ALL ABOUT HISTORY

Annual

Retelling the true stories behind history's most memorable events, the All About History Annual will take you on a fascinating journey back in time. Discover the bloodthirstiness of conqueror Tamerlane, delve into the education of Alexander the Great and take a look at the strange religious rituals of the Ancient Egyptians. Grasp the impact and legacy of monarchs like Henry VIII, Catherine the Great and Edward I of England. Uncover the mysterious rituals of Northern Europe that led to the creation of its bog bodies and get to know the origins of the cult of Norse god Thor. Follow the ebb and flow of some of history's most violent conflicts, from the Battle of the Little Bighorn to the clash of Napoleon and Wellington at Waterloo. We also reveal 50 incredible little-known facts about Christmas, how to win a joust, and how the British seaside became a fashionable holiday destination in 19th century Britain. This collection gathers together all the best content from the magazine over the past year, so sit back and immerse yourself in the highlights and low points of our tumultuous history.
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HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR

Discover jaw-dropping heritage pictures by the shortlisted photographers and overall winners

The Historic Photographer of the Year Awards has revealed the winner of its competition, which showcases the very best historic places and cultural sites from around the world. In its inaugural year, the contest has attracted a swathe of astonishing entries from amateurs and professionals alike, who have climbed, hiked and trekked their way to snap iconic landmarks and far-flung forgotten ruins from every corner of the globe.

The overall winning image of an abandoned former military hospital was shot by Matt Emmett from Reading. Taken at RAF Nocton Hall, Matt’s picture won him £2,500. The winning public vote photograph was a shot of Jedburgh Abbey taken on a school trip and was won by Manchester’s Jenna Johnston, who walks away with £250.

The Historic Photographer of the Year Awards is a joint venture between Trip Historic, the leading online travel guide to the world’s historic sites, and History Hit, which brings unique content and insight from some of the UK’s best known historians and academics. A panel of experts, including broadcaster and historian Dan Snow, All About History’s Group Editor in Chief, James Hoare, and David Gilbert, Chair of Creative United, selected the overall winning image.

Read on to discover some of the shortlisted shots, the winning pictures, what inspired the photographers and why the judges chose them.

DOLBADARN CASTLE BY PAUL TEMPLING

Paul Templing decided to make the most of Dolbadarn Castle’s location in Snowdonia National Park, Wales. An International Dark Sky Preserve, artificial lighting is intentionally restricted so that you can better see the stars. “The clouds parted just long enough to catch the Milky Way as it sank into the horizon on this late summer’s night,” said Paul.
Historic Photographer of the Year

**TRAIN CEMETERY, BOLIVIA**
**BY PAMELA JONES**

Professional photographer Pamela Jones explains her shot: “Just outside Uyuni, Bolivia, trains were abandoned decades ago and left to rot at 11,995ft.” She added, “Built by the British, the railway transported minerals to the Pacific Coast until the mining industry collapsed in the 1940s.”

**WWII AIR RAID SHELTER BY DANIEL SANDS**

Daniel Sands went to great lengths to get the most out of his shortlisted entry. After being given access to a secretly restored World War II bunker, the photographer rigged lighting and haze in order to achieve this final image.

**WELLS CATHEDRAL**
**BY RICHARD NASH**

Richard Nash’s entry focuses on a monument to Medieval bishop Ralph of Shrewsbury at Wells Cathedral, Somerset. Finely carved from alabaster, this statue was originally pride of place in the middle of the choir. However, it was relegated to the north aisles in the 18th century and heavily defaced. “Perhaps this shows how history changes our views on individuals,” said Richard.
Mang Lang Church, Vietnam
By Tran Hung Dao

If it wasn’t for the cyclist wearing the conical hat in the bottom-right, you might never have guessed that the Mang Lang Church is in Vietnam. The Roman Catholic church, built in the Gothic architectural style, was created by French missionary Father Joseph Lacassagne in 1897. It is as much a reminder of the country’s colonial past as it is a shrine to Blessed Andrew of Phu Yen, the protomartyr of Vietnam.

Wat Mahathat, Ayutthaya, Thailand
By Mathew Browne

Travel photographer Mathew Browne explains his shortlisted shot: “Wat Mahathat is a 14th-century temple reduced to ruins in 1767 when the Burmese army invaded Ayutthaya. Over time, a tree has grown around one of the remaining stone Buddha heads, such that it is now completely enclosed by its roots with only the face peeking out.”
EDINBURGH CASTLE BY DARYN CASTLE

This shortlisted image offers a unique view over Scotland’s capital city from a gun turret of Edinburgh’s historic castle. “I found the view overlooking the city over the old cannon to be incredibly cinematic and it transported me back in time,” said Daryn from Banbury.

BAGAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL ZONE BY ANA CAROLINE DE LIMA

Photojournalist Ana Caroline de Lima captured this stunning shot of Bagan, the capital city of the lost kingdom of Pagan, in modern-day Myanmar. Previously home to 10,000 Buddhist temples, 2,200 remain in varying states of repair. “There remains so much of what is original still to see that none of this stops the temples of Bagan being a unique wonder to behold,” said Ana.
Felipe de Castro Hoffmann Martins captured this picture from the walls of the Jaisalmer Fort, one of the largest fully preserved fortified cities in the world. Despite overlooking a holy lake, this heritage site is actually in the heart of the Thar Desert in Rajasthan, India.
Public Vote Winner

JEDBURGH ABBEY
BY JENNA JOHNSTON

Heritage consultant Jenna Johnston from Manchester, who provides advice on building conservation projects, won the public vote with this shot of Jedburgh Abbey in the Scottish Borders. "This photo of the 12th-century Augustinian abbey, Jedburgh, was taken on a class trip in 2011. That class, and that trip, sparked my enduring love for Medieval architecture," said Jenna. Judge Dan Korn, VP Programming and Head of TV channel History, said, "Such was the quality on display, it was difficult to select a clear winner. All deserve hearty congratulations for their talents and creativity."

Overall Winner

RAF NOCTON HALL AND US MILITARY HOSPITAL
BY MATT EMMETT

The overall winning image by Matt Emmett is of an abandoned military hospital in Lincolnshire that was loaned to American forces during the Gulf War. Intended to treat injured soldiers flown back from Iraq, it only ever had 35 patients. Judge James Hoare explains why he thought Matt’s image should win: "Conserve-as-found is increasingly a part of the heritage landscape and Matt captures not some frozen image of calcified past, but an image of an ongoing history. This is a history that's very much alive and shifting like dappled sunlight through the vines, reminding us not just of the changing value of what we have, but the changing value of our role in remembering it."
The amazing stories behind history's most powerful, mighty and magnificent monarchs

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Royals & Rulers
Was the Medieval monarch really the treacherous tyrant Shakespeare portrayed him as?

Written by Peter Price

Macbeth is one of William Shakespeare’s most famous works, having kept audiences spellbound with its tales of murder, betrayal and a sprinkling of the supernatural for centuries. It tells of an ambitious noble whose lust for power sees him kill his friend and king to gain the throne, spurred on by a prophecy from a trio of witches and his ruthless wife. Macbeth’s treachery sees his enemies come back for revenge and he dies alone and friendless at the end.

We do not know a lot about the real Macbeth, who lived from 1005-1057. But what records we have suggest his rise to the throne, while quite different to Shakespeare’s tragedy, was no less bloody. We find a man whose ambition drove him to become ruler of the kingdom of Moray and then the whole of Scotland – a feat achieved over the slain bodies of his enemies. The Bard didn’t have to look hard to find drama and intrigue, but he did not tell the whole story. Macbeth was not as underhanded as his literary counterpart. He also ruled a strong and stable Scotland for almost a decade, putting it on the European map as a place of international renown.

Scotland in the 11th century was much different to the one we know today, made up of a patchwork of loosely connected kingdoms. Alba was the largest and most central state. The seafaring Jarldom of Orkney, ruled by the Lord of the Isles, encompassed the Outer Hebrides and the northern tip of the mainland. Strathclyde made up the area running from Glasgow to Penrith. Moray, where Macbeth’s family ruled, included Inverness and Aberdeenshire.

It is impossible to ascertain exactly how these kingdoms interacted with each other, but many historians think that each was ruled autonomously by a ruler that was subservient to an overarching king of Scotland. This system would have been similar to the Irish high kings of the same period. Ruling from his seat in Alba, Malcolm II was the high king of Scotland when Macbeth was born. Generations of war and dynastic conflict had seen Scotland’s crown pass from brother to brother rather than the more familiar primogeniture, which hands the crown down from father to son. With many Scottish kings in the 10th and 11th centuries being killed by their rivals, this system ensured that someone was always ready to rule without the number of claimants to the throne growing ever larger.

However, Malcolm was a powerful figure in the region. Killing his predecessor, Kenneth III in 1005, and allegedly securing his territory by defeating a Northumbrian army at the Battle of Carham (around 1016), he not only confirmed the Scottish hold over the land between the rivers Forth and Tweed but also secured Strathclyde about the same time.

As savvy a politician as he was a general, Malcolm saw the Norman feudal system down south and decided to defy tradition – he would pass the crown directly to his heir. He set about removing all the rival claimants to the throne in a very direct way – by killing them. It’s highly probable Macbeth was Malcolm’s younger cousin, so he was lucky to survive this cull. Malcolm is Medieval Scotland’s only real example of a serial killer. His consolidation of power was arguably far worse than anything the real Macbeth ever did.
A major flaw in Malcolm's plan, though, was that there is no evidence of him actually fathering a son, only daughters. Instead, his grandson Duncan would inherit his crown, becoming Duncan I. This is the supposedly good king Macbeth betrays in Shakespeare's play.

The kingdom of Moray was ruled by a mormaer, meaning high steward, and was the position held by Macbeth's father Findlaech, or Findley. This means Macbeth's name was quite unusual. 'Mac' usually means 'son of' — like 'Macduff' would mean 'son of Duff' — but as Macbeth's father was called Findley his name meant 'son of life'. In later life, Macbeth would be known by another name, 'the furious Red One', presumably given for his prowess on the blood-splattered battlefield.

Despite Malcolm II being the high king, Findley clearly didn't respect him as he sent a constant stream of raiding parties into his territory. This outward show of aggression was tempered by an internal feud when Findley was usurped and murdered by his nephew Gille Coemgain. The new ruler of Moray would then go on to marry a Scottish princess, Gruoch — from the line of Kenneth III, who Malcolm had killed to assume power. As well as inheriting Moray, their son Lulach could make a claim for the high kingship.

While the boy in Malcolm's crosshair, Macbeth got in the way. Findley's son wanted to retake Moray. In 1032, Gille Coemgain and 50 or so of his followers were locked in a hall that was set alight, roasting all those inside. While there is some ambiguity as to who ordered the killing, Macbeth stood as the one to benefit most. The fire saw Macbeth's opposition die gruesomely and he now stood as uncontested ruler in Moray. Shrewdly, Macbeth also married Gillecomgain's widow and took her son as his ward. This is one of the few examples of Macbeth displaying the sort of underhandedness that Shakespeare would make him synonymous with.

No sooner was Macbeth king of Moray, he had to look to his northern borders to combat the growing power of Earl Thorfinn the Mighty. The Norse Orkneyinga Saga names Karl Hundason as the king of Scots and relates Thorfinn's struggles with him to assert his control over the northernmost points of Scotland, namely Caithness and Sutherland. Hundason has been suggested to be Macbeth, although the reason for the ambiguity is unknown. If true, Macbeth failed to take away Thorfinn's positions on the mainland, but as the Norse jarl got his nickname from his massive frame and skill in battle, he may have been out of his league.

When Duncan took the crown in 1034, Macbeth may have seen a chance to extend his sphere of influence and gain the throne of all of Scotland. Duncan was seen as an ineffectual ruler, being described as "a man promoted well beyond his station" — a far cry from the fearsome Malcolm II. Our understanding of Duncan's reign as peaceful comes largely from the play, but it seems that Shakespeare cherry-picked the good aspects and left out the drudgery to better place the king as a counterpoint to Macbeth's tyranny and ambition.

Duncan I met his end at Macbeth's hand, but the deed was not done in the dead of night in a bedchamber. The two met on the battlefield in 1040, near Elgin, and Duncan was slain. Whether it was Macbeth who did the deed is unknown, but some poetic licence can see this confrontation being a dramatic showdown.

The British Isles have a history of royal usurpers and Macbeth certainly fits the category. Many of the kings before him had taken the throne by brute force. In fact, violent succession was so commonplace in Scotland at the time that Duncan I's peaceful coronation was somewhat of an oddity.

Aside from having killed Duncan, Macbeth could also claim lineage to the Scottish throne through his mother's bloodstream and, of course, his stepson Lulach. His claim was strong enough that he was crowned with no opposition. After his death, Duncan's son — another Malcolm — would flee the country.

Once king, Macbeth faced very little opposition for much of his reign. However, having clashed with the Jarl of Orkney as the ruler of Moray, his kingship was contested in 1045 by Duncan I's father, Crinán, abbot of Dunkeld. This powerful man could have been a real thorn in Macbeth's side, but after a brief and violent struggle Crinán and 180 of his men lay dead. This was not an age of pitched battles in Scotland and many of the conflicts fought by Macbeth would have been on a much smaller scale to, say, the Battle of Hastings, which was fought in 1066 — about a decade after his death.

Crinán's rebellion was Malcolm II's bloodline trying to reassert itself and place the future Malcolm III on the throne. Just as in the play, Macbeth had won the crown by bloodshed and the dead were coming back to haunt him.

However, after seeing this rebellion off, Macbeth did something no other king of Scotland had ever done: he went on a pilgrimage to Rome. This journey could have taken months, so this meant he must have been confident enough in the strength and stability of his reign that he did not fear usurpation. Macbeth was invited to a papal jubilee hosted by Pope Leo IX.
THE FOUR KINGDOMS

During the 11th century Scotland was not a single entity – rather a collection of independent kingdoms.

**MORAY**
A fiercely independent kingdom within Scotland, it inhabited most of the Highlands and served as a buffer between the king of Scotland and the Lords of the Isles. Although its rulers were usually subservient to the king, many Moray rulers fought on until the region was suppressed for good by David I in 1130.

**ALBA**
Another name for the kingdom of Scotland, this was the seat of the king. Ongoing tensions between Alba and Moray would shape the political landscape of the territories until their unification in 1130. The kings of Alba were also in a near-constant state of war with their southern neighbours in England.

**BATTLE OF LUNFANNON**
The site of Macbeth's final battle. Retreating from the onslaught of Malcolm III's forces, Macbeth and his men were caught off guard and made their last stand. His body was laid to rest at Iona, the traditional resting place of the kings of Scotland.

**STRATHCLYDE**
Brought into the king of Scotland's sphere by Malcolm II, Strathclyde has been dubbed 'the kingdom of the M74' due to the modern motorway running through the historic territory. It was also known as the kingdom of Cumbria and was fully part of Scotland by 1066.

**THE VIKINGS**
Occupying the Outer Hebrides and the northern tip of the Scottish mainland, the rulers of this region were descended from Viking raiders and had ties to Scandinavia. Thorfinn the Mighty, the powerful Jarl of Orkney, fought with Macbeth, and his widow married into the Gaelic royal family.

**SCONE**
The traditional coronation place of the kings of Scotland. The Stone of Destiny, also known as the Stone of Scone, is the coronation stone on which the king would sit. The stone was taken by Edward I and only returned to Scotland in the 20th century.

**NORTHUMBRIA**
During Macbeth's reign, Earl Siward, a powerful supporter of King Cnut, ruled the vast and powerful kingdom of Northumbria. Although Siward defeated Macbeth and installed his ally in southern Scotland, he lost his son on the field of battle.

**KEY**
- Strathclyde
- Moray
- Alba
- Jarrow of Orkney

**BATTLE OF DUNSFANNE HILL**
The battle made famous by the play saw Siward of Northumbria march north and threaten Macbeth's southern borders. Even with Norman mercenaries on his side, Macbeth was defeated and lost possession of the southern part of his kingdom.
THE SCOTTISH PLAY
What other parts of Macbeth's history did Shakespeare rewrite?

THE GHOST OF BANQUO
In the play, Banquo is a friend Macbeth murders, only to be haunted by his ghost. Banquo was a mythical figure that the Stuarts — including King James I & VI — claimed descent from. Courting favour with the monarch, the Bard even has the witches predict James's coming in the play, telling Banquo, "Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none."

In reality, it's likely the Stuarts originated from a Breton family who came to Scotland after the Battle of Hastings and after Macbeth's reign.

LADY MACBETH
Shakespeare's leading lady is one of the most powerful women in literature, a queen with vaulting ambition and hardened ruthlessness.

Sadly, we know little about Macbeth's real wife, Gruoch, or her past.

— if any — in her husband's rise to power. However, Holinshed's Chronicles may have inspired the playwright. An Englishman, Holinshed describes Scottish women as being as bloodthirsty as the men in battle. They slew the first living creature that they found, in whose blood they not only bathed their swords, but also tasted thereof with their mouths.

WEIRD SISTERS
The witches who "double, double, toil and trouble" are one of the most iconic features of Shakespeare's Macbeth. While it's likely people in 17th-century Scotland would have believed in witches, their inclusion speaks more to the issues of Shakespeare's day. A Witchcraft Act, making it legal to kill witches, was passed by Elizabeth I in 1563. Her successor, James I & IV, was obsessed with witchcraft, writing a three-book treatise called Daemonologie in 1597. In Macbeth, Shakespeare's First Witch curses a ship called the Tiger to suffer 81 weeks of storm. A real ship of that name reached Milford Haven after a traumatic voyage of just that duration in June 1606 while Shakespeare was writing the play. But the reference would also remind Shakespeare's audience of the well-publicised North Berwick Witch Trials of 1590-92. Over 70 Scottish women were tried, with some confessing after torture to trying to sink James' ship by conjuring a tempest when he sailed to Copenhagen in 1589.

“TEN THOUSAND DOLLARS”
The minor character of Ross tells Duncan how Macbeth demanded a ransom from the king of Norway to be paid in dollars. Rather than preciously referring to the US currency, Shakespeare was using an Anglicised name for the German Thaler. This currency was widely used in Scotland during the Bard's time, but the Thaler was not minted until the 15th century — 400 years after Macbeth had died.

THE EQUIVOCATOR
Macbeth's doorman, the Porter, refers to 'equivocation' — the act of avoiding the sin of lying by implying something untrue through ambiguous phrasing. While this might sound rather like esoteric moral wrangling to a modern ear, the phrase was highly political in Shakespeare's time. Henry Garnet, a Jesuit priest, was hung, drawn and quartered for being 'complicit' in the Gunpowder Plot of 1605. Garnet had heard about the plot to blow up the Houses of Parliament, but not reported it to the authorities as it would have broken the seal of confession. Garnet's writings on the topic of equivocation were publicly criticised and used against him during his trial.

THANE OF GLEAMS
At the start of the play, Macbeth is described as Thane of Glamis and is made Thane of Cawdor by Duncan for his efforts fighting Norway. A 'thane' was a Scottish noble who ruled a portion of the country in the king's name. The actual Macbeth was significantly higher born — he was the Mormar of Moray before conquering all of Scotland. Shakespeare's confusion seems to have stemmed from his research material, a potted history known as Holinshed's Chronicles published in 1577.

While in Rome, Macbeth "scattered money like seed to the poor", implying he possessed great wealth. Scotland was flourishing, or at least not in financial trouble under his kingship. Macbeth's visit to Rome also indicates a knowledge of the wider world and that Scotland was firmly on the European map during his kingship.

In a further sign that Scotland was open to international business, Macbeth's reign also saw the first mention of Normans in Scotland when he took two into his service in 1052. Having left Edward the Confessor, two knights, Osbern and Hugh, joined Macbeth's military council. Unfortunately, their impact in campaigns in opposition to the Normans' reputation for military prowess was negligible and they were killed at Dunsinane. This was the beginning of trouble on Macbeth's southern borders.

The battle, as in the play, saw a massive, well-equipped army march north from England led by Siward, the powerful Earl of Northumbria. While Birnam Wood did not uproot itself, as Shakespeare artfully put it, some 3,000 Scots and 1,500 English lay dead at the end of the day — a massive butcher's bill for the era.

Although he survived the fight, Macbeth's kingdom had a chunk taken out of it as Siward crowned Duncan's exiled heir as king of Strathclyde. The death of Siward a year later must have filled Macbeth with hope, but this would be short lived.

Malcolm Canmore, the future Malcolm III, was seeking revenge for his father's death and had his eyes set on the crown. He marched into Scotland in 1057 and surprised Macbeth and his men at Llunphanan in Aberdeenshire. He may have come from Orkney as he was married to Thorfinn the
Duncan I was killed in battle, not in his bed. Mighty's widow, whose past conflicts with Moray would see no love lost between the two. Macbeth's enemies were uniting against him.

With his forces Malcolm cornered Macbeth at Lumphanan and after a fierce fight saw the former fall on the battlefield. It seems fitting that Macbeth's death came by the sword of Duncan I's son, the very man he killed to take the crown. Perhaps this overwhelming sense of poetic justice is what convinced Shakespeare to choose just this king to write his play about.

But Malcolm didn't take the throne straight away. Lulach, Macbeth's stepson with the noble heritage, was taken to Scone by loyal followers and crowned king after his stepfather. However, the reign of Lulach — known as 'the Unlucky' or by less generous chroniclers, 'the Idiot' — was destined to be short-lived, as just four months later Malcolm would slay him at Essie in 1058 and take the throne as Malcolm III.

However, Medieval Scottish history is murky. An alternative tale sees Lulach and Malcolm combine their forces to take vengeance on Macbeth, the man who had killed both their fathers. After his death, Malcolm may have then rounded on his ally and taken the throne for himself. Whatever the actions, Malcolm III emerged victorious and ended Macbeth's line for good.

Macbeth's actions were not unusual for a Scottish king in this era of blood and strife, but his story is certainly made all the more famous as a result of Shakespeare's dramatic attentions. While not the tyrant portrayed in the play, Macbeth claimed the throne through ruthless force, carving out a reign in a bloody and turbulent time in Scottish history.

We get a feel that Macbeth was a capable ruler and a man of ambition, taking revenge against his father's killers to rule Moray by exploiting the political stage and using his military might to take the Scottish throne. While he was able to rule with impunity for a number of years, the feuds created by his actions came back to haunt him and he died at the hands of men hellbent on revenge.
From cats and dogs to orangutans and elephants, meet history’s best-loved royal pets

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

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

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

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

"Their pets offered the unconditional love, affection and loyalty that they might have struggled to find elsewhere"
One's Best Friend

POPE LEO X & HANNO

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

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

Manuel had sent a retinue of other exotic animals, including leopards, parrots and cheetahs, to gain the pope's support for Portugal's trade expansion. However, it was Hanno who Leo, and the public, adored. When he passed away just two years later, Leo was heartbroken. He commissioned the artist Raphael to create a memorial fresco in Hanno's honour, which unfortunately no longer exists, and he personally wrote the epitaph to accompany it. Hanno was buried beneath the Vatican courtyard, with his remains discovered there in 1962.

"Hanno delighted the pope and the city of Rome as they had not seen an elephant since the days of the Roman Empire. Leo even wrote to Manuel to thank him."

KING EDWARD VII & CAESAR

The canine who stayed with his master until the very end

Just like his parents, Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, King Edward VII adored dogs and he owned a few over the course of his life. But out of all of them, it is his relationship with Caesar, his white and brown wire fox terrier, that really tugs at the heartstrings.

Caesar lived a life of luxury with Edward, accompanying him abroad and sleeping in an easy chair by his master's bed. Caesar was assigned his own attendant, a footman, to keep him washed and clean. Although never overly concerned with other humans, he became excited whenever he saw his master. At times when he misbehaved, Edward would shake his stick at him and say, "You naughty, naughty dog." Despite this, Edward never became angry with Caesar and usually broke into a smile soon after the scolding.

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

QUEEN ELIZABETH II & SUSAN

The House of Windsor's favourite breed

In 1933, Prince Albert, Duke of York, bought a Pembroke Welsh corgi called Dookie for his daughters, Princess Elizabeth and Princess Margaret. Dookie's arrival turned out to be the start of the Windsors' long royal love affair with the breed. When Elizabeth turned 18 in 1944, her father, now King George VI, bought her another corgi, Susan, as a birthday present. The two quickly became inseparable and Susan was even snuck into Elizabeth's carriage as she and Philip made their way to their honeymoon in 1947.

Susan lived until she was almost 15 years old, passing away in 1959. Elizabeth, now queen, wanted to commemorate her faithful companion and commissioned a memorial for her, personally sketching the design and inscription.

In total, Queen Elizabeth has owned over 30 corgis all descended from Susan — her current ones, Holly and Willow, are the 14th generation. Despite her enormous public role, she has always been incredibly shy and it has been said that her beloved dogs act as a buffer in social situations when she feels overwhelmed. Above all, they shower her with love and affection that perhaps only they can give, unaware of her royal status.

MARY, QUEEN OF SCOTS, & GEDDON

The devoted dog and his lonely mistress

For Mary, Queen of Scots, dogs offered her the companionship that eluded her throughout her life. Sent to live at the French court aged just five, the queen sometimes felt isolated and she unfortunately experienced the same when she finally returned to Scotland after 13 years, a stranger to her native country. However, a comfort to Mary was her treasured pet dogs. Her tragic fate in 1587 is made even more poignant when you include the story of her cherished dog Geddon.

A Skye terrier, Geddon kept Mary company during the last few years of her life when she was kept imprisoned by her cousin, Queen Elizabeth I. At her execution, Mary moved slowly to the scaffold and placed her head on the block, where the executioner beheaded her with two strokes of his axe. As her body was being removed, those present noticed a rustling under her clothes — under her petticoat was a terrified Geddon.

The executioner tried to take him away but he escaped, running back to his mistress and curling up between her body and her severed head. The loyal little dog ended up covered in her blood and was forcibly taken away to be washed.

PHARAOH RAMESSES II & HIS BIG CATS

The lion's share of Egyptian royal love and affection

Ramesses II owned a variety of different exotic animals but in particular he was supposedly fond of cats. The pharaoh had a number of lions and cheetahs that roamed his palace. Of course, this is not that surprising considering how cats were seen to be sacred animals in Ancient Egyptian society. Interestingly, while the Ancient Egyptians saw lions as big cats, they actually saw cheetahs as the smaller cats!

However, Ramesses' pet lion is the one that is commonly associated with him. The lion was not just a pet to the pharaoh but a symbol of status and power. He reportedly brought his pet with him to the Battle of Kades against the Hittites, where the lion bravely stood by his master's side during the fight. It is this image of the pharaoh and his lion that is commonly depicted in artwork of the famous battle.

Ramesses II at the Battle of Kades in 1274 BCE with his faithful pet lion staying loyally by his side.
An unlikely companionship in Napoleonic France

Empress Joséphine, the first wife of Napoleon, had a menagerie full of exotic animals that she loved, but none more so than her orangutan, Rose. Most likely named after Joséphine’s favourite flower, Rose was presented to the empress by General Charles Decaen, governor of Pondicherry. She was the first of her species to arrive in France and quickly demonstrated what an intelligent creature she was.

Rose was known to wear white cotton chemises and exhibit good manners, greeting guests of the empress in a dignified manner. She would normally eat turnips, her favourite food, for dinner and would sit “at the table with a knife and fork.” To top it off, it was reported that Rose actually slept in the same bed alongside Joséphine and Napoleon, which by itself indicates how important she was to the empress.

Although Joséphine loved her dearly, Rose did not adjust well to a life in captivity. Just five months after her arrival, she passed away, leaving the empress devastated. Having an interest in biology herself, Joséphine sent Rose’s body to Georges-Frédéric Cuvier, head keeper of the menagerie at the Natural History Museum in Paris, for him to study.

“Rose was known to wear white cotton chemises and exhibit good manners”
When speaking of King Henry VIII, the majority of us probably conjure up the image of a lustful, overweight man prone to fits of fury. His six marriages, the break from Rome and the trigger of the English Reformation as well as his desperate race to have a male heir continue to provoke our interest to this day, largely because of his tyrannical behaviour. However, Henry was an insatiable monarch from the beginning, a man who did whatever it took to get what he wanted. He was, however, a monarch who was never actually meant to rule.

Henry’s parents, King Henry VII and Queen Elizabeth of York, had four children who survived infancy: Arthur, Margaret, Henry and Mary. Henry was the second son, the spare to the heir, born at Greenwich Palace on 28 June 1491. Unfortunately, there is little existing information regarding his early life. Having said that, we do know that he spent his childhood in the care of ladies at Eltham Palace, entertained with the tales of chivalric kings, while Arthur was groomed for the throne. Their separation meant that, sadly, little Henry barely got to know his older brother.

Although Prince Henry received an exemplary education, he was never taught the ways of government and administration – he was apparently intended for a life in the Church. Suddenly, everything changed. In 1502, Prince Arthur tragically died a mere five months into his marriage to the red-headed Spanish princess Catherine of Aragon. Just like that, Henry, a ten-year-old boy, was thrust into the spotlight as the heir to the throne, a position that nobody had dreamed he would be destined for.

Henry became the duke of Cornwall in 1502 and the Prince of Wales in 1503. Determined to keep his son away from outside influences, his father hid him away. The next logical step, you may think, was for the king to urgently begin training his son in matters of state but this didn’t happen. Instead, little Henry was given no opportunities to learn about rulership as the king continued to maintain control over all affairs of government. This was in stark contrast to the schooling Arthur had received as heir, when he was sent to Ludlow Castle in Shropshire to assume still more responsibility. Already isolated, Henry’s situation worsened when his beloved mother passed away in February 1503 from childbirth. Elizabeth’s death, just a year after the loss of Arthur, left the royal family devastated and stole away the sole source of warmth and love in the young prince’s life. Henry was left to enter his teenage years alone with a cold and reserved father, who had become even more withdrawn after losing his treasured wife and queen.

The king, keen to maintain his alliance with Spain after the death of his firstborn son, suggested a marriage between Prince Henry and Arthur’s 19-year-old widow, Catherine. The new match was agreed and preparations were made for a papal dispensation to sanction the relationship, with Catherine testifying that her union to the late Prince of Wales had never been consummated. Everything seemed to be going according to plan.
However, the situation changed when Catherine's mother, Queen Isabella of Castile, passed away in November 1504. The relationship between her father, King Ferdinand II of Aragon, and King Henry quickly soured and before long, the 14-year-old prince had broken off his engagement to Catherine. He allegedly justified his decision by claiming that he had been forced into the match by his father — whether he was made to break the engagement by the king or through his own free will is debated.

Regardless, the situation left Catherine in limbo in England with little income or resources. Meanwhile, Henry grew into an athletic and handsome man, though he was still denied the opportunity to learn the art of kingship by his father. He became the source of hope for courtiers who wished to see the back of Henry VII and his miserly ways — Prince Henry’s reign promised a revival of glory at the English court.

On 21 April 1509, Henry VII succumbed to tuberculosis and the prince succeeded him as Henry VIII. The new king, two months away from his 18th birthday, relished his new-found freedom and immediately rid his court of the remnants of his father's reign. Two of Henry VII's most trusted — and despised — advisors, Edmund Dudley and Richard Empson, were thrown into the Tower of London for high treason and executed.

At the same time, Henry renewed his engagement to Catherine and they married on 11 June, just two months into his reign. Claiming it was his father’s dying wish that they wed, it could have been an act of defiance in response to the oppression he had experienced under the late king. Two weeks later, the couple journeyed together to Westminster Abbey for their coronations — Henry and Catherine had officially become the king and queen of England.

Following his coronation, Henry’s court was filled with dancing, music, jousts and festivities day and night. His never-ending energy was widely remarked upon and the court was given a new lease of life as Henry lavishly spent the wealth that his father had painstakingly accumulated during his reign. Courtiers marvelled at the new era of luxury and glamour that Henry was ushering in.

Edward Hall, a lawyer and historian, wrote about Henry in his famous work Hall’s Chronicle. He stated, “The features of his body, his goodly personage, his amiable visage, princely countenance, with the noble qualities of his royal estate, to every man known, needs no rehearsal, considering that, for lack of cunning, I cannot express the gifts of grace and nature that God has endowed him with all.”

Clearly good-looking, charismatic and remarkably talented, Henry embodied all the qualities of a Renaissance king and enchanted all those who beheld him. However, for all of his qualities, he also possessed an impulsive and quick-tempered nature. Indulged as a child without access to the outside world, he had never known anything different. His father had avoided costly foreign wars to focus on consolidating his

How he grew from L to XXXL

The king’s combat armour shows how his waistline expanded over time.

Henry’s combat dress from his jousting competitions show how he went from strapping young athlete to the flabby monster we’re more familiar with today. Aged 23, his armour had 34.7-inch waist and a 41.7-inch chest. Five years later, there was the suit made for the Field of the Cloth of Gold— he had gone up to a 36.1-inch waist and 41.8-inch chest. A set of foot combat armour also made in 1520 shows some particularly rapid weight gain with a 37.9-inch waist and 44-inch chest. 20 years later, his armour for a tournament to celebrate May Day portrays his ballooning to a 51-inch waist and 54.5-inch chest!
“The court was given a new lease of life as Henry lavishly spent the wealth”

rule and kingdom, which had been ravaged by the Wars of the Roses. But his son, inspired the heroic tales of his childhood, wanted to emulate the glory of his predecessors Edward III, the Black Prince and Henry V. His goal? France.

Henry VIII seemingly declared his intentions to invade France soon after his accession in 1509, essentially to reignite the Hundred Years’ War. Yet England had no allies who desired to wage war against the French and without support, he found himself at a loose end. It was also obvious that the English Navy needed to be expanded if Henry was to realise his hopes and dreams as a warrior king. He commissioned the building of brand new ships, the most famous of which was a carrack warship dubbed the Mary Rose.

As it turned out, foreign allies and the state of England’s navy were not Henry’s only obstacles. Although he had dispatched with the most hated of his father’s advisors, he had kept some – namely Richard Foxe, the bishop of Winchester, and William Warham, the archbishop of Canterbury. Both were opposed to war and tried to counsel the new king to steer clear from such circumstances had finally arrived thanks to the ever-changing alliances of the Italian Wars.

In October, Pope Julius II created a holy league alongside Ferdinand and Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I against France’s Louis XII. Julius sought Henry’s support and the he needed little persuading to join a fight against France. His dreams of expanding his territory across the Channel had finally come within his grasp.

But despite the jubilant celebrations, Henry and Catherine’s joy soon turned into heartbreak. After just seven weeks, their baby suddenly died. Distraught, the king decided it was time to renew his hostile intentions towards France. The right circumstances had finally arrived thanks to the ever-changing alliances of the Italian Wars.

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Catherine was 23 when she married Henry

Henry’s hobbies

The pastimes of an all-round talented monarch

Music

Henry VIII was a respected composer and musician during his lifetime. There is a common misconception that he composed ‘Greensleeves’ for Anne Boleyn but in fact it was not created until after his death. However, he did pen a number of different pieces of music, which are compiled in his famous collection, the Henry VIII Songbook, created around 1518. Out of the 20 songs and 13 instrumentals attributed to Henry, ‘Pastime with Good Company’ is arguably his most famous.

Sports

Known to have been a keen sportsman for the majority of his reign, Henry was noted for his athleticism from a young age. The king enjoyed partaking in archery, jousting, wrestling and dressage, as well as javelin and other sporting activities on a daily basis. In fact, it was claimed that in his early 20s, Henry could supposedly exhaust up to ten horses a day while out on the hunt, a true testament to his good physicality.

Scholarship

Henry is generally considered as one of England’s most intelligent and well-educated kings. He was widely read, with a collection of thousands of books, and was also a learned linguist. He saw himself as a philosopher and author, most notably writing the treatise Assertio Septem Sacramentorum, or The Defence of the Seven Sacraments in 1521 in response to Martin Luther’s 95 Theses, which were nailed to a church door in modern-day Germany. This earned him the title of Defender of the Faith from the pope.

Dance

Among his many other talents, Henry was also a good dancer. During his brother’s wedding to Catherine in 1501, a ten-year-old Henry was said to have grabbed his older sister as a partner and delighted onlookers with his dancing. The king allegedly enjoyed dancing daily, often partnering with his younger sister when Catherine’s numerous pregnancies prevented her from taking part.
A month later, Henry signed the Treaty of Westminster with Ferdinand in which they promised to support each other. In 1512, Henry's army was finally on its way to France with the intention of meeting Ferdinand's forces for a joint attack on Aquitaine, which would then fall into English hands after it was conquered. On the surface, it was a perfect plan.

