

## **Archaeology & History 2025**

### **January: History of the Mayans. (Vivien)**

Civilization located in Central America, Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, Honduras and El Salvador. Covered a vast period from 12,000BC to 1519 AD. Cities established in 750BC to 500BC

Known for developing writing system (Hieroglyphics and later Mayan Script). Numbering system to base 20 and base 18. The Long count calendar 18 months in a year each of 20 days, 5 unlucky day to reach 365 in a year. Used long count calendar to predict end of the world 12 December 2012. Ball games where losers were sacrificed to gods

Distinctive shaped pyramids built. UNESCO heritage site of Chichen Itza. Vivien introduced various archaeological site. Civilisation was on the wane, due to warfare, disease and natural disasters, exasperated by the Spanish invasion. Still significant populations of Mayans today, (40% Guatemalans)

### **February: Ur of the Chaldees. (Me)**

A major city in the cradle of civilisation, in Mesopotamia (land between the two rivers). The Summerian people Invented plough, seeder, first to use bronze developed intensive agriculture. Able to settle and build towns and cities.

First to use writing, symbols (rations for workers), then cuneiform, developed laws in Code of Ur-Nammu.

City of Ur lost when river changed path, covered with sand. Sir Leonard Wooley British archaeologist led the excavation. Important site birthplace of Abraham significant for Jews, Christians and Islam.

Focused around the royal cemeteries tombs of the kings, many robbed but some intact. Lots of amazing artefacts discovered, elaborate headdresses, musical instruments, jewellery, a board game and the standard of Ur.

Tomb of Queen Puabi, untouched by robbers, shows Queens burial chamber. Most disturbing is number of bodies of staff and attendants in the tomb. 12 female attendants, two oxen and chariot, 5 armed guards and three male

attendants. In the death pit nearby there were 68 women all wearing jewellery and six men at the entrance. Thought to have taken poison neatly arranged, some showed signs of trauma death.

During gulf war Saddam parked warplanes alongside ziggurat. When Baghdad was conquered, looters stole and smashed more than 15,000 precious objects including 7,000 cylinder seals.

### **March: Catacombs and Ossuaries around the world - (Vivien).**

Catacomb, underground passageways used as burial chambers, ossuaries structures that hold human remains. Commonly associated with Romans and Christian burials.

Catacombs in Paris, remains of more than 6m people. Dead from city cemeteries transferred underground in 1785 for health reasons. Extend for 2,000 acres beneath Paris

Oldest in Alexandria Egypt (KomEl Shoqafa), dates back to 12th century BC. Discovered when a donkey fell down a hole. Lots of pots and rubbish discarded as relative visit and have picnic. Still used during Roman and Greek period.

Catacombs of San Callisto. Galleries 12 miles long, 20m deep in parts. Burial place of 16 popes, many martyrs and Christians.

Czech Republic, Prague Sedlec Ossuary. In 1278 Henry Abbot of monastery in Sedlec returned from Holy land with soil from Golgotha and sprinkled it over cemetery. It became most desirable burial site in Central Europe. Too many to be housed in catacombs bones used to decorate the church.

Odessa Catacombe largest in world 60m deep. Runs up to 2,500 km. Massive, a reason given as to why a subway has never been built in Odessa. Lima in Peru, built in 16th-19th due to the growing population, due to epidemics, high mortality rates. Enormous wells 10m deep filled with bones and human skulls.

Hypogeum in Malta, loads in cemeteries in London Highgate, Brompton and Wet Norwood.

### **April: .How Scotland became a nation (John),**

Thousand years of history. Before there were nations in the UK. The Celtic people were spread around northern Europe. They were not one group but a collection, they had arrived around 6th century BC and became dominant due to superior culture. History is sketchy because didn't write anything down.

Other main group of peoples in Scotland were the Picts. Romans conquered as far as the Antonine wall, but later forced back to Hadrian's wall. Romans called the area north of Antonine wall Caledonia

Gaelic came from Ireland to West Coast, better known as Scots from the Roman name for Irish Migrants and pirates. They settled in the Argyll area. From the east came the Angles as raiders from Germany.

Battle of Nechtainsmere the Picts defeated the Angles 685. The Scots were defeated by the Picts. However when the Vikings arrived the Picts and the Scots joined forces to fight Vikings.

The Picts were heathen Gaelic and Scots were Christian and as Picts were converted they were gradually subsumed and eventually culture/language died out. About 841 AD Kenneth MacAlpin a Scot married a Pictish princess. Acknowledged as the first king of Scotland. For his coronation at Scone, the stone of Destiny from Dalriada was used. Coronation of monarchs.

Pictish stones, granite or sandstone carved with symbols, different classes and ages etc May have been painted bright colours.

