. Much of this exotic material was eventually buried in the graves of the elite, so is well known to us from the famous burials of Vix



The ancient Roman statue of the Dying Gaul, which reinforced the traditional idea of Celts as savage, naked warriors

in Burgundy and Hochdorf near Stuttgart. In return for the luxury goods, the Hallstatt chiefs in all probability offered raw materials such as gold, tin and amber, as well as slaves, which were becoming increasingly important to the Mediterranean economy.

Such a system depended on the co-operation of tribes living around the Hallstatt chiefdom zone, who acquired and supplied the raw materials and the slaves. The market for slaves encouraged raiding in these peripheral zones, creating instability that led to the breakdown of the system in the early fifth century BC. As a result, the old Hallstatt chiefdoms collapsed, while the peripheral groups occupying that arc from the Loire to Bohemia became increasingly dominant.

These societies shared cultural aspects – both in burial rites, now focusing on the warrior, and in a highly original elite art style expressed mainly in metalwork. In the archaeological terminology, this cultural manifestation is called *La Tène* (after a site in Switzerland) and the decorative style is often



Men slay bulls in a detail from the Gundestrup cauldron, which dates from between c100 BC and AD 1. Though discovered in Denmark, this vessel is believed to be the handiwork of Thracians in contact with Celts

referred to as Celtic art. It was from these *La Tène* tribes that the migratory movements which impacted on the classical world came.

Given this archaeological background, it is reasonable to argue that the Celts, as defined by the Hellenistic and Roman writers, developed from a cultural tradition that can be traced back in west central Europe well into the second millennium BC.

When, in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, antiquarians began to take an interest in the Celts and Celtic origins, they had no archaeological evidence to inform them, but instead had to create hypotheses based partly on interpretations of the Bible and partly on the classical sources then available. The general view to emerge was that the Celts must have originated somewhere in the east and moved westwards across Europe, eventually crossing into Britain and Ireland. The idea was taken up by a brilliant antiquarian and linguist, Edward Lluyd, keeper of the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, who in 1707 published his great work *Archaeologia*

*Britannica*, in which he set out details of his study of the native languages of Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Cornwall and Brittany, recognising them as belonging to the same family, which he called Celtic. Later, in letters to friends, he speculated that the languages had been introduced into Britain, Ireland and Brittany by waves of Celtic migrants coming from western central Europe. In this he was simply following the theories then current. Lluyd's work was to form the cornerstone of Celtic studies for the next 250 years and provide the predominant model, which later scholars were content to follow.

### Challenging the consensus

From the mid-19th century, archaeological evidence began to appear in increasing quantity and was at first interpreted in terms of the accepted hypothesis, but by the 1960s archaeologists were finding it difficult to force the increasingly sophisticated data set into Lluyd's old linguistic model: there were things that simply did not fit. Most notably,

there was no convincing archaeological evidence of migrations from central Europe into Britain and Ireland, or into Iberia – regions where the Celtic languages were known to have been spoken. It was time to take a new objective look at the evidence.

Out of this has grown a new theory: that the languages we call Celtic originated in the Atlantic zone of Europe (Iberia, western France, Britain and Ireland) as a *lingua franca* among the maritime communities who can be shown to have been in active contact with each other along the Atlantic seaways from the fifth millennium BC. Belief systems, artistic styles and a sophisticated knowledge of cosmology were shared along this Atlantic facade, implying that people could communicate with one another in a common language.

But if the Celtic language developed in this zone (where, in some areas, it is still spoken), then how and when did it spread eastwards into central Europe? The simplest hypothesis consistent with the archaeological evidence is that the advance took place in the second

# Were the Britons Celtic?

The inhabitants of the British Isles spoke the same language as their continental cousins. But did that make them Celts?

The word Celtic was loosely used by the classical writers and has continued to be loosely used in more recent times to such a degree that some commentators question whether it has any value at all. Julius Caesar, however, very specifically said that the region between the rivers

Garonne and Seine was known to its inhabitants as *Celtica* and this is supported by a late fourth-century BC writer, Pytheas, who refers to the projecting mass of the Armorican peninsula as Keltike. But no ancient writer refers to the Britons as Celts.

The poem *Ora Maritima*, which makes use of sources going back to the sixth century, calls Britain "the island of the Albiones", adding that Ireland was inhabited by the Hierni, but the more widely used name was Prettanike or Pretannia whence came the name Britannia, familiar to the Romans. Prettanike may come from the word 'painted ones', referring to body decorations of the natives. If so, it may not be an ethnonym (the name people called themselves), but a description of the islanders reported to Pytheas by the neighbouring inhabitants of Gaul.

So can we call the Britons and Irish Celtic? That they were indigenous people and not immigrants is now broadly agreed, but they were bound to continental Europe by networks of

connectivity across the English Channel and southern North Sea and along the Atlantic seaways, and through these connections they shared aspects of their culture with their continental neighbours. The most dramatic is 'Celtic art', which developed in western central Europe and was being introduced into Britain and Ireland by the fourth century BC to be copied and developed by local craftsmen. The motifs of Celtic art were redolent with meaning and reflected belief systems that the Britons must now have held in common with their continental neighbours.

More telling is the fact that the Celtic language was used in Britain and Ireland as well as across much of the continent – and there is good reason to suggest that the language first developed in the Atlantic zone. If so, then the Irish and the Britons, as early Celtic speakers, have a strong claim to be classified as Celts.

That said, while the tribes in regular contact with the continent will have recognised their similarities with their continental neighbours, they will also have been conscious of their differences. They will have seen themselves as first and foremost a member of their tribe, but they will also have recognised an affinity with those across the Channel. Whether they regarded their common language and traditions as part of a broader Celtic heritage, we will never know.

millennium with the spread of the Maritime Bell Beaker phenomenon – a time of complex movements of people, beliefs and knowledge associated with the rapid development of copper and bronze metallurgy and the exploitation of a wide range of raw materials.

By the end of the second millennium, the Beaker phenomenon embraced the whole of western and central Europe and provided the basis from which subsequent Bronze Age cultures, including those of the early Hallstatt culture, emerged. The new hypothesis neatly explains how the Celtic language may have spread and why the earliest identified Celtic inscriptions, dating to the seventh century BC, are to be found in south-western Iberia. If we accept that speakers of the Celtic language can be called Celts then, by this hypothesis, the Celts originated in Atlantic Europe long before the Greeks and Romans first encountered them in the mid-first millennium BC.

Whether the new hypothesis will stand the tests of time remains to be seen, but powerful new techniques of scientific analysis are being developed to create entirely new data sets to put alongside the archaeological and linguistic evidence. The most promising of these, the study of ancient DNA derived from human bone, will enable us to chart the movements of populations and to see if the ancestors of the Celts really did come from the west.

In 1963, despairing at the fragmented nature of Celtic studies, JRR Tolkein wrote: "Celtic of any sort is... a magic bag into which anything may be put, and out of which anything may come... Anything is possible in the fabulous Celtic twilight, which is not so much a twilight of the gods as of the reason." He would, I think, be reassured that Celtic studies are now in vigorous good health and are at last emerging from the dimly lit realms. ■

**Barry Cunliffe** is emeritus professor of European Archaeology at the University of Oxford. He is the author of *Britain Begins* (OUP, 2013)

## DISCOVER MORE

### TELEVISION

► Alice Roberts and Neil Oliver go in search of the Celts in the series **The Celts: Blood, Iron, and Sacrifice**, due to air on BBC Two this autumn



### EXHIBITION

► The British Museum's **Celts: Art and Identity** exhibition runs until 31 January 2016. Find out more at [britishmuseum.org](http://britishmuseum.org)

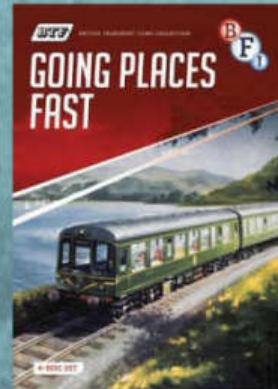
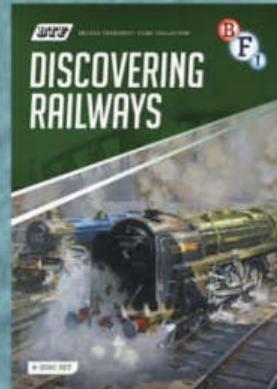
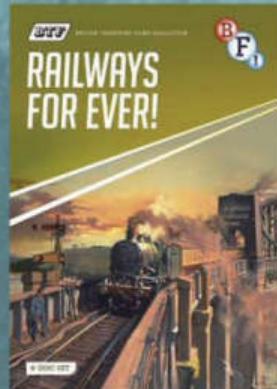
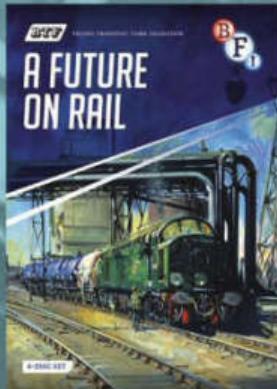
## ON THE PODCAST

We'll be exploring the British Museum's Celts exhibition on our weekly podcast

► [historyextra.com/bbchistorymagazine/podcasts](http://historyextra.com/bbchistorymagazine/podcasts)

ABOVE: Part of the Celtic 'Battersea shield', which was found in the Thames in 1857 RIGHT: A 19th-century illustration shows early Britons, who were known as Prettanike, possibly meaning 'painted ones'





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# The Georgian for popular his

**Loyd Grossman**

reveals how 18th-century Britons of all classes fell in love with radical portrayals of the past

**B**enjamin West's painting *The Death of General Wolfe* (shown right) was the popular hit of the Royal Academy's summer exhibition of 1771. The actor David Garrick delighted exhibition-goers one morning by posing in front of West's picture and enacting his view of how the general died. Newspapers reported how the ageing and infirm former prime minister William Pitt contemplated the picture for a long time before declaring that "there was too much dejection not only in the dying hero's face, but in the faces of the surrounding officers, who... as Englishmen should forget all traces of private misfortunes, when they had so grandly conquered for their country".

On busy days, more than a thousand people would visit the exhibition. By the time it closed, 22,485 catalogues had been sold. *Wolfe* was the most talked-about picture of the most successful art exhibition yet held in London.

General James Wolfe was Britain's greatest imperial martyr – the 32-year-old having been killed achieving victory at the battle of Quebec in 1759, which effectively delivered control of French Canada to Britain. West's bold depiction of his death electrified the public. A subsequent engraving of the painting became



*"The Death of General Wolfe* was the most **talked-about picture of the most successful art exhibition yet held in London"**

# craze story

One of Britain's great imperial heroes lies mortally wounded in his officers' arms in *The Death of General Wolfe* (1770). Benjamin West's masterpiece transformed the way that the Georgians thought about the past and the present, argues Loyd Grossman



one of the most widely distributed images of the entire 18th century.

The significance of *Wolfe's* success was due both to the appeal of its subject and to West's innovative treatment of it. In the hierarchical world of 18th-century culture, artists' choice of subject matter, and how they went about depicting it, was rigidly circumscribed.

Academic theory declared that the highest form of art was history painting, with its repertoire of subjects chosen from the Bible, mythology or ancient history. Even contemporary subjects were to be treated as if they emerged from the classical past.

Unsurprisingly, when George III was told that West proposed to paint Wolfe and his comrades in contemporary dress, he remarked that it was "thought very ridiculous to exhibit heroes in coats, breeches, and cock'd hats". Undaunted, West did just that and also painted the fallen hero in the pose of the dead Christ, familiar from centuries of pictures of the Lamentation in churches across Europe.

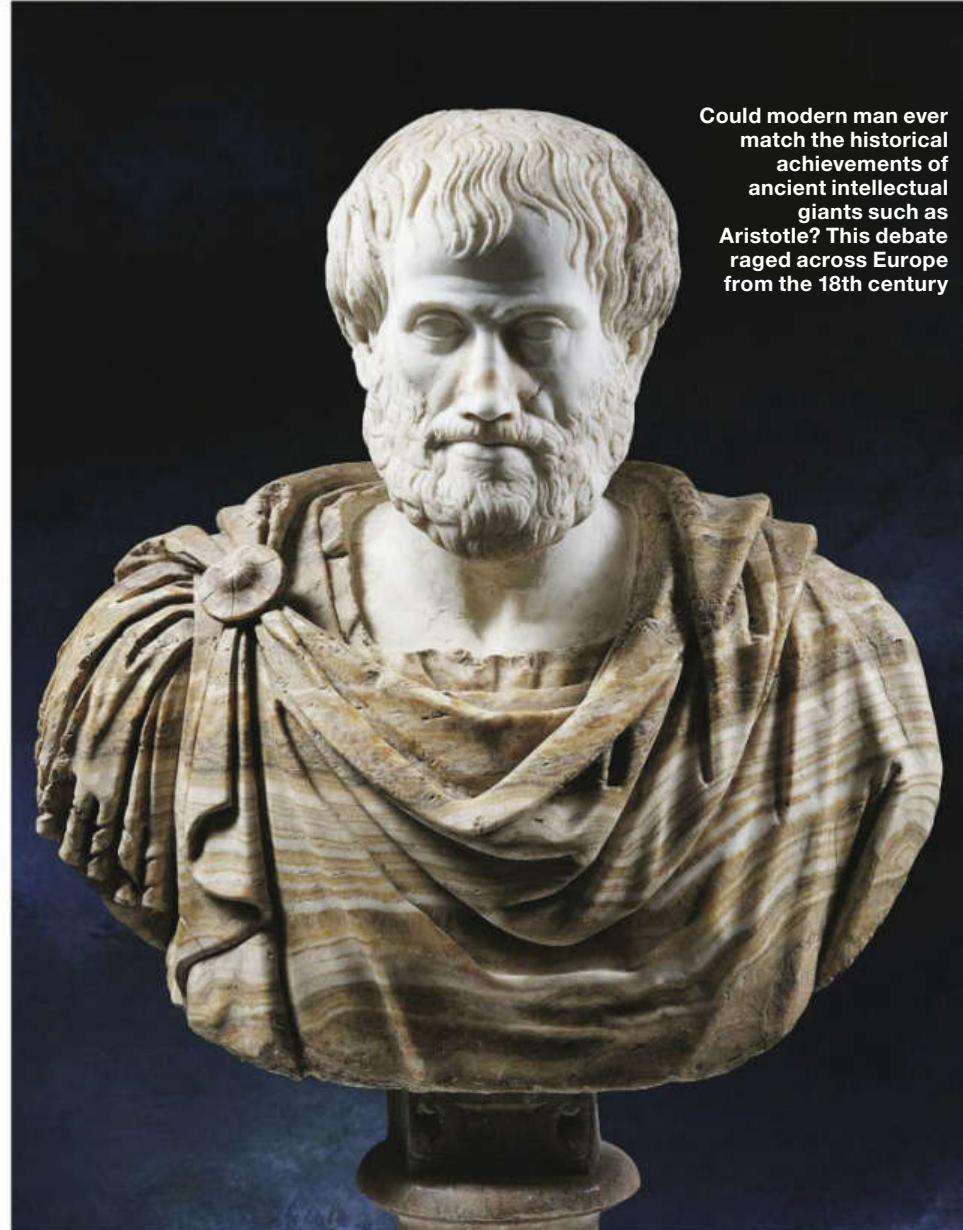
West used the language of the highest and most sacred form of art to elevate a great contemporary event to the status of epic drama. The result has been characterised as "the revolution in history painting", but it was much more than that: *Wolfe* was the first great visual expression of a revolution in historical consciousness, which transformed the way that men and women of the 18th century thought about the past and the present.

## The historical nation

The flurry of programmes on television, the rise of the celebrity-historian, the books at the top of the bestseller lists... all demonstrate that history has never been so popular. But our present-day history boom has its roots in the 18th century. As one of the star historians of the period, David Hume, joyfully proclaimed in 1770: "This is the historical age and this the historical nation."

So why did history become so popular in the 18th century? There is no single answer, but it helps to first look at what became known as the 'Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns'. This was a bitter ideological war waged in France and England, which asked whether the intellectual achievements of modern men and women could ever equal those of the ancient poets, playwrights, statesmen and philosophers.

It was a great leap forward when someone like the author James Boswell could declare: "I do sincerely think that this age is better than ancient times." Such assertions are at the very basis of what we can call a modern attitude or, as the 20th-century French philosopher Michel Foucault put it, "the will to heroise the present". Implicit in this, is a belief that the great events of the modern day are not



Could modern man ever match the historical achievements of ancient intellectual giants such as Aristotle? This debate raged across Europe from the 18th century

just news, but history.

The war between Britain and France, industrialisation, the rapid growth of cities and the 'rise' of the middle class had all stimulated a public hunger for history that could make sense of the rapid and often bewildering changes that were affecting the lives of 18th-century Britons. That demand was to be satisfied by the development of a new type of history writing, 'philosophical history'.

The first mass-market historian in Britain was the Huguenot soldier of fortune Paul de Rapin de Thoyras, whose *History of England*, published from 1725 as a shilling-an-instalment part-work, was such a success that a newspaper reported "no book in our language had ever more buyers or readers". But sadly Rapin's work was as dull as it was accessible.

It was the sparkling prose of David Hume that really ignited the 18th-century history boom. Compare these two accounts of the execution of Charles I. Rapin wrote how, "the king suffered death with great constancy, and without showing the least signs of weakness or amazement". Where Rapin plodded, Hume soared, writing that the executioner "held up

to the spectators the head streaming with blood, and cried aloud, This is the head of a traitor!... Never monarch, in the full triumph of success and victory, was more dear to his people, than his misfortunes and magnanimity, his patience and piety, had rendered this unhappy prince."

Hume played his audience like a violin. "The first quality of an historian is to be true and impartial," he wrote to his friend William Mure. "The next to be interesting. If you do not say that I have done both parties justice; and if Mrs Mure be not sorry for poor King Charles, I shall burn all my papers and return to philosophy." Hume never returned to philosophy: history's rewards were too great.

The mastery of prose and a gift for emotional engagement were not the only winning talents of the philosophical historians. Whereas most history writing from Thucydides onwards was more or less intended to be a how-to guide for the ruling classes – providing lessons in statesmanship, diplomacy and moral leadership – the philosophical historians painted with a broad brush. They expanded the scope of history away from a

"It was the sparkling prose of David Hume that ignited the 18th-century history boom - **he played his audience like a violin**"

narrow concentration on dynastic and political intrigue and battles fought. Voltaire – like Hume, a philosopher turned historian – was perhaps the chief inspiration in this regard, setting out the stall of philosophical history in his famous opening lines of *Le Siècle de Louis XIV*: "It is not just the life of Louis XIV that one claims to write; one is proposing a greater object... to depict to posterity not the actions of a single man, but the mind of mankind..."

Such an approach powerfully appealed to a new, bigger public of book buyers and readers. A knowledge of history was being transformed from a practical guide for the elite to a necessary middle-class attribute.

### The infallible public

Philosophical historians welcomed this new audience with open arms, believing that they liberated them from the often fickle and capricious demands of regal and aristocratic patrons on whom so many men and women of letters had depended for their living. "The people is far less often mistaken in its choice than the prince," Rousseau wrote in *The Social Contract*. The successful radical historian Catharine Macaulay rejoiced that: "Individuals may err, but the public judgment is infallible."

An eager new audience bought the works of the often conservative Hume as well as the always controversial Macaulay. "It has ever been, and I believe, ever will be the bane of this country... to rush into unnecessary and expensive wars; to give up all the fruits of very dear-bought conquests in the patching up of hasty treaties of peace," the latter wrote, "and when the nation is just on the point of emerging out of the poverty which war produces, the paroxysms of Quixote rage return..." Macaulay's forthright views brought fame and fortune: George III bought her books for his library, and when she visited America, George Washington entertained her.

It was in the annus mirabilis of 1776, year of the Declaration of American Independence and the publication of Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*, that a new kid came to town. The first volume of Edward Gibbon's *History of*

## Four past masters

When these historians put pen to paper, the Georgians sat up and took notice

### Voltaire (1694-1778)

Voltaire, whose real name was François-Marie Arouet, valued style and audience appeal as much as scholarship, and incorporated social and cultural history into the age-old tradition of political narrative. Voltaire's *Essai sur les Moeurs* (1756) was the first call-to-action of philosophical history, but the three years he spent in political exile in England helped to mould his approach to history writing. Voltaire's *Le Siècle de Louis XIV* (1751) increased his already considerable fame earned as a playwright, wit and radical thinker.



### David Hume (1711-76)

Hume is now more widely regarded as a philosopher than a historian. However, his philosophical writings were not a commercial success. Thanks to the income from his *History of England* (1754-61), Hume was able to remark that he "was become not only independent, but opulent". How influenced Hume was by Voltaire remains open to question. He observed that Voltaire "cannot be depended on with regard to facts; but his general views are sometimes sound, & always entertaining".

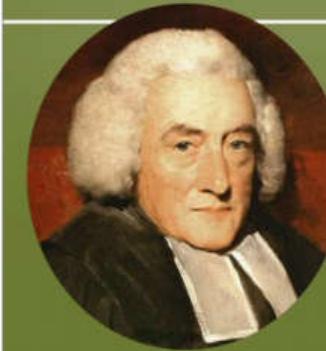
### Catharine Macaulay (1731-91)

'The republican virago', Macaulay was one of the most original voices of the 18th century. A leading member of the so-called bluestocking group of female intellectuals, her career was tainted by what was then regarded as personal scandal. Her platonic relationship with the clergyman Thomas Wilson led him to install a controversial life-size statue of her in his church, St Stephen Walbrook. She was later shunned by society following her marriage to a ship's surgeon 26 years her junior.



