



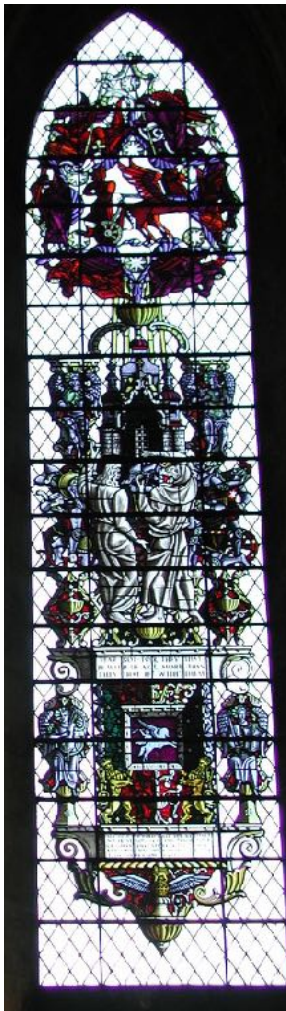
*A personal selection of Salisbury, Wessex,  
British and world, history*  
EDITOR: Mark Brandon:



## A PEEK THROUGH THE WINDOW - NO. 46

### MIKE DEEMING WRITES:

In 1947, Harry Stammers (1902-69) was persuaded by Dean Milner-White of York Minster to move to York and set up a new stained glass studio and school. This was the forerunner of the York Glaziers' Trust, whose current leader, Prof Susan Brown, is the author of *Sumptuous and Richly Adorn'd*, every Salisbury Cathedral guide's essential handbook to the decoration of the Cathedral. He brought to York his extensive experience and his quirky style, which built on the classical style of Christopher Webb.



This style is exhibited in his 1950 window commemorating the Glider Pilot Regiment, in our north nave aisle (left). Here, the figures are angular and stylised, with delicately painted faces. Notice how they are set against a clear antique glass background, to maximise the light through the north facing window. Red is the dominant colour – red was the regimental colour – in contrast to the dominant blues of the medieval glass, of the Prisoners of Conscience window and, most recently, of the Army Air Corps Window just to the east.



The biblical stories depicted in these windows are well described in the guides' handbook and also in Paul Smith's book 'Salisbury Cathedral - the Windows of the West'. The panel at the bottom of the lancet shown here includes the text *See that ye hold fast the heritage we leave you, yea, and teach your children that never in the coming centuries may their hearts fail or their hands grow weak.*

The quote is from a pageant play by Louis N Parker, first staged in 1912. It celebrated the career of Sir Francis Drake and his defeat of the Armada. It ran for 221 performances at His Majesty's Theatre and this photo (above right) shows Lyn Harding as Sir Francis and Amy Brandon-Thomas as Lady Drake.



Harry Stammers' windows usually carry his maker's mark, in this case with the date at the bottom of the left lancet. You can see too the antique clear glass in this picture. There is another Stammers' window in the old St Mary's Church in Wilton, also carrying his maker's mark. But for glass in Wilton, you really must go to the Italianate church of St Mary and St Nicholas, home to one of the most extraordinary displays of stained glass windows in the country, much of it C12-C13 from France. I'll take a peek at that in a future Jot&Tittle.

### THE POISONED PEN

**W**icked Little Letters, a recent Studio Canal film, tells the story of a farcical and sinister scandal in a 1920s English seaside town. When Edith Swann (played by Olivia Colman) and fellow residents begin to receive threatening letters full of unintentionally hilarious profanities, foul-mouthed Irish migrant Rose Gooding (Jessie Buckley), is charged with the crime. The anonymous letters prompt a national uproar, and a trial ensues.



The historical basis of the film was provided by the *Littlehampton letters*, explored by cultural historian Emily Cockayne in two books, *Cheek by Jowl: A History of Neighbours* and *Penning Poison: A History of Anonymous Letters*. The case first appealed to Cockayne because it highlighted the problem of entwined lives that she addressed in her 2012 book on neighbour relations.

