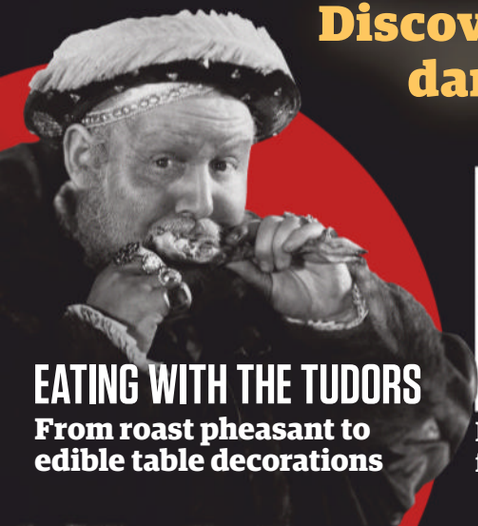
A MERRY ROMAN CHRISTMAS

ALL ABOUT HISTORY

FALL OF THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE

VICTORIAN UNDERWORLD

Discover the gangs that lurked down the dark alleys of 19th century Britain



EATING WITH THE TUDORS

From roast pheasant to edible table decorations

WOMEN OF MEDIEVAL MEDICINE

Pharmaceutical pioneers from the Middle Ages

FORGOTTEN LIVES OF GAY LONDON

How some men survived as a criminalised class

TERRY DEARY INTERVIEW

Horrible Histories author celebrates the underdogs

FUTURE
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Members of the Whitechapel Vigilance Committee tail a suspect in this sketch from *The Illustrated London News*, 1888

Welcome

Welcome to the 150th issue of *All About History*. Not a bad milestone for us to hit and one I'm incredibly proud to be a part of. We've tackled a lot of subjects across those issues and frequently doubled back to areas for reexamination. In some ways, our cover feature this issue is a good example. The Victorian age is a fascinating one, marking a period of incredible social, economic, political and global upheaval. It's a world being propelled forward by the gains of the Industrial Revolution and the massive expansion of towns and cities, but with that came a lot of challenges. Not the least of these was crime, which is perhaps reflected in some of the period's most famous stories, both real and fictional.

For this special issue we welcome Dr Michala Hulme to take us down the dark alleys of Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham and London to see how crime and criminality impacted people's daily lives. Also in this issue, we see how the Romans celebrated their own end-of-year festivities, catch up with legendary author Terry Deary to talk about *Horrible Histories* and historical underdogs, shine a spotlight on the experience of gay men before decriminalisation and much more. As we mark this milestone issue, I want to take a moment to thank my team for their consistent efforts and work as well as all the support teams who make this publication possible. And most of all, thank you for reading. I hope you enjoy the issue.

Jonathan Gordon
Editor

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ALL ABOUT HISTORY

Future PLC Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA

Editorial
Editor **Jonathan Gordon**
jonathan.gordon@futurenet.com
Art Editor **Thomas Parrett**
Features Editor **Callum McKelvie**
Staff Writer **Emily Staniforth**
Production Editor **Iain Noble**
Editor in Chief **Tim Williamson**
Senior Art Editor **Duncan Crook**

Contributors
Rowena Cockett, Mark Galeotti, Bee Ginger, Michala Hulme, Michael G Stroud, Jackson van Uden, David Williamson, Kym Winters

Cover images
Joe Cummings, Getty Images, Alamy

Photography and illustration
Joe Cummings, Kevin McGivern, Adrian Mann, Alamy, Getty Images, Shutterstock, Thinkstock

Advertising
Media packs are available on request
Advertising Sales Director **Lara Jaggon**
lara.jaggon@futurenet.com | **+44 (0)7515 961911**
Graduate Sales Executive **Sophie Dickinson**
sophie.dickinson@futurenet.com

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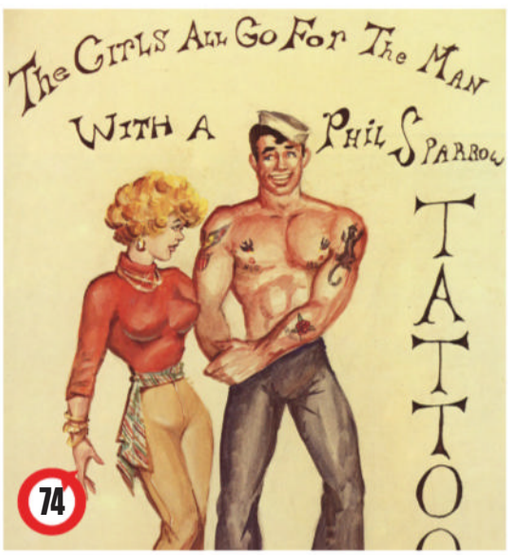
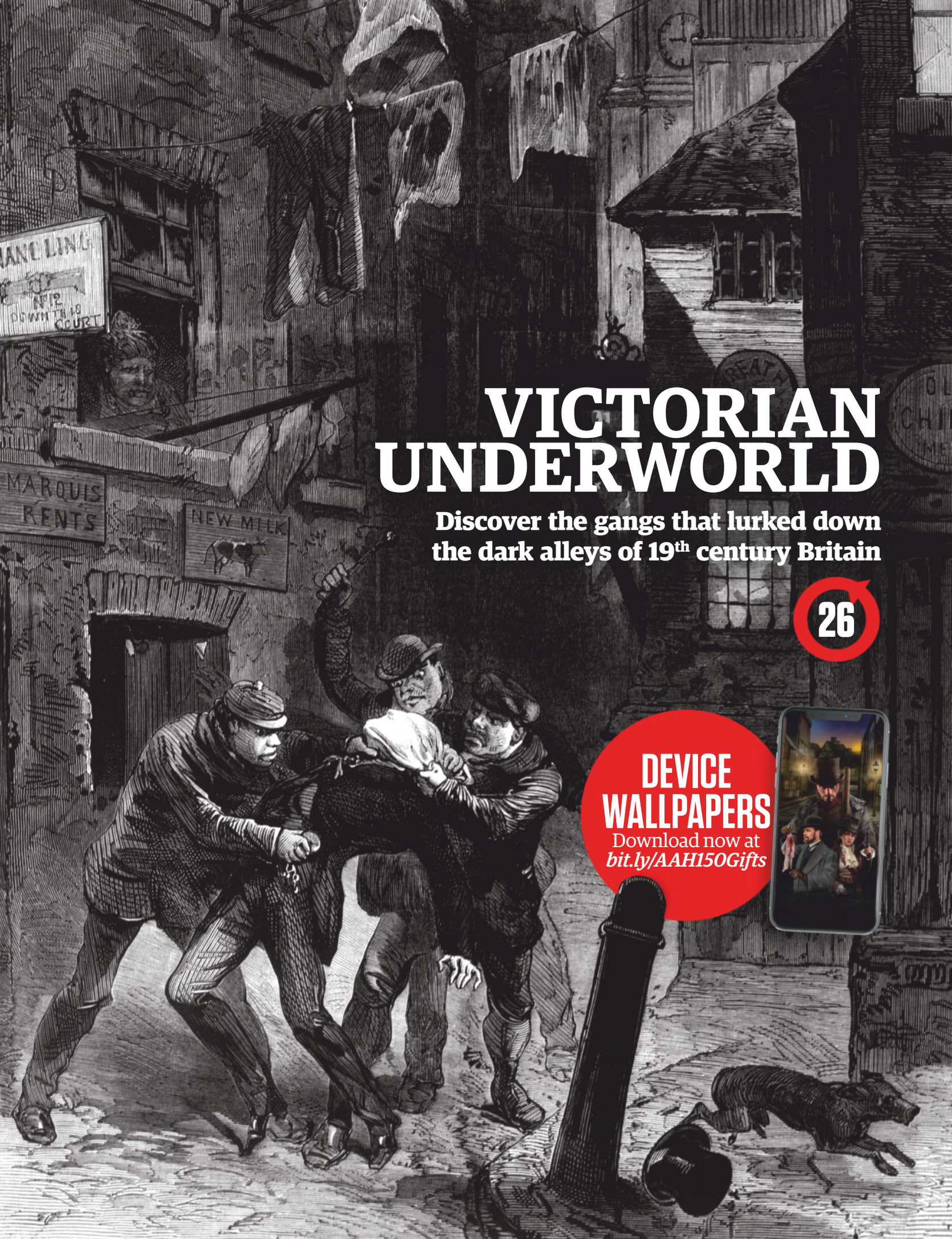


Main image: © Alamy



VICTORIAN UNDERWORLD

Discover the gangs that lurked down the dark alleys of 19th century Britain

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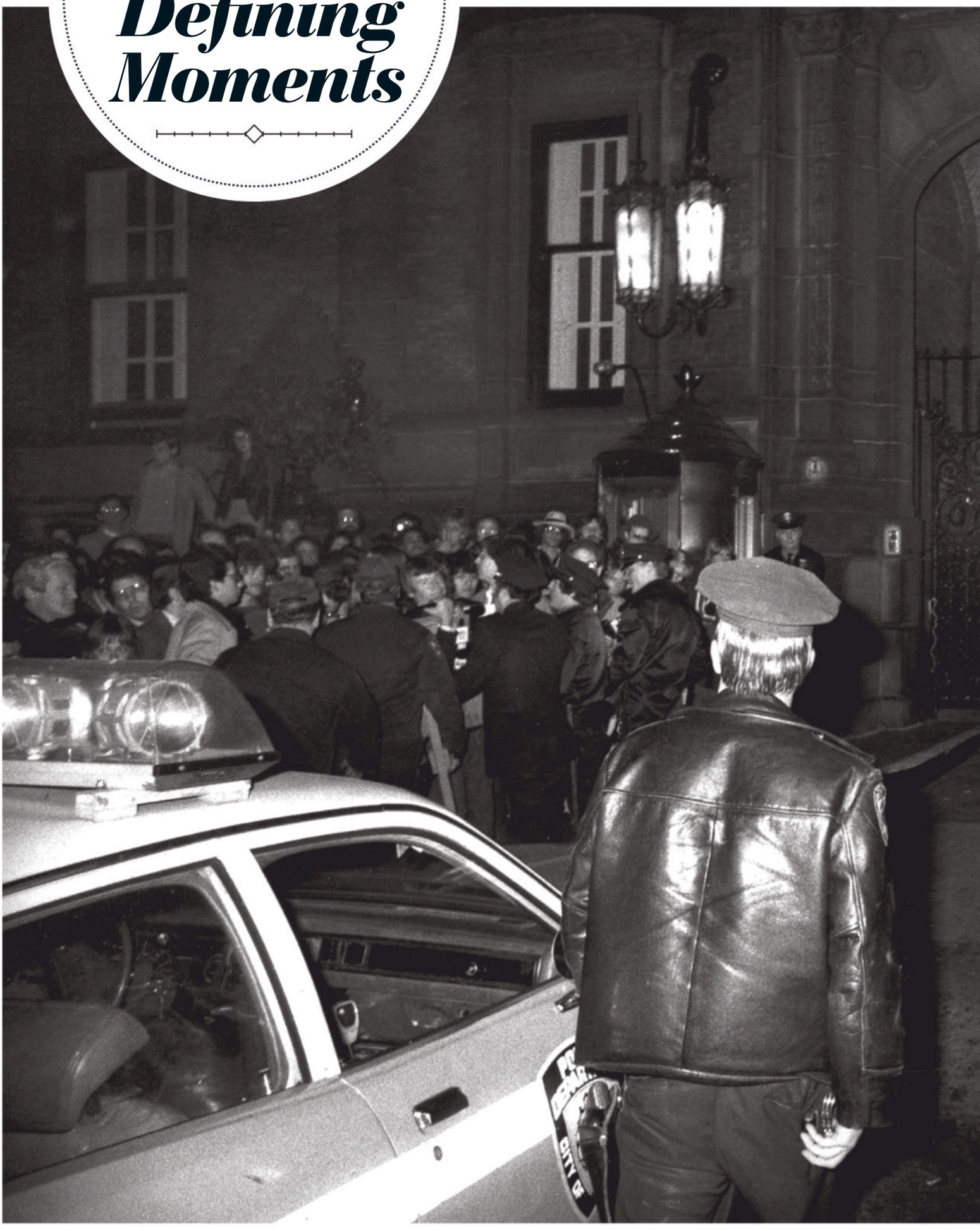
Defining Moments



© Getty Images

8 December 1980

JOHN LENNON KILLED

Former member of the Beatles John Lennon was gunned down in front of the Dakota apartment building where he lived in New York City at around 10.50pm on 8 December 1980. Having been shot in the back four times, he was rushed to hospital, where he was pronounced dead. The killer, Mark Chapman, was a Beatles fan who objected to what he saw as the singer's hypocrisy. On the morning of the murder, Chapman waited outside Lennon's building and later asked him for his autograph as he walked to his car. When Lennon returned home, Chapman seized his chance. This photograph shows the exterior of the Dakota an hour after the shooting.

© Alamy

28 November 1919

FIRST WOMAN SITS IN HOUSE OF COMMONS

Nancy Astor was elected as a Member of Parliament in the UK after a by-election in Plymouth. Astor, while not the first woman to be elected to Parliament (that was Constance Markievicz in 1918), was the first to actually take her seat. It had previously been occupied by her husband before he entered the House of Lords as a peer. American-born Astor proved to be an outspoken addition to the British Parliament and advocated for women's rights, but she was also known to hold anti-Semitic and anti-Catholic views. Astor served as an MP until 1945, when she retired from politics.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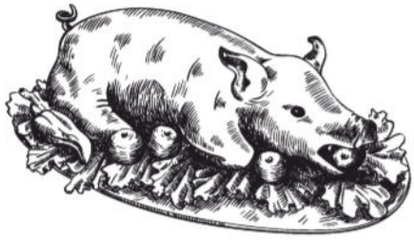
ALL ABOUT

FEASTS



Chronicling the history and symbolism of festivals of food, from ancient cultures to the modern world

Main image: © Getty Images

Written by Emily Staniforth, Callum McKelvie, Jonathan Gordon, Rowena Cockett & Jackson van Uden

Key Events

400s BCE ROMAN SATURNALIA

Starting out as a one-day event, the Roman festival of Saturnalia eventually stretches from 17 to 23 December. It involves sacrificing pigs at the temple of Saturn, the god of agriculture, followed by a public feast with drinking and dancing.

Small gifts were given on the last day of Saturnalia, 23 December, possibly inspiring Christmas.

300s CE OLD NORSE FUNERAL FEASTS

Norse families gather together at funeral feasts called erfi where ritualised toasts are undertaken to remember the dead and confirm inheritance. The heir cannot sit in their predecessor's ruling seat until a vow has been made and the funeral toast drunk.

1160s FEAST OF FOOLS

In areas of medieval France, the Feast of Fools begins to be celebrated on New Year's Day. The festivities involve the usurping of social order, with a mock bishop or pope being elected and people wearing masks, dancing and drinking.

HARVEST FESTIVAL OF MIN c.2900 BCE

Egypt celebrates the Festival of Min, god of fertility, with processions, offerings and ceremonially cutting the first sheaf of corn to ensure a good harvest.

THE LAST SUPPER c.33 CE

Jesus and his disciples share a meal on the night before his crucifixion. He blesses the bread and wine, forming the basis for the Christian Eucharist.

PANCAKE DAY 1445

Tradition says a woman from Olney in Buckinghamshire hears the church bell while making pancakes and runs to the service still carrying her frying pan.

400s BCE

CLEOPATRA'S BANQUET c.40 BCE

Legend says that Cleopatra wins a bet with Mark Anthony to throw an expensive banquet by dissolving a pearl earring in vinegar and then drinking it.

300s CE

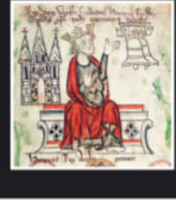
EID AL-FITR 600s

Muslims begin celebrating the festival of Eid al-Fitr at the end of Ramadan, the month of fasting, by praying and sharing large meals together.

1160s

HENRY III'S CHRISTMAS FEAST 1264

Henry III holds an elaborate Christmas feast at Woodstock Palace, featuring 30 oxen, 100 sheep, five boars, salted venison, salmon and six casks of wine.



1520 FIELD OF CLOTH OF GOLD

Henry VIII meets François I of France near Calais for 18 days of feasting, tournaments, masquerades and religious services. Magnificent palaces and pavilions made of fabric and timber are erected and around 12,000 people attend, consuming nearly 200,000 litres of wine.

Today, the Wampanoag mark Thanksgiving with a protest known as the National Day of Mourning.

1621 FIRST THANKSGIVING

Around 90 Wampanoag and 52 English Pilgrims meet at Plymouth, Massachusetts, for a feast to celebrate a successful harvest. This becomes known as the First Thanksgiving, but the peace is short-lived due the colonies increasingly expanding into Native American territory.

1821 GEORGE IV'S CORONATION BANQUET

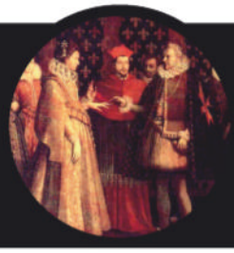
The last coronation banquet is held in Westminster Hall for the coronation of George IV. Over 2,000 guests attend and many more view the spectacle from the galleries above. The banquet is so expensive that it has never been repeated.

FEAST OF THE PHEASANT 1454

Duke Philip the Good of Burgundy holds an extravagant feast to encourage a crusade against Constantinople, featuring a live pheasant and minstrels playing inside giant pies.

MEDICI WEDDING 1600

A banquet to celebrate the wedding of Maria de' Medici and Henri IV of France takes place in Florence, featuring ornate sugar sculptures and folded napkins.



REGENCY BANQUET 1817

Prince George invites Grand Duke Nicolas of Russia to dine at the Royal Pavilion in Brighton. Chef Antonin Careme creates over 100 exotic dishes for the occasion.

1520 — 1621 — 1821 — 1930s

BANQUET OF CHESTNUTS 1501

Cesare Borgia, son of Pope Alexander VI, supposedly holds a banquet at the Papal Palace where 50 courtesans crawl around on the floor picking up chestnuts.

MANCHU-HAN IMPERIAL FEAST c.1719

The Qing Dynasty Emperor Kangxi supposedly holds a feast incorporating food from the Manchu and Han ethnic groups to promote peace between the two peoples.

THE $1,000 DINNER 1851

In a bid to outdo their New York friends, a group of wealthy men in Philadelphia put on a 17-course dinner that lasts for 12 hours.

1930s MODERN DAY OF THE DEAD

The Mexican Day of the Dead sees families adorn altars or graves with candles, marigold flowers and the favourite foods of their deceased relatives to coax their souls into visiting. Sugar skulls (calaveras de azúcar) and Bread of the Dead (Pan de Muerto) are traditional features.

Debate exists over whether the Mexican Day of the Dead has indigenous pre-Hispanic roots.

TUDOR FEAST

Hampton Court Palace Great Hall, UK
16th century

Henry VIII embodied the excesses of Tudor life – he enjoyed the finest food, wine and entertainment to the fullest, and Hampton Court Palace was the scene of many lavish feasts. The land was originally developed in 1514 by Cardinal Wolsey, who expanded on a preexisting country house. He wanted Hampton Court to serve as a palace worthy of hosting the king and Embassies from around Europe. But after his failure to secure Henry's divorce from Catherine of Aragon, Wolsey fell from favour and Henry seized the palace for himself.

From 1529, Hampton Court Palace was developed even further with a Great Hall being added to host luxurious banquets. (William Shakespeare's King's Men put on a performance in the Great Hall for James I in 1603.) Henry also had a theatre added as well as a maze and other extravagant features. He was attended by up to 800 courtiers, so the maintenance of the palace became a massive operation. One Spanish visitor in 1554 reported that between 80 and 100 sheep, a dozen cows, about the same again in calves and even more poultry, boars and rabbits were consumed daily by the residents of the palace. Winter was the peak time for consuming meat as there was frequently less feed available to maintain large numbers of livestock.

Most dinners at court consisted of two courses, the first featuring boiled meats in the form of a pottage with vegetables and bread, and a second course with roasted meats. Big court feasts would add a third course of spiced wine called hippocras served with wafers and sweetmeats. This course was called the void and was served exclusively to the upper classes. It's believed that the void got its name as it was enjoyed while standing, allowing for the table to be 'voided', meaning cleared away.

MEDIEVAL CEILING
The ceiling of the Great Hall was constructed in a hammerbeam style, which even for its time would've been considered old fashioned. It was a nod to the classic medieval halls of legend, which Henry VIII associated with chivalric traditions. The roof also features a falcon badge and the initials AR for Anna Regina, the family badge and royal name of Anne Boleyn, who married Henry around the time the hall was built.

ABRAHAM TAPESTRIES
Around the sides of the Great Hall you'll see the Abraham Tapestries, each depicting a different story from the life of Abraham from the Old Testament. These are believed to have been commissioned by Henry VIII himself as part of his extensive tapestry collection and have hung in the hall since 1546. The ten tapestries were made in Brussels from wool, silk and thread made with silver and gold. Other tapestries from this series of Abraham stories can be found in Madrid and Vienna, but they don't feature those precious threads.

DAILY MEALS
The Great Hall wasn't just used for lavish feasts, it was also where many of the staff gathered to eat if meals were included in their pay. Food would be served twice a day, with a main dinner beginning from 10am and supper served from 4pm. These could be attended by as many as 600 courtiers. Staff were usually served a form of stew called pottage with bread, while nobles and the king (who would typically eat privately in his own apartment) enjoyed more meats and sugary confection.

TABLE SETTINGS
Each diner served themselves from the dishes provided and would be given a large plate called a trencher on which to place their food. These could be made from silver for important events, with the king's sometimes made from gold. Everyone brought their own cutlery, consisting of a knife and spoon. Forks were exclusively used for carving and serving, not for eating, although the king sometimes had one. Bread would be used to wipe cutlery clean between dishes.

THE TOP TABLE
This was reserved for the highest-ranking individuals at the palace, usually the king and queen, and was raised on a dais. Chairs were provided for this table and benches used to seat guests at the lower tables, set at 90 degrees to the king. Those of higher rank would be seated closer to the royals, decreasing in rank further down the hall. All the tables were covered in cloth, but spilling food or drink was considered a social faux pas given the cost of laundering the fabric.

THE GREAT HALL

A smaller hall had existed on the site from its original construction and development between 1495 and 1514, but when Henry VIII took over the palace from 1529 he had the new Great Hall commissioned. Key upgrades were made to accommodate his retinue and servants, and create a more extensive leisure space. The kitchen, royal lodgings, chapel and tennis courts were all upgraded. It was not an entirely happy location for Henry, however, as it was where Jane Seymour died following the birth of their son Edward and where Catherine Howard was arrested for adultery and treason.

HIERARCHY

Your social standing meant a great deal in Tudor Britain, as it did around the kingdoms of Europe at this time. Workers in the court couldn't expect much from their meals beyond pottage and bread, while the richer courtiers and nobles got more variety, but it went beyond that. Sumptuary laws dictated what people could wear and how many dishes they could be served. A 1517 law limited cardinals to nine dishes, while dukes, marquises and earls could have seven. Such restrictions were lifted for weddings and festive meals.

THE MESS

The image of a wide array of dishes laid out on a table for the Tudors to enjoy probably seems familiar. This was referred to as the 'mess', which meant that each course involved several dishes being brought to each table at the same time. The diners then served themselves their portion, starting with the highest-ranked person. The king and queen were given their own servings, but others at their table had to share between two and those on the lower tables shared between four. A large feast could see 43 dishes served in a main course including swan, venison, pheasant, jellies, pies, tarts and more.

THE KITCHEN

The kitchen was upgraded to meet Henry VIII's lavish demands and was the largest in Tudor England. It was staffed by 200 cooks, sergeants, grooms and pages, and put out as many as 1,600 meals a day for the palace's inhabitants. The kitchen was divided into departments, each headed by a sergeant assisted by yeoman and grooms and responsible for different aspects of meal preparation, such as those that handled all the roasted meats.

THE SUBTLETY

A feature of big festive meals or banquets put on for a foreign Embassy was the use of a 'Subtlety'. The name has a certain irony to it as it was essentially a showstopping centrepiece. These were pieces of art made from marzipan and spun sugar and crafted to look like an animal, castle or some other exotic object. Wolsey is said to have hosted such a meal for the French Embassy in 1527, likely at Hampton Court, where a sugar chess set impressed the visitors so much that it was boxed up and sent back to France.

Illustration: Adrian Mann

HESTIA, GODDESS OF THE HEARTH

Greece
6th century BCE – 1st century CE

VEILED GODDESS

In Greek mythology, Hestia is the first child of the titans Kronos and Rhea who was swallowed, along with her younger siblings, by her father. She was the last to be freed by Zeus and rejected the advances of Apollo and Poseidon, instead swearing a vow of chastity. In return for this commitment, Zeus is said to have promised her the first offering of every sacrifice. As a symbol of her modesty, she is usually depicted wearing a veil.

MODEST GOD

A great many of the Greek pantheon are depicted dressed in armour or revealing costumes, but not Hestia. She is always shown fully covered, speaking to her role as a symbol of domesticity and home life. And unlike other gods, she didn't have many dedicated temples. She was worshipped in the home or at the community hearth, known as the prytaneum.

SYMBOLS OF DOMESTICITY

A common item to see Hestia holding in the few depictions of her from ancient Greece is the branch of a chaste tree. The aromatic shrub, the vitex agnus-castus, blooms in the autumn and has a number of associations dating back over 2,500 years. It's been used in women's health, fertility and marriage rituals. The branches would be carried by women during the Thesmophoria festival to honour Demeter, goddess of the harvest, during which women were to remain chaste.

KETTLE

An important item you might see Hestia either holding or sitting next to her on the hearth is a kettle. Boiling was one of the ways in which the Greeks purified their water for drinking or use in cooking. It is another important symbol of the everyday domesticity that Hestia was thought to represent and preside over.

THE HEARTH

The Greek home centred around a hearth, similar to how it sometimes feels like ours can centre around the kitchen. It was the place where food was cooked and where the family could get warm. It was also where food offerings could be made to the gods. This dual purpose with regards to food is what made Hestia one of the Theoi Daitioi, the gods associated with feasts and celebrations. The others were Dionysus (god of wine), Aphrodite (goddess of pleasure) and Charites (goddess of joy).

PURE FLAME

As the goddess of the hearth, Hestia was also the possessor of the eternal flame, which had a lot of symbolic importance. The community hearth would be used to light the fires within new homes in the community to welcome people. The purity of the flame was also connected to Hestia's depiction as the eternal virgin. As such, she played a religious role in Greek life while also being an important civic symbol.

BARE FEET

Hestia's form under the Romans might be better known thanks to her famous worshippers. Known as Vesta, she was given a temple in Rome in which an eternal flame was maintained by the Vestal Virgins - women who'd taken a vow of chastity. During the Vestalia festival, married women were invited to make offerings of ritual cakes to the goddess, but had to enter with bare feet.

Illustration: Kevin McGivern

Historical Treasures

KRATER – SYMPOSIUM VASE

This vase was designed to hold wine at some of the ancient Greeks' notorious drinking sessions

c.550 BCE, Greece

The ancient Greeks were no strangers to a good party. Their symposiums were a form of boozy banquet that usually occurred after a main feast, and attendees were mainly concerned with drinking. Intended for male guests only, members of the wealthy classes would gather for an evening of conversation, games and copious amounts of wine.

The item shown here is known as a krater and was designed to hold large amounts of wine, which was then diluted with water and poured into guests' glasses by servants. It's currently on display at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. This example features mythological subjects, while others depict images of the symposiums themselves. These illustrations are responsible for much of what we know about these events.

The houses of Greek aristocrats had rooms called andron that were built specifically for entertaining male guests and holding symposiums. Androns would contain a number of couches known as klinai, and each would seat two attendees. Guests would lounge upon these, leaning on their left elbow.

One of the Greek philosopher Plato's most important works is called *Symposium* and focuses on the conversations between a group of men attending one of these events. Among them are his fellow philosopher Socrates and General Alcibiades. The main topic of conversation between the great men is the nature of love. However, it's thought that no such symposium actually took place in real life and the esteemed gathering was a fictional creation of Plato.

Alexander the Great and his generals later transformed the symposium into a vast, decadent display of debauchery and heavy drinking. It was at such an event that Alexander stabbed one of his senior commanders, Cleitus. Alexander was disparaging his father, Philip of Macedon, when Cleitus intervened and the drunken Alexander responded by impaling Cleitus with a spear.

DARK ART

This vase has been made in the so-called 'black figure' style. This is a process by which a special slip (a mixture of clay, water and pigment) was used, which turned black when the vase was fired in the kiln.

EPIC JOURNEY

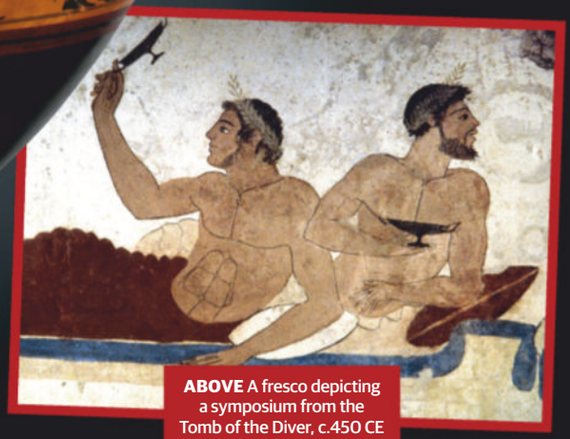
The scene shown on both sides of the vase is Hephaestus' return to Mount Olympus after being cast out. It is an apt image for a krater, as Hephaestus was taken to the home of the gods by Dionysus, the god of wine, who kept his cup full during their journey.

