

History Student Times

February 2011



KPMG

Holocaust Memorial Day

Ryan Yung

The 27th January is a day of remembrance and mourning but also great solidarity in the Jewish community. Holocaust Memorial Day has taken place since 2001 and in 2005 was declared an international event by the United Nations. This date was chosen as it was the 27th January 1945 when Auschwitz concentration camp was liberated from Nazi forces by Soviet troops. It is a fitting date for such a significant memorial day. Auschwitz has become synonymous with the atrocities of the Second World War, where unimaginable numbers of Jews, prisoners of war, Roma and the disabled perished.

The memorial service in the University's Student Union was a great success, not only with regards to the numbers who took the time to pay their respects, but also due to the emotive and fitting tributes. There were short speeches from the local Rabbi and delegates from the Socialist Workers, the Foundation for the Disabled and the Student Union itself. The Rabbi delivered a heartfelt speech which was even more poignant given the presence of his young son who watched on, beaming with pride. The Union had assembled an exceptionally well presented display to mark the occasion, including untold stories, a statement of commitment and a new feature: the book of memories. This enables those with a story to tell regarding the twentieth-century holocausts to have the chance to write it down on paper and ensure that their personal memory lives on for many years to come.

Jack Kagan's 'untold story', which featured on the display, was exceptionally moving. Jack was from the town of Novogrodek, which due to the complicated nature of its boundaries has been a part of Poland, Lithuania, under German and Soviet rule and is now in Belarus. Jack tells the story of how he came in the possession of a *Magen David*, a sign featuring the Star of David. This was a rusty old sign with a huge story. The town's Jewish population was essentially wiped out during the Nazi raids in the Second World War and many were sent to labour camps. Jack was among 250 men who dug a tunnel to freedom whilst in captivity and was also among the 170 who subsequently joined the Bielshi brothers-led partisans.

These men fought back; not just physically but through providing clothing, shelter and food to those who needed it most. The sign was smuggled out from the wreckage and given to Jack, who has since donated it to several museums, and is currently displayed in the Jewish Museum in London. The sign has become a symbol of sadness and remembrance but also of hope, not just for the townsfolk of Novogrodek, but for Jewish people throughout the world. It is stories like Jack's that are quintessential examples of how the Holocaust's legacy can continue to shock, move and educate us all.

The next generation is so important in the legacy of the Holocaust in the Second World War, as the numbers of surviving eyewitnesses and contemporaries will naturally begin to dwindle in the coming decade. It is imperative that these people's memories live on, so the future generations understand the causes of a holocaust and hopefully humanity will never have to endure another. It is easy to forget the other holocausts of the 20th century, with Cambodia, (1975-79) Bosnia, (1992-95) Rwanda in 1994 and Darfur (2003 to the present day). The continuing devastation in Darfur highlights the work that still needs to be done throughout the civilised world to eradicate anti-Semitism, racism, xenophobia and national chauvinism. These principal causes of holocausts and acts of extreme violence will only be prevented if we learn from the past, which is why Holocaust Memorial Day is so important.



Money, Recognition and History

Archana Kapoor

On the 26th September this year the *Sunday Express* proved a very interesting but disappointing read. Within a page of one another were two articles, the issues of which would have caught anyone's attention: Auschwitz-Birkenau and the Cold War. An attention attracted, however, for the wrong reasons.

The first of them faithfully mirrored its headline: 'Ghouls cash in on Auschwitz as death camp crumbles away'. You may remember that in December 2009 the sign at the entrance of Auschwitz, *Arbeit Macht Frei*, 'Work Sets You Free', was stolen. In the same year the *Sunday Express* reports that the personal belongings of the camp's *Kommandant*, Rudolf Hoess, including letters and a gift from Heinrich Himmler (SS Commander) were voluntarily sold to the Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum by his grandson, an offer the paper calls 'insincere'. Insincere is one word, ironical is another. For it seems that the commander of the camp is worth more than the camp itself. Perhaps it is too bold to say, but in other words, the maintainer of the camp is worth more – in memory and in financial terms – than its victims.

A special fund was set up for the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum last year since the demands of the maintenance of failing buildings, some of which are predicted to last just another decade, is greater than its income. The museum has set £100m as its target to meet its £2m per annum costs. Because entry charges to a cemetery are forbidden, a £10 tour fee has been introduced. For many tourists who wish to see the camp this fee will be paid out of necessity, but it seems leaders do not recognise such necessity themselves. I'm no expert in the economies of individual countries, and we all know they're fragile, but when you hear that Austria and Britain will donate £5m, and Germany £50m, it does make you think.

Henry Appel, a survivor of Auschwitz, once said (and the *Sunday Express* quotes), 'There is only one thing worse than Auschwitz itself and that is if the world forgets there was such a place'. With even the USA pledging more than European countries at £12m, it

does make one wonder at whether such European donations (and these, the paper writes are 'shamefully' the only ones so far, with the European Commission confirming they will not be contributing to the fund) are made half-heartedly, even embarrassingly. That brings forth a whole avalanche of questions in itself: the lack of and raising of money may not be the only obstacles in this issue. Yes, the buildings were not meant to last, but surely there can be no doubt in them being preserved, as it were? Whether as a reminder or a warning, perhaps there shouldn't even be a question *about it*?

Saddened by this article, I turned over the page and beheld 'Oil is prize in new kind of Cold War'. Immediately interested I read . . . and found no reason to believe there was a 'new kind of Cold War' at all. The original itself wasn't even mentioned, unless one reference of disputes over the gas and oil reserves of the Barents Sea having started in (and I quote) 'the communist era' counts as the basis for such a headline. Apart from this, I am assuming Russia wanting more than Canada, Norway, Denmark and the USA constitutes a Cold War revival. Needless to say, this article amused me.

It struck me that here, within the same paper, were two historical issues that fared differently when 'revived'. One sought after because of similarities and headlines, the other not so eagerly embraced, perhaps because of bad memories, perhaps money, perhaps both. This contrast between the two raises many, many questions: how history is received and used, how far and *why* any single phenomenon or place should continue to 'attract' and what or who should determine why or when this takes place. In the case of Auschwitz-Birkenau it appears the lack of money is the what, and why, and determiner of the when. To say that it is being forgotten, as Appel feared, would be to go too far and would be plainly false. But if the chances of its continuing to physically exist are measured in terms of money, and this in turn used as a measure of recognition (if this should even be done), then something is not quite right, either.

