

REVIEWS

The books, TV shows and films causing a stir in the history world this month

MADAME FOURCADE'S SECRET WAR



The thrilling tale of the French resistance's only woman chief

Author Lynne Olson Publisher Scribe Price £22 Released Out now

Inside the crowded shelves of Second World War histories lie a number of now-iconic women who served as spies from Noor Inayat Khan and Violette Szabo to Krystyna Skarbek. In this thrilling account of a French resistance movement, Lynne Olson introduces us to another. Marie-Madeleine Fourcade was la

patronne (the boss) of Alliance, the only woman to hold such a role. Her network aimed to strike against Vichy France and its Nazi occupiers through gathering intelligence on German troop movements, U-boat schedules, weapons and more, and passing it on to the Allies. Their work was hugely important and gleaned

valuable information but at a terrible personal cost to Fourcade and her colleagues - hundreds of Alliance's 3,000 agents were captured, interrogated,

tortured and executed by the Nazis' secret police, the Gestapo, who referred to the network as Noah's Ark because of its animal-themed aliases. Two years into Fourcade's leadership of the Alliance barely any of the original agents had survived and many of the 'second wave' had been imprisoned or killed. Olson discusses how the lax precautions on the part of Alliance agents coupled with the growing abilities of Gestapo agents to accurately detect their locations from their radio transmissions created an ever more perilous environment.

Within the pages of this thrilling narrative, Fourcade's spirit shines through. As a woman - and an upper-class woman at that - la patronne's contemporaries could not have conceived that she could be a spy. But she was no stranger to carving her own path despite what others thought. She had for many years been separated from her conservative first husband, who disapproved of her independence and social life, and pre-war she had acquired a pilot's licence, drove a car, and worked as an entertainment producer on France's first commercial radio station Radio-Cité. During the fraught years

of the war, Fourcade never lost her dedication to Alliance despite the very real hardships she faced including long separations from her children Christian and Béatrice, giving birth to her third child while on the run, escaping arrest and captivity, and coping with the grief of her agents being caught and killed. Much has been written about spies, intelligence agencies and resistance networks of the Second World War but *Madame Fourcade's Secret War* stands out from a crowded field by chronicling

the experiences of an inspiring woman who has been somewhat neglected by history. In documenting Alliance's triumphs and despair during the conflict, the book also engagingly portrays the network's story as a whole and the breadth of intriguing and eclectic personalities that made up its ranks - ranging from military officers, fishermen and housewives, to architects, aristocrats and students. Olson skillfully depicts this large cast in all the poignancies of their situations, and in Marie-Madeleine we have an inspiring protagonist who put her life on hold, and on the line, to help bring her country back from the brink.

"She was certainly no stranger to carving her own path despite what others thought"



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Exciting.
Eye-opening.
Poignant.
BW

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Reviews by
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BARBARIANS AT THE WALL 

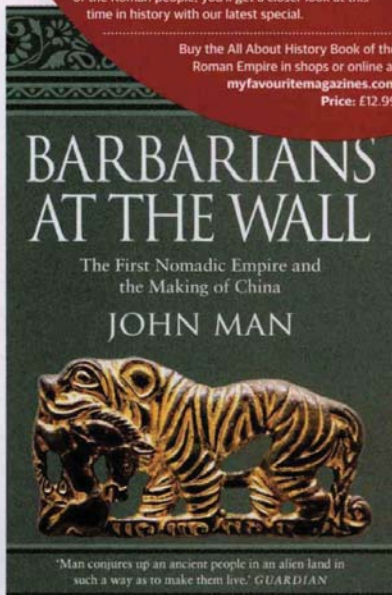
A fast-paced and fascinating chronicle of nomadic life in ancient Asia

Author John Man Publisher Bantam Press Price £20 Released Out now

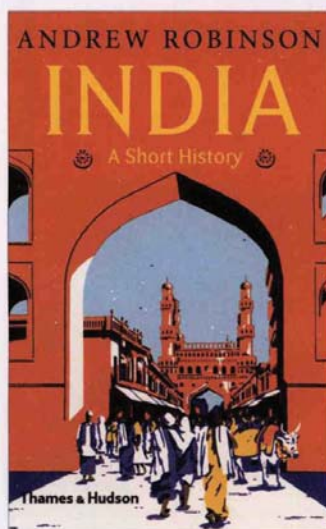
Barbarians At The Wall begins with the sighting in 204 BC of a comet, a portent heralding the emergence of a new dawn for China. The teenage King of Qin state, Zheng, interpreted its appearance as a sign of great change to come, and so it was when he waged war against China's other remaining states and emerged as its first Emperor. Zheng - who is best known today for the Terracotta Army - founded a powerful empire but its rise coincided with that of another. The Xiongnu, nomadic peoples of the Eurasian steppes, were to be a thorn in the side of China's rulers for 400 years, and they are worthy subjects of this engrossing blend of narrative storytelling and archaeological analysis. Through raids across the Great Wall which was built to bar them, to the receiving

