ALL ABOUT HISTORY ANNUAL

Spanning from ancient rulers to inspirational women and horrible histories, this new All About History Annual brings you another packed volume full of incredible tales of bravery, innovation and sometimes cruelty. Learn about the strange and inventive medicines of the middle ages, the incredible life of former slave-turned civil war spy and emancipator Harriet Tubman and delve into the depths of Hitler’s bunker in his final days. We span the full breadth of history to bring you some of the most engrossing stories around. Kicking off with ancient rulers such as the heretic pharaoh, Akhenaten, this collection will then take a look at some royal stories, such as the cult of the sun king, Louis XIV. Then we move into more dark and disturbing tales such as the history of werewolves and the real Mr Hyde. Some amazing women of history take over from there with Joan Of Arc and some interviews with members of the Apollo program. We round off with war stories such as tales of those who looked after evacuated children and black heroes of World War One.
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Printed by William Gibbons, 26 Planetary Road, Willenhall, West Midlands, WV13 3X7

Distributed by Marketforce, 5 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf, London, E14 5HU
www.marketforce.co.uk Tel: 0203 787 9001

All About History Annual Volume 7
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India’s Philosopher King

While Ashoka began his reign as a bloodthirsty conqueror, he soon had a change of heart, creating the world’s first welfare state

Written by Hareth Al Bustani

At the start of his long reign, India’s King Ashoka seemed destined to become one of history’s great conquerors. Instead, having spilled much blood to seize and expand his realm, he did something far more remarkable – he disavowed violence.

The move was all the more spectacular considering his lineage. His grandfather, Chandragupta, was a force to be reckoned with. A brilliant warrior, Chandragupta commanded a mercenary band in the service of Alexander the Great, before overthrowing India’s Nanda kingdom and establishing his own dynasty, the Maurya in 322 BCE. He went on to unite the subcontinent’s north and west, kicking the Macedonians out – with an army of 600,000 men, 8,000 elephants and 30,000 cavalry – and ruling over the subcontinent’s greatest empire for a quarter of a century. The Jains say he abdicated the throne to his son, before fasting himself to death.

Indian society was governed by an increasingly rigid caste system, topped by the Brahman class of Vedic priests. Though Chandragupta was born to one of the lower castes, he filled his court with Brahman. His son, Bindusara, went on to subjugate the subcontinent’s south, cutting through the Deccan plateau, into Mysore - earning himself the nickname ‘Enemy-Slayer’. Although he failed to capture the kingdom of Kalinga to the east, he was said to have fathered 101 children, naming his eldest son, Sushima, his heir. One of his numerous dalliances resulted in a boy named Ashoka, a child who seemed set for a life of misery and obscurity. Not only did he suffer from a skin condition that left him “rough and unpleasant to touch”, but he was prone to fainting and fits of epilepsy.

His afflictions made him a wicked youth, supposedly burning his entire harem alive after hearing them gossiping about his skin. Short and stout, he depended entirely on his wits, making an ally of his father’s chief minister, with whom he schemed against his brothers. Eager to put

“Ashoka’s early years were ruled with an iron fist, as he received daily briefings from an elaborate, far-reaching intelligence network of spies”

When Ashoka visited the newly conquered Kalinga, beyond the pomp and grandeur, all he could see was the horrors of war.
these skills to good use and keep his son at arm’s length, the king sent Ashoka, now known as ‘the Worthy’, to put down a rebellion in the northwestern province of Taxila.

Receiving a hero’s welcome, Ashoka went on to forge alliances with two mountain leaders of Kashmir – so successfully, his father named him the viceroy of Ujjain. There, he met a merchant’s daughter called Devi, a committed Buddhist, and defied convention by marrying her for love, rather than prestige. Back in the capital, the prodigious heir Sushima had caused an uproar by slapping a senior minister on the back of his bald head, for comedic effect. Fearing the fickle whims of the future king, the courtiers had his rival claimant Ashoka recalled to the capital. Leaving his lowly wife and children behind, Ashoka returned and married Asandhimitra, from a small kingdom north of modern Delhi, naming her his chief queen. Sushima, meanwhile, was sent to suppress another revolt in Taxila.

In 274 BCE, the king fell gravely ill and ordered Sushima to return, instructing Ashoka to take his place. Desperate to remain in the capital at this critical juncture, Ashoka feigned sickness, and had the chief minister intercept the message to Sushima. Incensed, Ashoka then confronted his father, demanding he be named regent in a manner so shocking, the emperor supposedly fell into an epileptic fit and died. When Sushima finally arrived at the capital, he found his half-brother defended by a wall of Greek mercenaries. According to the Mahayana Buddhist account, the chief minister dug a ditch within the eastern gate, filled it with coals and covered it with reeds and dirt, before egging the crown prince on, encouraging him to seize his throne. As Sushima rushed into the unguarded eastern gate, he tripped into the fiery hole, enduring a slow, painful demise.

In the ensuing four years, legend tells how Ashoka killed his remaining 98 half-brothers one-by-one, sparing only his uterine sibling, Vitashoka. Having finally wiped out all other male heirs, he enjoyed the rites of coronation. During the ritual, he was cleansed, anointed and consecrated by Brahman priests, emerging a king of divine authority. Now he was the physical embodiment of Dharma itself – the cosmic truth. Adopting his grandfather’s title, Devanampriya, ‘Beloved of the gods’, and the regal name Priyadasa, or ‘Beloved to behold’, he appointed his younger brother vice-regent. The emperor would go on to take six wives and scores of concubines, fathering 14 children.

He took quickly to leadership, assessing the affairs of the realm, receiving gold revenues, appointing officials, writing letters, overseeing military exercises and even going hunting. He nominated four princes to serve as viceroys, overseeing the district officers, mahamatras - who, in turn, managed a further group of subordinates. Cities, meanwhile, were run by commissioners with judicial powers.

Ashoka’s early years were ruled with an iron fist, as he received daily briefings from an elaborate, far-reaching intelligence network of spies. One account tells of how he built a ‘Hell Prison’, which looked beautiful on the outside, but was filled with the ‘five great agonies’ of Hell. He allegedly appointed a man called Chandragirika his chief executioner, tasking him with killing people by all manner of depraved tortures, only to later have him tortured to death.

The Original Machiavelli

The Mauryan dynasty began with a genius, determined to deliver his empire from danger, and hell-bent on revenge

Chanakya was born to a Brahman family in the northwestern province of Taxila – a centre of culture and learning where the finest studied science, economics, law, medicine and warfare.

A teacher’s son, the genius became a professor himself at a young age, and his study of politics led him to believe that India’s Nanda kingdom was in a dangerously vulnerable state. In the event of an invasion, he worried the entire realm would soon collapse. Desperate, he travelled east to the capital of Pataliputra, to advise the Nanda king, only to find him a manipulative tyrant. The experiment ended in disaster, with Chanakya fleeing disguised as a Jain ascetic – eventually coming across a brash young boy called Chandragupta.

Taking the young lad under his wing, he gave him a holistic education, hoping to mould him into the ideal ruler. As the two amassed financial support, they mounted a direct attack on the Nanda, failing spectacularly. Soon after, the duo watched a mother scold her son for eating the hot centre of a bun, rather than the cool edges – prompting a change in strategy. Shoring up allies in the Himalayas, they attacked the outskirts of the kingdom, slowly carving it up piece by piece, before eventually taking the capital itself and sending the Nanda king fleeing. Thereafter, Chandragupta was appointed king, creating the Maurya dynasty and ruling in the mould of Chanakya’s design. Chanakya, nicknamed Kautiya or ‘the Crow Like’, went on to pen Arthashasstra, ‘Treatise on State Economy’, outlining his theories on statehood, rulership, political economy and international relations – ideas that would survive well into the British Raj.
Ashoka was said to have erected 84,000 stupas and monasteries across the subcontinent, and he built them to last.

The area marked in red overlaying a modern map of the region shows the extent of the Indian empire around Ashoka’s time.

Although he loved meat, and particularly enjoyed eating peacock, in 265 BCE - whether under the influence of his mother, his first wife or a young monk who miraculously survived his ‘Hell’ - he converted to Buddhism. It was a political masterstroke - one that would allow him to further whittle away the influence of the Brahman caste, by simply transitioning their authority away to the humble Buddhists.

He immediately began replacing the 60,000 Brahman on his payroll with 60,000 Buddhist monks - who saw their ranks swell with Brahman converts. However, it would be a few years before he took his new faith seriously enough to give up his beloved peacock meat. During this transition, in his eighth year in power, eager to accomplish what his father could not, the king went against the tenets of his newfound faith and invaded the unconquered eastern kingdom of Kalinga.

The ensuing war would prove far bloodier than he could have imagined. Although the king succeeded in subjugating and drawing Kalinga within his yoke, 100,000 were killed in the violence, and 150,000 displaced. Even amidst the glory of conquest, as he toured his new province, littered with corpses and ruins, the human toll shocked Ashoka to his core. Rather than pride, he simply felt grief and shame.

Hurling himself deeper into Buddhism, he disavowed violence, and began a second phase of leadership, ‘Ashoka Dharma’. He commemorated this transformation in 260 BCE, with a public display of piety, inscribing the first of many ‘Rock Edicts’, pronouncing his conversion to Buddhism. These would later culminate in the Pillar Edicts, inscribed pillars of magnificent polished stone, crowned by lions, bulls and elephants, sat atop the Wheel of Moral Law.

The king sometimes spent three quarters of the year touring the empire, inscribing rock faces in the subcontinent’s first written script, Brahmi, which was developed to communicate his mother tongue of Prakrit. This gave him the means to speak directly with every single one of his subjects.

In the process, he delivered a fascinating array of philosophical, heartfelt musings - unfiltered and raw, a far cry from the modern politician’s sanitised public statement.

One of his rocks directly expressed remorse for the invasion of Kalinga, lamenting: “Peasants who behave with humility towards their friends, servants and labourers are killed in wars and separated from their loved ones”. The king added, “This has distressed me considerably. Why should this happen?” He then vowed to eschew thoughts of war and direct all his energies to Dharma going forwards, encouraging future generations to do the same. “The triumph of Dharma is superior to the triumph of war.”

As he became consumed by his Buddhist faith, this idea of Dharma would become a leading tenet of his leadership going forwards. Curiously, he sought not to enforce the Buddhist notion of
Dharma upon the empire, but to create a society
governed by a universal force of mutual respect
and kindness – or as he put it, “All men are my
children”. It was a system of civic ethics, rather
than a state religion. In one edict, he denounced
the “meaningless rituals”, synonymous with
Brahmanic worship, instead encouraging people
to adopt rituals and customs of “respect for elders”
and “treating all living creatures well” – including
slaves and labourers.

He insisted that “there should be restraint
in preaching one’s faith”, adding that “a person
who praises his own faith and derides the faith
of others is actually bringing his faith into
disrepute”. After all, Buddha himself had said it
was behaviour, not birth, that determined whether
one was a “priest or an outcast”. While all this
served to disgust the Brahman, nothing enraged
them so much as his edict denouncing the
sacrifice of animals. In the statement, Ashoka even
confessed that while his royal kitchens still killed
two peacocks and a deer every day to make curry,
these too would soon be spared.

During this new phase of governance, Ashoka’s
political administration largely resembled that
of his grandfather. His mahamatras travelled
across the empire five times a year, making sure
neither senior nor lower ranking officials were
abusing their posts. When Ashoka’s own brother
was caught taking liberties with his vice-regency,
he was forced to resign, and become a Buddhist
hermit. Ashoka also had various officials and
employees on the payroll, collecting taxes from
peasants, artisans and merchants, and holding
lawbreakers to account. He was firm but fair: not
only abolishing the death penalty, but offering
amnesty on his birthday and the anniversary of
his coronation, releasing certain prisoners.

In 254 BCE, the king sent a minister to mediate
a dispute between Buddhists and the Nigrantha,
a sect of Jain ascetics who refused to even wear
clothes. When the minister was killed, Ashoka
called together the Third Buddhist Council at his
capital of Pataliputra, to streamline the various
Buddhist sects and codify what was considered
doctrinally correct. He then began a widespread
programme of proselytising – sending monks
cross the region, bearing the accepted doctrine.

As he grew older, Ashoka became increasingly
dedicated to the Sangha, the Buddhist community.
He was said to have built 84,000 stupas and
monasteries across the realm, one for each of the
Buddhist discourses. Rather than mud and
plaster, they were built to last – of brick and stone.
He supposedly gifted 100,000 gold pieces to
every monastery, another 100,000 to the site of
Buddha’s birth, and a further 100,000 to the Bodhi
tree where Buddha received enlightenment.

The king also revived the magnificent
Pancavarsika festival, reimagining it in line with
his Buddhist faith. At the end of the proceedings,
he erected a platform around the Bodhi tree and
poured milk over it, infused with sandalwood,
saffron, camphor and perfume, from 5,000 gold,
silver, crystal and tiger’s-eye pitchers.

After the king’s chief queen and mother of his
beloved heir, Kunala, died, her spot was filled by
Tishyarakshita – a Machiavellian anti-Buddhist,
who had supposedly once tried to destroy the
Bodhi tree. Either angered at Kunala for rejecting
a sexual advance, or simply hoping to elevate
her own son, she supposedly doctored one of
the king’s orders, having his heir blinded – while
he was, in an all too predictable predicament,
dropping down a rebellion in Taxila. When Kunala
clawed his way back to the capital, sans eyes, the
chief minister had the queen killed, and her anti-
Buddhist conspirators executed or banished to
the desert. Ineligible, Kunala’s son Samprati was
named heir in his stead.

As Ashoka neared his seventies, and his health
began to fail, he sustained himself by planning a
second Pancavarsika festival, one that would far
surpass the first – spending 400,000 gold pieces
entertaining 400,000 monks, and even more
for his Ashokarama monastic centre. However,
decades of philanthropic spending had virtually
bankrupted the empire, and the king’s ministers
leaped on the young Samprati – who told the
treasury to reject Ashoka’s request. Denied his
dying wish, to donate all his remaining worldly
goods to the Buddhist community, Ashoka slipped
away from rulership, allowing Samprati to act in
his name – before dying in 233 BCE.

The king’s death would be followed by another
troubled succession, with a line of short-reigning
kings ushering in the dynasty’s demise, and the
return of Brahmanism just half a century later.
Though Buddhism would eventually fade from
the subcontinent, it informed the future Hindu faith,
with Buddha serving as one of Vishnu’s avatars. It
would also find fertile ground in Sri Lanka, Nepal,
Tibet, China and beyond. Of the two symbols that
adorned Ashoka’s Pillar Edicts, the Bodhi tree and
the Wheel of the Moral Law, the latter has been
immortalised on the modern Indian flag.

It is a fitting tribute to a man, who not only
presided over the largest ever Indian empire for
three decades, but transformed a minor sect into
a major world religion, successfully demonstrating
an entirely new model of leadership – one based
not on conquest, but universal welfare.
The Wide Reach of Civilisation

Ashoka’s philanthropy blossomed across the fringes of the empire, rolling out remarkable developments.

Set along the Ganges, the Maurya capital of Pataliputra was one of the largest cities in the world, perhaps even larger than Rome, brimming with palaces, factories, shipyards, gardens and temples – all enclosed within enormous walls, with 570 towers and 64 gates.

However, the empire proper was enormous, spanning an incredible array of cultures and landscapes – most of it far less sophisticated than the capital. With large swaths covered in dense forest, littered with backwater villages, one of the king’s most influential moves was his introduction of Dharma mahamatras, or superintendents of morals. This new breed of officers were tasked with rolling out the king’s vision of Dharma on the ground, maintaining peace between the sects, digging wells, running hospitals and building shade alongside the road.

They were sent to the farthest reaches of the empire, teaching the tribes about Dharma, and bringing with them the high culture and technology of the Gangetic Basin, the heart of Maurya power. In the process, the peasants were ‘civilised’, brought into the fold of tax-paying society, with a respect for royal authority and Ashoka’s monks, officers and priests. The king claimed that through his efforts, many hunters and fishermen were converted to agriculturists.

Before long, black-polished pottery, writing, iron tools and spoked wheels were carried to the distant provinces. Burnt bricks would emerge for the first time in northeast India, a material that could withstand heavy rain, and therefore allow settlements to be built where mud shacks previously could not. Ring wells, meanwhile, allowed people to live further and further from the river banks. Having communicated his philosophies to the rulers of Greece, Egypt, Turkey and Sri Lanka, the king even offered medical support to neighbouring countries.
What have the Romans done for us?

They came, they saw and they conquered - and they shaped modern Europe at the same time

Written by Kate Marsh

At its height, the Roman Empire was sprawled out over more than five million square kilometres. It was the main state on the Mediterranean Sea, and reached as far north as Scotland. It stretched down into North Africa and came to dominate the Middle East and beyond. A nation that big never really disappears - its culture and traditions seep into the people and the landscape, leaving a legacy that can never truly be scrubbed out.

A lot of Roman ways did disappear over time: paganism died out, with temples being converted into churches or falling into disrepair; gladiators stopped battling it out in the arenas; and phalluses stopped being used as lucky charms. But the Romans had been around so long, and their customs proved to be impossible to leave behind. It’s nigh on impossible to count the ways in which the Romans shaped modern Europe both physically and culturally, so here are just ten of the multitude of things that they left behind after the fall of the Western Roman Empire.
ROADS
How to travel around Europe

Not all roads lead to Rome, but some made by the Romans are still in use today. While building materials differed across the empire, the formation was always the same: the road itself was raised, built up in layers of rocks, stones, gravel and sand, with ditches on either side for drainage. Roads were incredibly important in such a vast territory - they sped up movement, allowing troops to get around quicker, and they boosted trade and communication.

Perhaps the most famous example of this in Britain is Watling Street, a name derived from what the Saxons called it. Stretching from modern Dover, though London and up Wroxeter, it connected the port closest to mainland Europe with the rest of Britannia. It also saw its fair share of history - it was the site of Boudicca’s final defeat to the Romans, and it’s thought that the pilgrims in Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales used it, too. Today it exists as the A2 between Dover and London, and the A5 from London to Wroxeter.

LANGUAGE
You’re probably already talking like a Roman

Spoken by the majority of Romans, Latin was the foremost language of the empire and is often referred to as dead. Really, it’s anything but. Europe’s Romance languages - French, Italian, Portuguese, Romanian and Spanish, among others - have all stemmed from Latin, thanks to the widespread Roman occupation. Thanks to their common root, there are a lot of similarities between them, meaning that if you know one, it’s easier to learn and understand another. Of course, Germanic languages like German, Dutch and English have also been influenced by Latin.

But Latin itself was widely used across Europe until the Middle Ages as the administrative language for states like the Holy Roman Empire and the kingdom of France. It was also, and still is, the language of the Roman Catholic Church, with services conducted in Medieval Latin. The Renaissance didn’t stop this, with theological and scientific tomes being written in Latin.

Latin is still used today - animals all have Latin classifications, and bones in the body often have Latin names, like scapula and coccyx. But one country still uses Latin as its official language: the Vatican City. In fact, it’s the only country in the world where you can use an ATM in Latin.
Fast Food
Ancient Rome’s answer to Burger King

If you enjoy your food and you like it quick, you should thank the Romans. In Pompeii alone, more than 80 thermopilia (literally cook shops) have been found, each one a stone counter with earthenware jars, or doilia, slotted into them to help food and drink stay warm. Often located in marketplaces, they provided a place to grab a quick bite to eat on the go, much like McDonald’s or KFC do today.

A Roman thermopolium often sold spiced wine, meats, cheese, fish, lentils and nuts. Classicist and ancient historian Mary Beard has commented that these fast food bars lined the streets in Pompeii - they were the alternative to a meagre diet of bread, cheese and fruit for the poor, as they didn’t really have the facilities to cook anything else. While some thermopilia just provided food, others had outdoor seating areas for those who wanted to take their time.

Large-Scale Construction
The Romans were more innovative than people realise

If there’s one thing the Romans are remembered for today, it’s their buildings. Palaces and theatres already existed before them, but what the Romans added to architecture was astounding. Amphitheatres were born for the infamous gladiator bouts (which the Romans actually adopted from their Etruscan predecessors). Triumphal arches and columns sprang up all over the empire, commemorating the victories of emperors like Trajan and Titus. Aqueducts carried water to towns and cities that didn’t have their own water sources. Hadrian built a wall across northern England as a barrier against the barbarian Picts in modern-day Scotland.

One understated achievement, though, was the Pantheon, which still stands in Rome today. Completed in 125 CE, it is possible that it was the first building ever created where the inside is deliberately designed to outshine the outside. The rotunda stretches 43.2 metres in diameter, and is a perfect hemisphere. At the very top is an 8.8-metre-wide oculus, or opening, and the whole dome is crafted from pumice and concrete. It stands as a testament to Roman architecture and building prowess.


Laws

Time to update the legal system?

It seems crazy that we still use laws created over 2,000 years ago, but it’s the truth. The Twelve Tables, which is usually cited as the foundation of ancient Roman law, was a heavy influence on the Bill of Rights at the founding of the United States, and both South Africa and San Marino still base their legal systems on the idea of Jus Commune, or civil law. Fragments of the Twelve Tables still survive today, and we can see that it covered family law and torts, both of which are still extant.

Rome boasted the world’s first advanced legal system, and thanks to its far-reaching influence, it’s no wonder that it has affected so many others. Law students today can still study it, and it often helps them to understand our own complex legal system.

The Julian calendar

We’ve got one man to thank for leap years

Calendars already existed by the time Julius Caesar came to power - the Greeks had created their version, while other civilisations had theirs. Rome had its civic calendar, but it was out of sync with nature, so Caesar decided to change that. He added one extra day every four years because of a calculation that showed it took 365 and one-quarter days for Earth to go around the Sun, not 365. So it was that the so-called Julian calendar had created leap years.

However, the calculations were slightly off - it actually takes us a further 11.5 minutes to go around the Sun each year, so Caesar's calendar was over-correcting to the tune of eight days each millennium. This was finally fixed in the 16th century with the introduction of the Gregorian calendar, named after Pope Gregory XIII, but the idea of leap years stayed. Unfortunately for historians, different countries adopted it at different times, making it very confusing to date some events.
CENTRAL HEATING
Keeping your house warm isn’t a new idea

The Romans were pioneers, and they invented an ingenious way to keep their buildings warm with underfloor heating. A fire or furnace heated the air below the floor in a room, and the air then escaped up the walls. Under the ground floor was a basement hypocaust, which saw stacks of terracotta tiles piled up in a bed of concrete. Baths across the Roman Empire used this method to heat their hot rooms, or caldaria, and houses in the northern provinces employed it to keep them warm in the colder winter months. The rooms that needed the most heat would be placed closest to the furnace, but it was by no means a cheap option. Only the wealthy could afford it as it required skilled engineers to build it, and slave labour and copious amounts of fuel to keep the furnaces burning. When the Empire fell, central heating in the western provinces fell out of use - it’s only been in the past 100 years or so that it has come back.

SANITATION AND PUBLIC HEALTH
Keeping clean was an important task

The Etruscans were the first to build sewers in Rome, but the Romans were happy to take them over and keep them in use, even building their own in the city and beyond. But contrary to popular belief, Roman sewers weren’t to do with sanitisation; they removed water from the streets to prevent flooding. The Romans also had public toilets; dank and dirty, they weren’t pleasant to use, but they served in a pinch. Unlike toilets at home, these were connected to the sewers.

But the most impressive example of public health comes from the Roman baths. Situated in most towns and cities, it was the weekly, or sometimes daily, trips to the thermae that kept Roman citizens clean. A trip included traipsing around rooms of different temperatures and a good scrub, and an exercise ground was attached. This could perhaps be the precursor of the modern gym, with its exercise rooms, swimming pool and sometimes steam rooms and saunas.

CONCRETE
The reason 2,000-year-old structures are still standing

Roman concrete was nothing short of fantastic. While our concrete has a lifespan of about 50 years before it begins crumbling, the Roman version has lasted for over 1,000 years and is still going strong. Made to a recipe whipped up by the architect and engineer Marcus Vitruvius around 30 BCE, it’s comprised of volcanic ash, lime and seawater, all mixed together with volcanic rocks and spread into wooden moulds, before being plunged into more seawater.

While concrete was used for buildings, it was also used to create piers and harbour walls for one very important reason: it got stronger over time. As seawater reacted with the volcanic ash, it created new minerals that reinforced it. It’s for this reason that people have recently started suggesting that we should go back to this ancient concrete - after all, why fix something that hasn’t broken for a millennium?
Akhenaten

The Heretic Pharaoh

By replacing a pantheon of gods with the Aten, himself and his queen, this Egyptian king threw his nation into turmoil

Written by Dr Charlotte Booth

The pharaoh Akhenaten ruled Egypt during the 18th dynasty and is one of the most written about rulers of ancient Egypt. This infamy is due to his religious overhaul where he replaced the rich pantheon of deities with the Aten - the sundisc.

However, despite this post-mortem fame, Akhenaten was not an important king in the grand scheme of Egyptian history and he ruled for a mere 17 years (1350-34 BCE). This period of Egyptian history is known as the Amarna period, named for the new capital city during his reign, Tell el Amarna in Middle Egypt.

Throughout the modern era he has been referred to as the world’s first monotheist, a pacifist, an alien and the heretic king. Additionally he has been compared to Moses, Martin Luther, Oliver Cromwell, Adolf Hitler, Stalin and Christ. Eminent Egyptologist, Margaret Murray commented in 1949, “The Tell el Amarna period has had more nonsense written about it than any other period in Egyptian history ... in the
case of Akhenaten the facts do not bear the construction often put on them."

So many theories abound about this king due to the lack of tangible archaeological evidence about his reign and we can thank the ancient Egyptians themselves for this fragmentary survival rate.

Following his reign, Akhenaten’s contemporaries tried to erase his very existence from history. His name was erased from the monuments and his temples, his city was razed to the ground and the stones reused as building material.

So who was Akhenaten? Peaceful, religious activist or a heretic?

Akhenaten was the second son of Amenhotep III and queen Tiye. He was born with the name Amenhotep, which he changed during the early years of his reign to Akhenaten, in honour of his newly revered god, the Aten.

As a second son, young Amenhotep was never expected to be king, but between year 16 and 27 of his father’s reign, his older brother Thutmose died leaving him as sole heir to the throne.

Just before Amenhotep IV, as he was crowned, came to the throne he married an unknown woman named Nefertiti. Her parentage is one of the many things about the Amarna period that is hotly debated. One prominent theory is that she was a cousin of Amenhotep IV. Her father is thought to be Ay, the brother of queen Tiye and the king who followed Tutankhamun onto the throne.

Together they had six children, all girls: Meritaten, Mehetaten, Ankhesenepaten (the future wife of Tutankhamun), Nefertineferuaten, Nefreneferu and Setepenre.

Nefertiti however was not the only wife of Akhenaten, and written evidence shows he had at least four wives: Nefertiti, Kiya (the mother of Tutankhamun), Tadukhipa, a Babylonian princess, and his own daughter Ankhesenepaten, who later married Smenkhkare and Tutankhamun.

Akhenaten and Ankhesenepaten also possibly had a child together called Ankhesenepaten Tasherit (The Younger).

“The Tell el Amarna period has had more nonsense written about it than any other period in Egyptian history”

The Aten

There was nothing remarkable about Amenhotep before he became king – nothing to suggest he would utterly reject traditional religion and culture. He grew up at Memphis and was raised within the traditional religious culture that comprised a rich pantheon of gods. However, once he became king, Amenhotep IV (Akhenaten) abandoned all of these deities, replacing them with the Aten - the solar disc.

The Aten, however, was not a new god. Aten was already part of the traditional Egyptian pantheon and was recorded as early as the twelfth dynasty (1991 - 1782 BCE) in the Coffin Texts.

Aten was traditionally depicted as a man with the head of a falcon surmounted by a sun disc, very similar to images of Re-Horakhty. Akhenaten abandoned this imagery and depicted the god as
a solar disc with sun rays emanating from it, each ending in hands holding ankh symbols to the mouths and noses of the royal family.

However, even this imagery is not new and is depicted on Amenhotep III's stela at Giza (1453-1419 BCE). Akhenaten didn't even start the reverence of the deity. This was started by his father, Amenhotep III, as part of a campaign to restrict the ever-growing power of the priesthood of Amun located at Karnak temple. Akhenaten simply continued his father's work but with more fervour.

Many modern writers believe that Akhenaten's religion was monotheistic but this does not seem to be the case. One of the first acts of Akhenaten after he became king was, in year three, to write a hymn's name in a pair of cartouches.

This presented the divine name as part of a royal epitaph and Aten was also given regnal years that were in line with those of the king. The king and the god were therefore closely intertwined, to the extent that the royal heb-sed festival showing the prowess of the king, was celebrated together as two gods/two kings.

It could be questioned whether Akhenaten was elevating his position to that of a god, or reducing the god's position to that of king. Either way, they were equal.

This equality was further emphasized with Akhenaten's control over the personal religion of the Egyptian people. The only people able to worship Aten directly were the royal family. Everyone else in Egypt was expected to worship Akhenaten, who would converse with the Aten on their behalf. This suggests there were in fact two gods of equal divinity - Akhenaten and Aten.

It wasn't until year nine of his reign that Akhenaten's religious fanaticism went to extremes. He closed all other temples in Egypt and diverted their revenue to the temples of the Aten at Tell el Amarna. Some years later he started a hate

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**AKHENATEN'S HYMN TO THE Aten**

This text is thought by many to show Akhenaten's monotheism was a forerunner to Christianity

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One text that has led to many comparisons between Akhenaten's religion and Christianity is the Great Hymn to the Aten, which is recorded in his vizier, Ay's tomb at Tell el Amarna. It has been compared to Psalm 104 from the Book of Psalms in the Christian Bible. There are eight points of comparison between this and Psalm 104, although the full text runs to dozens of lines. For example The Hymn to the Aten states,

**"The land is in darkness, in the manner of death... Every lion is come forth from his den; All creeping things, they sting."**

Verse 20 from Psalm 104 similarly writes,

**"Thou makest darkness and it is night: wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth. The young lions roar after their prey and seek their meat from God."**

Another verse from the Hymn to the Aten states,

**"At daybreak, when thou arisest on the horizon, When thou shinest as the Aten by day, Thou drivest away the darkness and givest thy rays. The Two Lands are in festivity every day, Awake and standing upon (their) feet. For thou hast raised them up... All the world, they do their work."**

This is compared to verse 23 from Psalm 104,

**"The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together and lay them down in their dens. Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening."**

This verse from the Hymn to the Aten is often compared with verse 12 of the Psalm. It states,

**"The birds which fly from their nests, Their wings are (stretched out) in praise to thy ka. All beasts spring upon (their) feet. Whatever flies and alights, They live when thou hast risen (for) them."**

The Psalm comparatively states,

**"By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation, which sing among the branches."**

These comparisons seem convincing of the religion of the Aten being the origin of the Psalm and Christian thought but for the eight comparable points there are many other verses that do not compare. Additionally the Hymn to the Aten was not new at the time it was penned and much is adapted from the Middle Kingdom Coffin Texts (2040-1782 BCE) and earlier hymns to Amun. Akhenaten had taken well-known elements of the traditional religion and rebranded them to fit his new god; as did later religions.
SICKLY KING
Can the unusual depiction of Akhenaten tell us about his health?

The unusual way in which Akhenaten is represented in art has led to decades of discussion as to whether the style represents pathology, or whether it is purely artistic creation. Images of Akhenaten — and subsequently, his wife Nefertiti, his children and top courtiers — depict him with short spindly legs and arms, heavy thighs and stomach and elongated facial features. The princesses are also depicted with elongated, egg-shaped skulls which had led to suggestions of artificial head deformation although there is no conclusive evidence that this was practiced in ancient Egypt.

Due to this unusual artistic representation, Akhenaten is thought to have suffered from a variety of conditions:

- **HYPERPITUITARISM**
  A condition of the pituitary gland which can cause excessive growth spurts, with the lower jaw, cheekbones, hands and feet, growing at an accelerated rate.

- **MARFAN’S SYNDROME**
  Causes the sufferer to grow very tall and thin, with elongated extremities, a wide pelvic girdle, abnormally elongated skull and a localized distribution of subcutaneous fat.

- **LIPODYSTROPHY**
  A disturbance of the fat metabolism, where subcutaneous fat disappears from some areas of body whilst other areas are unaffected.

- **KLINFELETER’S SYNDROME**
  Causes the male sufferer to develop breasts, small testes and very long legs.

- **FRÖLICH’S SYNDROME or DYSTROPHIA ADIPOSOGENITALIS**
  A condition of the pituitary gland that can lead to obesity and is used to explain his large hips and pendulous breasts.

Fortunately, Akhenaten’s body was identified in 2010 as being the body found in the Valley of the Kings tomb known as KV55. DNA test shows that he was the son of Amenhotep III and the father of Tutankhamun. Studies show he had suffered no appearance-changing pathologies. This therefore indicates that the representations of Akhenaten (his wife, family and courtiers) was merely artistic convention and not a depiction of illness or his general appearance.
campaign against the cult of Amun. He began destroying temples and statues of Amun, including the name. Wherever the name of Amun appeared it was chiselled out, even from his own birth name Amenhotep and his father’s cartouches.