PROLIFIC POTTERY

This krater is the work of an artist known as Lydos, and numerous pieces in the black-figure style are attributed to him. It's possible that he was a foreigner who had relocated to Greece.

WINE O'CLOCK

The krater would have held a mixture of water and wine, the exact dilution of which would be decided by the symposiarch - the master of ceremonies. Typically the wine would be heavily diluted, with two-parts wine to five-parts water.



ABOVE A fresco depicting a symposium from the Tomb of the Diver, c.450 CE

HISTORY'S GREATEST FEASTERS

It was certainly the more the merrier for these ten famous gluttons

Henry VIII
English
28 June 1491 – 28 January 1547

Henry VIII was king of England from April 1509 to January 1547 and is remembered as a cruel and overweight monarch. One thing that contributed to his infamous size and 132cm waistband was his love of banquets and feasts. Henry's kitchens at Hampton Court Palace, the biggest in England, prepared lavish meals that included beer, wine, pies, roasted meat, game, pottages, fruit and jellies, with Henry free to indulge as much as he wished. He also had a personal chef who used a private kitchen to prepare his food, and he had a love of oranges.

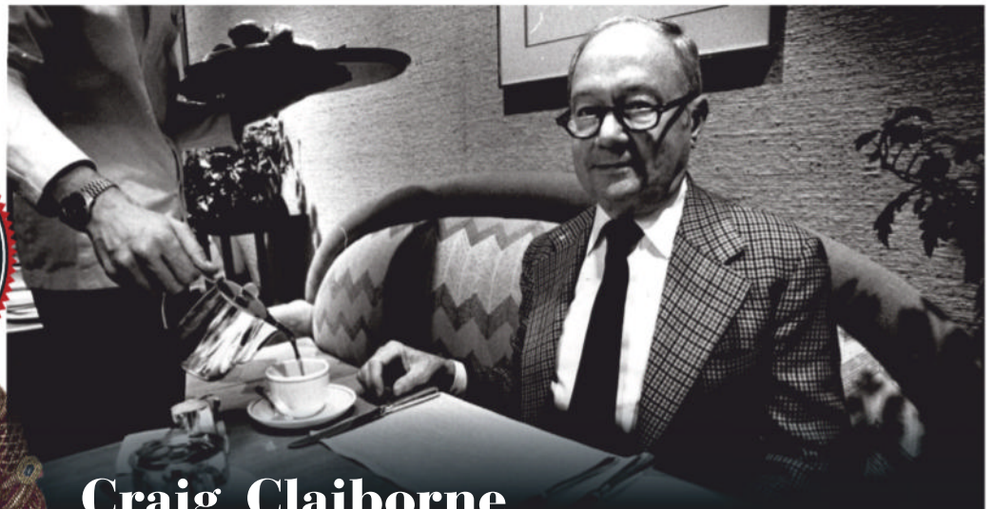
Henry VIII was the only one who ate with a fork at his banquets, using it to eat sweet preserves.

BELSHAZZAR
BABYLONIAN, 580 BCE – 539 BCE

A biblical feast in the *Book of Daniel* tells the tale of Belshazzar, a prince of Babylon, being warned about the collapse of his kingdom. Belshazzar hosted 1,000 lords at this feast, and wine was drunk freely by all in attendance. Once everyone was drunk, Belshazzar ordered that the golden drinking vessels that his father stole from the Jewish temples in Jerusalem be brought out so they could all drink from them and praise their idols.

CHARLES II
ENGLISH
29 MAY 1630 – 6 FEBRUARY 1685

After the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 Charles II needed to resurrect the pomp of the Crown, and this included bringing back the tradition of public dining. He followed the practices that he'd grown up with and used the finest cutlery, crockery and linen to furnish his tables. Every week, Charles would hold a banquet where he would be served 26 dishes. One of his famous feasts was for the Knights of the Garter, at which they were served 16 barrels of oysters, 2,150 poultry, 1,500 crayfish, 6,000 stalks of asparagus and 45kg of strawberries.



Craig Claiborne
American
4 September 1920 – 22 January 2000

After winning an auction put on by American Express to have dinner anywhere in the world, at any price, for himself and a friend, food critic Craig Claiborne took himself and Pierre Franey to Chez Denis in Paris. Here, Claiborne turned his $300 auction bid into a $4,000 meal of 31 dishes, including Beluga caviar, Belon oysters and foie gras, all paired with fine wines and champagnes.

Claiborne and Franey did not finish all their courses in their $4,000 meal – they only had a spoonful of one of their soups!

Philip the Good

Burgundian

31 July 1396 – 15 June 1467

Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy, transformed his realm into a large and powerful duchy during the Hundred Years' War. One way of building his and Burgundy's prestige was through magnificent feasts. The most impressive was the Feast of the Pheasant in 1454 to announce a new Crusade (which never happened). This feast featured jousting, musicians, and replicas of exotic animals and ships. Even more impressive was the wine poured out of statues and the 50-course meal. The lavish feast also featured an enormous pie, out of which emerged a troupe of musicians.

During the Feast of the Pheasant Philip the Good allegedly had a mechanical elephant make an appearance.

Cleopatra VII

Egyptian

January 69 BCE – 12 August 31 BCE

Cleopatra once sought to demonstrate Egypt's wealth to Mark Antony with a competition to see who could host the most expensive banquet. Antony put on an extravagant feast, believing Cleopatra would be unable to beat him. She then ordered vinegar for dessert, dropped one of her large pearl earrings (estimated to be worth $28.5 million in today's money) into the vinegar, let it dissolve and then drank the solution, soundly defeating Antony with just dessert!

Cleopatra even tried to double the cost of her banquet but Mark Antony refused to drink her other pearl earring.

CESARE BORGIA

ITALIAN
13 SEPTEMBER 1475 – 12 MARCH 1507

An illegitimate son of Pope Alexander VI, Borgia became one of the most ruthless figures in Italy after he resigned as a cardinal in 1499. Despite having left the Church, he still maintained apartments in the Vatican. It was here that he would host his infamous Banquet of Chestnuts. This lavish occasion was less about food as 50 courtesans were hired to dance, entertain and compete in picking up the chestnuts spread across the floor.

EMPEROR KANGXI

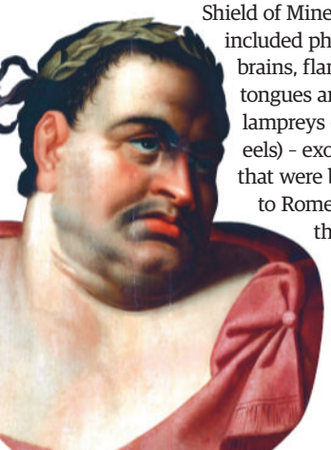
CHINESE
4 MAY 1654 – 20 DECEMBER 1722

Emperor Kangxi is one of the longest-serving rulers in history, and he made feasts and banquets a key element of his diplomatic efforts to woo his enemies. Kangxi saw banquets as a more important tool than the Great Wall of China, hence why they were so grand. Occasions such as the Manchu-Han Imperial Feast featured over 300 dishes of different Chinese cuisines from across the country, like beef tenderloin in oyster sauce and shiitake mushrooms with pine nuts. There were also some unusual dishes like tiger testicles, rooster combs and carp tongue served with bear paw.

VITELLIUS

ROMAN, 24 SEPTEMBER 15 CE – 22 DECEMBER 69 CE

One of Rome's four emperors during the Year of the Four Emperors (69 CE), Vitellius was chronicled as a gluttonous feaster, allegedly hosting four feasts a day while attending other banquets in between. One of his favourite dishes to present was the Shield of Minerva which included pheasant brains, flamingo tongues and lampreys (similar to eels) - exotic items that were brought to Rome from the farthest reaches of the empire.



George IV

English

12 August 1762 – 26 June 1830

When George IV first met his wife, she remarked that he was "very fat", no doubt due to his love of rich food like Turkish kebabs, deep-fried potatoes and chicken, and deep-fried cream and game. His coronation banquet was also excessive, with 6,704 dinner plates, 1,406 soup plates, 1,499 dessert plates and 288 large pitchers of ale and beer. This rich diet led to many health conditions such as gout, which prevented him from carrying out many of his duties. His unhealthy habits eventually caught up with him and he died weighing over 150kg of a burst blood vessel in his stomach.

George IV's eating habits caused him so many health issues that he had to take opium drops as a painkiller before royal events.

All images: © Getty Images

Q&A

A HISTORY OF FEASTING

Brian Hayden explains the social, political and cultural importance of these grand occasions

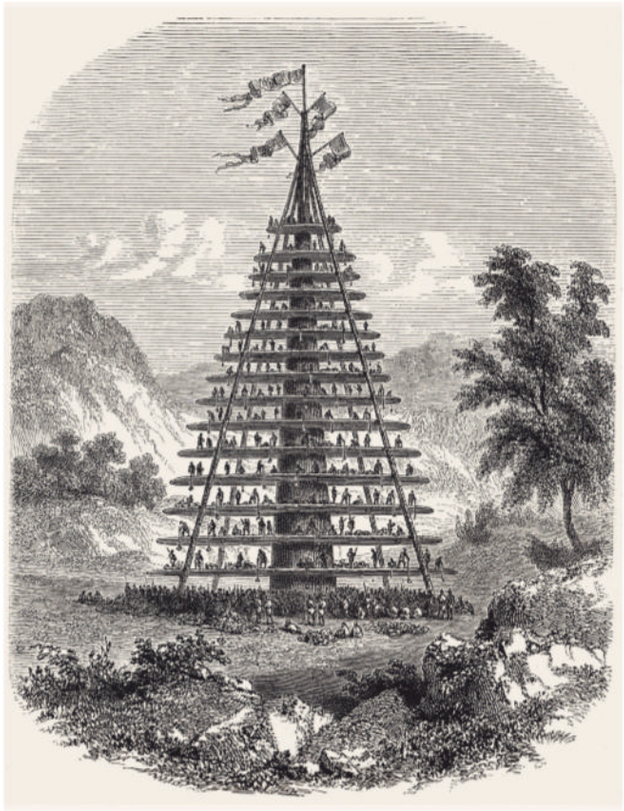
What are some of the earliest examples of feasting?

There is no material evidence for any feasting during the very earliest years of human existence. I think that the first good indicators of feasting appear in the early Upper Paleolithic of Europe, some 30,000 years ago, when humans lived by hunting and gathering. Even stronger cases can be made for fairly substantial feasts being held in Epipaleolithic times among Natufian communities that still lived by hunting and gathering in the Near East, some 11,500 to 15,000 years ago. Shortly afterward, when people began farming, feasting became much more widespread and has since characterised virtually all agricultural cultures.

You've described pre-industrial historical feasting as a "powerful engine of cultural change." Can you explain what you mean by that?

In traditional societies, there is usually a specific underlying purpose for holding feasts and inviting specific individuals, whether to create marriage prospects, military alliances, trade partnerships or political support. Invitations to feasts almost always involve the consumption of highly desired or costly foods, including meat (scarce in most traditional societies), special starches and alcohol – the feasting triumvirate. Special foods and exotic materials are frequently given to selected guests to take away with them as well. These features are all meant to attract desired people to create advantageous relationships. While these special foods and items are often described as 'gifts', they are more accurately labelled as 'debts', because they must be repaid in kind to maintain the desired social relationship. If they are not, social rupture will occur, often in an adversarial or violent fashion. These feasting relationships and debts are capable of creating structured political networks in communities that can concentrate power in the hands of the individuals who can produce or control the most food surpluses – the wealthiest people in the communities.

One other key factor to understand about this traditional hosted feasting system is that achieving most goals usually involves competing with other people who want to get the same things for themselves. They want the same marriage partner, the same trade partner, the same military ally as the host. This results in competition to produce more and better foods and to give away other more and better desirable



Brian Hayden is professor emeritus in the Archaeology Department at Simon Fraser University, British Columbia, Canada. He is the author of books including *The Power of Feasts* (Cambridge University Press, 2014) and *The Power of Ritual in Prehistory* (Cambridge University Press, 2018).

ABOVE LEFT The earliest evidence of feasting is from 30,000 years ago in prehistoric European societies

LEFT An illustration of a 19th century Maori hakari feast stage

ABOVE *Cleopatra's Feast* by Flemish painter Jacob Jordaens (1593 – 1678)

"Feasts were held to create military alliances, trade partnerships or political support"

gifts in order to achieve the benefits for oneself. This creates very strong and unlimited pressures for increasing food and gift production leading to the domestication of plants and animals, and ultimately to the monumental give-aways like the potlatch of the northwest coast [of North America] and Polynesian feasting scaffolds almost 100ft-high [30m] filled with food. The repercussions on all aspects of society were unparalleled in traditional societies compared to the previous years when it was not feasible to accumulate or use surplus foods due to the limited technologies of those times. The development of social and economic inequalities as well as the concentration of political power and the production of new ideologies can all be linked closely to the emergence of competitive feasting systems.

What evidence do you rely on when studying feasts from the past?

There is a wide range of evidence that we use to infer feasting. Some of the most important archaeological indicators are unusually large hearths, elaborate serving materials (such as fancy pottery or elaborately carved spoons to impress guests), oversized cooking or serving vessels, special (costly) foods including domesticated animals or plants, technologies and resources capable of producing surpluses, special feasting structures, indications of food wastage, feasting scenes in art, written records of feasts, and the elaboration of non-subsistence items like sculptures used as gifts to impress guests. Context is also important, especially food remains or materials left near burial sites where feasts often occur.

Tell us about your favourite historical feast...

My favourite description of an historical feast comes from Hippolochus' account of a marriage celebration hosted by Caranus in the third century BCE. Caranus was related to one of Alexander the Great's close associates and wanted to secure his relationships with a support network by indebting selected guests at this event. To begin, all guests were given silver cups and gold tiaras, after which they received large loaves, chickens, ducks, ring doves, a goose and assorted viands. A second platter for each was of silver containing a large loaf, geese, hares, goat kids, pigeons, turtle doves, partridges and cakes. Then followed gifts of another gold tiara, wine to drink and entertainments. After this, silver and gold jars containing perfumes were given to each. The main course consisted of another large silver platter (a gift) with a large whole roasted pig inside of which there were thrushes, ducks and warblers with puréed peas poured over eggs, oysters and scallops. Considerable drinking was followed by the presentation of a kid on another silver platter with gold spoons. Large baskets of plaited ivory strips were then given to the guests to carry away what they could not eat, as well as more crowns and jars of perfume. More entertainment was followed by gifts of large gold cups, more wine and crystal platters full of baked fish, more gold tiaras and jars of perfume. A chorus of 100 sang a wedding hymn, together with dancers, and the serving to each of boars on silver platters. Finally, after more wine, a variety of cakes were served in ivory baskets, the guests packed up their literal fortunes in gifts and reportedly left entirely sober. Cleopatra apparently hosted an even more lavish feast for Caesar with the fairly transparent motive of securing his support for her rule over Egypt.

FESTIVALS & FEASTS

From celebrations of snails to beer-soaked festivities, visit these five historic celebrations

1 SAGRA DEL PESCE
CAMOGLI, ITALY

Like some of the other festivals featured here, Italy's sagra have their origins in religious feasts and date back hundreds of years. Initially occasions to venerate particular saints, across the centuries, these festivals gradually became more focussed on celebrating an area's produce. For example Sagra dell'Uva, held in Marino near Rome, celebrates the humble grape. The most famous sagra are those that celebrate truffles, such as Alba's Fiera Internazionale del Tartufo Bianco d'Alba - the White Truffle Festival.

The Sagra del Pesce is held every year in the fishing village of Camogli in northern Italy. The festival is in honour of San Fortunato, the patron saint of fishermen, and pays homage to the village's long history of seafaring. A highlight of the festival is a vast pan in which various nautical delights are cooked for the many guests. As well as tucking in to the delicious seafood, visitors can also enjoy spectacular firework displays and parades in San Fortunato's honour.

Dates and details vary. Head to www.welcomecamogli.it for the latest news about the festival.

During the festival, seafood is fried in a huge pan

The shelled delicacy is celebrated at L'Alpec del Caragol

2 L'APLEC DEL CARAGOL
LLEIDA, CATALONIA, SPAIN

Every year around 200,000 visitors descend upon the city of Lleida in Catalonia, Spain, for the world's largest snail-eating festival. It began in 1980 but is said to have its origins in the historic L'Aplec festivals. These are similar to the Italian sagra and originally had religious connotations.

The L'Aplec del Caragol festival is organised a little like an old-fashioned feast. Groups of locals sit at long tables in large tents called penyas and gorge themselves on the shelled delicacies, drink and dance. Outside can be found huge steel pans known as paellas in which the snails are prepared. But there are other treats to be found here too, including snail-shaped bread and even snail racing competitions. At the most recent festival, organisers claimed that a record amount of snails was consumed - some 15,000kg.

The event usually takes place in Lleida in May - check details before travelling.

The 2018 Cold Food Festival in Qinhuangdao, northern China

3 TET HAN THUC AND COLD FOOD FESTIVALS
VIETNAM

Tet Han Thuc has its origins in China's Cold Food Festival, otherwise known as the Hanshi Festival. Legend has it that a Chinese nobleman called Jie Zitui once saved the Duke Wen of Jin from starvation by cooking a piece of his own thigh to feed him. Unfortunately, when the duke attempted to repay Zitui by offering him a position of power in his government Zitui refused. Zitui went into hiding in the forest and the duke started a series of fires in an attempt to smoke him out. But these raged out of control and Zitui was killed.

Devastated at his reckless actions, the duke decreed that no fires were to be lit during a period of mourning. The local peasants were forced to use their initiative, surviving on traditional cold food instead. In the centuries since, this event has evolved into the Cold Food Festival, which is celebrated throughout Asia. The festival was originally celebrated in winter, but it was later moved to spring as people became unwell due to eating cold food in the winter months.

Today, many Asian countries still hold a festival devoted to traditional cold foods. For example, in Vietnam this has translated into Tet Han Thuc, celebrated every year on the third day of the third lunar month. During this event rice balls known as banh troi are made.

Tet Han Thuc takes place throughout Vietnam on the third day of the third lunar month.

The famous oyster opening contest at the Galway festival

4 GALWAY OYSTER FESTIVAL
GALWAY, IRELAND

Galway Bay on the west coast of Ireland is renowned for its delicious flat-shelled fresh oysters. In 1954, the area held its first annual Galway International Oyster and Seafood Festival and it has continued ever since. At the original festival, a banquet was held at which the 34 guests were invited to gorge themselves on 12 different types of oyster.

The festival is held every year in September, just as the oyster harvesting season begins. A highlight is the World Oyster Opening Championships, in which participants have to open as many oysters as possible and are also judged on their speed, technique and presentation. Alongside the competition attendees can also enjoy a number of other entertainments, including live music, and of course treat themselves to the delicious local seafood.

The 2025 Galway International Oyster and Seafood Festival takes place between 26-28 September. For further details visit www.galwayoysterfestival.com.

5 OKTOBERFEST MUNICH
MUNICH, GERMANY

Germany's Oktoberfest has grown to become a global event, with many towns and cities around the world holding their own beer-soaked festivals, but the oldest originated in Munich and dates back to 1810. The event was originally held in honour of Prince Ludwig's marriage to Princess Therese von Sachsen-Hildburghausen and took place over a five-day period.

Surprisingly, there was no beer at this first event, but the festival was so popular that similar feasts were held in the following years. By the 1880s Oktoberfest had begun to resemble something like the huge feast and drinking session that we recognise today. Roasted chicken was sold to the hungry guests and breweries constructed huge beer tents to cater to the increasing demand.

By 1910, around 1.2 million litres of beer was being drunk in the largest tent alone. Across the years, fairground rides and other attractions became an important part, along with traditional songs and music.

Munich Oktoberfest remains as popular today as it has ever been, with 2023's two-week event attracting about 7.2 million visitors to the 40 beer tents. There are also parades and, of course, a selection of delicious treats.

Oktoberfest 2025 takes place between 20 September and 5 October. See oktoberfest.de/en for more details.

The yearly festival involves music, singing and copious amounts of beer

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VICTORIAN U

Discover the gangs that lurked down the dark alleys of 19th century Britain

Written by Dr Michala Hulme

Illustration: Joe Cummings

NDERWORLD

On 23 April 1892, 16-year-old William Willan and his gang were lying in wait for Peter Kennedy, a rival gang member, outside the mill where Kennedy worked. When Kennedy saw them, he tried to escape but was soon chased down by the dozen youths armed with makeshift weapons. Willan was a scuttler, a youth street gang that had terrorised the working-class districts of Manchester and Salford and had tested the governing authorities for over two decades. The name 'scuttlers' was a collective term for these violent ruffians. Individually, the gangs were named after the roads they lived on. Using weapons such as pieces of wood studded with nails, broken bottles, belts and knives, the gangs would fight predominately over territory and girls. ▶

EXPERT BIO

DR MICHALA HULME

Michala is an award-winning historian and genealogist who specialises in the Victorian era. A particular focus is her hometown of Manchester, having authored *A Grim Almanac of Manchester* and *Bloody British History: Manchester*. She has made over 80 media appearances and is currently based at the University of Birmingham.

TOP Twenty-year-old William Brooks was arrested in 1890 and was an alleged member of a Salford scuttling gang

ABOVE In 1892, scuttler William Willan was tried for the murder of Peter Kennedy at the Manchester Assizes. The building was severely damaged during the Blitz and was later demolished

Willan's gang had been embroiled in a bitter feud with a rival outfit for over a month before this confrontation. Some weeks previous, he claimed that he'd been attacked by one of Kennedy's allies, prompting him to now retaliate by stabbing Kennedy in the side. After delivering the mortal blow, Willan wiped the blood off the knife and handed it to an accomplice, and the group fled the scene. Kennedy survived for eight days after the stabbing before succumbing to his injuries, leading to Willan's arrest and subsequent trial.

Willan held the title of King of the Bradford Street Scuttlers – a badge of honour for a scuttler who'd proven himself as a fearless leader and skilled fighter. For these young gang members, loyalty ran deep; they saw each other as family, with a fierce King of Scuttlers at the helm, defending them against rival gangs, the authorities and the police.

Later in 1892, Willan and two associates faced trial for Kennedy's murder at the Manchester Midsummer Assize Courts. Despite his "bitter sobbing" throughout the trial, the jury was unmoved, deliberating for just over an hour before finding him guilty of murder. Willan was sentenced to death, while his two co-defendants were acquitted. As the judge donned his black cap, Willan pleaded desperately: "Oh, master, don't: I'm only 16." His conviction and sentence underscored the brutal reality of gang violence and the authorities' ongoing struggle to loosen the scuttlers' bloody grip on the streets of Manchester.

As soon as the verdict was announced, the family set about trying to get it commuted. They obtained a solicitor and started a petition, gathering over 4,000 signatures.

They succeeded and Willan's death sentence was commuted to penal servitude for life. Eight years after his conviction, the Home Secretary agreed to release him on licence.

One of the earliest recorded scuttler incidents occurred in 1875 when a group of female gang members began terrorising Salford's streets. Despite police efforts – including deploying undercover officers – the attacks only intensified. Between 1888 and the autumn of 1890, the local press documented 42 scuttler cases, highlighting the authorities' growing struggle to control these violent gangs.

Sentences for those found guilty ranged widely, from two months in prison with a £5 fine for common assault to six months for attacking a police officer, and penal servitude for graver offences like manslaughter. On 5 February 1887, 18-year-old Joseph Brady, a notorious scuttler, was out drinking with two women when a confrontation erupted with a rival gang member. Though their fight was quickly broken up, the tension escalated. Later that night, Brady's adversaries, including a scuttler named Owen Callaghan, stormed into his home and fatally stabbed him. At the ensuing trial, Callaghan was convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to 20 years of penal servitude. Yet such lengthy sentences failed to deter scuttler violence. Detective Jerome Caminda, who dedicated much of his career to combating scuttler activities, observed that imprisonment often elevated these criminals to 'hero' status among their peers. Caminda, like many others, called for harsher penalties such as the cat whip. Also known as the cat-o'-nine-tails, it consisted of nine knotted cords, or 'tails', and got its name because it left scars that resembled cat scratches.

With a steady walk to the scaffold, McLean declared his innocence before the executioner released the trapdoor

While Manchester and Salford were grappling with the scuttlers, Liverpool was in the midst of its own battle with a group the newspapers called the High Rip Gang. This gang, which operated in the Vauxhall area of the city during the 1880s, was arguably even more brutal and calculated than the scuttlers in its modus operandi.

The High Rip Gang's first reported leader was 17-year-old Michael McLean, and in 1884 he and his crew faced charges for a brutal, unprovoked assault on 24-year-old Spanish sailor Exequiel Rodriguez Nunez. On a chilly January night, shortly after ten o'clock, Nunez was making his way back to his ship when McLean and four accomplices ambushed him. They kicked him to the ground and struck him repeatedly with

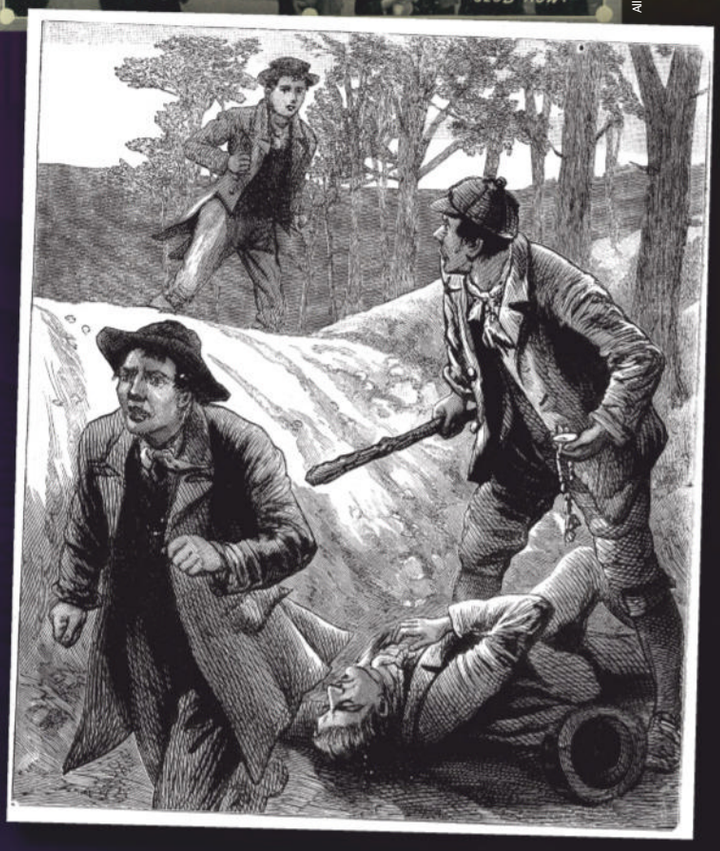
RIGHT By the end of the 19th century, the cat whip was frequently used to punish those convicted of illegal gang-related activities

BELOW LEFT An early image of Kirkdale Jail, where Michael McLean was executed in 1884 for the brutal murder of Exequiel Rodriguez Nunez

FAR RIGHT Club Row Market in Spitalfields, East London, c.1910. It was notorious for gang-related crime

BOTTOM RIGHT Assaults and violent robberies were commonplace in Victorian England

All images: © Alamy, © Getty Images

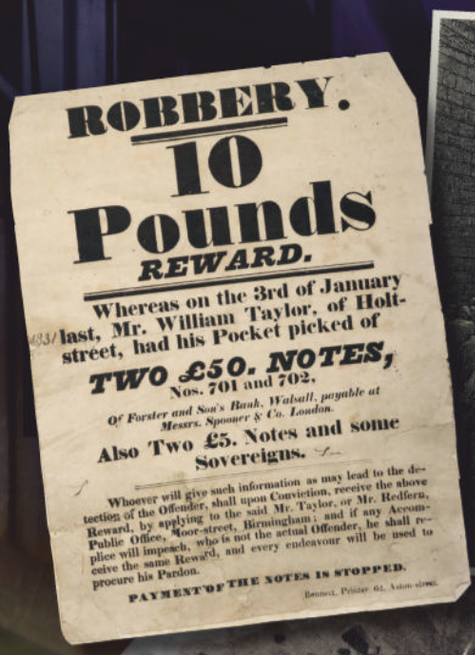


belts. Although Nunez fought to his feet and tried to escape, he was ultimately caught. In a horrific turn of events, McLean and a fellow assailant named Duggan stabbed Nunez three times. One blow severed an artery near his neck, leaving him fatally injured.

McLean and his gang showed no regard for gender in their violent assaults, and they displayed a blatant fearlessness toward the police. During one notorious incident, while being arrested for attacking a female rent collector and stealing her bag of money, McLean stabbed a police officer with such ferocity that the blade sliced through his arm to the bone. This act underscored the gang's ruthless disregard for those in authority.

