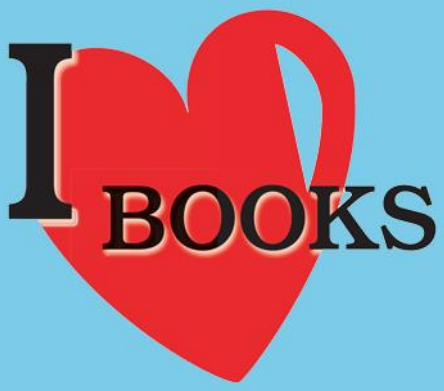


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Opening extract from

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London set ablaze in German 'Blitz'



BY OUR WAR CORRESPONDENT,
London, 11 December 1940

THIS DRAMATIC IMAGE was captured last night by photographer Herbert Mason from the roof of our Fleet Street offices. Over 160 people died in the raid and more than five hundred were injured.

London is bearing the brunt of the Blitz, and has been hit fifty-seven nights in a row. Over a million homes have been destroyed, with tens of thousands killed or injured. Other British cities have also been attacked.

Mr Mason's image is a timeless icon of Britain standing alone against Nazi atrocities. The German Chancellor Adolf Hitler now has a stranglehold on the Continent. Since his invasion of Poland last year, his forces have overrun northern France, Belgium and vast swathes of Central and Eastern Europe, threatening all Europe with their appalling supremacist ideology.

The Blitz (German for lightning) followed air raids on Berlin ordered by Prime Minister Winston Churchill on 25 August after an isolated attack on London. Luftwaffe bombers retaliated on 7 September, switching their targets from airfields to London. This change of tactic relieved Royal Air Force fighter defences which were on the verge of destruction, and has denied Germany the air superiority that was almost in its grasp. As a result, Hitler has been forced to cancel his Operation Sea Lion plans to invade Britain.

This picture was taken by chance. As Mr Mason stood above London, on watch for firebombs, the City was cloaked by smoke and flame. He says the wind raised by the firestorm below briefly cleared the scene to reveal St Paul's surrounded by utter devastation.

"Suddenly the shining cross, dome and towers stood out like a symbol in the inferno," he recalled. "The scene was unbelievable and in that moment or two I released my shutter."

D-Day arrives at last, as Allies fight to free France

BY OUR WAR CORRESPONDENT,
Normandy, France, 6 June 1944

THE INVASION to liberate Europe from its Nazi oppressors has begun. Today, officially D-Day, saw a massive attack on the beaches of Normandy by Allied American, British and Canadian troops.

The landings were a complete surprise to German generals, who had been misled by Allied agents to expect an attack elsewhere on France's heavily defended northern coast.

Troops landed by parachute and glider behind enemy lines in darkness to seize key bridges, roads and gun batteries. Meanwhile resistance groups across France sabotaged communications. In the grey light of dawn, the first wave of the 160,000 soldiers that landed today began the perilous struggle up the beaches. Troops faced heavy fire from bunkers while crawling through a labyrinth of barbed wire. Casualties have been very high. The coast is now secured but there is heavy fighting inland as the Allies advance into France. The final objective is to invade Germany itself from France in the west and Italy in the south, meeting up with the Russian Army advancing from the east.

Nazi Germany, led by Adolf Hitler, combines aggressive military expansion with the appalling treatment of people in occupied territories. Millions, including Jews, Slavs, homosexuals and other groups, have been murdered.

The fascist Nazi party seized power in a desperate Germany suffering from the harsh penalties imposed after the First World War. Hitler promised prosperity and power to the German people – power that would be achieved by enslaving other nations. Hitler's allies in this Second World War have been the empires of Japan and Italy.

In 1940, as western Europe fell, 330,000 British and French soldiers were miraculously evacuated from Dunkirk by a makeshift fleet of warships and civilian vessels, including hundreds of small boats. Today many of the rescued men were again fighting on the beaches of France.



Britain goes nuclear in new 'Cold War'

BRITAIN'S FIRST operational atomic bomb entered service yesterday at top-secret RAF bases in southern England. The Blue Danube, to be carried by Vickers Valiant V-Bombers, marks Britain's entry into the global arms race at the heart of the Cold War, writes our war correspondent on 17 November 1953.

Vital parts of Blue Danube were tested at Orford Ness in East Anglia, and a prototype was detonated in a Pacific island lagoon to the east of Australia. Nuclear weapons were first used to destroy the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. The bombs, developed by the United States with assistance from British scientists, ended the Second World War, albeit with a huge loss of Japanese civilian lives.

