



A personal selection of Wessex, British Isles and world history.

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CLIMATE CHANGE 2

I am particularly fond of high quality nature writing, the likes of John Lewis-Stemple, Roger Deakin and Richard Mabey. A new edition to my library is *The Old Ways* by Robert Macfarlane (Penguin Books 2013). In this book he walks the ancient footpaths including *The Doomway* (originally the Broomway), a



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submerged track that runs from the Essex coast to Foulness Island across the life-threatening Maplin Sands. His musings whilst walking encompass the lost world of *Doggerland* - now reduced to the underwater Dogger Bank of the shipping forecast. The photo above¹ shows remains of a submerged coastal forest, complete with footprints. The map below right² shows the theoretical boundary of Doggerland. All this is to point out that climate change is not new. The good news is that the inundation caused by the melting of the Arctic ice was gradual, giving our Mesolithic ancestors time to evacuate to higher ground.



We have discussed the *Little Ice Age* before but a friend has thoughtfully loaned me Philipp Blom's *Nature's Mutiny* (Picador 2019) 'How the Little Ice Age transformed the West and shaped the present.' Although



Philipp covers every aspect of the subject, what interests me are some of the side-effects of Climate Change.

One example is that when Italy began to go hungry the authorities went cap-in-hand to the northern European states (including England) to buy grain for bread. This allowed these aggressively mercantile states to move into the Mediterranean that had previously been the exclusive domain of the Italians, principally the Venetians. A second example, is that the growth of Alpine trees slowed down altering the character of the timber, with closer tree rings and denser structure. This coincided with the blossoming of the great Cremonese violin makers between 1650 and 1750: Amati, Ruggeri, Stradivari and Guarneri-del-Gesú. It would be unreasonable to put down their achievement solely to climate change but it was certainly a contributory factor.

THE FIRST TOURIST

Some 2,300 years ago, a Greek named *Pytheas*, left Massalia (Marseilles) and voyaged in a boat to *Ultima Thule*, even to the edge of the ice. On his return around 320 BC he wrote a book *Peritou Okeanou* (On the Ocean). The book no longer exists, possibly a victim of the Christian destruction of the Library at Alexandria. However, he was quoted by at least eighteen other writers, including (reluctantly) Strabo in his *Geographica* written in the late first century BC (1620 edition shown right).

Incidentally, there was a Merchants Handbook known as *Massaliote Periplus* possibly dating from as early as the 6th century BC, describing the sea routes used by traders from Phoenicia and Tartessus in their journeys around Iron Age Europe.

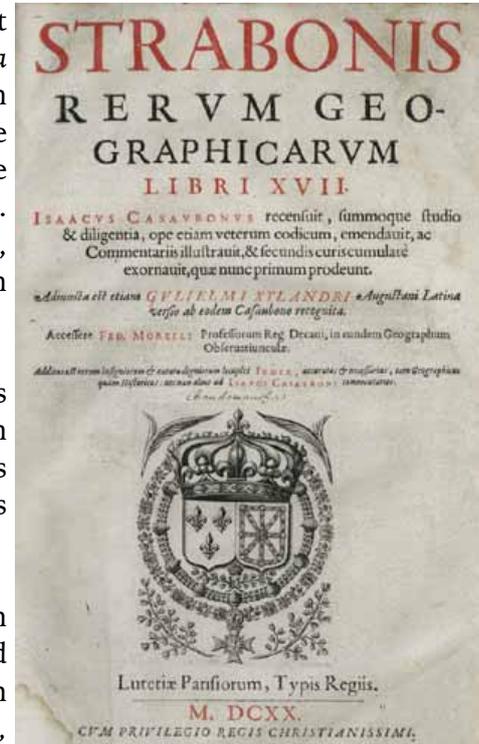
Not everyone believed Pytheas' account but modern historians unanimously accept his truthfulness and accuracy. Circumpolar explorer Vilhjalmur Stefansson in his book *Ultimate Thule*,

published in 1942, concludes that Pytheas could be described as a combination of James Cook and Galileo.