Tell el Amarna

The royal capital through Amenhotep III’s reign was at Memphis, in the north of Egypt, with the religious capital situated at Thebes. Memphis was associated with the creator god Ptah and Thebes was the seat of the king-of-the-gods Amun. Akhenaten would have been raised at one or both of these cities.

Akhenaten decided in the early years of his reign to build a new capital dedicated to his favoured deity on a site that was untouched by any previous religious practice. He chose the barren site of Tell el Amarna in middle Egypt due to a dip in the cliffs, between which the sun rose, which resembled the hieroglyphic sign for ‘Horizon’. He called the city, Akhetaten - the Horizon of the Aten. The modern name for the site is Tell el Amarna and gives its name to this whole period of history.

Work started in year four of his reign where the boundaries were marked out by a series of stelae carved from the cliff faces surrounding what was to be the outline of the city. By year six, there were 14 boundary stelae, all of which show Akhenaten, Nefertiti and two of their daughters (Meritaten, and Meketaten) worshipping the Aten. These inscriptions made it clear that Akhenaten did not intend for the city to expand and develop past these stelae.

In year nine the royal court moved to the new city. The whole city was designed as a cult centre devoted to serving the Aten, Akhenaten and his family. The only people who lived there served a function within Akhenaten’s wider plan.

Evidence shows that people were invited to live at Amarna, but only if they had a skill required for the administration of the cult of the Aten. There were numerous temple officials, artists, temple scribes and police officials, but only one vizier and no other civil administration.

Of the 50,000 to 100,000 people who lived at Tell el Amarna, ten per cent were the elite and the rest were middle classes. It seems unlikely there was a poor underclass. Officially the city was not fortified but it was well-protected by the cliffs and a strong military presence. The new city was planned around an official centre dominated by temples, palaces and military barracks. There is no archaeological evidence for shops, taverns or schools although they may have been temporary structures leaving little evidence. Tell el Amarna was a functional city, with no room for natural growth or expansion.

Changing religion is not an easy task

One of the prevailing theories about Akhenaten was that he was a pacifist who was more interested in his religion than in war. This is often assumed due to the changing artistic style because he depicts himself worshipping the Aten rather than charging into battle as was traditional before and after his reign.

However, we need to think carefully about what Akhenaten achieved. He single-handedly altered the religion of the entire country replacing hundreds of gods who had been worshipped in the homes and temples for thousands of years with the Aten and himself. For perspective, imagine if a modern prime minister announced as of next month we are all to worship them and not to hold any religious beliefs other than the ones they permitted. There would be riots. The Egyptians were no different in this respect.

The only problem is we don’t have any evidence of protests but there is enough evidence to suggest the religious upheaval was not a peaceful one. Excavations at Tell el Amarna, have uncovered a large portion of the city was actually occupied by military barracks and police headquarters. There was clearly a large military presence here, and the royal family is often depicted with a guard. These were often of Asiatic or Nubian origin - as they would not have been affected by his religious changes.

This heavy military presence was clearly felt to be necessary. It has been suggested that the move from Thebes to Amarna was instigated by a rebellion against Akhenaten, and the guards were there to protect the heretic king from personal attack.

Surrounding the city there was also an intricate network of roads, which was probably a military patrol route in place of an enclosure wall. These patrols picked up anyone outside the city who should not be there, as well as monitoring those
who were leaving. So was this apparent fear justified or was Akhenaten paranoid?

To answer this we have to turn to an extraordinary part of the inscription on one of the boundary stelae that marked the boundaries of Tell el Amarna. Amidst the hyperbole about why Amarna was chosen as the city to the Aten, it states,

“... it was worse than those things I heard in regnal year 4
it was worse than those things I heard in regnal year 3.
It was worse than those things I heard in regnal year 2.
It was worse than those things I heard in regnal year 1

It was worse than those things Nebmaatra Amenhotep III heard
... it was worse than those things Menkheperure Thutmose III heard.
And it was worse than those things heard by any kings who had ever assumed the white crown (i.e. ruled the south of Egypt).”

It is clear the motivation to move the capital city from Thebes to Tell el Amarna was more than religious inspiration. It seemed there was some backlash - the likes of which no king had seen. What this backlash was, however, will remain a mystery. It is possible it was a potential challenge to wrest the throne from him, or there had been audible criticism to his religious changes. Whatever it was, it was disturbing enough for

**WHO WAS SMENKARA?**
Was the shadowy co-ruler of Akhenaten really Nefertiti taking on the role of king?

One of the most popular theories is that Smenkhare was in fact Nefertiti. This is based on nomenclature - essentially following Nefertiti’s name changes. In year 12 of Akhenaten’s reign Nefertiti disappears from the records as the Great Royal Wife, Neferneferuaten-Nefertiti. This led some scholars to believe she had fallen from grace and had been banished from Tell el Amarna.

However in year 13, a co-ruler appears called Ankhkheperure-Nefertiti, with the title of Great Royal Wife being transferred to Akhenaten’s oldest daughter Meritaten. Further evidence that this co-ruling king was Nefertiti was found in the form of bezel-rings bearing the feminine form of the name, Ankh- et-kheperure rather than the masculine Ankhkheperure.

Then another figure appears as co-ruler, known as Ankhkheperure- Smenkhare, who was co-ruler for two to three years before Akhenaten died, and then ruled alone, dying a few months later. He was also married to Meritaten as his Great Royal Wife, although it is thought she predeceased him. He then married the only surviving daughter of Akhenaten, Ankhnesenpaaten, who had already been married to her father and bore him a child.

Upon the death of Smenkhare, the throne passed to Tutankhamun who married Smenkhare’s widow Ankhnesenpaaten.
Akhenaten to record this on the stelae for eternity, and surround himself with the military in his new city with the carefully chosen inhabitants.

Rebellion

So did the Egyptian population change its religious fidelities on the behest of the king? The short answer is ‘no’.

People, certainly paid lip service to the new religion, probably out of self-preservation but in their own homes they maintained their traditional religious practices.

Evidence from all over Egypt, and even at Tell el Amarna, shows that the general population were still worshipping household gods such as Bes, the dwarf god, Taweret, the pregnant hippo, and state goddess Hathor. These deities were worshipped quite openly, and in some of the houses at Tell el Amarna, images of the god Bes were painted onto the walls.

Further signs that Akhenaten’s religion was losing traction, even at his religious city can be seen in the naming of his two youngest daughters. Despite these girls being born when the Aten was the primary deity, and their father was equal status to the god they had names dedicated to Ra/Re and not the Aten.

Such public lip service to the religion of Akhenaten, made it all the easier for Tutankhamun to revert back to the traditional pantheon once he became king following the death of Akhenaten and Smenkhare.

Tutankhamun was born as Tutankhaten, so the first thing he did when he came to throne at aged eight or nine was to change his name to honour Amun. He then moved the capital city back to Thebes, and re-established the cult of Amun.

As one would expect, once the king, royal court and power moved away from Tell el Amarna, everyone else also drifted away and moved back to their home villages and towns. Life then pretty much carried on as normal for the people of Egypt.

Akhenaten died in 1334 BCE and evidence suggests he was buried in the royal tomb in Tell el Amarna. However it seems unlikely that this was his final resting place, and Petrie discovered broken fragments of his sarcophagus, canopic jars and shabti figures around the city. He was clearly considered a public enemy after death and his burial was in danger of reprisal.

It is thought that Tutankhamun may have brought his father’s body to the Valley of the Kings in Thebes in order to prevent the body being defiled by his enemies. For many years the body in KV55 was thought to be the body of the re-interred Akhenaten, and this was proven to be the case through DNA testing. Tutankhamun appears to have placed his father into the unfinished tomb of KV55. Since this reburial, KV55 had been attacked numerous times over the years, and the poor condition of the tomb had damaged the burial even further.

Many of the funerary goods in KV55 originally had belonged to a woman but had altered by the addition of a uraeus to the canopies and coffins, making them suitable for a king. These were later removed when the tomb was ransacked and the names on the equipment were also hacked out and the gold removed from the coffin.

Akhenaten, the peaceful, monotheist had clearly made enemies throughout his short reign who believed his crimes were enough to justify the destruction of his funerary assemblage that would eliminate any chance of him having an afterlife.

Such public lip service to the religion of Akhenaten, made it all the easier for Tutankhamun to revert back to the traditional pantheon. 

Akhenaten was virtually lost to history until his city of Amarna was rediscovered.
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Did greed and a lust for power bring down one of the Tudor era's most powerful families?

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RISE AND FALL OF
THE Boleyns
How greed and ambition brought a Tudor dynasty to destruction
Written by Nicola Tallis
On the morning of 19 May 1536, a woman mounted a scaffold that had been erected within the confines of the Tower of London: minutes later her head was struck from her body with a single blow from a French swordsman. This woman was no ordinary prisoner, but one who had until recently been revered as Queen of England: her name was Anne Boleyn. A decade earlier Anne had embarked on a courtship with the illustrious Tudor king, Henry VIII - a relationship that had altered not only the whole course of her own life, but also those of her family. The Boleyns had been raised to soaring heights before crashing to lows that were steeped in misery and despair – for Anne and her brother George, the result was death. The extraordinary rise and fall of Anne Boleyn and her family is one of the most controversial and intriguing stories of 16th century England; it is one that continues to enthral to this day.

Almost every aspect of Anne Boleyn’s life is controversial, including the year of her birth. Now widely accepted to have been in around 1501, Anne was one of three surviving children born to Sir Thomas Boleyn by his wife, Elizabeth Howard. Thomas was a man whose family roots lay in trade, though his grandfather, Sir Geoffrey Boleyn, had once been Lord Mayor of London. His father was a Norfolk landowner whose primary estate was Blickling, and Thomas himself, born in the mid 1470s, had risen to prominence steadily under the Tudors. He had attended the wedding of Prince Arthur and Catherine of Aragon in 1501, been among the escort of Princess Margaret to Scotland in 1503, and created a Knight of the Bath at the coronation of Henry VIII in 1509. Thomas was well favoured by Henry, and was a frequent participant in all of the leisure activities of which the King was so fond. Thomas’s marriage to Elizabeth Howard had also been advantageous, for she was the daughter of the second Duke of Norfolk. The couple raised their children, Mary, Anne and George, primarily in the peaceful surroundings of Hever Castle in Kent, a property inherited from Thomas’s father.

During the early years of Anne’s childhood, her father was often absent. Thomas was a well-educated man who would later be the dedicatee of two books by Erasmus, and was also fluent in French. His skills had not gone unnoticed by the king, and for this reason he was often employed in diplomatic service abroad. It was during his time in Mechelen at the court of Margaret of Austria, the regent of the Netherlands, that Thomas spied a glowing opportunity for his daughter Anne. Margaret agreed to take the younger into her household, and in the spring of 1513 Anne arrived to take her place. Margaret was delighted with her decision, and wrote to Thomas expressing that Anne was “a present more than welcome in my sight”. So much so, that “I am more beholde
to you for sending her than you can be to me for receiving her." Anne blossomed during her time in Margaret’s service, continuing her education and perfecting her command of French, which she demonstrated in her letters to her father. She was extremely bright, and proved herself to be a skilled needlewoman who excelled in dancing and music and was fond of poetry. Anne had been in Margaret’s household for around 18 months when, in the autumn of 1514 her father - always ambitious - perceived a better opportunity for her elsewhere. Leaving Margaret’s court behind, Anne travelled to France to join the entourage of Henry VIII's younger sister Mary, who had married the ageing King of France, Louis XII. Here she was reunited with her own sister Mary, who had accompanied the new Queen of France from England. The time that the Boleyn sisters spent as Mary’s ladies was, though, short-lived. After just three months of marriage, on 1 January 1515 Louis died, and it was probably in the middle of the following month that Mary secretly remarried Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk. When the formerly disgraced couple returned to England in the spring, the Boleyn sisters remained in France where they joined the household of the new queen, Claude, wife of François I.

Anne spent the next seven years in France, during which time her personality took shape and she developed a grace and poise that were highly influenced by the sophistication of the French court. This was clearly in evidence when she returned to England in 1522, now a highly accomplished young woman. Before long a place had been found for both Anne and her sister in Catherine of Aragon’s household, and the sisters regularly participated in court entertainments.

Before long Anne’s sister had become embroiled in an affair with the king, and as a result her father’s favour continued to rise. In April 1522 he was appointed treasurer of the royal household, and further honours were soon heaped upon him. On 18 June 1525 Thomas’s ambitions appeared to have been recognised when he was raised to the peerage and created Viscount Rochford. His son George also seemed set to follow in his footsteps: in 1516 George had joined the royal household as a page, and in around 1524 had been admitted to the King’s Privy Chamber. He would later emulate Thomas’s example by travelling to France to embark on diplomatic service. It may also have been around this time that a marriage was arranged for him with Jane Parker, the daughter of Henry, Lord Morley. Sadly, it was not a happy match.

In 1526 everything changed for the Boleyns. The King had long since tired of Anne’s sister, and in February he appeared at a joust wearing a magnificent gold embroidered costume that – in the style of courtly love – sported the words ‘Declare I dare not’. Nobody was left in any doubt that he had a new love interest, but the object of his desire was as yet unknown. It was not long, however, before it became clear: Anne Boleyn.

Though with her swarthy complexion Anne was not considered beautiful by contemporary standards, Henry found her wit and charm irresistible. Neither was he the first to have been entranced by her, for she had earned other admirers including the poet Thomas Wyatt and Henry Percy, heir of the Earl of Northumberland. Anne had hoped to marry the latter, but the king’s chief advisor, Cardinal Wolsey, had broken off the match, earning him Anne’s enmity. But she now had an infinitely more powerful suitor.
An illustration of Anne from *The Queens Of England, Or Royal Book Of Beauty*

**Rise And Fall Of The Boleyns**

**King’s Mistress, Queen’s Sister**
Mary Boleyn’s turbulent tale

Anne Boleyn was not the first member of her family to catch Henry VIII’s eye, for his gaze had first landed upon her sister, Mary. Having been wed to William Carey in 1520 Mary was a married woman, but this did not deter the king. Their affair was, however, conducted with such discretion that it is uncertain precisely when it began, although 1522 is the likeliest date. It was almost certainly over by 1525 when Mary bore her second child, a son, but there is some doubt over the paternity of her daughter, Katherine, who was born in 1524. Could she have been the king’s child? It is certainly possible. In 1528 Mary’s husband died, and six years later she secretly remarried. Her second husband was the lowly born William Stafford, and by her own admission she claimed that when making her choice “love overcame reason.” So outraged was her sister Anne, now queen, that she banished Mary from court. But Mary had no regrets, and defiantly declared that she would rather “beg my bread with him than to be the greatest queen christened.” She alone of her siblings survived the fall of the Boleyn family in 1536, and lived out the rest of her days quietly. She died at Rochford Hall in 1543.

Conscious of the way in which her sister had been discarded and highly ambitious like her father, Anne steadfastly refused to become Henry’s mistress. Unused to such a rebuff, this left him both surprised and intrigued. But instead of retreating and pressing his advances elsewhere, it instead served to heighten his passion for Anne. He wrote her copious love letters in which he passionately poured out his feelings for her, declaring that “my heart shall be dedicate to you alone.” Anne though, had higher aspirations, and continued to spurn Henry.

In the spring of 1527 Henry’s feelings for Anne proved to be the catalyst in what became known as the king’s ‘Great Matter’, as he began an investigation into the validity of his marriage to Catherine of Aragon. He had long since tired of his wife, and more crucially, Catherine had failed to provide him with a male heir: her only surviving child was a daughter, Mary. Henry became convinced that his lack of a son was God’s divine judgement on his marriage and was determined to have it annulled: what was more, Anne would be the ideal replacement. He was confident that if he were to marry her, Anne would provide him with

“**ANNE WAS NOT CONSIDERED BEAUTIFUL, BUT HENRY FOUND HER WIT AND CHARM IRRESISTIBLE**
the son that he needed in order to secure his dynasty. Yet it was not destined to be a smooth or straightforward process.

The ‘Great Matter’ dragged on for more than five years, during which time Anne’s influence—and that of her family—grew, but she became increasingly frustrated. The king believed that Wolsey would be able to achieve an annulment for him, but when the case was referred to the Pope in Rome in 1529 the Boleyns became convinced that Wolsey was working against them. Anne’s father hated Wolsey as much as she did, and their faction plotted his destruction. In October 1529 he was stripped of his office of Lord Chancellor, and the following year he died at Leicester en route to the Tower and possible execution. When she heard the news, Anne celebrated the demise of her enemy.

The delay in Henry’s annulment left Anne feeling increasingly vulnerable as her position
remained insecure. However, Henry's passion for her had not wavered, and he showered her with an abundance of rich gifts, including jewels, clothes, money and fine apartments. It was not for nothing that one source observed that she became "very haughty and proud", and she was treated as queen in all but name. The fortunes of Anne's family rose as a result of her relationship with the king, and in 1529 George was admitted to the Privy Council. In December meanwhile, Thomas was created Earl of Wiltshire, an ennoblement that was followed by a celebratory banquet at the Palace of Whitehall. The following year he was appointed Lord Privy Seal.

When an annulment did not prove forthcoming, with the support of the Boleyns and Thomas Cromwell - a former servant of Wolsey's - Henry took matters into his own hands. He made the momentous decision to split from the Catholic Church and establish the Church of England with himself at its head, thereby enabling him to marry Anne. If Rome would not give him what he wanted, Henry was fully prepared to make his own rules. Many were appalled by the king's decision, but Anne and her family were supportive and she herself was a great advocate of church reform. This only served to exacerbate her unpopularity amongst the English people, many of whom were sympathetic to the plight of Catherine of Aragon. Indeed, Anne was so widely disliked that a progress in the summer of 1532 had to be cut short because, as the Imperial ambassador Eustace Chapuys reported, "the Lady is hated by all the world." Nevertheless, it was clear that it was only a matter of time before Anne was queen.

In September 1532 Anne partook in a glittering ceremony that saw her created Marquess of Pembroke in her own right. Just four months later she and Henry were secretly married, by which time - having finally capitulated to his advances - she was already pregnant. In May Thomas Cranmer, whom Thomas Boleyn had once made the family chaplain and was now Archbishop of Canterbury, officially declared Henry's marriage to Catherine to be null and
void. Instead, his marriage to Anne was affirmed to be good and valid. The following month Anne's ultimate moment of triumph arrived, and it was one in which her family were there to share. On 1 June, bejewelled in a sumptuous dress of crimson velvet lined with ermine, she was crowned in a magnificent ceremony in Westminster Abbey. She was the second commoner to be made Queen of England, and in a sign of the importance of the occasion she was crowned with St Edward's Crown - usually reserved for the coronation of male monarchs. All that remained was for her to produce a son.

On 7 September Anne gave birth not to the long-desired prince, but to a girl, Elizabeth. In spite of the disappointment of her sex, the baby was healthy and there was every reason to hope for sons. Yet they were never to transpire, and several other pregnancies resulted in nothing but bitter disappointment.

Anne proved to be a very different kind of wife and queen to her predecessor. Though she distributed alms and gave money to other charitable causes, she was both pious and a patron of learning, she remained unpopular with her subjects whose hearts lay with Catherine. Similarly, where Catherine had been obedient to her husband's will and turned a blind eye to his infidelities, Anne was outspoken and was outraged when Henry was unfaithful to her. The result was inevitable; by the end of 1535 Henry was tiring of his wife, and sought solace in the arms of one of her ladies: Jane Seymour.

Following the example once set so successfully by her mistress, Jane employed the same tactics to the King's advances. She refused to become his mistress, and instead held out for marriage. Once again, the game worked. On 29 January 1536 - the same day as the funeral of Catherine of Aragon who had died that month - Anne miscarried of a child that showed every appearance of being male. Chapuys observed that “she has miscarried of her saviour”, and her perceived failure gave her enemies an opportunity to move against her.

In the following months as the King's ardour for Jane Seymour grew, so too did the coolness with which he treated Anne and her family. In April it had been expected that George would be admitted to the Order of the Garter, but in a clear sign of how far they had fallen, another candidate was chosen. Unbeknown to Anne, her former ally Thomas Cromwell was plotting her downfall and on 29 April laid his evidence - which most modern historians agree to have been falsified - before the king. Anne, he said, had committed adultery with four men, including a lowly born musician named Mark Smeaton. But there was worse, for Cromwell also claimed that Anne was guilty of incest with her own brother. Henry was furious and ordered the arrest of all of those involved, Anne included.

The court celebrated May Day with all of the usual revelry at Greenwich. George was the leading challenger at the customary jousts, and Anne sat beside her husband as they presided over the tournament. Yet the king left abruptly, causing Anne alarm and with good cause. The following day she was arrested and taken to the Tower, as were the five men - including her brother - accused alongside her. As she arrived at the fortress in a state of utter shock, she asked Sir William Kingston, the Constable, “Do I go into a dungeon?” She was taken to the Royal Apartments.

The imprisonment of the Boleyn siblings proved to be an upsetting and agitating experience for them both. Anne was placed in the custody of the constable, who made detailed reports of his prisoner’s every word. Bewailing her misfortune, on one occasion Anne cried, “Oh, my mother, thou wilt die with sorrow.” Her behaviour was erratic, and Kingston reported that “one hour she is determined to die, and the next hour much contrary to that.” On 12 May the four men with whom Anne had been accused of...
adultery were tried and condemned, and three days later she and George stood trial separately. Though both siblings defended themselves ably, the result was a foregone conclusion. Anne and her brother were both found guilty and condemned to death. Among the peers who sat in judgement upon them was their own father, whom Chapuys had heard was “quite as ready to assist at the judgement” as he had been to the other men who had stood trial.

There was no hope of a reprieve, and on 17 May George and the men condemned alongside him were executed on Tower Hill. Permitted to speak, in his final moments he stated that “I am come hither not to preach and make a sermon, but to die.” He met his end bravely. Two days after her brother’s death it was Anne’s turn. By means of a final favour to the woman who he had once loved so passionately, the king had sent to Calais for a French swordsman who was tasked with executing his former queen. Unlike George, a private execution within the confines of the Tower had been arranged for her, and a scaffold erected in front of the White Tower. Having made a short speech in which she implored “If any person will meddle with my cause, I require them to judge the best”, Anne’s head was removed swiftly and cleanly with a deft blow from the sword. Her severed remains were interred within the Chapel of St Peter ad Vincula within the Tower.

Eleven days after Anne’s death, Henry VIII married Jane Seymour. It was through this marriage that he received that which he had so desperately craved: a son, Edward. Amongst those who attended the prince’s christening at Hampton Court in October 1537 was Thomas Boleyn. Yet he no longer basked in royal favour or held the influence he had once enjoyed as a result of his daughter’s exalted status. Moreover, the tragedy that he had been forced to endure had left him a broken man, and he retired to Hever to live quietly. On 3 April 1538 his wife died and was buried at Lambeth, and it would not be long before he followed her to the grave. Thomas died at Hever on 12 March 1539, and was interred in the church there. It was a sad end for the man whose family had once been raised to such staggering heights. Yet their moment of glory was not quite at an end.

The two decades following Anne’s death left their mark on her daughter, Elizabeth, whose life was destined to run a less than stable course. She would never forget her mother’s terrible end, and there is no doubt that it deeply affected her. Yet she was to be Anne’s greatest legacy, for when Elizabeth succeeded to the throne on 17 November 1558, she did so not only as her father’s daughter, but as her mother’s too. For in this queen flowed the blood of the family who had once been the most ambitious in England - the Boleyns.
Anne was condemned to her fate because of the capriciousness of King Henry VIII.

Anne would spend her last days in the Tower of London, where her daughter Elizabeth would also be briefly held.

Henry's second wife was given the ultimate punishment in 1536 despite likely being innocent of all charges.
Cult of the Sun King

Did Louis XIV’s lust for power sow the seeds of revolution?
In the early hours of 6 January 1649, the ten-year-old Louis XIV and his younger brother Philippe were woken from their sleep and hustled into a carriage that was waiting outside their apartments in the Palais Royal in Paris. Accompanied by their mother and Louis’s regent, Queen Anne, the two boys were whisked away to the safety of Louis’ birthplace, the Château de Saint-Germain-en-Laye, just outside Paris, only to discover that it was completely unprepared for their arrival, and in a state of disarray. The reason for the young king’s hasty flight from his capital was the Fronde uprising, a civil war that broke out in the spring of 1648 as the result of a bitter stand-off between the crown and the parliament of Paris, inflamed by Queen Anne’s chief minister Cardinal Mazarin’s efforts to raise money for the Thirty Years War, which involved raising taxes, that impinged on various fiscal privileges enjoyed by the nobility for centuries. The Italian-born Mazarin was already universally loathed throughout France by the nobility, bourgeoisie and peasantry alike, but it was this latest tussle with the parliament that proved to be the final straw, leading to violent demonstrations on the streets of Paris and simmering discontent among the aristocracy. Matters worsened when the regent, Queen Anne, who completely relied on Mazarin, doubled down and had a number of the chief leaders of Parliament, including the extremely popular Pierre Broussel, arrested, which brought the royal family into direct opposition with the rebels and made them a focus for their wrath. Broussel was released two days later, but the damage was already done, and relations between the crown and the mutinous Parisians continued to deteriorate until finally the decision was made to flee the capital.

For ten-year-old Louis, who had been King of France since the age of four, this seemingly precipitous flight from Paris was both an exciting adventure and a sobering reminder of just how fickle his people could be. He loathed being cooped up at Saint-Germain, and although he was not yet able to participate in council meetings, he quickly became aware that his current plight was primarily the fault of the parliament and nobility, which led him to view them with a deep and unwavering resentment. This feeling was compounded when just a few weeks after Louis’s flight from Paris, his uncle by marriage, Charles I of England, was executed in London after a strikingly similar disagreement between crown and parliament had spiralled out of control and ultimately ended in a devastating and bloody civil war and the loss of his throne. Meanwhile, the presence of Charles I’s impoverished widow Henrietta Maria and her youngest children, who were financially supported by Louis’ mother and living on the fringes of the French court, was further disturbing evidence of just how low royalty could fall if they failed to control their rebellious
"This feeling that he alone was divinely appointed to rule over France would crystallise throughout Louis’ childhood and adolescence"

subjects. Charles I had been an enthusiastic proponent of the doctrine known as the Divine Right of Kings, which asserted that monarchs were divinely appointed by God and therefore subject to no earthly authority, including that of their parliament. That this belief had led to Charles’ autocratically dismissive handling of his parliament and ultimate downfall and execution should have deterred other rulers from following suit, but to the spoiled and adored Louis, who had been given the middle name ‘Dieudonné’ (the ‘God given’) in reference to his seemingly miraculous birth after his parents had been married and fruitlessly attempting to produce an heir for 23 years, the theory apparently made perfect sense. This feeling that he alone was appointed to rule France would crystallise through Louis’ childhood and adolescence, boosted by the ongoing Fronde rebellion, which dragged on until 1659 and effectively fostered both his intense dislike of Paris and a serious distrust of the French nobility.

Although the royal family eventually returned to Paris after that first flight to Saint-Germain, they never felt entirely safe. On one humiliating occasion that Louis would remember for the rest of his life, a mob gained entry to the royal apartments at night, and upon demanding to be allowed to see their sovereign were allowed to reverently file past the royal bed in order to see the boy king, who swallowed his fury and pretended to be asleep, for themselves.

Unsurprisingly, the royal family packed up and once again fled the capital shortly afterwards. More humiliating still was the fact that so many members of the highest aristocracy, including Princes of the Blood, and even members of Louis’ own family, sided with the rebels. The Prince de Condé, a celebrated general who was beloved throughout France, initially fought on the side of the crown until he was persuaded to swap sides and lead troops against the royal forces instead, which led to Queen Anne ordering his arrest. Even worse, Louis’ own uncle Gaston, Duc d’Orléans, an

Even in his childhood, Louis’ image was curated to reference ancient gods and mythology.

Louis quickly realised that one of the best ways to secure power was to keep his nobility as close as possible.

PUBLIC IMAGE

Louis XIV carefully curated his image to ensure that his people both respected and feared.

France had been in varying degrees of turmoil for well over a century before Louis XIV’s accession and he was determined to unify the nation with himself as figurehead, bringing much needed order to the realm. To accomplish this, it was not enough that he should be a mere man, albeit one who wore a crown – he would need to be something more, something godlike in both outward splendour and omnipotence.

At ground level, Louis loved to be seen as approachable, and was punctiliously polite and kind to everyone he met, regardless of their social class, but the image that he wished to project from a distance was very different, and specifically designed to underline the distance between himself and his people. Other leaders might have cultivated a more paternal image, portraying themselves as the affectionate but firm father of the nation, but Louis, who was fascinated by the Roman Emperors, decided to follow a rather different path and instead portray himself as akin to an actual god, more specifically Apollo, the charismatic sun god who also governed truth, light, knowledge and poetry. To this end, Louis ruthlessly engineered his own image and reputation, carefully ensuring that every painting, engraving and sculpture displayed him at his magnificent best, inspiring reverent respect from his subjects and fearful awe from everyone else.

Even in old age, when Louis was corpulent and infirm, no longer the handsome and athletic king that he had been in his youth, he still managed to project an unassailable aura of power and majesty that almost made those around him forget his infirmities.
“L’état, c’est moi,’ he allegedly declared, and he did not allow anyone to forget that he was in charge”

invertebrate troublemaker, sided with the rebellious nobles while his daughter Anne-Marie-Louise, Duchesse de Montpensier, who was determined to marry her cousin Louis as soon as he was old enough, ended up being exiled from court as a result of her active participation in the rebellion, which famously included ordering that the Bastille cannons be fired on royal forces - an unwise move that cost her any chance of marrying her cousin and becoming Queen. Although he was still a child, and to an extent shielded from the decision making, military manoeuvring and political ramifications of the Fronde rebellion, he understood enough to form his own opinions about who was responsible for the outrages against his royal authority and determine a plan to ensure that it would never happen again.

Although Louis officially reached his age of majority two days after his 13th birthday in September 1651, and had his coronation three years later, he was still very much under the control of his mother Queen Anne and her chief minister Cardinal Mazarin, still both as unpopular as ever, who oversaw the day-to-day governance of the realm. Energetic, bold and ambitious, Louis chafed under the restrictions that they imposed upon him, longing for a time when he alone would be master of France and could take full control. Although outwardly confident, the events of his childhood had left him feeling insecure and powerless as well as deeply wary not just of the aristocracy, but also his own extended family, who he now found himself unable to completely trust. As a handsome and charming young king presiding over a magnificent and prestigious court, Louis appeared to outsiders to be very much in control, but in reality everyone close to him knew that the real power remained with his mother and Cardinal Mazarin, who further hampered his freedom by keeping a close eye on the royal coffers. The young Louis must have wondered when this protracted adolescence would finally come to an end, until finally the hated Mazarin died in March 1661, and all of the power and, just as importantly, royal revenue, began to flow unimpeded towards him. At last long Louis was the master, and from now on he was determined not to share his power with anyone.

At the time of Mazarin's death, Louis was 22 years old, and had been King of France for almost 18 years. He had been terrorised, patronised and sidelined - but not anymore. When asked who would replace Mazarin as chief minister, Louis astonished everyone by announcing that there would be no replacement, and that instead he would be ruling entirely alone. “Up to this moment I have been pleased to entrust the government of my affairs to the late Cardinal,” he informed his council. “It is now time that I govern them myself.” From now on, although he would accept advice and direction from his ministers, every decision would ultimately be made by him, and he would personally oversee everything himself.

It worked in Louis's favour that his period of absolute personal rule followed hot on the heels of a protracted period of internal turmoil, while Mazarin had been so widely detested and his death so little regretted throughout the nation that his replacement by the charismatic and popular young king was greeted with great joy and optimism for the future.

Right from the very beginning, Louis proved himself to be an effective ruler, with a particular genius for selecting the very best advisors and most efficient administrators for his council. The difficult early years of his reign may have left him extremely mistrusting of people, but they had also made him a reasonably good judge of character, who richly rewarded loyalty, but was also capable of acting with decisive ruthlessness towards those unfortunate enough to have disappointed him.

Although initially Louis was preoccupied with stabilising the nation's parlous financial situation and establishing himself as an absolute ruler, he was nonetheless keen to move forward with his long-held desire to leave the capital Paris, which he still associated with the terrifying events of the Fronde rebellion. At first the court spent a great deal of time at the sprawling Renaissance...
The royal family were also depicted as near-mythological figures alongside Louis...
Throughout his reign, Louis XIV showed a particular genius for surrounding himself with talented individuals who were willing to work to enhance his own prestige.

palace at Fontainebleau, but he quickly began to look around for a more suitable spot where he could make his own mark and create a splendid palace that was truly worthy of the monarch that he intended to be. His father’s old hunting lodge at Versailles, 11 miles outside the capital, seemed at first like an unlikely choice but Louis, who had first visited Versailles in 1651, would not be deterred, and from 1661, shortly after the death of Mazarin, began an intensive programme of expanding and embellishing the original building, gradually creating a splendid palace for himself.