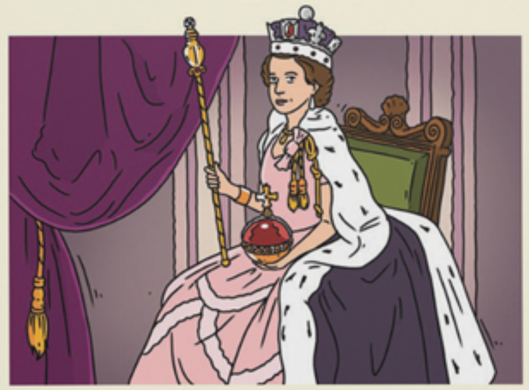
A bitter arms race has now broken out between the US and the USSR, to develop bigger and more powerful bombs. The absence of actual fighting has led to the confrontation being known as a 'Cold War'. The rivalry between the two nations has divided the world, with America and its allies, which include the UK, forming the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (or NATO), facing the USSR and its communist empire. The UK and France have decided that they need their own nuclear weapons for their independent defence.

The Cold War looks set to polarise world politics for decades to come. Meanwhile nuclear research is at the forefront of a technological revolution, contributing to the development of nuclear energy sources to provide electric power.

Long may she reign over us!

Queen Elizabeth II yesterday became the longest-reigning monarch in British history. Our chief reporter charts some of the biggest changes in British life during her reign

BY OUR ROYAL CORRESPONDENT,
London, 10 September 2015



AT TEATIME yesterday afternoon Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II became the longest-reigning monarch in British history. She has now surpassed the reign of her great-great-grandmother, Queen Victoria, who ruled for sixty-three years, seven months and two days.

"It is not a title to which I have ever aspired," remarked the eighty-nine-year-old monarch yesterday afternoon as she opened the new £294 million Scottish Borders railway at the revamped Tweedbank station near Melrose in Scotland. "Inevitably a long life can pass by many milestones – mine is no exception – but I thank you all and the many others at home and overseas for your touching messages of great kindness," she said.

The Queen's reign has seen the end of the British Empire, and Britain itself has been transformed by unprecedented social and technological revolutions. Some of the most dramatic changes since the Queen's succession to the throne in February 1952 include:

Media: The Coronation in June 1953 was the first to be broadcast on television, with an estimated twenty million people tuning in. Since then television, and more recently the Internet, has transformed the ways in which people communicate, learn, transact and protest.

Travel: In 1952 only the rich could afford to travel overseas. Now, cheap flights allow many families to take holidays abroad, some several times a year, thanks to more time off work.

Rights: Over the past sixty-three years key pieces of legislation have banned discrimination on grounds of gender or race, and legalised same-sex relationships and same-sex marriage.

Defence: Threats to national security have changed since the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. Since the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and 7/7, national security concerns have focused on extremists who wish to undermine British ways of life.

Climate: The scientific and political awareness of how quickly humans are changing the world through greenhouse gas emissions has awakened a new global effort to move our economy away from fossil-fuel dependence.

Finally, here are some tantalising questions that remain to be answered in the not-too-distant future:

- Will Britain retain its independent nuclear deterrent?
- Will Britain remain within the European Union?
- Will Britain reform its voting system to better represent its people's wishes?
- Will Britain continue to be a United Kingdom, despite growing support for Scottish independence?
- Will it be Prince Charles or Prince William who eventually takes over as the next monarch of Great Britain and the Commonwealth?

Across

1) Modern sculpture made in heaven (5,2,3,5)
8) Evenin' all! Their official nickname (7)
9) Special stone that means a lot to the Scots (5)
11) Good place to chalk up a walk (5)
12) Roger ____, renowned for his dashing performance (9)
13) Henry ____, who won the Battle of Bosworth Field (5)
15) Symbol used by both sides after a Civil War (4)
16) The biggest problem facing eighteenth-century navigators (9)
18) Bird shot by an ancient mariner (9)
21) Treaty of Union signed by an Iron Lady (10)
23) Significant Act makes monarch head of the Church (9)
25) Canal crisis (4)
26) Sustained bombing campaign (5)
27) House fit for royal newlyweds (8)
29) Creator of the Analytical Engine (7)
32) Nuclear testing zone, now a nature reserve (6,4)
34) One of two double-crossing Anglo-Saxon chiefs (5)
35) First royal racecourse (5)
37) Architect who rebuilt London (4)
38) No Christmas allowed if you are one of these (7)
39) Bonnie Prince (7)

