

*A personal selection of local, British Isles and world, history.*

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## HOW TRUE

*The English are not a very spiritual people, so they invented cricket to give them some idea of eternity -*  
George Bernard Shaw.

## HAITI'S GENERAL<sup>1</sup>

**F**rançois-Dominique Toussaint l'Ouverture, a name that really trips off the tongue, lived from 1743 to 1803. He was an Haitian general and the most prominent leader of the Haitian Revolution. During his life, Louverture first fought and allied with Spanish forces against Saint-Domingue Royalists, then joined with Republican France, becoming Governor-General-for-life of Saint-Domingue, and lastly fought against Bonaparte's republican troops. As a revolutionary leader, Louverture displayed military and political acumen that helped transform the fledgling slave rebellion into a revolutionary movement. Along with Jean-Jacques Dessalines, Louverture is now known as one of the *Fathers of Haiti*.



Toussaint was born as a slave in the French colony of Saint-Domingue, now known as Haiti. He was a devout Catholic, and was manumitted as an *affranchi* (ex-slave) before the French Revolution, identifying as a Creole for the greater part of his life. During his time as an *affranchi*, he became a salaried employee, an overseer of his former master's plantation, and later became a wealthy slave owner himself; Toussaint owned several coffee plantations at Petit Cormier, Grande Rivière, and Ennery. At the start of the Haitian revolution he was nearly 50 years old and began his military career as a lieutenant to Georges Biassou, an early leader of the 1791 War for Freedom in Saint-Domingue. Initially allied with the Spaniards of neighbouring Santo Domingo, Louverture switched his allegiance to the French when the new Republican government abolished slavery. Louverture gradually established control over the whole island and used his political and military influence to gain dominance over his rivals.

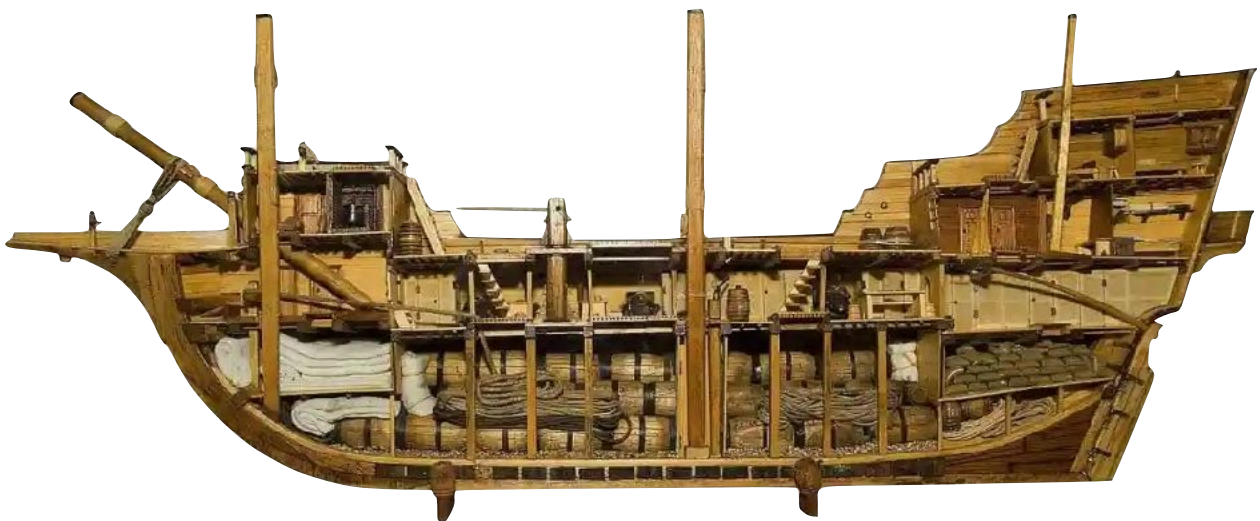
Throughout his years in power, he worked to balance the economy and security of Saint-Domingue. Worried about the economy, which had stalled, he restored the plantation

system using paid labour; negotiated trade agreements with the United Kingdom and the United States and maintained a large and well-trained army. Toussaint seized power in Saint-Domingue, established his own system of government, and promulgated his own colonial constitution in 1801 that named him as Governor-General for Life, which challenged Napoleon Bonaparte's authority.