Although Versailles was very definitely calculated to project an aura of majesty and fill visitors, especially those from other countries, with awe and envy, Louis also intended from the very first for his new palace to act as the central powerhouse; the beating heart of his absolutist regime. Once installed there and at a safe distance from Paris and the parliament, he worked hard to cement his position as absolute monarch. ‘L'état, c'est moi,’ he allegedly declared, and he did not allow anyone to forget that he was in charge. Apparently indefatigable, he worked tirelessly, overseeing every detail of his nation’s governance, from taxation to foreign policy and making it clear to his ministers that he was interested in every detail of what was going on, no matter how trivial or unimportant it might appear.

By the end of the decade, Louis was spending most of his time at Versailles, having decided that he needed to put as much distance as possible between himself and his capital, but he was not able to accomplish a permanent move to the palace until 1682. His distrust of his nobility had not abated since the dark days of the Fronde, and as he did not want to leave them behind in Paris, where they would be free to plot against him, he was forced to come up with an elegant solution to this quandary – he would bring them along with him to Versailles to keep an eye on them. To this end, he ensured not just that they would all be housed, either in the palace itself (where they would fiercely compete over draughty, uncomfortable rooms) or in the elegant town that was quickly springing up around the palace, where the wealthiest aristocratic families set about building their own mansions to remain close to the court.

Then as now, Paris was renowned throughout Europe as a glamorous and exciting creative hub, where all the latest fashions were set, the greatest minds resided and the most wonderful art created, and Louis knew that he would have to work hard to make sure that his nobles wanted to follow him to Versailles instead by making the court entertainments even more splendid than any that could be enjoyed in the capital, and ensuring that all the most fashionable goods could be just as easily procured at his palace as on the most stylish streets of Paris. There was a price for all of this splendour, though – Louis kept a close watch on everyone at court, including his own family, employing secret police and having all correspondence opened and read, with the juiciest details being relayed straight back to him – a fact that his family would on occasion use as a means to make him indirectly aware of any complaints that they might have.

He was also keen to ensure that everyone at court knew that he was the centre of their world since they were all merely satellites, orbiting around him with even the most trivial details of their own lives dictated by his daily routine, which they were all, without exception, expected to witness and participate in. The male courtiers were expected to be in constant attendance, which included participating in his morning ‘lever’ when the highest ranking aristocrats competed to hand him his clothes, accompanying him on his afternoon walk through the gardens, watching him eat his meals and then once again jostling to help when he was publicly put to bed in the evenings. By making his courtiers compete for his attention, Louis sought to remove their will to rebel and make them entirely dependent upon him, and to a large extent he succeeded.

When Louis XIV died at the age of 76 in September 1715, his five-year-old great grandson succeeded him as Louis XV. The Sun King would
have been a hard act for anyone to follow, but it was an especially huge burden for such a small child, especially one as shy as the new King was reported to be. When Louis XIV created Versailles and not only made himself the central focus of one of the most magnificent courts in history, but also placed himself at the head of the administrative structure of the entire nation, he assumed that the system would continue to revolve in exactly the same way around his successor. His son and grandson had both been painstakingly groomed from birth to take the reins after he had gone, but no one could possibly have foreseen that both men would predecease him and that he would instead be succeeded by a child not much older than he himself had been when he became King.

Sadly, unlike his great grandfather, Louis XV did not have a mother to act as regent. Instead, he was placed under the care of the Duc d'Orléans, son of Louis XIV's younger brother Philippe, who took charge of both government and court until the young King had reached the age of 13. As Louis XIV had deeply disliked the Duc d'Orléans, he attempted to curtail his power by stipulating in
Orbiting The Sun King

Although Louis XIV was keen to rule alone, he had a genius for surrounding himself with talented people.

1. Anne of Austria, Queen of France (1601-1666)
   Daughter of King Philip III of Spain, Anne of Austria married Louis XIII of France in 1615, but the couple did not have their first child, Louis, until 1638. After her husband's death in 1643, Anne became regent for their young son and worked tirelessly to protect him and his rights. When she died in 1666, she was devastated.

2. Philippe de France, Duc d'Orléans (1640-1710)
   As the birth of his elder brother Louis was hailed as a miracle after so many years of childless marriage, everyone was surprised when a second child, Philippe, was born two years later in 1640. Although the brothers frequently quarrelled, they were also extremely close, and Louis came to depend upon Philippe's support and loyalty over the years.

3. Françoise-Adélaïde de Montespan, Marquise de Montespan (1644-1707)
   Born into one of the oldest and most prestigious aristocratic families in France, Françoise de Montespan was the perfect choice of mistress for the young Louis XIV. Ambitious, beautiful, sensual and extremely intelligent, she was a driving force in the creation of his magnificent court at Versailles.

4. Françoise d'Albigny, Madame de Maintenon (1633-1719)
   Born into an impoverished noble family, Françoise had few prospects when, at the age of 17, she married the poet Paul Scarron, who introduced her to the intellectual circles of Paris. She became friends with Madame de Montespan, who also befriended Françoise – to the extent that she would usurp Montespan's position and become his second wife.

5. François Le Tellier, Marquis de Louvois (1643-1691)
   The eldest son of the venerable statesman, Michel Le Tellier, Louvois succeeded his father as Secretary of State for War in 1662, and became one of Louis XIV's most trusted ministers thanks to his great success in building France's military strength and curbing the power of the nobility. He is now considered one of the greatest ministers of war in French history.

6. Jean-Baptiste Colbert (1619-1683)
   Although Louis XIV was inclined to distrust those who had been closely associated with Cardinal Mazarin, he made an exception for Colbert, who took charge of the Cardinal's affairs during his exile. After Mazarin's death, Colbert was repeatedly promoted, becoming Minister of Finances in 1661 and acquiring some level of power in almost every department.

7. Jules Hardouin-Mansart (1646-1708)
   Perhaps the most outstanding achievement of Louis XIV's reign was his palace at Versailles, a masterpiece of Baroque architecture. Although Louis had a lot of input into the palace's design, the man that brought his vision to life was architect and builder Hardouin-Mansart, whose major works include the Place des Victoires and Place Vendôme in Paris.

8. André Le Nôtre (1613-1700)
   Le Nôtre was a close associate of Louis XIV's court painter Charles Le Brun and the architect Mansart before he was hired to design the gardens at Fouquet's country estate, Vaux-le-Vicomte. After Fouquet's fall, Le Nôtre was hired by Louis XIV to design the gardens surrounding Versailles. Le Nôtre's work is now considered to be a masterpiece of Baroque garden design.
his will that until his heir was able to rule alone, France should be governed by a Regency Council made up of 14 members, only for Orléans to overturn this after his death, buying the support of the Parliament of Paris by restoring the right to challenge the King's decisions and authority that had been stripped from them by Louis XIV. This restoration of parliamentary powers would be an increasingly uncomfortable thorn in the side of the French monarchy from this point on, and would ultimately lead to the events of 1789 and deposition of Louis XVI, who was even less able to control his government than his predecessor Louis XV. While Louis XIV had used his own personal charisma and strong will to maintain control and awkward, diffident grandson, Louis XVI, detested the court routine even more, and went to great lengths to hide away from the watchful eyes of his courtiers, while his wife, Marie Antoinette, would rarely be seen at Versailles, preferring instead to reside in the relative privacy of the Petit Trianon in the palace's park. Louis XIV had used public display, etiquette and ostentatious ceremonies to emphasise his authority and reinforce his position as the centre of the court. However, to his successors, his style of kingship, which was almost akin to a cult of personality, was a terrible burden, although not one that they felt able to change, preferring instead to circumvent it rather than impose their will.

While the royal court stagnated, the capital was as exciting as ever, especially as it had become a cradle of bold and innovative Enlightenment ideas, propagated by writers like Voltaire and Montesquieu, in the mid-18th century. To the dismay of the King and his ministers, many of this new breed of philosophers were critical of both the church and the monarchy, preferring the constitutional system in Britain to the absolutist monarchy that ruled over France.

While Louis XIV would have had no qualms about crushing such sedition within his country, his successors were rather less effectual, although some of the more seditious writers, such as Voltaire, found themselves imprisoned and exiled as a result of their views, which just had the effect of making them more popular and strengthening their case that the French monarchy was the very antithesis of enlightened. Marooned in the midst of their magnificent court, which had been indoctrinated during the long reign of Louis XIV into a state of servile compliance and dependency, the Sun King's successors had no idea just how much public opinion had turned against them and, until the very end, just how much danger they were in. Weak attempts were made to reform the system, streamline the court and improve the relationship between monarch and state, but it was too little, too late.

Louis XIV's success as an absolute monarch had been almost entirely due to his strong and decisive personality, but in creating an expectation that the personal attributes of the monarch were crucial to the prosperity of the regime, he did his successors a huge disservice as neither of them were at all suited to the task. It was later said that while under Louis XIV nobody dared to breathe, under Louis XV they whispered, and under Louis XVI, they shouted - to ultimately devastating effect.

"Louis sought to remove their will to rebel and make them entirely dependent upon him, and to a large extent he succeeded"
Lives of Royals
Battle For England’s Soul

Elizabeth At War

Did Catholic conspiracies at home and abroad nearly topple the ‘heretic queen’?

Written by Derek Wilson

The inheritance into which Elizabeth Tudor entered in 1558 at the age of 25 was something of a poisoned chalice. When she was still a babe in arms her father, Henry VIII, had severed the English church from Catholic Christendom. She was still in her teens when the regime of her young half-brother, Edward VI, had hurried the nation farther along the Protestant path. And she had yet to enter her twenties when her half-sister, Mary, had embarked on a determined reversal of the religious policy of the two preceding reigns in order to restore England to papal obedience. Her subjects and, indeed, interested parties throughout Europe, watched carefully to see what course Queen Elizabeth would set for her realm. But some people did more than watch. Through the media of sermons, books and pamphlets they brought pressure to bear upon public opinion and upon the young queen. But there were others who were prepared to go even further. Plots, intrigues and assassination attempts formed the leitmotif of her entire reign.

As a divinely-anointed monarch Elizabeth knew she had to settle the religious issue, and enforce it in a world bitterly divided between Catholics and Protestants. The task had to begin with Elizabeth’s own convictions. What, then, did she believe? She had been brought up by a governess and a group of tutors, most of whom were of the ‘Christian humanist’ persuasion, which is to say that their theology was basically Calvinist (the systematic Protestantism
advocated by the French reformer, John Calvin) and their religious ethos intellectual – more of the head than the heart. During Mary Tudor’s reign she’d had to keep her real beliefs secret and outwardly conform to Mary’s religion. One result of this experience was that she had little patience with religious enthusiasts of any persuasion. She expected all her subjects to put loyalty to the Crown above their personal preferences and convictions – just as she had done.

In 1559, the English church was provided with a new Prayer Book that established its credentials. It followed closely that used in Edward VI’s reign. An Act of Uniformity ordered all subjects to attend worship in their parish churches. Those refusing to do so (known as ‘recusants’) were liable to fines and – for repeated offences – imprisonment. However, it was one thing to give England’s Protestant Church legal standing and quite another to protect it against the enemies ranged against it. The most powerful of those enemies was King Philip II of Spain, whose monolithic empire embraced Spain and, after 1580, Portugal, parts of Italy, Sicily, Sardinia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and, farther afield, colonial territories in South and Central America, as well as, after 1580, Portugal’s conquests in Africa and the East Indies. Philip had been the husband of Mary Tudor and he believed himself to have a divine commission to restore England to the Catholic faith. To this end, he offered marriage to Elizabeth (although in Rome Elizabeth was officially regarded as illegitimate and, therefore, not legally Queen of England).

Unyielding Elizabeth

In all political circles at home and abroad it was simply assumed that Elizabeth would marry and that her husband would become the effective source of authority. Offers came from foreign princes and ambitious English noblemen. The council and parliament made frantic efforts to persuade the queen to marry and, hopefully produce an heir, thus securing a Protestant dynasty. But Elizabeth consistently refused to yield her independence of action. She remained alive and well decade after decade. This gave the country a measure of stability but it also meant the continuance of stalemate. Elizabeth’s longevity emboldened desperate partisans to plot against her and achieve their ends by violent means.

Catholic hopefuls had a candidate ready to hand to replace Elizabeth. Mary Stuart, who had been queen of the Scottish kingdom since 1542, was descended from Henry VIII’s sister, Margaret Tudor. If, as the pope insisted, Elizabeth was illegitimate, the English crown was Mary’s by right. In 1570 Pius V made the Catholic opinion abundantly clear. His bull (decree), Regnans In Excelsis, excommunicated Elizabeth and declared her “deprived of her pretended title”. It absolved all her subjects of their loyalty to her. This was, in effect, a declaration of war and the ‘army’ now launched against the ‘heretic’ queen comprised all good Catholics who looked to Rome for guidance. Elizabeth, who knew what it was to espouse a minority religion, only required outward conformity. But she was powerless to inhibit the zeal of religious partisans and the mounting hostility between Catholic and Protestant factions.

This was a Europe-wide phenomenon. Between 1562 and 1598 France was torn asunder by religious wars that cost three million lives. At the same time the Netherlands was a battleground between the armies of Philip II and those of Protestant rebels. In England many Catholic recusants gathered to practice their rituals in secret groups. Some of them were breeding
grounds of revolt. They were instructed and encouraged by missionaries sent from the English College at Douai (later moved to Rheims), the objective of which was the reconversion of England. To many it seemed that this could only be achieved by the overthrow of the government.

The Scottish Queen

Following the publication of Regnus In Excelsis there were at least six attempts to kill Queen Elizabeth or remove her from office by force. Perpetrators were egged on from Madrid by promises of Spanish gold and from Rome by assurances of heavenly reward. One bonus for Elizabeth was that, as a result of a brief civil war, Mary Stuart had been deposed and imprisoned. In 1567 she had escaped and sought refuge in England. She remained there as Elizabeth’s guest in various northern or midland strongholds. For Elizabeth this was a mixed blessing. Though Mary’s fate was in Elizabeth’s hands the Scottish ex-queen was a focus for English dissidents.

The Plots

How real were the threats against Elizabeth’s life?

The Ridolfi Plot 1571

Complexity 7/10
Practicality 5/10
Veracity 8/10

Florentine banker Roberto Ridolfi had been plotting against Elizabeth for some time, even helping with the northern rebellion in support of Mary Stuart. After this effort’s failure he began looking for foreign aid to overthrow Elizabeth, ultimately planning for a Dutch invasion. Word of the plot reached Elizabeth and messengers were captured, leading to confessions and the plotters being exposed. Ridolfi was abroad when this happened and never returned to England.

The Throckmorton Plot 1583

Complexity 6/10
Practicality 3/10
Veracity 7/10

The plan lead by Francis Throckmorton was for a Spanish-backed invasion and simultaneous civil uprising to replace Elizabeth with Mary, Queen of Scots, and have the latter marry the Duke of Guise, head of the Catholic League. But the duke was also the architect of the Bartholomew’s Day massacre and hated by Protestants as a result, so he was an unlikely king of England candidate. The plot was revealed by agents of Francis Walsingham.

The Babington Plot 1586

Complexity 7/10
Practicality 5/10
Veracity 7/10

Lead by Anthony Babington, the plot again involved Spanish and Catholic League support, but this time with the aim to assassinate Elizabeth, with the written consent and support of Mary Stuart. Walsingham infiltrated the plot early with double agents and began intercepting messages. Deciphering one such coded message, Mary was proven to have given her assent to Elizabeth’s murder, for which she stood trial and would be executed.

The Lopez Plot 1594

Complexity 3/10
Practicality 4/10
Veracity 3/10

Roderigo Lopez was the physician in chief to Elizabeth from 1581, but was executed for treason in 1594 after being accused of plotting to poison her. But it’s likely to have been a fabrication by Robert Devereux, the Earl of Essex, a disgruntled patient. The Portuguese national and ‘new Christian’ (he converted from Judaism) was accused of working for Philip II, supported by confessions obtained by torture from messengers. Threatened with torture himself, Lopez confessed.
“There were at least six attempts to kill Elizabeth or remove her by force.”
The first attempt to free Mary and set her on the throne of her rival occurred in 1569. Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk, devised a plan to write himself into the royal script. He would marry Mary, help her to regain her Scottish crown and, on Elizabeth's death, return with his wife to London, King of England in all but name. He made common cause with the Earls of Northumberland and Westmorland who, like many in the northern shires, clung to the traditional version of the Christian faith. But Howard's allies became impatient. The northern earls raised an army of 5,500, seized Durham, went on a rampage through the cathedral and installed a priest to say mass. They then set out to rescue Mary but their support rapidly dwindled and, in any case, Mary had been moved to a more secure location. The brief rebellion collapsed and its chief instigators escaped into Scotland. Northumberland was subsequently handed over to the English and executed (August 1572). Westmorland made his way to the Spanish Netherlands and died there, a reluctant exile, in 1601.

An Obsession

The Duke of Norfolk was not chastened by this experience. He still enjoyed the queen's favour and, after a brief spell in the Tower, he was set at liberty. Thus it was that the sinister figure of Roberto Ridolfo was able to play on his vanity and ambition. Ridolfo was a Florentine banker-cum-Catholic activist. He had been involved as a go-between in the rebellion of the northern earls. That experience had left him convinced that the restoration of the Catholic faith could not be achieved without military aid from abroad. That meant looking to Spain for the necessary ships, men and munitions. Ridolfo was part of a network involving Philip II, the Vatican, Mary, Norfolk, the Spanish ambassador and agents connected to Catholic cells throughout England. What came to be known as the Ridolfo Plot was a conspiracy of Byzantine complexity involving troops from the Spanish Netherlands, sympathisers at the English court and hotheads in the shires ready to stir up revolt. It was doomed by two facts: most of Elizabeth's subjects had no stomach for civil war (particularly when they could see the current bloody conflict convulsing France); and the government had its own, highly effective espionage network operated by the queen's secretary, William Cecil (and, his successor, Francis Walsingham). Conspirators were rounded up and examined under torture. Correspondence with Mary was intercepted and scrutinised. Punishments were meted out. This time nothing could save Norfolk, who went to the block in June 1572. Ridolfo, who was abroad at the time, escaped unscathed. It is even possible, as some historians have suggested, that he had, all along, been a double agent in Cecil's pay.

The Ridolfo Plot failed. But it was, nevertheless, a turning point. Far from deterring the King of Spain from fresh endeavour, the 'Enterprise of England' became an obsession. He wrote to his commander in the Netherlands:

*I desire to achieve this enterprise so much, and I have such complete confidence that God our Lord... will guide and direct it, and I hold my charge from God to do this to be so explicit that I am extremely determined and resolved to proceed... doing everything possible in this world to promote and assist it.*

Bringing England back under papal obedience was to Philip the obvious main element in his entire strategy. As well as its spiritual importance, it would stop the irritating interference by English privateers with Spanish convoys travelling from the Americas, and it would clear the Narrow Seas for

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**What did it mean to be Excommunicated?**

A quick explanation of the pope's condemnation of Elizabeth

On 25 February 1570, Pope Pius V issued a papal bull declaring, "We do out of the fullness of our apostolic power declare the foresaid Elizabeth to be a heretic and favourer of heretics, and her adherents in the matters aforesaid to have incurred the sentence of excommunication and to be cut off from the unity of the body of Christ." But what did excommunication mean for Elizabeth and the nation?

1. **Exclusion from communion**
   The primary effect of excommunication is the refusal to give an excommunicated individual communion. Since communion or Eucharist is a holy sacrament in memory of Jesus, being denied it is seen as being denied access to Christ.

2. **It wasn't a punishment**
   Excommunication was viewed by the Catholic church as a tool for redirecting someone who had veered off the Catholic path. An excommunicated individual could repent through confession in order to be brought back into the church.

3. **Other monarchs objected**
   It's understood that Philip II of Spain and Maximilian II, the Holy Roman Emperor, both opposed the excommunication of Elizabeth as they believed it would be used in England to further oppress Catholics.

4. **National impact**
   The added intention of issuing the papal bull was to support uprisings against Elizabeth and give English Catholics religious cover for attempting to overthrow their divinely appointed monarch. The excommunication was even repeated in support of the Spanish Armada.
of all maritime obstacles to traffic between Spain and the Spanish Netherlands.

**The Dilemma**

Cecil, his conciliar colleagues, popular preachers and members of the Protestant majority in parliament urged the queen to ‘deal with’ Mary Stuart. As long as Elizabeth’s unwilling ‘guest’ was alive and encouraging plots against the crown neither queen nor country could be secure. The intelligence network was assiduous in collecting evidence against Mary in order to bring her to trial - and execution. But Elizabeth refused to yield to such pressures. She also declined action in support of the Protestant rebels in the Netherlands, although it was perfectly obvious that a vital element of the Enterprise of England was the despatch of an invasion force across the North Sea.

Why was Elizabeth so reticent? Undoubtedly she was temperamentally opposed to the very idea of war. It was nasty and it was expensive. But she also faced an intellectual dilemma. She believed that, like all Christian monarchs, she held her position by divine appointment. It followed that she had no right to interfere in the internal affairs of other kingdoms. To encourage rebellion in the Netherlands or Scotland, in the name of religion, might, in the long run, weaken her own position. Because who was to say that some of her own subjects might not rise against her - in the name of a higher power?

By the 1580s a state of cold war existed between England and her Catholic neighbours and, within the country, between the queen and religious dissidents. In 1583 credible information reached London through the intelligence network that the Duke of Guise, a maternal kinsman of Mary Stuart, was going to send a hitman across the Channel to dispose of England’s heretic queen. Such a story was readily believed in the prevailing climate. An attempt had been made on the life of the Dutch independence leader William of Orange in 1582 and another, two years later, was successful. It is against this activity in high places that the actions of ardent private partisans must be seen.

In October 1583 two such desperate, though unrelated, events caused much consternation.

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"To encourage rebellion in the Netherlands or Scotland, in the name of religion might, in the long run, weaken her own position"
mission to any who cared to listen. Unsurprisingly, he was arrested, tried, convicted, imprisoned and tortured. He was discovered strangled in his cell, though whether he had hanged himself or suffered at the hands of someone as fanatical as himself has never been established.

Francis Throckmorton’s plan had more substance. He came from another Catholic family in the Midlands and, between 1580 and 1583, spent time in Madrid and Paris discussing the redress of grievances with English religious exiles. Back in England he became the hub of a conspiracy connecting the Spanish ambassador, his own foreign contacts and Mary Stuart. But Walsingham had his measure and Throckmorton’s arrest in October proved to be a major coup for the government. Incriminating evidence found in his lodgings included lists of names and the plans for bringing an invasion force across the Channel. Throckmorton was not executed until his captors were satisfied that they could not extract from him any more damning evidence. He went to his death in July 1584 loudly proclaiming that his confession had been extorted under torture.
Elizabeth gives her famous speech to the troops at Tilbury ahead of the fight with the Spanish.

The Spanish Armada was harried by faster English ships as it attempted to invade England.

Elizabeth's Armada portrait shows her hand on the globe, indicating her claim to an expanded empire.
By this time Cecil, Walsingham and other members of the council were frantic with frustration at the queen's steadfast refusal to take the initiative against her enemies. They wanted her to throw in her lot with the Dutch rebels and provide them with military assistance to inhibit Philip II from launching the Enterprise of England. They also wanted Mary out of the way once and for all. In 1584 they took the initiative. They drew up a document called the Bond of Association, to be signed by all men of substance, and pledging them to take arms against any who attempted to usurp the throne or sought to encompass the queen's death.

Spain Takes Action

For Elizabeth, crunch time had arrived. At the end of 1585 she reluctantly despatched to the Low Countries an armed force under the leadership of her favourite, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester. It made little military impact but King Philip could not ignore it. Yet worse was to come, from his point of view. Within months, Elizabeth, amidst agonies of doubt, agreed to put Mary on trial to face conspiracy charges backed by further evidence Walsingham had gathered. The jury delivered the inevitable verdict and Elizabeth was left with the agonising decision to sign the death warrant. How could she, a divinely-anointed monarch, endorse the execution of another divinely-anointed monarch - and one recognised by the pope and her fellow European rulers? She tried to evade responsibility by signing the warrant and then sending instructions that it should not be delivered. But her advisers hurried the event. Mary was beheaded on 8 February 1587. And all Elizabeth could do was claim she was not responsible: her instructions had been disobeyed.

This turn of events actually played into Philip's hands by uniting the opposition against Elizabeth. In Paris the royal court was outraged at this 'murder' of one of their own (Mary was the sister-in-law of Henry III). In Rome protracted negotiations reached a satisfactory conclusion. Pope Sixtus V agreed a substantial financial contribution to the invasion of England and granted Philip the right to nominate Elizabeth's replacement. The Spanish king had, meanwhile, been completing the logistical details of the Enterprise of England. Ships and men were being assembled in Iberian ports. The Duke of Parma was, albeit reluctantly, ready to embark an army in the Netherlands. All England held its breath as it awaited the news that the Spanish Armada was on its way.

King Philip's invasion fleet sailed in May 1588, carrying 18,000 soldiers and 2,500 cannon. The plan was to link up with Parma's force of 30,000 veteran troops at the French port of Gravelines and then to carry this massive army across the narrows in barges. It was, by any standards, a massive and complex undertaking. Several things could go wrong and many of them did. Thanks to the English intelligence system, some of the Spanish tactics were well known in London before the Armada hove into view. Communication between the king, Parma and the naval commander, the Duke of Medina Sidonia, was poor. The fleet's departure was delayed by bad weather. Harassing by the English navy with superior fire power further slowed the Armada's progress. Parma was not ready. English fire ships were sent among the Spanish ships, waiting at anchor for the Netherlands' contingent, causing them to scatter. Strong winds from the south-west forced Philip's vessels into the North Sea. With no possibility of turning back they were forced to sail around Scotland into the Irish Sea and many ships were wrecked in those dangerous, unfamiliar waters.

"She tried to evade responsibility by signing the warrant and then sending instructions that it should not be delivered"
RISE OF THE ZULU EMPIRE

SHAKA

HOW AN EXILE USED WAR AND POLITICAL GUILE TO BECOME AFRICA'S CONQUERING KING

Written by Jonathan Gordon
Who was the real Shaka kaSenzangakha? Despot? Illegitimate usurper? Moderniser? Skilled diplomat? Bloody tyrant? Any exploration of the history of the first king of the Zulu has to inevitably come to the conclusion that we’re not entirely sure. The history of Shaka has become so entwined with the motives of those who wished to make use of his tale. One source for the life of Shaka are notes taken by Western colonisers and traders, often looking to push the agenda of a savage African king or hoping to boost book sales through salacious accounts of atrocity after atrocity. Our other source is the oral history of the people themselves, often recorded many years after the event and sometimes quite clearly coloured by the people who succeeded Shaka, hoping to raise or diminish him depending on their own agenda.

So, is there anything about the life of Shaka we can be assured is true? Thankfully, yes. There’s enough detail scattered through all of these sources to see an image of a king emerge, albeit one packed with caveats and requiring some amount of scepticism. What we can certainly do is deflate and explain some of the myths around Shaka and, just as interestingly, explain why they exist. Shaka has become an icon, used to this day as a pillar of Zulu identity. His legend has value to people and that in itself is worth examination. Hopefully by the end of this you will have a better understanding of who Shaka really was and why other depictions of him have existed for the last 200 years.

BEFORE SHAKA
Shaka was born into a region dominated by clans, large and small, working on a kind of tributary system. When his father, Senzangakha, was chief of the Zulu they were a lower level chiefdom situated in the valley of the White Mfolozzi River, paying tribute to the Mthethwa to their southeast. The Mthethwa were one of three major chiefdoms to whom everyone else was paying tribute, the others being the Ngwane (later the Swazi) and the Ndwandwe. These three groups primarily all spoke Nguni and they vied with each other through the late-18th century into the beginning of the 19th century for control of the region nestled in the south-east of the continent. It was a region.

ABOVE Zulu wedding ceremonies continue to be a massive event
LEFT Zulu warrior traditions lasted for many years, as this 1868 image shows
with a vast array of terrain and soil types, ideal for farming a variety of crops and grazing animals.

As the new century began new chiefs began to emerge that would shape the next decades. Zwide became the leader of the Ndwandwe around 1805 and would reign for about 15 years before he fatally crossed paths with Shaka, as we'll explain later, and Dingiswayo became the chief of the Mntethwa in 1806, someone who would become integral to the life of the future Zulu king. Around the same time as Dingiswayo, Senzangakhona reached maturity and was able to take the seat of his father Jama as chief of the Zulu (a regency was put in place run by his sister Mkabayo since their father had died in 1781).

While the Zulu were a junior partner in the Mntethwa confederacy, this new generation of leaders sought to bring in a number of modernising changes to the society they inherited. Organising men and women into age regiments, or amabutho, is one element that became common, essentially structuring people into work groups by age rather than regionality. It also appears that the Mntethwa, and by extension their tributary chiefdoms like the Zulu, did away with the ritual circumcision of men to mark their transition to maturity and marked this moment instead by use of head rings. This appears to have been for very practical reasons since the ceremony naturally involved adult men being out of action for several weeks as they recovered from the process (as well as schooling elements of the ceremony that happened beforehand) and they were entering a more modern and fast-paced world that required quick deployment of manpower. It's worth noting here that some of these most significant changes have sometimes been credited to the reign of Shaka, but the evidence would suggest that the reforms were coming into effect long before his time and that his contribution was either to accelerate or expand upon them.

Society more widely remained driven by the family unit, which typically involved a single patriarch at its head, often with multiple wives. The homestead, or umuzi, would involve a single hut structure for the head of the family with further huts arcing on either side for each of the wives to form a horseshoe shape. In the centre would be a kraal, meaning an animal pen. Collectively the family would be expected to meet the needs of everyone in the homestead, with women often farming the land and men typically hunting. Royal households were not much different, adding military considerations into the mix. They recruited men from the age regiments and had their own special groups dedicated to defending their interests. When not fighting, however, they still had to help out with the crops and hunting like everyone else.

**A MYSTERIOUS BIRTH**

It was into this relatively fractious but structured world that Shaka was born to his father Senzangakhona of the Zulu and mother Nandi, the daughter of the Langeni chief. The how and when of this rather pivotal event remains a matter of great debate. Most commonly, Shaka's birth is said to have been sometime in July.
1787, but Dan Wylie in his work on Shaka estimates that something like 1781 makes as much sense. That would have made Shaka about 35 when he finally took over as chief of the Zulus. The how is the more complex element. Claims over Shaka’s legitimacy are integral to his claim to the Zulu leadership and debunking that claim from. Mother and child were exiled in order to assuage the shame and the couple never married.

However, the evidence doesn’t really support this tale. For a start, Nandi and Senzangakhona had at least two children together, the other being Shaka’s sister Nomcoba. So, the more believable story is that Nandi was an isingodosi, or betrothed maiden, to Senzangakhona and while sex between them was prohibited before he came of age, they were permitted to be intimate with one another. The pregnancy therefore broke taboo, but merely meant that the rites needed to be rushed through and ultimately they did marry. It should

**“THIS NEW GENERATION OF LEADERS SOUGHT TO BRING IN A NUMBER OF MODERNISING CHANGES TO THE SOCIETY THEY INHERITED”**

became important to many who followed him, both inside and outside the kingdom.

The most popular story is that Shaka was conceived out of wedlock, to the great shame of both Senzangakhona and Nandi. The pregnancy was hidden and blamed on itshati (a type of intestinal bug) and this is possibly where the name ‘Shaka’ came

Having not taken a wife of his own, Shaka relied heavily on his extended family, particularly the women, to run key parts of his kingdom. His own mother, Nandi, was chief among these figures for much of his life, but of near equal importance was the sister of Senzangakhona and Shaka’s aunt, Mkabaya.

Mkabaya had acted as regent on behalf of Senzangakhona when their father Juma had died, and it’s said she had even found her father the wife that bore him his son in the first place. Senzangakhona had still not reached the age of maturity and so Mkabaya had to step in to maintain the continuity of the family line. She and many of her sisters never married, preferring to remain princesses among the Zulu people rather than be married off to rival groups. In this position they had more autonomy and power than they would have done as the wife of a different chief.

While Nandi and Shaka were thought to be in exile, or at least living away from the Zulu, it had been the sisters like Mkabaya who had kept in touch and visited with the young Shaka, which may have helped build a strong bond between them. When Senzangakhona passed away, it was notable that Mkabaya gave her blessing to Shaka to return and usurp the chosen heir, helping to smooth things over with the people beforehand.

Mkabaya was no less important to Shaka’s downfall, however. After the death of Nandi and military setbacks, she plotted with his brothers Dingane and Mhlangana to assassinate him. She then helped to orchestrate Dingane take the throne by plotting against Mhlangana.

**LEFT The Zulu were a highly patriarchal people, but women could still hold a lot of power and political influence**
also be remembered that Nandi was not Senzangakhona’s only wife. In fact he had 15 of them and at least 18 sons between them in his lifetime. In any case, Shaka’s legitimacy carried with it enough ambiguity to allow others to fill in the gaps as they wished.

