

## IN BRIEF

■ **The Heritage Lottery Fund is looking to fund projects** to develop the country's understanding of the slave trade.

Community organisations and other heritage institutions are encouraged to submit their ideas to the fund, in order to celebrate the bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade in British ships. If you have an idea to mark this important

**The HLF wants to fund projects on Britain's slave trade**

event, take a look at the HLF website, [www.hlf.org.uk/rememberslavery](http://www.hlf.org.uk/rememberslavery) for information on funding and applications. *Katy Jones*

■ **Action Trust for the Blind is searching for volunteers** to interview for an oral history project. The trust is calling for blind and visually impaired people who lived in London during the Blitz to record their war experiences. Their stories will show how the Second World War affected the blind, and how they contributed to the war effort. If you have a story to tell, or know anyone who would be interested in being interviewed please contact Melanie Kempys by calling 020 8563 2922 or emailing [melanie@actiontrustfortheblind.org](mailto:melanie@actiontrustfortheblind.org). *KJ*

## History Detectives

■ **History Detectives is an exciting new programme** coming to the BBC which is looking for participants. If you have any curious objects and artefacts that might hold an untold story, the team of experts will reveal historical secrets by using up-to-the-minute research techniques. If you know of an item that could be of interest telephone 0141 331 5424 or email [History.Detectives@liontv.co.uk](mailto:History.Detectives@liontv.co.uk). *KJ*



## In search of the last Conquistadors



A 16th century manuscript showing Conquistadors being attacked in South America

### Archaeologists find Spanish fort destroyed by Indian tribes

**A**RCHAEOLOGISTS ARE on the verge of discovering the fate of some of the last Conquistadors. In a remote site in North Carolina, excavations have pinpointed the place where a garrison of Spanish soldiers was wiped out in a Native American uprising four and a half centuries ago.

After the Spanish Conquistadors conquered Mexico and Peru, they planned to subdue swathes of what is now the USA by seizing control of all territory between the Atlantic and Texas. Plans were scuppered in 1568 when Native American tribes in what are now the Carolinas and Tennessee rose up and obliterated

six Spanish garrisons. Just one would-be Conquistador survived to tell the tale.

Now archaeologists have located one of the Spanish forts, and evidence of the catastrophe that overwhelmed its garrison. Excavations have revealed a series of large houses which had been attacked with fire arrows and burned to the ground. Dozens of burned stone arrow heads have been recovered. The Native Americans buried the debris under a thick layer of earth and built a religious shrine – a large earthen pyramid – where the fort had stood. Entombment of the houses and

the construction of the pyramid may have been to honour the tribes' ancestral spirits for giving them victory.

In and around the houses, the archaeologists have found copper lace ends from Spanish clothing, glass beads, lead shot for guns, fragments of chain mail and Spanish ceramics. The burning and burial of the buildings appears to have preserved much of the material they were made of. Burned bundles of cane, possibly used as roofing, and probable roof timbers have been unearthed. Even the axe marks on the wood have survived, revealing that the

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## A day to remember

Historians of the future will benefit from a huge exercise in social history

**T**HERE WERE no earth-shattering events on 17 October 2006 but it is a day that may well go down in history thanks to a mass observation weblog.

Over 46,000 people submitted their diaries of the day to the One Day in History project, which has been run as part of the History Matters campaign. The bloggers came from all over the United Kingdom and ranged in age from young children to senior citizens.

Among the well-known diarists was Conservative leader David Cameron who recounted a busy working day that concluded when he “collapsed in front of *Newsnight* with a cold beer”. Other celebrities taking part included Stephen Fry,

historian Dan Snow and Will Carling. But of course, in the main, this is about the lives of “ordinary people” like Alex Games from London who “woke before 6am with *Farming Today*” and described how he was “trying to shower every other day to save water”.

This is not the first mass observation in Britain. A similar exercise took place on 12 May 1937, the day of George VI's coronation. It is however the first event of this scale and using modern technology.

The diaries are to be archived by the British Library and will be available online. “They will be an enormously valuable resource for



Children log on to the One Day in History website. Cameron, left, was among those who submitted their diaries



future generations,” said History Matters spokesman Ivo Dawnay. “Almost every diary has a little kernel in it that tells us something about the way we live today.”

Juliet Gardiner, author of *Wartime: Britain 1939-1945*, said



The stone heads of the fire arrows used to destroy the Conquistadors' houses

carpentry techniques were Spanish. However the only human remains ever discovered at the site (unearthed several years prior to the present excavations) are those of three Native Americans – including one who may have been

## A garrison of Spanish soldiers was wiped out by a Native American uprising

a chieftain. His skeleton had been interred in front of the earthen pyramid. Significantly, he was buried with high status grave goods – a smoking pipe, a turtle shell, a tool kit of stone implements, some arrow heads – and an iron knife which the archaeologists believe may have been presented to him by the Spanish as some sort of diplomatic gift.