of sumptuous gifts in Chinese attempts at mollification, the Xiongnu amassed a wealth that enabled them to imprint their culture on swathes of land in Central Asia, creating a heritage which has been linked to Attila's 'Huns' and Genghis Khan's Mongol Empire.

The book's erudite and evocative pages examine themes such as the currency of legends in nation-building and how far it is possible to reconstruct the minutiae of an ancient people's existence. A cast of intriguing characters coupled with fascinating archaeological discoveries and Man's amiable style makes for an enjoyable read that does justice to the significant impact of the Xiongnu on Chinese and Asian history.



'Man conjures up an ancient people in an alien land in such a way as to make them live.' GUARDIAN



INDIA A SHORT HISTORY 

An insightful trip through the many histories of India

Author Andrew Robinson Publisher Thames & Hudson Price £8.99 Released Out now

India: A Short History sets out to achieve what might seem to be an almost impossible feat, to write a history of India that is comprehensive, accessible and appealing. It succeeds admirably.


The history of India is vast and complex. From Chinese pilgrims seeking the birthplace of Buddha its modern flourishing economy via Alexander the Great, the Mughal empire and British colonisation, it is a country that has lived many lives. In his latest work Andrew Robinson, a scholar of the history of India, aims to retell all of these histories in order to better understand India, as well as the future it faces.

It's a tall order. With approximately 4,000 years of stories to tell, it might seem an almost impossible feat to construct a tight, focused narrative in the space

of just 200 or so pages, but Robinson's book does so with aplomb. Though obviously not able to cover every aspect of India's fascinating past in great detail, *India: A Short History* instead distils the history of the nation into a narrative that cracks along at a fair speed yet is still able to recreate not only the lost scenes of eras past, but the people who lived in them.

India: A Short History is accessible, insightful and packed with wit and understanding. Though this isn't a book for scholars of India, for anyone looking to learn more about India and better understand not only its past but its present too, this is the perfect place to start.

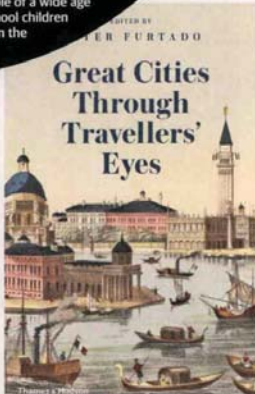




HISTORY OF WAR RECOMMENDS... **Out now!**
INVASION
 Author Scott Addington Price £15.99
 Publisher Unicorn

Those who have read Scott Addington's previous military history books will know what a colourful delight they are. Packed full of intriguing facts, figures and anecdotes - many of which may be little-known to even the most well-read of history enthusiasts - that are presented in visually appealing infographics and an easy to follow format. The author has that rare talent of producing highly informative works that will greatly appeal to people of a wide age range, from secondary school children to adults and perhaps even the veterans themselves.

"In nearly 200 extracts taken from across the millennia Furtado assembles some famous names"



GREAT CITIES THROUGH TRAVELLERS' EYES

A curious global journey with some historic names

Author Peter Furtado (editor) Publisher Thames & Hudson

Price £24.95 Released Out now

Great Cities Through Travellers' Eyes, edited by Peter Furtado, is the perfect read for armchair travellers. Within its pages Furtado has assembled some of the best historical writing about nearly forty cities, from Alexandria to Washington DC. It seems as though all human life is here from soldiers heading into an uncertain fate to artists looking for their muse and simple tourists, off to explore the globe.

In nearly 200 extracts taken from across the millennia, Furtado assembles some famous - and infamous - names, as well as some who may be less familiar.

There are clearheaded descriptions of cities that readers may recognise and at the other end of the spectrum, flamboyant, personal collisions with them that left indelible marks on the travellers.