McLean and his accomplices were eventually arrested for the murder of Nunez. Of the five men indicted, only McLean and Duggan faced trial, and after a lengthy hearing both were found guilty and sentenced to death by hanging. While Duggan later received a reprieve, the Home Secretary saw no grounds for reducing McLean's sentence and he was executed at Kirkdale Gaol on 10 March 1884. Since 1868, executions had been conducted in private, yet the press eagerly reported the details. They noted that McLean "walked firmly to the scaffold", where he delivered a brief speech proclaiming his innocence. The executioner then strapped his legs, adjusted his white cap and released the trapdoor. McLean fell three metres to his death, dying instantaneously on the noose.

Following the execution, petitions flooded into the Home Secretary's office after shocking revelations surfaced regarding the hangman, Mr Binns. It was disclosed that he had arrived at the gaol in an "incapacitated" state. The prison governor confirmed that the executioner was indeed drunk when he reached the prison, yet he still managed to carry out the execution "fairly satisfactorily". This troubling information sparked outrage and raised serious questions about the integrity of the execution process. ▶


ROBBERY.

10 Pounds

REWARD.

Whereas on the 3rd of January last, Mr. William Taylor, of Holt-street, had his Pocket picked of

TWO £50. NOTES,

Nos. 701 and 702,

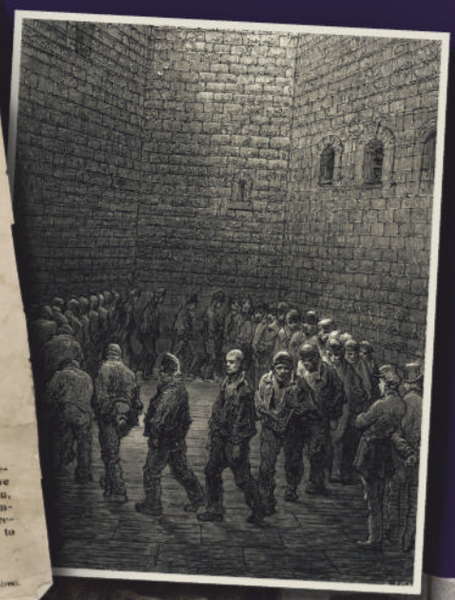
Of Forster and Son's Bank, Walsall, payable at Messrs. Spooner & Co. London.

Also Two £5. Notes and some Sovereigns.

Whoever will give such information as may lead to the detection of the Offender, shall upon Conviction, receive the above Reward, by applying to the said Mr. Taylor, or Mr. Redfern, Public Office, Moor-street, Birmingham; and if any Accomplice will impeach, who is not the actual Offender, he shall receive the same Reward, and every endeavour will be used to procure his Pardon.

PAYMENT OF THE NOTES IS STOPPED.

Bennett, Printer 61, Aston-street.



FAR LEFT A reward poster looking for pickpockets who'd robbed one William Taylor in Birmingham

LEFT An 1872 engraving of prisoners in Newgate, London, by Gustave Doré

BELOW Gang warfare in London provided plenty of material for the newspapers

While the near execution of Willan instilled a sense of dread among scuttlers, stoking fears that they could face the scaffold, the execution of McLean had little impact on the criminal activities of Liverpool's gangs. In fact, it did nothing to deter young boys from seeking membership in the violent posse. A local employer reported that several dockworkers had informed their foreman of their intentions to quit and join the High Rip Gang, and the group's notoriety grew thanks to its ongoing involvement in a wide range of crimes such as stabbings, blackmail, housebreaking and highway robberies. Like the scuttlers, the High Rip Gang also included women, who often served as scouts and decoys for their male counterparts. No one appeared to be safe from the gang's reach – they stole from their neighbours and attacked women, underscoring their brazen disregard for their community.

The true extent of their crimes will never be known because the vast majority went unreported, largely because the public feared retaliation for speaking to the police. And local press reports alleged that many officers had been removed from their beats due to threats to their lives, highlighting the pervasive atmosphere of intimidation and lawlessness that gripped the city.

By the 1890s, reports of High Rip crimes in Liverpool had nearly vanished, and it would take another decade for scuttler activity to similarly decline. A combination of harsher sentences for those convicted, the establishment of new playing fields and the formation of youth organisations such as the Boys' Brigade, Scouts and boxing clubs created positive outlets for young people to channel their energy. These initiatives played a crucial role in curbing gang activity, ultimately leading to the decline of these violent groups.

Birmingham, however, tells a different tale. At the dawn of the 20th century the city was still grappling with ruthlessly violent street gangs. For the past 30 years Birmingham had been plagued by violent working-class youth groups known as 'slogging gangs', a term derived from the word 'slogger', which described someone who hit hard. By 1895, these slogging gangs had begun to be referred to as Peaky Blinders. Collectively known as the Peakies, they would rise to become one of the most notorious street gangs in England, leaving a lasting mark on the city's history.

UNSOLVED MURDERS

It wasn't just gangs who were a danger in 19th century Britain...

THAMES TORSO MURDERS

Between 1887 and 1889 (although the killings may have started earlier), the remains of at least four women were pulled from the River Thames in London. The bodies had been dismembered, with other parts found around the city. Only one of the victims was identified – Elizabeth Jackson – who was pregnant at the time of her death. Police investigating the murders believed the perpetrator had medical knowledge, but no one was ever caught.

ELIZA GRIMWOOD MURDER

The brutal murder of Eliza Grimwood left a lasting impression on those who learned of it, not least author Charles Dickens. Grimwood's body was found on 26 May 1838 in her home in Wellington Terrace, London. She had suffered multiple stab wounds and her throat had been cut, with blood reportedly covering the walls. Dickens was a crime reporter at the time and drew on the scene in *Oliver Twist* for the murder of Nancy by Bill Sikes. Grimwood's killer was never found.

THE PIMLICO MYSTERY

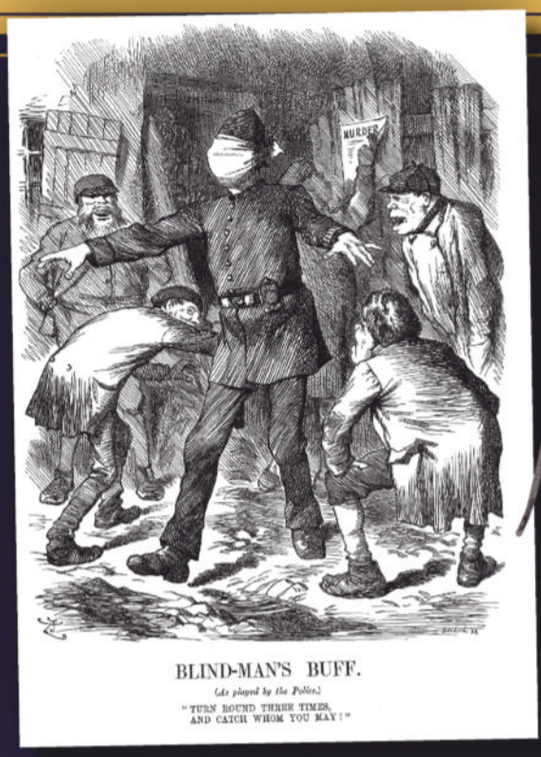
On 31 December 1885 Edwin Bartlett died, and the autopsy revealed there was chloroform in his stomach. The prime suspects were his wife Adelaide Bartlett and Reverend George Dyson, the man she had started an affair with and who had recently purchased chloroform. But their trial saw them acquitted of murder, with suicide suggested as the cause of demise. The *British Medical Journal* re-examined the case in 1994 but was unable to shed further light on the death.

CHARLES BRAVO MURDER

The mysterious death of Charles Bravo in 1876 baffled the police and medical experts. Bravo, who was in good health, began to slowly wither away and within weeks he was dead. His cause of death was attributed to a chemical called antimony, which can be toxic and acts similarly to arsenic. He may have been poisoned deliberately but conclusive proof was never found. Crime writer Agatha Christie studied the case years later, but was unable to solve the mystery.

Each gang sported a distinct style that set them apart. The High Rips donned their signature Bucko caps, while the scuttlers were known for their bell-bottomed trousers, leather belts that doubled as weapons, and narrow-pointed clogs with cut-out patterns on the toes. The Peakies distinguished themselves with their iconic caps, perched over one eye, complemented by a "carefully trained curl of hair" over the other. They also wore neckerchiefs and, like the scuttlers, embraced large bell-bottomed trousers. The name Peakies originated from their headwear – a peaked cap that, according to folklore, concealed a razor which was wielded against their enemies.

In their early days these gangs gained notoriety for housebreaking, petty theft, assaults and violent robberies. More organised and ambitious factions also engaged in protection ▶



LEFT This cartoon from the satirical magazine *Punch* pokes fun at police efforts to control the criminal gangs

RIGHT Before professional police forces were founded, the streets were patrolled by nightwatchmen

BIRTH OF THE 'BOBBIES'

One man's groundbreaking reforms heralded a new age of criminal justice

Sir Robert Peel became Home Secretary of the United Kingdom in 1822 and set about trying to bring the country's soaring crime rate under control. A fully professional police force was repeatedly proposed, but there was significant opposition to the idea. Many feared that a state-controlled law-enforcement body would be used to force people into compliance with the government's wishes. There were also concerns that maintaining such an organisation would result in higher taxes.

Despite this, the Metropolitan Police Act was passed in 1829, creating the Metropolitan Police in London with an initial 3,200 men hired and trained as policemen. They were referred to as Peelers or Bobbies after Robert Peel, and the latter moniker is still in common usage today. After some initial success, further reforms were passed to expand the force in London and empower the creation of similar organisations across the country. By 1851 there were 13,000 police officers in England and Wales, and the 1856 County and Borough Police Act made full-time professional police forces mandatory.

rackets, extorting money from local businesses in exchange for safety and security. Failure to comply often resulted in brutal reprisals, including attacks on the business premises or, in some cases, assaults on the owners themselves. In 1939, legendary circus showman Pat Collins recounted his own experience with the Peaky Blinders, revealing that they had threatened him, demanding payment to avoid having his stalls attacked. Contrary to popular belief that he dealt with them using a knuckleduster, Collins said that he never resorted to violence. Instead, he enlisted undercover police officers to monitor his fairs and suppress any gang-related activity.

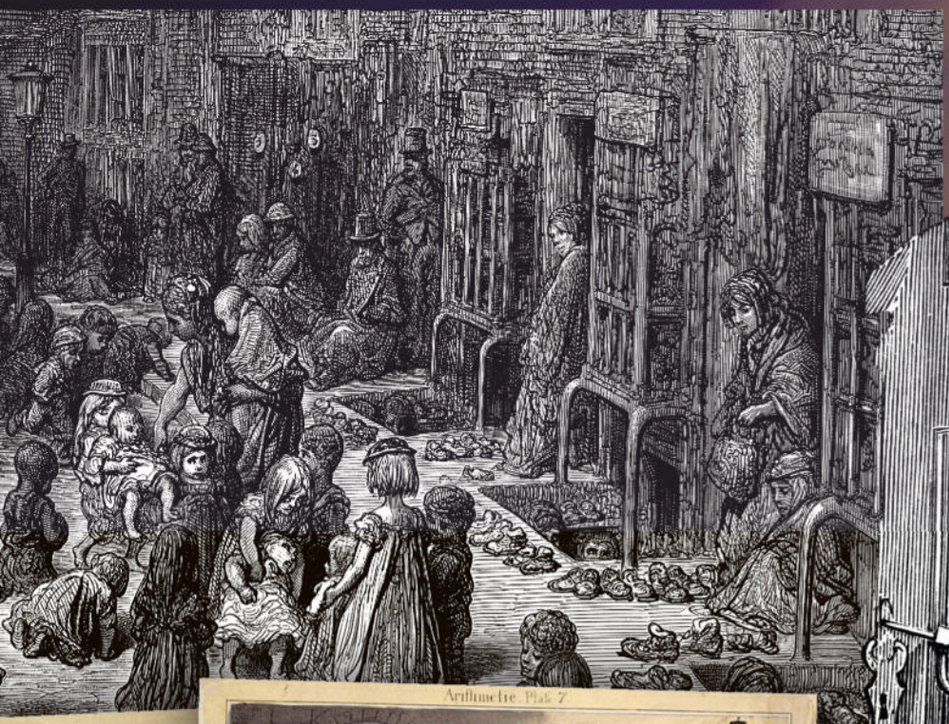
Although Collins sought the protection of the police, it's important to note that the Peaky Blinders had a notorious history of attacking law enforcement officers. One infamous member, Thomas Walters, was sentenced to five years of penal servitude for stabbing a police constable in the back after being ejected from a theatre. In 1901, gang members Joseph Adey, John Davis and George Fowler received sentences of 15 years of penal servitude for the manslaughter of Constable Gunter. The trio brutally assaulted him with bricks, one of which struck him on the forehead, and tragically Gunter succumbed to his injuries three months later, underscoring the violent nature of the gang and their willingness to confront authority.

As Adey, Davis and Fowler began their lengthy prison sentences, one of Britain's most infamous crime bosses was wrapping up his own. William 'Billy' Kimber, portrayed as Thomas Shelby's rival in the BBC show *Peaky Blinders*, had just completed a two-month sentence for assaulting a police officer. By 1904, Kimber had amassed a troubling record of convictions that included theft, shopbreaking, assault, gaming offences and public drunkenness. His notorious reputation and criminal exploits solidified his status within the underworld, making him a significant figure in the history of gang crime in Birmingham.

Born in Birmingham in 1882, Kimber was the son of William Kimber and Catherine Farrell. Along with his brothers Joseph, Harry and George, he was on the wrong side of the law from a young age. Starting with petty crimes, Kimber eventually gained national notoriety as the leader of the

ABOVE As racegoers enjoyed their day, organised criminal gangs employed pickpockets to work their way through the crowds, stealing money and valuables

All images: © Alamy, © Getty Images



LEFT Turning to crime was not uncommon in the industrial slums

MIDDLE LEFT A gamekeeper chasing poachers off his land

MIDDLE RIGHT This satirical cartoon from 1827 shows pickpockets working in tandem to steal from a gentleman

ABOVE An 1891 wood engraving of a thief breaking into a home

Birmingham Boys, a notorious crime gang that operated at racecourses across the country. His ability to manipulate the world of gambling and his audacious tactics solidified his reputation as a formidable figure in the criminal underworld.

At the time, racecourses presented an easy and profitable target for gangs. With substantial amounts of money exchanging hands, largely unregulated gambling and minimal police oversight, these venues became a magnet for the criminal underworld. Kimber and his brothers began their racecourse schemes by stealing winning betting tickets and cashing them in. However, it wasn't long before they expanded their operations to include illegal betting, protection rackets and ▶

> The gang ruthlessly attacked him with bricks, one striking his forehead – Constable Gunter succumbed to his injuries months later

TOP The original Peaky Blinders: mug shots taken during WWI show the men wearing their signature peaked caps and neck scarves

ABOVE By the 1920s, gangs like the Sabinis and the Birmingham Boys were using racecourse meetings as prime grounds to dominate the bookmaking trade

ABOVE RIGHT Convicts on a ship bound for Australia. Between 1788 and 1868 about 162,000 prisoners were sent to the penal colonies

The rivalry had now ignited into a full-blown war, as 300 Sabini men faced off against the Birmingham Boys

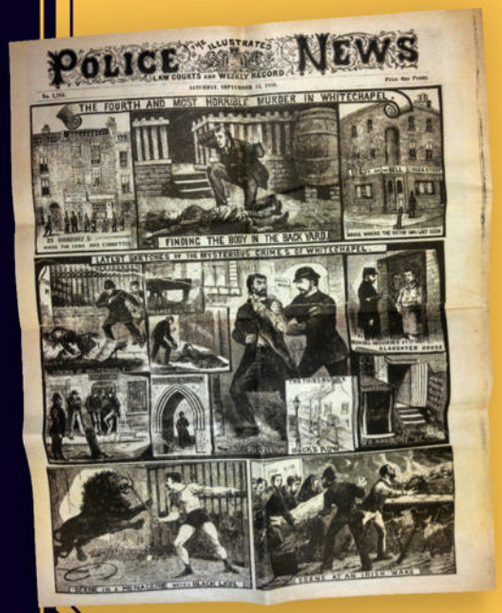
organised pickpocketing rings. Their pickpockets expertly navigated the bustling crowds, targeting the cash and valuables of wealthy racegoers, turning the racecourse into a lucrative playground for Kimber's expanding criminal empire.

During the interwar years, racecourses became hotspots for fierce gang rivalries. While most gangs kept to racecourses within their own districts, ambitious leaders like Kimber sought to expand beyond the West Midlands. After the First World War, his gang established a strong presence at racecourses in London and across southern England. However, these venues were also prime territory for gang leader Charles 'Darby' Sabini and his brothers, who ran a London-based outfit of Italian origin. Among the Sabinis' key associates was Alfred Solomons, a Covent Garden fruit salesman later portrayed by Tom Hardy in *Peaky Blinders*. The bitter rivalry between Kimber and the Sabinis would become legendary, setting the stage for a brutal power struggle over control of these lucrative racecourse operations.

One of the early clashes between the rival gangs erupted at Greenford Park races in London. Darby Sabini, feeling that Kimber's men were taking liberties, confronted them with a gun, issuing a clear threat. Tensions escalated, and at a later meeting in Plumpton over 300 members of the Sabini gang faced off against the Birmingham Boys, seeking vengeance. The violent confrontation left several injured, though, remarkably, no one was killed. However, the message was

POLICE NEWS

The Victorians loved their trashy tabloids too



If you thought modern tabloid newspapers and cheap magazines crammed with murder and mischief were a modern phenomenon, think again. Some of the images you see in this feature came from a 19th century publication called *The Illustrated Police News* – a popular weekly newspaper promising scandalous stories with salacious images to match. It was first published in 1864 and entertained its readers with graphic reports on the latest crimes, accidents and tragedies, and the police investigations into them.

The Illustrated Police News was founded by London publisher George Purkess and drew its stories from the London law courts, as well as sourcing juicy tales from elsewhere in the country. For maximum dramatic effect, the lead stories were recreated on the front page by a team of illustrators. After newspaper taxes were abolished in 1861, Purkess began printing it as an affordable four-page penny edition, expanded to 12 pages in 1897, and it went on to include celebrity scandals, reviews and sport. Wildly popular with a public hungry for cheap entertainment, it was published until 1938.

clear: the rivalry had now ignited into a full-blown war.

In an effort to defuse the brewing war, Kimber agreed to a meeting at Darby Sabini's house, with Solomons also in attendance. As the men drank, tensions flared and heated words quickly escalated into a fight. Later that night, a police officer found Kimber lying unconscious on a road in Kings Cross. He was rushed to hospital, where doctors discovered he had been shot, with a bullet lodged just below his left lung. The following day, Solomons turned himself in at the local police station, claiming he had shot Kimber "by accident". According to Solomons, the gun had gone off as they struggled during the fight, with Solomons attempting to seize Kimber's weapon.

At the subsequent trial, Kimber adhered to the gangster code, refusing to aid the police by confirming that Solomons was the shooter. Instead, he insisted he hadn't seen the assailant's face. Kimber did, however, take the opportunity to denounce the use of guns, declaring them tools for "cowards" and saying he'd "rather blow out my own brains than use one on anyone." Kimber's refusal to testify was one of the factors that led to Solomons' acquittal.

In 1924, however, the 32-year-old Solomons faced court again, this time charged with the unlawful killing of Barney Blitz, a bookmaker's runner for the Birmingham gang, at the Eden Club. In a show of solidarity, the Jewish community funded his defence. Solomons was ultimately found guilty of manslaughter and received a sentence of three years' penal servitude.

By the late 1920s, Kimber's influence was in decline as rival gangs began to dominate the criminal landscape. Moving his family to the southwest coast of England, he stepped away from gang life and eventually passed away in 1942 at the age of 60.

The Sabini gang, meanwhile, maintained ruthless control of their criminal activities throughout the 1930s. However, with the onset of the Second World War in 1939, Darby Sabini and other Italian members of the gang were interned as 'enemy aliens', dealing a significant blow to their power. By the war's end in 1945, new criminal groups had seized control and the Sabinis' influence had all but faded away. Darby Sabini lived quietly after his release, passing away in 1950. The fall of both Kimber and the Sabinis marked the end of a bloody era in Britain's gang history, their once-powerful empires overtaken by rival criminal factions.

ABOVE Officers from the Wolverhampton Borough Police Force, pictured in 1900

All images: © Alamy/© Getty Images

"Io Saturnalia!"

What was the 'Roman Christmas'?

Written by Jonathan Gordon

It's the dark of midwinter but all around you are bright candles – gifts have been exchanged, you're digging in to a hearty meal and you're surrounded by friends and family, many of whom might be a little the worse for drink. The mood is jolly and relaxed, no one has to work today and everyone can enjoy themselves as they see fit. Outside, you can hear people walking up the street singing songs of the season, but they aren't Christmas carols. No, this celebration is Saturnalia, the multi-day festival of the god of farming and the harvest and, as you can likely tell, a celebration that had a lot of influence on religious holidays that followed.

As the name implies, Saturnalia was a celebration of Saturn, the Roman god of farming and the harvest. It was originally honoured on 19 December each year, according to the old Roman calendar, to coincide with the end of the winter sowing season. Columella, a Roman soldier and farmer who wrote extensively about Roman agriculture, states that a farmer should be done with planting their autumn crops by the beginning of December. As such, this was a natural time to rest and relax in the lead up to the solstice, before the work of the farm would pick up once again.

At first it appears that Saturnalia lasted for a single day, but it began to be extended over several days, lasting up to a week at its peak, from 17 December to 23 December. This expansion of the festivities is believed to have taken place between 133-31 BCE in the late Republic. It was aided, in part, by the introduction of the Julian calendar by Julius Caesar, which extended December by two days and moved Saturnalia from 17 to 19 December. It would appear that ▶

"December was a natural time for Roman farmers to rest and relax"

many people continued to mark the festival on the original date, which began to stretch things out. Various attempts were made to trim down the festival, with Augustus mandating a three-day celebration and Caligula making it five days, but most seem to have eventually honoured the week-long event.

With this extended festival, each day took on its own important role, although a full accounting of Saturnalia has not been discovered and we're left to piece together fragments of the event from mentions in multiple sources stretched over time. Things would always begin with an event at the shrine to Saturn in Rome, which according to Livy dated back to about 497 BCE, although the holiday may have started many years earlier. The temple saw a number of reconstructions over the decades with the ruins that exist in Rome today, attached to the Roman Forum, dating to a reconstruction of the temple in the fourth century CE. Festivities would then be held around the city, both privately among families and households and publicly. Publius Papinus Statius describes one festival under the reign of Emperor Domitian, held in the amphitheatre in Rome. Everyone brought food and wine with pastries served in the morning and, later, female gladiators fought in the arena as entertainment.

Additionally, Saturnalia was a time for upturning social norms and expressing liberty for all who lived in Rome. The enslaved could expect to be waited on by their masters and to be served a meal similar to one their masters would enjoy later in the day. It was common for enslaved workers to wear their masters' clothes for the day and express their grievances freely, without fear of retaliation. This went beyond slavery too, as a mock king of the household would be chosen, the Saturnalicius princeps, or 'leader of Saturnalia', to lead festivities in the family. This might be the youngest member of the household or someone chosen at random and they would issue commands to entertain everyone, insult guests and generally cause mischief. The usually strict codes of conduct were thrown out for the day and wild behaviour was encouraged, which is how Saturnalia built up a reputation for being a particularly drunken and unruly event.

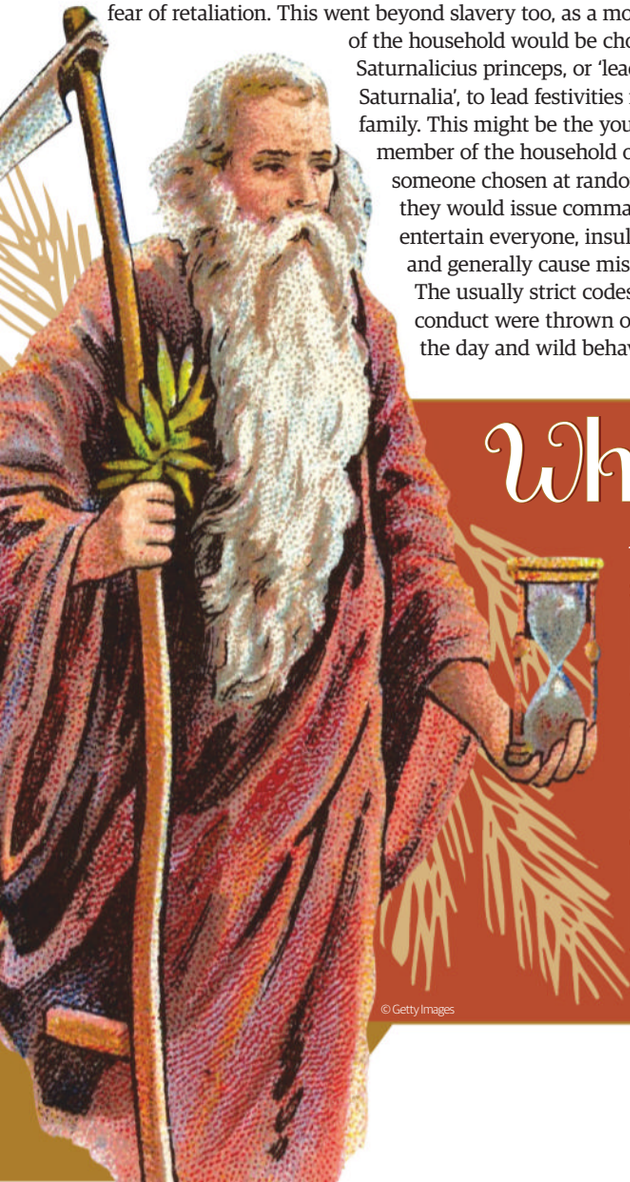
> "The enslaved of Rome could expect to be waited on by their masters"

After the initial religious ceremonies it was common for gambling, singing, music, feasting and socialising to fill the days that immediately followed. Lucian, a Roman poet, records Saturn himself declaring: "During my week the serious is barred; no business allowed. Drinking, noise and games and dice, appointing of kings and feasting of slaves, singing naked, clapping of frenzied hands, an occasional ducking of corked faces in icy water – such are the functions over which I preside." Bright colours were encouraged, replacing the more sedate togas that would normally be warn. It was a carnival atmosphere that led to the poet Catullus calling it "the best of times". All through the streets a shout of 'io Saturnalia!' (hail Saturnalia) could be heard.

The last days of the festival were the Sigillaria where presents of candles, called cerei, and wax fruit and wax or terracotta statues, also called sigillaria, would be given. Manufacturers of such gifts

ABOVE Rome typically lived by strict social codes, but these were relaxed during Saturnalia

RIGHT Saturnalia was considered a time for feasting and enjoyment for everyone as the sowing season ended



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Who was Saturn?

A quick guide to the god of the harvest

Saturn was the god of sowing and by extension the god of farmers and harvests for the ancient Romans. He was connected to the Greek Titan Cronus, who had been exiled from Olympus by Zeus. In Roman mythology he went on to a more peaceful life as the ruler of Latium, the region in which Rome was established, and taught the local people to cultivate the land.

While he was overthrown by his son Jupiter (just as Cronus was overthrown by Zeus in Greek mythology), Saturn managed to maintain his significance in the pantheon of gods for the Romans. His association with agriculture gave him particular significance and associated him with wealth and the good health of the state. His founding of Latium was considered to be a golden age for the Romans, adding to his esteem. Despite famously devouring his own children to prevent being overthrown by them, in both Greek and Roman myth, he was associated with peace and equality by Romans in terms of his dealings with mortals.

were called sigillarii. Candles represented light returning after the solstice, which in the Roman Julian calendar was 25 December. The wealthy, in particular, were expected to be generous with their money, giving to charity as well as handing out presents. In keeping with the spirit of Saturnalia, some gifts could also be humorous. Augustus was among those who took part, with Suetonius recording that he gave gifts of gold and silver as well as clothing. He also handed out more jokey gifts with double meanings, such as cloth of goat's hair, sponges, pokers and tongs. He also held blind lotteries for friends at which they didn't know what they were buying.

Nero, on the other hand, was less generous. One famous story tells of him acting as mock king (despite already being emperor) hoping to embarrass his stepbrother Britannicus by making him sing in front of friends during Saturnalia.

Perhaps expecting some protection from the traditions of Saturnalia that allowed for mockery and speaking out against social superiors, Britannicus proceeded to sing about his misfortune, having been passed over for the throne that had belonged to his father Claudius. He is said to have gained the favour of the drunken revellers that day but not long after he was found dead, killed by poison.

Saturnalia certainly took on some interesting characteristics under the emperors. With public events held at arenas and celebrations organised under the auspices of the imperial throne, these events also became a display of their power and generosity. It would be called Saturnalia principis, or 'the emperor's Saturnalia'. While it was traditionally a celebration supposed to highlight the liberty and equality of all Romans, it could also be ▶

ABOVE
The excesses of Saturnalia were called out by some critics in their own time

a tool for reminding people of the supremacy of the emperor. As a result, Saturnalia could be presented as being gifted to the people by the emperor, which still places their liberty in his hands and benevolence.

As Professor Carole Newlands writes in *The Emperor's Saturnalia: Statius, Silvae 1.6* (*Flavian Rome: Culture, Image, Text* – Brill, 2002): "Spectacle was integral to the monarchical or imperial process, for by impressing and captivating the people, it persuaded them to acquiesce in a political system where power was unevenly distributed. The political cannot then be separated from the spectacular."