As for the exile portion of the story, that comes up again and again, even if the legitimacy question is put to rest. Some degree of travel between family units seems reasonable to expect and given the long distances and lack of any modern transport methods, such trips might well cover long periods of time. Still, Nandi is said to have been a fiery and strong-willed woman who had no fear of standing up to her husband even as one of the lesser wives and it’s possible that Shaka’s parents clashed frequently. Still, when he was old enough Shaka was initiated into his father’s key age regiment, the iWombe ibutho, so he wasn’t completely ostracised when growing up.

We have records of Nandi and her son leaving to live with other groups on multiple occasions, whether her own Langeni or others, and being visited by extended family. Eventually Shaka found himself with the Mthethwa, the chiefdom to whom Senzangakhona, along with around 30 other clans, paid tribute.

**THE FORGING OF SHAKA**

It’s clear that it was under the tutorship of Dingiswayo that Shaka grew and learned most of what would serve him in taking the Zulu chiefdom and turning it into a kingdom - perhaps arguably even an empire. Shaka is said to have risen quickly through the ranks of the military thanks to his intelligence and initiative to become a respected general in the Mthethwa army, helping to win many victories for his chief. He was even given the honorary name, ‘uSitshaka ka sitshayeki’ meaning ‘he who beats but is not beaten’.

Dingiswayo himself was one of the more progressive and reforming chiefs of the period, and it’s from him that a few key innovations can be traced back that Shaka took on in later years. For instance, he moved further towards age regiments and away from regional work groups than other chiefs, which Shaka expanded. He also took tighter control of things like marriage, mandating when the men of his amabutho could take a wife. Marriage generally was an important tool in his arsenal as he also made strategic marriage arrangements with rivals, such as with his greatest enemy Zwade of the Ndwandwe, whose sister he took as a bride.

On the whole the leadership of Dingiswayo looks fairly similar to that of Shaka, with a mix of diplomacy, innovative thinking and occasionally brutal violence and single-mindedness. In coming to the throne he had killed his own brother and this is another lesson Shaka seems to have taken on board. He would also have taken into account the way in which placing the right ally at the head of a chiefdom could help maintain your own power, as Dingiswayo did when he backed Shaka to claim the Zulu chiefdom.

Senzangakhona fell ill and died in 1816, leaving his heir Sigujana to take over the Zulu. There are many tales from the region that tell of Shaka bewitching or poisoning his father, but the details are unclear on this point. Sigujana was only a little younger than Shaka, but belonged to his father’s senior and eighth wife Bhibhi. As his first-born son, however, Shaka would have a strong claim to take his place and thanks to the backing of Dingiswayo of the more powerful Mthethwa, that wasn’t likely to be a problem. A plot appears to have been hatched in concert with another son of Senzangakhona named Ngwadi. Having brought Sigujana into his confidence Ngwadi killed his half-brother.
while he bathed in the river and sent word to Shaka to return to their father’s capital of Sikelebheni.

**FROM CHIEF TO KING**
What’s the difference between a chief and a king? Possibly it’s somewhat semantic, but the key difference between the role played by Shaka and that played by his father is that Shaka ended up at the head of the chiefdom pyramid and arranged what might previously have been a loose confederacy into a much more organised state. And he wasted no time in asserting his position even when he was still technically working under the umbrella of the Mthethwa.

Shaka moved closer towards having a full-time standing military force, making it the very centre of his political and social structure. They would be put through regular military training and would be sent out on regular raids to intimidate unruly tribes and take cattle from them, maintaining a base level of fear of the wrath of their king. These warriors would live in their own barracks and a strict prohibition on marriage without the king’s authority remained. Shaka would personally never take a wife, which in turn has fuelled much speculation about his sexuality or impotence, but the fact remains that his homestead was full of women and there’s evidence he fathered children. This in turn led to stories that he would kill women who became pregnant by him, but again such stories may have been politically motivated, so it’s unclear.

Women generally were a massive part of Shaka’s political structure in the years

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**THE LEADERSHIP OF DINGISWAYO LOOKS FAIRLY SIMILAR TO THAT OF SHAKA, WITH A MIX OF DIPLOMACY AND BRUTAL VIOLENCE**

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**THE ZULU SUCCESSORS**

**Dingane**
Reign: 1828–1840

The son of Senzangakhona’s sixth wife and half-brother of Shaka conspired to kill the Zulu king and take his place with the help of some of his other half-brothers. Without Shaka in charge, however, some of the small communities on the outer edges of the kingdom began breaking away. Dingane was ultimately killed by his brother Mpande, who then took over.

**Mpande**
Reign: 1840–1872

With the support of the Boers, Mpande looked to overthrow his brother in 1840. He was the son of Senzangakhona’s ninth wife and may have been persuaded to seek the throne against his better judgement. As it was his son, Cetshwayo, would end up doing most of the heavy lifting of ruling after he defeated his brother to gain supremacy within the family.

**Cetshwayo**
Reign: 1873–1879

Son of Mpande and grandson of Senzangakhona, Cetshwayo was the last king of an independent Zulu kingdom. He defeated and killed his younger brother Mbuyazi, who was his father’s favourite, to secure his path to the throne in 1856 and was more or less in charge from that point. His reign ended with defeat in the Anglo-Zulu War, after which he was exiled.
to come. Nandi, his mother, was now queen mother and as such in charge of all palace household affairs, making her very influential. Much against her earlier reputation, she is said to have been a calming voice in the ear of the young leader. The other women in his family, such as his aunts and the many other wives of his father, would go on to positions as the heads of other chiefdoms, acting as political emissaries to be a symbol of his power and control.

However, it was early in Shaka’s time as chief that his benefactor Dingiswayo was captured and killed by longtime rival, Zwide of the Nd wandwe. This event would likely have been a massive blow, not least since Dingiswayo had backed his claim with the Zulu and been an important influence on him going into adulthood. Shaka refused to yield to Zwide and stood his ground, giving Shaka the first big chance to prove his leadership to his own people and to implement some of his more profound tactical changes.

Zwide is thought to have attacked with perhaps more than twice as many men as Shaka was able to muster, and yet the smaller chiefdom managed to beat back their enemy on several occasions, each time retreating back to safer land, rebuilding and training. A key tactical change actually came about through a change in primary weapons for the Zulu. At this point throwing spears, or assegai, were common, but Shaka moved his men to using a two-foot, long-bladed single-handed spear called an ikhwa. Combined with their famous ishlangu shields, Zulu warriors would look to knock the enemy off balance with a shield strike and then stab them in the midriff. It was a vicious method of fighting, and in concert with their bull-horn formation that would encircle the enemy, it’s easy to see why Shaka built a reputation as a particularly ruthless and bloody military leader.

It’s interesting to note here that despite this effective fighting style there was seen to be a cost to the warriors in fighting this way and it was important for returning soldiers to undergo ancient cleansing traditions to rid them of an umnyama, or dark omen. Ceremonies for this cleansing could last four days before they could finally meet with the king, at which time the battle would be reviewed and honours handed out. Poor performance or cowardice could be punished by execution.

When Zwide’s army attacked on their third assault in 1819 Shaka’s forces retreated into the Nkandla mountains, using the difficult terrain to even out the fight against the superior Nd wandwe numbers. Having routed them, Shaka moved his men back across the Black Mfolozi in a surprise advance into Zwide’s territory and forced them into retreat. Any defeat for a ruler in this region and era could be seen as delegitimising their right to rule. Defeat brought great shame upon Zwide and some of the smaller chiefdoms who had formerly paid tribute to him began breaking away. Some, but not all, turned to Shaka and the Zulu, who now inherited much of the Mthethwa region as theirs as well.

As mentioned earlier, some of these chiefdoms were given overseers in the form of members of the royal family, and others might be allowed a certain amount of autonomy especially if they were on the outskirts of Zulu territory. But Shaka was not averse to doing much as his mentor had done for him and had chiefs assassinated in favour of more agreeable heirs to their lands.

“SHAKA WAS NOT AVERSE TO DOING MUCH AS HIS MENTOR HAD DONE FOR HIM AND HAD CHIEFS ASSASSINATED IN FAVOUR OF MORE AGREEABLE HEIRS”
submitted to Shaka and Phakathwayo’s half-brother Nqetho was brought out of exile to take his place. But the Qwabe would remain a threat, whether real or imagined, since Shaka would blame them for an assassination attempt on him some years later.

**TRADE AND TRAGEDY**

With his greatest adversaries dead or in retreat, Shaka went about building his kingdom into something that would last for the next 60 years. As tight central control was practically impossible, Shaka relied on regular raids and intimidation to maintain order, as well as strategic placing of family. To avoid the fate of Zwide he also needed to keep winning victories and he apparently worried about seeming old, plucking out the white hairs that emerged on his head. A defeat of Zulu forces by the Mpondo in 1824 was the first sign that Shaka’s rule might crack.

Still, matters of justice were decided by Shaka, not local chiefs, as were diplomatic relations with those outside the Nguni-speaking world. When traders landed on Zulu land in a bay they named Port Natal,
A ZULU WARRIOR
What made them unique?

**HEADDRESS**
Zulu regiments wore distinguishing headresses so their commanders could orchestrate battles from a distance.

**ISIHLANGU**
A Zulu war shield was made from cowhide, and when beaten with a spear made a loud intimidating noise.

**IKLWA**
Equipped with a pointed blade, this spear was used to stab enemies from behind the large shield. A longer throwing spear called an assegai was also utilised.

**MODERN FIREARMS**
Shaka wasn’t averse to using firearms, but during his reign they were mostly useful for shock value and sowing chaos. They were used a little more in later years.

**COWHIDE**
The cowhide used to make the shields was made extra durable by drying it in the sun, burying it under manure and then hitting it with rocks.

**STAMINA**
With no supply train or heavy armour, Zulu forces could cover over 30 kilometres in a day. Shaka is thought to have had them run barefoot rather than in sandals to improve their speed.

Shaka saw the opportunity he’d been waiting for. The Cape Colony to the south had been established by the British in 1814 and he had long wished to establish a trade route with them, but was blocked by the distance and rival tribes in his way. The arrival of Lieutenant Francis George Farewell and Henry Francis Flynn to his kingdom in June 1824 could be the diplomatic opening he needed to enrich his kingdom far beyond anything his forebears had achieved.

Shaka granted them an audience, allowed them the right to stay in the bay, and almost like another small chiefdom they remained under his ultimate rule. Still, the situation was unsettled and later that year there was an attempt on Shaka’s life by assassins. While he blamed the Qwabe, it’s said that he suspected his half-brothers Dingane and Mhlangana. He sent forces to crush any embers of Qwabe resistance and chase down possible suspects. He even took the step of moving his capital into Qwabe territory to stamp his authority on them. Meanwhile, the Ndwandwe were building in strength once again under the leadership of Zwedie’s
son, Sikhumnya. Shaka personally led the attack in October 1826, backed by some of the white settlers, and achieved a comprehensive victory, followed by the slaughter of many of the civilians. The Ndawandwe would not rise again, with survivors swearing allegiance to the Zulu or scattering to other chiefdoms.

Shaka hoped that trade through Port Natal and possibly the introduction of firearms into his army would prove to be the decisive path to more sustainable power. In 1827 he chose James Saunders King, the leader of a group that had shipwrecked in 1825, to lead his embassy to the Cape Colony. In the meantime, though, his mother Nandi died.

The downfall of Shaka really starts to accelerate from here and we can be fairly confident of this because the stories about his behaviour, genuine or not, become more and more extreme. It was suggested by leaders that succeeded him that he killed Nandi himself, perhaps in a rage that she had hidden a son he had fathered, but we do know that a period of mourning was established and he directed his rage at the Qwabe once again. Further stories claim he ordered all pregnant women and their husbands to be killed, but it does seem his chief advisor Ngomane kaMqombili confused the matter. Shaka’s attack on the Mpondw immediately to the colony’s north likely didn’t ease the growing tensions.

The final stage of mourning required a war to cast out the umnyama and they were the perhaps inopportune targets. However, a second embassy was arranged in September, this time led by members of the original traders and a man named John Cane. Alas, while Cane would prove successful and a treaty was prepared, Shaka would be assassinated before it could arrive.

**THE LAST DAYS**

Shaka ordered another campaign, this time heading north against the Gaza kingdom. Already an unpopular move so soon after a campaign heading south, it proved disastrous, with his army decimated by malaria and dysentery before they even reached the enemy. Forced to withdraw, what could have been a bolstering victory became a humiliation and was all that was needed for Shaka’s enemies to see an opening. Much as he had suspected, his brothers Dingane and Mhlangana were plotting against him and set aside their rivalry to succeed Shaka to first depose him. Shaka’s aunt, Mikayi, who had helped his ascension, now backed this coup as well, perhaps blaming Shaka for the death of Nandi or even being the creator of that legend. They were also backed by one of his advisors, Mbophi.

On 23 or 24 September 1828 Shaka was killed by his brothers as he sat in his personal quarters. Mbophi created a distraction, scattering the many women and attendants around the king, and then one or all of the three men, although it’s unclear how it played out exactly, stabbed him. It’s said that his last words were, “What is the matter my father’s children?” Ultimately Dingane would emerge as king, turning on Mhlangana as well.

So we come back to the question of who was the real Shaka kaSenzangakonha? Even to this day the Zulu nation is said to have been ‘born out of Shaka’s spear’ and that description seems accurate. War and bloodshed were never far from this thoughts, but he may not have been the crazed murderer that later tales made him out to be. He was capable of incredible cruelty and violence, but it would be fair to say no kingdoms in history have been built on anything less. The very fact that he is surrounded by so much myth makes him all the more intriguing and the nation he left behind so unique.
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The Real Mr Hyde

Pillar of the Edinburgh establishment Major Thomas Weir turned out to be rather more devil than angel

Written by Catherine Curzon

As the 16th century ticked over into the 17th, the world was a place of suspicion and fear. The Age of Enlightenment had yet to dawn and just like the rest of the British Isles, Scotland was a place where the good feared God and cowered at the unseen wickedness that dwelt in the shadows, hoping to tempt the weak or greedy. It was a place where magic might just be real and witch trials convinced some people that witchcraft lurked in the most unexpected places, its practitioners scheming to snare even decent souls and drag them into the grip of evil and all the way down to hell itself. In the first half of the 17th century one man came to embody immorality, evil and the blackest magic imaginable to the residents of Edinburgh. He was Major Thomas Weir, the notorious Wizard of West Bow, practitioner of devilish arts, summoner of demons and notorious fornicator with his own sister and beasts alike. Major Thomas Weir died for his supposed crimes, but was he truly an emissary of the devil, or might he have been a mentally ill man who lost his life to a tragic miscarriage of justice? Perhaps there was a third possibility and Major Weir was actually the heartless brother who subjected his own sister to unimaginable torments for decades, driving her mad.

Thomas Weir was born in 1599 in Carluke, a town in the Scottish central Lowlands county of Lanarkshire. He was born to privilege as a descendent of the Weir-de Vere family, an influential and ancient family who had made their home at Stonebyres, an imposing Lanarkshire estate. Here they grew rich and powerful, presiding over the lands they ruled for generations. Thomas Weir’s father, also named Thomas Weir, was the Laird of Kirkton. The laird was married to Lady Jean Somerville,
The Real Mr Hyde
Horrible histories

Major Weir’s house stood empty for decades. It was the site of all sorts of strange reports and a place where few dared to tread.

Tales of Major Thomas Weir’s cavorting with the devil became bestsellers for a scandal-hungry public.

Thomas Weir the younger’s mother, and Lady Jean had a few talents of her own. Regardless of how well she had married and how much power her family wielded, gossip about her was rife. Some whispered that she had clairvoyant powers, rumours that her own daughter would later swear to in the midst of her own rambling, hysterical confession.

The son, Thomas, however, made no such claims to worldly powers, nor did he wish to. Instead he was raised as a strict Covenanter and Presbyterian, famed for the strength and passion not only of his unshakeable faith, but the long and fiery speeches he gave to his religious followers.

So pious and godly was Weir that when he took up residence with his wife, Isobel, alongside other devout Presbyterians at the top of the West Bow, off Edinburgh’s Grassmarket, the group was given the nickname, the Bowhead Saints. They were morally unimpeachable, the godliest of the godly, and they were fiercely anti-Royalist in their beliefs.

Weir enjoyed a celebrated and well-rewarded career as a soldier, serving in Ireland during the Irish Rebellion of 1641 before he returned to Scotland. As a committed and passionate anti-Royalist, Weir proudly added his signature to the Solemn League and Covenant in 1643. This document was an agreement between the English Parliamentarians and the Scottish Covenanters in which each swore their allegiance to the other, creating a force that would eventually overwhelm the Royalist forces. Weir served in the Army of the Covenant under James Graham, Marquis of Montrose, where his loyalty to his land and people was unquestioning. As he rose through the ranks of the army, so too did he rise in prominence amongst Edinburgh covenanters, who revelled in the passion and strength of his spoken prayers. In fact, so famed was Weir for his religious fervour that Presbyterians made pilgrimages to his home in the West Bow from across Edinburgh and beyond, hoping to hear him speak.

When Weir’s military career reached its natural end with the Parliamentarian victory in the English Civil War, he returned home to Edinburgh permanently. By now a major, he was given command of the city guard of Edinburgh, a position to which a loyal, sober and serious man such as Thomas Weir seemed particularly well-suited. In fact, Weir’s loyalty to his anti-Royalist beliefs was proven still further when his former commander, Montrose, was imprisoned in Edinburgh after he changed sides to fight for the monarchist cause. As Montrose languished in his cell awaiting his date with the executioner, a merciless Weir made his captive’s life miserable. To him, a traitor was the lowest of the low, but Major Thomas Weir was to fall further than even that.

Major Weir eventually retired from his position and devoted himself full time to his religious preachings, by now regarded by his followers as something close to a saint. When his wife passed away he was joined in West Bow home by his unmarried sister, Jane, or Jean, who was known to her friends as Grizel, who became her brother’s housekeeper and, as was later revealed, much more besides. Major Thomas Weir was a striking figure when glimpsed about the city, always dressed in black and carrying an imposing black staff that was topped by the carving of a fearsome human head. The staff was one of the most important props of his preaching and he brandished it during his blood and thunder prayers, striking fear into the hearts of sinners. The life of the Weir siblings should have been one of respectable and genteel retirement, uneventful days interspersed with the prayers that had become so renowned, but it was not to be.
In 1670, a lady was walking past Weir’s home with her maid when she was alerted to some strange goings on by the sound of shouting and cackling from inside. This wasn’t exactly what one expected to hear when one passed the home of a Presbyterian so-called Bowhead Saint and as the women picked up their pace, things got even stranger. An immensely tall woman burst from within, howling with laughter and twisting her body into hideous shapes. The hellish figure pushed roughly past the women and disappeared down Anderson’s Close, where she apparently disappeared into thin air.

Days later, Major Weir took the stand at a packed Presbyterian meeting and quite suddenly, with no prompting, made an unexpected confession. He and his sister were lovers, he claimed, and they practised bestiality too. He went on to confess that he had sexual relations with innumerable servants and his own stepdaughter, as well as all sorts of other ungodly acts.

Attendees at the prayer meeting who had been expecting prayers and breast-beating were shocked by Weir’s outburst and blamed the confession on ill health. They put it down to mental strain and tried to rush it up, fearing the irreparable damage it might do to the church. For some time they were successful, but Weir wouldn’t be silenced no matter how hard his followers tried. He took his bed with ill health and there continued to confess to incest and bestiality until the story, inevitably, got out.

At first the authorities quite understandably dismissed Weir’s ravings as those of a madman. Sir Andrew Ramsay, Lord Abbotshall, the Lord Provost of Edinburgh was keen to let the old major, by now 70 years old, live out the rest of his life at home, ranting and raving as much as he wished. This was a victim of mental illness, declared the Lord Provost, and needed no punishment. It was decided to take no further action but it was Weir himself who forced their hand. When Lord Abbotshall sent doctors to examine the patient, Weir declared himself sane and the doctors agreed with him. The only thing wrong with the old man, said the physicians, was a guilty conscience. He needed to unburden himself and be punished in order to find peace.

“\n\nWhen the fearsome black staff was hurled into the fire, it twisted and writhed like a serpent”\n\n
The Real Baddies

Literature is full of types who were inspired by real life villains

The Witchfinder General

The villain of both the novel and film Witchfinder General was Matthew Hopkins, the English Civil War’s infamous witchfinder responsible for hundreds of executions. Though usually portrayed as an older man who met his death on the gallows, Hopkins was only in his late twenties when he died in his bed of pleurisy.

Dracula

Though Bram Stoker’s Dracula might have been fiction, the man who inspired it was very real. Vlad Tepes, aka Vlad the Impaler, was a mighty and brutal warlord in 15th century Wallachia. Tepes’ impaled enemies lined the roads to his fortress and he achieved notoriety for his vile cruelty.

Long John Silver

Whilst he provided Robert Louis Stephenson with the inspiration for Long John Silver, William Ernest Henley was certainly no pirate. In fact, Stevenson’s friend was a poet. This popular fellow had lost one leg to tuberculosis and was a noted storyteller and raconteur who boasted an enormous beard!

Hannibal Lecter

Dr Hannibal Lecter, the memorable psychopath of Thomas Harris’ The Silence Of The Lambs was based on Alfredo Balli Treviño, an upper class physician who murdered and mutilated a friend. Journalist Harris met Treviño whilst researching a story on death rows in the 1960s.

Professor Moriarty

Arthur Conan Doyle’s legendary Napoleon of Crime took his inspiration from Adam Worth, a criminal mastermind of the Victorian era. Worth sat at the head of a vast criminal empire that stretched across Europe. Ironically, his son later became a detective!
THE VILLAINOUS HEROES

History is full of heroes who turned out to be anything but!

**The Thief-Taker General**

In Georgian London few men were more respected than Jonathan Wild, Thief-Taker General. Wild seemed to have a particular gift for finding stolen goods and returning them to their wealthy owners in return for rich rewards. In fact, Wild was the mastermind behind the robberies and when he handed over the so-called burglars to face punishment, they were usually his enemies.

Wild was the most powerful godfather in the city but when his double life was discovered, he went to the gallows. His hanging was so popular that tickets were issued to witness the spectacle.

**Robert Knox**

Scottish physician Robert Knox was noted for his anatomical expertise. He was also the man for whom Burke and Hare obtained bodies by murderous means when the supply of fresh cadavers proved too slow to satisfy demand.

When the murders were uncovered and the body snatchers were put on trial, the genteel Knox faced no charges. The people of Edinburgh were outraged and his career was ended by the scandal. Even a move to London didn’t help and Knox devoted himself to writing for several years until he made a return to practice as an anatomist at London’s Free Cancer Hospital.

**Gilles de Rais**

Baron Gilles de Rais was one of 15th century France’s most celebrated heroes. He fought alongside Joan of Arc and rose to the pinnacle of military achievement, whilst amassing a vast fortune.

Baron de Rais’ extravagant lifestyle came crashing down when he was accused of occultism and the murder of innumerable children. In a trial that shocked France, the respectable soldier was found guilty and hanged in 1440. Debates still rage about whether Gilles de Rais was guilty of the crimes for which he was convicted or was a victim of religious persecution. His story inspired Charles Perrault’s bloody fairy tale, *Bluebeard*.

Weir refused to accept that he would face no punishment for his sins and told them that he didn’t want a pardon, he wanted to be punished. Eventually both Weir and Grisel were taken into custody at the Edinburgh Tolbooth and there, to everyone’s surprise, it was found that Thomas wasn’t alone in his confessions of sin.

Grisel admitted that, years before, a stranger in a coach made fire had taken Weir to Dalkeith and there he had been given supernatural knowledge of the Scottish defeat by the English that had happened that day and had yet to be made known. She told them that she had been having sexual relations with her brother from her teens and had, in the decades that followed, practised all manner of sexual deviancy at his command. When they asked for evidence she showed them the horseshoe-shaped mark on her brow, a witch mark she had inherited from their mother, so she claimed. The source of Weir’s power was the staff he always carried, claimed the terrified woman. Unless the authorities wanted him to cast evil spells on them, they had better take the staff from him. Not wanting to take any chances, they did just that.

Grisel and Weir confessed to meetings with the devil himself and refused to see any priest or other member of the clergy. When their house was searched large sums of money were found wrapped in cloth and accompanied by an unknown root. When the cloth was thrown on the fire it exploded and the magistrate given responsibility for the money claimed, rather unbelievably, that the notes themselves were bewitched and flew about his house in a manner so ferocious that he feared they might damage the fabric of the building!

Though Major Weir’s lone confession had been dismissed as the ranting of a madman,

"Some claimed to have seen the ghost of Weir himself, leaving a trail of flame in his wake"
when taken in concert with that of his sister, the Edinburgh authorities decided that there must be something in it. They put the siblings on trial on 9 April 1670. Major Weir was charged with incest and bestiality, whilst Grizel was charged with witchcraft. With no lawyer willing to defend the siblings, a guilty verdict was swiftly handed down. Weir was to be strangled and his body burned whilst Grizel would be hanged.

When the noose was put around Major Thomas Weir’s neck and he was told to repent, he refused. Instead he claimed, “I have lived as a beast and must die like a beast,” resisting all efforts to pray. His body was cut down into the fire and the fearsome black staff hurled in after him where, according to terrified witnesses, it twisted and writhed like a serpent. Both Weir and the staff took an uncommonly long time to be reduced to ashes.

In her cell, Grizel wouldn’t believe that her brother was truly dead until she was assured that the staff had been burned with him. It was this staff, she said, that gave Weir his hellish power. Only when she knew that it was no more did she confess that their mother had been a witch who had taught her children black magic. She claimed that she and her brother shared the mark of the devil with their mother and that it was this mark, shaped like a horseshoe, that allowed them to see the future. When Grizel was taken to the place of execution on the Grassmarket she became hysterical, screaming of her shame and tearing at her clothes. She slapped the face of her executioner and fought fiercely, splitting and cursing all the way. The remains of Major Weir and Grizel were buried at the base of the Shrub Hill Gallows, but they were far from forgotten.

The Real Mr Hyde

Though the Weirs were dead, their spirits lived on in Edinburgh, according to witnesses who lived near the house where they had resided. For years the building remained uninhabited and reports were made of mysterious lights and the sound of screams and laughter. Some even claimed to have seen the major himself, the black staff in his hand as he galloped through the city on a black horse, leaving a trail of flame in his wake. On other occasions a coach was heard to thunder up and down the road outside Weir’s home after dark but when his neighbours dared to peer around their shutters, the street was empty and no such coach was in sight.

The house stood empty for nearly a century until a former soldier rented it at a bargain price. He stayed there for just one night before he packed up and left, claiming to have been tormented by the strange vision of a calf that rose up on its hind legs. The house was demolished during improvement works during the 1870s but to this day, ghostly happenings are occasionally reported on the site where it once stood.

But what was the truth behind the strange case of Major Thomas Weir and his sister, Grizel? At first glance it appears to be a story of mental illness and delusion that, amidst the 17th century fervour for witchcraft trials, led an innocent brother and sister to their deaths. Yet what are we to make of Grizel’s claims that she had been her brother’s lover for years? Was Thomas Weir’s guilty conscience caused not by his dealings with the devil, but his guilt at the abuse of his own sister? Might this, after all, be why he was so keen to blame his sexual misconduct on Satanic influences rather than himself? Of course this doesn’t explain Grizel’s own confession, but years of abuse or shared delusion might well have played its part. The truth of the strange case of the Weirs appears to have perished with them.

When Robert Louis Stevenson was growing up in Edinburgh, the local tale of Major Weir was one of the most popular of all the city’s many legends. In fact Stevenson’s own father had been urged by his parents to avoid the neighbourhood in which the empty Weir house still stood, lest they encounter the spirit of the major on his devilish steed. In the tale of Doctor Jekyll and Mister Hyde we see the ghost of Thomas Weir again, the pious man of God who lives a secret life of debauchery and deviance.

To the people who knew him, Major Thomas Weir was a warlock and his sister a witch, but to modern eyes, both were suffering from mental illness and in need not of the noose, but treatment. To Robert Louis Stevenson, Weir was one of several inspirations for his most famed creation and he remains captivating to this day, his story one that chills as much as it intrigues. What Major Thomas Weir would have made of that is anybody’s guess.
Have you been feeling under the weather lately? Consult our new medical dictionary for some of the best medieval treatments out there!

Written by Jessica Leggett

The medical knowledge and understanding of the human body in medieval Europe was very different compared to what we know today. It was largely based on the practices set out by physicians, in particular Hippocrates and Galen, during the ancient world and the belief that the body comprised of four humours: blood, yellow bile, black bile and phlegm – with illness occurring when they became out of balance. Each humour corresponded to one of the four elements and its associated qualities, and so blood was like air, hot and wet; yellow bile was like fire, hot and dry; black bile was like earth, cold and dry; and phlegm was like water, wet and cold. Cures often revolved around these qualities, so if a disease was considered to be cold and wet, then something hot and dry would be recommended to counteract it.

Contrary to popular myth, dissections did occur during the medieval era but they were rare and so the inner workings of the human body were not fully understood. For medieval physicians, diagnosis was determined on the appearance of the patient and observation of the symptoms, in particular measuring the pulse and analysing urine. Numerous surviving manuscripts depict charts that showed physicians how to examine urine based on its colour, smell and even taste. Treatment fell into three categories – diet, medication and surgery – which still remain today, but some of the cures featured in this list are very bizarre and we don’t endorse them, nor recommend that you try them!
WOUNDS AND BURNS
Medieval Diagnosis: Minor Injuries
Recommended Treatment: Spider Webs

From time to time everybody experiences a wound or burn that they need to treat, and with no modern-day plasters to be found people in the medieval period would often use spider webs - sometimes soaked in oil and vinegar - to cover them. Spider webs were an ideal choice because they are naturally antiseptic and once they had dried they would form a hard protective layer on the injured area. Snail essence, which is packed full of anti-inflammatory properties, was also used to soothe burns and scalds and was even used as a sore throat remedy! Fresh urine was also used to cleanse wounds and burns because it was sterile, and it could sometimes be purchased from the local apothecary.

SECOND OPINION
There were many ways to treat wounds and burns during the medieval era, so if you’re scared of spiders or snails then you may want to try a different route! Topical treatments that were frequently used included theriac and dragon’s blood, but if the wound was bleeding a lot then some horse dung was applied instead. An ancient Egyptian treatment that continued into the medieval period was to use mouldy bread to treat wounds, which is fascinating considering that the antibiotic penicillin - discovered by Sir Alexander Fleming in 1928 - is derived from penicillium moulds.

EYE ISSUES
Medieval Diagnosis: Cataracts
Recommended Treatment: Needles

Most people experience problems with their eyes at some point in their life and this was no different in the medieval period. Just like today, cataracts were dealt with through surgery, with physicians using a needle to remove the cloudy lens from the eye, a procedure that was known as ‘couching’. It was a difficult operation that only the most highly skilled would perform and, overall, only external surgeries were carried out during this era. For those with swollen eyes, a recipe from Anglo-Saxon manuscript Bald’s Leechbook recommended to take a live crab, cut off its eyes and hang them around the patient’s neck.

SECOND OPINION
Another remedy for eye infections from Bald’s Leechbook, which doesn’t involve cutting up live crabs, was to create a salve from onion or leek, garlic, cow bile and wine. After the mixture had been left to sit in a brass vessel for nine days, it could then be applied to the affected eye with a feather. In recent years, researchers have remade this particular salve using the exact recipe from the Leechbook and discovered that it actually kills MRSA bacteria, leading to hopes that it may hold the key to dealing with antibiotic-resistant bugs.

EPILEPTIC FITS
Medieval Diagnosis: The Falling Sickness
Recommended Treatment: St Paul’s Potion

As you can probably tell from this list, herbal medicines were all the rage during the medieval period and they were used for all manner of illnesses and conditions, including epilepsy. If you suffer from epilepsy, then a medieval physician would recommend that you drink St Paul’s potion, which was attributed to the apostle himself. It was made from dozens of different ingredients including ginger, roses, cloves, mandrake, dragon’s blood, liquorice, sage and roses all mixed together with honey and given alongside some wine. It was also a versatile medicine that could be used for stomach issues, paralysis and arthritis, but don’t worry if you can’t find all of the ingredients at your apothecary - there’s always bloodletting!

SECOND OPINION
While epilepsy is a common condition that is well understood today and can be successfully treated or controlled, its causes were not known during the medieval period. Consequently, it was assumed by many to be the result of demonic possession, with physicians performing trepanation on afflicted patients in an attempt to release the evil demon inside the body. Stemming from this superstition, magic and charms were also used to treat epilepsy and several examples of them can be found in manuscripts from throughout the medieval period.
FEVER AND UPSET STOMACH

Medieval Diagnosis:
Imbalanced Humours
Recommended Treatment:
Dragon’s Blood

If you have a fever or an upset stomach - or both - then there are many medieval treatments that can deal with them. Dragon’s blood, a sap from the Dracaena draco tree that was native to Morocco and the Canary Islands, was a popular medicine to drink. Blood red in colour, dragon’s blood was prescribed for fevers, upset stomachs and even pain and heavy bleeding caused by menstruation. However, it was a very expensive ingredient and only the wealthy could afford it. Not to worry, though, another treatment for fevers and stomach problems was bloodletting, which restored balance to the humours.