This anthology offers readers a chance to join the likes of Marco Polo on voyages of discovery that shaped the history of the world, or to meet a medieval Chinese holy man who was shown around Sainte-Chapelle by none other than the King of France. What emerges as much as portraits of the cities are portraits of the travellers themselves. Within these short extracts there is humour and pathos and a good deal of excitement.

Great Cities Through Travellers' Eyes is a perfect read both for those who like to travel and those who prefer to let others do the work for them. Its bite-sized extracts and vast variety of authors will appeal to readers, who are bound to learn something from this entertaining volume.

 Bite-sized, Entertaining, Informative CC

CHARLES I'S KILLERS IN AMERICA

The regicides who escaped King Charles II's justice

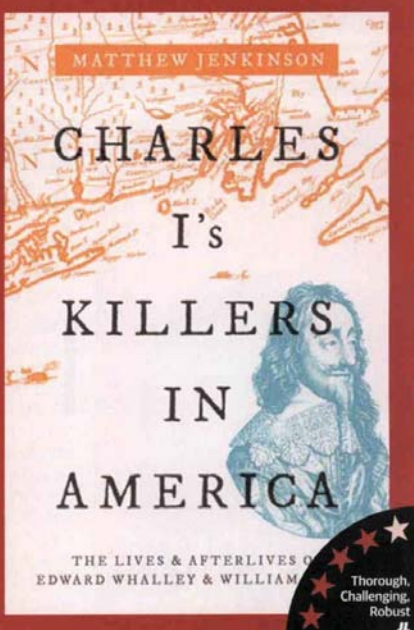
Author Matthew Jenkinson Publisher Oxford University Press Books
 Price £20 Released Out now

Edward Whalley and his son-in-law William Goffe were two of the most famous signatories on Charles I's death warrant. In this book, Jenkinson explains what happened to the two men after they fled England for America following King Charles II's restoration to the throne.


Interestingly, Whalley and Goffe's involvement in the regicide entangled them in the American political landscape at a time when friction was emerging between the colonies and Charles II, ultimately aiding their survival across the pond. After their deaths, the two men became legendary figures and their story was incorporated in American mythology, with 19th century writers treating them essentially as harbingers of the American Revolution.

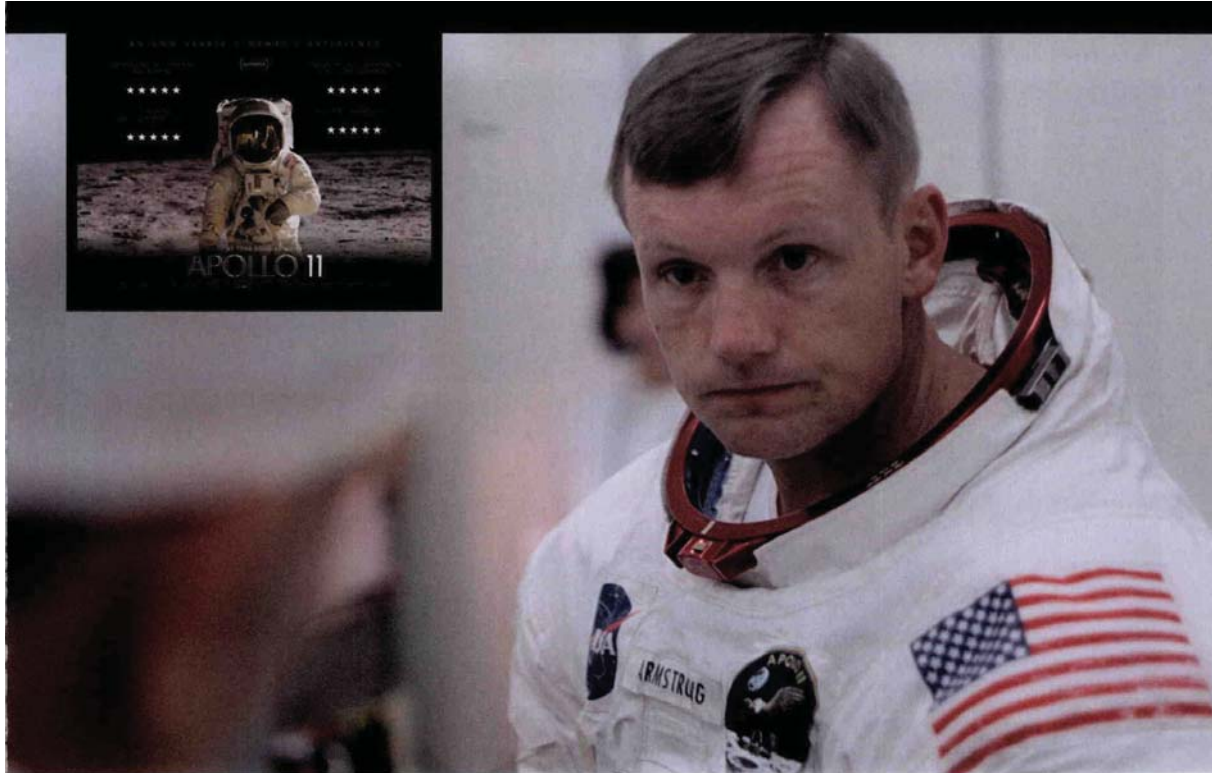
It is often stated that Charles II determinedly sought revenge for the murder of his father, with Whalley and Goffe remaining on the run for the rest of their lives. However, Jenkinson challenges this long-held narrative, arguing that the king was actually rather powerless when it came to seeking justice without the cooperation of the colonial authorities.