Down

1) Name of republican leader's portrait, not fussed about his image (5,3,3)
2) One of Henry VIII's favourite sports – careful not to fall off! (8)
4) Battle that killed James IV of Scotland (7)
5) Ship they said would never sink (7)
6) Good place to sleep – if you're a dog! (6)
7) Still standing as a memorial to the victims of the Great Fire (8)
10) Country retreat for visionary of Middle Eastern peace (6,4)
12) House where a Prince Charles hid in an oak tree (8)
14) Wartime PM's Kentish hideaway (9)
17) It's just like looking through a keyhole at a man writing a diary! (5)
19) Cornish village devastated by floods (9)
20) Country that threatened England with invasion in 1588 (5)
22) Henry V's finest moment? (9)
24) Project to save Britain's coastline (7)
28) These took place at Quarry Bank (5)
29) Poetic hero who fought a dragon (7)
30) Scotland's favourite poet (5)
31) First city to have a police force (7)
32) First name of female founder of the National Trust (7)
33) Charles ____, world-famous naturalist (6)
36) House with a ring that inspired Tolkien (4)



All the correct answers can be found somewhere in this book!

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Giant welcome for causeway visitors

BY OUR GEOLOGY EDITOR,
Bushmills, County Antrim, 1 July 2012

A SPARKLING NEW visitors' centre opened its doors yesterday at the Giant's Causeway, Northern Ireland's only World Heritage Site. The £18.5m facility was unveiled by Peter Robinson, First Minister of Northern Ireland, and his deputy Martin McGuinness.

The Giant's Causeway is an almost incredible formation of more than 38,000 giant pillars of basalt rock into mainly hexagonal columns. This geological phenomenon reflects shifts that took place in the Earth's crust some sixty million years ago. This period, soon after the extinction of the dinosaurs, saw the world's continents gradually move into their current locations, and mammals begin their slow rise to dominate the Earth.

As Europe and North America gradually drifted apart, magma from beneath the Earth's crusts bubbled up through cracks at the edges of the young Atlantic Ocean. As the magma cooled, it formed the fractured basalt columns.

These rocks have inspired poets and painters for centuries. According to Irish legend, the giant Finn McCool built the causeway to reach Scotland to fight a rival. Accounts differ over who won, but the encounter left the apparently broken causeway and its modern name. More plausibly, perhaps, in 1588 the Spanish galleon *Girona* was dashed against the unforgiving basalt while fleeing the defeat of the Armada. The wreck cost the lives of all but five of the 1,300 men aboard.

Although the National Trust has looked after the site since 1961, it has been without a proper visitors' centre since 2000, when the previous facility burned down. The replacement is the result of ten years' planning and funding from a public appeal and a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

"This is where ancient quarrels are put to rest," said Mr Robinson, as he declared the building open for business. "This new centre will help to transform this region into a world-class tourist attraction."

The centre features 186 hexagonal pillars quarried from part of the same geological formation in nearby Kilrea. Its green roof is carpeted with grasses and wildflowers from local fields, while 4.5km of underground pipes heat the centre using geothermal energy.



Secrets of Stonehenge shrouded in mystery

Wiltshire monument may have been 'an ancient Mecca on stilts', according to radical new theory

BY OUR MEGALITHIC EDITOR,
Salisbury Plain, Wiltshire, 25 March 2015

WHAT WAS the ancient purpose of Stonehenge? Speculations about its function range from a druid temple or a lunar calendar to a centre for healing and hero-worship. However, a startling new theory suggests that the world-famous circle of monumental megalithic standing stones may once have supported a raised wooden platform for prehistoric stargazers.

Behind the new theory is historian and museum director Julian Spalding, who has noted the many raised altars in other cultures and suggests Stonehenge may have supported a similar structure. The evidence, says Spalding, lies in ancient civilisations worldwide. As far afield as China, Peru and Turkey, sacred monuments were built high up, whether on man-made or natural mounds, and in circular patterns possibly linked to the rotation of the stars.



"All the great raised altars of the past suggest that the people who built Stonehenge would never have performed celestial ceremonies on the lowly earth," he continues. "That would have been unimaginably insulting to the immortal beings, for it would have brought them down from heaven to bite the dust and tread in the dung," he says.

