

ALTOGETHER ARCHAEOLOGY



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Newsletter

1

Editor's Update...

Welcome to the Spring edition of the newsletter.

Our AGM was held on 9th March and we welcomed David Ranner to our Management Committee, and note the re-election of Tony Metcalfe, Martin Green, Greg Finch, and Janet Stirk.

We take this opportunity to thank Karen Heys for all her good work on the committee following her resignation.

Our membership fees remain the same as last year:

- £25 single member
- £35 joint membership
- £15 student member

If you have not already paid, please remember to do so.

We are currently looking forward to a summer season of digs at Gilmonby and Gueswick, and hope that the weather improves drastically from what we have seen so far this Spring. It will be nice for people to have the opportunity of meeting up again. Please contact Tony Metcalfe if you wish to sign up.

I hope you enjoy the articles in this newsletter. If you want to contribute an article for our Winter newsletter then please send them direct to me at sgoldsborough2002@yahoo.co.uk

Happy reading!

Sue Goldsborough

2

CHURCH CORNER

The British Mosque

Mosques have become a familiar part of the urban landscape of our towns and cities because of social and demographic changes in the last one hundred years. While there has been a Muslim presence in Britain since at least Elizabethan times, it was not until the late 19th century when the first mosque was established in a terraced house in Liverpool, by a British convert to Islam: Abdullah William Quillian. Since then, mosques have increased in number, with further houses being used or by conversion of existing buildings.

More recently, according to the 'Muslimsinbritain.org' database of 2013, showed that 45% of mosques were house-based; 39% were other building conversions and 16% were purpose-built mosques. Their survey of 2017 gave a total figure of all mosques and prayer rooms in Britain as 2122. In theory any enclosed space can be a mosque or prayer room. However, bigger premises have been sought to accommodate increasing numbers in larger urban areas.

Basic architectural requirements of the mosque

Unlike western Christian architecture such as Romanesque and Gothic, there is no fundamental style of the architecture of the mosque. Islam is worldwide, and therefore subject to local styles and

materials. As for decoration, it must be kept to a minimum to prevent distraction, so that the prayer room of a mosque will appear quite plain without the colour and iconography of many Christian churches. Pew less, the floor is carpeted, usually with markers for individuals or prayer progressions woven into it. Two other essential features are the Mihrab and the Minbar (fig.1).

The Mihrab is a semi-circular niche in the wall that faces Mecca from where the Imam leads the prayers. The Minbar is usually three-stepped and placed at the right-hand side of the Mihrab and used by a preacher as a pulpit.



Fig1: Al-Azhar showing combined Mihrab and Minbar

Example of the purpose-built mosque

Due to its maritime history, South Shields was a very early settlement for Muslim Yemeni sailors who married into the local population and therefore required a place of worship.



An early example was the conversion of a large public house, later demolished. It was not until 1971 that the Al-Azhar Mosque – a very early purpose-built example in Britain - was built in the Laygate area of the town and includes an attached Madrasa or Muslim school (fig.2). In 1977 the boxer Mohamed Ali and his wife visited the mosque to have their wedding blessed.

Fig.2: Al-Azhar Mosque 1971, South Shields

One of the latest examples of a new build mosque is found at the eco-friendly Cambridge Central Mosque (fig.3) designed by a British company and completed in 2019 at a cost of £23 million. It was short-listed for the RIBA Sterling prize, and won the peoples vote of that year. The central prayer area is filled with tree like columns spreading out like branches and in some way reminiscent of the fan vaulting in King's College Chapel nearby. It was closed for visitors on my visit but I managed one photo from outside the building.



Fig.3: Cambridge Central Square showing the remarkable timber tree-like columns

Example of a conversion mosque

The conversion of a Christian church into a mosque, synagogue or Sikh temple is not unusual (fig.4). South Shields also has a Bangladeshi community because of the restaurant trade. Their mosque was established after purchasing a redundant Primitive Methodist church within the area of their community. They now seek planning permission to construct a Mihrab (niche) in the east-facing wall between the two windows as seen in figure 5.



Fig.4: The former Methodist church now the Baitul Ma,mur Suni Jame-E-Masjid, South Shields.