If anyone, after having read this, wishes to make a small donation, whatever the amount, to the State Museum, or if you just want to find out more about the site, feel free to visit

<http://en.auschwitz.org.pl>

Postgraduate Talk With Vincent Hiribarren

Rodolfo Barradas Simões

First of all, thank you for talking with HST. Could you tell us a bit about your research project?

My research is on Nigerian territory and borders. I'm looking particularly at the 1000 year old Kingdom of Borno. The aim is to prove that there is a continuity in the use of the territory and borders in pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial times. I want to show that the territory and borders were reused by the Europeans and then by the Nigerians.

Why did you choose to research Nigeria and the Kingdom of Bornu?

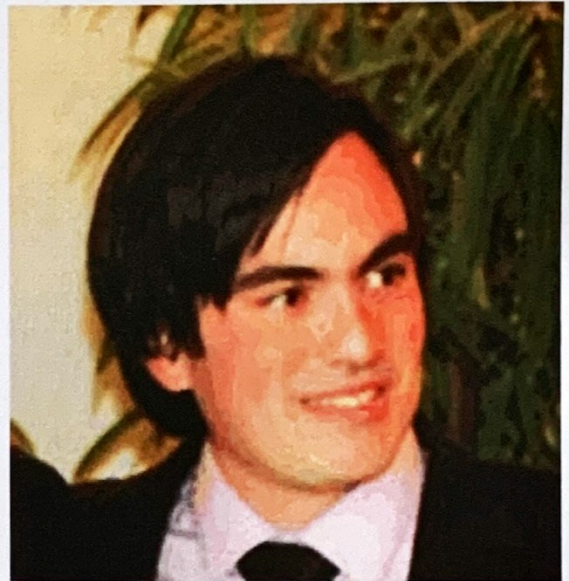
I find it fascinating. Bornu has a very long history and there is the connection with France in the colonial period. It is also a neglected topic - as African history often is - and offers a chance to produce new and original work.

You are currently also working in Professor Simon Burrows' research project on *The French Book Trade in Enlightenment Europe (1769-1787)*. Could you tell us about your role?

The project will map the book trade [by creating a database of the business records of the *Société Typographique de Neuchâtel* (STN), a Swiss publishing house] and I create the maps for the database. This will be released later this year in June and it will be an open source. I am very much interested in studying and creating maps and my PhD involves a bit of this too!

You did your undergraduate degree and masters at the University of Paris, Panthéon-Sorbonne. What is your view on the differences between the studying in France and the UK?

France is more old-fashioned in the way students are taught. Of course fees are much lower, around 300 euros, and the state offers a housing benefit that pays about half the rent. Also there is no selection process for an undergraduate degree, they have to take you on but can get rid of you later. But in the UK the students are much more looked after and I especially



like the quality of the teaching, the way teaching is related to and led by research.

Leeds prides itself in having a variety of cultural offerings. Any favourite places?

I really like an English pub, in particular The Original Oak in Headingley. In the city there is the Adelphi, by the docks. There is also a really nice Ethiopian restaurant in the Merrion Centre which I can't remember the name of [Merkato International]. Music wise, the LUU has some really good concerts on. Last December I went to see Femi Kuti - a fantastic Nigerian musician.

Academia doesn't seem to be faring too well currently, so what are your future plans?

This is the final year of my PhD and hopefully I will find a job as a lecturer afterwards. I like teaching and researching. I also teach in the French Department here at Leeds which has allowed me to develop some useful skills. The cuts will not be easy and I have to be realistic; it is going to be hard but I am optimistic. I don't like being too pessimistic.

Research, Research, Research...with Kevin Linch

Ben Szejka

What is your research project?

I am looking at soldiers and soldiering in Britain between 1750 and 1815. During this period there was a massive expansion in the number of people in the armed forces, not necessarily in the full time regular army but also in the militia and other part time forces and historians do not know much about them. We are looking at the cultural and social aspects around the topic rather than the military aspects.

So how do we do this? I am working with Dr. Matthew McCormick, University of Northampton; his field is gender history and masculinity while my background is military and therefore we can benefit from each others' skills and perspectives.

Recently we ran a workshop for a few academics to discuss relevant sources from the era and new ways of using them. We also have a conference on the 7th of July.

Why is this project different to others in the field?

Other historians focus on the regular army; we want to look at all Britain's soldiers. We are investigating the broader theme of military service and one of the aspects of this is how it relates to society, rather than considering the army as a separate entity. Historians have often characterised the relationship between society and soldiers as hostile, but that is an over simplification, especially when you consider the numbers of people involved. One of the results of our workshop discussions was that soldiers were closely involved with society, for example there are more letters of soldiers writing to their family, asking what is happening back home and what they are up to, than has been assumed.

Are you using technology in an innovative way?

We are cataloguing the different type of sources

from official letters and lists to pictures and representations of soldiers. We needed a means of managing all this, so technology helps catalogue all these documents and can help identify trends. I use Endnote for this, so we can categorise the documents in different ways, which means we can look at everything we have on a particular subject. We are also encouraging others to get involved through our project website (<http://redcoats.ning.com/>). Anyone can join and we have a discussion forum, Q&A section, and it lists members and their expertise. As part of this we are making some of the sources available publically, which exemplify some of the issues in we are looking at in this project.

What is the final product of the research project?

Matthew and I are going to write a methodological article, based on our own experience but also the workshop which we held last Friday. This will include defining soldiers, how we, as historians, study them and challenge analytical models that only focus on their role in combat.

The conference is a big part of the project, we have around 30 potential speakers from across the globe, many coming from the US and Australia. It would also be great if interested students came along! Also, the website will hopefully keep going after the project is over as a community, and the source material on our website will be part of the legacy.

What have you found most interesting about this research project?

Actually, one of the things I have enjoyed is getting people into the same room and talking about the subject - the networking aspect of the project is really useful. This may be surprising, as we get students in seminars to discuss sources, but it is quite rare for a group of historians to be able to get together to do this.