SECOND OPINION
Just in case you can’t get your hands on dragon’s blood or you want to avoid bloodletting, you can always try one of the many medieval herbal remedies that were prescribed for fevers and stomach problems. Popular ingredients included galingale, powdered ginger or mint mixed with either wine or ale. Both ginger and mint tea are still recommended today for settling an upset stomach, promoting digestion and helping with a fever, so it seems that not all medieval medicine was on the crazy side!
THE ZODIAC MAN
Astrology played a very important role in medieval medicine

The human body was seen as a microcosm of the universe and so prognosis and treatments were linked to the movement of heavenly bodies. Each zodiac sign was assigned to a part of the body that it was believed to influence and control, leading to the ‘zodiac man’, an illustration that features in various surviving almanacs. Physicians always checked the position of the stars before performing any procedure, because if a sign was active then it would be dangerous to conduct treatment on the associated body part.

ARIES
The Ram controlled the head and influenced the eyes, the brain, adrenal glands and blood pressure.

TAURUS
The Bull controlled the neck and influenced the throat, ears, vocal chords and teeth.

CANCER
The Crab controlled the chest and influenced the breasts and some bodily fluids.

VIRGO
The Maiden controlled the stomach and influenced the abdomen, gallbladder, pancreas, intestines and liver.

SCORPIO
The Scorpion controlled the reproductive organs, bladder, rectum and pelvis.

LIBRA
The Scales controlled the buttocks and influenced the lower back, hips, endocrines and kidneys.

SAGITTARIUS
The Archer controlled the thighs and influenced the legs.

CAPRICORN
The Sea Goat controlled the knees and influenced the bones, skin and nerves.

AQUARIUS
The Water Bearer controlled the ankles and influenced the blood vessels.

PISCES
The Fish controlled the feet and other extremities.
RASH AND FEVER

Medieval Diagnosis: Smallpox
Recommended Treatment: ‘Red Therapy’

Have you been suffering with a high fever, headaches, fatigue and vomiting, with lesions appearing all over your body, turning into blisters? It sounds like you’ve contracted smallpox, a nasty and contagious disease, but don’t worry - a bit of red therapy should sort you out! In the medieval period it was believed that the colour red had healing properties, so patients with smallpox would be wrapped in red cloth and their bedchambers draped with red hangings, and they would only drink red fluids such as pomegranate juice and red wine. In some cases, even red implements were used by physicians as part of the treatment, which was adopted in Europe following the suggestion of Persian physician Rhazes in 910. The English physician John of Gaddesden used red therapy to treat Prince John, the son of King Edward II, which he wrote about in his textbook *Rosa Medicinae*. Red therapy persisted as a treatment for smallpox for centuries, and even Queen Elizabeth I was treated with it during her battle with the disease in 1562. If you’re lucky enough to survive your bout of smallpox then don’t worry, you will be immune to the disease for the rest of your life!

HEADACHES

Medieval Diagnosis:
Pressure Build-up
Recommended Treatment: Trepanning

Do you have a headache or a migraine that just won’t go away? In the medieval period, a popular treatment to alleviate the pain was trepanning, a procedure in which a hole was drilled into the head to relieve pressure. In reality, trepanning exposed brain tissue and the resulting wound would often become infected, ultimately leading to death. Another invasive method was suggested by Arabic physician Abu al-Qasim, which involved making an incision in the temple and sticking a piece of garlic inside it for 15 hours. Remove the garlic and leave the wound alone for two to three days and then apply some cotton soaked in butter. Once the wound develops some pus, take a red hot iron and cauterise your head.

SECOND OPINION

If you don’t like the sound of having a hole drilled into your head, then there are plenty of other weird medieval treatments to cure your headache! For example, Ali ibn Isa al-Kahhal, an Arabic physician between the 10th and 11th centuries, suggested that you should tie a dead mole to your head in order to cure a headache. For a herbal alternative, one Anglo-Saxon recipe from Bald’s Leechbook recommended mixing beetroot and honey and applying the juice on your head, before lying back in the sun and allowing the juice to run down your face.
LESIONS AND NUMBNESS
Medieval Diagnosis: Leprosy
Recommended Treatment: Treacle

Have you had to leave your home and move into a leper house or hospital after being diagnosed with dreaded leprosy? Well, don’t despair, because there are treatments out there for you! Theriac, also known as treacle, was a standard topical medicine that was used by medieval physicians to cure leprosy, applied to the lesions on the patient’s skin. It was an ointment, or compound, made from up to 70 different ingredients - including the flesh of vipers - and it was believed to cure a wide range of ailments, from digestion issues, jaundice and asthma to the plague. Another popular topical treatment for leprosy was mercury, which we now know is a poisonous substance.

SECOND OPINION
If the thought of applying theriac or mercury to your skin doesn’t appeal to you, then you can always turn to good old bloodletting. It was commonly believed that leprosy was the result of too much black bile in the body and that the blood needed to be purified in order to restore the balance between the humours. With this in mind, a more extreme treatment was to bathe in the blood of either children or virgins as another way to clean the blood - however, animal blood was often used instead.

NECK SWELLING
Medieval Diagnosis: Scrofula
Recommended Treatment: The King’s Touch

If the lymph nodes in your neck are swollen and painful, then you may have scrofula - a skin disease caused by tuberculous bacteria that could prove fatal in medieval times. Thankfully there was a cure for scrofula: the ‘king’s touch’. Also known as the ‘royal touch’, the monarchs of England and France held ceremonies where they would touch hundreds of people suffering from scrofula and supposedly cure them, which lead to the disease being commonly referred to as the ‘king’s evil’. Superstition played a huge role in medieval medicine, offering explanations for the unknown, so it’s no surprise that the ‘king’s touch’ was so popular. The seeming ability to perform such a miracle also emphasised the belief that the monarchs had been given the divine right to rule by God, reinforcing their position.

HOT, SWOLLEN JOINTS
Medieval Diagnosis: Gout
Recommended Treatment: Mandrake

Nobody wants hot, red, swollen joints that are very painful, which is why gout is such a troublesome disease. Luckily, there’s a medieval treatment that can cure it once and for all! Mix some powdered mandrake with wine and drink the concoction for seven days to reduce the swelling and relieve the pain for good. Mandrake was a popular ingredient in medieval medicine and it was used to treat various illnesses, but it had to be prepared carefully as it was considered a difficult plant to harvest. This is because the roots resembled a human and it was believed that once it was removed from the earth, the mandrake would release screams that could cause madness. To prevent this, make sure to stuff your ears with mud so that you can’t hear them!

SECOND OPINION
If you don’t want to risk being driven mad by a mandrake, there’s another herbal medicine that’s a lot safer to prepare. Mix wine, cumin, leeks and laurel berries together and drink the mixture every day until you’re cured. If all else fails, it’s worth trying some bloodletting to restore the balance between the humours as it was believed that gout was caused by excess phlegm.
DEPRESSION

Medieval Diagnosis: Melancholia
Recommended Treatment: Flower tea

In the medieval period there were several different ways to treat melancholia, which we would identify as depression today. Peonies were believed to have healing properties and were frequently used for medicinal purposes, which includes helping those dealing with melancholy. A drink would be made from peony roots and given to patients, however it probably wouldn’t have helped them at all because we now know that peony roots are actually poisonous! The physician Rhazes was forward-thinking when it came to his understanding of melancholia and mental illness, and he recommended baths for patients as well as an early form of behaviour therapy.

SECOND OPINION
It is important to note that mental health and illness was not understood properly during the medieval period and it was often attributed to evil demons and witches. As a result, patients were also subjected to barbaric treatments such as starvation, drowning and beatings. They were also locked away in asylums for the insane.
The History Of Werewolves

How the mythical beast has adapted and evolved through successive cultures to become one of humanity’s abiding legends

Written by Tanika Koosmen

The werewolf as we know it today in fantasy and science fiction novels, films and TV shows has a significant and extensive history. Cultures across the world have incorporated the beast into their mythology, folklore and literature, creating a historical tradition that is often lost or forgotten in the face of the CGI werewolf of the modern era. The very first werewolf in literature actually stretches as far back as literature goes, to the Epic Of Gilgamesh, which is the oldest surviving text in history, dated around 2100 BCE. This werewolf is a very small part of a larger story, courtesy of the goddess Ishtar, who transforms a humble, pious shepherd who sacrifices goats in worship of her. However, the single reference in this poem signifies to scholars of literary history that a larger tradition existed, integrated into the stories and lore of the people.

Ancient Origins

When Greek and Roman literature adopted the werewolf tradition, it was across numerous genres: ethnographic travel texts, philosophical musings and astrological poetry. Initially, the belief was localised to the Neurian people, who lived around modern north-western Ukraine and south of Belarus. The first account of the Neurian werewolf peoples was recorded by Greek historian, Herodotus, writing in the fifth century BCE, in a work entitled The Histories. While Herodotus is renowned for including wild tales in his historical writing, in The Histories Book IV even he admitted: “I do not believe this story, yet nevertheless they tell it, and even swear it to be true.”

Stories of werewolves were also associated with the Arcadian cult, located on Mount
Lykaion in Greece. On Mount Lykaion, the mythological birthplace of Zeus, there was an altar dedicated to Lykaean Zeus, or ‘Wolf-Zeus’, and the cult who worshipped there were believed to be werewolves. The rites of passage, as recorded in the works of Latin writer of natural history and miscellany Pliny the Elder (23–79 CE) and Greek travel writer Pausanias (second century CE), applied to the adolescent boys of the cult. One would be chosen from a lot and taken to a lake, where he would shed his clothes and hang them from a tree before swimming across the lake and transforming into a wolf. If he abstained from harming a human in the nine years that followed, he could swim back across the lake, retrieve his clothes and transform back into his human self, with the nine years added to his appearance.

Rumours circulated that the cult also practised human sacrifice (which has not yet been confirmed, although archaeological excavations of the site have found the remains of an adolescent boy buried next to the altar) and would mix human flesh with their ritual sacrifices. Pausanias himself refused to ask for details of the ‘secret sacrifice’, instead letting ‘them be, as they are and were from the beginning’. If a member of the cult tasted human flesh, they would take the form of the wolf. The place itself was also known for folk beliefs: in the precinct of Lykaean Zeus, for example, no one was allowed to enter, or they would not survive the year. If an animal sought refuge from a hunter within the precinct, the hunter would not pursue it, but he would be flesh, and prepared to serve it to the god. Jupiter, disgusted that human flesh was offered as food and offended by the lack of respect afforded to him, used his lightning to destroy Lycaon’s palace. When Lycaon fled, his true self infected his body and his form was changed to match. He became a wolf, and his bloodlust was turned to the cattle of the countryside.

Other authors became entangled with the werewolf myth, adding pieces to the developing traditions. In the Satyricon, a bawdy novel by Latin author Petronius (c. 27–66 CE), a young man tells a story at a dinner party. While walking through a graveyard with a soldier for company, the soldier removes his clothes, transforms into a wolf and runs off to attack the livestock. When the narrator arrives at his destination, he finds that his host had speared a wolf through the neck in an attempt to save her sheep. Afterwards, back at his lodgings, the narrator is disturbed to find the soldier attended by a doctor, with a large neck wound and a fever. The narrator claims that, even though the soldier was of good character, he could never dine with the werewolf again, knowing that his kind must be evil.

Even magic became a part of the story, with the theme of witchcraft in the Eclogues of Latin poet Virgil, published in 37 BCE. Therein, the necromancer Moeris provides herbs and poisons to the narrator for a love spell. With these poisons, says the narrator: “I have often seen Moeris turn wolf and hide in the woods, often call spirits from the depth of the grave and charm sown corn away to other fields.” This connection influences later
In the tale of Lycaon of Arcadia, the Greek king attempts to test Jupiter’s all-knowing power by feeding him human flesh.
interpretations of the werewolf by Christians, as evident in Saint Augustine’s *The City Of God*, a fifth-century text that tells of the evils of men who can change their form into beasts.

**THE MYTH BUILDS**

Beyond the ancient Greek and Roman texts, Icelandic werewolf traditions appeared in the sagas during the Viking Age (800-1050 CE), the literature that told the fantastical history of Scandinavian beliefs and religion. These texts combined the werewolf tradition with their own berserker legends: warriors would dress in the skins of predatory animals to acquire animal instincts and strength during battle. Berserkers had a fearsome reputation. Aside from their displays of superhuman strength and ferocity in battle, they were known for their fits of rage, which were uncontrollable and apparently spontaneous. The traditions became intertwined and the werewolf legends adopted some of the character traits of the berserker, which is where we find the origins of the violent frenzy of the werewolf.

It was in medieval Europe that the werewolf, adopted into local legends and geographical regions, began to spread in folklore popularity. Most of the information about the werewolf as we know it today was created during the period that stretched from the fifth to the 15th centuries, after the fall of the Roman Empire, and in the midst of the spread of Christianity. Historically, during this period the werewolf becomes a blend of myth and reality. *Bisclavret*, composed by Marie de France in the 12th century and one of four major werewolf tales to be constructed in the medieval period, tells the story of a werewolf who is an innocent victim of a treacherous woman. Bisclavret, a French baron beloved by the king, reveals to his wife that he is a werewolf, and when he transforms he must retrieve his clothes to change back into his human form. His wife, frightened by this revelation, convinces a knight to steal her husband’s clothes, stranding him in his wolf form. When the baron, who joins with his king as a ‘tame wolf’, attacks the knight and his former wife, the king discovers the truth and forces the couple to return the clothes so that Bisclavret’s human form may be restored. The story proved to be very popular: for example, the anonymous Melion from the 12th century echoes the storyline, with a small difference: the wife uses a magic ring to transform her husband into a wolf. The idea that a werewolf transformation can be achieved by magic is carried into the extensive 13th-century traditions of the Norse, and in turn is integrated into the witchcraft trials of the 16th century.

**“ASIDE FROM THE DISPLAYS OF SUPERHUMAN STRENGTH AND FEROICITY DURING BATTLE, THEY WERE KNOWN FOR THEIR FITS OF RAGE, WHICH WERE UNCONTROLLABLE AND APPARENTLY SPONTANEOUS”**

**THE WEREWOLF IN DEMONOLOGY**

There was a significant number of people accused of ‘werewolfry’ in Europe during the Early Modern age, with a large concentration in France
and Germany. In fact, it’s the opinion of some that as many as 30,000 men and women were accused during this age (although that number has never been confirmed and seems based more on belief than in fact). The most recent and comprehensive list of confirmed cases contains only 280 names, compiled by writer and scholar Elmar Lorey.

Nevertheless, there were a significant number of werewolf trials, the accounts of which have survived. One of the most famous cases of a werewolf within the legal system is Peter Stubbe, a young man convicted of the murder and mutilation of an undetermined number of people in a small town in Germany in 1589. Stubbe’s trial was highly publicised and reinforced the tenet that lycanthropy could be criminally prosecuted. It’s far from the only criminal case to have a lasting impact on cultural memory: the case of feral child Jean Grenier, discovered in 1603, had claimed that he was given a wolfskin by the Devil and used it to transform into a wolf and attack young girls, killing and eating them.

After this legal case had concluded with Grenier’s imprisonment (as there was no evidence to suggest that he had actually killed anyone), and his death seven years later, the changes of

**Lost Lore**

Every culture adds their own new piece to the werewolf legend

** Werewolf Festival (First century CE) **

Marcellus Sidetes, a physician born around the end of the 1st century CE in Asia Minor, wrote a medical poem that spanned 42 books. Nearly the entire corpus was lost, with only two fragments surviving. One fragment, preserved by Aetius of Amida, is called De Lycanthropia and describes a werewolf festival in which men lose their minds to the ‘wolf-madness’.

** God’s Police Force (1691) **

In 1691 Latvian peasant Old Thiess, an 86-year-old man, was accused of being a werewolf. He pled guilty to the charges immediately but claimed that he and his fellow werewolves were in fact agents of God who fought the Devil and his sorcerers called the ‘Hounds of God’.

** Werewolf Births (1865) **

In The Book Of Werewolves, Reverend Sabine Baring-Gould recounts an uncommon method of creating werewolves that originated in Denmark: “If a female at midnight stretches between four sticks the membrane which envelopes the foal when it is brought forth, and creeps through it, naked, she will bear children without pain; but all the boys will be werewolves.”

** White Wolf Dream (1910) **

In 1910, Sigmund Freud, the famous psychoanalyst, treated a young patient known as Wolf Man. A member of a wealthy Russian family, Wolf Man had delusions that he could transform into a wolf and would run through the woods during the night. Freud traced his patient’s obsession with wolves to a dream he had as a young boy about seven white wolves in the tree that stood outside his bedroom.

** Nazi Werewolves (1939-45) **

During World War II, a small group of ‘underground’ Nazi ground troops were known as werewolves. The extensive German folklore behind the creature, and common folk belief in ‘Germanic legends of man-eating wolves’, helped to spread fear among the Allies of the werewolf soldiers.
“To consider the werewolf so powerful that he might independently change his form is in direct contradiction to the belief that only God could hold such power”

Werewolfery saw a sharp decline, and the belief in transformation was replaced by the diagnosis of ‘melancholy’, a disease of the mind. This was, in large part, an attempt by Christian and Catholic authors to integrate belief in werewolf transformation with the omnipotence and power of God, for to consider the werewolf so powerful that he might independently change his form is in direct contradiction to the belief that only God could hold such power. There are many texts from this period that decried the werewolf transformation - authors as early as Saint Augustine of Hippo (354-430 CE), through to Dutch physician Johann Weyer (1515-1588) and English author Reginald Scot (1538-1599) all insisted that God could not be responsible for such a monstrous beast. Even King James VI of Scotland, in his text Daemonologie (1597), considered the werewolf to be a man suffering from delusions of transformation, which was the cause of their ‘wolfish’ behaviour. It is, however, important to remember that while the upper echelons of educated society might have lost their folkloric edge, the cultural belief in werewolves remained and was integrated into the realm of folklore and fairy tale.

FOLKLORE AND FAIRY TALES

Nineteenth-century writers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm collected the folk and fairy tales of the people, publishing them in volumes for the world to read. One of their stories recorded a popular German folktale in which three men go into the forest to cut wood. The first man was the storyteller’s grandfather, the second man his friend, but the third man was an unknown entity and, according to the narrator, there was something sinister about him. This nefarious thing is revealed during the story when the third man (believing the other two were asleep) put on a magical belt, turned into a werewolf (like a normal wolf, only slightly different), ran off to devour a foal in the neighbouring field and returned to his human form by removing the belt. In the late 1860s this was considered to be one of the most common werewolf tales in Germany.

Due to the widespread movement from folk belief to science and reason during the 18th century, also known as the Enlightenment, the werewolf-tradition fairy tales soon morphed into the literary werewolf of the 19th century. The
WEREWOLF SYNDROME EXPLAINED

A quick guide to hypertrichosis

Colloquially known as werewolf syndrome, hypertrichosis is a rare skin condition that results in an unusual amount of hair growth over the body. The condition is associated with a hereditary mutation that can be present at birth, but can also be acquired as a reaction to drugs, cancer or eating disorders. In the later form the condition can be reduced through treatment, but there’s no cure for the congenital form of hypertrichosis.

The first recorded case of the condition was that of Petrus Gonsalvus of Tenerife, documented by Ulisse Aldrovandi, who arrived at the court of Henry II of France in 1547. Both Gonsalvus, his children and grandchildren had the condition. It’s possible that his story inspired Beauty And The Beast. People with the condition would often be hired as part of freak show acts in the 19th century. Today fewer than 50 cases are documented worldwide.

The modern werewolf, from horror films and young adult fiction alike, finds its origins in these gothic tales. One of the most famous gothic werewolf stories is George WM Reynolds’s Wagner The Wehr-wolf, published in 1847, which tells the story of a Fernand Wagner, who makes a pact with the Devil for the gift of transformation. A novel that influenced the werewolf tradition, although it does not reference a werewolf specifically, is Robert Louis Stevenson’s The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde (1886). The dual nature of man, and the depiction of the ‘curse’ as both physical (transformation) and mental (madness) heavily influenced later appearances of the werewolf in fiction. The first female-authored werewolf tale, The Were-wolf (1896), was written by Clemence Housman and is widely considered to be a classic within the Gothic genre. It was during this time that the werewolf stereotype was beginning to solidify, to be explored and expanded during the 20th century.

THE MODERN WEREWOLF

The early 1900s saw the werewolf explode within popular culture, and the century introduced classic texts such as Guy Endore’s The Werewolf Of Paris (1933), Jack Williamson’s Darker Than You Think (1948), and Greye La Spina’s Invaders From The Dark (1960). The tradition pushed further into cultural memory with the first mainstream film to portray a werewolf transformation, Werewolf Of London, released in 1935. It inspired the later film, An American Werewolf In London (1981), which was revolutionary for its use of special effects and reenergised the werewolf in popular culture. The transformation scene, in which the main character is changed into a werewolf, is still considered to be some of the best effects of its time.

When computer generated images (CGI) became the latest technological marvel of cinema, the werewolf gained traction once again through films such as the Harry Potter series (2001 - 2011), the Underworld franchise (2003 – 2016), Van Helsing (2004), and (many) more that began to explore the werewolf archetype and add to the tradition. Drawing on material from the considerable examples before them, werewolves could now be killed by silver bullets, their transformations were at the behest of the lunar cycle, and they were violent and murderous. But they also showed depth and individualism in ways that reflected the diversity of the traditions.

The history of the werewolf is sometimes confused and unclear, but the running theme connecting the werewolf throughout its historical appearances is the concrete belief that the werewolf, in both human and wolf form, is inherently evil.
In the first hours of the morning on 26 April 1986, a safety test at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Station went array and triggered a massive explosion. The blast lifted the cover off of one of the power station’s nuclear reactors, Reactor 4, followed by another huge explosion that left the reactor’s core exposed and spewing radioactive material. Debris from the successive blasts rained down on the plant, as a fire spread from Reactor 4 to nearby buildings. The fire raged for days, as firefighters tried to contain the blaze. Pilots ran thousands of flights overhead, dropping sandbags onto the burning reactor in the hopes of putting out the fire.

Two days later, on the morning of 28 April, scientists at a Swedish nuclear power plant hundreds of miles away from Chernobyl and the plant town of Pripyat, in the Ukrainian SSR picked up unusual high readings of radioactivity. Swedish officials, after some investigating, concluded that the radioactive materials had originated in the Soviet Union. In subsequent days, similar reports of unusually high levels of radioactivity came from across the globe.

But Soviet officials acknowledged nothing in the first hours and days, at one point going so far as to deny outright that an accident had occurred. In part, the minimal information coming from Soviet sources reflected the fact that they, too, were trying to figure out what exactly had taken place at Chernobyl. Finally, on 28 April, the Soviet government issued a brief statement acknowledging that an accident had occurred at the Chernobyl power plant. It took until 14 May, over two weeks after the disaster, for the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, to make a public statement about Chernobyl.

By that point, those living around the nuclear power plant had already been evacuated. Within 24 hours of the explosion, local officials in Pripyat had received notice to prepare residents to evacuate the town. Some of the town’s residents had fled already on that first day.
Horrible histories

Chernobyl’s impacts were vast and wide-ranging, though the sheer degree of devastation continues to be hotly contested decades later.

The catastrophe did immediate damage as it contaminated portions of the western Soviet Union, concentrated in what became Russia, Ukraine and Belarus after the Soviet Union’s collapse in December of 1991. Estimates from the United Nations put the number of individuals affected by the nuclear accident at the Chernobyl power station at some 8.4 million across Russia, Ukraine and Belarus alone. Some 600,000 people were involved in – and impacted – by efforts to clean up the nuclear power plant.

Around Chernobyl, trees in the nearby forest turned a sickly reddish-brown as a result of high radiation, in what became known as the ‘Red Forest’. The crew that cleaned up the accident ended up exposed to high degrees of radiation; 28 of the plant’s workers died within months of the explosion, while another 106 suffered from acute radiation sickness thanks to high radiation exposure during the clean-up process.

Food supplies, too, were contaminated as radioactive isotopes fell on crops, farms and grazing areas for livestock. A slew of new regulations and orders tried to grapple with the enormity of the problem. Soviet officials introduced new mechanisms to monitor contamination, distributing new advice to farmers across the contaminated areas. Often, these attempted solutions merely hid the problem. One group of KGB officers, for instance, found four train cars of radioactive meat in 1990. For the past four years, the contaminated meat had criss-crossed railroads, trying in vain to find any takers willing to accept it.

The devastating effects of the accident were hardly contained in and around Chernobyl or kept within the confines of the exclusion zone set up by Soviet authorities. Radioactive particles travelled far and wide, carried by weather systems and wind patterns. After all, it was precisely these weather patterns that made it possible for Swedish scientists to figure out – and inform those around the globe – that a nuclear accident had taken place in the Soviet Union.

In the days after the explosion, Soviet officials tracked the radioactive clouds emanating out of the explosion. A large accumulation, over Belarus, was headed toward Moscow where meteorologists anticipated a sizeable spring storm in the days to come. Rather than see it rain radioactive droplets over Moscow, Soviet pilots chased the clouds and peppered them with silver iodide to make it rain. Seeding the clouds brought down a heavy, radioactive rain across swathes of Belarus in order to spare the Soviet capital from those same rains.

Spikes in radioactivity could be found, too, in the United Kingdom. Scientists tested sheep, only to discover that the animals possessed radioactive isotope levels far too high for human consumption. Again, it was the rain as storms in early May of 1986 contaminated farmland, as pools seeped into the water table. Farmers in Wales faced restrictions on their livestock; their sheep were classified as radioactive, monitored and restricted for years after the 1986 disaster.

Across the globe, the catastrophic accident at Chernobyl inflamed anti-nuclear sentiments. Individual citizens and national governments demanded that Moscow take steps to prevent another such accident. Some 40,000 demonstrators showed up to protest a nuclear power plant in Brokdorf, a small town in the northern part of the Federal Republic of Germany.

The West German foreign minister, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, demanded nothing short of the closure of all Soviet nuclear reactors.

The disaster at Chernobyl horrified Mikhail Gorbachev, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. For Gorbachev, the damage done by Chernobyl drove home the dangers of the atomic age and of nuclear annihilation. Countless of Gorbachev’s advisers later recalled that the horrific accident encouraged the General Secretary to seek dramatic nuclear reductions in negotiation with his American counterpart, Ronald Reagan.

Chernobyl also spurred on Gorbachev in pursuing a policy of glasnost – or openness – in Soviet society. In the years that followed, that same policy of openness made it possible for citizens in the affected areas of the Soviet Union to express their frustration with how the government had handled (or mishandled) Chernobyl.

By 1989, there were mass demonstrations taking place in Ukraine and Belarus, as residents of the two republics tried to lift the veil of secrecy about the degree of damage caused by the accident. Demonstrators decried a Soviet cover-up of the dangers, as concerned citizens produced documents that showed that Soviet officials had pushed on with a May Day parade in Kyiv, just days after the accident, despite knowing that radiation levels were extremely high. Chernobyl ultimately became a rallying cry in the Ukrainian push for independence.

Timeline of Disaster

The lead up and aftermath of the terrible Chernobyl reactor accident

01:00 Preparations for a safety check on reactor no. 4 begin with power being reduced
14:00 Emergency core cooling on reactor no. 4 is also disabled so it won’t interfere with the test
23:10 Permission for the test to continue is given even though the less experienced nightshift takes over
00:28 Power drops below stable limits. Operators break safety guidelines by removing the control rods in hopes of raising the power output
01:00 Test is given permission to proceed once power stabilises. Emergency shutdown and safety features are deactivated
01:23:04 A power surge occurs as the test begins on reactor no. 4
Numerous international organisations have been involved in addressing the ongoing effects of the Chernobyl disaster, much of it focused on the safety of the site itself.

Despite the devastating accident in April of 1986, the other three reactors at the Chernobyl plant remained in operation. At the beginning of 1990, the Ukrainian parliament voted in favour of closing the plant by 1995. These timetables were sped up in the fall of 1991, after a fire broke out at unit 2 and destroyed part of the roof of the turbine hall. Unit 2 would be closed effective immediately, with the remaining two slated to be closed in 1993. But, before that could be done, parliament reversed its 1990 decision in the autumn of 1993. The reactors would remain in use.

European governments tried to make the closure of the plant a crucial issue in the early 1990s, linked to broader development assistance for Ukraine. These attempts failed: the plant remained in operation until December of 2000.

Starting in 1990, the United Nations took on a more active role in addressing the consequences of the disaster, a role made possible by the Soviet government's growing acceptance that international assistance was needed. The General Assembly called for international cooperation to deal with the ramifications of Chernobyl.

A vast array of initiatives received support from the United Nations, dealing with all aspects of the issue. Since 1986, according to the UN's estimates, various UN bodies and major non-governmental organisations have started some 230 research and assistance programs to address issues arising out of the Chernobyl accident.

The most visible sign of international cooperation to deal with the aftermath of Chernobyl, however, is the vast engineering project to contain the radioactive remains of the nuclear reactor. In 1986, in the months following the accident, the Soviet Union constructed a shelter to seal off Reactor 4. But this initial structure, known as the sarcophagus, began to crumble, threatening the release of new radioactive contaminants.

An international effort supported the construction of a new structure to surround Reactor 4, a project known as the New Safe Confinement. A massive metal half-cylinder, measuring 109 metres high and 257 metres in length, the New Safe Confinement covers both the old, crumbling sarcophagus and the damaged reactor. It was installed in late 2016, some 30 years after the initial accident. And the project's cost is immense: the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, responsible for coordinating the funds, estimates the total cost at some €1.5 billion.

When one thinks of the so-called 'ghosts' of Chernobyl, the most immediate connection is to the exclusion zone ringing the nuclear power plant. Chernobyl, as the site is often summed up, is a ghost town. Tourists and journalists flock there to see an abandoned site, the latest batch inspired by HBO’s hit television series, Chernobyl.

Seemingly frozen in time, the buildings of Pripyat show signs of life from a state that no longer exists, that of the Soviet Union. It is hardly surprising, then, that it is tempting to see Chernobyl as something of the past, maybe even as a relic unique to the Soviet era.

Historians, scientists and activists, however, all remind us that the high-profile accident continues to be a pressing issue, decades after the initial accident. News reports detail the ongoing impact of high radioactivity levels on agriculture across Europe, not just in the three countries most affected by the disaster. Others continue to debate how disease rates are linked to Chernobyl. Ongoing international cooperation, like the immense project to build and install a new structure to confine the radioactive rubble remaining, is a stark reminder that the ghosts of Chernobyl remain. We're still living with the fallout.
THE DARK SIDE OF THE RENAISSANCE

Written by Jessica Leggett
The Dark Side Of The Renaissance

Exploring the violence, tragedy and terror of one of the most celebrated periods in European history with Professor Catherine Fletcher

"The problem is if we don’t think about the hardships and the atrocities, then we get this very one-sided story of the glories of Western civilization and ‘wasn’t European culture great?’ without seeing any of the negatives to that," argues Catherine Fletcher, the author of The Beauty And The Terror: An Alternative History Of The Italian Renaissance.

Whether you’re an art lover or not, there’s a high chance that you will be able to name at least one of the most famous works to have come out of the Italian Renaissance: for example, two of Leonardo da Vinci’s iconic paintings, the Last Supper and the Mona Lisa, or Michelangelo’s David, his famous sculptural masterpiece. Yet did you know that Da Vinci pitched his abilities as a military engineer and his various inventions to his patron, Ludovico Sforza, Duke of Milan, before mentioning his ability as an artist? Or that Michelangelo was hired as a military architect by the government of Florence to build fortifications for the city from 1528 to 1529?

For centuries, the world has marvelled at the artistic and scientific achievements that emerged in the Renaissance, essentially putting the period on a pedestal as one of the greatest eras of mankind. However, in celebrating the Renaissance, we often forget about the tragedy and catastrophe that frequently played a vital role in its development, looking at it in isolation rather than in the context of the time. “When you’re walking around an art gallery, you’re looking at the artworks and you’re appreciating them for their value and for the artistic sense, and you get this sense of development through art,” explains Fletcher. “But what you don’t necessarily get, beyond sometimes a limited extent in exhibitions, is that big social context of what was the world like that these people were living in when they were painting these works."

An example of a tragic event that influenced the Renaissance is the Fall of Constantinople in 1453, a moment that not only marked the end of the Byzantine Empire but also saw thousands of citizens murdered, deported and enslaved by the Ottomans. Consequently, many Greek scholars fled to Western Europe, settling in Italy. “Although the study of ancient Greek is already a matter of some interest in Renaissance Italy, this group of refugees gives a new boost to that intellectual culture,” says Fletcher. These scholars brought their books, manuscripts and knowledge of their civilisation – particularly of the Greek language – with them to Italy, which had an enormous impact on the development of Renaissance thinking, all as a result of their home being conquered.