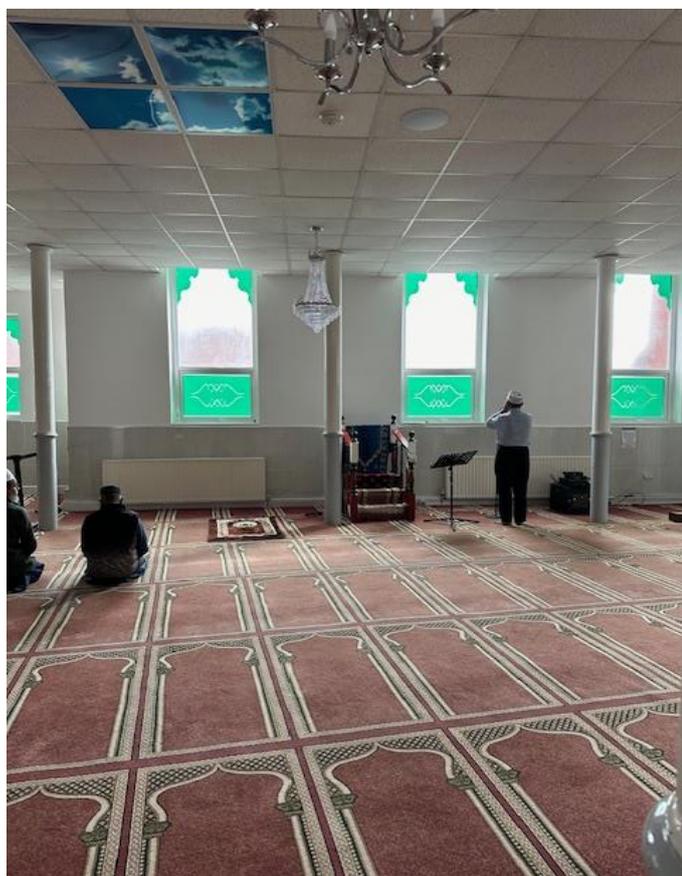


Fig.5: Interior showing the wall between the two windows behind the column where the Mihrab (niche) will be constructed.

Alan Newham

Phots: Alan Newham

3

THE MAGIC OF SPAIN

Wow, Malaga 3000 Years of History

Fed up with constant rain, we decided to go for a city break in a sunny place. My husband and I had been to Malaga airport several times but never visited the city itself. What a mistake that turned out to be. What a beautiful city Malaga proved to be with lovely marble pavements and curved corners to help dissipate the wind that blows from the sea. And so much history! We didn't know where to start.