This might seem a little cynical, but the festival was not without its critics even in its own day. The poet Martial wrote about what he saw as the evils of gift giving, the practice seemingly being used among his peers to guarantee favours down the line. He also complained of having things regifted to him from a wealthy friend, including writing tablets, tooth picks, sponges, a napkin, a wine cup, beans, olives, wine, figs and plums, all presented to him by eight slaves. Martial notes that he would have preferred the value in silver one of the slaves might have carried to him. At a later Saturnalia he lamented that he had received no gifts... we wonder why?

Pliny the Younger is reported to have built himself a soundproof room so he could continue working during Saturnalia, so loud were the celebrations in the street. He wrote in his *Epistles*: "When I betake myself into this sitting-room, I seem to be quite away even from my villa, and I find it delightful to sit there, especially during the Saturnalia, when all the rest of the house rings with the merriment and shouts of the festival-makers; for then I do not interfere with their amusements, and they do not distract me from my studies."

Lucius Annaeus Seneca was even less of a fan, saying: "It is the month of December and yet the city is at this very moment in a sweat. Licence is given to the general merrymaking. Everything resounds with mighty preparations, as if the Saturnalia differed at all from the usual business day! So true it is that the difference is nil, that I regard as correct the remark of the man who said: 'Once December was a month; now it is a year.'" Anyone who finds themselves annoyed by Christmas adverts in September clearly has an ally in Seneca.

As we suggested at the beginning, there are some similarities between Christmas and Saturnalia, but the two festivals actually coexisted for some time. The first recorded Christmas Day was in 336 CE when it was celebrated on 6 January, since no specific date is mentioned for the birth of Christ in the Bible. The date is believed to have moved to 25 December around 354-60 CE, with the first mention of the date being the Nativity of Jesus recorded in the *Chronography of AD 354,* also known as the *Calendar of Philocalus*. This chronicle also recorded the first day of Saturnalia as 17 December, which matches with the longer format of the festival. For the Romans, 25 December had always been the date for the birth of the sun god, Sol Invictus, which closed out the festivities of the previous week of Saturnalia as its own religious observance before work would begin again. It seems likely that as the Romans gradually converted from paganism to

"Christmas and Saturnalia actually coexisted for some time"

Christianity they chose to maintain some of the key dates and traditions of their old holidays to simplify them and also make them more enticing for new converts.

Things like the candles of Saturnalia are similar to the Advent candles of Christianity and symbolically similar to the burning of the Yule log, which became a common tradition around Europe in later centuries. The decoration of the house with evergreen plants was common for Roman festivals and feasting together was also widespread. Romans even wore cone-shaped hats called pillei which symbolised liberty and dated back to the Greeks, which might be compared to the paper crowns worn today at Christmas. Saturnalia celebrants would also go out into the streets and sing songs to celebrate the festival, as mentioned by Pliny, which has its parallel to carol singing. And, in parts of Bulgaria, Romania and Moldova, the slaughter of a pig around Christmas and New Year is still a common tradition, just as it was an important way to kick off the Saturnalia festival.

ABOVE Nero had Britannicus poisoned following an altercation during Saturnalia

LEFT Wearing bright clothing, singing in the street and partying were all common practices

How direct any of these similarities are is unclear, but we do know that Christian religious leaders saw the threads. There is evidence that Christian leaders, both in ancient Rome and in later years in Europe, would forbid feasting or decorating with evergreens during Christmas, precisely because these were considered pagan traditions and they didn't want them to contaminate or degrade the piety of the day.

Ultimately, Saturnalia did gradually recede into history as the old Roman traditions were supplanted. However, the poet Statius proclaimed of Saturnalia: "Who can sing of the spectacle, the unrestrained mirth, the banqueting, the unbought feast, the lavish streams of wine? Ah! Now I faint, and drunken with thy liquor drag myself at last to sleep. For how many years shall this festival abide! Never shall age destroy so holy a day! While the hills of Latium remain and father Tiber, while thy Rome stands and the Capitol thou hast restored to the world, it shall continue." And in some ways, he wasn't wrong.

More Roman Festivals

Other important events in the ancient calendar

Lupercalia

A fertility festival held on 15 February, perhaps linking it with the modern Valentine's Day, and overseen by priests called Luperci. The name is possibly derived from the legendary she-wolf who acted as mother to Romulus and Remus in Roman myth. The Luperci would sacrifice goats and a dog and after a feast would run around striking women with thongs made from the animal skins, supposedly making them fertile.

Quinquatria

This was the festival of Minerva, goddess of wisdom and war as well as craftsmen and the arts, and was held from 19 to 23 March each year. Similar to Saturnalia, the first day was one of religious observance, followed by days of games. It was common to visit a fortune teller during this festival too, given the goddess's connection to them, while the priests of Mars would purify weapons and military equipment.

Floralia

Held in April, this festival in honour of the goddess Flora has its connections to later May Day celebrations. Flora was the goddess of flowers, and temples would be strewn with plants to mark the occasion. Typically the festival would begin on 27 April and last for six days with games being put on by magistrates, called aediles, in order to gain the support of the populace ahead of elections.

Vulcanalia

Honouring the god of fire, Vulcan, this festival was intended to protect precious crops from the summer heat. Held on 23 August, the Vulcanalia would see games and bonfires, with small animals being sacrificed by being thrown into the flames. Vulcan was an important god to the Romans, whom they looked to appease after the Great Fire of Rome and destruction of Pompeii.

THE FALL OF THE RUSSIAN EMPI

How military errors and a failure to modernise helped to bring down the tsars

RE

Written by Mark Galeotti

Did the catastrophe that was the First World War destroy the Tsarist Empire? One might think so, considering that it led to not one but two revolutions in 1917, toppling the three-centuries-old dynasty in February and bringing the Bolsheviks to power in October (March and November in our calendar). Yet once, while walking through Moscow and coming across one of the military re-enactment festivals that had become so popular in Russia, this author inadvertently started a heated debate when this was put to a quartet decked out in the brass-buttoned black splendour of the 1st Life Grenadier Yekaterinoslav Regiment. The eventual consensus was that despite – what else could they say? – the valour of the Russian army, the country was unprepared for and unequal to the challenges of the first truly industrial war.

It's hard to disagree, as a 19th-century army was fed into the meatgrinder of a 20th-century war, resulting in carnage that made even the trenches of the Western Front look sedate. By 1917, 34,000 Russian soldiers were deserting every month, and the total casualties of the war would number 5.5 million wounded and dead.

The tragic irony is that there were many in Russia clear-eyed enough to have understood the lessons of the past hundred years of conflict. Napoleon had been defeated in Russia in 1812, but only after he had overreached. Nonetheless, it was still possible for all too many Russian generals and ministers – and Tsar Nicholas I – to cling to the belief that it had proven the continued validity of their antiquated methods and dependence on spit and polish. Future Minister of War Dmitry Milyutin would lament that this combined "a brilliant appearance at parades" with a "pedantic ▶

observance of countless petty formalities" that would "kill the true military spirit".

The real test would be the Crimean War of 1853-56, in which Russia found itself facing the most advanced military powers of the age: Britain and France. Russia was humbled not just on the peninsula but in its northern waters too. The Royal Navy blockaded its trade fleets in the Baltic Sea, cutting its exports by 80 percent, leading to a financial crisis that saw the ruble devalued and the budget collapse. Nicholas I died from the flu in March 1855 and his son, Alexander II, had no illusions about the danger the war posed. He quickly sued for peace and acknowledged the need for reform.

Russia's rulers have often appreciated the danger in falling behind their neighbours and rivals. The medieval princes imported Italian military architects to build the Moscow Kremlin and set up the first workshop building cannon; Peter the Great hired Dutch and British shipwrights to build his navy and sailors to captain his ships. The Berdan Rifle, the standard service weapon from 1870-91, was designed by an American engineer.

However, Russia has found itself time and again trapped by its security dilemmas. Its size and lack of natural borders demand a large army. Its under-developed agrarian base, a product largely of soil, geography and climate, held back industrialisation, forcing it to import skills and technologies to keep up with the arms races of the age. In order to spend what was needed, on the basis of the existing economy, the state needed to be all the more demanding, extracting a greater share of national produce. This often generated a violent backlash – the country's history is one of riot and rebellion – and required the state to be fiercely authoritarian.

Nicholas I had feared that reform of the economy, and especially the institution of serfdom, might generate resources for the military but also spark violent unrest. Alexander II launched those reforms – and triggered rural disorder and his own death in 1881 from a terrorist's bomb. He had appointed Milyutin to the position of Minister for War, who had made a start on reform of the armed forces, but Alexander III was determined, in light of his father's fate, to rule with an iron hand. Military modernisation continued on its own momentum, with the navy becoming the third-largest in the world behind Britain and France. But it was all about hardware: Milyutin's efforts to address long-standing intangible weaknesses of training, leadership and morale largely stalled.

Alexander III had had concerns about his son's fitness to rule, and with good reason. As became apparent when Nicholas II succeeded to the throne in 1894, he was weak enough to be dangerous for the regime, foolish enough not to understand the threats facing Russia, stubborn enough not to listen to those who did, and credulous enough to listen to people to whom he really shouldn't have paid attention. This includes those who assured him that a war with a rising and increasingly assertive Japan would be a good thing, and that, as Interior Minister Vyacheslav Plehve airily put it, "a nice, victorious little war" would unite and cheer the nation.

Aware of Nicholas' plans, in February 1904 the Japanese struck first with a surprise attack on Port Arthur, Russia's furthest-flung outpost in Manchuria. The 1904-5 Russo-Japanese War was a costly and embarrassing defeat for Nicholas. Japan had been modernising with greater speed and efficiency, modelling its army on the Germans and its navy on the British. Russian troops frequently fought doggedly, but poor circumstances and even worse leadership kept them on the defensive. Barbed wire, machine guns and rapid-fire artillery made assaults bloody and dangerous, offering a harbinger of the killing fields of the First World War, but with speed, élan and a willingness to take often frightful losses, the Japanese could still advance.

RIGHT The British Charge of the Heavy Brigade in October 1854 during the Crimean War

FAR RIGHT Alexander II attempted reforms, but unrest and his assassination followed

BELOW Nicholas II was ill-equipped as a leader to take on the challenges facing Russia

BELOW RIGHT Russia refused to retreat from the Russo-Japanese War, dragging it on longer than might have been necessary

The Fall of the Russian Empire

ABOVE LEFT A scene from Bloody Sunday, 22 January 1905, when peaceful protestors were shot by the tsar's forces

ABOVE Russian soldiers surrendering in 1915 during the First World War

LEFT *The Taking of Malakoff* by Adolphe Yvon, depicting the Siege of Sevastapol during the Crimean War

BELOW Peter the Great was lauded as a moderniser, but that trend didn't continue with his successors

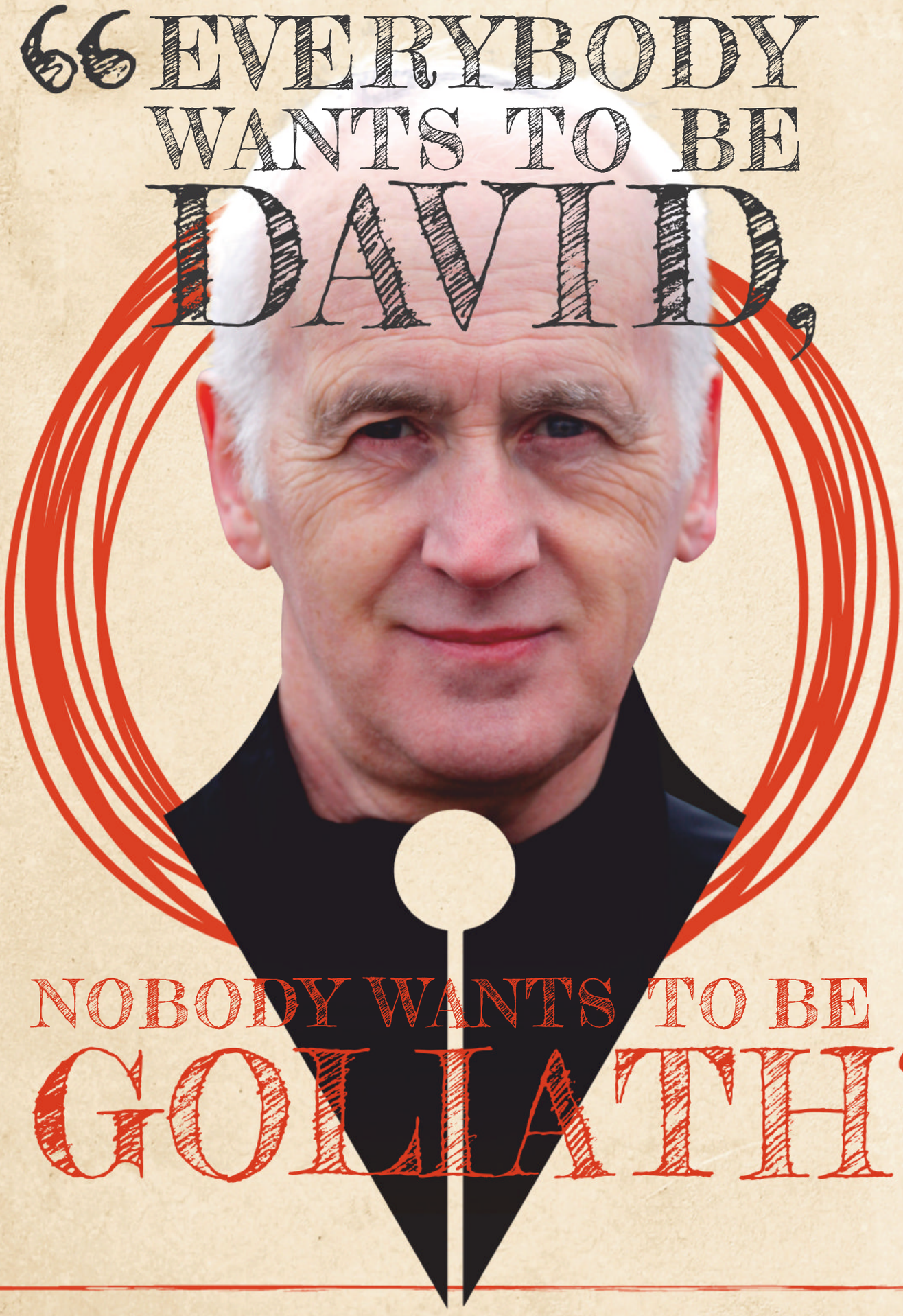
By January 1905, Port Arthur was near surrender and all the Russian Pacific Fleet's capital ships had been sunk or scuttled. In February, as the bitter Manchurian winter began to recede, the two armies clashed at Mukden (now Shenyang), in the biggest land battle before the First World War, which would end with the Japanese blooded but in control of all of southern Manchuria. Desperate to re-engage at sea, the Russians had been forced to redeploy their Baltic Fleet on a seven-month odyssey to the theatre of war. It hardly started well: on the night of 21–22 October 1904 it was steaming through the waters of the Dogger Bank region, off the east coast of England, when it came across some trawlers from Hull. The Russian captains already appeared to have been jumpy, even paranoid. They had carefully sailed round an imaginary minefield, and groundless rumours were circulating that somehow Japanese motor-torpedo boats had sailed all the way to European waters and were operating out of Danish waters. Then they spotted the trawlers in the fog, put two and two together, and made war.

They opened fire with everything they had, but the net result was to sink just one trawler and kill two fishermen. In the confusion and crossfire, two Russians were also killed, the cruisers Aurora and Dmitri Donskoi were damaged by friendly fire, and the supply ship Kamchatka lost in the fog. This incident almost did mean war, but hasty diplomacy and the promise of reparations managed to avert a crisis. After all that, when they finally tried to slip through the Tsushima Strait between Korea and Japan, on the night of 26 May 1905, the Russians were spotted and smashed by the Japanese. Twenty-one Russian ships were sunk, including eight battleships, and five captured – all for the loss of three Japanese torpedo boats. As the Japanese moved on to take the Sakhalin Islands, and with unrest breaking out all across Russia, Nicholas had no option but to sue for peace.

"FOR THE MONARCHY AND THE SYSTEM TO SURVIVE, RUSSIA NEEDED TO BE TRANSFORMED"

The period of protest and riot that followed, known perhaps misleadingly as the 1905 Revolution, did open one last window of opportunity. New Prime Minister Pyotr Stolypin embarked on a campaign of vigorous repression (such that the hangman's noose became known as a 'Stolypin necktie'), but he understood that martial law was only a temporary answer, and that for the monarchy and the system to survive, Russia needed to be transformed. Instead of another round of buying ships and raising regiments, he tried to address the underlying economic constraints, embarking on an ambitious effort to encourage a new class of rural entrepreneur, the kind of prosperous yeoman farmers who were the backbone of German conservatism. In the short term, he was successful. Agricultural productivity increased by almost 15 percent, and in time this might have been enough to finally break the vicious circle of poverty, insecurity and oppression. Maybe Russia might have been able to afford the modernisation it so needed. But Stolypin did not have time: he was assassinated in 1911, possibly with the foreknowledge of a jealous and insecure tsar. His reforms died with him, and even to the revolutionary leader Vladimir Lenin it meant the "last, the last conceivable, road for tsarism" had been closed.

An army that substituted mass for modernity; an officer corps that relied on dated tactics and discipline over authority; a government that feared its people too much to relax its grip on their throats. This was a recipe for disaster in 1914-17 – just as, arguably, it proved in 2022.



Author Terry Deary discusses his career, writing history, the success of Horrible Histories and his new book

Interview by Emily Staniforth

Here at *All About History*, we love to learn as much as we can about the past in order to create an engaging and exciting magazine for our readers. Someone who shares this passion with us is writer and actor Terry Deary, who is best-known as the man behind the hugely successful *Horrible Histories* children's books. One of Britain's best-selling authors of the last few decades, he has written over 350 fiction and non-fiction titles for children and adults and is an advocate for making history accessible and enjoyable, bringing his signature humour and wit to the subject. Now, he has published his latest history book for adults, *A History of Britain in Ten Enemies*. We sat down with Terry to talk about his new book, the success of *Horrible Histories* and his career in history writing.

You started your career working in theatre and drama. What inspired you to start writing books for children?

I joined the Breconshire Theatre Company, as it was then, as an actor. We wanted to tell stories about the people in that region so we had to research them and put them into story form. I just seemed to have the knack of giving those brilliant actors and creative minds a shape, a structure, using writing skills which I didn't know I had. Then one tour was for children and we were told to go into schools just before the summer holidays. The actors said: "Terry, go away and write us a script for when we come back in September." I said: "What will you be doing?" They said: "We'll be on holiday!"

I came up with a children's story called *The Custard Kid* and it was a great success. One of the greatest successes was in a little junior school in Wales: a big puddle appeared in front of a little girl in the front row because she peed herself laughing. But that's a sign of success, isn't it?

After that I thought I could turn *The Custard Kid* into a children's novel and after 23 rejections it was accepted and I was on my way. I went on publishing novels for children, over about 50 of them, before I began writing for *Horrible Histories* publisher Scholastic in 1989. People think I'm a non-fiction writer, but actually I'm a novelist.

Your biggest success has been the Horrible Histories series, which continues to be incredibly popular. How did these books come about?

I was actually commissioned to write an entertaining children's history joke book with interesting anecdotes. I'm not an historian, but the facts are all there. I was commissioned, and I researched it and wrote it with more facts than jokes, and you've got to give credit to illustrators like Martin Brown, who research thoroughly. Something I've discovered down the years is *Horrible Histories* might be perceived as new but, in fact, if I was playing football that would be an open goal. You just look at the textbooks in schools and they are utterly appalling. You wouldn't believe the language they use, because the publishers went to historians to write children's history books. This isn't a criticism of historians, ▶

ABOVE Terry has played a number of cameo roles in the *Horrible Histories* television series and the movie

RIGHT He has written dozens of the incredibly popular children's non-fiction series *Horrible Histories*

but they wouldn't know a child if it jumped up and bit them on the ankle! I was asked to write a book on crime and punishment and I came across one quote in the opening of this school book which began: "Every society in every age has lived by a set of rules which determined what was permitted and what was forbidden." What? You've got eight, nine and ten-year-olds in an inner city school – what are they going to do? They're going to shut the book! I would never write like that because I'm a children's author. And then there are the illustrations. When I went to a Viking book the language was equally bad: "Despite fierce headwinds the Vikings sailed across the Atlantic." 'Despite' is not a word in a child's vocabulary. But the illustration had the Viking ship driven across the ocean with a billowing sail and the oars outside rowing away. Looking at it you'd think: "Hang on, if that's been blown across the Atlantic, why have you got the bloody oars out? You'll break your arms!" This was done by an artist who didn't give a toss, whereas Martin Brown is absolutely meticulous. He may do cartoons, but they're beautifully researched.

Horrible Histories has been successful but you've got to remember I've written around a couple of hundred books that aren't *Horrible Histories* – fiction, non-fiction, adult, children's – so the publishers came to me because after writing 50 children's fiction books I was a safe pair of hands. They knew I'd deliver. I always deliver on time and I always deliver quality, but most of all I deliver something which puts the reader first. The writer doesn't matter. The readers are most important. That's the same with the new book – it's the reader that matters. I want to entertain, engage and inform all at the same time. So that's how *Horrible Histories* became a success – the opposition was so bad it was an open goal. The world was waiting for *Horrible Histories*. I was just lucky to get the job as a children's author. I'm a journeyman who simply writes to commission.

Why do you think Horrible Histories has been, and continues to be, so popular with children?

Because there are new generations coming along all the time. Somebody said Shakespeare isn't the playwright for the Elizabethan era, he's a voice for all times. The stuff I give are facts which new generations discover all the time. In that sense, history

"THE WORLD WAS WAITING FOR HORRIBLE HISTORIES. I WAS JUST LUCKY TO GET THE JOB"

doesn't age quite as badly as, say, children's fiction. You read books by Enid Blyton but she is undoubtedly dated. Certainly when I was a kid reading her gave me the impression that I could never be a writer because I was working class and I didn't go for holidays with my auntie in a private house on the coast and have adventures. I worked in my dad's butcher shop, so I could never be a writer. *Horrible Histories* tends not to become dated.

The adaptation of Horrible Histories for TV and theatre has also been hugely successful. Have you enjoyed watching your books come to life?

When *Horrible Histories* were becoming really popular – it was at one point 19 of the top 20 most-borrowed children's non-fiction in libraries – I was invited to write *Horrible Histories* as stage plays for a theatre in Cardiff. It was hugely successful and I thought it was grand. Because the current stage adaptations are not all my scripts [used in subsequent theatre adaptations] I'm much more critical. I'm very twitchy about watching *Horrible Histories* on stage because the stage is my own territory.

With television it's completely the opposite. I was involved in the commissioning and we went through various scenarios of how you could present the books. Then CBBC came up with this brilliant idea: instead of standard children's television where the presenter shouts at the audience, they got professional comic actors and sketch-show writers and put them together. They came up with something which was as new to television as *Horrible Histories* was to children's history books and I was quite outside it, and I would go along and I'd have cameo roles. I was up against these superb actors here!

When it came to the film, it was awesome mixing with some of the stars like Alexander Armstrong and Lee Mack. The story is about the invasion by the armies of Claudius into England and taking on the Celts, and as I was signing books at the Edinburgh Festival my editor came up to me and said: "We've cast the movie and to play Claudius we've got Derek Jacobi." What? I could hardly write! I, Claudius himself! He decided, just for a laugh, to play Claudius in a comic movie. What a wonderful guy and what a privilege! The movie was great fun and I did have script approval of it. I just loved it.

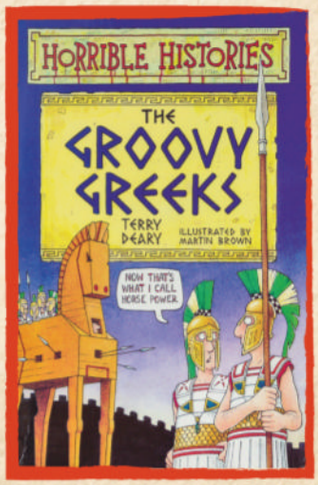
I react differently to the different media, but generally I don't take a lot of credit. I know they're based on my books but it's the talented people – the actors and the writers for the television, movie and stage – that should take the credit. I've got to let go and say: "You're the experts!" I don't mind letting go.

You starred in several episodes of the Horrible Histories television series and in the movie. How did that come about and did you enjoy the experience?

The TV show decided to do a sketch about the Venerable Bede. The Venerable Bede was born in the centre of the universe: Sunderland! Where do I come from? Sunderland! What's he famous for? History! What am I famous for? History! But would you believe it that when they came to ask if I would like to play the Venerable Bede and I said: "Oh yeah my hero! You picked me because I'm from Sunderland?" They said: "Really? We didn't know that!" It was the most bizarre coincidence that I got to play a fellow historian from Sunderland. It's the highlight of my acting career.

In the movie I went on set and played a Celt warrior who gave a gift to Nero, which he didn't approve of so I was dragged off to be executed. A week later, I was asked to come and play a part in the television series. They wanted me to play Archduke Ferdinand of Austria. I don't need to tell you what happened to him but it was like they just wanted to keep killing me off!

I hope I do it very modestly and I just take the role as a sort of cameo. I also appear on stage occasionally. For one tour I had done a pre-recorded voiceover as the voice of Zeus but in Sunderland (my hometown) Zeus was going to appear on stage and be part of an *X-Factor*-inspired scene. Because I'd been the voice of Zeus all the way through and the audience had learned to hate Zeus, I walked on and they booed and stamped and shouted: "Off! Off! Off!"



MIDDLE LEFT A cover from the *Horrible Histories* series shows the artwork of illustrator Martin Brown

LEFT Derek Jacobi played the titular role in the 1974 TV series *I, Claudius* and agreed to play Claudius in 2019's *Horrible Histories: The Movie*

Your new book for adults, A History of Britain in Ten Enemies, has recently been published. Why did you decide it was time to write a history book for grown ups?

I've written six history books for adults before but picked the wrong publishers so they vanished without a trace. Then I got so involved in children's books I couldn't really pursue that. And then I read a poem by a god-awful poet called Tennyson, who you'll have heard of. He just did one poem which blew me away called *Ulysses*. In it he says: "Death closes all but something ere the end, some work of noble note may yet be done..." That's me! I've had a good career but maybe there's one great thing I can still do. I found myself an agent to sell what I really want to do, what my great love is – a murder mystery! After a month he'd got me three offers to publish my murder mystery – *Actually, I'm a Murderer* – which comes out next June. I then pitched an idea for an adult non-fiction – the rough idea of a book which argued against the idea of nationalism and how destructive labelling people with national identities can be and [my agent] sold it to Penguin.

The more I look at adult non-fiction publishing, the more I realise that so many people have written books marketed as '*Horrible Histories* for grown ups'. How can they be? Because these are not my authorial voice! Even wonderful people like David Mitchell, his book is sold as *Horrible Histories* for grown ups. Let's put the record straight: *A History of Britain in Ten Enemies* is ▶

Terry Deary on how the Spanish Armada is misrepresented in British history...

"The first misrepresentation is the myth that the British sent fire ships towards the anchored Armada, the Spanish panicked, cut their anchors and were blown across the Atlantic. The Spanish were not scared of fire ships! They would jump on board, put out the fires and push them away with barge poles. What they were scared of was 'hell burners'. Three or four years earlier, the Spanish blockaded Antwerp with a row of ships and the Antwerp defenders sent in fire ships which the Spanish laughed at. Then the Dutch sent in two apparent fire ships which were packed with gunpowder, gravestones and scrap metal, and sent them into the line of the ships. They called them hell burners and when they exploded they wiped out 800 Spanish and terrified the rest. The Spanish Armada saw the English fire ships come towards them and thought they were hell burners. The truth is, the British were so low on gunpowder they couldn't have filled a ship and made it a hell burner, but that is not portrayed. The fact was when the people of Antwerp sent the hell burners in, they had a sponsor: Queen Elizabeth I of England. In helping the people of Antwerp, she got rewarded 100-times over by giving the Spanish the impression the English could create hell burners.

"The other thing which has irritated me is Elizabeth's speech at Tilbury. She went along and she made this wonderful speech allegedly: 'My people, I come among you to fight and die with you.' Why does nobody say she made that speech 10 days after the Spanish had been defeated? There was no way she was going to go and fight and she knew that, and she then left the soldiers to be discharged very soon after and the sailors were dropped ashore at the ports without any work. That is never told.

"The third thing they don't tell you is that there were two more armadas. They kept coming back. Each time they came back in October when the storms were raging and each time they got blown away, when the English were at their most defenceless."