However, Ferdinand, crafty as ever, decided that he would rather pursue his interests in the kingdom of Navarre in northern Spain and completely left Henry's forces in the lurch. To make the experience even more humiliating, he then sought an alliance with the French, blindsiding the English. Not only had Henry's ambitions been thwarted, but he had just been taught a lesson on the fickleness of foreign alliances — something that he had not been prepared for.

Despite the setback, Henry was determined to take French territory and rebounded with a new agreement with Maximilian. France had isolated itself from the other European powers in defiance of the pope and Henry's alliance with the Holy Roman Empire was subsequently seen as a defence of the faith by the papacy. Julius himself offered to bestow upon Henry the title of the 'Most Christian King', stripping it away from Louis. The pontiff also promised that he would crown Henry as ruler of France, provided he successfully conquered the country. It was a tantalising offer for a sovereign who so desperately wanted the territory.

"The pontiff also promised that he would crown Henry as ruler of France, provided he successfully conquered the country"

There was one major issue that Henry needed to face before he could continue his campaign against France. Edmund de la Pole, a nephew of Edward IV and heir to the Yorkist claim to the throne. The situation was difficult thanks to Edmund's brother Richard, who was living in exile in France as an ally of King Louis. Henry couldn't allow him to remain alive in England as a blatant beacon for Yorkist supporters, especially with Richard and his allies in France. He promptly had Edmund executed at the Tower of London in 1513.

With the military campaign against France renewed that same year, Henry personally led his troops abroad, arriving in Calais in June. By August, the monarch and his troops had made significant progress and together with Maximilian, they seized the town of Thérouanne following the Battle of the Spurs. Shortly afterwards, Henry conquered the town of Tournai in September. These were not the greatest or most crucial of successes but they gave the king a taste of the victory he had hoped for since ascending the English throne.

Although he had dealt with the problem of Edmund and achieved moderate success in France, Henry's determination to prove himself led his military campaign in France invokes an image of a courageous and chivalrous king willing to go with his troops into battle. yet it was an extremely reckless move for a sovereign who had no heir to succeed him or a contingency plan for the throne in the event of his death. Henry had risked plunging his country into chaos for the sake of personal triumph.

Henry's achievements in France were mild at best in comparison to those of his wife. While the king was away waging war in France, he had left Catherine as regent in England along with a group of councillors to support her. The queen was anxious that King James IV of Scotland would invade England, partly to take advantage of Henry's absence and also to uphold his country's accord with France, known as the Auld Alliance. Catherine's concerns were confirmed when James and his army crossed the border into Northumberland that September, resulting in the Battle of Flodden.

Fortunately for Catherine, the conflict was disastrous for Scotland and left many of the
Henry VIII's beloved flagship

often referred to as ‘Mary the Mystic Rose’ during the time the ship was created.

The Mary Rose took part in Henry’s campaigns against France, most memorably during the England’s time as a member of the Holy League in 1512. Aside from perhaps testing the Channel waters on the way to the Field of the Cloth of Gold in 1520, it was largely kept out of action during the 1520s and 30s, undergoing a major rebuild. The ship would not grace the water again until 1545, when it was sunk during the Battle of the Solent just outside Portsmouth Harbour.

The barber-surgeon was responsible for treating wounds, providing medicines and even conducting operations. His cabin was very small with just enough space for himself and his chest, which was recovered from the wreck. The carpenter was responsible for maintaining the ships by waterproofing the decks as well as making repairs, such as fixing holes made by cannon balls. He also had a small dog that dealt with the rats.

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The gunners

The heaviest guns were kept on the main deck and each side of the ship had several gun ports that could be closed with watertight lids.

The watch bell

The bell of the Mary Rose was used to signal the time, mark the change of watch and as a warming. Made from copper, tin and lead and cast in bronze, it was one of the last items to be recovered from the wreck.

Scottish nobles dead. King James — incidentally the husband of Henry’s oldest sister, Margaret, a marriage arranged by Henry VII to secure peace with Scotland — was also killed. Catherine sent the bloodstained coat of James to Henry in France as evidence of the historic defeat — in just one battle, she had overseen the bloody glory that her husband so desperately wanted. In comparison, Henry’s success in France was small, insignificant and, above all, expensive.

The king's costly campaign in France became even more meaningless when, just a year later, he secured peace with Louis. Pope Julius II had succumbed to a fever earlier in the year and the push against France was abandoned under his successor, Leo X. As the new pontiff made peace with Louis, followed by both Maximilian and Ferdinand, the English monarch was left with no option but to do so as well.

Henry reached a truce with the aid of Cardinal Thomas Wolsey, who was now the most influential man at court as Lord Chancellor. He supported Henry’s desire for battle with France, effectively replacing the anti-war stances of Foxe and Warham. While Henry enjoyed his frivolities and pursued his obsession with war, he relied on Wolsey like a child. It was often the cardinal who was left to deal with the day-to-day matters of the state, both domestic and financial.

To secure his new peace with France, Henry promised his sister Mary to Louis even though the French king was 34 years older than the princess. It was a dramatic turnaround for Henry, after being so hellbent on defeating Louis. But his efforts turned out to be short-lived as Louis died in January 1515, less than three months into his marriage. He was succeeded by Francis I, a man who proved to be just as vivacious as Henry.
**The Field of the Cloth of Gold**
A summit where kingly egos were flying high

**01 The king and his men**
Henry is portrayed entering the town of Guînes with his entourage, where the English made camp during the summit. Notable figures in the procession include Sir Thomas Wriothesley, Garter King of Arms, and Cardinal Wolsey beside the king. The figure ahead, carrying the sword of state, is Thomas Grey, the marquess of Dorset.

**02 The palace**
Seen here in the forefront, the palace was built specifically for the event and was a temporary structure. It had a solid, brickwork foundation but the walls and roof were made from timber and canvas, reducing the overall cost of the building work. The canvas was subsequently painted to make it look like it was made from bricks.

**03 Fountains of alcohol**
In front of the temporary palace there were two fountains, one for beer and one for wine, for the endless consumption of those attending the summit. Look closely at the foreground and you will see revellers who have doubled over and become sick from drinking too much, while others have descended into drunken brawls.

**04 Gold dining tent**
The lavish gold tent depicted in the middle of the painting is the king's golden dining tent, next to which are the ovens and tents where Henry's sumptuous meals were prepared. Enormous quantities of food were consumed at the Field of the Cloth of Gold, where there were thousands of hungry guests in attendance.

**05 Henry meets Francis**
In the centre of the background lies another luxurious gold tent. Upon closer inspection, you will notice that the meeting between Henry VIII and Francis I is taking place inside. The interior is made up of blue velvet, embroidered with French fleur-de-lys, indicating that this tent actually belongs to Francis.

**06 Tournament fields**
At the top right of the painting are the tournament fields where the jousting, sword fights and archery took place. In a bid to outdo one another, the kings spared no expense when it came to sports, games, feasts and music — the tournaments lasted for 11 days, although there were interruptions due to bad weather.
Next to the tournament fields was the Tree of Honour, an artificial tree built for the summit and was covered in gilt. It held shields, which indicated the different competitions of the tournament, and if knights wished to participate then they showed their interest by touching their lances on their desired rival’s shields.

In the distance is the town of Ardres, where the French were staying during the Field of the Cloth of Gold. This painting, attributed to the British School, was likely commissioned by King Henry to not only commemorate the summit, but to also highlight the lavishness of the English camp compared to the French.

Although England’s queen did attend the Field of the Cloth of Gold, she is not depicted alongside Henry as he enters Guines. Instead, it has been suggested that she is the woman seen in the tent to the far right of the painting here, or she may be in the group behind the tent alongside her ladies-in-waiting.

Henry had real glass windows installed for his temporary palace created by Flemish glaziers and so the French referred to it as a “crystal palace”. Glass was expensive, and it is estimated that around £36,000 was spent in total by the English on the summit, which was more than the total annual costs of the royal household.

The red and white rose, the iconic emblem of the House of Tudor, can be seen as a symbol throughout the painting. Most noticeably, it adorns the front of the temporary palace, as well as being part of the embroidery of the tent on the far right. Henry clearly wanted to make his mark on the spectacular occasion.
In the meantime, Henry’s quest for a legitimate male heir was proving fruitless. Since his son’s death in 1511, Catherine had given birth to two stillborn sons in 1513 and 1515. The royal couple eventually produced a living heir in 1516 but to Henry’s dismay, it was a girl. They named her Mary. The king remained confident that his long-awaited son would soon follow but a miscarriage in 1517 and a stillbirth in 1518 destroyed his hopes.

For the most part, Henry and Catherine’s marriage was relatively happy, despite the king indulging in numerous affairs over the years. Yet the realisation that his wife was nearing her 40s began to upset the king, no doubt emphasised when Francis produced two living sons in 1518 and 1519. In 1519, the balance of power in Europe changed with the death of Maximilian. A new Holy Roman emperor needed to be elected and the main contenders were Maximilian’s grandson Charles I of Spain and Francis. Desperate to not be left out, Henry also threw his hat into the ring, despite the fact that he was not considered a key player. In the end, Charles was unanimously elected and he now ruled Spain, Austria, the Burgundian Netherlands and the Holy Roman Empire as Charles V. Henry had never had a real shot in the election but that same month, his mistress, Bessie Blount, gave birth to his illegitimate son, Henry FitzRoy — proof that Henry was able to produce a male heir.

Francis became increasingly unsettled as his kingdom was enveloped by Charles’ vast empire and hoping to prevent the latter’s dominance in Europe, he sought an alliance with England. In June 1520, the two monarchs met at the Field of the Cloth of Gold in an event organised by Cardinal Wolsey that was situated between the French town of Ardres and the English territory of the Pale of Calais. Hailed as a momentous occasion, it was supposed to mark the beginning of a new Anglo-French alliance that would keep both safe in Europe’s new order.

On paper, it seemed like a great idea but from the start it was also an opportunity for Henry and Francis to indulge in their rivalry. No expense was spared as the two kings tried to outdo each other in the arrangements — the summit’s name derived from the fact that the camp tents were made from cloth of gold, a fabric woven with silk
and threads of gold. Food and drink flowed freely, with numerous festivities to keep the English and French retinues entertained.

However glorious the event was supposed to be, it was a spectacular failure. Very little was achieved and Henry was allegedly humiliated after challenging Francis to a wrestling match, which he subsequently lost. Within two years, England and France had descended into war yet again as Henry signed an alliance with Charles V and Pope Leo X against Francis. For all the money poured into the event, England did not benefit at all — it was all just another example of Henry basking in his own vanity.

The accord with Charles showed that Henry was still clinging on to the idea of conquering French territory — Charles was in the middle of an all-out war with Francis. However, the English king had completely run out of money and Wolsey had to raise funds through unpopular subsidies and loans to continue Henry's plans for war. The monarch, focused on his French ambitions, was oblivious to the building discontent in his own kingdom — his attempts to attack France in 1522 and 1523 with little support from Charles gained England absolutely nothing.

When Francis was captured by Charles' forces at the Battle of Pavia in 1525, Henry once again saw another opportunity to make his dreams come true. Hoping to take advantage of Francis' absence, he wanted to stage yet another invasion of enemy territory. Wolsey issued the Amicable Grant — another tax that would raise funds for the king's warmongering — but Henry still hadn't grasped the anti-war sentiment that was rumbling throughout England. After years of failed military campaigns, the last thing anyone wanted was to cough up more money. Widespread anger against the move forced the cardinal to abandon the grant.

With no money and no domestic support, Henry was all out of options. Angered by the fact that Charles was seemingly refusing to recognise his claim to the French throne, he switched sides. He signed the Treaty of the More with France in 1525, which was then under the regency of Francis' mother, Louise of Savoy, on account of the French king's imprisonment. Henry promised to relinquish some of his claims to French territory and to help negotiate Francis' freedom.

His hope for glory in France reduced to barely a glimmer, Henry's attention was soon diverted by one of Catherine's ladies-in-waiting, the young Anne Boleyn. During the first half of his reign, the monarch was not the full-on cruel tyrant he became by the end of his life. Yet, as a spoilt and impetuous young man, whose obsession with chivalric glory and vanity eclipsed the needs of his country, it is clear to see that the seeds had been there right from the beginning.
Edward I stands as one of the most celebrated and vilified kings of Medieval England. Feted at home for his military skill and governance, he is remembered as a tyrannical invader by those unfortunate enough to get in his way. A fierce warrior and capable administrator, he was also ambitious to a fault.

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

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

As king, his army was renowned throughout Europe as one of the largest and most disciplined — a force that would see him crush a fermenting rebellion and bring Wales into his sphere of influence.

His castle-building project in Wales would become one of his lasting legacies and these fortresses loomed over the countryside as a grand statement of English military might. As imposing as the castles were, they were more costly than any that were built in England and almost bankrupted the kingdom.

A defining moment
Expelling the Jews from England

In order to appease his nobles, Edward ordered the expulsion of all of the Jews in England in 1290. The kingdom's Jewish population at the time numbered around 3,000 with the total population of his lands sitting at around three million — meaning that he expelled one per cent of his subjects. This edict would not be reversed until 1656.
"A warrior through and through, much of Edward's reputation comes from his various campaigns in England, Wales, Scotland, France and the Middle East"
The wars in Scotland would earn him his most infamous nickname, 'The Hammer of the Scots,' although this doesn’t seem to have been used in his lifetime. Brought in to adjudicate a succession crisis in Scotland, Edward saw an opportunity to seize the kingdom and launched an invasion. Initially successful against William Wallace after his victory at Falkirk, his grip was loosened by Robert the Bruce, who declared himself monarch and sought to drive the invaders out. During his subjugation of the kingdom, Edward lost the Great Seal of Scotland, used to officiate laws, and many legal documents — a setback for royal governance.

Ownership of Scotland would remain Edward’s driving ambition, even after death. One account of his death sees the king leaving instructions that his body was to be taken on campaign so that he would be present when Robert the Bruce was defeated. Unfortunately his dreams would come to naught as his son Edward II was defeated at the Battle of Bannockburn. It could be argued that Edward was responsible for the centuries of warfare and enmity between England and Scotland as although there had been conflict before, there had been friendship, too.

His unscrupulous and untrustworthy nature earned him another nickname, ‘Edward the Leopard’, highlighting his bravery and ferocity as well as his canny ability to get himself out of sticky situations. One of his contemporaries states that “when he is cornered he promises anything you like but once he has escaped he goes back on his word. The lying by which he gains his ends he calls prudence, whatever he wants he holds to be lawful as if there are no legal bounds to his power.”

In the civil war during Henry III’s reign, a young Edward initially sided with the rebels, led by Simon de Montfort, but later switched to crush the revolt. At the Battle of Evesham, Edward employed subterfuge by approaching de Montfort under his son’s banner, which had been captured at Kenilworth. This rather duplicious act won the Edward the day but ended up marring his reputation somewhat.

Edward acted less than honourably during the war, agreeing to terms only to turn on his word when it suited him. During the siege of Gloucester, he parlayed with a rebel army larger than his own that was sent to relieve the town — but once the rebels left and the danger had passed, he broke his word and took the town, imprisoning and heavily ransoming its inhabitants.

Edward was also quick to fight a psychological war as well as a physical one. King Arthur, the mythical saviour of the Britons, was still venerated in Wales and during Edward’s invasion there was hope that this would be the hour of need in which he would return. To quash this hope, Edward had Arthur and Guinevere’s supposed bodies reburied at Glastonbury — a statement that ensured the old legend stayed dead.

Edward also refused to let the garrison at Stirling Castle admit defeat until he had experimented with his new siege engine, the War Wolf. This giant trebuchet, possibly the largest ever built, so intimidated the defenders that they sought terms of surrender — only Edward’s reply was, “You don’t deserve any grace, but must surrender to my will.” Not a man known for his mercy, Edward had a reputation for cruelty and brutality and his cold-blooded treatment of his captives was well known. When Robert the Bruce’s sister and the countess of Buchan were captured, they were suspended in cages above the towns of Berwick and Roxburgh —
Edward I had three nicknames – Longshanks, Hammer of the Scots and Edward the Leopard.

a treatment that Edward didn’t consider that harsh as he had provided them with latrines.

Brutally murdering his rivals was part and parcel of Edward’s campaigns, although he would have seen them as traitors as they refused to bend to his will and so deserving of their fate. Rebels like Simon de Montfort, Dafydd ap Gruffydd and William Wallace were all hung, drawn and quartered – a horrific execution method that involved hanging the unfortunate victim until he was almost dead, disembowelling him and finally cutting the body into pieces. These would be displayed around the kingdom as a warning to others considering defying his will.

The norm in European Medieval warfare was that noblemen were not killed but rather ransomed when captured. Edward saw an end to this by not only killing those he saw as traitors, but also organising squads of men to specifically seek out and kill nobles on the battlefield.

Edward possessed a fiery temper that could flare up at any moment. Always disturbed by his son’s infatuation with Piers Gaveston, an outsider at court raised beyond his station, Edward exploded with anger at hearing that the man was being granted lands in France. “You bastard son of a bitch!” he raged, “Now you want to give lands away — you who never gained any? As the lord lives, were it not for the fear of breaking up the kingdom, you should never enjoy your inheritance.”

Other outbursts included chasing a hunting companion with a drawn sword after the unfortunate man lost control of his falcon and striking a page at his daughter Margaret’s wedding – although he did pay compensation to the dazed boy for this incident. Edward’s temper and size would have been incredibly intimidating and during dispute with the clergy, the elderly and frail dean of St Paul's was said to have died in the king’s presence his temper was so great.

Edward’s temperament was also decidedly cold at times. When he heard about the death of both his father and young son, his grief was only evident towards the late Henry III. After being asked why this was, he replied, “It is easy to beget sons but when a man has lost a good father it is not in the course of nature for god to send another.”

1290 saw one of Edward’s most heartless acts, the Edict of Expulsion. This called for all Jews to leave his kingdom, forcing thousands to flee abroad or practise their faith in secret. Edward’s motives do appear to have been primarily financial – his nobles would only agree to pay their taxes if he forced the Jews to leave. The edict was also not an isolated incident, but the culmination of 200 years of anti-Semitic persecution in England. In fact, it was welcomed by the vast majority of the country’s population. However, Edward was the first king in Europe to expel Jews, setting a dangerous precedent that would haunt the continent for centuries.

Aside from his cruelty and warmongering, Edward did seem to have a vested interested in the wellbeing of his subjects. As king he issued the Hundred Rolls, a census to seek out corrupt royal officials and appoint more trustworthy men to their places. This magnanimity is tempered by the fact that his own wars and castle building programmes nearly brought his kingdom to financial ruin.

The Stone of Destiny

During his subjugation of the country, Edward took one of Scotland’s most precious royal items, the Stone of Destiny. This stone had been used for generations to coronate and legitimise the kings of Scotland. The Stone stayed at Westminster for centuries and was only returned to its homeland in the 1990s, where it now resides with the rest of the Scottish crown jewels in Edinburgh Castle.

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**Hero or villain?**

**HEROISM**

While no doubt a brave and fearsome warrior, Edward doesn’t seem to have possessed many other heroic traits.

**VILLAINY**

Cruel, brutal and duplicitous, Edward would stop at nothing to get his way, although he never needlessly caused harm.

**LEGACY**

Celebrated and vilified in equal measure, Edward’s castles and kingship have left a lasting mark on Britain that is still visible today.

Was Edward a hero or a villain? Get in touch and let us know what you think.
"Her reign is considered the Golden Age of Russia but her time on the throne was full of salacious scandal, intrigue and hidden truths."
He has gone down in history as “Catherine the Great” thanks to her dedication and devotion to her adopted country. One of the Russian Empire’s greatest leaders, Catherine oversaw its unprecedented expansion, a series of military successes and the arrival of the Russian Enlightenment. Her reign is considered the Golden Age of Russia but her time on the throne was full of salacious scandal, intrigue and hidden truths that others used to tarnish her legacy. So, what really happened during her reign?

Catherine was born in 1729 as Princess Sophie of Anhalt-Zerbst, an impoverished German royal. Her prospects were dim until Elizabeth, empress of Russia, wrote to Sophie’s mother proposing a match with her nephew and heir, Grand Duke Peter of Holstein. It was keenly accepted and Sophie was determined to seize her destiny, learning to speak Russian fluently, which greatly impressed Elizabeth. She was a perfect fit for the Russian throne.

In contrast, her betrothed was a terrible choice for an emperor. Born and raised in Germany, Peter was brought to Russia aged 14 and he hated it. He refused to convert to the Russian Orthodox Church — unlike Sophie, who converted and adopted a new name, Catherine, in 1744. A year later, the couple married in Saint Petersburg. Recalling the wedding in her memoirs, Catherine stated that her “heart predicted but little happiness: ambition alone sustained me.”

Catherine thought greatness awaited her. Instead, her husband turned out to be a drunk who played with toy soldiers like a child. They despised each other and their marriage went unconsummated for several years. But Catherine didn’t want to waste her life and she told herself that she would become “the sovereign Empress of Russia in [her] own right.”

Feeling isolated and unloved, Catherine was getting desperate. After years of marriage, there was no heir. Elizabeth was breathing down her neck and the court was watching her every move. She started a series of affairs, firstly with Sergei Saltykov, a handsome rake and court member. Elizabeth actually encouraged their relationship, hoping it would result in a pregnancy.

Catherine finally gave birth to a long-awaited heir, Paul, in 1754. The paternity is still debated today but Catherine implied in her memoirs that it was Saltykov, though possibly only to spite Peter. Regardless, she succeeded in her purpose and stabilised her position at court as the mother of the future emperor.

However, Catherine barely saw her baby as Elizabeth whisked him away and raised him herself. Catherine was devastated and her affair with Saltykov ended when he was sent away. Meanwhile, Peter’s behaviour became foolish, worrying those around him. His wife, having fulfilled her duty, couldn’t bear Russia crumbling in his insipid hands because he had failed to do his. She began to mastermind his downfall.

Elizabeth died in 1761 and Peter became Peter III. Catherine was now empress consort but it wasn’t enough — she wanted sole power. Support for her grew after Peter’s childish behaviour at Elizabeth’s funeral, where he created a game to alleviate his boredom. Taking advantage of this, Catherine openly grieved for the deceased empress, winning many admirers in the process.
Peter's behaviour was inexcusable. He skipped his own coronation and withdrew from the Seven Years' War — despite the fact Russia was winning — returning to the land that they had conquered from Prussia. His actions disrespected those killed or injured during the conflict, alienating the army. Peter's contempt for the Church and his desire to wage war against Russia's long-time ally of Denmark exacerbated growing hatred towards him. He flaunted his mistress, Elizaveta Vorontsova, stating his desire to divorce Catherine and disinherit their son.

By April 1762, the situation was unbearable. Peter publicly humiliated Catherine at a state banquet by denouncing her as a fool, leaving her in tears. Whispers circulated that night that the emperor, incensed and drunk, had ordered his wife's arrest. Fortunately, Prince Georg Ludwig of Holstein, Catherine's uncle, managed to dissuade him from committing such an impulsive act. It was the final straw and Catherine knew that she and her son were now in grave danger.

The emperor realised that if her coup was to succeed, she needed someone with influence and power by her side. She started an affair with Grigory Orlov, a lieutenant of the Izmailovsky Guards who had caught her eye the year before. Catherine had chosen her new lover wisely. Alongside his brother and fellow guard, Alexei, he had the political influence that she needed to support her. The relationship was important and those who resisted were arrested. The usurper made her way to the Winter Palace to have her sworn in as Russia's new ruler, to the exclamation of the crowd there. As for Peter, the seriousness of the situation sank in as he arrived at Monplaisir to find it abandoned, with Catherine long gone. Desparing, he begged with his estranged wife, hoping to negotiate an escape to his native duchy of Holstein with Elizaveta. The answer was no. Peter fell into a drunken stupor, while Catherine readied herself outside the Winter Palace, wearing the uniform of a male guard. Climbing onto her horse, it was time to arrest her husband.

Word arrived of Peter's arrest and Catherine, sent him a document of abdication, which he was forced to sign. Just over a week later, Peter was killed at Ropsha while in the custody of Alexei Orlov. Catherine waited a day before issuing a statement, claiming that Peter died of "a haemorrhoidal colic." But as Peter's body lay in state, it was bloody and bruised, the hallmarks of strangulation likely committed by Alexei himself. When Alexei wrote to Catherine to inform her of Peter's illness, he stated ominously, "I fear that he might die tonight, but I fear even more that he might live through it."

As suspicions arose that Catherine had committed regicide, she became nervous that her reign was already tainted. Was she involved in Peter's death? It couldn't be proven, but the fact that her position was now more secure is beyond certain. Catherine wanted sole, autocratic power, yet some of her co-conspirators, namely Panin and Dashkova, expected her to assume the regency on behalf of her young son. Catherine remained stubborn and was finally crowned in a sumptuous coronation in September 1762. Her message that she was in control came across loud and clear.

Catherine had discovered the Enlightenment movement as a young girl and dreamed of modernising Russia. Conversing with some of the most famous French philosophers of the day, such as Voltaire and Diderot, Catherine had the opportunity to become the enlightened leader she craved to be since she was a child. However, Russia was a mess. With a poor administrative system and a backwards economy, the seriousness of the situation sank in as she arrived at Monplaisir to find it abandoned, with Catherine long gone.
the country languished in the shadows of the other Enlightened world powers. It needed a complete overhaul.

Catherine wanted to introduce a better education system, build new cities, develop Russian culture and possibly abolish serfdom. She wrote the *Nakaz*, also known as the *Great Instruction*, a momentous piece that took her two years to complete. It was inspired by the principles of Western philosophers and formed Catherine’s idea of the perfect government. She presented it to the Legislative Commission, assembled in 1767, which consisted of approximately 500 people, all from different classes of society. On the surface, it advertised Enlightenment thinking as a way to revitalise Russia – in reality, it reinforced Catherine’s belief in absolutist monarchy.

The Commission failed to achieve anything before it was disbanded in 1768. It embodied the hypocrisy that Catherine would peddle throughout her reign – she wanted to be perceived around the world as an enlightened leader but the truth was a very different story. The obvious example is the issue of serfdom. At one time, Catherine may have considered reforming or abolishing serfdom in the Russian Empire altogether but the economy depended too heavily on the workforce, who belonged to the aristocracy, and Catherine ultimately relied on the nobles for support. Consequently, apart from slightly improving the rights of serfs, Catherine actually did nothing to improve their situation throughout her reign.

Nevertheless, she did accomplish some of her goals. She was committed to improving education in Russia to bring it in line with the West and alongside new towns and cities, she founded academies, libraries and schools across her vast empire. For the first time, free schooling became available for all children – except serfs – and the
EXPANSION OF AN EMPIRE

01 Alaska Colonisation, 1766
Catherine wrote to the governor of Siberia, declaring the indigenous people of the Aleutian Islands and the Alaska Peninsula to be Russian subjects. She instructed the Russian fur-traders to treat their new fellow subjects well. After this, tax collectors accompanied Russian fur-hunters on their voyages to Alaska and the government licensed fur-hunting expeditions.

02 First Russo-Turkish War, 1768-74
The first in a series of wars between Russia and the Ottoman Empire was sparked by a conflict over borders. Catherine’s victory led to Russia expanding its influence in Europe and gaining territory in modern-day Ukraine. The Turks were forced to accept the Crimean Khanate’s independence, providing an opportunity for Catherine to annex it later on.

03 Pugachev’s Rebellion, 1773-75
After Catherine usurped the throne, she faced a number of rebellions from pretenders, with the most serious revolt led by a Cossack, Yemelyan Pugachev. He claimed to be the deceased Peter III and his rebellion gathered pace as the government failed to see it as a legitimate threat. Catherine eventually had it brutally suppressed, leaving thousands of rebels dead.

04 Russo-Swedish War, 1788-90
The Ottoman Empire formed an alliance with Gustav III of Sweden against Catherine, his cousin. Gustav wanted to depose her, hoping that it would bolster his popularity in Sweden, but despite some success, the war racked up some serious debt. As for Catherine, she gained nothing from the conflict and wanted to reach a peace deal, which was concluded in 1790.

07 Kościuszko Uprising, March 1794
Following the first and second partitions of Poland, there was a popular uprising against Russian control over the country. Following Russian demands that the Polish downsize their army, the supreme commander, Tadeusz Kościuszko, led a rebellion. He was captured seven months later and the revolt was repressed, leading to the third and final partition of Poland in 1795.
How Catherine extended Russian territory

04 Second Russo-Turkish War, 1787-92
Still reeling from their defeat 13 years earlier, the Ottoman Empire declared war on Russia once again. They attempted to regain the territory that they had previously lost to Russia but instead suffered a decisive defeat. Following the Treaty of Jassy in 1792, the Turks were forced to accept Russia’s annexation of Crimea that had occurred in 1783.

05 Polish-Russian War, 1792
A war broke out in Poland between the anti-Russian, pro-reform Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the anti-reform Targowica Confederation. The latter was supported by Catherine, who was angered by a new alliance between the Commonwealth and Prussia made in an attempt to stop Russian interference in Poland. Poniatowski believed that Russia would eventually win and sought a ceasefire, to the anger of his countrymen.

08 Russo-Persian War, 1796
The last war of Catherine’s lifetime, Russia went to war against Persia after the latter invaded Georgia, a country that Russia had sworn to protect, in 1795. Russia hoped to depose the shah, Agha Mohammad Khan, who hated Russia, and replace him with someone who liked the country. Catherine’s armies were winning but following her death, her successor, Paul, withdrew the Russian troops.

Curriculum became standardised. Furthermore, Catherine championed education for women and even established the Smolny Institute for young noble girls, the first of its kind, in Saint Petersburg in 1764.

As a fierce patron of the arts, her personal collection of artwork was the largest in Europe at the time. Having amassed thousands of masterpieces, she founded the Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg in 1764 and it is still a museum of art and culture today, open to the public since 1852. She also imported Western literature and encouraged the arrival of foreign artists and architects to improve Russia culturally. A woman on a mission, the empress even sent Russian academics abroad to learn the ways of Western culture and society and dissemble them back in the motherland.

As for foreign affairs, Catherine took massive strides in comparison to her predecessors. She patronised her former lovers with titles, money and power throughout her reign. However, there was one that she went the extra mile for – Stanislaw Poniatowski. They had had an affair back in 1755, when he was the Polish secretary to the British envoy in Russia, but it had ended after Poniatowski was forced to leave during the Seven Years’ War, which pitched Russia against British-backed Prussia. He had hoped to rekindle their romance but Catherine knew this was too dangerous and told him, “You are likely to get us both slaughtered.”

Instead, when the Polish throne became vacant in 1763, Catherine promised it to Poniatowski. It was the perfect chance to expand her empire and he was elected under the threat of the Russian military in 1764. Straight away, Poniatowski attempted to pass a series of reforms that weren’t part of Catherine’s plan. She needed Poland to remain a weak protectorate and her former lover was supposed to be her puppet, not a lone wolf. When rebellion broke out in Poland in 1768, partly in reaction to Russian influence in the country, Catherine invaded under the pretence of restoring control.

Her dominance over Poland concerned Prussia, Austria and, in particular, the nearby Ottoman Empire, which had suffered a series of defeats at Catherine’s hands during the ongoing Russo-Turkish War that had also broken out in 1768. These losses shifted the European power of balance in Russia’s favour, no doubt to Catherine’s delight. However, the arrival of bubonic plague in Moscow between 1770 and 1772 and the resulting rioting pushed Catherine into seeking a truce as a reprieve.
A PRETENDER TO THE THRONE

The tragic tale of the rightful heir to the Russian Empire

Catherine may have successfully seized the throne but throughout her reign she faced off a total of 26 pretenders, all claiming to be the true heir. With the murky details surrounding Peter’s death, a number of pretenders identified themselves as the dead emperor, including Irmekyan Pugachev, whose rebellion developed serious support before it was crushed. There was even a female pretender, Princess Tarakanova, who said that she was the daughter of Empress Elizabeth and her favourite, Alexei Romanovskiy.

However, there was one person that Catherine was desperate to keep hidden from the Russian people – someone with a real claim to the imperial throne. With the drama of Catherine’s coup, it is possible to forget that Empress Elizabeth had gained her crown through usurpation as well, but this time the deposed was an innocent baby boy. Ivan VI was only two months old when he became emperor after the death of his grandaunt, Empress Anna, in 1740. Ivan’s mother, also named Anna, assumed the regency for him. The new arrangement lasted for just over a year before Elizabeth’s coup, herself a popular figure as she was the daughter of Peter the Great.

Elizabeth vowed to never sign a death warrant during her reign and did not kill Ivan and his family, instead choosing to imprison them together. Ivan was separated from them after rumours of his imprisonment circulated and he ended up at the Shlisselburg fortress where his true identity was so fiercely protected that even his jailer had no idea who the boy really was.

By the time Peter ascended the throne, Ivan was almost 22 years old. When he visited the prisoner, it was clear that spending almost his entire life isolated and confined had left Ivan mentally impaired. Peter could see that the boy would be no threat, not realising that the real danger was already within his court.

It was during Catherine’s reign that Ivan became a problem. One of the guards, a lackey, discovered his true identity and was determined to restore him to the throne. Gathering some men, the lieutenant attacked the jail and demanded the release of Ivan. There was one thing they didn’t know – instructions had been left to kill Ivan if an attempt was ever made to rescue him. Orders left by Elizabeth were reinforced by Catherine. Ivan was murdered and quietly buried, an innocent victim in the brutal game for the throne.

To rebalance the power in Europe, Russia, Austria and Prussia all agreed as neighbours of Poland to partition the country among themselves, without discussing it with the Polish king. As a result, Catherine gained 92,000km² of territory for her empire – almost the size of modern-day Portugal. It was the first of three partitions of Poland, which led to Poniatowski’s downfall in 1795, a year before Catherine’s death. He spent his final years in Russia, surviving on a pension provided by the empress.

Following Catherine’s victory over the Turks in the Russo-Turkish War in 1774, tensions were high with the Ottoman Empire. With the territory she gained, she established a province to the south of Russia, known as New Russia, now part of modern-day Ukraine. When she annexed Crimea in 1783, a former Turkish territory, a second conflict broke out. The second conflict, fought from 1787 to 1792, saw the Turks heavily defeated again and Catherine’s authority over Crimea was secured. It was one of the greatest military achievements of her reign.

During the trouble with Poland and the first Turkish war, Orlov continued to dominate the court as Catherine’s lover. During the decade since the coup, Orlov was rewarded with lands and titles and is credited for dealing with the Moscow plague riots. Catherine considered marrying him, until she realised that such a move was far too controversial. Despite concern about Orlov’s power, he held no sway over Catherine or her governance of Russia. She knew that he was too politically inept to deal with such matters, choosing to consult Panin instead.

Orlov’s relationship with Catherine sparked intrigue and jealousy from others, especially Panin. During her relationship with Orlov, Catherine became close to Grigory Potemkin. Their love story is infamous but not straightforward. They met on the night of the coup and Catherine rewarded him for his loyalty by promoting him to gentleman of the bedchamber, a position that allowed them to meet frequently. Potemkin had loved Catherine ever since and unlike the other men at court, he wasn’t afraid of Orlov.

Potemkin was too bold, openly declaring his love for Catherine at every opportunity. She enjoyed his attention but was too hesitant to pursue anything, perhaps because of Orlov. However, she didn’t discourage Potemkin and, seeing his potential, Catherine began to forge him a political career – the start of his dramatic rise within the court.

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After suffering a severe eye injury, Potemkin suddenly left the court. Catherine missed him terribly and after 18 months, she demanded his return in 1767. She appointed him as an army paymaster before promoting him as the Guardian of Exotic Peoples for her Legislative Commission, a politically important role. When the First Russo-Turkish War broke out, Potemkin was desperate to go the front and Catherine allowed it, though she longed for his return.

After Orlov’s dismissal, Catherine distracted herself with a new, younger lover, Alexander Vasilchikov, much to Potemkin’s disappointment when he briefly returned in 1772. However, Catherine’s interest in Vasilchikov faded quickly, although she compensated him with a sizeable pension and lands. Instead, her thoughts turned back to Potemkin, now a war hero thanks to his military success abroad.

When Potemkin disappeared from court again at the start of 1774, Catherine finally accepted their love. He returned and their affair started, with Catherine in her mid-40s and Potemkin a decade younger. With his military experience, he was a useful advisor and the first of her lovers with whom Catherine shared power. She bestowed upon him a number of military and political promotions, including governor-general of New Russia, granting him absolute power over the region.

The couple’s numerous love letters to one another indicate that they secretly married. In a letter to Potemkin, Catherine refers to him as “my dear, sweet angel, my very own friend, my husband,” and in another tells him that she’ll “remain [his] true wife to the grave.” Whether they actually married is uncertain, but considering the nature of the letters and Potemkin’s influence at court, it is a possibility.

