HITLER VS THE MOB
How the mafia fought Nazi agents in New York

FROST FAIRS
London's lost carnival on the ice

THE RULES OF REVENGE
Vikings
Trial by combat, banishment, and the blood eagle - the brutal truth behind the Norse honour code

BLOODY BYZANTINES
How the Romans lived on in the East

THE SECRET HISTORY OF CHRISTMAS
Tracing the season's origins

PLUS
Beloved royal pets, Ellis Island, Edward I, Hammer of the Scots, Brazil's Bandeirantes, Battle of Sempach, Cleopatra's decadent dessert

Dragon Empress
Why Wu Zetian is the only woman to ever rule China
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Editor’s picks

Nothing says ‘season’s greetings’ quite like an angry Viking coming at you with an axe, does it? Sadly, he’s not offering it as a gift – rather he’s challenging you to trial by combat. This was just one of many options for settling disputes. You might also have been banished, walking on burning hot coals, at least you would have been lucky enough to have frozen lava to wade through. However, the Vikings were not savages: most of their squabbles were settled through arbitration, while a jury of your peers would determine your sentence. The laws themselves did not come from on high either, but were voted on by the entire community. Face Viking justice from page 28.

While our front cover may seem lacking in Christmas spirit, you will discover that the Vikings may have been partly responsible for the tradition of hanging mistletoe under the mistletoe in our house – wait for it – in the year 1066. Find out why and what happened next from page 15.

Welcome

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Be part of history

Editor’s picks

没有什么比季节的祝福更像是一只愤怒的维京人用斧头袭击你。但不幸的是，他并不提供作为礼物——而是挑战你进行决斗。这只是众多解决冲突的方式之一。你可能会被流放，走在燃烧的熔岩上，至少你将能够在冰冻的熔岩中游泳。然而，维京人并不野蛮：大多数的纠纷是通过仲裁解决的，而由你的同龄人决定你的判决。这些法律本身并不来自上天，而是由整个社区投票通过的。面对维京人的正义，请从第28页开始。
While known as bloodthirsty pirates abroad, the Vikings were governed by strict laws at home.
SREBRENICA MASSACRE

A mother and daughter in a refugee shelter react to the news that the girl’s father died at Srebrenica. Over the course of five days in July 1995, the small town in Bosnia and Herzegovina suffered the worst genocide in Europe since World War II. Serb forces separated Muslim men and boys from their families, then systematically murdered over 7,000 of them in the surrounding fields. 14 December marks the end of the Bosnian conflict.

1995
Four years after Edward VIII renounced the throne on 11 December 1936, the newly dubbed Duke of Windsor was also made governor of the Bahamas. Serving from 1940 to 1945, he arrogantly dismissed the country as a "third-rate colony." But the British government may have appointed the duke to get him out of war-torn Europe, where he was accused of having fascist sympathies as well as being the target of several Nazi plots.

1945
Even in 1942, New Yorkers saw in the New Year by watching the Times Square ball drop. Though the US joined World War II in 1941, it was only decided after 1942 that the ball shouldn't be illuminated as it would make an easy target for enemy bombers. The iconic ball first fell in 1906, made of iron and wood and adorned with 100 25-watt light bulbs. Until 1995, it was lowered manually by six men and a guy with a stopwatch.
The Byzantine Empire

Uncover the extraordinary rise and fall of one of the world’s greatest empires as it buckled under the weight of internal conflict and foreign invasions.

**Byzantium is Born**

Greek colonists founded a city on the European side of the Bosphorus Strait. Strategically placed between Europe and Asia Minor, Byzantium prospered, though the Greeks and Persians warred over it many times.

**A Permanent Split**

Upon the death of Emperor Leo III, his two sons, Arcadius and Honorius, inherited the Eastern and the Western halves of the Roman Empire respectively. The empire would never be reunited.

**New Rome**

Emperor Constantine the Great moved the capital of the Roman Empire to Byzantium to better manage its eastern frontiers. Endowed by his name, the new capital was renamed Constantinople.

**Paying the Huns**

Amount of gold the Byzantines paid the Huns annually to keep them at bay.

**The West Falls**

The overthrow of Remmus Augustus by the barbarian Odoacer marked the end of Western Roman Empire. However, Odoacer bent the knee to Constantinople and Eastern Rome endured for another 1,000 years.

**The Great Schism**

After years of disputes, the Church formally separated into the Roman Catholic Church in the West, led by Pope Leo IX, and the Greek Orthodox Church, which was based in Constantinople.

**Restoration of Icons**

After another period of iconoclasm, icons held in 814, Empress Irene, regent for her son Michael III, finally ended the practice. Her efforts led to her canonisation as a saint.

**Holy Roman Empire**

Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne as Holy Roman emperor in an attempt to restore the Western Roman Empire. It frustrated the East, who felt that their power was being threatened.

**Rise of Iconoclasm**

Emperor Leo III made the veneration of religious icons illegal across the empire, something that continued after his death. This vexed the Western Church, which supported their use.

**It’s All Greek to Me!**

Emperor Heraclius introduced Greek as the official language of the empire’s administration, by the next generation, knowledge of Latin was rare, even among the educated.

**The Justinian Plague**

Approximate number of deaths daily in Constantinople.

**The Nika Riots**

Justinian’s harsh treatment of hooligans at a chariot race, as well as anger at a recent tax hike, sparked five days of rioting that killed a tenth of Constantinople.

**The Sack of Constantinople**

The army of Sultan Mehmed II killed Emperor Constantine XI as the Ottoman Turks successfully captured the capital.

**Plundering Away**

Estimated number of men in the Crusader army. Number of ships used in the sacking. Number of years the Latin Empire survived.

**Internal Strife**

A series of civil wars among dynastic rivals during the reign of Emperor John V severely weakened the empire and left it vulnerable to attacks from enemies abroad.

**End of an Empire**

The army of Sultan Mehmed II put Emperor Constantine XI on the throne, the Byzantines refused to pay. Angered, the Crusaders conquered the capital and caused the collapse of the empire.

**Population of Constantinople**

Estimated number of pre-plague inhabitants during the 6th century. Number of people who lived in the capital after its recapture during the 15th century.

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THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE

HAGHIA SOPHIA
TURKEY, 537 – PRESENT

The site of Hagia Sophia has been a holy place for centuries. Constantine I built a church on the foundations of a pagan temple in 325 CE and this was restored and then extended several times. However, after the church was destroyed by fire during the Nika Riots in 532, Emperor Justinian I had a grand vision. Wanting to restore the empire to its former glory, he decided to build the greatest church the world had ever seen.

Justinian hired a pair of famed mathematicians, Anthemius and Isidore, to design it. In 537, just under six years later, the Hagia Sophia (meaning ‘Holy Wisdom’) was completed. Its enormous dome relied on a revolutionary design that made it the largest in the world for almost a millennium. Despite its incredible design, the centuries were hard on the awe-inspiring church and subsequent Byzantine emperors used repairs as opportunities to add their name to it. Some were beautiful additions — for example, Justinian’s successor Justin II covered the walls with intricate mosaics. However, not every ruler was a patron of the arts. In 726, Emperor Leo III, following a civil war, forbade religious icons and this iconoclasm (a period of iconoclasm) was restored and then extended several times.

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When the Ottoman Empire fell after World War I, the secular nation of Turkey was created and Hagia Sophia became a museum, which you can still visit today in modern-day Istanbul.

01 Squaring the circle
What gives Hagia Sophia its beauty is the revolutionary way in which the architects created an immense open space. It is a dome built upon two semi-domes. In order to do this, it was necessary to ‘square the circle,’ which means to build a circular dome upon the square base. Hagia Sophia was one of the first structures to make use of this technique. Byzantine paintings of six-winged angels called seraphs (Greek: heupterpes) still line the pendentives.

02 The exterior adornments
The four minarets were added separately over the centuries following the Ottoman Conquest in 1453. At 60 metres, the minarets are taller than the cupola — the highest part of the dome — which hovers effortlessly 55.6 metres above the beautiful marble inlaid floor.

03 A miracle of construction
A marvel of engineering, Hagia Sophia was originally completed only five years after construction began. But 20 years later the dome collapsed and was repaired by the nephew of one of the original architects with the ribs we see today adding support.

04 Christian and Islamic fusion
Both the Byzantines and the Ottomans removed Christian mosaics at different times and replaced them with nonrepresentational art like calligraphy and geometric shapes. The Islamic calligraphy inside the dome probably covers an original Byzantine mosaic. A surviving mosaic of a Christ Pantocrator, the so-called Deées mosaic, probably dates from the 13th century and is considered one of the finest examples of late Byzantine mosaics.

05 Imperial strength
Supporting each hemisphere are four 17-meter tall porphyry columns. Like the Romans before them, the Byzantine emperors prized porphyry marble in part because it was rare, but also because it was purple — the colour of royalty. However, porphyry is known to fracture under stress, so the basilica’s columns had to be reinforced over the centuries with bronze collars. The capitals of the columns have Justinian’s monogram carved into them.

06 Doge Dandolo’s tomb
Hagia Sophia started out as a Greek Orthodox church. Then the Fourth Crusade, led by Venetians in 1204, sacked Constantinople and turned it into a Catholic one until the Byzantines returned in 1261. In 1453, the Ottomans turned it into a mosque, which it remained until 1934 when Mustafa Kemal Atatürk ordered it to be turned into a museum. A reminder of the Venetian Crusade, Dandolo, the 41st doge of Venice, is buried here.

07 The greatest temple ever built
Even today, when one gazes into the ancient dome, one is left speechless in its awe-inspiring space and history spanning centuries. Fortunately, the Byzantine emperor Justinian had the words, comparing it favourably with the Biblical First Temple in Jerusalem, saying, “O, Solomon, I have outdone thee!”

08 Knock on the emperor door
This seven-metre-high doorway — the largest in Hagia Sophia — was originally reserved for Justinian and his retinue. Made from oak and bronze, Byzantine sources claimed the wood was from Noah’s Ark. A mosaic above the door was added in either the 9th or 10th century and depicts Emperor Leo VI bowing in respect to Christ.

09 Lustration urns
Two large marble urns flank the entrance to Hagia Sophia. Helleno-Roman in style, they were each carved from single chunks of marble. These originally would have contained water that was used as part of a Roman purification ritual called lustratio. They were added to Hagia Sophia by Sultan Murad III, who brought them to the monument from the city of Pergamon.

10 Islamic calligraphy
The Ottomans added their art and calligraphy over the centuries. These ‘medallions’ were added during a renovation in 1847. They are Islamic calligraphy with the names of Allah, Muhammad and the first four Caliphs. Below is a minbar, or the elevated place where a milezzin leads and recites the call to prayer within the mosque.

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THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE

The Varangian Guardsman

CONSTANTINOPLE, 988–1400

The Varangian Guard was formed by Basil II in 988 to put down a rebellion. The force was made up of Rus warriors, the descendents of Vikings who had settled in modern-day Russia and Ukraine. Some straight-up Vikings also served in the Byzantine force, such as Harald Hardrada, who was a Varangian commander before reigning as king of Norway from 1046-66. Over time, the guards evolved from a band of unruly mercenaries to a loyal elite.

CONICAL HELMET
HEAVY IS THE HEAD
While there may have been some variation, it is likely that most Varangians wore conical helmets with a nose guard, in a Western style. This may have also included a mail hood or curtains for added protection.

VARANGIAN BRA
HEAVY ARMOUR SUPPORT
Varangian guardsmen wore a full-length chain mail tunic that would cover them from their head to their knees. However, the metal hauberk could weigh 12 kilograms or more, so the soldiers would wear a special leather harness—known as a Varangian bra—to take the weight off their shoulders.

LAMELLAR SCALE VEST
RIVETING DISPLAY
On top of the chain mail, the Varangians sported an extra layer of protection in the more stylish lamellar scale vest. While other lamellar vests were made from the rows of leather or metal scales laced together, the plates of the Byzantine design were riveted onto a backing for extra sturdiness.

UNDERGARMENTS
DYED IN THE WOOL
While Byzantine military manuals don’t mention any colour, many mosaics show the guards wearing purple cloaks and undergarments. However, this expensive colour was the preserve of the emperor in Byzantine society. Instead, it is far more likely that the Varangians joined the rest of the emperor’s entourage in wearing red cloaks.

BATTLEAXE
AXE TO GRIND
After the Norman invasion of Britain in 1066, the Varangians saw an influx of displaced Anglo-Saxon soldiers join their ranks. Hence the double-handed axe, so popular with Anglo-Saxon warriors at the Battle of Hastings, became a prominent symbol and weapon of the Guard.

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THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE

Day in the life

CHARIOT RACER
CHARIOT RACERS DREAMED OF GLORY AND SUCCESS IN THE HIPPODROME
BYZANTINE EMPIRE, 500-4

Chariot racing was the most popular spectator sport in the Byzantine Empire. Races took place in Constantinople's Hippodrome circus, which could seat up to 100,000 people at once. Spectators from all classes, including the emperor, enjoyed the games as a distraction from their daily life while the racers themselves were normally slaves. The racers were divided into four teams, which inspired the same fierce loyalty as modern football teams. In fact, fans of rival teams often brawled in the aisles. The races were also a prime opportunity for the emperor to present himself to the public, something that otherwise rarely occurred.

PRE-GAME SHOW
As the racers arrived to prepare for a day of competing, a wide array of entertainments were put on for the spectators to enjoy like wrestling, dancing, juggling, tightrope walks and wild beast fights. The emperor and his consort would be seated in their booth, called a Kathisma, which was directly linked to the Great Palace.

REPRESENT THE TEAM
There were four factions that raced in the Hippodrome — Blue, Green, Red and White. Racers would wear tunics that sported the colour of their team so that the crowd could easily identify them. Out of the four, it was the Blue and Green teams that were the most prominent, with the Red and White teams seen as the secondary factions.

BETTER SAFE THAN SORRY
Chariot races were extremely dangerous and racers needed to wear protective gear. Leather pads for the thighs and chest were common along with leather helmets. A sharp knife was also a must in case the chariot's reigns became entangled and the racer needed to cut himself free.

PLAY FAIR
Lots were drawn to determine which of the 12 starting gates, known as carceres, the racers would go from.

READY, SET, GO
A wealthy sponsor for the chariots, such as a senator or even the emperor, would drop a white cloth to signal the beginning of the race. The chariot crews would have to ride to the end of the U-shaped track, wheel around the spina in the centre and back again to win. Each race required seven laps and lasted around 15 minutes.

LUNCHTIME
There was a break midway through the day for food and drink, with more entertainment brought out for the spectacle in the meantime. It was also an opportunity for the racers to recuperate and ready themselves for the afternoon. This was not just about victory — success in the Hippodrome could propel racers to stardom.

IN IT TO WIN IT
After lunch, the races would continue with up to 24 performed each day. A movable scoreboard, which had seven dolphin- or egg-shaped lap counters, kept track of the score. Racers would team up to get rid of the first-place racer, usually by knocking into their carriage — an extremely dangerous and deadly move.

