East Dorset Antiquarian Society

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BULLETIN 5 – April 2021

Things are certainly improving on restrictions and, of course, coronavirus case numbers are now very low. I'm sure that you, like me, hope that the easing of restrictions doesn't spark another wave, though the rapid rollout of vaccinations should be a massive help. And, of course, the weather has been lovely, in the daytime at least, and promises to continue. We really could use some rain though!

For those reasons, and the fact that I'm running out of items to include, this will be the last of these mid-month bulletins covering more topical and amusing items. I have included some things that I'd gathered which are now a bit out-of-date, but I hope will still be worth a read.

Thanks are due to Alan for his long article to help those researching their ancestry: **Family History and its Sources**. After his article last month on the brave, and not so brave, squirrels, Alan has continued to try to get a photo of the squirrels' leap. He has seen it a few times, but every time was unable to get the shot; canny squirrels.

Thank you also to David Hall for providing many interesting old photographs; I've just picked a few that I thought had 'antiquarian value'.

The longer articles in this final edition are:

- **Yonaguni Island, Japan's Atlantis?**
- **Dodgy Metaphors for Brexit**
- **Villa Epecuén ghost town, Argentina**

Geoff Taylor

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Which is bigger – a jot or a tittle?

I remember someone telling me a rhyme to remember this – "a jot is a lot and a tittle's a little".

The phrase in English "a jot or a tittle" to talk of something small comes from William Tindale's translation of the New Testament in 1526 (Matthew 5:18), but it's rather a tautology as both are pretty small. A jot really isn't a lot.

A jot is the smallest letter of an alphabet – the Latin 'i' which came from the Greek *iota*, and originally from *jod* in the Hebrew alphabet. Tittle refers to a small stroke or point in writing, most commonly used for the dot on the letter 'i', so obviously rather smaller than jot. The word dot wasn't used until the 18th century, so whilst we would dot our i's, Shakespeare would apparently have tittled them.

So that's really useful to know isn't it, except that I don't think I've seen or heard the phrase for a decade or three? We do, though, still use jot to mean making a small note (I imagine that might disappear too as people increasingly type notes on electronic devices).

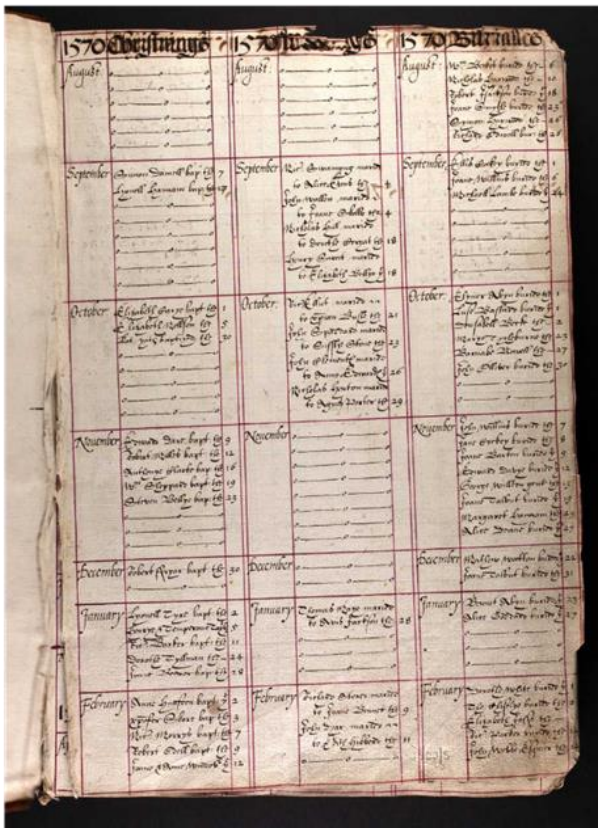
Family History and its Sources

My wife, Lindsey, has been researching her family tree since 2006 and now has over 11,000 individuals in her tree. One ancestor has led back to Tiridates The Great of Armenia around AD 300, pictured here on a coin. But how do you trace your family before the official recording of births, marriages and deaths? I decided to write about Lindsey's researches, not to talk about her family or the individuals in the tree, but to highlight the various sources that can be used, as many of them were either generated for, or have been used for, historical research. Generally speaking there are two types of resource available – original documents and derived sources. Original documents include birth, marriage and death certificates, parish records and census returns. Derived sources are those that have been compiled (usually by academics) from original sources on a particular family or topic.