Unfortunately, their great love affair didn’t last. Catherine and Potemkin were both passionate but, plagued with jealousies and insecurities, their relationship mutually cooled. By 1775, Catherine had a new favourite but unlike her previous lovers, Potemkin retained his position of personal and political influence over her for the rest of his life. In fact, he held so much control that rumours swirled that he procured new lovers for Catherine.

Scandalous gossip also spread that the empress’ lovers were vetted for their bedroom skills by one of her ladies-in-waiting before she slept with them. This was likely baseless slander but Catherine’s love for men was well known. Her sexuality became the focus of lewd jokes and crude satires designed to criticise her in Russia and further afield in Europe. Potemkin’s influence over her was also subject to such attacks, causing cracks in her image as an absolute ruler. Her vice was exposed – but Catherine was no less powerful as a result and neither was she ashamed.

While Potemkin was abroad as commander-in-chief during the Second Russo-Turkish War, Catherine caught sight of a vain young officer, Platon Zubov. At 22 years old, he was almost four decades younger than the empress who at that point had turned 60. Their affair began in 1789 and Catherine loved him deeply. She relied on him, perhaps because of her advanced age, and Zubov rose far quicker than any of her previous lovers. However, the toy boy nature of this relationship once again opened the aging empress up to sexual ridicule.

Catherine’s happiness was hampered by the arrival of tragic news in October 1791 – Potemkin had passed away abroad while negotiating peace treaty with the Turks after days of suffering with fever and symptoms of pneumonia. Catherine was grief-stricken. For the past two decades, he had been her pillar of strength and now she had to manage without him.

For the last five years of her life, the empress lavished her attention on Zubov. He played a crucial role in making decisions during her reign, leaving him envied and despised and the court couldn’t understand Catherine’s infatuation with him. Zubov even managed to convince the empress to give his brother command over her army in the Russo-Persian conflict, which began in April 1796, instead of a seasoned general. Although it turned out to be a good decision, with the younger Zubov returning in victorious glory, there is no denying that this was a different ruler to the one who had usurped the throne three decades earlier.

But Catherine never saw the outcome as she passed away in November 1796. Perverse stories of her unbridled sexuality surfaced, aimed at destroying her legacy and reputation. The most famous one claimed that she had died after engaging in bestiality with a stallion, which crushed her when its supporting harness snapped. The reality is actually far less vulgar – Catherine collapsed following a stroke, never to regain consciousness. It was an uneventful end for an unabashedly colourful woman, who will always be remembered through her epitaph as Catherine the Great.
The Secret History of Christmas
50 things you didn't know about the festive season

Joe Louis
The African American boxer who went head-to-head with fascism

London's Lost Frost Fairs
When the River Thames became a winter wonderland

How to Win a Joust
Winning - and surviving - a medieval joust wasn’t easy

Sun, Sea and Social Breakdown
The rise of the railway brought seaside resorts in reach
THE SECRET HISTORY OF Christmas

50 things you didn't know about the festive season

Written by Jessica Leggett
The temporary truce saw the British and the Germans venturing into no-man's-land, swapping cigarettes and even having a carol sing-off.

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

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

Whether the famous football match between the Germans and the British took place has been debated but there were certainly 'kick-abouts' between the two sides. It was a brief period of peace for those far away from home at a time when family was supposed to come together.

Although a heartwarming story, the same could not be said for the entire Western Front. Battles were still fought on Christmas Day and those who did manage to venture into no-man's-land safely were faced with the grim task of recovering the dead and retrieving the wounded. It was also not the only truce to have occurred along the Western Front in 1914. Despite expectations that the war would be over by Christmas, it was soon clear that this was not to be. The initial enthusiasm of the troops had worn off as they became exhausted with the toil of war.

By November 1914, there were small, informal truces along the Front in which soldiers from both sides agreed to quiet periods with no gunfire and a chance to recover the bodies of those who had fallen.

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

"It was a brief period of peace for those far away from home"
BRITAIN'S CHRISTMAS METEORITE

Britain's largest ever meteorite landed in Barwell, near Leicester, on Christmas Eve 1965. Described as being "the size of desk" when it first entered the atmosphere, by the time it reached the earth it had broken down into the size of a Christmas turkey! Luckily, no one was hurt by the incident.

THANKSGIVING CAROL

'Jingle Bells', one of the world's best-loved Christmas carols, was actually written for Thanksgiving. Originally titled 'One-Horse Open Sleigh', it was created in the mid-19th century by James Pierpoint for his father's Sunday school. The song proved so popular that the children asked to sing it again at Christmas and it has been deemed a festive song ever since.

SILENT NIGHT, HOLY NIGHT

According to legend, the carol 'Silent Night' was created as a result of mice chewing through a church organ. Joseph Mohr, a Catholic curate, found himself stuck on Christmas Eve 1818 after realising his organ could not be repaired. He wrote 'Silent Night' for the Midnight Mass service and the music was composed by Franz Xaver Gruber. The carol was soon copied and spread throughout Austria.

A PURITAN CHRISTMAS

The Puritan Pilgrims who settled in America during the 17th century were against the drunken celebration of Christmas, which they nicknamed 'Foolstide'. They did not believe that 25 December was the day of Christ's birth and Christmas was outlawed in 1659. Christmas Day would not be declared a federal holiday until 1870.

TRAfalgar Square Tree

Every single year you will find a magnificently decorated Christmas tree standing tall in the centre of London's Trafalgar Square in London – but do you know where it comes from? The tree has been a gift from the people of Oslo, Norway, since 1947 to thank the British for their help during World War II.

Jesus' Real Birthday

When did Christ actually come among us?

The Bible never actually tells us when Jesus was born, with the Gospels of Matthew and Luke providing different accounts of the event. In fact it was Pope Julius I who declared Jesus' birthday to be 25 December in 345 CE, most likely to integrate the pagan celebrations with Christianity.

How good was King Wenceslas really?

The inspiration behind a well-loved Christmas carol

You may have heard of the carol 'Good King Wenceslas', but did you know that it is based on a real-life saint? Saint Wenceslaus was the duke of Bohemia from 921 until his assassination in 935, most likely at the hands of his own brother.

Wenceslaus' brutal death saw him remembered as a Catholic martyr and his popularity soared. Although he was only a duke, Holy Roman Emperor Otto I posthumously bestowed "the regnal dignity and title" on him, which is why he is known as a king in the carol.
THE DARK SIDE OF CHRISTMAS

Meet Krampus and his evil associates

Half devil, half goat, Krampus is Santa Claus’ evil counterpart as depicted in Germanic folklore. While it was Santa’s job to travel around and deliver gifts to the children who had been good, it was left to Krampus to punish those who had been naughty. He is known to carry around a large sack to kidnap the naughty children to eat, drown or drag down the underworld and he would use sticks to beat them.

Krampusnacht, also known as Krampus Night, is a celebration held on 5 December, the day before Saint Nicholas’ Day, because this is when Krampus would supposedly arrive to dole out his various punishments. Today, the event is known for the raucous and drunk celebrations where people dress up as Krampus and run through the streets – however, this behaviour has not always been accepted. For years, the myth of Krampus became lost across Europe as the Catholic Church, which disapproved of the rowdiness, effectively sanitised Christmas.

The tales of Santa’s other evil companions, such as Le Père Fouettard, who whipped naughty children, and Knecht Ruprecht, who would gift them lumps of coal, also similarly faded from popular memory. Having said this, in recent years the scary counterparts to Santa have seen a recent resurgence in popularity, with their tales becoming increasingly commercialised.

There are also characters out there that were known to terrorise at Christmas but who were not necessarily associated with Santa Claus. The best example is the Kallikantzaros, goblins from southeastern European folklore that resemble little black devils. It was said that they would surface from underground during the 12 days of Christmas to trouble the humans on earth. To protect themselves, people would burn Yule logs to protect themselves, people would burn Yule logs as the Kallikantzaros could not walk through fire. According to legend, any child born during the 12 days of Christmas was at risk of turning into a Kallikantzaros.

“...He is known to carry around a large sack to kidnap the naughty children...”

Kallikantzaros is a Christmas goblin in Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia.
THE STONE OF SCONETHE controversy behind the historic symbol

The ancient Stone of Scone had been used for centuries for the coronation of the monarchs of Scotland before it was brought to England by Edward I in 1296. Subsequently used for the coronations of English and later British monarchs, it was last used for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953.

On Christmas Day 1950, the Stone was removed from its place at Westminster Abbey and returned to Scotland by four Scottish students and nationalists. It was finally brought back to England in 1952 but this was rumoured to be a fake, with the original still in Scotland. In 1996, the decision was made by the British Government to move the Stone to Scotland until the next coronation. It was taken to Edinburgh Castle with its return marking 700 years since it had been removed by the English.

LAWBREAKING MINCE PIES

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

KISS ME UNDER THE MISTLETOE

The history of the festive plant

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

In Norse mythology, the tale of Baldr — the son of Odin and Frigg — is associated with mistletoe. There was a prophecy that Baldr would die and so Frigg, the goddess of love, made every creature and plant on Earth promise to never hurt him. However, she failed to ask the harmless mistletoe and so Loki made an arrow out of the plant, which he used to kill Baldr. Frigg was devastated and it was said that her tears formed the mistletoe's white berries. In one version of the tale, Baldr was restored to life and Frigg blessed the plant as a symbol of love, swearing to kiss anyone who walked under it.

At some point in the 18th century, mistletoe became ingrained in Christmas tradition, although it is unknown how and why it became a fixture of festive celebrations in the first place.
A TIME FOR CORONATIONS
A number of Medieval monarchs consciously chose to be crowned on Christmas Day. It meant that their coronation would tie in with the celebrations for the birth of Christ, which would in emphasise their divine right to rule as awarded to them by God.

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

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

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

The Christmas card was the idea of Sir Henry Cole, the founder of the V&A Museum, as a quick way to send festive greetings. His friend JC Horsley illustrated a family celebrating around the dinner table with scenes of charity either side. 1,000 copies were made with a generic inside.

Cornelis van Haarlem's interpretation of the massacre

THE REAL KING HEROD

The legacy of King Herod, the Roman-appointed ruler of Judaea, is a controversial one. Although he was responsible for a large number of astonishing building projects that got underway during his reign, such as fortresses and theatres, he is also thought of for his tyranny.

The event that Herod is most remembered for is the Massacre of the Innocents, which is depicted in the Gospel of Matthew. He ordered that all male infants who were aged two or under in Bethlehem must be killed to avoid losing his throne to the newborn baby Jesus, King of the Jews. The massacre inspired the 'Coventry Carol', a 16th-century Christmas tune that was a lullaby sung by the mothers of the infants destined to be killed.

However, as the massacre is only mentioned in the Gospel of Matthew, it has been disputed as a myth rather than an actual historical event. There is a day dedicated to those who supposedly died, known as Holy Innocents' Day, to commemorate the infant martyrs, which is usually held between 27 December and 10 January, depending on the Church. Whether the massacre occurred or not, there is no denying that Herod became extremely paranoid during his reign and he did commit a number of brutal acts, including the murder of his wife and two sons. Knowing that Herod used such violence, it is not impossible to believe that he could have been capable of ordering the massacre.

HISTORY OF ADVENT

It is unclear when the season of Advent was first introduced, although we know that monastic communities expected to fast every day in December until Christmas by the 5th century. This period of fasting represented the anticipation for the Nativity and the birth of Christ but the practice had died down considerably by the 13th century.

THE CONFEDERACY’S CHRISTMAS MIRACLE

Andrew Johnson, 17th president of the United States, continued Abraham Lincoln’s plan to pardon Confederate soldiers following the end of the American Civil War. After the initial pardons were issued, Johnson gave a full pardon and amnesty to all ex-Confederate soldiers on Christmas Day 1868.

A ROYAL MISCONCEPTION

Who really introduced Christmas trees to England?

Ask anyone who introduced the Christmas tree to England and most will say Prince Albert, Queen Victoria’s consort. However, this is one of the most common misconceptions associated with festive season. In fact, it was actually Queen Charlotte, the wife of King George II, who brought the first known Christmas tree to England a good four decades before Albert.

Christmas trees were a part of Charlotte’s life from her native Mecklenburg-Strelitz. She brought many of her German traditions with her when she married George in 1761, turning Christmas into a far more public affair than it had been. Her first Christmas tree, installed in 1800 at Queen’s Lodge, Windsor, was nothing short of magical to all those that beheld it. Decorated with tinsel, sweets and candles, it sparked a new trend among the English nobility. Even Queen Victoria was said to have enjoyed Christmas trees during her childhood, which quite clearly points to the fact her husband was not responsible for bringing them to England.

So why does the story go that it was Prince Albert who introduced the tree in December 1840? Well, at this point Christmas trees were only common among the upper classes. When the periodicals such as the Illustrated London News began to print pictures of Victoria, Albert and the royal family gathered around their Christmas tree, the trend soon spread like wildfire across the country.

Albert certainly encouraged the development of Christmas trees as a popular tradition in England, which is why he has become so synonymous with them. As it turns out, though, it was still a German who brought Christmas trees to England — we have the Georgians to thank for the introduction and the Victorians for its popularity.
How Charles Dickens has shaped the holiday we all know and love

When it comes to the holiday season, Charles Dickens and Christmas go hand in hand. He is often credited with inventing Christmas as we know it and while it is an exaggeration, his vision of the perfect festive holiday has continued to persevere to this day.

At the beginning of the 19th century, Christmas was rarely celebrated with many treating it like the average workday. As new traditions began to emerge such as Christmas cards and crackers, the festive season soon developed into one of the biggest holidays of the year.

It was also during the Victorian era that Christmas really started to become about families spending time together. Images of Queen Victoria, Prince Albert and their many children enjoying the holiday together, whether it was by the tree or eating their large, decadent dinner, helped to influence others to do the same.

So what about Dickens? Well, thanks to his Christmas novels, in particular A Christmas Carol, published in 1843, he helped to spread the festive traditions that are so dear today. Through his novels he encouraged the message that Christmas was a time for love, family and goodwill, which struck a chord with moral Victorian society. The story also served as a way for Dickens to promote the need for charity with the use of poor Tiny Tim, having experienced poverty as a child himself.

As the popularity of his novels spread throughout the country, Dickens helped to revive the idea of the perfect family Christmas. His novel was so well loved that the author began to do public readings in 1849 and they continued right up until his death in 1870.

Eating the Turkey

In almost every film or television adaption of Dickens' A Christmas Carol, Scrooge wakes up on Christmas Day, turns up at the Cratchit house with a turkey and spends the day with them. But Scrooge never does this in the novel – he actually spends the day with his nephew, Fred, and his family, sending a turkey to the Cratchit house anonymously.

Dickens' Other Festive Novels

Although A Christmas Carol is one of Dickens' most famous novels, it was actually the first in a series of five books that he wrote for the festive season. The other four works were The Chimes (1844), The Cricket on the Hearth (1845), The Battle of Life (1846) and The Haunted Man and the Ghost's Bargain (1848).

To Coin a Phrase

Did you know that the terms 'Merry Christmas' and 'Bah! Humbug' were not widely used until Dickens wrote them in A Christmas Carol? Just like so many other festive traditions and phrases, Dickens' famous novel helped to popularise the sayings among the Victorians and we have been using them ever since as a result.

The Real Scrooge

Dickens got the inspiration for the cold-hearted character of Ebenezer Scrooge from real-life people, most notably the 18th-century miser and politician John Elwes. Elwes was supposedly so stingy that he would only wear ragged clothes and would eat putrefied meat to save money. Funnily enough, he actually had a large fortune – just like Scrooge.
CHRISTMAS SECRETS
A gift often given to American soldiers during World War II was a pack of Bicycle playing cards by the company ISPCC. At first glance, they were nothing more than simple cards, but if they got wet, each card would reveal part of a secret map. Join them all together, and the soldier could use them to escape a prisoner-of-war camp.

SAINTLY SIGHT
The visions of the mystic Saint Bridget of Sweden changed the way the Nativity has been depicted since late Medieval times. Shortly before she passed away, Saint Bridget described seeing the infant Jesus with blond hair, emitting light and lying on the ground. Alongside her other visions, many pieces of art portrayed Jesus to match what she had described.

DEFYING CROMWELL
Between 1644 and 1659, the celebration of Christmas was suppressed in England under Oliver Cromwell. When the English Parliament decided to ban Christmas altogether in 1647, there were outbreaks of rioting across the country and widespread disobedience of the law. Shops remained closed, and many chose to passively resist the ban by continuing with their Christmas feasts and festivities.

A FEAST FOR THE AGES
How the Christmas dinner has evolved

MIDDLE AGES

A) Boar’s head
A roasted boar’s head was a common feature at Christmas banquets across Europe as it supposedly represented the triumph of Christ over sin—a reflection of Christianity taking over paganism.

B) Venison
Alongside various other meats, venison was always served at Christmas. The haunch would have been eaten by the rich but the animal’s offal would be given to the servants to make umble pie.

C) Bread, cheese and ale
An unlimited supply of bread and cheese was a popular choice to accompany the extravagant Christmas dishes at the banquets of the rich, washed down with a jug of ale.

D) Frumenty pudding
Made from boiled, cracked wheat, frumenty pudding was a popular dish during the Middle Ages, often served alongside meat such as venison. It was a mainstay of a Medieval Christmas dinner.

ELIZABETHAN

E) Roast goose
In 1558, the English defeated the Spanish Armada. To celebrate, Elizabeth I ordered that the whole of England eat roast goose for Christmas dinner as it was the first meal she had eaten after the Spanish were beaten.

F) Gingerbread
Gingerbread was one of the many sweet foods that could be found at an Elizabethan Christmas. In fact, gingerbread men were first attributed to Elizabeth’s court and she served them to foreign dignitaries.

G) Sweetmeats
Sugar was an extremely expensive foodstuff in Elizabethan England. Rather than for taste, it was used to show off the wealth and status of the host and was a key ingredient in a number of dishes.

H) Lambswool
Lambswool was a popular hot drink made from cider, sherry or ale, with spices and apples. The heat would cause the ingredients to burst and form a woolly top, giving the drink its name.
**GEORGIAN**

**Black butter**
A classic Christmas preserve, black butter was a mild and sweet accompaniment to cheese and crackers. Its main ingredients included apples, cider and cinnamon, and it was usually prepared in November.

**Mince pies**
Although the mince pies we enjoy today are sweet, the Georgians made them with actual minced beef or lamb along with raisins and currants.

**Apple dumplings and rice puddings**
We know that the Georgians enjoyed a festive feast with apple dumplings and rice puddings thanks to a letter from the writer Jane Austen to her sister, Cassandra. After the last of her guests were gone, she wrote, "I shall be left to the comfortable disposal of my time, to ease of mind from the torments of rice puddings and apple dumplings."

**Twelfth Night Cake**
The centrepiece of a Georgian's Twelfth Night parties. The elaborate cake contained both a dried bean and a dried pea — whoever found the bean in their slice would become king for the night and the pea picked the queen.

**WORLD WAR II**

**Roast rabbit**
The government encouraged people to eat rabbits caught in the wild to ease the pressure on meat rations. Popular recipes included roast rabbit or rabbit stew.

**Christmas pudding**
Following the 'make do and mend' mentality of the war, the Christmas pudding was often made with more unusual ingredients in place of rations. The pudding generally had less fruit and no eggs and would sometimes contain root vegetables.

**VICTORIANS**

**Turkey**
Turkey was not the traditional meat for a Christmas dinner. Although not commonplace, Queen Victoria had one and it soon grew in popularity as a way to feed large middle-class families.

**Plum pudding**
A classic Victorian dish, plum pudding was often served alongside the savoury dishes of the evening rather than with the desserts. It was tradition to put a coin in the pudding mixture — a trend reportedly started by the queen as a thank you to the cook.

**Christmas cracker**
Tom Smith, a confectioner's apprentice, decided to sell sugared almond bonbons after discovering them in Paris. They failed to catch on as he had hoped and after a few years he created the Christmas cracker as an ingenious new way to market his product.

**Gin punch**
Gin punch was a simple drink of gin, hot water, lemon and spices but it always went down well with the dinner guests – and would often spark a few rowdy drinking games.

**Queen Victoria and Albert celebrate with the family**

**Elizabeth I ordered that the whole of England eat goose**
The melody of the beloved carol 'Deck the Halls' dates back to the 18th century and is actually derived from 'Nos Galan', a traditional Welsh New Year's Eve song. Originally created for dancing rather than singing, the musician Thomas Oliphant wrote the lyrics in English and they were published behind Santa's suit in 1862.

The real story behind Santa's suit

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

During the 19th century in England, he was pictured in white, brown and green on Christmas cards and illustrations. The Ghost of Christmas Present, who resembles Santa, was illustrated in green for Dickens' 'A Christmas Carol'. In Russia, Stalin ordered that the Russian equivalent to Santa, Ded Moroz, should wear a blue coat so he could not be confused with the Western counterpart.

THE CHANGING COLOURS OF FATHER CHRISTMAS

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'Tis the season
ASHINGTUNS DARING ATTACK
How Washington's festive mission changed the tide of war
Over a decade before he became president, George Washington was the commander-in-chief of the Continental Army during the American Revolution. After experiencing several defeats against the British, including the loss of New York City, he decided more drastic action was needed — a surprise attack.

The British had left behind a garrison of Hessian troops in Trenton, New Jersey, who were getting into the festive spirit, unaware of the events about to unfold. During the night of 25 December 1776, Washington's forces crossed the icy Delaware River and caught the Hessian troops off-guard in the early hours of the 26th. They were easily defeated and the Americans seized 1,000 prisoners as well as supplies.

Remembered as the Battle of Trenton, the event served to rise the morale of the Continental Army and contributed to a surge in new recruits, which was desperately needed.

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

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

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

WHY 'BOXING DAY'? 
Traditionally, Boxing Day was associated with charity and churches' money boxes would be opened for the poor. As time moved on, the charitable association died out and Boxing Day became a day where the family would gather outside to exercise after the excess of Christmas.
THE THREE WISE... WHO?

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

THE NAZI PLOT TO STEAL CHRISTMAS

In Nazi Germany, Christmas was celebrated by decorating trees with swastikas and children were given gifts such as toy tanks and SS soldier action figures. This much we might expect from the Nazi propaganda machine, but what might baffle some is that these boys and girls were given their gifts by the Nordic god Odin.

This was in part because Nazis ideologues saw organised religion as an enemy of the totalitarian state, so sought to de-emphasise - if not eliminate altogether - Christianity from the holiday. Christmas carols were rewritten to reflect the party's views; the most popular carol, 'Exalted Night of the Clear Stars', continued to be sung even after 1945. Families were encouraged to make homemade decorations in the shape of 'Odin's Sun Wheel' and bake treats in the shape of Nordic fertility symbols. Official celebrations might mention a supreme being but they more prominently featured 'light' rituals.

To this end, lighting candles on your Christmas tree was encouraged over putting up a Star of Bethlehem.

Resurrecting the old Germanic gods was also supposed to be about celebrating the Aryan race’s supposed heritage, normalising the Nazi ideologies of racial purity. Christmas cards invariably featured blonde-haired, blue-eyed German families gathered around Christmas trees. Germans were also encouraged to 'buy Aryan' and boycott Jewish department stores.

There were those who objected to Christ being taken out of Christmas - particularly members of the clergy. However, many seemed to embrace the neo-pagan festival’s brightly coloured pageantry. The secret police reported that complaints about official policies dissolved in an overall “Christmas mood.”

IO SATURNALIA!

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

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

**CREATING SAINT NICK**

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

**ODIN: THE ORIGINAL SANTA CLAUS?**

The pagan influence behind the jolly old man loved today

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

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

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

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

Some argue that the African-American heavyweight boxer who KO'd Hitler's Aryan delusions didn’t do enough to fight discrimination at home

Written by Jessica Leggett

Joe Louis is frequently referred to as one of the best, if not the greatest, heavyweight boxers in history. He rose through the ranks of amateur and professional boxing to become the world champion, a title that he managed to hold onto from 1937 to 1949, defending it a record 25 times – four of which were while he was serving in the United States Army.

Despite this glorious career, Louis is best remembered for his 'fight of the century' with Max Schmeling in 1938. When he knocked out the boxer from Nazi Germany in the first round, Louis became an overnight American hero.

The legendary fight was actually a rematch. Louis and Schmeling had fought before in 1936 but Louis had been defeated. Up until that point, he was a rising star that had never lost a fight – in contrast, Schmeling was a former champion who was considered by many to be past his prime, having been defeated by Max Baer in a tenth-round technical knockout in 1933.

Louis was confident that he would sail to victory but he had underestimated Schmeling, who had studied Louis' technique intensely. 12 rounds in, Louis suffered the first knockout defeat of his career, learning a valuable lesson in humility. Back in Germany, Schmeling's win was portrayed as a triumph for the Aryan race, another notch in the Nazi propaganda belt.

Louis actually went on to win the heavyweight title from Jim Braddock in 1937 but he refused to call himself a champion until he had beaten Schmeling – he demanded a rematch. While war between the United States and Germany was still four years away, rising tensions between the two powers turned the fight into an international sensation. Despite the fact Schmeling wasn’t even a member of the Nazi Party, the media pitched it as the ultimate culture clash: democracy versus fascism.

On the night of the sold-out fight at Yankee Stadium in New York, the city welcomed 30,000 visitors and made more than $3 million from them in sales; hotels, nightclubs and train lines were struggling to handle the demand. Beyond New York City, it’s estimated that 64 per cent of all radio owners across the US tuned in to listen to the fight – a figure that was only exceeded in the internationally tense period by two presidential broadcasts.
“Despite the fact Schmeling wasn’t even a member of the Nazi Party, the media pitched it as a culture clash: democracy versus fascism”
After being so hotly anticipated, it was perhaps a let down that the fight only lasted two minutes and four seconds. Louis unleashed a tireless barrage on Schmeling, which the German fighter seemed entirely unprepared for. But by 'destroying' Schmeling in the first round, Louis provided assurance to millions that America could beat the best Germany had to offer.

At a time when the American South was still segregated and the north was still rife with discrimination, Louis won the admiration of both blacks and whites. Where Louis had often been caricatured before the bout with Schmeling as ignorant, lazy and ape-like on the front pages of daily newspapers, he was now portrayed as a hero and cartoonists depicted him punching Adolf Hitler. It was a small but significant step in American racial iconography.

When the United States did enter the war, the government sought to use Louis' soaring popularity for the purposes of propaganda. In January 1942, he agreed to a charity bout against Buddy Baer to raise money for the Navy Relief Society. Agreeing to the fight proved to be a controversial choice for Louis, as black Americans were only allowed to hold lowly positions in the navy at this point. Regardless, he raised approximately $47,000.

The next day, Louis volunteered for the US Army, though he never saw combat. Instead, he undertook a series of promotional tours across Europe, performing exhibition matches to entertain the troops. He was depicted in uniform on recruitment posters alongside the quote "We're going to do our part... and we'll win because we're on God's side."

He also appeared in the 1944 propaganda film The Negro Soldier. Principally intended to encourage African-Americans to enlist in the military, the docu-drama produced by Italian-American director Frank Capra is considered a watershed moment for American cinema in its depiction of black Americans. The film showed black people as lawyers, musicians, athletes and other valued professions at a time when Hollywood only portrayed them as slaves or comic relief.

Despite his record-breaking achievements, Louis had his critics. The war years saw the emergence of the Double V Campaign, which argued black Americans should be fighting for victory — that's to say, equal rights — at home as well as in Europe. Some contemporary African-American civil rights campaigners disapproved of the fighter's active support of the armed forces due to the fact that troops were segregated.

These accusations only got worse after the war. Muhammad Ali went as far as to outright label Louis as an Uncle Tom — a derogatory epithet for a black person whose behaviour towards whites is obsequious and servile.

While the Army would have censored Louis if he had spoken about racism publicly, the star was stage-managed to avoid controversy. His managers, John Roxborough and Julian Black — both of whom were black — established a code of conduct for him.
As well as embodying clean living and good sportsmanship, he was prohibited from being photographed with a white woman. This was a concerted effort to not provoke the white anger that Jack Johnson, 'the Galveston Giant', had done a generation before. The black heavyweight star had provoked public violence from white fans for his flamboyant flouting of America’s strict racial mores in the 1910s. More immediately relevant to Louis, white boxers had refused to fight Johnson and the establishment made it clear that they would not accept another black fighter like him.

Despite (or because of) his natural talent as a fighter, Louis — the son of Alabama sharecroppers growing up in 1930s Detroit — would not have been able to build such a successful career without presenting him as passive and respectable. Muhammad Ali would later criticise him for this, but it could be argued that Louis helped black boxers to become more mainstream.

While he may not have spoken out publicly, Louis was willing to risk his career for what was right in private. He refused to perform or speak in front of segregated audiences and frequently spoke on behalf of his fellow black soldiers who experienced discrimination. When the prestigious Army Officer Candidate School refused entrance to future baseball player Jackie Johnson on the grounds of his race, Louis intervened. Despite his celebrity status, the boxer was also arrested when he defiantly ignored a ‘White Only’ sign at an army camp bus depot in Alabama.

Louis’ popularity began to wane after the war and he retired in 1949, however, financial problems forced him to return to the ring and his first match was against the heavyweight champion, Ezzard Charles. Although Louis still cut an imposing figure, he was soundly defeated. He stepped down again after losing to Rocky Marciano in 1951.

At the end of his boxing career, Louis had no money or family and faced an insurmountable federal tax debt, for which the government would hound him for the rest of his life. In his twilight years, Louis served as a ‘greeter’ at Caesar’s Palace in Las Vegas, where he shook hands with tourists, gambled with house money to lure others and played golf with high rollers before his failing health incapacitated him.

Perhaps surprisingly, one of the people that helped support Louis in his later years was Max Schmeling. The one-time rivals became close friends and, as well as helping fund Louis’ funeral in 1981, Schmeling acted as a pallbearer.

The case for Louis as a ‘villain’ is certainly thin on the ground. He may not have publicly stood up for racial issues, and it is true that there was no immediate change in response to his work, but his actions might also have given millions of black Americans a reason to hope for change.

Defining moment

A close call

One of the greatest heavyweight matches of all time, Louis faced Billy ‘The Pittsburgh Kid’ Conn in New York. Conn was the world light heavyweight champion and, like with Schmeling, Louis had underestimated his opponent. Conn stood strong for 12 rounds, until his attempt at a knockout in the thirteenth gave Louis the opportunity he needed to turn it around with a knockout of his own.

18 June 1941

Louis and Schmeling before their historic rematch in 1938

Hero or villain?

HEROISM

He may not have directly confronted the racial issues of his day but Louis broke down barriers as one of the first national icons of African-American descent.

VILLAINY

As a sort of ambassador for the black community, Louis could have been more vocal — but he did achieve a lot in his situation.

LEGACY

As one of the greatest boxers of all time, Louis is fondly remembered for his contribution to the sport and as a symbol of change in segregated America.

Was Joe Louis a hero or a villain? Get in touch and let us know what you think.
Sometimes Londoners called it the 'Blanket Fair', other times 'Freezeland Street', 'City Road' or, rather grandiosely, 'Frostiana'. But from 1309 to 1814, whenever the River Thames froze solid, an elaborate carnival would break out the ice.

So roll up, roll up! Enter London's lost frost fairs to discover a tent city of hastily assembled shops and pubs, circus performers and a wide variety of games. The rival of any royal extravaganza, expect customers from every strata of society, with more than one monarch making an appearance.

But be warned — its unique position also puts it outside of any authority's jurisdiction, so there are no police to break up fights or catch pickpockets. The ice is also prone to suddenly crack, drowning more than one reveller in the depths below. But this just means the fair-goers to this once-in-a-generation event party like there's no tomorrow.

**BEHOLD, THE LIQUID THAMES FROZE O'ER**

London's frost fairs were a side effect of the Little Ice Age. While you might associate ice ages with cavemen and woolly mammoths, this one affected the world's climate from the time of the Black Death until the Industrial Revolution. There are earlier accounts of the Thames freezing, such as in 695 and 1092, but these were one-offs. During the Little Ice Age, "the great streams [of England] were congealed" much more frequently.

The Little Ice Age's causes are debated but are believed to have been a perfect storm for climate cooling — huge volcanic eruptions at a time when the Sun was experiencing unusually low sunspot activity. This meant that while the Sun was already...
The Thames freezing put many Londoners out of work, including the city’s watermen. Giving off less energy to warm the Earth’s surface, much of it was being reflected back into space by great plumes of volcanic ash lingering in the stratosphere.

While mean annual temperatures dipping by 0.6°C (1.1°F) across the Northern Hemisphere may not sound a lot, it had a dramatic impact. Europe was particularly affected as atmospheric patterns also blew Arctic air over the continent. Alpine glaciers expanded, obliterating farms and villages in Switzerland, France and elsewhere. Norse colonies in Greenland collapsed after they were cut off by sea ice; frequent cold winters and wet summers led to crop failures; and North Atlantic cod fisheries fled south to warmer waters.

However, while the overall trend was towards the world growing colder from the 14th century until the late 17th century, temperatures still fluctuated year on year. This meant a frost fair on the Thames was not guaranteed each winter and when it did happen, it might last for weeks or just a few days. In fact, there were only 24 known winters during the Little Ice Age in which the portion of the Thames that snakes through London was recorded to have frozen over. On only a handful of those occasions was it thick enough to host a fair so, with few exceptions, the fairs occurred just once in a generation.

The coldest winter in Britain during this time was the Great Frost of 1683-84. The Thames froze for ten weeks, with ice as thick as 28 centimetres (11 inches). Trees split as if hit by lightning and boats were crushed by the pressure of the ice. Beyond London, there were reports of solid ice extending for miles off the coasts of the southern North Sea, while the ground was frozen to depths of 69 centimetres (27 inches) near Manchester and 1.2 metres (4 feet) in Somerset.

Another factor that contributed specifically to the Thames freezing in the capital was the building of the Old London Bridge. Finished in 1205, this crossing was the main route to ferry people, goods and livestock from the City of London to Southwark for 600 years. But this Medieval bridge was supported by 19 closely packed arches, each boasting large piers known as starlings, and their breakwaters slowed the river down, making it more susceptible to freezing.

Large pieces of ice would also lodge among the arches, gradually blocking them and acting like a dam, preventing salty seawater to pass up the river that would have otherwise lowered the freezing point. Whether it was because the frozen river was thickest near the bridge or due to it being in the heart of the city, it was around this area that the city’s frost fairs would generally be held.

**“LONDON’S FROST FAIRS WERE A SIDE EFFECT OF THE LITTLE ICE AGE”**

In 1309, an anonymous chronicler noted that the Thames froze at Christmas “and it lasted so long that people danced in the midst of it near a fire.” However, the first fair of significance opened on 21 December 1564 and lasted through to January. Raphael Holinshed recorded boys playing football “as boldlie [sic] there as if it had been on the drie [sic] land”.

The frost fairs must have been a wondrous sight, stretching for miles in all directions but the seizing up of the city’s main artery also put many livelihoods at risk. Brewer, baker and washerwomen all struggled without a source of running water. However, the worst hit were the watermen, who transported people along the river in little boats. It’s thought they established the frost fairs out of necessity.

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**WATERMEN MAKE USE OF BOOTHS TO GET THEIR PENCE**

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In 1621, the freeze lasted for eight weeks, so the out-of-work watermen guarded at the water-stairs, charging Londoners who wanted to step on the ice. Audaciously, another set of watermen would then charge them again when they got off on the opposite bank.

With this in mind, the watermen also set up a number of attractions to lure customers onto the river. They converted their boats into makeshift sleds to carry customers along the ice and sold food and drink from tents made of blankets resting upon crossed oar frames. It is unclear if this was the first time the watermen had organised a fair themselves or if they were doing as their predecessors had in previous years.

It wasn’t long before others cashed in. Hackney coachmen drove their horses out onto the ice to compete for custom on the new white highway. Traders set up their own booths and stalls, selling goods superior to anything the watermen could produce. Soon they had an entire street of primitive shops on the river.

In 1683, the Watermen’s Company appealed to the Court of Aldermen for help. They argued that as their guild had been given royal assent to operate the country’s waterways, they should have a monopoly on all river trade — including the frost fairs. While they had their sympathisers, the ethos of individualism and competition emerging at the close of the 17th century meant the court ruled against them. That winter saw the river host one of the largest frost fairs on record.
Archery on ice
The Virgin Queen, Elizabeth I, went out on the ice every day when the river froze in 1564 to shoot targets. This year also saw the first proper frost fair, where royal courtiers mixed with London's commoners.