But where the skeletal remains of the last Spanish conquistadors

lie buried is as yet a complete mystery. Historical sources suggest that they died in the open when they were tricked into leaving their fort. There is a possibility that the Spanish may have been burnt alive in their houses during the fire arrow attack by the Native Americans. Yet, so far not a single Spanish bone has been found. But as the excavation is due to continue over the next few years, the archaeologists hope to learn what befell the conquistadors in

their final few hours.

The dig, near Asheville, is being directed jointly by Dr David Moore of Warren Wilson College, North Carolina, Dr Robin Beck of the University of Oklahoma and Dr Chris Rodning of Tulane University in New Orleans – in collaboration with Pat and James Berry whose family has owned the site since it was granted to them by the English colonial government in the 1770s. *David Keys*

lot of diaries are very little use to a historian because there is nothing that is illuminating other than what somebody did and the name of their cat. These observations do need to be subjective and personal but also to be connected to the bigger things.” She also felt that the information needed to be evaluated in some way, no easy task considering the huge amount of information that has been collected.

Social historian Pat Thane also sounded a cautionary note. “I wonder whether we need this given the large numbers of oral histories and other personal sources that exist. However, as a historian, I would

rather have too much information than too little.” *Rob Attar*

▶▶▶ You can read the weblogs at [www.webarchive.org.uk](http://www.webarchive.org.uk). To find out more about History Matters visit [www.historymatters.org.uk](http://www.historymatters.org.uk).



**H** HISTORY MATTERS PASSION

that the campaign was “a very good idea” and stressed “the immediacy” of these diaries as opposed to retrospective history. She did, however, highlight the potential limitations of using these weblogs. “The problem is that a



### SECOND WORLD WAR

## Poland's ethnic cleansing

EUROPE'S LARGEST EPISODE of ethnic cleansing was carried out jointly by an unholy alliance of communists and extreme rightists, according to new research. An in-depth study of the expulsion of Poland's German population after the Second World War has revealed that it was planned and implemented by Poland's communist authorities in close co-operation with members of the National Democrats (the NDP, which was an illegal extreme right wing party in Poland).

The Communist Party came to power in Poland in 1944 and banned the vehemently anti-Semitic as well as anti-German NDP. However, in western Poland (what had been German East Prussia and Silesia) the government employed NDP members to carry out the ethnic cleansing program. An NDP front organisation, the Polish Western Union, received a government subsidy, ran many of the verification committees which determined who could stay and who should be expelled, and carried out virulent pro-expulsion propaganda against Poland's ethnic German population. Hundreds of National Democrats were recruited by the government's Ministry for Recovered Territories where they occupied many of the key positions.

“These extreme right wing officials were used by the communist government to seize German property and select Germans for final expulsion,” said Dr David Curp of Ohio University whose research on the subject is about to be published by Boydell and Brewer in a new book, *A Clean Sweep: The Politics of Ethnic Cleansing in Western Poland*.

Before the Second World War, Poland had been a multi-ethnic state, five per cent of whose population were ethnic Germans. During the war the communists had insisted that they were against the Nazis, not against the German people or against the ethnic German minority in Poland. Despite taking power in 1944, the Communist Party did not command the backing of most

Poles and had to struggle to win popular support.

The German population of Poland had risen to 20 per cent with the change of international borders at the end of the war. The National Democrats wanted to launch a terror campaign to empty the newly enlarged Poland of its German and ethnic German population. An internal government report said that the Polish Western Union believed that Poland “needs something along the lines of the SS Aussiedlungsstab” (the SS organisation responsible for expelling Jews and Poles during the Second World War) to remove ethnic Germans from Poland. The communist authorities realised that nationalist anti-German sentiment could be harnessed to make their government more popular, so they decided to exploit the nationalist fervour to help boost their own popularity and to survive in power.

There was debate within the government as to whether people should be expelled purely on the basis of their German ethnicity or whether German anti-Nazis should be spared. The Polish Western Union intervened and backed by some communist leaders, defeated those elements within the Communist Party who took a more liberal stance. Thus hundreds of German communists – some of whom had suffered in Nazi camps – were among those expelled. In total, two million Germans were forced to flee the emerging new Poland by the Red Army in 1944/45, and five million were expelled by the Poles in 1945-47. Two million Poles from Eastern Poland were also ethnically cleansed by the Soviets. *David Keys*

Expelled Germans leave Poland's western territories after the Second World War



**O**NE OF the most romanticised episodes of British history – the Jacobite Rising and Bonnie Prince Charlie's bid for the throne in 1745 – is about to undergo a potentially controversial makeover. One of Scotland's key historical attractions at the battlefield of Culloden, the site of the final Jacobite defeat in 1746, is to be transformed into a spectacular yet impartial museum committed to giving equal space to anti-Jacobite and Jacobite views.