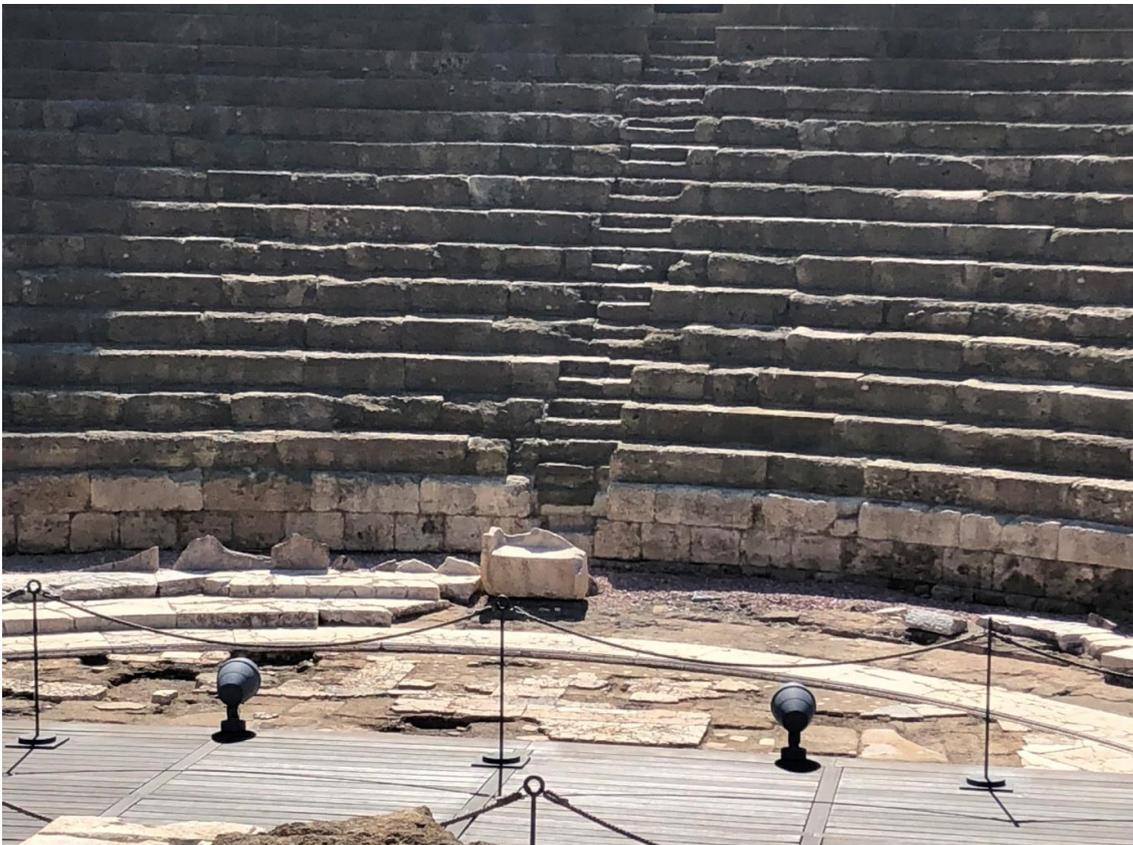


Fig.1: The Roman Theatre (Teatro Romano de Malaga) lies at the foot of the Alcazaba fortress

The first thing that we came across was the amazing Roman theatre (fig.1). The Phoenicians founded Malaga in about 800BC calling it Malaka (a fish salting place) but from the 2nd century BC, the Romans took over under the rule of Emperor Augustus and stayed there until the 3rd century. The theatre was built c. 1 AD and dominates a beautiful square. It was only discovered in the 20th century when a new library was being constructed. It is just so well preserved.

You can see rows of seats where the different classes of people were grouped and the orchestra at the bottom with a clearly defined stage. There are even tunnels where the orators, performers etc. came out onto the stage (fig.2). Amazing!



Fig.2: A well-preserved tunnel used by performers and orators

In the same square you can see preserved large stone troughs which were used to ferment garum, the fish sauce used by the Phoenicians, and the Romans during the Byzantium era. Thank goodness they are sealed under glass.

High above the Roman theatre is the Alcazaba, part palace, part fortress, an impressive tribute to the Moors who conquered the area from the Visigoths in 711 AD (fig.3). It was built between 1057 and 1063 as an impenetrable fortress and you can easily see how true that was. We had a tour from a guide, Esther, who really brought the history of the place to life. It was so well defended by a double wall and many gateways, set at 90-degree angles, combined with watchtowers so that attackers stood little chance of gaining entry. Esther made us tackle the zigzag of entrances and archways using a file instead of a shield. It was just so easy to forget to move your shield from one side to the other as you had to constantly change direction leaving you very vulnerable to attack. The Moors defended the place so expertly.



Fig.3: The Alcazaba, a palatial fortification in Malaga

The palace at the top was beautiful with attractive arches and lovely gardens using water channelled from the mountains (fig.4). We also saw the many silos that were used to store food. These silos were needed in 1487 when Ferdinand and Isabella began a siege which ended with the Moors being told to turn into Christians or die.



Figs.4: Views of the arches and gardens

Malaga cathedral is slap-bang in the middle of the old town (fig.5). We just came around a corner and there it was with lots of cafes, shops, and apartments snuggled around its base. There is a small peaceful garden in the middle of the general chaos in the streets. It does not have the same impact as many cathedrals do because of the closeness of other buildings but it is obvious that it is huge.

Isabella and Ferdinand were so pleased to have defeated the Moors that they ordered a new cathedral be built on the site of the main city mosque. It was begun in 1582 and finished in 1782. As a result it is a mixture of styles: Renaissance, Baroque and a bit of Gothic here and there. It is known as La Manquita (the old lady with one arm) because one of the two