WANT A REMATCH?
Unique to Byzantine chariot racing was the honour of the 'diversium', which allowed the winner to challenge the loser to a rematch with swapped chariots and horses. It was an opportunity for the victor to prove to the crowd that they had won the races based on skill, not luck.

COLLECT THE PRIZE
The winning chariot racer received their prize from the emperor, which consisted of a gold seal, a tunic, a helmet and a silk belt. The racer's victory was ultimately the emperor's and during the prize ceremony the crowd would shout their allegiance to him. For the racer, winning gave him the chance to switch teams and increase his income.

TIME TO PARTY
After the day's events, the factions celebrated or commiserated. There was frequent conflict among the different teams and supporters since chariot racing promoted a mob-like mentality, not too dissimilar to football hooliganism seen today. For this reason the scholar Procopius declared the racing factions "a sickness of the soul."
**How to WIN a WAR WITH GREEK FIRE**

**DEFEND THE BYZANTINE CAPITAL BY SEARING ENEMY SHIPS WITH THIS FEARSOME INCENDIARY TO BURN YOUR WAY TO VICTORY CONSTANCE, 673-1453**

Greek fire was the most feared weapon in Medieval warfare. An incendiary chemical, it would set fire spontaneously to wood and flesh, and couldn't be extinguished by water. While pitch and oil-soaked projectiles were used extensively in the Middle Ages, Greek fire was the sole preserve of the Byzantine Empire, in composition a closely guarded secret.

It's thought to have been invented in the 7th century by Jewish refugee Kallinikos of Heliopolis. Thrown in pots or pumped through tubes, it helped repulse many sieges on Constantinople. In fact, its deadliness has been cited as the reason for the empire's long reign.

**WHAT YOU'LL NEED...**

**VINEGAR**

**A PUMP AND HOSE**

**POTS**

**SMALL CANNET**

**Dragons head**

How do you make such a terrifying weapon even more frightening? Hide it up your sleeve. A fuse from the head of a mythical beast, of course, or at least from behind the protection of a metal shield.

**FUSE**

The substance is no good unless it's on fire. A fuse at the end of the mixture will ignite it as it's launched.

**PUMP**

The trigger of the flamethrower is a pump that you will need to push up and down, propelling the Greek fire out as an inferno.

**Cauldron**

The heated metal container where the lethal substance is kept, ready to be spewed forth from the head of a dragon or a metal shield.

**Bronze nozzle**

An adjustable mouthpiece with which to direct the Greek fire onto the ships and soldiers of enemy forces.

**Greek Fire**

Recipe for Greek fire

**Safety Check**

Let's check you've got everything you need to defend the city of Constantinople from the enemy fleet. We've got Greek fire, a cauldron of deadly substance, and a pump to get the flame flowing. But before we start, let's make sure everyone's ready.

1. **Set a Trap**

   One of the downsides of Greek fire is that it only has a range of about six metres, so we'll need to draw the enemy fleet in order to give them the full effect of our homemade secret recipe. Filing flame-throwing boxes to the fore and aft of 15 old ships should be enough to tempt the enemy fleet in order to give them the full effects of our homemade secret recipe.

2. **Let Others Join In**

   Some of the enemy will try and escape the inferno, so make sure they don't make it back to their ships safe and sound. A nice of the army and navy to capitalise and finish off the invaders.

3. **All Hands to the Pumps**

   No need for accuracy. Any who escape can help spread the news that the emperor and his secret weapon are not to be messed with. Make sure those who abandon their ships get a good roasting.

4. **Old-fashioned Warfare**

   Though the Ottomans had developed their own version of Greek fire, the successful siege of Constantinople was only made possible because the Ottoman Empire had already mastered the art of using massed troops and a vast array of siege engines.

5. **How Not to Win with Greek Fire**

   While the Great Wall of China was a testament to the Chinese ingenuity, it was no match for Greek fire. The Chinese were quick to adapt, developing their own version of the incendiary chemical.

6. **Win a War with Greek Fire**

   Greek fire was the most feared weapon in Medieval warfare. It was used extensively in the Middle Ages, Greek fire was the sole preserve of the Byzantine Empire, in composition a closely guarded secret.
THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE

Hall of Fame

MURDEROUS RULERS

At the heart of the Byzantine Empire was a monarchy that survived on intrigue, deception and bloodthirsty violence

PHOCAS

NON-SYNTHETIC 5.54-60

Phocas was a member of the army during the reign of Emperor Maurice. A bloody military revolt against Maurice led to his execution and as a result, a new ruler emerged. Phocas was crowned as the new ruler. Civil war ensued and aristocratic landowners were targeted. Phocas stripped them of their power and influence. These events set off the empire as factions sprang up determined to remove the usurper. Constantine was seized and Phocas was promptly beheaded.

JUSTINIAN II

685-695

Justinian was a skilled politician who sought to strengthen the empire by enfeebling his enemies. He was known for his intelligence and strategic mind, which allowed him to gain power and control. However, his rule was short-lived and he was eventually deposed by his own son, Constantine VII. Justinian was later exiled and died a lonely death.

BASIL I

Macedonian Dynasty 886-904

Though from humble origins, Basil earned the friendship and patronage of Emperor George I, who eventually crowned him as co-emperor. Basil was a great manipulator and committed a series of massacres to clear his path to the throne. When he sensed that Michael's threat was waning, he brutally murdered the emperor and his relatives. As ruler, he oversaw a series of conquests that turned the Byzantine Empire into the most dominant power in Europe.

IRENE

Gaian Dynasty 750-802

Irene was thrust into power when she became regent for her son, Constantine VII. She eliminated her rivals, including her sister Zoë, and ruled for 23 years. Irene was known for her intelligence and strategic mind, which allowed her to gain power and control. However, her rule was eventually overthrown by her son, Michael VII.

ANDRONICUS I

Comnenos Dynasty 1081-1092

Andronicus forced Alexios to sign a document that declared his son Alexios IV as co-emperor. Andronicus became tyrannical and the population revolted. He attempted to escape but was ultimately captured, tortured and killed.

BASIL II

Macedonian Dynasty 976-1025

Basil replaced the last Roman emperor, Theophanes, who had been blinded by his father. Basil was a skilled military leader and oversaw a series of conquests that led to the expansion of the Byzantine Empire. He was known for his intelligence and strategic mind, which allowed him to gain power and control. However, his rule was eventually overthrown by his son, Michael II.

THEODORA PORPHYROGENITA

Macedonian Dynasty 691-718

Theodora was known for her intelligence and strategic mind, which allowed her to gain power and control. She was known for her military successes and her ability to rule. However, her rule was eventually overthrown by her husband, Basil II.

JOHN V PALAEOLOGUS

Palaioiologus Dynasty 1222-1254

Although not a murderous man, John's reign was dominated by violence and rebellion. According to the throne as a young boy, the empire was plunged into a civil war. John managed to overthrow his rival, his father's old aide, and then followed a second civil war. He was deposed twice—first by his son and then by his grandson. John managed to regain the throne but was forced to appease his sons with titles.

Although she reigned as a regent and co-emperor beforehand, Irene was the first female to rule the Byzantine Empire entirely by herself.
Why did the Crusaders invade Constantinople?

Eliot Issacs

The Byzantine Empire was a Christian state, so it might seem odd that Crusaders sacked its capital in 1204. But, in fact, it was regarded as a betrayal of principles and greed. The Fourth Crusade were offered a reward by the exiled Byzantine prince Alexius if they put him on the throne. The Crusaders did so but the new emperor, now Alexius IV Angelus, was quickly murdered. The next ruler refused to pay the Crusaders, so they looted the city for three days straight, killing indiscriminately.

What made Byzantine mosaics so special?

Louise Thompson

In Antiquity, most mosaics adorned floors as they were usually made of stones that could withstand people walking on them. But the Byzantines put mosaics on their walls, so they could afford to use more fragile materials. Faces, hands and feet were set with stone, but coarse crystals were used to depict clothes. Mother of pearl, gold and silver leaf were also employed. Byzantine art was almost always religious, with the image of Christ Pantocrator in the Hagia Sophia the most famous example.

Did all Byzantine monks stand on pillars?

Josh Leary

Sylphism (from the Greek 'sylyros' meaning 'pillar') was a form of Christian worship in which a holy man would live atop a column, preaching, fasting and praying. A rail prevented them falling off and some had a small roof above their heads, though the aim was to suffer as the stylites believed this would ensure the salvation of their souls. Stylites were common in the early days of Byzantine Empire but the practice was far from universally embraced.

Saint Caimin the Elder (pictured right) was the first to take residence on a pillar in Aleppo, then part of the Byzantines' dominion, in 423 CE. He stayed up there until his death 36 years later. While his first pole was two metres high, it was later extended to 15 metres.

Saint Simeon's disciple Saint Daniel took stylitism to Constantinople, where the city archbishop ordained him and both Emperor Leo I and Emperor Zeno visited him.

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Next month's topic: Steam trains. Send your questions to

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Though they have a reputation for being bloodthirsty pirates abroad, the Vikings were governed by the rule of law at home

By David J Williamson, Jack Parsons and James Hoare

The Rules of Revenge

Viking Justice

As a vivid image of Viking raiders has induced over the centuries rampant, bloodthirsty warriors emerging from their terrorizing longships to ravage villages and towns, terrorising their terrified victims they were usually savage, seemingly governed only by their thirst for battle and desire for gold and land.

Yet behind the wild and uncontrollable image there lies a different story: men and women from an ordered society that had structure and a deeply rooted desire for fairness and justice. Punishments could be severely disproportionate to the crime — just calling someone a coward could see you have to fight them to the death — but the Viking legal system was based on a legislative assembly where all free men had a say and trials were carried out with a jury of your peers.

We use the term ‘Vikings’ broadly, but it’s wrong to think of these people as a single group from a single place. In the Viking Age, as now, Scandinavia was a complex collection of countries, each with their own slightly different variation of a deeper shared culture and belief system, as well as their own ambitions and plans. Even these individual nations contained multitudes: beset by clan feuds, political factions in the warrior class, and bitter disputes between individuals.

The need for laws and a system that was acceptable and workable for all was essential. In a society made up of farmers and warriors, often spread over vast distances, there was a dire need in such a society for an institutional method of resolving disputes. New laws were made at the Althing, an annual event where the opinions of the entire population could be heard on topics such as taxes, deciding who was king, and even peace treaties. The Althing helped engrain a sense of unity against others.

The importance of stories and sagas, especially about the exploits of the gods, was deeply ingrained into Norse culture. The tales inspired and guided them as to how they should live their lives. The story of Tyr and Fenrir is a good example of the Viking sense of justice.

It was prophesised that the giant wolf Fenrir would devour the god Odin, so the gods set out to capture him. They instructed dwarves to create magical chains, each stronger than the last, to bind Fenrir, telling the wolf that they would test his strength. But upon seeing them, the cunning wolf became suspicious.

Then Fenrir, son of the trickster god Loki, had an idea. He said that he would only allow himself to be bound if one of the gods placed their hand in the wolf’s mouth as an act of good faith. Tyr, the god of war, law and order, was the only one brave enough to volunteer. As expected, when Fenrir realised he could not escape the magical bonds, he promptly bit off Tyr’s hand. Tyr’s actions were the embodiment of truth and justice to the Vikings. The gods had pledged an oath to the beast that had to be fulfilled and, as grisly as it may have been, Tyr saw his sacrifice as the only way in which justice could be served. In Viking society, the breaking of an oath was held in great contempt. The story of Tyr and Fenrir was the foundation of their unwavering belief in the strength of fairness and justice.

By David J Williamson, Jack Parsons and James Hoare

Divine Judgement

The saga of Tyr and Fenrir helped engrain a sense of justice into Norse culture.
**Norse culture**

While the most important disputes might be discussed at the Althing, crimes were normally tried at the local and regional level at a Law-Thing, which were smaller but more frequent. These would cover topics such as property disputes and marital affairs, but perhaps also those that needed to be dealt with sooner, such as a murder investigation.

In most communities, a Thing would be presided over by a chieftain or even a king. However, this was not always the case. In Iceland, there was no single figurehead at the centre of the rule of law and the people would elect a leader — usually, they still usually came from one of the wealthiest families on the island. But it was the free men, known as karls, that made the Viking assemblies as much more democratic and set the standard for the system of law we recognise today. Viking society had a simple structure, with the majority of wealth and power in the hands of nobles, the jarls. Below them were the free men, known as karls, that made the Viking assemblies as much more democratic and set the standard for the system of law we recognize today. Viking society had a simple structure, with the majority of wealth and power in the hands of nobles, the jarls.

**OPEN-AIR TRIAL**

Viking disputes would be settled at assemblies known as Things. Viking trials were often held in a convenient or well-known place, such as a field or the edge of a river, to make it easier to find witnesses.

**The memory man**

With no written laws, past laws and decisions would be recited by a law-sayer, who would advise the chieftain and the jury on the law and as part of the final decision.

**Voice of the people**

The size of the jury would vary depending on the seriousness of the crime, with 12, 24 or 36 men. All had to be free men and at least 12 years old.

**The gathering**

Viking trials were often held in a convenient or well-known place, such as a field or the edge of a river, to make it easier to find witnesses for the relevant parties to prosecute and defend. The law-sayer would be elected by the Allthing legislature and serve a three-year term. Just as we swear oaths today, there are records of witnesses taking an oath before the proceedings, promising to give an honest account of what they knew.

**Wealth and power**

The chief, who was often elected and from one of the community’s wealthiest families, would preside over the trial. Unfortunately, chiefs were not above being bribed or passing judgements in their own self-interest.

**For and against**

Witnesses would be able to speak on behalf of both the accused and the accuser but sometimes only got involved if they had personal stakes in the case. They would swear on a bloodied ring.

**Trials by fire**

Viking justice was not without its brutal punishments. Among the most extreme measures was the death penalty, which could include hanging, burning, or slicing open the victim’s belly. The blood eagle was a particularly gruesome way to go, where the victim’s ribs and lungs were ripped out, leaving them with no lungs to breathe.

**SLAVERY**

While wealth and power were highly valued in Viking society, slaves were also used extensively. Thraels, or slaves, were usually foreigners and their status varied depending on their treatment. In some cases, they would be treated as equals, but in others, they were treated as mere property. Thraels were often used for chores and could even be sold into slavery.

**Pay the ultimate price**

Among the Vikings, everything was paid for, even a man’s life. If one man killed another, the surviving party had to pay a fine, known as a blood-price, which was determined by the severity of the crime.

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FIGHT FOR YOUR RIGHTS

Holmgang — a ritual duel was the most effective way of settling disputes in the Viking Age.

For a society that had so much pride and honour at stake, Viking Age disputes could not be settled by a trial or a duel. After the ritual duelling of holmgang took off, Meyemomen could utilise different forms for its less formal type of swarmsdomen as strong. The arena was marked out by staking down cloaks or ox hide covers, approximately six square metres in surface area — a sacred grove or holy site, or a literal island or islet (hence the name). The fight would take place three to seven days after the challenge and to the death, but because of the proximity it was actually quite difficult to deliver a killing blow — just as well, as death in Holmgang could lead to a feud that was exactly the sort of self-perpetuating carnage the ritual was justified to prevent.

