



The Historical Times

ISSUE 6

THE NCH HISTORY SOCIETY'S TERMLY MAGAZINE

MICHAELMAS 2020

Female Sexuality

History's discomfort with women's sexuality, including:

A look a Tudor women's sexuality

Conflicting portrayals of Empress Theodora

Also:
Aboriginal heritage destroyed for profit

San Marino: the nation that remained neutral during WWII

PLUS

Quotes Quiz
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AND ALL NEW

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Cover picture:

Venus of Urbino

Titian, 1532-34

Located in the Uffizi Gallery,
Florence

Welcome to The Historical Times

Hello all, and welcome to the sixth edition of the Historical Times. And to those of you who are just starting your first year, welcome to NCH!

For the last two years, the History Society has been striving to provide quality historical content. Both our full-length articles on happenings of the past and our quick updates on the latest history events, literature, and news aim to show just how relevant history is to understanding the modern landscape.

And, in conjunction to the magazine, the society will throughout the year be hosting a range of talks and other events, so make sure to look out for those (the best way to do this is by becoming a member of the society, which you can sign up to following this link: <https://forms.gle/wYfWfoykLw5SXZqz7>, or alternatively emailing either myself or Sam at lp1846 or sd1816 respectively).

And, on a final note, this will be the last publication of the current executive committee before elections take place next reading week. We would all like to give a big thank you our readership and those who have supported the society since its inception, we wouldn't be where we are without you.

Happy reading!

Lucy | Co-president of the History Society and Editor of *The Historical Times*

Upcoming Anniversaries:

- ☾ 2nd September: 75th anniversary of the official ending of the Second World War with the formal signing of the surrender document by the Japanese on USS *Missouri*
- ☾ 19th September: 150th anniversary of the start of the Siege of Paris during the Franco-Prussian War
- ☾ 7th October: 100th anniversary of women being able to attend Oxford University as full members to earn degrees 1920
- ☾ 11th November: 400th anniversary of the Mayflower Pilgrims arriving at Cape Cod
- ☾ 21st November: 100th anniversary of Bloody Sunday in Dublin during the Irish War of Independence
- ☾ 1st December: 65th anniversary of Rosa Parks arrested for refusing to give up her seat on the bus in Montgomery, Alabama
- ☾ 16th (estimated) December: 250th anniversary of the birth of composer Ludwig van Beethoven
- ☾ 31st December: 300th anniversary of the birth of Charles Edward Stuart, the Young Pretender also known as Bonnie Prince Charlie

Destroying Aboriginal Heritage for Profit: when will it end?

By Sam Doering



Source: Puutu Kunti Kurrama And Pinikura Aboriginal Corporation

It only took a matter of seconds for the 46,000-year-old Juukan Gorge Caves in Western Australia to be destroyed on 23 May 2020. These historic caves, which had been inhabited throughout the last Ice Age by the Puutu Kunti Kurrama and Pinikura (PKKP) people, were detonated to make way for Rio Tinto's iron ore mine expansion at Brockman 4 Mine in the Pilbara region.

Rio Tinto was fully aware of the sacred significance of Juukan Gorge Cave, but despite several opportunities to change expansion plans, the mining company stayed the course and laid explosives to get access to roughly eight million tonnes of ore. The multi-national mining company gained permission from the Western Australian Government to conduct blasts at Juukan Gorge as early as 2013 - six years before the blast - under Section 18 of the Aboriginal Heritage Act.

Permission was gained before an extensive archaeological excavation had taken place, which reveals a massive flaw with the regulatory system. The system, which is now under review, did not allow opportunity to consider new archaeological or historical information once ministerial consent has been given to mine or develop the land. This inflexible regulatory system, which ignored future findings and stifled communication between traditional owners and regulators and mining companies, caused Juukan Gorge to be blasted.

In 2014, a team of archaeologists discovered that the caves were dated at double the previous estimate of 23,000-years-old, and that it was a site rich with sacred objects and strong evidence of sustained human habitation. One major discovery included a 4,000-year-old length of plaited hair which confirmed a genetic connection linking modern PKKP people with their ancient ancestors. Lead

archaeologist, Dr. Michael Slack, also explained that the team discovered artefacts including grinding and pounding stones - which were believed to be the earliest forms of this technology in Western Australia - and a 28,000-year-old kangaroo leg bone which had been sharpened to a point, which was one of the oldest examples of a bone tool in Australia. These significant finds arguably made the caves a nationally important site, but even this fact would not save it.

