



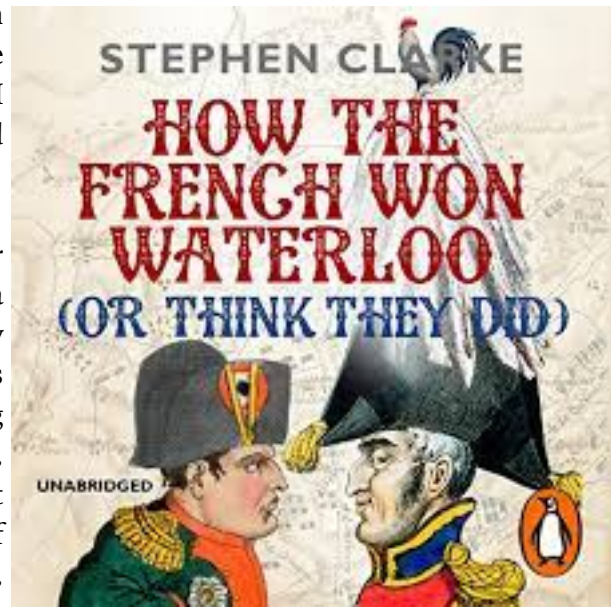
*A personal selection of Salisbury, Wiltshire, Wessex, British and world, history*

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## INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTIONS

In recent J&Ts we have had reason to mention the Industrial Revolution which we associate with Victorian times. However in two books I have dipped into recently, two ideas have cropped up.

Stephen Clarke's *how the French Won Waterloo (or think they did)* (Arrow Books 2016) is not only a hilarious romp through how history is viewed by our neighbours across La Manche but contains some serious points as well. Although winning Waterloo is obviously a salving of national pride, there is good justification for agreeing that Napoleon won the peace in that so much of France is still governed by Napoleon's ideas, whereas Wellington is just an interesting historic figure. After all, defeat can also bring out good qualities; think of Hereward the Wake or the Little Ships of Dunkirk. One story that has been kept alive by the Bonapartists is that when the British had surrounded part of the Old Guard, they called on them to surrender to which their officer replied *Merde*. The story is of course apocryphal (although widely believed) as the officer in question denied saying it.



The idea I thought was most interesting, is that due to the dominance of the British Navy, the French failed to have an Industrial Revolution which, in the long run, they are very grateful for. Why? Because they avoided the pollution, the huge gap between rich and poor, the inhuman working conditions and the fact that it did not last. Whilst the French were forced to go into de-luxe goods such as wine, cheese and cosmetics - at which they still excel.



The second book was *Babylon, Mesopotamia and the Birth of Civilization* by Paul Kriwaczek (Atlantic Books 2012). I had as a teenager read the 1964 Penguin Classics *The Epic of Gilgamesh* so I was not entirely ignorant of the rise of Ur (left), Uruk etc. in the Fertile Crescent (modern day Iraq). In *Babylon*, the author draws attention to Johan Huizinga's seminal book *Homo Ludens* (1938) which shows how key Play (in its widest sense) is



to the birth of civilisation. In part this explains the amazing burst of creativity that changed the *face of the globe* during the fourth millennium BC.

