

November—December 2023 Magazine

Welcome to the November to December 2023 edition of our Magazine. This issue runs from 1st November to 31st December 2023.

Reports include:

- November monthly meeting — Punch and Judy by Professor Harvey
- November History Group meeting - Matilda and the Norman Kings.
- SNATTs December Meeting—Quiz and

Christmas Tea.

December History Meeting—History of cakes

Last update: 20th January 2024



Christmas Lights on the traffic island by Barclays Bank, Stratford-upon-Avon

Monthly Meeting— Thursday 2nd November 2023

The History & Mystery of the Victorian Punch & Judy Show

By Professor Mel Harvey

Professor Mel Harvey told a good audience at the November meeting of Heart of England u3a about the history and nature of Punch and Judy shows. It was a performance originating in Italy and introduced into Britain in the reign of Charles II as marionettes. Later the puppets were made as hand



puppets and the stories were adapted for children's shows, particularly during the 19th century when they began to be very popular at the seaside. A portable tented theatre be-

came popular, usually in red and white striped fabric, and formalised in Britain during the Victorian period



The tent would hold only one person, usually a man who was styled 'Professor' and operated all the puppets and used a 'swazzle' in his mouth to produce the gleeful cackle sound. Another person, styled a 'bottler' was sometimes present to collect cash from the audience to pay

for the performance.. There were a fascinating variety of puppets that could be included in the show including:

- Mr. Punch
- Judy
- The Baby
- The Constable (a.k.a. Policeman Jack)
- Joey the Clown
- The Crocodile
- The Skeleton
- The Doctor

Characters once regular but now occasional include:

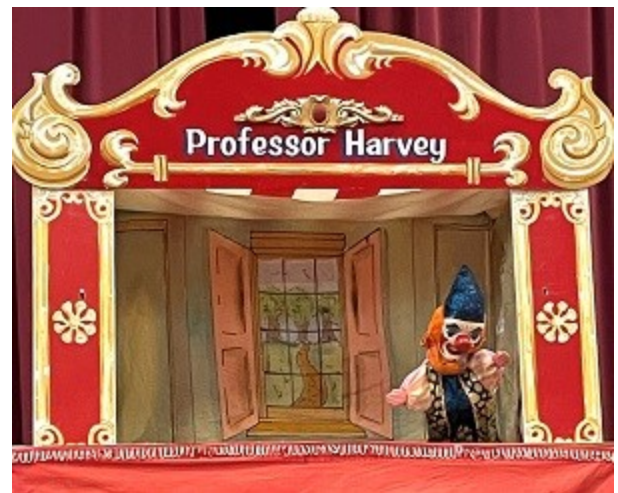
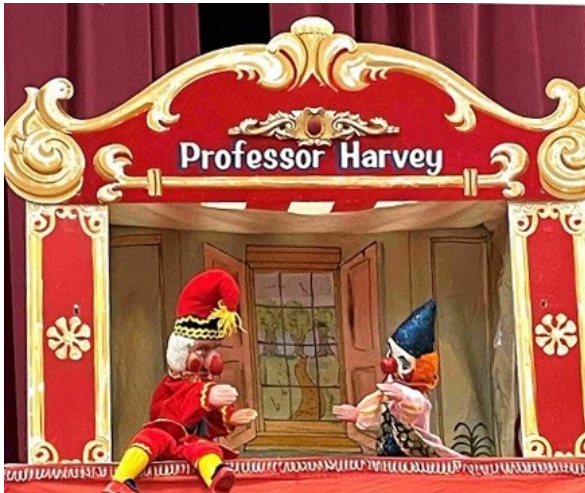
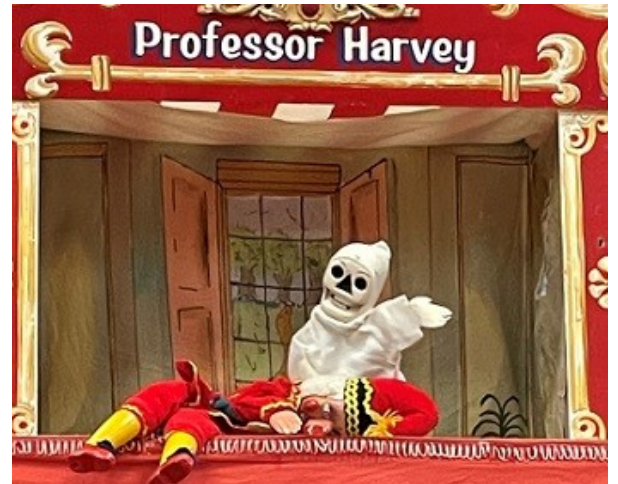
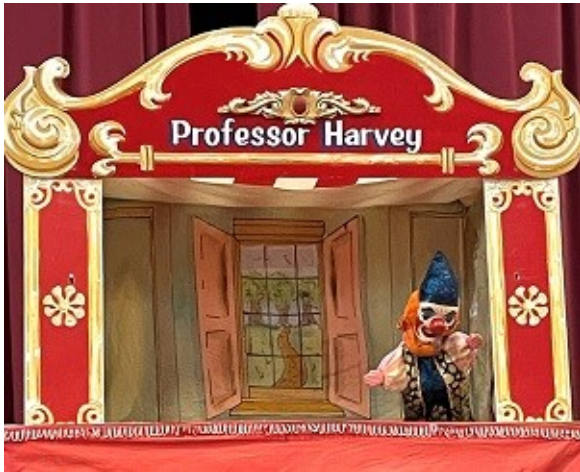
- Toby the Dog
- The Ghost
- The Lawyer
- Hector the Horse
- Pretty Polly
- The Hangman (a.k.a. Jack Ketch)
- The Devil
- The Beadle
- Jim Crow ("The Black Man")
- Mr. Scaramouche
- The Servant (or "The Minstrel")
- The Blind Man