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

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

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

Fox hunting
The river hosted a foxhunt in 1683-84, though it's unclear if the animal was wild or trapped and released for the sport. Some have suggested Charles II participated but this seems unlikely.

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

Fairground attractions
Adding to the carnival feel, large wooden swings that could hold up to six revellers were a common sight at frost fairs in 18th century.
Frost Fairs

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

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

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

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

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

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

"THE WATERMEN ALSO SET UP A NUMBER OF ATTRACTIONS TO LURE CUSTOMERS ONTO THE RIVER"
DANGERS ON THE ICE

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

How did the Thames freezing affect London?

The rarity of the event caused people to enjoy it but the reality was rather different for the economy. A large amount of London's goods were transported via the river, either through coastal trade or small vessels carrying cargo to and from ocean-going ships.

The ease of transporting heavy or perishable goods was very profound and affected everyone. Unless people had stocked in anticipation, they were probably suffering severe hardship. The City made attempts to stockpile fuel in various warehousing across London but those supplies dwindled from time to time. Of course, whenever you have a shortage of anything, prices go up, so those who were less able to afford things would have been more impoverished. Communication would also have been very difficult.

What did the frozen river look like?

The paintings in our collection suggest it looked almost like an Arctic landscape with vast, sort of jagged piles of ice. People have tended to say ‘this is just a load of nonsense, but it can’t possibly have been like that’. But actually if you look at the way pack ice forms, I think it’s very accurate.

How much of the River Thames froze?

To be honest, we don’t know as there isn’t detailed enough information. It’s fair to say it froze between the City of London and Westminster — beyond that, it’s very difficult to know. The likelihood is that the river was fairly solid in both directions but there may have been gaps and so much would have depended on local conditions. If it was fairly windy, ice could break up and then harden again downstream. The fact that the Thames froze didn’t mean it was all solid and possible to stand on — only patches were strong enough.

Did many people fall through the ice?

Every time the river froze, people stepped onto the ice thinking it was stronger than it really was and suffered as a consequence. There were lots of broken bones, dunkings and fatalities.

One of the most famous deaths was recorded in John Gay’s poem Trivia. It’s about the fate of a fruit vendor who apparently staggered under the weight of her great basket of hot apples and disappeared below the ice. He said, “her head, chop off, from her lost shoulders flies”. Then there’s this rather dramatic account of ‘And pip-pip-pip-along the ice resound’ as her hot pippins bobbed against the ice.

Did any fair booths get caught unaware?

There was a booth set up by Mister Laurence of Queenhithe, who could guard it overnight, leaving them with some gin. But fair-goers who knew just how cold that look must have been. But although the Thames was ‘nigh frozen over’ the night they moved to the Globe, they went by boat — the ice was too thin to stand on. There’s sadly no account of Shakespeare or his players capitalising on the frost fairs. However, others certainly did.

As one souvenir handbill from 1684 read: “Behold the wonder of this present age / A frozen river now becomes a stage.” While food and drink were popular attractions, frost fairs were as much like an illegal rave or a circus as they were a Christmas market. Music blared, entertainers recited bawdy verse and puppet shows were held. A “human salamander” seemingly ate glowing hot coals, sword-swallowers amazed audiences, an astrologer calling himself ‘Icedore Frostface of Fresseland’ read fortunes, and figures on stilts wandered among the crowds.

A menagerie of exotic animals was also on display, ranging from a dog that could do tricks, to a cage full of monkeys, to “a booth with a phenix [sic] on it.” One such exhibitor in 1684 was James William Chipperfield, whose family developed the Chipperfield Circus into an elaborate show that endured until the 1950s.

‘TIS DONE WITH GREAT DELIGHT

In 1599, William Shakespeare’s theatre company dismantled their old playhouse in Shoreditch and transported the wooden frame over the Thames, reassembling it as the Globe in Southwark. The story goes that the actors hauled the timbers across the icy river in the dead of night. The Bard wrote Much Ado About Nothing the same year, so you can imagine the actor playing Don Pedro declaring, “Good morrow, Benedick. Why, what’s the matter, / That you have such a February face, / So full of frost, of storms and cloudiness?” to a fair-goers who knew just how cold that look must have been. But although the Thames was “nigh frozen over” the night they moved to the Globe, they went by boat — the ice was too thin to stand on. There’s sadly no account of Shakespeare or his players capitalising on the frost fairs. However, others certainly did.

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As well as sledging and skating, there were also games you could pay to play. Along with nine-pin...
bowling and hoopla, Londoners enjoyed the dizzy experience of a 'Dutch whimsie' – being spun around in a chair or a boat tied to a pole. Every roundabout in modern playgrounds is thought to be a descendant of this 'whirling sledge'.

John Evelyn called the 1684 fair a "bacchanalian triumph, or carnival on the water", while his equally prudish contemporary Roger Morrice complained, "All manner of debauchery upon the Thames continued upon the Lord's Day and Monday". Fair-goers could gamble and likely placed wagers on regular attractions like horse racing and blood sports. As well as seeing bears and bulls fight dogs, "throwing at cocks" was fables." Perhaps this was because of the frozen racing and blood sports. As well as seeing bears placed wagers on regular attractions like horse Monday". Fair-goers could gamble and likely the ice was impermanent, so it was understood to only be a temporary suspension of social etiquette.

Despite the behaviour the fairs encouraged, even royalty couldn't resist. Queen Elizabeth I walked upon the ice daily in 1664 to "shoot a few marks" with bow and arrow. King Charles II went one step further at the Blanket Fair, attending with some of the royal family to see "Great Britain's wonder" on 31 January 1684. He even bought a memento from one of the printers, stamped with the date and their names. A French account claimed the Merry Monarch spent a whole night at the fair, while others say he joined in a foxhunt on the ice. Perhaps while accompanying the king, the royal army also fired a ceremonial salute with several cannons on the ice.

SEE WHAT THINGS UPON THE ICE WERE DONE

There were more frost fairs in the 18th century and they offered much the same attractions. In 1715, live entertainment was provided by "Will Ellis the Poet and his wife Bess" who were "Rhiming [sic] on the Hard Frost." Ox was again roasted by a Mr Atkins and Mr Hodginson, who claimed to be the descendants of the gentleman who had done the same in 1684. The painter William Hogarth bought a souvenir print for his pet pug, Trump. However, these later fairs also saw greater mechanisation, so the fairground attractions looked more like today's with swing sets and – sources claim – some sort of clockwork car went on display.

The final fair was held in February 1814 and though it only lasted a few days, it went out in style. The ice followed a thick fog that enveloped the city and the surrounding country, allegedly lasting from 27 December 1813 to 3 January 1814. Once it cleared, a grand mall was set up by Blackfriars Bridge, dubbed 'City Street', boasting temporary taverns with names like 'The City of Moscow', 'The Free and Easy' and 'Wellington Forever'. At least ten printers were set up and sold books with their postcards and poems while a full-blown casino offered roulette and a wheel of fortune. The watermen assumed their old position, charging two- or threepence for safe passage onto the ice. As the Londoners descended onto the frozen Thames en masse once more, a group of 70 people reportedly walked across the frozen water to South Bank at all once.

Various modern accounts claim an elephant walked across the ice at the final fair. While we would like to say this was led by a descendant of the Blanket Fair's James William Chipperfield, whose family's circus was now a booming success, the story may sadly be apocryphal. There are no known records from 1814 mentioning the animal, which would surely have been a talking point.

The fair lasted just four days as so many people and milder temperatures caused cracks to quickly appear in the ice. More than one person drowned and booths were carried away on ice flows. Damage to river barges was estimated at some £20,000, caused by giant fast-flowing chunks that had broken up. But even then, a large printing press, hungry for profits, was set up in defiance on an ice island near Westminster.

The Thames did freeze again after 1814 but not to the extent that anyone could walk on it. The Little Ice Age was drawing to a close, ending after 1850, but the frost fairs were also a victim of progress. The Old London Bridge was beyond repair and had to be replaced in 1830 by the modern London Bridge. This, plus the creation of the Embankment in the 19th century, created a narrower, faster-flowing Thames that was less likely to freeze.

London's lost frost fairs were always a celebration of impermanence, with participants never sure when the party would be over or when the floor was going to give way beneath their feet. We could never expect them to last forever.

The souvenir Charles II bought at the Blanket Fair. Hans in Kelder ('Jack in the Cellar') is a wry reference to Princess Anne's pregnancy.
ALL ABOUT HISTORY EXPLAINS

HOW TO WIN A JOUST

10th-16th century (all models)

Operations Manual

Top tips to triumph at the Medieval tourney
**Training starts early**

To become a knight, a boy would leave his home at around seven years old. First as a page, then as a squire, he would serve an older knight to learn the ways of war. Mastering the joust took years of practice and simply carrying the lance was a test of strength. To develop their skills, pages and squires would begin by riding a wooden horse pulled by other squires. Of course, in real jousts your opponent would be trying to knock you down, too. To practice for this, squires rode at quintains - shields attached to a rotating pole. At their most basic, these consisted of sacks to pierce with a lance but more extravagant quintains might be dressed up to resemble an enemy. When the shield was struck, the quintain turned and a wooden arm with a heavy weight attached would swing at the rider. If the squire hit the quintain at the wrong speed, he was almost certain to be knocked from the saddle.

The Middle Ages valued martial prowess as the ultimate virtue. Skill with sword, mace and lance was required by knights if they were to survive the wars that plagued Europe, so tournaments developed where knights could demonstrate their warrior abilities and prepare for conflicts. Early competitions were bloody affairs with melees where knights fought en masse and death was fairly common. Soldiers entertained the crowds and offered an outlet for violence but this seriously depleted the small pool of manpower a king could call on.

Over time, rules developed that turned these frenzies of bloodletting into chivalric events that provided a relatively safe way of showing a knight’s skill. From the 1400s onwards, knights in jousts wore full armour and restricted their weaponry to lances. To handle such an unwieldy weapon was a mark of attainment that could bring wealth as well as honour. For those seeking to move up in society, as well as nobility wishing associate themselves with the romantic values of the age, the jousting lists were events worth risking their lives for. If you want to win – and survive – a joust, here are ten things you need to know.

**Choose your tournament type**

Once you are a trained knight, you are ready to enter your first tournament – so long as you have a well-trained horse, armour and sufficient prestige to be accepted. Now you must choose which type of competition you wish to enter. Tournaments were held for many reasons like at the celebration of a marriage, the signing of a treaty, coronations of kings and queens, or even just to enliven the boredom of long sieges.

A challenge in the joust could take place ‘a plaisance’, with weapons designed for safety, or ‘a outrance’, with the deadly weapons of war. Even friendly matches could turn lethal though, so make sure that your competition is one that’s worth entering.

An international tourney could bring you fame throughout Europe but it could also bring scandal. In 1362, seven knights dressed up as the Seven Deadly Sins and allegedly challenged all comers to defeat them, shocking pious observers.
Heraldic shields helped identify jousters to the crowd.

**Select your opponent wisely**

Choosing your opponent in a joust was matter of utmost importance - your hopes of victory and honour would be decided the moment you picked them. Nobility, ability and rank all had to be considered when choosing an adversary. Like many other aspects of the joust, there was an air of theatricality about this. Commonly a challenge was announced by striking the shield of your desired opponent. French writer Jean Froissart records squires simply being sent to deliver this call to arms. In later periods, complex Trees of Honour were constructed. These structures were hung with the shields of competitors and those wishing to joust merely had to touch their lance to the shield of the man they wished to face. At Henry VIII's Field of the Cloth of Gold tournament, the Tree of Honour was made of intertwined hawthorn and raspberry branches to represent the binding together of England and France.

**Choose the right lance**

While size isn't everything, in jousting it does count for a lot. In fact, one knight, Marx Walther, apparently liked to carry a ridiculously large lance with a young boy sat on it just to prove his strength before a tournament. A wiser choice for most would perhaps have been one of the following varieties of lance.

A. **The heavy lance** This lance was typically around three metres long and made of solid ash wood 2.5 centimetres thick. It was designed for the shock of cavalry collisions on the battlefield.

B. **Coronal** A blunt, pronged crown placed on the tip of the lance, the coronal helped to catch the shield of the opponent and made unhorsing them easier. It also made penetrating armour less likely.

C. **Bourdonasse** This hollow lance was used in jousts after 1500. Up to 3.6 metres long, it splintered easily on contact, making for much more dramatic but safer combats.

D. **War lance** A heavy lance with a sharp metal tip designed to pierce armour, the war lance was known to be deadly if accurate contact was made with the opponent.

**Power or accuracy**

When King Duarte of Portugal came to write his treatise On Horsemanship, he dedicated a large portion of it to jousting. Controlling your horse was key to winning a joust. In the lists, horses could reach 40 kilometres per hour and managing that momentum could give you a devastating blow but failing to would make you miss your mark. Go too slowly and you will be an easy target for your adversary. Go too fast and you are less likely to set your lance where you mean it. A well-bred and trained horse was a valuable part of a knight's state. Death was a risk to the horse as well as the rider in a joust. Overtaxing your horse by riding it too hard could be disastrous. King Henry VIII "ran so freshly and so many courses that one of his best coursers (jousting horses) was dead that night".
Positioning your lance is everything

The joust developed out of an earlier type of combat between spearmen on horses. They wielded their spears in their hands and to gain control, they began to couch their spears under their arm - it’s from this that the lance evolved. As lances grew longer and heavier, aiming the point became harder. The weight of the lance could be carried on the leg or the saddle, or even on a hook built into your armour.

The ideal was to lower your lance gracefully as you approached the centre of the tilt (or ride) but in the heat of the bout this could become difficult. One of the issues identified by King Duarte in his writing about jousts is that knights sometimes closed their eyes at the moment of collision. Other writers offered a solution - it is easier to keep the eyes open until the last moment if you keep your mouth open.

"The ideal was to lower your lance gracefully as you approached the centre of the tilt (or ride) but in the heat of the bout this could become difficult"
Scoring points

When jousts stopped being about incapacitating your opponent, ways were needed to determine who had won each bout. In 1466, Sir John Tiptoft wrote his Ordinances, which set out how points were to be scored. The ideal outcome of a joust was to unhorse your foe, but points could also be won by shattering your lance into multiple fragments on your opponent, indicating that you had struck them.

Penalties could also be inflicted that would move you down the rankings. A spear that caught and broke on the foe's saddle was bad, but the worst thing a jouster could do was deliberately strike the opposing horse as this led to instant disqualification from the match. Killing a horse could even lead to ejection from the whole tournament. When Nicholas Clifford killed his foe Jean Boucinel in 1381 by hitting him in the throat, however, he suffered no punishment at all - the judge considered it to have been an accident.

"Killing a horse could even lead to ejection from the whole tournament"

Get others to sing your praises

In a society where honour and patronage were vital to worldly success, knights had to let others know just how formidable they were. Kings wanted their tournaments to be internationally famous - Edward III sent heralds throughout Europe to announce his great competition at Windsor in 1358, at the huge cost of £32. Heralds sometimes helped in the judging of the jousts as well as announcing the winners, so payments to them could be money well spent. Minstrels could be persuaded to literally sing your praises for the right price. At a tournament in 1352, a minstrel was paid the huge sum of 40 florins for his work. Whole chronicles could be filled with tales of jousts and Jean Froissart's histories include a notable number of contests. It is thanks to these songs and stories that we know of the feats of individual jousters such as Amadeus VII of Savoy, who broke 47 lances in a single combat.
How to Win a Joust

Get yourself to the medical tent

A knight in full armour falling from a speeding horse makes quite a crash. Broken bones occurred frequently and if not set properly, they could be fatal. If a horse fell on its rider then amputation may be necessary. Death in tournaments was such a drain on the numbers of knights that the Church threatened to excommunicate anyone who took part, and would deny burial by clergy to any who died. Tournaments survived this ban though, even as they claimed the lives of many notable lords and kings. Henry VIII suffered many jousting injuries – he was knocked out by a lance striking him through an open visor in 1524 and nearly killed by a fall in 1536. The latter accident left him unconscious for two hours leading to fears of his death. His injured leg became ulcerous and started the decline of a sporting young monarch into a grossly obese old man.

Claim your prize

In early tournaments, knights who lost forfeited their armour and horse to the victor. They would then have to pay a ransom to get it back from the knight who defeated them. William Marshal captured ransoms from 103 knights in a ten-month period of tournaments. As the rules of chivalry developed, mercenary tendency became unseemly. Later jousts culminated in grand gift giving ceremonies presided over by the ladies of the court. Prizes could be a gold plate, jewels, crowns, costly garments, weapons, armour, or even exotic animals like talking parrots. In Magdeburg in the 1280s, the first prize in a tournament was a beautiful woman, though the winner chastely paid her dowry to marry another man. In 1352, Amadeus IV of Savoy won three gold rings and three kisses from beautiful women. He kept the kisses but passed the rings to other worthy jousters – they grumbled that they would have preferred the kisses.

WATCH A REAL-LIFE JOUST

Get a taste of the tourney at one of these summer events

Joust!
Cardiff Castle, Wales
Get a taste of what Wales’ capital city was like in the Middle Ages at this family-friendly event. As well as an epic jousting display, Joust! includes a village encampment and strolling musicians at Cardiff Castle. For more information, visit cardiffcastle.com.

Spectacular Jousting
Linlithgow Palace, West Lothian
Enjoy the thunder of hooves and the clashing of lances in the annual competition at the birthplace of Mary, Queen of Scots. Another Spectacular Jousting event will be held at Caerlaverock Castle on 28-29 July. For more information, see historicenvironment.scot.

International Jousting & Medieval Tournament
Arundel Castle, West Sussex
Top challengers from across the globe will take part in a week-long event held at an 11th-century Norman fortress. There’s also a live performance from Medieval band Rough Muscpe and have-a-go archery. For more information, head to arundel.org.uk.

Grand Medieval Joust
Bolsover Castle, Derbyshire
Experience a spectacle of speed and skill as four of the most masterful knights bid to take victory. Bolsover Castle will host living history encampments as well as a falconry display. For more information, take a trip to english-heritage.org.uk.
Sun, Sea and Social Breakdown

The rise of the railway brought seaside resorts in reach of the masses – and fresh challenges to maintain Victorian morality

Written by David J Williamson
from sandcastles to fish and chips, promenades to pleasure piers, many of the things best associated with a trip to the British seaside have their roots in the Victorian summer holiday. However, while we take these seaside attractions for granted now — even looking back on them as old fashioned — many of them were considered revolutionary at the time, some even an affront to common decency. This led to some puritanical restrictions, but not even Victorian morality could hold back the tide of change that was rolling in.

Peacocking on the prom
Trips to the seaside were nothing new at the beginning of the Victorian era, at least for the upper classes. In fact, ‘taking the waters’ for your health was so popular during the Georgian period that Jane Austen featured both the spa town of Bath in two of her novels and the coastal town of Lyme Regis in *Persuasion*. As Austen was keen to point out, while these trips were ostensibly about getting fresh air and exercise, they were also often an excuse for high society to mingle and show off. As well as prove that they could afford not to work, they could also stay at grand hotels, attend the theatre, and wear the latest fashions at parties.

A classic example of this exhibitionism masquerading as healthy living was promenading. A stroll along the seafront was considered good for the constitution, but a long, level ‘prom’ or esplanade was also like a public catwalk where you could be ‘seen’ by society and enjoy admiring glances as you strolled serenely by, decked out in your best attire. Promenading only grew in popularity during the Victorian era, with the first piers being built in the 1850s to give tourists somewhere to stroll as well as to moor ships.

While spa towns like Bath and Harrogate still held their appeal during Queen Victoria’s reign, doctors were increasingly recommending trips to seaside resorts. This was mainly because they believed that the bracing sea air contained what they termed as ‘ozone’ or ‘activated oxygen’, something that was ‘very essential but also a preventative of disease and a great aid for the treatment of ailments of all character.’

Prince Albert, a staunch advocate of science and healthy living, led by example by building a new royal residence by the sea in 1845: Osborne House on the Isle of Wight. The royal family spent many summers from July to August at their palatial holiday home, with Queen Victoria continuing to stay there regularly long after Albert died in 1861.

We now know that the Victorians were quite wrong about the seaside offering so-called activated oxygen. But in an era of rapidly industrialising towns and cities, it’s likely that these coastal towns offered a welcome break from the choking pollution.

But the smog-ridden Industrial Revolution also brought railways. This new mode of transport could whisk you across country in a matter of hours, shrinking time itself and opening up a whole new world of endless opportunities of how people could spend their precious leisure time. Although expensive, the burgeoning Victorian middle class could afford rail fares and were keen to follow en masse where the aristocrats led.

Coastal towns offered a welcome break from the choking pollution
Up until the 1850s, it was not unusual for men to bathe or even swim in the sea completely naked. But such a tradition would not fit with the ever-expanding popularity of the seaside holiday. Not only were there more people sharing the beach, many of them were now women and children. Victorian values and correctness dictated that the proper etiquette was followed.

For example, as popular as promenading was, an unmarried woman was chaperoned by a married lady — a family member or friend — when strolling to ensure that the strict social boundaries between the sexes were not crossed and to ward off any unwanted or unsavoury advances. On the beach, this became something of a nightmare for Victorian decency, especially when it came to the tricky subject of bathing in the sea.

Promoted as a healthy pastime, sea bathing was as popular with Victorian women as men, if not more so as it represented another small yet
significant change in attitudes towards what women should and should not do. It is important to point out, however, that it was bathing in the sea that was the draw — swimming in open water was quite rare. Paddling and dipping were both thought to invigorate health, but the big question was how could men and women benefit from such pleasurable pursuits while maintaining the essential Victorian decorum?

The first solution was quite straightforward — men and women would bathe in separate parts of the beach. In 1847, Parliament gave local councils new powers to set how far apart the sexes had to be when bathing. One such by-law passed by Lowestoft, Suffolk, which was not unusual for the era, dictated: “A person of the female sex shall not, while bathing, approach within 100 yards of any place at which any person of the male sex, above the age of 12 years, may be set down for the purpose of bathing.”

Regulation also required that women wore a “suitable gown or other sufficient dress or covering to prevent indecent exposure of the body.” This swimwear could be extremely heavy; sometimes weights were even sewn into it, so that dresses did not float to the surface. In choppy waters, these heavy outfits could drown a wearer. But these coveralls did serve another purpose: they stopped the ladies getting a suntan. Until the 1920s, having a tan was considered vulgar and only for workers in the fields. On the beach, parasols would also be employed to shade them from the sun.

However, as modest as Victorian swimwear was, to their prudish minds, a woman having to walk the length of the beach to the sea — even on a gender-segregated beach — was the equivalent of a modern ‘walk of shame’. Instead, they used a bathing machine. Strictly speaking, bathing machines dated back to around the 1750s and were not really ‘machines’. Resembling a beach hut with four wheels, it would be rolled out to sea, usually pulled by horses. Some machines were equipped with a canvas tent around the doorway, capable of being lowered to the water and thus giving the bather greater privacy.

Once deep enough in the surf, the bather would then exit the cart using the door facing away from prying eyes on the beach and proceed to paddle. For inexperienced swimmers — which would have been most Victorian women in their billowing swimwear — some beach resorts offered the service of a ‘dipper’, a strong woman who would escort the bather out to sea in the cart and lift them into the water and yank them out when they were done. When the swimmer wanted the bathing machine brought back in, they would signal the operator by raising a small flag attached to the contraption’s roof.

Bathing machines were deeply hypocritical. Men did not have to employ any similar device and they just strolled into the water wearing a considerably tighter swimsuit. But in a strange sort of way, bathing machines also played a small part in giving a modicum of freedom to Victorian women, allowing them the privacy to experience sea bathing first-hand rather than be excluded altogether as they had been from so many other leisure activities and sports.

Another addition to the crowds that set the seaside holiday apart from anything that had gone before were children. Depending on class and standing in the world, Victorian children were either the educated future of the family line or just another worker, toiling in appalling conditions. But with rising prosperity came more disposable income and the ability to spend some time together as a family at the seaside. Those who once could only look on in admiration from afar as their ‘betters’ enjoyed a seaside break were now able to taste it for themselves.

As access to the seaside increased, many organised trips through churches, charities and societies such as the Temperance Movement gave opportunities to even the lowest in society. 1871 saw the introduction of the Bank Holidays Act that set aside four days through the year as official holidays for all for the first time. These were not paid — an entitlement to paid holiday would not become law until the 20th century — but with ever-improving transport links and the cost of an excursion subsidised by groups and organisations, the nature of the seaside holiday began to change dramatically both in its scale and its experience.

**Resorts boom**

The railways transformed small communities — which often started as mere fishing villages — into bustling resorts to which people flocked in growing numbers.
The great cover-up
The modest way to take the air or take the plunge!

A whiter shade of pale
At first shaded bonnets, and then later less formal straw hats, were acceptable to keep the sun from colouring the face, which was not socially acceptable. Tanning was not fashionable until the 1920s.

The heads-up on sensible bathing
With a variety of styles, a hat or bonnet kept the hair nearly in place and covered. A dip up to the chest was all that was required and your head going under the water was very unladylike!

Weighed down by the need for modesty
Trousers or skirts were a point of style and preference in heavy woollen material. Ladies often chose a combination of these, even putting weights into the over-skirt to stop it rising to the surface and exposing the trousers beneath.

You never know what you might tread on
Sea bathing did not involve swimming and so shoes or boots covered the ankles for modesty and were required when you stood in the water. In case of jagged pebbles or unspeakable sea creatures that may have been underfoot.

Avoid sand between your toes at all costs
Whether walking on the beach or the promenade, it was always wise to be prepared with a stout pair of shoes or boots, laced properly so as not to expose the ankles.

A little skin begins to appear
Far more relaxed and daring, these sleeves gave exposure to both sea and sun, creating a little more freedom of movement and being quite risqué. Sleeves would eventually creep further up the arms, but not for some time yet.

A second line of defence
If your hat or bonnet didn’t give enough protection from the sun, a parasol did the trick. It was also very useful to shield you from the eyes of the lower classes and to hide telling blushes when being courted.

Chin up to keep out the chill
A high-collared jacket was essential to remaining poised and keeping the sea breeze from causing a chill. It also protected the arms from the sun and insects. Elaborate lace would complete the feminine touch.

Under wraps from prying eyes and pests
Necessary to cover the legs and the ankles from insects and gentleman’s gazes, long skirts were often paired with a crinoline petticoat to give it shape and bustle at the rear – not easy for sitting in a deck chair. Lighter cotton skirts were introduced later.

Bathing machines
Invented to preserve the modesty of Victorian ladies, they would be pushed or pulled into the water either by men or a horse. The occupant could then descend the steps into the water with as little bodily ‘exposure’ as possible. Assistants could also be hired to help you into the water and ‘take a dip’ rather than swim, then aid you in returning up the steps.

Sun, Sea & Social Breakdown

Weighed down by the need for modesty
Trousers or skirts were a point of style and preference in heavy woollen material. Ladies often chose a combination of these, even putting weights into the over-skirt to stop it rising to the surface and exposing the trousers beneath.
Bathing machines line the beachfront at Hastings, East Sussex, circa 1900

Bathing machines were necessary for women who wished to take a dip in the sea

Entertainment for All
Typical scenes from the Victorian seaside

The promenade
A combination of exercise and showing off, ‘promenading’ was a chance to take in the sea air, meet friends and make a fashion statement. Unmarried or unmarried young ladies and girls were encouraged at first, but it was later common for groups of both working class men and women on organised trips to use a stroll along the prom to meet and flirt.

Ice cream
Just one example of how the social taboo of eating outdoors was broken. A famous Victorian cook, Agnes Marshall, claimed to have invented her own freezer equipment, patented an ice cream maker and created the first ice cream cone. Ice cream sellers would push carts up and down the beach all day. Other street foods of the day were cookies, mussels and the very first fish and chips.

Donkey rides
Racing in popularity in the latter part of the 19th century, these rides possibly evolved from the working donkeys that originally carried baskets of cookies and other shellfish as part of the local industry. Some were attached to seaside towns; others could be hired for the day.

Bandstand
Victorians were well used to listening to bands playing in the open air at one of the many public parks that had sprung up around the country. And this outdoor entertainment was adopted to give an engaging and invigorating atmosphere and entertainment to a day out by the sea.

Building sandcastles
As a means of keeping children entertained on the beach, buckets and spades were mass-produced from tin sheet metal and often brightly painted with decorations depicting the resort or scenes of a beach. Once purchased, these could be used year after year and were a popular and relatively cheap entertainment along with nets for exploring rock pools.

Pleasure palaces
The pier was both an extension of the promenade and a focal point for entertainment. This could be simply a selection of machines (later slot machines or one armed bandits) and a half of mezzanine so that crowds could experience being away from the shore and keeping their feet dry. The latter saw the development of large music halls and concerts – and some even had their own train.

Deckchairs
The concept of sunbathing was foreign to the Victorians, but it did recognise the benefits of sitting out in the open air. So it’s not surprising that folding deckchairs were patented in the US in 1855. Originally used on ocean liners and steamships – hence the reference to a ‘steak’ – the transition to using the lightweight, highly portable chairs on beaches in port towns must have been a natural one.

Pier pressure
Seaside towns sought to attract tourists by building ever longer piers

North Pier, Blackpool
Designed by Eugenius Birch, work began in 1862 and was completed in 1863. The pier was damaged in 1867 by Lord Nelson’s former flagship, Foudroyant, which was moored alongside the pier as part of an exhibition. In the 1870s, the pierhead was enlarged and the Indian Pavilion and bandstand were built. There were further collisions with the pier from shipping in 1892 and 1897.

Brighton
A relatively late construction, work began in 1891 and was completed in 1899. A tramway had been built to help with construction, but this was dismantled upon completion of the project. A 1,500-seat theatre was incorporated into the pierhead in 1901 along with various other smaller pavilions at various points along the construction.

Llandudno
Designed by James Brunlee, construction began in 1876 and was completed in 1877. A number of additions followed, including a bandstand at the pier head in 1874 and a pavilion at the shore end in 1884 that also incorporated a swimming pool. Further construction in 1884 took it to its final length.

Ryde
The very first of its kind in the country, its location on the Isle of Wight close to Queen Victoria’s summer retreat made it a popular destination. First opened in 1814, it underwent various extensions to its length and to the size of the pierhead, including the addition of a tramway alongside the pedestrian pier.
By the middle of the 19th century, towns such as Brighton had already expanded, numbering 44,000 in the 1841 census. Other popular resorts like Blackpool and Llandudno had started much smaller, but with the industrial centres of Manchester and the Midlands not far away, they rapidly turned into the must-go places for groups of friends and co-workers looking for a few hours of fun.

In response to such high demand and the ability of some holidaymakers to even stay for a night or two, accommodation became a valuable commodity. A range of boarding houses and hotels sprang up to suit every budget. Resorts that regarded themselves as catering for the better class of person — places like Brighton with its royal links to the Georgian era and Ryde on the Isle of Wight, with its proximity to Queen Victoria's Osborne House — tended to already have large, grand hotels as close to the seafront as possible.

But for Blackpool and similar destinations, the lack of deeply rooted tradition meant they had more freedom and could virtually start from scratch. Boarding houses and small hotels became booming businesses, but one rule applied no matter where you stayed: the closer to the sea, the higher the price. And unscrupulous landlords were always looking for ways of extracting as much out of people's pockets as they could by whatever means necessary — especially what was meant by a 'sea view!'

With the development of the resorts came the expansion of the wealth of the towns and what they were able to offer in entertainment for holidaymakers to spend their money on. In many cases, the local pier would be extended to become even more popular, offering a greater variety of entertainment than before.

Building was sometimes on a grand scale, with the creation of much more indoor entertainment to combat the unpredictable British weather. Aquariums, amusement arcades, ballrooms and even circuses were constructed as permanent fixtures to keep the public entertained and keep them spending.

Southport
The local corporation first made plans for a pier in 1840, but it was not until 1859 that work began. It was designed by James Brunlee and first opened in 1860. Developments over the years have seen waiting rooms for boat passengers added, the pier lengthened and widened and a tramway built. A further extension in 1868 brought it to its final length.

Southend
The longest pleasure pier in the world, it was originally built in 1829 as an attraction for visitors from London and extends out into the Thames estuary. The wooden pier was only 180 metres long when first opened, but it was extended over time and by 1848 was already the longest pier in Europe.

With typical Victorian enterprise and invention, technology and mechanisation had their parts to play. Electric lighting illuminated the promenade, steam carousels and fairground rides appeared on the prom and the pier. Competing resorts made bold statements to attract customers, and what better way than with a replica of the Eiffel Tower at Blackpool to embody a sense of pride and success? The beach had not been forgotten — it was now just part of the whole drama and no longer the main character. What had been created for the seaside break was more choice and less reason to leave.

From rather sedate, genteel beginnings at the start of the Victorian age, by the end of the 19th century things were starting to look somewhat different. As the era progressed, so did the resorts, expanding not only in size but in what they had to offer. Demand drove innovation not only in the construction of new entertainments but also in transport, with rapid improvement of the railway network to help quench the ever-popular thirst to get away from it all.

People from all walks of life now shared the experience and attitudes, and standards slowly started to change. Many traditional ladies would still not take a dip in the sea, but for a younger, more liberal generation, it was a release from the strict ties of social boundaries that they fully embraced. Ladies' swimwear became slightly less restrictive and more risqué; the sexes mixed openly on the prom; bawdy 'what the butler saw' machines appeared in the arcades; and comedians told rude jokes in the music halls.

Tired of increasingly having to mix with the hoi polloi, the upper classes began to abandon their traditional resorts. Instead they spent their time and money on foreign holidays where, for now at least, the masses could not follow. What was left were the majority who had learned how to relax and enjoy themselves, willing and able to spend their hard-earned cash on a dazzling array of entertainments.

It was the working man and his family who had taken ownership of the seaside holiday. With ever-improving conditions for workers, the popularity of what the Victorians created continued to rise, leaving a legacy that still rings true today — and it is them we must thank that even now we all still love to be beside the seaside.
A-Z of the Ancient World
Explore 26 incredible icons of Classical Antiquity

The Cult of Thor
Who was the Norse god behind the famous superhero?

Secrets of the Bog People
Meet the mysterious Iron Age mummies of Northern Europe

Sparta
A time traveller’s handbook for the world of ancient Sparta

Keeping the Gods Sweet
Honey played a vital role in Ancient Egyptian life

Educating Alex
What influence did Aristotle have on Alexander the Great?
A port located on the northern coast of Egypt, Alexandria was one of over 70 cities said to be founded by the mighty Macedon king Alexander the Great. Shortly after it appeared in roughly 331 BCE, it replaced Memphis as the home of Egypt’s ruling Ptolemy dynasty. Not only that, but Alexander supposedly designed the plan for the city himself.

The city is perhaps most famous for its great lighthouse, Pharos, one of the original seven wonders of the world. Alexandria was also home to one of the greatest libraries the world has ever known. With a hefty amount of original Greek and Egyptian works, the shelves also boasted a number of foreign texts that had been translated into Greek for study. While no one knows when exactly the library was destroyed by fire, it was most likely when Julius Caesar sided with Cleopatra in a bitter war against her brother, Ptolemy XIII, in 48 BCE.

The city itself was considered the largest in the Mediterranean world in the 1st century BCE. For years it was the centre of Hellenic science and learning, and it served as the capital of Egypt from its inception to its surrender to Arab forces in 641 BCE. Alexandria still stands today, on the west side of the Nile Delta.
**IS FOR BASTET**

Do you want your home protected from evil spirits and disease? Call on Bastet, the Ancient Egyptian goddess of the home, women's secrets, cats and fertility. She was the daughter of the sun god Ra, and her cult was centred in the city of Bubastis - people even made pilgrimages there to bury their dead cats.

She also played a role in the afterlife as a guide and helper.

**IS FOR DELPHI**

According to the Ancient Greeks, Delphi was the centre of the world. This island held a temple dedicated to the god Apollo, which was home to a famous oracle that would offer guidance to both Greek city-states and individuals.

Known as the Pythia, this oracle was said to channel prophecies from Apollo himself, while in a dream-like trance. To obtain an augury, you would be expected to offer laurel branches, money and a black ram to sacrifice. The ceremony would involve the Pythia bathing in Delphi's Castalian Spring before descending into a special chamber of the temple, which was filled with the smoke of burning barley meal and laurel leaves. Sat on covered tripod cauldron, the oracle would inhale the fumes, before making their judgment.

Traditionally the Pythia would only be consulted once a year, but at the peak of the Delphi's popularity there were three Pythiai in office. The Pythia was also always a woman and when she died a replacement was chosen from the priestesses of the island temple. The Delphic temple of Apollo was established in the 8th Century BCE and the last prophecy was given there around 393 CE, when Roman emperor Theodosius closed all of the pagan sites to make way for Christianity.

