Lest We Forget

A delicately handcrafted brooch
honouring those who served
our nation courageously

Hand-applied 18-carat gold-plating

Genuine Swarovski® Crystals

An elegant symbol of life's fragility, the vivid poppy
proves a breathtaking tribute to those who laid down their
lives in service of our great nation. Now you can honour a
loved one who served with the Flanders Fields Poppy Brooch,
a first-of-a-kind fine jewellery exclusive, only available from
The Bradford Exchange.

A truly heartfelt first-of-a-kind design...

Inspired by Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae's epic poem In
Flanders Fields, this stunning treasure brings precious poppies
to life in a truly meaningful presentation to honour those
who made the ultimate sacrifice so that we may be free.
Hand-applied 18-carat gold-plating beautifully accents the
finely-crafted brooch to create a truly opulent look. Six radiant
Swarovski® crystals rest in the centre of the bloom which is
hand-camouflaged in red to capture the lifelike vibrancy of the
poppy. Wear this elegant brooch next to your heart and know
that our valiant heroes will be remembered always. The brooch
is accompanied by a Certificate of Authenticity reproducing
McCrae's beloved In Flanders Fields poem as a beautiful
finishing touch.

Exceptional design & incredible value
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This exclusive brooch is payable in two easy, interest-free
instalments of £12.49.99 — that's exceptional value at just £49.98
(plus £6.99 S&H). Protected by our 120-day guarantee,
this exquisite tribute is available for a limited time, so don't
miss out. To order your brooch, pay nothing now — simply
complete and return the Priority Order Form today.

Accompanied by a custom-designed presentation case

ORDER FORM

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YES! Please order 1 of the Flanders Fields Poppy Brooch for
me as described in this advertisement. I need PAY NOTHING NOW!

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Welcome

“The die is now cast,” wrote the king to his First Minister, Lord North. “The colonies must either submit or triumph. I do not wish to come to severer measures, but we must not retreat.”

King George III of the United Kingdom casts a long shadow, but like all shadows its aspect is misshapen and its features are stretched out of all proportion.

George III is shorthand for “madness” (thanks to the film, see page 98) and (especially in the US) “tyranny”, but although its unwritten constitution was still in the process of being (un)written, the United Kingdom was a constitutional monarchy at the time of the American Revolution.

So how can a king whose authority is exercised through Parliament be a tyrant? And to what extent did Parliament’s reaction to the disgruntled colonials reflect the views of the monarch?

Those are exactly the questions that All About History’s staff writer and in-house herald Jessica Leggett poses in her feature on page 28, as she reveals whether or not George III deserves his maligned reputation.

James Hoare
Group Editor

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Editor’s picks

Medieval Medicine
From Black Death to broken bones, discover how science and superstition collided in the gruesome world of medieval medicine

Protecting Pompeii
Antiquity ace Kate Marsh explains how Pompeii’s rediscovery and preservation is every bit as exciting as its gruesome final hours

World War II Cannibals
Biologist Charlie Evans reveals how desperation drove Leningrad’s citizens to feast on each other during the darkest days of the Nazi siege

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Subscribe to our weekly email newsletter for more stories, visit www.bit.ly/aahistnewsletter
Michael Keaton tries out the view from behind the camera during the filming of the first Batman film. Keaton was controversial choice for the role due to what was then mainly a comedy background, but director Tim Burton saw the intensity he could bring to the character. Burton was vindicated when the film grossed $40.49 million in its opening weekend alone, going on to earn over $411 million worldwide.
BROTHERHOOD AND UNITY

Yugoslav president Josip Tito was praised for both holding his divided nation together and for walking the knife-edge between communist East and capitalist West. His death represented the beginning of the end of Yugoslavia's "Brotherhood and Unity", but his funeral showcased unity of a different kind, bringing together the likes of Kim Il-sung, Saddam Hussein, Yasser Arafat, Leonid Brezhnev, Margaret Thatcher and Prince Philip.

1980
EMPIRE UP CLOSE

Wounded soldiers of the British India Army convalesce in the Indian-inspired dome near Brighton Pavilion. Desperately needed to shore up Britain’s depleted ranks following the disastrous battles of 1914, the Great War saw Indian soldiers fight white foes for the first time, and do so on European soil. These were huge taboos and played a key role in eroding the myth of Anglo-Saxon supremacy that held the British Empire in check.

1915
Space Cowboy

Air ace Joseph A Walker vaults from the cockpit of the X1 with characteristic glee. Walker, who served in World War II, flew three variations of the supersonic Bell X-1 and became the first American to make space flight when the X-15 exceeded 100 kilometres in altitude in 1963. Repeating the feat made him the first person to make multiple space flights and he was also the first test pilot of the Lunar Landing Research Vehicle used by Apollo 11.
“[God] himself gave medical knowledge to men, just as He himself assigned both herbs and other things to grow on the earth.”

Origen, 1st century Christian scholar
From bloodletting to prayer, discover how physicians, barber surgeons and holy men treated the Black Death and more

Explore an apothecary

The doctor will see you now

Eleanor Herman on poison

Visit medieval hospitals

Written by David Crookes, Jessica Leggett
Medieval Medicine in history

Discover the development of medicine during the medieval period, from groundbreaking texts to medical firsts.

7TH CENTURY

**THE JUSTINIAN PLAGUE**

25-50 MILLION

Number of estimated deaths across the empire

Approximate number of deaths each day in Constantinople during the plague

10,000

This was the FIRST major outbreak of bubonic plague in the world

Greek physician Paul of Aegina creates his seven-volume medical encyclopaedia, incorporating his own knowledge with that of the ancient Greeks and Romans – it would remain popular for the next 800 years.

DEATH OF A KING

King Richard I of England dies after the Siege of Châlus, following a botched attempt by a surgeon to remove an arrowhead from his shoulder, with the wound turning gangrenous.

ARRIVAL OF SURGERY

The surgical field emerges due to the establishment of the University of Paris, followed by other European universities such as the ones in Bologna and Oxford.

SPREADING THE KNOWLEDGE

Starting in the 12th century, numerous ancient texts on astrology are translated into Latin, not only influencing medical practice but becoming a staple of European medicine.

INFLUENCING MEDICINE

Avicenna completes his encyclopaedia, *The Canon of Medicine*, one of the most famous medical treatises in Europe. In it, he discusses the four humours, introducing it to medieval medicine from Greco-Roman.

1025

12TH CENTURY

A NEW DIAGNOSIS

Gilbert the Englishman, a priest and physician, finishes his *Compendium Medicine*, in which he offers the first diagnosis of leprosy. It is subsequently translated into several languages.

PRACTICAL TEACHING

The first recorded autopsy takes place in Cremona, Italy, with dissections eventually becoming an educational tool in medical universities, such as the one in Bologna, over the next few decades.

NATURAL MEDICINE

The *Red Book of Hergest*, a Welsh Medieval manuscript, is created and it includes a collection of herbal remedies attributed to Rhiwallon Feddyg, the founder of the Physicians of Myddfai.

541-542

1199

1150

1250

1286

14TH CENTURY
**CHINESE MEDICINE**
Chao Yuanfang, an imperial court physician during the Sui Dynasty, compiles his *Treatise On The Many Illnesses*. He discusses more than 1,700 diseases, such as smallpox, which greatly influences medicine in China.

**ISLAMIC GOLDEN AGE**
The first pharmacies are opened in Baghdad and they prove to be very popular, with many more founded throughout the Arab world – they would finally appear in Europe by the 12th century.

**JAPANESE MEDICINE**
Physician Tamba Yasuyori completes his edit of *Ishinpō*, the oldest surviving medical text in Japan. Inspired by the work of Chao Yuanfang, it discusses both diseases and treatments and is considered a national treasure of Japan.

**PUBLIC HEALTH**
Infirmaries had been a part of monasteries since the 6th century but it takes another five centuries before public hospitals are opened, supported by the church, city authorities or through private funds.

**EMERGING EDUCATION**
The Schola Medica Salernitana is founded in Salerno, Southern Italy, and is believed to have been the first medical school of the western medieval world.

**THE BLACK DEATH**
Estimated number of people who died
- 25-50 MILLION
- That roughly equates to 30-60% of Europe’s population
- It is thought the plague travelled anywhere between 1-8 MILES A DAY 1347-C.1352

**LIFE EXPECTANCY IN ENGLAND**
21-year-old male aristocrat was estimated to live another 48.11 years between 1400 to 1500
- Meanwhile, they had been expected to live another 43.14 years between 1200 to 1300

**A FATHER OF SURGERY**
English surgeon John Arderne composes his influential medical treatise on a range of topics, including treatment for the eyes and a cure for anal fistulas, based on his career experience.

**A GROUND-BREAKING DISCOVERY**
Persian physician Rhazes becomes the first person to distinguish between smallpox and measles, recognising them as two different deadly diseases, and discussing their associated signs and symptoms.
An apothecary was a busy place in medieval times since it was where substances used in medicine were sold to patients, physicians and surgeons. Apothecaries were, to a great extent, the predecessor to modern pharmacists, mixing the smallest of quantities of herbs and spices to create treatments while offering medical advice and carrying out a small range of services.

It could be imagined to be a place of wonder and hope with shelves packed full of jars and vials filled with powders and liquids. The air would be filled with the scent of exotic spices and some apothecaries would work hard to maintain a feeling of mystique.

They wanted people to feel both amazed and reassured that the sometimes off-beat ingredients (fat, flayed cats, hedgehog grease, bear fat and virgin wax were involved in treatments for throat infections) would do them great good and encourage a purchase.

The shops could be found across Europe, where streets were often named after them, especially when a handful existed side-by-side (Apothecary Street in London is one such case). For those who worked in them, there was much pressure, particularly as demands for cures grew and greater quantities of ingredients became necessary. Apothecaries could be blamed if a patient’s condition did not improve – but they were seldom thanked if it did.

It didn’t seem to matter that apothecaries did not have any formal training to begin with (examinations were introduced in the 15th century). Indeed, there were many cases where apothecaries would have dual roles, perhaps doubling as a barber or even performing surgery.

It was not unusual for medicine to be done ‘on the side’, either, since the shops would sell perfumes, items for food, wines for general consumption and even stationary. Neither, come to that, was it rare for apothecaries to give advice or even diagnose illness even though the law stated their role was purely to supply medicine. Few found themselves prosecuted.

**Medieval Medicine**

**Inside History**

**An Apothecary**

**Western Europe, 1100**

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**Self-reliance**

Initially, apothecaries would cultivate their own plants and herbs in a garden plot outside. This would help them to cut down on costs and ensure that there was enough supply to produce the necessary treatments. As time went on and demand rose, they would purchase their ingredients from a growing number of suppliers.

**Trading in beauty**

As well as helping people back to health, an apothecary would make and sell perfume and other beauty products in much the same way as a modern-day pharmacy. Often ingredients would have a dual use. Tragacanth, a natural gum taken from the dried sap of Middle Eastern legumes, for example, was used in both a perfume and cough medicine.

**Live animals**

Typically, an apothecary would also have live animals at his disposal, although perhaps not always permanently on the premises (to aid gout, for instance, an owl was plucked clean, opened, salted, cooked and pounded with boar’s grease). Medieval cures for burns involved rubbing the slime of live snails on a wound and, once again, that also had some scientific grounding: the slime has anti-inflammatory, antioxidant and antibiotic properties.
**Public-facing**
Many apothecaries ran their own small shops such as the one pictured here, serving medicine to members of the public from behind a counter in the front section of dedicated retail premises. Visiting patients would trust the men to diagnose their conditions and they would buy products deemed capable of curing or relieving their ills. Sometimes an apothecary shop was based in the apothecary’s home.

**Treating patients**
Although much of an apothecary’s work was selling raw ingredients and creating medicines to a recipe written in Latin, they would also be called upon to diagnose illness and prescribe treatments to help cure or relieve an illness. It would appear the training, however, was not formal but passed down in an apprentice-like scheme over many years, and it could involve tongue scraping, tooth extraction and the use of knives (treated with sterilisation equipment, of course).

**Raw ingredients**
Behind the counter, in jars on the shelves lining the walls, was an assortment of herbs and spices used in the preparation of the medicines. There would be pepper, ginger, saffron, nutmeg and cloves, cumin, aniseed, rosemary, fennel and nuts among many others. Curing migraines, for example, entailed boiling barley, betony, vervain and other herbs before wrapping them in a cloth and applying to the patient’s brow. In this case, the apothecaries were not far off the mark – betony and vervain can be found in modern treatments.

**Different liquids**
Wines, cordials and syrups would also be contained within many of the jars. Wine was thought to be useful in attaining healthy blood, with the finest, aromatic and pleasant-tasting tipples of the most benefit. It would be boiled to allow other ingredients to dissolve or it would be drunk ‘neat’ – the idea being that it could enter the blood stream directory and generate blood. To that end, wine was believed to aid the absorption of other medicines.

**Preparation area**
Apothecaries would generally prepare the medicines using their ingredients out of sight of the purchaser, working to age-old recipes which they would refuse to divulge. They worried about potentially giving a rival an advantage by revealing their secrets so they would work diligently in a back room and hope their cures or treatment would work so that word would spread about their personal effectiveness.

**Weights and scales**
In most cases, only tiny amounts of each ingredient were used and it was important to get the balance right. For that reason, the weights and scales of an apothecary were invaluable and they used the Troy method based on the weight of a grain of wheat: A Troy ounce was 480 grains or 31.1 grams and a Troy pound 5,760 grains.

**Mortar and pestle**
The best way to crush and grind herbs, spices and other ingredients was with a mortar and pestle. Apothecaries would have a number of them in various shapes and sizes, the smaller ones being particularly good for the grinding of fine powders, whether wet or dry, and larger ones for bulkier ingredients.

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A PHYSICIAN

Anatomy of THE DRAWING OF BLOOD

Working on the basis that fire, water, earth and air controlled the humours, physicians believed the body would be 'balanced' by removing 'bad blood' (they thought blood was static and stagnated in certain parts of the body). Ailments were therefore treated by clamping leeches to the patient's skin (sometimes to the eyes). Over time, physicians themselves were nicknamed leeches.

A CRUCIFIX

Physicians saw no distinction between medicine and faith, and disease could also be attributed to everything from demons and sin to the stars and punishment from God. Although they were recognised as a distinct professional class in 1215, their treatments – be they bloodletting or herbal remedies – went hand-in-hand with prayer and relics. To the medieval worldview, all things had a spiritual dimension.

EDUCATED MEN

High-end physicians in the Middle Ages were university educated and their medicine was rooted in the writings of ancient Greeks such as Hippocrates and early medieval Arab physicians. They treated aristocrats and royalty, explaining illness as an imbalance of the four humours (or distinct bodily fluids): black bile, yellow bile, phlegm and blood.

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A BUNCH OF POSIES

It was widely thought that diseases were carried by smell so physicians would seek to protect themselves by masking any stench. Posies were a popular choice but oranges were also used. Flowers also came in handy for treating smallpox – as well as giving patients red food and drinks and wrapping them in red cloths, physicians would ground red roses with bamboo juice.

MONEY PURSE

Physicians would always charge high fees for their services, with renowned practitioners in England typically commanding 100 marks for their treatments (a mark being a medieval unit of account worth 160 pence). This would be the equivalent of some £48,000 today, with many physicians put on a retainer fee that attached them to a royal or noble household.

CUTTING TREATMENTS

There were some extreme cures for disease. Inflamed lymph nodes within the armpit or groin areas would be sliced open to allow the pus to drain, while trepanation would see a hole drilled into the patient's skull so that blood build up could be relieved or intracranial diseases cured. Being made to vomit – another way of balancing the body – seemed tame in comparison.

DRAWING OF BLOOD

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Hall of Fame

MARVELLOUS MEDICS

Meet ten men and women who had a lasting impact on medicine in the medieval world

---

**PAUL OF AEGINA** *Byzantine* c.625-690

Paul was one of the most prominent physicians of the Byzantine period. He studied medicine in Alexandria, Egypt and was also exposed to Arabic medicine through his travels to the Middle East. He wrote *The Epitome of Medicine*, comprising of seven books on various subjects including hygiene and toxicology, combining the work of Hippocrates and Galen with new medical procedures, such as cauterisation. It was highly influential and remained as the standard guide for medicine and surgery for 800 years.

---

**AVICENNA** *Persian* 980-1037

Regularly cited as one of the most significant physicians of the Islamic Golden Age, Avicenna wrote hundreds of works, many of which were dedicated to medicine. His most famous was the encyclopaedia *The Canon Of Medicine*, which remained in use until the 17th century as one of the world’s most authoritative and famous medical textbooks. Avicenna was influenced by the work of Greek physician Galen, combined with Persian and Indian medicines. Although the majority of it has now been debunked by modern medical science, Avicenna provided great insight to areas such as anatomy and symptoms, and is often touted as a founder of preventive medicine.

---

**AL-ZAHRAWI** *Spanish* 936-1013

Widely hailed as ‘the father of modern surgery’, Al-Zahrawi was the greatest surgeon of the Islamic Golden Age. In roughly the year 1000, he completed his 30-volume illustrated medical encyclopaedia *Al-Tasrif*, which was intended for medical students. Documenting Al-Zahrawi’s almost 50 years of medical experience, it discussed human anatomy and the pathology of diseases among other topics. It was influential on the development of both Islamic and European medicine and surgery, remaining as the standard textbook in medical universities for 500 years. Aside from his encyclopaedia, Al-Zahrawi holds the distinction of introducing around 200 new surgical instruments to the medieval world.

---

**ANNA KOMNENE** *Byzantine* 1083-1153

Byzantine princess Anna Komnene studied medicine from an early age, eventually developing a reputation as a good physician. Her father, Emperor Alexios I, placed Komnene in charge of a large hospital, as well as an orphanage, in the capital Constantinople. While in this role, it is believed that she treated thousands of patients and she was also known to teach medicine in various other hospitals. Interestingly, Komnene was deemed to be an expert in gout and treated personally treated her father when he suffered attacks.
HILDEGARD VON BINGEN
GERMAN 1098-1179
Hildegard was a Benedictine nun who was known for her holistic approach healing and herbal remedies. She was the author of the nine volume Physica and the five volume Causae et Curae, which between them covered a range of topics including human physiology, the medicinal properties of plants and herbal treatments. While it remains unknown exactly where Hildegard studied medicine, her writing suggests that she was familiar with folk medicine, Arabic medicine and the work of Galen.

IBN ZUHR SPANISH 1094-1162
Ibn Zuhr was considered the most renowned physician of Muslim Spain. Born into a family of physicians, he trained in medicine from an early age and was introduced to the works of Hippocrates and Galen by his father, who made him swear the Hippocratic oath. He notably wrote the Kitab al-Taysi, focusing on clinical descriptions and diagnosis of diseases, at the request of his contemporary Averroes, to serve as a companion the latter's medical encyclopaedia, Colliget. Also known for introducing animal testing to evaluate new medical procedures, Ibn Zuhr's work contributed greatly to the development of surgery in the medieval world.

MAIMONIDES SPANISH C.1135-1204
First exposed to medicine while living in Morocco from 1160 to 1165, Maimonides’s reputation as a physician earned him a place as the court physician to the sultan of Egypt, Saladin. Influenced by Greek and Arabic medicine, coupled with his own experiences, Maimonides wrote at least ten medical treatises, discussing conditions such as asthma and pneumonia. His work is credited with spreading medical knowledge amongst the Jewish community during the Middle Ages.

IBN AL-NAFIS SYRIAN 1213-1288
Ibn al-Nafis made one of the biggest medical discoveries of the Medieval world when he correctly described pulmonary circulation, with blood moving from the right side to the left side of the heart through the lungs. This contradicted the traditionally accepted view of Galen, where blood seeped from the right to the left ventricle through the chamber walls - it would take European scholars another three centuries to prove Ibn al-Nafis correct. He also predicted the existence of coronary and capillary circulations, 400 years before they were discovered, proving that he was a physician far ahead of his own time.

AVERROES SPANISH 1126-1198
Averroes, a physician at the royal Almohad court, was celebrated for his insight and knowledge in the field of medicine. He created a number of medical works, the most important of which was his first, the encyclopaedia Book of Generalities About Medicine, which he wrote in 1162. Also known by its Latin name, Colliget, it was split into seven books which discussed a range of topics, including anatomy, hygiene and therapy. The Colliget was focused on the theoretical bases of medicine and summarised the work of Galen, earning Averroes recognition in the Latin medical world.