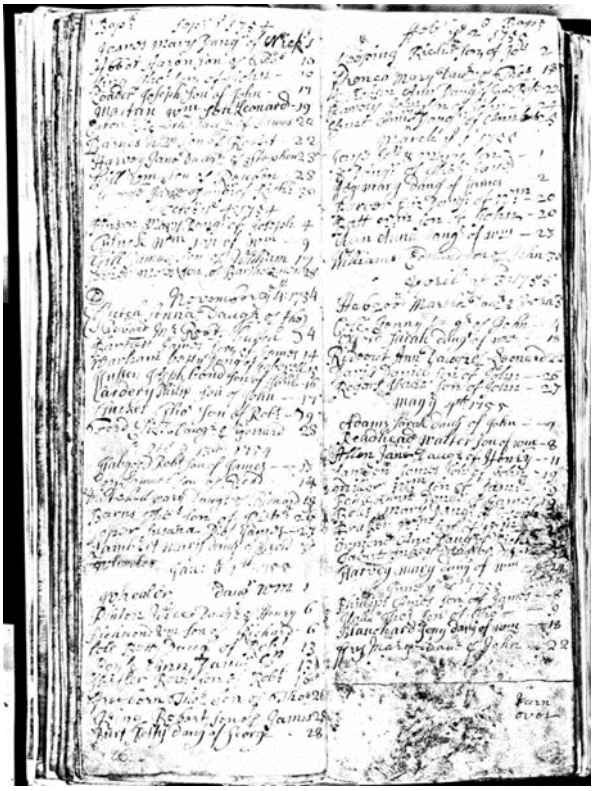
Most people use the well-known commercial genealogy web sites such as *Ancestry* and *Find My Past* to build their family trees. Information is also available from some sites run by volunteers that are free to the user, such as *Online Parish Clerk* – this is by county but not all counties are available. Most family history societies, usually county based, have libraries and websites with information available, but normally only to members. Another very useful website is *Curious Fox* - this is a self-help blog. You can post a query without charge, and it can sometimes break what seems an impossible dead end.

Official registration of births, marriages and deaths started in the UK in 1837, but the information they contain and the coverage vary with time and location. For instance, it was not compulsory for births to be registered until 1875 and, until 1911, a birth record did not give the mother's maiden name.

The first census was held in 1801, but it is not generally available and has very little information. The first useful census which includes names and ages at an address was 1841 (note: ages were rounded to the nearest 5 years in this, but not in later censuses). There is also the *1939 Register* which records exact address, names, sex, exact date of birth and occupation, but does have many redactions.



Before 1837 parish records can be used for baptisms, marriages and burials. In theory, parish records go back to 1538 – they were introduced by Thomas Cromwell. However, some have been lost or destroyed in floods, fires, etc. Not all parishes started their records in 1538, and many are difficult to read because of the handwriting styles (particularly Tudor), or because the ink has faded, or a page has been damaged. Some early records were written in medieval Latin, which can sometimes be interpreted once the Latin for 'baptism', 'marriage' and 'burial' have been learnt, but the names were also in Latin. The two examples shown give an idea of the variations. The Salisbury Parish Register of 1570 (right) is well laid out and is easy to read when enlarged. That from Wimborne Minster of nearly 200 years later (1754-55, below) has no structure and is very difficult to read, even when enlarged. Some are far worse than this.



Even when in English, on all records the spelling was 'as heard' by the scribe, as most people could not read or write. The level of information included is variable, and baptisms or burials are not necessarily in the same place or time as the birth or death, e.g. some families would save the baptisms for groups of their children. On the plus side, parish records sometimes include notes on various subjects such as wages paid by the parish clerk, or notes on family events of significant families. They are now mostly kept in County Records Offices but generally can only be viewed on microfiche. However many are now digitised on *Ancestry* etc., and are much easier to read on a computer.

The coverage of parish registers by commercial websites varies depending on their arrangements with each county. Also, the county boundaries generally used by County Records Offices are those that existed at the time of the 1974 reorganisation. This means that all Christchurch records are held in Hampshire Records Office, regardless of which side of the boundary it sat at the time of any particular record.