Pytheas says that the Gutones, a people of Germany, inhabit the shores of an estuary of the Ocean called Mentonomon, their territory extending a distance of six thousand stadia; that, at one day's sail from this territory, is the Isle of Abalus, upon the shores of which, amber is thrown up by the waves in spring, it being an excretion of the sea in a concrete form; as, also, that the inhabitants use this amber by way of fuel, and sell it to their neighbours, the Teutones. Amber the tree resin was often confused with *amberggris* (grey amber) that originates in sperm whales. The Greek name for amber is *Elektron* which, because it held a static electric charge gave us the word *electricity*. Baltic yellow amber shown left.

Pytheas describes Britain as the Islands of the *Pretanni* (the



Le voyage de Pythéas en Europe du Nord-Ouest (≈ 325 av. J.-C.)



Painted ones). Diodorus Siculus used the word *Pretannia* in the first century BC. The P became a B over time but the Welsh still use *Prydain* for Britain. He points out two promontories, *Belerion* (Cornwall) and *Kantion* (Kent). He also mentions Holy Island, no doubt encountered when navigating up the west coast between Kintyre and Antrim.

Diodorus writes, almost certainly copying Pytheas: ‘They allege that the residents are the original inhabitants who still retain their primitive manners and customs. For in their battles they use chariots in the same manner as it is reported the ancient Greek heroes fought in the Trojan War. They live in small huts usually built of reeds or wood. When they have reaped their grain they store the ears cut from the stalk in underground storehouses. From thence they take as much of the oldest as will be needed for the day, and after grinding it they prepare their food from it. Their customs are simple, being far removed from the craftiness and wickedness of our time. They are

content with frugal fare and do not have the desires which come with riches. The island has a large population, and has a cold climate, since it stretches so far to the north, lying directly under the Great Bear. Many kings and chieftains rule there, usually keeping peace among themselves.’

I am indebted to *Pytheas the Greek* by Barry Cunliffe (Allen Lane, The Penguin Press 2001). Sir Barrington Cunliffe was Professor of European Archaeology at Oxford and I was very privileged to work for him in Winchester as a fifteen year old schoolboy.

GOING DUTCH

In reading Philipp Blom’s *Nature’s Mutiny* (Picador 2020) about the effects of the Little Ice Age I came across the information that the Catholic Spanish king sent his troops into deal with the Protestant Netherlands. Unfortunately he did not pay them which resulted in them going on the rampage, leading to the virtual sack of Antwerp in 1576 with the loss of some 10,000 lives. Many families fled to Amsterdam. These included such luminaries as Christoffel Plantijn, one of Europe’s great printers (his font is still in use today).

Amsterdam was one of the few cities that wasn’t dominated (and constricted) by the Church, so many independent minded souls involved in the arts and sciences headed there. Holland was really quite small but with a great skill in hydraulic engineering they began to drain the polders of the Rhine and Maas estuaries, along with the Meers of the Zuiderzee. Their expertise was later applied to the lowlands of East Anglia.



Rembrandt van Rijn (1606 - 1669) was a good example of social mobility being the son of a Leiden miller who gave him the opportunity to go to school. Leiden university followed by an apprenticeship in Amsterdam set him on the road to fame and fortune. Many were attracted to the city and especially merchants. The growth in shipping and international trade involved great risk and so the Italian idea of selling shares in each venture grew, which in turn gave birth to the *Beurs* (stock exchange). On its opening, 1,143 individuals created a trading capital the equivalent today of a hundred and fifty million dollars. This was an economic revolution that changed society.

In my view it shows that the Dutch, Scandinavians, British and Irish think in similar ways that are markedly different to the rest of Europe, no doubt due to the sea's influence. Unfortunately this was not really taken into account with the formation of the EU.