### William Robertson (1721-93)

Clergyman and principal of Edinburgh University, Robertson was at the centre of the Scottish Enlightenment, a friend and colleague of Hume, fellow historian Edward Gibbon and moral philosopher Adam Smith. Like Hume, Robertson combined immense research with a flair for melodrama. His *History of the Reign of Charles V* (1769) presented a majestic overview of European history, which made him perhaps the most internationally celebrated British historian.



*the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* was a monumental work whose enduring fame has sadly led us to neglect the achievements of its author's predecessors.

Although long surpassed in terms of research, the writings of Hume, Macaulay and William Robertson (see box above) are still joyful and inspiring as well as testaments to the age in which the love of history first became a popular pursuit. ■

Loyd Grossman is an entrepreneur, historian and broadcaster. He will be discussing the Georgian craze for history at BBC History Magazine's History Weekend at Malmesbury see [historyweekend.com](http://historyweekend.com)

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# The spies who surprised me

**Sir Max Hastings'** new book tells the story of espionage in the Second World War. Here he introduces some of the remarkable agents who captured his imagination, and reveals the momentous impact of their operations

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6



7

## Secrets and spies

- 1 Bletchley Park, the Buckinghamshire mansion that housed Britain's Government Code and Cypher School
- 2 Ronald Seth was a British spy who became a German double agent
- 3 Harro Schulze-Boysen, a Luftwaffe officer and member of the 'Red Orchestra', fed information to the Soviets
- 4 Noted historian Hugh Trevor-Roper monitored the German Abwehr for MI6
- 5 Smoke belches from a vessel torpedoed by a U-boat. Deciphering German messages helped stem attacks
- 6 Bill Tutte, whose work at Bletchley Park was pivotal in understanding and breaking the Lorenz encryption system
- 7 The Lorenz Schlüsselzusatz (SZ) was Germany's most powerful cipher machine
- 8 A member of the Women's Royal Naval Service operates a Colossus computer at Bletchley Park in 1943
- 9 Soviet superspy Richard Sorge, who infiltrated the German embassy in Tokyo



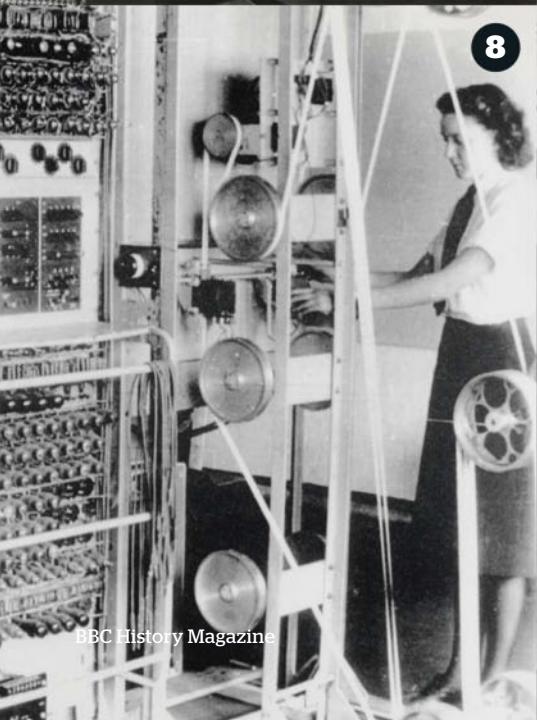
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People who killed each other – soldiers, sailors, airmen – were the most conspicuous, yet in some ways least interesting, participants in the Second World War. Outcomes were also profoundly influenced by a host of men and women who never fired a shot. All of the belligerents waged an unceasing secret war – a struggle for knowledge of the enemy – to empower their armies, navies and air forces through espionage and codebreaking. General Albert Praun, the Wehrmacht's last signals chief, wrote afterwards: "All aspects of this modern 'cold war of the air waves' were carried on constantly even when the guns were silent."

I thought I knew quite a bit about the war, but was amazed by some of the tales I encountered while researching my latest book. There was the Japanese spy chief whose exploits caused him to be dubbed by his own men 'Lawrence of Manchuria'. And there was Karl-Heinz Kramer, a German spy in Stockholm who warned Berlin in September 1944 that the Allies were about to stage a mass parachute drop to seize a bridge over the Rhine. His forecast was ignored, and after the war it was discovered that Kramer's supposed British informants were figments of his imagination: the Arnhem message was an inspired but wild guess.

Meanwhile, one of the Soviets' wartime spy chiefs, Pavel Sudoplatov, earned his spurs by presenting a Ukrainian nationalist in Rotterdam with a handsome box of chocolates... which blew the man to pieces minutes later. In the far east, bitter hostility between British and American secret services reached a nadir in January 1945, when USAAF aircraft shot down two RAF Liberators, apparently deliberately, because they were carrying French agents into Indochina against Washington's wishes.

The Soviet superspy Richard Sorge (pictured left) once said that spying should be done bravely – and that was certainly how he did it. He began his brilliant campaign to penetrate the German embassy in Tokyo in 1933 by befriending the Wehrmacht colonel who soon afterwards became Hitler's ambassador – and by sleeping with the colonel's wife. Before Sorge was finally arrested eight years later, and dispatched to the gallows, there was scarcely a handsome woman within his reach whom he had not seduced, nor an embassy secret that had gone unreported to Moscow.

Not the least remarkable agent of the war was a man few people have ever heard of, the Special Operations Executive's (SOE's) Ronald Seth, who was parachuted into Estonia to

start a resistance movement in October 1942. Seth was next sighted in Paris in 1944, having become a protégé of German intelligence, trained to drop back into Britain. This fabulously weird man's doings fill a thousand pages in the files of SOE, MI6, MI5, MI9 and Hitler's Abwehr (military intelligence). It almost defies belief that Seth's operational codename was 'Blunderhead'.

In my new book, as in all my books, I have attempted to paint the big picture – in this case, the significance of intelligence to each nation's war effort – then woven in human stories such as these about spies, codebreakers, guerrillas and intelligence chiefs. The Second World War witnessed an explosion of covert operations such that, in Professor Richard Aldrich's words, "secret service became the struggle's growth industry". Never in history had such vast resources been lavished upon garnering information. The Americans alone spent half a billion dollars a year on SIGINT – signals intelligence.

## Harnessing civilian talent

Most of this was wasted, of course, but today we are in no doubt that the western Allies did intelligence better than their enemies, partly because they gave free rein to superb civilian talent. When the British official history began to be published 30 years ago, I suggested to its author, Harry Hinsley, a veteran of the codebreaking unit at Bletchley Park, that it seemed to show amateurs achieving much more than secret service professionals. Hinsley replied, rather testily: "Of course they did. You wouldn't want to think, would you, that in peacetime the best brains of our society wasted their lives in intelligence?"

I've always thought this important. Battles could be fought by men of limited gifts, the virtues of the sports field: fitness, grit, skill with weapons. But intelligence services suddenly needed brilliance – and Britain was the place where they got more of it than anywhere else.

Most books on this theme focus on single nations. I have tried instead to explore the global story. I've written a lot about the Soviets, whose doings are unfamiliar to most western readers, and who created the largest spy networks the world has ever seen, across continental Europe and in Britain and the US.

The 'Red Orchestra', upper-middle-class, leftwing Germans, provided Moscow with superb intelligence about Hitler's war machine between 1935 and 1942. They were led by astonishing personalities: the Luftwaffe officer Harro Schulze-Boysen and his wife Libertas, the intellectual Arvid Harnack and his American wife Mildred, all four of whom eventually met dreadful deaths at Nazi hands.

Spymasters were often unsure which side



Admiral Karl Dönitz talks to a U-boat commander in December 1944. Interception of Allied messages aided German attacks – but also masked British success in breaking German ciphers

## "One thousandth of 1 per cent of material from secret sources changed battlefield outcomes"

their agents were really on, and in some cases doubt persists to this day. The British dwell obsessively on the treason of the so-called Cambridge Five. But fewer people notice what we might call the Washington and Berkeley 500 – a small army of American leftists who briefed Soviet intelligence not merely about the atomic bomb but also about every aspect of US policy and technology.

Many books about intelligence focus on what spies and codebreakers found out. The only question that matters, however, is of how far their discoveries changed outcomes. Did they prompt action by commanders in the field and at sea? It is fruitless to study in isolation any nation's pearls of revelation. These must be seen in the context of thousands of pages of trivia and nonsense that crossed the desks of analysts and warlords.

I am struck by the number of spies whose only achievement abroad was to stay alive, at hefty cost to their employers, while collecting information of which not a smidgen assisted anyone's war effort. Perhaps one-thousandth of 1 per cent of material from secret sources changed battlefield outcomes. Yet that

fraction was of such value that nations begrimed not a life nor a pound, rouble, dollar or Reichsmark expended in securing it.

Until late 1942 the wartime SIGINT competition was much less lopsided in the Allies' favour than legend suggests. Hitler had his own Bletchley Parks, and the Germans broke important codes, with consequences for both the battle of the Atlantic and the north African campaign. Admiral Karl Dönitz's men achieved reasonably regular breaks into convoy communications, though fortunately only about one signal in 10 was broken quickly enough to concentrate U-boats on targets. A secret postwar American study of German naval intelligence concluded: "The enemy possessed at all times a reasonably clear picture of Atlantic convoys with varying degrees of accuracy as to the routes and day-by-day plotting."

Such failures sometimes had perverse consequences. Dönitz several times became fearful that the British were reading U-boat codes, and ordered inquiries. In the end, however, he allowed himself to be reassured by the vulnerability of the Allies' convoy traffic. He reasoned that if the Royal Navy was clever enough to read the German hand, its chiefs would have stopped this costly hole in their own communications.

Had the Allies' conduct in the battle of the Atlantic suggested omniscience, Dönitz would almost certainly have suspected the British breakthroughs in deciphering his encrypted communications, and slammed shut the window on U-boat operations that

had been prised open by the brilliant codebreakers of Bletchley Park.

As for the land war, until late 1942 German and Allied SIGINT were in about the same place. The Afrika Korps thought the British 8th Army's wireless discipline very slack, and attributed to this some of Rommel's triumphs. The so-called 'Desert Fox' called the Wehrmacht's 621st Radio Interception Company his 'circus', and it was deemed a major disaster when in July 1942 New Zealanders overran and destroyed it. Worse for Rommel, at about the same time, Washington belatedly changed its diplomatic codes. For many months, he had been reading what he gratefully called his 'little Fellers' – the dispatches of Colonel Bonner Fellers, the American military attaché in Cairo, who revealed almost every detail about British deployments and intentions.

After Bletchley persuaded the Americans to repair this gaping security breach, the Germans never again secured such a superb source. For the rest of the war they read only lower Allied codes, though spasms of carelessness enabled the Germans to piece together orders of battle, just as the British and Americans did with German communiqués.

The Wehrmacht out-station in Athens, for instance, once read a message from a British paymaster in Palestine, instructing a division moving to Egypt to leave behind its filing cabinets. This enabled a big red pin to be shifted on the map of Montgomery's deployments. Later, the Germans discovered that the American 82nd Airborne division had been redeployed from Italy to Britain because they broke an administrative message about a paratrooper facing a paternity suit. They also deduced an impending attack in Italy when they decrypted a signal ordering a rum issue for the assault units.

### Bletchley's brilliance

We should acknowledge that German codebreakers achieved important successes – before thanking our forefathers' lucky stars that they did not, in the end, match the men and women of the Government Code and Cypher School outside a dreary suburban town in Buckinghamshire: Bletchley Park.

Alan Turing was in a class of his own. Yet the Bletchley Park story is far more complicated than such simplistic films as *The Imitation Game* suggest. First, far from anybody at Bletchley persecuting Turing, his genius was always recognised there. Second, the GCCS's achievement was a team effort by one of the most remarkable groups of human beings ever assembled – Turing could have achieved nothing without that fellowship.

Legend has it that Bletchley, through Turing's Bombe – electro-mechanical machines that

helped decipher messages encrypted using German Enigma machines – gained open access to the enemy's communications. This is untrue. The codebreakers didn't walk on all the water all the time. Though a lot of Luftwaffe and naval traffic was read from 1941 onwards, breaking army Enigma messages was hugely difficult. As late as September 1944, Hut 6 at Bletchley could read only 15 per cent of army messages. Many breaks took days to achieve, and reached battlefield commanders too late to influence events.

Moreover, an increasing number of the Germans' most secret messages were enciphered not with Enigma, but instead through teleprinters that employed an entirely different system. The achievement of Bletchley's people in cracking this system was arguably greater than that of breaking Enigma. The most widely used German teleprinter was the Lorenz Schlüsselzusatz (SZ) – codenamed Tunny at Bletchley – which transmitted in a non-Morse language. After British interceptors started to record this incomprehensible stutter, from August 1941 a Bletchley team probed its significance.

Piece by piece they groped towards the solution of the Lorenz riddle, handicapped by the lack of a physical example of the Germans' transmitter (whereas they had had an Enigma machine). The man who made the initial discoveries is scarcely known to posterity, yet deserves to be almost as famous as Turing.

Bill Tutte was a 24-year-old former chemistry student turned mathematician. The son of a gardener, he won a scholarship to the

## "Some of the most momentous German messages were encrypted in Jellyfish"



This Abwehr G312 Enigma machine, now on display at Bletchley Park, was used to encrypt messages between German armed forces

Cambridge and County Day School, then progressed to Trinity College. In October 1941, Tutte was assigned to study Lorenz, and spent months seeking to divine what kind of machine might generate the noises recorded by the interceptors. By sheer brainpower he eventually established that the teleprinter had two sets of five wheels, with 501 settable pins and a further two motor wheels, between them creating a range of combinations much greater than Enigma's. A Bletchley chief hailed Tutte's contribution as "one of the outstanding successes of the war" – and so it was.

### Fishing for information

Establishing the machine's character was a vital beginning, yet the problems of reading its traffic remained huge. By the summer of 1942, the need to crack Lorenz had become desperately urgent. The more the Germans used it for top-secret communications, the less they used Enigma. Between July and October 1942, by extraordinary endeavours that owed little to mechanical assistance, a Bletchley team read some messages. It was learned that one of the teleprinters was named *Sägefisch* (sawfish), so different German keys used in setting Lorenz were allocated fish codenames at Bletchley – Bream, Grilse, Octopus and so on. Some of the most momentous German messages were encrypted in Jellyfish.

Bletchley reported in August 1943: "The quality of the intelligence derived from the Fish keys is of the highest order." Decryption attempts became far more successful towards the end of the year, when new technology – first, the 'Heath Robinson', then Colossus – was deployed.

Decryptions from both Enigma and Lorenz were known indiscriminately to Allied field commanders as Ultra, and these enabled them to plan operations in the second half of the war with a confidence vouchsafed to no previous warlords in history. But it deserves emphasis that, though Ultra was a marvellous tool, it was not an Excalibur, magicking victories. Reading an enemy's hand did not diminish its strength. Until late 1942, again and again the British learned where the Germans intended to strike, but it did not save them from losing the battles that followed. Hard power was always indispensable to the exploitation of secret knowledge.

The British have always been justly proud of their decryption successes, but others also played this game, notably the Soviets, sometimes with awesome success. Ian Fleming's thrillers are said to bear no relationship to the real world of espionage. Yet, when reading contemporary commissars' reports and memoirs, I am struck by how uncannily they echo the mad, monstrous,

imagined dialogue of such people in *From Russia With Love*. Some of the plots executed by Stalin's spymasters were no less fantastic than Fleming's, and dwarf in scale those of the western Allies.

For instance, in December 1941 a personable young man named Alexander Demyanov, descendant of a great noble family, skied into the German lines southwest of Moscow and announced that he represented a pro-Hitler resistance group committed to restoring the tsars. The Abwehr embraced him, and a few months later parachuted him back into Russia, codenamed Agent Max. Demyanov soon reported that he had become a wireless operator at Red Army headquarters and, for more than two years thereafter, passed fabulous information to Berlin.

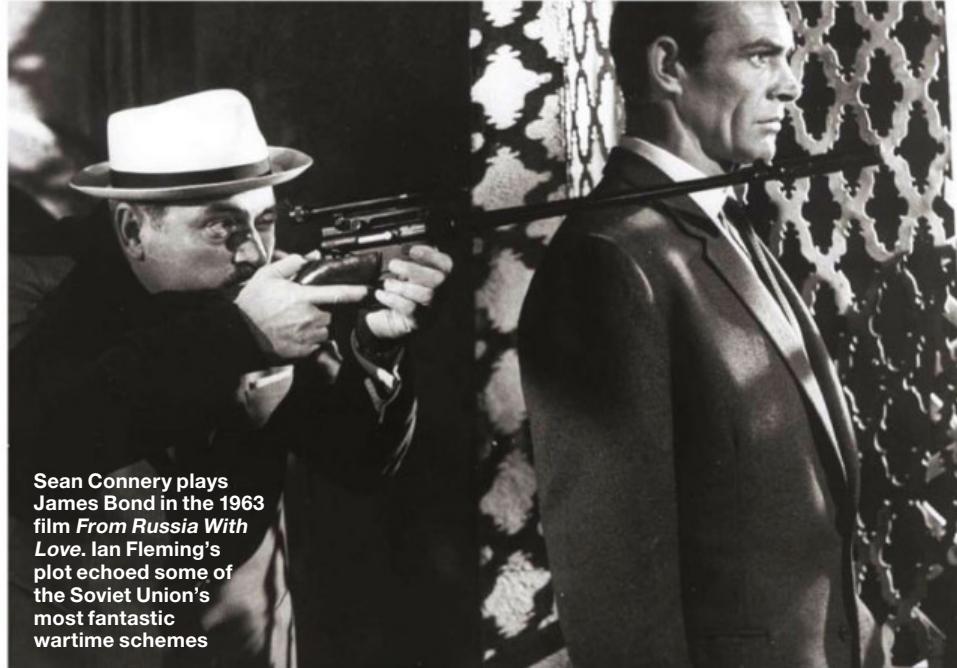
### Stalin's pivotal deception

Colonel Reinhard Gehlen, chief of German intelligence on the eastern front, cherished Max as his star source. Meanwhile, the spy's dispatches found another fascinated audience – in Britain. Hugh Trevor-Roper, later a controversial Oxford historian, spent the war monitoring the Abwehr for MI6. During my research I decided that the snobbish, rude, arrogant Trevor-Roper was one of the most remarkable British intelligence officers of the war. From 1942 onwards he knew more about Hitler's secret services than anybody in Germany, because he was privy to the identities of all of the double agents controlled by the Twenty Committee (so named as a nod to that number in Roman numerals: XX – 'double-cross') in London.

Courtesy of Bletchley, the donnish officer pored over Agent Max's early dispatches – and warned the Soviets they had a security leak the size of the Grand Canyon. When they took no notice, Trevor-Roper decided that Max must be a double, controlled by Stalin's NKVD.

In November 1942 came Stalingrad and operation Uranus, the Soviets' devastatingly successful double-envelopment of the German 6th Army. Around the same time further north, the Red Army also launched another big offensive, Operation Mars – which proved a bloodstained failure.

This caused the British to conclude that Agent Max could not conceivably be working for Moscow – because he had warned the Germans that Mars was coming, enabling them to shift reinforcements northwards to meet it. Nobody, reasoned these rational men serving a western democracy, could have sacrificed 77,000 Soviet lives to promote a deception. But Stalin did just that. The evidence now seems incontrovertible: that Agent Max was indeed the NKVD's Agent Heine; and that, on the Soviet warlord's



Sean Connery plays James Bond in the 1963 film *From Russia With Love*. Ian Fleming's plot echoed some of the Soviet Union's most fantastic wartime schemes

## "Surely nobody could have sacrificed 77,000 lives to promote a deception. But Stalin did just that"

personal authority, the Germans were told of Operation Mars to distract them from Uranus. This was surely one of the most remarkable intelligence stories of the war.

Many things about the 1939–45 era remain disputable, but no informed person doubts that Bletchley was one of the most remarkable institutions the world has ever known, forming a key part of the narrative of Britain's achievement in the conflict. It remains nonetheless weird, almost beyond imagining, that the Germans never recognised the vulnerability of Enigma and Lorenz. They received endless clues and tips: in my book I tell the story of how, in May 1942, a German commerce raider seized the Australian freighter *Nankin*, and found aboard top secret Allied reports based on Ultra intercepts, which were eventually forwarded to Berlin. And in 1943 a Swiss intelligence officer, exploiting a warning apparently from an American source, told the Abwehr that the Allies had broken the U-boat codes.

Even then, a most un-Germanic mental laziness prevailed. While the Third Reich executed wholesale Allied spies, traitors and saboteurs, its functionaries remained oblivious of the most deadly of all threats to its security – a few hundred tweedy, bespectacled young academics labouring in drab, suburban Buckinghamshire. The only explanation is hubris: an institutional unwillingness to believe that their British enemies, whom they so often humbled on

the battlefield, could be that clever.

Although there are many stories in my book about bungles and failures, in intelligence as in everything else related to conflict, victory is won not by the side that makes no mistakes, but by the one that makes fewer than the enemy. By such a reckoning, the final triumph of the British and Americans was as great in the secret war as it became in the collision between armies, navies and air forces.