The interpretation centre at Culloden is currently oriented

toward Bonnie Prince Charlie. However it is to be demolished and will be replaced by a larger museum which will seek to tell the story in more objective terms.

Over the years, the National Trust for Scotland, which owns the site, has received many complaints

accusing the interpretive centre's content of being biased in favour of the Jacobites. "Without doubt the current display tells the story of Bonnie Prince Charlie in a highly

romanticised way – using Jacobite songs and a very gentle narrative," said Alexander Bennett, the senior National Trust official in charge of the Culloden make-over. "The new interpretation centre will be totally different. It will simply present the facts in an impartial, though nevertheless exciting way and let the visitors make up their own minds as to who was right and who was wrong," he said.

The new interpretation will reflect the complex political issues of the time. The '45 will be explained as part of a Scottish civil war – and indeed as part of a wider pan-European conflict, the War of the Austrian Succession. It will look in detail at the conflict

between Highland Episcopalians and Catholics and Scottish Tories on the one hand and Scottish Lowland and east coast Presbyterians, Anglicans and Whigs on the other hand. It will examine the military participation of the French and will ask what has hitherto been a semi-taboo question in Scotland: namely, was the British Hanoverian government right and a force for progress and were the Jacobites wrong and a force for reaction?

The new exhibition will also look more closely at Culloden's appalling aftermath – the floating prisons established on the Thames for Jacobite POWs, the public execution of rebel leaders on

## Romanticism removed from Culloden

DAVID KEYS reports on plans for a new battlefield visitor centre



The new visitor centre will feature a dramatic battle scene to be filmed using 300 extras

### ARCHIVES

## Britain helped Russian defectors escape Stalin

AT LEAST FIVE top ranking Russian military defectors were smuggled into Britain after the Second World War posing as farm or factory workers. The secret operation was masterminded by Brigadier Charles Hirsch, who was deputy director of military intelligence, behind the backs of Home Office officials, according to newly released MI5 files at The National Archives. The security service was alarmed that the Red Army soldiers, four of whom brought their German mistresses with them when they came to Britain, might be double agents.

They travelled through Harwich in 1948 as part of operation Westward Ho, which was meant to bring to Britain 1,200 labourers with much needed agricultural and industrial skills from the displaced persons camps in Germany. The operation was hugely sensitive because of political determination to avoid provoking the Soviet leader Josef Stalin after his country's contribution to Allied victory during the Second World War. Even high ranking diplomats were discouraged from coming over to the west. But Brigadier Hirsch laid

down that these special defectors must be evacuated immediately and could not be allowed to remain in Germany where they risked kidnap and assassination.

He wrote: "In view of the security and political risks, involving great administrative problems, it is important that, before deciding to bring a special defector to the UK, all alternative possibilities, such as continued residence in the zone of occupation, should have been examined and found wanting. The intelligence value must therefore be excessively high to warrant such risks and expenditure of effort".

No details are given of the information that the defectors provided. The identities of the five remain classified but one was code named The Duke. They were provided with false names and cover stories, then taken to a camp in Munster where they joined other DPs (displaced persons) travelling to Britain. MI5 financed them until they could find work but warned that after that they were on their own. Brigadier Hirsch ensured that the whole operation was deniable. He explained:

"In the event of discovery that a special case has got into this country and is a Russian subject, there will be no reason to suppose that anyone in this country knew anything special about him. Nothing can then be fastened on anybody, except that the individual was wrongly registered in Germany as a DP". Peter Day



Volunteer labourers in Kent help bring in the hay in 1950

Tower Hill, the ethnic cleansing of Catholic highlanders and the forced conscription of Jacobite troops into the British Army to serve overseas.

The new museum, and the presentation of the battlefield itself, will reflect archaeological discoveries made at the site in recent years. Detailed studies by Glasgow University's Centre for Battlefield Archaeology, including

metal detector surveys to determine the distribution of musket shot, have revealed that the battlefield was larger than previously thought, that the government and Jacobite lines were further apart and that the Jacobites were much better armed than historians had believed.

The work has revealed that the Jacobites used their French and other muskets more than previously suspected. Evidence of a strong Jacobite presence (and desperate government countermeasures) between the government's front and second lines shows that Jacobite troops came much closer to achieving victory in the battle than the historical sources have

indicated and academics have previously thought.

"We have also located what are probably the government's war graves – and the location of a government gun battery on the far left of their lines," said Dr Tony Pollard who led the investigations.