The other aspect I enjoy is going to archives and



discovering new things. We have quite a good budget to travel around to lots of different archives. I am particularly fond of local archives as I based my undergraduate dissertation on material I found in East Sussex County Record Office; they are often untapped resources and are overlooked because they are not centralised. And of course I get to go round the country a little bit!

What have you found most difficult about this research project?

Managing the finances, not necessarily tedious, but not what you expect.

The flip side of going to archives is that you don't spend a lot of time with people. You may spend a couple of days taking photos of documents and then a couple of weeks reading them all. That's why I find the networking fun, because it can be a break it all.

How long does it take to go from the idea stage to the finished article?

Some of the ideas came from me meeting Matthew at another conference which was 3 years ago now. We started talking about ideas and then we had to prepare this monster application form [points at a large wad of paper]. It probably takes 6 months to get to the application stage. It is a long process actually - we are going to finish Jan 2012 so we will be looking at around 4 years to get to the final stage.

Will there be a new module, or changes to your module?

Both really, it is going to refresh the third year module, HIST3718 The Second Hundred Years War when I run it again, and material I am finding now is going into my MA module Defending the Nation. The bigger plan is to develop a special subject from the project, and I'll have a good range of sources to base it on. It should be something along the lines of 'Georgians at War', not a standard military history, but of war's impact on society, and should be on for

September 2012, in time for first years!

Do you have any advice about how a student can become an academic in the current situation of higher education?

There are stages to it really, so I'd suggest perhaps break it down and see if you are interested in each part. Ask yourself if you want to do an MA and a PhD, and then look at if you want an academic career. You will be looking at 5 years until you've finished these qualifications so you need to make sure you want to do each stage. Also, we do not know the impact of fees on the university finances, it could liberalise the departments and there could be many appointments, but it might not. If you are interested and want to do the study anyway you should consider it. PhD students don't always have to go into academia.

What do you see as being the biggest innovation in the field of history?

That is a tricky question. Maybe one thing is how we collect and share sources. People take photographs all day long in archives, and this has the potential to massively change the discipline when we get to a point where large collections will have been photographed. We have not digitised it all yet, but there could be a massive digitising project in the future. There is something lurking around in that area which may change how historians do history.

To contact Kevin about attending his conference on the 7th of July or about his research project, email: k.b.linch@leeds.ac.uk <http://redcoats.ning.com/>

The 'Soldiers and Soldiering in Britain' project is sponsored by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC).

Each year the AHRC provides funding from the Government to support research and postgraduate study in the arts and humanities. Only applications of the highest quality are funded and the range of research supported by this investment of public funds not only provides social and cultural benefits but also contributes to the economic success of the UK. For further information on the AHRC, please go to: www.ahrc.ac.uk

Thank you for giving us your time.

Did Shredding the Corset Mark the Beginning of a Newly Feminist Era?

Anastasia Bernhardt

Personally, I am not fond of feminist history. Perhaps this is because I have a burning desire to stay at home, bake cakes and shuffle around my humble student home, feather duster in hand, trying my best to emulate a 1950s domestic goddess. Despite my complete disinterest in a movement which would discourage me from this kind of behaviour, I find the relationship between the journey to female equality and underwear to be somewhat fascinating. Burning bras will forever remain the iconic image of sixties feminism. But can the decline of the corset; a barrier which had helped to constrain fiery women for centuries, the epitome of high Victorian reserve, be seen in the same light?

It was during George V's early years that designers like Paul Poiret began to develop sleek silhouettes that were truer to the female form. It has often been presumed that the demise of rigid Victorian corsetry was a practical consequence of the new working roles that women found themselves filling in the absence of their men. Whilst this is true in part, it is important to note that the corset had fallen out of favour with haute couturiers many years before. So can the corset really claim to symbolise woman's increasing encroachment on typically male roles? I say that it was mostly down to the age old desire to replicate high fashion. The new undergarments that were essential parts of the new streamlined fashions were just as difficult to move in. Although not as restrictive on the chest, nor so heavily boned, the longer style of corsets made it near impossible to sit down and walking cumbersome. The bras of the 1920s which intended to flatten the breast, whilst representative of a more androgynous figure were anything but sexless when paired with the glittery flapper girl dresses of the era. Women might have been smoking in public and cropping their hair, but this was also the age of the compact mirror and Hollywood glamour. This was a nod towards fashion, not feminism.

It is more than likely that my own desire to return to a more domestic lifestyle is fuelled by fashionability also. I have unashamedly been consumed by the growing market for vintage fashion and antiques. Hyde

Park and Headingley are a testimony to this thesis. With a stroll down the Otley Road unavoidably resulting in the purchase of something ridiculously unnecessary to decorate my room with; said trinket has more often than not severely dented my overdraft and smells faintly of cabbage. The matter is not much helped by my dampened prospects for a glittering career as I enter the real world as a history undergraduate in a recession. (This article stands as evidence of this creeping realisation, why else would I have spent my Monday evening writing for the paper other than as a last ditch attempt to bulk up my CV?)

But that is not to say that I wish to diminish the efforts and achievements of the likes of Mary Wollstonecraft, Emmeline Pankhurst and Germaine Greer. If it was not for the sacrifices of these women I would not have the freedom to walk out of my front door on completion of this article to go for a well deserved pint in my local. For an anti-feminist, it is a discomfoting notion to owe so much to those who fought the cause so ardently.

History Football 2010/2011

Jamie Dickenson & Joe Kane

History faced FOB Soc (Faculty of Biological Sciences) in an evenly matched game and were fortunate to come out 3-0 winners. History started sluggishly and were lucky to go into the break 1-0 up thanks to a bundled goal from Owen Bradley after an error from the goalkeeper. The second half saw the team improve, and History doubled their lead when a deep Joe Kane cross found Jamie Dickenson at the back post, who beat a defender to the byline to square the ball back to the perfectly positioned Ben Jones who found the goal.

The 3 points were wrapped up for History when a long ball forced a punch from FOB Soc's keeper that fell straight to Alex Gee who calmly placed the ball in the back of the net.

History struggled to impose their game on POLIS in their next fixture, of which they lost 3-1. Going 2-0 down at half time, History fought valiantly after half-time and were rewarded when Owen Bradley produced a wonderful solo goal. Slaloming past defenders with ease, Bradley produced a cool side foot finish to pull History a goal back with 15

minutes to go. However POLIS scored late on, ending any hopes of a History comeback.