The Littlehampton letters started in 1919 with the two neighbours, Edith Swann and Rose Gooding, whose close friendship breaks down after Edith reports Rose to the NSPCC. Soon after, Edith and other members of Littlehampton start receiving poison pen letters full of threats and bizarre obscenities. As Cockayne puts it, 'You can't imagine, genteel society taking too well to this'. Indeed, the letters were not read out in court to spare the jury's blushes. Modern audiences might be surprised that people would use such foul language in the 1920s, including the C-Word. 'The letters tap into a general circulation of bad language in these communities' explains Cockayne. 'Swear words were in more common usage than the period let us know.'

While swearing may have been more commonplace than assumed, it was very unusual for a woman to swear in public, let alone write expletive-filled letters. This in part explains why the Littlehampton letters were such a scandal. Emily points out that 'It would have been very common for men to write letters like these', but the difference was that men were allowed to get away with this behaviour. In some cases, men would claim they had been 'mesmerised', drunk or suffering from the flu. When women start writing the letters 'the whole law book is thrown at them' explains Cockayne.



Story above comes courtesy of Sky History. I don't know if you have seen the film? I thought it was brilliantly acted (the cast includes Timothy Spall and Gemma Jones) but a terrible assault on the ears.

## FINLAND'S NEWBOY

I suppose the average Britisher's knowledge of Sweden stretches from Blondes to IKEA but Swedes have a magnificent history; including a revolution! Nicholas Kinloch writes: King Karl XII was hit by a random musket ball at the end of the Great Northern War. Karl's death did not merely end the life of one of Europe's most charismatic rulers, and with it Sweden's status as a great power. It also precipitated an immediate political and dynastic crisis that, within two years, would transform Sweden's system of government. Like Great Britain's Glorious Revolution of 1688–89, with which it shared some common features, this transformation was largely – though not entirely – bloodless. So rapid and significant were the changes that contemporary Swedes also referred to them as a revolution, and one which appeared to inaugurate an 'age of

liberty'. But in its turn the new era, for all its promise, would last a mere fifty years.

War-weariness, and with it a growing opposition to absolutist rule, spread through all classes and institutions. To the disaffected, the sudden death of Karl XII offered an opportunity. The king had died without issue, and the first question to be answered was who would succeed him. The second was how any successor would be permitted to govern.

The Swedish monarchy had never been hereditary. At least in theory, the sovereign was elected



by the Estates represented in the *Riksdag*, although it was true that they usually chose a scion of the ruling house. Each monarch, upon election, signed an accession charter recognising the privileges of the Structure of Swedish government. It was unclear who should succeed him. At

just eighteen years old Karl Friedrich of Holstein-Gottorp was an unknown quantity. His youth and inexperience counted against him in the circumstances that prevailed in 1718. Nor would he be alone in Stockholm. His mentor was arguably already the most powerful, and certainly the most unpopular, man in Sweden. This was Georg Heinrich von Görtz, Freiherr von Schlitz.



A Change of Government Council chaired by HM The King at the Royal Palace in 2022. The Council was attended by The Crown Princess, the Speaker of the Riksdag and the new Government. Photo: Ingemar Lindewall/The Royal Court of Sweden

The ‘Grand Vizier’, officially, Görtz was no more than the duchy of Holstein-Gottorp’s envoy to Stockholm. Within a year, Görtz was his most trusted adviser. The title of a recent biography, *The kingdom’s most hated man*, suggests the degree of antagonism he aroused. Voltaire – who knew him – observed that *no project was too great for his daring genius to attempt, but that in pursuing his schemes he was equally prodigal with promises and lies*. More darkly, Ulrika Eleonora’s husband, Friedrich of Hesse-Kassel, asserted that *Görtz was everything in Sweden, except a Swedish subject*. Karl XI’s carefully-constructed system of government disintegrated. Policy was now decided by a handful of the king’s acolytes, and increasingly by Görtz alone.