Another point to remember is that the transcriptions used by the various genealogy websites are not to be relied upon. Very often these are generated by Optical Character Recognition (OCR) software and contain many errors. Even when they are generated by humans, they are simply going through the records line by line so recurring families are not always obvious and can be transcribed incorrectly. Early parish records give little other than basic facts – e.g. "John Doe was buried 27 March 1655". Later records, particularly baptisms and marriages, do give more useful information, such as parents' details, place of birth, etc.

There are other records such as wills, local militia rolls, court records, and so on, which are mostly held in County Records Offices, but which can also be accessed through commercial genealogy websites. Wills can include useful information, such as family members benefitting from the will, inventories, names of witnesses and the status of the individual, such as yeoman or husbandman.

The parish records should include everybody, but it can be difficult to track families because people didn't always baptise their children at the same church. Burials can also be at a different place to where they were living at time of death. But if you are lucky enough to find a link to local nobility or higher, then family records probably exist in a number of ways and these can go back much further than parish records; locations then become much less of a problem.

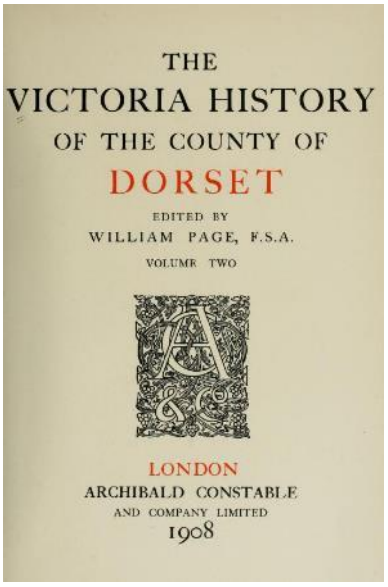
Many families kept their own records, and some families have been researched by historians and published independently. However, accuracy is not always to be relied upon. Much like a well-known online encyclopaedia, they should be regarded as a convenient starting point rather than a source of unvarnished truth. It was not unknown for these families to use such records to promote their own standing by distorting the truth, or by repeating family legends which turn out to be more myth than fact.

The College of Arms, whose own coat of arms is below, evolved in the medieval period and was first incorporated under Richard III in 1484. In the 16th and 17th centuries, the college sent heralds out to the counties with the purpose of documenting the right of any person to bear arms – that is, to display a coat of arms. This became known as the Heralds' Visitations and involved recording the family pedigrees of those claiming a right to a coat of arms; many went back centuries. However, as with the family

records mentioned above, these pedigrees relied on the accuracy of the information given to the heralds and, frustratingly, they were not interested in dates of births, marriages or deaths. Accuracy also relied on the rigour applied by the herald when interrogating the families, and this is known to have been variable – some detail is inaccurate as some heralds were more scrupulous than others! The Visitation records were previously available on CDs, but can now be accessed through the *Medieval Genealogy* website. Although this site was created by a self-described self-taught amateur genealogist, it does provide access to a number of medieval documents and records in addition to the Heralds' Visitations.

Then there is the *Foundation For Medieval Genealogy* (an article in their magazine gave the link from Lindsey's family tree to Tiridates The Great). The Foundation hosts a project called *Medieval Lands* which is available free to use online. This researches all the cartularies and other records across Europe. These are medieval manuscripts or rolls which recorded gifts or rights given to ecclesiastical establishments, and they were witnessed by other nobility. They can contain information such as participation in campaigns or battles, support to causes or monarchs, as well as family details. For the UK, the records stop at 1536, the Dissolution of the Monasteries, but continue beyond this date for many European countries. Notably, this also includes a section on *Domesday Corrections*. Other similar websites exist and there is a degree of academic dispute between them. As with all derived sources, they should always be viewed with caution. However, the areas of dispute are relatively rare and, as the authors are academics, they do provide references.