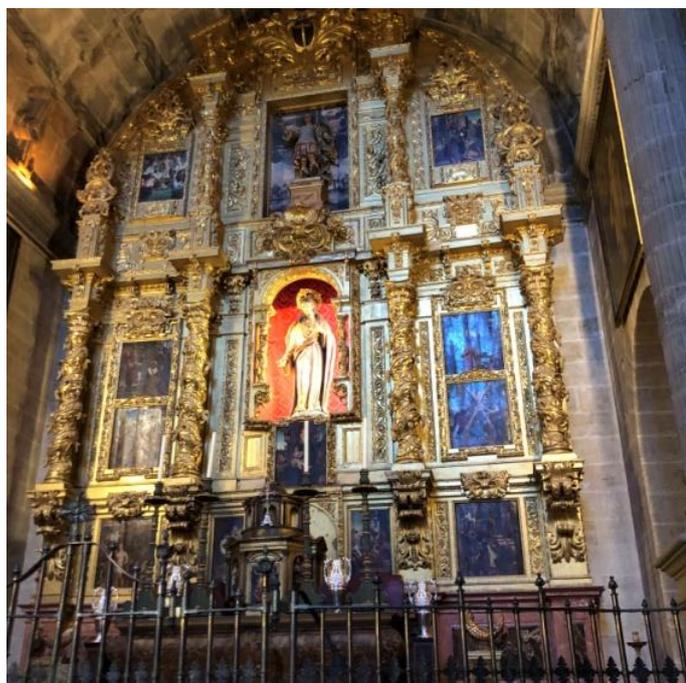


Fig.5: Malaga Cathedral (Santa Iglesia Catedral Basilica de la Encarnacion)

towers is unfinished. There are many theories as to why but the popular theory is that they chose to use any money they had left to improve the streets and the port.

Inside you are met with an amazing colourful, typical Catholic cathedral. The ceilings are breathtaking and so many beautiful columns and carving. The side chapels are stunning, with many paintings, statues and pictures (figs.6).

Who knew that a few days could show us so much history and beauty in such surroundings? We were so pleased that we had decided to do a Malaga city break. Especially as we came home to hail, rain, and wind.



Figs. 6: Inside views of Malaga Cathedral

Margaret Ablett

Photos: Margaret Ablett

4

Why Do We Speak English in Britain?

Schoolchildren have been taught for many years that Britain was invaded by Angles, Saxons, and Jutes around 410 AD after the Romans left, and Old English (OE) was their native language. We owe this fact to the Venerable Bede in his book, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People* written approximately 300 years after this 'invasion'. However, doubts about the veracity of this statement have appeared amongst modern historians. Professor John Blair (2018) of Oxford University claimed that most modern historians do not believe there was an Anglo-Saxon invasion.

So, if there was no invasion, why do we speak English? Why would historians doubt the narrative of Bede? Bede might have been venerable but he was not infallible. Indeed, he thought Hadrian's Wall was built by Severus. His narrative of an invasion by Angles, Saxons, and Jutes is contradicted by Procopius (the Byzantine historian and secretary of the great General Belisarius) who said that Britain was invaded by Frisians. Modern archaeologists excavating in Kent have seen lots of finds closely linking that area with Francia rather than with Jutes as Bede described. More importantly, early Anglo-Saxon dated cemeteries have had skeletons teeth analysed using isotope analysis which tells us that these people likely originate from Britain not Germany (Oosthuizen, 2019). Analysis tells us that immigration is taking place and some grew up overseas but they are as likely to have been from Spain or France as Angeln (the home of the Angles) or Saxony. There is no archaeological evidence of a German invasion. So, what happened?

We first encounter Britain with the 4th century story of Pytheas of Marsalia, a Greek trader who calls the island Prytania, relating to the habit of the locals painting themselves blue. The next record is from Julius Caesar in his Gallic Wars. He first describes Gaul as having three distinct peoples: the Gauls, the Aquitani, and the Belgae, of which the Belgae are the strongest. Caesar says that the Belgae live in the area next to the sea (in the area that today we would describe as southern Holland, Belgium, and north-east France) and they are not Celtic but closest to Germanic. As for Britain, he said that not much was known about the province so he asked merchants who traded with Britain but gained little information and so had to resort to sending traders over to Britain to gain more knowledge. When they returned, he still had learnt little. However, he says that *'the inland portions of Britain are inhabited by those who themselves say that according to their own tradition, they are natives of the soil whilst the coast regions are peopled by those who crossed from Belgium for the purpose of making war.'* We have found Gallo Belgic coins in Britain, mainly in Kent, the earliest dating to before 100BC. Later coins of a similar type are found all along the south coast as far west as Dorset.

Caesar's conquest of Gaul has been described as a genocide so it would be unsurprising if some people decided to move away from the trouble, much the same as people did in the 450's AD to get away from Attila the Hun. Indeed, Caesar tells us the Belgae and the Atrebates (another Belgic tribe) moved to Britain having originally supported the Romans and then switched sides (fig.1).

When Caesar attacked Britain in 55 BC, he did so with two legions - approximately 15,000 men. The ships carrying his cavalry got lost and he received cavalry support from the Atrebates living in Britain who gave him 100 horsemen. In 54 BC he attacked again with six legions – about 45,000 men – but had to build an extra 200 ships for that purpose i.e. the extra 30,000 men. The attack achieved little and Caesar soon returned to Gaul. Nonetheless, the narrative implies that there was shipping available in 54 BC to ferry 15,000 people to Britain which would be enough to transport the Belgic tribes to Britain, not just the elite of those tribes as some academics believe.