The ultimate price to pay for a Viking was to be outlawed from society. Those partially outlawed, for three years had their home and possessions to remain, but to be fully outlawed, cast out, dishonoured and lose all worldly wealth was difficult to endure. Whatever the outcome, tracking down and killing an outlaw wasn’t a crime and so many would flee to other lands to escape such a fate. It was better than facing a possible individual who sought to improve their status and standing in the community by carrying out their own death sentences in this way.

Another way of distributing justice was in hand-to-hand combat — a holmgang, or duel — but there was no guarantee of justice being on the side of the right. In simple Viking terms, the gods favoured the righteous and the outcome was seen as justice being carried out. In reality, the most rented judging on the sides of these taking part and it could be a very uneven match, but it was possible for one of the parties to appoint a substitute or champion in their place, thereby possibly swung the fight in their favour.

The 1,000th anniversary of the Althing, June 1930

The Ljósavatn ceremony

“The ultimate price to pay for a Viking was to be outlawed from society”

Either way, in the eyes of the gods it was always the winner who was in the right and the means justified the end.

However, Viking notions of which crimes deserved a fine and those that required capital punishments were very different from ours today. Taking responsibility for one’s own actions was considered paramount. If you did something wrong, you had to admit to it and then you could defend yourself at the Thing, which was the comparable way to handle it.

You could even get away with murder — if you did it in broad daylight and not flee the scene, you would get a lighter sentence. Erik the Red killed two men in around 981 in Hring far, Iceland. He did not run and was exiled for three years. This worked out in his favour as he discovered Greenland while he was gone.

In contrast, theft was a horrid crime because stealing involved taking one’s action. Grettir the Strong was almost hung for stealing sheep when he was a starving outlaw in the 11th century. This form of execution was very rare and considered a form of suicide. Murder could also carry a death sentence. Viking law dictated that to use insults that suggested another was unmanly or effeminate — for example, calling someone cowardly — gave a warrior the legal right to challenge their accuser to a duel.

Viking law clearly did not see piracy against foreigners as crime, but then again neither did the Vikings protect themselves. Some attempts did end in murder, and hundreds of years later Nonetheless. Viking raiding eventually gave way to settlements across early Medieval Europe.
The Norwegians settled in Scotland, Ireland and Iceland; the Swedes in Russia, the Baltic, and Eastern Europe; the Danes in England and France. With the flourishing of Viking settlements came the spread of their laws. Archaeological evidence for Things have been found in the Isle of Man, the Faroe Islands, Scotland and beyond. In many of these places, honorary Things still assemble.

In England, meanwhile, the Danelaw represented a geographical area negotiated through various battles and treaties but it was the foundation of many aspects of modern law that we know today. Far from being oppressed and enslaved, the parts of England under Viking rule continued to thrive and there's no evidence that the Danelaw was any more lawless than neighbouring Wessex. In fact, Viking justice has left a legacy that endures to this day — the English word 'law' derives directly from Old Norse.

As a system of law and order, the Thing had its faults, such as being open to corruption and overly reliant on an unwavering belief in the will of the gods. But it was inclusive, giving the ordinary man a voice and placing the strong Viking values of honour and fairness at its core. It was this strength that was to carry it through many years of change, ensuring that small and strong rulers could spread their influence throughout entire countries and on through the centuries to the enduring legacy that we have today.

The Wile exported their laws to their colonies, including Britain.
The temporary truce saw the British and the Germans venturing into no-man’s-land, swapping cigarettes and even having a carol sing-off.

On Christmas Eve 1914, British troops were hauled up their trenches when they overheard the Germans singing ‘Silent Night’ and other carols. They responded with their own festive songs, sparking a sing-off between the two sides. The next day, 25 December, some of the soldiers made their way into no-man’s-land to exchange gifts and take photos with the enemy.

Written by Jessica Leggett

50 things you didn’t know about the festive season

THE CHRISTMAS DAY TRUCE
A temporary festive reprieve on the front line

Whether the famous football match between the Germans and the British took place has been debated but there were certainly ‘kick-abouts’ between the two sides. It was a brief period of peace for those far away from home at a time when family was supposed to come together. Although a heartwarming story, the same could not be said for the entire Western Front. Battles were still fought on Christmas Day and those who did manage to venture into no-man’s-land safely were faced with the grim task of recovering the dead and retrieving the wounded. It was also not the only truce to have occurred along the Western Front in 1914. Despite expectations that the war would be over by Christmas, it was soon clear that this was not to be. The initial enthusiasm of the troops had worn off as they became exhausted with the toll of war. By November 1914, there were small, informal truces along the Front in which soldiers from both sides agreed to quiet periods with no gunfire and a chance to recover the bodies of those who had fallen.

When reports reached the high command of the British Army of these little ‘truces’, they were angry. The troops were fraternising with the enemy and putting the task at hand in jeopardy. In 1915, an order was issued that anyone found initiating any such truces would be punished and they never happened again.

“It was a brief period of peace for those far away from home”
Gruber. The carol was soon copied and spread throughout Austria. According to legend, the carol ‘Silent Night’ was created as a result of mice attacking a child. The idea of Jesus being born in a stable is also under debate. The Bible never actually tells us when Jesus was born, with the Gospels of Matthew and Luke providing different accounts of the event. In fact it was Pope Julius I who declared Jesus’ birthday to be 25 December in 345 CE, most likely to integrate the pagan celebrations with Christianity. Pope Julius I was the first Pope to define Christmas Day as a day of Christ’s birth and Christmas was outlawed in 1659. Christmas was against the drunken celebration of Christmas, which they believed was a pagan tradition.

The Secret History of Christmas

Half devil, half goat, Krampus is Santa Claus’ evil counterpart as depicted in Germanic folklore. While it was Santa’s job to travel around and deliver gifts to the children who had been good, it was left to Krampus to punish those who had been naughty. He is known to carry around a large sack to kidnap the naughty children to eat, drown or drag down the underworld and to use his stick to beat them. Krampusnacht, also known as Krampus Night, is a celebration held on 5 December, the day before Saint Nicholas’ Day, because this is when Krampus would supposedly arrive to date out his various punishments. Today, the event is known for the raucous and drunk celebrations when people dress up as Krampus and run through the streets – however, this behavior has never been accepted. For years, the myth of Krampus became lost across Europe as the Catholic Church, which disapproved of the superstition, effectively banned Christmas. The tales of Santa’s other evil companions such as Le Père Fouettard, who whipped naughty children, and Knicke布雷切特, who would gift them lumps of coal, also similarly faded from popular memory. Having said this, in recent years the dark side of Christmas has seen a resurgence in popularity, with their tales becoming increasingly commercialised.

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There are also characters out there that were known as Krampus. In Greece, the Kallikantzaros could not walk through underground during the 12 days of Christmas to trouble the humans on earth. To protect themselves, people would burn Yule logs for the 12 days of Christmas. In recent years, the Kallikantzaros has seen a resurgence in popularity, with their tales becoming increasingly commercialised.

The Secret History of Christmas

Meet Krampus and his evil associates

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半人半羊的克劳斯，是圣诞老人的邪恶同伴。在中世纪的德语中，圣诞老人的使命是给孩子们送礼物，而克劳斯的任务则是惩罚那些不听话的孩子。他随身带着一个大袋子，用来抓走不听话的孩子，然后在地狱里折磨他们。克劳斯之夜，即克劳斯之夜，是12月5日的庆祝活动，因为在这一天，克劳斯会从圣尼古拉斯日之前带来各种惩罚。今天，这个活动以狂野的和醉酒的庆祝活动而闻名，人们会穿上克劳斯的衣服，在街上奔跑。然而，这种行为从未被接受。多年来，克劳斯的传说在欧洲各地丢失。圣诞节期间，天主教会反对这种习俗，有效地禁止了圣诞节。圣尼古拉斯的其他邪恶伴侣，如Le Père Fouettard，会鞭打淘气的孩子，而Knicke布雷切特，会给他们送煤块，这些故事也逐渐从人们的记忆中淡出。然而，近年来，圣诞节的黑暗面已经重新流行起来，他们的传说开始变得越来越商业化。
A TIME FOR CORONATIONS

A number of Medieval monarchs consciously chose to be crowned on Christmas Day. It meant that their coronation would tie in with the celebrations for the birth of Christ, which would in emphasise their divine right to rule as awarded to them by God.

LAWBREAKING MINCE PIES

As we know, Oliver Cromwell and Parliament banned Christmas celebrations and made mince pies and other Christmas foods illegal, hoping that it would drive out the gluttony in the country. However, when Charles II became king in 1660, the ban was lifted and the law no longer exists.

KISS ME UNDER THE MISTLETOE

The myth of the history of the festive plant

The Celtic Druids believed that mistletoe was a symbol of fertility because it could survive the harsh winters and still bear berries. It was used in elixirs designed to cure sterility and sprigs of it would also be hung over doorways as protection against evil spirits.

However, she failed to ask the harmless mistletoe and so Loki made an arrow out of the plant, which he used to kill Baldr. Frigg was devastated and it was said that her tears formed the mistletoe's white berries. In one version of the tale, Baldr was restored to life and Frigg blessed the plant as a symbol of love, swearing to kiss anyone who walked under it.

A LIFE-CHANGING GIFT

Author Harper Lee worked for years to support herself while struggling to find the time to write. Everything changed in 1956 when her friends Michael and Joy Brown gifted her a year's worth of wages for Christmas. Lee quit her job and wrote To Kill a Mockingbird, one of the world's best-selling novels.

THE ROOTS OF DECKING THE HALLS

Evergreens have been a popular choice for winter decorations since pagan times with the belief that they represented everlasting life. Herbs such as rosemary and bay, which symbolise remembrance and valour respectively, were commonplace in the home. Holly, a masculine plant, and ivy, a feminine plant, were thought to balance the home.

THE GRAVE OF SAINT NICHOLAS

Where was the real-life Santa Claus really buried?

Recently, archaeologists in Turkey have discovered what they believe to be the tomb of Saint Nicholas — in other words, the resting place of Father Christmas. Saint Nicholas was believed to have been born in Myra, modern-day Demre, in southern Turkey, where this tomb has been found under an ancient church. Known for his kindness, generosity and secret giving gifts to the children of Myra, he lived during the 4th century. However, he didn't become known as 'Santa Claus' until the 16th when he became popular across Europe.
THE REAL KING HEROD

The legacy of King Herod, the Roman-appointed ruler of Judea, is a complex one. Although he is sometimes viewed as a brutal tyrant, the figure of Herod is actually richer in nuance than one might initially think. The story of Herod is most famously associated with the Massacre of the Innocents, which is described in the Gospel of Matthew. This event, according to the Gospels, occurred when Herod, fearing the threat posed by the newborn baby Jesus, ordered the killing of all male infants under the age of two in Bethlehem. The massacre is often seen as a symbol of Herod's tyranny and his suppression of any potential challenge to his power.

However, the true history of Herod is much more nuanced than this. He was a political mastermind, known for his extensive building projects and his role in stabilizing Judea during a time of great turmoil. Despite his brutality, Herod was also a patron of the arts, and his court became a center of intellectual and cultural activity.

THE CONFEDERATE'S CHRISTMAS MIRACLE

Andrew Johnson, 17th president of the United States, continued Abraham Lincoln's plan to pardon Confederate soldiers following the end of the American Civil War. However, it was President Johnson who introduced the tree in December 1863.

A ROYAL MISCONCEPTION

Who really introduced Christmas trees to England?

Ask anyone who introduced the Christmas tree to England and most will say Prince Albert, Queen Victoria’s consort. However, this is one of the most common misconceptions associated with Christmas. In fact, it was actually Queen Charlotte, the wife of King George III, who brought the first known Christmas tree to England — the periodicals such as the Illustrated London News began to print pictures of Queen Charlotte, Prince Albert, and their many children enjoying the holiday together.

THE HISTORY OF ADVENT

It is unclear when the season of Advent was first introduced, although we know that the idea was adapted from the calendar. The custom of Advent is thought to have begun in the 5th century. This period of preparing represented the anticipatory waiting for the Nativity and the birth of Christ but the practice has been widespread since the 13th century.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Charles Dickens is perhaps best known for his festive fiction. His famous novel, A Christmas Carol, has been adapted into films and stage productions countless times. The story of Scrooge's transformation and the lessons he learns from his encounters with Marley's Ghost, Bob Cratchit's wife Mary, Tiny Tim, and the Three Spirits has become synonymous with Christmas spirit.

THE REAL SCROOGE

Dickens got the inspiration for the cold-hearted character of Ebenezer Scrooge from real-life people, most notably the 19th-century miser and politician John Elwes. Elwes was supposedly so stingy that he would only wear ragged clothes and would eat pared meat to save money. Funny enough, he actually had a large fortune — just like Scrooge.
**Mythbusting Christmas**

**CHRISTMAS SECRETS**
A gift often given to American soldiers during World War II was a copy of the bicycle playing cards by the company EPCO. At first glance they seem nothing more than simple cards, but if they get wet, each card would reveal part of a secret map. Join them all together and the soldier could use them to rescue a prisoner of war camp.

**SAINTLY SIGHT**
The virtues of the mystic Saint Bridget of Sweden; changed the way the history has been described. Shortly before she passed away Saint Bridget dreamed about the infant Jesus with blond hair, emitting light and singing on the ground. Alongside her other visions, many pieces of art portrayed Jesus in what she had described.

**DEFYING CROMWELL**
Between 1644 and 1660, the celebration of Christmas was suppressed in England under Oliver Cromwell. When the English Parliament decided to ban Christmas altogether in 1645, there were outbreaks of rioting across the country and widespread disobedience of the law. Shops remained closed and many chases to passively resist the bill by committing with their Christmas foods and festivities.

**A FEAST FOR THE AGES**
How the Christmas dinner has evolved

**MIDDLE AGES**
- **Roast rabbit**
  - A roasted rabbit's head was a common feature at Christmas feasts across Europe at it supposedly represented the triumph of Christ over sin — a reflection of Christianity taking over paganism.
- **Gingerbread**
  - Christmas gingerbread, black butter was mild and sweet to accompany cheese and crackers. Its main ingredients included apples, elder and cinnamon, and it was usually prepared in November.
- **Mince pies**
  - Although the mince pies we enjoy today are sweet, the English made them with rum and curcuma.
- **Apple dumplings and rice puddings**
  - We know that the Gorgonzola enjoyed a festive feast with apple dumplings and rice puddings as a way to clean the palate before the next course of a Medieval Christmas dinner.

**ELIZABETHAN**
- **Roast goose**
  - In 1558, the English defeated the Spanish Armada. To celebrate, many sweet foods that could be found at an Elizabethan Christmas dinner were given to the servants to make apple dumplings.
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  - We know that the Gorgonzola enjoyed a festive feast with apple dumplings and rice puddings as a way to clean the palate before the next course of a Medieval Christmas dinner.