BELOW
A memorial statue of Jack Crawford stands in Sunderland's Mowbray Park

BOTTOM MIDDLE
A painting of the naval Battle of Camperdown in 1797

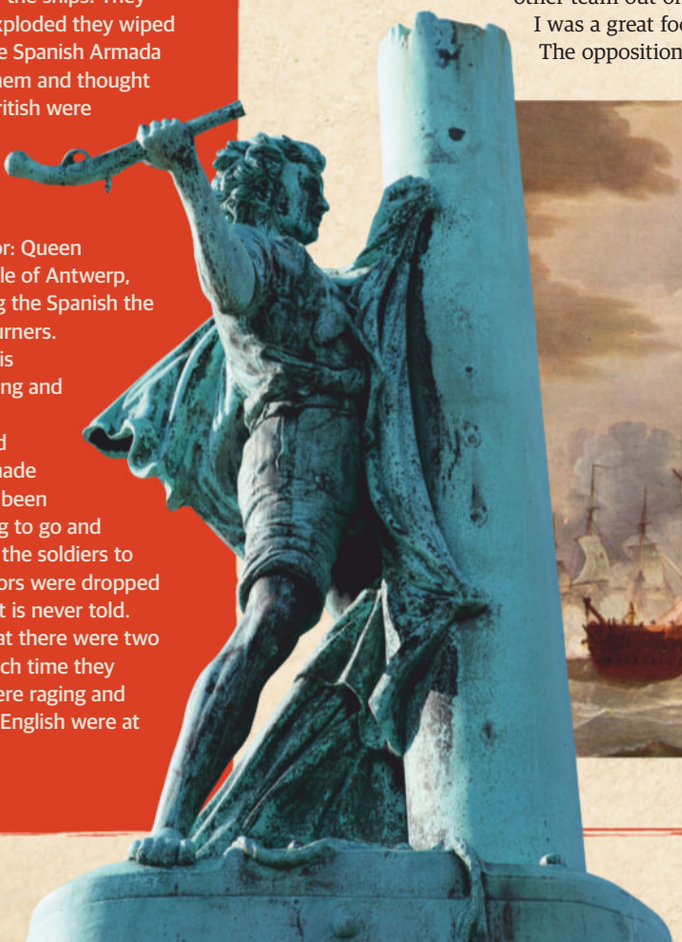
Horrible Histories for adults because it's by the *Horrible Histories* author! Revenge wasn't a motivation by any means but so many people have jumped on the bandwagon, and not just publishers but reviewers too. So come on, give the guy that wrote the original *Horrible Histories* a break because he's a poor starving author who wants to be a country music singer or an actor and failed in both careers. See what he can do in a book for adults, please!

What can readers expect when they pick up your new book?

They can expect to be engaged right from the first line, and then in the final line see the arguments that are meant to persuade them about labelling people with national identities. Donald Trump has got this little saying 'Make America Great Again', or 'MAGA'. Mine is 'WAAH' – 'We Are All Human'. Forget about the differences. Look at what we share in common. Stop trying to divide us. Stop saying Britain is great. Britain has one or two little dark spots in its history. The other feature I go through is the David and Goliath act. Everybody wants to be David, nobody wants to be Goliath. So the history that's been remembered is little Britain battling against the odds: Agincourt, World War Two, Battle of Britain and so on. The biggest British 'against the odds' example is the Spanish Armada. People forget things like the battles against the Tasmanians. Why? Because there were 20,000 Tasmanians and 60 years after the British landed there were no Tasmanians at all. Why don't we learn about that in school? Why do we learn about the Armada, which is usually quite distorted in the retelling?

Has looking at Britain's history through the lens of its enemies changed the way you view Britain's past?

Seventy years ago I was playing for the Cubs football team and in the first half we were 7-0 up, and I'd scored six. In the second half I ran up the field and scored my seventh. My team was leading and the referee blew his whistle to put the other team out of their misery. For 50 years I thought I was a great footballer and then I realised I wasn't. The opposition were probably little seven or eight-



Images: © Alamy, © Getty Images

"ALL TOO OFTEN WE CELEBRATE THE ADMIRAL NELSONS OF THIS WORLD"

year-olds, who were easy to dribble around. You're only great if the opposition is great and that's my mind shift which I then applied to the book. You can't judge people by what they achieve, but only by what they achieve it in opposition to. All nations remember their successes against the odds, but they don't remember the ones where they marched in with ease. The British Empire, which I loathe with a passion, wasn't won with courage but with the machine gun. The British had the machine gun, the native populations didn't. Nothing brave or courageous about it! The epilogue of my book covers that and how Britain has deluded itself, and I want to disillusion those readers.

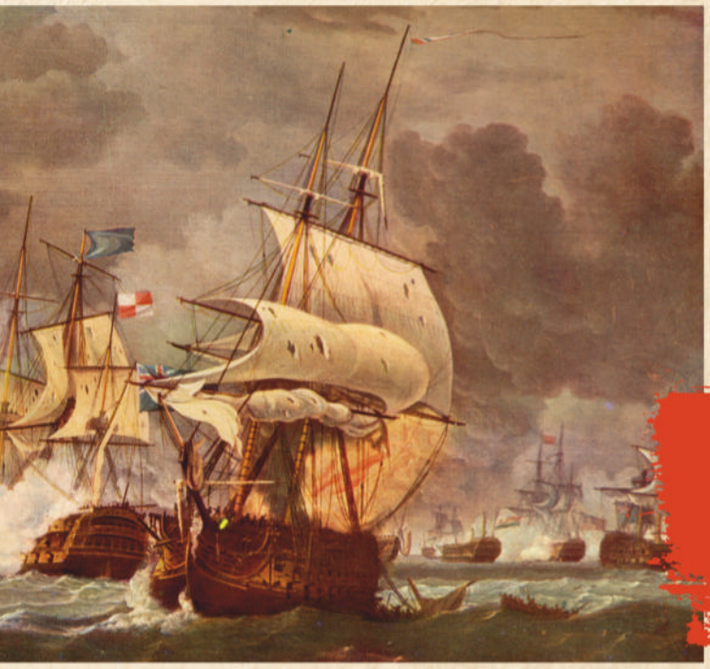
How did you find writing for adults? Do you find it similar to writing for children?

No, it's much more enjoyable! My writing style is conversational. I talk to my reader because my reader is the most important person. When I'm writing for children, I'm talking to children and, without being patronising or demeaning, everybody talks to children differently. But writing for adults and talking to adults I can say things I say in the pub. It's wonderful to be able to address people and challenge them, whereas with children I've got to be more conservative.

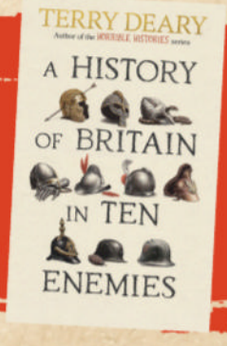
Do you have any favourite facts or stories from A History of Britain in Ten Enemies?

My favourite is the Battle of Camperdown [11 October 1797]. People all know about Admiral Nelson – they built a bloody great column and stuck his statue on top! [The Battle of] Trafalgar would not have happened if we'd lost Camperdown eight years earlier. There, Admiral Duncan had problems with his signalling on his flagship. All his standards, his colours, were blown away, which was a sign of surrender. Somebody had put the colours back up, nail them to the mast, otherwise they would've been defeated. A fellow named Jack Crawford took on the task. He's forgotten... but he was from Sunderland. He's got a little statue in a park in Sunderland, whereas bloody Nelson, who would never have fought the Battle of Trafalgar or been heard of if it hadn't been for Jack Crawford, got a column. The common man in a battle that was greater than Trafalgar but is forgotten and an enemy, the Dutch, which is also forgotten. So Jack Crawford nailing the colours back to the mast has got to be my favourite story. And it's not just because he was from Sunderland but because he's a little person who made a difference, and too often we celebrate the Nelsons of this world but not all the people who contributed to our history.

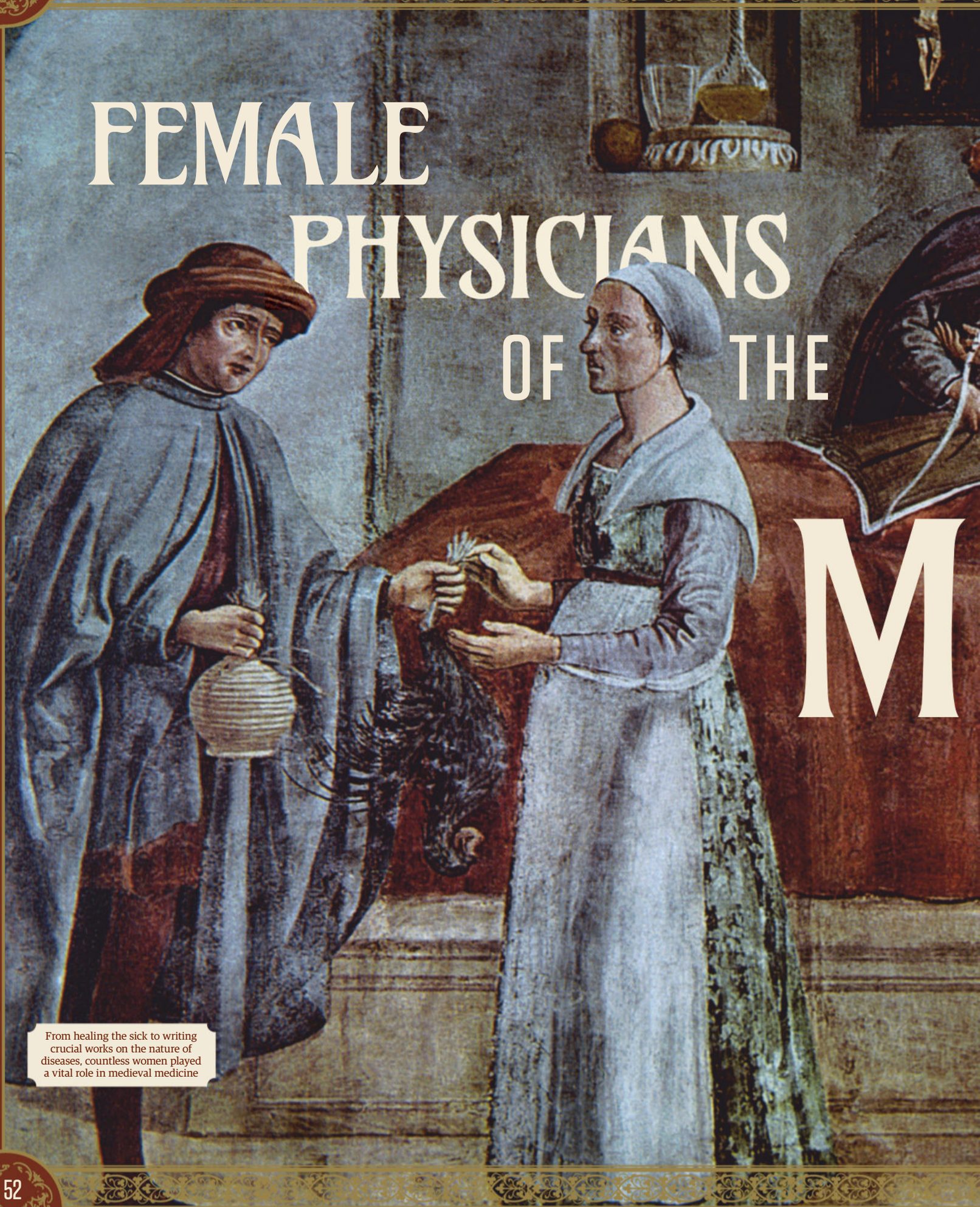
LEFT The Black War between British colonists and native Tasmanians in the 1820s nearly wiped out the indigenous population



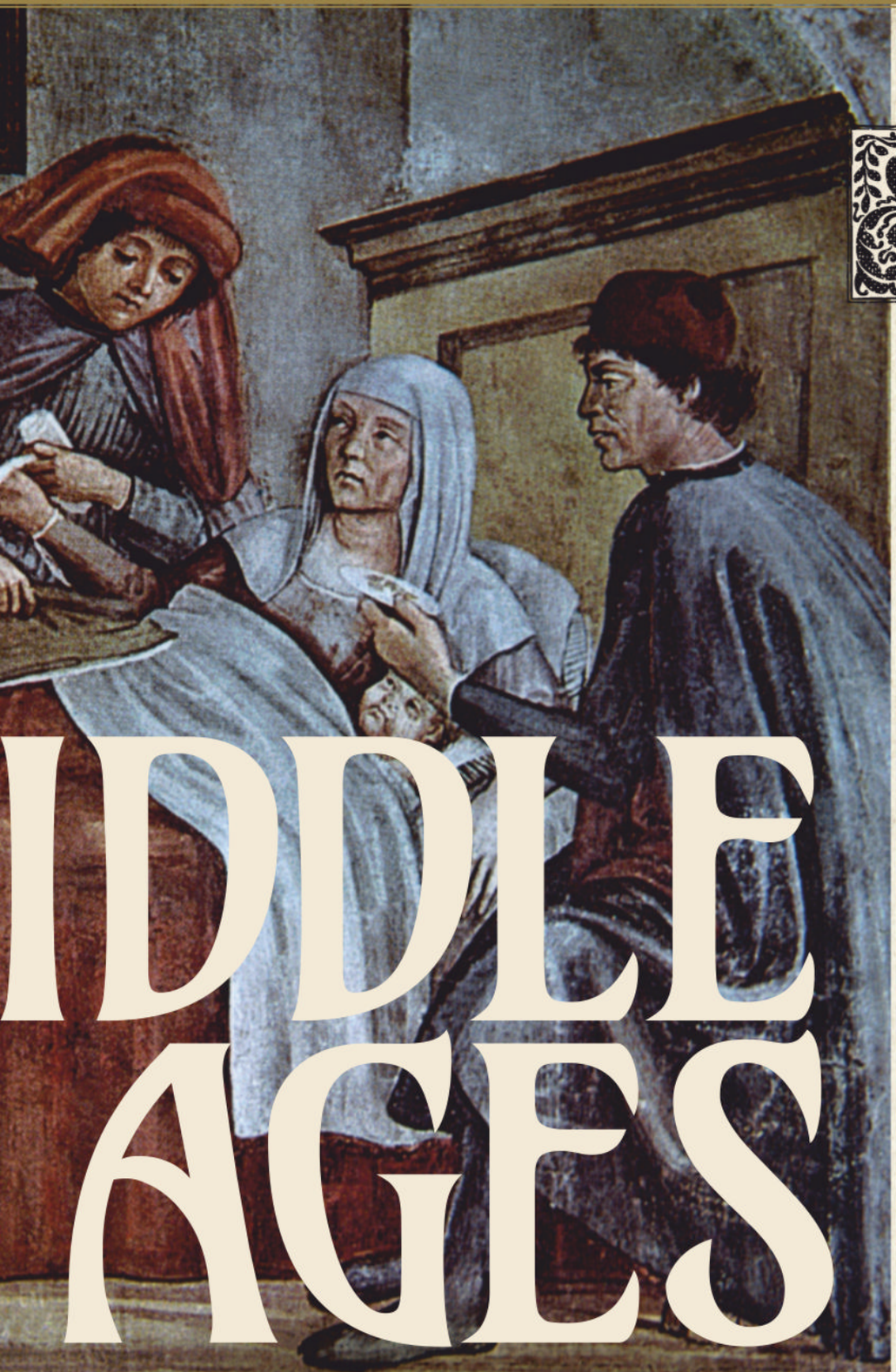
A HISTORY OF BRITAIN IN TEN ENEMIES
(BANTAM, 2024)
BY TERRY DEARY
IS AVAILABLE TO BUY NOW



FEMALE PHYSICIANS OF THE M



From healing the sick to writing crucial works on the nature of diseases, countless women played a vital role in medieval medicine



IDDLE AGES

Determined to make a difference despite the male dominance of the medical world, these pioneering women overcame numerous obstacles in their efforts to aid the infirm

Written by Bee Ginger

It's no secret that the medieval period was a man's world, an age when – with a few exceptions – kings wielded ultimate power backed by male counsel. Educational opportunities for women were relatively rare, and the notion of females being more skilled surgeons and doctors than their male peers was considered ludicrous. Yet such a forbidding combination of factors did not prevent women from earning a reputation as excellent healers, even if they weren't recognised as physicians.

During this fascinating time the peasantry often relied on the guidance of a 'wise woman'. These healers possessed expert knowledge of the powers of herbs and remedies, and they played an important role as midwives in an age when giving birth was often fatal.

Drawing on the land around them, wise women used a variety of ingredients (from plants to animal parts) to create ointments and other forms of medicine. These women would pass down their expertise to the next generation, ensuring the survival of their 'charms' or 'spells' (as their concoctions were often called, terms that would prove dangerous when healers began to be suspected and tried for witchcraft).

They were not the only women who worked tirelessly to improve the lot of the masses – or their rulers. Throughout medieval Europe and the Arab world, women strived to enhance their understanding of the human body and establish safe, hygienic environments in which to treat patients, be they orphans, wounded warriors or royalty. Their efforts were met with very different societal reactions, with some receiving the appreciation of nobles while others were hauled before a court of law and tried for the crime of refusing to give up on people who had been discarded by frustrated male physicians unable to find a cure.

From the body-strewn battlefields of the Middle East to the towns and cities of Italy and France, the women you are about to meet paved the way for a future in which women could learn the art of medicine and practise it freely. Many of them did so against a backdrop of suspicion and envy that would culminate in countless women being tried and even tortured for performing procedures and dispensing treatments. In one gruesome incident, a 60-year-old Tuscan nun was strung up by the arms for having the audacity to administer ointments derived from the flower betony to women in labour.

Despite this widespread persecution and determined attempts to stymie the progress of female medical professionals, it is testament to the impact of these groundbreaking women that their legacies live on today. ▶

The Prophet's Mosque in the city of Medina. Al-Aslamia was an early follower of Muhammad

RUFAIDA AL-ASLAMIA

7TH CENTURY

Born into the Bani Aslam tribe in Hejaz (in modern-day Saudi Arabia) in the 7th century, Rufaida Al-Aslamia is considered to be the first female Muslim nurse, if not the first female nurse in human history. Trained by her father Saad al Aslami, who was also a physician, Rufaida taught other women and her wider community about the importance of hygiene and how to generally improve medical practices. Renowned for her kindness, she helped orphans and the poor, but her most famous work was undertaken on the battlefields of the Arab Peninsula during the Prophet Muhammad's campaign to spread the reach of Islam. Present at several clashes, Rufaida helped to treat wounded troops and received a share of the spoils of war from Muhammad in recognition of her work.

MAGISTRA HERSEND MID 13TH CENTURY

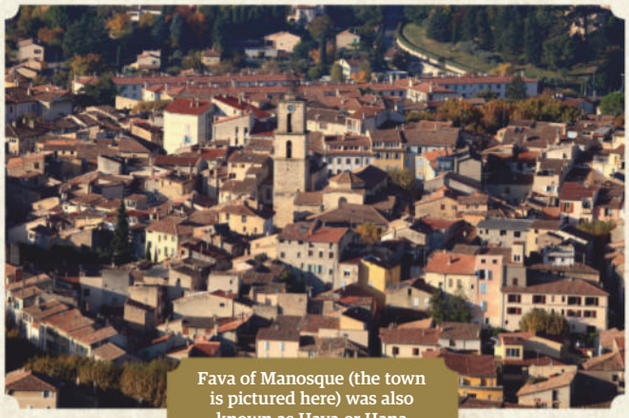
Seen dying in this painting, radiocarbon dating of King Louis IX's jawbone suggests he'd suffered from scurvy and schistosomiasis, which is also known as 'snail fever'

Licensed female physicians were relatively scarce during the Middle Ages, but female official royal physicians were rarer still. The courageous Magistra Hersend was one of them. A surgeon who worked for King Louis IX and his queen, Margaret, Hersend accompanied the king on the Seventh Crusade in 1249. While in the Middle East she was paid 12 French deniers (pennies) a day to tend to camp followers, and in Acre she was given a life pension by a grateful King Louis.

As for the campaign to retake the Holy Land, it proved to be a disaster. The Christian forces were annihilated in Egypt and Louis and Hersend were captured. They were later released, allowing Hersend to return to France and her husband Jacques, the king's apothecary, whom she'd married in 1250.

Louis would embark on another attempt to reclaim former Christian holdings in 1270, where he perished not at the hand of the enemy but dysentery, which took his life in Tunis a matter of weeks.

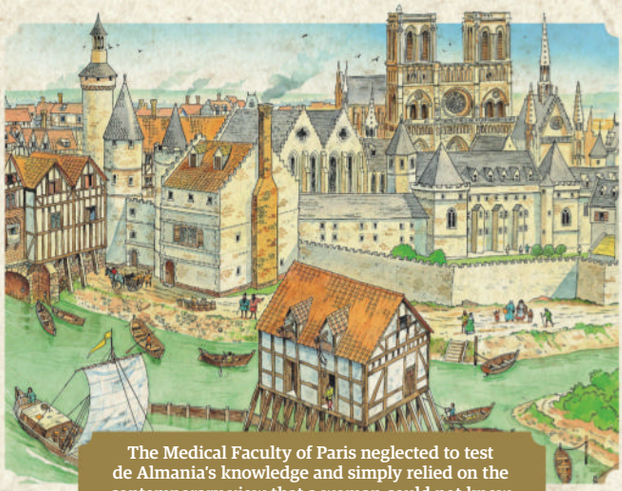
FAVA OF MANOSQUE EARLY 14TH CENTURY



Fava of Manosque (the town is pictured here) was also known as Hava or Hana

A Jewish physician from Provence, Fava of Manosque hailed from a remarkable family of medical professionals. Her mother Astrugus was a surgeon, as was Fava's husband, their son Bonafos and two of their grandsons. It's likely that she was trained in medicine by her spouse (at the time Jews were not allowed to study in medical schools). Putting this religious discrimination aside, Fava treated both Jews and Christians, but sadly her contributions did not receive the appreciation they deserved. In 1321 or 1322 she was put on trial for treating an unfortunate man named Poncius Porcelli, who had received a serious whack to the testicles. At the time a man's testicles were viewed as being far too intimate for a female doctor to palpate (to examine by touch). When asked if she had studied Porcelli in this manner, Fava denied doing so, stating that she had merely guided her son on how to treat their injured patient.

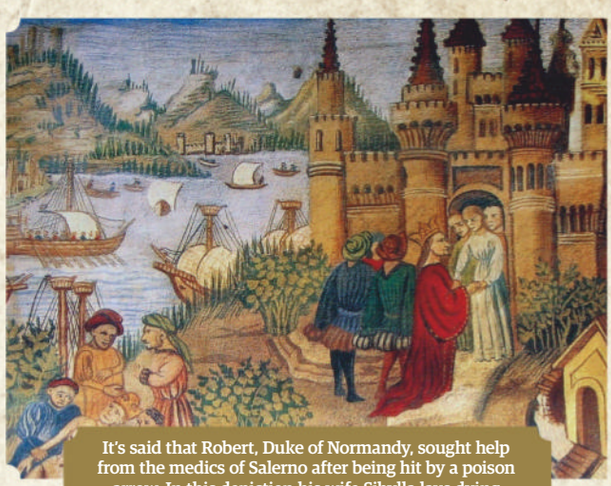
JACQUELINE FELICE DE ALMANIA EARLY 14TH CENTURY



The Medical Faculty of Paris neglected to test de Almania's knowledge and simply relied on the contemporary view that a woman could not know more about the human condition than a man

Hailing from Florence, Jacqueline Felice de Almania worked as an unlicensed medical healer in 14th-century France, where her methods yielded impressive results. Treating both men and women, de Almania firmly believed that only women should examine other women (so as to prevent men learning the secrets of 'women's business') and only charged her patients if they were cured. You might think her efforts would have been appreciated by French society, but in 1322 she was put on trial for unlawful practice. Despite the testimony of grateful patients she was convicted, fined and threatened with excommunication (a spiritual if not a literal death sentence) if she continued to see patients. The ruling had a lasting impact as it prevented women from studying medicine (and thereby obtaining a licence) in France until the 1800s.

ABELLA OF SALERNO EARLY 15TH CENTURY



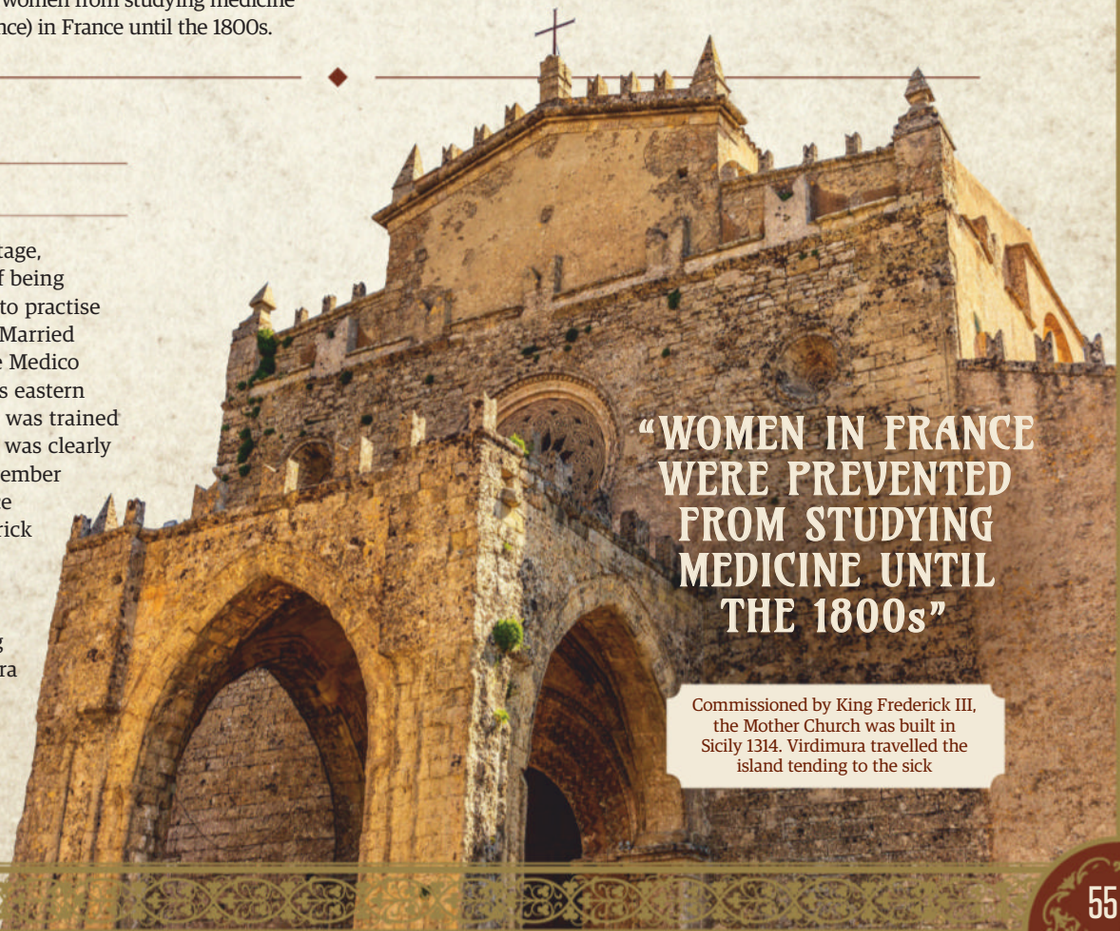
It's said that Robert, Duke of Normandy, sought help from the medics of Salerno after being hit by a poison arrow. In this depiction his wife Sibylla lays dying (bottom-left) after sucking the poison out of his wound

Born in 1380, Abella was first a student and then a teacher at the Salerno School of Medicine, which was one of the first to admit women and provided Western Europe with the majority of its medical knowledge. Specialising in embryology, she is remembered as one of the Mulieres Salernitanae (Women of Salerno), a group of female physicians who blazed a trail in medieval Italy. Abella shared a familial link to Giovanni of Castellomata, Pope Innocent III's doctor, and during her life she penned two works titled *On Black Bile* and *On the Nature of the Seminal Fluid*. Sadly neither of these documents survived.