GUY DE CHAULIAC FRENCH C.1300-1368
After studying medicine in Montpellier, Paris and Bologna, Chauliac practiced as a physician in Lyon and served as the personal surgeon to three Popes of the Avignon Papacy. He wrote the Chirurgia Magna, in which he discussed a variety of medical treatments and surgical procedures, largely influenced by the work of Galen. The Chirurgia Magna quickly became one of the most important surgical textbooks in the Medieval world and remained as such for almost 400 years.
Q&A With...

ELEANOR HERMAN

THE BESTSELLING AUTHOR AND BROADCASTER ON THE LINE BETWEEN KILL AND CURE

The Royal Art of Poison: Fatal Cosmetics, Deadly Medicines and Murder Most Foul is out now from Duckworth

Eleanor Herman is a NY Times bestselling author of both YA fiction and historical non-fiction, and has hosted shows for History and National Geographic.

She’s an expert on the torrid private lives of monarchs and her books include Sex With Kings: 500 Years Of Adultery, Power, Rivalry And Revenge and Sex With The Queen: 900 Years Of Vile Kings, Vile Lovers And Passionate Politics.
What Can You Tell Us About the Royal Art of Poison and What Inspired It?

In writing Sex With Kings and Sex With the Queen, books that examined the love lives of European royalty, I was surprised that whenever someone at court died – even a slow death – everyone assumed they had been poisoned. I decided to investigate those deaths at some point in the future to see if these individuals had really been poisoned or had died of natural illness.

It took while to get back to this kernel of a book idea, but I finally did.

What Sort of Research Did You Do on the Book?

I read biographies of dozens of people who were rumoured to have been poisoned as well as books on the medical care – and I’m being generous with that term – in past centuries. I also read original books written in the 16th century about medical treatments and recipes for homemade medications. Some of them made my eyes pop out of their sockets – eating droppings to ease constipation, a mercury face mask left on for eight days. I also worked with doctors and researchers around the world to determine what killed these people, including with those researchers who dug some of them up.

What’s the Earliest Example of Royal Medication Going Wrong That You Came Across in Your Research?

Henry VII of Luxembourg, the Holy Roman Emperor, contracted anthrax during an epidemic in 1311 when it killed his court’s horses and jumped into the human population, with many fatalities. It didn’t kill Henry, but it did give him stinking black lesions all over his body.

His physicians prepared an arsenic skin crème to rub on the lesions. Back then, all medication was based on trial and error – they basically tried everything and finally landed on something that worked. So they knew that a tiny bit of arsenic in a cream reduced lesions and skin rashes.

What they didn’t know was why – that arsenic, being poisonous, killed the bacteria causing the infection. Nor did they know that the arsenic could build up in the human body over time and kill the patient. They figured if it didn’t kill you quickly, then it must be okay. When researchers studied Henry’s bones in 2013, they found them loaded with arsenic. It takes months for chronic arsenic poisoning to show up in bones – a single fatal dose would show up in the digestive tract, which is the first part of a corpse to decompose. So the poison in his bones is proof that he was being slowly and unintentionally poisoned by his physicians. But it wasn’t the arsenic alone that killed him. He died of a fever, and arsenic doesn’t cause fever. But it is safe to say his body was greatly weakened by the arsenic, allowing the fever to tip him over the edge.

We Know a Lot About Early Modern Cosmetics Being Killer, But Were There Any Medieval Precursors Where Getting That Perfect Look Could Have Long Term Consequences?

Medieval makeup was more natural than the clown look of the Renaissance with its ghastly white lead paint face and the bright red cheeks and lips from mercury-based substances. Still, some women probably used white lead powder to obtain an enviable pallor and darkened their eyelashes and brows with an oil-based mixture of kohl, which was either made of lead or antimony (a cousin of arsenic) smelted from its ore, antimony sulphide, also known as stibnite.

Or they combed their lashes and brows with a lead comb dipped in vinegar which reacted with the lead, allowing it to leach out.

A bit of the stuff would probably not harm most women, though it would depend on genetics. Some people react very badly to it in a short time. Others could go a lifetime without any symptoms.

Poisoning as a Political Tool Feels Very Renaissance, But How Was It Used to Settle Family Feuds and Dynastic Challenges in the Medieval Period?

There is, however, one interesting medieval poisoning case in my book. In 1329, 38-year-old Cangrande della Scala, a warlord in northern Italy, had conquered several cities when he fell ill of a fever and died four days later. There were rumours of poison, as there always were, but modern researchers believed he probably died of malaria, a common illness in an Italian summer and one which causes high fever. Then, in 2004, Cangrande’s mummified remains were exhumed and studied. Researchers were shocked to find a poisonous plant – foxglove, also known as digitalis – in his oesophagus (he had vomited shortly before he died), his liver, stomach, intestines, and rectum.

He had clearly died of digitalis poisoning. Except digitalis doesn’t cause a fever. It seems he had a fever – from which he may very well have recovered – and his doctor was bribed to poison him in his medication.

Royals and warlords never had a taster test their medication. They just drank whatever the doctor handed them. And Cangrande, a superb warrior, threatened many Italian cities and had many enemies. Clearly, one of them had gotten to his doctor.

Do You Have Any Other Historical Projects Bubbling Away in the Background?

I’m working on another book of love affairs of powerful people. I have a strange fascination for
Places to Explore

MUSEUMS AND ATTRACTIONS

Get close to plague pits and surgical tools at these featured attractions

1. LAZZARETTO VECCHIO
VENICE

The oldest purpose-built quarantine station, the eerie Lazzaretto Vecchio was established in 1423 on one of the smaller islands of the Venetian lagoon to protect the great mercantile city from the ravages of the plague. With ships arriving from Asia and Africa, Venice was especially vulnerable to the spread of disease and all those infected regardless of social status or wealth were condemned to crowded bunkhouses on the reclaimed mudflats of Lazzaretto Vecchio.

Though much of the earlier structure was pulled down in the 19th century to build a barracks, archaeological work continues to uncover much of its gruesome early history.

Graffiti can be seen from the 16th century when bubonic plague ravaged the city and as recently as 2006 a mass grave of 1,500 neatly buried 15th century skeletons was discovered, proving that this ill-fated island still has secrets left to yield.

Lazzaretto Vecchio can be visited on Sundays from April to October, or through specially booked tours. Find out more at lazzarettovecchio.it.

2. FRANCISCAN CHURCH AND MONASTERY
DUBROVNIK

Built in 1317 and greatly embellished in the following centuries as testament to growing wealth and influence of the Republic of Ragusa (Dubrovnik from 1358 to 1808), the primary duty of the monastery’s Dominican friars was the care of the sick and although it remains a fully inhabited monastery, the beautiful cloistered medicinal herb garden can be visited by tourists along with the pharmacy, which first opened in 1317 and is the third oldest in the world.

This ancient pharmacy was originally the monastery’s primary source of revenue and is still a working shop, as well as Old Pharmacy Museum, meaning that the dispensing of prescriptions to the modern inhabitants of Dubrovnik sits side-by-side with a selection of medieval and early modern medical implements. Much like the monastery itself, the pharmacy’s 700-year story is far from over.

Franciscan Church and Monastery is open 9am to 6pm April to October, and 9am to 2pm November to March. Admission is 40 kuna.
Now known in their modern incarnation as St John Ambulance, the medical mission of the Order of St John dates back to 1080, when a group of monks established a hospital in Jerusalem to care for sick and injured pilgrims visiting the Holy City.

The Hospitallers - as they became known - gradually transformed into the Knights Hospitaller during the Crusades, to defend by sword the pilgrims they sought to heal, first by providing armed escort for pilgrims and eventually leading and fielding armies.

The museum's gatehouse location is all that remains of the 12th century Clerkenwell Priory, once the English base of the Order of St John, and taken from them during the reign of Henry VIII. Most of the knights fled for Malta, but three who did not were executed as traitors for their loyalty to the Pope. The Museum of the Order of St John contains not just materials and records referring to the 150-year history of the St John Ambulance, but Medieval manuscripts detail land grants and royal privileges, coins from the Crusader states and seals of the priors, as well as numerous archaeological materials from the lost Clerkenwell Priory.

The most interesting items in the collection reflect the power and prestige of the order's early modern patrons, including a cannon commissioned by Henry VIII for the defence of their island fortress of Malta, and a crystal cross gifted by Pope Pius V in 1565.

The Museum of the Order of St John is open Monday to Saturday 10am to 5pm. Admission is free. Find out more at museumstjohn.org.uk.
The act of self-mortification, or flagellation, had been common practice for holy men since the earliest decades of Christianity. As the Black Death ravaged Europe across the mid-14th century it erupted into a mass movement, powered by hysteria and the belief that this vile epidemic was a divine punishment.

The first outbreaks of public flagellation occurred in Northern Italy in 1260 and the practice was soon carried to the rest of Europe, particularly Central Europe and the Low Countries, where communities covering under the shadow of pestilence adopted it as a desperate act of public contrition.

The most common tool of cleansing was the scourge, a whip with three tails that was often knotted or barbed with iron to inflict maximum pain, and worn on the waist. The flagellants or penitents would march in a line two-by-two from town to town, robed and hooded in red crosses. Those at the front of the procession carried crucifixes and banners aloft, and they sang hymns begging for forgiveness. Twice a day the flagellants would stop in a town square in front of the church, form a circle, strip to the waist, remove their shoes and flay themselves until they bled.

The Dominican friar Heinrich von Herford (1300-1370), recalled, “Using these whips they beat and whipped their bare skin until their bodies were bruised and swollen and blood rained down, spattering the walls nearby. I have seen, when they whipped themselves, how sometimes those bits of metal penetrated the skin so deeply that it took more than two attempts to pull them out.” Finally, they would pray. The routine would be repeated a third time in the evening.

For townsfolk frustrated by the impotence of their priests and prayers, flagellation offered visceral answers, eye-catching spectacle, and even supernatural healing. The French chronicler Jean Froissart (1337-1405) wrote of their audience that, “Some foolish women had cloths ready to catch the blood and smear it on their eyes, saying it was miraculous blood.”

The practice soon peaked and quickly declined as papal bulls made flagellation heresy and secular authorities moved to restore public order following a series of grisly massacres of Jews by flagellants. However the belief underpinning flagellation – that sickness was a punishment for sin – endured well into the Renaissance.

The practice was a rare surviving copper scourge found at Rievaulx Abbey and used by the monks for flagellation, it's now on display at the English Heritage visitors centre on the site. Find out more at english-heritage.org.uk.
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Blamed for losing the Thirteen Colonies and vilified in the Declaration of Independence, does King George III deserve this bitter legacy?

The crowds swarmed the gilded statue of King George III with the words of the newly signed Declaration of Independence ringing loudly in their ears. They shouted and jeered as they climbed the protective fence, slinging ropes over the king's statue, pulling at them as it violently swayed from side to side. With an almighty crash, the statue came crumbling to the ground against a wave of cheers – no longer would Americans suffer under the tyrannical rule of King George and his British Empire.

Many of history's biggest watershed moments have involved the tearing down of statues, a symbolic break for freedom at the end of oppressive rule.

Made of gilded lead, the fall of George's statue was poetic in more ways than one as it was melted down and turned into 42,088 musket balls, used by the Continental Army against the king's own forces.

The debate regarding George's reign has raged ever since his lifetime, as the infamous king who not only lost the American colonies, but whose permanent descent into madness caused crisis within the British monarchy. But does George, the longest-reigning king in British history, really deserve to be remembered as a tyrant?

On the Path to War

Before taking a look at George's involvement it is important to note that prior to the outbreak of the American War of Independence, discontent had been bubbling across the Thirteen North American colonies against the British Parliament for some time, thanks to the Seven Years' War. The war, which had lasted from 1756 to 1763, had been extremely costly for Britain despite its victory over France and its allies.
Hoping to recoup some of the money that had been spent on the conflict, Parliament decided to tax the colonies on the grounds that the war had partly been fought to protect them from the French in Canada. Britain had also sent 10,000 troops to the colonies to defend the frontier near the Appalachian Mountains. The result was the Stamp Act, passed on 22 March 1765, which imposed direct taxes on the colonists for the first time in order to raise money for their defense.
King George III

All legal documents, newspapers, calendars and so forth were required to have stamps, which could only be paid for with either silver or gold despite paper money being the most common currency in the colonies.

The Stamp Act left many of the colonists furious. Why should they pay taxes when they had no form of representation in Parliament? The argument that Parliament considered the interests of everyone, and that all English subjects had “virtual representation”, did not go down well at all - in fact, the colonists argued that the passing of the taxes with no representation had violated their rights “as Englishmen.” Protests against the Stamp Act rose quickly with colonists doing everything they could to ensure that it could not be enforced.

They refused to import British goods which affected trade, burned effigies of stamp tax distributors and threatened them with violence, to the point where attempts to collect the tax completely failed.

Many of these protests had been led and encouraged by the Sons of Liberty, an organisation created in reaction to the act, with the motto “no taxation without representation”. By October, representatives from nine of the 13 colonies had formed the Stamp Act Congress, which declared the act unconstitutional.

To make matters worse for Parliament trouble was also brewing at home with merchants expressing their anger over the act affecting their ability to trade with the colonies. Under increasing pressure from the colonists and their protests Parliament eventually repealed the act a year later on 18 March 1766. However that same day they also passed the Declaratory Act, asserting Parliament’s authority to tax the colonies. Clearly the battle was just beginning. Just two months after enacting the Stamp Act, Parliament had also introduced the Quartering Act, which required the colonies to house the British Army.

In particular the New York colonial assembly refused to comply arguing that they had not been consulted about the army’s presence and that they had not given their consent.

The Quartering Act was not repealed like the Stamp Act, with Parliament deciding to punish New York for its defiance. They responded by introducing the New York Restraining Act,

“Many these protests had been led and encouraged by the Sons of Liberty”

The Stamp Act inflamed tensions between the colonies and Britain

Colonal New Yorkers protest the British Parliment’s controversial Stamp Act by burning stamps in the street

Burning the Stamps.
**American Tyrant**

**Escalation of the American Revolution**

Discover how the British Parliament and its far-flung subjects across the Atlantic Ocean came closer and closer to insurrection.

**Royal Proclamation of 1763**

King George caused outrage in the colonies after prohibiting all settlement west of the Appalachian Mountains. The colonists believed that it was their right to access and govern lands to the west, and were angered at this royal intervention.

**The Stamp Act**

In another attempt to raise revenue, British Parliament imposed direct taxes on the colonists for the first time, requiring all legal documents, newspapers and pamphlets to have stamps. The act caused widespread anger and protests in America, with the colonists arguing that there should be "no taxation without representation."

**Boston Massacre**

A mob began harassing British soldiers in Boston, Massachusetts, following rising anger at the presence of British troops to enforce parliamentary legislation. Five colonists were killed in the ensuing conflict, and the incident was used to encourage rebellion against the British.

**The Sugar Act**

This act was the first attempt by Parliament to raise revenue for the defense of the colonies and reduce the smuggling of sugar and molasses that occurred there. However, this affected the colonial economy which led to protests from those who believed the taxation violated their constitutional rights.

**The Intolerable Acts**

Hoping to curb colonial resistance to parliamentary authority and punish Bostonians for the Tea Party, the Intolerable Acts are introduced, which removed Massachusetts’s right to self-governance and closed the Boston Harbour. The acts provoked anger amongst the other colonies, who vowed to support Massachusetts.

**Boston Tea Party**

The Tea Acts allow the British East India Company to sell its tea to the colonies without paying the taxes specified by the Townshend Acts. Colonists respond by dumping £9,000 worth of the Company’s tea into the Boston Harbour.

**Battles of Lexington and Concord**

Tensions between Britain and the colonies reach breaking point as the first engagement of the war takes place. British troops had been on the way to secure an arms cache in Concord, only to be intercepted by colonial militiamen in nearby Lexington.

**The Townshend Acts**

Still trying to raise money from America, Parliament placed taxes on a range of commodities including glass, paper, tea and paint, arguing that it was to pay for the administration of the colonies. Colonists were furious and again argued that they should not be taxed without representation.

**The Intolerable Acts**

The Intolerable Acts are introduced, which removed Massachusetts’s right to self-governance and closed the Boston Harbour. The acts provoked anger amongst the other colonies, who vowed to support Massachusetts.

**Events across time**

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King George III

**America’s First Whistleblower**

How Benjamin Franklin upped the stakes with a leaked letter

Before he became one of the Founding Fathers of the United States, Benjamin Franklin was an agent in London, on behalf of Massachusetts. For some time he had watched as the relationship between Britain and the colonies deteriorated as tensions increased, something which concerned him greatly.

Therefore, it is unsurprising that when Franklin saw an opportunity that he thought would improve the situation, he took it. In 1772 he obtained letters that had been addressed to the late Thomas Whatley, an assistant to British Prime Minister George Grenville, from the Governor of Massachusetts, Thomas Hutchinson, and his secretary and brother-in-law Andrew Oliver.

Hutchinson, a staunch loyalist to the crown, and Oliver had encouraged both the king and Parliament to act against the colonists for their protests. Believing that the men had misled Parliament about the situation in Massachusetts, Franklin decided to send the letters to Thomas Cushing, speaker of the Massachusetts assembly.

He hoped that the letters would show the assembly that it was Hutchinson and Oliver who had instigated the trouble between Parliament and the colonies, not the British ministers themselves, but asked Cushing to keep the letters private.

However, they were published in June 1773 in the Boston Gazette and caused widespread outrage in Massachusetts, with colonists demanding Hutchinson’s removal. Meanwhile, Britain remained focused on identifying who had leaked the letters, with Franklin eventually admitting his role.

Lambasted, humiliated and accused of being a thief and a spy in front of the Privy Council, Franklin returned to America fully committed to the Revolutionist cause.

Franklin’s attempt to improve relations between Britain and the colonies only served to fan the flames which prevented the colony’s royal governor from approving legislation until the assembly complied with the law.

This new act was one of the Townshend Acts that Parliament enacted between 1767 and 1768, some of which enforced taxes on goods imported to the colonies from Britain, such as glass, paper and tea. The acts only served again to escalate tensions between Parliament and the colonies, who again argued that such taxation was unfair when they had no representation.

Following a riot in the town of Boston, Massachusetts, British troops were stationed there from 1768. Two years later, a confrontation between the soldiers and a mob of colonists led to the British firing into the crowd, resulting in the death of five Americans – an incident that became known as the Boston Massacre.

The rising American Revolution would witness one of its most defining moments with the passing of the Tea Act in May 1774. The Act enabled the British East India Company to sell tea in the colonies without paying the taxes mentioned in the Townshend Acts. Infuriated, a group of colonists chucked thousands of pounds worth of tea in the Boston Harbour, an incident that became known as the Boston Tea Party.

**The Role of King George III**

So, where exactly does King George fit into all of this rising tension?

It seems strange to think that, for a man with such a villainous reputation across the pond, that the king never set foot on the American continent or, for that matter, even ventured into either Scotland or Ireland – but that does not mean that he did not know how to interfere.

Following the conclusion of the Seven Years’ War, Britain helped itself to French territory in North America. Now, George had to find a way to placate the Native Americans living there, as they had been loyal to the French during the war. He decided to issue the Royal Proclamation of 1763, forbidding any settlement west of the Appalachian Mountains, therefore denying the...
American Tyrant

“AN INCIDENT THAT BECAME KNOWN AS THE BOSTON TEA PARTY”

colonists the right to resources and land there. Of course, the restriction placed on their migration upset the colonists, who were also angered by that the Proclamation prevented them from trading with the Native Americans, except from licensed traders. George's intention had been to protect the indigenous people, but in the process, he had planted a seed of resentment among the colonists.

The king believed, following the conclusion of the war, that the settlement of America was Britain's top priority, which led to Parliament’s decision to station an army there without the agreement of the colonial assemblies.

However George disagreed with the issuing of the Stamp Act and said that it was “abundant in absurdities”, although he had no choice but to assent to the act as he was unable to go against Parliament, which had granted the British crown to the Hanoverian dynasty only on condition that absolutism was consigned to the past.