"IN CELEBRATING THE RENAISSANCE, WE OFTEN FORGET ABOUT THE TRAGEDY AND CATASTROPHE THAT FREQUENTLY PLAYED A VITAL ROLE IN ITS DEVELOPMENT"
Italy, divided into several independent states, was also locked in persistent war and conflict for decades due to the drawn-out and bloody Italian Wars, a series of conflicts that saw European countries, mainly France, Spain and the Italian states themselves, fight for control over Italy and thereby gain supremacy of the continent. It was thanks to their careers in these wars that many military commanders had the funds to commission pieces of Renaissance art. “A lot of these small centres of northern Italy, which have these brilliant cultural courts, in places like Mantua, Ferrara and Urbino, the dukes and the princes of those little states are all basically renting themselves and their companies out for hire as mercenaries to the larger Italian states,” explains Fletcher. “That’s where they get a big chunk of the money to pay for these art commissions and palaces... I think that things would not have developed in quite the same way had there not been the Italian Wars.”

One of these military commanders was Alfonso I d’Este, Duke of Ferrara, the husband of Lucrezia Borgia and whom Fletcher describes as “a massive military innovator”. The duchy took part in the League of Cambrai, an alliance that primarily consisted of France and the Papal States, which spearheaded the League, against Venice. He secured victory in the Battle of Polesella against the Venetians in 1509 and remained allied with France after the Papal States switched sides, helping the French to defeat the Papal States and the Spanish at the Battle of Ravenna in 1512. He was a noted cultural patron, hiring Giovanni Bellini to paint The Feast Of The Gods, and commissioning two portraits of himself from Titian, as well as multiple artworks including The Worship Of Venus.

“I THINK THAT THINGS WOULD NOT HAVE DEVELOPED IN QUITE THE SAME WAY HAD THERE NOT BEEN THE ITALIAN WARS”

Throughout the Italian Wars and right in the midst of the Renaissance, various Italian cities were subject to violent sackings as armies slaughtered thousands of people while mercilessly raping citizens and pillaging along the way. The scale of violence used in the Sack of Rome, 1527, sent shockwaves through the rest of Italy and Europe. The troops of Emperor Charles V, whose dominions included Spain and the Holy Roman Empire, that were stationed in Italy were angry that they hadn’t been paid and so they mutinied, plundering Rome and leaving devastation in their wake. They even imprisoned Pope Clement VII! It’s said that the Sack of Rome signalled the end of the High Renaissance, the period that’s considered to be the peak of Renaissance art, although this is still a matter of debate. Regardless, the fallout from this brutal episode severely affected the cultural activity in Rome as many artists and intellectuals were killed or forced to flee the city, and numerous humanist libraries were destroyed.

With Spain’s involvement in the Italian Wars and the subsequent impact on the Renaissance, it’s important to consider the role that empire and colonisation played. As Fletcher explains, “Spanish conquests in the Americas very quickly produces a lot of money that finances Spanish conquests in Italy.” Not only did the Spanish colonization of the Americas fund their involvement in the Italian Wars in the 16th century, but it also contributed to the development of the Western trade and the Atlantic slave trade, a devastating and destructive practice that generated wealth for traders. When it comes to the Renaissance, Fletcher says, “Unless you are really conscious about putting the pieces together then the global connections don’t necessarily stand out.”

Economic change was not only driven by colonization and trade, but also by the numerous health pandemics that swept across Europe, in particular the Black Death, which is estimated to have killed around a third of the continent’s population in the 14th century. “In the aftermath of that, of course, there is a huge financial shake-up, with wages rising because you’ve got a labour shortage and there is a whole set of knock-on effects from that into the early stages of the Italian Renaissance,” explains Fletcher. With the economy on the rise in the aftermath of the pandemic, social mobility became easier and the wealth of Italian merchants grew, giving them the money to spend on cultural goods such as art and architecture.

One of the most famous merchant families of the Renaissance – indeed one of the most famous merchant families in history - was the Medici, who started out as wool traders before moving into banking in the 15th century. With the Medici Bank becoming the largest bank in Europe, this incredibly wealthy family propelled themselves to political power in Florence, building a dynasty that would have a lasting impact on the culture of the Renaissance. For example, it was thanks to the patronage of Lorenzo de’ Medici that some of the most celebrated Renaissance artists, such as Botticelli, Da Vinci and Michelangelo, could focus exclusively on their artwork without the need for a second job to supplement their income.
Believe it or not, artistic commissions made by bankers such as the Medici were also partly influenced by their religious beliefs at the time. “For Christians in this period lending money at interest is regarded as a sin, it’s inappropriate,” explains Fletcher. “Obviously, you can make a lot of money by being a banker and so what Christian bankers tend to do to atone for this bad behaviour is that they do good work. They commission religious artworks in churches, they patronise churches, they build family chapels and of course incidentally, or perhaps not so incidentally, this helps to perhaps burnish the reputation of their family because the chapel gets the family name attached.”

Aside from mercantile wealth, the economic change that came in the wake of the Black Death also contributed to the growth in Renaissance humanist thinking, at a time when the Protestant Reformation was also taking hold in Europe. “Martin Luther, who is generally regarded as the person who kicked off the original Protestant Reformation in 1517, is not terribly influenced by the kind of humanist thinking, not humanist in the modern sense, that characterised Renaissance intellectual circles,” says Fletcher. “But some Protestants certainly are influenced by that method, and one of the important contributions of these new academic techniques of textual criticism is that when they get applied to scripture and church documents, they start challenging, to some extent, the authority of the church.”

Thanks to this new method of textual criticism, humanist thinkers were able to expose deceit right at the core of the Catholic Church, against a backdrop of increasing religious tension. It was proved that the Donation Of Constantine, a document that was supposedly a 4th century decree from the Roman Emperor Constantine handing the authority over

**DA VINCI’S WAR MACHINES**

*The polymath designed numerous military inventions*

**CROSSBOW**

In 1486, Da Vinci drew several designs for a giant crossbow, which was also known at the time as a ‘ballista’. The weapon had a crank on the side to wind the gears and arm the device, which could be fired by either using a rope to tug on the release catch or by hitting it with a mallet.

**ARMoured CAR**

Perhaps one of Da Vinci’s most famous inventions, his ‘armoured car’ or tank was inspired by a turtle’s shell. It needed four men to operate it using hand cranks while others operated the cannons, which were located around the perimeter of the tank, allowing it to fire in any direction.

**ARCHITONNERRE**

Da Vinci’s architonneur was a steam-powered cannon that used charcoal to boil water in a copper container, which would generate steam to fire the weapon. A safety valve prevented too much pressure from building up, but once this valve was closed it would start the firing sequence to launch the muzzle-loaded cannonball.

**MACHINE GUN**

A man who was way ahead of his time, Da Vinci sketched the first known design for a machine gun, with the gun barrels resembling the pipes of an organ. There are 33 gun barrels, mounted in rows of 11 on a revolving triangular piece, and the idea was that once the first row of barrels had fired, the second would be ready to go, and so on.

**SCYTHED CHARIOT**

He created his design for a scythed chariot around 1483, with scythes fixed on both the front and the back of the chariot. The four revolving scythes at the front were intended to strike down infantry, while the scythes in the back were supposed to protect the rider from any attacks from behind.
WAS THE HUSBAND OF MONA LISA A SLAVE TRADER?

The dark truth behind the world’s most famous smile

Leonardo da Vinci’s Mona Lisa is one of the art world’s most iconic masterpieces and the sitter with the enigmatic smile. Lisa del Giocondo, an Italian noblewoman who was born into the influential Gherardini family. At the age of 15, she married Francesco del Giocondo, a Florentine businessman who – according to recent findings – was involved in slave trading.

Fletcher explains: “You have big Italian interests in trade with West Africa, often via Portugal, and one of the people who is involved in that, who I was fascinated to turn up in the course of researching this book, is the husband of Mona Lisa. He was himself involved in importing enslaved people from Portugal, probably originally some of them from North or West Africa.”

It is said that Del Giocondo regularly bought female slaves and had them baptised, but it’s also believed that he purchased too many of them to simply keep them on to serve in his household. And so it’s assumed that he must have sold some of them off as a result. At the moment, it seems that the question of whether Del Giocondo was a slave trader can’t be confirmed beyond doubt, but the evidence so far certainly raises some suspicions.

A perfect example of this is the Galileo Affair, which lasted on and off from 1610 to 1633. Galileo Galilei was a physicist and astronomer who openly supported heliocentrism, the
astronomical model that states that it is the Sun – and not the Earth – that is at the centre of the solar system, following his discovery of four of Jupiter’s moons and the phases of Venus. Heliocentrism went against the beliefs of the Catholic Church, who deemed it to be heretical and against scripture, and Galileo was interrogated and subsequently convicted of heresy in 1633, spending the rest of his life under house arrest. Today, we know that Galileo was right all along and his name has finally been cleared, but his prosecution, imprisonment and loss of reputation will always be a dark moment of the Renaissance.

Even intellectual advancements of the Renaissance that don’t necessarily seem problematic, in subjects such as maths, can become so when considering the context. “The developments in maths are important if you’re trying to investigate artillery trajectories, so a lot of the intellectual achievements have practical applications that are perhaps darker and more sinister than we might necessarily assume if we’re just looking at the intellectual activity in the abstract,” explains Fletcher.

It’s clear that the great artistic, scientific and intellectual developments of the Renaissance occurred alongside troubling and problematic trends and events happening in the world during this period and indeed was impacted and financed by them. Having said all this, does this mean that historians of the Renaissance have been ignoring this dark side? “I’m not sure that it’s necessarily that the events are ignored, but they tend to get kind of put into silos,” says Fletcher. “You’ve got an art history and a history of religious change, which takes in the long process of Catholic reform and then the rise of Protestantism and the Catholic response to that, so that gets done almost on its own. Then you get a history of empire and a global history of what’s going on around the world at this time, then you get a history of war and warfare. Historians, particularly professional academic historians, like to often write thematically and they will pick one of these things and study the trends, but of course, if you’re living there at the time all of them are happening at once.”

With violence, warfare, pandemics, immorality, colonialism and the slave trade all running rife and having a massive impact during this period, it is important to bear in mind the tragedies and the atrocities that make up the dark side of the Renaissance. Nonetheless, Fletcher reminds us: “That’s not to say that we can’t or shouldn’t enjoy looking at Renaissance art because I think it’s fabulous... but I think it’s important for people to understand that if you only think about the wonderful beauties of it, then you’re only getting half a history.”

**“HUMANIST THINKERS WERE ABLE TO EXPOSE DECEIT RIGHT AT THE CORE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH”**
INSPIRATIONAL WOMEN

Powerful stories from history that are too often ignored

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In conversation with two women who helped the Apollo space program reach the moon and more

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The incredible and inspiring fight for equality and representation that was Tubman’s life
WOMEN OF APOLLO

We speak to Poppy Northcutt and JoAnn Morgan about their time working on the NASA Moon missions

Written by Jessica Leggett
How did you get involved with the Apollo program and what was your role?
I majored in mathematics at college and after I graduated, I got a job with a space contractor called TRW. I was hired as a computress and after a few months, I was assigned to a project that involved developing a family of computer programmes that calculated the trajectories that would be used in the Apollo program. I started working on the return to Earth programme, developing the manoeuvres to come back from the Moon, in 1966 and when the schedule for the Apollo 8 mission was accelerated I was asked, along with some of my team members, to go over to the control centre and work during the mission.

What was it like to be the only woman working in a male-dominated environment like that?
I pretty much experienced the same as what every woman who worked in an isolated environment did. You always felt like you stood out because you were different and that you would be noticed more if you didn’t perform well, so you always felt pressure to perform better than average. I was fortunate, the company that I worked for was very progressive for the time and I didn’t experience overt discrimination.

Was it frustrating to receive attention from the press because of your appearance and the fact that you were a young woman?
I increasingly found that frustrating because it had a cumulative effect. At the same time, I knew it was really important to continue to speak to the press, even if they were going to be dismissive and talk about how I was wearing my hair or whatever, because I thought it was very important that women and men out there began to recognise that some women were doing these jobs.

The calculations made by you and your team were put to the test with Apollo 8, the first crewed mission to reach the Moon’s orbit. How did it feel waiting for Apollo 8 to regain communication after it passed behind the Moon?
Well, that was very nerve-wracking because when you lose communication with them, you don’t know whether the engine had fired or not, whether the burn that they did was too long or too short. Apollo 8 was the first time that we had ever lost communication with a spacecraft in flight for long.

Did it hit you in that moment that you were making history?
It didn’t hit me at that moment because you’re so involved in what you’re doing and making sure that everything is working, you can’t be thinking about those extraneous things. Fortunately, the reason they were late was not because there was a problem with the manoeuvre, but because there are mass concentrations on the Moon that had not been previously mapped. So, every orbit they went around the Moon and collected data to build the profile of the mass concentrations, so in future missions they would come out pretty much dead on time.

Where were you when Apollo 11 successfully landed on the Moon?
I was at home resting! I was a return to Earth specialist and you’re not going to bring them back from the Moon to the Earth whenever you got two astronauts on the surface of the Moon. In the end, I probably did worse than everybody else because at the time, I had like an 11 inch a little portable black and white TV!

**What can you remember from the moment of the landing?**

Well, the images at the time were pretty terrible, I don’t really remember very much about what I saw, I was mainly listening to the audio. It was sitting there holding your breath, wondering if they were going to land or not because they were having a little bit of fuel problems going down. President Kennedy said we were to land on the Moon and return back to Earth – I never disconnected those. I only considered it a success if we did both of those things, it wouldn’t be a success if they landed and they didn’t get home.

**You also helped to bring the astronauts of Apollo 13 safely home after one of their oxygen tanks exploded. What was the atmosphere like during that time?**

It was a very tense time at the control centre for everyone because we had a mission that was definitely endangered. I think the biggest concern was that no one knew how serious the damage to the spacecraft was. When you’ve had a major loss like that, you don’t know what else might have been affected and that suspense was certainly a concern to everybody. But again, when you work on a mission, part of what you learn to do is you learn to focus and compartmentalise, you’ve got to do your job and do your job correctly. In terms of the return to Earth, our program worked great, it did everything it was supposed to do.

**It must have been a great feeling to know your program worked successfully?**

It was a great feeling to know that we knew how to deal with that problem. I think Apollo 13 was the most successful lunar mission because it showed even though we didn’t accomplish all of the mission goals, we accomplished the main goal, which was to get them home safely.

**Do you have any advice for young girls and women thinking of going into the STEM fields today?**

I still talk to girls that tell me a lot, ‘I’m not good at math! I hope they take part of what President Kennedy said to heart, because I think it’s truly the overriding lesson from Apollo, which is to do it because it’s hard, not because it’s easy.
What was your role during the Apollo 11 mission and what did it entail?
My job as instrumentation controller in the Launch Control Center firing room was associated with the ground systems that supported the launch phase of Apollo 11, understanding and following the health and welfare of all the instrumentation systems.

Did you know beforehand you would be the only woman in the firing room?
In later years I learnt that my director, Karl Sendler, had decided that he wanted me there and he said to me, “You’re my best communicator and I want you on the console.” I listened to 21 channels and I had to discern who was working what, if the systems were going well, if there were problems and when they were going to be resolved. It meant a lot to me because moving into the senior engineering ranks was an acceptance thing. I felt accepted as part of a really large team that was doing a very important and historic job.

It must have been extremely validating for you to get that recognition?
It truly made my career. The fact that I was there and seen by all of the managers, the contractors, the other NASA centres and Washington, that picture of me was in Life magazine and the New York Times, although it never said my name. The public affairs officer said, “Oh, can you do an interview?” but I didn’t do any interviews throughout the whole Apollo programme because they didn’t ask the man next to me or the man four seats down. If they didn’t ask them, then they were only asking me because I was a woman and I just wanted to be part of the team, I didn’t want to be singled out.

Poppy Northcutt expressed her frustrations being singled out by the press. How was your experience of that?
So - unlike Poppy, I remember when she did those interviews – I turned them down. The only ones that I ever did all throughout the 1960s and ’70s was when they were going to talk about all the women in NASA. There was one or two of those magazine articles from France and Russia that showcased women and it was kind of strange to me how the foreign print media were more interested in giving a holistic story about women scattered throughout NASA, whereas I didn’t experience that with any of the US magazines.

Is it surprising that it was not of more interest on home soil?
I think it was just the times that we were in. When they selected a class of women astronauts, the attention turned towards them and they became the centrepiece of women’s achievements in space exploration, that was such a big thing and so important that they be given the opportunity to be astronauts. It was okay for me because by that time, I was moving into being a division chief and into management, going to graduate school and getting my master’s degree and I really didn’t want the attention on me. I just wanted to work and do what I was interested in.

What was it like to be the only woman working in that male-dominated space?
The men in the room were very respectful and easy to work with because we were on television
and so people could watch me. In earlier missions, I received obscene phone calls and I never knew where they came from. After the third time, I did report it to a man who saw the look on my face and saw me slam the phone down, and I concluded that he must have taken action because those calls stopped. I just tried to stay focused on getting my job done and that was what really buoyed me.

**What was the atmosphere like in the firing room during the launch?**

Things are fairly quiet in the firing room, the noise dampens down and you're listening. There is nobody pushing a button to go, it was an automatic, final countdown. In Florida, we did not have that same ‘go’ system as mission control, so our whole strategy was that you only said something if you needed to cut off the launch. There were a thousand people listening who could make that request, but we all wanted to go and if there's no reason, you're not going to call for a cut off.

**Where were you when Apollo 11 successfully landed on the Moon?**

The firing room in Florida is not needed at landing and so most of the launch team were getting a little bit of a break and I was actually on vacation. Like everybody else on planet Earth I watched the landing on TV. My husband said, “Jo, you’re going to be in the history books someday,” and that’s the first time I really thought about it from the perspective of history. I knew from a scientific standpoint, because my personal hook in desiring to work in the space program was the new knowledge, and so the idea that it was going to be so historic really hadn't struck me until the landing and then boy, it just walloped me!

**Did you see yourself as a trailblazer at that time?**

In the 1960s, I did not see myself as a trailblazer; I was so intensely passionate and focused on my desire to be part of that space exploration and the fact that I was a young woman doing it really was not relevant in my mind, not until the 1970s. When I got my master’s degree at Stanford University, it was really my professors there who opened my eyes to the trailblazer aspect.

**Do you have any advice for young girls and women in STEM?**

Well, I certainly want to encourage all girls and women to learn to be fearless about math and science. I’m lucky I was fearless because I had a father who gave me a chemistry set and encouraged me, even though I cracked the concrete on our patio with it he never fussed, he just wanted to know how I did it! In some of the sciences, we’re doing better but worldwide, we need women to care about science and engineering because the future of people on this planet is important. We're over half the population and if we don't care, we're not going to get it right.
JOAN of ARC

How did a teenager turn the tide of war and make herself an icon?

Written by Pamela D Toler

Joan of Arc had three counts against her: she was young, she was a peasant, and she was a woman. How did she convince anyone that God had sent her to save France? In 1429, France was ready for a champion, or perhaps a miracle. Since France’s unexpected defeat by England at the battle of Agincourt 14 years before, the Valois dynasty’s claim to the French throne, and indeed the dynasty’s control of France itself, had been badly compromised. The English army and its Burgundian allies occupied much of northern France. The Dauphin Charles, who remained uncrowned although his father, King Charles VI, had died seven years previously, had taken refuge in the city of Chinon. The English army had besieged the town of Orléans, which was the gateway to southern France. If it fell, England’s armies would have easy access to Chinon and to Charles - who from the English perspective was a rebel, not the heir to the throne of France.

Then Joan of Arc appeared on the scene: a 17-year-old peasant girl who claimed three saints - Catherine, Margaret and Michael - had given her the mission of driving the English out of France and placing the Dauphin on the throne. If her claim was true, Joan might be the miracle France needed.

In order to understand why Joan was able to convince people of the truth of her mission, we need to look at her claim from the perspective of her contemporaries. Visionaries who claimed to bring messages from God were familiar figures in 15th century France. The question for her contemporaries was not whether Joan heard supernatural voices, but whether those voices came from heaven or hell.

In May 1428, Joan travelled with her uncle to Vaucouleurs, a fortified town ten miles north of her home village of Domrémy, located in northeastern France near the border between the Duchies of Lorraine and Burgundy. Her voices had told her Robert de Baudricourt, the
"The question for her contemporaries was not whether Joan heard voices, but whether those voices came from heaven or hell."
captain of the French garrison at Vaucouleurs, would help her deliver her message to the Dauphin in Chinon. Baudricourt not only refused, he told her uncle to take her home and box her ears for her impertinence.

Joan was not dissuaded. When she came back to Vaucouleurs in January 1429, she was more insistent, but de Baudricourt initially refused to help her travel through the war-torn countryside to reach Charles in Chinon. In February, inspired perhaps by the fact that the duke of Lorraine had displayed interest in her claims, de Baudricourt ordered the parish priest perform an exorcism on Joan to determine whether she was possessed by evil spirits. She passed this test of her spiritual purity to the priest’s satisfaction. Evidently de Baudricourt was also satisfied, since he agreed to provide Joan with an escort to Chinon.

The girl who arrived in Chinon on 6 March with an escort of six armed men did not look much like the peasant girl who first demanded de Baudricourt’s help. Joan arrived in Vaucouleurs in a homespun red dress. She left for Chinon dressed in doublet, tunic, hose and breeches, with her hair cropped short and a sword at her side. It was a practical choice for an 11-day ride through 350 miles of mostly hostile Burgundian territory. It was also a statement that Joan was in Chinon on a mission.

The Dauphin Charles kept her waiting for several days before he agreed to see her. When he sent word for her to present herself at court, he disguised himself in plain clothes and hid among his courtiers, reasoning that if she were truly sent by God she would be able to identify him. Once again, Joan passed the test, picking Charles out of the crowd with no difficulty.

It was a positive sign, but Charles was not prepared to accept she was a true prophet without seeking expert advice.

Joan was not the first person to hear voices or receive a special revelation of God’s will in 15th century France. In fact, the situation was common enough that there was an established process for determining whether such visitations were heavenly or demonic. Known as ‘discernment of spirits’, this process had been laid out in detail by the great theologian Jean Gerson in a work titled On The Proving Of Spirits, written in 1415.

Even within the context of other medieval prophets and visionaries, Joan’s case was an extreme one. Previous prophets claimed revelations, but called on others to act on their messages from God. Joan demanded the right to take action herself – to lead French troops
against the British and to see the Dauphin crowned - as an essential part of the message.

Joan was interrogated by two panels of clerics in examinations that were remarkably similar in form to the trial for heresy that she would face at the end of her brief career. Both followed Gerson's principles, which he summed up in a Latin verse: “Ask who, what, why; to whom, what kind, from where.” In other words, clerics should consider both the nature of the revelation and the nature of its recipient in order to determine its ultimate source.

The first examinations took place at Chinon, where the theologians at the Dauphin’s court subjected her to a good deal of both physical and spiritual testing.

The examination began with a test of Joan’s physical virtue. Joan claimed to be a pious woman, but the fact that she arrived wearing men’s clothing - a practical solution to travelling with a troop of soldiers - raised questions about her virtue and modesty. Two high-ranking ladies of the court confirmed her status as an untouched maid.

**What did Joan of Arc call herself?**

Peasant families didn’t use family names to identify themselves

We know her as Joan of Arc. At least one of her contemporaries, the great theologian and scholar Jean Gerson, named her the Maid of Orléans. She called herself Jeanne la Pucelle, Joan the Maid.

Proving that Joan was a virgin was an important part of the tests she submitted to at Chinon and Poitiers. An unsullied virgin was less apt to have been corrupted by the devil. The noblewomen of Chinon and later no less a personage than Yolande of Aragon, the queen of Sicily and the Dauphin’s mother-in-law, proclaimed her a maid. The theologians at Poitiers took that statement of purity one step further and called her the Maid.

Joan, a peasant girl with no family name operating in a world where men were known by titles like Robert de Baudricourt or Jean, the Count of Dunois, recognised a good title when she heard it and claimed it for her own.
“For three weeks, the learned clerics prayed for a sign that this young girl was an emissary of God’s will”
Once her physical purity was established, Archbishop Guélu and the other theologians at Chinon questioned her on her faith and her habits. They found her to be devout and virtuous. But even after several days of examination and prayer, they weren’t prepared to make a decision about the validity of the Maid’s claims. Too much was at stake. Charles could not afford to follow the revelations of a false prophet or reject those of a true prophet. Either choice would be a disaster for France, which already teetered on the brink of destruction at the hands of the British.

On 10 March, Charles sent Joan 40 miles south to Poitiers, the administrative centre of Armagnac France, for more extensive questioning by a panel of 18 theologians, presided over by Regnault de Chartres, Archbishop of Reims and Chancellor of France.

For three weeks, the learned gathering questioned Joan about her life, her beliefs and her revelations. They prayed for a sign that would tell them that this young girl was in fact an emissary of God’s will. Her questioners reported that they found no evil in her, only “goodness, humility, virginity, piety, integrity, and simplicity.” Her belief that it was her mission to lead the Dauphin to Reims to be crowned and drive the British from France held firm through all their examinations. And yet, like their counterparts at Chinon, they were unwilling to reach a definitive verdict.

The churchmen wanted a sign that would prove Joan’s claims were truly a message from God. Joan herself gave them a clue as to what form that sign might take. When informed that it would be difficult to lead the Dauphin to Reims because the besieged city of Orléans lay in the path between Chinon and Reims, Joan saw no difficulty; she would raise the siege.

From the point of view of the theologians in Poitiers, an attempt to raise the siege of Orléans was the perfect test of the validity of Joan’s mission. Success would vindicate her claims; failure would be an indictment of the same.

Raising the siege of Orléans, which we now think of as Joan’s first major achievement, became the ultimate test of the truth of her claims. Around 22 April, outfitted with a suit of custom armour made by the king’s master armour and a personal standard, she joined the royal army at Blois. She marched out of Blois with an army of 4,000 soldiers who had rallied to her cause, foreshowing pillage, prostitutes and profanity to ride with the Maid, and a huge convoy of provisions collected by the Dauphin’s mother-in-law for the suffering citizens of Orléans.

The army arrived at Orléans on 29 April. Joan openly entered the city with the food convoy, as if no siege were in place. She was greeted with excitement, not only because she brought much-needed supplies but because rumours regarding her mission had given them hope. On 5 May, Joan and the town’s commander, Jean, Count of Dunois, the Bastard of Orléans,
rode into battle with the French cavalry. Dunois was the official commander, but no one doubted that Joan was in charge. She carried her standard as if it were a weapon and urged her soldiers into battle. They fought for two long days, taking one British fortification after another. By the end of 6 May, the British had retreated into the Tourelles, a massive twin-towered stone structure that controlled access to the city across the Loire River. The former besiegers were themselves under siege by Joan and her army.

On 7 May, French forces assailed the Tourelles at dawn, in what would be the bloodiest battle of the Hundred Years’ War since Agincourt. Toward the end of the day, a crossbow arrow penetrated Joan’s armour between her neck and her shoulder. The French army briefly faltered when she was carried from the field, covered in blood. Joan refused to rest. Once the wound was bandaged, she put her armour back on and returned to the battle, where she urged the army forward once more. By day’s end, the Tourelles was under French control.

The fall of the Tourelles meant the siege of Orléans was effectively over, but the English still had garrisons in the small forts they had built to the west and north of the city. At dawn the next morning, sentries reported that the English were arming for battle once more. The defenders of Orléans mustered. At Joan’s orders, they drew close to the English position, but Orleans had been besieged for six months. It took Joan and her men four days to raise the siege. The learned churchmen at Poitiers had received the sign they asked for. Who could argue now that Joan’s voices were anything other than a message from God?

The siege of Orléans was over, but Joan wasted no time savouring her victory. Her mission was not yet complete. Three days later, Joan reported to the Dauphin Charles and demanded that he go to Reims to be anointed and crowned as the divinely sanctioned king of France.

Many of Charles’ advisors felt they should build on the success at Orléans and begin an offensive against the English. But Joan insisted that the Dauphin must be legitimately crowned. And Joan was the woman of the hour.

Travelling to Reims was not a simple task. The city was deep in English-held territory and the Dauphin’s purse was thin. It took almost a month to raise the money and muster the troops that Joan needed to drive out the remnants of the English army, from their garrisons at Jargeau, Meung and Beaugency.

On 11 June, Joan and a force of some 2,000 men, under the nominal command of the duke...
WHAT SOURCES DO WE HAVE FOR JOAN OF ARC’S STORY?

Unlike most women of the medieval period, Joan of Arc’s story is well documented.

Joan of Arc left her mark in many historical sources, including chronicles, fiscal accounts, official records and letters (we even have letters that she dictated to some of the movers and shakers of her world). She shows up on the records of the town clerk at La Rochelle and the letters of an Italian merchant stationed in Bruges. Christine de Pizan, the first woman we know of to earn a living as a writer, wrote a hymn of praise to her. Theologian Jean Gerson wrote two treatises on her career.

But the main source for her story is the record of her trial, conducted between 9 January and 30 May 1431. Each day the court’s chief notary and his two assistants recorded the trial in French. Every evening, they compared and corrected their work.

Notarised copies of both the original and final transcripts exist. As a result, we have the actual words of both Joan and the witnesses who spoke for and against her. Even filtered through the male clerics who recorded them and translated from Joan’s native French into the Latin that was the language of law and government at the time, her words leap from the page.
of Alençon, successfully besieged the English garrison at Jargeau. From Jargeau, the army moved against the remaining British positions. Meung fell on 15 June and Beugency on 17 June.

On 29 June, with the road cleared of immediate threats, Joan and a force now numbering 12,000 soldiers escorted the Dauphin and his court more than a hundred miles across the dangerous countryside from Chinon to Reims, where French kings had been crowned since 1207. On 17 July, after seven years of waiting, Charles VII was crowned in the cathedral at Reims, with the army at his back and Joan the Maid in a place of honour at his side.

Prior to the coronation, Joan’s mission and the newly crowned king’s goals had been similar, if not identical. But once Charles was invested with royal authority in a manner recognised as legitimate throughout France, their paths diverged. Joan remained focused on driving the English out of France through military action while Charles began to explore the possibilities of peace negotiations with the Duke of Burgundy.

For a period of time, Charles pursued the two goals in tandem. After the coronation, the French army pushed toward Paris, which had been under Anglo-Burgundian control since 1418, taking several surrounding towns as they went. At the same time, unknown to Joan, on 16 August, French envoys opened peace talks with the Burgundians.

Within two weeks, the two powers signed the Edict of Compiegne. The treaty provided for a truce through Christmas between France and Burgundy. Paris remained in English control, and stood outside the terms of the treaty. The French were free to attack the city, and the Duke of Burgundy reserved the right to defend it.

At the time Charles signed the edict, Joan and her army were seven miles away from Paris, which she intended to take from the English as the next step in her mission of retaking France. For two weeks, she waited for Charles’ permission to attack, skirmishing with English forces around the walls of the city and reconnoiter its defences.

Finally, Charles allowed her to go on the offensive. On 8 September, Joan led her troops to the Porte Saint-Honoré, the gate on the western edge of Paris. As she had before, she plunged into the ditch with her men, brandishing her banner and urging them forward.

Joan’s troops were no closer to taking the city at sunset than they had been at dawn. As darkness fell, a crossbow arrow hit Joan in the thigh. She was losing blood, but she continued to shout to her soldiers to press on. At Orleans and Jargeau, Joan had fought on when wounded. Her resilience had encouraged her men to keep fighting as well. This time, the official commander of her army, the Duke of Alençon, called a ceasefire as soldiers dragged
“JOAN HAD Fought ON WHEN WOUNDED. Her RESILIENCE HAD ENCOURAGED HER MEN To KEEP FIGHTING AS WELL”

Joan from the ditch against her will and carried her to safety. When she woke up in camp the next day, she learned Charles had given the order to retreat. The assault on Paris was over.

She had been given one day to take the most heavily fortified city west of Constantinople. As far as Charles and his advisors were concerned, the assault on Paris was no different than the attempt to raise the siege of Orleans: a gamble that Joan could produce a miracle. If it failed, nothing was lost. The military position remained unchanged. From Charles’ perspective it was time to pursue peace with Burgundy, with the hope of uniting France against the English.

Faith in Joan and her mission deteriorated after her failure to take Paris. Charles honoured her for her service by conferring nobility on Joan and her family, but he clearly considered that her active value to France was at an end. For the past seven months of her freedom, Joan was reduced to leading a small band of soldiers on small campaigns.

On the evening of 24 May 1430, 13 months after her victory at Orleans, Joan led her last campaign. A Burgundian army had besieged the town of Compiègne. Joan rode out with a small force to mount a surprise attack against the besiegers, but was herself caught in an unexpected pincer movement between English soldiers from the south and Burgundians from the north. She stayed with the rear guard, allowing most of her men to escape, then surrendered to Jean of Luxembourg-Ligny, a vassal of the Duke of Burgundy.

As a new member of the nobility and a soldier in the French army, Joan had every reason to expect to be ransomed. Instead, Charles left her to her fate. The Burgundians turned her over to the English, who in turn surrendered her to the Inquisition.

Her capture raised questions once again about the nature of her voices. The success of Joan’s mission had contained within it the seeds of her fall from the beginning. Each battle was a test of the truth of her mission. Her final failure and capture could be seen as a failure of belief on the part of Charles, resulting in the loss of heaven’s aid. The English were sure it was proof that her inspiration came not from heaven but from hell.