Today there is a Punch and Judy College of Professors who maintain tradition and provide an education service.

Also the V & A Museum has a collection of Punch and Judy puppets and other artefacts and documents, including early scripts and pictures.

Thank you to Professor Harvey for showing us the world of Punch and Judy.

Monthly Meeting— Thursday 2nd November 2023
The History & Mystery of the Victorian Punch & Judy Show
By Professor Mel Harvey (continued)



Five pictures of a Punch and Judy puppet theatre with various characters.

History Group Meeting—Thursday 16th November 2023

Queen Matilda and the Norman Kings

Julie Howard

Julie explained that she was fascinated by history and particularly the Norman period from 1027 to 1154. During this period there were several Matilda's, possibly 5, although I lost track during the talk and missed taking notes. Julie gave a very entertaining and informative account of the period so I hope you find my account interesting.

William the conqueror was married to Matilda of Flanders. When William wanted to marry Matilda she considered herself much above his class as he was illegitimate. However, he attacked her one day and assaulted her, throwing her to the ground. That seems to have changed her mind as she would not entertain marriage to anyone else after that even though there were other better born suitors. They were married in 1051/2. They had possibly ten children despite living for periods in different countries:

- Robert (Curthose) c1052—1134
- Richard 1054—1070
- Adeliza - 1113
- Cecilia 1056—1126
- William (Rufus) 1057—1100
- Constance c1061—1090
- Adela c1067—1137
- Henry C1068—1135
- Agatha ?
- Matilda ?

As you will see from the family tree, William

Rufus became King of England following his father's death in 1087. However, he died following a hunting accident in the New Forest on 2nd August 1100. He had not married nor left an heir. His brother Henry succeeded to the title, becoming Henry I.

Henry married Edith Matilda of Scotland on 11th November 1100 at Westminster Abbey. The couple had 2 children who survived to adulthood. (there were also several illegitimate children by Henry's mistresses.

- Matilda born 7th February 1102, died 10th September 1167
- William Adelin born 5th August 1103, died 25th November 1120..

Matilda was married to Holy Roman Emperor Henry V in about 1114. Henry died in 1125 without producing an heir. Matilda returned to Normandy and her father arranged for her to marry Geoffrey Plantagenet, Count of Anjou, in 1128 in order to bolster the defence of his southern borders in Normandy. He named Matilda as his heir and forced his court to swear allegiance to her.

At Henry's death in 1135 Stephen of Blois claimed the throne and had backing from the English Church. Stephen did not have the ruthless temperament required to control the ensuing turmoil as civil war broke out when his dispute with Matilda became common knowledge. This period of civil war became known as 'The Anarchy' and lasted for 19 years. But Stephen was more popular than Matilda, as she was viewed by most of the people as a foreigner and a woman who was married to one of the hated Angevin en-

emy. Matilda was also found to have an unfortunate personality. She was proud and overbearing, arranging everything as she thought fit, according to her own whim. Trouble started in 1141 when the Battle of Lincoln took place between Stephen and Matilda's half-brother Robert, Earl of Gloucester. After fighting bravely, Stephen was overcome and captured and taken before Matilda who immediately had him imprisoned in Bristol Castle. He was later released. But Matilda did not get the crown as she had hoped ...not because she was lacking in courage ...but more because she had an arrogant and haughty manner and was disliked.

Eventually she herself was captured, but true to form, she escaped from Devizes where she was being held, disguised as a corpse.