The cave was a sacred site to traditional Aboriginal Australian owners, the (PKKP) people; the site physically connected PKKP people to their ancestors, which is a core belief in Aboriginal cultural tradition. John Ashburton, chair of the Puutu Kunti Kurrama Land Committee told ABC News that, "Our people are deeply troubled and saddened by the destruction of these rock shelters and are grieving the

loss of connection to our ancestors as well as our land."

Since it was revealed that the Juukan Gorge Caves had been destroyed, heads have rolled at Rio Tinto, and rightly so. After months of escalating pressure from shareholders, political leaders and Aboriginal communities alike, Rio Tinto CEO Jean-Sébastien Jacques; iron ore division chief, Chris Salisbury; and Simone Niven, Group Executive, will leave the company within the next six months. The Western Australian Government has also taken action by bringing forward new heritage legislation that would emphasise mutual agreement between traditional owners and companies who wish to use the land.

Section 18 will be scrapped, ending ministerial oversight on Aboriginal sites, and allowing traditional owners to have a far greater say, including being able to appeal against non-compliance of land use.

The destruction of the Juukan Gorge Caves has emphasised the poor way in which Aboriginal heritage is perceived, and ultimately disregarded in Australia. Aboriginal Australians are part of the oldest continuing civilization in the world, as a 2016 study from the University of Cambridge confirmed, and yet their physical heritage is shamefully ignored. It begs belief that nationally important sites can be destroyed easily, often with

permission. Time will tell if Juukan Gorge is the last victim of expanding mining operations and whether a shift in thinking will ensure historically important Aboriginal sites are more carefully protected.



Source: *The Australian*.

Quotes Quiz: Can you name 'em?

Can you name the people behind all six of these historical quotes?

Answers on page 9

(1) *Few will have the greatness to bend history itself; but each of us can work to change a small portion of events, and in the total; all of those acts will be written the history of this generation.*

(2) *Be assured those will be thy worst enemies, not to whom thou hast done evil, but who have done evil to thee. And those will be thy best friends, not to whom thou hast done good, but who have done good to thee.*

(3) *The most difficult thing is the decision to act; the rest is merely tenacity.*

(4) *History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again.*

(5) *There will always be people saying things can't be done. And history shows time and time again that that things 'couldn't be done' and they were done.*

(6) *There is no royal flower-strewn path to success. And if there is, I have not found it, for if I have accomplished anything in life it is because I have been willing to work hard.*

Control of Female Sexuality in Tudor England

By Megan Seiorse

Female sexuality was one of the greatest threats to the social order and societal stability during the sixteenth century, from the peasant to monarchy. Thus, in order for the patriarchal social structures to operate effectively, it had to be controlled. In this sense, it made up a large part of both conceptions of masculinity and femininity, and is important to consider when understanding what made society tick. The key to the functioning of this idea is the perceived destructive nature of female sexuality. This is shown in Sidney's *Arcadia*, written in 1593, in a passage describing the effect that too much sex with a woman would have on a man: "this effeminate love of a woman doth so womanise a man". The destructive force can be shown as the woman is able to literally alter the man's character and respectability. This kind of rhetoric is echoed in texts such as Barbaro's *On Wifely Duties* (1416), and William Gouge's *On Domesticall Duties* (1622) - the continuity over the 200 year time frame showing the true strength of this idea. Barbaro instructs the wife to 'tolerate his wrath silently' if physical abuse is inflicted by the husband. In this sense, the perception of the female capability for destruction is quite clear, especially when taken with the quote from *Arcadia* - the wife has to be corrected and restrained, else the manhood of the husband, and by that logic, the social order, is under threat.

In one sense, sexual reputation was central to a woman's standing within her local community. Anne Laurence's research shows that 90% of defamation cases fought by women in York in this period were about sexual deviance, and Laura Gowing demonstrates that a large minority of these cases had both a female defendant and plaintiff. There's even one report of a woman and her husband taking the husband's mistress to court, which shows just how entrenched these ideas were in both the male and female psyche. Despite the wrongdoing to the modern eye being on both parties in this situation, the woman was to blame entirely - another example of women being portrayed as having an almost hypnotic and destructive quality, especially when linked to sexuality and the sex itself.