VIRDIMURA

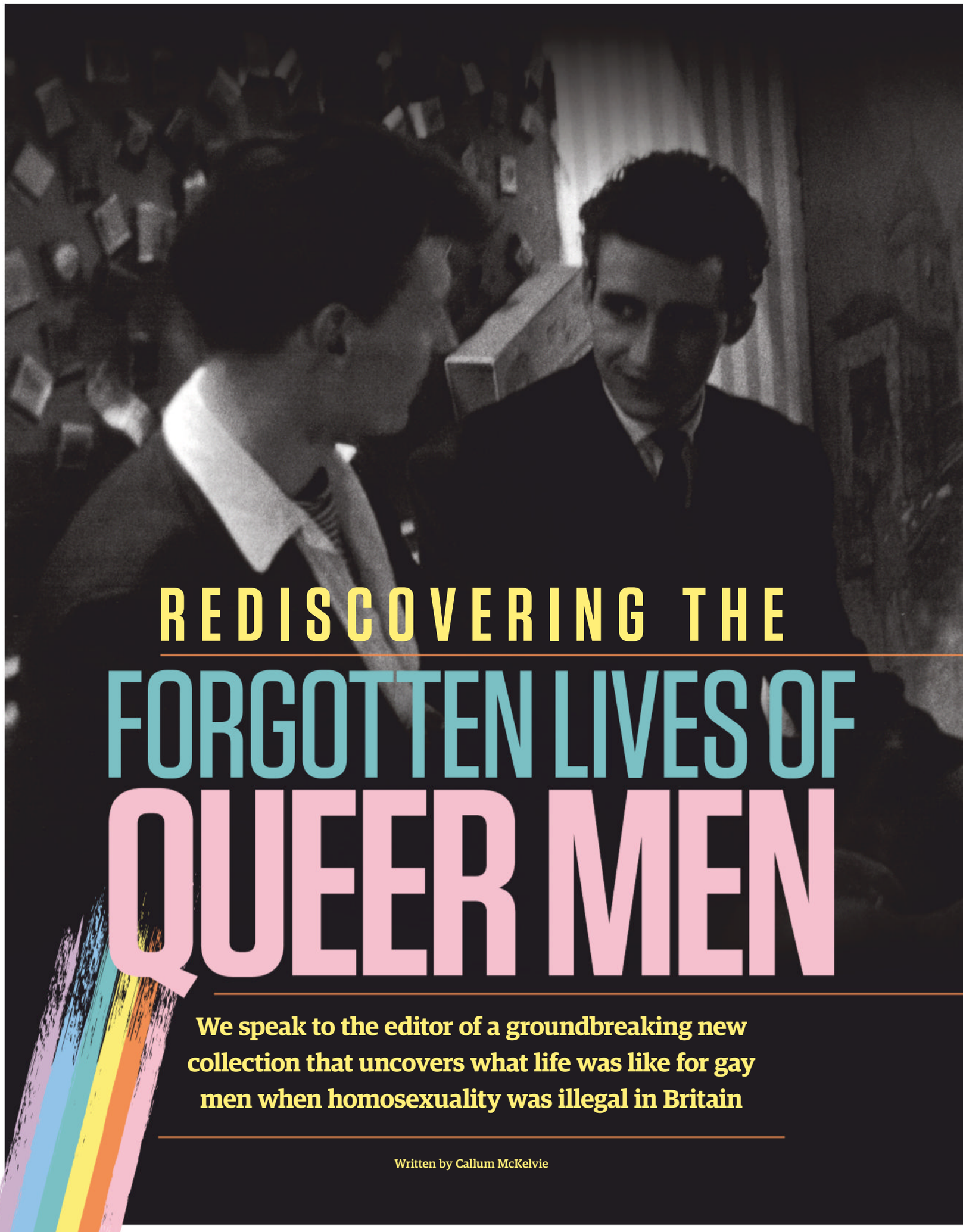
LATE 14TH CENTURY

A Sicilian doctor of Jewish heritage, Virdimura holds the accolade of being the first woman to be certified to practise medicine on the Italian island. Married to a man known as Pasquale de Medico of Catania (a port city on Sicily's eastern coast), it's likely that Virdimura was trained in medicine by her spouse. She was clearly an astute pupil, because in November 1376 she was granted her licence by none other than King Frederick III's doctors after passing the necessary exams and being supported by the testimony of her patients. Known for helping the poor and disabled, Virdimura inspired an international award that is given to doctors who dedicate themselves to humanitarian work.



"WOMEN IN FRANCE WERE PREVENTED FROM STUDYING MEDICINE UNTIL THE 1800s"

Commissioned by King Frederick III, the Mother Church was built in Sicily 1314. Virdimura travelled the island tending to the sick



REDISCOVERING THE FORGOTTEN LIVES OF QUEER MEN

We speak to the editor of a groundbreaking new collection that uncovers what life was like for gay men when homosexuality was illegal in Britain

Written by Callum McKelvie

Rediscovering the Forgotten Lives of Queer Men

On 21 July 1967, the Sexual Offences Act received Royal Assent. Although the Act only partially decriminalised homosexuality and included several conditions, its importance cannot be overstated. Prior to the Act, queer men could be the victims of harsh prison sentences or cruel blackmailers who exploited the draconian laws. Despite these dangers, however, life for these men still continued. In fact, in Britain there had existed for many centuries a vibrant queer subculture, particularly in London.

For historians these stories can often be difficult to piece together. Due to the illegality, many people chose not to write about their experiences at all, lest it be discovered and used as evidence. Those accounts that do exist are found across disparate sources, from diaries and letters to newspapers and paperback fiction.

Now, writer and historian Peter Parker has put together *Some Men in London*, a two-volume collection of extracts and articles that tells a cohesive narrative of queer life in the capital in the post-war years before decriminalisation. We spoke to him to find out how he approached such a monumental task, what some of his favourite stories from the collection are, and just what life was like for queer men in London between 1945 and 1967. ▶

EXPERT BIO

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PETER PARKER

British writer and historian Peter Parker began his career as a journalist, including writing reviews for the *Gay News*. His books include *The Old Lie: The Great War and the Public-School Ethos* (1987), *Ackerley: A Life of JR Ackerley* (1989), *Isherwood* (2004) and *Housman Country* (2016).

SOME MEN IN LONDON VOLUMES 1 AND 2 ARE AVAILABLE NOW FROM PENGUIN BOOKS

All images: © Getty Images

What was it like for gay men in the period immediately following WWII?
After 1945 there was a general moral panic. It was thought that because Britain's men had been away, there had been no 'paternal hands'. It was widely believed that children were growing up without father figures and as a result were becoming either juvenile delinquents – or gay. There was also concern about the state of the country in general, the divorce rate was going up and Britain was losing the empire. So in 1954 the Wolfenden Committee to investigate homosexuality and prostitution was instigated. Suddenly homosexuality, which had not really been mentioned in polite society, became a matter of public debate. And so we slowly began to move towards 1967 when homosexuality was partially decriminalised.

"LONDON, LIKE MANY CAPITAL CITIES, IS SOMEWHERE PEOPLE GRAVITATED TOWARDS IN ORDER TO ESCAPE PROVINCIAL SMALL TOWNS WHERE IT WAS MUCH MORE DIFFICULT TO BE GAY"

What do you mean by 'partially' decriminalised?
We have to be careful about this – there were a number of stipulations. Despite the decriminalisation you still had to be over the age of 21 [the age of consent for heterosexual couples was 16] and any sexual activity had to take place in private. Even a hotel was considered a public space. This law didn't apply to the armed forces or even the Merchant Navy, or in Northern Ireland or Scotland.

How dangerous was it for queer men during this period?
You have to remember it was illegal. Even trying to pick someone up, well, that's soliciting, you could be sent to jail for two years. Until 1948 [when the Criminal Justice Act abolished hard labour in England and Wales] that included hard labour. So nothing had really changed since Oscar Wilde was tried in 1895. Even without hard labour, prison was not a cushy place to be. People were also in danger of being blackmailed: they would pick someone up, who would then threaten to go to their family, employer or even the police unless they were paid.

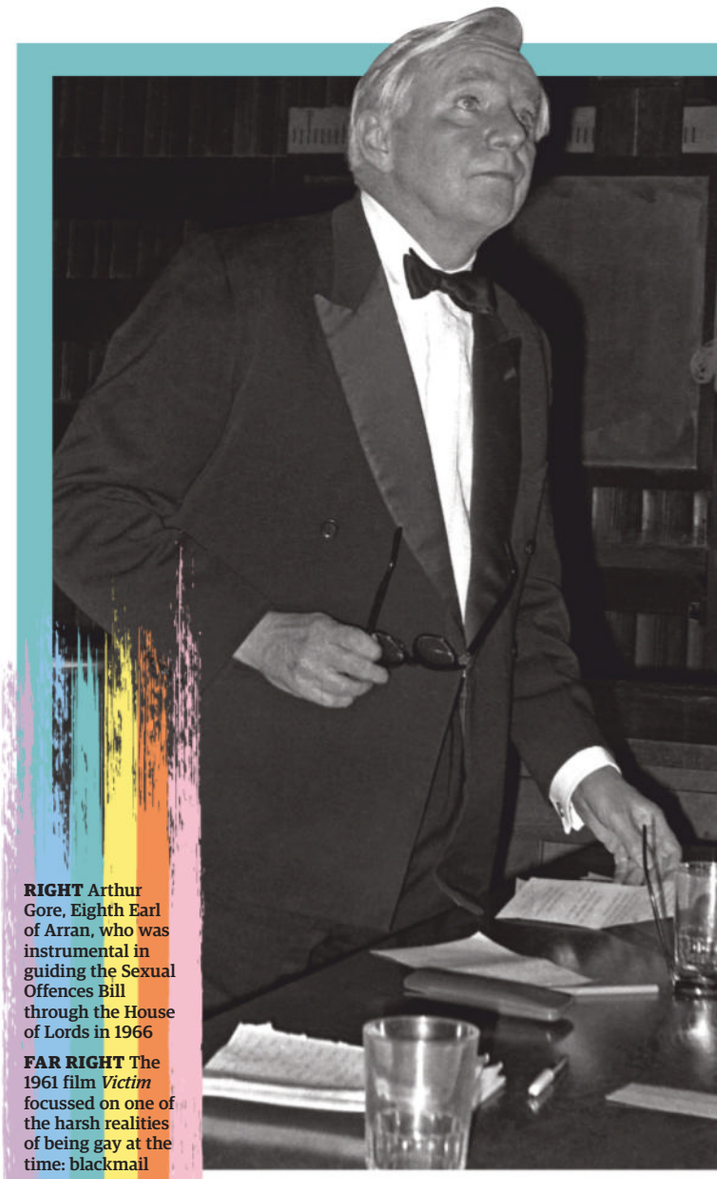
So people did live in fear... but on the other hand if that was the whole story this book would be very depressing and it isn't. Even though we were moving towards decriminalisation, there was a whole gay subculture. There were bars and pubs, even if they were often raided. But they were probably less risky than picking someone up in a lavatory or in a park, which also went on. Some of my readers of Volume One were quite surprised at just how much gay life there was. Although it was a fairly dark period people were managing to have fun and live their lives.

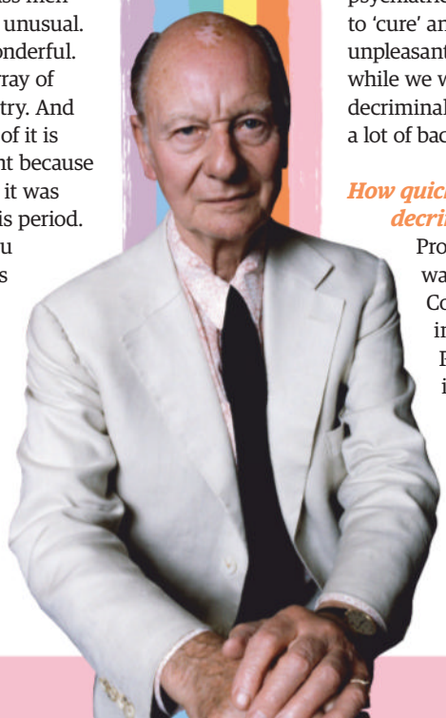
What role did culture play?
In Volume Two I'm particularly pleased with the material surrounding the 1961 film *Victim*, a thriller about homosexual blackmail. I found a wonderful piece from a magazine that portrays the star Dirk Bogarde as "100% man". Now, of course, we all know that Bogarde himself was gay but it's an example of the sort of attitudes of the period. Another interesting thing I found was a newspaper clipping about an actor, Arthur Howard, who'd been arrested for homosexual offences. Howard was best known for his role in a popular television series but he was also the father of Alan Howard. In the 1970s Alan became a great Shakespearean actor but he had an early role in *Victim*. His father was arrested for homosexual offences just before the film came out. I think that sort of juxtaposition is quite extraordinary.

I was also really pleased to discover lots of novels. Some of these I knew and some I read for the first time, such as *The Leather Boys* by Gillian Freeman, which was also made into a pretty controversial film. I'd assumed it was a piece of pulp fiction but it's actually a really, really good novel! It's about two working class men who are in love, and that's fairly unusual. So finding stuff like that was wonderful. I wanted to get in as broad an array of stuff as possible, even some poetry. And all of it is from the period, none of it is retrospective. This was important because I wanted to give an idea of what it was actually like to be gay during this period. So these are newspapers that you would have read. These are films that you would have seen. These are books that you would have been familiar with.

How did psychiatry influence the conversation?
One of the main arguments for decriminalisation was that people can't help it, it's a condition. So homosexuality was no longer seen as a crime but began to be seen as a mental illness. One of the shocking things I discovered when researching the book were the sort of remarks and attitudes coming from the psychiatric community. They were out to 'cure' and that often meant extremely unpleasant forms of aversion therapy. So while we were making progress towards decriminalisation in 1967, there was also a lot of backsliding.

How quick was progress towards decriminalisation?
Progress towards decriminalisation was slow. The Wolfenden Committee published its report in 1957 and it took a year for Parliament even to discuss it. When they did, all they basically said was: 'Well, we will talk about it but we're not going to do anything because the general public won't stand for it.' This idea of public opinion was





RIGHT Arthur Gore, Eighth Earl of Arran, who was instrumental in guiding the Sexual Offences Bill through the House of Lords in 1966

FAR RIGHT The 1961 film *Victim* focussed on one of the harsh realities of being gay at the time: blackmail

BELOW Renowned thespian Sir John Gielgud was arrested for homosexual offences in 1953

always used by politicians and the media because they didn't want to do anything they thought would be unpopular. But the thing about public opinion is it's often difficult to gauge. If someone comes up to you in the street and asks you about a controversial subject, you may not want to say what you really think.

What was the initial inspiration behind Some Men in London?

Penguin approached me. I think it was clear from my previous books, including my biography of JR Ackerley but also Christopher Isherwood, that this was a period I knew a fair amount about. I think my editor initially thought it was going to be largely about Soho and Fitzrovia and the homosexual aspects of the bohemian bars and clubs associated with those areas. But the minute I began working on my proposal I discovered that this was a much, much larger topic. I realised it involved the press, national politics, psychiatry, film – pretty much everything! In fact it was so large that it was originally conceived as one volume but by the time we began to trim the material my editor said: "We'll wreck it if we cut any more. We'll just have to do it in two!"

Why did you choose to focus the collection on London specifically?

London, like many capital cities, is somewhere people gravitated towards in order to escape provincial small towns where it was much more difficult to be gay. I'd have loved to have done the whole of Britain but we would have ended up with even more volumes! It also became apparent that, while there are lots of very interesting stories from around the country, London was at the centre. For example the Wolfenden Committee's main focus was London. The policemen they interviewed were from London and the magistrates were often the Metropolitan magistrates. The committee did talk to magistrates from other major cities but I think there was also an idea that if you wanted to find 'vice' you went to London. I suppose it would be the ▶

THE MONTAGU SCANDAL & THE ROAD TO DECRIMINALISATION

The 1953 scandal that helped inspire the Wolfenden Report

The Sexual Offences Act (1967) partially decriminalised sexual relations between two consenting male adults. It is well known that the 1957 Wolfenden Report was an important factor in leading to this momentous piece of legislation, but what inspired the report in the first place?

In 1953 Britain had been shaken to its core by a sex scandal involving three men: landowner Michael Pitt-Rivers, journalist Peter Wildeblood and Lord Montagu of Beaulieu. They were convicted of homosexual offences, with Montagu sentenced to 12 months and Pitt-Rivers and Wildeblood each receiving 18 months behind bars.

Wildeblood was angered by his treatment and in 1955 published his memoir *Against the Law*, in which he vehemently argued for homosexual rights. The scandal and Wildeblood's book were instrumental in convincing the Churchill government in April 1954 to commission the Wolfenden Committee to prepare a report on the laws surrounding homosexuality. Despite the report's conclusion that sexual acts between consenting males be at least partially decriminalised, it would take another ten years before the law was changed.

AllImages: © Getty Images, © Alamy, © Shutterstock

same if you were researching America and there have been books, though not anthologies, on queer New York City.

Homosexuality was partially decriminalised in 1967 but why did you choose the end of the Second World War as your starting point?

Well, we had to start somewhere. Originally I started in January 1945 and I had to lose some rather good material. But it seemed so arbitrary that in the end I decided to actually start on VE night itself [Victory in Europe Day, 8 May 1945]. We have two very contrasting diary entries, one from Chips Channon [Conservative MP Sir Henry Channon], who had a big party at his house in Mayfair, and the other by photographer John S Barrington talking about going out and picking up sailors. Together they seemed like a very good place to start.

How did you go about sourcing all the material?

Throughout my writing career as a journalist I'd read innumerable books. I used to work for *Gay News* as a regular reviewer and I was always being sent books. In fact, if you look at my shelves, quite a lot of the material used is actually from my own collection, but I also acquired a lot as well.

I also used a number of archives. The British Newspaper Archive online is a marvellous resource, but required me to type in the word "homosexual" and filter the results to between 1945 and 1967 to see what came up. I discovered that what I actually needed to search for was "serious offence", which is the term they often used because they thought the readers needed to be shielded from what these men had actually done.

One fantastic archive was at the Bishopsgate Institute in London, where they had the Lesbian and Gay Newspaper Archive. I'm not quite sure how it happened, but someone for many years collected articles to do with homosexuality all across Britain. Of course it's not comprehensive, but it is a fantastic resource and it saved a lot of time because it was concentrated solely on the topic I was interested in.

The Hall-Carpenter Archives at the London School of Economics is another interesting one. This is an archive dedicated to gay life, named after lesbian novelist Radclyffe Hall and gay rights activist Edward Carpenter. They had a lot of material

RIGHT A moment from 2013's Pride in London. The city has been the home to a yearly Pride parade since 1972

BELOW Actor Dirk Bogarde in 1961's *The Singer Not the Song*. He played the lead role in *Victim*, a risky move for a closeted gay man in 1960s Britain

All images: © Shutterstock, © Alamy

"THERE'S A NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO FOUGHT FOR QUEER RIGHTS AND PUT THEMSELVES ON THE LINE. THEY SHOULDN'T BE FORGOTTEN, THEY SHOULD BE CELEBRATED"

concerning the Homosexual Law Reform Society, which was set up to try and get Parliament to implement the recommendations of the Wolfenden Committee. There are all these amazing resources which I was very lucky to find and use.

What are some of your favourite stories in the collection?

One I really like is in Volume One. It involves Viscount Sudley, who met someone in a bar and invited them home for 'wrestling'. In some ways it sounds like a vaguely comic story, except that he was burgled. However, when I did some research I discovered that Viscount Sudley was in fact the older brother of the Eighth Earl of Arran, Arthur Gore. It was Gore who piloted the Bill to decriminalise homosexuality through the House of Lords. This was a connection I knew nothing about.

I'm also proud of the material relating to Sir John Gielgud's arrest. I've included his various replies to letters he'd received from people who were very sympathetic, one of whom was Noël Coward. When we were close to going to press Oliver Soden produced a new biography of Coward in which he quoted a few lines from Coward's diary, in which he revealed his true feelings surrounding Gielgud's arrest. I rushed to the Noël Coward archive and found the full entry, which isn't in any of the published diaries. He's pretty harsh to Gielgud. There's a nice juxtaposition between what Coward thought in private and what he was actually writing.

What do you hope will be the impact of Some Men in London?

Some of the poor men featured in this collection, if you told them that in 2024 they would be able to marry another man, I think they would be astonished. When we have these rights, a lot of people don't realise the struggle there was to get them. In some ways the book is a vision of what it would be like if those rights ever disappeared. One always has to be on guard – rights are hard-won and often easily lost again.

I also think it's important to celebrate people whose names perhaps mean nothing now, like AE Dyson who founded the Homosexual Law Reform Society and fought to get Parliament to implement the Wolfenden reforms. There's a number of people like Dyson who fought for queer rights and put themselves on the line. They shouldn't be forgotten, they should be celebrated.

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TURN TO PAGE 24

EGYPT LINE DIG IT OUT KIT

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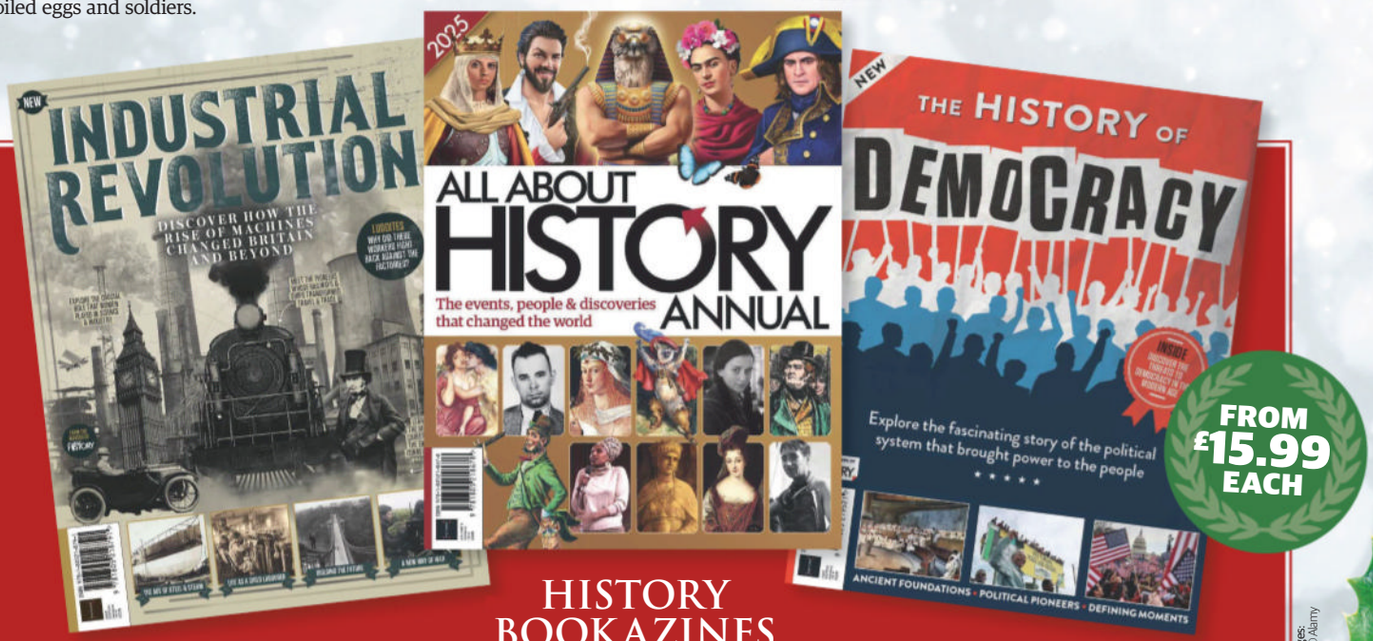
EGG CUPS - NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

£25 each www.npgshop.org.uk

These are just some of the handmade egg cups from a series designed by Katch Skinner, available through the National Portrait Gallery. Historical figures include Henry VIII, Anne Boleyn, Mary Seacole (all pictured here), David Bowie, Emmeline Pankhurst, Grace Jones, William Shakespeare and many more. They can also make a great mini plant pot if you're more into succulents than boiled eggs and soldiers.



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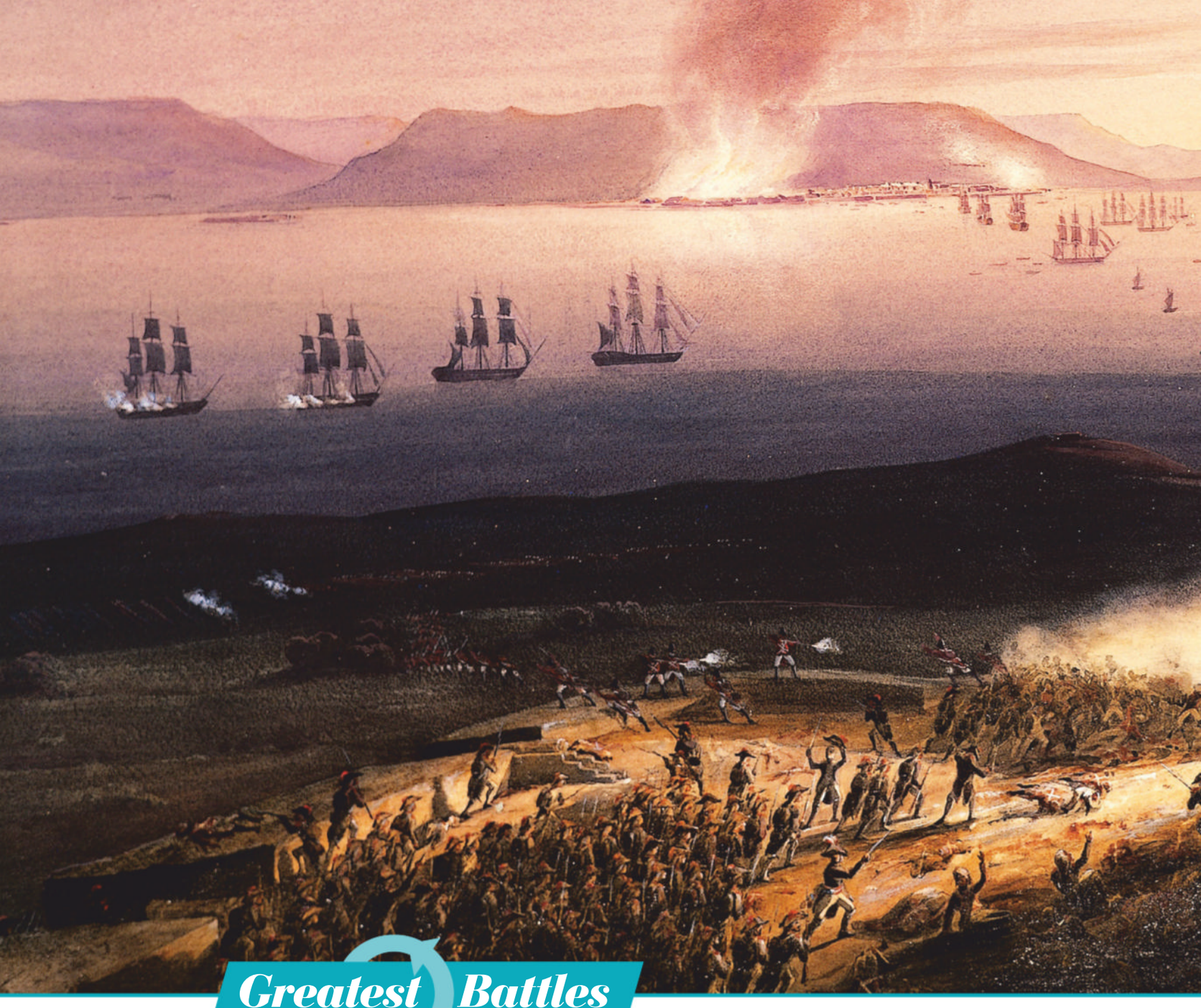


Greatest Battles

SIEGE OF TOULON

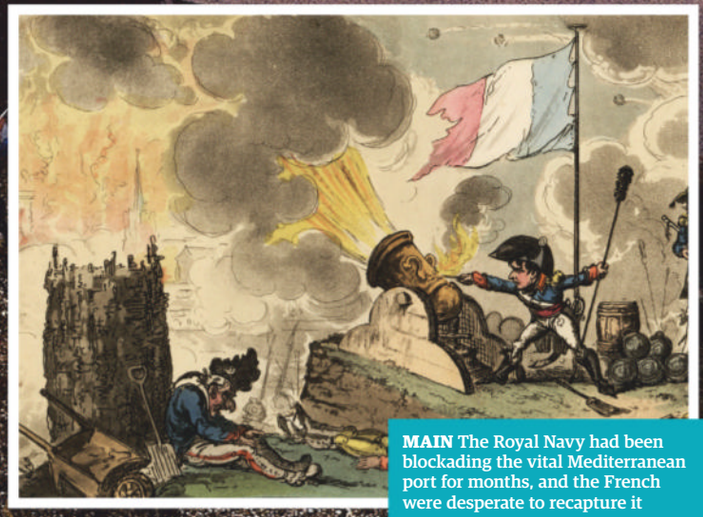
TOULON, FRENCH REPUBLIC
SEPTEMBER – DECEMBER 1793

Written by Michael G Stroud

For a short period, the revolutionary fervour that swept France from 1789 remained a largely internal political affair, punctured occasionally with civil unrest as politicians set about dismantling the old regime to make room for a new nation. This all changed in 1792 with a cascade of geopolitical and domestic events, mass dissention, counter-revolutions and declarations of war.

The perceived threat of revolution spreading from France to its neighbours galvanised a coalition, led chiefly by Prussia, Austria, England and Spain. This left France assailed by both internal and external enemies, and the onslaught soon had the nation on its heels.

In August 1793 coalition and royalist armies pushed into Republican France on multiple fronts, and French forces reeled from numerous defeats. These, along with strong anti-Jacobin (the ruling Republican party) uprisings throughout the country, meant that the fragile republic was on



MAIN The Royal Navy had been blockading the vital Mediterranean port for months, and the French were desperate to recapture it

TOP The French Republican Army, led by Major-General Jacques Coquille Dugommier, enters Toulon at the culmination of the siege

ABOVE This cartoon depicts Napoleon firing a canon during the siege. He was promoted to brigadier-general soon after victory at Toulon

a knife edge. Matters became catastrophic with the raising of the royalist flag in Toulon on 27 August.

The revolt in Toulon was the result of heavy-handed leadership by Jacobin officials in their attempt to coerce the more moderate members of the city and the French Navy (as well as the over 6,000 dockyard workers at the naval arsenal) to their side. This alienation only served to infuriate and galvanise the moderates, who by 18 July had formed a General Committee and removed the Jacobins, before trying and publicly executing over 40 of them.