We should also acknowledge that, for many agents serving their countries abroad, the experience was irresistibly thrilling, albeit at risk of their lives. An SOE officer posted to the Levant described the impact on local listeners when he used the French word *intelligence* to describe his mission: "The sharp intake of breath by Arabs who had read their *romans policiers*, and knew the omnipotence, omniscience and ruthlessness of the British Secret Service, was flatteringly audible. Some instantly asked me if I was a lord." He loved it. So, too, did most other spies of many nations. Why else would they have taken the work? ■

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**Sir Max Hastings** is a military historian and journalist. He will be talking about Second World War espionage at *BBC History Magazine's History Weekend* in Malmesbury – for details see [historyweekend.com](http://historyweekend.com)

### DISCOVER MORE

#### BOOKS

- **The Secret War: Spies, Codes and Guerrillas 1939–1945** by Max Hastings (William Collins, 2015)
- **The World of Spies**, a collector's edition by *BBC History Magazine*, is on sale from 16 October. For more details, see page 79

### ON THE PODCAST

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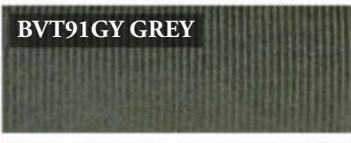
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# THE BIG QUEST ANCIENT

From pyramids to mummies and Cleopatra to Tutankhamun, Egyptologist **Joann Fletcher** reveals the latest discoveries and controversies surrounding the ancient civilisation

Accompanies the forthcoming BBC Two series *Immortal Egypt*



## 1 What is the earliest evidence of 'art' in Egypt?

The oldest graphic activity ever recorded in Egypt – indeed, in the whole of north Africa – was carved into the sandstone cliffs of Qurna around 25 miles south of Edfu, between Luxor and Aswan. Recently scientifically dated at 19,000 years old by Dr Dirk Huyge, director of the Belgian Mission who has studied the site since 2005, the gallery comprises at least 185 individual images, almost three-quarters of which depict the now-extinct, powerfully built wild cattle known as aurochs, the ancestors of domestic cows.

Some of these huge creatures – almost 2 metres long – have ‘cut’ marks scratched around the head and neck area. Huyge believes that these ‘cuts’ have some kind of symbolical meaning, possibly as an attempt to ensure a successful outcome for hunting expeditions. The Qurna scenes also feature hippos, gazelle, birds, fish and strange hybrid beings, along with several stylised female figures representing the earliest Egyptian attempts at self-portraits.

Huyge has dubbed the rich repertoire of scenes a veritable “Lascaux along the Nile”, observing that these lifelike and vivid images are “uncannily close” in style to European cave art such as that seen at Lascaux in France, which also features aurochs and other large animals. He adds

that “perhaps direct influence or cultural exchange over such a long distance is not as improbable as it seems... The Mediterranean Sea at the time of the last Ice Age was at least 100 metres lower than it is now: could it be that Palaeolithic people established an intercontinental exchange of iconographic and symbolic concepts?”

The pictures carved into the sandstone cliffs at Qurna are dominated by depictions of aurochs – now-extinct wild cattle – dating back 19,000 years



# QUESTIONS OF EGYPT

The famous gold death mask of Tutankhamun was discovered in tomb KV62 by Howard Carter and his team – but was it originally made for Nefertiti?

## 2 Who was the real Tutankhamun?

Though undeniably Egypt's most famous pharaoh, little is known about Tutankhamun. When born, probably around 1346 BC at the city of Amarna, some 180 miles south of modern Cairo, he was named Tutankhaten – 'Living Image of [sun god] Aten'. His father was the so-called heretic pharaoh Akhenaten, while his mother may have been Kiya, one of Akhenaten's minor wives, or possibly even Akhenaten's chief wife and co-ruler Nefertiti.

Tutankhaten took the throne at his father's death in c1336 BC, changing his name to the more familiar Tutankhamun when the Aten cult was terminated and worship of the state god Amun reinstated.

He ruled until his death in c1327 BC, the cause of which remains a focus of debate. Studies of Tutankhamun's tomb and its contents also continue to reveal all manner of unexpected details. Not least is the possibility that at least 80 per cent of his grave goods were originally made for other members of his family, from the famous gold throne to at least one of his three golden coffins. Even the gold death mask "had originally been a Nefertiti piece", claims Egyptologist Nicholas Reeves.



Intricately carved hieroglyphs at the 'White Chapel' of Senusret I at Karnak (c1950 BC). Did hieroglyphs evolve from early tax records?

## 3 Why did hieroglyphs develop?

The deceptively simple-looking picture writing evolved over several millennia into a sophisticated system using thousands of signs. First described as hieroglyphs ('sacred carvings') by the Greeks, they were largely used to create the ritual texts covering the walls of temples and tombs, while a form of hieroglyphic shorthand known as 'hieratic' was used by the literate elite. These were mainly the scribes and officials who administered the country for the king, even before Egypt emerged as the world's first nation state in c3100 BC.

German archaeologists excavating the tombs of Egypt's earliest rulers at Abydos in

the late 1980s discovered some 150 small labels of bone, ivory and wood carved with simple pictograms – 'proto-hieroglyphs' – describing everything from bolts of linen to jars of oil, together with their quantity and place of origin.

The labels, once attached to grave goods, have been dated to c3250 BC and are the earliest evidence for the way officials raised and recorded taxes in kind. They are among the most important documents in history, as the pictograms form a phonetically readable script that some claim was the earliest writing in the world – apparently predating that of the Sumerians of Mesopotamia.

## 4 When were dead bodies first mummified?

Mummification is so synonymous with ancient Egypt that most people assume it has been completely understood for some time. Yet recent research is rewriting much of what was previously known – from the most effective techniques used during the 14th century BC 'New Kingdom' to the preservatives that were used to obtain the most lifelike results.

The origins of embalming are now known to be much earlier than the Pyramid Age (from c2600 BC). Well before that time, linen was used to wrap bodies at sites such as Mostagedda (north of Luxor), some of it coated in a toffee-like substance. But only in 2014 was this substance finally identified, by archaeological chemist Dr Stephen Buckley of the University of York, as a blend of oils, fats and antibacterial pine resin. He discovered that "some of the ingredients were brought from the north-east Mediterranean. For example, the pine resin must have come from what is now south-eastern Turkey."

But such long-distance trade links were not the only big surprise. Carbon dating carried out on the Mostagedda linen by researchers at the University of Oxford revealed that the wrappings and mixtures both date to c4300 BC – some 1,700 years earlier than mummification was previously believed to have first been used in Egypt.

## 5 How many pyramids are there?

It is estimated that 138 pyramids survive in Egypt, varying widely in layout, size, location and purpose. The first was built in c2650 BC for King Djoser. His bench-shaped 'mastaba' tomb was embellished to form a six-tiered, 60 metre-high step pyramid (shown below). Snefru (c2613–c2589 BC), the greatest of all Egypt's pyramid builders, moved 9 million tonnes of stone to build three successive pyramids as he refined his plans, and his son Khufu created the Great Pyramid of Giza. This was the standard royal tomb till superseded in c1750 BC by rock-cut tombs such as those in Luxor's Valley of the Kings. Some smaller pyramids are believed to have served as territorial markers or tax-collecting points; these were built throughout the Nile Valley as far south as Aswan in around 2600 BC.



## 6 How old was the oldest known 'Egyptian'?

The remains of the earliest human yet found in Egypt were discovered by Belgian archaeologists in 1994 during their excavation of a Stone Age quarry at Taramsa Hill near Dendera, about 40 miles north of Luxor. They unexpectedly uncovered the shallow pit grave of a young child. Its body was carefully buried in a seated position, oriented east toward the rising sun, with its head resting back on a sand bed to face skyward. The child, who lived during the late Pleistocene, approximately 60,000–55,000 years ago, was

aged between 8 and 10 when it died, though the remains were so fragile and fragmentary that it was impossible to determine whether they were male or female.

Not only is this the oldest known burial from north Africa, but it also provides a vital missing link in the human story. As the anthropologists who examined the child's remains explained: "The location of this find is significant, because it's on a possible dispersion route of modern humans from Africa into Asia and Europe between 50,000 and 100,000 years ago."

## 7 Was Cleopatra an Egyptian?

Cleopatra VII 'the Great' was the last pharaoh of the Ptolemaic dynasty (305–30 BC). The Macedonian king Alexander the Great had taken Egypt in 332 BC during his conquest of the Persian empire; on his death, Ptolemy I – one of Alexander's generals and rumoured half-brother – took control. His descendants – 15 male pharaohs, all called Ptolemy – shared the

throne with female co-rulers. Cleopatra VII ruled first with her father, then her brothers and finally her son (by Julius Caesar) Ptolemy XV, called Caesarion.

Though the Ptolemies initially spoke Greek and clung to Greek culture, they gradually became influenced by Egypt's ancient traditions. In 181 BC Ptolemy V was mummified rather than cremated, and Ptolemy VIII married one of his daughters into the Egyptian nobility.

Cleopatra VII was born in Egypt, as were most of her predecessors, but was the first to learn the Egyptian language and gain the support of her subjects against the growing power of Rome. Images within Egypt's temples show her as a typical Egyptian figure with traditional regalia and long hair. However, classical-style marble portrait busts show her wavy locks swept up in a Greek-style bun. One painted image even suggests red hair. Controversy about Cleopatra's ethnicity continues to rage; the identities of her mother and grandmother are unknown – they might have been members of the Egyptian aristocracy.

GETTY/BRIDGEMAN



Some Egyptologists believe that this basalt statue, now in St Petersburg's Hermitage Museum, depicts Cleopatra. The Ptolemaic dynasty was Macedonian in origin, but Cleopatra's mother and grandmother may have been Egyptian

## 8 Are any discoveries still to be made?

This is perhaps the question most often asked of Egyptologists – and the answer is a resounding yes!

Some of the most exciting discoveries are being made in museums. Last year museum staff in Wigan, combining their collections in new storage facilities, rediscovered antiquities covering the entire span of Egypt's ancient history, from c3500 BC to the early centuries AD, the highlight being a gilded face from an 18th-dynasty coffin. Also last year, a re-examination of ancient linen wrappings from Mostagedda stored in Bolton Museum pushed back the origins of mummification by 1,700 years (see opposite). Even the British Museum still produces surprises. In 2012, computed tomography (CT) scans revealed that the naturally mummified body of a man – known to generations of schoolchildren as 'Ginger', thanks to his faded red hair – had literally been stabbed in the back around 3500 BC.

In Egypt itself, of course, new finds are announced almost every week. Even the Valley of the Kings has not yet been completely explored. Nor, it seems, has its most famous tomb. In 2014, high-resolution scans of the walls of Tutankhamun's burial chamber revealed the outlines of two intact sealed doorways. Some experts believe these may lead to additional unexplored chambers.

So, much like the iconic golden death mask, even the tomb of Tutankhamun still conceals secrets. ■



A member of staff at the British Museum next to a scan of Gebelein Man, also known as 'Ginger'

**Joann Fletcher** is honorary visiting professor at the University of York. She is speaking at *BBC History Magazine's History Weekend* in Malmesbury see [historyweekend.com](http://historyweekend.com)

### DISCOVER MORE

#### BOOK

► **The Story of Egypt** by Joann Fletcher (Hodder & Stoughton, 2015)

#### TELEVISION

► **Immortal Egypt: World's Greatest Civilisation**, written and presented by Joann Fletcher, is due to be broadcast on BBC Two later this year





A portrait of an ageing woman in black, said to be Lady Margaret Douglas, a close relative of Henry VIII. Her romantic liaisons landed her in the Tower of London on more than one occasion

# The forgotten Tudor princess

# Lady of honour to Anne Boleyn, grandmother to a king: Margaret Douglas's life was intimately connected to the Tudor period. So why is she so little known? **Alison Weir** explores her story

In 1536 a young woman lay in the Tower of London under sentence of death. Her crime was to fall in love – treason in the eyes of King Henry VIII, who believed that her lover had designs on his throne.

This wasn't Anne Boleyn, who famously lost her head that year, but the king's near heiress, Lady Margaret Douglas, who had secretly precontracted herself to Lord Thomas Howard, half-brother of the Duke of Norfolk. The Act of Attainder passed against Thomas was the first ever to legislate on royal marriages, and decreed that any man espousing or defiling a relative of the king, without royal assent, was a traitor – and both would suffer death. Thus Margaret and Thomas stood condemned under a statute that had not been in force when they had committed what was now, legally, an offence.

Margaret Douglas was a great prize, for she had a strong claim to the throne of England. Tudor blood ran in her veins: her mother, Margaret Tudor, Queen of Scots, was Henry VIII's sister. Margaret was courted and feared accordingly.

The story of her extraordinary life spans five Tudor reigns, and is packed with intrigue, drama and tragedy. In an age of female inferiority, she stands out as a feisty, intelligent character who operated effectively at the highest levels of power.

Margaret's birth was as dramatic as her life. In 1515, ousted from the Scottish regency, a pregnant Margaret Tudor fled into Northumberland, finding refuge at Harbottle Castle. Her daughter was born there, two weeks prematurely, on 7 October. Henry VIII had no children, and English law did not recognise the claim of the Scottish James V, so Margaret Douglas was Henry's next heir after her mother.

Margaret's childhood was overshadowed by her warring parents. By 1518 her father, Archibald Douglas, Earl of Angus was living in adultery and, after they divorced, he took custody of young Margaret. In 1528, branded a traitor, he fled with her to England.

Margaret was growing into a spirited young lady, "both beautiful and highly esteemed", as one contemporary put it. In 1531 Henry placed her in the household of his daughter,

the Princess Mary. Two years later, Margaret was one of the ladies of honour assigned to Anne Boleyn, a role she would hold under all of Henry's successive wives.

Anne presided over a lively circle of courtiers who enjoyed much "pastime in the queen's chamber", making music, dancing and writing poetry. The poems they wrote were bound into books and circulated at court; one, the *Devonshire Manuscript*, comprised verses composed or transcribed by Margaret, and her friends Mary Howard, Duchess of Richmond and Mary Shelton, Anne Boleyn's cousin. These poems chart the doomed romance between Margaret and Thomas Howard. Precontracting herself without royal assent shows Margaret as headstrong and reckless – character traits that would be evident throughout her adult life.

## Doomed romance

By October 1537 the couple were grievously ill. Margaret was freed from the Tower but Thomas, tragically, died. Devastated and weak, Margaret was sent to Syon Abbey to recuperate. She was still mourning her lost lover a year later.

Yet she failed to learn from this terrible experience. In 1541 she again incurred Henry's displeasure after involving herself in an affair with Charles Howard, brother of the doomed queen Catherine Howard. This time she was fortunate to escape with a reprimand. She spent the next two years at Kenninghall, the Duke of Norfolk's house. In 1543 she attended Henry's wedding to

**"The story of Margaret's extraordinary life spans five Tudor reigns, and is packed with intrigue, drama and tragedy"**

Katherine Parr and returned to court.

On 6 July 1544, Margaret was married to Matthew Stuart, Earl of Lennox, an ambitious, French-educated, Scottish nobleman who had turned traitor by offering his allegiance to Henry VIII. It was a political union, but the couple fell in love and remained devoted to each other.

While Lennox was away campaigning, Margaret bore his children. They had eight: four boys and four girls. The only two to survive into adulthood were Henry, Lord Darnley, born in 1545, and Charles, born in 1557. Margaret doted on her sons, and was the dominating influence in their lives.

But a malign influence had entered her world: Lennox's secretary, Thomas Bishop, a treacherous mischief-maker. His ill-feeling seems to have sprung from Margaret complaining about him to her husband and urging his dismissal. In time Bishop would exact a vicious revenge.

In 1547 Henry VIII died. Margaret lived in Yorkshire for most of Edward VI's reign, but was in Scotland in 1553 at the time of his death and the unsuccessful coup to place Lady Jane Grey on the throne. She hastened home for the coronation of her friend, Mary Tudor, and it is at this point that Margaret emerges as a staunch Catholic, like the queen.

Mary wanted Margaret to succeed her instead of the Protestant Elizabeth. She gave Margaret precedence over Elizabeth at public ceremonies, and treated her as her next heir. But parliament would not sanction it and, when Mary died in 1558, it was Elizabeth who succeeded. Yet Margaret, as a Catholic, would remain a dynastic threat and prove a powerful force in Elizabethan politics.

## A blessing and a curse

Elizabeth's councillors feared that Margaret would make a bid for the crown. But Margaret's aims reached further. She had brought up Lord Darnley in the Roman faith and had him well educated. Like her, he had a sound claim to the throne, and she was fiercely ambitious for him. But he was an arrogant boy, stupid and spoilt.

Margaret secretly plotted to marry Darnley to the young Mary, Queen of Scots, which would unite two Catholic claims to the

## THE LIFE OF A LOST PRINCESS

**1515**

Margaret is born at Harbottle Castle, Northumberland. Because she is born in England, she is her uncle Henry VIII's subject, and as such has a **strong claim to the throne**.

**1527**

Margaret's parents, **Archibald Douglas, Earl of Angus, and Margaret Tudor (right)** divorce, which raises enduring questions about Margaret's legitimacy.

**1530**

She arrives at the English court, where she is treated as a princess of the blood. She will serve **five of Henry VIII's wives**.

**1536-37**

Margaret secretly precontracts herself to Lord Thomas Howard. Both are **imprisoned in the Tower**. Margaret is released, but Thomas dies of an illness.

**1544**

Margaret marries **Matthew Stuart, Earl of Lennox**. It is a love match.

**1562-63**

Margaret is **kept under house arrest** at Sheen for plotting to marry her son, Lord Darnley, to Mary, Queen of Scots.

**1565-67**

Margaret is again imprisoned in the Tower after **Darnley (left) marries Mary** without Elizabeth I's consent. Compassion prompts Elizabeth to release her after Darnley's murder.

**1571**

Margaret's husband, the Earl of Lennox, is assassinated in Scotland after a turbulent **regency for their grandson, James VI**.

**1574-75**

Margaret **schemes to marry her son Charles Stuart** to Bess of Hardwick's daughter Elizabeth Cavendish. For this, she is once again sent to the Tower, but remains there for only a few weeks.

**1578**

Margaret dies at her house at Hackney, and is accorded a state funeral and **buried in Westminster Abbey**.

"It is Margaret's blood, not that of Henry VIII or her rival Elizabeth I, that has **flowed in the veins of every sovereign since**"

throne of England, and bring the two kingdoms under Stuart rule. Yet she was unaware that spies were watching her every movement. One of those informers was the malevolent Thomas Bishop.

When Elizabeth found out about Margaret's plotting, she kept her under house arrest for more than a year and sent Lennox to the Tower. In 1563 both were released, but Margaret continued to scheme, and when, in 1565, Darnley wed Mary without Elizabeth's permission, Margaret once again ended up in the Tower. She stayed there for two years until Darnley was murdered, whereupon she collapsed in such violent paroxysms of grief that, out of compassion, Elizabeth set her at liberty.

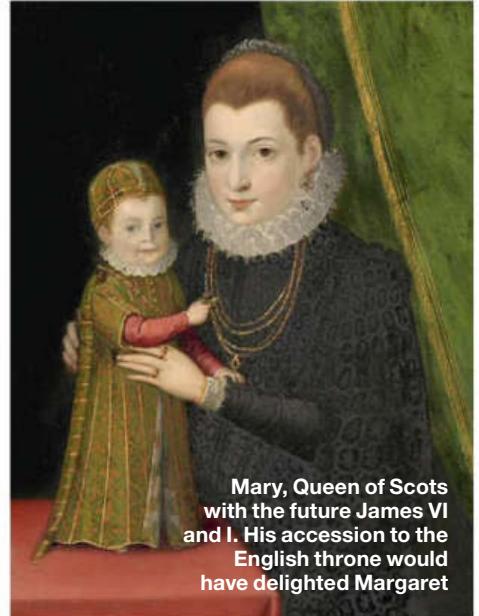
Margaret demanded vengeance on Darnley's murderers. She denounced Mary, insisting that she had connived at Darnley's destruction. She and Lennox were ceaseless, and vocal, in their quest for justice.

In 1567 Mary was forced to abdicate in favour of her infant son, who was crowned James VI of Scots. Margaret had now realised her ambition of being grandmother to a king, and was to dedicate herself to young James's interests for the rest of her life. In 1570 Lennox was appointed regent for his grandson, but his alleged sympathies for the English made him an unpopular figure and, in 1571, he was assassinated. Margaret was once more plunged into grief.

In 1574 Margaret intrigued with the redoubtable noblewoman Bess of Hardwick to marry her son Charles to Bess's daughter. It was probably on his mother's instructions that Charles so "entangled himself that he could have none other", and Margaret and Bess hastened the marriage – crucially, without seeking the queen's permission. Elizabeth I was incandescent – and Margaret suffered a third spell in the Tower.

After Charles's death from tuberculosis in 1576, she fought in vain to secure for his daughter Arbella the earldom of Lennox, which had reverted to James VI.

That was to be her last political effort for,



**Mary, Queen of Scots with the future James VI and I. His accession to the English throne would have delighted Margaret**

on 9 March 1578, Margaret, aged 62. The Earl of Leicester's opponents often circulated rumours that he poisoned his enemies – and some blamed him for Margaret's death. But she probably succumbed to a heart attack or stroke. She was buried in the tomb that she had built for herself in Westminster Abbey.

Given her intrigues, her closeness to the throne, and Elizabeth's enmity, it is surprising that Margaret Douglas lived so long. She had spent four years in the Tower, "not for matters of treason, but for love matters". Love had been the great blessing and the great curse of her life.

Her royal blood had brought danger and tragedy, for it had fuelled her ambition to secure a crown for her descendants. But she managed to retain her position at court – a lucky survivor in the brutal world of 16th-century politics – and she died in her bed, not by the axe as did Lady Jane Grey or Mary, Queen of Scots, or in prison like Jane's sister Lady Katherine Grey. That may well be why Margaret Douglas, a prominent and crucially important figure in Tudor England, is largely forgotten and overlooked.