Nonetheless George did support the policy of raising revenue from the colonies and he soon became frustrated following the Boston Tea Party believing that Britain had become too lenient. He argued that stronger measures were needed to get the Americans, who had repeatedly resisted parliamentary authority, under control. Consequently Parliament enacted the Coercive Acts, also known as the Intolerable Acts, in 1774.

The Coercive Acts were a series of four acts designed to restore control in Massachusetts and in particular, punish the Bostonians for rebelling with the Tea Party. As a result Boston's port was closed until the colonists had paid for the destroyed tea. Parliament would appoint the Massachusetts Governor's council, the Royal Governor could prevent prosecution of British officials from occurring in Massachusetts and finally, all colonies had to provide housing for British troops stationed in America.
For both sides, it was the final straw. Not only had George formally declared that the colonies were in rebellion, but he refused to even read the Olive Branch Petition and commented that the colonists had “strongest protestations of loyalty to me…whilst they were preparing for a general revolt”. Meanwhile the Congress and the rest of the colonists took the king’s refusal to look at the petition as evidence that he did not care about their problems.

Two months later, on 27 October, George spoke to both houses of Parliament and urged them to end the American revolt quickly. He firmly stated that “many of these unhappy people may still retain their loyalty, and may be too wise not to see the fatal consequence of this usurpations, and wish to resist it, yet the torrent of violence has been strong enough to compel their acquiescence, till a sufficient force shall appear to support them.” The king’s message was unmistakable – it was time to send the troops in.

As for the colonists, they began to take a more anti-monarchal stance thanks to a pamphlet, *Common Sense*, written by Thomas
American Tyrant

“The Thirteen Colonies were no longer subject to British rule”

Paine, one of the Founding Fathers of the United States. Published in January 1776, it successfully galvanised support for American Independence for the first time amongst the colonies. Up until then, the primary focus of the conflict for the colonists had been to assert their right to self-governance, not to gain independence.

Six months later, the Declaration of Independence was ratified by the Second Continental Congress on 4 July. The Thirteen Colonies were no longer subject to British rule and instead, they had become independent sovereign states, justifying their independence by listing their grievances against the king who they described as, "A prince whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a tyrant is unfit to be the ruler of a free people."

Was King George really a Tyrant?

Just like that, George had been painted as the tyrant who had driven the colonists to revolution, forever defined by the words written in the Declaration. In its wake, mock trials and executions of the king were held while his effigy was burned and buried across the colonies, his villainous reputation solidified. After all, it could be argued that it was easier for the Americans to justify a revolt against a tyrant than to try and fight on for reform.

TO CURE A KING

George III’s medical mystery

What exactly did King George III suffer from? This is a question that has debated ever since his lifetime, with the most commonly cited reason being porphyria, a blood disorder. Known for causing aches and pains in the afflicted, as well as psychiatric problems, it often believed that the king suffered from the disorder on account of his blue urine, a symptom of porphyria.

However, in recent years, other suggestions have been put forward for George’s illness. Analysis of George’s letters indicates that he may have suffered from bipolar disorder because when he was ill, his language would become more colourful and his sentences would be long and repetitive, containing up to 400 words.

It is even possible that some of the treatments used on George actually made his illness worse. To blister the skin, which was believed to rid the body of toxins, the king was regularly treated with arsenic-based powders. In 2005, analysis of George’s hair had a concentration of arsenic that was 300 times the level which is considered to be toxic. As arsenic is known to trigger porphyria, it is likely that the king’s doctors were actually making him worse, not better.

Unfortunately, George was subject to a number of now discredited treatments in a vain attempt to treat his illness. This included vinegar and water footbaths, ingesting musk and bark, bloodletting, cupping, restraining him and taking purgatives, just to name a few. Although George recovered from a serious bout of illness from 1788 to 1789, he would eventually succumb to permanent insanity by 1810.
King George III

The accusations made against the king varied. For example, his refusal to grant assent to laws, obstructing administration of justice, maintaining standing armies without the colonists’ consent and choosing to wage war against them. In one of the most damning statements of the Declaration, the Congress also claims that George “plundered our seas, ravaged our coasts, burnt our towns and destroyed the lives of our people.”

But was George really a tyrannical king, guilty of these crimes? By definition, a tyrant is cruel and oppressive, who governs with an authoritarian regime – a statement that does not apply to King George. In fact in many ways, George was considered to be a far more liberal ruler than some of his contemporaries, such as the Austrian despot Empress Maria Theresa.

Considering that George was a constitutional monarch, there was no way that he would have had complete control over the decisions made in regard to the colonies or indeed, his own realm. He viewed the war against the Americans as a struggle for the rights of the British Parliament, rather than as an opportunity to increase his own power – and it was Parliament that was responsible for colonial policies, not the king.

Quite often, George would defer decisions to those he felt were more qualified to make them, something he did at the beginning of the war in 1775, although he voiced his opposition when it came to the subject of concessions for the colonists. Nevertheless, he followed the movements of the war closely from the very start, drawing up long regimental lists to the point where he knew the details of the uniform for every regiment off by heart.

To define George as a tyrant is perhaps one step too far, but there is no denying that he played a prominent role in the continuation of the war, believing that it was the best decision for the British Empire. Known for having a stubborn streak, he refused to accept North’s resignation even though the latter had realised that a victory against the colonists was impossible following the British surrender at the Battle of Saratoga in 1777.

This stubbornness continued for years as George refused to compromise over America and argued that the colonists had rebelled because the repeal of the Stamp Act back in 1766 had demonstrated weakness on Britain’s part. Indeed, the claim that Britain’s lenity towards America had allowed them to rebel was one that the king would repeat throughout the conflict.

It would not be until the Battle of Yorktown in 1781, with the surrender of Lord Cornwallis and the British to George Washington and the Continental Army, that George was forced to recognise defeat, with the start of peace negotiations occurring between Britain and the colonies. In another blow to the king, North was forced from his position as Prime Minister following a vote of no confidence, and he resigned in 1782.
After the loss of the war and with Britain in the midst of a political crisis, George wrote a draft letter of abdication in March 1783. In it, the king states his intention to exile himself to Hanover after renouncing the throne and he takes his wording seriously, as the letter is covered in several corrections and redrafts.

George could be obstinate but he was also a good-natured and cultured monarch, unlike his great-grandfather and grandfather, who took their duties as king very seriously. In a letter written during the 1780s, he expressed his devastation over the outcome of the war, declaring, “America is lost! Must we fall beneath the blow?” Yet just three years later, George swallowed his pride and welcomed John Adams, the first American ambassador to England – hardly the response of a tyrant.

Unfortunately the stress of the war with America, the political problems in Britain and the deaths of his two young sons, Prince Alfred and Prince Octavius, triggered bouts of mental illness in George which eventually became permanent in the last decade of his life. Consequently, he has gone down in history labelled as “the mad king who lost America”, whose reign was dominated by political corruptions, poor decisions and of course, insanity.

George’s illness helped to turn him into the perfect scapegoat for what had happened in America, while the British blamed him for the failure of imperialism. It wasn’t until the 1960s, when it was first suggested that the king had suffered from the blood disorder porphyria, that sympathy emerged for him. His illness has continued to fascinate ever since, and it was even the subject of 1991 play (and 1994 film) by Alan Bennett, titled The Madness of George III.

King George’s reign lasted for a remarkable 60 years but his loss of the Thirteen Colonies and his mental illness has unfairly characterised his reign as tyrannical. It is only recently, with the release of the Georgian papers into the public domain, that we have gained a gateway into George’s thoughts regarding America, a relationship that has primarily been defined by the words of the Declaration of Independence.

Whether he was a tyrant or not is still debated, but George will always be remembered as America’s last king.
The Armistice brought joy, relief and things we could never forget... but how could we best remember?

Written by David J. Williamson

It has been given a place in history as 'the war to end all wars'; a conflict which saw technology, invention, and man's ingenuity take warfare to an even more deadly and abhorrent level of mass destruction. For four tortuous years men endured unimaginable conditions in the trenches and on the fields of battle, whilst their friends and family bore their own private and public suffering of anxiety and loss.

For those at home and those at the Front who had survived, the Armistice brought a mixture of unadulterated joy and overwhelming relief.

But what was it in reality, and how could we keep alive the memories we needed to ensure that we never forget?

In many ways the actual Armistice was something of an inexact science. As an agreement for a ceasefire - actual formal peace was not to come until 1919 - it was signed in the private railway carriage of French General Marshal Foch in remote woodland at Sam on 11 November 1918. It was agreed to come into effect within six hours. Germany's allies of the Central Powers had weakened and collapsed and she was alone and isolated. The abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm II had been announced just two days before, there was mutiny and unrest at home and a sea blockade strangling the country into submission. Germany was in no position to bargain or negotiate and was set to have its military decimated, territory reclaimed and a huge financial bill for compensation.
Armistice Day

Celebration, Sorrow

"The Armistice brought a mixture of unadulterated joy and overwhelming relief."

British Tommies rejoice upon hearing news of the 1918 Armistice.
“crowds thronged the streets as an immediate and unfettered response to the ceasefire”

During those ensuing six hours many more men were to die – with some estimates as high as 3,000 – and even at the agreed time of 11am the guns were far from silent as artillery on both sides, eager not to have to haul away their heavy shells, continued to fire and exhaust their supplies. But the guns did fall silent, and when the official communiqués relayed the news to the Front each man greeted it in his own way; some with relief, some with jubilation, others with calm resignation. A familiar cocktail of emotions by which each had already found his own way of dealing with the years of carnage all had witnessed and endured.

Telegraph wires were buzzing with the news as it spread rapidly around the world and for many the party began. In distant continents, many of them with loved ones fighting in the war, crowds thronged the streets as an immediate and unfettered response to the ceasefire. Many marked the occasion with a hurriedly organised parade and plans were soon underway to welcome back their brave and victorious lads. But for hundreds of thousands this was tinged with the sadness and despair that the end of the fighting had come all too late; so many would not be coming home.

As 1918 drew to a close the mood began to swing from celebration of victory to thoughts of remembering the sacrifices made by those who fought. Now ideas of a more formal form of remembrance...
began to emerge, many of which we still recognise to this day.

Although the signing of the Armistice had sparked global celebration, an actual day to mark or commemorate the occasion did not emerge until a year later. As a ceasefire the Armistice had needed to be extended three times before the peace conference in 1919 that led to the Treaty of Versailles in June of that year. King George V of England held a dinner in honour of the French president on 10 November followed by a formal parade on the 11 November and Armistice Day was born.

A custom from Cape Town, South Africa, was also soon to spread throughout the nations of the Empire and on to the rest of the world. A two minute silence as an act of respect for the war dead came to the attention of the king who was fully behind the idea and as such it became common practice. People, standing together as one in solemn silence and respect; one minute for those who fell, and one minute for those they left behind. It became, and is still to this day, a powerful show of unified grief, sorrow and remembrance.

“In Flanders Field the poppies blow between the crosses, row on row”

These opening lines of In Flanders Fields by John McCrae were to be the inspiration for American academic and war volunteer Moina Michael. After the war she campaigned for the poppy to be adopted by the Americans as a symbol for their war dead. This in turn was taken up by the French and by 1921 it had been adopted by the British Empire as a telling and poignant badge of remembrance for their fallen soldiers, sailors and airmen.

**WAR OF WORDS**

In the immediate aftermath politicians and generals rushed to burnish their own legacies

“At eleven o’clock this morning came to an end the cruellest and most terrible war that has ever scourged mankind. I hope we may say that thus, this fateful morning, came to an end all wars.”

British Prime Minister David Lloyd George, speech in the House of Commons, (11 November 1918)

“This is not a peace. It is an armistice for 20 years.”

Marshal Ferdinand Foch, French General, said after the Treaty of Versailles (1919)

“The war has ended – quite differently, indeed, from how we expected. Our politicians have failed us miserably.”

Wilhelm II, Emperor of Germany. Reaction to Hindenburg and Ludendorff’s advice that an armistice must be requested (29 September 1918)

“After expending the greatest effort, and suffering the greatest sacrifices in blood in all history, we must not compromise the results of our victory. America is far away and protected by the ocean, England could not be reached by Napoleon himself. You are sheltered, both of you: we are not.”

Georges Clemenceau, Prime Minister of France, speech at the Paris Peace Conference (27 March 1919)

“I can predict with absolute certainty that within another generation there will be another world war if the nations of the world do not concert the method by which to prevent it.”

US President Woodrow Wilson, speech in Omaha, Nebraska (8 September 1919)

“The real reason that the war that we have just finished took place was that Germany was afraid her commercial rivals were going to get the better of her, and the reason why some nations went into the war against Germany was that they thought Germany would get the commercial advantage of them. The seed of the jealousy, the seed of the deep-seated hatred was hot, successful commercial and industrial rivalry.”

US President Woodrow Wilson, speech at the Coliseum in St Louis, Missouri, on the Peace Treaty and the League of Nations (5 September 1919)

“The truth is that we have got our way. We have got most of the things we set out to get... The German Navy has been handed over; the German mercantile shipping has been handed over, and the German colonies have been given up. One of our chief trade competitors has been most seriously crippled.”

British Prime Minister David Lloyd George, quoted in Lord Riddell’s diary entry (30 March 1919)
Lest we forget

WORLD WAR 1.5

Though peace was declared in the West, conflict continued to spark across the globe

2. Finnish Civil War 1918
Revolution and civil war had weakened Russia's grip over Finland and Germany tried to take advantage to fill the political vacuum. German-backed 'whites' faced Russian-backed 'reds', with the whites achieving victory. However, with the defeat of Germany in WWI its influence diminished and Finland was able to establish itself as an independent nation.

3. Hungarian-Romanian War 1919
With the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire Romania was eager to re-establish its army and claim back territory, and to turn the tide on communist expansion on its borders. Romanian forces pushed into Hungarian territory and despite a Hungarian counter offensive entered Budapest in 1919 having achieved their objective.

4. Polish-Soviet War 1919-1920
To gain territory to the east Poland moved into the Ukraine to be met by Bolshevik forces which pushed the Polish army back to the capital, Warsaw, causing alarm in the West. A Polish counter offensive then caused Moscow to sue for peace and disputed territories were divided amongst them.

1. Russian Revolution and Civil War 1917-1922
Fighting on the Eastern Front had weakened Russia's army. As the revolution took hold civil war threatened to dismember the country. Battles were fiercely fought, with civilians being the greatest deaths and casualties. With the victory of the Bolsheviks came the creation of the Soviet Union and independence of the Baltic States.
Armistice Day

Originally only worn on Armistice Day or Remembrance Sunday, in modern times it has grown into the main icon of both remembrance and fundraising through the Royal British Legion and poppies of all sizes and manufacture adorn people, places and vehicles in the run up to and during the traditional period of remembrance.

In the US poppies are still used for fundraising for both Veteran's Day and Memorial Day.

So momentum grew for a more fixed and lasting means of remembrance that was to slowly develop.

And nothing could be more permanent than a monument. For grieving families in the aftermath of the war one thing was painfully obvious, they could not visit the graves of their loved ones at their local graveyard or cemetery. The tragic truth was that the fallen were buried in another land, or worse, their bodies had never been recovered and so they had become merely a statistic, a name on a telegram. Such heart-breaking issues posed a dilemma for the authorities and solutions had to be found to help families and whole nations grieve for death on an unprecedented scale, not only in sheer numbers but the varied nations and nationalities involved in the conflict.

The clinical practicalities during the war meant that those who could be buried were done so in makeshift cemeteries of wooden crosses often close to the battlefield where they had fallen. For those who were missing in action they often remained so, their whereabouts unknown.

The issue for repatriation of the bodies of the fallen was to become a controversial social and political issue, particularly for Great Britain and its ally the USA, and each were to take different approaches to resolve it.

In the US there was an undercurrent of unhappiness that their fallen would
MOURNING HAS BROKEN
How Armistice was marked and how memory of WWI has changed

The First World War was a global conflict by not only involving the major political and military powers of the day, but also the vast numbers of countries and people around the world in which they had control or influence.

As such, when the Armistice came, people and places thousands of miles apart shared in celebration and, in time and in their own way, commemoration and remembrance that endures to this day.

In the USA the news was greeted with ecstatic celebrations in the streets of all the major towns and cities. Although they did at first commemorate Armistice Day, 11 November in the US is now Veterans Day and is focussed on veterans living and dead but not those who fell in battle. Memorial Day remembers those killed in action and has its roots in the American Civil War.

With many men fighting in WWI the importance to Australia and New Zealand of both Armistice Day and Remembrance Day is undiminished. They in turn have Anzac Day which specifically commemorates their country’s actions in Gallipoli during WWI and is still a public holiday in both countries.

As a member of the Empire and later the Commonwealth, Canada has continued to commemorate Armistice Day. Although like Britain and others it has changed to Remembrance Day or Remembrance Sunday as the Sunday closest to 11 Nov each year. Canadian veterans are treated to free transport on that day.

In France and Belgium Armistice Day has been commemorated from the beginning and today is still a national holiday for both countries.

Wooden crosses mark the first resting places of the fallen

TOP LEFT
Exuberant US soldiers pile on an army truck join an Armistice Day parade in New York City

ABOVE
With their helmets aloft, the men of the 1st Irish Guards listened to the reading out of the Armistice by their officers

RIGHT
Crowds gather to gawp at a stack of German helmets exhibited as spoils of war in the streets of Paris
not be returning home. Under pressure the government finally relented and thousands of bodies were exhumed and transported back across the Atlantic. For Britain and its Empire it was a different story. The government of the day believed that the war dead should be treated as equals and buried in identical graves near to where they fell, regardless of rank or background, leaving us with the acres of memorial stones in neat military file beneath the huge megalithic monuments of remembrance that dot northern France and Belgium, their walls filled with the names of the dead.

At home in Britain and across the world stone memorial crosses sprang up in all shapes and sizes in villages, towns and cities; most able to carry every name of those from that location who gave their lives in the ‘Great War’.

As with the Cenotaph in London which started as temporary wood and ended in permanent stone, this was a focus for a community. A place where they could gather to remember and reflect, a place that for even just one day of the year became a part of the battlefield where their loved one had died, helping them feel that little bit closer once more.

And that tradition continues today. World War I did not ‘end all wars’ after all, but it was the end of war as we had known it. Things would never be the same, and as the grief and horror of war has continued unabated throughout the 20th century right up to the present becoming, if it were possible, even more destructive and terrifying, the need for respectful reflection by peoples across the globe is just as strong.

The wooden crosses are tablets of stone, lovingly cared for, poppies sell in their millions every November and wreaths are laid and a two minute silence observed at memorials across the globe. And in this way World War I can actually be seen as a beginning, not an end, in which reflection on the horrors of all war and respect for those who lose their lives fighting them has become and remains a unifying and undying act of timeless remembrance.

“in Britain and across the world stone memorial crosses sprang up in all shapes and sizes”
Rediscovering Pompeii

An entire town was wiped off the map almost 2,000 years ago - so how did we find it again?

Written by Katharine Marsh

"The Samnite Wars of 343 to 290 BCE saw Rome take a liking to Pompeii"
At the foot of a volcano in southern Italy lies one of the ancient world’s most famous cities, its legacy on par with the Eternal City itself. For hundreds of years, it lay forgotten, buried under layers of ash and dirt. A whole town, a place where people had lived their lives from birth to death, had slipped from people’s minds, resigned to the annals of ancient history, all because of one fateful day in 79 CE. That was until it was found, completely by accident, in 1599.

Pompeii’s demise should have been obvious right from the start – the city that would become famous for being buried in a cataclysmic volcanic eruption was built on a spur that had been formed by a prehistoric lava flow. While we don’t know much detail about Pompeii’s early days, we do know that the city was created by an Oscan tribe that was then influenced by some Greeks who sailed over in the 8th century BCE. However, 100 years later came the Etruscans, a civilisation that ruled the area until the Greeks decided to take it back after their victory at the Battle of Cumae in 474 BCE. For 70 or so years, things were peaceful once more until the Samnites, an Italic tribe, appeared towards the end of the 5th century.

It was thanks to the Samnites that the Romans first became interested in Campania, the area in which Pompeii and its neighbouring towns of Herculaneum and Stabiae were nestled. The Samnite Wars of 343 to 290 BCE saw Rome take a liking to Pompeii and it tried to exert its influence, but Pompeii wasn’t having any of it. Fiercely independent, Pompeii tried to rebel but the Roman consul Sulla came in and squashed it in 80 BCE, setting up his colony of Venus by resettling 4,000 soldiers in the city.