Other stuff John included was Lewis Chessmen, found Lewis in Outer Hebrides most pieces held by British Museum, made of whalebone (Vikings), Book of Deer, written in about 900, only surviving example of written old Gaelic. Beehive cell typical of where monks lived. Kilt and Bagpipes.

### **May: English Poor Laws (Barbara)**

From Tudor to the Welfare State.

Tudor Poor Laws. Before dissolution of monasteries poor could find relief at monasteries. After the black death scarcity of workers led to movement looking for better terms of work. In 1495 parliament passed the Vagabonds and Beggars Act, send beggars back to their parish to beg. Those begging outside their area, could be whipped, stocks or imprisoned.

**No provision for healthy who could not find work**, until 1555 when first House of Correction established in London forerunner to workhouses. Poor Act 1551 mandated each parish to keep register of the poor and make provision for them, begging was illegal.

Later the English colonies seen as a place to dump poor. Like Rwanda scheme. Poor children still sent to Australia in 70s.

\*\*\* Workhouse movement established in 17th century. Single or joint parishes to build workhouse. By 1776 1,912 parish or corporation workhouses were established in England and Wales.

Poor Law Amendment Act. (a) Conditions to be worse than outside system, (b) conditions so bad that no-one would voluntary enter system. Families split up, men women and children, given hours of pointless work. To wear uniforms

Andover scandal, inmates eating fertiliser made from ground up animal bones. Reform Act 1867, gradually improved conditions in workhouses.

Poor Law system improved with introduction of friendly societies and trade unions. Literary criticism, Dickens, Trollope and Jack London. Welfare reforms of Liberal Government saw introduction of old age pension and National Insurance. Workhouses abolished by Local Government Act 1929.

In 1947 Poor law system abolished with introduction of Welfare State. National Health Act 1946 creating the NHS.

Today, Poverty is hidden, 30% of Children living in poverty, 14.3m are relatively poor (less than 60% of median wage. 2,800 food banks. Charities stepping in where system has failed

### **June Tour Round Derby**

Holiday: Walking tour led by Derby Heritage. History of Derby's. Next tour to be decided.

### **July Nottingham Caves of National Justice Museum**

Nottingham riddled with caves, over 800. Guide took us down, used as storerooms, wine cellars, clandestine meetings, air raid shelters and tannery.

National Justice Museum. One stop shop for justice, tried jailed and executed on steps outside. In 1805 massive crowd to watch public hanging, man guilty of murdering wife and three children. People crushed and trampled 12 died including one whole family and 150 were injured.

We had a mock trial of Derek, accused of stealing a dog collar, found guilty and transported to Australia.

August (John)

Archaeology of the Dead part 2. John. An updated presentation done by request.

Vast subject. Ancient Burials, Neolithic burial sites. Late neolithic period increased use of cremation, Maes Howe in the Orkneys.

Mausoleums and grand tombs, Halicarnassus one of seven ancient wonders least remembered. Taq Mahal, in Agra India white marble built by Shah Jahan for his wife who died giving birth to their 14th child. Terracotta Army and the pyramids. All dealt with under previous presentations.

Oseburg ship burial on land ,lots of artefacts from the 9th century.

Reconstruction on left, photograph on the right. Sutton Hoo, Anglo Saxon ship burial, shape of ship, wood gone but all rivets still in place, famous Sutton Hoo helmet.

Funeral furniture like coffins, caskets, shrouds, urns and canopic jars. Richard III, lead lined wooden coffin. Greek and Roman elaborate designed sarcophagi. Through Saxon period, Sutton Hoo, excavation, famous helmet and ship burial. Egyptian mummies, scramble of photographers.

Memorial to the dead, Trafalgar square with nelson's column, Cenotaph to honour 'The Glorious Dead'. London Road railway war memorial.

Church graveyards, municipal cemeteries built due to overcrowding. More people opting for cremation these days (80% in England). War graves managed by the War Graves commission.

**September and October Frescoes of Pompeii (Moy)i**

Pompeii destroyed by volcano Mt Vesuvius in 79AD. Social change, earthquake many of established wealthy families and nouveau riche living in city. City frozen in time under enormous layer of volcanic ash. New areas being uncovered all time.

Baker's shop mural. Millstones turned by donkeys, ovens, evidence of slave workers. Slaves outnumbered free men by 4 to 1.

House of Thiasus, Dionysus/Bacchus the Greek/Roman god of wine, ecstasy and excess

Ratio of Men to Women was 3 to 1. Power of the phallus. Street sign, flying phallus

Frescoes of popular myths, Roman and Greek. Cupid, Midas Icarus Dido etc

Cupid (read from slide)

Echo and Narcissus. Narcissus rejected the advances of Echo, punished by Nemesis who makes him fall in love with his reflection.

Gladiators Fresco. Slaves who could earn freedom. Like Rock Stars. Large crowds. Fought in amphitheatre crowds of 12-15,000 (Pompeii population estimated at 20,000).