**GEORGIAN**
- **Black butter**
  - A classic Christmas preserve, black butter was mild and sweet to accompany cheese and crackers. Its main ingredients included apples, elder and cinnamon, and it was usually prepared in November.
- **Mince pies**
  - Although the mince pies we enjoy today are sweet, the English made them with rum and curcuma.
- **Apple dumplings and rice puddings**
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**ELIZABETHAN**
- **Roast goose**
  - In 1558, the English defeated the Spanish Armada. To celebrate, many sweet foods that could be found at an Elizabethan Christmas dinner were given to the servants to make apple dumplings.
- **Gingerbread**
  - Christmas gingerbread, black butter was mild and sweet to accompany cheese and crackers. Its main ingredients included apples, elder and cinnamon, and it was usually prepared in November.
- **Mince pies**
  - Although the mince pies we enjoy today are sweet, the English made them with rum and curcuma.
- **Apple dumplings and rice puddings**
  - We know that the Gorgonzola enjoyed a festive feast with apple dumplings and rice puddings as a way to clean the palate before the next course of a Medieval Christmas dinner.

**VICTORIANS**
- **Plum pudding**
  - A classic Victorian dish, plum pudding was sweet, the Georgians made them with rum and curcuma.
- **Gin punch**
  - A classic Christmas preserve, black butter was mild and sweet to accompany cheese and crackers. Its main ingredients included apples, elder and cinnamon, and it was usually prepared in November.
- **Mince pies**
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**The Secret History of Christmas**

**WORLD WAR II**
- **Roast rabbit**
  - The government encouraged people to eat rabbit caught in the wild to ease the pressure on meat rations. Popular recipes included mustard rabbit or rabbit stew.
- **‘Murkey’**
  - For many, real turkey just wasn't an option during wartime rationing. Instead, many households bulked up with turkey and stuffing, which was actually motion stuffed with watercress.
- **Carrot cake**
  - It was developed by Gertrude and Daisy, staff of BBC Radio’s Kitchen Front.

**Elizabeth I ordered that the whole of England eat goose**
A TALE OF THREE STOCKINGS

Why do we hang stockings on the fireplace at Christmas?

As the story goes, there was a widowed man who had three very beautiful daughters. The family was poor and the man was scared that his daughters would never marry because of their low status. One day, Saint Nicholas was walking through the town when he overheard the local villagers discussing the sad situation of the three girls. He decided to help but knew that the man would never accept an act of charity so he secretly filled each daughter’s stocking with enough gold for a dowry and disappeared into the night. The next morning, the girls were elated to find the money and their father was finally at peace. When the townspeople heard what had happened, they too hung up stockings on their fireplaces. Hanging stockings is a popular tradition.

WASHINGTON’S DARING ATTACK

How Washington’s festive mission changed the tide of war

Over a decade before he became president, George Washington was the commander-in-chief of the Continental Army during the American Revolution. After experiencing several defeats against the British, including the loss of New York City, he decided more drastic action was needed – a surprise attack. The British had left behind a garrison of Hessian troops in Trenton, New Jersey, who were getting into the festive spirit unaware of the events about to unfold. During the night of 25 December 1776, Washington’s forces crossed the icy Delaware River and caught the Hessian troops off-guard in the early hours of the 26th. They were easily defeated and the Americans seized 1,000 prisoners as well as supplies. Remembered as the Battle of Trenton, the event served to raise the morale of the Continental Army and contributed to a surge in new recruits, which was desperately needed.

CHRISTMAS BREAKDOWN

On 23 December 1888, Vincent van Gogh famously cut off his left ear and handed it to a brothel maid. Why he took such a drastic step remains unclear but it has been suggested that the artist freaked out after receiving a letter informing him of his brother’s impending marriage.

THE ORIGINS OF POINSETTIA

Poinsettia is a staple for the festive holidays, but did you know that it was originally associated with the Aztecs? They used it to produce red dye and fever medication. By the 17th century it had also become associated with Christmas, thanks to its resemblance to the Star of Bethlehem shining brightly in the sky.

FESTIVE CHEER

During the devastation of World War I, there was one thing that could lift the spirits of those so far from home. In the period leading up to Christmas in 1917, over 50,000 parcels a day were received across the Channel by soldiers from their loved ones.

WHY ‘BOXING DAY’?

Traditionally, Boxing Day was associated with charity and churches’ money boxes would be opened for the poor. As time moved on, the charitable association died out and Boxing Day became a day where the family would gather outside to exercise after the excesses of Christmas.

THE CHANGING COLOURS OF FATHER CHRISTMAS

During the 18th century in England, he was pictured in white, brown and green on Christmas cards and illustrations. The Ghost of Christmas Present, who represents Santa, was illustrated in green for Dickens’ A Christmas Carol. In Russia, Stalin ordered that the Russian equivalent of Santa, Ded Moroz, should wear a blue coat so he could not be confused with the Western counterpart. During the 19th century in England, he was depicted in red and green, and in Turkey, he was depicted wearing a red coat and green trousers. The popular red and white combination influenced by the real-life Saint Nicholas. Coca-Cola’s Santa took inspiration from the cartoons of Thomas Nast and helped to bring the look to mainstream attention during the 1930s. However, Santa has also worn other colours.

THE COCA-COLA LIE

The classic story that Coca-Cola was responsible for Santa’s red outfit is a complete myth. Its creator, H. C. Coca, was an invalid and Santa has been depicted in red for centuries, with the popular red and white combination influenced by the real-life Saint Nicholas. Coca-Cola’s Santa took inspiration from the cartoons of Thomas Nast and helped to bring the look to mainstream attention during the 1930s. However, Santa has also worn other colours.

Tis the season

The meaning of the ancient word "Tis" was often used in the past to introduce a short piece of information or a story. In this context, "Tis the season" could be understood as an introduction to the theme of the article, setting the stage for the upcoming content. By using this phrase, the writer aims to engage the reader's interest and create a sense of anticipation for what is to come. This approach is common in literature and other forms of writing where the introduction needs to be concise yet captivating to draw the reader into the narrative.
THE THREE WISE... WHO?

Despite what the Nativity tells us, the baby Jesus was not visited by three wise kings the night he was born. In fact, he was visited by three wise men bearing gifts — and they actually arrived a couple of months after his birth.

There is also hot debate concerning the number of wise men.

IO SATURNALIA!

Although the Romans held celebrations in December, it was not for the Christmas that we know and love today. They celebrated Saturnalia, the pagan winter solstice festival, where gifts were exchanged and lavish banquets and entertainments were held. It was named in honour of Saturn, the Roman god of agriculture.

Waffen-SS cadets’ Christmas Party, 1941

CHRISTMAS Giá RENN?

A popular tale regarding the origins of the Christmas tree features one of the most controversial men in European history. Apparently Martin Luther, the German Protestant reformer, was the first to think of decorating a tree for Christmas. Supposedly, Luther was walking home one evening when he looked up at the night sky and was amazed by its beauty. Surrounded by evergreen trees, he became inspired and hoped to recreate the scene for his family. He brought a tree into the house and proceeded to decorate it with lit candles. While this may or may not be true, Christmas trees did originate in Germany...

ODIN: THE ORIGINAL SANTA CLAUS?

The pagan influence behind the jolly old man loved today

The Nazi appropriation of Odin for their Christmas celebrations has some basis in fact. Pre-Christian Germans celebrated Yule. During this time, Odin would go on his ‘wild hunt’ in the sky. Children would leave their boots filled with straw for his eight-legged horse, Sleipnir, and when Odin flew past he would leave them gifts like toys and sweets in return — much like how children today put food out for Santa’s reindeer when he visits their homes to leave them presents.

Gift giving is not the only way in which Odin and Santa Claus are similar characters. Odin is frequently portrayed with a long, white beard, just like Saint Nicholas, and he rode his horse across the sky much like how Father Christmas rides with his reindeer and sleigh.

Also, Odin had the uncanny ability to always know if someone had been good or bad. For those who were bad, he would hand out punishments and many feared that he was watching them at all times. This is a skill that Santa Claus also possesses, although it would seem that worst punishment from him would be a lump of coal.

Pagan traditions became assimilated into Christian ones as Christianity took hold across Europe. It is reasonable to suggest that Santa, a Christian figure, supplanted Odin’s place as worship of pagan deities was eventually banned and, in doing so, he also took on a few of Odin’s characteristics.

THE NAZI PLOT TO STEAL CHRISTMAS

Hitler hijacked the holiday, removing Christian references.

In Nazi Germany, Christmas was celebrated by decorating trees with wreaths and children were given gifts such as toy cars and 55-volt electric figures. This much we might expect from the Nazi propaganda machine, but what might be more surprising is that these boys and girls were given their gifts by the Nordic god Odin.

This was in part because Nazi ideologues saw organised religion as an enemy of the totalitarian state, so sought to de-instantiate it if it existed anywhere — Christianity from the holiday. Christmas cards were sent out to reflect the party’s love for the most popular card. ‘Flight of the Goose Girls’, continued to be sung even after 1945. Families were encouraged to make homemade decorations in the shape of Odin’s Sun Wreath and make baubles in the shape of Nordic solar symbols. Official celebrations might mention a separate being that those more prominent featured ‘light’ rituals.

The Secret History of Christmas

The xmas myth

Christmas trees have been used since ancient times. There is actually evidence that Christmas trees were used in pagan festivals. An old Norse poem called ‘Yule’ describes how the Yule tree was decorated and used as a symbol of the rebirth cycle of nature. It is suggested that the Yule tree was actually the same as the Yule log, which contained fire. Therefore, when you are the decorated chimney, you are still acknowledging ancient traditions.

A CONNING CHRISTMAS CROOK

John David Gluck founded the Santa Claus Association in 1913 to help the New York Post Office deal with the numerous letters addressed to Santa. The Association sorted through the letters, passing them on to donors who would buy the gifts for the children. The service was popular and soon enough, Gluck began to ask for funds for a new company building. When the building never materialised but Gluck continued to ask for money, suspicions were raised. In 1927, it was discovered that he could not account for large amounts of the money — there was not enough to convict him, but Gluck was stripped of his role.

CREATING SAINT NICK

A visit from St. Nicholas is a poem by Clement Clarke Moore that was composed in 1822. Thanks to Moore’s poem, the image of Santa Claus as a fat, ‘jolly old elf’ became popularised during the 19th century and is what we know today. One of Moore’s inspirations was Saint Nicholas and he supposedly composed the poem while on a sleigh on a snowy day. The poem redefined the traditions of Christmas gift giving as Father Christmas was depicted flying from house to house on 24 December, magically entering each one through the chimney. Until this point, Santa had always been portrayed as arriving on Christmas Day.

ODIN: THE ORIGINAL SANTA CLAUS?

The pagan influence behind the jolly old man loved today

The Nazis believed that all northern European cultures were supposedly related to Odin. This is due to the fact that many modern words are derived from Old Norse and have the same origin as the original Indo-European language.

CHRISTMAS CROOK

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Waffen-SS cadets’ Christmas Party, 1941
What was it?
A small inlet in the shadow of the Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island was the entry point for millions who sought to start a new life in America for over 60 years. Facing an unprecedented wave of new arrivals at the turn of the century, the government established Ellis Island as the first federal immigration inspection station.

Between 1892 and 1924, it is estimated that around 12 million people entered the United States through Ellis Island. However, not all new arrivals to New York City went through the famous facility. The authorities believed first- and second-class steamship passengers were less likely to become a public charge so they only underwent a cursory inspection aboard their ships before passing through customs. Only the poorest immigrants, who travelled in steerage class, were transported to Ellis Island to undergo through medical and legal inspection.

If an immigrant’s papers were in order and they were in good health, the process would last three to five hours. But sick passengers could be detained on the Island of Tears until they recovered and passengers ran the risk of being deported if they failed to meet an inspector’s standards.

Why did it happen?
The high volume of immigration to the United States at the turn of the 20th century was driven by numerous factors, including political instability and an economic downturn in Europe. Improvements in steam power also improved travel in the late 19th century, shortening the journey from 15.5 days in 1838 to just 4.5 by 1907.

Up until 1892, US immigration was handled at the state level but the unprecedented number of arrivals forced the federal government to intervene. They moved New York’s entry point to Ellis Island as its size allowed it to process more people and it provided an area to assess immigrants before they reached the mainland.

Eventually, so-called ‘nativist’ politicians introduced new restrictions to stem mass migration, such as the 1921 Quota Laws and the 1924 National Origins Act. This signalled the death knell for Ellis Island as an entry point. After 1924, it only held those who had problems with their paperwork, war refugees and other displaced persons.

Who was involved?
Benjamin Harrison
1889-1893
The 23rd president of the United States was responsible for choosing Ellis Island as the new Federal immigration site.

William William
1902-1907
As federal commissioner for the port of New York, he was stationed on Ellis Island and tried to rid the facility of corrupt practices.

Annie Moore
Moore is remembered as the first passenger to have been registered on Ellis Island at the age of 17 after travelling from Ireland.
London's Lost Frost Fairs

Discover the carnivals that broke out on the ice when the River Thames was turned into a winter wonderland

Written by Jack Parsons

Sometimes Londoners called it the “Blanket Fair”, other times “Frosterland Street”, “City Road” or, rather grandiosely, “Frisland”. But from 1099 to 1814, whenever the River Thames froze solid, an elaborate carnival would break out on the ice. So roll up, roll up! Enter London’s lost frost fairs - a side effect of the Little Ice Age. While you might associate ice ages with cavemen and woolly mammoths, this one affected the world’s climate from the time of the Black Death until the industrial revolution. There are earlier accounts of the Thames freezing, such as in 699 and 892, but these were one-off. During the Little Ice Age, “the great streams of England” were congealed” much more frequently.

The Little Ice Age’s causes are debated but are believed to have been a perfect storm for climate cooling - huge volcanic eruptions at a time when the Sun was experiencing unusually low sunspot activity. This meant that while the Sun was already giving off less energy to warm the Earth’s surface, much of it was being reflected back into space by great plumes of volcanic ash lingering in the stratosphere. While mean annual temperatures dipping by 0.5°C (0.9°F) across the Northern Hemisphere may not sound a lot, it had a dramatic impact. Europe was particularly affected as atmospheric patterns also saw Arctic air over the continent. Alpine glaciers expanded, sheltering farms and villages in Switzerland, France and elsewhere. Norse colonies in Greenland collapsed after they were cut off by sea ice. Frequent cold winters and wet summers led to crop failures, and North Atlantic cod fisheries fled south to warmer waters.

However, while the overall trend was towards the world growing colder at the 13th century until the late 17th century, temperatures still fluctuated each year on this. This meant a frost fair on the Thames was not guaranteed each winter and when it did happen, it might last for weeks or just a few days. In fact, there were only 24 known winters during the Little Ice Age in which the portion of the Thames that makes through London was recorded to have frozen over. On only a handful of those occasions was it thick enough to host a fair at all, with few exceptions, the fairs occurred just once in a generation.