Margaret did not live to see her dynastic ambitions brought to fruition. How she would have exulted to see her grandson ascend the English throne as James I, uniting the kingdoms of England and Scotland under one ruler. It was what she had hoped and schemed for all her life. And it is her blood, not that of Henry VIII or her rival Elizabeth I, that has flowed in the veins of every sovereign since. ■

**Alison Weir** is the top-selling female historian in Britain. She will be discussing Margaret Douglas at *BBC History Magazine's History Weekend* at Malmesbury see [historyweekend.com](http://historyweekend.com)

### DISCOVER MORE

#### BOOK

► **The Lost Tudor Princess: A Life of Margaret Douglas, Countess of Lennox** by Alison Weir (Jonathan Cape, 2015)

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Francisco de Goya, *The Duchess of Alba* (detail), 1797 © Courtesy of The Hispanic Society of America, New York

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A reproduction of Francisco de Goya's painting "The Duchess of Alba" (detail), showing the Duchess in a dark, voluminous dress with a red sash and a large, dark shawl. She wears a wide-brimmed black hat and a pearl necklace. The background is a soft-focus landscape.

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# BOOKS



Andrea Wulf in the British Library with one of Alexander von Humboldt's engravings.

"One of the extraordinary things about Humboldt is that he straddled the Enlightenment and Romanticism," she says

Photography by Alastair Levy

## INTERVIEW / ANDREA WULF

*"Alexander von Humboldt is the forgotten father of environmentalism"*

*Andrea Wulf talks to Matt Elton about her new biography of a polymath who fundamentally shaped the way that we see nature – and predicted climate change as early as the 19th century*

## PROFILE ANDREA WULF

Brought up in Germany, Wulf studied design history at the Royal College of Art in London. She has written for publications including *The New York Times* and *The Guardian*, and her previous books include *The Brother Gardeners: A Generation of Gentlemen Naturalists and the Birth of an Obsession* (Vintage, 2008). She was the 2013 British Library writer-in-residence in the Eccles Centre for American Studies.

### IN CONTEXT

Alexander von Humboldt was born to a prominent family in Berlin in September 1769. His mother planned for him to work in finance, but following her death Humboldt pursued his interest in the natural world and embarked on an expedition to Latin America. His scientific observations of the area's plant life led him to develop theories of biogeography that were to influence generations of later experts, including Charles Darwin. Further travels to North and South America saw him interact with leading political figures including Thomas Jefferson and Simon Bolívar. He died in 1859 at the age of 89.

### Why did you write this biography?

I'm from Germany, where Alexander von Humboldt is a big name – but very few people have heard of him in the UK or US. So I knew about him from when I was younger, but then forgot about him. Later, whenever I started a book, he kept popping up because he was such a polymath – he had his fingers in every pie.

He was the last of the polymaths, in my opinion. When he died in 1859 it was the last moment at which one person held all the knowledge in their head that he did. After that point, scientists begin to fall into specialised fields of narrow expertise.

He also had an extraordinary memory: he could remember the shape of a leaf, or the colour of soil, across decades and decades and distances of thousands of miles. That's why he was able to look at nature as a global force, because he could remind himself while he was in the Alps that he'd seen something in the Andes, for instance.

### Can we trace how Humboldt saw the world back to when he was young?

To some extent. He was a typical child of the Enlightenment, I'd say, brought up in a very privileged and wealthy aristocratic Prussian family. His father died when he was young, and his mother was very cold, emotionally, but what she *did* do was provide a string of amazing Enlightenment teachers.

Where he was brought up was important too. Tegel, the family estate, is set among huge forests near Berlin. Unlike his brother – who was very happy with books – Alexander was always running around, coming back with his pockets stuffed full of shells, seeds, plants and insects.

So he was brought up within nature, with Enlightenment ideas. And then he met Johann Wolfgang Goethe, who at that time was Germany's greatest poet. Humboldt later said that it was almost as if Goethe gave him new organs with which to view the world. One of the extraordinary things about Humboldt is that he straddled the Enlightenment and Romanticism: he said that we can only understand nature if we look at it with reason *and* with our feelings, our emotions and our imagination.

### How important was his ability to understand new technology?

I think it was incredibly important. We tend to see historical figures in a romantic way and yes, Humboldt really understood nature, but he was also fascinated by all kinds of new technology. One of the reasons it took him so long to prepare for his expedition to South America is that he wanted to buy the best instruments he could. He travelled around Europe to find apparatus, and then took it to the experts to learn how to use it. In the end he took 42 devices, schlepping them over the Andes and down the Orinoco.

### Did he enjoy the experience of travelling to South America?

Prussia was almost this intellectual corset imposed on him, so I think he felt absolutely liberated going to Latin America. He always said that scientists had to leave their labs and be outside in nature to understand it.

Most historians don't want to touch this subject, but he was probably gay, so this was also a moment when he could just be who he was without anyone checking up on him. I think he expressed a lot of his frustration in his personal life through physical exertion. As he put it: "I don't have sensual needs." Instead, he climbed mountains. What he did physically is absolutely mind-blowing. His team crossed the Andes again and again –

*"He could remember the shape of a leaf, or the colour of soil, across decades and thousands of miles"*

2,500 miles of one of the harshest landscapes you could possibly imagine. By the time they climbed Chimborazo, a volcanic mountain in the Andes, Humboldt was the most experienced mountaineer in the world. This was not a scientist who sat in an ivory tower.

### Of all the things that he saw in South America, which was most important?

I think it was the Chimborazo. This was the moment when three years of travelling came together for him. He climbed 20,000 feet, almost to the top, of this mountain that was believed to be the highest in the world. No other person had been higher than he was.

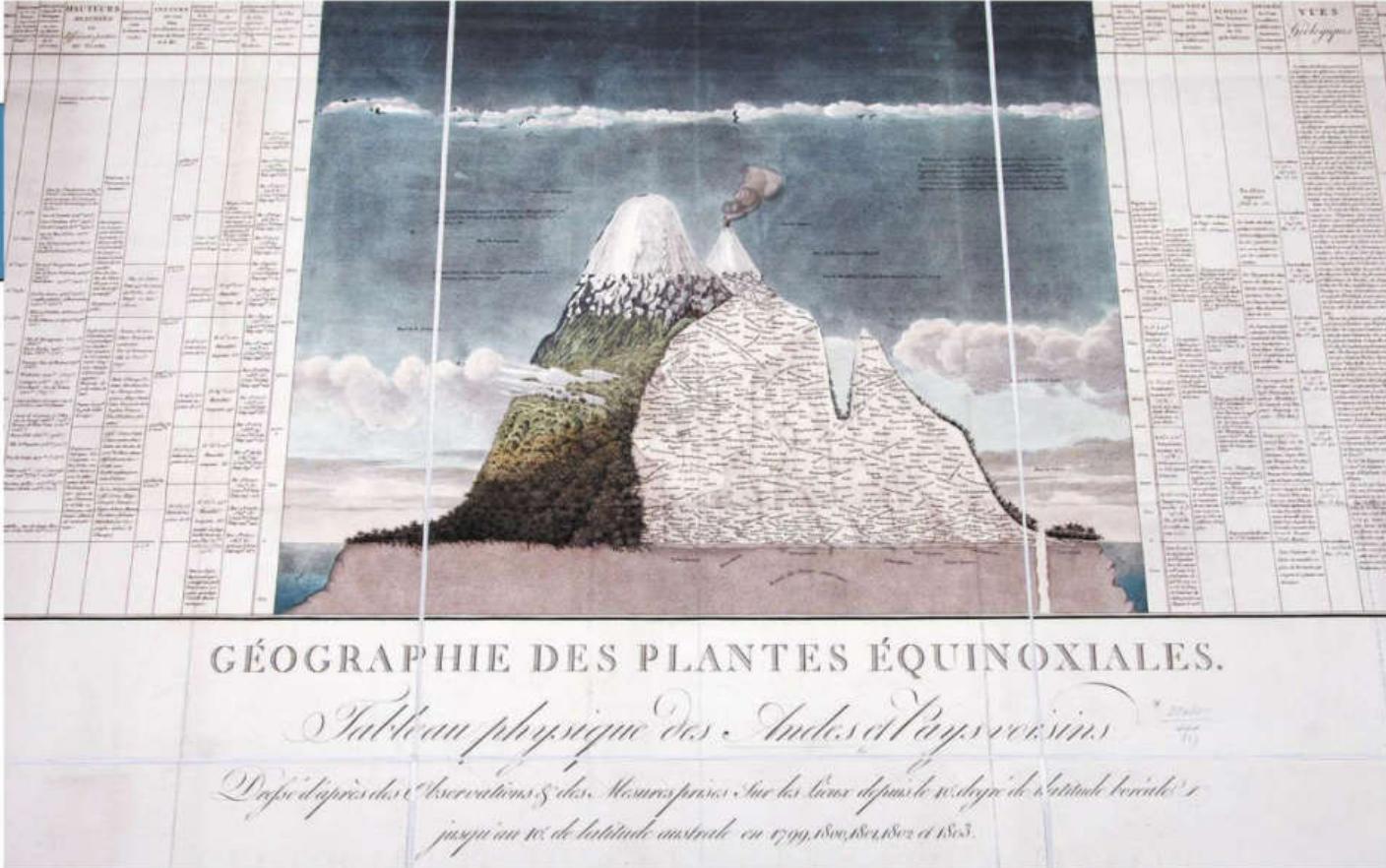
Humboldt looked down and saw mountain ranges folded below him, and realised that the journey he'd taken from Quito in Ecuador, about 100 miles away, had taken him through tropical vegetation; through alpine plants, moss and lichen, to the line of eternal snow. And he understood that, rather than seeing the plant world in terms of classification, we should see it in terms of vegetation zones. This was the moment that he understood that nature is a global force.

The fascinating thing about Humboldt is that he's not primarily important for the discovery of one thing: instead, he comes up with a new view of the world. Throughout his life he talked a lot about the glimpses you have from above, the glimpses that show you that everything comes together.

### How did Humboldt develop his idea that everything is connected?

I think it was because he travelled so much. As a young man he went all over Europe as a mining inspector, and then later he visited the US and Siberia. At that time not many people had seen so much, and they definitely weren't scientists who could remember everything they had ever seen!

It became very clear to Humboldt that there were connections across the globe, and he became obsessed with taking temperatures. Until then, this data had been recorded in long tables, but he came up with the extraordinary approach of drawing maps of the world featuring isotherms – the lines that we see on weather reports today, linking parts of the world experiencing the same temperature. When you look at the data like that, everything becomes so much clearer. I really think that we can see Humboldt as the originator of comparative climatology.



Humboldt's diagram of Chimborazo, including details of the plants at each level. The scientist's ascent of the mountain was, says Andrea Wulf, the moment when he "understood that nature is a global force"

But if everything hangs together it can all go wrong, because if you pull one thread the whole thing might unravel. When Humboldt was in South America he saw the devastating environmental effects of monoculture, irrigation and deforestation, and was the first to predict harmful human climate change. It's amazing, because in 1832 he predicted the three ways that humankind can destroy the environment: through irrigation, the felling of forests, and industrial emissions.

#### **His work led to a lot of fame, didn't it?**

Yes, and as much as I adore Humboldt, he was quite flawed. The more famous he became, the harder he found it to understand that he wasn't the centre of attention.

There's an amazing moment in 1842 when Charles Darwin finally met Humboldt, who was a huge hero for him, and the reason that Darwin went on his scientific voyage on the *Beagle*. And Darwin was utterly disappointed, because he couldn't get a word in.

#### **Despite this fame, Humboldt is now not that well known. Why is this?**

The first reason is that he was a polymath, so when he died – the point at which scientists began to specialise – these 'experts' looked down at him for knowing everything. They saw it as making him an amateur, almost.

The other reason is that he was German. He was famous until the First World War, which was really not a great time in the UK

or the US to celebrate a German scientist. The United States, particularly, had been in love with Humboldt, but during this period they burned German books and renamed streets originally titled in his honour.

#### **What are Humboldt's key legacies?**

He gave us an idea of nature, as a web of life, that continues to shape how we see it. His interdisciplinary, holistic view is also hugely important. We now have such a sharp line between the sciences and arts, and I think we could do with adopting his approach of bringing together the subjective and objective, of combining scientific curiosity with an emotional response to nature.

As a historian I think it's really important that we know where our roots are and what our history is, and it seems to me that the environmental movement is really lacking a historical, philosophical base on which they can build. Humboldt's ideas are now so seemingly obvious that we've forgotten the man behind them. I'd say a lot of nature writers are still following in his footsteps – even though they may never have heard of him. If you think of something like Rachel Carson's 1962 book *Silent Spring*, she could only have come up with the argument that nature is an interconnected whole because of Humboldt. He is the forgotten father of environmentalism and of nature writing.

Most important, though, is the fact that he predicted human-induced climate change.

*"Humboldt's ideas about nature are now seemingly so obvious that we have forgotten the man behind them"*

I think it's time to remind ourselves that this has been an issue for a very long time, and is something that I believe we really need to tackle – and, I'd argue, through a Humboldtian approach. He believed in the exchange of knowledge between the sciences, and that is incredibly important today.

#### **If you could somehow travel back in time and ask Humboldt a question, what would it be?**

I would ask him how we're going to deal with climate change. He was always so up-to-date, so he would know what to do. ■



**The Invention of Nature:**  
The Adventures of Alexander von Humboldt, the Lost Hero of Science by Andrea Wulf  
(John Murray, 496 pages, £25)

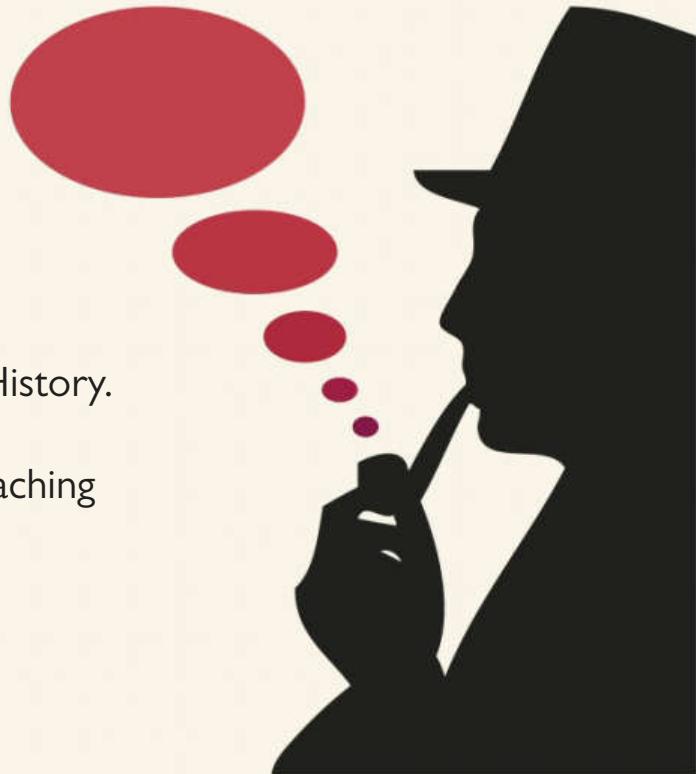
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# REVIEWS



A member of the Nazi SA stands outside a Jewish shop in Berlin. Nicholas Stargardt has "embroidered a vast tapestry portrait of Germany on its high road to hell", says Nigel Jones

## National solidarity?

**NIGEL JONES** rates a study of how German people understood, and reacted to, their leaders' actions in the Second World War

### The German War: A Nation Under Arms, 1939-1945

by Nicholas Stargardt

The Bodley Head, 736 pages, £25



In his study of Germany in the final year of Hitler's war, *The End* (Penguin, 2011), Sir Ian Kershaw devotes much space to speculating as to why the vast majority of the German people continued to back the terrorist regime that had failed them so disastrously un-

til the bitter end. In Nicholas Stargardt's massive, searching and eye-opening investigation of the wider German population's attitudes to their rulers and their crimes during the war, the University of Oxford historian attempts to find an answer to this conundrum.

Using an enormous array of sources, including letters sent home by soldiers from the front, trial testimonies, secret diaries and the unvarnished views of more intelligent and self-aware Nazi ministers such as Josef Goebbels and Albert Speer, Stargardt has embroidered a vast tapestry portrait of Germany on its high road to hell.

Like any good historian, Stargardt is well aware of how deeply our vision of the past is influenced by our contemporary situation. He thus explains how, in the immediate postwar period, when the crying need of the west was for a strong Germany to become a bulwark against Soviet communism in the Cold War, the crimes of Nazism were airbrushed away or blamed solely on the SS. This allowed the Nazi Wehrmacht to be absolved of atrocities, given a clean bill of health, and reborn as the squeaky-clean new Bundeswehr.

It was only in the 1990s, when an exhibition about Wehrmacht war crimes toured major German cities, that it was finally admitted that the army had been up to its neck in Nazi crimes, and that many soldiers on the eastern front proudly carried photographs of them taking part in the mass execution of Jewish people and partisans along with their treasured family snaps.

Stargardt liberally quotes the diary of officer August Töpperwein, who, after witnessing a massacre of a village's entire population of 300 Jews of "all ages and both sexes", belatedly realises that: "We are not just destroying the Jews who want to fight against us. We literally want to exterminate this people."

Stargardt gives the lie to any idea that ordinary Germans did not know about the Holocaust. He repeatedly quotes witnesses who saw what Goebbels called the Allied 'terror bombing' of the cities, and the mass rapes carried out by the Soviet army, as a just punishment for the original Nazi sin of deporting and killing the country's Jews.

Whereas Kershaw saw German efficiency, and Nazi totalitarian command and control, as keys to the nation's extraordinary resilience in the face of hammer blows that would have destroyed other peoples, Stargardt shifts the emphasis to Nazi success in

**"Stargardt gives lie to the idea that Germans did not know about the Holocaust"**



## COMING SOON...

"Winter is coming and we'll soon be putting together our annual Books of the Year list. For the first time, you'll be able to nominate your favourite book of the past 12 months. To find out more and cast your vote, visit [historyextra.com/bbchistorymagazine/books2015](http://historyextra.com/bbchistorymagazine/books2015)" Matt Elton, reviews editor



convincing Germans that they were in an 'us or them' battle for their very existence. Offered the choice between *Endsieg* ('final victory') or annihilation, most Germans unsurprisingly plumped for the former and went down fighting.

Conditioned by the Nazis' black-and-white outlook, Germans were already prepared to expect armageddon as fighting began. And, even though the regime steadily lost popularity as bombs fell and casualty lists mounted, the mass of Germans remained patriotically determined to defend their fatherland against a world of enemies.

In contrast to the triumphalism of 1914, the popular mood in Germany

***This book may change forever what we thought we knew about German responses to war***

throughout the second 20th-century war they had unleashed on the world remained bleak and grim. There was a brief blip following the early fall of France, when the looted food and wine led infantryman and farmer's son Ernst Guicking to exult: "First pork leg, then roast calf, sausage with vegetables and to finish a wonderful dessert. We are living 'Like God in France'." Once the invasion of Russia became bogged down the following year, however, most thinking Germans realised that Hitler's great gamble had failed, and that his war was irretrievably lost.

This masterly book may well change forever what we thought we knew about response of the German people to the war. They could not square the circle: the stubborn fact was they were fighting for their country, but in a war characterised by cruel, callous and ultimately genocidal methods. In the end, it risked consuming not only their material resources but their humanity as well. ■

Nigel Jones is a historian and author who leads the Face of Evil tour of Nazi German sites for [historicaltrips.com](http://historicaltrips.com)

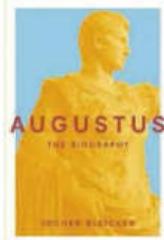
## Augustus victorious

**PETER JONES** commends a newly translated study of the first Roman emperor and the world that he created

### Augustus: The Biography

by Jochen Bleicken

Allen Lane, 784 pages, £30



This is a superb account of the grand-nephew of Julius Caesar, Gaius Octavius. Born into a wealthy Italian family of no serious distinction in the small town of Velletria, he became Octavianus when adopted (aged 18) by Caesar as his son and heir, and was to emerge as Rome's first emperor, Augustus.

Jochen Bleicken argues that being Caesar's heir meant nothing more than it did for the heir of any other aristocrat: it implied he had an advantageous foot on the political ladder, but what he made of it was up to him. After Caesar's assassination in 44 BC, Cicero for one was not at all certain Octavian would become a 'good citizen', and few would have bet on him becoming master of the Roman world.

Octavian began his political career when that world was in turmoil after Caesar's death, with civil war ready to flare up again. Bleicken argues that Octavian came to understand that there was no future in the military dictatorship of the sort that Caesar had run. But since military dictatorship was all that was on offer among the old families who now lined up to fight over Caesar's inheritance (there was nothing 'revolutionary' about those who assassinated Caesar), Octavian had to play that game. Absurdly young though he was, he showed

himself a brilliant – and at times rather lucky – survivor in the ensuing lawless chaos, selecting and discarding friends and enemies as he saw fit, as willing to murder rivals as he was to show clemency.

When he emerged victorious against Antony and Cleopatra in 31 BC, he had done so owing nothing to Rome's inner-ring of powerful ancient families. Free of that baggage, he set about creating a new state, which nodded to its republican past but whose basis was three-fold: a constitution legitimising one-man rule by the princeps ('first man'); Rome's first professional standing army under the princeps' supreme command, stationed across the provinces; and the promotion of new executive and administrative talent wherever it could be found. Further, by replacing the republican culture of exploiting the provinces for private gain with responsible administration, he established Rome as one of the world's most successful empires.