Again, this is an idea with much history behind it. John of Salisbury (1115*-1180) said "a beautiful woman is quick to inspire love; an ugly one's passions are easily stirred. What many love is hard to protect; what no one desires to have is a humility to possess." Now compare alongside John Knox's sixteenth-century text, *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*: "Nature I say, doth paynt them furthe to be weake, fraile, impacient, feble and foolishe: and experience hath declared them to be vnconstant, variable, cruell and lacking the spirit of counsel and regiment." The devious nature of Salisbury's

"beautiful woman", and the loose and corrupted behaviour of the "ugly one" are reflected nearly exactly by Knox, who claims both natural and material proof of women's inferiority - the "weake" is contrasted by the "cruell" - that is to say, women simultaneously had both weakness and maligned power. There is almost a panic in the tone of both men - a need, they both claimed, to control women, in order to protect themselves and society more generally.



Courtesy of The British Library:
Queen Elizabeth I

strength - seen in the size of the codpiece and his athletic muscles in the Holbein portrait - Elizabeth used the same theme of sexual potency in a different way, but for the same ends - the image of sex as power. Elizabeth retained the notion of her desirability in order for the traditionally weak image of a virgin to retain its power. Thus, as Susan Doran points out, Elizabeth used imagery in the Sieve Portrait to exemplify this. The imagery - the sieve and the pearls - represent her virginity, whereas the deep velvet of her dress and the crown represent her regality. This is important as a contrast to Mary I's reign. Upon her accession, Pole described her as a 'virgin, naked' and 'helpless'. Although Elizabeth used her virginity, it was never appropriated by anyone else, as with Mary, and was tempered by the inclusion of regalia in portraiture. She kept control, crucially.

The fact that women and female sexuality were perceived as a threat to the temporal and spiritual order only shows their strength. This idea diffused from the monarchy to the villager, although, as shown, it was possible for women to spin in order to retain a large amount of autonomy.

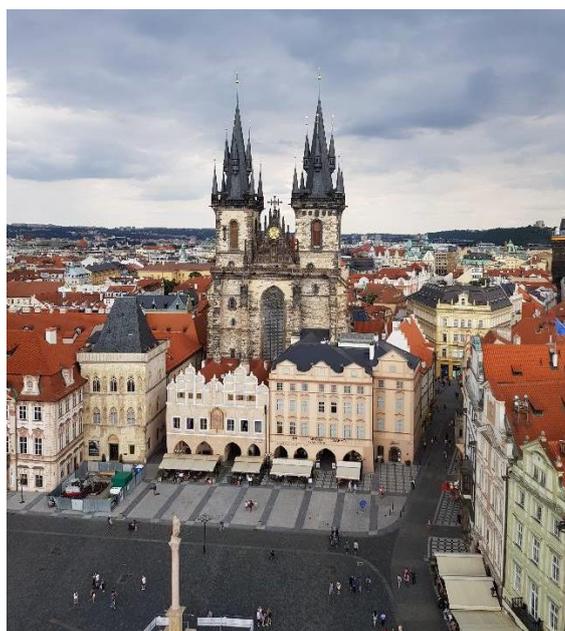
Historical Travels

Our own writer Sam has managed to do a fair bit of travelling this summer despite COVID-19 restrictions, and on his journeys, he discovered the small North Sea island of Heligoland and the Czech capital, Prague. Here are some of the photos he took:



Left: This is the South Harbour of Heligoland, a small German island 70km into the North Sea. This small island has an interesting history. A centre of resistance and intrigue against Napoleon during the Napoleonic Wars, it was here in 1841, August Hoffmann penned the lyrics to 'Deutschlandlied' which became the German national anthem. It was also a refuge for revolutionaries following the 1848 Revolutions. Decimated by WWII after being made a German stronghold, islanders were forced to leave for the mainland, and in 1947, the largest single explosive detonation occurred under British control - four-thousand tonnes of ammunition were detonated.

Right: While this photo may not seem particularly important, it is historically significant. It captures the Defenestration Window at Prague Castle. This particular defenestration was the third one in Prague's history, and was the catalyst for the bloody Thirty Years War. On 23 May, 1618, Count Vilem Slavata of Chlum and Count Jaroslav Bořita of Martinice, two Catholic Regents, and their Secretary, Philip Fabricius, were thrown from this window by a group of Protestants - all survived, but the path to war had been set.