There is a lot of information to digest with this book - which isn't a bad thing - but it is not the easiest to read, although there are a number of contemporary illustrations scattered throughout that provide a welcome break for the reader. Thankfully, there is a timeline included as one of the appendices, which helpfully gives both order and context if you feel that you need it.



MATTHEW JENKINSON
CHARLES I'S KILLERS IN AMERICA
 THE LIVES & AFTERLIVES OF EDWARD WHALLEY & WILLIAM GOFFE

 Thorough, Challenging, Robust JL



APOLLO 11

To infinity and beyond! Well, to the Moon and back at least

Certificate U Director Todd Douglas Miller **Cast** Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin, Mike Collins **Released:** Out Now

It's estimated 650 million people worldwide turned on their television sets to see and hear astronaut Neil Armstrong step foot on the Moon and utter what must surely count as among the most famous sentences in human history: "One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind." As NASA's pioneering Apollo 11 mission closes in on its 50th anniversary, Todd Douglas Miller's awe-inspiring documentary is a fine reminder of our capacity for endeavour and ingenuity, recounting a moment in time when what seemed impossible, the realm of science fiction, was made possible.

Assembled from recently unearthed 70mm footage taken in 1969, 35mm and 16mm film, audio recordings amounting to thousands of hours, as well as closed-circuit video clips, live television broadcasts and photographs, *Apollo 11* is impressively put together and made in what is known as the 'direct cinema' style. This documentary format discards traditional

"Apollo 11 is impressively put together and made in what is known as the 'direct cinema' style"

voiceover narration and talking heads interviews in favour of source material. The effect is an immersive viewing experience closer to that of an arthouse movie, but, given the subject, one boasting the towering spectacle and high-octane thrills of a Hollywood blockbuster.

The film ingeniously puts us right in there with Mission Control techs, the astronauts in their tin can hurtling through outer space, among the thronging crowds gathered to see the launch at Cape Canaveral, the navy crews in the Pacific, binoculars at the ready, awaiting the re-entry of the Columbia. Constructing the documentary in this fashion invites the viewer to share the range of emotions felt by those directly involved in the project at the time, as well as the feverish public mood of witnessing history in the making.

Most strikingly of all, we get to hear the wonderful sense of humour Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin and Mike Collins (who manned the craft and didn't set foot on the Moon) possessed

as they journeyed into the unknown. When Collins' heart monitor malfunctions, NASA report their concern, only for the astronaut to quip, "I'll let you know if I stop breathing." The ultimate zinger, though, belongs to Aldrin, as he clambers out of the Eagle to join Armstrong on the surface of the Sea of Tranquility, joking that he'd better not accidentally lock the door from the inside or they'll be in a bit of a pickle. You'd expect these men to be deadly serious and humourless, given the fact they're literally hundreds of thousands of miles from home and disaster could strike at any second.

The direct cinema approach, however, does mean politics and social history take a backseat. Cold War aspects to the Space Race are muted entirely, in favour of an intense focus on the main event and the delivery of a hymn to American genius and memorial to slain 35th president, John F Kennedy (director Miller uses JFK's stirring 1962 speech about putting a man on the Moon, at the very end, adding further emotive oomph).