When he died, his mix of patience, determination and ruthlessness had completely reconstructed the Roman world. It was an unparalleled, probably unique, personal achievement.

Bleicken published the original German version of this book in 1998. Expertly translated by Anthea Bell, it combines fine scholarship and balanced argument with a clear, well-constructed storyline that does Bleicken's subject proud. It should become standard reading for everyone interested in the foundations of the Roman empire. ■

Peter Jones is the author of *Veni, Vidi, Vici* (Atlantic, 2013)

A statue of Augustus with Cupid, denoting his link to the gods. Jochen Bleicken's biography "does his subject proud"



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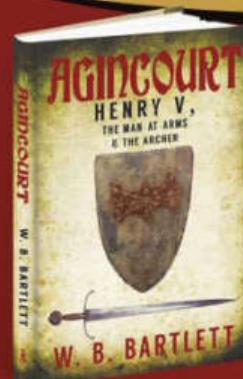
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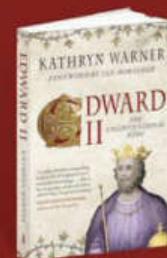
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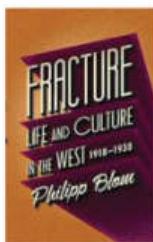
## The long shadow of war

**JOANNA BOURKE** on a look at how the history of the west was shaped by one world war – and the looming clouds of another

### Fracture: Life and Culture in the West, 1918–1938

by Philipp Blom

Atlantic, 496 pages, £25



In 1928, a curvaceous and vivacious Helen Kane strode onto the stage during a production of Oscar Hammerstein's *Good Boy*. She pouted her heavily painted lips and, with wide eyes winking at the audience, launched into 'I Wanna Be Loved by You'. By the time she sang the lines "boop-boop-a-doop", her audience was in raptures. Betty Boop, as she became known, came to represent a feminine ideal in postwar western society.

Five years later, the west could best be called prewar. Portents of another world war were everywhere. Young Nazis tossed 'degenerate' books into fires burning in squares and streets around

Germany. The author Erich Kästner was loitering discreetly in the crowd when his books were denounced for contributing to German's 'moral decline'. He recalled that he saw "books flying into the roaring flames and heard the sentimental tirades of that slick little liar [Joseph Goebbels]... It was revolting."

The cultural shift represented in the move from Betty Boop to Hitler Youth was reflected in much larger changes in interwar Europe and America. Yet Philipp Blom argues that the 'fracture' in western culture was neither so simple nor so complete as these developments might suggest.

Blom's book is structured chronologically, with chapters devoted to each year between 1918 and 1937 (1938 is there, but

**"People, rather than abstractions, are at the heart of this story"**



Dust clouds sweep through Colorado, c1935. The effect of such storms is among the topics covered by Philipp Blom's "vivid and energetic" history of the interwar years

only as an odd, thin epilogue). This sometimes leads to rather artificial links between disparate events. More often, it allows for new and original insights. For example, Blom uses a discussion of PG Wodehouse's novel *Thank You, Jeeves* (about a super-competent butler and his foolish upper-class master) to reflect on class, poverty and protest in 1930s Britain.

It also enables Blom to draw attention to less familiar events and individuals. His range is extraordinary: he evokes dance, music, architecture and literature with verve, and analyses politics, economics and technology with great clarity. People, rather than abstractions, are at the heart of this story. Blom reminds us of the "cheerful nihilism" of

## House of scandal

**SUSAN LAW** praises a biography of a Berkshire estate and the series of strong-willed women who made it their home

### The Mistresses of Cliveden: Three Centuries of Scandal, Power and Intrigue

by Natalie Livingstone

Hutchinson, 512 pages, £25



Scandalous women who dare to be different have always been irresistible – not just in life but in print. That's certainly true of Cliveden's mistresses in this ambitious biography of the opulent stately home.

The stories of five intriguing and very different women are neatly framed by the evolution of the house itself, from its conception as a romantic country hideaway for the Duke of Buckingham's lover in the 1660s, to its purchase as a hotel by the author's husband in 2012.

The "lustful, greedy" Anna Maria, Countess of Shrewsbury, who captivated Buckingham, made the most of her charms but ultimately became Cliveden's lost mistress after a House of Lords ruling forced the couple to separate in 1674. Her successor was equally adept in the age-old trade of sex for wealth and power but, as she was "crookedly built"

with a squint in one eye, it was personality rather than beauty that drew Elizabeth, Countess of Orkney into an affair with William of Orange and consolidated her role as influential society hostess.

A lack of surviving personal letters means that both remain rather distant figures, and the book is strongest in later sections where the women's own voices are heard. Augusta, Princess of Wales emerges as a lively character, enjoying picnics and games of ninepin with her children in the gardens.

In 1795 Cliveden burned to the ground. The ruins were later restored under the supervision of Harriet, Duchess of Sutherland, an anti-slavery campaigner and close friend of Queen Victoria and William Gladstone. Most familiar to readers will be the turbulent saga of Nancy Astor, who sensibly ditched another suitor to marry the "fourth



the ‘flappers’, the high jinks of Dadaism, the extraordinary havoc wreaked by the dust storms in America’s corn belt during the mid-1930s, and the mass deaths caused by the man-made Ukrainian famine. Throughout the period there was anti-Semitism, discrimination, and slaughter. Long before Blom gets to the Spanish Civil War, a sense of impending doom pervades the text.

The effect of these years continues to be felt and Blom repeatedly tells us why it is important to know this history. His vivid, energetic style is enthralling, but his message is disheartening. ■

**Joanna Bourke** is professor of history at Birkbeck, University of London

richest man in the world”, and in 1919 became the first female MP to take a seat at Westminster. It was at a party held by Nancy’s son Bill that John Profumo met Christine Keeler, and a scandal was born.

Fluently written, the book interweaves these personal stories with historical snippets illuminating each era and glimpses of life at the pinnacle of society – from spectacular Restoration banquets featuring peacock, tortoise and glittering crystal jellies, to the hazards of wearing court dresses spiked with long pins. The broad sweep through 300 years of social change is packed with plenty of colourful details that capture the heady essence of Cliveden and the bold, spirited women who shared its history. ■

**Susan Law** is the author of *Through the Keyhole: Sex, Scandal and the Secret Life of the Country House* (The History Press, 2015)

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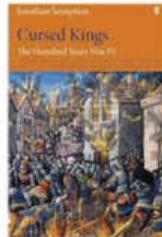
# Madness and murder

**NICHOLAS VINCENT** on the penultimate entry in a masterful series on the Hundred Years’ War, focusing on France’s downfall

## The Hundred Years War, Volume IV: Cursed Kings

by Jonathan Sumption

Faber and Faber, 928 pages, £40



On 23 November 1407, riding home singing after a long, well-lubricated supper, the king of France’s brother was assassinated by agents of his cousin John, Duke of Burgundy.

On 10 September 1419, John was violently murdered under the gaze of the French dauphin. These two deaths plunged France into civil war.

As a monk displaying John’s remains is said to have remarked: “It was through the hole in this skull that the English entered France.” French politics dissolved into factional rivalry. Henry V seized the opportunity not only for short-lived victory at Agincourt, but to conquer Normandy as far as the gates of Paris. Charles VI reigned in France, his long periods of madness interrupted by brief remissions from which, like a malignant jack-in-the-box, he re-emerged to spread further contagion within the body politic.

Henry died in 1422, followed by Charles three months later. In the aftermath, Henry’s infant son was allowed to lay claim to the English and French thrones.

It is the crisis in French politics from roughly 1403 to 1422 that occupies this fourth volume of Jonathan Sumption’s masterpiece: 20 years of political narrative at roughly 40 pages per annum.

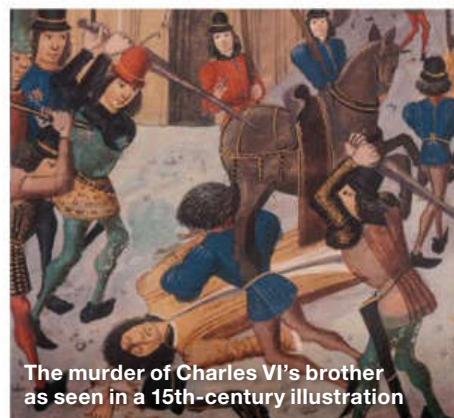
Some may consider this monumental self-indulgence. Others, myself included, will marvel not only at the skill with which Sumption tells the story but at its sheer daring. Perhaps not since Lord Macaulay’s *History of England* (1848) has such mastery been deployed on so epic a scale. Just as Macaulay wrote while occupying a prominent role in public life, so Sumption is a leading member of the UK Supreme Court.

Yet his approach has little in common with Macaulay’s partisan Whig bombast. High politics are recounted in dispassionate journalistic terms. Charles VI’s madness, and the greed of his courtiers, lay behind the collapse of political order in France. In England, Henry V’s genius averted what might otherwise have been an even sharper slide into chaos.

The crown of France remained too potent a symbol to be brought low even by the humiliations of Charles VI. Dynastic fortunes would shortly be reversed. After 1422, it was to be France that held the winning hands, and the English who found themselves lumbered with a less than effective king. Winning wars, meanwhile, involved more than military success. Henry V may have scored victories on the battlefield and at the treaty table, but never won the hearts and minds of his subjects in France. That a leading public figure not only understands this fact, but is prepared to teach it, is one of the many wonders of Sumption’s book.

This is one of the great historical enterprises of our times, elegantly constructed, thrillingly told, illuminating every incident and personality that it touches. Nobody who loves history should pass it by unread. ■

**Nicholas Vincent** is professor of medieval history at the University of East Anglia



**Red alert for the Sumatran tiger. Fauna & Flora International launches emergency appeal in response to 600% increase in poaching threat. Your response by 9 November could make a huge difference.**



This Critically Endangered tiger has been pushed to the edge of extinction – maybe 500 remain. Give to stop the poachers at [www.FFIsumatrantiger.org](http://www.FFIsumatrantiger.org)

A 600% increase in snares laid since 2011 has put FFI's anti poaching team on red alert. Habitat loss has already pushed the Sumatran tiger to the brink of extinction but now poachers have stepped up their efforts to snare these magnificent cats.

Fauna & Flora International (FFI) has put out an urgent call to the global community to save the last Sumatran tigers currently existing in the wild – and specifically to employ more rangers. There are now only around 500 Sumatran tigers left.

FFI is urgently seeking funds to step up their crucial conservation programme in Kerinci Seblat National Park, Sumatra, Indonesia. In order to safeguard the future existence of these magnificent creatures, it is vital that more rangers are employed

Right now, the Sumatran tiger faces a number of very serious threats, which are putting their very survival in jeopardy. And, sadly, they are all man-made threats.

Poaching is a constant danger for the elusive Sumatran tiger – and now poachers have substantially stepped up their efforts. Hunters make good money from the tiger's beautiful skin and demand is constantly growing. Also, its bones are illegally exported to use as ingredients in traditional Asian medicines.

What is really worrying now is that poachers have increased the number of tiger snares laid by 600% since 2011 and this year snares found have been at almost record levels.

This is against a backdrop of a very serious loss of habitat. In the last ten to 15 years, natural forest cover in Sumatra has been slashed by almost a staggering 40%. Now there is a newly emerging threat, discovered by tiger patrols - the growth of illegal coffee plantations in Kerinci Seblat National Park.

These majestic forest dwellers have been designated as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List, making the Sumatran tiger one of the most endangered tiger subspecies on the planet. This is a rating reserved for animals that face an extremely high risk of extinction in the wild.

Latest surveys have indicated that there may now be as few as 500 existing in the wild. Kerinci Seblat National Park is one of the last places on Earth where they can still be found.

Today, 170 tigers live in and around Kerinci Seblat National Park – the largest known population of tigers anywhere in Sumatra. Since 2007 the number of tigers in the park has stabilised and begun to slowly grow – largely thanks to the vital work of FFI's Tiger Protection and Conservation Programme. However, now the upsurge in poaching puts these gains under threat.

Debbie Martyr, FFI Team Leader of the Kerinci Tiger Project in Sumatra, says:

"So far this year our ranger teams walked almost 1100 miles on forest patrols in and bordering the national park and destroyed more than 60 active tiger snares - an increase of 600% since 2011. That is why we need to step up patrol regimes".

## One of the Sumatran tiger's final strongholds is under threat from a massive increase in poaching. Action is needed now.

- £83,131 is needed to help us fund more rangers and step up action against the poachers in Kerinci Seblat National Park.
- This is one of the final strongholds of the incredibly rare Sumatran tiger, a place where the battle to save the Sumatran tiger will be won or lost.
- FFI's work here could be all that stands between the Sumatran tiger and extinction.

### Tiger populations are dreadfully fragile.

If FFI cannot recruit more rangers to protect the tigers against the increased efforts of the poachers all our good work could be undone.

For all of these reasons, it's now absolutely vital that we increase our patrols to protect tigers from poachers – and work towards greater protection for their delicate habitat.

If we're going to save the Critically Endangered Sumatran tiger from complete extinction, it's vital that we have the means to take action now.

FFI must raise £83,131. To do that, the charity is calling on readers to make an urgent contribution today.



Photo: Gill Shaw

*"If you value the natural world – if you think it should be protected for its own sake as well as humanity's – then please support Fauna & Flora International."*

**Sir David Attenborough, OM FRS  
Fauna & Flora International vice-president**

Please send a gift, by no later than 9 November, to help safeguard the future survival of the last few remaining wild Sumatran tigers.

Together, we can save the Sumatran tiger from extinction – but only if we take action immediately.

To take action for the Sumatran tiger please go to [www.FFIsumatrantiger.org](http://www.FFIsumatrantiger.org) or cut the coupon.

If the coupon to the bottom right is missing, please send your cheque (payable to FFI) to: FREEPOST RRHG-GBGG-CAGG, Fauna & Flora International, Sumatran Tiger Appeal, Jupiter House, Station Road, Cambridge, CB1 2JD by 9 November.

### Stop press - Poachers kill Tiger in Kerinci

*"We knew this tiger, a large male. To see it reduced from a beautiful wild animal to a pile of meat and guts made us all very angry".*

Yohan Dinata, Tiger Protection Team, Kerinci Seblat

Fauna & Flora International, founded in 1903, was the world's first international conservation organisation. Today its work spans the globe, with over 140 projects in more than 40 countries. It has a strong history of finding creative solutions to conservation problems and of working with local communities. FFI is supported by the most eminent scientists and members of the conservation movement.

Your support is needed now: Fauna & Flora International (FFI) has launched an emergency appeal, backed by Sir David Attenborough, to raise £83,131 to save the Sumatran tiger.

These items are vital to help save the remaining Sumatran tigers from extinction.

£5,212 could help fund two new rangers posts and buy essential equipment – rucksacks, uniforms, sleeping bags, cooking equipment, field radios and compasses.

£2,500 could buy a pick-up van to help a patrol move around quickly to prevent poaching.

£400 could buy camping equipment and boots.

£72 could buy first aid kits to treat injured rangers whilst out on patrol.

£32 could help buy a field radio, essential to getting extra help if poachers are spotted.

Donations large or small will help us save the Critically Endangered Sumatran tiger from the 600% upsurge in the poaching threat.

Cut the coupon below and return it to FFI, together with your gift, to help save the Critically Endangered Sumatran tiger. Alternatively, go to [www.FFIsumatrantiger.org](http://www.FFIsumatrantiger.org). Thank you.

I want to help save the remaining 500 Sumatran tigers today, with a donation of £ \_\_\_\_\_

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Please note: If Fauna & Flora International succeeds in raising more than £83,131 from this appeal, funds will be used wherever they are most needed.

For no further contact by email tick here  or no further contact by post tick here  or no further contact by telephone tick here

Please return to: Sumatran Tiger Appeal,

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You can call 01223 431991 to donate now.

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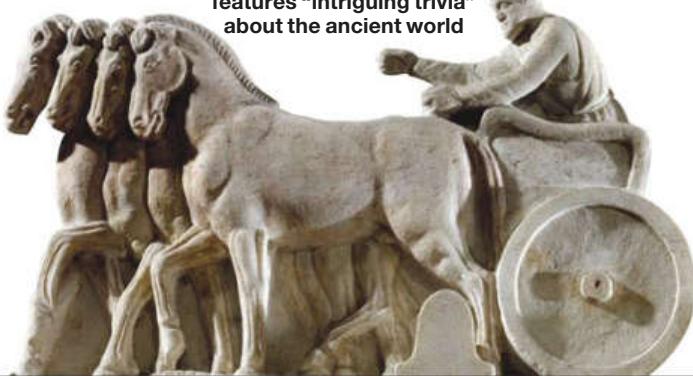
**England, Arise:  
The People, the King and  
the Great Revolt of 1381**  
by Juliet Barker  
Abacus, 528 pages, £10.99



In the summer of 1381, after years of unrest caused by rising taxes and a diminishing population, the flames of rebellion suddenly sprang into life. Within a few short weeks, they had consumed almost the whole of England and looked set to raze the monarchy itself to the ground. People from every corner of the kingdom took up arms against what they saw as unjust suppression by the church and state, as well as by its boy king, Richard II. The reforms they called for were so radical that, if they had been realised, every aspect of English government and society would have been utterly transformed.

Respected historian Juliet Barker tells the story of this remarkable moment in our history through the lens of the men and women who took part. In so doing, she proves that they were a more diverse body of rebels than simply ‘peasants’: they included constables, stewards and even gentry among their ranks.

A frieze of a chariot, c350 BC. Jane Hood’s book features “intriguing trivia” about the ancient world



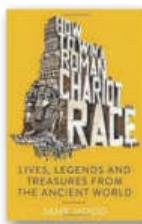
Moreover, far from being united in a common cause, they expressed many different kinds of grievance; indeed, it was not one revolt, but a series of local riots captured under the umbrella of the Peasants’ Revolt. And although Wat Tyler has gone down in history as its charismatic leader, Barker claims that he played only a very minor role.

The myth-challenging occasionally becomes a little laboured, and the structure is also rather disjointed because the story of each local uprising is told separately. But this does not detract from a thoroughly researched, engagingly written account of a moment when the world was – almost – turned upside down.

Tracy Borman’s latest book is *The Story of the Tower of London* (Merrell, 2015)

### How to Win a Roman Chariot Race

by Jane Hood  
Icon Books, 240 pages, £8.99



Like a more adult version of *Horrible Histories*, this is a veritable smorgasbord of interesting, intriguing and

downright disturbing trivia, gathered from the civilisations of Egypt, Greece and Rome. Each chapter covers a different aspect of the past, from art and literature to magic, entertainment and language.

This is a wonderfully diverting tome and Hood writes in a lively and entertaining way, guiding the reader through some of the more bizarre and lurid aspects of the past. So, if you ever wanted to know what Alexander the Great really did in India, which Roman emperor was the most debauched, how the Greeks practised contraception, how Lord Elgin lost both his marbles and his nose, or the damaging effect that a sex strike can have on society (both ancient and modern), then this is the book for you.

Miles Russell is senior lecturer in archaeology at Bournemouth University

### The Greatest Knight: The Remarkable Life of William Marshal, the Power Behind Five English Thrones

by Thomas Asbridge  
Simon and Schuster, 464 pages, £9.99



William Marshal was born (in c1147) to a minor baronial family. Yet, by the time of his death in 1219, he had climbed to the position of the highest official in England and was deemed worthy to be the subject of the first biography of a non-royal subject. His contemporary biographer, writing in Old French, praised William as “the best knight in the world”; his posthumous

reputation has been living off this tribute ever since.

Thomas Asbridge charts William’s spectacular rise to supremacy in vivid detail. His subject offers no shortage of exciting stories: surviving an imminent execution at the age of five at the hands of King Stephen (from whom William learned much about chivalry); making his fame and fortune on the knightly tournament circuit; allegedly sparing Richard the Lionheart’s life after besting him in combat; and driving the French invaders out of England in 1217 when aged 70. William’s life is one that deserves telling once again.

Marshal has a reputation for being the ultimate loyal servant, never abandoning the losing side. But that did not mean that he refused to dirty his hands in the squalid business of politics: he hedged his bets with the French in 1204 after the loss of Normandy, and did so again in 1216 when the French invaded. Asbridge is too careful a historian to let this pass without comment, detecting hubris in his subject.

But was Marshal, as the subtitle of Asbridge’s book claims, really “the power behind five English thrones”? He was increasingly a prominent power, but only the single most important force when he acted as regent for the boy-king Henry III after John’s death in October 1216.

That his was a “remarkable life” is beyond contention, however, and Asbridge does it full justice in this colourful and exciting biography that shows popular but assured history at its best.

Sean McGlynn is the author of *Kill Them All: Cathars and Carnage in the Albigensian Crusade* (The History Press, 2015)





A suffragette is arrested in London, c1914. Ajay Close's novel "is a powerful story of women forced to draw on their inner resources", says Nick Rennison

## FICTION

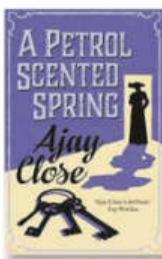
# Suffering and suffrage

**NICK RENNISON** on a novel that explores the charged relationships between a suffragette, her doctor and his wife

### A Petrol Scented Spring

by Ajay Close

Sandstone Press, £8.99, 350 pages



The summer of 1914: women's suffrage is one of the great issues of the day. Arabella Scott is one of the militant campaigners whose demands for votes for women have brought them into conflict with the authorities. Arrested for arson, she goes on hunger strike. After being released and re-arrested several times under the provisions of the infamous 'Cat and Mouse' Act, she is transferred to prison in Perth.