Görtz also controlled foreign policy and even diplomacy, sometimes with disastrous results. He was determined to keep Great Britain out of the war, knowing that King George I, in his capacity as Elector of Hanover, keenly desired the acquisition of Bremen-Verden. Görtz offered financial support to the Jacobite cause, as well as promising a Swedish army to support any Jacobite rebellion. In February 1717, George’s government in London took the extraordinary step of raiding the Swedish embassy, arresting the ambassador, Carl Gyllenborg, and publishing his correspondence.

Görtz, who had been with the king in Norway, was intercepted and arrested near Gothenberg when he attempted to return to Stockholm. The Svea Court of Appeal accused him of having set up in his own person an unlimited despotism. He was found guilty of having unlawfully attempted to separate the late king from the love of his subjects. On 19 February 1719 he was publicly beheaded. When Karl Friedrich finally arrived in Stockholm, he was forced to



acknowledge Ulrika Eleonora as queen. He was denied a royal title, and also learned that the queen's husband had been recognised as her successor.

More significant was the considerable reduction in the authority of the monarch, leading some historians to describe the new regime as an aristocratic republic. In May 1720, Fredrik signed the Grundlag, a new instrument of government. All legislation would require majority approval in three of the four chambers. The Riksdag's Secret Committee was expanded to comprise fifty nobles, twenty-five clerics and twenty-five burghers, and its role was also significantly enlarged. Hitherto, its principal task had been the supervision of foreign policy – hence its name, from the 'secret' matters it dealt with – but now it would initiate legislation. Significantly, representatives from the peasants' Estate were excluded. A second committee would supervise the work of the Privy Council, although the king would retain control of its appointees, as well as making appointments in other areas of the bureaucracy. All future monarchs must agree to an accession charter, before election. The monarch could no longer veto legislation, since he had undertaken in his accession charter 'always to agree with the Estates'. He could neither dissolve the Riksdag nor dismiss ministers. And in reality, his power to appoint members of the Privy Council was limited by the requirement to choose from a shortlist selected by the Riksdag.

The events of 1718–20 never became a foundational myth of the Swedish state. Instead, it was the adoption of the constitution of 1809, and the subsequent establishment of the Bernadotte dynasty, that were generally accepted as having set Sweden on an irreversible course towards constitutional monarchy and parliamentarism. The end of absolutism in 1718–20 coincided with, and was in large part the consequence of, military defeat. No such national trauma was associated with 1809: on the contrary, the new royal house was associated with final victory in the war against Napoleon. In consequence, the revolution of 1718–20 largely disappeared from public discourse. Even so, and for all its limitations, it was more than just 'a plot by some people', as British MP Tony Benn memorably, if inaccurately, described Britain's Glorious Revolution. In what became a century of revolutions, events in Sweden were the first successful challenge, however brief, to the earlier era of absolutism. This was no small achievement, and deserves to be better remembered.

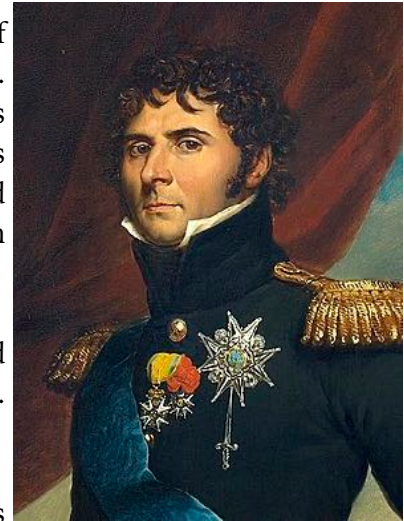
#### THE ONE THAT GOT AWAY



If, like me, you have read the excellent *Désirée* by Anne Marie Selinko (published in 1951) you will know that Désirée Clary<sup>1</sup> (left) was the one time fiancée of Napoleon but who married Marshal Jean-Baptiste Jules Bernadotte. The Marshal was promoted after Austerlitz to become Prince of Pontecorvo. Her sister married Joseph Bonaparte whilst her brother had a daughter, Zénaïde, who married the son of Marshal Berthier (Napoleon's Chief-of-Staff).