Pompeii was a prosperous town, densely populated with 10,000 to 12,000 people, one-third of whom were slaves, over an area of three square kilometres. Being so close to the fertile slopes of Mount Vesuvius was nothing...
Pompeii wasn't so lucky. The rumbles were felt in Neapolis (modern-day Naples) and destruction. On 5 February 62 CE, that's exactly when things started to go wrong. From time to time it would cause some disruption to the normal life in Pompeii, but it was this that attracted the upper classes of Roman society. In a way, Pompeii was their seaside resort, with their villas providing grand views of the bay and the stunning scenery all around. The city even pigged the interest of Emperor Nero, remembered today for his tyranny, whose wife Poppaea Sabina was actually a native Pompeian.

Home to a port, Pompeii saw some of the Roman Empire's most expensive goods pass through its streets. Silk, clams and wild animals all entered the Italian peninsula there, as well as exotic fruits from around the known world. Garum, a kind of fish sauce, was made locally, and olives were plentiful as they grew in groves on the slopes of the mountain.

Life in Pompeii was normal - that's perhaps why it's attracted such fame over the years since its discovery. It was as ordinary as Roman towns got, with an amphitheatre, baths and graffiti-covered walls. Thanks to the preservation caused by the eruption in 79 CE, we know how houses were laid out, the names of some of the homeowners, and how people spent their free time. It’s thanks to Pompeii that we know about Caecilius and his family, made famous by a Doctor Who episode but who have lived on in the first book of the Cambridge Latin Course that’s still used to teach Latin to secondary school children in Britain today.

But Pompeii wasn’t the image of perfection - every few years, tremors would cause a little bit of trouble. It usually wasn’t enough for people to pack up and leave (perhaps they should have, but they didn’t really know they were at the foot of a volcano), but from time to time it would cause some disruption and destruction. On 5 February 62 CE, that’s exactly what happened. Vesuvius awoke underground and the rumbles were felt in Neapolis (modern-day Naples), and some of the buildings were damaged. Pompeii wasn’t so lucky.

Parts of the thick city walls crashed to the ground and temples crumbled. Parts of the town were ravaged by flames and even the sheep couldn’t escape - grazing in the countryside nearby, they choked on the poisonous fumes. The aqueducts that provided water to the town were destroyed and the bridge over the nearby River Sarno collapsed. No one knows how many people died but it’s estimated that hundreds, if not thousands, perished. This time, flocks of people left the city - why should they stay in a town that was falling down around them? They’d be better off taking their families and their trades elsewhere. Little did they know what a good move that would be in the long run.

Meanwhile, those who stayed behind tried to rebuild. City walls were rebuilt and temples were repaired. Water began flowing to the city once more and the improvements were spurred on when Nero came to visit in 64 CE. In fact, Nero's visit was a joyous occasion - the ban on gladiator fights was lifted for the imperial visitors. It had been five years since Pompeii had hosted a gladiator match - after they’d rioted and fought with neighbouring Nucerians in 59 CE, they’d been banned from holding any bouts by Nero himself.

After that, life went back to normal. Slowly but surely, the remaining Pompeians rebuilt their city and carried on. What else was there for them to do? If only they knew it would have been in vain.

There was nothing special about the year 79 CE. The emperor Vespasian did die at the start of the summer, but that wasn’t an event that would impact the lower classes of Roman society. In a way, Pompeii was just plodding along, no different to usual.

That was until the strange events started occurring. The fish that swam in the River Sarno began to float dead on the surface. Springs and wells dried up. The vines on the fertile slopes of the mountain began to wither and die.

In August that year, as always, the citizens celebrated Vulcanalia, worshipping Vulcan, the god of fire. In hindsight,
behind the horizon, the dark that swept over the bay was under the weight, crushing anyone who was sheltering along with a considerable amount of ash. Ceilings buckled the earth; it is certain at least the shore was considerably.

According to Pliny, it “seemed to roll back upon itself, and an extraordinary amount of detail about the individual stages. But now we need to question how much of this is actually true.

The current excavations in Pompeii’s Regio V have uncovered something that has called our understanding into doubt. Scrawled in charcoal on a Roman wall is “XVI K Nov”, which means the 16th day before the Kalends of November, or 17 October in our current calendar. While there’s no year attached to this piece of graffiti, it’s pretty clear that the year was 79 CE.

The house where it was found was in the middle of being redecorated, with some walls covered in plaster and others, such as that one, primed for a coat. It’s also worth noting that the graffiti was written in charcoal, which wouldn’t have lasted all that long on the wall if it wasn’t for the eruption preserving it.

So how accurate are our sources? The written evidence came from Pliny the Younger, who wrote about his uncle’s death, and he sounds very sure of the information he presents as he writes, “I have faithfully related to you what I was either an eye-witness of myself or received immediately after the accident happened, and before there was time vary the truth.” Having said that, Pliny was writing around 20 years after the fact and we don’t have any original copies of his letters - we’re relying solely on translations that have changed over time. The date has varied widely from August to November in different versions and transcriptions, and those who consider the later months to be correct have archaeological evidence to back them up, with autumnal fruits and heating braziers have been uncovered in the ruins over the years, which don’t really fit with our idea of summer in southern Italy.

Now we’re left with the arduous task of trying to figure out when exactly this volcano did explode - did people live two months longer than we previously realised? Have we stuck with a mistranslation that caused us to have the wrong date for centuries? Perhaps more excavations will unveil some concrete evidence, but until then, we’ll just have to wait and see.

We were fairly sure we knew almost everything about the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 CE. We knew which cities were destroyed in the blast, the type of eruption that occurred and an extraordinary amount of detail about the individual stages. But now we need to question how much of this is actually true.

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Buried city

Preserving Pompeii
Looking after a city that’s over 2,000 years old is far from an easy task

01 Regio V
The current excavations are taking place here, uncovering a part of the city that hasn’t seen the light of day since the eruption in 79 CE.
New technologies like lasers and drones are being used to uncover the half-hectare area in what’s been called one of the biggest postwar digs in the world.

02 Villa of the Mysteries
From 1924 to 1961, a considerable amount of excavating took place. One of the buildings to be uncovered in this period was the Villa of the Mysteries, a well-preserved villa on the outskirts of Pompeii. Archaeologists also dug up most of Regio I and II.

03 Via dell’Abbondanza
While today this street makes up the majority of the ‘Pompeii for all’ walking route, it was heavily bombed during World War II, hampering excavation efforts. It was around this time that Vesuvius erupted again and parts of the area were evacuated.

“A RIVER OF POISONOUS GASES HURTLED DOWN THE MOUNTAIN AT 100 MILES AN HOUR”
unwelcome. It was the end of the world – those still alive would never see the light of day again.

Children were shouting for their mothers, men were standing with their hands in the sky, wondering why the gods had forsaken them. Had Vulcanalia not been enough? Was there another ritual they should have done?

The dark, dense cloud became destabilised as the night wore on, and the first deadly pyroclastic surge – a river of poisonous gases – hurtled down the mountain at 100 miles an hour, headed straight for Pompeii. Everyone it touched was asphyxiated and they died where they stood. Some were lucky, but their luck was rapidly running out.

At midnight, the cloud spilling out of Vesuvius’ summit reached 30,000 kilometres – until it collapsed. Another pyroclastic surge raged down the slope, this time headed for Herculanenum. Anyone who hadn’t fled was killed instantly.

Morning didn’t break the next day. For the most part, the south side of the Bay of Naples was deathly silent. A few people were still alive, huddled in the ruins of their towns under the dark cloud that loomed overhead. Terrified as they were, perhaps they didn’t see their final moments coming as the cloud collapsed for the last time, sending the last deadly wave towards Pompeii. Anyone who had been left breathed no more as the force destroyed the buildings around them.

From across the bay, Pliny the Younger could see the darkness begin to dissipate. He wrote: “At last this dreadful darkness was dissipated by degrees, like a cloud or smoke; the real day returned, and even the sun shone out, though with a lurid light, like when an eclipse is coming on. Every object that presented itself to our eyes [which were extremely weakened] seemed changed, being covered deep with ashes as if with snow.” We can only imagine his thoughts as he detailed the eruption in excruciating detail – if the wind had changed direction, it could have been his body that was buried.

Over the years, the ash became more compact and layers of dirt formed on top of it. Over time, new cities were built on top of Vesuvius’s destruction. Modern-day Pompei, Ercolano and Castellammare di Stabia were all resting atop a huge and heartbreaking tragedy that the world had forgotten. Until 1599, that is.

Domenico Fontana was digging a new course for the River Sarno when he accidentally struck the city. He created some underground tunnels and explored a little, but the story goes that he was shocked by the sexual nature of some of the frescoes – it was the late 16th century, after all – and so he reburied what he’d found. It took 150 years for interest to grow in what he’d discovered.

In 1748, excavations began in the region at a site that was simply named ‘Civita’, from the Latin word for ‘town’. The first phase was effectively a sanctioned looting mission – any treasures like statues and busts were shipped off to Charles III of Spain, although they now have their home in the National Archaeological Museum in Naples. Thanks to fairly primitive archaeological techniques, some of the frescoes and other items were accidentally destroyed.
When the team tried to backfill what they’d discovered, there was uproar from some in the classics community, who argued that what had been found should be preserved, but it wasn’t until the early 1800s that methodology began to change.

French rule in the Bay of the Naples had an unexpected side effect: the digs became more organised, and items and people were catalogued. A total of 1,500 workmen were employed to systematically excavate the town from west to east. By 1860, a fair amount had been dug up.

Things changed again when Giuseppe Fiorelli took up the project in 1863. His methods focused on conservation and he ordered his men to start at the top of the houses and work their way down to preserve everything that was discovered. Fiorelli was also the man who divided the town into the sections that we know today, and he did one more important thing. The type of eruption that had occurred in 79 CE had preserved everything extremely well, except for the victims themselves. However, what was left behind of them were holes in the shape of their bodies when they died. Fiorelli made plaster casts of these holes, which are now the images most associated with Pompeii.

You could say that the rest is history, but it’s a history that keeps on being discovered as excavations are taking place with more and more evolved archaeological techniques. The digs have never really stopped and a new area, Regio V, is currently in the process of being uncovered. Skeletons have been found, as well as walls painted a vibrant red and new buildings like the House of Jupiter. New techniques are being used like lasers and drones, and the plan is to eventually open the area up like the rest of the site.

The future of Pompeii looks brighter than its past. With international interest in the city, it attracts millions of visitors each year who come to walk in the footsteps of those who lived and died in the same spot almost 2,000 years ago. However, there’s still a problem – something catastrophic.

Vesuvius, the volcano that has always loomed ominously in the background, is supposed to erupt every 20 years or so. It hasn’t since March 1944, and the next time it blows is supposed to be an event akin to that infamous deadly ordeal of 79 CE. Pompeii, Herculaneum and the other ancient towns in the area could be buried again, alongside the sprawling metropolis of Naples or the holiday destination of Sorrento on the other side of the bay. Will people be rediscovering our cities hundreds of years from now, walking where we walked? Only time will tell.
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How the work of eight artists revealed a much more personal truth...

Written by Philippa Grafton

Impoverished, inspired, insane: the image of a tortured artist is often a romantic one. More often than not, the celebrated Vincent van Gogh tops the charts of these troubled souls.

A penniless painter haunted by melancholy and depression whose reputation as one of the greatest modern artists only truly blossomed after his suicide, van Gogh – the man – seemed like the very picture of pity.

But depression does not discriminate. Mental wellbeing transcended – as it continues to transcend today – wealth and status. For every struggling artist who fought his own demons there existed another who suffered while the commissions rolled in. Van Gogh might be the archetype of today’s vision of a tortured genius, but even court painters like Goya and ‘Renaissance men’ like Michelangelo faced hardships in mental health.

These artists, however, aren't to be pitied – in many cases, these creative geniuses acknowledged the drive and inspiration that they gleaned from their personal struggles, particularly van Gogh.

Indeed, Richard Dadd, a Victorian painter who spent his life in asylums, was liberated creatively by life locked up in an asylum.
A stockbroker in Paris, Paul Gauguin initially ventured into art as a hobby, his income from selling paintings mere pocket money compared to his city career. However, after the Paris stock market crashed in 1882, Gauguin decided to embrace painting full-time while travelling the French colonies. But in Martinique, he caught dysentery and malaria and was so unwell that he was forced to return to France.

A drunken brawl in 1894 left Gauguin with a shattered ankle that never truly healed. A year later, Gauguin left for the French colonies, never to return to Europe again. In 1897, in debt and on the brink of the banks foreclosing, Gauguin heard the devastating news that his daughter, Aline, had died. Heartbroken, Gauguin completed what he believed to be his masterpiece, walked to a nearby hill and attempted suicide by consuming arsenic. His endeavour was unsuccessful and he awoke throwing it up. However, his health never recovered and he eventually died in prison in 1903.

PLAGUED BY HEALTH ISSUES AND DECADES OF DEPRESSION, GAUGUIN WAS DETERMINED TO END HIS LIFE ON HIS OWN TERMS.

When Norwegian artist Edvard Munch wrote of his childhood that “disease and insanity were the black angels on guard at my cradle,” little could he have predicted that he would live well into his 80s, surviving not only war and global health pandemics, but also his own melancholy. After his mother’s death at the hands of tuberculosis in his early childhood, Munch grew up surrounded by his siblings and father, from whom Munch believed he had inherited what he called the “seed of madness.” Munch’s father, Christian, was pious to the point of obsession, even waking his son during the night to watch the boy’s sister, Sophie, die.

The inevitability of death loomed over Munch for the rest of his life, and after moving to Paris, he was soon forced back home after his father’s death left the remaining family in financial ruin.

Returning to Paris and Berlin, Munch’s increased drinking was taking its toll on the artist; his fatalism continued to overshadow his life and he developed severe anxiety. In 1893 he created the first iteration of The Scream after suffering a panic attack in Nice, later explaining that he “sensed a scream passing through nature; it seemed to me that I heard the scream. I painted this picture, painted the clouds as actual blood. The colour shrieked”.

In the years that followed, Munch’s mental health continued to deteriorate, exacerbated by the booze. After a breakdown in 1908, he was hospitalised and underwent eight months of ‘electrification’.

Upon being discharged, he returned to Norway to lead a solitary life. Newly reinvigorated, he avoided themes of despair and illness in his artwork – though his could never forget his own mortality, and painted many macabre self-portraits.

D'où Venons Nous / Que Sommes Nous / Où Allons Nous was Gauguin’s self-considered masterpiece and upon completion, he attempted suicide.

Munch created four versions of his iconic painting, The Scream.
Paint and suffering

FRANCISCO GOYA 1746-1828

Once the highest-ranked painter in the Spanish royal court, Francisco Goya's work is often split into two discrete phases: the former light, bright and proving his skill and value; the latter hinting at Goya's mental deterioration, with his paintings taking a darker turn in both tone and subject.

Having built up a sterling reputation in Spain as a portrait painter to kings and nobles, a severe recurring illness that began in 1793 changed Goya's life forever. Suffering from tinnitus, headaches, vision problems as well as hallucinations, this first bout of ill-health ended, but one lasting ailment endured: Goya lost his hearing. From this point on, Goya's entire personality changed and he withdrew into himself. Three more serious attacks of illness struck and he died in 1828, having spent his final years tormented by the inevitability of death and his own sanity.

Goya naturally never received a diagnosis, but modern-day researchers have suggested various ailments, from syphilis or lead poisoning from his paint, to paranoid dementia or even Susac's syndrome, an autoimmune disease that can cause headaches, hearing loss and psychiatric problems.

MICHELANGELO BUONARROTI 1475-1564

Championed as one of the greatest artists to have ever lived, Michelangelo's exquisite masterpieces betrayed the artist's inner turmoil.

When Michelangelo - then a sculptor who'd made his name on such works as David and Pietà - was offered the opportunity to paint inside the Sistine Chapel, little did he realise he'd been set up by a rival. Convinced that this sculptor who'd never before painted a fresco would fail, Bramante, bitter that Michelangelo had won work he believed was rightfully his, allegedly convinced Pope Julius II to commission him. But Bramante underestimated his foe.

Instead, Michelangelo convinced the Pope to give him free rein over decorating the chapel's ceiling.

Despite learning the new medium quickly, Michelangelo faced hurdle after hurdle; he had to pick up the art of fresco painting quickly.

Where seasons changed, mold grew on his work; and despite the sheer scale of the project, Michelangelo was determined to work alone.

In the end painting the Sistine Chapel proved almost more than Michelangelo could bear. Tucked away in the Last Judgement scene on the altar wall, Michelangelo expressed his sickness of the project in the form of an expressive self-portrait – the hanging flesh clutched by a disdainful St Bartholomew close to the centre of the scene.

Many historians and researchers question whether the determined Michelangelo suffered from OCD or even Asperger’s syndrome.
Vincent van Gogh 1853 - 1890

RENOWNED AS ART HISTORY’S ‘MAD GENIUS’, IN REALITY VAN GOGH’S LIFE WAS DEVASTATING AND CRUEL.

Flitting from one job to another, Vincent van Gogh had always shown skill in art, but he only began painting at the age of 27. Despite this, he quickly fell in love with it, turning to booze and rationing his food in order to spend his money on painting supplies. Travelling around his homeland of the Netherlands, as well as Belgium, van Gogh eventually ended up in Paris in 1886 with his favourite brother, Theo.

Here, van Gogh brushed shoulders with the Belle Époque’s leading figures. It was here that van Gogh met Paul Gauguin and the two began a tempestuous, conflicting friendship that came to define both their careers. After two years in Paris, van Gogh moved to Arles on the south coast of France, where the warm climate and change of pace led the artist to embrace a brighter, bolder colour palette – though van Gogh was struggling, writing in July to Theo that “the more I am spent, ill, a broken pitcher, by so much more am I an artist.”

Unknown to van Gogh, however, this picturesque life that the artist had found was hurtling to a catastrophic close. Inspired and in awe of his friend Gauguin, van Gogh encouraged him to visit Arles. In October 1888, Gauguin arrived and van Gogh’s dreams of painting together were realised. However, by December the pair’s relationship had soured and the two artists frequently quarrelled.

According to Gauguin, on 23 December van Gogh attacked him, brandishing a razor. After the confrontation, van Gogh returned to his room and took the razor to his left ear, cutting it off and bandaging the profusely bleeding wound. Raging, van Gogh wrapped the ear in paper and gifted it to a prostitute that both artists frequented. Hospitalised, van Gogh was diagnosed with “acute mania with general delirium” and in the months that followed the artist suffered from delusions and hallucinations.

By June 1889, van Gogh had voluntarily entered an asylum in Saint-Rémy-de-Provence. Here, van Gogh painted arguably his most famous work of art, The Starry Night. At the start of the following year, van Gogh experienced a relapse. A year after entering the asylum, van Gogh moved to Auvers-sur-Oise to be closer to Theo. Here, the wheat fields captivated him, describing them as representing “sadness and extreme loneliness.” On 27 July, just over two weeks after van Gogh wrote of his enchantment with these vistas, the artist shot himself. Having stumbled back to his lodgings, he succumbed to his injury in the early hours of 29 July. His last words, uttered to his beloved brother on his deathbed were, “This sadness will last forever.”

It’s not entirely clear from what van Gogh suffered. Some argue porphyria, while others claim manic depression or even epilepsy. Tragically he wasn’t the only van Gogh to suffer – Theo also struggled with “melancholy” in what the brothers’ physician described as “far worse than Vincent’s.”

Their younger brother Cornelius also committed suicide, and their sister, Wilhelmina, lived in an asylum for nearly 40 years.
Now largely forgotten, Franz Xaver Messerschmidt was a leading sculptor of the 18th century, winning several commissions from the Habsburg dynasty - most notably Empress Maria Theresa - and teaching at the prestigious Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna. However, his mental breakdown and subsequent fall from grace has shunted him from the pages of history to its footnotes, despite his leading role not only in his contemporary society, but in the evolution of artistic movements.

One of the finest Baroque sculptors of the age, Messerschmidt had won favour among the ruling elite of Austria, and held an enviable position at the art school. When the position of professor for sculpture came up at the school, the talented sculptor put himself forward for the role, certain that his experience and favour would see him to success. What he hadn’t counted on, however, was competition. When a rumour that Messerschmidt suffered from a ‘confusion of the head’ reached his seniors, the role was offered to Messerschmidt’s rival. Enraged, Messerschmidt left the school and Vienna and eventually settled in Pressburg, where he became a recluse and devoted himself to his ‘masterpiece’ - the so-called ‘Character Heads’.