History consolidated their position at the top of the Sunday league with a scrappy 2-1 victory over a resilient French Soc. Goals from Jamie Dickenson and a brilliant curled effort from John Hall were enough to win.

A landmark win for History came against Chem Eng in a 4-1 win on the 3G at Weetwood. A close game saw History scored first through an Owen Bradley shot from outside the box. Chem Eng equalised after half-time, but History were in determined mood and went ahead again through a scrappy goal from Joe Delafield. Their lead was extended when Aaron O'Donoghue finished off a quick counter-attack when he found the net with an excellent strike. The points were wrapped up when Sam Meiklejohn put away a misplaced back pass.

History won their 3rd game on the bounce with a 7-0 thumping of Devonshire. Ben Jones and Simon Naylor made it 2-0 at half time and some clinical finishing after the break made sure of the win. Ben Jones completed his hat-trick and goals from Sam Meiklejohn, Ben Tobin and Jamie Dickenson made it seven without response.

A clash against Christian Union saw History run out winners in a one-sided affair ending 6-1. The deadlock was broken early when a Simon Naylor cross found the back of the net, and History went in to the half time break 2-0 up when a corner was poked home by Ben Jones after a crafty flick on from Andrew Hogan. After the break Christian Union replied with a goal, but the game was put beyond doubt with two goals from Jamie Dickenson and one apiece from Ben Jones and Simon Naylor.

History finished Semester One top of Sunday Division 2 and managed to escape relegation from Wednesday Division 1, coming 8th.

The Philosopher's Stone: More than a Myth

Katriona Ormiston

We all know the story; Harry Potter saves the world from the wrath of Voldemort by acquiring the Philosopher's Stone first, from the Mirror of Erised, by being well-intentioned. The notion seems entirely fictitious. Brilliantly imaginative on J. K. Rowling's part, but fictitious all the same. However, the best lies are born of some semblance of the truth. I do not intend to convince you that the Philosopher's Stone is, was, or ever will be real, but in the Early Modern Period, some of the brightest and best minds in the world believed it was. The practice of Alchemy was primarily devoted to the discovery of this alchemical substance, the Philosopher's Stone, which it was believed could turn base metal into gold, and achieve immortality. Alchemy had been practiced as far back as ancient Egypt, but the discovery of such a substance in the Late Renaissance became the fixation of the greatest minds of the 16th and 17th Centuries. Sir Isaac Newton was one such figure. Made famous as a great Physicist, it is little known that he was also an alchemist... and a theologian, a philosopher, a mathematician, and an astronomer. So it seems harsh that for his belief in alchemy, John Maynard Keynes in 1942 dismissed Newton as 'not the first of the age of reason, he was the last of the magicians.'

Keynes' comment which distinguishes reason from magic assumes an extremely modern perspective, and an intolerant one at that. In fact intellects of the Early Modern Period were learned in a vast number of disciplines, in which many of us now could only plead vague proficiency. They knew three or four languages other than their own, and could operate at a high level simultaneously in various fields. For these people we use the broad label 'Humanists'. Therefore we cannot dismiss such beliefs as the mad ramblings of the few and the foolish.

King James I of England defended a belief in witchcraft from skeptics in his 1597 *Daemonologie*, and was extremely well-educated. Belief in the supernatural was therefore not a result of ignorance. It is rather harder to understand a present day belief in witchcraft and those who in the US have attempted to ban *Harry Potter and the*

Philosopher's Stone on the basis of its occult subtext, said to violate the separation of Church and State; witchcraft, or 'Wicca', is a federally recognised religion in the USA!

Admittedly though, there is such a subtext. Indeed Nicholas Flamel was (or is, according to some) a medieval alchemist, born c.1330, who claimed to have achieved the making of both the Philosopher's Stone which turned metals into gold, and the Elixir of Life which achieved immortality. For whatever reason this poor French scribe and manuscript-seller became very rich, it was believed by his creation of the Philosopher's Stone.

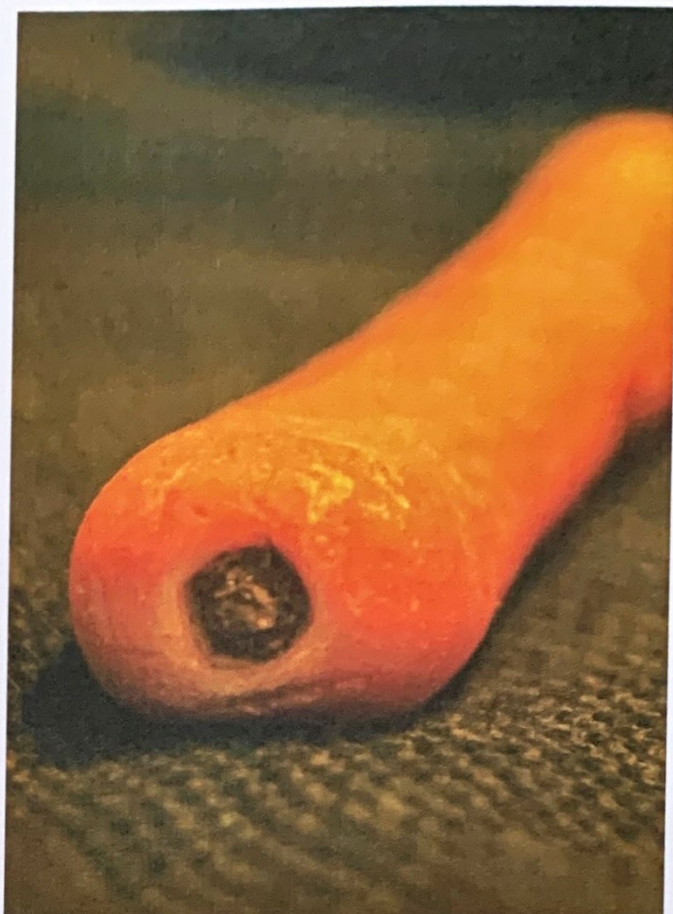
Quite Interesting Questions and Answers - The Book of General Ignorance

Archana Kapoor

The sequel to *QI's The Book of General Ignorance - The Second Book of General Ignorance: Everything you know is still wrong* - has recently been published. In it you will find yet more unexpected answers to what may seem general knowledge or trivia questions. In case you have not had the pleasure of reading the first below are a few enlightening discoveries which may take you by surprise and even raise a smile or two.