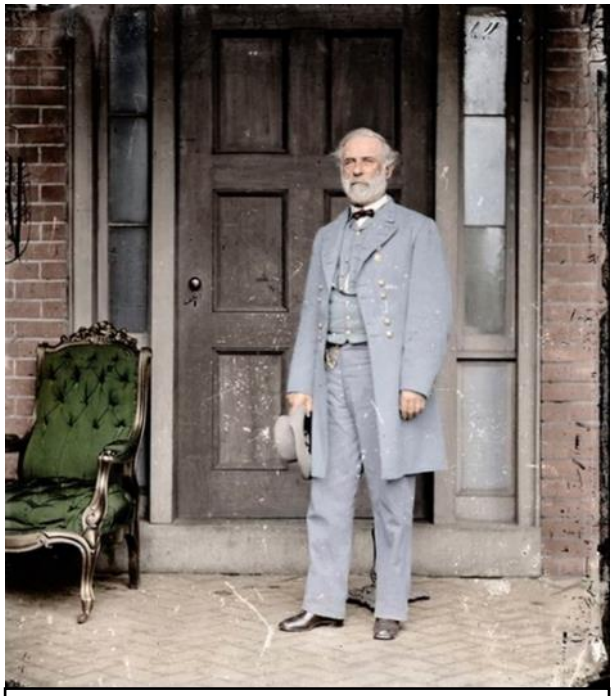
Another source with much information on landed gentry and nobles is *British History Online*. This includes the Victoria County Histories. These detail the various manors and who held them at various times. There is information on the lands held and the status of the subject, as well as their beneficiaries. They are updated if funding is available. All of this information helps to build a picture of the subject, although not all counties are available. *British History Online* also has Court Rolls and other sources, but these are mainly available only to subscribers, whereas the Victoria County Histories are free access. Another set of sources available is the medieval Inquisition Post Mortem or IPM. These were local inquiries into the lands held by the deceased so that income and rights due to the Crown could be collected – perhaps an early form of inheritance tax. Some are available through *British History Online* but others are only available from either *Mapping The Medieval Countryside* or the National Archive. A few are still unpublished.


THE
VICTORIA HISTORY
OF THE COUNTY OF
DORSET
EDITED BY
WILLIAM PAGE, F.S.A.
VOLUME TWO
LONDON
ARCHIBALD CONSTABLE
AND COMPANY LIMITED
1908

There will be other sources of information, but these are the main sources used by Lindsey to compile her family tree. The vast majority of her research was carried out online, and as time goes on more will no doubt be generated by new research and become readily available without leaving home.

Alan Dedden

The CBA Wessex Quiz #9 'Around the World' can be found HERE



Confederate General Robert E Lee (1807-1870), who commanded the Army of Northern Virginia from 1862 until its surrender in 1865. When Lee joined the Confederacy, his Arlington plantation across the Potomac from Washington DC was taken by the Union government and later became Arlington National Cemetery. The Pentagon was built next to it.

Imperial Airways plane, 1936. It doesn't look very safe, does it? Well, accidents were frequent: in their first 6 years from 1924, 32 people died in 7 incidents. In 1939 Imperial were merged into BOAC and eventually became British Airways.

Coca-Cola being introduced to France in 1950.

Transporting a 5MB hard drive; a serious job in 1956, but now you can have thousands of times that in your pocket.

A pair of beavers, extinct in Britain for 4 centuries, have been released in the west of Dorset as part of a nationwide trial. They're in an enclosed private habitat, being monitored by Dorset Wildlife Trust.

Yonaguni Island, Japan's Atlantis?

Yonaguni is the westernmost of the inhabited islands of Japan, 2,000km south-west of Tokyo and only 108km from the east coast of Taiwan. With only 29km^2 (11 square miles) of land, it's just 11km long and 4km wide, with a population of about 1,700 and a local language that's impenetrable to almost everyone else.

Yonaguni's early history is vague and much debated, though many assume it was first settled from Taiwan about 30,000 years ago. The island was connected to Taiwan by a land bridge during the last ice age, probably up to roughly 10,000 years ago. In the 15th century it was part of the Ryukyu Kingdom, with its centre on Okinawa to the north-east; a major player in medieval maritime trade in East and South-East Asia. The Kingdom was a tributary state of the Ming dynasty in China from 1429 but invaded by Japan in 1609, who then gained control over its islands, though they weren't formally included in the Empire of Japan until 1872. From 1945 to 1972 Yonaguni was controlled by the United States, and in the early post-war period the island's tiny port became a black-market centre; the population reached 20,000 briefly, with 38 bars and about 200 'hostesses'.