Left: This is the Church of Our Lady before Týn, captured from the Old Town Hall Tower, Prague. The cathedral was constructed in the 14th century and is an imposing structure over the Old Town. It is the burial place of Danish astronomer Tycho de Brahe and several Bohemian lords who were decapitated during the Thirty Years War.

Got any pictures of historic sites you'd like to share? Send them to historysoc@nchsuo.org, and they might end up in the next edition!

Picture of the term



Above: Courtesy of blackhistorymonth.org.uk: Omoba (Sarah) Aina Forbes-Bonetta 1843-1880



Last term, we explored some of the recently discovered letters of Oliver Cromwell detailing his struggles with depression, and how it could be beneficial to review our understanding of historical mental illness.

We all know the standard Victorian history taught to us from our primary school Victorian day, where we would write on chalkboards, to our intensive secondary school modules laying out the expansion of the British Empire. But recently, historian and broadcaster David Olusoga has produced the series *Alt History, Black British History We're Not Taught in Schools*, highlighting part of Britain's racial history that is so frequently left out of the narrative.

The picture above is of Omoba Aina Forbes-Bonetta, who is featured in the series. Born a Yoruba princess, her parents were killed when she was about five in a 'slave-hunt', and a couple of years later she would be gifted to Queen Victoria by Captain Frederick E Forbes, who gave her his surname, as well as that of his ship, the *Bonetta*. The Queen was greatly impressed by her 'regal manner and academic studies' [BHM2020]. She would marry aged 18 and move to Lagos, but aged 40, after years of bad coughing from the climate change between West Africa and Britain, she would die of tuberculosis.

An African royal so close to the Queen who has been consistently unspoken about highlights how black history is often ignored in standardised teaching, arguably isolating the black British population from a part of history close to them, and the entirety of Britain from a fascinating branch of history. It also arguably exposes an unwillingness to confront the uncomfortable side to imperial history and its entrenched effect on modern society.

What are your thoughts? Send them to historysoc@nchs.u.org, and they might end up in the next edition!

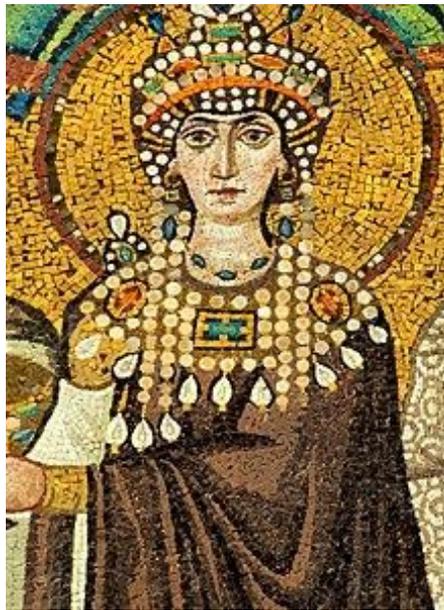
Empress Theodora: conflicting portrayals of women with power

By Lucy Page

The sixth century scholar Procopius of Caesarea wrote three contrasting versions of the Emperor Justinian's reign over the Byzantine Empire – *The History of the Wars of Justinian*, *Secret History*, and *Buildings of Justinian*. And, crucially, these versions all included different portrayals of the empress, Theodora. In each respectively, she is portrayed as the saviour of the empire during Justinian's illness, as wicked and lustful, or as a beautiful and pious wife. In reality, there is no doubt of her accomplishments. But what is perhaps equally as striking about the empress is how three portrayals of her by the same man can be so different, and how hers is only one example of the long-existing discomfort with women with power and the struggle historically to typecast them as an extremity of one character or another in order to justify their success.

Theodora was born in 500 A.D. to a Constantinople bear trainer and a dancer and actress. Although the place of her birth is uncertain, it is believed that she was of Greek Cypriot descent. From a young age she was performing as an actress and serving in brothels along with her two sisters, travelling around what was transforming from the Roman to the Byzantine Empire. She would become mistress to the Syrian official Hecebolus for four years, and sometime after this is believed to have converted to Miaphysite Christianity. It was after this that the future emperor Justinian and Theodora met, Justinian soon seeking to marry her. However, due to a Roman Law put in place by the former emperor Constantin, actresses were banned from marrying above their rank, meaning the marriage couldn't go ahead. But in 524 his uncle and the current emperor, Justin I, changed the law to allow actresses and

other women of low status to marry a person of any rank with the emperor's approval – Justin himself wanting to marry the freed slave Euphemia – thus legalising Justinian's and Theodora's marriage in the process. Justinian would claim the throne in 527, making Theodora his empress.