The coldest winter in Britain during this time was the “Great Frost” of 1683-84. The Thames froze for ten weeks, with ice as thick as 28 centimetres (11 inches). Trees split as if hit by lightning and boats were crushed by the pressure of the ice. Beyond London, there were reports of solid ice extending for miles off the coasts of the southern North Sea, where the ground was frozen to depths of 68 centimetres (27 inches) near Manchester and 2.5 metres (8 feet) in Somerset.

Another factor that contributed specifically to the Thames freezing in the capital was the building of the Old London Bridge. Finished in 1205, this crossing was the main route to ferry people, goods and livestock from the City of London to Southwark for 600 years. But this

So roll up, roll up! Enter London’s lost frost fairs - a side effect of the Little Ice Age.
Winter festivals

“A CARNIVAL ON THE WATER”
The frost fairs boasted numerous attractions to lure Londoners onto the ice

01 Archery on ice
The Virgin Queen, Elizabeth I, went out on the ice every day when the river froze in 1564 to shoot targets. This year also saw the first proper frost fair, when royal courtesans dressed in Londoners’ costumes.

02 Printing press
Printers were a popular attraction at many frost fairs, printing customers’ names onto commemorative souvenirs. While early fair-goers were mostly illiterate and settled for simple postcards, by 1814 ballads and books were sold on the ice.

03 Marching elephant
While the 1814 fair only lasted a few days, some modern sources have claimed that the ice was so strong that “a very fine elephant was led across the Thames a little below Blackfriars Bridge.” However, there is little contemporary evidence to back up this extraordinary assertion.

04 Animal baiting
Bear-baiting, bull-baiting and the curious if cruel-sounding “men throwing at cocks” were among the more bloodthirsty entertainments available at the fair.

05 Fox hunting
Fox hunting was popular at frost fairs, though it’s unclear if the animal was wild or trapped and released for the sport. Some have suggested Charles II participated but this seems unlikely.

06 Winter sports
There are several accounts of football being played on the ice during the fairs, along with hockey, nine-pin bowling, and horse and donkey racing.

07 Fairground attractions
Adding to the carnival feel, fairground attractions could hold up to 6 newsmen while the fairers’ will o’ the wisp attracted flocks of birds to the ice.

08 Ride the draw boat
Fair-goers could ride in boats fitted with wheels and decorated with streamers. These could be taken along using oars or pulled ahead by the out-of-work watermen.

09 One-horse open sleigh
While Henry VIII travelled from central London to Greenwich by sleigh along the frozen river in 1536, hackney coach drivers frequently took ordinary Londoners along the ice as well.

10 Temporary taverns
Frost fairs boasted “more liquor than the fish beneath do drink”, with stalls selling beer, ale, brandy and gin. Others established temporary taverns with benches to sit on.

11 Beware thin ice
As well as the risk of slipping over, many Londoners drowned when the ice cracked. In 1739, a large sheet collapsed as the river defrosted, swallowing up several tents full of people.

12 Ice skating
Before the invention of iron skates in 1667, London’s youth tied animal bones to their feet and reportedly reached “a velocity equal to the flight of a bird.”

13 Roasting ox
As well as slate baking gingerbread, hot pudding pies and spiced apples, revellers could warm themselves while watching the spectacle such as the roasting of a sheep or a whole ox.

“THE WATERMEN ALSO SET UP A NUMBER OF ATTRACTIONS TO LURE CUSTOMERS ONTO THE RIVER”
**Dangers on the Ice**

Hazel Forsyth from the Museum of London warns that walking on the frozen river came with risks.

How did the Thames freezing affect London? The novelty of the event caused people to enjoy it, but the rarity of the event caused people to enjoy it, but the risks were significant. The Museum of London is hosting a Thames frost fair project on 22-23 December. Both events were free and family-friendly.

The Old London Bridge contributed to the Thames frost fair project in 1715.

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**Frost Fairs Were as Much Like an Illegal Rave or a Circus as They Were a Christmas Market**

Known as the Blanket Fair, it lasted from December 1683 to February 1684. A double row of booths stretched from Temple Stairs to the South Bank. On the last day of December 1683 and "Lapland mutton" roasted on spits while stalls were selling hot pudding pies and gingerbread. Some sold souvenirs from简单 trinkets to golden jewellery. Some stalls offered much the same attractions. In 1715, a French account mentions a dog that could do tricks, to a "Dutch whimsie" — being spun around in a chair or a boat tied to a pole. Every time the river froze, people stepped onto the ice, thinking it was stronger than it really was and suffered as a result.

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Brazilians. They run these logging bразилм trees for its extremely valued red dye. Brazil has been divided into 15 captaincies that are run by Portuguese nobles. They run these logging bразилм trees for its extremely valuable red dye. Brazil has been divided into 15 captaincies that are run by Portuguese nobles. They run these logging bразилм trees for its extremely valuable red dye. Brazil has been divided into 15 captaincies that are run by Portuguese nobles. They run these logging bразилм trees for its extremely valuable red dye. Brazil has been divided into 15 captaincies that are run by Portuguese nobles. They run these logging bразилм trees for its extremely valuable red dye. Brazil has been divided into 15 captaincies that are run by Portuguese nobles. They run these logging bразилм trees for its extremely valuable red dye. Brazil has been divided into 15 captaincies that are run by Portuguese nobles.

This means that many of the indigenous people are hostile to outsiders, even leading their own raiding parties. The bandeirantes are an insular group who all know each other. For example, the famous bandeirante Manuel de Barba Gato is the son-in-law of the even more famous Fernao Dias Pais Leme. Tavares has been married twice, both times to the daughters of other bandeirantes.

**Extra tip:**
The bandeirantes are an insular group who all know each other. For example, the famous bandeirante Manuel de Barba Gato is the son-in-law of the even more famous Fernao Dias Pais Leme. Tavares has been married twice, both times to the daughters of other bandeirantes.

**Helpful skills**
- **Sleep in a hammock.** Keeping off the forest floor at night is the only way to avoid being eaten alive by insects.
- **Wear thick clothing.** Although the heat can be fierce, the spiny vegetation of the barren hinterland is even worse. Leather chaps and jackets are a must.
- **Bring trinkets and cloth.** If you aren't a hardened survivor, trading with friendly tribes is your best chance of getting food outside the coastal towns.
- **Cover your mouth when you sneeze.** Indigenous tribes have no resistance to European diseases and tens of thousands will die in smallpox and influenza epidemics.
- **Miss the phrase 'drogas de sertao' for narcotics.** Bandeirantes use this term, meaning 'wilderness drugs,' to cover many herbs and plants including Brazil nuts, cocoa, guarana and cloves.
- **Worry about the 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas.** The boundary between the Spanish and Portuguese empires in South America will be redrawn in 1750 anyway, thanks to the bandeirantes.
- **Be surprised to see Tupi in the bandeiras.** Most of the expedition workforce is made up of indigenous people employed or owned by the white bandeirantes.
- **Be fooled by dancing slaves.** They may be practicing capoeira, a martial art that is disguised as a dance, to avoid suspicion.

**Dos & don'ts**
- **Sleep in a hammock.** Keeping off the forest floor at night is the only way to avoid being eaten alive by insects.
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**WHO TO BEFRIEND**
Antonio Raposo Tavares
Although he is as much a slave hunter as his fellow bandeirantes, Antonio Raposo Tavares has also done more to expand Brazil's borders than anyone else. If you are in São Paulo in 1654, you might be able meet him as he returns from his most recent expedition, which has taken seven years. Covering more than 10,000 kilometers, he has pushed inland all the way to the Andes mountains. But of the 1,200 men who set out with him, only 60 or so remain and Tavares is a changed man. Exhaustion and malnutrition will kill him within a few years, too.

**WHO TO AVOID**
Domingos Jorge Velho
Representing a new generation of bandeirantes, Domingos Jorge Velho is one of the most ruthless. In the second half of the 17th century, many bandeirantes are acting as entrepreneurs and explorers and more as enforcers for the local white landowners and cattle ranchers of the northeast of Brazil. Velho has led multiple expeditions that have completely exterminated several South American tribes and his brutality extends to African slaves, too. In 1694, this cruel mercenary will lead the assault to crush a community of more than 30,000 escaped slaves at Palmares on Brazil's east coast.

If you plan to join one of the expeditionary bandeiras, you'll need more than just backwoods survival skills.
What if... Richard I and Saladin had intermarried?

An unusual proposition during the Third Crusade could have heralded peace in the Medieval Middle East

Written by Jonathan O'Callaghan

What was the cause of the Third Crusade from 1189 to 1192?
The immediate cause was the pope's call for the crusade after Saladin [the first sultan of Egypt, Syria, Palestine and Yemen] captured Jerusalem. We have a papal accord to the Christians to go to the aid of their fellow Christians in the East. It's a family matter as well because King Henry II of England was a cousin of the rulers of Jerusalem and Richard I [son of Henry II, king from 1189 to 1199] was a first cousin once removed — so it wasn't just a religious motivation.

What did Richard I, or Richard the Lionheart, hope to achieve by leading the Crusade into the Middle East?
Well, nobody actually said 'this is what our aims are' and so we have to assume them from letters sent back to the West and from what people did. On the basis of the papal accord, we reckon that they wanted to recapture Jerusalem. We also suspect that they wished to set up a regime in the East that would be agreeable to all concerned — that is to say the Latin Christians in the West and the Franks settled in the East. It also would have preferably been [a regime] that was at least acceptable to Saladin and his successors because they needed a peace treaty to hold the lands that they had recovered. They did set up a new regime and they also managed to recapture some coastal towns — but they didn't manage to regain Jerusalem.

"He had to keep winning victories to keep his army together"

What sort of ruler was Saladin and what were his motivations?
Saladin is quite difficult to get at because we have [Islamic] histories of him written by people who were quite anxious to assure everyone who read them that he was very spiritually minded, noble, heroic and a just ruler. While we can't deny any of these things, it would be nice to have an opposing view to give it a bit more balance.

There are people who regarded Saladin as a usurper, a conqueror, not the valid ruler. He spent most of his life fighting other Muslims to try and establish his regime, and throughout the Third Crusade he had to negotiate with his own army — and the various groups that made up his army — to hold them together. There were points where he had to let people go back home to get in the harvest or carry out their own business. He was having problems and so he had to keep winning victories to keep his army together.

What was the relationship like between Richard the Lionheart and Saladin?
Contemporaries were interested in their continual sending of messages back and forth. The first thing Richard did [when he arrived] was to send a message to Saladin and open negotiations for peace. Of course, according to both sides it was the other that started negotiations.

The Western sources were concerned about Richard's apparent friendship with Saladin although the two never actually met. But Saladin's brother, al-Adil, did go to meet Richard and this looked quite suspicious to Western writers.

On the other side, the picture was exactly the same if reversed. Sources around Saladin were very suspicious of Richard, thinking he was extremely clever, cunning and unreliable. They wanted to know what he was up to and they thought Saladin was being far too friendly.

The Third Crusade ultimately ended in a three-year truce with the Treaty of Jaffa.
What If... Richard I and Saladin Had Intermarried?

It's quite amusing, if a little sad, to imagine both sides' outside commentators in such a situation while the leaders were desperately trying to work around each other with detailed negotiations, long-standing spread or diplomacy, and the exchange of gifts. Their relationship is described as friendly by some Western sources but I think mutual respect is probably a bit more accurate.

In 1191 Richard made an unusual proposition to marry his widowed sister Joan to Saladin's brother, al-Adil. What did Saladin make of this idea?

For a long time I thought it must be a myth introduced by Arab sources because the contemporary Western ones don't mention it at all. However, talking about it with two students of mine, we decided that it could be true. It was probably a negotiating ploy by Richard. From the point of view of Saladin, this would not have been impossible — natures had married Christian women before — but it would have been allowed to keep her own religion so it wouldn't have been designing for either side. But they didn't trust Richard and they didn't know what was up to. I'm sure their first reaction was, 'He said what? He can't mean that.'

What do you think Richard did it?

Why did Richard take Joan to the East with him from Sicily? He had his wife Berengaria with him, so he may well have taken Joan along to keep her company. But why didn't he send Joan back home with her mother, Eleanor, who came to Sicily to meet him?

The fact that Richard took Joan with him suggests that he was negociating about setting up a dynasty out there. She could become queen of Jerusalem. Joan said about this we don't know, because nobody bothered to record her reactions.

For the Western sources, particularly the Epics, it's all part of that great Hollywood romance — although of course it's not. By Arab sources it's probably a bit more accurate. According to the sources, Richard proposed that al-Adil marry the King of England's sister, who brought him with him from Sicily, and to the realm would be Jerusalem.

They went to al-Adil and read it out, and Saladin 'battened to express approval of these terms, believing the King of England would not agree to them at all, and that it was very likely to mock and deceive them.' Saladin didn't believe it. So they went back to Richard and effectively called his bluff.

Then we come to 1191, and the question is will al-Adil convert to Christianity, and the discussion is continuing, and Saladin says he's happy with it. But now Richard has changed his mind. He asked me: 'Can you understand what it is Richard was thinking? Can you imagine what it would have been like to have a Muslim prince who converts to Christianity? How seriously would Richard have taken this idea?'

What would have happened if it had gone ahead?

Well, Muslims didn't have to have just one wife, so the Christian children would have been the position of not knowing whether their father would convert to Saladin's lands. I'm not sure anyone had thought it through that far.

Both sides would assume the other side would convert because, of course, each would have known that their religion was the most righteous and true. It's quite sweet the way contemporary literature of both sides reflects this belief and you look back over 800 years of history and think it's a shame, really — it would have been nice.

If it had gone ahead. If one side had been ready to convert to the other religion, they probably would have stopped by their supporters because Muslims are not going to be happy to see al-Adil convert to Christianity. And whatever Richard's advisors are not going to be happy to see a Christian prince converted to Islam.

It would be like a peace treaty in the 1950s between the Soviet Union and the US that had required the US president's sister to convert to communism and marry Joseph Stalin. One feels it would have been utterly to happen.

Would this unlikely marriage have brought an end to the Crusades?

Yes, I think it would have been the end of the Crusades as such. It probably would have been very good for trade, too, until the Mongols invaded (in the 1220s) and disrupted all the trade routes to the East, which would have happened anyway.

Whether this new united kingdom could have stood against the Mongol invasion, I don't know.

What else might have been different?

There would have been peaceful pilgrimage into Jerusalem for people from Western Europe and also for Muslims — and Jews. Of course. The pilgrimage would probably have been easier for both sides. The end of the fighting might also have meant that trade would be easier. People's crops wouldn't be getting destroyed all the time.

And there would be no fighting for the people coming from the Crusades in the 13th century. They made remarks like, 'we have to fight these people, we can't possibly make peace with them.' I imagine there would be quite a lot of people saying why don't we just make peace, rather than going to war. I think it would have been a good idea — but then I'm sitting here in the 21st century. My values are not necessarily theirs.

How different would our modern view have been of this period?

Until very recently scholars didn't really look at the peace negotiations at all or the attempts to bring people together as in the case of this one. The Arab sources on both sides had no interest in promoting the fact that people were trying to make peace.

So much of the literature that's come from both sides. So I thought, oh, there's not much hope that peace is going to break out on this planet in the near future, unfortunately.