Despite its small size, Yonaguni has its own small native breed of horse, typically of 10 hands (i.e. about 1m at the 'shoulders'). It also has a separate species of the world's largest moth, the Atlas Moth, with wingspans up to 25cm. An alcoholic distilled rice drink, *hanazake* (flower sake), is only produced on the island; despite being 120^o proof, or 60% alcohol, it's traditionally drunk straight. The island is also known as a favoured dive site, partly as a gathering place for hammerhead sharks but also for the 'Yonaguni Monument'. Perhaps this isn't a place to dive after trying *hanazake*, as you also need to watch out for *anbonia* – the 'Geography Cone Snail' – as it can fire an attached 'poison dart' that is potentially fatal to humans.

The underwater Yonaguni Monument, or 'ruins', off the south coast was only discovered in 1986. It has "staircase-like terraces with flat sides and sharp corners". One description of this underwater 'pyramid' speaks of a "platform 100x50 metres and up to 25 metres tall, seeming carved out of solid rock at perfect right angles". It is, though, hard to get a handle on the actual size when another website puts the dimensions of the main part as 150x40 metres and another says it's 50x20m. At least most agree that it's around 20metres tall at its highest point, which is around 4-5metres below the surface of the sea. Let's just say that the 'main slab' is huge, and that there are other formations nearby, some resembling pillars or columns.

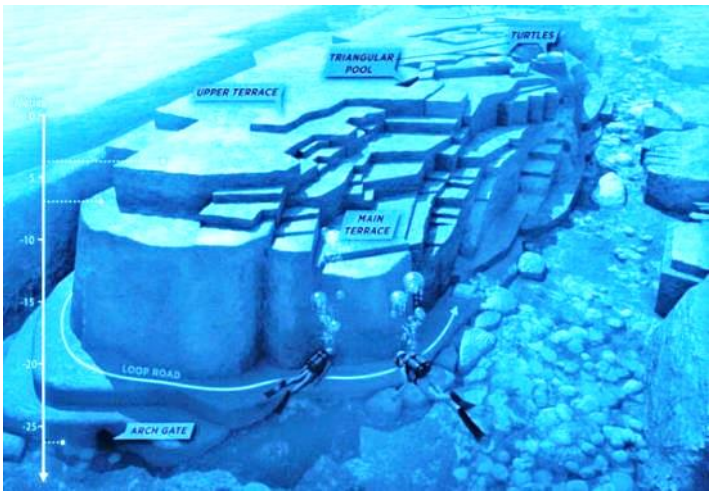
Masaaki Kimura, a professor from Okinawa, believes that these formations are artificial or, at least, artificially modified structures. It seems that he originally suggested they were at least 2,000 years old and more recently around 5,000 years. His view is that they were originally above ground, sunk by earthquakes in this tectonically highly active region. Reports of these theories are generally over a decade old, so his current views (he is now 80) may differ; I can't find any information on that.

Others have dated the formations at 8,000 years old, some suggesting that they are part of the lost

Continent of Mu, also called Lemuria. The most popular theories about Mu appear to be that it is the Pacific equivalent of the Atlantic Atlantis, a sunken continent which held an extremely ancient advanced civilisation. Of course, there are also fringe theories (!) that the rock formations are the work of aliens.

However, a professor of geology who dived the site thought that this was basic geology and classic stratigraphy for the local sandstones and mudstones, which tend to break along planes and give very straight edges, particularly in an area with lots of faults and tectonic activity. To counter that, there are comments that this is too boring, especially as there are supposed to be hallways and staircases, as well as what appear to be regular rows of holes dug for moving rock. Some even say that there is a form of writing on the walls. I have to say that I can't find any photographs to confirm any of this.

The best overall view I've found is that shown here but, although I've found it on several websites, I have yet to find its origin, any description of the diagram or anything that convinces me that it is an accurate representation. Several researchers say that the monument is natural and that it appears to be of solid rock, rather than distinct blocks.



The counter to that is this picture of an underwater stepped, Aztec-like, pyramid, clearly made of huge blocks and with a stairway to the top. This, again, can be found on several sites, but is almost certainly neither real nor anything to do with Yonaguni.

But why not have a search for the monument on the internet, where you may find something that I didn't. If you think it's of interest, or have anything to add, do let me know.