The new facility, due to open in late August next year, will be a mixture of museum and interpretation centre with

The '45 will be explained as part of a Scottish civil war – and a pan-European conflict

interactive presentations and Britain's first ever "immersion film" portrayal of a battle scene. The five minute sequence, made in the same style as the beginning of *Saving Private Ryan*, will feature 300 extras and a combat team led by famous stuntman Chick Allen who appeared in *Gladiator* and *King Arthur*.

History enthusiasts are helping to finance the £9.1 million museum and interpretative complex by adopting and engraving stones which flank an avenue leading to the new centre.

## The right to deny

Historians express reservations about French decision on Armenian genocide law, reports ROB ATTAR

THE FRENCH parliament has recently voted to make it an offence to deny the Armenian genocide of 1915. The deaths of 1–1.5 million Armenians through deportations and murder are recognised as genocide by the International Association of Genocide Scholars. Ottoman Turkey has been accused of instigating the massacres and expulsions. Turkey asserts that the deaths were not genocide and has reacted angrily to the French vote.

Some historians have criticised the move: "It is a very bad idea," said Dr Donald Bloxham, author of *The Great Game of Genocide: Imperialism, Nationalism and the Destruction of the Ottoman Armenians*. "It is an attack on freedom of speech and however much one deplores the deniers, there are other ways of tackling them."

Turkish-born academic Taner Akcam agreed. "This opens the way for the state to impose how we should think about history and it does not address the underlying pain it purports to fix." Akcam was also worried that such a law would "accelerate the hate and animosity between Turkish and Armenian people and move us further away from ending denial".

Armenian-American scholar Peter Balakian, author of *Burning*

*Tigris: A History of the Armenian Genocide* is "opposed to all laws that restrict opinion or thought" but notes that the situation is complicated by "the fact that one of the most horrendous human rights crimes in history was never followed by any form of justice or acknowledgement by the perpetrator".

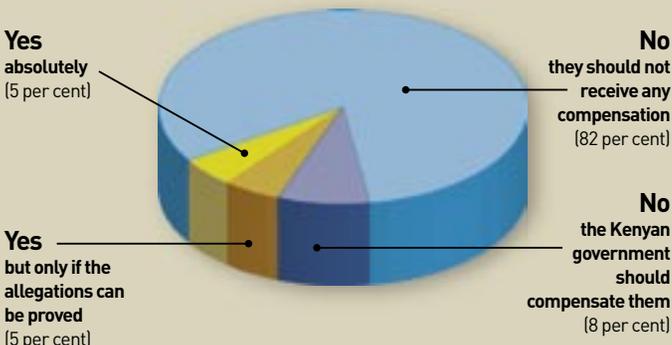
This is not the first time that parliaments have sought to legislate on historical matters. Similar laws against Holocaust denial are on the statute books in many European states and in February this year British historian David Irving was sentenced to three years in prison in Austria on such a charge.

But Professor Richard J Evans of Cambridge University, an expert on Nazi Germany, believed there was less justification for the proposed new law. "It is understandable, though still regrettable, to have a law against Holocaust denial in countries that bear direct responsibility for the extermination of European Jews and where there is a danger of neo-Nazism. It is a different matter to pass a law against the denying of the Armenian genocide because countries like France do not bear a direct responsibility for what happened and there is no political threat to democracy involved in denial, however reprehensible it may be".

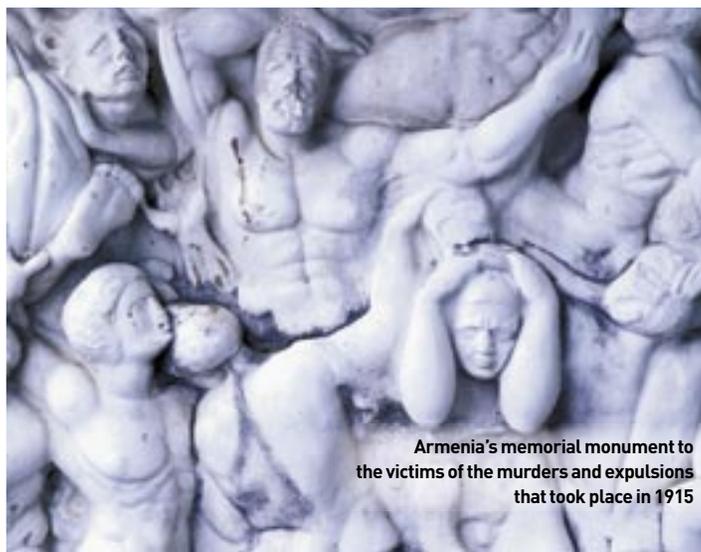
### READERS' POLL

#### Should the British Government compensate Mau Mau veterans of Kenya?

Former Mau Mau fighters are seeking recompense from the British government for alleged mistreatment during the war for Kenyan independence half a century ago. Should they receive compensation?



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Armenia's memorial monument to the victims of the murders and expulsions that took place in 1915