**IS FOR CROESUS**

The last king of Lydia was known for his piety with the rich offerings he made to Apollo at Delphi - mostly of solid gold. In fact, Croesus was an incredibly wealthy and powerful man, capturing nearly all of the Greek towns on the coast of Asia during his reign.

Born the son of a king, Croesus did have other siblings, but we know that he was crown prince as he served as governor of Adramyttion, which was the usual position given to a Lydian heir. Croesus had two sons but as one was mute and thus considered unfit to rule, the burden of being crown prince fell to the other, Atys. Until he died in a hunting accident. But the royal succession was never going to be a problem for Croesus. As he prepared for war against the Persians, he consulted the oracle at Delphi and was allegedly told that if he went into battle, one great empire would crumble - he just didn't realise that it would be his.
Before the Romans were the Etruscans, the main inhabitants of northwest Italy between the 8th and 3rd centuries BCE. While a lot of the civilisation’s culture was destroyed by the Romans, some of was assimilated into the Roman way of life. For example, the mighty empire’s famous gladiator fights actually began as an Etruscan funeral rite.

Somewhat similar to Ancient Greece, Etruria was made up of independent city-states linked by a common religion, language and culture. Militarily, the Etruscans dominated Italy’s waters and the Greeks actually referred to them as ‘scoundrel pirates’.

However, when the Etruscans lost to Syracuse at the Battle of Cumae in 474 BCE, things took a downward turn. Syracusan tyrant Dionysius I destroyed many Etruscan ports and the civilisation’s decline began. It would finish with the Romans as treaties and alliances could only stave off the inevitable. The few cities that survived Rome’s ruthless expansion would finally find themselves Romanised in the 1st century BCE.

Invented around 400 BCE by the Ancient Greeks, this crossbow fired wooden bolts at the enemy. The weapon was made out of horn, wood and animal sinew, and a U-shape extension at the back end of it allowed the user to rest it on their belly, distributing the weight and making it easier to use.

Ancient Greek philosophers Hippocrates and Galen argued the human body was composed of four humours - black bile, phlegm, blood and yellow bile. These humours were influenced by the natural elements (earth, water, air and fire, respectively) and the seasons, but any imbalance between them could result in illness. This philosophy influenced medicine until well into the 1800s.

The Hittite capital was the city of Hattusa, which was one of the largest urban settlements of its time, and its ruins can still be visited near the modern town of Bogazkale. It was at Hattusa that the king lived - the man who was the head priest, top military commander and supreme judge all in one. In the early years of the kingdom, he was helped by a council of nobles known as the pankus.

However, the kingdom fell at the hands of the Assyrians. After being overrun, the Hittites paid tribute to the Assyrian Empire before finally merging into the Neo-Assyrian Empire around 800 BCE.
The Ishtar Gate was a colourful and impressive sight.

Is for Jason

Looking for someone to get the Golden Fleece for you? Jason’s your man! A mythological character who was supposedly the son of a king, he appeared in front of a usurper and asked for the throne as it was his right. The usurper, Pelias, demanded that Jason fetch the Golden Fleece in return for the crown.

Jason put together a group of heroes – the Argonauts – and headed to Colchis in modern-day Georgia, overcoming various obstacles along the way like an island full of murderous women and the dreaded Harpies. When they finally arrived at Colchis, Jason was tasked with yoking fire-breathing bulls and sowing dragons’ teeth before he could steal the Golden Fleece with the help of a sorceress princess named Medea.

Upon their return to Jason’s homeland, Medea murdered Pelias, causing the pair – now married – to take refuge in Corinth under King Creon. Jason’s wavering loyalty towards his wife and his love for Creon’s daughter, Creusa, inspired Greek dramatist Euripides’ famous play Medea. According to the play, the protagonist, Medea murdered Creon, Creusa and her own sons. There’s no one version of Jason’s death. While some say he committed suicide out of grief, others say he was crushed by a rotting part of his ship, the Argo, as he slept under it.

Is for Ishtar Gate

The inner city of Babylon was guarded by a series of gates and the eighth was the Ishtar Gate, named after the Babylonian goddess Ishtar. It was thought to have been built around 575 BCE under the orders of King Nebuchadnezzar II as part of his plan to enhance the city and was one of the original seven wonders of the world until it was replaced by the Lighthouse of Alexandria.

The highly decorative gate featured bulls, lions and dragons representing different Mesopotamian gods and was made of glazed bricks, coloured tiles, bronze, cedar and possibly lapis lazuli. It towered an impressive 11.5 metres.

Often used for religious processions, the gate was excavated in 1902-14 and reconstructed in Berlin, Germany, in 1930. However, there isn’t enough room at Berlin’s Pergamon Museum for what was originally a double gate, so the smaller front is on display and the rest is in storage.

Knossos

It’s probably fair to say that Knossos is best known for its relation to mythology than its part in the Minoan civilisation. It’s the home of the labyrinth, commissioned by King Minos and built by Athenian inventor Daedalus (father of the fabled Icarus, who flew too close to the Sun). The labyrinth has also lived on thanks to its main resident that was half man, half bull, all Minotaur.

But Knossos was more than just a legend. It was the bustling capital of Minoan Crete. Inhabited from the seventh millennium BCE all the way up to its destruction in roughly 1375 BCE – around the end of the Minoan civilisation. Before its demise it was a centre of trade and Knossos even enjoyed relations with other Eastern Mediterranean cities.

While Knossos itself was a city, it’s the palace that is associated with the myths mentioned above. The grand building was the centre of Minoan life and it was first excavated in 1878. and Sir Arthur Evans uncovered almost the entire building about 50 years later. It was Evans who dubbed the civilisation ‘Minoan’ after King Minos, the civilisation’s most famous ruler.
**L** is for **Leonidas**

If you’ve heard of Leonidas before, it’s probably from the film *300* - but this is the real story. Born in about 530 BCE, Leonidas became king of Sparta in around 490. He was the son of King Anaxandrides and his older half-brother had died under mysterious circumstances in the same year. Despite how he came to the throne, Leonidas was a good king, trained to be a hoplite warrior with sharp political acumen.

The Persian ruler, Xerxes, had his eye on Greece and launched an invasion. To reach his desired location, Attica, he had to make his way through Thermopylae but Leonidas was ready to intervene. In 480 BCE, he led at least 6,000 soldiers from different Greek city-states to stop the Persian force.

When things went awry, most of the Greek troops fled. Leonidas and his 300 Spartan soldiers all stayed and fought to the bitter end. When the Persians beheaded Leonidas’ corpse, it was seen as an insult and fuelled the Greek hatred for the Persians for years to come.

**N** is for **Numidia**

Making up the modern-day country of Algeria on the north coast of Africa, Numidia had a chequered past. The region had the beginnings of an empire in 200 BCE but it was mainly made up of nomadic Berber tribes and bands, and it was split into two halves - Massylla and Masaesyli. It didn’t become a unified land until just after the Second Punic War, which raged from 218 to 201 BCE. While King Massinissa of Massylla had allied with Rome, Syphax of Masaesyli had made a friend in Carthage - a relationship that ultimately saw him being unthroned by Massinissa.

With the support of Rome behind him, Massinissa ruled Numidia for almost 50 years. His main aim was to make his kingdom an agrarian society, which was a move away from the old nomadic system. He also took some Carthaginian territory and became one of the most powerful people in North Africa.

After Massinissa’s death in 148 BCE, Numidia had a number of different rulers but none seemed to work out so both Julius Caesar and Augustus divided it. It wouldn’t be until the rule of Septimius Severus from 193 to 211 CE that it would be reunited and known as Numidia once again.

**M** is for **Mithraism**

This Roman mystery cult is still a mystery today as no sources preserve the mythology of the deity Mithras. However, we do know that he appeared in Persia in the late 1st century BCE and then disappeared again in the late 4th century. We also know that the temples were always in underground caves and, strangely, they all featured similar reliefs of Mithras killing a bull – today known as the tauroctony.

A lot of Mithras’ temples can be found in Rome, Ostia, Numidia, Dalmatia and Britain as well as along the Danube border in the north – at least 420 have been identified. The sites are often close to fresh water, which was necessary for some of the rituals.

Mithras’ cult was entirely male and there were seven degrees of initiation, according to Saint Jerome, with ritual meals at each stage. Having said that, some do argue that the different levels were actually grades of priests but the cult had no professional clergy as far as we’re aware.
**IS FOR OSTRAISM**

If you wanted to get rid of a citizen threatening Athens, ostracism was the way to do it. First there would be a meeting where the people decided on if they would hold an ostracism vote. When the day came, citizens wrote the name of whoever they wanted banished and the one with the most votes had to leave for ten years.

**IS FOR PHIDIAS**

While little is known about Phidias’ life, a lot is known about his work. The Athenian sculptor, who was active between around 490 and 430 BCE, was one of the most famous artists in the ancient world and he has been credited with creating the images of Zeus and Athena that still persist today.

Some of Phidias’ statues made it to Athens’ Acropolis like the Athena Promachos, the Lemnian Athena and the colossal figure of Athena made for the Parthenon. But none of those were considered to be Phidias’ masterpiece - that accolade goes to his statue of Zeus, completed in 430 BCE, which was considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

Unfortunately no original examples of Phidias’ works survive today and the sculptor’s final years are also unknown. We know that he didn’t die in prison, as was previously believed, but he may have been exiled from Athens by his enemies who disliked his close friendship with Pericles, an Athenian general and statesman. What we are sure of, however, is that he influenced a considerable number of future Greek and Roman artists.

**IS FOR QUINQUEREME**

About 40-45 metres long and four metres wide, this warship had five rowers in each row on each side. All told, the crew was made up of 300 rowers, 20-30 sailors and between 40 and 120 marines, and one could apparently be built in under two months. Used by the Greeks, Romans and Carthaginians, it may have been first built by Dionysus of Syracuse in 339 BCE. However, the vessel became rarer under the Roman Empire until it fell out of use completely.

**IS FOR RETIARIUS**

Easily the most iconic gladiator in the Roman arena, the retiarius fought with a three-pronged trident and net. They became popular in the 1st century CE and usually wore very little armour - just an arm guard, shoulder guard and a wide belt. A retiarius would also be armed with a dagger, or pugio, held in his left hand. As a result of their lack of armour and weaponry, they were the lowest-ranking gladiators out of the various different types. A retiarius would usually be matched with a secutor, or pursuer, and the net was used to entangle the fully armed opponent.
S is for Stater

In the 7th century BCE, a world first occurred – in the Lydian Empire, the Lydian Stater was brought into circulation. Arguably the first coin officially issued by a government in the world, it became the model for all subsequent coinage. The Staters were made from a mixture of gold and silver known as electrium and their weight equalled their value.

Tyrian purple

Trying to dye something purple in the Phoenician city of Tyre in the Bronze Age? Extract the colour from murex shellfish. Thanks to its striking colour and resistance to fading, Tyrian purple was highly desirable and expensive. It was exported as far across the Mediterranean as Carthage before being adopted by the Romans as the colour of the emperors.

V is for Ustica

This small island off the north coast of Sicily is the home of one of the best-preserved Middle Bronze Age settlements in the Mediterranean and has been occupied on and off ever since. First belonging to the Phoenicians, it was colonised by the Greeks who named it Osteodes, or Bone Island, after the 6,000 Carthaginian mercenaries who had been left to die there. It was later taken over by the Romans who named it Ustica.
Want to make an impression on your enemies? Use some war elephants. Although most famously used by Hannibal in the Second Punic War, they weren’t exclusively employed by the Carthaginians in the ancient Mediterranean. The Greeks also used them in battle but the Romans preferred to make them fight in the arena - but they were perhaps one of the only animals to be pitied by the Roman people.

Alexander the Great was known for using war elephants

Born around 519 BCE, Xerxes I became one of Persia’s most famous kings. After restoring peace to his kingdom, he set about his next task: conquering Greece. He tried in 480 BCE but proved unsuccessful - something that historians have termed the beginning of the end of his dynasty - and instead he began an extensive building project in Persia. His ignominious end would come in 465 BCE when he was murdered.

Not many women got a chance to rule in the ancient world - but Queen Zenobia made sure she had her time on the throne. After marrying Odaenathus, a Romanised Arab and ruler of Palmyra, it’s thought she had him killed around 267 CE and proclaimed power in the name of their son. This was only the beginning.

Zenobia ended the idea that Palmyra was submissive to the Roman Empire. The best part was that Emperor Gallienus was powerless to stop her. Then the next emperor came along and he wasn’t much better - he had no choice but to accept her sovereignty. That was how Zenobia achieved her aim of making Palmyra equal to Rome. But that was never going to be enough. The queen managed to keep the dreaded Persians at bay while annexing neighbouring states like Syria and Anatolia. It only took her a year to take control of Egypt in 270 CE.

It was in Emperor Aurelian that Zenobia would finally meet her match. He stormed Palmyra but the queen was overconfident and when she tried to flee, she was captured at the Euphrates River. We may never know if she committed suicide or was brought to Rome but her legacy lives on as a forceful woman who took on one of the greatest empires the world has ever seen - and she almost won.
The thunder god Thor is probably better known these days as one of the Avengers in the Marvel comic books and movies. However, more than just a superhero, he was worshipped as an actual deity by the Vikings. In Viking sources, Thor is usually described as the son of Odin by the giantess Jörð, who was an earth-mother figure, her name literally meaning ‘earth’, similar to the Greek Gaia. While Odin was the Allfather, the king of the Norse pantheon, his unpredictability and irrationality made him a god to be feared and appeased rather than admired and imitated. Thor, however, had a common touch that gave him a mass appeal. He was a mighty warrior who could level mountains with his hammer Mjölnir, but as a weather god he also
brought rain to water the crops. The many sagas featuring Thor show him exhibiting the qualities Vikings most admire, such as courage, loyalty and lust for life. In fact, it can be argued that it was Thor’s heroic efforts that hammered home Norse morality to the Vikings and taught them to admire these qualities at all.

NORDIC ORIGIN STORY
The earliest traces of Thor go back 700 years before the Viking Age. In his book *Germania*, the 1st-century Roman historian Tacitus writes about the gods worshipped by the Germanic tribes east of the Rhine. Like many Roman writers, he equates German gods with his own: Hercules, he says, was “above all other heroes they extol in their songs when they advance to battle.” The Germans called this god Donar and he was a god of thunder, carrying a club like Hercules, which is probably why Tacitus conflated the two.

Donar’s association with thunder led to later Roman writers equating him with Jupiter, the thrower of thunderbolts. Two centuries before the first Viking raids, the Anglo-Saxons brought their pagan religion to England and among their gods was Thunor.

One of the main sources of surviving Norse myth is the *Prose Edda*, written by the Icelandic historian Snorri Sturluson. However, Sturluson was a Christian and didn’t try to record these tales until the 12th century and, as such, his retellings of the pagan sagas are full of daring exploits but have been purged of pretty much all of their religious content. More than once they also begin to stray into the realm of farce.

The enchanter (and giant) Utgarda-Loki tricks Thor three times: he wrestles an old woman who is age personified and against whom no one can win; he tries to pick up Utgarda-Loki’s cat, which turns out to be the Midgard Serpent transformed; and he fails to empty Utgarda-Loki’s drinking horn because it is connected to the ocean. In another tale, Thor disguises himself as a bride to take his hammer Mjölnir back from the giant Thrym.

Other adventures are more heroic but equally lacking in any religious context. Whatever the pretext — whether it be an insult, a duel, the theft of his infamous hammer, or simply a raid into the giant lands of Jotunheim — Thor slays a huge hero before fighting his way...
out through an army of unnamed giants and slaughtering them all.

Thor's relationships with the other gods are barely sketched in. He is married to the goddess Sif, with whom he has a daughter, and two sons by other mothers. Almost nothing is known of Sif — she may have been a fertility goddess, with her golden hair representing a bountiful harvest — and even less of Thor's offspring. Their names mean 'strength', 'strong' and 'brave' but their deeds are unrecorded. Only Loki features significantly in Thor's legends, causing trouble and being imprisoned until Ragnarök.

WORSHIPPING THE THUNDER GOD

Viking sources only tell us a little about how the Norsemen worshipped Thor, and early Christian writers — who can hardly be expected to be impartial — focus on bloodthirsty tales of human and animal sacrifice. The Eyrbyggja Saga tells of the early colonisation of Iceland in the 10th and 11th centuries and includes a rare Norse description of a pagan temple:

"It was a mighty building. There was a door in the side wall, nearer to one end of it; inside this door stood the posts of the high-seat, and in them were nails that were called the Divine Nails. The inside was a very sacred place. Right inside, at the far end, was a chamber, the same shape as a church chancel these days. In the middle of the floor was a stand like an altar, and on this lay an arm ring, weighing twenty ounces, and all in one piece; men swore all their oaths on this. Also on the stand was the bowl for the blood of the sacrifice, and in it the blood-twig — like a holy-water sprinkler — which was used to sprinkle the blood of sacrificed beasts. And all around the stand the gods (i.e., idols) were set out in that holy place."

The high-seat was a type of throne; in a Viking house, it belonged to the head of the household. Even more than the heart, the pillars of the high-seat seem to have been the heart of the household, and some were said to have been carved with Thor's image. In the Landnámabók, which also tells of the colonisation of Iceland, Thorolf Mostranskegg threw his high-seat pillars overboard with a prayer to Thor and founded his new steading where the pillars washed ashore.

The Flateyjarbók, another Icelandic text, echoes the importance of the thunder god — his image sits in the place of honour between the idols of Odin and Freyr, larger than the others and adorned with gold and silver. It sits in a model of his legendary chariot, whose wheels make the sound of thunder, and the two immortal goats that pull it.
Christian writers mention Thor more often than any of the other pagan Norse gods. While he is often worshiped alongside others in the pantheon – most commonly Odin and Freyr – pride of place has always belonged to the thunder god.

The most extensive description of Viking religious practices comes from the 11th-century German chronicler Adam of Bremen. In Book IV of his Gesta Hammaburgensts ecclesiae pontificum, or Deeds of the Bishops of Hamburg, he describes a temple at the Swedish capital of Gamla Uppsala (Old Uppsala) around 1070, fairly late in the Viking Age. Once again, Thor is found sitting between Odin and Freyr in the place of honour. The temple is covered in gold and a huge golden chain runs around the roof of the building.

Outside the temple are a well into which sacrifices are thrown and a sacred grove whose trees are used to hang animal and human offerings at a festival that takes place every nine years. The sacred grove at Old Uppsala belongs to a long tradition. Tactius writes about sacred groves in his Germania, and Saint Olaf of Norway and King Brian Boru of Ireland, both devout Christians, destroyed groves that were sacred to pagan Norsemen.

The archaeological evidence for the worship of Thor – and for pagan Norse religious practices in general – is disappointingly scanty. Archaeologists have searched in vain for any hint of the great temple at Old Uppsala: the surrounding area is littered with burial mounds dating back as far as the Bronze Age, but no trace has been found of the building described

The three tiers of Norse society lay at the heart of their life and culture. A person's societal standing and primary figure of worship was dictated by which tier, or 'function'; they belonged to. Wealth and status varied widely within each class. An affuent farmer could own as much land as a poor jarl or he could be a tenant farmer working for a landlord.

**JARLS**

Jarls (linguistically related to the English word 'earl') formed the nobility. Kings were drawn from the jarl class, sometimes by election rather than succession – a weak or unpopular monarch could be replaced if the jarls could unite behind a rival claimant.

In peacetime, they oversaw the efficient running of their lands; in war and on Viking raids, they commanded a crew drawn from among the local farmers. Odin was the principle god of the upper classes and they would strive to emulate his wisdom, vast knowledge and creative spark.

**NORSE MIDDLE CLASS**

The Norse middle class was made up of free farmers, fishermen and craftsmen, and called bondi or karls. In peacetime, they provided the goods and foodstuffs that kept society running; in war, they crewed the ships and made up the rank and file of Viking armies. A special subclass was the hiskarls (house karls), who served a jarl or king as a personal staff and bodyguard. The gods of the middle classes had more homely and earthly values that mirrored their more physical lifestyle. As Thor was venerated for his honour and ability as a warrior, he was the obvious choice for the principle deity.

**THRALLS**

Thralls were little better than slaves. Some were convicted criminals but the majority were captives brought back from raids. Slave raids against the Slavic peoples across the Baltic were so common that the word 'slavus' replaced the Latin 'servus' in all the slave markets of Europe. Thralls had no rights – in Viking law, killing one was destruction of property rather than homicide. The religion of a thrall could vary and would have depended on where they had originated. Viking raiders bought and sold slaves anywhere from Ireland, Scandinavia, Byzantium and the Middle East.

Lucky amulets were often shaped like Thor’s hammer. Carvings of Mjölnir were used as pendants to show devotion to the thunder god.
by Adam of Bremen. Elsewhere, evidence of pagan Viking temples is maddeningly absent. The most visible archaeological evidence of Thor’s cult is the Thor’s-hammer pendant but even that is less common than might be expected. Around 50 examples have been found across Scandinavia, dating from the 9th to 11th centuries — the same time that Christian cross pendants were spreading throughout Europe. Some historians have speculated that the Thor’s-hammer pendant was developed in answer to the new faith.

A soapstone mould found in Denmark casts both crosses and Thor’s-hammer pendants, while a silver pendant found near Fossi in Iceland can be interpreted as either — perhaps its owner was hedging his bets on which religion would come to dominate. In a similar vein, an iron Thor’s-hammer from around the year 1000 was found in the Viking-ruled Danelaw of Yorkshire, bearing an inscription that begins and ends with a cross.

Several runestones call upon Thor to protect a person or an area, or simply to witness the carving of the runes and the raising of the stone. Other inscribed stones — including Christian crosses such as one from Gosforth in Cumbria — are decorated with scenes from Norse myth and images of the gods. Thor and his hammer are common motifs. On crosses, these images are often found alongside the crucifixion and other Biblical scenes.

While the archaeological evidence for the worship of Thor is disappointing, the Icelandic sagas do offer a few glimpses into Norse religious life. They tell of festivals of animal sacrifice and feasting called blóts, which mainly took place in the winter. There were various blóts, including one dedicated to Freyr and another to the benevolent goddesses known as the disir, but there wasn’t one for Thor. The thorrablót, which may have been invented in the 19th century, according to some scholars, was named after the month of Thorri (frost) in the pagan Icelandic calendar that ran from mid-January to mid-February.

There were many names for priests — gött, gyðja, völva and seidmaðr are known — but there seems to have been no professional priesthood. Instead, community leaders like jarls also acted as religious leaders and these terms seem to refer not to the religious rank of
ASATRU Norse paganism in the new age

Named after the Æsir tribe of Thor and Odin, Asatru is one of several forms of Norse neo-paganism or Forn Sed (the Old Way). Vanatru reveres the Vanir tribe of Freyr and Freya, and Disatru worships the female spirits known to the Norsemen as dísar.

All these movements developed from the volksch Norse and Germanic mysticism of the 19th century. They gained momentum in the 1960s and 1970s when many in the West were exploring Indian, Celtic, Native American and other forms of mysticism. The Icelandic government officially recognised Asatru in 1972 and groups have grown up across Scandinavia and elsewhere.

Asatru seeks to reconstruct the pagan Norse religion, based mainly on the Eddas. Some of its followers also incorporate elements of shamanism, environmentalism, feminism and other political and philosophical elements according to their own personal values and beliefs. Some are also Wiccans. There is no established dogma and individual points of view are encouraged.

So far, the movement is small. In 2017, the Icelandic Asatru Fellowship had fewer than 4,000 registered members but it is still Iceland’s largest non-Christian religious organisation. In 2015, construction began on Iceland’s first pagan temple for about 1,000 years; building is expected to finish in mid-2018.
Ancient Civilisations

the individual, but to the religious activity in which they were involved.

The sign of Mjölnir seems to have been more than decoration. Pagan Norsemen sometimes made a gesture indicating Thor's hammer as a sign of blessing or purification in much the same way that Christians made, and still make, the sign of the cross. The story of the death of Baldr has Thor using his hammer to bless the dead god's funeral pyre, and in the semi-comic tale of Thrym's wedding, Thor recovers his stolen hammer when it is laid in his lap to consecrate the supposed bride for marriage.

The Heimskringla reports that Haakon the Good, an early Christian king of Norway, was bowed by pressure from his people into making winter sacrifices during a blot at Hlader. When the drinking horn was passed to him, he made the sign of the cross over it to protect himself from the heathen nature of the proceedings.

Eyebrows were raised, but one of Haakon's friends defended him, saying that he was actually making the sign of the hammer, as they were all accustomed to doing.

While no surviving source tells us exactly how a Norseman would make the sign of Thor's hammer, we can assume from this account that it was very similar to the sign of the cross made by devout Christians today: presumably the hand moved in a T-shape.

The Arabic writer Ahmad ibn Fadlan tells of Swedish Rus making offerings to idols made of "a long upright piece of wood that has a face like a man's and is surrounded by little figures, behind which are long stakes in the ground," but gives no names. Given Thor's prominence in Viking temples elsewhere, though, it seems likely that he was worshiped in this way.

Thor also presided over oaths. In 876, Danish leaders in England sealed a peace with King Alfred the Great by swearing on 'holy rings' associated with the worship of Thor — perhaps similar to the arm-ring mentioned in the Eyrbyggja Saga above.

Even after the advent of Christianity, the Norsemen were careful not to offend the god who controlled the weather. A man named Gaukathori, according to the Icelandic Landnámabók, "was very mixed in his faith; he believed in Christ, but invoked Thor in matters of seafaring and dire necessity." Gaukathori himself is quoted as saying to King (later saint) Olaf II of Norway, "If I must believe in a god, it is no worse to believe in the White Christ than in any other."

Even with Snorri's religious bowdlerising, the Prose Edda shows Thor as an embodiment of many qualities that are traditionally associated with the Vikings. He is a peerless warrior, a fearless traveller and quick to avenge any
insult to himself or his Æsir tribe. He eats and drinks in heroic quantities and, while quick to anger, he is never petty or envious. Most of his expeditions to Jotunheim seem motivated by the love of a good fight rather than by any racial hatred of giants.

All these qualities — strength, courage, enterprise, loyalty and simple lust for life — were greatly admired by the Vikings and historical leaders who lacked any of them often drew criticism from the saga writers.

Thor’s more straightforward approach to battle, seeming to revel in the joy of fighting, would have made him more appealing to the average Norse warrior to emulate in skirmishes. The unpredictable Odin was more esoteric in his role in combat, giving berserkers their battle madness, and the Flateyarbok tells of a kind of curse or spell in which a pagan king of Sweden invoked Odin to overcome his enemies in war.

"HE IS A PEERLESS WARRIOR, A FEARLESS TRAVELLER AND QUICK TO AVENGE ANY INSULT TO HIMSELF OR HIS ÆSIR TRIBE"

A carved Viking funerary stone depicting some of the Norse pantheon

THOR’S MIGHTY HAMMER
The truth about the thunder god’s trusty weapon

Thor used his hammer, Mjölnir, to protect the gods in Asgard from the giants as well as to watch over humankind. As a reflection of Thor, the embodiment of a storm, Mjölnir could produce thunder and lightning and also had a number of different magical properties, such as enabling Thor to fly, being able to shrink and the ability to restore life. Thor demonstrated this when he used Mjölnir to resurrect his goats after he initially killed them. Mjölnir is famed for never missing its intended target, returning to Thor’s hand like a boomerang.

When the dwarves crafted the hammer, they mistakenly made the handle far too short. Thor wore iron gauntlets, known as jämpring, to enable him to grip the handle firmly and a belt, megingjörð, to cope with the hammer’s enormous strength, which doubled his strength and therefore made it easier for him to wield his mighty weapon.

Thor’s hammer also played an important role in formal ceremonies and consecration, effectively providing protection and order in the community. Interestingly, although Thor famously wielded Mjölnir, war hammers were not used in combat until the late Medieval period, post-Viking Age.
MEET THE SKALD

Much of what we know about Thor was recorded by the Icelandic poet Snorri Sturluson.

Born in Iceland in 1179, Snorri Sturluson was raised by Jon Loftsson, a relative of the Norwegian royal family. His education probably included the work of Sæmundr ‘the Learned’ Sigfusson, Loftsson’s grandfather and the author (or, some scholars say, simply the compiler) of the Poetic Edda (or Older Edda), a collection of retold myths.

Snorri was wealthy and became renowned as a poet and lawyer. In 1215, he was elected to the position of Lawspeaker of the Althing, Iceland’s highest office, but became embroiled in a plot to bring Iceland under Norwegian rule and was assassinated.

Snorri is best known today for the Prose Edda (or Younger Edda), which, together with the Poetic Edda, makes up our main source for Norse mythology. He also composed the Heimskringla, a history of the kings of Norway from the 9th century to 1177.

As a poet, Snorri would have encountered legends and historical tales, many existing only in oral form. Having studied the Poetic Edda as a boy, he may have decided to preserve these tales and match the work of the famous Sæmundr. The gods in the Prose Edda act more like superheroes; it is not known whether Snorri rewrote the stories for Christian readers or whether they had already been sanitised by two centuries of oral transmission in a Christian country.
In Norse mythology, Ragnarök is a prophesised battle that will see the gods assemble to face off against their greatest enemies and (spoiler alert) they will lose. Odin will be swallowed whole by the enormous wolf Fenrir; the fire giant Sutr will defeat Frey; Heimdallr and Loki will kill each other; and mighty Thor — though he will beat the Midgard Serpent first — will collapse dead.

While the gods fight, the earth will quake before submerging under the water, the sun will blacken and the heavens will burn. Ragnarök is essentially the Viking equivalent of the biblical apocalypse, but where the Christian end of the world is final, Ragnarok is cyclical.

The prophecy ends with the promise that the world will resurface, renewed and fertile. Two humans will repopulate the Earth and the gods will return. In comic book terms, Ragnarök is more like the elaborate crossover events that Marvel and DC run before they want to revamp their characters.

It’s fitting, then, that while Thor is not the supreme deity he once was, he lives on. His name is given to the fourth day of the week, in place names like Thundersley, Thundridge and Thursley, the chemical element thorium, and in personal names like Thorolf, Torstan and Torvald, which are still used today.

Beyond the Australian actor fighting aliens on the silver screen, the legend of Thor has also been revived and retold down the years. As well as the Christian Snorri Sturluson erasing the religious aspect from Thor’s sagas, the Old English work Solomon ad Saturn goes further, even recruiting him to the side of Christianity.

In its pages, Thor — under his Anglo-Saxon name of Thunor — strikes the Devil with a fiery axe, much as he slew giants with his hammer. Thor and the rest of the Norse sagas have also been reinvented by literary greats including Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Rudyard Kipling, JRR Tolkein and Neil Gaiman.

Beyond literature, Swiss painter Henry Fuseli reimagines the deity by putting oils on canvas for his Neoclassical nude Thor Battering the Midgard Serpent from 1790. The Swedish historical painter Marten Eskil Winge took a more literal approach in Thor’s Fight with the Giants in 1872, in which the thunder god rides on a chariot pulled by goats. He also appears in 19th-century composer Richard Wagner’s epic Ring Cycle.

Of course, in 1962, Thor was resurrected once more by comic book writer Stan Lee and artist Jack Kirby. But while Marvel keeps on churning out pages and making blockbuster movies, it seems that the thunder god has a bigger franchise than any of the other Avengers and will outlast them all.
SECRETS OF THE BOG PEOPLE

MEET THE MYSTERIOUS IRON AGE MUMMIES BURIED IN NORTHWEST EUROPE’S SWAMPS

Written by Jerry Glover
The Iron Age bog bodies of northwest Europe are some of the best naturally preserved human remains from the ancient past. While their skin looks like tanned leather and their bodies are seemingly deflated, they are pretty similar to you or me, which is astonishing considering many of them are at least 2,000 years old.

Hundreds of these mummies have been found in the peat bogs of England, Ireland, the Netherlands, Denmark and northern Germany. While sometimes only heads and arms are uncovered, the complete cadavers that have been unearthed often bear traces of terrible violence. Occasionally hanged or stabbed or with their throats and stomachs slashed open, the shocking ways in which these people died both repel and fascinate. One of history’s most profound murder mysteries, no contemporary writing can tell us for sure why they were killed or buried in violation of the normal death rites. But evidence increasingly suggests they were key players in human sacrifices.

All of the bodies were interred in peat bogs, which form in low-lying ground where moss gathers. The small amount of oxygen prevents bacteria from breaking down the dead vegetation each year. The resulting peat increases at a rate of just one metre every 1,000 years, creating a cocktail of chemicals — humic acid — that is able to preserve soft material and bones, tanning skin like leather.

The earliest record of a bog body find comes from Shalkholz Fen in Germany in 1640. We don’t know what people thought of the mummies when they were first discovered but it was claimed that one found at Haraldskær in Jutland was the lost remains of Queen Gunnhild in 1835. According to Icelandic sagas, she was a cunning witch who was lured to the bog and drowned by King Harald Bluetooth in the 10th century.

We now know that Haraldskær Woman is actually 1,500 years old, so she can’t be Gunnhild. Her proximity to Bluetooth’s royal residence at Jelling may have caused her misidentification. Cases of mistaken identity have happened elsewhere. The finding of a preserved Iron Age woman’s head in Lindow Moss, England, in 1983 caused a local man to confess to the murder and disposal of his wife in the same bog — a mistake that led to his conviction.

Research into Denmark’s bog bodies began in 1859 when Conrad Engelhardt investigated Nydam Mose in Jutland, finding iron weapons and an oak boat. They have now yielded over 500 Iron Age bodies from between 400 BCE and 400 CE.

For his astonishing preservation and calm appearance, the most celebrated of these is the man who was found in Jutland’s Tollund Fen in 1950. He lay on his side as if sleeping, his only attire a pointed skin cap, fastened under the chin by a hide string, and a hide belt around his waist. A rope of two twisted leather strings encircled his neck, drawn tight to cause lacerations, then it coiled across the shoulder and down his back. A few days of stubble covered his chin and upper lip but otherwise he was clean-shaven.

Danish police took a fingerprint analysis from his right thumb and found that it was indistinguishable from that of a living person, a result of him being buried in the bog when the water was cold. If it had been more than 4°C, the soft body parts would have begun to decompose before the humic acid could entirely infuse the corpse, arresting the decay.

Tollund Man’s excellent decomposition was due to a large amount of collagen fibres that were tanned by the moss in his dermis (inner) skin layer, as well as the keratin of his hair, fingers and toenails. The tanning effect also preserved the lacerations made by the noose and his wounds. Likewise, his brain was remarkably well preserved and his teeth were intact.

Like most other Danish bog bodies, Tollund Man lived and died around the midpoint of the period when ironwork emerged in northwest Europe, between 500 BCE and 200 CE. Anaerobic bacteria, which don’t need oxygen, concentrate iron deposits around bogs, leaving behind oily springs to show these iron ‘bog ore’ deposits.

After about 500 BCE, the peoples inhabiting northwest Europe began to source and work this ore, needing about four football-sized lumps to make just one axe head. Since iron is easier to source than the tin and copper that make up bronze, and is more durable, its discovery transformed lives and social orders across Europe. The bogs that made this possible with peat and iron ore were therefore considered to be special and sacred places, and Tollund Man’s area was rich in the stuff.

In the age of the bog people, the dead were often burnt on a pyre. Afterwards, their bones were gathered up, put in urns or wrapped in cloth and often buried under a mound with a few goods.
To some cultures, cremation was bound with the belief that fire helped the body give up the soul so it could travel to the land of the dead to be reborn. Contrast this with the burials of the mummies, who were left in places where their remains were suspended with their souls unable to leave, and it suggests their deaths served a different purpose.

Before dying, the victims all received a last meal. Tollund Man and Grauballe Man enjoyed a grainy gruel, and the latter's contained a hallucinogenic fungus. He was killed when his throat was neatly sliced, from ear to ear.

The lack of fruits and vegetables shows that these men died in winter or early spring, possibly during the midwinter celebrations, a time connected to sacrifice. Perhaps their villages were on the edge of famine and the men were gifts for the gods in hope of a more successful harvest.

Little gold figures found in Danish bogs depict naked figures with belts and neck nooses, just like Tollund Man. The Oseberg Tapestry and picture stones, both dating from 700 to 900 CE, also show hangings as offerings to Odin, the god connected to sacrifice. Perhaps their villages were prized by the Druids as a powerful medicine. From other clues such as the fox fur around his arm and his well-kept fingernails, it has been speculated that he was an aristocrat or even a Druid priest-in-training.