She was tried at Rouen on charges of witchcraft, heresy and dressing like a man by a panel of 42 clerics, led by the Bishop Pierre Cauchon, who was not an impartial jurist. He had lost his episcopal see (or diocese) at Beauvais when the town surrendered to Joan and King Charles after his coronation at Reims.

The very beliefs that allowed Joan to convince French authorities that she was in fact a true seer shaped the conclusions of the Anglo-Burgundian clerics who conducted her final trial. Like their counterparts at Poitiers, they asked “who, what, why, to whom, what kind, from where”. They considered both the nature of the revelation and that of the recipient. And, perhaps inevitably, they reached very different conclusions.

Joan was burned at the stake as a heretic in Rouen on 30 May 1431.
“When I found I had crossed that line, I looked at my hands to see if I was the same person. There was such a glory over everything, the sun came like gold through trees, and over the fields, and I felt like I was in Heaven.”

- Harriet Tubman
SLAVE, SPY, SUFFRAGETTE

Erica Armstrong Dunbar tells us how Harriet Tubman freed herself from bondage, went on to save others and then fought oppression in all its forms for the rest of her life

Interview by Jonathan Gordon

Any single one of the milestones that Harriet Tubman achieved in her life would be enough to cement someone’s place in the history books. She freed herself from slavery and went on to free others working on the Underground Railroad leading refugees out of the Southern slave States. She joined the Union Army as a spy, scout and nurse and even led an expedition to free slaves during the war. She fought for women’s right to vote after the war. And while all this was happening she battled personal heartache and physical disability. It’s an extraordinary and inspiring story, brilliantly retold by Erica Armstrong Dunbar in her new book, *She Came To Stay*, so we sat down to talk through it all.

What were some of the formative moments in Harriet Tubman’s upbringing, having been born a slave in Maryland?

I think that when we start thinking about Harriet Tubman, we have to think about her connection to her ancestors. I don’t begin the book in 1822 when she was born. I begin with the connection to her maternal grandmother who was a woman named Modesty who was forced to travel the Middle Passage and arrived in the colony of Maryland.

So, when I think about where Harriet Tubman’s story begins, I’d argue that it really begins in Africa and it begins with the strength of her grandmother. I think about the impression that her ancestors would have had on her, but I also think about her life as a small child on
the Eastern Shore of Maryland. For Araminta (Harriet’s birth name) she was introduced to a life enslavement at the age of five, when she was removed from her mother’s care. Think about a five- or six-year-old, someone who does not yet have their adult teeth to be taken from their family and forced to do very difficult labour; emptying muskrat traps, doing domestic work, caring for infants when she herself was but a child. This was Araminta’s introduction to the hard labour of enslavement. And that loneliness was something that she would always remember.

Was she a born leader?
I don’t know that I would say that she was a born leader. I would say that she became a leader and became a leader before her time on the Underground. I think that we see samples of this, for example when she was a 13- or 14-year-old girl. She was forced to make a decision about helping an overseer attempt to capture or subdue an enslaved man at the general store. She refused to get involved and I see this moment as a crucial moment for Araminta because she made a decision not to assist in the violence of slavery. Because of that decision, she was met with a serious consequence, which was that in this blind rage the overseer picked up a metal weight from the counter and hurled it in the direction of the enslaved man who was attempting to run off and hit Araminta in the head. It literally fractures her skull and she lived with the vestiges of this traumatic injury. Really, it was a traumatic brain injury, one that forced her to deal with headaches for the entirety of her life as well as these sleepwalking spells - that’s what she called them. Perhaps today we would call them epileptic seizures. In any case, it was this moment when she stood up against slavery. I would argue that’s a moment where we see the early signs of her leadership.

“IT WAS AT THIS MOMENT Harriet really makes the decision that no man is ever going to make that kind of decision for her again”

This injury had other effects on her life too. We often think about the head injury as just that, an injury. But I think there are two things that we need to remember. This injury literally disabled Harriet Tubman and we don’t think about her through the lens of disability, but we really should. And she managed to live with this for the entirety of her life.

But the other thing that we need to remember is that she also says that this is the moment where she becomes the closest to God, and she was a deeply spiritual and religious person for her entire life. It was this head injury that brought about these sleepwalking spells, and during these spells she would have visions that would prompt her on what was going to happen. They were almost premonitions.

Of course, these premonitions, these visions, helped her on the Underground. She said this later on in her life. She recounted to her biographer that she had these visions and they would tell her which way to cross a road, how to stay away from slave catchers, which bridge to cross, which one not to cross. When we step back and we think about the awesome and almost unbelievable life that she lead on the Underground Railroad, one almost has to believe that there was some kind of divine intervention to allow a small woman - five feet tall in stature - to make 13 successful trips in and out of the jaws of slavery from Maryland to the Northern States and Canada.

Tubman hired a lawyer to challenge for her freedom. Was this common? No. An enslaved woman, who is illiterate, made the decision to hire an attorney because she understood or felt that something was amiss regarding the legal status of her family. She was able to hire herself out, pay her owner $50-60 a year and then save her own money.

One would think that you save money and you buy clothing or at least cloth to make clothing, extra food or what have you. But she makes the decision to pay an attorney and this attorney scoops the legal documents that are available and uncovers exactly what Araminta (at that point now Harriet Tubman) knew, which was that she was entitled to freedom at the age of 45 and that indeed her mother had been given that right and that it had been stripped from her. And this, of course, tells Harriet Tubman everything that she needs to know.

What did she face when she escaped in 1849? Most people think they know the story of Tubman and her escape. She hopped on the Underground Railroad and appeared in Pennsylvania, but of course it was not that simple. Her first attempt was an aborted mission, not by her own desire, but because her brothers felt uncomfortable and wanted to return and basically dragged Harriet back to the farm. It was at this moment that Harriet really makes the decision that no man is ever going to make that kind of decision for her again. No man will control her movements. So she sets off by herself.
The fact that she sets off alone and as a woman is unique and very unlike the majority of fugitives who found their way to living in the north. The majority of them were young men, relatively healthy. They weren't charged with the responsibilities of child care and things that kept enslaved women tethered to their farms and plantations. Now, Harriet of course did not have biological children and did not have that keeping her attached to the farm.

When she did run she used this loosely connected system of safe havens that we call the Underground Railroad. It meant that she traveled for weeks on her own, in the winter. She could not read or write, so she could not read signs or a map, let alone a compass if she had one. She was completely dependent upon the few bits of information she had from those who were willing to help her on the Underground, some who were free black men and women and others who were white men and women who stood against the institution of slavery.

She hid in barns, she hid in wagons, she ate what food she could find, of which there was not much, and would travel over 100 miles pretty much by foot to reach the Pennsylvania border. We often think of this moment as Tubman reaching freedom, but in many ways that's inaccurate. It was the moment that she reached a State that no longer practiced slavery, but the Federal government weighed in and she was still an enslaved person no matter where she lived, with the exception of Canada.

How did her experience inform how she then helped others achieve their freedom?
The moment that she crossed the Pennsylvania border, one would think that she would have felt immediate joy, but she actually didn't. She felt isolated and sad and wondered why she was in

WHAT WAS THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD?
A quick explanation of emancipation efforts before the Civil War

The secret network of safe houses, roads, routes and supply chains that helped escaping slaves make their way north, often into Canada where they could find safe haven, was known as the Underground Railroad. The route itself was not a train line, but rather named in reference to the lines that were in the early to mid-19th century helping to connect the far reaches of the expanding United States.

The network is likely to have originated with Quaker abolitionists around Philadelphia and North Carolina at the turn of the century, but was greatly expanded by the abolitionist movement as it grew. The people who helped refugees escape were known as conductors and the stops along the way, be they people's homes, barns or schools, were referred to as stations, safe houses and depots, which in turn were run by stationmasters.

While in Tubman's time slavery was not practiced in the Northern United States, it was still not safe for escaped slaves as they were still legally recognised as the property of slave holders. Only reaching Canada, where slavery was outlawed completely, could escapees really find their freedom, at least until after the Civil War.
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Inspirational women

“She’s an entrepreneur. She’s hustling. She’s trying to make money to survive and to help other women around her do the same thing. She’s a warrior”

this strange land welcomed by none and that all of her family were still behind on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. It made her wonder what does freedom mean when it sits alongside slavery? What does freedom mean when your parents or your children or your siblings are still enslaved? Almost immediately she makes the decision that she’s going to go back and rescue all of them. If she could make it to Philadelphia then she would be the vessel to rescue her family and friends, so she makes this decision that her own escape and her own opportunity for freedom informs and fashions her decision to return and to help those who were closest to her.

How much danger was she in?
The risk was so very great that once again it’s almost unbelievable that she elected to go back at least 13 times. There were rewards out for her capture. She returns to the Eastern Shore of Maryland, her last trip was in 1860, and so really she escapes in 1849 and for 11 years she’s going back and forth, preferring to go in the winter, which was actually not the time that most fugitives attempted to escape. They usually escaped in spring and summer.

She would sometimes take the train south, which of course we sit here and say, “What? She got on a train and went south?” But yes, she did, because who is looking for fugitives on a train going back to the south? No one really. And of course she would use that, she would use the waterways, she would use wagons and foot travel. Each time she returned she was in greater danger. Each time she left she would leave with a handful of what was considered human property, so the bounty on her head grew and grew. The danger never disappeared.

How did she get involved with the Union Army?
One of the things that Harriet Tubman did frequently was make small appearances and speak to anti-slavery groups throughout New England, so she became somewhat well known, although in a very careful way, because she was still a fugitive. But in 1862 she was actually approached by the governor of Massachusetts who knew that her skills as a scout, and as someone who’d rescued over 70 people out of Maryland, could be put to good use. He convinced her to head south to Southern Carolina to serve as a scout and a spy for the Union Army.

I think it’s actually incredible when we think about her heading down to Beaufort, South
While her life is full of examples of self-sacrifice and caring, Tubman could be tough and hard nosed when she had to be, even threatening to shoot an escapee for fear they would give away Underground Railroad secrets if they backed out.

The SS Harriet Tubman was a Liberty Ship launched in 1944 to aid in the war effort. Liberty Ships were cargo ships adapted from a British design that greatly improved industrial output at the time.

Tubman suffered from the injuries sustained in her youth right to the end of her life. It’s claimed she even had surgery without anaesthesia in her old age.

**Tubman’s Allies**

The men and women who fought by her side

**Sojourner Truth**

ABOLITIONIST, WOMEN’S RIGHTS ACTIVIST

The first black woman to win back custody of a child from a slave holder, Truth had escaped slavery herself in 1826 and became a noted speaker for civil rights and preacher, made famous by her “ Ain’t I a Woman?” speech in 1851. In the Civil War she recruited troops for the Union Army.

**William Still**

UNDERGROUND RAILROAD CONDUCTOR, WRITER, ACTIVIST, HISTORIAN

His record keeping as a conductor for the Underground Railroad gives us detailed accounts of the work done by abolitionists in the region. Still personally helped fugitive slaves before the war and continued as a philanthropist afterwards.

**John Brown**

ABOLITIONIST

Believed the only way to end slavery was through violence, and lead several armed rebellions around Kansas. He met Tubman at the Constitutional Convention (an abolitionist meeting) in Ontario, 1858. The next year he led a raid on an armory in Virginia, was caught and tried for treason.

**Frances Harper**

ABOLITIONIST, SUFFRAGIST, TEACHER, WRITER

Worked on the Underground Railroad, and was a public speaker for the American Anti-Slavery Society and founder of the National Association of Colored Women. She was one of the first African American women to be a published author in the US.

**Susan B. Anthony**

WOMEN’S RIGHTS ACTIVIST, SUFFRAGIST, ABOLITIONIST

Put forward the women’s suffrage amendment that became the Nineteenth Amendment of the US Constitution. Anthony was a lifelong abolitionist, lead several women’s suffrage organisations and published a women’s rights newspaper.

**Frederick Douglass**

ABOLITIONIST, WRITER, SUFFRAGIST, DIPLOMAT

Douglass escaped from slavery in Maryland and became a leading abolitionist. He wrote several books about his experiences as a slave and believed in equality between all peoples, and as such supported women’s suffrage.
Inspirational women

Carolina, in 1862. One thing to remember is that she is still technically a fugitive, and when Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation, supposedly emancipating enslaved people in States that have seceded from the Union, her home State of Maryland had not seceded. She was still technically a fugitive.

So here she is, a fugitive, going further south than she has ever been before, agreeing to spy and to scout. She manages to make connections with enslaved black men and women on the ground to gather intelligence, and it’s really because of her relationships in South Carolina that she’s able to lead the first expedition led by a woman in the Civil War. She leads a successful expedition in which they dismantle Confederate troops and set free over 750 enslaved people. She does this while she’s also serving as a nurse in the military camp hospitals. She’s also creating opportunities for enslaved women to take care of themselves, taking washing in for soldiers and making food, baking pies and these kinds of things. She’s an entrepreneur. She’s hustling. She’s trying to make money to survive and to help other women around her do the same thing. She’s a warrior.

The next stage of her life was the fight for suffrage. How did she adapt to this field?

Many of the women, white women in particular, who were involved in the fight to end slavery transitioned into or were working on securing women’s rights – specifically the right for women to vote. This became intensified after the passage of the 16th Amendment, which gave black men the right to vote.

We see Harriet Tubman really working side by side with many of the white women abolitionists who had come to her rescue financially and in other ways, and stood shoulder to shoulder in the attempt to end slavery. We now see the social movement transition to the right for women to vote. Tubman is someone who manages to walk the line well between her commitment and relationship with white women suffragists and with a new generation of young black women suffragists who were discouraged from participating in what was seen as a heavily white woman-run movement. White southern suffragists were unwilling to accept black women as a part of the movement. She did the work and ultimately for her the most important thing was advancing the rights of women no matter how it came.

Was the racism of white suffragists a big issue?
The National Association of Colored Women have Harriet attend their first meeting and praise her and celebrate her. Yet, the same kind of respect and affirmation did not come from white women in the same circles. They were willing to allow black women to participate in suffrage campaigns, however in a segregated fashion. They wanted them to march at the end of the line in their marches. For black women that was simply unacceptable. It was quite a strain and one could argue that this strain that centred on race would be something that really plagued the women’s movement throughout the 20th century.

Is there any one story about Tubman that really exemplifies her determination for you?
I think her time after the Civil War, is something that really marked living with the vestiges of slavery and racism. She lived for 53 years after the war’s end, so living for half a century through the failures of reconstruction, always struggling with poverty, I find it absolutely amazing that she managed to carve out a life of her own and to marry again. And to marry a man who was 20 years younger than her. There’s a moment where we say, okay Harriet, I see you. Good for you! Managing to find love and companionship in the most difficult of times. I really think that her ability to pull together her family and to create lives for themselves after the Civil War and after slavery in the most destitute of financial conditions, that was amazing and often goes neglected or at least not spoken about.

“I find it absolutely amazing that she managed to carve out a life of her own and to marry again. And to marry a man who was 20 years younger than her”

A Queen’s Blessing

How did Harriet Tubman come to be buried with Queen Victoria’s Jubilee Medal?

When Harriet Tubman passed away in 1913, she did so with very little money (if any), but surrounded by friends. She was buried with something rather special, however; a medal marking Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee in 1897. But how had she come to possess such an item?

“My understanding and that of Tubman biographers is that it was given as a gift and she was invited to the Diamond Jubilee as a guest,” explains Dunbar. “She was unable to attend, but Queen Victoria wanted to make certain that she was at least recognised, so she sent her this pin.”

Queen Victoria apparently also sent Tubman a silk shawl, which is now at the National Museum of African American History and Culture. But as Dunbar explains to us, it symbolises more than that.

“I think it reminds us that Tubman was globally known as a leader and as a freedom fighter. It wasn’t something that was simply put about on the Eastern Shore of Maryland or the South, but across the Atlantic, in England and other places across Europe. People knew Tubman’s name and I think that it’s symbolic and important to think about her being buried with that marker, that medal.”
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“WE WILL TAKE YOUR CHILDREN TO SAFETY!”

Operation Pied Piper and the forgotten evacuated teachers of World War II

Written by Gillian Mawson
“We will take your children to safety!”

EXPERT BIO

GILLIAN MAWSON
In her extensive research into wartime evacuation, Mawson has interviewed over 600 evacuees to preserve their stories and written four books on the subject. Her work includes Rhymes and Remembrance. Poetry written by Britain’s Second World War Evacuees and Britain’s Wartime Evacuees. Learn more at guernseyevacuees.wordpress.com
War stories

During World War II, thousands of British teachers were evacuated with their pupils, yet we hear their stories far less often than those of child evacuees. Sadly, the majority of teachers have now passed away, but their surviving diaries and private correspondence make their wartime memories all the more precious. These men and women took on a great responsibility. Cut off from their own families for the duration of the war, they not only educated the children in their care, but did their best to monitor their health and happiness. They visited local organisations such as the Women's Voluntary Service and Red Cross, to ask for clothing for their pupils. Crucially, they provided hope and comfort to the children when they were homesick or emotionally distressed.

“The Teacher Touched Mum’s Arm and Said Softly, ‘You Can Leave Them Now, Mother, They’ll Be Safe With Me’”

On 1 September 1939 the British government’s plans for evacuation swung into operation and millions of schoolchildren, teachers, mothers and infants were moved before war was declared on 3 September. In the weeks leading up to the evacuation, teachers had liaised with parents regarding the preparations for evacuation and carried out evacuation rehearsals in their schools. In her school log book, Maureen Brass described the preparations that were made for the evacuation of St Dominic’s Infants School, in London: “The week before the evacuation, we gave parents lists of what the children should bring with them, made labels showing their names, the name of the school and the school number. Ours was school number 0302. On the morning of September 1st 1939, the children assembled in school around 7.00am. The staff had arrived at 6.00am. At 8.00am we set out from the school, waved off by tearful mothers, grandmothers and others. The groups, Seniors, Juniors and Infants, with staff and helpers, walked in fours to Kentish Town West Station. We all boarded a train that was waiting for us and set out into the unknown.”

Mr A Wilshire was asked to prepare for the evacuation of pupils in Ilford, Essex and he made the following entries in his diary: “Friday, August 25 - Evacuation duty in Ilford has fallen to Mr Dinmore, Mr Bryce and me. My party, which will consist of children under five with their mothers, together with expectant mothers, will be known as a non-school party. It will number at least 650 and will go from Southark School. Thursday, August 31 - We learnt that the government has ordered the evacuation to take place tomorrow, Saturday and Sunday. I am going on Sunday - I know not where to. My party totals 800.”

Although some children and teachers were evacuated by coach or boat, the majority travelled by their billets by steam train. As a result, strong memories remain with them of emotional scenes at railway stations and their subsequent journeys into the unknown. When a large group of children from Hackney, London, boarded a train, their parents gathered to witness their departure. One of their teachers Miss Griffith, wrote in her diary: “Will any of us ever forget the departure, the route lined with sad but relieved parents?” In his memoirs, nine-year-old John Hawkins described the kindness of his teacher when his school was evacuated from Birmingham: “When my Mum,
“We will take your children to safety!”

sister and I arrived at school that day our teacher was marking names off a clip-board. The teacher touched Mum’s arm and said softly, ‘you can leave them now, Mother, they’ll be safe with me.’ Mum’s lips begin to tremble - she crouched down and kissed us tenderly on the cheek. Then on we children and teachers marched, past the houses, shops and factories that we all knew so well, from which poured housewives, factory workers, shop assistants, men and women, young and old, to loudly cheer us on our way. When we reached Tyseley station, we were swiftly but gently ushered into a compartment. Suddenly, everyone turned in amazement to see a frantic mother dash from the crowd and blindly force her way through the barrier onto the platform, to scoop her tiny, frightened daughter into her arms. She then ran, sobbing bitterly, from the station.

Teachers also wrote about the arrival of their schools in the evacuee reception areas.

Mary Richardson taught at Cork Street School, Camberwell, and travelled with her pupils to Kent. Mary’s daughter, FJ Unwin, shared her mother’s story, saying: “Each teacher was assigned ten children and after a long train journey, we arrived at Sevenoaks where we were neatly put into cattle pens to be counted. We then caught another train and arrived at Brasted station, which is quite a distance from the village, so when we arrived at the church hall we were a sorry sight - tired, thirsty and afraid. Mothers came and chose us and I was seized upon by the lady at the village shop and bakehouse. We had promised to try to keep families together but with four Peabody girls and four Sparrowhawk boys, this proved impossible. Some of the younger children had wet themselves and their clothing was dirty, ragged and unsuitable. However, the Kent ladies were brilliant, extra clothing was found, menus were changed to accommodate townies who never ate ‘greens’ and cuddly toys were given to comfort the weepy ones.”

As described, evacuated teachers had to ensure that children who had left with just a small bag were properly clothed during their years away from home. Some teachers actually approached the local newspaper office to ask if they could place an appeal for clothing in the paper. A Cheshire newspaper printed the following appeal: “Boots and clothing for 90 boys are needed in Hale. These boys are in our midst through no fault of their own. Cash donations also welcome.” As a result of such appeals, local communities donated clothing and footwear to thousands of child evacuees. Teachers also approached the Women’s Voluntary Service (WVS) to ask for clothing for their pupils. When Mr Percy Martel brought his pupils to Cheadle Hulme, Cheshire, he relied heavily on the help of the local WVS. His diary entry for October 1940 shows that the weather had become much colder and he was anxious about the children’s clothing. “Today we all had to spend hours in the school air raid shelter, a wet, slippery muddy lake and the roof is leaking. To take children from a warm school into such an atmosphere is scandalous and with, as yet, no winter clothes.” Luckily the ladies of the WVS came to the rescue. They quickly organised several fundraising events and were able to supply...
War stories

Children were inspected to ensure they were in good health.

For many of the young evacuees, it was their first experience of rural life.

LEAVE HITLER TO ME
SONNY – YOU OUGHT TO BE OUT OF LONDON

ISSUED BY THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH
the evacuees with warm clothing. Mr Martel praised the WVS in his diary: "The work done and the sympathy extended to us by these ladies is indeed marvellous. As our troubles increase, their sympathetic support and kindness seem to attain greater heights."

When Wimbledon Central school was evacuated by train to Chichester, the children were immediately put onto buses. However, four of the buses were accidentally sent to a completely different destination. One of the teachers, Mr C Lee, recorded this event in his school log book and on 5 September he wrote: "Continued to check the houses where our pupils have been billeted. Children very happy but bewildered. I then went to the evacuation distribution centre to find the exact destination of the other four buses but no news."

He spent two full days visiting local officials before he finally discovered the whereabouts of the rest of his pupils.

When the children arrived at their new billets, their teachers told them that they must write their new address on a postcard and send it, together with a short message, to their parents. The teachers suggested messages which would cheer up worried parents, such as: “Dear Mum and Dad, am living with nice people. Don’t worry about me.” However, this had tragic consequences for one little boy and his family. He left his new billet, placed his postcard, with the above message, in the letter box then went for a walk. Sadly he fell into a canal and drowned. His family were advised of his death that evening, but two days later, his postcard with its poignant little message arrived at their home.

There is a common misconception that most evacuees were sent from poor urban housing to the countryside where the facilities were far superior. Even today, some people still assume that all evacuees came from inner city slums, were dirty, had head lice and were not house trained.

Gateshead teacher Jessie Hetherington talked about the poor facilities that she and her pupils had encountered in Bishop Auckland: “We were welcomed warmly by our prospective hosts and, after distribution to our new homes, a long day ended. Mine was to a village comprised of long rows of pit houses with outside ‘nettles’ (toilets) and very few bathrooms. Saturday was spent seeing that the children were settling in. They had all come from a new housing estate where every house had an indoor toilet and bathroom, but here most were housed in houses without either – as I was. The kindness of most of the hosts made up for the lack of amenities.”

From May 1940, further waves of evacuation occurred in Britain when Germany invaded Belgium, Holland and France. Now children from the south and east coasts of England were moved inland to safety. A House of Commons report shows that one MP declared, “If the weeks that lie ahead, none of us knows whether he may not be evacuated from some place which at the moment appears to be quite safe”! Then, on 20 June 1940, around 25,000 Channel Island children and teachers were evacuated to England, just days before their islands were occupied by Germany. Mrs Marjorie Atkins’ diary described the evacuation of her pupils from Amherst Girls’ School in Guernsey: “News came through at about 9pm that things were getting very dangerous and that a ship was on its way to fetch us and we must be back at school by 3am! By now most of the children were in bed whilst their parents were making the necessary arrangements. Gradually, wide-eyed sleepy girls came with bewildered parents and we had to tick them off on our list as they arrived.”

Britain sent ships of all descriptions, including coal barges and mail boats, to transport the children and teachers across the English Channel to Weymouth. After they disembarked, they were taken into the Pavilion Theatre where they received tea and sandwiches, gave their personal details and underwent a brief health check. In 1975, Guernsey teacher Miss Grace Fry shared her story with the Guernsey Retired Teachers Association: “We had only been in Weymouth for a few minutes when an air raid took place. My pupils and I were pushed out of the building onto a bus then, to my horror, the driver locked the door and disappeared. After an hour, I thought, ‘Well, this is the end, if a bomb falls on us, I hope it happens quickly!’ Then the driver unlocked the door and said ‘Out!’ We were then sent to the railway station. Young soldiers began to push the children onto a train, then suddenly this big Major came out of the darkness, and said ‘Madam will you go on with your children?’ and I said ‘But where?’ Well, the train started to move, and a young Lieutenant came running down the platform, grabbed my hand and said ‘Can you run?’ and we set off at a terrific lick! A steward appeared at the open train door and this young soldier pushed me into his arms, and then off we went. We were sent to Pollokshields, Glasgow, where one of the volunteers asked me if my group were Belgian!”

It may appear strange that Channel Island evacuees were sent to the industrial towns and cities of northern England and to Glasgow but the only railway lines available at that time led straight into those areas. Few evacuees were given any idea of their final destinations, despite the efforts of the teachers to obtain information. Guernsey teacher Alec Rose explained: “I repeatedly asked the guard about our destination and was eventually told, ‘You’re going to Oldham, THE POETRY OF WARTIME EVACUATION

How the evacuated teachers encouraged evacuees to share their feelings, through poetry

During the war, many evacuees wrote poems to describe their experiences and often it was their teachers who encouraged them to do this. Evacuees wrote about their involvement in the war effort, their thoughts of home and family and their feelings regarding the eventual return home. Some described the joy of ‘Victory in Europe’ Day whilst others revealed their sadness at leaving behind the ‘foster families’ who had cared for them and whom they had come to love. Poems about victory and the return home are mostly provided by evacuees from Guernsey who came to England and Scotland in 1940. Perhaps this is because they felt physically separated from their homes and families by the English Channel. Many evacuees composed poems in their later years, often after attending evacuation reunions. After talking about their experiences with each other, they wrote poetry that examined the effect that wartime evacuation had upon their lives. Kathleen Barber was seven when she was evacuated, from Lowestoft to Glossop, Derbyshire, with her younger brother. Fifty years later, she attended a meeting of the Lowestoft Evacuee Association where she read out her poem, ‘The Market Place’. The opening verse describes the evacuee ‘selection process’ that had occurred in Glossop Market Place in June 1940.

The woman viewed the market place
It’s stalls still standing bare;
A silent witness to a day
That she remembered there.
When children stood around the place,
Or sat down on a stall.
Then people came and picked them out,
She clearly could recall.
For some a boy, for some a girl,
For some just one of each.
Her memory spanned so many years
That day’s events to reach.
Some had slept, all were scared.
Thank God that town held folk who cared.

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THE PRESIDENT’S WIFE AND THE YOUNG EVACUÉE

How one young girl became a wartime pen pal to Mrs Eleanor Roosevelt

When Father Bleach brought Guernsey’s La Chaumière Catholic School to Cheshire, he faced huge financial difficulties. However, his fortunes changed when he discovered the existence of the ‘Foster Parent Plan for Children Affected by War’ (FPP). The FPP asked people to donate a regular amount to provide a child with food and shelter. They were also asked to write letters to the child to show that someone cared about them, creating what we now call ‘child sponsorship’. In November 1942, Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of American President, Franklin D. Roosevelt, sponsored three FPP children. One was Paulette Le Mescam, one of the children at La Chaumière School. Paulette became ‘Foster child 306’ to Mrs Roosevelt who became ‘Foster Parent 200’. Soon, many of Paulette’s school friends were sponsored by Americans.

When Paulette received letters from the ‘White House’ and wrote letters back, the address meant little to her. She explained: “I was only 11 years old, there was no television then so we didn’t hear about famous people. To me, she was just my Aunt Elephant. I remember receiving some Lux soap which had a lovely smell, and a lovely red dress.”

In May 1943, Paulette discovered who ‘Aunt Elephant’ actually was and spoke on BBC radio about the work of the FPP and about Mrs Roosevelt. When the Channel Islands were liberated on 9 May 1945, Paulette received a final letter from Mrs Roosevelt and an invitation to visit the White House. However, Paulette was unable to accept this offer: “I hadn’t the money or support to enable me to do this. Cut off from my Guernsey family, Aunt Elephant’s letters were the only correspondence I received during the war.”

- and God help you!” The guard was referring to a town of coal pits and slag heaps.” The Channel Island evacuees relied very heavily on the care and guidance of their teachers as they were totally cut off from their own parents for five long years.

Although many of Britain’s evacuees received loving care from their wartime foster parents, others did not. Children endured physical and mental cruelty at the hands of unsuitable hosts because billets were not fully vetted before children were placed there. Luckily, some children were ‘rescued’ from these terrible situations because their teachers noticed their unhappiness, or observed bruises and marks. Peggy and Betty White were evacuated to Oxford with their teachers and lived very happily in the home of a local couple, Mr and Mrs Murphy. However, when Mrs Murphy was due to have a baby, the girls had to move out. Peggy recalled that their next billet was very different:

“We moved in with Mrs Fisher who turned out to be the most wicked woman we had ever met. From the very next day we were beaten and made to do all the housework before going to school. We had to get up at five each morning and we were sent to bed as soon as we got in from school. As an extra punishment we would be shut, one at a time, in a dark coal-shed all night. We lived there for about a year, which to us seemed like forever. One day Betty’s teacher, Mrs Payne, saw the terrible bruises on her. She questioned us both, and we said that Mrs Fisher would kill us if we ever told anyone. Mrs Payne took us back to the house and told us to pack our belongings while she had words with Mrs Fisher. Then we all left. As we walked along the road in the gathering dusk, Mrs Payne said, ‘Where would you like to live most of all?’ Betty and I cried in unison, ‘With Mrs Murphy.’ She replied, ‘That’s just where we are going.’ We skipped the rest of the way there. Mrs Murphy cried when she saw us and so did we.”

In some cases, schools were evacuated to open-air camps in the countryside. When Derby School was evacuated to Amber Valley Camp in 1940, the accompanying teachers became full-time ‘foster parents’ to 200 boys. Elisabeth Bowden shared her story with the Derby Evening Telegraph: “My father was headmaster of Derby School and Mother and I moved into the camp with him. We lived in a bungalow whilst the pupils and the other teachers were billeted around the camp in wooden huts. It was a huge responsibility for those adults, in charge of 200 boys. Mother had a petrol allowance because she drove the emergency vehicle. Several times she had to take boys with broken arms and that sort of thing, to the hospital.”

It is clear that, during the war, the teachers who remained with their evacuated pupils carried a huge burden of responsibility. Miss Grace Fry’s life was completely changed by her experience of caring for 100 children. In a 1975 interview for the Guernsey Retired Teachers’ Association, she stated: “It was the evacuation that decided me. I wasn’t going to have children, because I had had enough with all that during the war.” The child evacuees have never forgotten the care they received from their teachers. John Davis told me: “My memory is of the unfailing kindness of the staff at a time when their own personal lives must have been under great stress, as well as the responsibility of teaching and caring for such a large number of children in very difficult circumstances.”

“I WASN’T GOING TO HAVE CHILDREN, I HAD HAD ENOUGH WITH ALL THAT DURING THE WAR”
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THE LAST DAYS OF HITLER

From January 1945 Adolf Hitler and his top aides moved permanently into their underground bunker. This was the beginning of the end, but what really happened in those final months under Berlin?

Written by Jonathan Trigg

Adolf Hitler - Nazi Germany's Führer - was a nomad. From his accession to power in 1933 and throughout the years of war, he was a dictator of 'no fixed abode'. Officially Hitler resided at the Reich Chancellery in Berlin, but as the war went on he wandered across Europe, staying away from the capital and setting up home at any one of his 20 Führer Headquarters (Führerhauptquartiere). His favourites were the Berghof near Berchtesgaden in Bavaria, and the Wolf's Lair (the Wolfsschanze) in East Prussia. But as the war turned against Germany in the autumn of 1944, he decamped to the Eagle's Nest (the Adlerhorst) near Bad Nauheim in Hesse to plan and oversee his final role of the dice in the West: Unternehmen Herbstnebel (Operation Autumn Mist), the Ardennes offensive that would become famous as the Battle of the Bulge.

With the failure of the attack - and its baby sister offensive, Nordwind, to the south - Hitler and his entourage made what would become their final move of the war as they headed northeast and arrived in Berlin on 16 January 1945. There, deciding against setting up shop in his so-called Führerwohnung (Leader apartment) on the upper floor of the Reich Chancellery, he opted instead for a complex of offices, tunnels and storage rooms that had been constructed almost 30 feet under the Chancellery garden - the Führerbunker.