On 12 March 2023, a new Belgic coin was found in the Test Valley, Hampshire. It describes a previously unknown ruler Esunertos, dating to 50-30 BC who would appear to be a client king of Commius, the man who provided Caesar with the cavalry in 55 BC.

There is more work to be done but it appears to back up the evidence of Belgic tribes living in Britain before the Roman invasion, as does the Roman names for towns in Wessex - Venta Belgarum being the early name of Winchester, and Calleva Atrebates being the name for Silchester. Why do I emphasise the Belgic tribes? Well, the closest language to Old English (OE) is Frisian and was spoken all along the low-lying areas of continental Europe, from Jutland and south to Flanders where it dies out. We know that the Romans left large areas of Belgium and north-east France and southern Netherlands almost empty of people, Caesar had a track record of killing large numbers of tribes and enslaving the remaining people. However, it is possible that the tribes in that area escaped over the Channel seeking safety.



Fig.1: Map showing the location of British tribes pre-Caesar's attack

We know that in medieval times the wool staple was the largest source of income for the crown with long standing trade relations with Flanders. According to Professor Robin Fleming (2010), the oldest trading town in Britain was Ipswich, and it appears likely that wealth derived from controlling the trade out of Ipswich was behind the riches found in Sutton Hoo. Furthermore, Blair (2018) tells us there is elaborate and abundant evidence from the first half of the 8th century of trading with the low countries where sceattas minted in the Netherlands make up between a quarter and a third of English currency with little English coin going in the other direction. This means England was running a massive balance of payments surplus with the Netherlands. It is entirely possible that trade was going on much before that time (fig.2).

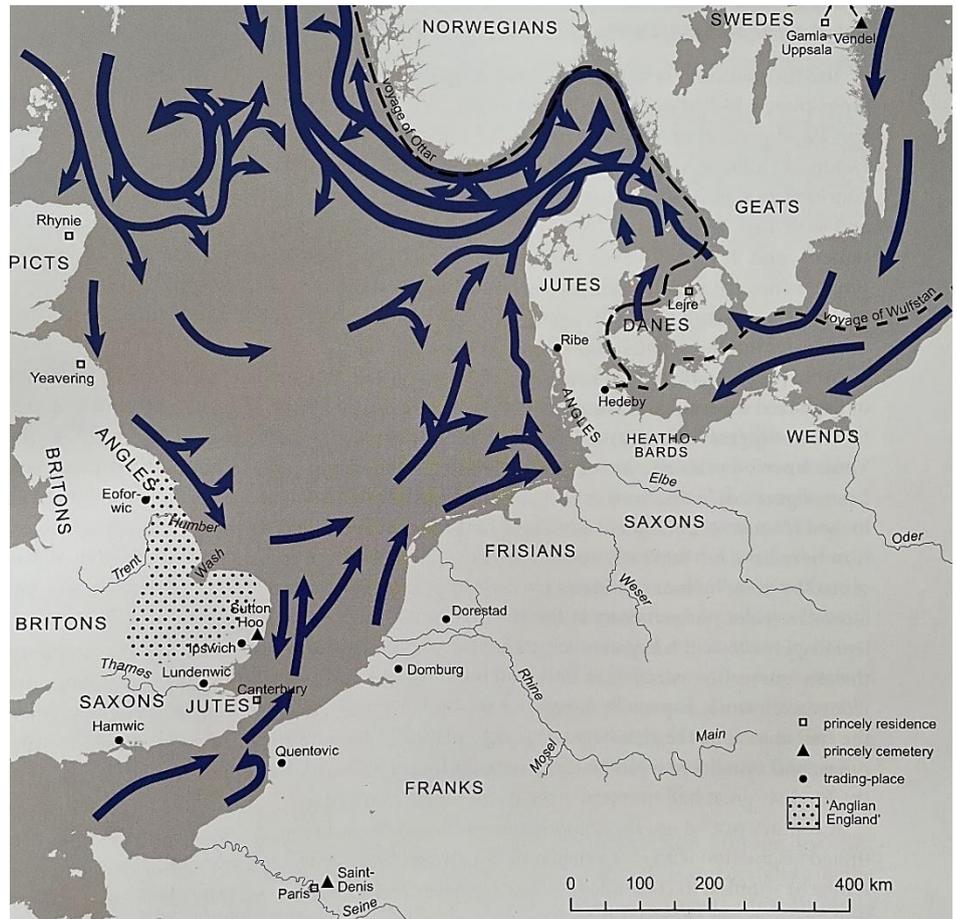


Fig.2: Map showing the north-east trading routes and emporia post-Roman

In conclusion, for us to speak English it would make sense if a sizeable portion of the island's population already spoke Old English (OE). Languages evolve over time and it is possible that an earlier dialect of Frisian might have changed into Old English. After the Romans left, Britain became an important part of a North Sea trading system and Old English might have helped people converse with Frisian traders thus giving this language a boost in popularity. It seems clear that if native English speakers did not arrive after 410 AD, then they must have arrived before the Romans.