His unusual death—his remains show signs of bludgeoning, garrotting and strangling—and the year of around 60 CE make it possible that he was ritually sacrificed as a last resort against the Roman advance. General Gaius Suetonius Paulinus was marching towards the island of Anglesey, a conquest is refuted by experts who see them as murder victims. But if Tollund Man was murdered, why was he so carefully buried? Similarly, if Tollund Man was hanged as a criminal, why was he so carefully buried?

The high status of some of these bog people can also be seen in Ireland. For instance, Old Croghan Man from County Offaly was tall and enjoyed a meat-rich diet and manicures. In County Meath, meanwhile, Clonycavan Man’s hair was styled with an expensive gel made from plant oil and pine resin, likely imported from France or Spain.

Before dying, the victims all received a last meal. Tollund Man ate a cooked mixed grain cake called bannock. Some of it was burnt, possibly singling him out for death. He also ate mistletoe, prized by the Druids as a powerful medicine. From other clues such as the fox fur around his arm and his well-kept fingernails, it has been speculated that he was an aristocrat or even a Druid priest-in-training.

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Both were killed, mutilated and deposited in bogs near hills where kings were invested or at the intersections of tribal boundaries.

Irish legends add to the idea that these two men were kings who were sacrificed to ensure the fertility of their lands in hard times. The 4,000-year-old Cashel Man from County Laois, pinned in the bog with stakes, attests to a very ancient Irish tradition of ritual killing.

Dyed woolen clothes, amber beads and a bone comb testify to the wealth of Denmark’s Huldremose Woman, who met her violent end in approximately 150 CE. Recent analysis of her garments revealed their exotic foreign origin, which probably meant she had either traded or travelled abroad for them. Alternatively, she may possibly have emigrated to Denmark.

Similar unusual connections came from a study of Haraldskær Woman in 2014, kindling the idea that these women were considered to be special because of their outsider status and they were thus more efficacious as sacrifices. This theory argues that they were shamanic wisewomen who went willingly as gifts to the marsh goddess, blessing their communities with their own special sacrificial value as a result. It also possible that they were despised foreigners or prisoners of war.

According to Tacitus, a Roman historian, Germanic tribes punished cowards and the “disreputable of body” by drowning them in marshes under walled hurdles, which may have been what happened to Haraldskær Woman. This also occurred in Ireland and northern Germany.

Since these tribes didn’t write about themselves, Tacitus is one of our best sources about them, although his records relied on second-hand sources regarding their customs as he never visited them himself. His accounts also serve to justify the subjugation of the “barbarians” at the fringes of the Roman Empire.
Raised bog
The best-preserved bodies were all found in raised bogs, which form in basins where poor drainage leaves the ground waterlogged and slows plant decay. A raised bog contains few minerals and very little oxygen.

Natural preservatives
Peat comprises decaying pollen and vegetation — mainly sphagnum moss — where bog bodies are found. The peat releases an acid similar to vinegar that pickles the skin like leather and dyes the hair ginger.

Cold conditions
The mummies would have had to have been placed in the water during winter or early spring when the bog was coldest to refrigerate the body and prevent it from decaying.

Handled with care
Despite having been brutally murdered, bog bodies often show signs of being delicately placed. Tollund Man was found in a fetal position with his eyes and mouth deliberately closed after his death.

Secured in place
Bodies were often held down by rocks or with sharpened branches driven into the peat, likely to prevent the corpses from floating back to the surface.

Wearing a noose
Elling Woman and Tollund Man were hanged, the ropes still around their necks in death. The Borneomose Man was hanged or strangled with a rope noose. Yde Girl was strangled with a woolen belt.

In the most significant weather event since the Ice Age, Europe became dramatically colder and wetter after about 750 BCE. The resulting bad harvests produced may have stoked a widespread feeling that the angry gods had to be placated by human sacrifices.

So-called ‘water cults’ saw a revival in western Europe, with offerings of weapons starting at lakes and rivers — perhaps these included humans when people were really desperate. Just how many of these killings were happening? Since water doesn’t preserve skin and bone, we can only ever know the bog sacrifices and further clues exist to signify the importance of making offerings to watery places.

The rarest and most prestigious of bog depositions in Denmark’s pre-Roman Iron Age coinciding with the bog bodies are bronze and silver cauldrons, a number of which have been discovered. The finest is the Gundestrup Cauldron, which may have originated as far away as the Balkans before it was dismantled and interred in the Danish bog around 100 BCE, close to the sites of three bog bodies. On 13 silver plates, it depicts the mysteries of the mummies’ religion, either the male or female pantheon of deities, or possibly religious officials such as Druids or shamans.

One plate shows a large figure plunging warriors into a kind of cauldron, while ‘reborn’ warriors on horses ride away in a procession. Another panel shows a cross-legged horned figure holding a torc and a snake — a shamanic god among animals.

In Celtic mythology, the origins of cauldrons are always mysterious. As a symbol of rebirth, the cauldron is part of other Indo-European traditions and it foreshadows the symbol of the Holy Grail, while its iconography shares motifs with ancient art from the Near East and even India with its cross-legged shaman.

Most scholars believe that the cauldrons were votive offerings to the indigenous gods, perhaps because the earlier human sacrifices were not propitious enough for them and the deities required more precious gifts. The more valuable the sacrifice, the more pleased the gods would be.
WHERE THE BODIES ARE BURIED

Mummies have been found all over northwest Europe, particularly in areas with a high concentration of peat.

**01 Tollund Man**
- The best preserved bog body was about 30 when he was hanged in the 4th-3rd centuries BCE. Apart from a cap, belt and a noose around his neck, he was buried naked.

**02 Lindow Man**
- This young man was strangled, bludgeoned and had his throat cut sometime in the 1st century CE at Lindow Moss in Cheshire. This was Britain’s first well-preserved bog body.

**03 Grauballe Man**
- Discovered in Denmark in 1952, this 30-year-old man may have experienced starvation before having his throat cut from ear to ear around the third century BCE.

**04 Cashel Man**
- Possibly a king, Cashel Man lived in County Laois, Ireland, in the early Bronze Age around 2,000 BCE, making him the oldest fleshed bog body in Europe. The way in which he was buried suggests ritual sacrifice.

**05 Huldremose Woman**
- This wealthy Jutland woman wore a checked woollen blue skirt, a red scarf and two sheepskin capes. She also had a comb and headband, and ate a form of rye bread before being hanged.

**06 Kayhausen Boy**
- One of the few children to be found in a peat bog, this seven-year-old boy met his end after being stabbed in the throat three times with a dagger. He died in the 4th century BCE in Lower Saxony, Germany.

**07 Elling Woman**
- This woman died in her 20s and was found wrapped in a sheepskin cape with a leather cloak tied around her legs. Her long, red hair was split into seven twisted pigtails and she is thought to have been hanged around 280 BCE.

**08 Haraldskær Woman**
- Found in Gunnhild’s Bog in Jutland, she was misidentified as Queen Gunnhild, who was drowned in a bog in the 10th century in Icelandic sagas. She is actually 15 centuries older!

**09 Yde Girl**
- This 16-year-old, who lived in the early 1st or late 2nd century BCE, was found wrapped in a woollen cape in northeast Holland in 1897. She suffered from a curved spine and had long, reddish-blonde hair.

**10 Old Croghan Man**
- At almost two metres, this man from County Offaly, Ireland, was unusually tall for his time. Possibly royal, he was in his early 20s when he died between 362 and 175 BCE. Only his torso survives today.
The Huldremose Woman, who was found in Denmark in 1879

Even so, the possibility of how this and the other cauldrons were hidden to prevent them becoming the spoils of other tribes, later forgotten when the communities who interred them were displaced, cannot be ruled out. With no first-hand accounts to tell us for certain, we are only able to hazard conjectures. Yet as the evidence grows, so scholarship tends more towards the idea of ritualised offerings.

The greatest amount of Iron Age bog deposits in Denmark comprise swords, spearheads and shields that were bent or broken before being carefully arranged in bundles and placed in bogs or cast out into lakes. Serving as votive offerings to the gods, these weapons were usually the war booty from military clashes between Scandinavians and Romans. Of Denmark’s many weapon-sacrifice sites, the most prominent is Illerup Adal, where at least three deposits amount to thousands of items.

Julius Caesar, who related similar activities when he was in Gaul, corroborates the ritual purpose of these weapon-sacrifices. Ultimately, for having supplied the weapons for these conflicts to armies on both sides, Roman merchants profited the most.

Bog bodies are not known to accompany these types of deposits and the Danish weapon-sacrifices reached a peak of intensity between 200 and 450 CE, closely coincident with Roman expansion into northern Europe and the waning of ritual bog killings in Denmark. Furthermore, the emergence of a political nucleus in eastern Jutland at the same time could also have been a significant factor in the decline of the bog bodies as the weapon-sacrifices replaced the human ones.

Surprisingly, Ireland’s bog bodies have also turned up a considerable amount of Iron Age butter. Resembling cheese, the so-called ‘bog butter’ usually comes in earthenware pots, or wrapped in animal skins or bark. In 2013, a 5,000-year-old piece weighing some 45 kilograms was found in County Offay, and a 35-kilogram chunk that is 3,000 years old was found in County Kildare in 2009. Around 300 more examples have emerged.

Since bogs make good natural refrigerators, it could simply be that the butter was deposited to preserve it, or improve the taste. Those brave enough to have tried recreations describe it as “gammy” and “funky”. But if the intention was to retrieve it later, then why was so much butter left in the ground?

Perhaps they were survival caches, put away for leaner times and later forgotten. Yet since butter was valuable — and later used to pay taxes — it seems much more likely that they were sometimes buried as protection from thieves, or even made as sacred offerings to the gods.

The bog body phenomenon peaked around the 2nd century BCE before tailing off around the time that the Roman Empire was spreading into the north of Europe. It’s worth mentioning that this was also a time when political power was being consolidated in eastern Jutland.

The pattern of the bog body deaths in similar ways and means suggests that, despite the great distances between them, the peoples of northwest Europe shared broadly similar perceptions about the sacred importance of ritual offerings made to watery places, even if the precise circumstances of individual bog bodies and depositions vary.

These beliefs lasted centuries and even survive today whenever a wish is made before throwing a coin into a fountain. Out there, somewhere in the mires, there must be other bog bodies that can tell us even more about why they came to be.

An illustration of the buried boat found at Nydam by Conrad Engelhardt in 1859

Does scientific evidence support the theory that many bog people were ritually killed?

In speaking to colleagues involved in bog body research, particularly in Denmark, there is widespread agreement that scientific techniques applied serve to endorse and bolster ideas of ritualised deaths.

Of course, it is impossible to be dogmatic and assume that all the bodies we know about died in sacrificial circumstances, but the highly choreographed killings, the overkill violence and the ‘last suppers’ of so many all seem to point to the choice for bog-based ceremonies being wrapped around with ritual behaviour.

Which is your favourite bog body?

One is Haraldskaer Woman and the other is Clonycavan Man from Ireland. New examination of both has the potential for revealing many more secrets associated with seasonality, status and links with foreign lands.

Is it right to display these kinds of human remains in much the same way as other artefacts?

Ethical issues are important. These are people, not artefacts, and need to be accorded respect. If they are to be displayed, the model of excellence is the Tollund Man room in Silkeborg Museum, where he resides peacefully in a small room in Silkeborg Museum, where he resides peacefully in a small room in Silkeborg Museum, where he resides peacefully in a small room in Silkeborg Museum, where he resides peacefully in a small room in Silkeborg Museum, where he resides peacefully in a small room

Recent research highlights the geographic outsider status of two of the Danish bog bodies (the women of Huldremose and Haraldskær). Do you agree that this was the most important factor in their deaths?

This new interpretation is very important for endeavours to understand who these people were in life. In no way does it detract from the idea of the special status accorded those who ended up as bog people.

The idea of the spiritual journey makes total sense to the notion that Haraldskaer Woman was some kind of religious leader, even a shaman. But image was important in the ancient world and someone who had travelled widely would have been invested with exotic and powerful status. Not many people within Iron Age communities would have had the opportunity to make such journeys; they would be expensive, time-consuming and potentially risky, so those undertaking them would not have done so lightly.

Do you think other bog bodies could have had a similar ‘outsider’ status?

I suspect this might be the case. I think I’m right in saying that there is evidence that Tollund Man also made a long journey in the months before he died. This idea has a particular interest in terms of the bog people who had some disability that made walking difficult, such as Yde Girl and Kayhausen Boy. For these individuals, a pilgrimage would itself have been a huge act of self-sacrifice.

A PILGRIM’S PICKLING

Miranda Aldhouse-Green, emeritus professor of archaeology at Cardiff University, says that many bog people may have been on spiritual journeys...
This Ancient Greek state is a world where discipline rules. In a society that prides itself on its warriors, boys as young as seven are already undergoing the agoge, a strict education and training regime that is compulsory for all male Spartans except the king’s firstborn son.

It is a society of three parts. At the top sit the Spartans, who enjoy a state-financed education regardless of their gender, with each man expected to do his bit to make Sparta great. In the middle are the perioikoi, who were craftspeople and weapon smiths, and at the bottom are the helots, enslaved prisoners responsible for performing the chores and labour that the Spartan men, busy training and fighting, cannot.

This is a state that expects loyalty from every citizen. Built on war, its enemies are many and its appetite for conquering is undiminished. Tread carefully here.

WHERE TO STAY

Unfortunately, Spartans don’t put a lot of emphasis on luxury hotels and mod cons, so why not join the locals and stay in a Spartan barracks? These quarters are the home of Spartan boys from the age of seven until their 30th birthday. They can’t even leave it when they get married - they are expected to sneak out at night to visit their wives! You don’t get much privacy in the communal barracks but there’s plenty to do during your stay. With a rigidly structured physical training programme compulsory for every resident, you’ll never be at a loss for how to spend your time.

Dos & don’ts

Grow your hair long
Spartan men grow their hair long and style it before battle. It’s a cheap and eye-catching way of adding flair to your fearsome look!

Cut down on clothes
To look like a warrior, throw off your clothes and don the obligatory scarlet cape.

Join in with activities
Spartan society places a great deal of emphasis on working together for the good of all - everyone is expected to do their bit.

Laugh along with the locals
Don’t miss the rituals in which Spartan girls entertain with comical songs about the men they know!

Expect to see your spouse
Though you’ll be able to marry from the age of 20, you can’t live with your spouse. Husbands have to sneak out of barracks to enjoy a tryst!

Expect to be well fed
Food is rationed to keep warriors trim. Whatever you do, don’t put on any weight or you’ll become a target of public ridicule!

Admit you’re foreign
While foreigners can live in Sparta, they can’t hold official positions. They don’t have any rights and are subject to expulsion at any time.

Surrender in battle
A Spartan who surrenders commits the most grievous sin imaginable. Even mothers tell their sons to return from war a soldier or die trying.
WHO TO BEFRIEND

Leonidas

Leonidas I is Sparta’s warrior king, the son of Anaxandridas II. Although the king's firstborn son was exempt from the agoge, as third son, Leonidas didn’t just train - he excelled. The notoriously strict regime forged him into a fearsome warrior and a leader with a talent for diplomacy as well as war. Leonidas I led the combined Greek armies against Persia’s attempted invasion in 480 BCE and became a hero to his people when he died surrounded by the enemy at the Battle of Thermopylae. Fearsome, loyal and a born strategist, you can expect him to lay down his life for his land.

Extra tip: Don’t mention sibling rivalry if you want to stay on Leonidas I’s good side. His elder brothers, Cleomenes and Dorieus, were born to different mothers and fought bitterly over who should succeed to the throne. When Cleomenes was proclaimed king, the furious Dorieus left Sparta for good.

WHO TO AVOID

Nabis

Nabis seized power in 207 BCE by executing his two fellow claimants to the Spartan throne. Though Nabis likes to think of himself as a king, not everyone looks on him so kindly. On the one hand he freed a lot of slaves and made them Spartan citizens, but on the other he exiled the rich and claimed their estates for the nation.

If you find yourself on a visit to the region of Laconia, you might want to think about making it a day trip - Nabis will cost Sparta this important territory by entering a dispute with the Romans that will end in war.

Helpful skills

Religious ritual

The Spartans honour the god Carneus with Carnea, a national harvest festival and suspension of military operations. The festival begins with an athletic display and culminates with the sacrifice of a ram.

Metal work

While you won’t enjoy the same rights as other Spartans if you become a perioikos blacksmith, your work forging weaponry will be vital to Sparta’s military might.

Military training

Warrior training favours the rough and tumble. Barefoot and near-naked, Spartans are taught to live off the land and become masters of hand-to-hand and armed combat.
Keeping the Gods Sweet

More than just a delicious treat, honey played a vital role in Ancient Egyptian life from being offered to the gods to embalming mummies.

When Howard Carter uncovered the lost tomb of Tutankhamun in 1922, he was astonished by what he found. "It was a sight surpassing all precedent, and one we never dreamed of seeing," he later wrote. Though it had been partly looted in ancient times, the royal necropolis still contained a vast hoard of treasures. Much has been made of the famous pharaoh's opulent sarcophagus and the royal chariot, life-size statues and richly decorated throne that were buried with him.

However, some of King Tut's prized possessions that are often overlooked are the numerous jars of honey that he took to the grave with him. Tutankhamun was not alone, many pharaohs did this. Honey played an important role in every facet of Ancient Egyptian life. As well as being used as a sweetener for cakes, both honey and beeswax were used in religious rituals and was even used as a medicine to treat wounds. While pharaohs would flaunt their wealth through honey, beekeeping would employ hundreds if not thousands of workers. You could go as far as to say the sticky substance played such a pivotal role that it was the glue that bound Ancient Egyptian society together.

A testament to how highly valued honey was to the Ancient Egyptians, they developed an elaborate mythology surrounding it. According to the Salt Magical Papyrus, when the god Re wept, his tears turned into bees upon hitting the earth. These creatures then toiled among the flowers and trees, producing honey. Elsewhere in some of the Pyramid Texts, it is said that the sky goddess Nut could take the form of a bee. The goddess Neith's temple at Sais, in the Nile Delta, was known as the 'House of the Bee'.

Honey was also incorporated into many religious rituals. Honey featured in the 'Opening the Mouth' ceremony, in which the deceased was prepared for the afterlife by symbolically having their mouth opened, so they could eat and drink once their soul crossed over. In one section of it, known as the 'Chapter of the Festal Perfume in the Form of Honey', the priest recited "Hail, Amun-Re, Lord of the Throne of the Two Lands! I present unto thee honey, the Eye of Horus, the Sweet One, the exudation from the Eye of Re, the Lord of Offerings, Amun-Re, the Lord of the Two Lands is flooded therewith, for it is sweet to thine heart, and it shall never depart from thee." In both texts, bees or honey are symbolically shown coming from Re's eyes.

Honey was also a key ingredient in the embalming fluid used to prepare mummies. This actually had a solid basis in science. When combined with bodily fluids, honey creates hydrogen peroxide which slows the growth of bacteria, in turn slowing the corpse's decomposition.

Written by Marc DeSantis
A pot from the era of First Dynasty pharaoh Semerkhet, with a bee hieroglyph prominent

Likely for the same reason, the Egyptians used honey to treat injuries. Hundreds of prescriptions involving honey are found in surviving medical papyri. As well as being used as an ointment, it would have made their often unpalatable medicines go down more easily.

Honey also figured in marriage ceremonies, with a husband pledging “I take thee to wife... and promise to deliver to thee yearly 12 jars of honey.” The Egyptians also believed that the destruction of waxen sculptures moulded by a magician could hurt the target in real life. This figured in rituals performed at the Temple of Amun-Re. In those services, held each day, a beeswax figure of the underworld demon god Apophis, Ra's foe, was used as a means of destroying the evil god. In another example, Pharaoh Nectanebo II, who ruled Egypt c. 360-342 BCE, is said to have been contemplating a naval battle against an enemy. He built a fleet of miniature model enemy ships out of beeswax and the recited an incantation over them. The little boats sank, and so he hoped the ships of his opponent would, too.

The Westcar Papyrus relates that a priest named Aba-aner, who lived during Egypt's Old Kingdom period of roughly 2686-2181 BCE, and fashioned a crocodile out of beeswax and placed it within a pool where his straying wife's lover had a habit of taking his bath. When this man came near to the pool, the wax crocodile came to life, grabbed him and dragged the love rival beneath the water, never to be seen again.

Honey was also often given as an offering to gods. While ordinary people would give what they could, pharaoh Ramesses III (c. 1217-1155 BCE) took it to the next level. Legend claims he bequeathed huge quantities of honey to the priests of Egypt. He made an offering of an extremely large amount of honey to the god Hapi.

“...the Egyptians also believed that the destruction of waxen sculptures moulded by a magician could hurt the target in real life”

Perhaps due to its association with the gods or the simple fact that its high demand made it expensive, honey became something of a status symbol. Pharaohs - like the overly generous Ramesses III - would make a show of how much of it they could afford, as a display of their wealth and power. In a particularly cruel example of conspicuous consumption, Pepy II (c. 2325-c. 2150 BCE), would boast that he had a great system for avoiding insect bites: he would cover a slave in honey. Flies swarmed to the slave and left Pepy in peace.

However, in any discussion of the Ancient Egyptian's honey obsession, someone always points out that since the civilisation's First Dynasty, all the way back in 3100 BCE, one of a pharaohs many grand titles was 'He of the Reed and Bee'. To see this as a reflection of the high esteem with which the honeybee was held is rather too simplistic interpretation. In fact, the bee hieroglyph denoted rule over Upper Egypt. Therefore to call the pharaoh 'He of the Reed and Bee' was to emphasise the extent of the ruler's dominion. If you went back to the original source...
Long-Lasting Honey

Incredibly, the honey found in Egyptian tombs is often still edible. There are a number of reasons for this. Honey is a sugar and it has a very low water content, making it a poor environment for microorganisms that would cause other foods to go bad. Further, the glucose in the honey is converted by an enzyme into hydrogen peroxide and glutonic acid. The glutonic acid depresses the honey's pH to such a low acidic level that it further hinders bacterial growth. These characteristics make it useful as an effective treatment for cuts and burns and as a preservative. However, you might think twice before tasting it. A team of robbers were digging for treasure in the graves outside the Pyramids. They found a sealed jar containing honey. They began eating the tasty substance, dipping in with bread, continuing until one of them noticed that one of his fellows had a hair on his fingers. To their horror, they found that inside the jar had been preserved the body of a young child.

The process of getting honey was clearly a large-scale operation, of great importance to the Egyptian people. The Kahun Papyri states 'he hath united the two lands, he hath joined the reed to the bee'. By extension, the many hieroglyphs of bees that have been found in tombs.

Hive of activity

To fuel their honey addiction, the Egyptians employed various methods. Foreigners were offered forced to pay it as a form of tribute. The mighty warrior-pharaoh Tuthmosis III received numerous jars of honey from Syria. It was also noted as one of the spoils collected from the alien Hyksos by Pharaoh Kamose in the 16th century BCE.

However, the greater part of the Egypt's honey was produced locally. The Nile River, which runs the length of Egypt, proved to be a welcoming habitat for bees. The annual flooding of the Nile deposited a dark, nutrient-rich soil wherever its waters reached. Farmers then used the river to irrigate their plots. The result was a bounty of crops in the lush riverland, which in later years would earn Egypt the nickname 'the breadbasket of Rome'. We know Egyptian bees would have feasted on this crop, as the preserved honey that has been recovered from Egyptian tombs has been tested and proven to contain nectar and pollen collected by the busy insects from fruits and vegetables cultivated by the Egyptians. It also contains traces of the pollen of plants grown to provide fodder for animals, including clover and alfalfa. The flavour would have seeped into the honey, and depending on the type of plant the bee has been harvesting, the floral aroma and taste will vary from pot to pot.

While honey-hunters collected the golden syrup from hives found in the wild, bees were also systematically farmed to provide the country with a constant flow of the sweet stuff. A sign of the coordination involved, one official during
In the Middle Kingdom (c. 2040-1710 BCE) the title 'Overseer of Beekeepers of the Entire Land' was held. Much later, in the Ptolemaic period (305-30 BCE) archaeologists have found evidence of enormous apiaries at Fayum. One person who lived in Fayum owned some 5,000 hives. Professional beekeepers were employed to man these hives. Remarkably, these beekeepers travelled with their hives all over the country.

A papyrus discovered at Fayum, dating to the third century BCE, indicates that bees would be transported across Egypt to make the most of the earlier and later flowering times of different kinds of plants. This 'Petition from the Beekeepers' was written by a group of beekeepers to an official by the name of Zenon, complaining that the donkeys needed to transport the hives back from the fields outside the city of Philadelphia. The bees were supposed to have been in the fields for 10 days, but 18 passed, while donkeys were nowhere to be seen. The local peasantry were eager to flood the fields and burn brushwood. If the donkeys were not sent soon, the beekeepers warned that 'the hives will be ruined'.

Given how reliant we now know Ancient Egyptian society was on this sticky treat, let's hope that those donkeys eventually arrived.
Did Alexander the Great’s one-on-one lessons with Greek intellectual giant Aristotle shape the iconic king’s rule?

Alexander III of Macedon, better known as Alexander the Great, built an empire that stretched from Greece to the Indian border in little more than a decade. But as well as being a mighty conqueror, he was famed for his intellect, showing a keen interest in philosophy, medicine and science. This perhaps comes as no surprise as he was taught by none other than Aristotle, the Greek philosopher whose ideas are now a pillar of Western thought. But how did this intellectual giant come to teach a teenage prince and how faithfully did the conqueror live up to his schoolmaster’s ideals?

Most of our knowledge of Alexander the Great comes to us from second- and third-hand accounts written hundreds of years after his death, which tend to give his life the soft glow of myth. The most referenced extant source we possess is Plutarch’s Parallel Lives, which he wrote in the 2nd century CE, nearly 500 years after the emperor’s death. Plutarch gives us few details about the three-year period that the young Alexander spent studying under Aristotle, between the ages of 13 and 16. But what we do know is tantalising as, although this tutorship only lasted a short time, it may have altered the course of history.

Alexander was born in 356 BCE in the Macedonian capital of Pella. The son of King Philip II and his fourth wife, Olympias, he was raised with royal intent, receiving military training alongside schooling from Aristotle.

Written by Tom Cohen

Aristotle was about 40 when Philip hired him in 343 BCE. He had spent the previous 20 years studying with Plato, another great philosopher, at his Academy in Athens. However, he left the school suddenly around 348 BCE, most likely because Plato did not select him as his successor, appointing his nephew Speusippus instead.

Although Philip considered other eminent philosophers to tutor his son, he ultimately invited Aristotle to teach the precocious prince. This may have been because Aristotle, like Alexander and Philip, was Macedonian and his own father, Nicomachus, had served as the court physician for Philip’s father, Amyntas.

While it would have been a great honour to train a future monarch, Aristotle never explained why he accepted the job of royal tutor. The philosopher was widely respected in his own lifetime, so would have other options after leaving Plato’s Academy. Aristotle possibly already dreamt of establishing his own rival school in Athens and knew royal patronage would make this possible. As part of Aristotle’s contract, we do know Philip agreed to restore his home city of Stagira, which the king had razed several years earlier as punishment for an uprising against his rule.
Aristotle was given a small temple dedicated to the nymphs to use as a classroom in the village of Mieza, just outside of Pella. Incredibly, you can still see the stone seats they sat on and the shady walks the philosopher was wont to take among its ruins today. As well as Alexander, Aristotle’s school took in several other high-ranking children. Many of these would go onto become some of Alexander’s most trusted generals and companions, including Hephaestion, Ptolemy, Cassander and Cleitus.

Plutarch says that the class’ lessons were centred on ethics, politics, philosophy and rhetoric. Aristotle may have also lectured the group on Plato’s so-called ‘unwritten doctrines’. While these are now lost to history, they likely included Plato’s metaphysical and spiritual speculations, which were normally reserved for initiates of his Academy and not widely shared.

Aristotle also wrote short instructional pamphlets specifically to train Alexander in becoming a good king. Again, we don’t know exactly what these contained but a later biographer, Diogenes Laërtius, preserved the titles, which include On Kingship, In Praise of Colonies, Alexander’s Assembly and The Glories af Riches.

The general education of young men in Ancient Greece at that time involved a close study of poets, philosophers and playwrights from Homer to Sophocles. But Aristotle also had an immense interest in the sciences and he made sure to teach Alexander everything he knew about biology, physics and medicine. The prince must have taken this on board as in later life he was known to aggressively prescribe diets, medicines and exercises to his friends when they fell ill. Alexander also sent exotic plants and animals back to his old tutor so that he could study them.

After his death in Babylon, Alexander’s will went so far as to suggest his quest to conquer the world was partially scientific, and that he had planned to cross the Indian Ocean, and circumnavigate the Horn of Africa to further both his dominion and understanding. While this could be chalked up as bluster (after all, Napoleon made similar claims), Alexander was as much the intellectual heir of Aristotle as he was the royal successor of Macedonia. This philosophical inheritance was handed down to Aristotle from Plato, who himself had been taught by Socrates – a triumvirate that includes some of the greatest Ancient Greek minds.

Alexander took this role very seriously. When on campaign in Persia, he found out that Aristotle had published some of Plato’s aforementioned unwritten doctrines. He wrote a stern letter illustrating his displeasure, saying, “I had rather excel others in the knowledge of what is excellent, than in the extent of my power and dominion.”

However anecdotal this correspondence may be, it certainly does characterise Alexander’s charisma and the ideology of Aristotle. The future leader of Macedonia believed that he was exceptional and that philosophy was sacrosanct – his education had helped him to achieve his rank. It is possible that Aristotle’s teachings had informed his self-perception as well as his ability to attain greatness.

Like most royals, Alexander was primed for success, but seldom does a prince have instruction in how to bring this quality to fruition. A major part of Aristotelian philosophy is actually concerned with realising potential – a person who wants to be great is required to practice wisdom and strive for excellence. This excellence, or arete, is the Ancient Greek concept that the greatest excel through virtue, intelligence, nobility of birth and beauty of body.
In addition, Aristotle wrote about entelechy, which is concerned with how a person can realise their potential. It examines causes and effects to better understand how events unfold and how people develop. Aristotle would have taught Alexander to analyse his life to make it more excellent and how to study a range of outcomes to select the best course of action. This is to say that Aristotle would have taught the prince how to unlock his potential and this is why Alexander repudiates his tutor for sharing knowledge with others, because he knew that if they were to read the philosopher's ideas, they would have access to what he saw to be the 'secret knowledge' necessary to take the world.

Alexander's education manifests itself in others ways as well. For example, he didn't strive to enslave the world through mere butchery and violence. Rather, he was known to treat the people he conquered with humanity and to have shown amnesty to the wives and daughters of the Persian emperor after defeating him in battle.

While excellence is an Aristotelian ethic, the tutor would have taught the prince to read and appreciate how other revered authors treated glory, excellence and virtue. Plutarch notes that Alexander slept with a copy of Homer's Iliad under his pillow, annotated by none other than Aristotle himself. Achilles, the protagonist of the epic poem that was composed several centuries before this period, is concerned chiefly with his own personal glory and reputation, not with money or prizes. Alexander undoubtedly reflected this in his insatiable desire to conquer the world and his simultaneous charity, giving away presents and money to his soldiers and allies.

Throughout his life, Alexander's predilection for philosophy never faded. There are several anecdotes about his interactions with other eminent philosophers during his ceaseless military campaigns across eastern Europe and Asia that suggest he had a personal affinity for their eccentricities as well as their views.

Indeed, upon meeting Diogenes of Sinope, one of the founders of Cynicism who was known for his extremely simple lifestyle — and for living in a large jar in an Athenian marketplace — Alexander addressed him and offered him anything he wanted. The cheeky Diogenes merely asked the Macedonian to step out of the way so he could sunbathe more easily. Alexander, suitably impressed remarked, "But truly, if I were not Alexander, I would be Diogenes."

Despite these anecdotes that show a certain humility, Alexander's unprecedented military successes would eventually cause him to exhibit some very un-Aristotelian vices, like indulgences in wine, flattery, violence and excessive sleep. The conqueror even came to believe that he was a god and he is said to have remarked that only "sleep and sex" made him feel mortal.

On one infamous occasion, he drunkenly burned down the Persian capital of Persepolis just five months after capturing it and, in a separate incident, he killed his friend Cleitus in a drunken quarrel, spearing him through the chest and then immediately weeping with regret.

When Aristotle's tutorship of Alexander came to an end in 340 BCE, the philosopher returned to Athens and established his own school of philosophy, the Lyceum. He and his students came to be known as the Peripatetics as a result of their habit of strolling the gardens during their lessons. But after Alexander's demise in Babylon in 323 BCE, the pro-Macedonian government of Athens fell and Aristotle was forced to flee for his life, remarking that he would "not allow Athens to sin against philosophy twice", in reference to the city's execution of Socrates.

After Alexander's death, his generals greedily carved up the empire and fought among themselves. Known as the Diadochi, or Successors, several of them had been Alexander's old classmates. Ptolemy, who may have been the late ruler's half-brother, seized Egypt, and his family would rule it for several centuries until the arrival of the Romans. In fact, the infamous Cleopatra, of Julius Caesar acclaim, was a member of the Ptolemies. Just as Alexander's successes in war and statecraft can in part be attributed to Aristotle's education, so can Ptolemy's.
Alexander the Great's

Report Card

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literature</td>
<td>A+</td>
<td>A dedicated scholar of Greek literature, Alexander even slept with a copy of Homer's Iliad under his pillow long after his school days were over.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics</td>
<td>C-</td>
<td>Alexander killed his friend Cleitus in a drunken quarrel but this is somewhat balanced out in his kind treatment of Darius' wife and daughters after conquering the Persian Empire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td>Alexander had a long history of physical fitness and military prowess, and he was a notable cavalry commander. However, he was also known to overindulge in alcohol and late nights.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td>Alexander's conquests brought him unparalleled booty but he was also known to give away large sums of gold, expressing that the tons of treasure held him back from conquering more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>A+</td>
<td>Alexander inherited a curiosity of nature from Aristotle and is said to have sent his tutor exotic animal and plant specimens from the countries he conquered for cataloguing and study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>A+</td>
<td>Alexander's conquests revealed huge new swaths of the globe and connected India to Greece with trade. His will expressed his desire to explore the Indian Ocean and Africa, adventures he would never take.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two other former students, Antipater and his son Cassander, would come to rule large swaths of Alexander's empire, including where it had begun in Greece and Macedonia. Aristotle also named Antipater the executor of his will when he died in 322 BCE, suggesting they remained good friends in subsequent years. The same can't be said for Aristotle and Alexander.

Alexander fulfilled his father's promise and restored Stagira. The specimens he sent his old tutor allowed Aristotle to establish an impressive zoo and botanical garden. The king also patronised the Lyceum, so Aristotle could afford to build a vast library. But Plutarch suggests the pair fell out in later years, possibly over Alexander's treatment of the Persians.

Alexander successfully took the Persian Empire. But after overthrowing Darius III he did not show any of Aristotle's intolerance or xenophobia towards his people. In fact, his Macedonian and Greek soldiers would famously mutiny because Alexander was showing too much favour to the Persians, adopting their style of dress and giving them officer ranks in the military. Most notably, in a show of solidarity with his conquered people, Alexander went so far as to marry his generals and officers in masse to Persian noblewomen using Persian traditions in the city of Susa in 324 BCE.

Alexander himself, still married to Roxana, also married Stateira, the oldest daughter of Darius, in order to better unite the royal families of the two territories. It is possible that he understood that conquering an empire required very different virtues from ruling one and that he needed to extend qualities like grace and tolerance to all of the people in his dominion — not just Greeks — in order to rule effectively and fairly.

It is seldom in history that a great conqueror also loves virtue and knowledge. In The Republic, written 25 years before Alexander's birth, Plato anticipates a "Philosopher King" who would rule himself with virtue and lead his nation with a love of knowledge, excellence and justice. Perhaps Aristotle had been considering this idyllic goal when tutoring the Macedonian prince and hoped to unlock the incredible potential he saw in the future conqueror when he agreed to be his tutor. But Alexander died long before he could realise those lofty goals and his death cast a long shadow on the ancient world.

Despite this, Alexander's indelible accomplishments caused each subsequent conqueror to feel inadequate. Famously, Julius Caesar would weep in envy of Alexander and his memory transcends the cities that still bear his name today, such as Alexandria in Egypt.