Begun before he left Vienna, this series of busts differed from his previous commissions. Where before he’d championed the ornate Baroque, he instead embraced the simplicity of Neoclassicism; where before his busts gazed in ambivalent, aloof disinterest, he carved grotesque, gurning grimances, baring teeth, squinting eyes. What triggered Messerschmidt’s obsession with his expressive series is unknown, though the series has been interpreted as the sculptor’s descent into madness. Experiencing hallucinations and paranoia in Vienna, the solitary life served to encourage his delusions. In 1781, having met with the artist in Pressburg, Christoph Friedrich Nicolai wrote that Messerschmidt believed that he was haunted by a demon of proportion, and “in an effort to gain control over the spirit,” would pinch himself in front of a mirror and re-create the expression, creating the perfect proportion.

Over two centuries since his death, many psychologists and experts have attempted to retrospectively diagnose this ‘troubled soul’, from schizophrenia to Crohn’s disease. What ailed Messerschmidt might never truly be known to us, but his oeuvre of ‘Character Heads’ leaves a powerful legacy for the legend of the ‘mad genius’.

Two of Messerschmidt’s heads photographed together, No. 24 (Weepy Old Man) and No 28 (The Incapable Bassoonist)
**ERNST LUDWIG KIRCHNER**  
1880 - 1938

This ambitious young bohemian overcame a breakdown to become Germany’s most celebrated artist – only for his world to come crashing down under the Nazi regime.

When World War I broke out, German artist Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, like many of his contemporaries, joined the war effort. Unlike many other young men, however, Kirchner was an unwilling volunteer, reluctantly applying to become an artillery driver.

Used to the bohemian life, Kirchner had been a founding member of Die Brücke (‘The Bridge’) whose liberated views were key in the evolution of German Expressionism. Months into his training and addicted to both alcohol and sleeping pills, Kirchner had a mental breakdown and was discharged in November 1915. Kirchner never actually served, but the horrors of war left their mark on his work, in particular in his Self-Portrait as a Soldier, depicting himself mutilated, his back turned on his old life.

Following his breakdown, Kirchner sought treatment in a sanatorium in Switzerland in 1916, where he remained for a couple of years. In 1918, he moved to a small village in the Swiss Alps. In the inter-war years, Kirchner’s evocative work gathered a keen following in his home country. But not everyone appreciated his expressive, primitive art. In the 1930s Kirchner’s works were rounded up by the Nazis and in 1937 several of his artworks were exhibited in the ‘Degenerate Art Exhibition’ in Munich. Considered a badge of pride for many artists who were repulsed by the regime, the ‘honour’ was Kirchner’s undoing. The following year he shot himself.

Kirchner painted this self-portrait in his army uniform just before he was admitted to a sanatorium in 1915.

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**RICHARD DADD**  
1817 - 1886

On the brink of breaking onto an international stage, Richard Dadd’s promising career as an artist was cut down during the very opportunity that could’ve catapulted him to fame instead of infamy. In July 1842, after studying at the Royal Academy of Arts and co-founding an artists group called The Clique, Dadd joined his patron Sir Thomas Phillips on a tour of the Middle East. In Egypt, Dadd began acting erratically, believing himself to be connected with the Egyptian god, Osiris. Aware of his fragile state of mind, Dadd wrote that his “imagination [was] so full of vagaries that I have really and truly doubted my own sanity”.

With Dadd clearly unwell, the tour began their return home, but in Italy Dadd became convinced that the Pope was intending to harm him and schemed to attack him, though he never fulfilled this. When he arrived back in England, his mental health continued to deteriorate and he began to consider his father as the Devil in disguise. In August 1843, he stabbed his father to death and fled to France. After attacking a passenger, Dadd was caught by the French authorities and extradited back to England. Here, Dadd was placed in Bedlam psychiatric hospital. In 1864, Dadd was moved to the newly built Broadmoor Hospital, where he died in 1886. No longer confined by the whims of patrons and buyers, Dadd’s confinement in an asylum liberated his creativity, and he continued to paint until his dying day. It’s now acknowledged that Dadd likely suffered from paranoid schizophrenia.

Dadd painted this scene while incarcerated in Bedlam after murdering his father.
Ragnar Loðbrók

Ragnar Loðbrók gained a whole new following thanks to the History TV show Vikings.
Listen. Do you hear? That sound. That is the sound of lamentation. Sigurd the Dragon Slayer and Brynhild the Fair are dead. The trees whisper it, the rivers carry tidings to the heaving, restless sea; the rain and the wind, the sun and the stars tell the news: Sigurd is dead. Brynhild has departed.

There was a man who heard the whisper of rain and wind, who saw the tears of the sun and the grief of the stars. That man was Heimir, foster-father to Brynhild, and his grief for the fair Brynhild was as great as if she had been the daughter of his loins. Then Heimir laid down his plough and put aside his crown and forsook his kingdom.

For Brynhild and Sigurd had had a daughter, Aslaug, and they had asked Heimir to take her as foster-daughter in turn. However, Aslaug being only three years old, Heimir had not yet brought her to his own kingdom. But now Heimir put aside all else, even his grief, and rushed to Aslaug, and they had asked Heimir to take her as foster-daughter in turn. However, Aslaug being only three years old, Heimir had not yet brought her to his own kingdom. But now Heimir put aside all else, even his grief, and rushed to Aslaug. For Sigurd had thrown down many men in his might and now that he was dead and fear of him no longer held his enemies in thrall, they would seek vengeance on his living memory, that the seed of Sigurd and Brynhild be utterly destroyed in this middle-earth.

Heimir brought Aslaug back to his kingdom, Hlymdal. But soon the news began to spread that the flesh of Sigurd and Brynhild lived with Heimir. Aslaug, even as a child, was too beautiful not to be marked. Rumour spread faster than frost: the child of Sigurd and Brynhild the Fair lives in Hlymdal. Heimir, listening, heard the howling, distant but coming closer. The wolves were gathering.

There was no keeping Aslaug in Hlymdal. But Heimir realised that he could not just flee, for wherever he went, the girl’s beauty and bearing would tell her lineage. No, he must go, but in going, he would have to keep his foster-daughter hidden, always, when they were in sight of men.

So Heimir had a marvellous harp made with cunning and craft; so that little Aslaug might be hidden within it. And with her, in the harp, Heimir stowed precious things: gold and silver, and fine clothes, for he foresaw that they would travel far. Leaving his kingdom, Heimir set forth, a wanderer, a beggar carrying a harp that he might play for his supper and his bed. They wandered far. Whenever they were far from the eyes of men, Heimir would take the harp apart and let little Aslaug bathe. For food while Aslaug was shut in the harp, he gave to her a wine-leek, for its virtue is such that a person may live long on it, even when she has no other food to eat. And when Aslaug cried, for fear of the dark and the confinement of her safety, Heimir would play the harp, quietening her – he was marvellously skilled at the harp.

In his wanderings, Heimir came to Norway, to a farm called Spangared. An old couple lived there, Åke and his wife Grima. When Heimir knocked on their door, Grima answered. “Why come you here, stranger?” Grima asked. “I mean you no harm, old woman,” said Heimir. “I am a wanderer, a beggar, far from home. I ask only for a space near the fireside so that I might warm these old bones.” “You’ll be asking me to feed you once you’re sitting by the fire, I’ll be bound,” said Grima.

But Heimir held up his hands, blue with cold. “I am a harpist. I want only to warm these fingers before the black cold takes them.” “All right,” said Grima. “I’ll let you in. No food, mind. We’ve none to spare for beggars.”

As Grima fed the fire, Heimir set his harp down beside him then held his hands to the flames. But Grima, sharp-eyed, sharp-tongued, sharp-witted, saw something hanging from the harp and as she bustled around the farmhouse she looked closer and saw it was a piece of the richest cloth. Grima realised that this was no ordinary beggar. “Listen, beggar. I spoke harshly to you, for we see few enough people here on our farm. Stay, for my husband will be back from the forest, and I will give you food to eat, and a place for you to sleep tonight.” Heimir looked at the crafty old woman but the snow blindness dimmed his sight and he did not see the guile glint in her eye. “I am grateful. I fear another night in the open would be the end of me.” “Let me show you where you can sleep.” So the old woman took Heimir to the barley barn and he lay down there, with the harp beside him, to sleep amid the warm sacks of barley.

While Heimir slept, Grima set to her tasks; but she was too excited to do much. So when Åke, her husband, came home, he found the house unswept, the fire unbanked, and the animals not fed. Åke looked round, then looked to sharp-eyed Grima and said, “You must be very happy. For every day, I work, chopping wood and hauling it home until my fingers bleed while you sit and do nothing.” Then sharp-tongued Grima said, “Would you like to do the work of a moment and, by that work, keep us fat and contented all the rest of our lives?” “What work is that, old woman?” asked Åke.

“A man came to our farm today. An old man, a beggar he said. But I saw, with these sharp eyes, the gold glint from his finger and gold cloth in his harp.”

Written by Edoardo Albert

“Rumour spread faster than frost: the child of Sigurd and Brynhild the Fair lives in Hlymdal”

Legend and history meet with Ragnar Loðbrók, the Viking forefather who fought monsters and led raids on Saxon England
He is very old but I think he must have been a great warrior when he was young. I put him in the barley barn and he is lying there.” Grima looked at her husband, and the thought of what she planned to do glinted in her eyes: “Fast asleep,” she added.

But Ake shook his head. “No. No. I will not do this thing that you ask.”

Sharp-tongued Grima cut him with her tongue. “Why did I marry a weakling? My mother told me to marry Svein. He wouldn’t have hesitated. If you won’t kill him, Ake, then so help me, I’ll take the beggar man for my husband and we’ll drive you out. You weren’t here when he came; you didn’t hear the honey words he poured over me. But I would not listen - I vowed to stay true to my husband. Much good does that do me! Mark this, Ake, and mark it well: I’ll take him to my bed and kill you if you don’t take this chance.” Grima put her hand on Ake’s arm. “We won’t get another chance like this, Ake,” the woman wheedled, cunningly.

Then Ake nodded his head and he took his axe and sharpened it. Grima brought Ake to where Heimir lay, the harp by his side. He was snoring.

“It’s done,” whispered Grima. “But run away after you strike, lest he lay hand on you.” Then Grima took the harp and ran back to the farmhouse.

Ake took his axe and stood beside the sleeping, snoring Heimir. He raised his axe and brought it down but, striking, the axe caught on bone and flew from his hands. Heimir roared from his sleep, limbs thrashing, and Ake fled from the barn. But the blow was deep, a death blow, although such were Heimir’s death threes that the whole barn came down.

Ake found Grima in the farmhouse with the harp. “It’s done,” he said.

“Well be rich,” said Grima. “Mark my words.”

But the old man shook his head. “This won’t end well. His blood will bring down blood on us.”

“Pah,” said the old lady. And she opened the harp. But, inside, they found a little girl.

“This will end badly,” said Ake.

“It’s true,” said Grima. “She is not what I expected. Who are you? But to whatever question they asked, Aslaug gave no answer.

It was as if the young girl had no speech.

“This is bad,” said Ake.

“Nonsense,” said Grima. “I need some help around the house. She will be called Kráka, after my mother, and I will simply say, if anyone asks us, that she is our own daughter.”

“No one will believe you,” said Ake. “We’re both so ugly. No one will believe Kráka is our daughter.”

“I will make her ugly,” said Grima. “I will shave her head, and tar it, and dress her in rags, so people will think she is my daughter.”

Grima set the girl to doing chores on the farm. There Kráka grew up, in poverty and silence.

In Gautland there was a jarl named Harrud. He was very great, for he had killed Harald Wartooth at the battle of Brávellir.

Ragnar was the son of Sigurd. He was a giant among men, handsome, feared by his enemies and beloved of his friends. He had already gathered men to his warship and earned a reputation as a great warrior when he heard of the promise Jarl Harrud had made. But Ragnar made no oath, nor did he talk of the serpent that had imprisoned Póra. Instead, he had some clothes made: shaggy trousers and a shaggy cape, which he boiled in tar. Then he sailed to Gautland and pulled his warship up on a beach not far from Jarl Harrud’s hall. But Ragnar did not go to greet the jarl that night. Instead, he woke early, before anyone else had got up, and Ragnar put on the tar-covered trousers and cape he had made, and he took a spear from the rack. Climbing down from his ship, Ragnar rolled on the beach, covering his trousers and had a bower made for her use, near his hall.

Every day Harrud would send Póra a gift. One day he sent her a little snake of great beauty. Póra liked the snake and put it in a box with a piece of gold for its bed. But at once the snake began to grow, so that within a few days it was too big for its box, and it lay curled round it. Once out of the box, the snake grew quicker, so that it soon lay wrapped around Póra’s bower and none might enter or leave save only the man who brought the serpent its food: a whole ox.

The gold beneath the snake grew with it too, so that it lay upon a great hoard. Then Harrud swore an oath that whatever man killed the snake and freed Póra would have Póra as his wife and the snake’s gold as her dowry. Many men heard this, but none dared to face the serpent.

The king of Denmark was Sigurd Hring. His fame was great, for he had killed Harald Wartooth at the battle of Brávellir.

Ragnar Loðbrók neatly straddles the transition from legend to history: it begins by anchoring the future wife of Ragnar in the greatest of Norse legend, the story of Sigurd the Dragon Slayer and Brynhild (ignoring the difficulty of Sigurd and Brynhild belonging to a time four centuries earlier), and ends with the sons of Ragnar, men such as Ivar the Boneless and Sigurd Snake-in-the-Eye, who are undoubtedly historical figures.

Whether Ragnar himself was a historical character remains unknown. While a group of Viking war chiefs were known as sons of Loðbrók, this could refer to a tribal founder as their actual paternal father. But if Ragnar was real, he likely first appears in the historical record in 845 CE, when a Viking chieftain named Reginheri led 120 longships up the River Seine to attack Paris. According to the French chroniclers, this Ragnar succumbed to the plague that devastated the Vikings besieging Paris. But ‘Ragnar’ pops up again in the following decades: he raids Scotland and the Isles, settles in Dublin, attacks Anglesey and, finally, dies in a snake-filled pit in York. Actually, Ragnar appears to have died at least five times during his career.

It’s possible that a series of different Viking chieftains who shared similar names had their stories conflated into one character: Ragnar Loðbrók. Once this process began, the pull of a good hero with name recognition would ensure that other tales would be ascribed to him, in the same way that Arthur, at most a war leader of the Britons, became the exemplar of medieval chivalry.

With the modern reinterpretation of Vikings, which has seen them change from bloodthirsty rapists to intrepid explorers and traders, it was only a matter of time before Ragnar Loðbrók would be reimagined for the screen. Vikings makes for a great television but it conflates different times and characters, making the historical Rollo, the first ruler of Normandy, Ragnar’s brother and contemporary, when in reality Ragnar came two generations before Rollo. But such tale making is in keeping with the writers of the sagas.

The Real Ragnar
A historical legend or merely fiction?

The sagas start in legend and end in history with diversions into tales of adventure and chivalry throughout. But the saga of Ragnar Loðbrók neatly straddles the transition from legend to history: it begins by anchoring the future wife of Ragnar in the greatest of Norse legend, the story of Sigurd the Dragon Slayer and Brynhild (ignoring the difficulty of Sigurd and Brynhild belonging to a time four centuries earlier), and ends with the sons of Ragnar, men such as Ivar the Boneless and Sigurd Snake-in-the-Eye, who are undoubtedly historical figures.

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An imagining of the discovery of Aslaug by Mårt en Eskil Winge

The first Viking

Ragnar Loðbrók. Now help us bake his bread.

But the old woman held up her hands. Her fingers were twisted and bent. “These old hands can’t do such hard work. But I have a daughter who can do the baking for you. Her name is Kráka, but she has grown so headstrong I can barely control her. Ask her yourself when she gets back.”

Kráka had taken the cattle to water in the morning. But as she watered the cattle, she had seen the great ship, moored in the inlet, with painted shields lining its sides and the painted head of a great serpent at its prow. Seeing the ship, Kráka undressed and washed herself, despite Grima having forbidden it. Then she brushed her golden hair that had grown long. For few visitors came to Spangareid and, with so few visitors, Grima had grown lazy and stopped shaving Kráka’s head.

Leading the cattle, Kráka came home. And the men, bent over the fire, stopped what they were doing when they saw her and they turned to Grima and asked, “Is this your daughter?”

“She is,” said Grima. “How can that be?” said the men, “when she is so beautiful and you are so ugly?”

“Don’t judge this old woman in her age: I was a beauty too when I was young.”

But the men did not hear the threat and protested all the more that the woman they had seen was indeed more beautiful than Póra.

Then Ragnar spoke. “I will send other men and they will bring back report of this woman of whom you speak. If it be as you say, then I will pardon your incompetence. But if she be one whit less beautiful than Póra, then you will die.”

But when Ragnar’s messengers tried to sail to the beach, the headwind was too great and they could not reach the land.

 Denied, Ragnar’s eagerness to see this maiden waxed and he told his men to give her this message: “If she is truly more beautiful than Póra, then I want her for my bed. Tell her I will meet her, but that she must come to Ragnar Loðbrók naked but clothed, full yet hungry, alone and with company.”

cloak in sand. Then he removed the rivet holding the spear head on its shaft.

Ragnar went through the dawn to the jarl’s hall. All were sleeping there. Ragnar went to Póra’s bower. He saw the serpent coiled round it, asleep. At once, he stabbed it with the spear. Pulling the spear out, he stabbed again, cutting through the serpent’s spine, and he twisted the spear so the spear head broke off.

In its death throes, a stream of acid blood gushed from the serpent, striking Ragnar. But the sandy cloak and shaggy trousers protected him from the deadly blood. Póra, wakened by the death agony of the serpent, saw a hooded man striding away and she called after him. But Ragnar did not turn, and answered in riddles, before walking away.

Póra wondered who the man might be who had killed the serpent and freed her. Could such a giant be a man? When Jarl Harrud, wakened by the serpent’s death thrashing, came, he found the spear point embedded in the animal’s spine but so great was its size that Harrud too wondered if a man could have wielded such a weapon.

Then Póra advised her father to call a great assembly of the people. For whoever had killed the serpent would carry the shaft that fitted the spear head that had slain the snake.

Ragnar and his men heard the call to assembly and went to it, sitting apart from the other men.

Jarl Harrud stood and spoke to his people. “The snake that held my daughter captive is dead and the man who killed it left in the beast its death.

‘Let he who wielded that spear bring it forward and I shall keep my promise to him, whatever his degree.’ Many men tried, but no one had a spear shaft that matched the spear head. Then Ragnar stood forth, and claimed the spear was his, and fitted the spear head to the shaft he carried. News of this deed spread through all the Northlands and beyond; Ragnar’s name was sung from the white north to Miklagard itself. Jarl Harrud, glad at so worthy a match, gave Póra to be Ragnar’s wife, and he took her home to Denmark. Ragnar loved Póra and she gave him two sons, Eirik and Agnar. They grew to be great men. But then Póra took sick and died. In his grief, Ragnar put aside his kingdom, giving it to the keeping of others, and to still his sorrow he took to his warship and set sail.

One morning when they were anchored in a small inlet, Ragnar’s men woke early and took the rowing boat and rowed to land to bake bread. On the beach, they saw a farm not far away and the men took their wheat to the farm so that they might use its oven.

An old woman greeted them. The men asked her name and the old lady replied to them, “My name is Grima. Who are you?”

“We are the men of the great Ragnar Loðbrók. Now help us bake his bread.”

But the old woman held up her hands. Her fingers were twisted and bent. “These old hands can’t do such hard work. But I have a daughter who can do the baking for you. Her name is Kráka, but she has grown so headstrong I can barely control her. Ask her yourself when she gets back.”

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 Denied, Ragnar’s eagerness to see this maiden waxed and he told his men to give her this message: “If she is truly more beautiful than Póra, then I want her for my bed. Tell her I will meet her, but that she must come to Ragnar Loðbrók naked but clothed, full yet hungry, alone and with company.”

ship. But when they served the bread to the crew, the crew complained that it was burnt.