A WILTSHIRE WALK

On a rare day out, Sue and I found a great circular walk starting at the village of Dinton. We were soon in the countryside with no people and just the birdsong to listen to. The Nadder Valley is not only home to a river, a tributary of the Avon, but also a single-track railway. We crossed the first by a footbridge alongside an old mill and the second via a pedestrian crossing.

Our next stop was the village of Compton Chamberlayne, originally home to the Penruddocke family. This village was recorded in the Domesday Book and has a simple but interesting thirteenth century church. Not only did the church *advowson* belong to the Penruddockes but they owned most of the village as well. There is a small organ that was a gift from Sir Walter Galpin Alcock,

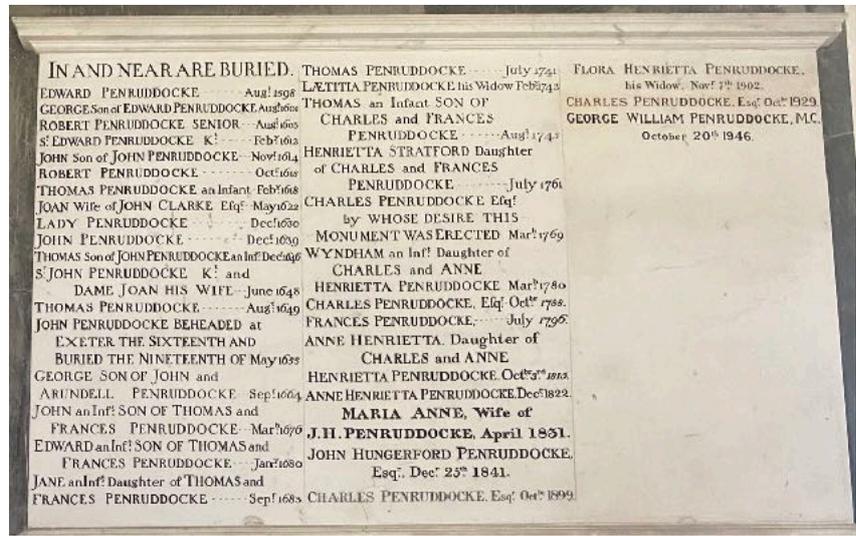
famous organist and composer. He was professor of organ at the Royal College of Music and Salisbury Cathedral organist and choirmaster from 1916 to 1947. However, there was another connection to the Cathedral - the chancel floor.



Imagine my surprise when I looked at the tiles and realised they were identical to the ones I walked on as a

Chapter House guide. I contacted John Elliott who, as an architectural historian, is my first port of call in such cases. It turns out that Minton re-invented the medieval inlaid tile and produced books of designs that customers could choose from. The Salisbury tiles are copied from the original medieval chapter house tiles, some of which can be seen at the east end of the north choir aisle. So I am not sure whether these were left over from Salisbury or if Minton (or their sub-contractor) added the design to their books.

Finally, the wall of the chancel was decorated with the fascinating plaque shown below. You will see that in May 1665 John Penruddocke was executed at Exeter. Colonel Sir John Penruddocke



was a Cavalier and a member of the *Sealed Knot*. Risings were planned all over the country but Sir John's was the only one to take place and it ended in disaster at the hands of Cromwell's New Model Army. The Sealed Knot was a secret society commissioned by the future Charles II; nowadays it is the name of the oldest re-enactment group, and the biggest in Europe.

LINKS

Recently, **Sky History** pointed out that Henry VIII was famous for killing off his wives but the total number of citizens he caused to be terminated is rarely mentioned - 57,000!!!!

Gladiatrix: These women were fierce fighters (right³), shrouded in mystery, with little documentation or references to them in history. What we do know is mostly determined via inscriptions and literary sources taken from the early Roman Empire and the end of the Roman Republic. Female gladiators did not appear until later in Roman history. Historians speculate on the exact dates, but most agree that they began to emerge around 107 AD, during Emperor Nero's reign. At this point in history, gladiators had become a significant part of entertainment in Rome. Bringing women into the fray was a great way to spice things up, offering something unique and different. Many considered female gladiators to be an exotic rarity, so adding them to the roster heightened the spectacle of Colosseum fights.