'How many wives did Henry VIII have?' was the first question. The answer? Two, say *QI*, or four if you are a Catholic. A nice example of how with historical hindsight contexts and precise meanings of words may be overlooked. Henry had declared his marriage to Catherine of Aragon to be illegal, and three of later marriages - to Boleyn, Howard and Cleves - were annulled. An annulment once granted means the marriage never existed.

We also learned that Marco Polo - the Venetian who allegedly travelled to China - having been born in Dalmatia, Croatia, was not a Venetian after all, at least not by birth. Nor was it Walter Raleigh (most likely pronounced Water Rawleigh) who introduced tobacco and potatoes to England (he never visited North America), but the Frenchman Jean Nicot. The produce was also introduced to England from France, rather than having been shipped direct from the New World.



It was not in France, however, but in Halifax, Yorkshire that the guillotine was invented. Nor, seeing as France is hot on the menu, was the famous phrase 'Let them eat cake' (or, as the precise translation reveals 'Let them eat brioche') during the French Revolution uttered by Marie Antoinette in 1789. The phrase had been seen in print in at least 1760, and perhaps even earlier in 1740 when the philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau claimed he had heard it.

From Marie Antoinette to Nelson. When we think of Nelson we almost always think of his blind eye and eye-patch. However, though Nelson's vision in his right eye was damaged, it was not so severe as to render him blind (though undoubtedly he did use this to his advantage in battle). The eye-patch synonymous with Nelson was in fact never worn by him in his lifetime, but added on in his portraits as a sort of pathos after his death. Concerning his death, there may be a smile raised when you hear what *QI* say about his last words. They were 'Drink, drink. Fan, fan. Rub, rub'. *QI* stand by this revelation: 'These were the absolutely last things the dying admiral said' they write.

From Nelson to Napoleon. Napoleon's most humiliating defeat? Rabbits. To celebrate the Peace of Tilsit between France, Russia and Prussia in 1807, Napoleon suggested an afternoon spent rabbit-

shooting. Thousands were brought by his chief-of-staff but far from being wild rabbits they were tame . . . and they were hungry. This is so hilarious I am going to have to quote *QI*: 'Rather than fleeing for their life, they spotted a tiny little man in a big hat and mistook him for their keeper bringing them food. The hungry rabbits stormed towards Napoleon at their top speed of 35 mph . . . The shooting party . . . could do nothing to stop them. Napoleon was left with no other option but to run, beating the starving animals off with his bare hands. But the rabbits did not relent and drove the Emperor back to his carriage while his underlings thrashed vainly at them with horsewhips'. This might appear rather flamboyant, but the message can be seen: Napoleon, an Emperor and leader in war, fled from rabbits.

When asked which war has killed the greatest proportion – and proportion is stressed – of British soldiers, a modern war would come to mind. Surprisingly, it was the English Civil War (1642-49) – England's biggest military mobilisation, in which 1 in 10 of the adult male population was killed. This was three times greater than the proportion killed in WW1 and five times greater than those killed in WW2.

When a gladiator was sentenced to death by a Roman Emperor it was not by the famous thumbs-down signal that the sentence was given. There was a thumbs-up (for the death sentence, analogous to a drawn sword) and a thumbs-in (spared from the sentence, like a sword in its sheath) but never a thumbs-down. The confusion seems to have stemmed from the nineteenth-century painter Jean-Léon Gérôme who misunderstood the Latin phrase 'turned thumb'. He thought it meant turned down, rather than up. Ridley Scott, director of *Gladiator*, when he was told of this decided to stick to the conventional belief rather than confuse the audience.

These are just a few of the questions answered in *QI*'s first book, and they are historical at that. Much more is covered, from science to myth to the natural world, and some questions you probably would not have thought of at all: why Robin Hood's tights were red and not green, why Buffalo Bill never did in fact kill any bulls, why the Celts have only lived in Britain since 1792 and how carrots were originally purple on the outside and yellow on the inside. I thoroughly recommend reading it, whether it's for learning (or challenging - as *QI* say, they are Quite Interesting but

'do not claim to be quite right') intriguing details and facts, or just for a fun read!

As a taster to the second book: oranges are gassed to make them orange; why fish do not exist; how mockingbirds and not finches inspired Charles Darwin's Theory of Evolution; *Puffinus puffinus* is not a puffin; and *QI* offer their answer to the ultimate question – Which came first, the chicken or the egg? And these are from the first contents page! Interested? Watch this space for yet more Quite Interesting



questions and answers from the sequel: *The Second Book of General Ignorance!*

NEWS FROM THE HISTORY SOCIETY

With Emma Stone

On behalf of the History Society, we hope that you had an amazing Christmas and New Year complete with Christmas spirit, presents, laughter and delicious food. Despite having a hectic few weeks of revision (we hope that everyone did well) it is now time to breathe and have a well-deserved rest before the work starts to pile on again.

We are currently in the process of organising a HUGE social for you, which will involve a number of different societies. This will give you a chance to meet new people and socialise with students outside of History. The aim of the social is to provide a cheap night for you, with free and £1 drinks. If you haven't attended any of our socials yet, then this is the ideal one to attend. It promises to be a massive night, so keep an eye out for the poster.

Our annual Christmas Ball was a large success; we had a tremendous turn out from all year groups, the food went down a treat and everyone took to the dance floor at some point in the night. There was much festive merriness (mainly from the free bottles of wine and beer provided) and we thank everyone who attended the evening and made it so memorable.

We are about to start organising the 'History Holiday' which will occur early in the summer. We haven't narrowed down a choice of locations yet, so if there is anywhere you really want to go to, let us know; we are always welcome to any suggestions. Just email the History Society at: historysociety@leeds.ac.uk.

We look forward to seeing you soon, and wish you all the best with the next term.

NEWS FROM THE SSC...

Rebecca Lever

The last SSC meeting, on January 27th, covered a number of issues, mainly on student experiences at the beginning of first year, and a proposed proctorial system, suggested by SSC chair Usmaan Amin. As ever, the new tuition fee environment was a question on everyone's minds, and discussions with Richard Whiting helped illuminate the practical impact the government's reforms will have on the History Department. Since the budget for each school is decided by the university and not the individual departments, the issue is out of our hands to a certain extent, but the general emphasis seems to be, as in all other public institutions, on more innovative ways to organise resources and give 'value for money'.