The true purpose of Stonehenge, built between 3000 and 2000 BC, continues to mystify archaeologists. Some believe that the stone circle was a religious site; others have suggested that it served a political function, or even that the stones were a giant musical instrument. The circle is aligned to the sunset of the shortest day of the year and the sunrise of the longest, these days being the winter and summer solstices, suggesting cosmological significance, while burials and cremated remains nearby suggest a religious function.

Early construction at the site consisted of raised banks and ditches forming further rings. Prehistoric stone circles dot the countryside of Britain and Europe, including the largest ring of megaliths, literally 'giant stones', at nearby Avebury.



Henry dissolves monasteries, builds fleet

BY OUR ROYAL CORRESPONDENT,
Westminster, June 1541

THE ABBEYS and monasteries owning great swathes of England have been swept away, transforming the landscape and the lives of its people with the greatest redistribution of wealth since the Norman Conquest. The amount of land owned by the Crown has been quadrupled at the stroke of a pen.

Nearly nine hundred religious estates have been closed in just five years, their land and property seized by King Henry VIII, asserting his authority as Supreme Head of the Church in England, a power claimed in the 1534 Act of Supremacy. His policy has seen twelve thousand members of religious communities thrown on to the streets. Although the King has announced that he will create some new charitable and educational institutions, they will not replace the Church's previous role as a provider of education, relief for the poor, shelter for travellers and care for the sick.

The confiscated wealth has more than doubled Crown income. Much of the money will be spent on foreign wars. The Navy Royal has also been expanded to compete for territories in the New World found by Italian slave trader Christopher Columbus. Many of the seized properties have been sold to loyal followers of the King, turning holy sites into luxurious homes, such as Lacock Abbey in Wiltshire, until recently an Augustinian nunnery.

The radical reforms follow the King's dramatic feud with the Pope over the annulment of his first marriage to Catherine of Aragon and his subsequent wedding to Anne Boleyn in 1533. King Henry insists that he is a good Catholic and merely wishes to break the power of the Church and the Pope in Rome. However, his recent raid of Church wealth has coincided with widespread anti-Catholic sentiment. The German monk Martin Luther shook the Catholic world in 1517 by nailing a list of ninety-five objections to papal doctrine to the door of a church. His book *On the Monastic Vows*, published in 1521, states that monastic life has no biblical basis.

A Crown spokesman said, "People must realise that this isn't just about religious principles. The economy of the whole country had been unbalanced by generations being bullied into leaving their property to the Church. Without this drastic action eventually the Church would have owned everything!"

Resistance to King Henry's policies has been strongest in Yorkshire, where a force of thirty thousand assembled under the leadership of landowner Robert Aske, calling itself the Pilgrimage of Grace, demanded an immediate stop to this reformation of the Church in England. Henry agreed to the pilgrims' demands but later arrested Aske and had him hanged in chains to die of thirst, hunger and exposure three days later. More than two hundred rebels were hanged, beheaded or hanged, drawn and quartered, and a woman was burned at the stake.

The King's friends are shocked at this vindictiveness and cruelty, which are at odds with his previous reputation as a fair and generous prince. Some fear that the head injury he sustained while jousting just a few months ago has turned him into a tyrant.

Armada scuppered by storms and fire

THE THREAT of invasion was thwarted yesterday when a colossal armada consisting of hundreds of Spanish ships was defeated by an English fleet, *writes our marine warfare correspondent on 9 August 1588.*

The ferocious sea battle took place near Calais in northern France, where the Spanish ships had been waiting to pick up soldiers for the invasion of Britain. Before the battle, the English released fireships, vessels laden with flammable and explosive goods and then set alight, to throw the Spanish ships into confusion. Admiral Charles Howard and explorer Francis Drake oversaw the English fleet, approaching the Spanish cautiously and encouraging them to fire prematurely while out of range, before rushing in with a deadly volley of cannon fire.

The broken Spanish fleet was forced to flee north around the east coast of Britain, with English ships in hot pursuit. The English victory cements the nation's indisputable power at sea.

The invasion was masterminded by Spanish king Philip II. Along with his late English wife, Queen Mary, Philip was briefly co-ruler of England. But this plan to subdue England came to a crashing end yesterday after the defeat of his fleet.




House of Lords
House of Commons
1660
1675
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2016