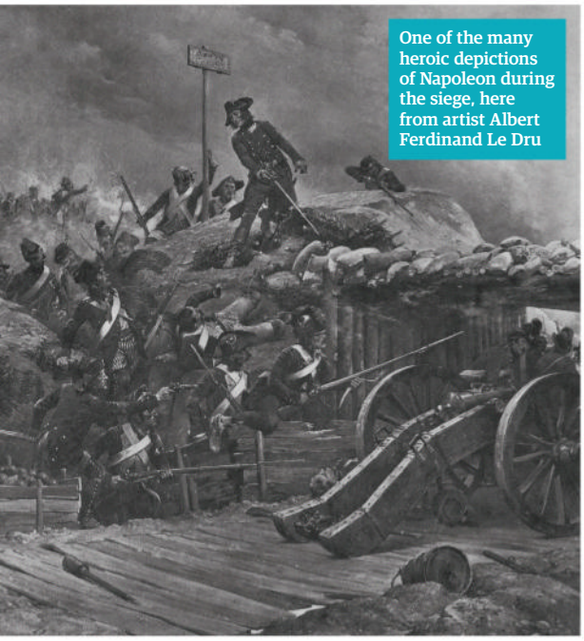
Toulon was a critical hub of France's naval power in the Mediterranean, housing the bulk of its fleet as well as serving as a major weapons arsenal. The French Mediterranean Fleet at the port was a mixed bag at best. Led by interim commander Rear-Admiral Jean Honoré Comte de Trogoff, he possessed 35 operational vessels that consisted of 19 ships-of-the-line, seven frigates and nine corvettes. The rest were not ready for action, which included four ships-of-the-line and one frigate that were being refitted, nine ships-of-the-line and nine frigates that were non-operational, and a ship-of-the-line and a frigate that were under construction.

The loss of this strategically important harbour was unacceptable and risked unravelling everything Jacobin France had established. So it came as no surprise to the General Committee in Toulon that the leadership in Paris promptly ordered an army to be assembled to retake it as soon as possible.

Toulon's rebel leaders quickly realised that they needed immediate assistance if they had any hope of avoiding the guillotine and so turned to the blockading British. The Royal Navy fleet, under the command of 68-year-old Vice-Admiral Sir Samuel Hood, had been blockading the French port for months, so when the counter-revolutionaries in Toulon reached out for assistance, and after they swore allegiance to the Bourbons, Hood seized the opportunity and began landing troops in support, which initially included 1,200 marines and 200 sailors.

The British quickly occupied Fort Lamalgue and dispatched forces into the city. It soon became apparent to Hood, however, that he would need more men, and quickly, in order to secure the port and defend against the oncoming French. Calls for additional troops were sent to London (they would not receive his request until 7 September), as well as allies Spain, Sardinia, Austria and Naples. Only the Spanish would answer, with 12 ships-of-the-line and more than 3,000 troops under the command of Lieutenant-General Don Juan de Lángara y Huarte.

The French, with the loss of multiple cities, had been shocked into action, quickly pulling together and mobilising an army to retake them. The French Army, under the command of 42-year-old former painter Major-General Jean Francois Carteaux, reclaimed Avignon ▶



One of the many heroic depictions of Napoleon during the siege, here from artist Albert Ferdinand Le Dru

and Marseilles before moving on to Toulon. Carteaux arrived at the city with around 5,000 infantry, 26 guns and a small cavalry force of 140 as a land force, since the fleet was bottled up at Toulon by the allies. He was quickly supported by the arrival of Major-General Jean Francois Lapoype and his 3,000 troops of mixed quality.

THE SIEGE COMMENCES

During the first week of September Carteaux moved his force of 5,000 in from the west, pushing out allied pickets and occupying the village of Ollioules. Lapoype with his 3,000 came from the eastern approach and occupied Hyères and Sollies. It was obvious to all that the French would have to lay siege to the port, but with his artillery commander seriously wounded at Ollioules, Carteaux needed a replacement.

The artillery and ammunition that Carteaux had at his disposal was less than intimidating, with a mere five batteries initially available consisting of two 24-pounders (11kg), two six-pounders (3kg) and an assortment of mortars and smaller field guns. Even so, the French continued to tighten the noose around Toulon as more reinforcements arrived, bringing the siege forces up to approximately 15,000, with more en route.

The matter of who would command the artillery was resolved on 16 September when, thanks to the urging of Antoine-Christophe Saliceti, a Corsican deputy to the National Assembly, the 24-year-old Napoleon Bonaparte was appointed. Napoleon quickly assessed the tactical situation and recommended to Carteaux and Lapoype that they needed to take the small peninsula that was made up of Mount Caire and Point l'Eguillette as this would allow the French to shell the allied ships in the inner harbour, forcing them to withdraw.

After much cajoling of Carteaux, he was allowed to do what he could to proceed, as both Carteaux and Lapoype had their own ideas as to how to take Toulon and paid little attention to the young officer.

Within 48 hours of Carteaux's approval, Napoleon had sent out teams to pull together all of the resources needed to construct two batteries on the western side of the inner harbour. Having named them de la Montagne and des Sans Culottes – favourable Jacobin names – Napoleon launched a short bombardment on 20 September (they were extremely thin on ammunition) which caused no real damage. A failed infantry attack at La Caire several days later did nothing but alert the allies as to the significance of Point l'Eguilette.

Finally aware of its importance, British engineers were ordered by Colonel Lord Mulgrave (commander of the British troops only as there was no single allied ground commander, which would prove disastrous) to create a well-fortified earthwork on the hills overlooking the peninsula. Christened Fort Mulgrave by the British, it came to be known as 'le petit Gibraltar' by the French for its imposing disposition and deadly heavy cannons – 15 36-pounders (16kg) and five 24-pounders – and four mortars.

The allies received additional forces in September. Several battalions of Sardinian troops escorted by six ships and three battalions of 2,000 Neapolitan troops brought the allied defenders to around 8-9,000 (including sailors) by 29 September, against 15,000 besieging French troops. Since the allies controlled the sea there was no shortage of food, unlike in a typical siege.

Lapoype was adamant that Toulon should be attacked from the east and launched his own assault on 30 September. He believed that the key to retaking the city lay in capturing the high ground that was Mount Faron, and set out to do just that. Having assembled a force of 1,600 men under Brigadier-General Gaspard Gardanne, they made their way to the north side of the mountain and followed a little-known foot trail known as the Pas de la Masque.

The allies had failed to properly garrison Mount Faron, only assigning a token force, as they felt its terrain would deter any major French assault. Under cover of heavy fog, elements of the French force led by Lieutenant-Colonel Victor made their way up the path at 2am on the morning of 1 October, surprising a small 60-man British detachment at the top. Moving on, the French soon discovered – much to their surprise – that Fort Croix Faron had been abandoned by the 300-strong Spanish garrison.

Lapoype hurriedly sent the remaining troops to the top to join their comrades but failed to personally assess the situation. Instead, he went to extol his success to the Committee representatives that were travelling with the army. Exhausted from the climb and taking the summit, most of the French troops had fallen asleep, while also failing to put out adequate numbers of pickets.

When word reached the allies of the fall of Mount Faron, Mulgrave quickly made plans to retake it and assembled two columns by 8am. One column of 200 British and 380 Sardinians, commanded by himself, would approach from the east; the other, consisting of 200 Spanish, 100 Neapolitans, 200 mixed grenadiers and 56 Sardinian fusiliers, led by Rear-Admiral Gravina, would approach from the south of the mountain. In support from the south would be 150 British from the 30th and 69th Regiments and 100 French from the Royal Louis, under the command of Captain Elphinstone.

Upon seeing the allies forming, Victor pulled his men back to the eastern rim of Mount Faron. Allied 12-pounder (5kg) fire continued to target the exposed French troops until the allied columns arrived. In short order, the French were assailed on three fronts, quickly destroying their resolve and forcing them out of their captured prize. By 3:30pm, Mount Faron was back under allied control, a victory which cost them nine killed and 69 wounded. The French saw 75 killed, 200-300 wounded and 61 captured.

On 18 October, Napoleon was promoted to major and received a late birthday gift when Carteaux was reassigned to the Army of Italy on 23 October. Major-General Amédée Doppet, his replacement, quickly proved to be of no use either – he would be replaced within weeks by the capable Major-General Jacques Coquille Dugommier, who would see the siege through to its conclusion. The allies also had a command shake-up with the arrival of Major-General don Rafael Valdés on 18 October to take command of all Spanish ground troops; then on 23 October Hood was notified that Rear-Admiral Gravina had been appointed as commander-in-chief of all allied forces in Toulon. This was not well received as Hood and the other British troops refused to serve under a Spanish commander.

Days later, on 27 October, Mulgrave was replaced by Major-General Charles O'Hara, with Major-General David Dundas serving as his second-in-command. Allied reinforcements also arrived, bringing them up to around 16,000 consisting of 2,300 British, 6,500 Spanish, 4,300 Neapolitan, 1,500 Sardinian and 1,500 French rebels (though only 75 percent were available for duty). The French attacking forces also swelled, increasing their total strength to around 25,000.

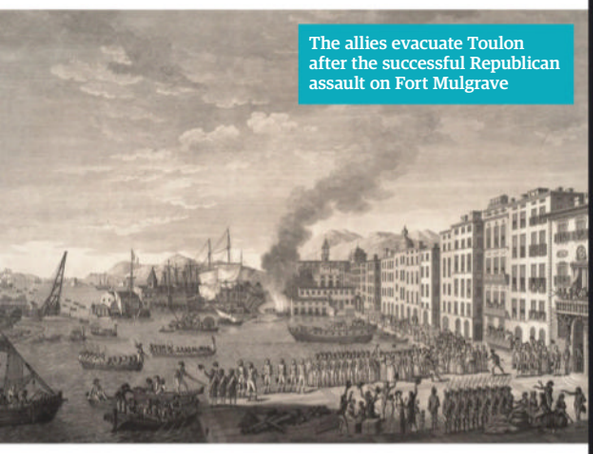
Napoleon kept expanding his artillery batteries, which grew to 13 by the end of November, and his guns continued to shell allied ships within range. The duel between allied vessels and Napoleon's guns had lasted weeks with little effect on either, but that changed when a French shot managed to damage an allied ship, spooking the remaining vessels in the inner harbour to pull back out of range. This was perfect for the Republicans as the ships could no longer provide fire support for Fort Mulgrave and, with Napoleon having constructed three batteries within 300m of the fort, they could not direct massed fire into it.

Dugommier, after a council of war on 25 November, effectively settled on Napoleon's plan: a massed bombardment of the promontory defences, a dawn attack against Fort Mulgrave with a feint against Fort Faron, and then the creation of a battery on Point l'Eguilette from which they could attack the allied fleet.

The plan was interrupted on 30 November by the strongest allied sortie of the siege: 2,350 British and Neapolitan troops led by Dundas sortied out of Fort Malbousquet, overrunning the new French battery la Poudrière in the predawn hours. However, this success bred rashness, as the allied force then moved to take la Farinière battery, with some elements looking to raid the ammunition parks, causing the allied attackers to lose cohesion. Dugommier and Napoleon led the French counterattack, repulsing the allies. Over 400 were killed and 200 captured, including O'Hara and other allied officers, at a cost of 50 French troops killed and 150 wounded.

Dugommier was determined to bring the siege to an end and ordered an assault on Fort Mulgrave on 17 December. A heavy bombardment of the fort ensued, followed by its fall to General Muiron and his 6,000 troops at a cost of 1,000 casualties. (Napoleon led the reserves forward when it appeared the attack was faltering.) The northeastern side of Toulon saw Lapoype and 4,000 troops take Mount Faron, with Brigadier General André Massena capturing Fort d'Artiques in the process. Within hours Napoleon secured Point l'Eguilette and the nearby Balaquier, at the cost of having his horse shot out from under him and a bayonet wound to his thigh. He then directed the establishment of a battery of ten guns by late in the day on the 18th, ready to fire on allied ships.

The loss of Fort Mulgrave (for which the British blamed the Spanish), a crumbling defence, no reinforcements and imminent bombardment by Napoleon's guns (which were now augmented by captured British artillery) left Hood and the allies with no choice but to evacuate Toulon. Dugommier and his Republican French troops effectively took over the city by 9am on 19 December. ▶



The allies evacuate Toulon after the successful Republican assault on Fort Mulgrave

ALLIED DEFENDERS

SAMUEL HOOD

Admiral Sir Samuel Hood arrived at Toulon already a veteran of many pivotal conflicts of the era. He started out as a junior officer in the War of the Austrian Succession in 1741 and went on to serve in the Seven Years' War (1756-63), the American Revolutionary War (1775-83) and finally the French Revolutionary War for the British. He was commander-in-chief of the Mediterranean Fleet from 1793. Following the war he was made viscount of Whitley.

CHARLES O'HARA

O'Hara also fought in the major wars of the era before the French Revolutionary War, notably surrendering at the Siege of Yorktown during the American Revolutionary War. He was also forced to surrender in this siege, giving him the distinction of surrendering to both George Washington and Napoleon Bonaparte. Following his military service he was made governor of Gibraltar, where he would see out his life, succumbing to old wounds in 1802.

FRENCH REPUBLICAN ARMY

JEAN FRANÇOIS CARTEAUX

A general in the French Revolutionary Army, Carteaux's first career was as a painter, even doing a portrait of Louis XVI. He became commander of the Army of the Alps after the French Revolution despite lacking military training. He enjoyed some early success but the siege to recapture Toulon was a mess. Post-war he was made administrator of the French lottery by Napoleon.

JACQUES FRANÇOIS DUGOMMIER

Born Jacques François Coquille, he took the name Dugommier after the coffee plantation he bought from his parents, 'Le Gommier'. He started in the military at 15 with the 'gentlemen cadets' before joining the infantry. He fought in the Seven Years' War and American War of Independence. Dugommier took over command of the siege from Carteaux and heeded the advice of Napoleon to turn the battle.

NAPOLEON BONAPARTE

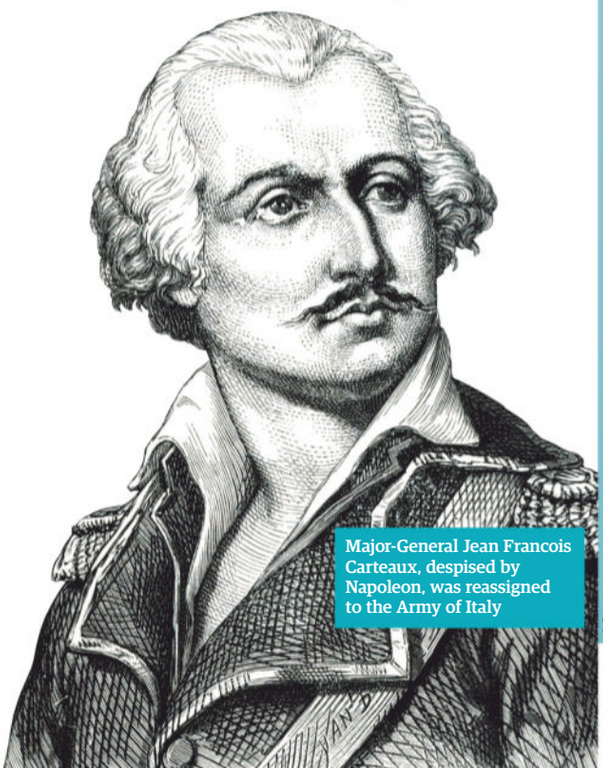
Following an injury to the chief of artillery, Napoleon was pushed forward to take of command of the unit by members of the National Convention. His arrival helped to turn the tide since the artillery had been mishandled by the inexperienced Carteaux. Napoleon suggested taking a hill fort that would give them a better position to fire on the British, forcing them to retreat, which proved successful and raised his profile.

AFTERMATH

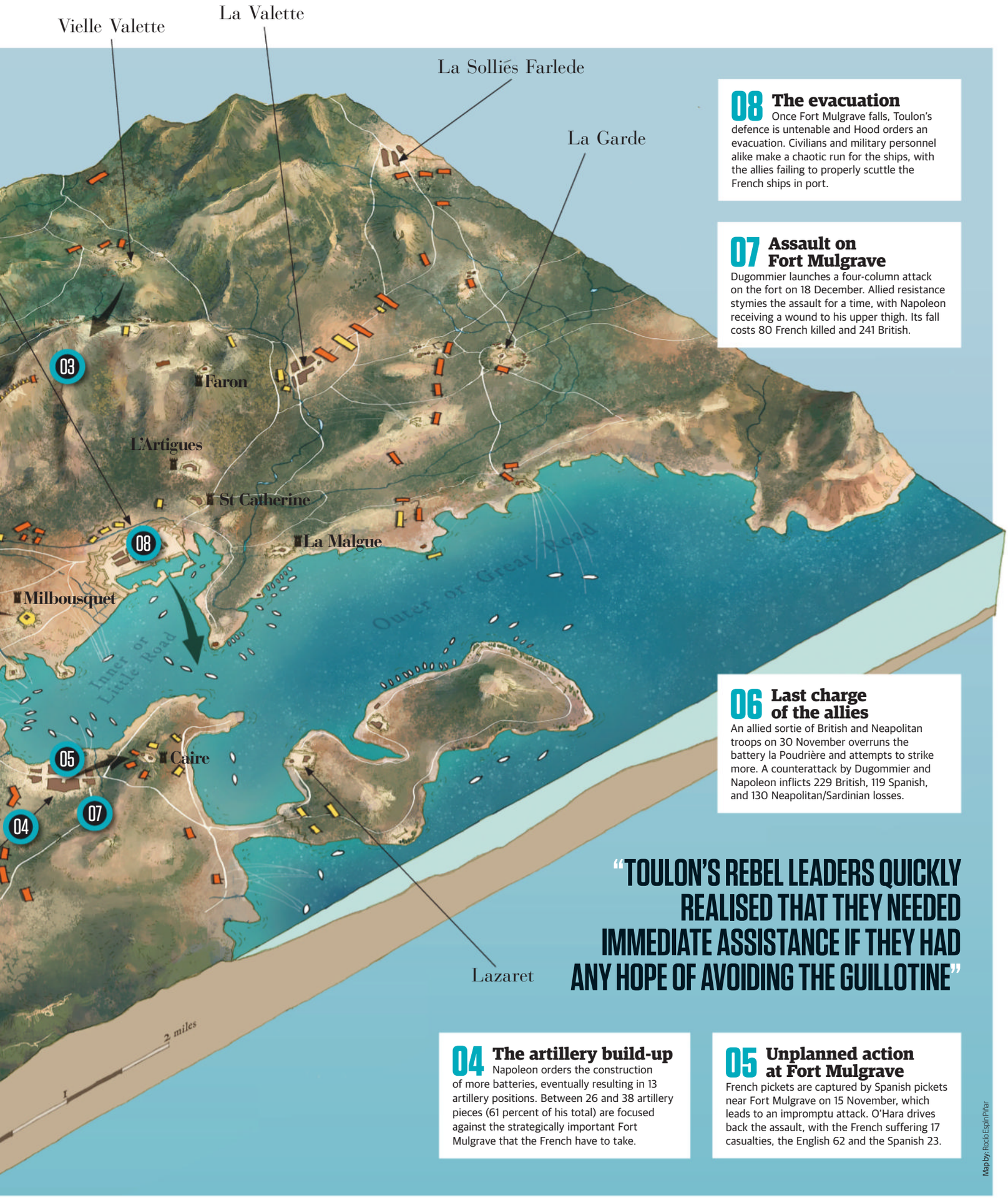
The allied evacuation of Toulon was chaotic. Hood had no clear plan to scuttle the French ships that were bottled up in the inner harbour and the resulting haphazard effort saw the destruction of nine French ships-of-the-line, three frigates and two corvettes. Much to the surprise and delight of the victorious French, they discovered 14 ships-of-the-line, one frigate and three corvettes still intact.

Hood and the allies took almost 7,500 civilians from the city, as well as numerous French ships, including four ships-of-the-line, seven frigates and five corvettes. But the spoils of war were of little comfort to the allies, who suffered heavy casualties at Toulon. The British losses were about 700, with 150 killed, 280 wounded and 270 captured. The Spanish contingent endured 1,240 casualties, with 200 killed, 640 wounded and 400 missing. The Neapolitan and Sardinian elements lost around 100 casualties and a further 1,000 who were abandoned during the evacuation. The French suffered 500 killed and 1,200 wounded, with disease and other non-combat factors reducing the troop strength of all by about 25 percent.

Once the French secured the city, reprisals began almost immediately with the rounding up of those deemed traitors to the revolution. Hundreds were gathered up, with some given a speedy show trial and others summarily executed. During Toulon's Reign of Terror more than 300 were shot without trial and 282 executed by guillotine. Among those were 27 rebel officers, 134 soldiers, 13 sailors, 11 priests, 78 artisans, 21 merchants, 20 clerks and 24 women. There are conflicting reports as to the Massacre of Toulon. Some, such as Napoleon, stated that there was no massacre while others, such as British captain Sir William Sidney-Smith, said the opposite and accused Napoleon of playing a direct role in the executions.



Major-General Jean Francois Carteaux, despised by Napoleon, was reassigned to the Army of Italy



08 The evacuation
Once Fort Mulgrave falls, Toulon's defence is untenable and Hood orders an evacuation. Civilians and military personnel alike make a chaotic run for the ships, with the allies failing to properly scuttle the French ships in port.

07 Assault on Fort Mulgrave
Dugommier launches a four-column attack on the fort on 18 December. Allied resistance stymies the assault for a time, with Napoleon receiving a wound to his upper thigh. Its fall costs 80 French killed and 241 British.

06 Last charge of the allies
An allied sortie of British and Neapolitan troops on 30 November overruns the battery la Poudrière and attempts to strike more. A counterattack by Dugommier and Napoleon inflicts 229 British, 119 Spanish, and 130 Neapolitan/Sardinian losses.

"TOULON'S REBEL LEADERS QUICKLY REALISED THAT THEY NEEDED IMMEDIATE ASSISTANCE IF THEY HAD ANY HOPE OF AVOIDING THE GUILLOTINE"

04 The artillery build-up
Napoleon orders the construction of more batteries, eventually resulting in 13 artillery positions. Between 26 and 38 artillery pieces (61 percent of his total) are focused against the strategically important Fort Mulgrave that the French have to take.

05 Unplanned action at Fort Mulgrave
French pickets are captured by Spanish pickets near Fort Mulgrave on 15 November, which leads to an impromptu attack. O'Hara drives back the assault, with the French suffering 17 casualties, the English 62 and the Spanish 23.

Map by: Rocío Espín Piñar

What If...

JAPAN HAD WON AT MIDWAY?

Victory in this vital battle in June 1942 would've kept alive Japan's hope of dominance in the Pacific War

Interview by **David J Williamson**

INTERVIEW WITH

© JBuckley

PROFESSOR JOHN BUCKLEY

John is professor of military history at the University of Wolverhampton, UK, where he is convener of an online MA military history programme. He is also the author of *Armchair General: Can You Defeat the Nazis?* (2021).

The surprise Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, in December 1941 left the US Pacific Fleet reeling. Six months later, the Japanese naval command set their sights on the US Pacific base at Midway. Once secured, they could launch another assault on Pearl Harbor, further damaging US capabilities in the region and leaving them free to consolidate their dominance. Badly miscalculating the morale and capability of the Americans, the larger Japanese force found itself in a closer battle than they'd expected. The Americans prevailed, but a Japanese victory would've seen the war in the Pacific take a very different turn.

What different factors would've led to a Japanese triumph at Midway?

Though the US victory at Midway has variously been described as a miracle or incredible, it was a quite evenly matched battle. Despite the Japanese having many more ships, at the sharp end the forces were fairly comparable, particularly in [aircraft] carriers and air power. What tipped the battle in the Americans' favour more than anything else was superior signals intelligence-gathering and interpretation. Skilful cryptanalysis by the American team at Pearl Harbor handed Admiral Chester Nimitz and his staff a huge advantage when preparing for the battle. The Americans were alerted to the Japanese plan and intentions, and consequently positioned their carrier forces to exploit the advantage.

To change the outcome radically, Nimitz would have had to disregard the intelligence he was afforded by his code-breaking team, or act far more cautiously in response to it. Though unlikely, such a reaction would have probably reduced the battle to a scrappy and inconclusive exchange, much as Coral Sea [May 1942] had been and the subsequent engagements that would unfold in the Solomons battles in 1942.

To turn Midway decisively in favour of the Japanese, their intelligence staff would have had to put the pieces together and alert Admiral Yamamoto to the likelihood that the Americans were aware that an attack was imminent. Indeed, there were hints in the intelligence gathered by the Japanese that this was the case, but they failed to process and interpret the evidence appropriately. If Yamamoto had been so warned, however, he might have adapted his plan, sprung a nasty surprise on the US carriers and achieved a major success. If Nimitz had lost two or all three of his carriers at Midway without inflicting similar losses on the enemy, the following months would have proved very tricky for the US Navy in the Pacific.

What would possibly have been Japan's next move had they won?

In the aftermath of the US Navy's carrier fleet in the Pacific being destroyed, it is enticing to imagine that the Japanese might have moved quickly to attack and occupy Pearl Harbor. This would undoubtedly have proved calamitous for the US and would have afforded the Japanese a huge strategic advantage in ▶

© Alamy

RIGHT Aircraft carriers were the most important asset in both the US and Japanese navies in the Pacific

Main image source: © Alamy, © Getty Images

THE PAST

RUN UP TO 3 JUNE 1942

MANOEUVRING THE PIECES INTO PLACE

A large Japanese task force of four heavy aircraft carriers, two light carriers, two seaplane carriers, seven battleships, 15 cruisers, 42 destroyers and ten submarines embarked with orders to engage and destroy the American fleet and invade Midway. For the US forces the outlook was mixed. They had successfully intercepted and decoded Japanese communications, so they knew the 'where', but the 'how' might prove more difficult. Admiral Chester Nimitz had no battleships and only two aircraft carriers were combat-ready. The carrier USS Yorktown was in desperate need of repair, but incredibly after only 72 hours in dry dock it put to sea to join the fleet.

3-4 JUNE 1942

EBB & FLOW

The Japanese task force was closing in on the Midway islands and, having located at least part of this fleet, US B-17 bombers from Midway engaged the enemy, but to little effect. The following day the air battle began, with the American pilots outnumbered roughly 4-1. Midway came under heavy bombardment, except for the runways, which the Japanese planned to use themselves. Planes from Midway were now assaulting the Japanese carrier force. Planes from the Hiryu followed American aircraft back to the Yorktown and a dive-bombing attack left it badly damaged and unable to move. After a second attack it began to list dangerously, and the order was given to abandon ship. A wave of American bombers reduced the Hiryu to a blazing wreck.

5-6 JUNE 1942

COUNTING THE COST

The damaged Akagi and Hiryu were scuttled, a Japanese submarine sank the salvage vessel accompanying the Yorktown and some stragglers from the Japanese fleet were located and either damaged or sunk. Japan's losses included four aircraft carriers and more than 320 planes. Approximately 3,000 Japanese sailors and airmen were killed. The US victory came at the price of one carrier, a destroyer and nearly 150 aircraft, while 317 airmen, sailors and Marines lost their lives. The critical US triumph at Midway stopped the expansion of Japan in the Pacific.

> "Midway had always been intended to destroy the US carriers in the Pacific"

the Pacific. Yet such an undertaking would have absorbed a huge amount of Japanese resources and would have been fraught with risk. Any significant advantage gained from Midway might well have been frittered [away] in a direct assault on Hawaii, and consequently Yamamoto's next move was likely to have been a more vigorous prosecution of the campaign in the South Pacific, in particular the securing of air bases in the Solomon Islands and further operations to capture Port Moresby [in New Guinea], which had been the original objective that triggered the Coral Sea battle.

Though such limited objectives might seem cautious, the Midway operation had always been intended primarily to destroy the US carriers in the Pacific in order to secure freedom of action for the Japanese fleet for many months, well into 1943. Yamamoto's objectives during this period would have been to sever the link between the United States and Australia and to create a defensive barrier across the Pacific.

ABOVE The Japanese carrier Hiryu was severely damaged and eventually scuttled

BELOW The carrier USS Yorktown was crippled by Hiryu then sunk by a submarine

What options would there be for the US in response to defeat?

The US Navy would have been very much on the back foot following a heavy defeat at Midway, but all was far from lost, even in the short term. Pearl Harbor was still heavily defended and would have proved a difficult nut for Japan to crack, and Nimitz would have had one last throw of the dice with his two remaining carriers, Wasp and Saratoga, which would be ready for action later in the summer of 1942. But it would have been imperative for the Americans to keep those carriers available to function as a 'fleet in being' rather than risking them in action without very great care. If they were lost, the cupboard would have been bare well into 1943.

Any prospect of contesting Japan's occupation of Guadalcanal in the summer of 1942 or fighting a long campaign in the Solomons in the autumn would have been seriously in doubt if the US carriers had been lost at Midway. Nimitz would have had to sit and wait until 1943, when new carriers and resources became available, before he could move on to offensive operations. In essence, defeat at Midway would have reduced US options in the Pacific to a policy of conservation and survival well into the following year.

What would be the possible impact on other theatres of conflict in the Second World War?

US defeat at Midway would have forced a temporary re-evaluation of the Anglo-American grand strategy of 'Germany First', forged by US President Franklin D Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill in December 1941. Much to the US Navy's disappointment, and despite the deteriorating situation in the Asia-Pacific theatre, the majority of American resources were focused on containing and defeating Germany, which was viewed as a greater threat.

Defeat at Midway would have forced a short-term shift of focus to prevent potential calamity in the Pacific. A diversion of resources from the Atlantic-European front to shore up defences in the Pacific, in particular Hawaii and Pearl Harbor, might well have caused a contraction or a postponement of the planned invasion of Vichy French North Africa in the autumn of 1942 – what became Operation Torch.