There she encounters Hugh Ferguson Watson, an ambitious doctor from a poor background, who is one of the few medical men in Scotland prepared to force-feed the suffragette prisoners. An epic battle of wills ensues between Watson and Arabella. He attempts, via bludgeoning logic and the pain and humiliation of force-feeding, to break her spirit. She resists him both physically and intellectually. During their confrontations, described by Ajay Close

with graphic immediacy, a strangely intense relationship develops.

Two years pass. The First World War has reached bloody stalemate, and the campaign for women's rights has been temporarily suspended. Watson weds a free-spirited woman named Donella, but their marriage rapidly becomes a prison for both of them. Repressed and callously controlling, the doctor forces his wife from lively sociability into isolation and loneliness. Because of dark suspicions he comes to entertain about madness in her family, he refuses to have sex with her. And, hanging always over them, is the question of his strong, oddly twisted feelings about Arabella that have never been resolved. Only by learning more of her husband's past and by asserting her own ambitions can Donella escape the wretched confines of her life.

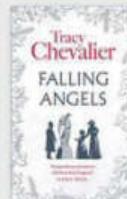
This is a memorable work of fiction. Ingeniously and deviously constructed, it is a powerful story of two women forced to draw on their inner resources to free themselves from the manipulations of a deeply damaged man. **H**

**Nick Rennison** is the author of *Carver's Quest* (Corvus, 2013)

## THREE MORE NOVELS FEATURING SUFFRAGETTES

### Falling Angels

Tracy Chevalier (2001)



In Edwardian England, unhappily married Kitty Coleman seeks new fulfilment, first in a disastrous affair and then by reinventing herself as a suffragette. Her life is transformed through her involvement in the campaign, but her husband grows ever more angry with her for flouting convention. *Falling Angels* summons up a vanished world in which society and women's status were in transition.

### Half of the Human Race

Anthony Quinn (2012)



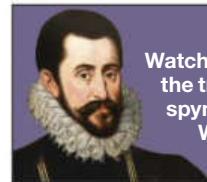
Constance Callaway is a suffragette, drawn into ever more radical action for the cause, who endures the painful indignity of force-feeding in Holloway prison. Will Maitland, meanwhile, is an honourable county cricketer with unthinkingly traditional views on society and the relationship between the sexes. Quinn's subtle novel follows the love affair between these two very different people through the late Edwardian era and into the First World War.

### The Hourglass Factory

Lucy Ribchester (2015)



Frankie George, out to make her mark in Fleet Street, is sent to interview suffragette and trapeze artist Ebony Diamond. She finds herself drawn into a mystery that involves the Pankhursts, the *Titanic*, murder by a too-tightly-laced corset, and a convoluted conspiracy designed to permanently discredit the women's rights campaign. In her debut novel, Lucy Ribchester creates a suffragette romp filled with larger-than-life characters and enjoyably melodramatic adventures.



Watch Yesterday to learn the tricks of Elizabethan spymaster Francis Walsingham's trade

## Secret history History's Ultimate Spies

**TV** Yesterday, scheduled for Friday 16 October

Here's a film that focuses on those who developed spy networks in the days before mass communication. It explores how the methods employed by these pioneers in subterfuge and skullduggery are still in use around the world today.

Expect tales of Elizabethan England, the era when Francis Walsingham's clandestine operations entrapped Mary, Queen of Scots; France, when Cardinal Richelieu was in his pomp; and the American Civil War, when Allan Pinkerton was head of the Union Intelligence Service.



Serial letter writer Pliny the Younger is the star of a new series on Radio 4

## Letters from the past

### How to Survive the Roman Empire by Pliny and Me

**RADIO** BBC Radio 4, scheduled for Monday 26 October

Magistrate Pliny the Younger was a prolific letter writer. Much of his correspondence has survived, offering first-hand insights into life in ancient Rome. Written by Hattie Naylor and from the same team that made *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, this new series, based on these letters, charts Pliny's time as a young lawyer.

In the first of five weekday episodes, Pliny buys a slave, a captive from the Roman enclave of Caerwent in Wales, and we begin to see Rome from the perspective of both master and servant.

Jonathan Wright previews the pick of upcoming programmes

# TV & RADIO

## Between the lines

Radio 4 poetry and arts editor James Cook tells us about a project that mixes history and versifying



### We British: An Epic in Poetry

**RADIO** Radio 4, scheduled for Thursday 8 October

What does it mean to be British? One way to answer this question is to look at the nation's history through specific events – great victories, cataclysmic defeats and moments where the political weather abruptly changed. Yet there's another way, and that's to focus instead on people's day-to-day lives. It's this latter approach that informs *We British*, a day of poetry programming weaved through the Radio 4 schedule on, appropriately enough, National Poetry Day.

"We're interested in the intimate, the more domestic... more bedrooms than battles," James Cook, Radio 4's poetry and arts editor, tells *BBC History Magazine*. "We want [to show] the emotional lives people were entrenched in, the way in which the majority of people lived."

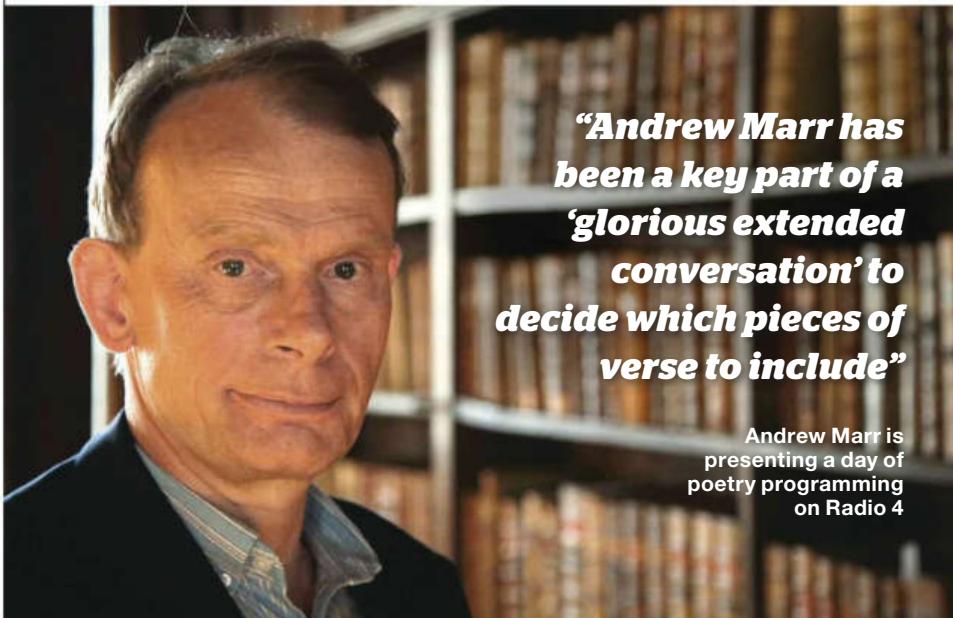
Presented by Andrew Marr, the day will feature around six hours of readings, archive material, interviews and conversations. Marr's guests will include actors such as Dominic West, Charles Dance and Fiona Shaw, and poets,

including Michael Rosen and Daljit Nagra. Over the day, we'll hear Shakespeare, Christina Rossetti and Ted Hughes, as well as less famous names, and pieces where the authorship has long been forgotten.

According to Cook, Marr has been a key part of a "glorious extended conversation" to decide which pieces of verse to include. "There are certain poets that he's very keen to talk about, that he feels are neglected, and there are certain very famous poets he feels are maybe a bit overrated," says Cook. "He's not a big fan of Wordsworth, we can probably say."

The programming will begin with some of the earliest surviving verse and "roll through the day in [a] chronological fashion" so that listeners get a sense of the sweep of British history, as well as a sense of our forebears' lives in specific eras – grandness and intimacy together.

The idea of competing identities will also be important. "I don't want it to feel too polished," says Cook. "I want it to feel like cases are being made and, actually, that Britishness is a bit rough around the edges, and that it's not even easy to settle on what pieces should or shouldn't be in a day like this – because it's not." ■



**"Andrew Marr has been a key part of a 'glorious extended conversation' to decide which pieces of verse to include"**

Andrew Marr is presenting a day of poetry programming on Radio 4



Lucy Worsley will be raising a glass to Georgian romance this autumn

## Love is...

### A Very British Romance with Lucy Worsley

TV BBC Four,

scheduled for Thursday 8 October

We think of romance as a 'natural' part of life. Too simplistic, argues Lucy Worsley. Many of our innermost thoughts and feelings are shaped by social, political and cultural factors that, unless we stop to think about them, we hardly even notice. This even applies to the notion of falling in love.

Worsley's latest series takes us back to the Georgian era, a time when rules around courtship began to be rewritten. Prior to this time, marriage had

traditionally been as much about money as finding a soulmate. But the 18th century was when the idea of 'sensibility', and particularly the idea people might acutely respond to the emotions of another person, began to become fashionable.

The rise of the novel was key here, because romantic fiction, in Worsley's estimation, was "as revolutionary as a political manifesto" for the way it changed how people thought about love and marriage. Books by the likes of Samuel Richardson, Fanny Burney and Jane Austen didn't just offer escapism, they offered new ways of thinking. Accordingly, for Worsley, the most influential Georgian wasn't Wellington or Nelson, but "Aunt Jane, spinster".

## Face values

### Simon Schama's The Face of Britain

DVD (BBC/Spirit Entertainment, £19.99, released 19 October)

To look at British portraiture, says Simon Schama in a preamble to his latest series, is akin to "combing through the family album of our nation". But "be warned", he cautions, we can't take the faces we see at "face value". Instead, our ideas about some of the most famous images from our history rest on the interplay between sitter, artist and the Great British public, as we collectively pass opinions on these artworks.



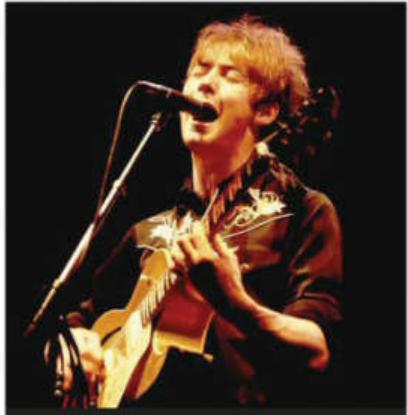
Churchill despised Graham Sutherland's portrait of him

This interplay can be complex. In Power and Portraiture – the first of five themed documentaries – Schama tells the story of Graham Sutherland's 1954 portrait of Churchill. Recovering from a stroke, Churchill wanted a "proclamation of his undimmed vigour". Sutherland gave him "a picture of the rugged truth... an obituary in paint". Churchill, who acidly called the picture "a remarkable example of modern art", hated the painting and it was destroyed.

It's just one of the stories told with élan in a series that, in combining his art historian's eye for detail, sharp turn of phrase and gift for big narratives, represents some of Schama's best television work since the *History of Britain*.

## WANT MORE?

We'll send you news of the best history shows every Friday. Sign up now at [historyextra.com/bbchistorymagazine/newsletter](http://historyextra.com/bbchistorymagazine/newsletter)



Scottish indie sceneres Aztec Camera perform in Chicago, 1983

At the risk of depressing some readers, indie music has a history that now stretches back close to 40 years, when labels such as Zoo, Postcard, Rough Trade, Factory and Mute emerged in the wake of punk. In **Music for Misfits: The Story of Indie** (BBC Four, October), Mark Radcliffe charts what happened and why.

**Landmark Trust** (Channel 4, October) follows the work of the architectural charity, paying special attention to the restoration of Belmont – an 18th-century maritime villa in Lyme Regis that writer John Fowles (*The French Lieutenant's Woman*) called home – and St Edward's Presbytery in Ramsgate, designed by Augustus Pugin.

For **The Story of Scottish Art** (BBC Two Scotland & iPlayer, October) Lachlan Goudie attempts both to put Scottish art in an international context, and tell a story that reveals much about Scotland's social and political history. **Wales in the 80s** (BBC One Wales & iPlayer, October) charts the history of the principality in the decade of Thatcherism. Bonnie Tyler, Tanni Grey-Thompson and Neil Kinnock are among the contributors.

Highlights on PBS America include **Legacy of War** (Thursday 22 October), which charts the rebuilding of Europe post 1939–45, and **Spy at the Hanoi Hilton** (Monday 2 November), which tells the story of Vietnam War PoW James Stockdale and his fellow prisoners.

On Radio 4, listen out for **The Invention of France** with Misha Glenny (Monday 2 November).

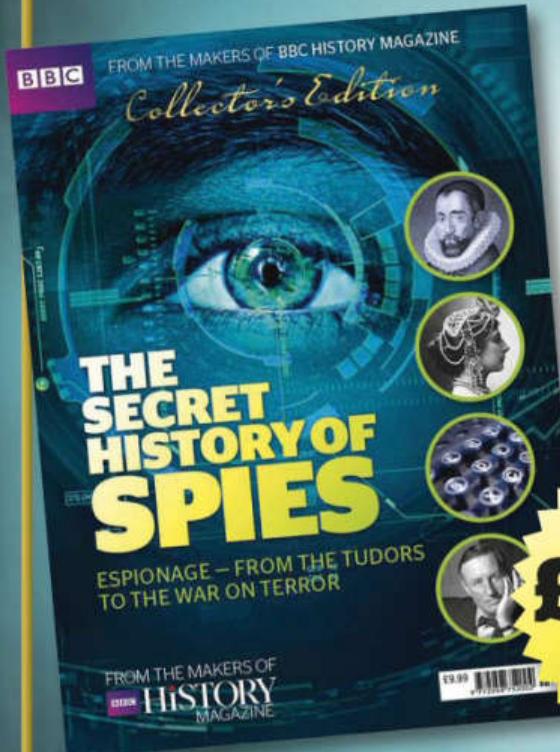
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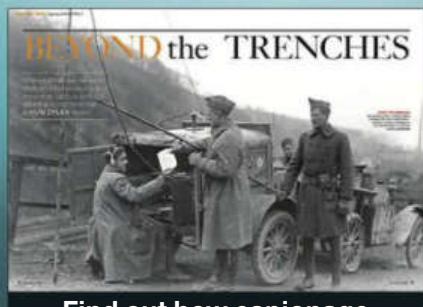
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## HISTORY EXPLORER

### The Brontës

Claire Harman and Charlotte Hodgman visit **Brontë country** in West Yorkshire, where sisters Charlotte, Emily and Anne Brontë penned some of English literature's most celebrated novels

**T**he village of Haworth, perched on the edge of the South Pennine moors, would be a quaint but unremarkable Yorkshire village but for its unique connection to one of British history's most famous literary families. But its sleepy tea rooms and antiquarian bookshops are a far cry from the crowded industrial town it was in 1820, when red-haired, Irish-born Patrick Brontë moved his young family into Haworth parsonage after taking up the post of curate.

It's clear on arrival at Haworth that the bleak, windswept moors were reflected in the settings for many of the sisters' books, particularly Emily's Gothic masterpiece, *Wuthering Heights*. The exposed and isolated moorland setting of Top Withens, an abandoned farmhouse about three miles from Haworth, is thought to have been Emily's inspiration for the location of the Earnshaws' farmhouse in the novel. The ruins can be accessed via a path that takes walkers past a small waterfall known to have been popular with the sisters. "A perfect torrent racing over the rocks, white and beautiful!" wrote Charlotte in November 1854. A chair-shaped rock nearby is said to have been where the Brontë siblings would sit and tell each other stories.

The parsonage itself – now a museum and library under the care of the Brontë Society – is the highlight of a trip to Yorkshire for any literary pilgrim. Situated on the edge of the village, adjacent to the graveyard, the Georgian house – with adjoining meadow where the sisters would dry their

washing – is virtually as it looked when the family moved in, nearly 200 years ago. Visitors can walk through the house and peer into the rooms where the siblings ate, slept and wrote. The dining room makes for especially affecting viewing – here, we are told, the three women would gather every evening to discuss their writing, walking round and round the large dining table. *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey* were all written in this room.

#### Death at the parsonage

"When the Brontës moved to Haworth, the physical isolation of the property mirrored the social isolation of the family from the village," says Claire Harman, author of a recent biography of Charlotte Brontë. "Maria Brontë, Patrick's wife, died the following year, making it even harder for the family to integrate with the village, and leaving six small children ranging from seven years to just 20 months old. It was a terrible bereavement."

Elizabeth Branwell, Maria's unmarried sister, moved to the parsonage to care for the motherless family. But in 1825 the Brontës were to suffer more anguish when the two eldest siblings, 11-year-old Maria and 10-year-old Elizabeth, died of tuberculosis within six weeks of each other.

"Losing their mother and two beloved siblings had a profound effect on the remaining Brontës," says Harman. "Overnight Charlotte, previously the middle child, had become the eldest. But where young Maria had naturally assumed the role of 'little mother', Charlotte possessed no natural



Charlotte Brontë, from a portrait of all three sisters painted by their brother, Branwell, in 1834

ON THE PODCAST  
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STEVE CALCOTT/BRIDGEMAN



# “The dramatically bleak, windswept moors inspired many of the sisters’ works”

CLAIRE HARMAN

The ruined farmhouse of Top Withens, perched high on the South Pennine moors, is thought to have provided a setting for Emily Brontë's Gothic masterpiece *Wuthering Heights*





**As his health declined, Branwell shared this room with his father, Patrick, who cared for his only son in his final days**

maternal leadership qualities."

Instead, the children retreated into an imaginary world of their own creation – Angria – where vast lands were conquered and fascinating characters created. Encouraged by Charlotte and the family's only son, Branwell, the children wrote and hand-stitched miniature books and magazines – some no more than 2 inches high (see picture below) – for Branwell's toy soldiers. These games began a journey into writing that would last the sisters their entire lives.

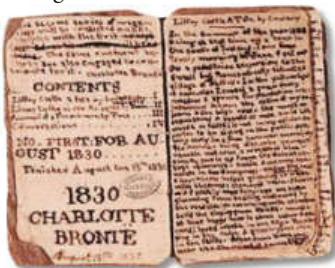
Some of these tiny books – and other objects from the museum collection – can be seen during a private tour of the parsonage library.

## Out in the world

Says Harman: "Much of the inspiration for the children's early writing must surely have come from their father, himself a published author of great enthusiasm and ambition. Unlike most fathers of the day, Patrick actively encouraged his daughters to read – even allowing them the works of Byron, who was widely considered a scandalous writer – and all the sisters attended school at various points in their childhoods.

"What was clear from an early age, however, was that the three remaining sisters would eventually have to earn livings as teachers or governesses – a respectable occupation for middle-class women."

Although Charlotte, Emily and Anne used their sporadic periods at school to learn all they would need for a life of



teaching, all three loathed being away from home, and longed to be together at the parsonage, safe within the family unit once more.

"The sisters were pretty fatalistic about the fact they would have to earn a living," says Harman, "but they hated being away from each other and none of them liked children at all! They clung to the idea that perhaps one day they could leave teaching and support themselves through their writing.

"Eventually they came up with a system that meant that when one sibling was out working, the others could have a period of time at home. But they were all three terribly homesick. Emily in particular found being separated from the family unit incredibly stressful, and developed a profound neurosis about leaving home. Charlotte, too, became hyper-sensitive away from home, and retreated into her Angrian fantasies to ease the pain of separation."

Charlotte did, in fact, spend a year abroad, teaching at the Pensionnat Heger in Brussels, where she and Emily had previously studied. It was a testing period for the 27-year-old, who developed a passionate, but unrequited, love for Constantin Heger, who ran the boarding school with his wife. A collection of Charlotte's anguished letters to Heger – mostly unanswered as he and his wife sought to detach themselves from what was becoming an uncomfortable relationship – are now held in the British Library. Charlotte would use her experiences in Brussels in her fourth novel, *Villette*, published in 1853.

Throughout their periods of time in Haworth – or away from home – all three sisters continued to write prolifically. And in 1846, using some of the money left to them

by Aunt Branwell who had died in 1842, they took the bold step to publish a collection of their poems, under the pseudonyms Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell.

"It was Charlotte who was the driving force behind the publication,"

**"ALL THREE LOATHED BEING AWAY FROM HOME AND LONGED TO BE TOGETHER AT THE PARSONAGE, SAFE WITHIN THE FAMILY UNIT"**

## VISIT

### Brontë Parsonage Museum



Church Street, Haworth, West Yorkshire  
BD22 8DR

● [bronte.org.uk](http://bronte.org.uk)

says Harman. "Emily was a genius but she had little desire to please a publisher, or anyone else for that matter. Anne, too, was happy to be published but didn't have the worldly impetus Charlotte had to get her works into print."

Despite some favourable reviews, the book sold just two copies – a blow to Charlotte in particular, who had declared that she wished to be "forever known". Undeterred, the sisters continued writing and their persistence paid off: in 1847, Charlotte's novel *Jane Eyre* was published, becoming an overnight success, while Emily's only novel, *Wuthering Heights*, and Anne's *Agnes Grey* were both published in December the same year.

Published under the same pseudonyms as their poems, the three novels received mixed reviews, but rumours abounded as to who the mysterious Bells could be.

ALAMY



## THE BRONTËS: FIVE MORE PLACES TO EXPLORE



When writing, Charlotte, Emily and Anne used the pseudonyms Curer, Ellis and Acton Bell respectively

"The energetic storyline of *Jane Eyre*, not to mention its brooding hero Mr Rochester, made the novel an instant hit," says Harman. "The violent and destructive nature of *Wuthering Heights*, however, was far more perplexing for readers, and the book was widely condemned as being impious and dangerously uncouth."