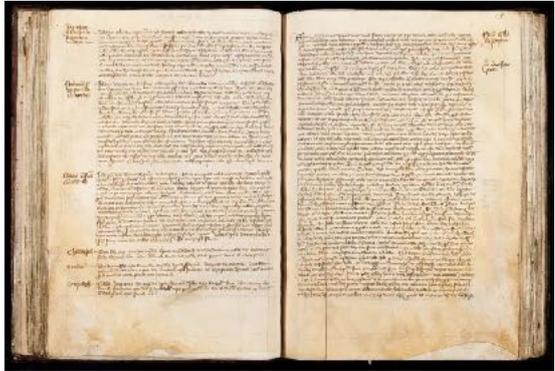
NEW EDITOR

Son **Tim** has joined the editorial team and has already started a page on Facebook and there will shortly be one on Instagram - there are links on our website to both of them. These social sites carry mini-articles and below is one to give you a flavour.

Game of Thrones?

Jot & Tittle reader Edward came across an article in the Washington Post about cruel punishments meted out to women. He forwarded it to see if I could check on the following about an Ela Fitzpayne who in 1337 was associated with the murder of a priest. The Archbishop of Canterbury accused her of having a sexual affair with the priest and ordered her to walk barefoot the length of Salisbury Cathedral carrying a four-pound candle once a year for seven years (Archbishop's letter, below⁴).

This story was also carried by CNN citing a *lead study* author Dr. Manuel Eisner, a professor at the UK's University of Cambridge and director of its Institute of Criminology. They report that there is no evidence that the Salisbury punishment was carried out. The Fitzpayne family came from Dorset (Okeford Fitzpaine) and hence the jurisdiction of Salisbury Cathedral.



Tim found this parallel: Jane Shore was one of King Edward IV's many mistresses. After his death in 1483 (and the suspicious death of his son, Edward V), Edward's brother ascended to the throne as Richard III. Richard wasn't as charmed by Shore as his brother had been, and charged her and two others with conspiring against him. He accused her of sorcery and witchcraft—the scoliosis-afflicted King believed she used spells to “waste and wither” his body—but couldn't come up with enough evidence. Had he been able to, her sentence would likely have ended with her head in a basket at the Tower of London. Instead, she was punished for immorality.



To atone for her “sins,” Shore was condemned to public penance in the form of walking through town while crowds of people watched, yelling and shaming her (left⁵).

She wasn't totally naked, as Cersei was in GoT, but by the standards of the day, she might as well have been: She wore nothing but a kirtle, a thin shift of linen meant to be worn only as an undergarment.

S h o r e ' s

trek included enduring sharp flint stones in the street that tore at her bare feet. She remained in Ludgate Prison until the King's Solicitor General, Thomas Lynom, fell in love with her and asked her to marry him. Through Lynom, she received a pardon and was able to live the rest of her life in relative quiet (unfortunately, the same can't be said for Cersei).

1. Photo courtesy of the Daily Mail.
2. Map courtesy of The Natural Historian.
3. Courtesy of Wikipedia: Relief of paired fighters Amazonia and Achillea, found at Halicarnassus, identified as women by their gendered names.
4. The Archbishop of Canterbury's 1332 letter accused Ela Fitzpayne, a wealthy aristocrat, of committing serial adultery "with knights and others, single and married, and even with clerics in holy orders." (Photo credit: Register of John de Stratford/Hampshire Archives/Hampshire County Council via CNN Newsource).
5. Courtesy of The Vintage News. The Penance of Jane Shore by William Blake, c.1780. (William Blake / Wikimedia Commons / Public Domain).