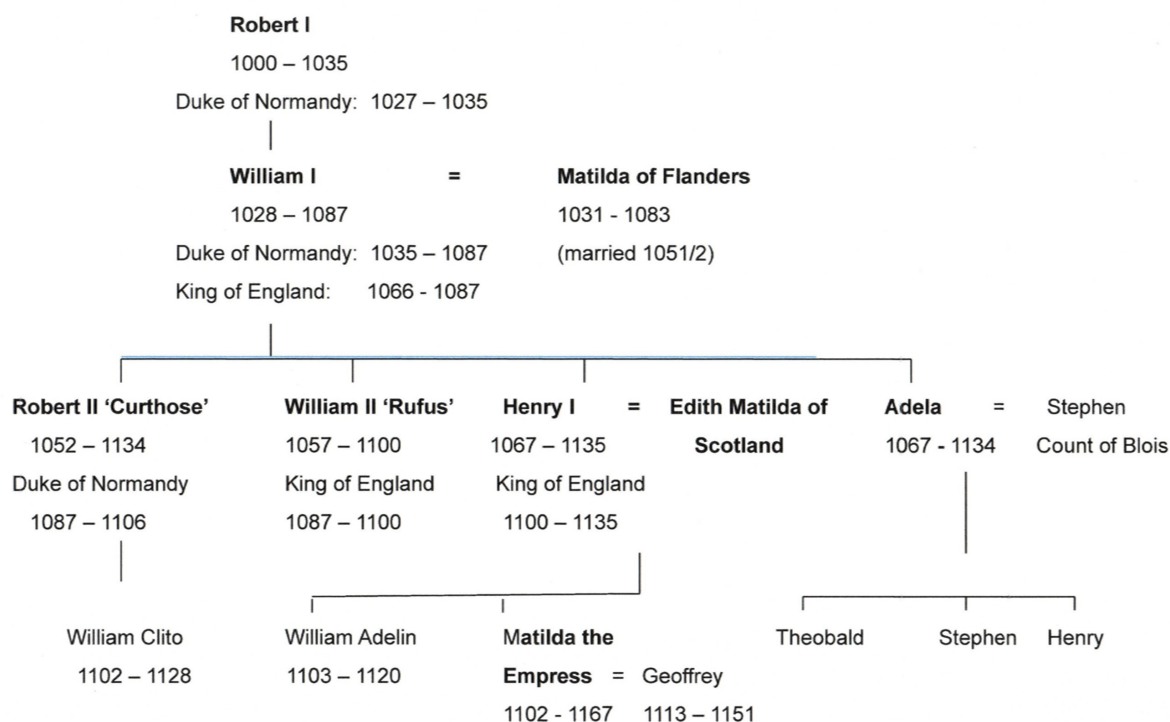
She was dressed in grave clothes and tied with ropes onto a bier, and carried thus as a corpse to the safety of Gloucester. In 1142 she was held in Oxford Castle, but

again she managed to escape, being lowered from the castle walls on a rope during some extremely bad weather. It was thick snow and bitterly cold, but she managed to reach the town of Wallingford during the night. Henry, Matilda's son by the Count of Anjou, the lawful heir and claimant to the English throne, then came to England with it is said, 'many knights'. This was in fact not the case: he had very few. Unfortunately for Matilda, Stephen's men defeated Henry's small force and most of Henry's followers deserted him. In 1153 Stephen agreed to the Treaty of Westminster with Matilda's son Henry of Anjou. This stated that Stephen should remain king for life (in the event this was less than one more year) and then Henry should succeed him.

Upon Stephen's death in 1154, Henry was crowned King Henry II, the first of the Plantagenet line of kings.

So it could be said that Matilda had triumphed in the end!

Brief Family Chart of the Norman Kings



Science, Nature and All Things Technical Meeting 8th December 2023 Christmas Quiz and Tea

Due to poor weather and very congested roads around Stratford resulting from the Victorian Christmas Market in the centre there were fewer participants at the meeting than in previous years. There were five tables, each with three competitors. The quiz was based on Christmas with questions extending over subject matters from how old is Santa to which of Santa's reindeer was named after an object in space. Other questions were very loosely based on Christmas—such as when was the bicycle invented (based on cycles as a popular present in a Christmas stocking). There were 25 questions in all plus a supplementary question $13\frac{1}{2}$.

teams during the tea that followed the quiz.



Quiz Masters Bob and Chris Heaps

The five tables were spaced around a semi-circle facing the Quiz Masters and all had to write down the answers to each question. The team with most correct answers won the prize of a box of Quality Street. The prize, as was customary, was shared with the other



Table 1



Table 2



Table 3



When the scores were tallied there was a draw for first place. The winner was decided by a further question—When was turkey introduced to the English Christmas table? The answer was during the 16th century. Turkey was introduced from the Americas, possibly by Sir Francis Drake.

Table 1 were awarded the prize.

Thanks to Bob and Chris for setting the questions and managing the excellent quiz.