One damning review declared that: "The reader is shocked, disgusted, almost sickened by details of cruelty, inhumanity, and the most diabolical hate and vengeance..."

### Tragedy strikes

Any pleasure that the Brontës might have derived from their newfound literary success was short-lived. Branwell, who had been suffering from alcohol and opium addiction

for some years, died suddenly in September 1848, at the age of 31.

More heartache was to come. Still reeling from the death of their brother, it soon became apparent that Emily was also seriously ill with tuberculosis. Just three months after Branwell's death, she perished, refusing treatment until the day of her death when she allegedly uttered: "If you will send for a doctor, I will see him now..."

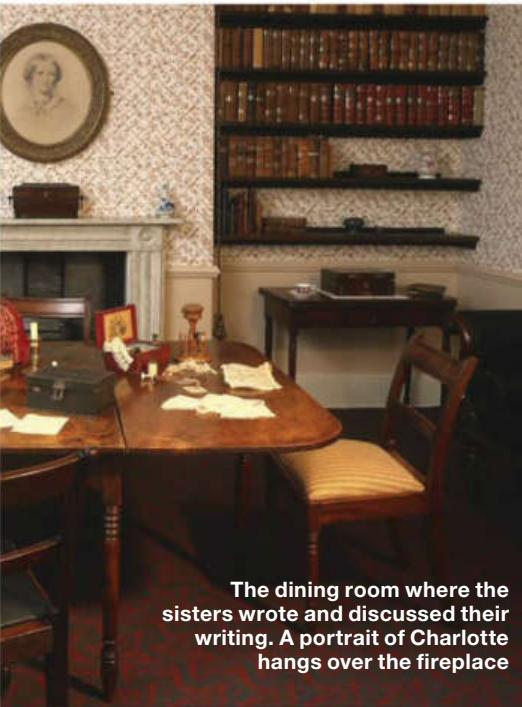
The loss of Branwell and Emily was devastating for the remaining sisters, but before long Anne, too, was showing signs of tuberculosis. Despite seeking all available treatment, Anne died in Scarborough in May 1849 where she had hoped the warmer climate would relieve her symptoms.

"Charlotte was left utterly bereaved by her siblings' deaths," says Harman. "Lost and alone, she continued pacing around the dining table at night, as the sisters had once done together, but was bereft without them."

Charlotte eventually married curate Arthur Bell Nicholls, who had come to Haworth in 1845. But for a woman who had written such vivid romances in her novels, the union was far from being a love match to rival that of Jane Eyre and Mr Rochester, or Lucy Snowe and Paul Emanuel (*Villette*).

"Charlotte's decision to marry intrigues me," says Harman. "To marry a man she just about liked enough but whom she had no strong emotions for is not an act one might have expected from a writer of great romance. The couple lived at the parsonage with Patrick, but after just nine months of marriage Charlotte died from pregnancy-related complications."

Patrick, who outlived his entire family, soon commissioned novelist Elizabeth Gaskell to write Charlotte's biography. Published in 1857, it heralded the start of a Brontë cult that continues to this day. For many it is the tragic death of such raw, flourishing talent that contributes to the sisters' ongoing appeal. For others, it is the descriptive beauty and romance of their novels. Either way, it is hard to deny that the Brontës themselves have a life story as moving as any novel. ■



The dining room where the sisters wrote and discussed their writing. A portrait of Charlotte hangs over the fireplace

### 1 St Mary's with Holy Apostles, Scarborough

Where Anne Brontë is buried

In May 1849, Anne Brontë arrived in Scarborough accompanied by sister Charlotte, and school friend Ellen Nussey. Three days later she succumbed to tuberculosis and was buried in Scarborough at her own request – she is the only Brontë not to be buried in the family vault in Haworth. [scarborough-stmarys.org.uk](http://scarborough-stmarys.org.uk)

### 2 Hollybank School, Mirfield, West Yorkshire

Where the sisters were schooled

Charlotte, Anne and Emily all attended Roe Head School – now Hollybank School – at various points, with Charlotte teaching there from 1835–38. It was at Roe Head that the sisters met lifelong friend Ellen Nussey. Today a plaque commemorates the building's Brontë connections. [hollybanktrust.com](http://hollybanktrust.com)

### 3 North Lees Hall, Hathersage, Derbyshire

Where Jane Eyre may have been set

Situated in the heart of the Peak District National Park, the imposing 16th-century tower house is thought to have been the inspiration for Thornfield Hall in *Jane Eyre*, the home of Mr Rochester. Charlotte visited the property several times, while legend tells of a mad woman at the house who died in a fire – a possible inspiration for the tortured character of Mrs Rochester. [vivat-trust.org](http://vivat-trust.org)

### 4 72-74 Market Street, Thornton, West Yorkshire

Where four Brontë children were born

Patrick and Maria moved to the small three-bedroomed cottage in 1815 with their two children Maria and Elizabeth. Charlotte, Emily, Anne and Branwell were all subsequently born in the house – allegedly in front of the fireplace. The house is now an Italian coffee bar and delicatessen. [bronte-country.com/bronte-birthplace](http://bronte-country.com/bronte-birthplace)

### 5 St Michael and All Angels Church, Haworth

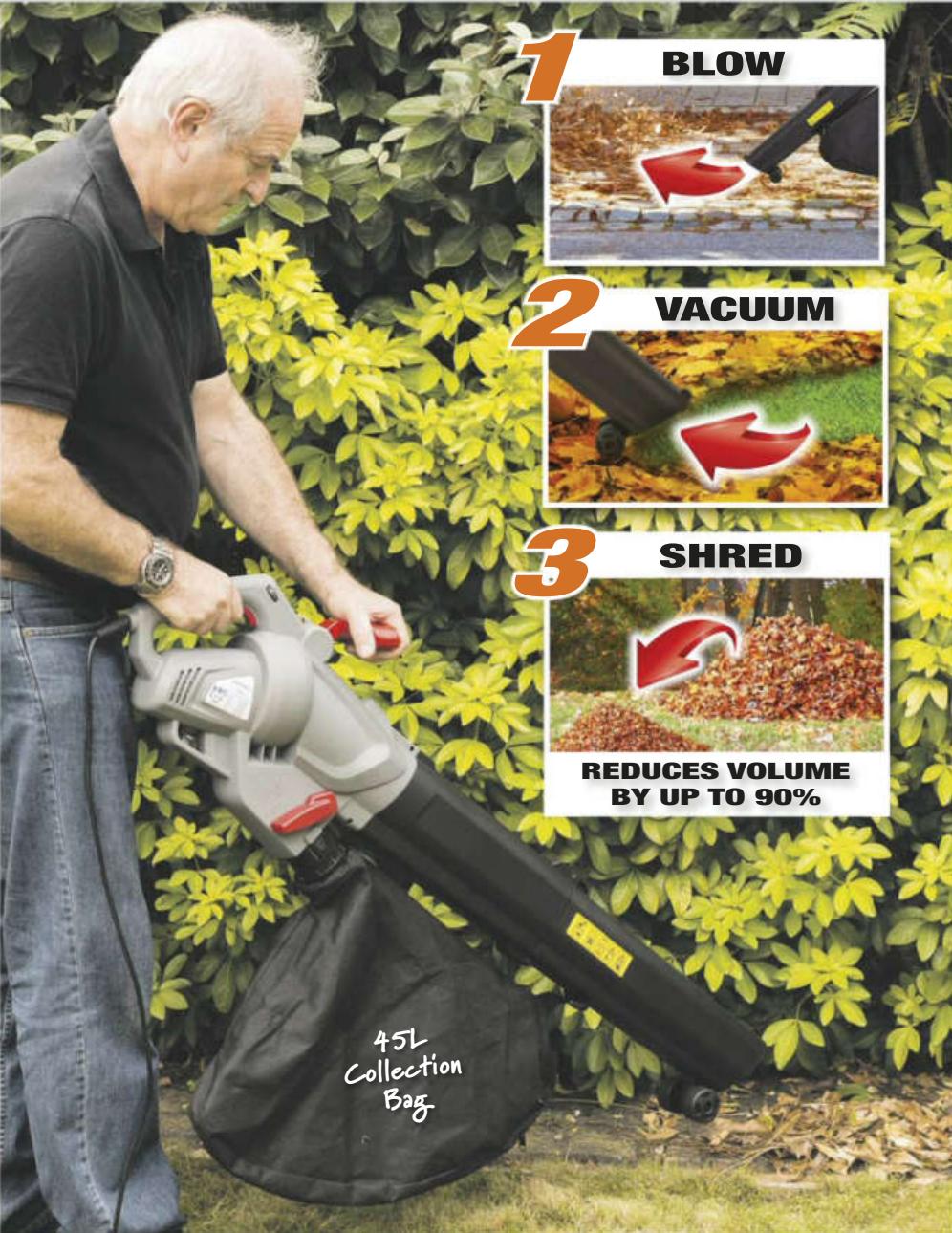
Where the Brontë family vault is sited

Several members of the Brontë family are buried in a vault in Haworth Church where Patrick Brontë preached from 1820 until his death in 1861. Charlotte was married here in 1854. [haworthchurch.co.uk](http://haworthchurch.co.uk)



Historical advisor: Claire Harman (left). Claire's latest book is *Charlotte Brontë: A Life* (Viking, 2015). Words: Charlotte Hodgman

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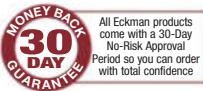
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# FIVE THINGS TO DO IN NOVEMBER

## Down the rabbit hole

EXHIBITION / FREE ENTRY

### Alice in Wonderland

The British Library, London

20 November–17 April 2016

01937 546546

bl.uk



This month sees the launch of an exhibition to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the publication of Charles Lutwidge Dodgson's much-loved children's book, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* – following the escapades of the titular girl after she follows a talking, clothed white rabbit down a hole in a riverbank.

Originally written for the daughter of a family friend – Alice Liddell – Dodgson's book (authored under the pseudonym Lewis Carroll) was a publishing sensation, popular with both children and adults, including Queen Victoria.

The exhibition, which explores how the story of Alice has captured the imaginations of artists, readers and writers over the years, also features Dodgson's original manuscript, complete with hand-drawn pen-and-ink illustrations. Later editions of the book featuring illustrations by Mervyn Peake, Ralph Steadman, Leonard Weisgard, Arthur Rackham, Salvador Dali and others will also be displayed in the exhibition.

A number of commemorative events will run alongside the exhibition, including a panel discussion about the book, chaired by broadcaster Lauren Laverne and featuring author and screenwriter Frank Cottrell Boyce, Children's Laureate Chris Riddell and debut novelist Vanessa Tait – great-granddaughter of Alice Liddell.



Alice is showered with cards in this illustration by John Tenniel, from the colour edition of *The Nursery Alice*, 1890

EXHIBITION

### Enchanted Dreams: The Pre-Raphaelite Art of ER Hughes

Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery

17 October–21 February 2016

0121 348 8038 (booking line)  
birminghammuseums.org.uk/bmag

Artist Edward Robert Hughes comes under the spotlight in the first exhibition dedicated to the man and his work. Paintings, drawings and watercolours, many of them previously unseen by the public, will be on show, including the famous piece *Night with Her Train of Stars*.



This Egyptian ivory box shows Daniel with lions

EXHIBITION

### Egypt: Faith After the Pharaohs

British Museum, London

29 October–7 February 2016

020 7323 8181 (booking line)  
britishmuseum.org/egypt

The first major UK exhibition examining the history of post-pharaonic Egypt charts its transition to a majority Christian and then Muslim population.

Objects on show include a pair of sixth to seventh-century curtains, decorated with Christian and classical imagery.



EXHIBITION

### Modern Scottish Women: Painters and Sculptors 1885–1965

Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh

7 November–26 June 2016

0131 624 6200  
nationalgalleries.org

More than 80 works by significant female artists (as well as less well-known names) are displayed in Edinburgh in an exhibition that celebrates the contribution made by Scottish women to art history between 1885 and 1965. Margaret Macdonald Mackintosh and Bessie MacNicol are among the artists featured.

EXHIBITION

### Lee Miller: A Woman's War

Imperial War Museum London

15 October–24 April 2016

020 7416 5000  
iwm.org.uk

Examine the impact of the Second World War on women through the photography of Lee Miller, one of the 20th century's most important war photographers. Some 150 images will be on show, detailing the diverse experiences of the women Miller captured on film – pre and post conflict.



## MY FAVOURITE PLACE

# Bali, Indonesia

**By Arthur Cotterell**

For the latest in our historical holidays series, Arthur explores a rare Hindu enclave in Indonesia, a tropical idyll studded with gem-like temples

**M**y first visit to Bali five years ago was a huge culture shock. Though I had explored other Indonesian islands, nothing could prepare me for such a unique culture.

This beautiful island has weathered the storm of modern times rather well, and remains a cultural gem with an idyllic landscape. International tourism has certainly had an impact, but the Balinese people are infallibly friendly, and there is always something new to discover.

The beliefs of maritime south-east Asia find their focus in Bali. The island is known as a Hindu enclave in largely Muslim Indonesia, but the Balinese also piously respect their ancestors and carefully placate the indigenous spirits dwelling in the island. Nothing is considered to be inanimate, be it a stone, a tree or a motorcar. During the Hindu new year festival, reverence for machines is shown by adorning the bonnets of vehicles with the sacred cloth usually wrapped around the trunks of trees and prominent rocks.

Small offerings are placed outside doorways to divert the attention of malignant spirits. In paddy fields, similar offerings

lie on the ground next to shrines dedicated to Dewi Sri, the indigenous rice goddess, who long pre-dates the arrival of Hinduism. Along with the water goddess Dewi Danu, she guarantees prosperity and receives the gratitude of farmers.

In gardens, special altars are used for the worship of ancestors, believed to descend from Gunung Agung, Bali's highest volcano. From its summit gods and goddesses also come down to unroofed temples where, during festivals, they are fed and entertained by music and dance-drama. A Balinese temple has no forbidding rooms, blackened with incense and occupied by awe-inspiring images: in fact, they tend to avoid representations altogether.

Visitors to Bali are often

baffled by the apparent absence of religious formality. Yet hardly anywhere is without a temple or shrine, since few places lack divine significance. Indeed, this island barely 20 times larger than the Isle of Wight is dotted with more than 20,000 temples.

Some originated before the arrival of Hinduism. The 11th-century Pura Tegeh Koripan is the highest temple in Bali, near the summit of the extinct volcano Gunung Penulisan. Actually a hilltop complex of five temples now dedicated to Shiva, its original foundation certainly precedes the triumph of the Hindu faith, its altars displaying carved figures and even unhewn rock

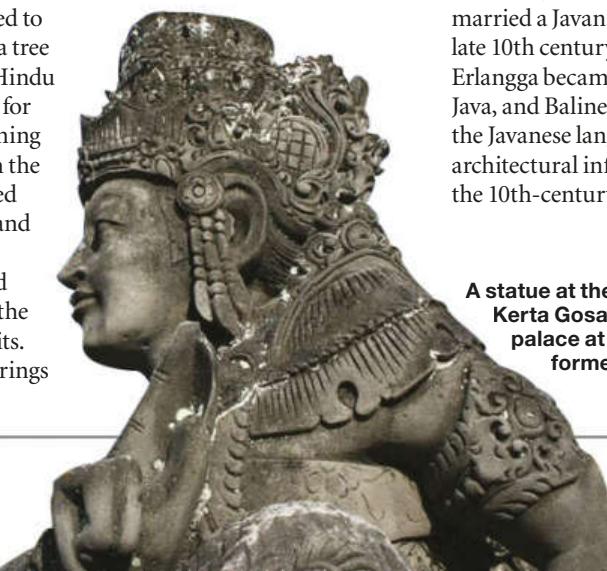
Bali's culture has been influenced by its larger neighbour to the west, Java, for over 10 centuries, since King Udayana married a Javan princess in the late 10th century. Her son Erlangga became king of eastern Java, and Balinese courts adopted the Javanese language. The architectural influences show in the 10th-century 'elephant cave'

**The 16th-century Pura Tanah Lot. "Watching the waves crash onto the rocks at the foot of this clifftop temple at sunset is a memorable way to end a day," says Arthur Cotterell**



Goa Gajah, and the rock-hewn royal monuments at Gunung Kawi dating from 1080, both near Ubud in south-central Bali.

Three centuries later, in 1343, Java's dominance was cemented when Gajah Mada of the Javanese Majapahit dynasty conquered Bali. The island's capital moved to Gelgel and later to Klungkung in modern Semarapura, where the remains of the Kerta Gosa palace complex – built in the early 18th century and largely destroyed by the Dutch in 1908 – provide absorbing wandering. Hindus fleeing the rise of Islam

CORBIS/ALAMY

**A statue at the remains of Kerta Gosa, an 18th-century palace at Klungkung, the former capital of Bali**



“ Though it is barely 20 times larger than the Isle of Wight, Bali is dotted with more than 20,000 temples

## ADVICE FOR TRAVELLERS

### BEST TIME TO GO

Bali's dry season falls between April and September, when temperatures average around 27°C. Major Hindu rituals and festivals take place throughout the year, with additional street processions and offerings a regular occurrence.

### GETTING THERE

Bali's only airport is Ngurah Rai International Airport (also known as Denpasar) but there is currently no direct flight to Bali from Europe. UK travellers can reach Bali via Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Hong Kong or Bangkok.

### WHAT TO PACK

The sun can be fierce, so it's sensible to carry a wide-brimmed hat or a parasol. Sunscreen is also a must, and insect repellent is useful.

### WHAT TO BRING BACK

Beautiful wooden carvings and *ikat*, a woven silk or cotton cloth of dyed threads

### READERS' VIEWS

I would definitely recommend the sacred monkey forest in Ubud – just don't hide your bananas from the monkeys!

Demi Pebbles Sarah Burkin

Visit the water gardens at Tirta Gangga and Pura Ulun Danu temple, Beratan Lake – both interesting and in beautiful locations  
Lee Morton

in the Indonesian archipelago in the 15th century flooded into Bali, and several of its most iconic temples date from the 15th and 16th centuries. Like Pura Tegeh Koripan, Pura Besakih, on the slopes of Gunung Agung, probably dates from prehistoric times, but has served as a Hindu temple since the Javan invasion

of 1284; by the 15th century it was established as a major place of worship and is now the holiest Hindu temple on the island.

Pura Tanah Lot, a 16th-century temple perched on a rocky outcrop off the south-west coast, is arguably Bali's most famous temple – as much for its visual appeal as its history. It was reputedly founded by Javanese saint Danghyang Nirartha, who is said to have achieved complete enlightenment at Pura Uluwatu in the southernmost peninsula. Watching the waves crash onto the rocks at the foot of this

clifftop temple at sunset is a memorable way to end a day.

Jawaharlal Nehru, who visited the island in the 1950s, called Bali "the morning of the world". To me, it is the last paradise. ■

Arthur Cotterell is author of *Bali: A Cultural History* (Signal, 2015)

Read more about Arthur's experiences in Bali at [historyextra.com/bbchistorymagazine/bali](http://historyextra.com/bbchistorymagazine/bali)

Next month: Tracy Borman visits Venice, Italy

### Been there...

Have you been to Bali? Do you have a top tip for readers? Contact us via Twitter or Facebook

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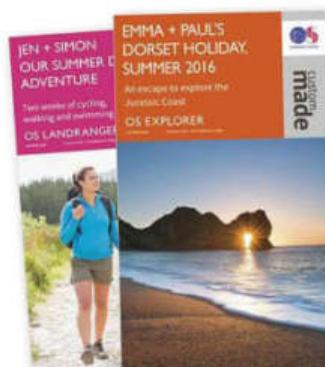
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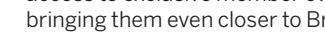
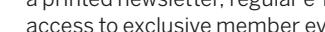
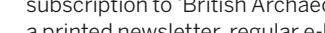
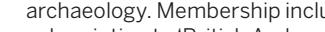
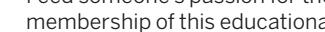
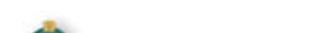
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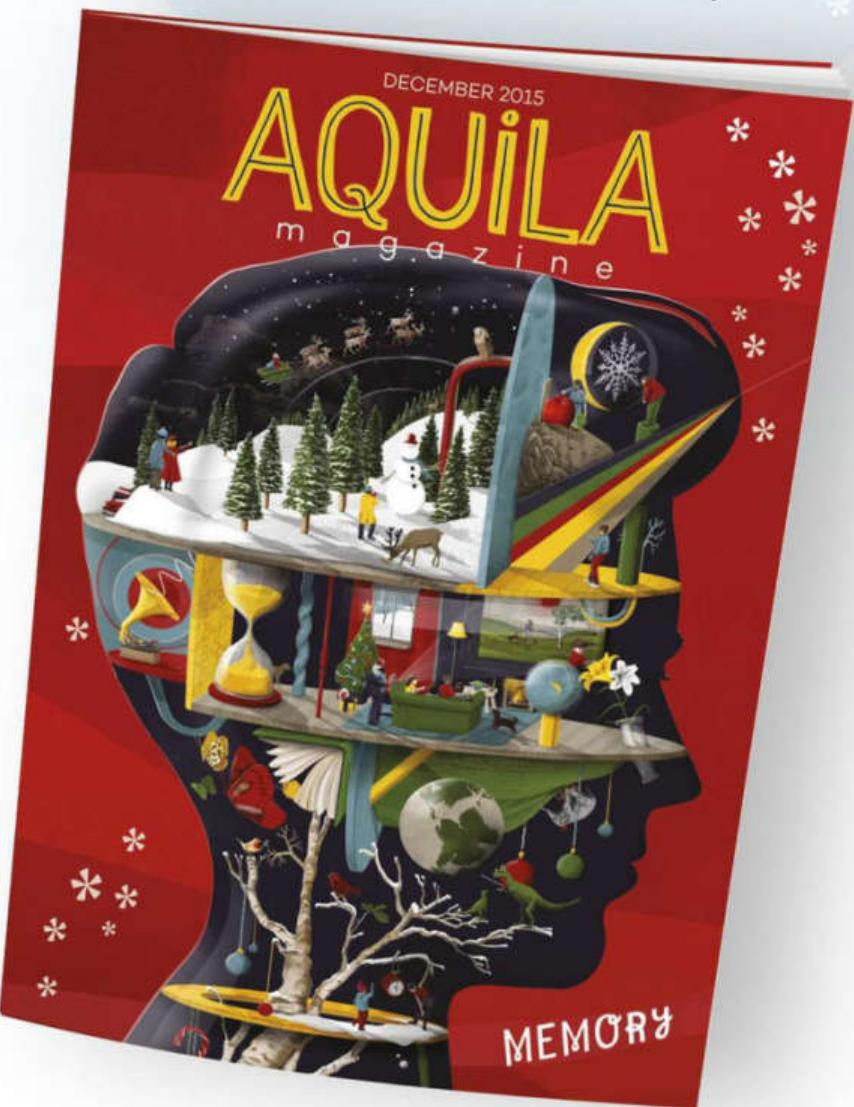


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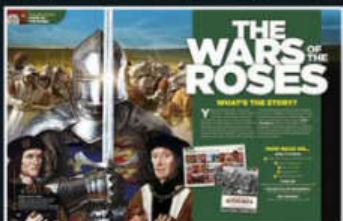


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# MISCELLANY

Q&A

## QUIZ

BY JULIAN HUMPHRYS

Try your hand at this month's history quiz

1. Who had a painful encounter with 'Little Jock' Elliot in Liddesdale, Scotland in October 1566?

2. Who were the adversaries in the Flagstaff War of 1845–46?

3. Who wrote *The History of England By a Partial, Prejudiced and Ignorant Historian* in 1791?

4. The first in England was Waverley; the first in Scotland was Melrose. Which was the first in Wales?



5

5. What is Admiral Jervis reputed to have said when quizzed about the possibility of a French invasion during the Napoleonic Wars?