“You had one task,” said Ragnar, who was hungry. “You could not even do that.”

“It’s not our fault,” said the men. “There was this woman there, and she was so beautiful we could not stop staring at her, and so we burned the bread.”

“No woman is as beautiful as Póra,” said Ragnar and his voice was low and threatening.

But the men did not hear the threat and protested all the more that the woman they had seen was indeed more beautiful than Póra.

Then Ragnar spoke. “I will send other men and they will bring back report of this woman of whom you speak. If it be as you say, then I will pardon your incompetence. But if she be one whit less beautiful than Póra, then you will die.”

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When the wind turned, Ragnar's messengers set sail. They landed and went up to the farmhouse and found Kráka waiting for them. Then they looked upon her and saw that the reports of her beauty were nothing less than the truth: she was more beautiful than Póra the Fair. The messengers bowed before her, and told her they came with word from Ragnar Loðbrók.

Kráka said, "I will come to your ship tomorrow, as the great Ragnar Loðbrók commands.

She watched the messengers sail back to Ragnar's warship, moored in the bay. And through the night, Kráka thought upon Ragnar's message. Then, when dawn was breaking, she went to see Áke. The old man was chopping wood. His dog, the only creature he loved, snarled at Kráka.

"Will you lend me your fishing net?" Kráka asked him. "I will catch us some fish for our lunch." 

"Take it," said Áke. "Saves me getting wet and cold, standing in the bay."

"I'll need to take the dog too," said Kráka, "or the gulls will steal the fish." 

"About time someone else did some work round here," said Áke. "Go with her, dog." The dog, disgruntled, followed Kráka back to the farmhouse. In the house, Kráka took an onion, then stripped her garments off and, naked, wrapped Áke's net around her.

"You shall have it," said Ragnar. He sent his men to row her to the warship.

When Kráka stood before him, the blood rose in Ragnar Loðbrók as it had not done since Póra, and he reached for her. But Áke's dog, seeing this, bit Ragnar's hand. Ragnar's men prised the animal off the king and strangled it. Thus died the only creature that Áke, the old man, loved.

Ragnar's wound was not deep, and he seated Kráka beside him while it was bound, and spoke with her.

"The kindness of a king might expect to be repaid by the embrace of a fair maid," he said, and as he spoke he had his men lay out rich cloth and gold and jewels before Kráka.

But the maid replied, "A true king keeps his word. You have promised me safe conduct: surely you will honour your oath and let me go hence, a maid intact."

"I will come to you if you promise me and my companion safe conduct," said the brave maiden.

"Ragnar will smell the onion and know she has eaten but is not sated."

Then Grima saw Kráka raise the onion to her lips, bite into it, chew and then spit it out.

"Ragnar will smell the onion and know she has eaten but is not sated!"

"But she is not full yet hungry." 

"You think me too young to remember what you did when first I came to you: how, though bound
“From today, each day that passes shall be worse than the day it follows, and the worst shall be your last.”

Then Kráka went to where the boat waited for her. The king welcomed her but when night came and he would sleep with her, Kráka refused.

“Before I come to your bed, I would have a wedding feast, and a welcome in your land.”

Ragnar, hearing the wisdom of this, accepted, but urged his men to sail all the faster. Once at his kingdom, Ragnar ordered a great wedding feast and Ragnar and Kráka were married. But that night, when Ragnar would lie with her for the first time, Kráka put her finger to his lips. “Wait,” she said. “You have waited long, but wait just three nights more. For if we share a bed tonight, then my heart tells me the child I bear shall suffer for our impatience.”

But Ragnar roared with laughter. “I have waited months, Kráka, months. I have given you gold and silver, my kingdom and my heart. I will wait for you no longer.”

So that night they were joined, and their marriage healed the pain of Þóra’s loss. But the telling of Kráka’s heart proved true, for their first child, born of that first coupling, had gristle where his bones should have been, and he was named Ivar the Boneless. Though boundless in wit, his men had to bear him on their shields, for he could barely walk.

There were other sons born to Ragnar and Kráka: Björn and Halfdan. But some of Ragnar’s men began to whisper that it was not fit for a king to be married to a peasant. Eystein, king of the Swedes, had a daughter of great beauty. Ragnar should forget Kráka and marry the king’s daughter instead. But Kráka, hearing of this, told him the tale of how she was in fact Aslaug, the daughter of the hero Sigurd and the valkyrie Brynhild. But Ragnar would not believe her tale. Kráka said, “If my words be true, then the son who sits now in my belly will bear a mark like a snake lying in his eye, and you will call him Sigurd Snake-in-the-Eye.”

So it was. Kráka gave birth to a boy and when he opened his eyes for the first time, Ragnar saw there a mark like a coiled snake. And all men came to know that Kráka was, in truth, Aslaug, daughter of Sigurd Dragon Slayer and Brynhild. The tale of their sons is told in the saga of the sons of Ragnar. It also tells of how Ragnar met his death when King Ælle cast him into a pit of serpents. There too is told how Ragnar’s sons took terrible vengeance for the killing of their father, and many other things beside. But now, this tale of Ragnar Lodbrok is done.
The horrors that unfolded under Hitler’s directive to starve a city into submission are revealed by the secret diaries of the people of Leningrad

Written by Charlie Evans

Alone in her home, 12-year-old Tanya Savicheva scrawled in her diary the heartbreaking words, “The Savichevs are dead. Everyone is dead. Only Tanya is left.” The notebook, filled with misspellings in blue pencil, lists each of her family members who she had seen die at the hands of hunger.

First her older sister Zhenya, her grandmother Yevdokiya, her brother Leka, and her two uncles, and finally the entry, “Mama on May 13th at 7:30 in the morning, 1942.” Tanya was alone, abandoned in a city that had been entirely cut off from the outside world. But she was not alone in writing a diary. Across the city, hundreds of diarists were chronicling the horrors of one of the deadliest sieges in history – the extent of which would not be revealed until decades later.

In spring 1942, outside Tanya’s home, the streets were strewn with more victims who had perished in the wake of Adolf Hitler’s horrific plans to starve her city to death. The chilling directive had come on 22 September 1941, “St Petersburg must be erased from the face of the Earth. We have no interest in saving the lives of the civilian population.” Nearly a third of the inhabitants would starve to death over the next 872 days while 150,000 shells were fired at the city and more than 107,000 incendiary and high-explosive bombs were dropped.

The three million people trapped in the once-thriving city were left to survive on almost nothing – just 125 grammes of dense sticky black bread made from a mixture of rye and oatmeal, kerosene and unfiltered malt. But the bitter tasting bread offered little nutritional value and it did not stave away the hunger pains.

Unprepared for the siege, it had taken just 12 weeks for German and Finnish forces to surround the city, destroying hospitals, food stores, roads, schools, power plants, and water supplies.

Leningraders were forced to forage for anything they could that might offer more life-sustaining calories than the rationed bread alone. People started to eat anything they could stomach; leather belts boiled into jelly, the scrapings from the back of wallpaper, fur coats. Elena Skryabina, teacher of Russian literature, described in her diary on 3 October 1941, “I visited a lady I know, and she let me try one of her culinary inventions – a jelly made from leather belts. The recipe is: cook belts made from pig leather and prepare a sort of aspic out of it. This nastiness beggars description! A sort of a yellowish colour and a horrible smell. Despite my extreme hunger, I couldn’t bring myself to swallow even a spoonful, and gagged.”

The city became rife with outbreaks of disease and the evermore gaunt populace was about to face a gruelling frost that would set into the already weakened city.

WARNING!
The images and content in this feature may be upsetting for some readers, please skip to page 70 if you’d rather avoid it.
Without food, a human might be able to survive up to 50 days. Beyond this, once the food in the gut has been used and the fat reserves depleted, the internal organs start to break down and the body starts to autocannibalism—an agonising and slow process that leads to a painful death that first devours the body, and then the mind.

As the thermometer mark dropped below -32.1°C, people started burning everything they could find to heat their homes, starting with the furniture, before the cherished family books. But some precious notebooks were kept as writing had become an important way of coping for many of the people confined to the city.

As the hunger became more and more intolerable, it wasn’t long before birds, rats, and stray dogs and cats started disappearing from the streets. And when this resource ran out, Leningraders traded beloved pets with their neighbours so they were not forced to kill and eat their own. At this point, Leningraders started to show symptoms of extreme starvation, moving slowly through the streets with sunken eyes and extended stomachs swollen from the effects of oedema as a result of malnutrition.

“They’re horrible, only skeletons, not people,” wrote factory worker Ivan Savinkov in his diary. Klavdiya Naumovna, a doctor at a Leningrad hospital, had similar sentiments in his diary, writing, “These aren’t people, rather skeletons with dry skin of a horrible colour stretched over them. Their consciousness is muddled, there’s a kind of dullness and doltishness about them. They lack strength completely. Today I saw a patient like that; he walked to the hospital by himself, but died two hours later.”

“The city became rife without breaks of disease”
In an attempt to survive Leningraders were forced to find nourishment anywhere they could...

### Beauty products
- Lipstick, fried toothpaste and face-powder pancakes are all items listed in diaries as sources of food for the Leningraders.

### Soil
- The heavy bombing of food reserves included the destruction of sugar storages. The soil could be dug up and either mixed with flour or sucked upon for sweetness.

### Water
- Water eased the hunger pains and Leningraders would search for water under the icy blanket that covered Russia in the winter or would dig holes into the ice of lakes.

### Leather
- Anything made from leather could be turned into a grimy jelly or a pate, including belts, briefcases and jackets.

### Wallpaper paste
- People stripped the walls of wallpaper, scraping the paste from the inside to make into a soup, and then eating the paper. Other people ate the paste directly from glue jars.

### Animal food
- Tins of cat food were opened and served for dinner, and linseed and oats for the cattle and horses became a vital source of nutrients for the starving people of Leningrad.

### Chickweed
- The people of Leningrad turned to harvesting chickweed, and started to pickle weeds and grasses to make them more palatable. This resourcefulness saw many Leningraders saved from the fatal effects of scurvy.

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Bodies piled in the open and uncoffined bodies were dragged through the streets on sleds to be buried in mass graves. It’s no wonder, that between the hunger and the heavy artillery bombardment, that tensions started to rise. First between neighbours, and then between families, as people were killed for ration cards and others started secretly keeping dead loved ones to claim their rations. These rising tensions didn’t go unnoticed by the people of the starving city. Arkadii Lepkovich noticed the blockade breaking apart his marriage as he and his wife grew suspicious of one another. “Even relations between mother and child, husband and wife, have been made completely inhuman,” he wrote. “The whole city has become this way because the battle for life has brought despair to every living individual.” People were going to increasing lengths to find a way to feed themselves and their families, with mothers even cutting their veins to feed their children blood. And then they became paranoid of one another. Rumours began to spread that others were dining on much worse than their beloved pets.

Children started disappearing, bodies went missing from the cemetery, corpses on the streets had parts missing. On 13 December 1941, the people of Leningrad's fears were confirmed - the NKVD, Stalin's notorious secret police, filed the first report of the consumption of human flesh.

Eating human meat is not a feat for the faint-hearted. It is a gruesome task that requires hours of preparation to hack through bone, pull apart the limbs, and carve out chunks of edible flesh, all the while being careful not to contaminate the meat by slicing the intestines. But if it can be stomached, human meat can provide protein, calories, and nutrition for those who have little other choices. And the cuts of human flesh, beef-like in texture and pork-like in taste, can provide a welcome meal. With the fat stripped and muscle ground up, marrow scooped from the inside of bones, and cooked internal organs, a human corpse can be enough to sustain someone for several weeks. Historically, eating deceased kin has been a lifeline in times of famine and over the period of the siege 1,207 individuals were convicted for cannibalism.

The Russian language distinguishes two types of cannibalism - ‘trupoedstvo’ (eating the flesh from someone who is already dead) and ‘liudoedstvo’ (killing and eating a person). In Leningrad, both corpse-eating and people-eating became a new horror in the unfolding nightmare of the siege. And it wasn’t long before these sources of food became available on the black market and people stopped asking each other where they had found such tender succulent meat in such a time of terrible famine.

One account from survivor Galina Yakovleva remembers a strange warm smell coming from a room and realising it emanated from the flesh of a corpse prepared for food, “In the twilight, there were huge chunks of meat hung from hooks to the ceiling. And one piece was a human hand with long fingers and blue veins…”

The perpetrators of cannibalism in starving Leningrad had not been criminals - only 18 people had previous convictions. Instead, they were people driven to such crimes by starvation and...
by madness, driven by the will to survive and to save their families. The vast majority of those who resorted to cannibalism were eating corpses that had already died, and were unsupported women with young children. But the NKVD reports do detail some grisly occasions where Leningraders killed others in the pursuit of a meal.

One of these reports includes a 42-year-old river port worker and his son who murdered, dismembered and ate their two housemates (in the report named only by their initials, M and I) before distributing the flesh, under the guise of horse meat, to trade for wine and cigarettes. On another occasion, the wife of a Red Army soldier lured a 13-year-old girl into her room and killed her with an axe to feed to her two dependent children aged between eight and eleven years old.

There were so many reports of corpse-eating and people-eating that the NKVD started a special unit of police and psychiatrists dedicated to trying to minimise the number of cannibalistic instances.

But despite these tragedies and crimes that were committed in the name of survival, many Leningraders still clung to humanity, determined that their suffering would not mean they would lose themselves. After the first devastating winter, in the summer of 1942, people still found ways to stay optimistic, with one diarist Klavdiya Naumovna writing, “The people are clean; they’ve started to wear nice dresses. The tram is running, shops are opening up bit by bit. There are queues at the perfume shops – there’s been a delivery of perfume to Leningrad... I was very happy. I love perfume so! I put some on myself and I feel like I’m not hungry, like I’ve just returned from a concert or a restaurant.”

The siege ended on 27 January 1944 when Soviet soldiers defeated the German line of defence and recaptured hundreds of towns and villages in the region. The total death toll of the Leningrad siege exceeds 1,500,000 military and civilians. As the siege ended, the government passed out cabbage and carrot seeds and the people of Leningrad planted every available piece of land with vegetables and people celebrated their victory in the streets.

Cats were introduced into the city again to protect the new small crops from rats. People came together to start to rebuild. Families were reunited with loved ones who were outside the blockade when the circle closed, real bread made from flour returned to the market, and a healthy glow came back to the complexions of the survivors. Life had returned to Leningrad.

The diaries and NKVD reports would languish in archives behind the Iron Curtain, for the most part unread until the 21st century.

As memory coalesced around the narrative of collective suffering, defiance and heroism in the face of the fascist aggressor, there was no room for personal stories in the sweeping opera of the Great Patriotic War, and certainly not stories that introduced soul-searching and moral ambiguity.

The humanity and determination to try to keep a normal life through adversity kept the population surviving through the 872 days of siege. Through the hardship, though the people of Leningrad were pushed to the limits of human survival, it was a time of great solidarity and triumphant resistance; for every story of murder and cannibalism, there are 100 more of the altruistic efforts to fight for the lives of others.

Stories of already struggling mothers taking in orphaned children, people sharing the last of their bread rations with strangers and groups risking their lives to bring supplies across the Road of Life over frozen Lake Lagoda.

Although much of its history was wiped clean, stories of love and loss continue to surface, a reminder that Leningrad was never wiped out.
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As has often been the case throughout the history of empires and conquest, it was a combination of greed, self-righteousness and a desire to punish a troublesome neighbour that inspired King Philip II of Spain to attempt to invade England in 1588.

As ruler of the largest empire in the world at the time, Philip's power was unrivalled, but this didn't translate into a reign of peace and contentment for his subjects, especially those residing in the Netherlands. A Spanish possession when its crown passed to King Philip II in 1556, since 1568 the Netherlands had been in revolt against its foreign overlords. However, it was not alone in its efforts; a neighbour to the northwest was all too willing to provide aid – England.
Such a blatant disregard for his rule and the sovereignty of his sprawling empire was never going to be ignored by Philip, and when Elizabeth I opted to relieve Mary, Queen of Scots (a devout Catholic) of her head, King Philip’s restraint snapped. The Protestant thorn in his side would have to be removed, and the only way to extract it would be to invade England and restore Catholicism to its people, many of whom Philip believed would rise up in support of their religious saviours as they landed on the English coast. He also had the express support of Pope Sixtus V, who viewed the entire enterprise as a crusade, an electric word bound to invigorate the men set to embark on it.

Such an undertaking was never going to be a simple one, and a vast and well-supplied fleet would take time to organise. Fortunately for Philip, the Pope permitted him to levy ‘crusade taxes’, which went a long way to funding the planned invasion. However, neither divine favour nor convenient taxation could prevent Francis Drake’s raid on Cadiz in April 1587, which saw 30 ships put out of action and vital supplies seized, pushing the Armada’s expedition back by a year.

Further problems occurred in February of the following year when the man chosen to lead the fleet, Álvaro de Bazán, a vastly experienced (and some say undefeated) admiral, died, forcing Philip to elect the Duke of Medina Sidonia, Alonso Pérez de Guzmán, to the position. Aware of his own limitations, de Guzmán immediately appealed against his unexpected elevation in the form of a letter to the king, but his efforts were foiled when royal advisors intercepted it.

Despite its inauspicious beginning, the Armada finally set sail from Lisbon on 28 May 1588, putting 160 ships, approximately 32,400 men (of which around 21,500 were soldiers) and 2,400 cannons to sea in the process. Such a force seemed destined to splinter all opposition and restore the heathen nation of England to Catholicism, or at the very least put an end to any English support of the United Provinces (seven states in the Netherlands that had succeeded in ousting the Spanish).

Unfortunately, the plan that this vast fleet was due to follow was anything but simple. The ships were ordered to sail for the Spanish Netherlands, where awaiting their arrival stood an

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**THE ENGLISH FLEET**

With armed merchant vessels and shallow-hulled Dutch flyboats vastly outnumbering the 34 warships in the fleet, the English Navy couldn’t match the Spanish invasion force in terms of firepower. Those few English battleships, however, were smaller than their Spanish counterparts, meaning they had fewer guns but also a lower profile and greater speed.

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**FIRESHIPS**

Significantly outgunned, the English launched six fireships against the Spanish fleet. These were a unique terror to early modern vessels which were made of wood, caulked with tar, and filled with gunpowder. Even the ropes were greased with fat making the bulk of the ship highly flammable. Fireships were usually steered by a skeleton crew who would abandon ship at the last minute.

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The English sent eight fireships into the Spanish fleet outside Calais.

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**Battle of Gravelines**

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73
army of 30,000 men under the command of the brilliant Duke of Parma. Under the cover of the Spanish ships Parma’s troops would be conveyed to England (Kent specifically), where they would make land and begin the invasion. Having successfully stunted the Dutch revolt and returned the southern cities (which today are in Belgium) to Spanish control, Parma, an Italian by the name of Alessandro Farnese, would prove a formidable threat to any English hopes of pushing the invaders back into the sea. Then the weather intervened.

As it would throughout the Armada’s ultimately doomed expedition, the elements turned against it, forcing some of its number to return to port. Then, on 19 July, any hope of maintaining the element of surprise evaporated when the fleet was spotted off the coast of Cornwall. A series of beacons were immediately lit, sending news to London of the presence of the Spanish. The stage seemed set for a decisive engagement. With the English fleet unable to sail out of Plymouth harbour due to the tide, it was suggested to de Guzmán that the moment had come to strike. Unfortunately for King Philip II’s ambitions, de Guzmán prevaricated and then decided not to act, claiming that engaging the English had not been approved by the king. It was a decision both would come to regret.

As the Spanish made for the Isle of Wight, English fortunes rapidly shifted, the fleet under Lord Howard of Effingham and Francis Drake was now able to escape its containment and pursue the Armada. As the Sun rose on the morning of 21 July the English, by now anchored off Plymouth and having seized the advantage of being upwind of their foes (known as gaining the weather gauge), moved to engage the enemy.

Conscious of the fact that the Spanish fleet was trained to unleash its cannons in one furious burst before rushing up to the top deck and preparing to board their stricken victim, the English wisely kept their distance, firing at range while being sure to maximise their speed advantage to keep out of the reach of Spanish grapples. However, while this meant that they didn’t lose a single ship during the encounter, it also spared the Spanish, who, arranged in a convex arc formation, withstood the barrage easily, only losing two ships (Rosario and San Salvador) when they collided.