The induction survey completed by first years in November of last year helped to reveal some of the strengths and weaknesses of the Leeds experience for history freshers. While the module enrolment process, induction week events and introductory talks and tours were very successful, the facebook group for incoming students was, surprisingly, only joined by less than half of the year. Other concerns raised were issues of time management, course structure and the academic expectations of moving from A-Level to undergraduate standard work. There were also calls for more activities and events in the department,

particularly from the History Society, so look out next year for an improved social calendar!

One issue that sparked considerable debate was that of the possible introduction of a proctorial system in Year 1 – where existing lectures and seminars are bolstered by student-led seminars, in which a third-year student would lead a discussion of topics and reading relevant to the module. While this is not an increase in contact hours with staff (as the scheme is entirely made up of students and the third years do not teach, but rather chair discussions), it might go some way towards helping first years get used to the seminar format, improve their knowledge of historical debates and develop their confidence in taking part in such discussions. The committee voiced a number of concerns and suggestions – such as how and if it would be assessed, whether enough willing proctors could be found, and the number of module credits, if any such a scheme would warrant. Proctorials have been used to great effect in the Philosophy department, and a recent graduate told me that 'they're really good, but because the focus is on reading-led learning you have to be strict about making sure everyone prepares so they can all contribute.'

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"If any Should Question Why We Died, Tell Them, Because our Fathers Lied"

Mark McKay

On the early evening of the 22nd April 1915 at around 5pm the French Colonial troops holding the line just north of the Belgian town of Ypres were greeted by an eerie sight.

Over the top of their parapet sentries viewed what appeared to be a greenish yellow cloud slowly drifting towards their positions from the German lines. As the cloud reached their own positions men began to gasp for air, their eyes would smart and some began to cough blood. Many men broke rank and fled their positions. However the actions of a few individual and remarkable units, in particular by the Canadian troops at St Julien held their ground against the subsequent oncoming wave of German infantry.

This mysterious new weapon of war, gas, had been used previously against the Russians on the Eastern Front but this was the first time that the Western Allies had encountered its use. The use of gas as a weapon of war caused international outrage, even some Germans were indeed shocked as one officer wrote:

"The whole world will be appalled at first, and then only mimic us."

His words would prove to be prophetic. However before the British or the French could launch their own attack certain problems needed to be addressed. The role played by the British Expeditionary Force (BEF), commanded by Sir John French, on the Western Front so far in 1915 had been limited to minor offensive actions around the Aubers Ridge sector. Nevertheless when the British attacked the small French town of Neuve Chapelle on the early morning of the 10th March 1915 the British succeeded in rupturing the German front line. However despite the breach created in the German line, which at this point in the war amounted to a single line of breastworks as opposed to deep fortified positions that would become utilised afterwards, the delay in bringing up reserves meant that the breakthrough was not exploited and further

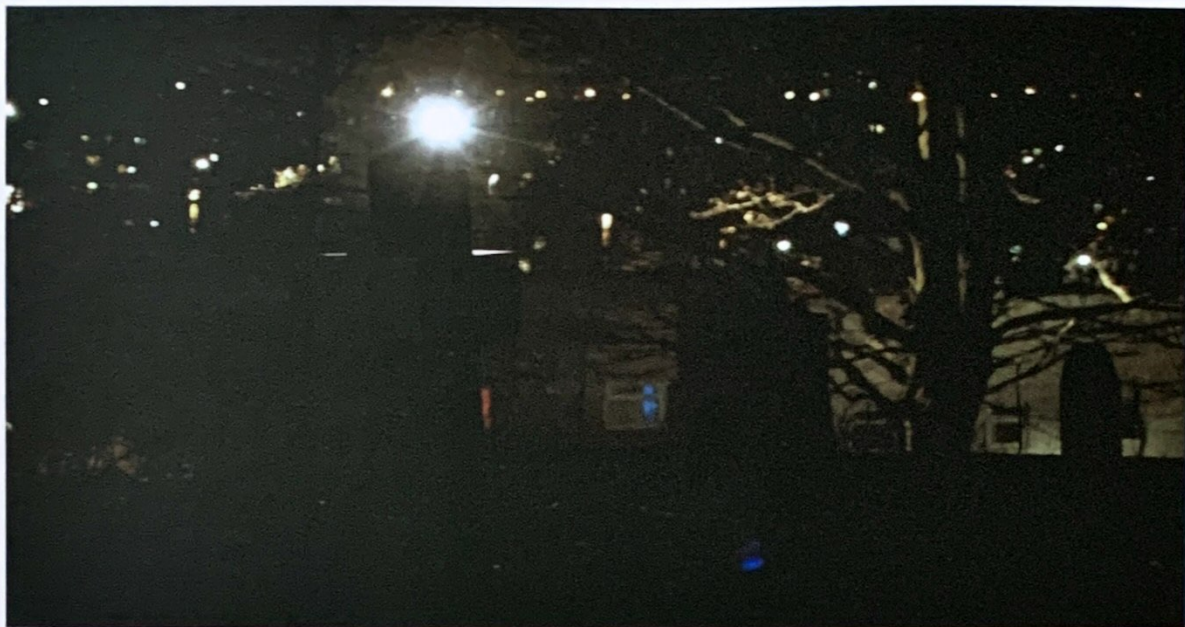
advance was met with heavy casualties. The British guns were also so short of ammunition that each battery was rationed to how many rounds it could fire per day and led to the Shell Scandal, a crisis of such magnitude that it would bring down the government.

However by summer the British were making preparations to support a larger French offensive. The French commander, Joffre, was eager for the British to attack on the French left flank at the small mining town of Loos; however when French viewed the battlefield he did not like what he saw. A sprawling low lying mining district with its mining towers, slag heaps and redoubts made the perfect defensive territory. Despite his objections French was pressured by Joffre and also Lord Kitchener (the British Secretary of State for War) to continue to prepare for the attack. Kitchener stated to French about the importance of supporting allies:

"We must do our up most to help the French, even though, by doing so, we suffered very heavy losses indeed."