But things could have been different?

There is always hope that it could be different. It's particularly interesting that these people who were regarded as the foremost leaders of the holy war on each side were the people who were actually prepared to make peace. Unless they were both faking it.

"Whether this new united kingdom could have stood against the Mongol invasion, I don't know."

What If... Richard I and Saladin Had Intermarried?

Richard I and Saladin had intermarried? What if...
When the East Coast was under threat from Nazi spies and submarines, the US Navy found an unlikely champion: the mafia. But was America’s alliance with the criminal underworld a spying success or big mob con?

Just a few months after its explosive entry into World War II, the US suffered another significant naval casualty. USS Lafayette, an 80,000-ton former French ocean liner, caught fire and capsized in New York Harbor in February 1942. Commanded by the authorities, the ship was in the process of being converted into troop transport when it sank. Happening so soon after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the government immediately suspected enemy sabotage. A congressional investigation eventually ruled the disaster an accident but the incident exposed how vulnerable the East Coast was to infiltration by Axis agents.

U-boats had been spotted patrolling in packs along the coastline. German torpedoes were taking out dozens of merchant ships on their way to resupply Allied forces in Europe—every month. In June, German agents were captured on Long Island with explosives, maps and details of strategic installations along the waterfront (see Hitler’s Doomed Sabotage Mission, page 67). The US had become complacent during peacetime and had dropped the ball as far as military intelligence was concerned. But after USS Lafayette went down, it prompted the head of the Office of Navy Intelligence (ONI), Commander Charles Radcliffe Haffenden, to launch a counter-espionage initiative. He wanted all eyes and ears to step ahead of the Nazis but the longshoremen, stevedores, fishermen and other blue-collar workers were suspicious people who would not talk easily to strangers—and certainly not to official-looking government types. So Commander Haffenden had to try a different tack; he'd talk to the real power in the docks—the mafia.

A flurry of clandestine meetings followed as ‘Operation Underworld’ was formulated. On 7 March 1942, senior ONI figures had their first meeting with the district attorney of New York County, Frank Hogan, to discuss the problem. They established the fact that certain underworld figures had knowledge of suspicious activities long before the authorities got wind of them. Concerns were raised about where the loyalties of the mobsters lay but they were quickly assuaged. The Italian-American mafia was loyal to the status quo, the mob and America more than likely in that order.

The navy wanted to place undercover agents in factories, hotels and bars, and they needed to bring the boats of fishing boats that worked the waters of the Eastern Sea Frontier aside, too. They needed a network of informants to keep a step ahead of the Nazis but the longshoremen, stevedores, fishermen and other blue-collar workers were suspicious people who would not talk easily to strangers—and certainly not to official-looking government types. So Commander Haffenden had to try a different tack; he'd talk to the real power in the docks—the mafia.

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There was no profit in supporting a fascist regime thousands of miles away just because it happened to be in control of the Old Country. A name of a potentially useful contact came up: Joseph ‘Socks’ Lanza. Lanza was a capo in the Luciano crime family (later Genovese), a well-known racketeer and union boss who had founded Local 359, the labour union for the workers at Fulton Fish Market on the East River waterfront. It was the biggest fish wholesaler on the East Coast and he took a tidy slice of this multimillion-dollar industry through protection rackets and by controlling contracts.

Lanza was powerful, dangerous and connected, but the navy had no moral objection to dealing with a convicted murderer. “We didn’t care about the background of the informer,” Colonel Angelo Cincotta told a 1954 congressional commission into army-mafia collaboration. “provided he had real information... I think the talk was one-way, from the informer to us and never from us to him.”

After a phone call with Lanza’s lawyer, a meeting between the two parties was held at 10.30pm on 26 March. Lanza, his lawyer and assistant district attorney Gurkin took a taxi from 103rd Street and Broadway to 14th Street and Riverside Park.
Lanza's criminal network extended across the waterfront out to the captains of fishing fleets at sea.

Here, Lanza and Garten talked for around an hour on a park bench, a location where Lanza felt he wouldn't be seen and suspected as an informant for the FBI's office.

The meeting was a success – Luciano could help and was willing to. He later passed Commander Haffenden several telephone numbers on which he could be easily reached and Lanza was given a code name and a visitor’s pass to Haffenden’s office, where he met with the commander every week or so.

The Cosa Nostra capo was certainly a useful man for the navy to have in their back pocket. Lanza's criminal network extended across the waterfront to the captains of fishing fleets at sea, all of whom were utilised as submarine lookouts, calling in codes with their ship-to-shore telephones whenever suspicious activity was spotted. Agents were seemingly placed in fishing trawlers around the ports and on fishing boats, using an introduction from a friendly face and fishermen’s union books obtained by Lanza. Lanza himself brought useful intelligence from Fulton Fish Market to his weekly meeting with Commander Haffenden.

However, the navy needed to do more than merely stop spies from disrupting the war effort on their own shores – they needed the dirt on Italy's criminal descriptions of places with strategic significance, photos of shore installations to help identify potential beachheads. The ONI needed to speak to those who were born in Italy and might still have family there; but this was Lanza apparently bad at.

Lanza controlled Fulton Fish Market. Beyond that, he needed help from others in the various mafia families of New York, but his indictment had led many of those in his criminal network to stay one step ahead of Nazi saboteurs and spies.

But was Operation Underworld a success for the US Navy? The ONI was certainly more effective at counter-espionage than it had been. With the mafia on board, they had eyes everywhere in New York City and particularly in the docklands.

did it really make to these criminals that there would be "no compensation" for their assistance; it was "their duty" to assist the US in their war effort. While helping the navy didn't cost them anything, the mafia wasn't known for giving something away for free. So what was it for Luciano and company? While Luciano was assured to get out of prison sooner, it's likely the others knew "doing their bit" would put them in a more favourable light for real, more realistically, they saw into two trouble with the law in the future. It's also hard to believe Luciano couldn't have had an opportunity to access to his crime family to discuss illicit business during their meetings. Too, the US defeat of Mussolini was also in the gangsters' interests – the leader had cracked down hard on the mafia in Sicily. It was a no-win situation for the mob.
The Dragon Empress

Written by Frances White

Peaceful reformer or scheming murderer, the true nature of the only woman to rule China in her own right is shrouded in mystery.

The Guanzhong Plain in Shaanxi province is China’s own Valley of the Kings, scattered with 30 mausoleums to Tang dynasty rulers. However, one of the tombs at Mountian Mankoum is quite different from the others. Normally, the huge stone slabs that sit outside a tomb hint at the great deeds of the dead, but this one’s tablet is blank. Known as the Woodless Stele, it marks the tomb of the only woman to rule China in her own right as an empress in the country’s 2,000 years of history.

On the one hand, Empress Wu Zetian’s humble birth suggests she did nothing memorable. Others will tell you it hints at a life of murder, betrayal and scheming – she is not worthy of inscription.

What you would never assume is that it belongs to a woman who ruled over one of the most peaceful and prosperous periods of China’s history, and even gave the lower orders of Chinese society their first ever voice in how they were governed.

This is because the historians who were expected to record her great deeds upon the tablet were men who hated her. The blank stone, much like Wu herself, presents two possibilities – a woman so indiscernible that a single good deed cannot be etched upon it, or a country so unwilling to upset the status quo that a blank stone is better than the truth that challenges it.

Wu was born in 624 to a wealthy family that had made its money in the timber business. While most young girls were instructed in what would make them a good wife, Wu’s father allowed her to follow her own interests. An intelligent girl, she was actively encouraged to widen her education, to read books and learn about politics, government, writing, literature and music. As most girls did needlework, Wu was learning the skills that one would day help her rule a nation. Because of her father’s support, she was encouraged to step beyond what was expected of her gender from a very early age.

Wu’s quick mind, coupled with her good looks, attracted the attention of the Emperor Taizong of Tang and she was selected to become one of his concubines. Aged just 14 years old, Wu was split away to the ruler’s court, a palace of schemes, plots and power plays. Likely a terrifying place for a young girl to be thrust into – but she was a quick learner.

Sources vary as to the emperor’s feelings towards Wu, with some claiming she became a quick favourite and others the opposite. What we do know is that she was hardly a timid, subservient mistress because while still assigned to the ruling emperor, she began an affair with his son, Prince Li Zhi.

Li Zhi’s feelings for Wu are in no doubt – he was completely in love with her. When Taizong died, all of his concubines, as tradition dictated, had their heads shaved and were sent to live out the rest of their days at a Buddhist convent. When Li Zhi became emperor in 649, taking the name of Gaozong, he broke with tradition and demanded Wu to be sworn to court as his own concubine.

Surprisingly, Gaozong’s wife, Empress Wang, had actually encouraged the return. Wang had hoped that Wu might divert attention from one of the ruler’s other concubines, Xiao Shuliang. Wang was right, but she would rue the day.
Wu had two sons with Gaozu but that fact would not have scored Wang and Xiao. The emperor had already chosen a successor — his cousin was made the new king — and he had named his son, Li Zhong, as his current heir. However, Wu had another baby in 654, a girl, who was found dead in her crib just days after being born. This is where the historical narratives split. For Wu, the culprit was dead. Wang had been jealous of his husband's affections for her and he had named his wife's uncle, and he had named her as his current heir. However, Wu’s son, Li Zhong, was the current heir. Wu claimed that Wang had strangled her child and she was also pregnant with another. Along with Xiao, the charges were taken very seriously and the emperor sided with Wu over his wife. Wang and Xiao were exiled from the palace, Li Zhong was stripped of his position as heir and Wu was given the title of imperial chancellor. While accounts of events are not impossible and there is no real reason not to believe them. However, they did conveniently make her the most powerful woman in China and some Chinese historians view the reality as very different. It is a common belief that Wu killed her own child, in order to implicate Wang and eliminate her as a rival. The idea of another empress living a normal life was the first to be born. However, she did, and her beauty and talent were far from insignificant. The matter was not ended by death, but rather by death and the lack of any new heir. Wu’s account of events is not impossible and it is far more likely that neither woman was responsible for the death and that the child died of natural causes due to poor ventilation in the palace. Wu then exploited the situation to her advantage. Whatever the truth, Wu had found herself in a position of power. The idea of another mother to the throne upset the balance of nature. Wu rose to the position of power and it was easy for her not to give up. In her new role, she replaced Li Zhong as her heir. Another, particularly greedy tale is that she tormented them, clipping up their limbs and putting them into a jam. She then claimed that the two women drank to their bones. It’s a claim that seems more like a tale from a Disney villain than a real-life person and it is very difficult to believe. The two women did not end up dead, however, and it is likely that Wu was simply ensuring the survival of herself and her son, not at all uncommon across the span of the era, but viewed with scorn when carried out by a woman. She had been clearly ambitious but this was the truth. Wu had known that this was the truth. She ruled with an iron fist and her authority was not questioned. Wu claimed that Wang had strangled her child and she was also pregnant with another. Along with Xiao, the charges were taken very seriously and the emperor sided with Wu over his wife. Wang and Xiao were exiled from the palace, Li Zhong was stripped of his position as heir and Wu was given the title of imperial chancellor. Wu managed events in a way that was not possible before and the sudden power was a thing of nature.

An 1843 European engraving lists Wu (5) alongside Chinese greats, including the mythical hero Fuxi (1), the philosopher Confucius (2) and the first emperor of unified China, Qin Shi Huang (3) and even listed women alongside Chinese greats, including the mythical hero Fuxi (1), the philosopher Confucius (2) and the first emperor of unified China, Qin Shi Huang (3) and even listed women alongside Chinese greats, including the mythical hero Fuxi (1), the philosopher Confucius (2) and the first emperor of unified China, Qin Shi Huang (3) and even listed women alongside Chinese greats, including the mythical hero Fuxi (1), the philosopher Confucius (2) and the first emperor of unified China, Qin Shi Huang (3) and even listed women alongside Chinese greats, including the mythical hero Fuxi (1), the philosopher Confucius (2) and the first emperor of unified China, Qin Shi Huang (3) and even listed women alongside Chinese greats, including the mythical hero Fuxi (1), the philosopher Confucius (2) and the first emperor of unified China, Qin Shi Huang (3) and even listed women alongside Chinese greats, including the mythical hero Fuxi (1), the philosopher Confucius (2) and the first emperor of unified China, Qin Shi Huang (3) and even listed women alongside Chinese greats, including the mythical hero Fuxi (1), the philosopher Confucius (2) and the first emperor of unified China, Qin Shi Huang (3) and even listed women alongside Chinese greats, including the mythical hero Fuxi (1), the philosopher Confucius (2) and the first emperor of unified China, Qin Shi Huang (3) and even listed women alongside Chinese greats, including the mythical hero Fuxi (1), the philosopher Confucius (2) and the first emperor of unified China, Qin Shi Huang (3) and even listed women alongside Chinese greats, including the mythical hero Fuxi (1), the philosopher Confucius (2) and the first emperor of unified China, Qin Shi Huang (3) and even listed women alongside Chinese greats, including the mythical hero Fuxi (1), the philosopher Confucius (2) and the first emperor of unified China, Qin Shi Huang (3) and even listed women alongside Chinese greats, including the mythical hero Fuxi (1), the philosopher Confucius (2) and the first emperor of unified China, Qin Shi Huang (3) and even listed women alongside Chinese greats, including the mythical hero Fuxi (1), the philosopher Confucius (2) and the first emperor of unified China, Qin Shi Huang (3) and even listed women alongside Chinese greats, including the mythical hero Fuxi (1), the philosopher Confucius (2) and the first emperor of unified China, Qin Shi Huang (3) and even listed women alongside Chinese greats, including the mythical hero Fuxi (1), the philosopher Confucius (2) and the first emperor of unified China, Qin Shi Huang (3) and even listed women alongside Chinese greats, including the mythical hero Fuxi (1), the philosopher Confucius (2) and the first emperor of unified China, Qin Shi Huang (3) and even listed women alongside Chinese greats, including the mythical hero Fuxi (1), the philosopher Confucius (2) and the first emperor of unified China, Qin Shi Huang (3) and even listed women alongside Chinese greats, including the mythical hero Fuxi (1), the philosopher Confucius (2) and the first emperor of unified China, Qin Shi Huang (3) and even listed women alongside Chinese greats, including the mythical hero Fuxi (1), the philosopher Confucius (2) and the first emperor of unified China, Qin Shi Huang (3) and even listed women alongside Chinese greats, including the mythical hero Fuxi (1), the philosopher Confucius (2) and the first emperor of unified China, Qin Shi Huang (3).
Dr Jonathan Clements weighs in on the legacy of China's infamous empress

**Q: How reliable do you believe the historical accounts of Wu Zetian's reign to be?**

The accounts of Wu's reign are full of lies and spin from her, her enemies and her descendants. We actually have lots of information about the period but it's not in one place, so it's essential to compare varying sources to get a sense of what she is saying.