As the smoke of the cannons dissipated Drake found himself consumed by a familiar urge to loot the ailing Spanish ships that had smashed into one another earlier in the day. While doing so would secure both useful information and valuable supplies, it very nearly cost the English fleet, and therefore England as a whole, dearly.

In order to approach his targets Drake required the cover of darkness, so as night fell he extinguished the lantern aboard the Revenge. In doing so he instantly plunged the rest of the English fleet into confusion, for they were relying on the light in order to follow his lead and maintain formation. As the captains of the ships scrambled to restore order Drake set about boarding and stripping the Spanish vessels, relieving them of gunpowder and – no doubt his favoured prize – gold. He also gained a strategically vital insight into the interior design of the Spanish galleons, which had extremely compact gun decks laden with supplies. As a result, the sailors manning the guns had very little room to manoeuvre, and Drake quickly deduced that reloading and re-firing the Spanish cannons must be a tricky and time-consuming endeavour.

The English spent the following day (22 July) catching up to the Spanish, who had made good use of their 24-hour advantage. However, they couldn’t mitigate the speed of the English ships, who managed to catch up with them. The next day the men under Effingham and Drake’s command formed up in preparation for battle, and while a minor skirmish achieved nothing, a full-throttle assault soon after saw four separate English squadrons racing towards their Iberian foes, forcing the Spanish back and thereby preventing them from anchoring safely in the Solent to await news of Parma’s army.

Reluctant to risk defeat, de Guzmán instead opted to make for the safety of Calais. This seemingly prudent retreat would prove to be a fatal error. Having reached Calais on 27 July, the Spanish lowered their anchors in anticipation of collecting Parma’s force of 30,000 well-equipped troops from Dunkirk. Word soon reached them that quickly
disabused them of this notion. Parma’s army had been almost halved by disease and was in fact not ready to embark. The Armada’s growing problems were compounded by the news that Dunkirk was being blockaded by valiant Dutch flyboats steered by men who knew all too well that the formidable Spanish ships were too large to sail into the shallow waters off the coast of the Netherlands. Parma was now stranded with no hope of rescue, and the blockade was the death knell for any dreams of spiriting his men to England. To say that overlooking this potential impediment was an oversight by King Philip’s advisors would be an understatement.

As de Guzmán no doubt prevaricated over what to do next the English were plotting a blazing denouement for his fleet. Understandably nervous of lone ships being preyed on, de Guzmán ordered the Armada to drop anchor off Calais in a tight formation, hoping for safety in numbers. What he hadn’t catered for was the English turning this otherwise reasonable decision against the Spanish by exploiting their compact ranks.

With the hour approaching midnight, the silence of the port of Calais was suddenly split by a ripple of panic as the Spanish watched no less than eight fire ships bearing down on them, each one stripped of any unnecessary weight and then crammed to the deck with brimstone, pitch, tar and gunpowder. Fearing that the looming fire ships were in fact ‘hellburners’ (ships filled with gunpowder charges), the majority of the Armada hastily cut their lines and sailed for safety, leaving de Guzmán and the
main Spanish warships behind.

While the flaming missiles failed to severely damage any of the Spanish fleet, they did succeed in shattering the previously formidable crescent shape of the Armada. The field had been levelled and the scene was set for a decisive encounter off the Belgian port of Gravelines.

Aware that in order to inflict sufficient damage they would have to close on the enemy to within 100 yards, the English sailed forth and unleashed a torrent of cannon and musket fire. Swathes of Spanish gunners fell in the maelstrom of metal as the broadsides of the Armada’s vessels began to splinter, causing a number of ships to list precariously as their sailors scrambled to return fire. After eight hours of fighting five Spanish ships were drifting below the waves and the English were beginning to pull back as their guns ran empty.

The English ‘victory’ at Gravelines sent the final cannonball into the hull of King Philip II’s dreams of conquering England and re-establishing Catholicism, but in truth any threat to the realm of Elizabeth I went up in a cloud of smoke the moment news of Parma’s entrapment reached de Guzmán.

Elizabeth’s famous address at Tilbury sounds somewhat less dramatic when one considers that by the time she gave it, inspiring as it was, the danger had long since passed.

Having prevaricated when decisiveness was required, having held back when a final push could have established a vital foothold, de Guzmán was guilty of many failings, but the doom of the Armada does not rest squarely upon his shoulders. From its conception the plan was destined to flounder, sunk by poor planning and the impetuous whims of a ruler bent on reminding an irritating neighbour of his far-reaching powers.

Having sailed for Scotland following its mauling off Gravelines, the Armada was almost completely obliterated by storms as it made for home. Upon hearing that less than 10,000 of his men had made it home, and many of them ill or dying, King Philip is said to have lambasted the interference of “God’s winds and waves.”

In the years that followed the reigning naval power of Spain was gradually cancelled out by the emerging seaborne prowess of the English, with both sides sending fleets to harass the other before the inevitability of a peace pact finally became clear to both, culminating in the Treaty of London in 1604. By then King Philip had been dead six years, his hopes of putting an end to England’s infernal interference in his internal affairs well and truly dashed.

In the centuries to come Spain’s dominance on the global stage would begin to wane, while the influence of England would see it establish an empire beyond compare. How different the history of the world would have been had de Guzmán managed to land upon England’s shores and unleash the full might of the Duke of Parma’s hordes.

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**8 AUGUST 1588**

The decisive running battle off the coast of Calais and the Spanish Netherlands cost the fire-damaged Spanish Armada dearly as the English fleet chased them back into the open waters of the English Channel. The Armada’s only chance of survival was to wait out the wind and land its army the Spanish Netherlands, where it could escape Drake’s predations, while the only chance of success was to board the Spanish Army of Flanders in their barges from the coast.

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**01 The dash for Calais**

By dawn on the morning of 8 August, the charred remnant of the Spanish Armada found themselves scattered north east of Calais, with the English fleet chasing them. Heavily damaged by the fireboat attack, the Spanish squadron flagship San Lorenzo attempts to sneak under oars into the neutral port of Calais. Ark Royal is diverted from the fleet to take the San Lorenzo but is warned off by French cannon.
The Duke plays for time
San Martin, the Duke of Medina Sidonia’s flagship, and four other galleon place themselves between the English and the bruised Armada. Over two hours the brave Spaniards fight a delaying action against the English, giving the Armada time to reform. Despite overwhelming odds, the five Spanish warships make it back to the Armada and take their places in the formation.

“Unfortunately for King Philip II’s ambitions, de Guzmán prevaricated and then decided not to act”

Hidden dangers
The Armada are unable to dash straight for the coast of the Spanish Netherlands and the waiting Spanish Army of Flanders as Dutch rebels have removed the sea marks. These navigation aids revealed the presence of the Shoals of Flanders, submerged sand banks that had to be taken with caution lest vessels run aground.

The battle is joined
The English, now reinforced by the ships harrying the San Lorenzo at Calais, launch an attack on the right flank of the Spanish Armada, which had formed a crescent with its supply ships protected at the rear. The lighter English ships are easily able to flank the slower Spanish and get close enough to unleash musket volleys as well as cannon fire. Keeping the wind at their backs, the English position themselves so that the Spanish hulls are raised towards them, exposing the vulnerable hull below the waterline.

The Spanish escape
With the Spanish right flank and rear badly damaged, the formation begins to collapse. Medina Sidonia leads another delaying action to cover the Spanish retreat as the Armada is driven out into the North Sea.

Cast aways
The Duke of Parma’s Spanish Army of Flanders – a multinational chiefly concerned with suppressing Dutch revolt – never joins the Spanish Armada and never poses a serious threat to the Kingdom of England.

The battle flounders
Still in formation, the Spanish Armada is heavily battle damaged and by the afternoon the English are starting to run out of ammunition, with some gunners loading chain and other debris into the guns to keep the pressure on. After eight hours of fighting the English pull away and the Spanish use the breathing space to begin repairs, but as the wind rises their opportunity to make for the Spanish Netherlands departs on the breeze.

Shallow water pirates
Allied to England, shallow-hulled flyboats commanded by the rebel Dutch waited in the sandbanks. Able to traverse the dangerous waters around the coast, they were poised to harry the Spanish Army of Flanders if its barges set out to join the Armada.
George Orwell

He is lauded as one of the most influential authors of the 20th century, but was this prolific writer always on the right side of history?

In the spring of 1937, on the Huesca front of the Spanish Civil War, a small group of republican soldiers crept across open ground under the cover of night. With bayonets fixed, they were ready to storm an enemy trench. Half of this band was made up of British volunteers – ideologically driven foreigners come to help Spain’s republic in its fight against the nationalist rebels.

Once the group was discovered, and the shooting began, one volunteer found himself caught in a deadly crossfire between his own side and the enemy: “I flattened myself out and dug my face into the mud so hard that I hurt my neck and thought that I was wounded... The fascists were firing, our people behind were firing, and I was very conscious of being in the middle.”

This volunteer was an Englishman named Eric Blair, though later he would be better known through his writing as George Orwell. His time fighting in the Civil War is just one of many chapters that defined, and then redefined, the world views, political stances and ideological commitments of one of the most important writers of the 20th century.

Born into a lower-middle class family in 1903, Orwell’s upbringing was largely unremarkable given his later achievements. He attended Eton on a scholarship, where he exhibited no great enthusiasm for academia. Instead of going to university as might have been expected, he emigrated to Burma, where he joined the colonial police force – the law and order on the frontier of the Empire. His experiences during this time, from 1922-27, would prove to be definitive.

Despite WWI greatly denting Britain’s power in the world – leaving not only a whole generation lost in the bloodbaths of Loos, the Somme, and Passchendaele, but also a mountain of financial war debts - the Empire still desperately clung on to its territories across the globe. Still under the grip of the British Raj, India remained the biggest and most important of these colonies, and by far the largest “Indian” province was Burma. It was here, during this time of Imperial decline that Orwell was both witness to, and a participant in, the ugly, brutal realities of colonialism.

As assistant district superintendent, Orwell was one of 13,000 civil policemen, supported by some 10,000 troops. This force was tasked with enforcing law over 36 districts of the province, with a population of 13 million people. In 1936 he

“The Fascists were firing, our people behind were firing, and I was very conscious of being in the middle”
Defining moment

The Spanish Civil War
In December 1936, Orwell travelled to fight in the Spanish Civil War, joining a republican militia, the POUM, affiliated with the Independent Labour Party. His wife Eileen, who found work in Barcelona, later joined him. He received a near-fatal bullet wound in May 1937. The couple was forced to flee the country after Soviet-backed government groups suppressed the POUM and arrested its members.

1936-1937
published a revealing account from this period of his life, recounting an event where he killed a rogue elephant that had trampled a Burmese man and destroyed property. “It was at this moment,” he wrote, “as I stood there with the rifle in my hands, that I first grasped the hollowness, the futility of the white man’s dominion in the East.”

Orwell openly describes the contradictions in his outlook, on the one hand deploring the oppressive and ridiculous system of the British Raj, while on the other expressing his disdain for the “sneering yellow faces” who harassed him daily in his work. Although he would later temper and rectify this language, his attitudes towards race remain one of the critical battlegrounds on which his work is debated. His semi-autobiographical novel, *Burmese Days*, also points to these contradictions simultaneously criticising colonialism, while detailing his own intimate knowledge of its practices and dirty secrets. The “gentleman’s club” at the heart of the book, is a place for “white men only” and is inhabited by a sorry, drink-soaked, clueless group of ex-pats, with little understanding of, but frequent disdain for, the country they inhabit. This is a satire of the colonial system Orwell experienced, in which he perhaps feared he could easily become fully assimilated.

After quitting the police force and moving back to England, Orwell began seeking a career as a writer, contributing articles and reviews for literary journals and left-wing newspapers. It was during this time that he began living rough, sleeping in workhouses, and even getting arrested in order to fuel his writing—drawing on these experiences in his articles and essays on class, poverty and society’s poorest extremes. Later he moved to Paris in 1928, living in the city’s impoverished, bohemian areas and working as a porter in restaurant kitchens. His first published book, *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933), dealt with these themes, recounting his time living below the breadline.

In December 1936 Orwell travelled to Spain to fight for the republican government in the country’s civil war. He was one of thousands of foreign volunteers, including many intellectuals and writers, who saw the conflict as the frontline against fascism in Europe—Italy and Germany both supported the nationalist rebels. Orwell chose to support the Partido Obrero de Unificacion Marxista (the Worker’s Party for Marxist Unification, or POUM for short), one of the numerous fringe militias that existed alongside several Anarchist, Communist and Socialist armed groups. All these separate organisations were armed with diverging ideologies, that would later spark fierce in-fighting on the republican side and suppressions.

During his time in Spain, Orwell not only experienced combat on the frontline, he received a near-fatal bullet wound in late May 1937, but also the ruthless, totalitarian control that the Soviet Union held over its allies. In *Homage to Catalonia* (1938), he describes the fighting that broke out inside republican-held Barcelona during 3-8 May 1937. Communist and government groups accused several of their allies of being Fascist sympathisers, resulting in deadly street fighting between factions.

By the war’s end, and with the government facing defeat, Soviet-controlled groups had begun suppressing their former Anarchist and Marxist allies, making widespread arrests and declaring the groups illegal. Orwell himself escaped Spain, although several of his comrades were held in Soviet prisons—some were even tortured and killed. It was this experience of treachery and deceit by the Communists that fuelled his later writing.
and some of his most famous work. Returning to England, Orwell was quick to enter the debate surrounding the government’s appeasement policy with Nazi Germany.

Much of the country, and many politicians, could not conceive of another conflict after the horrors of WWII, and for a time Orwell added his pen to the anti-war cause. Even the same year war was declared in 1939, he remained opposed, viewing Hitler’s Germany as a fascist menace, but as he saw it in no way worse than the vast oppressive Empires of Britain and France. “What meaning would there be, even if it were successful, in bringing down Hitler’s system in order to stabilise something that is far bigger and in its different way just as bad?” he wrote in a review in literary journal The Adelphi, published July that year.

By 1940, with the Battles of France and Britain poised to begin, Orwell appeared to shift his stance. “It is all very well to be ‘advanced’ and ‘enlightened’,” he wrote in April that year, “but a time comes when the sand of the desert is sodden red and what have I done for thee, England, my England?” Later the same year, with the threat of invasion a real fear in the nation, he even attempted to join up for military service, but due to ill health could only become a member of the Home Guard.

In August 1941 he joined the BBC’s Eastern Service, becoming staff number 9889 and delivering a regular radio show, Talking to India. This program, as well as a number of pamphlets and newsletters produced by Orwell, was part of a propaganda campaign to boost Indian support for the British war effort. Orwell became familiar with the Ministry of Information, which organised Britain’s wartime publicity and propaganda output, and for which his wife Eileen worked in the Censorship Department.

To his critics, Orwell’s participation in this propaganda was hypocrisy, and to some he is seen as supporting the very system he had once claimed to oppose. In his resignation letter to the BBC he claimed he never uttered a word on the air that he would not have said in private.

However, Orwell did not entirely toe the line with the establishment. Despite the UK and USA’s alliance with Stalin, he persisted in his vehement opposition to the Soviet regime, producing his ultimate satire, Animal Farm, in the very month WWII came to an end in 1945. This allegorical and satirical re-telling of the origins of the Russian Revolution, and the emergence of the Soviet Union, is widely read to this day and remains one of the most acclaimed refutations of Stalin’s regime. It would later be turned into an anti-Communist propaganda film, under the direction of the CIA.

In 1949 Orwell was in and out of hospital, and remained mostly bed-ridden as he struggled with tuberculosis – the disease that would finally kill him in January 1950. He spent this time tirelessly editing his dystopian novel 1984, in which he delivered his grim outlook on a future dominated by totalitarian world powers, signs of which were already apparent in the early years of the Cold War. Considered his greatest achievement, the book is not only a chilling prediction of life under a totalitarian state, it also holds an important lesson for our understanding of history: “Those who control the present, control the past and those who control the past control the future.”

Ronald Pickup as George Orwell in BBC drama Crystal Spirit: Orwell on Jura

Defining moment
Writing 1984
While sick with tuberculosis Orwell completed his final novel 1984, describing a dystopian future dominated by totalitarian superpowers. He wrote much of these amendments and produced the final manuscript while living on the island of Jura in Scotland’s Inner Hebrides. As his condition deteriorated he moved to University College Hospital, London, where he died on 21 January 1950.

1946-1950

Hero or Villain?

Practising what he preached, he took a bullet for his beliefs and directed consistent ire against both his opponents and his own shortcomings.

Flawed by prejudice, as well as self-contradiction on important subjects, critics past and present have had plentiful ammunition to fire at his divisive stances.

‘Big Brother’, ‘Room 101’, ‘Thought Police’, ‘Orwellian’ - few writers have achieved such a lasting impression on literature, language and culture.

Was George Orwell a hero or a villain? Get in touch and let us know what you think
HAROLD WINS AT HASTINGS

Anglo-Saxon England sends the Normans packing, meaning a vastly different English language - and closer ties with Scandinavia

EXCLUSIVE Interview With

Dr James Chetwood

Dr James Chetwood is an honorary research fellow at the University of Sheffield. He is a linguist and historian whose research focuses on the social, cultural and linguistic history of Britain and Europe in the Middle Ages.

What was the background to the Battle of Hastings in 1066? Who was vying for the throne?

Jump back to 1016, and there was a conquest of England by Danish kings, ending up with King Cnut being on the throne from 1016, an external power conquering and ruling England. Cnut’s reign lasted until 1035, before Edward the Confessor became king in 1042. If we jump forward to 1065, Edward is childless, his wife Edith is the daughter of a Godwin, and it’s coming to the point where Edward’s going to die without leaving an heir, and someone has to be king. There are various accounts of Edward promising the throne to different people. Supposedly he promised it to William the Conqueror [of Normandy], and that seems plausible that it did happen. But there’s also accounts he promised it to Harald Hardrada, the King of Norway. And then finally just before he died, there’s evidence he promised it to

READER OFFER: HOLIDAY IN SCENIC NORMANDY

With William the Bastard’s invasion hopes crushed and the flower of Norman chivalry eating English turf, Normandy is easy prey for its rivals to the west, in the Duchy of Brittany.

This special six-night tour departs from ports around the south coast and will take in the highlights of the once-mighty duchy, including its fascinating “Norman style” architecture. Trip includes bed, breakfast and a dynastic conflict between wouldbe dukes.
A medieval manuscript showing the bloody aftermath of the Battle of Hastings

Perhaps the most famous panel of the Bayeux Tapestry, believed to show Harold’s death

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Harold Godwinson, and because he’s by far the strongest nobleman in England at the time, he had the power to take control of the throne.

What happened after Harold came to the throne in January 1066?
So Harold is given the throne, he says he has a claim to the throne, he’s by far the most powerful person in the country, and has strong support in lots of areas. He’s vital to the defence of England, and the council of noblemen in England agree that he takes the throne and becomes king. He rules for about a year, but during that period William and Harold are pretty put out by this, and they both start hatching plans to invade England.

So Harold has to defend two fronts?
Yes, in early autumn of 1066, Harald Hardrada invades. They land on the north east coast and make their way to York, and they very nearly take it, until Harold marches north to meet them and defeat them at the Battle of Stamford Bridge [in September 1066].

And then he has to race south to face off with William the Conqueror in the Battle of Hastings on 14 October 1066.

How did the battle play out?
Although Harold had been marching south, there were more men he could call on and there’s enough of a force to get to the scene of the battle. They have the high ground at the top of a hill, William’s men are very tired as well, as they’ve been waiting all night on guard, and they meet them at the bottom of the hill. Harold is in a good position, the battle starts in the morning and takes up most of the day. The Normans are fighting uphill to try and break the English lines and it’s very difficult.

There’s a certain point where the Norman forces start to run away and, by luck or a deliberate ploy, the English forces chase them down the hill. The Norman cavalry turns and, because the English line is broken, they can infiltrate their lines and defeat them. That’s what turned the tide, and at some point in the ensuing melee Harold is killed.

It’s said that Harold was expecting a reinforcement of Saxon troops in the evening. If he’d held out, could this have been a turning point?
Yes I’d have thought so. It was really a touch and go thing. If Harold had held out to the end of the day, which would have been perfectly possible because he did have the higher ground, and [the English] lines hadn’t broken, it would have been difficult for William to win the battle. So that was a really big moment.