Courtesy of Wikipedia: Empress Theodora, from the contemporary mosaic in the Basilica of San Vitale, Ravenna

As empress, Theodora (crowned Augusta) worked closely with Justinian in ruling the empire. She would take part in his councils as well as advising him politically – it's documented that she once saved his throne by persuading Justinian to stand his ground against a rebellion when he and his council had decided to flee. Furthermore, having experienced it herself, she sought to put an end to the sexual exploitation of women in the empire; influencing laws that closed down brothels, as well as buying and then freeing ex-prostitutes, and also providing accommodation for many of them in convents. Under Justinian's rule, women were also given greater rights over divorce, children and property, the death

penalty was introduced for rape and banned for female adulterers – all changes almost certainly influenced by Theodora. The Egyptian bishop John of Nikiu would write in his chronicle a century later that she 'put an end to the prostitution of women, and gave orders for their expulsion from every place.'

It seems evident from this that, it was not despite of her upbringing, but *because of it*, she was such a strong, influential, and successful empress. She knew directly what it was like to work as a prostitute, and knew the unjust struggle of women in general, but especially those who were not born into high ranking families. And in two versions of his narrative, Procopius agrees. In *The History of the Wars of Justinian*, the empress is positively described as being motivated by her own experiences to help other women in need. In *Buildings of Justinian*, which was written after Theodora's death but was likely commissioned by Justinian, Procopius wrote that Theodora's influence prevented forced prostitution.

However, it's the *Secret History*, the work left unpublished until after Procopius' death, which contains the most detail, and the most malicious content, written about Theodora. In it, he wrote that the 'nation had become a community of slaves with Theodora as slave-driver'. And further, alongside his attack on Justinian himself, he describes in explicit detail her sexual conduct before her marriage to the emperor as a way to discredit her as empress. Nadine Elizabeth Korte noted that, although at the time it was standard for historians to write of sexual misconduct as a way to discredit both men and women in power, the detail with which Procopius writes about Theodora signifies something more than standard disdain for those rulers. Other contemporary historians such as John Lydus, John Malalas, and Evagrius Scholasticus (who was influenced by

Procopius' published works and did criticise Justinian) did not use the same sexually descriptive or malicious language to describe Theodora, even though none were averse to writing in this way to describe others. Thus, it's clear that Procopius' *Secret History* is not only a criticism of Justinian and Theodora's reign, but demonstrates his personal discomfort with a woman, especially a woman with her background, having as much power and influence over her husband and over an empire as Theodora did.

And even within our modern society, it's telling that the *Secret History*, the least well documented of Procopius' texts for centuries and the one with the most sexually explicit and negative descriptions of Theodora, has become the most popular and widely known. If you type 'Procopius Wars of Justinian, Theodora' into Google, about half of the results will direct you straight to the *Secret History*. If you add 'quotes' onto the end of that search, almost all of them become links to Procopius' unpublished text. The *Secret History's* depiction of Theodora is also where modern adaptations of the empress, such as in the 1921 film *Theodora* or 1954's *Theodora, Slave Empress* come from. It could be reasoned that this focus on the *Secret History's* Theodora is merely because in our progressive society, we are more openly receptive of sexually liberated women and portrayals of them. However, even if this was the intention of those adapting Theodora for a modern audience, Procopius' depiction lingers sinisterly over it. The idea that framing a woman as openly sexual is supposed to automatically make our minds connect her with the ruin of those surrounding her, in this case an entire empire, has been a persistent trope throughout history and still makes its mark today. A reevaluation of our widespread relationship with the *Secret History's* Theodora wouldn't be unwarranted.

Women with power have always made for a contentious topic, not because they inherently need be, but because they have been framed to be so. Procopius' contrasting portrayals of Empress

Theodora demonstrate this, and the nature of their legacy highlights that the problem still exists today. Theodora's influence on Justinian legislation set a standard at the start of the Byzantine Empire; using her own experience she championed the rights of those women who were not granted the power to fight for themselves. Personally, it's this version of Theodora that I believe deserves centre stage.

For further reading:

<https://mcgill.ca/classics/files/classics/2004-09.pdf>

Lynda Garland: *Byzantine Empresses: Women and Power in Byzantium, AD 527–1204*. London 1999.