In 1810, the Swedish *Riksdag of the Estates* elected Marshall Bernadotte to become Crown Prince of Sweden. On the death of King Charles XIII he was crowned Charles XIV John. After a brief war with a Norway that was fighting for independence, he persuaded the Norwegians as an independent kingdom to form a union with Sweden and share the same monarch and the same foreign policy. In Norway he was crowned Charles III John and the union

lasted until 1905. Then Prince Karl of Denmark, grandson of Charles XV of Sweden, was elected as King Haakon VII of Norway. Bernadotte<sup>2</sup> (right) died in 1844 and was succeeded by his son as Oscar I. Oscar died in 1859 and was succeeded by his son Charles XV (died 1872). Désirée was from Marseilles and never got used to the cold in Sweden which she left in 1811 and did not return until 1823.



Bernadotte was born in Pau in the Pyrenees where his shepherd ancestor married Germaine de Bernadotte and took her surname. In the local dialect it means *Young woman of Béarn*.

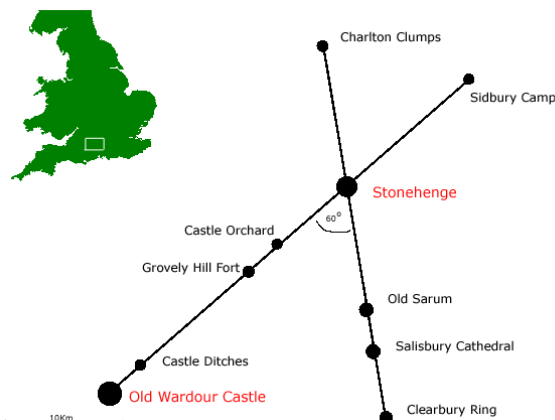
Bernadotte broke with Napoleon - their relationship was always ambivalent - and took Sweden into the anti-Napoleon alliance. Bernadotte was never paid to relinquish the title of Pontecorvo (in the territory of Naples) so in theory all Swedish male heirs have a right to the title.

### LEYS OF ANCIENT WILTSHIRE<sup>3</sup>

A new edition to the J&T library is *Wiltshire Tales of Mystery and Murder* by Roger Evans and published by Countryside books in 2005. One chapter concerns Ley Lines and as an example he sites the four that intersect at Stonehenge, two of which are shown below - in a truncated form. Now, Man is conditioned to look for patterns so we need to be careful not to impose our ideas on our surroundings. Nevertheless the number of points on each ley line is far more than probability would suggest.



I read, *Old Salisbury Cathedral, although built in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, was almost certainly built on or adjacent to an early pagan religious site, as was the norm in the early days of Christianity.* Knowlton church (above), off the Blandford road is the best example of this. So the majority of these dots are at least Iron Age and definitely pre-Roman. As Roger Evans puts it, *Now consider life thousands of years ago when most of the country was covered in trees, when there were no roads. But people still needed to trade and that required travel over extremely long distances. They relied more heavily on the sun than we do now and used simple, natural methods. Three men with poles could easily mark out a straight line - is that what the Cerne Abbas Giant is holding? So did the lines come before the religious and military sites?*



*They relied more heavily on the sun than we do now and used simple, natural methods. Three men with poles could easily mark out a straight line - is that what the Cerne Abbas Giant is holding? So did the lines come before the religious and military sites?*

You may not have to believe in earth energy and dowsing therefore to understand that Ley lines might have a real significance.

1. Painting by Robert Lefèvre (1755–1830), Drottningholm Palace collection - in the public domain.  
 2. Painting by François Gérard (1770–1837) - in the public domain.  
 3. With apologies to Thomas Babbington Macaulay.