Table 4



Table 5



Tea Table

History Group Meeting – Thursday 28th December 2023
The History of Cakes and a View of Their Taste and Texture
Narrator Robert Tringham; Judge Emily Collins

Robert started by explaining how he had conducted some of the historical research through contact with the Royal Historical Society for information about cake baking through history. Apparently, they had not been asked about this very often, if at all.

Robert then went on to talk about early forms of man, Homo Erectus and Neanderthal, both of whom were ancestors of Homo Sapiens (modern humans) and originated boat building, dwelling building and ovens for cooking food.

It is thought that ovens originated about 29,000 years ago, but were not necessarily used to cook food, rather they were used to bake, bricks and ceramic materials. By about 12,500 years ago, food was being prepared and cooked in ovens in countries in the east, such as modern day Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan and Iran. The earliest cake we had at the meeting was a Natufian Honey Cake, the recipe originating about 12,500 years ago.

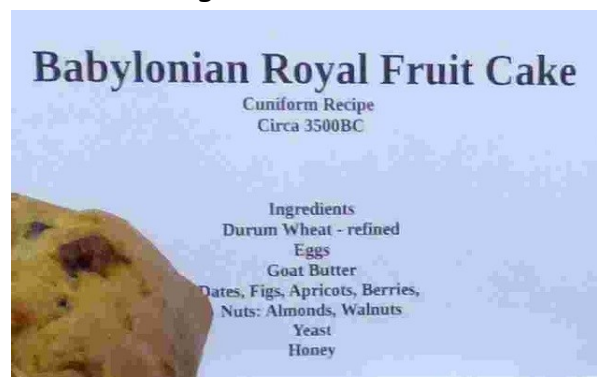
Below is the ingredient list:



The next type of cake was made during the Babylonian era about 3,500 years ago. A Clay tablet has survived that contained a recipe from that time, so we have a Babylonian Royal Fruit Cake, shown in the image below:



Below is the ingredient list:



The image above is of 2 cakes prepared recently using modern ingredients that approximate as closely as we can now obtain—ancient wheat varieties such as Durum or Spelt, honey as sweetener and salt can all be obtained.

History Group Meeting —Thursday 28th December 2023

The History of Cakes and a View of Their Taste and Texture Continued

The next cake is an English Tudor Seed Cake of about 1400 AD. These were made without eggs, due to the lack of supply in central London. The seeds are probably flax seeds due to the absence of seeds such as carraway seeds which became available later. There was a lack of raising agents at first. Yeast could be used but it was not particularly good in that period, so the cakes were rather flat looking.



The ingredient list is below:

English Medieval Seed Cake
 Circa 1215 – 1300
 References to seed cake in town archives of Berkhamstead in 1290, also Chaucer (1370) writes of “round flat cake”

Ingredients
 Whole wheat flour
 Flax Seed (ground)
 Flax Oil
 Sugar (beet)
 Flax Seeds (whole)
 Yeast

The next cake by date is a Ukrainian Layer Cake from about 1530 AD. This was produced from a series of pancakes that have been made into a cake with layers of cream and cream cheese and a final coating of

cream or cream cheese. It is quite an enormous cake which takes some skill in cutting. It is a very different texture and taste to all the other cakes.



Above is the Ukrainian Layer Cake from 1530 AD. Below is the label card for it which lists the ingredients.

Ukrainian Layer Cake
 Also “Medovik” Circa 1530

Honey
 Sugar
 Unsalted butter
 Eggs,
 Whole wheat flour
 Heavy cream
 Sour Cream
 Cream cheese
 baking soda (Cream of Tartar)

The final cake to be assessed was the only one bought from a modern supermarket and was an example of the Dresden Stollen. This was chosen because the recipe for Stollen is

History Group Meeting –Thursday 28th December 2023 The History of Cakes and a View of Their Taste and Texture Continued

not supposed to have altered during the last 500 years.



Robert had invited a local master baker, Emily Collins, to the meeting to assess the cakes for taste and texture, each cake being awarded a score from 50 points for each property.

Members of the audience were also invited

to do the same tasting and give their own points on the same basis. The scores of each member of the audience to be compared to scores of the judge and a prize to be awarded to the person whose scores most closely resembled those of Emily.

Emily awarded 337 points in total for the five cakes. She thought that the oldest cake, the Ancient Natufian Honey Cake would have tasted very good at the time it was baked, even though only four ingredients were used.

The member of the audience whose scores most resembled of Emily was judged to be Chris Heaps who awarded 338 points to the five cakes. Several members came close but the clear winner was Chris who received a bottle of Prosecco Rose as a prize.

Thanks to Robert for presenting a most interesting and festive subject at Christmas and to Emily for her efforts in judging the results..