Geoff Taylor

Black Foxes

I didn't even know that we had wild black foxes in this country, a natural variation on the usual red (though a small proportion that are more 'silver' foxes may be the result of people breeding them in the past; some may even be escaped exotic pets). Apparently something like 1 in 1,000 foxes in the UK are naturally black, but it seems that the proportion may be increasing and sightings across the country are going up. They seem to live quite happily alongside the more normally coloured ones.

Dodgy Metaphors for Brexit

This is a summary of an article by Tom Holland from the Sunday Times. Tom Holland (the writer, not the actor) is particularly known for historical books, fictional as well as factual, like *Rubicon* and *Persian Fire*. Here he considers the historical metaphors that have been used for Brexit and scores them as to how relevant they actually are. You may disagree, in which case I'd be interested to know your views.

Drowning of Doggerland *c*.6200BC

Rising sea levels led to the land bridge between Britain and the Continent being flooded. Geographically this is obviously the most important break with Europe, but the relevance to Brexit is minor; even Nigel Farage didn't want this hard a Brexit: **1/10**.

Romans leave Britain *c*.AD410

According to Zosimus, writing a little later, the Britons "threw off the control of Rome". Consequences were catastrophic: the economy imploded and towns and villas were abandoned to weeds. The Britons were the only ones who chose to leave the empire: **6/10**.
[Don't think I agree: others say the Britons pleaded with Rome to 'stay' and many apparently tried to maintain Roman ways.]

King John's relationships with Europe 1199-1216

John lost England's holdings in France, got into a major dispute with the Pope and defied papal authority for 8 years. He was brought to heel by the threat of French invasion and England became a fiefdom of the papacy. John's unmitigated humiliation makes our Brexit look a model of statesmanship: **2/10**.

The Reformation 16th century

Henry VIII's wife troubles led to England's divorce from the Catholic Church, then Elizabeth I signed trade deals with non-European powers. He reckons the Reformation was a European, rather than exclusively British, phenomenon and had a profound effect on how we see ourselves: **8/10**.

The Protectorate 1653-60

The establishment of a Republic in Britain and Ireland was seen by Cromwell and his supporters as "a noble and puissant nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep" (Milton). This was a real revolution but Brexit isn't: **3/10**.

The Seven Years War 1756-63

A European conflict that resulted in Britain becoming a global power. He thinks that Brexit wasn't motivated by a wish to restore the Empire, but was sustained by an image of global Britain: **5/10**.

The Continental System 1806-14

Napoleon's blockade of Britain sustained by French hegemony over continental Europe. Only the most die-hard Brexiteers wanted no-deal, though he wonders if Macron briefly remembered this: **3/10**.

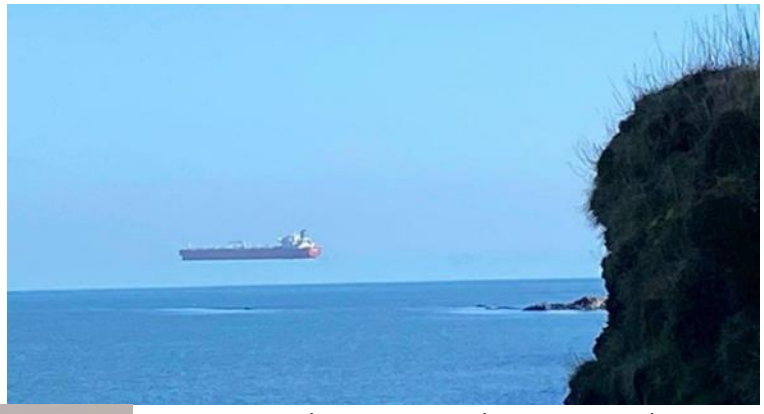
Splendid Isolation in the late 19th century

The heyday of Victorian self-confidence, a continuing influence to this day as most English traditions took on their familiar forms then, including Euroscepticism. However, Britain isn't the great power it was then: **3/10**.