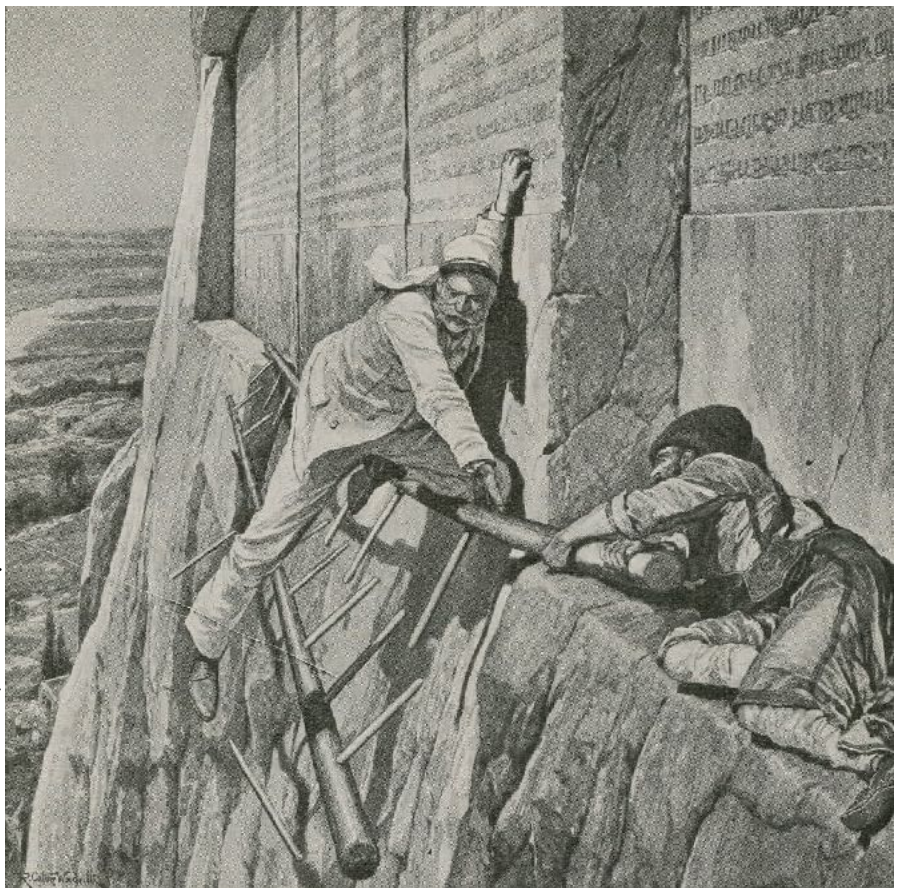
It would appear that the Mesopotamians were leaving the land for the city of Uruk which was controlled by the priesthood. Here they could work for the priest or the king - for a salary. The

irrigation projects increased food production so a farmer's son could choose a completely different career in the city. The lack of subsistence pressure created time for 'play' which resulted in a spate of original ideas, including the invention of the wheel and Cuneiform writing. The list of new technology is impressive: beer brewer's vat, the potter's kiln, the textile loom, the plough, the seed drill and the farm cart; the wind vane, the sailing boat, the harp, lyre and lute; fired bricks, the vault and the true arch - and children's toys. Interestingly, the potters wheel was invented before the cart wheel. They even invented a synthetic Lapis Lazuli which is still made in the same way today. The photo above is of a cylindrical seal and its imprint. There was almost a craze for this need to mark everything with your personal 'logo'.

Story: According to legend, Demetrius of Phalerium, head librarian at Alexandria, encouraged Ptolemy II (284 - 246 BC) to try and obtain a copy of the Jewish Torah. The high priest in Jerusalem sent seventy-two scholars, six from each of the Twelve Tribes. Each working alone on the island of Pharos managed to produce 72 identical copies - actually the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible) means 70 but as the old Jewish joke has it, who's counting?

In 1857 the Royal Asiatic Society of London gave a newly discovered Mesopotamian document to 4 leading scholars: Edward Hincks, Jules Oppert, Henry Creswicke and our own William Henry Fox Talbot. Again, each worked alone with the translation and they were submitted under seal. The examiners found that they were sufficiently alike for the Society to pronounce the mystery of cuneiform solved.

There are three forms of cuneiform and I well remember my childhood Victorian encyclopaedia showing a photo of British





army office Henry Rawlinson balanced on a long wooden ladder standing on a narrow ledge half way up a cliff at Behistun (page 2, *A narrow escape*) in northern Persia. He was copying a lengthy inscription left by king Darius around 500 BC. As it was trilingual, that solved the second style of cuneiform. The third version was much more difficult but was eventually conquered and is known today as Akkadian, split into Babylonian (south) and Assyrian (north) dialects.

Scholars felt that there was an even older language underlying these translations and eventually in 1905 a coherent and convincing translation of Sumerian was published. It turned out to be a very strange language and not part of any linguistic group with unusual syntax and a lexicon of one-syllable words. So, for example, 'A' could mean: water, canal, flood, tears, semen, offspring or father. Modern scholars feel that the language might be a *creole*, the result of children learning a language from their mother which was a *pidgin* cobbled together to enable speakers of different tongues (Uruk was multi-ethnic) to communicate.