In 1802, he was invited to a parley by French Divisional General Jean-Baptiste Brunet, but was arrested upon his arrival. He was deported to France and jailed at the Fort de Joux. He died in 1803. Although Louverture died before the final and most violent stage of the Haitian Revolution, his achievements set the grounds for the Haitian army's final victory. Suffering massive losses in multiple battles at the hands of the Haitian army and losing thousands of men to yellow fever, the French capitulated and withdrew permanently from Saint-Domingue the very same year. The Haitian Revolution continued under Louverture's lieutenant, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, who declared independence on 1 January 1804, thereby establishing the sovereign state of Haiti.

## INTO THE UNKNOWN<sup>2</sup>

This year marks the 404<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Mayflower's pioneering voyage with its 102 passengers and 30 crew. The emigrants weren't just ordinary passengers but had distinguished themselves as being in religious conflict with the then accepted rites of



worship in England and who were viewed as 'dissenters' and dangerous rebels. These English Puritans as they were to be known believed that their only means to practice their way of life and radical form of Protestantism was by creating their own Garden of Eden in the colonies. Such an exodus from a Europe besieged by economic depression and the threat of war (the Thirty Year War) was essentially a journey into the unknown, a world of alien geography and strange indigenous peoples and little understanding of what would become of them.

Out of all the voyages to the American colonies from 1620 to 1640, the Mayflower's first crossing of Pilgrim Fathers has become the most culturally iconic and important in the history of migration from Europe to the New World during the Age of Discovery. Other ships that took the Pilgrims across the Atlantic were the Fortune (1621), Anne and Little James (1623) and the second Mayflower (1629). Nine Presidents of America have descended from Pilgrims from Leiden including President Franklin D Roosevelt, George W Bush and Barack H. Obama.

Many of the refugees sailing on the Mayflower were regarded as dangerous religious and political dissidents who, having been in conflict with the Church of England for their unorthodox religious beliefs, had to worship in secret. Mostly made up of evangelical Protestants who

declared themselves as Separatists, other passengers also included Quakers, who equally found themselves in disaccord with the religious laws of England forbidding any form of worship other than the established rites of the Church of England.

One key character who fled across the Atlantic for an unknown destination and future was William Brewster, who founded the Separatist Church in his family owned manor at Scrooby in Nottinghamshire. Brewster had been fined for his non conformist beliefs and played a significant role in future journeys of other citizens fleeing England. Among the millions of Americans who can trace their ancestry to the Mayflower is Hollywood actress Ashley Judd who is a descendant of William Brewster and visited the historical town of Boston in Lincolnshire during her own personal pilgrimage to see the very same prison cell at the city's Guildhall where her ten times removed grandfather had been held after having been caught as the leader of religious dissidents trying to flee England for Holland.



The inaugural voyage of the Mayflower in 1621 wasn't the first attempt for these religious dissenters to try and leave England's shores for a new life overseas. Fourteen years earlier in 1607 a group of men, women and children secretly met a boat on the edge of 'The Wash' at Scotia Creek near Boston in Lincolnshire. They planned to defy the authority of the English Church and escape across the North Sea to Holland to live in religious freedom. But the captain of the ship they were to sail on betrayed them to the local militia who seized the group. Stripped of their possessions they were brought by boat back to Boston and held and tried at the Guildhall, home to the local law court and cells. Most were later released but devoid of their most precious belongings and means to leave England.