Answers

1. **Robert Kennedy:** was an American politician and lawyer who served as the 64th United States Attorney General from January 1961 to September 1964, and as a U.S. Senator from New York from January 1965 until his assassination in June 1968
2. **Tacitus:** was a Roman historian and politician. Tacitus is considered by modern scholars to be one of the greatest Roman historians
3. **Amelia Earhart:** was an American pilot, the first woman to fly alone across the Atlantic Ocean. In 1932, she also became the first person to fly across the Atlantic twice. She disappeared in 1937, while attempting to fly around the entire world, and was declared dead in 1939
4. **Maya Angelou:** was an American poet, memoirist, and civil rights activist. She published seven autobiographies, three books of essays, several books of poetry, and is credited with a list of plays, movies, and television shows spanning over 50 years. She received dozens of awards and more than 50 honorary degrees
5. **Boyan Slat:** is a Dutch inventor and entrepreneur. A former aerospace engineering student, he is the CEO of The Ocean Cleanup
6. **Madam C.J. Walker:** invented a line of African-American hair care products in 1905 and eventually became one of the first American women to become a self-made millionaire

*descriptions courtesy of Wikipedia

San Marino: the nation that remained neutral during WWII

By Marie Therese Gumpert

"San Marino, the only country controlled by the Axis that had the courage to protect the Jews"
- Giuseppe Marzi citing Celio Gozi's memorial



Above: San Marino

The Republic of San Marino is one of the oldest republics in the world, and, holding a land mass of 61.2 km², had declared itself neutral during the Second World War.

Its role in the war is hence often overlooked - San Marino was small and insignificant when compared to the great powers which waged their war across the continent. Yet there exists a story worth telling in San Marino's history during the war. In 1944, San Marino, with a population of roughly 15,000, ended up welcoming as many as 100,000 displaced people, the majority of whom were Italians seeking refuge after their homes were bombed. A number of Jews were amongst them, and they found hiding from Nazi persecution within Monte Titano. Here's how it played out:

Rimini, November 1943, heavy bombing by the allied forces is tearing the city to shreds. The people of Rimini begin to seek refuge and head to the San Marino - Rimini border. San Marino is located in the middle of the Gothic Line. Where the Germans set up a strong, well-positioned defense, with soldiers determined to respond blow for blow to the advances of the Anglo-Americans and their allies. The Adriatic city and its surroundings become a crossroads of bombings, cannonades, and battles.

In the **summer of 1944**, San Marino hits its peak in terms of "immigration". The Italians who seek and find refuge now reach 100'000. There were now seven refugees for each San Marinese citizen living on San Marinese territory. Amongst these, some

Jews, who, thanks to this neutral ground, escaped concentration camps. In the hopes of survival, the displaced people take shelter and try to live where they can, but almost all hide in the tunnels of the Rimini - a San Marino railway line commissioned by Benito Mussolini and fully financed by fascist Italy.

During this time, rations are scarce, reports tell the story of 50 grams of bread per person per day. Unfortunately, the small nation is only able to churn out 70,000 portions a day, making use of wood ovens as the bombings had put out of use the electricity. The San Marinese people are well aware of the fact that their hospitality and efforts, in conditions bordering on the absurd, will save the lives of many people. All the inhabitants are committed to feeding and protecting the displaced, no matter the cost.

San Marino continues to defend its neutrality and manages to avoid getting involved in war operations until **June 26, 1944**. Here, an allied air raid carried out by a British squadron of the DAF (Desert Air Force) bombs Mount Titano and its Castles, releasing 263 bombs and claiming the lives of 63 people. Subsequently, the British and the allies will go to apologise for the mistake made. But San Marino was now occupied by German Army forces, ultimately leading to the Battle of San Marino, also sometimes referred to as the Battle of Monte Pulito. This battle will last three days, from **September 17th to September 20th 1944**, and will see the Allied forces attack the German occupiers and finally enter the Ancient Republic as victors.

The Allied occupation will last for three months, and for the 100,000 displaced Italians and Jews, the hope of returning to their homes or to what was left of them will be reborn. In this devastating war, a small pacifist state maintained its neutrality, giving solidarity and protection to an enormous mass of people.