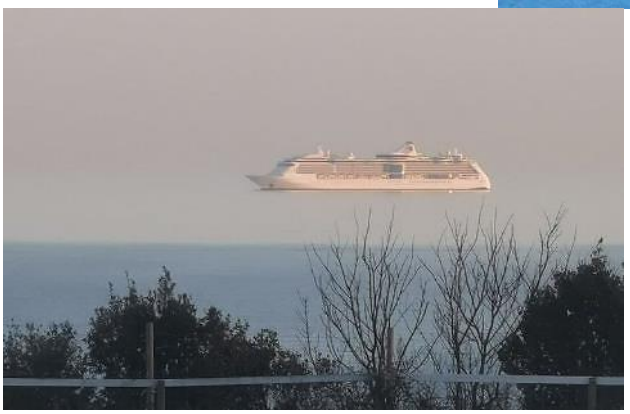
Ireland leaves UK 1922
It happened despite the warnings of economic and constitutional upheaval, and provoked a bitter civil war. There are parallels, though The EU isn't a colonial power (some might disagree) and didn't preside over centuries of oppressive rule: **5/10**.

Dunkirk 1940
This stirring moment, when the British army retreated from Germany and could continue the fight against the Nazis "alone", is probably the single most used parallel. However, Britain wasn't alone in 1940 and the EU isn't Nazi Germany: **1/10**.

Hovering ships



This photograph, taken 4th March by David Morris near Falmouth, isn't a fake. Unfortunately, neither has someone discovered antigravity or a new method of propulsion – it's a mirage caused by temperature inversion, where there's cold air near the sea and warmer air above it. Whilst this 'superior mirage' is relatively common in the Arctic, it only appears in the UK in winter and then very rarely.



But then we had the hovering cruise ship off Bournemouth on 17th March, photographed by many people.

Alan Affleck's photograph of Undulatus clouds at Ravenscraig Park in Kirkcaldy is here because I thought it unusual, though it's nothing to do with the ships.

A Senior's Version of Facebook

For those of my generation who do not, and cannot, comprehend why Facebook exists:

I am trying to make friends outside of Facebook while applying the same principles. Therefore, every day I walk down the street and tell passers-by what I have eaten, how I feel at the moment, what I have done the night before, what I will do later and with whom. I give them pictures of my family, my dog and of me gardening, taking things apart in the garage, watering the lawn, standing in front of landmarks, driving around town, having lunch and doing what anybody and everybody does every day. I also listen to their conversations, give them 'thumbs up' and tell them I 'like' them.

And it works just like Facebook – I already have 4 people following me: 2 police officers, a private investigator and a psychiatrist.

> I got myself a seniors' GPS. Not only does it tell me how to get to my destination, it tells me why I wanted to go there.

Villa Epecuén ghost town, Argentina

This resort town was established in the 1920s on the shore of Lago Epecuén, about 600km southwest of Buenos Aires. However, consistent high rainfall caused the lake to swell and, despite building a dam, the waters broke through in 1985 – a slow-growing flood inundated the town up to 10m deep by 1993. Then the weather got drier and the lake began to recede, so that by 2011 it was possible to walk many of the streets again.

The town was, though, destroyed, not so much by the flood but by the salty waters of the lake, said to be 10 times the salinity of seawater. That killed all the trees and other plants, of course. Despite this, one resident returned to the outskirts in 2009, and Pablo Novak was still living there in 2018, aged 88. By then hardly any of the town was underwater.

Volcano season?

On the left, lava spilling from the top of Mount Merapi on 27th January, Indonesia's most active volcano, vs. Fagradalsfjall on March 19, 30km south-west of Iceland's capital, Reykjavik.

Neither as spectacular as this shot of the world's most active volcano, Mount Etna, on 17th February.

The secret artists creating miniature buildings for street mice

On streets across Europe, a secret organisation of artists who go by the name AnonyMouse have been creating little places for mice to use, from a record store in Lund to a miniature castle on the Isle of Wight. The Sweden-based 'Anonymouse Collective' is a loose organisation of artists with members across Europe. They say they want to remind people that the "street belongs to everyone, and changing that space is up to all of us".

Wimborne Minster

This is just a couple of things that intrigued me as I didn't know about them, despite visiting the Minster often (more likely these days, I'd forgotten).