Around this time other English Puritans had managed to flee to the Dutch city of Leiden which had a reputation for welcoming 'free thinkers' from England. Twelve years later it was from here that these original migrants from England were to emigrate to America after they feared their children would become too integrated in Dutch life and in danger of being influenced by the Dutch Church. The Separatists was a puritan movement that evolved from the radical Calvinist branch of Protestantism with its Christian practices set down by John Calvin which appealed to the English pilgrims' religious, moral and social beliefs. The *Separatists* who represented an extreme wing of Protestantism believed that the Church of England was beyond redemption because of its Roman Catholic past. To the Puritans, it bore the mark of Satan. Under threat of persecution and fines for not attending Church of England masses, Separatists felt they had to do more than pray in private but to leave England entirely in order to worship freely. One group left for Holland in 1608 and in 1620 others, making the first wave of Puritan pilgrims crossed the Atlantic in the Mayflower, famously settling at what was then named after its English namesake, Plymouth, Massachusetts.



An alternative story: some believe that the Spanish arriving in Florida 56 years earlier enjoyed the first *Thanksgiving* (above<sup>3</sup>).

#### CAN YOU HELP?

**W**e recently drove past a tithe barn and Sue asked me what the 'arrow' slits were called? Any idea?

*Curious Wiltshire* by Mary Delorme (Ex Libris Press 1990) has a good article on tithe barns, especially those of Tisbury (right) and Bradford-on-Avon. The end of the Tisbury barn has slits which she refers to as *oillets*. However, on looking up the word I can only



find a reference to the inward embrasure of an arrow slit (left). The 'windows' in the Bradford-on-Avon barn are actually cross-shaped gable lights. Air flow in the barns was obviously very important to keep the contents from going mouldy. Incidentally, the contents were not always 'in kind' tithes but storage for the abbey's outlying *grange* farm produce.

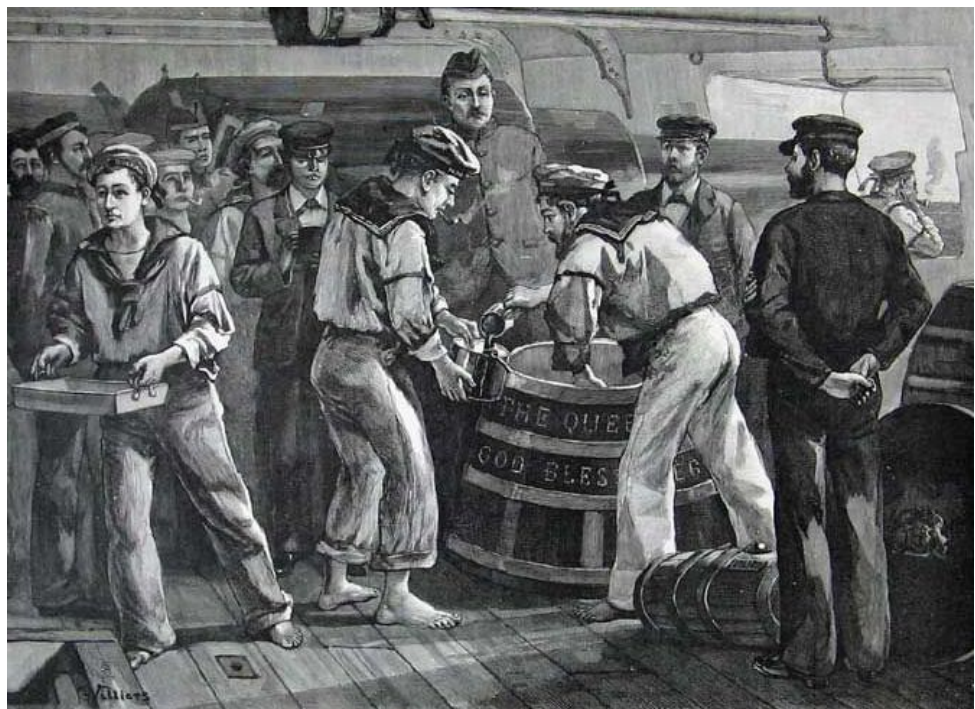


### THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY

I have just finished reading *A History of the World in Six Glasses* by Tom Standage (Atlantic Books 2007). This is a truly interesting way to view the *march of civilisation*. Incidentally, he points out that the word civilisation derives from simply living in cities. The first drink is beer and he notes that toasting someone's health before drinking is a remnant of the ancient belief in beer's magical properties.