Thus French was bound to an operation that he did not believe in and for which his artillery was insufficient. However the trump card that French would use at Loos would come in the form of retaliatory use of chlorine gas which it was hoped would make good for the lack of artillery ammunition. Also two divisions of New Army troops would be available in reserve to exploit any breakthrough made. The men in the New Army divisions were the first of those who volunteered at the outbreak of war in 1914. These were not experienced professional soldiers who could fire fifteen aimed rounds a minute like the BEF of 1914 nor were they well trained. However they were fit and it was thought they would conduct themselves well in battle. There was disagreement however between French and Douglas Haig (commander of the British 1st Army at Loos) regarding the proximity of these New Army divisions to the battlefield. Haig wanted them close to the front in order to exploit any breakthrough quickly; however French was wary of engaging the raw recruits too early in a battle in which he did not believe success could be gained. Any rash spilling of the blood of the British volunteer forces in poorly executed moves would not be taken too kindly by the British press or the British people.

Protection against gas was still primitive and it was hoped that the gas released by the some 5100 cylinders assembled by the British would



linger around the battlefield for longer than any protective mask could retain its effectiveness. The use of gas relied ultimately on the wind. The wind current needed to be strong enough to carry the cloud towards the Germans but not so strong that the cloud was dispersed altogether. Haig had met with his meteorologist Captain Gold early on the morning on the 25th September 1915, a cigarette was lit and the smoke slowly drifted to the east. It was hardly encouraging but without gas the attack would not be able to take on the same magnitude and at 6am the order was made to release the gas.

In the southern sector of the attack the gas and the infantry attack went well and Loos was taken but further north the gas hung around in No Man's Land, stopped, and then blew back into the British trenches. However stories of massive self-inflicted casualties are simply not true given that Britain only suffered seven gas related fatalities that day. Despite this the first German line was taken and at 1.20pm Haig gave the order to bring up the two reserve divisions. The reserves had been kept far in the rear and therefore had been marching since early on the 24th and were delayed coming up through the congested rear areas. The Germans too had been reinforcing their second line, British artillery had yet to be moved up and the German second position had received little shelling.

The delay in bringing up the reserve divisions meant that the attack could not commence until dawn on the following day on September 26th. The order was given for ten battalions (around 10 000 men) of the two reserve divisions to attack the German second line. The attack went in as if the British were on a parade ground, row upon row of infantry marched without

protective artillery fire. In the ensuing maelstrom through German machine gun and shrapnel fire over 8000 became casualties. To put what happened into perspective it is thought that fifteen British soldiers became casualties every eleven seconds.

The Germans called the battle *Der Leichenfeld von Loo* or 'the corpse fields of Loos'. One British officer, John Kipling, the son of the English poet Rudyard Kipling was amongst those killed in the attack on the 26th, it was the first day of his first battle. He was last seen in the fading light in the evening stumbling around apparently hit in the face. His body would never be found though his parents would search for the rest of their lives. Rudyard later wrote,

"If any question why we died, tell them, because our fathers lied"

The Battle of Loos may not have the glamour and heroism of the Somme or the sheer tragedy of Passchendaele. However Loos marked the end of the British professional army. From this point onwards the British forces would be made up the so called New Army units and 'Pals Battalions'. French would be held accountable for the casualties, despite him showing grave doubts about the entire operation from its inception all the way to its dénouement, and he would be replaced by Haig in December of 1915. Come 1916 the shell shortages and manpower reserves would no longer hamper the British efforts and it was hoped that the next offensive would bring the elusive victory. Britain would take over more of the French line as her army swelled in size and in the next year the attack would be made further south, astride the River Somme.

Review: *The King's Speech*

Joanna Phillips and Victoria Reeve

Directed by Tom Hooper, starring Colin Firth, Geoffrey Rush and Helena Bonham Carter.

The King's Speech is predicted to sweep the board at this year's Academy Awards having already picked up numerous other gongs. The historian should find it a satisfying film as it not only tells a good story but does so while accurately capturing the zeitgeist of 1930s Britain.

In the opening scene of the film we see the stammering Prince Albert, Duke of York (Firth), forced to confront his worst nightmare when he makes the opening speech at the 1925 British Empire Exhibition. His choked words echo around a packed Wembley Stadium (actually filmed at Leeds's own Elland Road) while the onlookers view him with pity. Consequently, having given up on conventional treatments Albert is persuaded by his wife, Elizabeth (Bonham Carter), to visit the decidedly unconventional Lionel Logue (Rush), an Australian whose brand of speech therapy is completely different, focussing on exercises and breathing and also exploring underlying psychological problems. Through Logue's developing friendship with the prince, we are given an insight into the post-constitution royal life of the 1930s, with the monarchy reduced to virtual actors on a media stage while trying to manage the Abdication Crisis and the outbreak of war.

The King's Speech touches lightly on certain themes. Logue is subjected to snobbery from some quarters such as the director of the amateur dramatics society he wishes to join and the Archbishop of Canterbury. However this snobbery is shown to be based more on colonial prejudices than aristocratic condescension and it is when Logue, an Australian, reveals that he learnt all he knows from treating shell-shocked men while fighting for the empire in World War One drives that the theme is driven home. Elsewhere, the film also avoids an exploration of the initial enthusiasm for appeasement and friendly relations with Hitler within the royal family in 1938. And of course "good guy" Churchill is shown as supporting Prince Albert through the Abdication Crisis when in actuality his personal preference was to stabilise the accession of Edward VIII. But these

details are smoothed over by the evocation of the 1930s; the sense of period which one gets from the precise costume designs and careful choices of location is excellent.

The King's Speech could receive criticism that its positive reception in America is due to the fact that it is about royalty and aristocracy. The fact that the film showcases actors known for playing stereotypically "British" characters perhaps does not help. Colin Firth is reunited with Jennifer Ehle, invoking the 1995 BBC adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*; even Mr Collins (David Bamber) makes an appearance as the aforementioned amateur dramaticist. Add to this mix key talent such as Michael Gambon, Derek Jacobi and Ramona Marquez as well as Timothy Spall's hackneyed Churchill and one does get the sense that this film aims to present "Britain" in a portfolio. But really this is not the focus of *The King's Speech*. It is an intimate story of a friendship and a personal battle, which it portrays marvellously; the viewer wants to laugh and cry with Albert as he overcomes his difficulties. That the key to unlocking Albert's speech is to relax, the one thing is position will not allow him to do, is a thought-provoking concept. Albert's speech as King George VI on the break of World War Two represents the climax of the film and the viewer is there with him in 1939, willing him to manage to complete the speech and strengthen the backbone of his listeners. That feeling will stay with you.