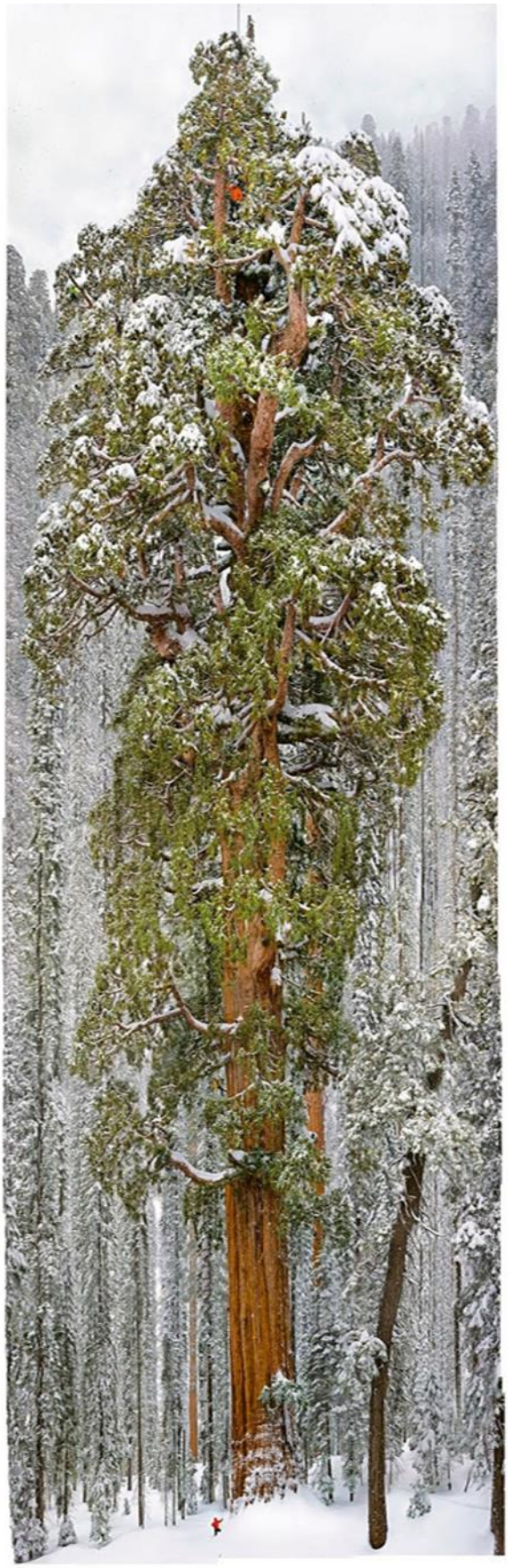
The church has a brass memorial to King Ethelred (or Æthelred) I, king of Wessex who reigned 865 (or 866!) – 871. He is buried in the Minster but the location of his tomb isn't known. The memorial is the only royal brass in the country but, perhaps oddly, it wasn't made until the mid-15th century and it has its facts wrong.

Ethelred (not to be confused with 'Ethelred the Unready', who was Ethelred II) was mortally wounded fighting the Danes, probably at Martin near Cranborne, and died in April 871 (the exact date is unclear but many say the 23rd). The memorial, however, puts the year as 873, when it is known that his brother Alfred definitely succeeded him in 871.

Two other Kings of Wessex are buried in Dorset – Æthelbald (858-860) and Æthelbert (860-865), both in Sherborne Abbey.

Daniel Defoe wrote *Tour through England and Wales*, published in 1724, in which he said that Wimborne Minster had "a most exquisite spire, finer and taller, if fame lyes not, than that at Salisbury". The only problem with that is that the spire collapsed in about 1600. The church's site says it was built in the 13th century but the Royal Commission has it as 15th century. Nevertheless, it had gone 60 years before Defoe was even born. I've not been able to find out how tall it was.

The President (no, not Trump or Biden)



The first ‘single picture’ of this beautiful 247 feet tall tree in Sequoia National Park, California, sent by my American friend.

It’s actually a composite of 126 photographs, chosen from thousands taken by people hanging from branches and so on; the figure near the top and the one at the bottom show the scale (the one at the top looks bigger because he’s on one of the limbs forward of the main trunk).

The tree is thought to be 3,200 years old; the end of the first half of its life (so far) coincided with the Romans ‘leaving’ Britain. It has about 2 billion leaves.

Food & drink

Did you know that avocados grow in hanging pairs and get their name from the Aztec word *ahuacatl* which means testicles? That was very quickly made politer by the Spanish, who used the much more respectable *abogado*, meaning advocate.

Or that the Cavendish banana cultivar, ancestor of most of those eaten today, was first grown at Chatsworth in the 1830s?

Gin has a reputation for causing misery but, as someone said, any alcohol makes you weepy if you drink it fast enough and have something to weep about.