Like Aristotle and Plato, Alexander's legacy was felt in the tidal wave of philosophy, art and ideas that poured their way from Greece to Iran, Pakistan and India in the wake of his military conquests, creating an immense synthesis of new knowledge, learning and trade across the continent.
Tamerlane's Reign of Terror
How the 'Scourge of God' built his bloody empire

Churchill 1704
How the soldier-statesman inspired his descendant Winston Churchill

Battle of the Little Bighorn
Native Americans and the US Army clash in 1876

Napoleon's Last Stand
How a reckless gamble ended an emperor's career

To Hell and Back Again
How Corporal Pagani dodged certain death on the Burma Railway

Siege of Lisbon
Liberating Lisbon from Moorish occupation in 1384
The so-called 'Scourge of God' built an empire that left people quaking from Damascus to Delhi

Written by Alice Barnes-Brown

The bloody reputation of Mongol ruler Tamerlane precedes him. Remembered for his gruesome military campaigns in which tens of millions of people may have been slaughtered, the great warrior Tamerlane — otherwise known as Timur — possessed a vast territory, stretching from Delhi to the Mediterranean. As the most powerful ruler in the 14th-century Islamic world, he was both feared and respected by his contemporaries. However, his legacy in the West mainly comes from obscene caricatures, such as Christopher Marlowe’s Tamburlaine, in which the savage emperor treats human life with as much respect as he would an ant. But was “Timur the Lame” merely a simple, brutish warrior?

A century and a half before Timur’s birth, Genghis Khan roamed the plains of Central Asia. Famously spending his life pillaging and murdering, when Genghis died, the Mongol conqueror split the spoils of his empire between four of his descendants. Chagatai, his second eldest son, was granted a large tract of land. Becoming known as the Chagatai Khanate, the steppes, deserts and mountains of the region made it one of the most beautiful parts of Genghis Khan’s old empire — but it was also one of the most remote.

Their neighbours to the north, the Golden Horde, were a scary bunch. Ruled by Genghis Khan’s grandson, these lawless tribes pillaged towns and villages from Eastern Europe to the Altay Mountains. The Chagatai Khanate, meanwhile, largely subsisted on nomadic herding and was heavily fraught with internal divisions. The khanate quickly split into two parts — the powerful east was called Moghulistan and the less fortunate west was known as Transoxiana.

It was in this divided world that Timur was born in 1336. His father, Taraqai, was a minor nobleman from the Barlas tribe — a group of nomads that made their home in the area south of Samarkand. The young Timur never stayed in one place for all that long, as his clan would repeatedly uproot themselves (and their livestock) to find the best grazing pastures whenever the seasons changed.

Realising that there was profit to be made in illegal activity, Timur turned to petty crime. His first exploits involved rustling sheep from neighbours and he quickly added banditry to his list of dodgy dealings, making travellers tremble in their boots. A man with a clear talent for violence, Timur apparently worked as a mercenary in his 20s, and was once seriously injured by an arrow during a skirmish.
"Timur was a man with a clear talent for violence"
It's estimated that Timur's armies killed up to 17 million people — or five per cent of the world's total population — but this is impossible to verify.

Timur's mission was to restore Mongol rule to the glory days of Genghis Khan.

Unable to walk properly on his right leg or raise his right arm, this unfortunate incident led to him being christened Timur-i Leng — a Turkic nickname meaning 'Timur the Lame' — which Europeans misinterpreted as 'Tamerlane'.

For some, this injury would mean the end of their crime sprees but Timur's were only just beginning. His ambitions knew no bounds and when the ruler of Transoxiana died in 1357, Timur spotted an unmissable opportunity. Aligning himself with the khan of Moghulistan, Transoxiana's archenemy, the powerful duo installed themselves on the vacant Transoxiana throne. Ilyas Khoja, the khan's son, was proclaimed king but Timur was the power behind the crown. However, he wouldn't be content with being second best for long and in 1364, he switched his loyalties yet again.

This time, Timur rushed to the side of his brother-in-law, Amir Husayn, who had a score to settle with the khan of Moghulistan and by 1366, he and Timur had conquered all of the Transoxiana region. Still, Timur had no desire to share power with anyone and turned on Husayn. In a fight to the death at the city of Balkh, Husayn was assassinated and Timur proclaimed himself the unchallenged ruler.

As he saw it, Timur's mission was to restore Mongol rule to the glory days of Genghis Khan, reigning supreme over lands from Korea to the Caspian Sea. Never one for diplomacy, Timur rushed through a political marriage to Husayn's widow, Saray Mulk Khanum. She was a direct descendant of Genghis Khan on her father's side and Timur believed that he would be able to use this to make him a more convincing leader in the eyes of the people.

If they weren't completely sold, they'd soon meet a grisly end. Timur wasted no time in showing his enemies who was boss in the most brutal way possible. He spent the first ten years of his rule establishing supremacy over his neighbours, demanding they surrender to him. If they refused, he would destroy their cities and enslave or murder everyone inside.

At the gates of Delhi, Timur allegedly massacred 100,000 Hindu prisoners.

Timur, seated in resplendent yellow on his throne, orders a military campaign against Georgia.
In his quest to be the next Genghis Khan, Timur conquered much of Asia.

**Smyrna 1402**
The port city of Smyrna, defended by the Knights Hospitaller after it was won during the Crusades, was too tempting a target for Timur to resist. In a bold move, the city refused to pay tribute to Timur, so he attacked it with siege engines and blocked the harbour to prevent people from escaping. After killing many Christian refugees and Muslims alike, he burned the city to the ground.

**Ankara 1402**
Timur marched to Ankara to meet his adversary, Bayezid I, deep within Ottoman territory. After leading his army across the desert in the heat of summer, the Ottoman emperor’s troops were exhausted. Timur cut off their main source of water, which forced them into a fight. While the Ottoman cavalry from Serbia got off to a strong start, Timur soon annihilated them and took Bayezid back to Samarkand as a spoil of war.

**The Caucasus 1385**
At the crossroads of Western Asia and Europe, Azerbaijan and its Christian neighbours Georgia and Armenia became a battleground for many empire-builders. Timur first conquered the Caucasus region in 1385 but it was snatched from him by Tokhtamysh, another Mongol warlord from the Golden Horde. On his way to Turkey in 1400, Timur with ruthless efficiency re-established his control over the region.

**Damascus 1401**
When citizens of Damascus heard Timur was on his way, they bolted the doors and took to the city walls in an attempt to defend themselves. Incredibly, Damascus held out for a full month before surrendering. Timur allegedly promised them security but once he had gained entry to the city, his true nature was revealed. He first extorted a huge ransom from its citizens, then let his men loose to do as they pleased. Only infant children and the elderly were spared death.

**Baghdad 1401**
By the time Timur had finished pillaging this once great garden city, there was nothing left but rubble. Tens of thousands of its citizens were slaughtered as vengeance for not surrendering immediately and its key civic buildings were destroyed. The only ones to survive Timur’s relentless siege were the artists and craftsmen, who were sent to Samarkand to embellish Timur’s grandiose city.

**Syr Darya River 1405**
On his way to challenge the Ming dynasty, Timur and his army stopped at the town of Otrar to wait for the bitter cold weather to pass. However, Timur fell ill. His doctors desperately tried to cure him, even by placing him in a bath of ice to bring his fever down. He apparently spoke eloquently to his companions, telling them to pray to Allah to have mercy on him. He died shortly thereafter.

**Delhi 1398**
After Timur crossed the Indus river, he headed straight for the terrified Delhi Sultanate. One story goes that Timur understood war elephants were easily scared, so he sent camels with fire on their backs to wield charge at the great beasts. The elephants ran away and the battle was won. The Mongol conqueror quickly laid siege to the rich city of Delhi, which was left entirely in ruins — leaving the few survivors of his attack homeless.
In 1383, Persia found itself on Timur's hit list. The once mighty empire was weakened by internal strife and division, which Timur took full advantage of. Beginning with the conquest of Herat, he plundered the ancient city of its treasures and destroyed many of its important landmarks.

Rumours of such horrific treatment reached other Persian cities and knowing that Timur would soon reach their walls, they had a decision to make. Some places, like Tehran, surrendered without question and Timur allegedly treated them mercifully. Others would not go down without a fight, so they were annihilated. In Isfahan, which rose up against Timur's hefty taxation, he responded by massacring its citizens and building towers out of their skulls.

The only group of people seemingly to escape such horrors were the artisans and craftspeople. Timur didn't spare them out of the kindness of his heart, though. He forcibly deported them to the city of Samarkand so they could get to work building his elaborate vision of an imperial capital. The city was to be the heart of the Islamic world and so Timur filled it with artists, architects and intellectuals from across Asia. Samarkand became a thriving hub of culture in the middle of Central Asia.

As well as simply being vainglorious, Timur's reasons for building Samarkand as an ode to God and Islamic culture were entirely practical. He was keen to legitimise his rule by both invoking Genghis Khan and stressing his role as a defender of Islam. Timur's personality cult centred on the notion that he was the 'Scourge of Allah', placed on Earth by God to defend the true religion. While he constantly floated the rules of Islam — namely, that Muslims should not kill — he invoked God often as a means of support for his military campaigns, legitimising them in the people's eyes.

But as the empire expanded, it started to incorporate peoples of different faiths, who thus had to be forced into submission. It was on this pretext that Timur invaded India in 1398. Having kept a watchful eye over the Muslim rulers of the Delhi Sultanate, the Mongol conqueror decided they had become too tolerant of their Hindu subjects and it was time for him to take matters into his own hands. In September 1398, Timur and his army of approximately 90,000 men crossed over the Indus River. Destroying cities on the way, he quickly defeated the sultan and laid waste to Delhi, which took over a year to lick its wounds.

Timur even allegedly captured 90 war elephants from India and used them to haul stone back to Samarkand for a great mosque he was building in his capital.

A year later, Timur was on the hunt for his next conquest. This time, he looked west to the Ottoman Empire and the Mamluk Sultanate of Egypt. While both had powerful Muslim rulers, Timur saw them only as usurpers who had stolen territory that rightly belonged to the Mongols. The Ottoman sultan, Bayezid I, for example, had offended Timur by taking Mongol lands in Anatolia. Timur even tried to warn him off by sending him some serious hate mail in 1399. In a letter he wrote, "Thy obedience to the Qur'an, in waging war against the infidels, is the
It was time for him to take matters into his own hands.

sole consideration that prevents us from destroying thy country".

However, Bayezid wasn’t phased. He responded with a cutting remark: "What are the arrows of the flying Tatar against the scimitars and battle-axes of my firm and invincible Janissaries?" So, an enraged Timur set out to test the Ottoman elite guard’s invincibility. On his way to Constantinople, Timur reconquered Azerbaijan and Syria before inflicting yet more brutality, this time on beleaguered Baghdad. Up to 20,000 of its citizens were killed and its monuments destroyed. After all, these ancient cities could not possibly create potential competition for Samarkand.

When he finally reached Turkey, Timur allegedly promised not to shed blood if the town of Sivas surrendered. Trusting his word, they did. It’s said he had 3,000 of the townspeople buried alive, and Timur maintained that he had kept his promise. After all, there was no blood.
On special occasions, Timur would grant the public an audience with him.

Timur evidently placed great significance on these feasts, as one guest was punished for turning up late by having his nose pierced like a pig.

Neat Ankara, Bayezid met Timur’s army on 20 July 1402 for a dramatic showdown. Timur was a shrewd tactician, so he circumvented Bayezid and attacked his army from behind. After a short battle, the sultan was captured and dragged back to Samarkand kicking and screaming. There, he was allegedly subjected to a variety of imaginative humiliations – from Timur using him as a footstool to being put on display in a golden cage.

Ironically, some rulers in Western Europe supported Timur. They thought he was helping them to achieve Christian goals by keeping the Ottomans – a powerful Islamic empire right on their doorstep with a beady eye on Hungary – at bay. Upon learning of his victory at Ankara, England’s Henry IV and Charles VI of France sent messages declaring their congratulations to Timur. The Spanish kingdom of Castile went even further and dispatched an envoy, led by Ruy González de Clavijo, to Samarkand.

Clavijo described in fantastical detail the wondrous and exotic goings-on he saw at Timur’s court. Arriving in 1404, he described Timur’s 15 palaces, which blended nomadic and Islamic traditions. Some of them were essentially grand tents that could be packed up and moved when necessary. Treated as honoured guests, the Spaniards dined each night at lavish feasts, which were always preceded by bouts of heavy drinking — allegedly following Mongol tradition. Timur evidently placed great significance on these feasts, as one guest was punished for turning up late by having his nose pierced like a pig.

Just after Clavijo and his crew started on their long journey back to Madrid in November 1404, Timur set off for what would turn out to be his last hurrah. Samarkand had been trading with Ming China for a long time, but Timur had grown tired of being treated like a vassal. For example, when a message from China arrived in 1395 calling the Ming emperor “lord of the realms of the face of the earth”, and treating Timur like an inferior, he decided to detain the Chinese messengers. When China dispatched more envoys to find out what
One Uzbek tradition has couples pose by a statue of Timur on their wedding day.

Timur’s plan was to overthrow the Ming and replace them with the Yuan dynasty, Mongol rulers established by Kublai Khan. While he normally embarked on his expeditions in the spring, in order to take advantage of good weather, he bucked his own trend and departed Samarkand in December 1404 with an army of approximately 200,000 troops. His chief astrologers had told him that the stars were in favourable alignment. What could go wrong?

Unfortunately for Timur, the stars turned out to be more favourable for China than they were for him. He fell ill on the frosty banks of the Syr Darya River in Uzbekistan and died — possibly of cold — in February 1405. With no leader to inspire a victory, Timur’s army decided to turn around and head back home. The fearsome conqueror was embalmed in fragrant oils and placed in an elaborate ivory coffin for the journey to his final resting place, the beautiful Gur-e-Amir in Samarkand, his treasured city.

Like Genghis Khan, Timur had divided his territory between his male descendants but ultimately his empire was built on fear, terror and pillaging rather than good governance. Timur’s successors would spend the next few decades fighting each other over the land and soon his vast empire would crumble.

However, the legacy of the ‘Sword of Islam’ continues to this day. His double-great-grandson Babur founded the iconic Mughal dynasty of India, a ruling family responsible for creating stunning Timurid-inspired monuments like the Taj Mahal and Delhi’s Red Fort. While Timur was thoroughly deserving of his bloodthirsty reputation, he left a unique visual impression on the city of Samarkand, and transformed the area from a neglected desert outpost to a centre for cultural, intellectual and religious exchange for generations to come. Not had for a man who began his career as a lame sheep bandit.

GUR-E-AMIR
Timur’s tomb in Samarkand, the Gur-e-Amir, is covered in elaborate blue tiling. Topped with a trademark dome, Timur’s grave is marked with a stunning slab of jade, rumoured to be the largest ever found at the time.

AQ SARAY PALACE
After winning a resounding victory in the town of Shahrishub, Timur commissioned an incredible white palace to stand on the site. Today, only the ruined walls of the great hall survive — it was once one of the largest of its kind.

THE REGISTAN
The Registan was built soon after Timur’s death and this public square bears his influence everywhere you look. On each side is a madrasa — a place of learning — adorned with incredibly lavish decorations influenced by other parts of the Timurid Empire.
His Excellency John, Duke of Marlborough, Marquis of Blandford, Earl of Marlborough, Baron Thurlow of Steventon and Baron (Churchill of Hambrook), Bt, General in all His Majesty's Forces, Master General of the Ordnance, One of His Majesty's Privy Councillors, Judge of the Inner and Outer Courts, and a Member of the Council of State (Governor of the United Provinces and General of the Confederate Armies).
How the soldier-statesman set an example of excellence and British military might that inspired his most famous descendant of all – Winston Churchill

Written by Frances White

Like his famous descendant, John was a very intelligent young man who found a calling in military service. Just as Winston would join the British Army, John set his heart on becoming a soldier and joined the Grenadier Guards in 1667. His military journey saw him serve in the Franco-Dutch War in 1672, when he was promoted to the rank of captain. He went on to gain a commendation at the Siege of Maastricht where he saved the duke of Monmouth’s life—a deed that allegedly earned praise from the French king, Louis XIV.

His illustrious career and military acumen ensured that he rose rapidly through the ranks. He was respected by the higher-ups and his courage had also earned him the admiration of the common soldiers. This is not dissimilar to the attention Winston received for his military career and his accounts of the battles he witnessed. Both men were propelled to relative stardom at a young age, and both would feel the resulting pressure and expectation.

Winston’s similarities to John did not end on the battlefield. When John returned to Saint James’s Palace, his affections were drawn to the young Sarah Jennings, a beautiful attendant to Princess Anne. Her family had been impoverished by debts and she was hardly the most obvious or appealing prospect for the eligible war hero. Nonetheless, John was besotted. His father wished him to marry a wealthier woman to ease the family debts—but John chose love.

It is clear to see why Winston would feel an affinity for John’s decision. After all, he too married for love. His future wife, Clementine Hozier, was the subject of public scrutiny, her true parentage unknown, as her parents divorced and her supposed father abandoned her. Her family sank down the social ladder and were forced to move home. Despite her past, Winston was captivated by Clementine.

Society doubted the staying power of their relationship—a daughter of divorce and a wild military man—but their union lasted 57 years. The marriages of Winston and John were remarkably similar as both men found their match in strong-willed and remarkably loyal women, who stayed by their sides until death did them part.

Like Winston, John was not fated to spend his whole life on the battlefield—politics held some appeal to both men. Upon the ascension of James II, John was appointed lieutenant general, effectively commander-in-chief, as well as peer of the realm. However, England was in the middle of religious rebellion and as one was defeated, another emerged.

"IT IS CLEAR TO SEE WHY WINSTON WOULD FEEL AN AFFINITY FOR JOHN’S DECISION"
It’s no surprise that Winston was inspired by and proud of his famous ancestor. John. He admired both his keen military strategy and also clever diplomacy — two things Winston himself held in very high regard. The idea of an ancestor who never fought a battle he didn’t win was inspirational for Winston, and it was this excellent success rate that he wished to replicate in his own military and diplomatic careers. Although they were both from aristocratic backgrounds, the two men were never ones to rest on their laurels and live an entitled lifestyle. They both became heroes in the eyes of the people, so it is easy to see why Winston empathised with his ancestor so dearly.

Although John was respected for his military victories, previous biographers had painted him in an unfavourable light — most notably Thomas Macaulay, writing some 100 years earlier than Winston. Macaulay’s work seemed to criticise John’s switch of loyalties from James II to William of Orange, painting him in a selfish, villainous light. This opinion was not uncommon, and part of Winston’s motivation to tell his own version of John’s story was to refute this dastardly image.

Winston’s biography of his ancestor, Marlborough: His Life and Times spanned four volumes and the first was published in 1933. In the preface Winston stated, “It is my hope to recall this great shade from the past, and not only invest him with his panoply, but make him living and intimate to modern eyes.” We can see how dedicated he was to this biography, as he allegedly wrote over 300 letters to people, requesting opinions about his work in progress. This was Winston’s labour of love for a man he admired greatly.

As expected, the books countered the image presented by Macaulay. They aimed to attribute good and pure reasons to John’s changing of sides, such as religious, moral and patriotic motivations. While Winston’s work is expertly written and researched, the fact that John deserted a man to whom he owed almost everything is hard to paint over.

Some critics of Winston’s work claim that he paints Louis XIV with the same villainous brush that John had once been tarred with. However, the fact remains that, as well written as it is, Winston was still writing about his personal hero. Some level of bias was bound to seep into his work as a result. Nevertheless, the finished product was well received by critics, with Roy Jenkins calling it a “revelation” and political philosopher Leo Strauss dubbing it the greatest historical work of the 20th century.

In theory, John was loyal to James II but he grew uneasy about the king’s Catholic leanings, apparently declaring that should the monarch attempt to change his religion, “I will instantly quit his service.” He was not the only one with misgivings about James’ beliefs, and in 1688, the so-called Glorious Revolution broke out with the goal of unseating the sovereign. John’s ruthlessness could be seen in full force as he abandoned his king, siding instead with William of Orange and thereby securing James’ defeat. It was a political move of calculated coldness.

John’s stark resolve and overriding self-belief were not dissimilar to traits displayed by Winston himself. However, Winston was an immensely loyal man, something John was far from. John initially benefited from his shrewd move, such as being bestowed the earldom of Marlborough by William and Mary and being given command in Flanders and Ireland between 1689 and 1691. However, the new king couldn’t trust a man who would betray his own monarch so easily.

Although John kept inflicting defeats on his enemies, his popularity plummeted and he was thrown into the Tower of London in 1692 on suspicion of trying to restore James II. He was released but the event sent Winston a powerful message — loyalty is one of the most important weapons in the political arsenal. Thankfully, a chance was coming for John to redeem himself.

In 1700, after the death of Spain’s King Charles II, Europe scrambled for control of the Spanish empire. Louis XIV was close to uniting Spain and France. For England, the Holy Roman Empire and the Dutch Republic, this was unacceptable.

As much as William distrusted John, he couldn’t deny that he was best suited to the role of creating a powerful coalition capable of toppling the might of the French crown. William, however, would not live to see the war run its course and when he died in March 1702, John played the part Winston would later find himself in — mounting a war effort against a threat to the British Isles.

Although John had the command he desired, he still struggled to gain the trust of the House of Commons, which was divided on where the attack should be concentrated. It proved a valuable lesson for Winston, who consolidated both his military and domestic leadership of Parliament when he was appointed prime minister.

However, one of John’s most valuable lessons to Winston was the importance of friendships with allies in the midst of war. The duke formed strong friendships with Queen Anne, Robert Harley, the speaker of the House of Commons and the High Treasurer Lord Godolphin, all of whom he used to influence and gain favour where possible. Winston described these friendships as “the crucible from which the power and glory of England were soon to rise, gleaming among nations”. In fact, the idea of friendship became so important to him that he used it to measure all historical figures.
MARLBOROUGH'S FINEST HOUR
How John defeated the 'invincible' army of Louis XIV at Blenheim

01 STORM OF LEAD
For his diversionary attack on the village of Blenheim, Marlborough gives Lt Gen John Cutts 20 infantry battalions and 15 cavalry squadrons. At 3pm, Cutts' six lines of soldiers advance with little cover, having to endure punishment not only from hundreds of concealed musketeers, but also from a battery of four 24-pounders adjacent to the village. One-third of Rowe's brigade is either killed or wounded in the near-suicidal attack.

02 GREAT BATTERY
Prince Eugene's attack is spearheaded by Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Dessau's Prussians. A Bavarian 'great battery' of 16 guns wreaks havoc on the Prussians, and a counterattack by Bavarian infantry led by Marshal Count Jean Baptiste d'Arco drives them across the Nebel. The Prussians lose ten colours in the failed attack.

03 PUT TO FLIGHT
French morale plummets when the mounted French Gens d'Armes are defeated by a smaller force of English cavalry. "What? Is it possible? The Gentlemen of France fleeing?" remarks French Elector Maximilian-Emmanuel, who watched the shocking defeat. Tallard later said the attack was the first indication that his army might lose the battle.

04 DANGEROUS CROSSING
As Marlborough prepares for his main attack on the middle of the enemy position, allied infantry crosses the Nebel and furnishes protective fire for cavalrymen who have dismounted to lead their horses over the stream.

05 OUTWIPTED COMMANDER
Lt Gen Marquis Philippe de Clerambault, the commander of the French infantry posted at Blenheim, crams so many musketeers inside the village that there is no space on the perimeter for many of them to fire at the enemy.

06 MISSED OPPORTUNITY
Unfortunately for the Franco-Bavarian army, Ferdinand, comte de Marsin, fails to see that if he sent a column of infantry and cavalry north from Obergau to exploit the rout of the Prince Holstein-Beck's Dutch infantry, he might split the two wings of the allied army and set the stage for a French victory.

07 COVERING FIRE
After Marlborough's brother, Lt Gen Charles Churchill, and his assault force cross the Nebel, the cavalry moves in front of the infantry. The infantry battalions leave gaps in their lines so that the cavalry can fall back and reform behind them unhindered.

08 UNMATCHED FIREPOWER
Lt Gen Charles Churchill's 18 infantry battalions easily outgun the nine French battalions they encounter on open ground south of the Nebel. The allied infantry enjoy greater firepower because it uses platoon firing, by which platoons fire successively in groups, so that a steady fire is maintained without pause. In contrast, the French line fires in unison with a pause to reload.

"Winston was an immensely loyal man"
John Churchill, 1st Duke of Marlborough (1650-1722)

Sarah Jennings (1660-1744)

John and Winston weren't the only famous figures to bloom from this illustrious family tree.

George Spencer, 4th Duke of Marlborough (1739-1817)

William Robert Roche (1936-2004)

Diana, Princess of Wales (1961-97)

DID YOU KNOW? Winston Churchill was also related to the Medici family, who ruled Renaissance Florence, on his paternal grandmother's side.

George was a courtier, nobleman and politician, a great-great-great-grandfather of Winston Churchill. Serving as an ensign of the Coldstream Guards, he was also appointed lieu-lieutenant of Oxfordshire. His relationship with George III was very close as he bore the sceptre at his coronation and was made Lord Chamberlain and Privy Seal.

A witty and popular member of high society, William was a writer, with his works performed onstage at Drury Lane. Collections of his poems were also published, and he could count Sir Walter Scott and Lord Byron among his followers. His most famous works include 'Beth Gelert' and 'Too Late I Stayed'.

The first wife of Charles, Prince of Wales, Diana was the mother of princes William and Harry. Known for her charity work, she attracted worldwide acclaim and scrutiny, especially after her divorce from Charles. Her unsuspected death in a car crash prompted an outpouring of national mourning.

Charles Spencer, 3rd Duke of Marlborough (1729-1817)

Charles was known for his service during the Seven Years' War, which involved every major European power at the time. During this he led the Raid on St Malo. He was one of the original governors of London's Foundling Hospital, a children’s home that marked a watershed in the care of orphans and deserted children.

Lady Diana Beauclerk (1734-1808)

Elizabeth Herbert (1739-1831)

Elizabeth Trevor (1715-61)

Jennie Jerome (1854-1921)

Lord Randolph Churchill (1849-95)

John Winston Spencer-Churchill, 7th Duke of Marlborough (1822-83)

Devereaux Beauclerk (1686-1703)

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The most important friendship for John was with Prince Eugene of Savoy, general of the Holy Roman Empire's Imperial Army. John and Eugene were like two peas in a pod as they both held immense control and influence over their armies and each understood how important the alliance would be to defeating France. It also helped, of course, that they were both remarkably talented military commanders. Combined, they were unstoppable. The friendship and close bond between the two men meant that their armies acted as a united force.

John, with the help of Eugene, enjoyed victory after victory. At Blenheim, the dynamic duo delivered a crushing defeat to their French and Bavarian foes, turning the tide of the war in their favor. This victory owed a great deal of thanks to the synergy between the different forces which came together to deliver the blow. Winston wrote that Eugene and John acted as "two lobes of the same brain... in constant touch with each other". There is no doubt that he would have remembered this important example during World War II when he, too, formed a very close connection with a powerful ally – Franklin D Roosevelt, the President of the United States.

The occasional disagreement, shared a close personal rapport, communicated frequently, and both understood the threat of the Axis Powers. For many historians, this friendship was one of the crucial factors that helped the Allies withstand the Nazi threat and win World War II.

John Churchill continued to humiliate his enemies, and win conflicts for his nation. He was immensely knowledgeable and resourceful, able to use whatever he had at his disposal to devastating effect. The duke captured Bonn, Trier and Trarbach and celebrated success at Ramillies, Oudenarde and Malplaquet, to name a few. These victories swung the balance of power in Europe and turned France from assailant to defender.

John's success across the continent meant that he carved himself a reputation for military excellence, which was unrivalled until the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte. He remains one of the few military commanders in history who was apparently never defeated in battle.

Winston was no doubt inspired by his ancestor's military achievements but his own track record was not to be as glittering. Some of his blunders resulted in the most crushing defeats experienced by the British Army in World War II. However, he did stand as a figurehead for a force that never lost hope, even in the hardest of times. The tally of wins and losses aside, it is likely that this strength of leadership would have impressed even his militarily flawless ancestor. Ultimately, both men achieved what they set out to do – win.

Unlike Winston, John's political victory was far from straightforward. Back home, the number of Tory peers in the cabinet was dwindling and he was forced to conform to Whig demands. France refused to agree to the rather harsh peace terms set out by the Whigs and resumed hostilities. John continued to beat them back down again but at an immense cost to his health. He became thinner and more haggard by the year.

When he tried to take a stand against the peace terms being discussed, he was swiftly dismissed, much to the shock of his allies. Accused of misusing public money, and with fears for his own fortune – especially as he was still building Blenheim Palace – he went into voluntary exile while the peace negotiations of the war he had won continued without him.

It wasn't until Queen Anne died in 1714 that John returned to his homeland. He rose to favor once again under her successor, George I, and reclaimed some of his influence and prestige. However, John was now an old man and his health was fading rapidly. He reportedly experienced several strokes and lived in the East Wing of the still unfinished Blenheim Palace for three years before a final stroke claimed his life.

The importance of this building to Winston is certainly no secret. It was within those walls that John struggled to build that Winston was born. Inside the idyllic summerhouse, dubbed 'The Temple of Diana', Winston proposed to his future wife, Clementine, sparking one of the most important companionships of his life.

Evidence for the vital relationship between these two famous Britons can still be observed at Chartwell, Winston's home for 40 years. Within the walls of the idyllic country house near the town of Westerham in Kent, in the bedroom that Churchill regarded as his inner sanctum, hangs a portrait of his most ambitious, brilliant ancestor – John Churchill, Ist Duke of Marlborough.
Custer's last fight
Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer strikes a dashing, desperate figure at the centre of this dramatic depiction by artist Otto Becker of Custer's last stand. Brandishing a saber, Custer is defiant during his final moments. Historically inaccurate in many ways, this image is perhaps the best-known interpretation of the event.

The winding river
The Little Bighorn River winds in the distance near the Indian encampment as Custer and his 7th US Cavalry detachment come to grief on a Montana hillside in June 1876. An apparent error in this image is the location of the fight, which actually occurred on the other side of the river.

War club wielded
A Native American warrior raises his club to strike a death blow against a fallen trooper of the 7th Cavalry. The artist also took license in providing the warriors in the painting with some weapons and regalia that probably were not present at the Battle of Little Bighorn.
Mounted warriors rush forward
As Custer and his troopers fight to the last in this fanciful image, mounted Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapaho warriors gallop towards the fray at Little Bighorn. Although the cavalrymen were significantly outnumbered, this painting offers the impression of literally thousands of Indians descending on a small band of them.

Firing his colt
A wounded trooper of the 7th Cavalry raises his Colt Model 1873 Single Action Army revolver for a point-blank shot at an attacking warrior. In addition to the bow and arrow, war club and lance, the Native American warriors at Little Bighorn were armed with more than 40 different types of firearms.

Taking a scalp
Mutualization of the enemy dead was a common practice among Great Plains tribal warriors who took scalps to achieve honour. While troopers were certainly scalped at Little Bighorn, claims that Custer was scalped or his body otherwise mutilated are unsubstantiated.

Battle of the Little Bighorn

BATTLE OF THE LITTLE BIGHORN
MONTANA TERRITORY, 25-26 JUNE 1876

As the United States' expanded westwards, they increasingly clashed with the indigenous people who lived there. Native Americans were usually moved to reservations, pockets of remote land miles away from home. If they refused to move to a reservation willingly, they were ruthlessly attacked and purged from their ancestral lands by the American military.

Some believed resistance was futile. For instance, the great Sioux chief Red Cloud agreed to a treaty with the United States in April 1868, consenting to relocate his tribe northwards to a reservation in the Black Hills of the Dakota Territory. On the other hand, some Sioux factions — like the Lakota — refused to move, particularly as white settlers encroached on reservations promised to them and other tribes. Among these were the Cheyenne and Arapaho, who joined leaders such as Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull in defying the treaty. The discovery of gold in the Black Hills in 1874 quickened the pace of white settlement.

In 1876, the US Army was charged with eliminating the threat to white settlement. A unit of cavalry was dispatched to the Montana Territory under the command of Colonel John Gibbon and Generals George Crook and Alfred Terry. They planned to trap the Native Americans and either annihilate them or force them to move.

Terry and Gibbon, hoping to trap their adversaries, headed for the valley of the Little Bighorn River. The 7th Cavalry Regiment, under Lieutenant Colonel George A Custer, was detached and ordered to follow Sitting Bull.

Custer was offered the firepower of a Gatling gun detachment. He declined, saying the guns would slow him down. He was also offered extra cavalry but rejected them, stating that his men — made up of less than 700 troopers — were capable of handling the mission. When a Lakota village was spotted along the banks of the Little Bighorn on 25 June, Custer divided his men into three groups.

Fearing that the element of surprise would be lost, he impetuously ordered an immediate assault.

Major Marcus Reno made first contact with the enemy at about 3pm but a Native American force pushed Reno's dismounted troopers to a hillside, where they were pinned down. Shortly after, Custer sent his five companies towards the other end of the village. Crazy Horse completed an envelopment of them and drove them northward.

Captain Frederick Benteen joined Reno and fought off repeated assaults and their survivors retired after another day of fighting. Custer fought a running battle with his pursuers until his five companies were finally surrounded on high ground a few miles from Reno's position. Custer himself died and his company was annihilated.

Although they had prevailed at the Little Bighorn, the Sioux would find themselves overwhelmed and the Black Hills taken from them within a year.
US 7th Cavalry Regiment

TROOPS C.700

The fateful decision to attack
On the morning of 25 June 1876, Custer is informed that a large Sioux village has been located in the valley of the Little Bighorn River, 24 kilometres from his command. Although he initially intends to attack the following day, he decides on an immediate attack when a subsequent report that some Native Americans have possibly observed his cavalry column, compromising the element of surprise.

Formidable enemy forces await
Custer’s experienced Pawnee and Crow scouts report that the Native American village, which includes over 2,000 Cheyenne, Lakota Sioux and Arapaho warriors under Sitting Bull, Crazy Horse and other leaders, is the largest they have ever seen. Custer discounts these concerns, hoping to initiate action before the alarm is raised and the villagers get away.

Ill-advised division of troopers
Unaware of his adversaries’ strength, Custer divides his 12 cavalry companies, fewer than 700 troopers, into four elements. One of these, 135 soldiers strong, is detailed to protect the 7th Cavalry’s regimental baggage train.

Custer in dire straits
Assailed from multiple directions, Custer’s cavalrymen are steadily pushed northward toward the slopes of a long ridgeline. Along with the assumption that the so-called ‘Custer’s Last Stand’ was a stationary engagement, there is also evidence to support a running battle between the opposing forces. A few miles from Reno’s position, Custer’s force is cornered on a hillside and annihilated. The end probably comes swiftly, in half an hour or less of desperate combat.

Reinforced but pinned down
Benteen joins the embattled Reno in better defensive positions along the slope of the hill, and the combined force holds its ground with determination. After hours of fighting, from the afternoon of 25 June until dusk the following day, the survivors of the two cavalry contingents manage to escape to safety.

Lieutenant Colonel George A Custer
LEADER
Shown above in 1865, George A Custer was promoted to the temporary rank of brigadier general during the Civil War.
Strengths: He was well-known for his bravery and fighting spirit.
Weaknesses: Custer was impetuous and took needless risks.

7th Cavalry Regiment
KEY UNIT
The veteran 7th Cavalry Regiment followed its commander, George Custer, to destruction at the Little Bighorn.
Strengths: The regiment was a mobile, quick-strike force.
Weaknesses: They were lightly equipped for sustained combat.

Springfield Model 1873 Carbine
KEY WEAPON
A ‘trapdoor’ rifle, the Model 1873 utilised a hinged breechblock.
Strengths: A short carbine that was easy to transport and had excellent range.
Weaknesses: A low rate of fire due to the single-shot chamber.
The battle joined
At approximately 3pm, Major Marcus Reno leads his troopers and scouts across a small creek. With orders to proceed as rapidly as he deems proper and attack, Reno opens the Battle of the Little Bighorn with an assault on the village from the south. Rather than retreating, the Native American warriors have chosen to stand and fight. Although he has been promised the support of the whole outfit, Reno is immediately in trouble.

Benteen is summoned
Captain Benteen leads another column of troopers 16 kilometres into the valley, finding no Native Americans. He receives a scrawled message from Custer ordering his force towards the sounds of Reno’s rifles.

Custer commits his column
With Reno heavily engaged, Custer attempts to cut off any retreat and envelop the village, committing two brigades, about 210 troopers, to an assault on its opposite side. While Cheyenne and Sioux warriors emerge to meet this second threat, Crazy Horse leads a war party a short distance downstream along the Little Bighorn and then doubles back to attack Custer. The result is a classic envelopment of Custer’s command.