The Commonwealth position in the Indian Ocean might also have suffered in the aftermath of a US defeat at Midway. Japanese carrier naval forces might well have returned later in 1942 to threaten the beleaguered Royal Navy still further and undermine Allied efforts to reinforce India and China.

How would the US have managed the narrative of a defeat, both to the American public and to its allies?

There is no doubt that a heavy defeat at Midway would have badly damaged America's standing and reputation abroad and within the Grand Alliance. Serious questions would have been raised about how long it was going to take for the USA to capitalise on its economic and industrial potential and build effective military capability. There would have been some dismay in London and Canberra in particular, as their immediate futures were more directly dependent on emerging American power. Conversely, in Moscow Soviet leader Joseph Stalin would have cared little about Midway, other than it might potentially drain away resources that he was demanding from the West in order to keep up the struggle against Adolf Hitler's forces on the Eastern Front in Europe.

Yet a defeat at Midway would have been only one more failure in the Pacific, so not actually that out of the ordinary, nor indeed a shock – the US Navy had been on the retreat since the Pearl Harbor attack in December 1941. Morale at home would have remained in the doldrums and questions would certainly have been asked about military and naval leadership, though Admiral Ernest King in Washington was unlikely to jettison Nimitz so soon after the post-Pearl Harbor clear-out in Hawaii. The government in Washington would have had to work very hard to bolster its reputation and would have pointed to economic mobilisation and output to indicate a more prosperous medium-to-long-term scenario.

ABOVE Japan lost hundreds of pilots in the Pacific War and couldn't replace them in sufficient numbers

Could the overall outcome of the war in the Pacific have been different?

Ultimately victory at Midway would have bought Japan more time to prepare for American counteroffensives. It would have won Japan the opportunity to strengthen its defences in the Pacific, and potentially isolate Australia still further from the US. But would this have been enough to do anything other than delay the inevitability of American victory in the Pacific campaign? Probably not. The underlying weaknesses of Japan's war effort and long-term deficiencies would have remained. The bulk of Japan's military assets were already deeply committed to China and Southeast Asia and were making little progress there; naval success in the Pacific would not have done much to break this impasse.

If Japan had been better able to exploit its recently captured resources and economic opportunities, greater military and naval capacity might have been developed, but the structure and nature of the regime in Tokyo precluded that. The USA was going to out-produce Japan many times over and eventually seize the initiative; defeat at Midway might delay the offensives but no more. It's worth noting that by 1945 the USA had the atom bomb, and the USSR was able to intervene in the Asia-Pacific War following the defeat of Germany. Both of these factors would've crippled Japan's ability to wage war; Midway was unlikely to alter that reality.

THE POSSIBILITY

1943

ON THE FRONT FOOT

With a victory at Midway, and the subsequent blow to the US naval capability, Japan would have been able to remain on the offensive in the South Pacific and possibly the Indian Ocean well into 1943. It may have resulted in a further attack on Pearl Harbor, already part of Japan's overall plans. It would also have started a chain of events that would see any return to offensive success by the USA in the Pacific to be painfully slow. Japan, on the other hand, would have been able to gain time to consolidate its forces and become a far more credible adversary to the US.

1943

FIGHTING THE CLOCK

With US naval forces taking time to recover from a Midway defeat, and progress against the Japanese slow, the timing of many events would have been badly skewed. The USA would not have been able to mount the Guadalcanal offensive (Operation Watchtower) until possibly 1943. By which time the Empire of Japan may have already been able to use the airfield and land-based planes to make successful strikes against US bases. US success would have been even harder to achieve had the Japanese forces had more time to create a substantial presence on the islands, which would have been more capable of repelling an amphibious assault.

1944-45

THE WAR GOES ON

By 1944 the US forces had reached the Marianas Islands, an ideal staging point for a possible invasion of Japan if necessary. But it was to be used for the base operations of the B-29 Superfortress fire bombing raids on Tokyo and other Japanese cities, as well as the dropping of the atomic bombs. But the delay in operations caused by a defeat at Midway would not guarantee such smooth planning, and such use of air power over Japan itself may have come much later in a much prolonged war.

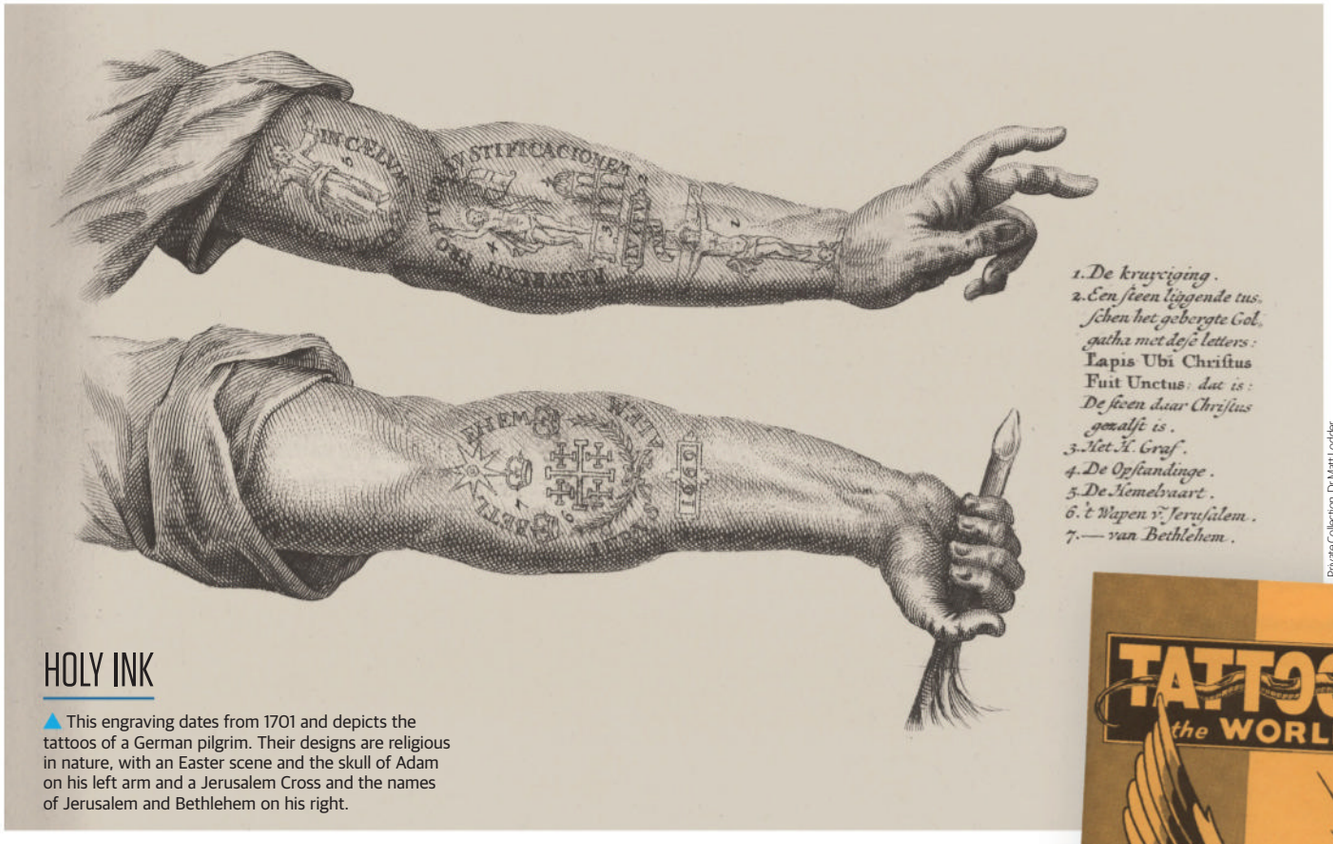
All images: © Alamy

Private Collection, Dr Matt Lodder

Through History

THE UNTOLD HISTORY OF TATTOOS

A new book explores the fascinating story of tattooing in the Western world



Private Collection, Dr Matt Lodder

HOLY INK

▲ This engraving dates from 1701 and depicts the tattoos of a German pilgrim. Their designs are religious in nature, with an Easter scene and the skull of Adam on his left arm and a Jerusalem Cross and the names of Jerusalem and Bethlehem on his right.

POWER COUPLE TATTOOISTS

▶ Husband and wife Samuel 'Deafy' and Edith 'Stella' Grassman were prominent American tattoo artists. Pictured here in the 1930s, they worked in various locations including New York and Philadelphia. Deafy's work, shown here on Stella, set him apart as a prominent tattoo artist of his time.

Rudi Indelder Collection / Bishopsgate Institute

FAKING IT

◀ For people who wanted to enjoy the tattoo trend but were wary of committing to permanent ink, embroidered stockings were a handy alternative. Such stockings, as worn by this model, were fashionable during the 1910s and 1920s.

Private Collection, Dr Matt Lodder

HOT OFF THE PRESS

▲ *Tattooing the World Over* was the first magazine dedicated to tattoos. Its first edition was published in 1947 and its second in 1951, and although the magazine only ran for two issues they were frequently reprinted.

When most people think of the history of tattoos, it's likely they gravitate towards the stereotypical images of heavily inked sailors and criminals. But did you know that tattooing as a profession in the Western world has existed since at least 1719? For the first time, historian Matt Lodder brings together extensive new research into the history of tattooing and evidence from private collections to write a book that tells the true story of tattoo art and artists in Europe and the United States.

In *Tattoos: The Untold History of a Modern Art*, Lodder looks at Western tattooing as a "professional and commercial practice" in order to distinguish the subject from "indigenous tattoo cultures throughout the Americas, Southeast and East Asia, North Africa and Oceania". Focussing on the early religious tattooing of the 18th century through to the postmodern designs of the 1990s, Lodder examines tattooing as an art form that has developed and changed stylistically over time and has been practised across gender and economic divides. Important figures in tattoo history, like the first professional tattoo artist in the West, Martin Hildebrandt, feature prominently throughout the book, which is vividly illustrated by a number of rarely published images from tattooing history.

Private Collection, Dr Matt Lodder

GOING WILD

▲ To generate publicity for their craft, some tattoo artists in the late 1800s began to stage eye-catching and dangerous stunts. Here, Alfred South is shown tattooing a Viennese tiger tamer in the circus ring with a big cat watching on.

Schenking van mevrouw Hansen-van den Brugghen, Den Haag / The Rijksmuseum

ALL AT SEA

◀ In this 1778 illustration of an Italian sailor's ink there are some typical maritime designs, as well as 'pilgrimage marks'. Religious tattooing of pilgrims to the Holy Lands is a tradition with a long history.

Private Collection, Dr Matt Lodder

SEX APPEAL

Phil Sparrow was a prominent tattoo artist who in 1965 was named as one of the top ten best in the world. Sparrow was gay and thoroughly documented his sexual encounters with men, and this advertising flyer was a playful take on his sexuality.

KEEPING IT IN THE FAMILY

Female tattoo artist Millie Hull was featured on the cover of American weekly magazine *The Family Circle* in 1936. In the article, Hull talks about how she makes her money tattooing sailors from New York's naval dockyards.

Tattoos: The Untold History of a Modern Art (Yale University Press, 2024) by Matt Lodder is available to buy now

REVIEWS

The books, TV shows and films causing a stir in the history world this month

THE LIFE AND DEATHS OF CHRISTOPHER LEE

A new documentary opens the crypt and shows there was more to this cinematic icon than Gothic castles and vampires

Certificate: 12A **Creator:** Jon Spira **Cast:** Peter Jackson, Caroline Munro, Joe Dante **Released:** Out now

Few lives have been lived as richly as Christopher Lee's. He was an actor, heavy metal singer, writer, a direct descendent of Charlemagne and, rumour has it, a secret agent during the Second World War. In 2001 at the age of 79 he underwent a late career resurgence when he was cast as Saruman in *The Lord of the Rings* films, and then as Count Dooku in the *Star Wars* franchise. He was still working when he passed away in 2015 aged 93, but despite his many achievements he could never escape the shadow of his most famous role – Count Dracula.

Lee first played the vampiric fiend in 1958's *Dracula*, one of many Gothic chillers produced by Britain's legendary Hammer Films studio. The role cemented him as a horror star, a reputation that would remain with him for the rest of life – despite his many attempts to brush it off. This conflict forms one of the cornerstones of writer-director Jon Spira's new documentary, *The Life and Deaths of Christopher Lee*, which across its two hour run-time delves deep into the many aspects of Lee's legacy.

Lee was a noted raconteur and seems to have cared deeply about his own narrative, and Spira sets about trying to incorporate a means through which Lee can be 'present' as his own storyteller. Spira's innovative solution is to use a meticulously crafted puppet and voice actor who, as Lee, tells his tale in chronological order. It's a delightful approach and far more appealing than a CGI recreation would have been, but the puppet does present a problem as Spira seems far too reliant on it as a storytelling device.

This reliance on 'Lee' as his own narrator means that some of the his taller tales go unchallenged – namely his exploits in the Second World War, which some people accused him of exaggerating. A few critical interviewees may have solved this problem, but there is a disappointingly small number of 'talking heads' and a distinct lack of archive material.

Spira attempts to make up for these absences by visually livening things up with a variety of animation techniques, and even during long sequences of narration the screen is filled with some delightfully quirky imagery. According to Spira much of this is provided by graduates fresh out of film school, and it's pleasant to think Lee is still providing inspiration nearly ten years after his passing.

There are also a few notable absences. For example, there's not a single mention of 1968's *The Devil Rides Out*, arguably one of Lee's most important collaborations with Hammer Films, which was both critically acclaimed and one of his own personal favourites. However, it's possible this may have been out of Spira's control and something to do with the lack of clips from Hammer Films in general, the documentary mostly relying on footage from trailers.

The Life and Deaths of Christopher Lee is not without its problems and ultimately doesn't have much new to say about a man whose life is already pretty legendary. But this documentary is a touching tribute that's filled with beautiful animation, and it serves as an excellent starting point for anyone wishing to learn more about this cinematic icon. ***CM***

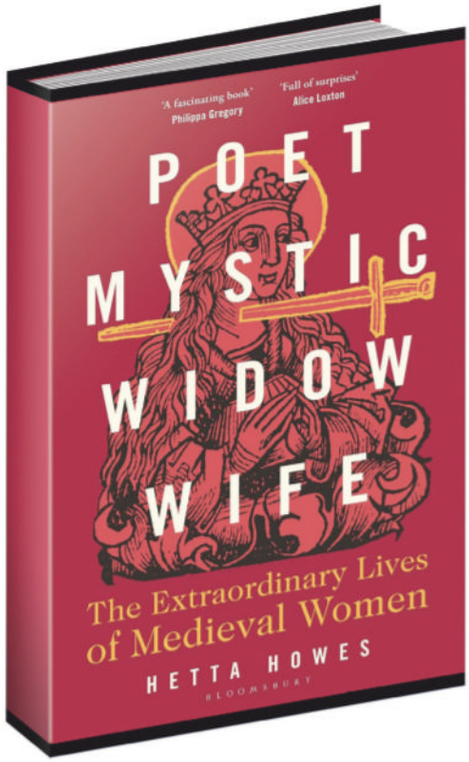
★★★☆☆

Reviews by
Jonathan Gordon, Callum McKelvie, Emily Staniforth

POET, MYSTIC, WIDOW, WIFE

An intriguing look into the lives of astonishing medieval women

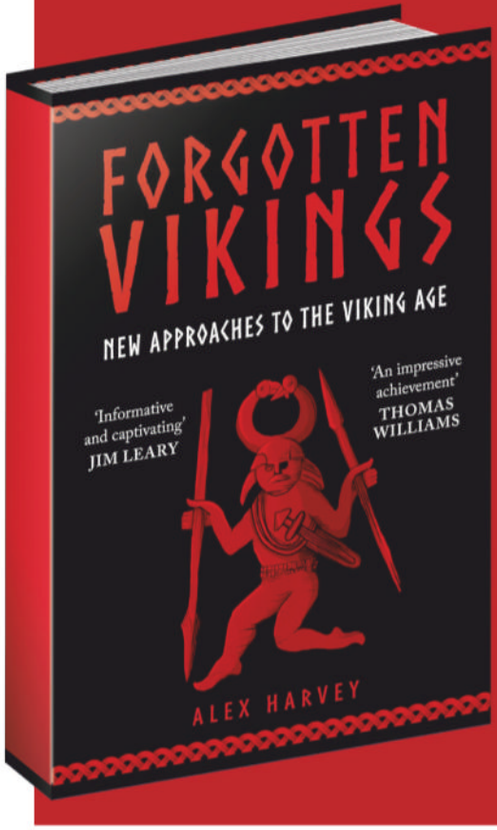
Author: Hetta Howes **Publisher:** Bloomsbury **Price:** £22 **Released:** Out now



The fight for women's rights continues to dominate headlines around the world, but in a lot of places much has changed since the Middle Ages when women were genuinely thought to be a product of 'adverse reproductive conditions'. Believed to be overly emotional, weak and in many ways defunct, women of this era certainly had challenges to face in medicine, religion, politics and wider society. Historian Hetta Howes' debut book *Poet, Mystic, Widow, Wife: The Extraordinary Lives of Medieval Women* captivatingly explores the lives of four medieval women who fought back against patriarchal expectations, securing themselves a legacy as independent thinkers, lovers and leaders. Through Howes' work, Marie de France (the poet), Julian of Norwich (the mystic), Christine de Pizan (the widow) and Margery Kempe (the wife) are vividly brought to life, and through their lives and work an insight into the real experiences of medieval women is highlighted.

In uncovering more about the lives of these four women, Howes reveals the many ways in which they were remarkable for their time and circumstances. What is even more intriguing about this book is how familiar their experiences, and the experiences of other medieval women, often feel. From marriage to pregnancy to spirituality to death, Howes manages to bring the past close to home in a way that allows us to marvel at the courage and intellect of her historical subjects while continuing to question how much still needs to change in modern societies. *Poet, Mystic, Widow, Wide* is a thoroughly engaging and thought-provoking read. ***ES***

★★★★★



FORGOTTEN VIKINGS

Bringing the latest research to bear to broaden the story of Norse expansion

Author: Alex Harvey **Publisher:** Amberley Publishing
Price: £25 **Released:** Out now

It's a tricky thing to offer a new examination of a topic that looks to expand on our previous understanding while also carrying the less-initiated along with the narrative. That's the challenge Alex Harvey is confronted with in *Forgotten Vikings: New Approaches to the Viking Age,* and it's one that he meets well. While this book looks to expand and magnify different areas of the 'Viking Age' it is also written in a very accessible way, acknowledging a lot of the common understandings (or misunderstandings as it might be) of these Norse peoples.

The better part of a millennium is examined across a little under 300 pages, starting well before the Lindisfarne raid in 793 CE and offering a much longer tail past the defeat of Harald Hardrada and his forces at the Battle of Stamford Bridge in 1066. What started these people on the path of raiding, pillaging and conquest? What were the lasting legacies of Norse culture, religion and governance on the rest of the world as it receded back to Scandinavia? Harvey looks to take on these questions with all the latest research and academic resources behind him.

Forgotten Vikings is an enlightening read that goes down smoothly. The inclusion of illustrations throughout from Harvey himself also gives the book a very personal feel. He gets into the archaeological evidence to draw out the provable facts and debunk the common myths. This book is well worth diving into if you want to expand your Viking knowledge. ***JG***

★★★★½

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HISTORY OF WAR RECOMMENDS...

Laugh Or Fly

Author Peter Hart and Gary Bain **Price** £25
Publisher Pen & Sword

Many of the men featured here are well-known, although that does not lessen the impact their stories, and a good balance sets these against some lesser-known figures. Hart's 40 years as oral historian at the Imperial War Museums and his subject knowledge of WWI aviation is apparent in every account, as is Bain's skill at storytelling.

THE STORY OF BRITISH PROPAGANDA FILM

A thorough examination of British cinema's dabblings in the dark art of manipulation

Author: Scott Anthony **Publisher:** Bloomsbury **Price:** £24.99 **Released:** Out now

"Anthony writes with authority and incredible knowledge, and his book is a perfect introduction to this subject"

What does the word 'propaganda' mean to you? Aside from 1980s synth-pop, perhaps it conjures up images of General Kitchener proclaiming: "Your country needs you!" in 1914, Captain America punching Nazis, or the sinister machinations of Joseph Goebbels. Yet propaganda is more than just a weapon of war and, although we may not realise it, it's an established part of everyday life. Cinema, the dominant art form of the 20th century, played a vital role in this and the British film industry, at one point one of the mightiest in the world, has a long history of dabbling in the so-called 'dark art'.

Scott Anthony's *The Story of British Propaganda Film*, the third in the British Film Institute's *Screen Stories* series, which explores the history of British cinema, is a new attempt to chronicle the development of propaganda on British screens. What is immediately striking is the breadth that Anthony applies to his subject - anyone who was expecting a tome focused solely on films produced during the 1940s for the Second World War effort may be surprised.

Anthony begins far earlier, covering the First World War, and delves deep into his subject by covering a variety of different areas. Of course, all of the famous British propaganda films are present and correct, including 1936's *Night Mail* and 1940's *London Can Take It!*, but Anthony also explores fictional films such as Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger's *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* (1943), once hated by Winston Churchill himself but now considered a classic.

By page 52 Anthony has all but dispensed with his discussion of the Second World War and continues on throughout the later half of the 20th century and into contemporary times. In the subsequent chapters he explores such topics as British propaganda in the empire, propaganda in the immediate post-war world and the function of cinematic propaganda in the world today.

Occasionally his text is broken up with an insert, usually along the lines of a photo-montage that zeroes in on a particular topic (for example *Biographies of a New Britain* focuses on the Cinemagazines from the 1950s to 1970s), or a 'close up' that explores a particular subject or film in depth without interrupting the flow of the book's narrative. The subjects of these 'close ups' are eclectic, touching on everything from the James Bond films (offering a refreshing take on the more recent films as opposed to the usual examination of Cold War elements) to British Council films.

The Story of British Propaganda Film is well worth the price of admission for any British film aficionado or lover of cinematic history in general. Anthony writes with authority and incredible knowledge of his subject, and his book is a perfect introduction to this fascinating topic. ***CM***

★★★★☆

HISTORY VS HOLLYWOOD

Fact versus fiction on the silver screen

ALEXANDER

Director: Oliver Stone **Starring:** Colin Farrell, Angelina Jolie, Val Kilmer **Country:** Greece **Year:** 2004

A bombastic biopic, but does it lose focus on facts in favour of action and spectacle?

D

VERDICT: Trades a lot of history for glitz and glamour.

01 Philip II (Kilmer) is depicted as having a scar over his right eye, possibly taken from a reconstruction in 1984 of what were believed to be the remains of Philip. However, those remains were later proven to not be his, which would've been known when the film was shot.

02 Alexander (Farrell) wears an elaborate lion-head helmet into battle, however there's no record of him wearing any such headgear. In fact, Plutarch records his helmet as being of plain iron. But the other equipment of the Macedonian military is considered very accurate.

03 The Battle of Gaugamela has been widely praised by experts for faithfully portraying the battle formations and tactics used. However, a number of other engagements are ignored and the later battle in India should have been on a riverbank, not in a jungle.

04 The film depicts Alexander being involved sexually with men and women. This appears to track with the historical evidence. We know he had multiple wives and at least one child. He's also believed to have been in a relationship with Bagoas and Hephaestion (Jared Leto).

05 The film is narrated by Alexander's successor in Egypt, Ptolemy (Anthony Hopkins) in Alexandria. At one point we see the lighthouse, Pharos, in the background. This lighthouse was commissioned by Ptolemy but wasn't finished in his lifetime.

Did you know?

In the 19th century the pies contained eel because they were one of the few creatures that could survive in the polluted River Thames and were a cheap source of protein.

PIE & LIQUOR

CLASSIC VICTORIAN STREET FOOD, LONDON'S EAST END, 19TH CENTURY

In Victorian London a popular working class meal was eel pie and mash potato with liquor (a sauce made from the eel cooking liquid). During this period the River Thames was brimming with eels and this pie was a cheap, delicious meal popular with East End dockers. Over time, as eels became rarer and more expensive, they were replaced with beef mince as the filling but pie, mash and the all-important liquor sauce remained an East End staple well into the 20th century. Today establishments such as M Manze – founded in 1902 and London's oldest pie shop – still serve this British classic.

Ingredients

For the pie

- 500g mince
- 1 onion (diced)
- 1 clove of garlic (crushed)
- Beef stock
- Salt and pepper
- 250g self-raising flour
- 250g flour
- 1 tbsp butter
- 125g suet

For the sauce

- 50g butter
- 500ml fish stock
- 3 tbsp flour
- Chopped parsley

All images: © Alamy

METHOD

01 Preheat the oven to 200°C. Begin by browning the mince in a frying pan with the garlic and onion. Once the mince has browned add the stock, and salt and pepper to taste. Cook for 5 minutes then leave to cool.

02 Begin to make the pastry, mixing the suet, self-raising flour and salt, add water until a firm dough begins to form.

03 Roll out the pastry to roughly 1cm in thickness and place it in the bottom of a greased pie tin. Add the beef mince mixture.

04 Mix together butter, water and flour to make shortcrust pastry for the lid. Add water and form into a ball, rolling out until it's roughly 1cm thick and large enough to cover the top of the pie dish. Lay on top and gently press the sides down. Place the pie in the oven for 20 minutes.

05 In a separate pan begin to make the liquor sauce. Melt the butter, then add the fish stock, flour and parsley, stirring thoroughly. Leave to simmer on a slow heat but do not allow it to thicken too much.

06 Serve alongside mashed potatoes, generously pouring the sauce over the both.

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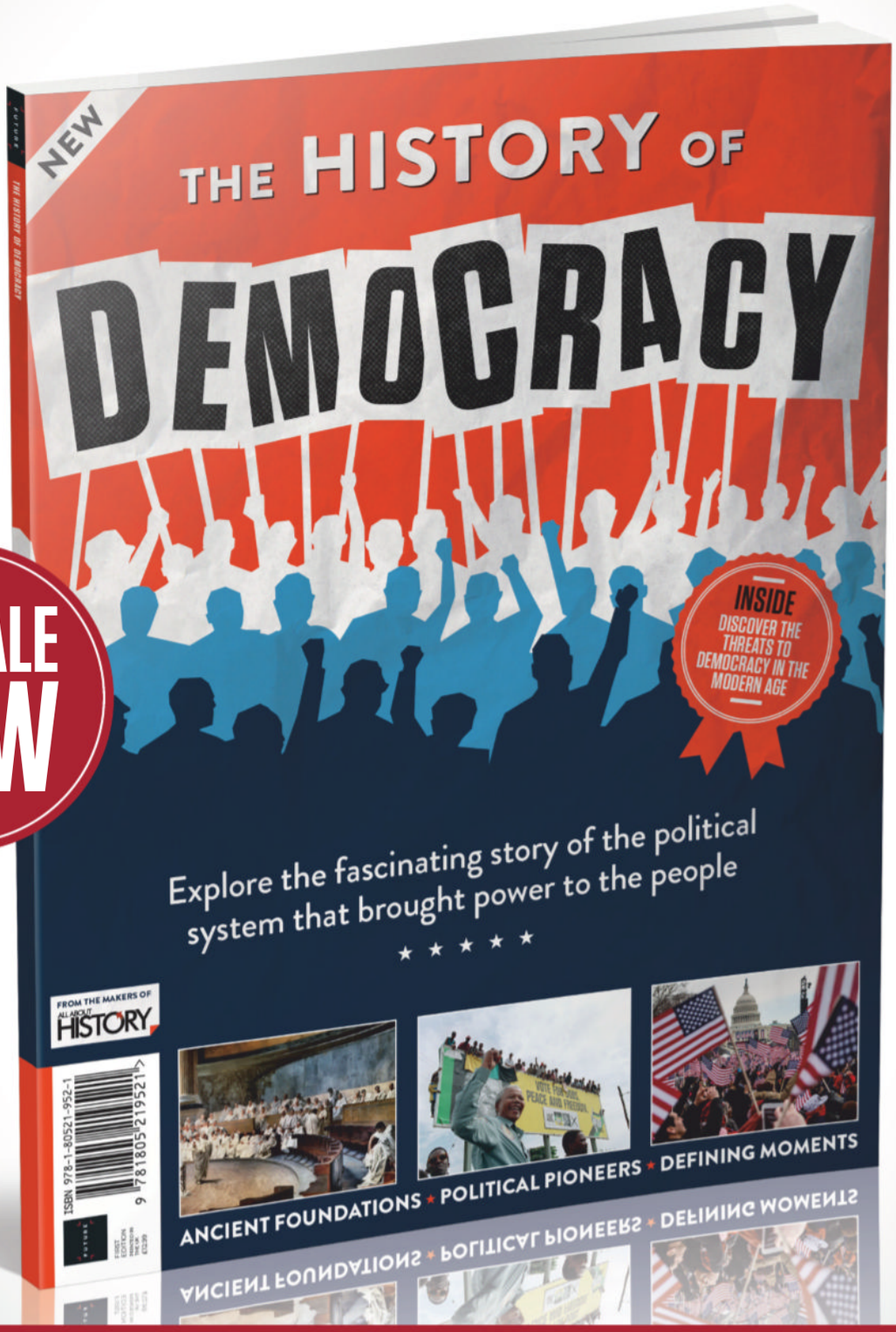

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