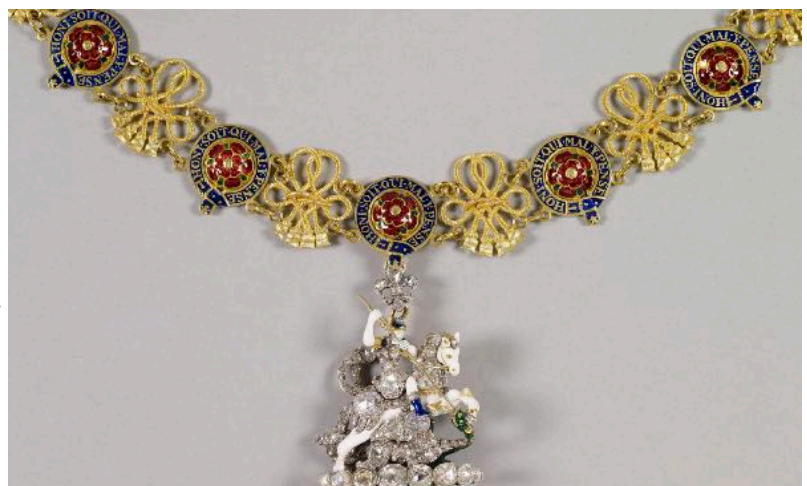
#### QUOTE UNQUOTE

**I** *f you cannot make knowledge your servant, make it your friend.* That seems to sum up J&T's ethos. Quoted by The Knowledge from Spanish writer Baltasar Gracián.

#### CORRESPONDENCE

**V**eronica Burton writes re J&T No.130: On John of Bohemia, my sources differ. It would seem that the Black Prince, 16 years old and in his first battle, when walking the battle after its end, was moved to find John of Bohemia and those who tethered their horses to his to take the blind king into battle. That Edward took the badge of three feathers and adopted it in tribute to John's heroism, is accepted. What is disputed is the adoption of the motto *ich dien*. Michael Jones, the Black Prince's most recent biographer, says the motto was devised by the Prince himself and first used in 1363, almost 20 years after Crecy. Generally, the most acceptable solution appears to be the feathers, but not the motto, was taken from John on the field of Crecy.

I must say that the story of the Countess of Salisbury (possibly Joan) and the garter, seems to be entirely untrue. There is no C14 source saying anything like that. The only source that relates this story is



from Polydor Vergil, a writer of the early C16, with nothing to support its veracity. Sometimes a story's too good to waste on account of historic fact or likelihood.

Stephen Slater (our Heraldry guru) comments: As for the countess's garter falling down- nice one, but as usual, I think the legend came about centuries after the supposed incident - probably a bunch of heralds sitting about with nothing better to do - no TV to keep them occupied!

### SCOTLAND'S BARD

**A**fter Queen Victoria and Christopher Columbus, Robert Burns has more statues dedicated to him around the world than any other non-religious figure.

John Steinbeck's classic 1937 novel, 'Of Mice and Men' took its name from a line in the Burns poem *To a Mouse – The best laid schemes o' mice an men / Gang aft agley*.

J.D. Salinger's 1951 novel, 'The Catcher in the Rye' based its title on the Robert Burns poem, *Comin' Thro' the Rye*.

*Is There For Honest Poverty'* (also known as *A Man's a Man for a' That*) was chosen to open the new Scottish Parliament in 1999 due to its themes of equality and universal brotherhood.

*Auld Lang Syne* is recognised by the Guinness Book of World Records as one of the top three most popular songs in the entire English language.

American President, Abraham Lincoln, had a lifelong admiration for the work of Robert Burns, with some claiming that the poet's work had a key role in helping Lincoln win the American Civil War and abolish slavery.

Burns' body was exhumed in 1815 to be placed in a new mausoleum in the town of Dumfries. During this process, a plaster cast of his skull was taken for study, which was found to be larger than the average man's skull.

Burns fathered at least twelve children during his short lifetime. His youngest son, Maxwell, was actually born on the day of Burns' funeral.