If you would like to immerse yourself further into the story of San Marino and the Italians and in particular the Hebrews who found protection within its borders, I highly recommend "Il Viale delle rose" by Giuseppe Marzi (2012, Giuntina) and "La meravigliosa bugia" by Davide Bagnaresi, Antonio Morri and Giuseppe Marzi (2017, Giuntina). Both of these books hold collections of letters, documents, interviews and photographs documenting the lives in hiding of the Hebrews in San Marino during the Second World War. Exposing the courage of a small Republic that refused to participate in senseless hatred. "Il Viale delle Rose" was also presented at the Cannes film festival in 2013 in English.

Recommended Media

Stuck inside? Need something to keep yourself busy? Check out our recommendations for history media you can consume from the comfort of your own sofa.

Podcast: Talking Tudors

Natalie Grueninger

'A podcast for lovers of Tudor history'

Documentary: Resident Alien

Johnathan Nossiter

'This documentary looks at the unconventional life of British writer and actor Quentin Crisp. An outwardly flamboyant gay man, Crisp endured many indignities as a youth in London. Eventually, however, he found recognition as an author and later as a theatre performer both in England and across the pond in New York City.'

Virtual Tour: The 'Rose City' (Petra), Jordan

[Link to the tour](#)

'Google has created a virtual tour of the mysterious city that allows you the clamber among the cliffs and experience this ancient wonder first-hand. Trekking through the city, you can explore a number of locations, accompanied by an audio track that's brimming with fascinating facts about Petra.'

Podcast: You're Dead to Me

Greg Jenner

'The history podcast for people who don't like history ... and those who do. Greg Jenner brings together the best names in comedy and history to learn and laugh about the past.'

Documentary: What happened, Miss Simone?

Liz Garbus

'This film follows the life of American singer, pianist, and civil rights activist Nina Simone. Through never-before-heard recordings and rare archival footage, director Liz Garbus chronicles the life of the legendary woman.'

Virtual Tour: The Vatican, Vatican City

[Link to the tour](#)

'You don't need to be in Rome to visit the smallest sovereign state in the world. The Vatican has created a series of virtual tours that let you loose inside the headquarters of the Roman Catholic Church – the home of the pope and one of the most important churches in Christianity, St Peter's Basilica.'

Recommended Reads

Black Spartacus: The Epic Life of Toussaint Louverture

Sudhir Hazareesingh

'A new interpretation of the life of the Haitian revolutionary Toussaint Louverture ... Hazareesingh proposes a new conception of Toussaint's understanding of himself and his role in the Atlantic world of the late eighteenth century.'

Children of Ash and Elm: A History of the Vikings

Neil Price

'The definitive history of the Vikings – from arts and culture and politics and cosmology – by a distinguished archaeologist with decades of experience.'

Dead Famous: An Unexpected History of Celebrity from Bronze Age to Silver Screen

Greg Jenner

'Celebrity, with its neon glow and selfie put, strikes us as hypermodern. But the famous and infamous have been thrilling, titiating and outraging us for much longer than we might realise.'

The Habsburgs: The Rise and Fall of a World Power

Martyn Rady

'From modest origins, the Habsburgs grew in power to gain control of the Holy Roman Empire in the fifteenth century ... the family continued to dominate Central Europe until the catastrophe of the First World War.'

Agent Sonya: Lover, Mother, Soldier, Spy

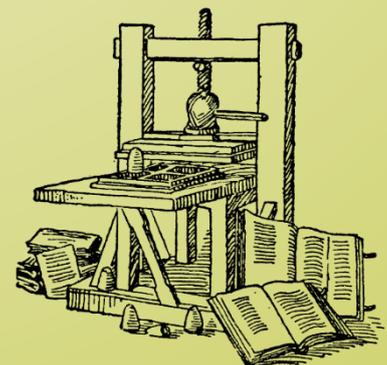
Ben Macynire

'Far from a British housewife, 'Mr Burton' – born Ursula Kuczynski, and codenamed 'Sonya' – was a German Jew, a dedicated communist, a colonel in Russia's Red Army, and a highly trained spy ... Sonya conducted some of the most dangerous espionage operations of the twentieth century. Her story has never been told – until now.'

A Curious History of Sex

Kate Lister

'Based on the popular research project Whores of Yore, and written with her distinctive humour and wit, *A Curious history of Sex* draws upon Dr Kate Lister's extensive knowledge of sex history.'





NCH History Society

Thanks for reading!

Make sure to sign up as a member of the History Society to find out about the latest talks and events.

And, as ever, if you wish to write an article for any future edition, don't hesitate to get in contact with your idea.

Contact us for more info: historysoc@nchsu.org