What would have happened if Harold had won the Battle of Hastings?
He would have just defeated two very powerful enemies from two outside threats. So he would have been in a powerful position internally as well as externally. The Pope had supported William’s claim to the throne and given him his banner in battle, but there’s no reason why [Harold] wouldn’t have carried on as king.
He would have been able to consolidate his rule over the winter and prepare against any future invasions.

Is there a chance of a Godwinian dynasty if he had won?
There’s no reason why there wouldn’t have been. There were rival earls in the country at the time, but they’d all acceded to his rule. So there’s no reason why he couldn’t have been an English king for a long time – and he already had five sons, so there were plenty of potential heirs.

What is one way the Normans changed English culture, and how would it have been different under King Harold?
It’s often been argued that the Normans completely changed how we used names, bringing in the use of hereditary surnames and so on. I don’t think this is the case. In reality, we’d probably be using the same system of naming, but with a very different set of given names and surnames. We’d almost certainly still have a lot of religious names like Mary, John, and Michael. But we wouldn’t have many of the popular names that existed in England since like William, Robert, and Alice. Many English surnames like Chamberlain and Gascoigne wouldn’t have made it into English.

Instead, there would almost certainly be more forms of Old English names in use today such as Godwin and Lefflet. And although the name ‘Harold’ wasn’t that popular in 1066, it might have made some headway in the decades after Hastings had he been successful.

How would our language as a whole have been different?
English would have been very different had Harold won at Hastings. English
passes from a prestige language to a lower status one for about 300 years, so we don’t have as much record of it as we would otherwise. The language of the elite is French, including the language of poetry and literature. And England was very much a part of the wider francophone literary world in this period. When it reappears as a written language of literature and poetry in the 14th century, it’s a very different language but one that is hugely adaptable.

Without the Normans to create the Domesday Book, the survey of England and Wales in 1086, would we still know as much about our country’s history? The English were actually pretty good at keeping historical records, but if it wasn’t for the Norman conquest we’d know very little about Normandy.

There are very few written records about Normandy on the scale we see in England until 1066. The Domesday Book is a hugely important document, though, and we know a lot more about England and Normandy at this period because of it. And that wouldn’t have happened without the Norman conquest.

It’s unprecedented.

Would England have been more closely tied to Scandinavia than mainland Europe if Harold had won the battle?
I think it’s very feasible that, in the short term, England would have continued to have been more closely linked to Scandinavia. Harold’s family was essentially Anglo-Scandinavian, Harold’s mother was Danish, he had a Danish name, and he had children called Ulf, Gytha and Magnus. His father, Godwin, owed much of his success and power to his patronage by Cnut (a Dane) and also his connections through his Danish wife. So continued close connections seem likely, even though he had just been attacked by the King of Norway.

Many changes [to England] would have had a much less Norman flavour if Harold had won, and England may have stayed far more in a Scandinavian sphere of influence. That said, Scandinavia was in the process of being incorporated into the wider Christian and Latin culture that they had been on the edge of until this point. They became part of Christendom and joined the club as it were.

So in the long run, England would certainly have still be part of this wider European, Christian culture – but it would probably have looked different in terms of its buildings and its language.

Would Harold have been regarded as King Harold the Great?
The Godwins were a self-made family. They went from relative obscurity to ruling England, one of the most powerful states in Europe at the time.

So there’s no reason if he hadn’t lost the battle that he wouldn’t have been perceived as great. Whether he was great as a person, that’s very hard to say.
The British Museum’s new exhibition, I Object: Ian Hislop’s Search for Dissent, supported by Citi, features over 100 objects that challenge the status quo in societies and defy established narratives. Guest-curated by journalist, historian and broadcaster Ian Hislop and assisted by British Museum curator Tom Hockenhull, the items featured range from ancient Mesopotamia to the 2016 presidential election. Many of these objects, from badges and prints to fine works of art, have been collected from all over the world and are on display for the very first time. The exhibition serves to highlight the power of objects and their potential to carry messages of dissent, subversion and satire that go against the mainstream of society.

While these messages are obvious for some objects, such as James Gillray’s satire of the future King George IV, others like Huang Yongyu’s paintings are more concealed in their manner, created in societies where dissent is dangerous.
This papier-mâché figurine of a skeleton factory-owner was used in the Day of the Dead parades in Mexico during the 1980s. Figurines such as this one emphasised that regardless of success and wealth everybody is just a skeleton at the end.

Artist Huang Yongyu created this painting after he was accused of inciting sedition against Mao's Cultural Revolution thanks to a previous painting of a winking owl. Owls are often regarded as a creature of ill omen in Chinese culture.

The anonymous graffiti-artist Banksy played a hoax on the British Museum in May 2005, when he installed a fake cave painting in one of the galleries. Accompanied by a fake information label, it features a figure pushing a shopping trolley and it took museum staff three days to notice.

This papier-mâché figurine of a skeleton factory-owner was used in the Day of the Dead parades in Mexico during the 1980s. Figurines such as this one emphasised that regardless of success and wealth everybody is just a skeleton at the end.
THROUGH HISTORY

WOVEN RAFFIA CLOTH

This cloth, featuring the proverb ‘the skin of the leopard is beautiful, but inside it is war’, was likely used as a form of decoration. It was possibly created in opposition to the dictatorship of Joseph Mobutu, who was president of the Democratic Republic of the Congo from 1965 to 1997.

MAKE AMERICA GAY AGAIN

Badges bearing political slogans have been frequently used in America since the 19th century. This particular one is related to the 2016 US presidential election and is a spoof on Donald Trump’s ‘Make America Great Again’ campaign slogan.
The future King George IV is mocked in one of James Gillray’s most iconic satires, *A Voluptuary Under the Horrors of Digestion*. Depicted with a bursting belly, unpaid bills, an overflowing chamber pot, cures for venereal disease, this satire attacks George’s gluttony and reckless spending.

This British penny from 1903, featuring the profile of King Edward VII, has been defaced with the slogan 'Votes for Women'. Achieved using a hammer and letter punches, it is thought that the suffragettes had been inspired to deface coins by anarchists.

This knitted pink ‘pussyhat’ was worn during the Women’s March on Washington on 21 January 2017. The march was held the day after President Donald Trump’s inauguration, in response to his derogatory remarks about women and in particular, in reference to a leaked recording where he boasted about assaulting women.
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Bonfire toffee

**Ingredients**
- 450g dark brown sugar
- 125ml hot water
- ¼ tsp cream of tartar
- 120g black treacle
- 120g golden syrup

**Did you know?**
Bonfire toffee has different names such as:
- Tom Trot, plot toffee,
- and in Wales it’s loshin du

**A SWEET TREAT GREAT BRITAIN, 17TH CENTURY**

Toffees, or candy apples as they are called across the Atlantic, are enjoyed every autumn. But while these lollipops are closely associated with Halloween, there’s another sticky treat to be enjoyed on 5 November: bonfire toffee.

Bonfire Night dates back to 1606, when the English Parliament declared 5 November a day of religious celebration after Guy Fawkes’s Gunpowder Plot was foiled. While the prayers and sermons thanking God for saving the life of King James I & IV waned over time, the revelries marked by bell ringing, bonfires, and fireworks grew in popularity.

By the late 18th century, the night was associated with mayhem and mischief. It was also around this time the earliest mentions of toffee appeared in Britain. Bonfire toffee, also known as claggan in Scotland, is hard, brittle and darker than the conventional sweet toffee. Sometimes it was formed into lollipops, but more often it was simply smashed into shards. Though how it became associated with Guy Fawkes Night is uncertain, bonfire toffee was regularly made each November until the 1960s.

**METHOD**

01 To begin making your bonfire toffee, line the base and sides of a rectangular traybake tin with baking paper. Grease it really well to ensure the sticky treat doesn’t adhere to the parchment, then put your tin to one side.

02 Pour 125ml hot water in a heavy-bottomed pan, then add the 450g dark brown sugar. We use dark brown sugar rather than regular brown as it has a stronger, more traditional molasses taste. Heat the mixture gently until the sugar is dissolved. Rather than stirring it, tilt the pan if you need to move it around.

03 Our recipe calls for ¼ tsp cream of tartar, but if you struggle to find it, you could use 1 tbsp of white wine vinegar – note the difference in quantity. Don’t worry, you won’t be able to taste either of these ingredients. Rather they will prevent the formation of sugar crystals.

04 Weigh out your remaining ingredients. Note that if you put them in a really well greased jug they will be much easier to pour out. Once the sugar has dissolved add all the ingredients and pop the sugar thermometer in, you can use the thermometer to give it a quick swirl but try not to mix it too much.

05 Bring to the boil and boil until you reach soft crack on your thermometer (270°F/140°C). This may take up to 30 minutes, be patient and do not leave the pan unattended as it can change quickly. As soon as it reaches the temp, tip it into your tin and leave it to cool.

06 If you want even pieces, let the toffee partially cool. This can take 15-20 minutes. Partially cut the toffee into even portions with an oiled knife, then break along these lines once it’s cooled.

07 Alternatively, you can smash it up into irregular shards with a toffee hammer or rolling pin once the dish has fully cooled. In either case, store it in an airtight container with individual layers of toffee separated by baking paper.

Did you make it? Let us know! www.historyanswers.co.uk /AllAboutHistory @AboutHistoryMag
For centuries, stories of King Arthur have fascinated those who have heard them. It seems that there are endless theories on exactly where his court of Camelot might be located, in which lake the Excalibur-wielding lady of the legends could be found and on just how grand his fabled round table was.

Yet as the stories have been told and retold and the magical and romantic elements teased to the fore, the possibility of a “real” King Arthur reigning in England has been forgotten.

In his new book, *King Arthur: The Making of a Legend*, Nicholas J Higham seeks to redress this balance. It is his belief that too many scholars of the period have decided to take an agnostic standpoint on the matter of whether King Arthur actually existed and in this weighty volume, he attempts to discover once and for all whether King Arthur was a monarch of fact or folklore.

Higham’s search for the truth takes him back in time to the earliest mentions of Arthur and searches for the evidence of the king’s origins in fact. He ably tackles other works on the king and carries out a thorough interrogation of previous attempts to prove the origins of the king, searching for the kernels of truth in the fiction and fable. His investigations take him as far as ancient Rome and Greece as he seeks mentions of the fabled king of the Britons, who is credited with defending his realm against Saxon invaders in the 5th century.

From the theories of a Dalmatian origin to Arthur all the way to the king’s place in the history of Britain, it seems as though Higham has left no stone unturned in his search for the truth behind the legend.

Higham is an authority on Arthur and his passion and encyclopaedic knowledge of his subject is evident on every page of this book.

With so much of Arthur’s story embellished and romanticised over the years, the task of determining exactly when and why his legend took off is a painstaking one, but it makes for a fascinating read. Higham ably navigates the sometimes obscure material that he is working with and demonstrates a laser-guided focus on his subject, following Arthur from text to text across the centuries to paint a fascinating picture of the origins of the fabled monarch.

*King Arthur: The Making of a Legend* is an intelligent and eminently readable work which takes an unusual approach to the stories of King Arthur. It is scholarly but never stuffy and Higham’s engaging writing will be sure to keep readers turning the pages as they join him in his search for King Arthur.

For scholars of the king, those with a casual interest in the history of England and its folklore or even just fans of a fascinating story that is wonderfully well told, this is the perfect book to take you back to King Arthur’s time. An engaging, interesting and accessible search for the facts behind the legend of King Arthur.
To confront the obvious: Willow Winsham is one of our own writers and we're very much in love with her work. As co-founder of #FolkloreThursday, and author of *Accused: British Witches Throughout History* and our recent cover story on Matthew Hopkins, the notorious Witchfinder General, *England’s Witchcraft Trials* comes with undeniable chops.

With no interest in reinforcing the robust mythology of ducking stools and witch burnings, Winsham subverts those expectations case-by-case, to expose the subtle differences between those rare English outbreaks of witch panic. A fantastic example is the Witches of Warboys which has the familiar escalating mania of Salem and the hormonally-powered fantasy of many modern hauntings or possessions, but then the accused finds herself held captive by the accusers when it is believed that only her proximity can ease the suffering of the young girls she has “bewitched”.

It’s fascinatingly personal and the small-scale dynamics of the situation offer a level of study that community-level panics do not, and Winsham ends each case with astute observations and the teasing out of various theories that speak of deep research and easy intimacy with the topic.

The cow’s heart on the hearth, however, is that *England’s Witchcraft Trials* is rather abrupt. It plunges you straight into its chapter-by-chapter cases, and then ends equally brusquely with no substantial conclusion nor sense of a through-line.

When a book is as interesting, informative and insightful as this, it’s natural to be left wanting more, but frustrating to know more is only slightly out of reach.

**ENGLAND’S WITCHCRAFT TRIALS**

Mad, hag and dangerous to know

**Author** Willow Winsham  
**Publisher** Pen & Sword  
**Price** £12.99  
**Released** Out now

“Winsham subverts those expectations case-by-case”

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**MEMENTO MORI**

A humorous examination of Roman thought on mortality

**Author** Peter Jones  
**Publisher** Atlantic Books  
**Released** Out now  
**Price** £12.99

The Romans loom large in popular imagination in the form of battling gladiators, emperors good, bad and worse, and armies of legionaries waging war across seas and continents. But when it comes to knowing the everyday details of life for the men, women and children of the empire, it’s likely the reader would be stumped. Happily for those curious about the Romans’ thoughts and practices around old age and mortality, Peter Jones’s *Memento Mori* (‘Remember You Die’) serves as a succinct yet nugget-filled guide. Jones sets the scene with an examination of mortality then and now. We learn that half of all Roman children were dead by the age of five and eight per cent of the population reached the age of over 60. Teenagers made up half the population (as Jones quips, it’s a sobering thought for some today).

We then move into the main action, which explores topics as diverse as ‘legacy hunters’ (those seeking to get written into wills to make money), Roman ideals of the vitality of youth, and the image of the honourable death.

An emotional connection to these distant ancestors comes in a section exploring physical dedications to the dead, which illustrates the insights a source such as this can provide. It is also pleasing to see Jones acknowledging the class differences on mortality practices - the poor could not afford expensive tombs for example.

The result of all this is an often amusing, always illuminating, guide which offers an intriguing vantage point at which to examine Roman life.
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Indian Partition.” the “atrocious butcher’s bill from aftermath – the Stalinist purges and brings to light some of the uncomfortable as a simplistic interpretation of reality. He goodness to the world. Hitchens criticises this became in popular imagination the war that restored goodness to the world. Hitchens criticises this

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should have followed the example of the US and waited to

Peter Hitchens is no stranger to controversy, insisting that Hitler and the Nazi regime had to be crushed, but Britain should have followed the example of the US and waited to enter the war from a position of military and diplomatic strength. Yet a war, begun in uncertainty and confusion, became in popular imagination the war that restored goodness to the world. Hitchens criticises this as a simplistic interpretation of reality. He brings to light some of the uncomfortable aftermath – the Stalinist purges and the “atrocious butcher’s bill from Indian Partition.”

HURRICANE

A disappointing but vital reminder of the Polish role in Britain’s “finest hour”

Certificate: 15  Director: David Blair  Cast: Iwan Rheon, Milo Gibson, Stefanie Martini  Released: Out now

The British infatuation with World War II may be faintly risible, but familiarity with its tropes and concepts has opened up space for films that focus on the smaller, more neglected stories. With Brexit-baiting topicality, Hurricane tells the story of the predominantly Polish pilots of the RAF’s 303 Squadron, the highest scoring fighter squadron of the Battle of Britain. The casting of Welsh actor Iwan Rheon (Game of Thrones, Misfits) in a role that requires him to flit between Polish and English seems faintly odd, but he does so with admirable conviction. Ultimately that’s the least of Hurricane’s problems with authenticity, and the film clings far too close to war movie cliche – chipper, weak-chinned English pilots and German officers whose scenes consist only of barked exposition – to impress in the aftermath of Christopher Nolan’s innovative Dunkirk.

Obviously hamstrung by a fairly low budget, the CGI dogfights are unconvincing and confusing to follow, while scenes apparently set in exotic locations such as France and London are framed so carefully as to suggest the whole thing was filmed in the home counties. Where Hurricane is at its most effective though, is in focusing on the weariness, stress and sacrifice of what Churchill called ‘The Few’ – in this its loudest echoes sound not from more obvious sources like 1969’s Battle of Britain, but the tone of HBO’s Band of Brothers and The Pacific.

It’s a story that most definitely needs to be told, but it’s hard not to be disappointed by the made-for-TV grade execution.

EREBUS: THE STORY OF A SHIP

The remarkable story of a ship lost in the Arctic

Author Michael Palin  Publisher Random House Books  Price £20  Released Out now

In 2014, marine archeologists discovered the wreck of HMS Erebus languishing far beneath the waters of the Arctic. From this discovery, Michael Palin uncovers the story of this remarkable ship from her days as a military vessel to her exploration of the Antarctic and beyond. This is the biography of the ship and the men who sailed on her.

Palin’s exhaustive research has taken him around the globe and as ever, he is a masterful storyteller with an innate ability to bring the world of the past to life. Within these pages the crew and commanders of Erebus come vividly to life and we travel with them from triumph into disaster.

This is not a happy story and it lingers long after the last page and the ship’s final, fatal voyage to the Northwest Passage. What lingers also is Palin’s own story of how he became fascinated with the story of Erebus and her various crewmen, both those who went onto great things and those who perished in horrendous circumstances when Erebus was lost.

This is also the story of the Victorian age of exploration and the hubris that so often accompanied it. It is an evocative and meticulously researched book and Palin’s passion for the project is evident on every page. It is indispensable reading not only for those with an interest in exploration, but for anyone who loves a good story. Erebus: The Story of a Ship is the biography that the ship and its crew deserve.
THE CROWN SEASON 2

A right regal offering of royal drama

Certificate: 15 Creator: Peter Morgan Distributor: Netflix Cast: Claire Foy, Matt Smith, Vanessa Kirby Released: Out now

When a marriage seems as though it’s falling apart around you, it’s something that you try to keep private - it’s painful enough without the world trying to get involved. But when you’re a queen, you don’t have that option. It’s that kind of rawness that really comes across in the second season of Netflix’s hit drama The Crown.

A turbulent, emotional instalment of the critically acclaimed series, it addresses the reign of Elizabeth II from the Suez Crisis in 1956 to the birth of the monarch’s fourth and final child, Prince Edward, in 1964.

The House of Windsor has been no stranger to scandal and in this series we get right up close to the problems surrounding not only the Queen’s personal life, but also that of Princess Margaret and the prime minister as well.

The time has also come to get a taste of what Edward VIII (or the Duke of Windsor, depending on the year) really got up to in the late 1930s and early 1940s - possible collusion with Adolf Hitler was just the start of the problems. And all of this almost explodes in everyone’s face when Lord Altrincham makes his criticisms of the monarchy and they begin to take off...

However, the series isn’t without its flaws. As with all historical dramas, some events are played out of order or tweaked to fit the ten-episode arc better.

But all in all, as long as you don’t watch The Crown as a documentary, you’ll be in for some very entertaining viewing - and, as with most of the Netflix library, you’ll just keep watching it until it’s all over.

It’s riveting viewing that will have you on the edge of your seat, unable to look away.
The king's son, the Prince of Wales, played by Rupert Everett, is depicted as a scheming villain who cannot wait to be named as regent on behalf of his father. In reality, the prince was far more conflicted over his father's illness, despite his desire for the regency.

The movie includes scenes where the king, played by Nigel Hawthorne, is given various treatments by his physician Dr. Warren to try and cure his illness. These include blistering, purgatives and cupping, all of which were really given to George.

Queen Charlotte, played by Helen Mirren, is shown as devoted to her mentally unwell husband throughout the film. Although Charlotte was known to adore George, in real life his illness frightened her, to the point where she wouldn't be left alone with him.

The film inaccurately shows the prince preventing his mother from visiting the king and hiring the physician, Dr. Willis, to treat him. In fact, it was the queen who stopped her son from seeing the king and she was the one to discover Dr. Willis.

In the final scenes of the movie, the king regains his senses and rushes to Parliament to prevent the Regency Bill from passing. It is true that the George's recovery vacated the need for the bill, but he did not have to dramatically rush there to stop it.
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