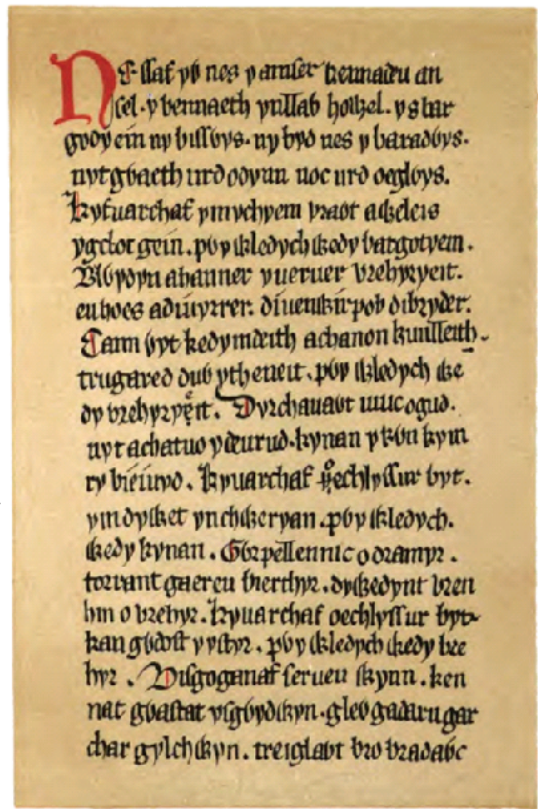
The oldest surviving piece of tartan has been “brought back to life”, says The Guardian (in The Knowledge). Experts recreated the 500-year-old cloth, which was discovered in a peat bog in the Highlands four decades ago, using carbon dating and dye analysis. Believe it or not, the oldest tartan cloth found was 3,000 years in Xinjiang, China. Tartans were local but not originally associated with clans. It was not until the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the Victorians invented artificial dyes that clan tartans evolved. The whole subject became politicised when George IV and Victoria supported ‘Highlandism’, stage-managed by Sir Walter Scott.

### THE MABINOGION

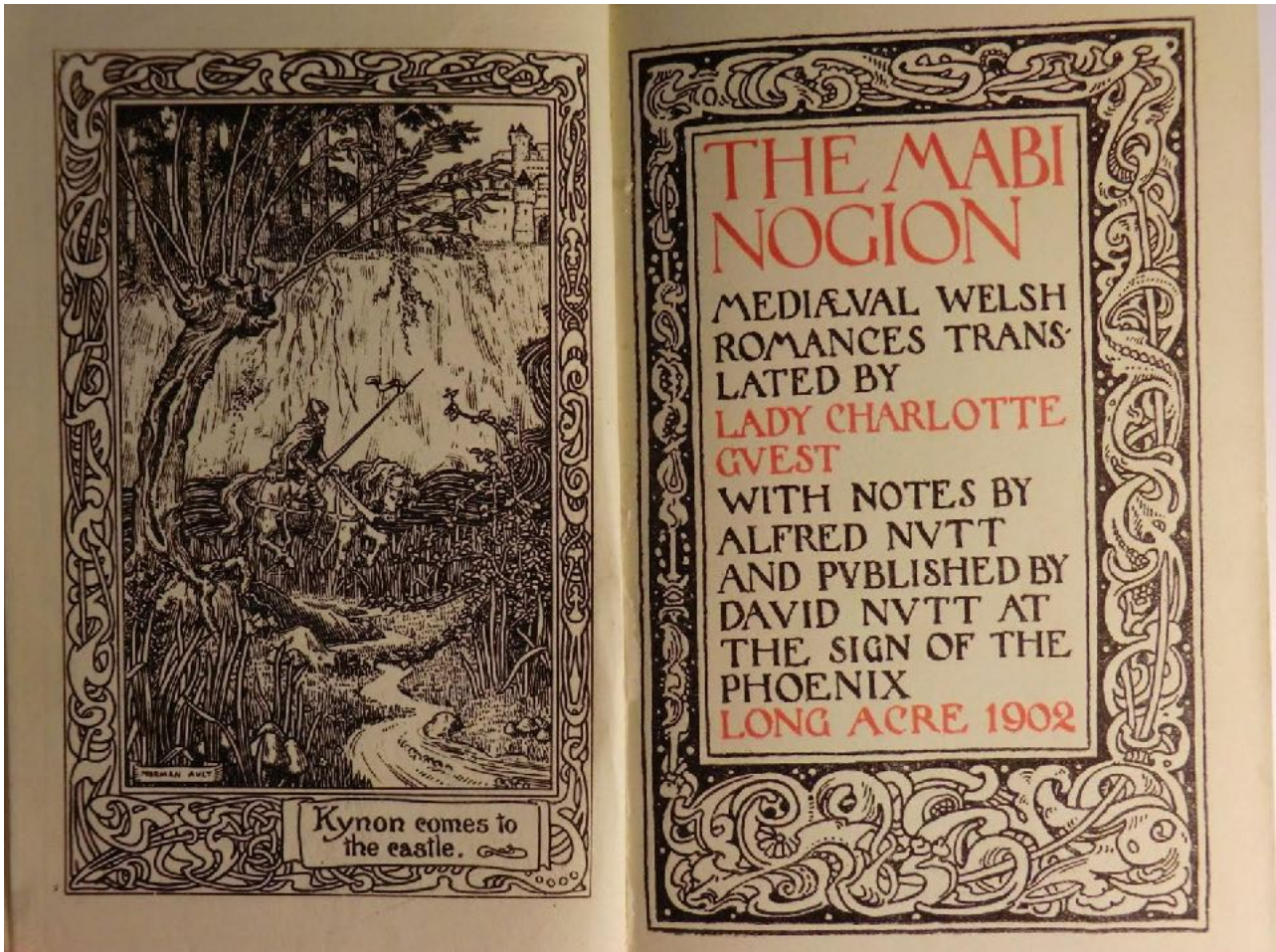
**Y**ou may not of heard of this if you aren't Welsh, but it is a collection of eleven medieval Welsh folk tales first assembled and printed by Lady Charlotte Guest in the mid-nineteenth century. They were originally collected together in the *White Book of Rhydderch* c.1325, followed by the *Red Book of Hergest* 1382 (see pic on page 5, Facsimile, courtesy of the Jesus College, Oxford). If you think this sounds rather Tolkienish then it is sources like this that he drew his inspiration from. They were original oral tales of the bards passed from generation to generation. Of course once written down, one misses the wide variation in narrative of the oral