**Q: To what extent do you believe that her reign improved or harmed China's perception and treatment of women in the 7th century and beyond?**

There's a huge deal of hypocrisy. Wu got blamed for dragging the dynasty down but she presided over its peak of prosperity, promoted a meritocracy and pushed for greater recognition of women's contribution to society. Women in Chinese history were traditionally neither seen nor heard — it was considered rude to address a lady by her name, so they were often anonymous when they do show up. Wu briefly claimed to be the bodhisattva Maitreya in order to win supporters, inspiring statues like this.

Beneath the surface, there's a subtly racist tinge as well. The periods in Chinese history when women had political influence tended to be those where 'barbarians' were in charge, like the Mongols or the Jurchen, so often you're seeing a backlash against foreigners and not women in general. Nonetheless, Wu has become something of an icon. Many modern Chinese women fixate on the intrigues and the rags-to-riches storyline. Hopefully not on all the murders.

Dr Jonathan Clements is the author of *Wu: The Chinese Empress who Schemed, Seduced and Murdered Her Way to Become a Living God*. He is currently a visiting professor at Xi'an Jiaotong University, China.
A younger Wu would have avenged the brothers three-fold to reassert her authority. But Wu was growing increasingly frail. Quite clearly losing her grip on the court, Wu had no choice but to abdicate in favour of her son Ruizong, who had been biding his time in exile. While she retired to a life of lavish luxury, this was the end for Wu. She died that same year, much to the chagrin of her enemies, peacefully in bed.

Generations of scholars have argued over Wu, with some claiming she was a ruthless villain, stopping at nothing to cut down her enemies, and others believing her to be far more sympathetic. The issue surrounds the sources, which were almost certainly biased against her, and it is a problem that has emerged throughout the reigns of countless female leaders in history like that of Queen Hatshepsut of Egypt, when no one wished to record the rule of a woman, hoping instead that she would be erased from history.

However, today Wu is finally being recognised as one of China’s greatest rulers. Although stories of her villainy, baby killing and mutilations are still difficult to shake — and may never truly be resolved — what we can rely on are facts. Under Wu, China enjoyed a period of stability and affluence that it had never seen before. Her reforms were not removed after her death but kept in place, laying the foundations for China to become one of the most prosperous countries in the world — and that alone is certainly worth carving in stone.

Spying FOR the Empress

Petition boxes
Masquerading as a place for commoners and court officials also to voice their suggestions, these petition boxes were actually a way to entrap those who plotted against Wu. Her spies and secret police would set the name they suspected as scheming and she quickly had the people named eliminated.

All expenses paid
Being a spy was risky business and Wu had to make it worthwhile. They were so reliant on her information network that they established a policy that spies would be paid to travel by public transportation in order to report back to the court, giving her a steady flow of interrupted and fresh information.

Rewards
Batting out and tying up people was nasty business, often putting the secret police in danger themselves. Asking people to spy simply out of loyalty was not going to work, so instead Wu made sure to reward those who helped her. This last for rewards actually prompted many of her spies to implicate as many people as they could get away with, and one of her police tried to implicate Wu’s own sons and family members — a step too far that ended in his execution.

Accusation manual
Two of Wu’s secret police apparently penned a guide entitled The Chief of Accusation, which served as a manual for their subordinates, teaching them how to coerce people of crimes and manufacture details that made plans seem likely. They were also used to create unique and horrific ways of torture in order to ‘persuade’ their targets to confess or give up crucial information.

Wu has been the subject of a Chinese TV series and stage show in recent years of countless female leaders in history like that of Queen Hatshepsut of Egypt, when no one wished to record the rule of a woman, hoping instead that she would be erased from history.
**Greatest Battles**

**Armour fatigue**
The Austrian knights initially made inroads into the Swiss' tight square formation, but when the Swiss reinforcements arrived they had grown weary from fighting in full armour. They were no match for the von Winkelried. This selfless hero supposedly threw himself on the sharp tips of a dozen enemy lances and died on the battlefield.

**Legend of Winkelried**
Swiss historians embellished the battle in the late 16th century by fabricating the tale of the legendary Arnold von Winkelried. This selfless hero supposedly threw himself on the sharp tips of a dozen enemy lances in battle.

**Minimal protection**
Swiss infantry had no standard armour that they wore into battle. Many soldiers wore some type of light, open-faced helmet such as a round skull cap, sallet or kettlehat to protect their head. The freedom from armour enhanced their mobility on the battlefield.

**Battle of Sempach**

**CANTON OF LUCERNE, SWITZERLAND, 9 JULY 1386**

Written by William E. Walsh

While the Hundred Years’ War tends to dominate 14th-century history, the Swiss struggle to be free from the grip of the Habsburgs was also pivotal for Europe. The Austrians, led by the mighty Habsburg dynasty, claimed lands south of the Upper Rhine extending deep into the cantons of the rugged Northern Alps. This threatened the autonomy of the Swiss, who had largely been free of feudal constraints in the Middle Ages.

Rudolf of Habsburg, the first of the dynasty to become king of Germany, substantially enhanced the fortunes of his family. In the closing years of the 13th century he not only owned lands in many of the Swiss cantons, but also gained the duchies of Austria and Styria through conquest.

Among the Swiss lands that Rudolf’s descendents coveted were the three rural districts of Schwyz, Uri and Unterwalden—the so-called forest cantons. But the fiercely independent people there had no interest in bowing to Rudolf’s family. In the face of Habsburg aggression, they formed a defensive alliance in 1291, an event that marked the birth of what we now call the Old Swiss Confederacy.

Duke Leopold I of Austria, Rudolf’s grandson, used a minor dispute over his rights to grazing lands in Schwyz to invade the region but the commoners ambushed and defeated his mounted knights at the Battle of Morgarten in 1315. Armed with halberds, the Swiss showed no mercy to their enemy, cutting down hundreds of enemy soldiers.

The well-disciplined, highly trained Swiss infantry enhanced the Confederacy’s wealth and manpower. The Confederacy’s military prowess and their presence on the battlefield was a growing European power.

Embodied by their growing power, the confederated cantons refused to swear an oath of fealty to the Habsburgs. In 1385, Lucerne even raided towns south of the Rhine that were controlled by the dynasty. Depriving Habsburg officials and destroying farms and crops. But when Lucerne seized the town of Rottenburg in December 1385, Duke Leopold III of Austria vowed revenge. Leopold summoned vassals from Alsace, Swabia and Tyrol for a campaign against the Swiss. The Austrian army assemblled in the town of Brugg in August in early July 1386 and marched to the canton of Lucerne.

Leopold had gathered a large body of forest canton reinforcements arrived. The well-disciplined, highly trained Swiss infantry exhibited their renown powerful offensive action as they wheeled and struck the Austrians. Leopold was slain while leading the counterattack and his army quickly retreated.

The Habsburg army collided with the Lucerne contingent on 9 July 1386 outside the village of Hiltihaufen. A desperate melee ensued with the Austrian knights fighting outnumbered, but when it seemed they had vanquished the Swiss army, a large body of forest canton reinforcements arrived. The well-disciplined, highly trained Swiss infantry exhibited their renown powerful offensive action as they wheeled and struck the Austrians in the flank. Leopold was slain while leading the counterattack and his army quickly retreated. The modern, unified state of Switzerland we know today was still hundreds of years away. The Swiss won a decisive victory that furthered the cause of their independence. The Austrian Habsburgs were forced to admit defeat and control of territories around the Rhine would collapse in the coming years, granting Lucerne, Bern and Solothurn unchecked expansion in the region. The Swiss also forced other states to acknowledge the Confederacy’s military prowess and their presence as a growing European power.
**Greatest Battles**

**Battle of Sempach**

**Austrian Habsburgs**

- **INFANTRY**: 2,500
- **CAVALRY**: 2,000

**DUKE LEOPOLD III OF AUSTRIA**

- **LEADER**
  - The ambitious duke ruled the Habsburg family's western domains and was eager to acquire new lands.
  - **STRENGTHS**: Though he only brought a moderate-sized army to Sempach, he had a sizeable base to cherrypick recruits from.
  - **WEAKNESSES**: He was completely unprepared for the arrival of the enemy's reinforcements.

**Swiss form a square**

- Having captured Sempach, Duke Leopold III leads his Austrian cavalry northeast towards the village of Hildisrieden. He runs headlong into the Swiss vanguard that has been deployed in a square formation.

**Crossbow barrage**

- Leopold's vanguard is formed up in a square as missiles pour from the enemy position. Leopold tells his vanguard to unloose the crossbows against the Swiss, who are virtually immobile.

**Thirst for revenge**

- The Austrian knights let their anger get the better of them. Eager to avenge themselves against the Swiss, they rush uphill towards the enemy with little regard to maintaining a tight formation.

**Crushing attack**

- The well-armoured Austrians crash with great force into the front ranks of the Swiss square. Although their dense formation brings the Swiss troops with great confidence, it is not a substitute for the longer weapons and better armour of their opponents. In the fierce melee, the Austrians outflank the Swiss vanguard and press on towards the Swiss army.

**Reinforcements to the rescue**

- A large body of Swiss reinforcements rides from the forest cantons, outflanking the Austrian vanguard. Duke Leopold had assumed that he was fighting the entire Swiss army and is stunned by the appearance of the fresh troops.

**Swiss flank attack**

- The Swiss reinforcements quickly form a square before wheeling to strike the Austrian left flank. Swiss halberdiers hack their way through the exhausted ranks of the weary Austrian vanguard.

**Leopold leads the counterattack**

- Duke Leopold, who has been watching the action from his horse, orders the knights of the main body to dismount and charge the Austrians. Leopold leads the charge against the Austrians, but the Swiss have been outdistanced by the long-shafted pikes.

**Leopold's death**

- The Austrian counterattack fails, and Leopold is slain. The Austrians are disordered and retreat. Leopold's death is a great blow to the Austrian forces.

**Reinforcements to the rescue**

- The Austrians fall back, and Leopold orders the knights of the main body to dismount and charge. The Swiss become disordered as they ride off to save themselves.

**Greatest Battles**

- **WEAKNESSES**: They lacked steel plate armour to adequately defend themselves against any armoured opponents.
  - **STRENGTHS**: They thought on their feet, able to track the enemy's movements and counterattack effectively.

**Swiss Confederation**

- **LEADER**
  - A courageous leader who inspired his troops and fought alongside them.
  - **STRENGTHS**: He thought on his feet, able to counter the Austrian invasion.
  - **WEAKNESSES**: Failed to send scouts to track the enemy's approach.

**LANCE**

- **KEY WEAPON**
  - The traditional height of a Swiss lance was 1.8 metres, and it was designed to penetrate the knight's mail and plate armour. The spike opposite the axe blade had a spike opposite to puncture armour. It also had a spike opposite the axe blade that functioned as a hook to unhorse passing riders.

**HABERD**

- **KEY WEAPON**
  - A 2.4-metre ash handle mounting a broad-headed axe that had a point opposite the axe blade and a spike opposite to puncture armour. It also had a spike opposite the axe blade.

**Key Unit**

- **DUKE LEOPOLD III OF AUSTRIA**
  - **LEADER**
  - A courageous leader who inspired his troops and fought alongside them.
  - **STRENGTHS**: He thought on his feet, able to track the enemy's movements and counterattack effectively.
  - **WEAKNESSES**: Failed to send scouts to track the enemy's approach.
Hero or Villain?

Paperback (592 pages)

The 'Hammer of the Scots' sought to exert his will over the entire British Isles by ruling with an iron fist.

Edward I stands as one of the most celebrated and vilified kings of Medieval England. Feted at home for his military skill and governance, he is remembered as a tyrannical invader by those unfortunate enough to get in his way. A fierce warrior and capable administrator, he was also ambitious to a fault.

Edward's large stature gave him the nickname 'Longshanks' and he loomed over his advisors and England's neighbours in equal measure, constantly looking to expand his the borders of his realm. While this behaviour was not unusual for the period, Edward's reckless spending and heavy-handed approach to dealing with, in his eyes, unruly subjects, has seen him painted as more of a pantomime villain than heroic king.

Edward was not the first English monarch with his name but was the first of Norman descent. Before William the Conqueror came in 1066, the Anglo-Saxon rulers of England used epithets rather than numbers so although Edward the Confessor and several others predated him, Edward was known as the first once his son came to the throne.

Written by Peter Price

Edward I's reputation comes from his various campaigns in England, Wales, Scotland, France and the Middle East. Early in his life he forged his reputation as a military man in the defeat of a rebellious group of barons led by Simon de Montfort. Edward then travelled to the Holy Land to fulfil his crusading vows. By the time he reached Acre, there was little zeal left in the Christian forces and after a 10-year truce was signed with the Mamluks, Edward returned home.

As king, his army was renowned throughout Europe as one of the largest and most disciplined - a force that would see him crush a feisty barons led by Simon de Montfort. Edward was a warrior through and through, much of Edward's reputation comes from his various campaigns in England, Wales, Scotland, France and the Middle East. Early in his life he forged his reputation as a military man in the defeat of a rebellious group of barons led by Simon de Montfort. Edward then travelled to the Holy Land to fulfill his crusading vows. By the time he reached Acre, there was little zeal left in the Christian forces and after a 10-year truce was signed with the Mamluks, Edward returned home.
“Murdering his rivals was part and parcel of Edward's campaigns, although he would have seen them as traitors”

Edward acted less than honourably during the war, expelling them to the enemy on his word when war broke out. During the siege of Gloucester, he parlayed with a rebel army larger than his own that was sent to relieve the town — but once the rebels left the danger had passed, he broke his word and took the town, imprisoning and heavily romancing its inhabitants.

Edward was also quick to offer an opportunity to the Scots. King Arthur, the mythical saviour of the Britons, was still venerated in Wales and during Edward's invasion there was hope that this would be the hour of need in which he would return. To quash this hope, Edward had Arthur and Guinevere's supposed bodies reborn at Glastonbury — a statement that ensured the old legend stayed dead.

The norms in European Medieval warfare was for noblemen were not killed but rather ransomed of surrender — only Edward's reply was, "You don't deserve any grace, but must surrender to my will."

Edward also refused to let the garrison at Stirling stay at Westminster for centuries and was only returned to its homeland in the 1990s, when Robert the Bruce's sister and the countess of Stirling were involved hanging the unfortunate victim until he was almost dead, disembowelling him and finally cutting the body into pieces. These would be displayed around the kingdom as a warning to others considering driving his will.

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Edward possessed a fiery temper that could flare at times. When he heard about the death of both his father and young son, his grief was only evident when it suited him. During the siege of Gloucester, Edward had a treatment that Edward didn't consider that harsh. Brutally murdering his rivals was part and parcel of Edward's campaigns, although he would have seen them as traitors as they refused to bend to his will and so deserving of their fate. Rebels like Simon de Montfort, Dafydd ap Gruffydd and William Wallace were all hung, drawn and quartered — a horrific execution method that involved hanging the unfortunate victim until he was almost dead, disembowelling him and finally cutting the body into pieces. These would be displayed around the kingdom as a warning to others considering driving his will.

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From cats and dogs to orangutans and elephants, meet history’s best-loved royal pets.

There is nothing quite like the bond between humans and their pets and rulers are no exception. Throughout history they can be seen with their loyal companions stood - their side. For many of these people, their pets offered the unconditional love, affection and loyalty that they might have struggled to find elsewhere due to their positions.