6. This late Neolithic or early Bronze Age stone stands in Rudston churchyard, East Yorkshire. What is its claim to fame?

**QUIZ ANSWERS** 1. James Hepburn, 4th Earl of Bothwell (future husband of Mary, Queen of Scots). Elliot was a border reiver who surprised and wounded Bothwell when the earl tried to arrest him. 2. Britain and elements of the Maori nation. 3. Jane Austen. 4. Tintern (they are all Cistercian abbeys). 5. "I do not say they cannot come. I only say they cannot come by sea." 6. Nearly 8 metres high, it's the tallest prehistoric standing stone in Britain.

ONLINE QUIZZES  
[historyextra.com/bbchistory-magazine/quiz](http://historyextra.com/bbchistory-magazine/quiz)



ILLUSTRATION BY GLEN MCBETH

**Q** Which monarch ruled for the shortest amount of time – and why?

Andrew Lewis, by email

**A** In England, Lady Jane Grey ruled for only nine days, though many question whether she was ever really queen. You might also count Edgar the Ætheling, the last of the house of Wessex. He was elected king following Harold's death in 1066 but was deserted by his supporters as William moved on London. He was never crowned, and reigned for under two months.

The Danish king Swein Forkbeard invaded and was declared king of England on Christmas Day 1013 but died five weeks later. Then there's Edward V, who reigned for 86 days – but was moved, with his brother, to the Tower of London by his uncle, the lord protector, who took the throne as Richard III; Edward was never seen again. In the 11th century three monarchs – Lulach, Duncan II and Donald III – each lasted less than a year on the Scottish throne, though Donald did get a second crack.

But British and Irish rulers don't come close to challenging the record books. World history, both ancient and modern, is littered with short-lived monarchs – some better documented than others.

How about, for instance, 'Louis XIX' of France? His father, Charles X, abdicated following an uprising on 2 August 1830. Louis' wife begged him not to sign his own abdication, and he hesitated for 20 minutes – during which time he was technically king.

Another who made the record books was Sayid Khalid bin Barghash Al-Busaid, who became sultan of Zanzibar in 1896 – for a mere two days. The British didn't recognise his right to rule the strategically important island, and deposed him by force. His palace was shelled by the Royal Navy in the shortest war in history – lasting just 38 minutes.

Eugene Byrne, author and journalist

## SAMANTHA'S RECIPE CORNER



Every issue, picture editor **Samantha Nott** brings you a recipe from the past. This month it's a fruit-flavoured drink made with the bounty of wild blackthorns

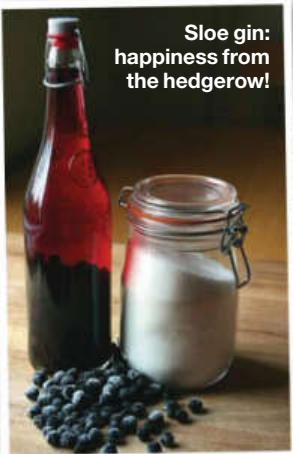
### Sloe gin

With the enclosure of the countryside in the 16th and 17th centuries came a huge increase in blackthorn bushes, used to divide up fields, and therefore lots of sloes. The popularity of gin at the time meant that there was an ideal way of making otherwise quite unpalatable sloes a bit more exciting.

Sloe gin is a great drink to prepare in time for Christmas and the long winter months that follow. I love the whole process, from picking the sloes to hiding the bottles in a dark corner to mature.

I've never made sloe gin the same way twice – it's always a bit haphazard – but for me the two most important things are not to use too much sugar, and to wait three months before you drink it (always hard!).

Quantities depend on how many sloes you pick, and are very rough – but, broadly speaking, use enough sloes to half-fill your bottle, and about 50g of sugar per litre.



**Sloe gin:**  
happiness from  
the hedgerow!



**Difficulty: 2/10**  
**Time: 20 minutes**  
**preparation, 3 months**  
**maturity**

#### INGREDIENTS

- 500g ripe sloes
- 50g sugar
- 1 litre gin

#### METHOD

Wash the sloes and pick off any stems, then pat them dry with a tea towel or paper towel. Prick the sloes, or freeze them overnight so that their skins split. Add the sloes to a sterilised bottle or jar till it's just under half full.

Top up the bottle or jar with gin and add the sugar. Seal the jar or bottle and leave for three months or longer, shaking the jar periodically to ensure that the sugar dissolves.

Before drinking, strain the gin from the sloes through a sieve or muslin and re-bottle.

*Note: this recipe uses a bit less sugar than most. More sugar can always be added to taste before drinking.*

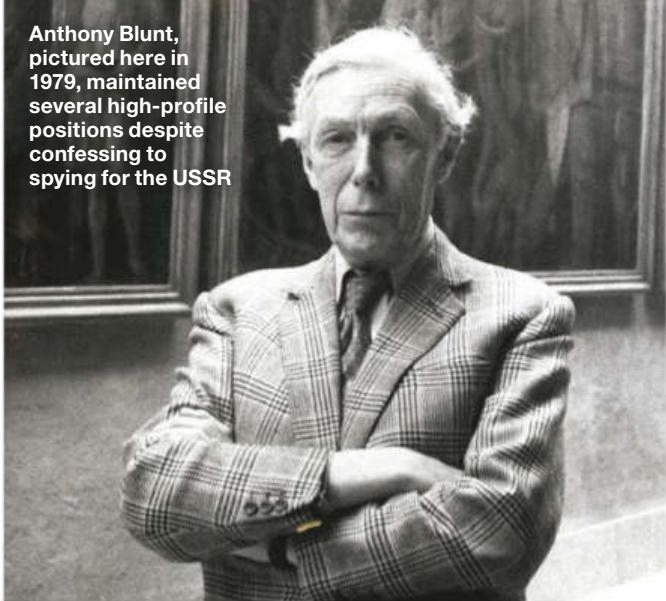
#### VERDICT

Country Christmas in a glass!

## GOT A QUESTION?

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**Anthony Blunt,**  
pictured here in  
1979, maintained  
several high-profile  
positions despite  
confessing to  
spying for the USSR



**Q Why was Anthony Blunt allowed to continue as Surveyor of the Queen's Pictures after he was exposed as a Soviet spy?**

@FlaglerPH, via Twitter

**A** In November 1979 Margaret Thatcher confirmed publicly that in 1964 Sir Anthony Blunt had, in return for immunity from prosecution, confessed to spying for the USSR from the late 1930s to 1956.

Thatcher's statement did not satisfactorily explain why, in the 15 years between his confession and public exposure, Blunt retained his knighthood and his positions as director of the Courtauld Institute of Art (till 1974) and Surveyor of the Queen's Pictures (till 1972).

Media consensus at the time was that he must have had support from "a coven of angels in very lofty places" (to paraphrase George Steiner's celebrated piece in the *New Yorker*), implying that Blunt's connections with Cambridge University and the House of Windsor had sheltered him

from the security services.

In fact, the opposite seems to have been the case. It was Blunt's old friends from Cambridge who had leaked crucial information to the press. The Queen's private secretary was twice instructed (in 1964 and 1972) by the cabinet, acting on the advice of the security services, not to dismiss Blunt, because his sudden departure might confirm suspicion that Blunt was indeed the 'Fourth Man' of the so-called Cambridge Five spies. MI5 and MI6 had little interest in protecting Blunt; they were motivated more by a desire to avoid the sort of spy scandals that had in the past revealed their failure to outwit the KGB.

**Dr Iain Lauchlan**, lecturer at the University of Edinburgh, with a special interest in the history of espionage and intelligence

# PRISE CROSSWORD

This chief advisor became Tsar of Russia in 1598 (see 14 across)



## ACROSS

- 6** Major Peter Norman \_\_\_, designer of a prefabricated corrugated steel shelter used in both world wars (6)  
**8** See 24 down.  
**11** Sir Richard, entrepreneur of the industrial revolution, constructor of a water-powered spinning frame (9)  
**12** The 1971 'beta' version of the Greek Cypriot nationalist movement, led by Georgios Grivas, its aim being the union of Cyprus with Greece (4,1)  
**13** eg the *Hindenburg*, destroyed in 1937 (7)  
**14** 16th-century chief advisor to the Russian tsar, whom he succeeded in 1598 (7)  
**15** A medieval landholder, often a guard or attendant of a noble family (6)  
**17** A future US president who, in 1941, exposed waste and fraud in war contracts (6)  
**21** The \_\_\_ Riots of the mid-19th century targeted Welsh toll-gates to protest against an unfair tax system (7)

**23** Effective ruler of Rome when Tiberius withdrew to Capri; executed in AD 31 (7)

**26** Historically, that part of a person's income paid over to the church (5)

**27** Communist leader, executed in 1989, whose regime collapsed after his troops fired on demonstrators (9)

**28** US-born English artist awarded a derisory farthing damages in his 1878 libel suit against art critic John Ruskin (8)

**29** Ancient people of what is now eastern and north-eastern Scotland, possibly named after their custom of body painting or tattooing (5)

## DOWN

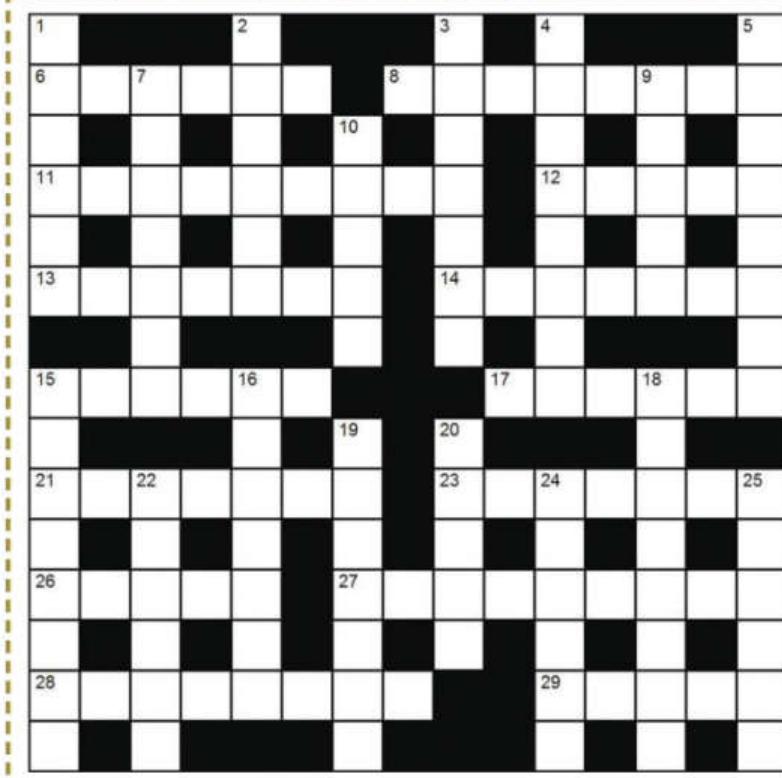
**1** Battle in 1402 at which forces of the Turkic ruler Timur defeated those of the Ottoman sultan Bayezid I (6)

**2** The \_\_\_ tax, based on the number of fireplaces in a household, was applied in England between 1662 and 1689 (6)

**3** Feudal levy a lord could exact from his vassal in lieu of military service (7)

**4** The Julian one was replaced by a more accurate version introduced by Pope Gregory in 1582 (8)

**5** Byname of Welsh politician who spearheaded the introduction of the



National Health Service in Britain (3,5)

**7** Indonesia's first president, who established an autocratic system he called 'Guided Democracy' (7)

**9** Substitute money, for example as used to pay employees, redeemable only at the company store (5)

**10** See 16 down.

**15** The successful siege of this site in 1781 by American and French forces against the British effectively ended military operations in the Revolutionary War (8)

**16/10** Civilisation emerging c3000 BC, at its most powerful during the New Kingdom (16th–11th centuries BC) (7,5)

**18** 1842 legislation prohibiting women, girls, and boys under 10 from working underground in the British coal industry (5,3)

**19** Term used for (imprecisely defined) border areas, such as that of Wales and England (7)

**20** Watts (1674–1748), regarded as the 'father of English hymnody' (5)

**22** South Africa-born entrepreneur 'Billy', whose holiday camps became a multi-million pound business (6)

**24/8** US senator who came to prominence in 1950 with unsubstantiated accusations of communist

subversion in government circles (6,8)

**25** Tunisian city on site of the ancient Phoenician colony of Hadrumetum (6)

Compiled by Eddie James

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**Across:** 5 Pascal 7 Cenotaph 10 Privateer 11 Noble 12 Comecon 14 Normans 18 Scythia 20 Estates 22/27 Ellis island 24 Stevenson 26 Martello.

**Down:** 1 Maya 2 Hebron 3 John Bright 4 Lamb 5 Papacy 6 Ship Money 8 Hoess 9 Rennie 13 Chichester 15 Anastasia 17 Reeve 18/16 Steam engine 19 Anselm 21 Synods 23/17A Lord Raglan 25 ENSA.

## FIVE WINNERS OF EAGLES AT WAR

N Jones, Bath; J Whowell, Cornwall; B Cash, Bristol; A Tidd, Renfrewshire; P Fisher, Cheshire

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## The mystery of Henry VIII's will

Suzannah Lipscomb investigates the battle over the Tudor king's legacy



## ◀ Six ages of China

Michael Wood describes the pivotal eras in the country's historical development

## Loch Ness monster

Gareth Williams reveals how the legend captivated 20th-century scientists

## Richard III's luck ▶

David Horspool on why the controversial king's fortunes were often out of his control





"She was a servant to mankind and we owe her an immense debt of gratitude. I can say - with cosmic gusto - she is my hero"

Actor Brian Blessed chooses

# Hypatia

cAD 370-415



An undated portrait of Hypatia who, says Brian Blessed, "gathered information from all over the world and imparted it to the people"

**H**ypatia was a Greek mathematician, astronomer and philosopher from the Egyptian city of Alexandria, then under Roman rule. There she was head of the Neoplatonist school, at which she lectured on various subjects, as well as being a staunch defender of the city's Great Library. She was brutally murdered by a mob of Christian zealots, possibly working on the orders of Alexandria's archbishop, Cyril.

### When did you first hear about Hypatia?

I was 11 years of age and had just started at Bolton-on-Dearne secondary modern in South Yorkshire. Because our class wasn't making any progress, the headmaster brought in his wife – a disciplinarian in stockings and spectacles. She said: "I'm going to tell you about a remarkable woman called Hypatia who gave her life for education. She studied at the greatest library the world has ever known – the library of Alexandria. This library contained all the ancient Greek works, the New Testament, the Old Testament, ancient scrolls, ancient history..."

### What kind of person was Hypatia?

It was a time when women were regarded as second-class citizens – in fact, men treated them as property. Yet they couldn't suppress Hypatia's thirst for knowledge. She had an extraordinary range of accomplishments for someone in any era – and to achieve these as a woman was unthinkable. She gathered knowledge from all over the world and imparted it to the people. All this great art, and she defended it.

### What made her a hero?

People expect your hero to be someone like George Mallory or Joe Louis, but Hypatia is, by far, the most sensational hero I've ever read about. She was an astronomer, she was a mathematician, she was a philosopher. She was a great beauty too. And she rode to the library on a chariot! Everyone wanted to marry her but she turned them all down, because she was devoted, utterly, to the library. The Greeks and the Arabs and the Phoenicians and the Italians met there. The scientists and the mathematicians and the physicists and the scholars met there and they imparted knowledge.

### What do you think was her finest hour?

Probably her opposition to Cyril, the archbishop of Alexandria. He despised her because she stood for learning and science, which the early church had identified as paganism. Their ignorance was quite dreadful. She was in great personal danger but continued to teach. She died on her way to work, set upon by a fanatical mob of Cyril's parishioners. They dragged her from her chariot, tore off her clothes and flayed her flesh from her bones. She was killed on the spot, torn apart for her defence of art and all that was right.

They then went into the library, burning things, destroying all the writings of centuries, of earliest man. Hundreds of works of art were destroyed, hundreds of manuscripts. Discoveries and ideas and passions were extinguished. The losses were incalculable, but the wonderful Hypatia fought with her last breath to save them. After they'd murdered her, they burned her remains. And Cyril was made a bloody saint.

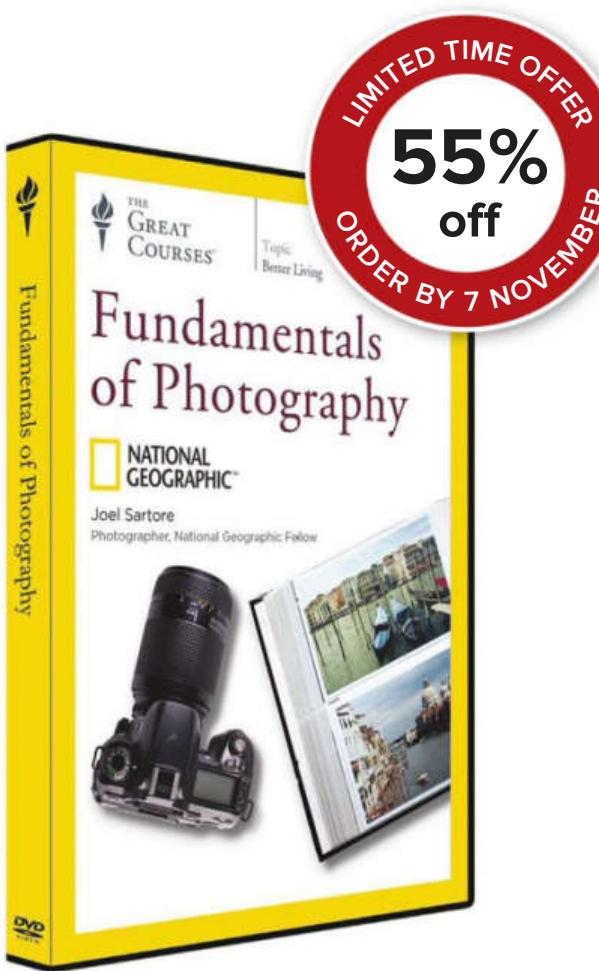
### Can you see any parallels between you and Hypatia?

My biggest love in life is meditation. I love peace, I love science and I love people of this nature. Katharine Hepburn was the closest I've come to Hypatia. Hepburn was incredibly powerful and I had marvellous conversations with her about life and education. Hypatia was a part that Hepburn should have played. She had that edge, that power, that passion. She had great knowledge and had studied all the great religions. I challenged and challenged and challenged Hepburn and I learned and learned and learned. I'd have been the same with Hypatia.

### If you could meet Hypatia, what would you say to her?

I would say: "Thank you for being a great example. And thank you for being a great servant to the arts and the sciences." Her tapestry was vast. She was a servant to mankind and we owe her an immense debt of gratitude. I can say – with cosmic gusto – she is my hero. We shall never see her like again. ■  
*Brian Blessed was talking to Nige Tassell*

**Brian Blessed** is an actor and writer. His memoir, *Absolute Pandemonium*, has just been published by Sidgwick & Jackson



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#### LEIF OVE ANDSNES

Mozart Piano Concerto No 20

Schumann Piano Concerto †

plus a recital featuring works by

Sibelius, Beethoven,

Debussy and Chopin

† Concert supported by Baker & McKenzie LLP

**barbican**

Resident  
Orchestra

\* Produced by LSO and Barbican  
Part of the LSO 2015/16 Season  
and Barbican presents



Photo Ronald Mackenzie