The second drink is wine: *Quickly, bring me a beaker of wine, so that I may wet my mind and say something clever* (Aristophenes 450 - 385 BC). Standage believes that the presence of the wild Eurasian grape with its natural dusting of yeast, stored cereal crops and the invention of pottery enabled the discovery of winemaking in the Zagros mountains on the western edge of Iran at least 6,000 years ago. The Greeks were great exporters of wine; a wreck off the southern coast of France contained 10,000 amphora, equivalent to 333,000 modern wine bottles.

The third drink is spirits. Under rum he notes that plantation slaves in the Caribbean were typically issued two or three gallons of rum a year to drink or barter for more food. It should be remembered that rum was a byproduct of sugar cane so would have cost very little. Apart from numbing their feelings, it was healthier than water and could be used medicinally. I expect you know the story of Admiral Vernon watering down the sailors' rum ration to which he also added sugar and lime juice. This cocktail (*Grog*) was known after the admiral's nickname of *Old Grogam* (from the material of his cloak). This sailors' *tot* prevented both drunkenness and scurvy. The Navy's pursers measured the rum's strength using a technique devised by the Royal Arsenal. The rum was mixed with a little water and a few grains of black gunpowder. Using a magnifying glass the mixture was heated by the sun's rays. If the gunpowder failed to ignite more rum was added. Ignition indicated a strength of 48% alcohol and was therefore a *proof* spirit.



It was originally thought that Virginia would have had the same climate as

Mediterranean Europe which would have meant that olives and fruit would not have had to be imported from the continent. This was a fallacy of course so the colonists turned to planting European vines but they succumbed to disease and the local vines were no good for wine. Finally they turned to using imported molasses to turn into rum, usually drunk in the form of punch. So now you can see where the US love for cocktails comes from. Consumption equated to four American gallons per year for every man, woman and child.

Coffee and Tea were the next drinks to take the world by storm. The coffee house was a great invention and powered the scientific inventiveness of the British. Wren, Hooke and Halley discussed the inverse-square law and gravitation's affect on the planets but could not find a satisfactory answer. This inspired Newton who wrote his *Principia*, published in 1687, as a result. The effect on Finance was the same with Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* and the formation of the stock exchange.



Portuguese Catherine of Braganza, wife of Charles II, popularised tea. The factory tea break was introduced when owners realised it kept their machine minders more alert and awake longer. Again, tea and coffee improved health as the water had to be boiled. The oldest tea merchant was a certain Richard Twining who set up shop in 1787. His logo (above<sup>4</sup>) is the oldest in continuous use throughout the world. Tea of course powered the British Empire and the Boston Tea Party was an action against the East India Company extending its market. The dreadful act of The Company forcing opium on the Chinese was an attempt to pay for the large amounts of tea being shipped. Once it registered that tea was growing in Assam, payment was no longer a problem.

You will need to read the book if you can't work out what the sixth drink is.

1. Courtesy of Wikipedia. The oil painting is signed and dated (Aleandre-Francois-Louis, Comte de) *Girardin a Nantes 13*. 13 in the Republican calendar equates to 1804/5. It is probably the only true depiction of TLO and is in the Public Domain.
2. Courtesy of Sky History. The model of a 17<sup>th</sup> century merchantman from the [behindeveryday.com](http://behindeveryday.com) website. Painting of the loading of the Mayflower is by Bernard Gribble, courtesy of [britannica.com](http://britannica.com).
3. Painting courtesy of Florida Museum of Natural History.
4. Courtesy of [militaryhistoryonline.com](http://militaryhistoryonline.com).
5. Courtesy of [Citydays.com](http://Citydays.com).