Many of these stories are heartwarming and, in some cases, offer up different perspectives on historical figures. Histories of Queen Victoria are often dominated by the focus on her marriage to Prince Albert and the four decades she spent mourning his death. Yet her childhood relationship with Dash, her cherished Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, highlights the plight of a lonely, isolated young girl who only had her beloved dog for a companion. Victoria's love for pets continued for the rest of her life and she was known to own goats, parrots and even a donkey among other animals. It was the start of a long love affair with animals for the British royal family.

Of course, there are also times where the term ‘pet’ is used very loosely when it comes to rulers and the animals they keep. Ivan IV of Russia, commonly remembered as Ivan the Terrible, was a brutal and paranoid man. Historical accounts of his life often say that he owned “pet bears” but his relationship with them was hardly one of loyalty or affection. Ivan deliberately starved his bears so that they were ready for their next meal, which was usually a prisoner that he would have thrown into their den—hardly an example of the caring attachment that the term conjures up.

There are many examples throughout history and here are seven special relationships between pets and their powerful owners.

“Their pets offered the unconditional love, affection and loyalty that they might have struggled to find elsewhere”

Edward VII poses for a photograph with his beloved dog Caesar circa 1905

Caesar led Edward’s funeral procession in 1910

The canine who stayed with his master until the very end

Albert, King Edward VII adored dogs and he of all of them, it is his relationship with Caesar, his white and brown wire fox terrier that really tugs at the heartstrings. Caesar lived a life of luxury with Edward, accompanying him abroad and sleeping in an easy chair by his master’s bed. Caesar was washed and clean. Although never overly concerned with other humans, he became excited whenever he saw his master. At times when he misbehaved, Edward would shake his stick at him and say, “You naughty, naughty dog.” Despite this, Edward never became angry with Caesar and usually broke into a smile soon after the scolding.

When Edward passed away in 1910, Caesar became depressed, roaming Buckingham Palace in search of his master and refusing to eat until Queen Alexandra coaxed him. Knowing how much the king loved Caesar, Alexandra ordered his funeral procession ahead of all of the heads of state, including King George V and Kaiser Wilhelm II. Alexandra continued to care for Caesar until his own death in 1914.

Hanno was loved by the pope and quickly became his favourite animal

The elephant that stole the heart of a Pope and a city

Hanno was a white Indian elephant given to Pope Leo X in 1514 as a gift from King Manuel I of Portugal. Hanno took part in the entrance procession for the king’s ambassadors and he was covered “with gold brocade carrying a howdah of silver.” Upon reaching the pope, he sucked water into his trunk and sprayed those who had gathered, including Leo himself! Hanno delighted the pope and the city of Rome as they had not seen an elephant since the days of the Roman Empire. Leo even wrote to Manuel to thank him, stating that Hanno had “become for our people an object of extraordinary wonder.”

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POPE LEO X & HANNO

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QUEEN ELIZABETH II & SUSAN

The House of Windsor's favourite breed

In 1931, Princess Elizabeth and Prince Philip met at a polo match. Their love affair blossomed and they married in 1947. Over the years, they have owned a variety of dogs, but the Welsh corgi breed is known for being loyal and affectionate companions. The first corgi, Dookie, accompanied Prince Philip on his honeymoon in 1947.

Elizabeth took a deep interest in her dogs and even had a portrait of her beloved corgi, Susan, painted in her honour. The portrait was presented at her 18th birthday. The portrait was later donated to the National History Museum, where it can be seen today.

Susan lived until 1959, and her passing marked the beginning of a new era for the Windsors. Elizabeth and Philip's relationship was cemented by their shared love for dogs, and this bond would continue to strengthen over the years. Today, the Windsors are known for their love of corgis, and the breed remains a popular choice for royal families around the world.
How to make...

DULCIS COCRORA
CLEOPATRA'S FAVOURITE TREAT EGYPT, 70 BCE

These delicious delicacies filled with honey and nuts were originally known as 'tiger nut sweets' and a recipe for them is reported to have appeared on a broken piece of Egyptian pottery dating from 5600 BCE.

Tiger nuts come from the yellow nutsedge plant. They were so revered in Ancient Egypt that tombs were filled with the nut as well as decorated with images of them. But they are considered a weed by many farmers today, so don't appear in modern recipes for dulcis coccora. This could be about to change though, as some dieticians have labelled tiger nuts a 'super food' as they are high in fibre.

No dulcis coccora is complete without another Ancient Egyptian delicacy: honey. Beekeepers first appeared in Egyptian hieroglyphs dating from the First Dynasty, around 5,000 years ago. Bees and their products were more than just agricultural — they had great significance in many other things such as Egyptian medicine and religious rituals.

Ingredients
- 450g dates
- 2 tsp cinnamon
- 1 tsp ground cardamom
- Handful of walnuts
- Jar of runny honey
- Handful of ground almonds
- Water
- Optional extras: tiger nuts, pomegranate seeds

METHOD
01 Begin by finely chopping the dates and walnuts. Dried dates can work very well, too!
02 In a large bowl, add the chopped dates and nuts and mix them with the spices. If you've keen to try the Ancient Egyptians' staple tiger nut, you can try grinding these and adding them, too. Ground tiger nuts are available from health food shops or, for the utmost in authenticity, you can get the pestle and mortar out!
03 Combine everything until the mixture becomes sticky. Add small amounts of water to get the ideal consistency.
04 Next, take a handful of the mixture and roll them into golf ball-sized spheres until all of the mixture has been used up. Once done, put them to one side.
05 Get the jar of honey ready and put the ground almonds onto a tray or plate. If you still want to try some tiger nuts and haven't put any into the main mixture, you can use them ground up instead of the almonds.
06 Now for the sticky part! One by one, dunk the balls into the honey, then roll them in the ground almonds (or tiger nuts) and put them on a tray. At this point, you can also add some pomegranate seeds as a garnish for an extra sweet taste.
07 Once they're all done, move your balls to the fridge to set the honey. Once they've cooled, take them out and enjoy!

Did you know?
We know that Cleopatra and her Roman lover Mark Antony scoffed these sweets as it's recorded in papyri discovered at Faiyum Oasis.

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ELIZABETH'S RIVAL:
THE TUMULTUOUS TALE OF LETTICE
KNOLLYS, COUNTESS OF LEICESTER

A much-needed reassessment of this remarkable, marginalised figure

Author Nicola Tallis Publisher Michael O'Mara Books Price £20 Released Out now

A woman who outlived three husbands, six children and seven monarchs, Lettice Knollys was, as author Nicola Tallis puts it, "the last of the great Elizabethan rivals." She has never been the centre of attention, but for the first time, the countess of Leicester gets the full-length biography that she so rightly deserves.

Off the bat, Tallis makes a bold claim that Lettice may have been the illegitimate granddaughter of Henry VIII through her maternal grandmother, Mary Boleyn. Although we will never be certain, Lettice's position as granddaughter of Anne Boleyn—and therefore first cousin once removed to Elizabeth—would have ensured that she was a prominent figure at the royal court.

Tallis covers Lettice's entire life, from her childhood right up to the day she died, aged 91, during Charles I's reign. Tallis' thorough research is clear evidence in the narrative. It is great to see Tallis finally step out of Dudley and Elizabeth's shadows. For too long she has been demoted to the position of 'the other woman' and a foil for Dudley's attentions. As Tallis points out, Lettice has been portrayed in popular culture as 'outspoken, haughty, insatiable and unmerciful'—as influenced by the bad light cast upon her by historians during and after her lifetime. Here, Lettice's character is reassessed and we finally discover the woman who truly loved Dudley, was devoted to her children and lived through an unspeakable amount of loss, including the executions of her third husband, Sir Christopher Blount, and her first-born son, the Earl of Essex.

It strikes a chord that the detractors of Lettice and Elizabeth's relationship was not just about jealousy, pettiness or rivalry—it was about heartbreak. Elizabeth was left devastated by Dudley's marriage to Lettice but a union needed to be found between her and the Virgin Queen was never in their future. The fracturing of Lettice and Elizabeth's once close relationship is a tale that Tallis tells in a beautiful and thought-provoking way, against the backdrop of political and religious turmoil at the royal court.

Elizabeth Revolts stands as a testament as to why the figures that are cast as mere accessories to the greats of Tudor history should be explored. As the previous author of Lady Jane Grey's story, Nicola Tallis has a clear and concise narrative which brings the life and times of this remarkable woman into the light. The result is an original work demonstrating the weight than might be believed.

"Tallis' thorough research is clear to see and her passion for the subject is evident in the narrative. It is great to see Lettice finally step out of Dudley and Elizabeth's shadows. For too long she has been demoted to the position of 'the other woman' and a foil for Dudley's attentions. As Tallis points out, Lettice's character is reassessed and we finally discover the woman who truly loved Dudley, was devoted to her children and lived through an unspeakable amount of loss, including the executions of her third husband, Sir Christopher Blount, and her first-born son, the Earl of Essex. It strikes a chord that the detractors of Lettice and Elizabeth's relationship was not just about jealousy, pettiness or rivalry—it was about heartbreak. Elizabeth was left devastated by Dudley's marriage to Lettice but a union needed to be found between her and the Virgin Queen was never in their future. The fracturing of Lettice and Elizabeth's once close relationship is a tale that Tallis tells in a beautiful and thought-provoking way, against the backdrop of political and religious turmoil at the royal court.

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LADY FANSHAWE'S RECEIPT BOOK:
The LIFE AND TIMES OF A CIVIL WAR HEROINE

An ordinary woman in extraordinary times

Author Lucy Moore Publisher Atlantic Books Price £20 Released Out now

A woman who outlived three husbands, six children and seven monarchs, Lettice Knollys was, as author Nicola Tallis puts it, "the last of the great Elizabethan rivals." She has never been the centre of attention, but for the first time, the countess of Leicester gets the full-length biography that she so rightly deserves.

It is interesting to explore her first marriage to Walter Devereux, 1st Earl of Essex, during this time that Lettice developed a relationship with Robert Dudley, the 1st Earl of Leicester. The marriage was a seventeenth-century "woman's career" writes Lucy Moore, with respectable females anticipating incomes with self-constructed, prosperous men, lived out in elegant surrounances to fulfill their worthy and modestly duties. But in the chasm of the Civil War, England's rocky foundations crumbled and all had to adapt to a world with no clear future in sight.

As a daughter and wife to servants of the crown, Ann Fanshawe was a true Royalist and, as one might expect, her family endured years of peril trying to keep their cause's flame alive.

To piece together Ann's dramatic life, author Lucy Moore consults not only her memoirs, but her receipt book—a carefully cultivated collection of medicinal recipes shared by family and friends. It was an essential handbook pointing to the wider role as head of her household and beyond, that a benefactor to the community.

The result is a thrilling leap into one of England's most tumultuous eras, which convincingly asserts that the women of the time were not the passive players we assume, but actually active participants in a feminine sphere that fostered and nurtured relationships between families. This was something that was particularly essential for the Cavaliers, who would face years of hardship before Charles II's supporters finally managed to bring an end to the Commonwealth and allow the king-expecting to claim his throne in 1660.

Ann hardly left her beloved diplomat husband Richard's side during the war and the Protectorate. Moving with him from place to place, each slightly worse than the place before. It embodied all the dangers and anxieties of invasioring adventures and left her legacy. Through this book, we gain valuable insight into the wider royal circle with a dizzying array of figures woven into the narrative, rooted in a depth of research dotted with exciting detail. The result is an original work demonstrating the skills that women of the time possessed and how they utilised them to full effect to preserve their families. What is clear is that wiso had new weight than might be believed.

JONATHAN SWIFT:
The REBEL REBEL

The man who made Gulliver

Author John Stubbs Publisher Viking Books Price £11 Released Out now

Jonathan Swift was, allegedly, kidnapped by his own nurse and spirited away from Ireland to England. He was, shockingly, once confronted with a bomb hidden inside a band-box. And he was, famously, the man who made Gulliver. The life of this Anglo-Irish satirist was as complicated as it was extraordinary, and the personal and the political were lived and fought with tenacity. The Reluctant Rebel captures this, creating an extensive biography of a remarkable man and a detailed history of the world he inhabited. Swift's life—his family history, childhood, education and career—are all meticulously covered. The tangled relationships he formed with Esther Johnson and Esther Vanhomrigh, whom he styled "Sister and Venus" respectively, particularly stand out. These relationships are woven, or rather great to make a famous literary character— he not only made a famous literary character. The narrative is clear, engaging and its scope is wide-ranging.

Naturally, this authoritative account is a must-read for those already interested in Swift's work and his corresponding influence. Swift's work marked him as a rebel, however reluctant he has been to accept the moniker. In this tome, John Stubbs carefully explores Swift's life, written works, correspondence with his childhood, education and career, Thomas himself, and his writings—certainly the most well-known of these is, of course, his writing. His pen smacked,
When Winston Churchill was elected prime minister for the first time in 1940, Britain was already at war. He later wrote of the event: "I felt ... that all my past life had been but a preparation for this hour and for this trial." Veteran history writer Brian Lavery's new biography explores that past life in great detail, including Churchill's time as a colonial soldier, a war correspondent covering the Boer War and as a long-serving politician.

The author of the 2010 bestseller Empire of the Seas chronicles the British Bulldog's many exploits and insightfully considers how Churchill's military background and experience of command shaped his ability to win World War II.

Commenting on his new biographer, the editor of the London Review of Books wrote: "When I read about Churchill, I'd always think of the war, but I don't think I'll ever think of Lavery that way again."
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How much truth remains in this story of a bereaved German couple, Otto and Elsie Hampel, spreading anti-Nazi leaflets in World War II?

01 Based on Hans Fallada's fictionalised account of the real-life rebels, some of the film's inaccuracies can be traced back to Fallada's novel. In reality it was Elise's brother who died, but both the novel and the film have changed this to the couple's son.

02 Otto and Elsie had been married for less than five years when war broke out and were in their mid and early 40s respectively when they died in 1943. At 52 and 50 years old, Gleeson and Thompson are almost 20 years older than their real-life counterparts.

03 For a city in the midst of brutal conflict, Perez's vision of Berlin looks surprisingly picturesque. It's clean and bright, with one or two bucolic scenes that look as though they belong in the glossy pages of a travel brochure rather than a wartime drama.

04 The film and novel both show Otto's execution. The book spare Anna the guillotine by having her die in a bombing raid, while her screen counterpart is last seen on death row, awaiting her fate. In fact, both Otto and Elise were guillotined in April 1943.

05 The novel's Escherich is a Gestapo officer, while the movie shows him as a conflicted but dedicated policeman ashamed of his part in the couple's fate. His final scattering of their postcards and suicide might be dramatically satisfying, but it never happened.

Following the evacuation at Dunkirk, the remaining British forces fought on in the defence of France. In response, Nazi Germany launched Case Red, a final offensive which crushed the remaining Allied armies. Capturing the drama of this catastrophic defeat, Robert Forczyk explains how and why France fell in June 1940.
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