THE BUNKER

As Hitler descended the stairs through the upper - Vorbunker - level and went through the steel blast door down into the newer, lower level, few of the 30-or-so staff who went with him could guess that this would be the dictator's last refuge. He would not leave it alive.
At first, Hitler would only sleep in the bunker, ascending from it in the afternoons for his daily top-level military conference in the Chancellery. There, surrounded by his senior officers, he would be briefed on the latest developments at the fronts: the west, east and Italy. The news was bad - the Red Army’s Vistula offensive had been launched on 12 January and was advancing steadily west. On 2 February the Soviets reached the River Oder, just 43 miles from Berlin itself. Less than a fortnight later, the remnants of the Budapest garrison surrendered the city, and Saxony’s architectural jewel - Dresden - was fire-bombed by the RAF and reduced to ashes. March brought more of the same: Hitler ordered a major offensive in Hungary to try and safeguard its desperately needed oil fields – to no avail, the Germans lost thousands of men and hundreds of Panzers and achieved nothing. Over in the west, John W Leonard’s US 9th Armoured Division reached the Rhine at Remagen to find the massive Ludendorff Bridge intact – capturing it, the Anglo-Americans now entered the heart of Nazi Germany. Montgomery crossed to the north a fortnight later, and within days Walter Model’s Army Group B (Heeresgruppe B) was surrounded in the Ruhr Pocket. The Allies’ spring offensive in Italy cracked the front there and forced the Germans into a headlong retreat.

**HITLER THE ADDICT**

By now Hitler’s physical and mental health were under massive strain. The Chief of the Army’s General Staff, Heinz Guderian, was shocked at his appearance: “The whole left side of his body trembled... He walked awkwardly, stooped more than ever, and his gestures were both jerky and slow. He had to have a chair pushed beneath him when he wanted to sit down”. Always prone to violent mood swings, his ranting and bursts of temper became more pronounced. An operation back in September to remove a polyp from his vocal cords had damaged his voice, and his hearing hadn’t fully recovered from the 20 July 1944 bomb blast that almost succeeded in assassinating him. Surrounded by doctors, his condition continued to deteriorate. His personal physician Karl Brandt, an SS officer responsible for the T4 euthanasia murder programme, was increasingly sidelined by another SS doctor, Ludwig Stumpfegger, and his sinister boss Theodor Morrell. Morbidly obese, and with an unsavoury reputation as a quack, Morrell exerted growing influence over the dictator, treating him with a plethora of over 70 different substances including methamphetamine, cocaine and opioids. After another injection – he would sometimes have 20 or so a day - the Nazi dictator would declare himself refreshed and revitalised, but his long-term health and judgement were falling apart.

With Berlin being bombed almost daily during March, Hitler moved his conferences from the Chancellery down into the bunker and rarely ventured above ground – only occasionally walking his beloved Alsatian bitch Blondi in the Chancellery garden. His connection to the outside world was now tenuous at best. The only news he received was via visitors, through the bunker’s telephone exchange, or from the radio, where he now increasingly tuned in to hear the BBC – a crime he had decreed as punishable by death in the Third Reich.

**BUNKER LIFE – DARK AND DANK**

Life in the bunker was safer than in the much-bombed city above, but was pretty grim nonetheless. Being below the water table, damp was a real problem, with condensation dripping down the concrete walls. Diesel generators provided electrical power and light, as well as operating the pumps needed to stop the place from slowly flooding. The air was fetid and dank, with inadequate ventilation leading to an atmosphere of claustrophobia and confinement, worsened by the constant humming of the generators that caused headaches and nausea among many of the staff. Those staff included a number of secretaries like Traudl Junge and

“**LIFE IN THE BUNKER WAS SAFER THAN IN THE MUCH-BOMBED CITY ABOVE, BUT WAS PRETTY GRIM NONETHELESS**”

In one of the last ever photographs taken of him, Adolf Hitler gives bravery awards to teenage members of the Hitler Youth.
INSIDE THE FÜHRERBUNKER

Hitler’s last hiding place was bomb-proof and blast-proof, but couldn’t shield the dictator from the disaster that was overtaking his capital city.

Originally built as an air-raid shelter for the Reich Chancellery, the first phase of the bunker’s construction, the Vorbunker, was buried five feet under a cellar in the old Chancellery building and completed in 1936 – the year of the Berlin Summer Olympics. Once the bombing of Berlin by the Anglo-American forces became more frequent as the war progressed, the decision was made to construct a far bigger and more secure level: the Führerbunker. This would be connected to the Vorbunker by a steel blast door and a flight of stairs, but would have a concrete roof some three metres thick and would comprise of 30 rooms branching off a long corridor. Several of the rooms were for Hitler and Eva Braun’s personal use, including a sitting room, a study (in which hung a large portrait of the Prussian king Frederick the Great), a bedroom for Eva Braun and another for Hitler himself. Communications with the outside world were via a telephone switchboard, a telex machine, a military radio set complete with an antenna running to the surface, and by personal messenger. Ventilation was not great and, combined with the damp, the atmosphere in the bunker was both claustrophobic and depressing. Despite its size the bunker was crowded, particularly towards the end with the arrival of Joseph and Magda Goebbels and their six children.

BRIEFING ROOM

It was from this room that Hitler and his top officials planned and submitted orders for the final few months of the war.

HITLER’S ROOM

This sparsely decorated room took furniture from the Chancellery around February as the bunker became the Führer’s permanent residence.

DEATH PLACE

Hitler’s study featured an oil painting of Frederick The Great. This was the room in which he and Eva Braun committed suicide shortly after being married.

TO THE GARDEN

As per his instructions, Hitler and Braun’s bodies were taken via this exit into the Chancellery gardens to be burned not long after their bodies were found in his study.

HITLER’S PHYSICIAN

This was the quarter’s for Hitler’s personal physician, originally Ernst-Robert Grawitz, who committed suicide in April. He was replaced by Ludwig Stumpfegger.

WAITING ROOM

This was the lower level of the bunker, with an additional level of security to access. Staff would gather and wait in this area to access their superiors.
War stories

Um Freiheit und Leben

Volkstrum

Nazi propaganda ordered the People’s Storm to fight for ‘freedom and life’

With German forces decimated, the Hitler Youth was pressed into action against the Soviet advance.

Three members of the Third Reich’s last-ditch defence, the Volkstrum or ‘People’s Storm’, armed with panzerfaust anti-tank weapons.

German forces defending Berlin surrendered to the Soviets on 2 May 1945.

Battle of Berlin, 1945

16 APRIL
The Soviet advance into Berlin begins with four days of fighting against German defences at Seelow Heights. One million Soviet soldiers eventually overwhelm the German IX Army’s 110,000 men.

20 APRIL
Shelling of Berlin starts and will continue until the city surrenders. It’s also Adolf Hitler’s 56th birthday, which he marks in his bunker as bombs fall on the city. Soviet forces progress as far as the Oder River.

21 APRIL
Lead by Marshal Zhukov, the 1st Belorussian Front begins to move into the eastern suburbs while Marshal Konev’s 1st Ukrainian Front comes in from the north. Hitler plans a response.

22 APRIL
Learning that his plans cannot be achieved, Hitler is said to declare the war lost, but commits to remaining in Berlin until the very end. Stalin issues his final assault orders to Zhukov and Konev.

23 APRIL
Soviet forces continue to tighten their encirclement of Berlin, moving further and further into the suburbs of the capital and cutting off the German IX Army from the city in the process.

24 APRIL
The XII Army attempts to launch a counter offensive against the incoming Soviet forces, but to little avail. Its attempts are hindered by persistent bombing from the RAF, slowing their progress.
Gerda Christian, telephone switchboard operators such as SS-Oberscharführer (sergeant) Rochus Misch, Hitler’s nurse Erna Flegel, and his Austrian cook, Constanze Manzlarei. Also crammed into the bunker were some of the Führer’s senior staff, including his much-disliked personal Party secretary, Reichsleiter Martin Bormann.

The impending collapse of the Reich, his deteriorating health, and Moriell’s misdirections combined to badly affect Hitler’s judgement. Never one to take advice from his military experts, he increasingly refused point-blank to heed their warnings or act on their proposals, and would instead often fly into a rage, as Guderian recalled when he reiterated his demand that the 200,000 soldiers trapped in the Courland Pocket in Latvia be evacuated by sea back to Germany to fight in its defence. “His fists raised, his cheeks flushed with rage, his whole body trembling, the man stood there in front of me, beside himself with fury and having lost all self-control... He was almost screaming, his eyes seemed about to pop out of his head and the veins stood out on his temples,” said Guderian. Worse was to come.

LET GERMANY BURN!
The nihilism and savagery that lay at the heart of Nazism manifested itself on 19 March with the issuing of the Demolitions On Reich Territory Decree—nicknamed the Nero Decree. Within it, Hitler stated: “I therefore order all military transport and communication facilities, industrial establishments and supply depots, as well as anything else of value within Reich territory, which could in any way be used by the enemy immediately or within the foreseeable future for the prosecution of the war, will be destroyed.”

Responsibility for this massive programme of deliberate vandalism was given to Hitler’s one-time favourite architect and now armaments production supremo, Albert Speer. Standing in front of his leader, Speer told him: “From the point of view of armaments the war was lost... I told him very bluntly the war will be finished within four or six weeks... and that it is now necessary to do everything to help the German people in this situation:” Hitler’s response was emphatic: “If the war is to be lost, the nation will also perish... There is no need to consider the basis even of a most primitive existence any longer... The nation has proved itself weak... Besides, those who remain after the battle are of little value, for the good will have fallen.” Speer was dumbfounded. He realised that the Nero Decree would cause untold suffering to the German population and resolved to disobey at the fortified Seelow Heights, the pressure soon became too much and the German front broke, with Theodor Busse’s Ninth Army and its surviving 90,000 men surrounded in the Halbe Pocket southeast of Berlin. On 17 April Walter Model dissolved Army Group B in the Ruhr, releasing its 300,000 men from service. Organised resistance in the west more or less collapsed. Goebbels took to the airwaves and lambasted both Model and his erstwhile troops as “die verrätischen Ruhmarmee” – “the treacherous Ruhr army”.

Model – for so long Hitler’s fireman, the general who had followed his Führer’s orders without question – turned to his last remaining three staff officers and declared: “I sincerely believe that I have served a criminal. I led my soldiers in good conscience... but for a criminal government.” Model would shoot himself four days later.

On 20 April, Hitler celebrated his 56th birthday by making his last ever trip to the surface, where he was photographed for the final time as he handed out Iron Crosses to a handful of pathetically young Hitler Youth boys for their bravery in facing Russian tanks. That afternoon he also hosted the last military briefing conference to be attended by the remaining major players in the Nazi state. Around him gathered a cohort of the infamous: Hermann Goering, head of the Luftwaffe and Hitler’s designated successor; Heinrich Himmler, Conrad Schumann, head of the SS; and Alfred Rosenberg, Hitler’s chief ideologue.

The documents that held the dire predictions of the imminent end of the Reich were, as it turned out, the very ones that led to Hess’s arrest and subsequent suicide.

“HE REALISED THAT THE NERO DECREES WOULD CAUSE UNTOLD SUFFERING TO THE GERMAN POPULATION”

25 APRIL
Soviet soldiers complete the encirclement of Berlin as their forces meet up, moving through the S-Bahn defensive ring. All routes in and out of the city are now Soviet controlled.

26 APRIL
The Soviets attack Tempelhof Airport just inside the S-Bahn ring while other forces cross the River Spree, bringing them closer to the centre of the city. German defences are nearly spent.

27 APRIL
A Soviet assault on the Reichstag begins at 6am and goes on all day as German guns fire from the adjacent Berlin Zoo. Meanwhile, Hitler has married Eva Braun and shortly after they both commit suicide.

30 APRIL
General Krebs, Chief of the General Staff, tells the Soviets of Hitler’s death and begins surrender talks. Joseph Goebbels, unwilling to surrender, kills his wife and children before committing suicide.

1 MAY
With the unconditional surrender of Berlin and Soviet forces controlling the majority of the city, the fall of the capital is complete. Total and unconditional surrender in Europe follows a week later.
bureaucrat and murderous head of the SS and Gestapo; Rudolf von Ribbentrop, ex-champagne salesman and now ignored Nazi Foreign Minister; Goebbels, Speer, Bormann, the heads of all three armed services, and Hitler’s senior adjutant, General Wilhelm Burgdorf. Not present was Heinz Guderian, who after too many arguments with his Führer had been sent ‘on leave’ and replaced by the military pigmyn that was General Hans Krebs. During the conference Hitler was repeatedly urged by the gathered bigwigs, several of whom had known him since the beginning, to leave Berlin while he still could and continue the fight from outside the city. He refused. When the conference ended and with Berlin about to be encircled, the majority of attendees fled the capital, leaving the Nazi dictator to his fate.

The following day, Hitler ordered SS-Obergruppenführer Felix Steiner – along with Paul Hauser one of the original architects of the Waffen-SS (armed SS) and now commander of Army Detachment Steiner (Armeestellung Steiner) – to attack south from its positions to destroy the Soviet pincer curling around the north of the capital. Positive that his steadfastly loyal Waffen-SS would come to the rescue, Hitler roared that: ‘Any commander who holds back his troops will forfeit his life.’ Knowing his rag-tag command was vastly outnumbered and would be annihilated if it attacked, Steiner sat on his hands.

“HITLER ROARED THAT ‘ANY COMMANDER WHO HOLDS BACK HIS TROOPS WILL FORFEIT HIS LIFE’”

“IT’S OVER! THE WAR IS LOST!”
Back in the bunker, Hitler’s grip on reality was fast disappearing. For the past few years he had increasingly overestimated the strength of his own forces and dismissed any contradictory opinion, and never more so than now as he waited for the attack from Steiner that he confidently predicted would save him and the Third Reich, just as his hero Frederick the Great had been saved by his
victories at Rossbach and Leuten back in the 18th century. Except there would be no Leuthen miracle. Hitler was reduced to moving imaginary divisions, corps and armies around the map in his underground briefing room. Standing hunched over the map table during the morning of 22 April he could be heard endlessly muttering Steiner’s name as he repeatedly called for updates as to the progress of the illusory attack. By the time the afternoon conference got underway it was clear to a frantic Hans Krebs that Steiner hadn’t launched the anticipated offensive, and the fawning Krebs had no option but to tell Hitler. Brilliantly captured by the actor Bruno Ganz in the 2004 film Downfall, Hitler exploded into a tirade of abuse, blaming everyone for failing him, pouring out his scorn and loathing for his generals in particular. After a three-hour marathon of venom that left everyone within earshot drained and exhausted, Hitler broke down, admitting for the very first time that the war was lost, and that he would stay in the city and kill himself at the end.

With Berlin surrounded, Hitler’s ability to direct what remained of the Wehrmacht was severely curtailed. Even within the city itself his influence was waning, and his last significant military act was to appoint General Helmuth Weidling on 23 April to lead the defence of Berlin. The same day, Hitler got a telegram from Goering saying that if he didn’t receive a reply from his Führer by 10pm that same night he would assume he had lost freedom of action and Goering would take over as head of state. Convinced by Bormann that this was a power grab, Hitler disavowed his former friend, sacking him from all his positions and threatening him with arrest and execution for treason.

Two days later the American and Soviet forces met for the first time on the banks of the River Elbe at Torgau - Nazi Germany had been cut in two.
THE FATE OF THE BUNKER BUNCH

The death of Hitler was followed by murders, suicides and escape attempts that have spawned endless conspiracy theories.

With the war lost and their beloved dictator dead, the two generals, Wilhelm Burgdorf and Hans Krebs, followed their leader’s example and blew their brains out. Hitler’s valet Heinz Linge and the Führer’s SS adjutant Otto Günsche fled the bunker and were captured by the Red Army, as was Rochus Misch, who covered Krebs and Burgdorf’s heads with handkerchiefs after their suicides. Stumpfegger, Bormann, Hitler’s pilot Hans Baur and the one-armed Hitler Youth leader Artur Axmann managed to get across the Weidendammer Bridge as part of the mass break-out, only for Axmann to be captured and Stumpfegger and Bormann to be killed. Lack of evidence led to decades of stories that Bormann had somehow survived and escaped to South America. Traudl Junge got out of the bunker and the city and lived. However, it was the fate of the Goebbels family that plunged the depths of tragedy. He and his wife Magda had six children: five girls and one boy. The eldest, Helga, was 12, the youngest, Heidrun, was just four. Their mother and father persuaded the SS doctor Stumpfegger to inject them with morphine to knock them out. Once unconscious, their parents crushed cyanide capsules in each of their young mouths – killing all of them. Joseph and Magda then committed suicide in the Chancellery garden. Günther Schwägermann, Goebbels’s SS adjutant, had a guard fire several shots into the bodies to make sure they were dead. Petrol was then poured onto the corpses and they were torched, although the lack of fuel by this point meant they were only partly burnt.

In Berlin itself, Weidling found himself in charge of around 80,000 men, half being the remnants of four or five Army and Waffen-SS divisions trapped in the city, and the other half being elderly Volkssturm (People’s Storm - the Nazi version of Britain’s Home Guard) militiamen and teenage Hitler Youth members. Perhaps strangest of all in this hotchpotch of defenders was the presence of significant numbers of non-Germans; among the ranks of the 11th SS-Freiwilligen Panzergrenadier-Division “Nordland” were many hundreds of Norwegians and Danes, and even a small number of Swedes. They were joined on 24 April by over 300 Frenchmen from SS-Brigadeführer Gustav Krukenberg’s 33rd Waffen-Grenadier-Division der SS ‘Charlemagne’ (Französische Nr. 1). Motivated to volunteer for the Waffen-SS by a range of factors, including anti-communism and pro-Nazi feeling, these volunteers would prove to be some of the city’s staunchest defenders.

Life in the bunker now became even more surreal as its occupants became little more than bystanders to the calamity above them as the city was fought over and further reduced to rubble. Space was now at a premium, with Goebbels moving in with his wife Magda and six children. They joined a woman who – despite being Hitler’s lover for over a decade – had been hidden away from the German public and pining eyes: the part-time photography model Eva Braun.

On 27 April, Hitler noticed that Himmler’s SS representative, SS-Gruppenführer Hermann Fegelein, was missing and a search was launched for the man married to Eva Braun’s sister, Gretl. Found in his Berlin apartment in civilian clothes and preparing to flee the city, he was arrested and dragged back to the bunker. Almost paralytically drunk, he was court-martialled, taken out into the Chancellery garden and shot. That night the BBC broadcast reported that his boss Himmler, Hitler’s der treue Heinrich (faithful Heinrich) had been engaged in secret peace feelers with the Allies. Hitler flew into another one of his by-now trademark rages and ordered Himmler’s arrest on charges of treason.

As a pleading Fegelein was executed, Henri Fenet, a French Waffen-SS officer defending the city, was brought to his divisional command post for treatment to a serious leg wound. As Fenet attempted to leave to return to his men, his commander Gustav Krukenberg demanded: “Where are you going?” Fenet replied: “Back to the battalion.”

“Do not move from here, you can’t stand up. Get your orders carried by messenger and stay here at headquarters.”

The bespectacled Fenet protested, to no avail. As the bitter fighting raged street-to-street, the French SS in particular were successful in holding up Soviet attacks with panzerfausts. Two of their
number, François Appolot and Eugène Vaulot, won the Knight's Cross for their exploits - although both awards were unconfirmed due to the chaos enveloping the city. Wilhelm Weber - a German officer serving with the French battalion - showed a comrade a hole in a wall overlooking Wilhelmstrasse: "Look! Isn't it beautiful!" He was pointing at a Soviet T-34 tank he had just knocked-out.

Admiral Karl Dönitz as his successor as head of state, and Joseph Goebbels as chancellor. Wary of the efficacy of the cyanide capsules that had been handed out by Stumpfegger, he had one tested on his dog, Blondi. During the morning of 30 April, Weidling informed him that the defence of the city would cease in the next few hours as ammunition ran out. With his last military command, Hitler gave permission for the

"HITLER FLEW INTO ONE OF HIS BY-NOW TRADEMARK RAGES AND ORDERED HIMMLER'S ARREST"

THE END AT LAST!
By now, Hitler was almost completely cut-off and played very little role in the unfolding events above ground. Down in the claustrophobic depths of the bunker, he made the decision to marry, and in the early hours of 29 April - in the map room - he and Eva Braun became man and wife in a civil ceremony. After a modest wedding breakfast, he dictated his last will and testament to Traudl Junge, naming Grossadmiral (Grand surviving defenders to try and break out of the shattered city. He then said goodbye to his staff and retired to his private study with his new wife. At about 3.30pm a single shot was heard. Hitler's valet, Heinz Linge, opened the door and saw Hitler slumped on the sofa - Eva had taken cyanide and Adolf had shot himself in the head. Their bodies were carried upstairs and out into the garden, doused with petrol and set alight.
WWI’s Black Heroes Remembered

Written by Jonathan Gordon
he process of reassessing and reevaluating history is an ongoing and rigorous one. It’s one of the many reasons why a study of history can be so rewarding, a surprise can often be waiting for you in a place you thought well explored. In recent years, the process of peeling away centuries of prejudice to reveal the blind spot of historical records as regards black and minority ethnic figures in Western history has been a particular focus for historians.

One such writer is Stephen Bourne, author of a number of books on the black British experience including *Mother Country: Britain’s Black Community on the Home Front 1939–45* (The History Press), *War to Windrush: Black Women in Britain 1939-1948* (Jacaranda Books), and *Black Poppies: Britain’s Black Community and the Great War* (The History Press) about which we wanted to talk to him about this issue. While images of the First World War clearly show black Britons fighting alongside white, like many others he noticed a distinct lack of context or detail about these men in books about the war. In some instances, the contributions of black and minority ethnic peoples had been seemingly erased from the record.

With this in mind we wanted to chat with Stephen Bourne about the stories in his book, the lives he has helped to uncover and the hard work of finding details about people who history has left behind. It’s just one area in which a modern perspective is bringing to light lost history, bringing a lot of exciting and challenging new assessments of what some might think are settled questions.

**Why was the British military not segregated like the US military was for so many years?**

Unlike the US military, we didn’t have an official reason to do so. Page 471 of the Manual of Military Law (1914) stated that ‘any negro or person of colour, although an alien, may voluntarily enlist’ and when serving would be ‘deemed to be entitled to all the privileges of a natural-born British subject’. However, although they were prohibited from being promoted to commissioned rank, there were occasions when soldiers of African heritage, such as David Clement and Walter Tull, were commissioned. Unlike the US military, we did not require the ethnicity of servicemen to be recorded in their recruitment papers. With the rush to join up in 1914, British-born black men from all over the country and all walks of life and class backgrounds volunteered at army recruitment centres. It is true that some of them faced discrimination, and were turned away, but not all of them.

**Presumably the collective experience of war helped to form bonds of friendship across racial lines where previously there might have been prejudice in the way?**

It is also true that those who were recruited shared comradeship with white soldiers on the front-line.
especially the ‘Tommies’. This is made clear in Black Poppies in the stories of Norman Manley, Harold Brown, Albert James, Arthur Roberts (whose First World War diaries were rediscovered after he had passed away in 1982), George A. Roberts and others. Some - although still very few - rose through the ranks, but virulent racism was more likely to be found amongst the white elite, as explained by Norman Manley. He was promoted to corporal, but then he asked to be demoted when he was unable to cope with the racist attitudes he had encountered. On the other hand, Walter Tull rose through the ranks apparently unscathed and, when he was killed in action in 1918, three of his comrades risked their lives - under enemy fire - to retrieve his body. That says a great deal about the comradeship that existed between black and white soldiers on the battlefields.

Would a unit like the British West Indies Regiment have had a different experience?

It could be argued that the British West Indies Regiment (BWIR), raised in 1915 as a separate black unit within the British army, was an attempt to ‘segregate’ black and white soldiers. But it actually existed to accommodate the thousands of men in Guyana and the Caribbean who wanted to support their ‘Mother Country’ during wartime. The BWIR was raised against the wishes of Lord Kitchener, the Secretary of State for War, but was ultimately done so with the encouragement of the Colonial Office and King George V. By the war’s end in November, the BWIR had registered 15,204 men and had rejected 13,940. Of the total accepted, 10,280 (66 per cent) came from Jamaica.

Despite there being no segregation, presumably there was no shortage of prejudice to overcome?

There was prejudice, but perhaps less than we expect between black and white comrades in British regiments. After all, they were at war, fighting a common enemy. However, there were concerns from the powers that be in the military that, if a black soldier was given a gun, he could be a source of danger to his white comrades, and not the enemy. It was felt that their colour would make them conspicuous on the battlefields. There were many exceptions, like Walter Tull [who earned promotions]. In spite of this, black Britons, as well as men from the Caribbean and West African colonies, came forward and joined up. Some of them hoped that by supporting the British in wartime, their countries would be de-colonised after the war. They hoped that, by showing they were as good as their white comrades, they would strengthen the case for independence for their homelands but they had to fight in another world war before this happened.

The worst case of racism I read about (and I have included this in the book) was the deliberate segregation of 8,000 members of the British West Indies Regiment after the war had ended. They were transferred to a military camp in Taranto, Italy but they waited for over a year to be demobbed. They were treated appallingly by
the British military and the situation escalated in December, 1918 when they were ordered to wash the dirty linen of the white British soldiers and Italian labourers. When they were ordered to clean the latrines as well, they flatly refused. A rebellion followed and many of them were court-martialled. The members of the BWIR in Taranto were virtual prisoners for almost a year after the Armistice.

What were the greatest challenges in telling the stories of black British soldiers in WWI? I am not a military historian but I refused to allow my lack of knowledge of that aspect of the First World War to deter me. However, the greatest challenge for me was the lack of information available. Historians of the First World War - and there are many - have systematically failed to acknowledge the contribution of black servicemen to the conflict. Some of them argued that the numbers were so small that their contribution was not worth considering. When I began writing Black Poppies, some of the information was fragmentary and conflicted. Trying to unravel the truth was a painstaking task. It was the most difficult and challenging book I have ever written.

“HE WAS PROMOTED TO CORPORAL, BUT THEN HE ASKED TO BE DEMOTED WHEN HE WAS UNABLE TO COPE WITH THE RACIST ATTITUDES HE ENCOUNTERED”
**The Life of Walter Tull**

A brief overview of one of the most famous mixed-heritage soldiers in WWI

1888 Born 28 April to Daniel Tull and Alice Elizabeth Palmer in Folkestone, Kent. Alice was from Kent originally, while Daniel was born in Barbados. Walter Tull’s paternal grandfather had been a slave.

1895 At age seven, Tull loses his mother Alice to cancer.

1897 Just two years after his mother, Tull’s father Daniel also passes away, from heart disease, at which point Tull is sent to an orphanage in Bethnal Green, London.

1908 Now aged 20, Tull is spotted playing football by officials from Clapton FC, an amateur football club, and is signed up. At Clapton he wins the FA Amateur Cup, London County Amateur Cup and the London Senior Cup, reportedly never losing a game.

1909 Walter Tull signs a professional contract with Football League First Division side Tottenham Hotspur, impressing in an off-season tour of Argentina and Uruguay before playing 10 times and scoring twice in the league. He was only the third mixed-heritage professional player in the league. However, he is dropped to the reserves later in the season.

1911 Tull signs for Southern Football League side Northampton Town where he will play 111 games over the next three years to great acclaim.

1914 At the outbreak of the First World War, Walter Tull enlists in the British Army, the first member of his football team to do so. He serves in the Duke of Cambridge’s Own (Middlesex Regiment) 17th and 23rd - sometimes known as the Football Battalions since so many players were deployed there - and the 5th Battalion.

1916 Tull fights in the Battle of the Somme and, having survived, begins training to become an officer.

1917 Tull is promoted to Second Lieutenant, seemingly in contradiction to the racially prejudicial rules of the time that prohibited men of non-European heritage from having authority over white troops. He goes on to fight on the Italian front with the 23rd Battalion.

1918 Walter Tull is killed in action near Favreuil during the First Battle of Papau as the German’s began their Spring Offensive. Despite the efforts of his comrades who were caught under heavy fire, his body was never recovered.
“TRYING TO UNRAVEL THE TRUTH WAS A PAINSTAKING TASK. IT WAS THE MOST DIFFICULT AND CHALLENGING BOOK I HAVE EVER WRITTEN”

What sorts of records and sources were you able to rely on?
For Black Poppies I relied on the work of historians like Ray Costello, who specialises in the history of Liverpool’s black community; Professor David Killingray, who has expert knowledge of Africans who served in the British army; and Jeffrey Green, who provided me with his research on the British West Indies Regiment. They had written about different aspects of the story in their books and articles and they were very supportive and generous with their time and expertise. Green is also knowledgeable about other aspects of Britain’s black community, including the founding of the influential African Progress Union in London in 1918. I wrote Black Poppies before David Olusoga’s The World’s War – Forgotten Soldiers of Empire, so I didn’t have access to his work.

I left school educationally disadvantaged. I did not go to university. I have never studied history. I taught myself how to use archives, such as the National Archives, Imperial War Museum, National Army Museum, Black Cultural Archives and the British Library. When I started writing history books in 1991, my approach was simple. Search for and collect first-hand testimony from the people who made history. So, first-hand testimony has been an important feature of all my history books whether it be from living relatives, letters or other sources.

How did you go about finding first hand accounts from the First World War?
It was difficult to find it for Black Poppies but Tony T. and Rebecca Goldstone generously gave me permission to quote from the interviews they conducted in the 1980s with survivors of the British West Indies Regiment. These First World War veterans were elderly then, living in retirement across the Caribbean, but their memories of being in the conflict were clear. I also found Norman Manley’s published memories of his First World War experiences in a 1973 edition of Jamaica Journal. My motto is: ‘Seek and you will find.’ Occasionally I am approached with information. A member of the Manley family read the first edition of Black Poppies and he asked to meet me. He showed me Norman Manley and his siblings’ First World War correspondence detailing the trials, tribulations and triumphs of life on the battlefields. He later granted permission for me to publish the letters in the new edition of Black Poppies. However, I have to mention that research for my books is sometimes restricted because there is no funding available for historians like myself who work outside of academia. This prevents me from applying for research grants from funding bodies like the British Academy or Arts and Humanities Research Council. The Arts Council of England stopped funding history research some years ago and I have been turned down for PhD funding four times for black British history projects.

Walter Tull is a name many of our readers might recognise and you spend some time discussing in the book. Why was he important?
Walter Tull’s story is important because we have a lot of information about his life both as a football hero, and as a soldier who successfully rose through the ranks. Photographs too. Perhaps he was more acceptable to his white comrades because of his success as a sportsman? Nevertheless, he is an inspiring British historical figure – but the British school curriculum needs to ensure he has a place in history lessons alongside the lives of the African American icons they teach, such as Dr Martin Luther King.

Why did you also choose to cover the stories of non-combatants during the war, like the conscientious objector Isaac Hall and the connected families of those at war?
It was important to me to offer a wide range of black British lives in the First World War. This is why I included black women and children on the home front, and the conscientious objector Isaac Hall. I aimed to give a fully rounded picture.
How has touring and giving talks on *Black Poppies* changed or evolved your understanding of these stories?

Since 2014 I have given many talks on *Black Poppies* and the reaction to the stories I tell has been astounding. I have had nothing but praise, especially in the black community, for cracking open the subject. My understanding of the subject has grown, hence the publication of the new edition, and I make a point of informing people that, in my personal view, racism existed in British history but not all white people were racists, and not all black people saw themselves as victims.

This is a concept you mention in the intro to your book. How important do you think that lesson is for readers of *Black Poppies*?

It is vitally important for historians to question and challenge what they read. If I hadn't done this, I would have ended up stuck in the 1980s. I would have believed what I was told back then by activists, that in the history of our country, with the existence of the British Empire and colonialism, all white British people were racists and all black people were victims of racism. When I give the *Black Poppies* talk to young black people, they are upset by the racist incidents and attitudes I include in the book, but at the same time they are inspired and empowered by the stories of black servicemen's comradeship with white servicemen, their heroism on the battlefields, and their ability to overcome adversity.

With the new access and public talks, does *Black Poppies* feel more like a living project in your life at this point?

*Black Poppies* has been a living project in my life since I signed the publishing contract with The History Press. It has been my most popular and successful black British history book. Whenever I visit the Imperial War Museum in London, the bookshop staff, who know me, always tell me that since 2014 *Black Poppies* has been their most popular title. Hard to believe, but true, considering the book was ignored by the media including many broadsheets and the BBC during the centenary period.

It’s a book full of inspiring people, tales of heroism and tragedy. Are there any that particularly stand out to you?

They are all extraordinary people, but I shall never forget the emotional impact of uncovering the life – and death – of Herbert Morris, the Jamaican lad who was shot at dawn for desertion. I am also fascinated by Mabel Mercer, the British-born singer who entertained the troops during the war, and went on to become, from the 1940s, the most influential cabaret singer in the United States. Frank Sinatra once said he learned everything he needed to know about phrasing from Mabel.
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