The road to defeat
After their resounding victory, the warriors, women and children, all return to their village. Despite their triumph over Lieutenant Colonel George A Custer’s 7th Cavalry at the Little Bighorn, the most famous battle of the Great Sioux War, the Native Americans cannot prevail against the growing strength of the US Army. Within a year, the tribes of the Northern Plains are forced to capitulate and subsequently settle on reservations.

Lakota Sioux, Cheyenne & Arapaho
Warriors 2,000+
Leader
Crazy Horse, Sitting Bull and others led a tribal alliance at Little Bighorn.
Strengths: Crazy Horse was visionary, spiritual, courageous and inspirational.
Weaknesses: He was willing to engage in a war against the odds.

Tribal Warriors
Sioux, Cheyenne and Arapaho warriors pursued the 7th Cavalry on horseback.
Strengths: They were courageous with great endurance.
Weaknesses: The warriors were often outgunned and outmanned, though not at the Little Bighorn.

Rifles
Winchester and Henry repeating rifles provided great firepower.
Strengths: Rapid rates of fire for repeating rifles.
Weaknesses: A shorter range compared to single-shot rifles.
“Napoleon built an empire that covered vast swathes of the continent”

Charles J. Eudall is a professor in history at the University of Liverpool. He is the author of numerous books on the Napoleonic Wars including Napoleon: France and Waterloo: The Eagle Rejected and Napoleon’s Wars: An International History, 1803-1815.
Napoleon Bonaparte was a man whose vaulting ambition saw him conquer Europe - but it would also be his downfall. In just over 100 days, the 'Nightmare of Europe' would escape from prison with a small band of brothers and reconquer France, prompting all the great powers of Europe to unite together to bring him down once and for all.

Lasting from 1804 to 1814, Napoleon built an empire that covered vast swathes of the continent and by 1810 it was easier to list the regions he didn't dominate - Portugal, Sicily, Sardinia, and the British, Russian and Ottoman Empires. This was not bad for the 'Petit Corporal' from Corsica, who only secured a commission in the French artillery in 1787.

Napoleon enjoyed a series of accelerated promotions as a result of the French Revolution. By early 1796, he was the commander of all the French forces manning the Italian frontier. Gifted with extraordinary tactical genius, he won a string of great victories that knocked both Austria and Piedmont out of the War of the First Coalition. Similar success in Cairo fighting the Battle of the Pyramids in 1798, during a doomed attempt to conquer Egypt, cemented his reputation as one of Revolutionary France's greatest heroes.

However, while Napoleon was enjoying these personal victories, France as a whole was struggling.
While he was off gallivanting in Egypt, Austria and Russia had rejoined the War of the Second Coalition and had retaken Italy. It was clear that France needed a much stronger government than the one that had emerged from the bloody chaos of the Revolution.

Seeking to fill the void, Napoleon, an extremely determined young man who had been dreaming of taking power for some time, set himself up as a de facto dictator in November 1799. Over the next year, he remodelled France and forced all of its opponents to make peace. Though hostilities with Britain would resume in 1803, the next year he was rewarded by the tame political system he had created with the title of Emperor of the French.

Over the next few years, the French armies secured unprecedented success and the result was that France remained complicit. With their social position both respected and protected by the state, the propertied classes had no reason to oppose Napoleon, while the populace as a whole were mollified by a measure of economic prosperity. Additionally, though levels of conscription were still relatively heavy, they were not unreasonable.

By 1807, the French Empire was greatly expanded. With his back to the wall, Napoleon fought bravely but the odds against him were just too high, he increasingly began to overreach himself. As his desire for power and glory increased, so did his demands for men and money. Meanwhile, all the powers of Europe were driven into a position in which they had no option but to fight him. The wars dragged on interminably with little sign of any sort of lasting peace. The elites and populace alike became increasingly unhappy with their emperor – and all the more so when a series of mistakes on the part of Napoleon precipitated a general economic crisis, which had terrible effects on living standards for ordinary people.

Beaten first in Russia in 1812 and then in Germany in 1813, the French were facing invasion by 1814. With his back to the wall, Napoleon fought bravely but the odds against him were just too high, while the system of conscription broke down in the face of a wholesale refusal to obey the regime or to implement its policies. Within weeks, it was all over. Napoleon was finally forced to surrender to his enemies on 6 April 1814.

In theory, this should have been the end of the story. Napoleon was exiled to the tiny

"With his back to the wall, Napoleon fought bravely but the odds against him were just too high"
Mediterranean island of Elba and given a position as its king, and the Bourbon monarchy was restored to France in the person of Louis XVIII. Meanwhile, the powers of Europe met in a great congress at Vienna in which they attempted not to turn the clock back to 1789, but to build a new system of international relations instead. On the one hand, it would ensure that France couldn't embark on any more acts of aggression and, on the other, it would make sure that Europe didn't slide back into the endless dynastic conflicts that had plagued the 18th century.

Watching from afar, the fallen Napoleon was not treated especially harshly in the wake of his defeat. With him went roughly 600 soldiers drawn from the Imperial Guard, and he was given complete freedom of movement as he was left almost entirely unsupervised on the peaceful and picturesque Italian island.

For Napoleon, however, confinement to so small a sphere was torture. The French government also afforded him a legitimate grievance by failing to pay the pension that had been granted to him. Many stories reached him of massive public discontent with the new regime so at the end of February 1815, he decided to return to France and restore himself to glory.

His prison break was somewhat anticlimactic as there was not a single guard to stop him. Though there was normally a British agent - Sir Neil Campbell - assigned to watch over Napoleon, he had left Elba to travel to Florence on 16 February, allegedly to visit his mistress. Ten days later, Napoleon set sail on board a small brig called L'inconstant along with his imperial guard.

There followed the so-called 'flight of the eagle'. According to legend, the erstwhile emperor returned to a hero's welcome in France but the truth may actually have been a little less romantic. When he landed on the French coast on 1 March, he was initially denied entrance to the town of Antibes and could supposedly only find two people to volunteer for his cause.

However, in a somewhat famous episode where Napoleon dared a unit blocking the road to fire upon him, the garrison of Grenoble actually decided to join him on 5 March. The city of Lyons - a place that the emperor had always favoured when in power - also welcomed his arrival with great excitement just five days later.
VIVE LA CONSTITUTION!
To win French support, Napoleon promised revolutionary reform

In early 1814, as the empire was crumbling, French political writer Benjamin Constant published a scathing attack on Napoleon, painting him as a tyrant obsessed with conquest. A year later, however, Constant could not resist the returned emperor's invitation to draw up a new French constitution. Napoleon knew that to rally support after returning from Elba, he needed to embrace France's revolutionary heritage and pose as the defender of liberty against the Bourbons.

Constant's document, although described as a simple 'addition' to the earlier imperial French constitutions, was more like a suggestion for a liberal constitutional monarchy. Called the Acte Additionnel, it gave real power to the House of Representatives, which was elected by the 'electoral colleges' of the empire and allowed for the extension of franchise to a greater number of people. It also explicitly guaranteed both press and religious freedom, as well as ruling out any reversal of revolutionary land reform.

Napoleon signed the Acte Additionnel on 22 April 1815 and submitted the constitution, quickly nicknamed 'La Benjamine' after its author, to a plebiscite. Scarcely 20 per cent of those eligible actually voted but it still received 1.3 million 'yes' votes versus 5,000 negative votes, so the government hailed its approval on 1 June. The re-restored Louis XVIII abolished it after the Battle of Waterloo but it went on to serve as an inspiration for later French constitutions, especially that of 1830.

Napoleon claimed to be a champion of the Revolution against reaction and he proposed a new liberal constitution

Most astonishingly of all, despite having promised Louis XVIII to bring Napoleon back to Paris in an iron cage, Marshal Ney pledged his allegiance to Napoleon along with his 6,000 men when they finally met at Auxerre on 18 March. Taken against his better judgement, it was a decision that was to eventually cost Ney his life.

Having received reports of Napoleon's growing support, Louis XVIII fled Paris on 20 March. Napoleon arrived just a few hours later, taking up residence at the Tuileries Palace. After being greeted by a large crowd of officers, they all celebrated well into the night.

Napoleon's ability to win over the army was to be expected. Some of the soldiers had been driven to fury by the restored monarchy's treatment of the military. Many officers who had once fought bravely for Napoleon had been placed on half-pay by the Bourbons in favour of aristocrats who had fled abroad in the wake of the Revolution - and they had fought for France's enemies to boot. However, regaining power over everyone else would prove to be trickier.

Popular responses to Napoleon's grandiose return were muted. While some areas that had done well out of Napoleon felt a measure of enthusiasm as they had particular reason to resent the Bourbons or had suffered the full brunt of the invasions of 1814, news of his return elsewhere was greeted with a mixture of fear, horror and armed resistance.

In an attempt to win over public opinion, Napoleon claimed to be a champion of the Revolution against reaction and he proposed a new liberal constitution but his every effort fell on deaf ears and was often badly bungled. For example, the so-called ceremony of the Champ de Mai, held on 1 June 1815, was supposed to be a great celebration of the new constitution.

It was bad enough that this was clearly an attempt to restore the institutions of the empire in a more liberal guise. To add insult to injury, the very name 'Champ de Mai' was unfortunate as it originally referred to assemblies of nobles called by Charlemagne and other Medieval monarchs when they wished to pacify subjects who might otherwise have become rebellious.

It's hard to tell what Napoleon thought he could achieve by returning to France. Take power in Paris though he might, there was really no realistic chance of the European powers actually leaving him in peace. They had all made effort after effort to come to terms with him prior to 1814 only to find that his demands were just too outrageous or that their friendships with the emperor brought little or nothing in the way of benefits for them.

Napoleon was quickly declared an international out,
outlaw and as a result, preparations were afoot for a massive invasion of France within a matter of days. Against such odds, there was little chance of Napoleon achieving victory.

It was quite clear that however unpopular Louis XVIII had been, the French people were in no mood to see the return of a ruler who was associated with both economic disaster and war without end. With conscription out of the question, Napoleon was forced to rely on the services of the much-reduced army that had been in his service when he escaped from Elba.

The only men who were mobilised for military service were the militia, the National Guard and the many thousands of soldiers who had been sent home in 1814 on the understanding that they could be called up once again if they were needed in the event of war. Even so, this should have given the emperor an army of approximately 500,000 men but in the event, fewer than one-third of those who should have put in an appearance seemed to turn up. Thus, Napoleon was left with a force of only half that number.
**THE FINAL SHOWDOWN**

Discover where it all went wrong for Napoleon at Waterloo

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**01 First foray**

Between 10am and 11.30am on 18 June, the Battle of Waterloo began with a French attack on a Coalition position at Hougoumont, a large farmhouse that served as a tactical outpost. This fighting was low-key at first with few troops from each side engaged but by the early afternoon, it had become a bloody epicentre for much of the fighting with the Coalition forces holding out against numerous French assaults.

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**02 Grande Batterie**

At around midday, Napoleon ordered his grande batterie of 80 cannons to open fire upon Wellington’s position. The cannons caused many casualties in Wellington’s cavalry, opening a potential weak point in the defending lines.

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**03 French infantry attack**

After the Coalition’s lines had been weakened, Napoleon began his attack proper with numerous infantry corps advancing. The initial fighting went the way of the French with the left’s infantry pressing Wellington’s forces back. However, just when it looked like Napoleon would make a decisive break, he was informed that Prussian troops were fast approaching. He tried to send word to Marshal Grouchy to engage with them but his commander was in Wavre. Seeing their infantry was about to buckle, Wellington’s First and Second Brigades of heavy cavalry charged and smashed into the French infantry. By the time they reached the bottom of the hill, they had completely halted the infantry’s advance. In doing so, however, they had left themselves exposed and without backup.

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**04 British heavy cavalry attack**

With the Coalition’s heavy cavalry now facing squares of French infantry to the front and with no support, Napoleon ordered a counterattack, dispatching his cuirassier and lancer regiments from his own cavalry division. A massive central battle ensued, with cavalry, infantry and artillery all involved. While Napoleon’s cavalry regiments took out much of the Coalition’s heavy cavalry, they could not wipe them out. Napoleon also dispatched troops to intercept the Prussians.

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**05 Napoleon counters**

With the French left, right and centre now disintegrating, the only cohesive forces left available to Napoleon were two battalions of his Old Guard. Despite hoping to rally his remaining troops behind them, the strength of the Coalition’s army left this untenable and all Napoleon could do was order a retreat. His exit was covered by the Old Guard, many of whom died holding back the Coalition’s advance.

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**06 Prussian cavalry charge**

As the battle raged on, Prussian cavalry charged into the Coalition ranks, causing further confusion and disrupting their formations.

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**07 Coalition regroup**

Despite the initial setback, the Coalition regrouped and fought back, pushing the French back and eventually forcing them to retreat.

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**08 Final victory**

After a series of fierce battles, the Coalition emerged victorious, ending Napoleon’s reign and returning Europe to a state of peace.

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**09 Napoleon’s retreat**

Realizing the battle was lost, Napoleon ordered a retreat, leading his troops back across the borders of France.

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**10 French army retreats**

With the French left, right and centre now disintegrating, the only cohesive forces left available to Napoleon were two battalions of his Old Guard. Despite hoping to rally his remaining troops behind them, the strength of the Coalition’s army left this untenable and all Napoleon could do was order a retreat. His exit was covered by the Old Guard, many of whom died holding back the Coalition’s advance.
09 PLANCENOIT RECAPTURED
The Prussian army retook Plancenoit and targeted Napoleon's right flank, giving Wellington the upper hand. The Old Guard that had been supporting the French position at Plancenoit beat a hasty retreat.

08 Imperial Guard attacks Wellington
With his forces temporarily holding off the Prussians at Plancenoit, Napoleon went on one last major offensive. He sent the supposedly undefeatable Imperial Guard into Wellington's army's centre in an attempt to break through and attack his flanks from within. While the guard had some success breaching multiple lines of the Coalition force, it was eventually overrun by Wellington's numerically superior infantry and wiped out.

07 Prussians arrive
Wellington had been exchanging communications with General Blücher, commander of the Prussian army, since 10am and knew he was approaching from the east. The Prussians arrived at roughly 4.30pm and, noting the village of Plancenoit on Napoleon's right flank was a tactically important position, began to attack the French forces there. However, after initially taking the village, French forces reclaimed it.

06 Stalemate
At the heart of the battle, Coalition and French squares then undertook a series of back-and-forth exchanges. All the while cannon and musket fire continued to rain down from all sides and, aside from one more combined arms assault by the French on the centre-right of Wellington's lines, a general melee ensued. Each side saw their numbers steadily chipped away.
"A man whose ambition and lust for glory had made the entire continent run with blood"

In this situation, his only option was to strike a rapid blow against the nearest enemy in the hope that a great victory would be obtained that would frighten his foes into making peace. In truth, this was a slim hope. On 15 June 1815, he invaded Belgium with the idea of catching the forces there unawares, as these troops were the most vulnerable to attack.

In the firing line were two separate armies, namely the duke of Wellington's Army of the Netherlands - a polyglot collection of troops from Britain, Holland and various minor German states - and Gebhard von Blücher's Prussian Army of the Lower Rhine. Neither force was of particularly good quality and individually they were both smaller than Napoleon's 125,000-strong Army of the North. In consequence, the emperor planned to defeat them separately by getting between them and hitting each one before they could unite and overwhelm him by the sheer weight of their combined numbers.

As an operational plan this was very good but it was badly executed. Units took wrong turnings, failed to move at the appointed time or became jammed in the narrow country lanes leading to the frontier. Fortunately for the French, the situation was not at its best in the Allied camp either. For ease of subsuming the troops, the armies of Wellington and Blücher were spread over a wide expanse of southern Belgium and the two commanders were not expecting an attack so soon. That night, Wellington was at a ball hosted by the duchess of Richmond where he and many other key officers enjoyed the free-flowing wine.

Hampered by poor staff-work, however, the French could not take advantage of their opponents' disarray. Initial success against the Prussians in particular was squandered, and Wellington and Blücher managed to reach safety a few kilometres south of Brussels - close enough to support one another with ease. Napoleon's master plan had failed.

The climax of the campaign came on the morning of Sunday 18 June. Having followed Wellington with the bulk of his forces, Napoleon needed to crush him before the Prussians arrived to help him but heavy rainfall the day before meant that much of his army had not yet arrived. It was nearly midday before his forces finally got into action and even when they did, they found that Wellington had chosen a very strong position in the form of a long ridge studded with a number of stoutly built farms. Every attempt at attack was soundly defeated.

All this time, exactly as he had promised, Blücher's army had been marching to the sound of the guns and at around 4.30pm, large numbers of Prussian soldiers started pouring onto the field on the emperor's right flank. From then on, increasing numbers of French troops had to be diverted to hold off Blücher. Success against Wellington became even harder to attain. One last attack by the Imperial Guard having been beaten off, the onset of evening saw the Prussian pressure simply become too great. The defensive line that had been established to hold them back was not just breached, but swept away.

This was the end - within a matter of minutes, the whole French army had collapsed. The only troops who put up any sort of fight were a few battalions of the Imperial Guard that had remained in reserve. Indeed, such was the disorder that it was only with the greatest difficulty that Napoleon evaded capture at the hands of the
WHERE ELSE COULD NAPOLEON HAVE FLED? If he hadn’t surrendered, the ruler could have had his pick of destinations

Live in exile in the United States
Napoleon seriously considered trying to escape to the United States after the Battle of Waterloo. While he ultimately surrendered to a British warship at Rochefort, he also had a vessel waiting for him at the port laden with furniture, books and maps of the US so that he could start a new life in the New World. When he was on Saint Helena, Napoleon often speculated about what might have been, from living in New Jersey with his brother Joseph, to retiring on the banks of the Mississippi or even venturing west to “found a new homeland.” He said, “I would have loved to realise this dream, it would have brought me new glory.”

Forge a new empire in South America
When Napoleon learned that his brother Joseph had safely reached the United States in 1817, he said, “If I were in his place, I would build a great empire in all of Spanish America.” If he had, he would have had the support of hundreds of Bonapartists that had enlisted in the patriot armies fighting for independence from Spain. This included General Michel Brayer, who had a brilliant career in Napoleon’s Grande Armée before briefly commanding the pro-independence Chilean cavalry, while his imperial officer Nicolas-Louis Raoul rose to the rank of Major General fighting in Guatemala. Several rumoured expeditions to rescue Napoleon from Saint Helena came out of Buenos Aires.

vengeful Prussians. He skulked away to begin to contemplate his next move.

Such was the battle of Waterloo. Deposed by the government he had left behind in Paris, Napoleon eventually surrendered to the British on 15 July, who promptly sent him into perpetual exile on the distant island of Saint Helena. He spent the rest of his life blaming Marshal Emmanuel Grouchy, who had blundered on the battlefield, for his defeat at Waterloo. Napoleon refused to realise that Grouchy, who had ended the day fighting the Prussian rearguard at Wavre, could not have reached him in time to make any real difference even had he tried to do so. Behind him, meanwhile, the emperor left a battlefield strewn with tens of thousands of casualties. Even in the two World Wars, such a scene of horror was rarely equalled but some might argue that it was a price worth paying for ridding Europe of a man whose ambition and lust for glory had made the entire continent run with blood.

In the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, Napoleon found himself imprisoned in far worse conditions than he had ever endured on Elba - his house, for example, was damp and overrun with rats. Even France suffered much harsher treatment than it had been subjected to in 1814, having both to pay a large indemnity and to endure three years of military occupation.

What is more, Louis XVIII was restored to the throne and was succeeded by his far less politically savvy brother, Charles X, in 1824. Even so, it was not until 1830 that the House of Bourbon was removed from the French throne for good. Perhaps this was proof of just how exaggerated the rumours of popular discontent were, the very same ones that had persuaded Napoleon to embark on his prison break - an adventure that was never far short of crazy.
TO HELL AND BACK AGAIN

During World War II, Corporal Roy Pagani dodged almost certain death in Dunkirk, Singapore and on the horrific Burma Railway

Written by Philip Davies

"My father was a remarkable man. Having escaped alone from Dunkirk and again from Singapore, he was the only European to escape successfully from the appalling Burma Railway. Most people think that no one ever did, but my dad managed it. Over 13,000 Allied prisoners of war died building the railway - 393 men for every mile of track laid. My dad was determined not to be one of them. I am so proud of him."

Not surprisingly, Cheb Campbell becomes very emotional when she recalls her father, Corporal Roy Pagani, and his exploits as a British soldier during World War II. The war cast a long shadow and left a lasting legacy for her and her family.

“What sustained my Dad and enabled him to endure so much was the promise he made to my mum. He vowed that whatever happened, and no matter what befell him, or however long it took, he would find his way back to her.” Little did he realise then that he would have to endure hair-raising escapes, guerrilla fighting, incarceration, agonising torture and an appalling death march to make good his promise - a promise that was to save his life when he despaired of survival.

“Dad was incredibly tough and self-confident. He was forced to learn this from a very early age. Abandoned by his father in the south of France at the age of seven, he was rescued by a nun and he spent his childhood in a boy’s convent near Toulon. They taught him to be resourceful and self-reliant - all the things that would stand him in good stead later on in life. He always said that these were the most wonderful days of his life.

“After returning to England as a teenager, he joined the East Surrey Regiment. Just a week before the outbreak of war, he married my mum, Thelma, who everyone called Pip.”

In May 1940, Pagani was part of the fighting retreat of the British Expeditionary Force to Bray Dunes, near Dunkirk, where he booby-trapped his lorry with a grenade. Being a loner at heart, he refused to join everyone else and head for Dunkirk but struck out alone looking for a boat. He found one, sailed it to England single-handed and four days later he reached the little east coast village of Shingle Street. After hitching a lift to Ipswich, he took a train to Colchester and then walked to his mother-in-law’s house. “When she opened the door to him, she fainted,” says Cheb.

Determined to get back into action, he eventually joined the newly formed 18th Reconnaissance Regiment. In late October 1941, he set sail for the Far East on the ill-fated Empress of Asia, which was dive-bombed with its precious cargo of arms and equipment within
sight of Singapore. As the ship blazed and listed, Pagani leapt back on board to retrieve his rifle and pack in which he kept his treasured photos of his wife and young son. Just two weeks after arriving, the British surrendered. But once again, Pagani decided to break away from the herd and resolved to escape.

At the docks, he found a sampan full of fish manure, invited four others to join him, and set sail as the city was consumed by fire and explosions. After island hopping, their frail craft was hit by a massive tropical cyclone. Hanging on for dear life, they were inundated by the full force of the storm. They were lucky to survive and they reached Sumatra and what they believed was safety - but their hopes were short-lived. The Japanese were close behind and after attempting to hijack an old steam tug, Pagani was seized by the Japanese and drafted into a labour battalion.

It was a grim awakening to what lay ahead. Death was an everyday occurrence and Cheb recalls how "he never got over having to sit with the dying, and then having to wash the dead body, plug the orifices, and then carry the corpse sewn into a rucksack slung between two poles to the burial site."

“HOWEVER LONG IT TOOK, HE WOULD FIND HIS WAY BACK TO HER”
Pagani was taken by ship to Thanbyuzayat, the base camp for the infamous Burma railway. He was determined to escape. Short and stocky, he calculated that he could disguise himself as a local and practised walking barefoot for miles to harden his feet. The camp was unfenced, as the Japanese believed that the prospects of any European escaping across an Asiatic country covered in dense jungle were minimal. Cheb explains, "One day in mid-November 1942, he simply said to his mates, 'Well, so long then, I'm off, before melting into the trees." Feigning sickness that day, he was able to join the daily working party late and, crucially, without an escort, and he disappeared into the jungle.

After several close shaves – including walking straight into a Japanese patrol – Pagani made his way north with the help of various local families. This assistance proved invaluable in bypassing Moulmein, which was swarming with Japanese troops. Soon lying up outside a small village, he noticed that the population was noticeably different from other Burmese he had come across. They were Karens, an indigenous hill tribe that had long offered its loyal service to the British in Burma. He decided to seek their help - a fateful decision that would save his life.

Knocking on the door, he was astonished to be introduced to a young girl who spoke impeccable English. Invited in, and plied with tea and biscuits, he was introduced to her father, an eminent Karen, who was in touch with Karen guerrillas in the hills. They were led by a mysterious British officer who had remained far behind the Japanese lines to lead a resistance army of Karens. This was Major Hugh Seagrim, the man who was destined to become the TE Lawrence of Burma.

Hidden under a reeking pile of manure, Pagani was taken in a cart up into the hills to join Seagrim. Cheb remembers her father describing their extraordinary meeting. "Tall, thin and dressed like a Karen, the major raised his hand, jumped down and said to my dad 'Hello, old chap', as if welcoming him to a country mansion".

Pagani became Seagrim's right-hand man and was tasked with whipping the guerrilla Karen force into shape. Together they fought a hit-and-run campaign against the Japanese but the escalating manhunt for Seagrim forced them to separate, at which point Pagani reverted to his original plan to escape right across Burma to rejoin the Allies in India.

He almost made it but he was caught trying to cross the mighty Irrawaddy River and was almost hacked to pieces by a howling Burmese mob before being handed over to the Japanese soldiers. Painfully, Cheb explains how, "tormented by agony from his open wounds, he contemplated suicide. But he suddenly remembered his promise to my mother that he would return to her and so he forced himself to bear the pain".

Worse lay ahead. He was taken to Rangoon and handed over to the Japanese military police - the dreaded kempeitai. For months he was beaten, tortured and abused, but he never broke. One day, without warning, he was thrown into the back of a lorry to what he believed was his execution before being dumped at Rangoon City Jail. Here he slowly recovered, helping his fellow prisoners of war by stealing food from the Japanese.

As the war neared its end, yet another ordeal lay ahead. In April 1945, over 400 of the fittest prisoners, including Pagani, were forced to march east on a gruelling death march. Stragglers were...
THE DEADLY BURMA RAILWAY
A torturous project that killed thousands of POWs

THE WAY AHEAD
Although only around 112 kilometres of the so-called 'Death Railway' actually ran through Burma, it had a lasting legacy on the region. Japan needed to ferry supplies between occupied Bangkok and Yangon (once known as Rangoon), but the approximately 3,200-kilometre sea route was filled with enemy ships and the mountainous region separating Burma and Thailand was thought to be too dangerous to build a railway, as steep drops and rapid rivers stood in the way. The project began at Thanbyuzayat, connecting to an existing line.

MEET IN THE MIDDLE
Construction started at both ends, with the intention of joining up at a midpoint along the planned route. The two sets of railway builders met up just south of the Three Pagodas Pass, a gap in the Tenasserim Hills, marking the modern-day borders between Thailand and Myanmar. Today, there is a memorial to the thousands of Australian and other Allied citizens who died building the railway, and a short original section can still be seen.

HELLFIRE PASS
This section of railway was particularly notorious. Aside from the fact the prisoners of war had to cut through the rock using only rudimentary tools, they suffered incredibly harsh treatment at the hands of their Japanese captors. Forced to work up to 18 hours a day, the sight of sick and dying workers under torchlight was said to resemble something in hell. As well as prisoners of war, many Tamil labourers came to assist the Japanese on the false promise of good jobs. Their deaths often go unrecorded.

ON THE RIVER KWAI
Prisoners of war constructed a bridge over the Mae Kong river at the town of Kanchanaburi. Building this was a nearly impossible feat and it's made all the more impressive by the fact it was completed in just one year, from October 1942 to 1943. The cost was high, though, and locals believe that one soldier died for every single railway sleeper crossing the bridge. The story of the bridge was later dramatised in a 1957 film, *The Bridge on the River Kwai*.

END OF THE LINE
Just 72 kilometres from Thailand's capital, Bangkok, the railway's other end was on the banks of the Mae Klong river at the town of Ban Pong. Today, a small carved stone is the only monument that marks the start of this once awful journey. From Ban Pong, you can take a train following the tracks of the original railway for 120 kilometres, which will get you almost to Hellfire Pass.

shot by the wayside. Believing them to be Japanese, Allied planes mistakenly strafed the column but in the nick of time they were rescued by advancing British troops. At last, Cheb's father was a free man.

Reunited with his wife and young family, Cheb explains how her father coped. "He simply put it all behind him and moved on with his life, eventually setting up a taxi firm in Clacton. Although it left deep physical and psychological scars, until the last few years of his life, he never spoke about the war. There were obvious effects though - he could not abide being barefoot or the sound of a dripping tap, having been subjected to the hideous Japanese water torture. Other than towards mum, he found it difficult to show affection to us. He would pull away if we hugged him for too long."

"When I was younger," she continues, "I wanted to find out more about what he had done. I got a book from the library but he didn't want to talk about it. Once when we were in France, he thought he saw a Japanese guard from the camp and went for him in the street. Beneath the surface, the scars ran deep. He worshipped Hugh Seagrim and, like the Karens, thought him saint. "Dad retained a life-long love for the Karens. Well into his 70s, he returned twice to Burma and the Karen hills - once with my sister, Michelle, and a year later with my mum. At his funeral, the Karens came and sang beautiful songs that had been recorded in the camp he had visited."

There were no obituaries. Long since forgotten, Corporal Roy Pagani was a man of unimpeachable courage who deserves to stand in the front rank of Britain's war heroes. His stoicism and self-belief in the face of unspeakable suffering bear testament to the triumph of the human spirit in the face of impossible odds. But to his daughter, Cheb Campbell, he was simply "my dad".

Philip Davies is the author of *Lost Warriors: Seagrim and Pagani of Burma*, published by Atlantic Publishing.
Terrible trebuchets
The Crusaders constructed man-powered trebuchets to batter the walls with large stones. A wooden beam swung on a vertical axis to hurl stones loaded into its sling. In the final weeks of the siege, the Anglo-Normans battered one stretch of wall around the clock.

Mighty tower
The Anglo-Norman siege tower dwarfed the walls of Lisbon so that the Crusaders could lower the bridge onto the rampart. The tower was draped in dampened animal hides meant to absorb the force of stones from enemy trebuchets and thwart efforts to set the tower alight.

Garrison artillery
The Moors had their own siege artillery mounted on battlements atop the massive gates of the city and also in the citadel. The defending trebuchets were able to inflict casualties on the attackers, as well as damage their siege equipment through direct hits.

Sinister cat
The Anglo-Normans built a 'Welsh cat' designed to protect miners who dug underneath a section of the western wall in order to collapse it from below. The cat was a wheeled siege engine with a roof made of hides designed to absorb the force of stones dropped on it from the battlements.
To persuade the Crusaders to join his cause, King Afonso I of Portugal said that the Anglo-Norman, German and Flemish forces would receive the plunder of Lisbon's inhabitants and the money derived from ransoming high-ranking captives, while he would get full control of the citadel and surrounding city.

Crusader navy
Control of the Tagus estuary, which led out to sea, was essential to a successful siege of Lisbon. A few ships routinely patrolled the river to intercept attempts to smuggle food into the city, which the Crusaders knew was desperately running out of supplies.

As Europeans were preparing to celebrate Christmas in 1144, more than 4,000 kilometres to the southeast, Seljuk warriors captured the Frankish stronghold of Edessa. The bold move by the governor of Mosul sent shockwaves through Christendom. The County of Edessa in Upper Mesopotamia had been the first crusader state founded to stop Muslim nations from expanding into the Holy Land in 1098—and now it was the first to fall.

Fearing that the Kingdom of Jerusalem would be next, Pope Eugene III called for a new crusade to recapture the fallen fortress. The principal crusade preacher, Bernard of Clairvaux, promoted the cause in Flanders and Friesland in 1146. Eugene and Bernard also wrote letters to the English requesting their assistance, which were then read aloud in churches and cathedrals.

In response to the call, 10,000 Anglo-Normans, Flemish and Germans set sail on the Second Crusade in 1147. However, when the fleet dropped anchor to replenish supplies at Porto in northern Portugal, emissaries of the Portuguese king, Afonso I, were waiting for them. Before they sailed on, he wanted their help liberating Lisbon from Moorish occupation. Though many of the Crusaders were initially resistant, the monarch persuaded them by promising all of the plunder in the city, plus the money that would be made from ransoming high-ranking hostages.

Lisbon was ruled by the Almoravid dynasty. Once a mighty force in the region, by 1147 they had lost ground to several foes in Iberia and were in the midst of an internal power struggle with a rebel force, the Almohad Caliphate. This meant the Almoravids were caught off guard when the Crusaders sailed up the Tagus and disembarked at Lisbon on 28 June. The 4,500 Anglo-Normans encamped on the west side of the city and the 5,500 Flemish and Germans bivouacked together to the east. The two camps built siege towers and trebuchets to batter the city's walls.

The Muslim garrison sortied frequently to torch the Crusaders' siege engines. But in late summer, the Crusaders intercepted a message intended for the ruler of neighbouring Évora, in which Lisbon requested aid as the city had nearly exhausted its supplies. They also seized the reply stating that there would be no relief army, which was forwarded to the enemy garrison to shatter its morale.

The Crusaders launched an attack in mid-October to stretch the city's defences. The Flemish and Germans torched the timbers in a large mine, collapsing a 60-metre section of wall, but the defenders plugged the breach. Shortly after, the Anglo-Normans pushed a siege tower against the fortress' southwest corner. With archers covering them, the knights stormed onto the ramparts. Fearing slaughter, the Muslims surrendered.

Despite the easy victory, dividing the spoils nearly went awry. The Crusaders squabbled with Afonso over control of the captives held for ransom, and the German-Flemish soldiers also disrupted the orderly process of confiscating the property of the residents for an even distribution of the booty, pouring into the city and violently ransacking it.

After wintering in Lisbon, the Crusaders who weren't injured during the siege or lost their zeal for holy war sailed for Jerusalem on 1 January 1148. Once in the Holy Land, they joined forces with French, German and local Crusaders in a failed attack on Damascus. They didn't even try to reach Edessa. In the end, the siege of Lisbon stood out as the only victory in a drearily unsuccessful crusade.
01 Street battle in the suburbs
Anglo-Norman knights and archers fight their way through the western suburbs on the afternoon of 1 July to gain control of the base of the walls for mining purposes. Muslim archers and crossbowmen, supported by troops on the roofs of the houses bombarding the Crusaders with rocks, hold the Crusaders back for six hours. Despite the fierce resistance shown by the defenders in the steep and narrow streets, the Crusaders secure the suburbs.

02 Engines of war
After two weeks spent collecting timber, the Crusaders encamped on both sides of the city construct a variety of siege machines, including moveable siege towers, trebuchets and wheeled sheds and rams. The Muslim garrison conducts repeated sorties in which they torch the Crusaders' wooden siege weapons.

03 Flying bridges destroyed
Ships attempt to lower flying bridges onto the walls along the river so that troops can fight their way onto the parapets. The defenders use stone-throwing machines to destroy them.

04 Sign of determination
The Crusaders beach the majority of their vessels and stow the masts and sails to signal to the garrison that they intend to stay through the winter if necessary to capture the city. The garrison troops had hoped that the Crusaders would become frustrated with their lack of success and depart for the Holy Land. This lowers the garrison's morale.

05 Devastating bombardment
A pair of Anglo-Norman trebuchets batter the west wall near the Iron Gate as the siege enters its final stage. They are able to fire an average of eight stones per minute.
Tower stranded by high tide

A Pisan engineer directs the efforts of the Anglo-Normans to build a 25-metre-high siege tower that is completed on 19 October. The Crusaders roll the siege tower, which boasts penthouses to protect troops from stones hurled by the defenders’ stone-throwing artillery, against the western wall. Much to the Crusaders’ consternation, the siege tower becomes stranded at high tide. When the water recedes, the garrison unsuccessfully tries to torch it.

Last-minute surrender

Fighting rages for 36 hours with the siege tower just over a metre from the western wall. When it appears that the Crusaders are about to lower the tower’s bridge onto the wall and fight their way into the city, the Muslims promptly surrender. In this way, the defenders avoid the worst case scenario in which the attackers would be entitled to the entire population if compelled to take the city by force.

Squabble among Christians

The Flemings and Germans are enraged that King Afonso is holding high-ranking hostages from the city as the surrender terms are negotiated. They claim that this violates the original terms negotiated between the Portuguese and the Crusaders. At the last minute, they are dissuaded from storming the Portuguese camp and seizing the hostages.

Crusaders run amok

Approximately 140 Anglo-Normans and 160 Flemish and Germans are allowed to enter the city on 24 October and supervise the collection of the money and property of the people of the city. 200 more Flemish and Germans slip into the city against orders. What was meant to be an orderly process degenerates into uncontrolled excesses and atrocities.

Mine collapses eastern wall

The Flemish and Rhinelander dig an expansive mine with five separate entrances underneath the east wall. They pack the tunnels with combustible materials and light it. The fire weakens the earth and a section of the wall collapses into the ground. The defenders hurriedly build a makeshift wall with timber and block the breach.
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