Graduate Profile with Oliver McRae

Tom Pollard

What degree did you study? Where?

History at York University and a Masters in Planning and Development at Sheffield University

What was your favourite period or topic to study?

Definitely modern Russian history – mainly Moscow in the 1920s and 30s. I'm not too sure how that happened but it did.

What is your favourite (publishable) memory from university?

Publishable... would have to paddling on the lake in the middle of York Uni campus in my first year on a blow-up air bed, getting spotted by the porters, then

paddling round trying to avoid them. It worked well until we started to sink!

What do you do at KPMG? What made you choose this department? What does this involve on a day-to-day basis?

I work in financial services audit. It's pretty much visiting different clients throughout the year in order to test their financial performance and the major process they use in their business. I picked FS because I was always more interested in banks and funds et cetera. I suppose it was the sort of clients you work on that really made me want to be in FS.

What helped you choose KPMG? Was there anything that made it stand out?

The opportunities and training are all obviously strong points, as was working at a major firm, but for me it was the people. All the way through the process they seemed interested in helping you succeed and everyone I met right up to the partner in my final interview seemed genuinely nice, the sort of people I'd want to work with.

What was the recruitment process like? Did you apply to many places? How long did it take for you to get a place?

I applied to quite a few places, all similar firms to KPMG. The process is similar for most of them and it's quite straightforward. There are all the usual steps: application form, online test, interview and assessment day, but it was all manageable. I think the thing to remember is that the process is run so you can show off your skills to impress them rather than trying to catch you out.

How did your degree help during the application process?

To be honest when I first applied I didn't think it would help me at all, I thought that a company like KPMG would just be looking for people from maths and science backgrounds. But as it turns out I'd developed a lot of skills I didn't know I had during my

degree: analysing a task and getting to the heart of the requirements as well as being able to form a point of view and bring others round to my way of thinking.

Any tips for applicants?

Definitely do your research by looking on the website, talking to people who have been through the process or attending graduate events. All major recruiters provide a lot of information on what they're looking for so it is important to make sure you tailor your application to demonstrate those skills to show them why they should choose you. Apart from that it's down to just perseverance. I know from personal experience it can be disappointing but it is important to keep going.

What are the best and worst bits of your job? Do people have misconceptions about your work?

Best bits are the variety, new places and different jobs every few weeks, and the people. It's always a good sign when you really get on with the people you work with. Worst bits would have to be the exams, they're tough and take a lot of dedication.

What would you recommend for students to improve their employability?

All the usual boring stuff. Try and make your CV as interesting as possible and include extracurricular and work experience. But if you really want to get ahead, doing a summer placement scheme puts you in great position. I know a few people who have done one and it's made them very employable.

Which historical figures would you like to compete with in an episode of 'Come Dine with Me'?

Stalin – A bit weird, but I spent so long during my degree reading books on him and debating whether he was evil or not, it would be good to see him first hand.

Churchill – A truly great man

Capitan Cook – Just to know what it would have been like to set out into the unknown

W.G. Grace – No explanation needed

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25
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- 5. Place Joseph and Mary were refused entrance into (3)
- 6. American state that fought against Michigan in the Battle of Toledo (4)
- 9. Animal in the Chinese Zodiac (2)
- 11. Queen Victoria, _____ of India (7)
- 12. Feargus _____, Chartist leader and social reformer, eventually declared insane (7)
- 14. Egyptian God of the sun (2)
- 15. Dutch Renaissance theologian (7)
- 18. 1914 Battle of _____ in Belgium in World War I (5)

HST Hotties from History

Rebecca Lever

Robin Hood



Good with a bow and arrow, could provide for you if you get stuck in a forest.

Lord Byron



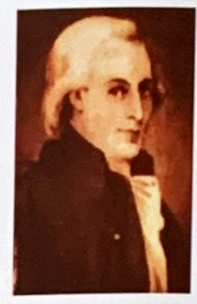
For a night of debauchery you know you'll regret in the morning

Che Guevara



Revolutionarily handsome, his photo spawned a thousand posters.

Casanova



Enough said.

Marquis de Sade



The masochist's choice

William Shakespeare

For those who like to be woo'd with a sonnet or two (and don't mind a receding hairline)



JFK



Handsome, all-American, tragically heroic. Even Marilyn couldn't resist.

Napoleon



If you go for short men with god-complexes, he's the one for you.

Margaret Thatcher



The Iron Lady herself, for those who like a strong woman.

Anne Boleyn



Alluring enough to make a king break from the Catholic Church

Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire

Beautiful, fashionable, open mind, open marriage.



Boudicca

Fiesty, earthy, a girl who knows her way around a chariot.

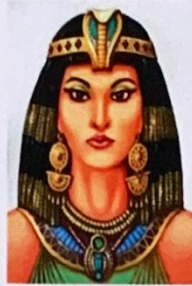


Wallis Simpson



The Anne Boleyn of the 20th Century, her appeal was powerful enough to cause the Abdication.

Cleopatra



Snaked her way into the affections of Mark Antony, Julius Caesar and William Shakespeare.

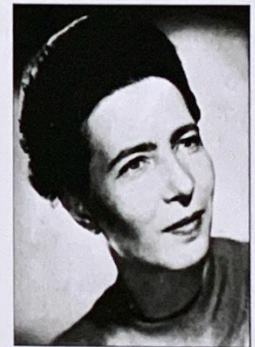
Catherine the Great



All those equine rumours would at least make for interesting conversation...

Simone de Beauvoir

She rejected monogamy and sexual categorization, what's not to like?




Helen of Troy



The face that launched a thousand ships

Have we missed anybody out? Contact historystudenttimes@leeds.ac.uk with your hotties from history before *Friday 11th March*. Tell us why you think they deserve a place on the list. Winners will be announced in the next issue.



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Interested in contributing or joining our editorial team?

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