tradition. The stories are a mixture of the myth, folklore, history and pseudo-history of Celtic Britain (as with King Arthur). Unlike the Irish, this is the only such Welsh collection of its kind. The recording of the stories has not been to the usual academic standards and have thus become somewhat corrupted.

The first story is that of Pwyell Lord of Dyfed (Pembroke, Carmathen and Cardigan) who ruled over the seven cantrefs (an administrative unit of 100 homesteads). Pwyll (Prudence), in Celtic mythology, king of Dyfed, a beautiful land containing a magic cauldron of plenty. He became a friend of Arawn, king of Annwn (the underworld), and exchanged shapes and kingdoms with him for a year and a day, thus gaining the name Pwyll Pen Annwn ("Head of Annwn"). With the aid of the goddess Rhiannon (the Welsh manifestation of the Gaulish horse goddess Epona and the Irish goddess Macha), who loved him, Pwyll won her from his rival, Gwawl. She bore him a son, Pryderi, who was abducted by Gwawl. Pryderi was later restored to his parents and succeeded Pwyll as ruler both in Dyfed and Annwn. In Arthurian legend, Pwyll's cauldron became the Holy Grail, and Pwyll appeared as Pelles, the keeper of the Grail.



My information is mainly from my copy of the Penguin Classics translation by Jeffrey Gantz, published in 1976.





## LAMPOON

From his lodgings above a shop in St James's, James Gillray (left, an 1819 mezzotint *courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery*) took aim at all kinds of public figures; and the odd thing was, most of his targets loved it. As Samuel Johnson said when he learned that Gillray had caricatured him as *Dr Pomposo*: "I hope the day will never come when I shall neither be the subject of calumny or ridicule, for then I shall be neglected and forgotten." In Georgian London, a caricature was a "fast-track to celebrity". When Gillray finally got in trouble over an "innocuous parody" of the Three Wise Men, a young George Canning – "who had been badgering him for a

caricature" – took the opportunity to weigh in. The blasphemy charges were dropped, and Canning, who went on to become prime minister, got his caricatures. Eighteen months later, Gillray was on a government pension, working as a highly effective propagandist. His image of Napoleon "Little Boney" Bonaparte as a "vertically challenged tyrant" has stuck, even though "the Corsican was actually above average height". His cartoon (right, a hand-coloured print published by Humphrey in 1805 *and in the Public Domain*) shows Napoleon and Pitt The Younger carving up the world at the Peace of Amiens). Gillray referred to the Prime Minister as *The Bottomless Pitt*. This article taken from The Knowledge.