John Goldsbrough

Fig. 1: Wikipedia, Fig. 2: Blair 2018

Blair, J. (2018) *Building Anglo-Saxon England*. Princeton University Press, Woodstock, Oxfordshire

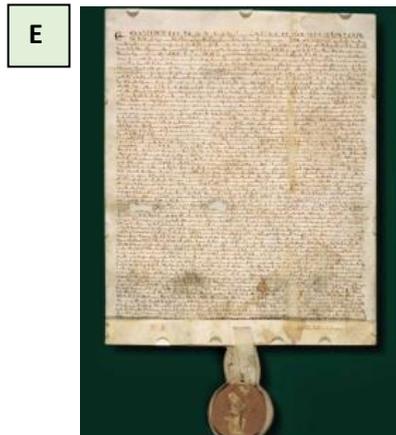
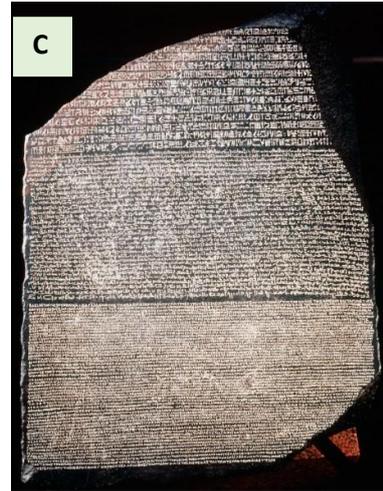
Fleming, R. (2010) *Britain After Rome*. Penguin Books Ltd, London

Oosthuizen, S. (2019) *The Emergence of the English*. Arc Humanities Press, Leeds

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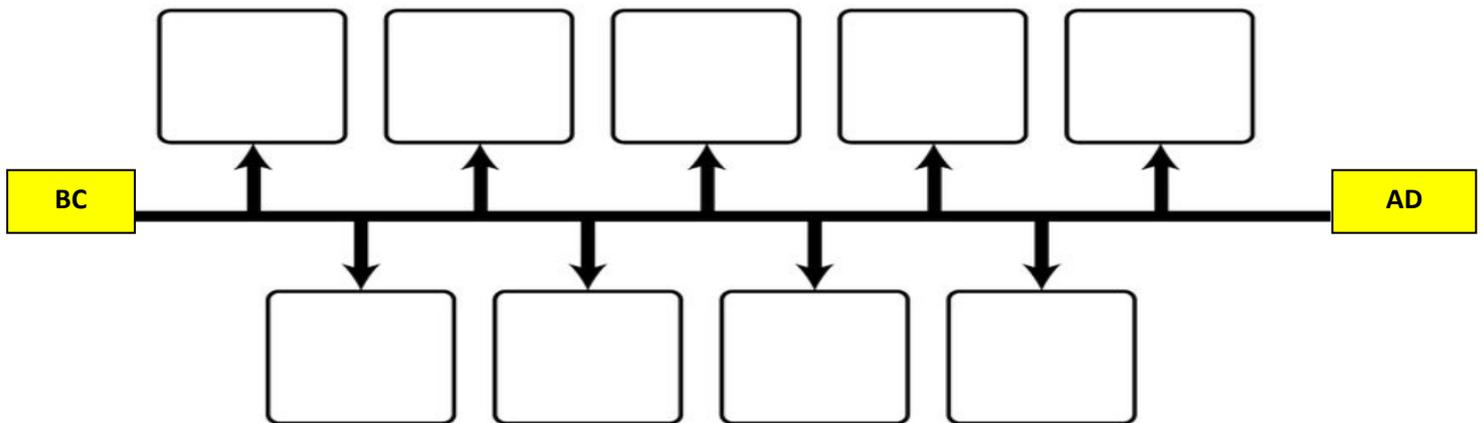
QUIZ

Match the date with the object and put the corresponding letter in the timeline in order of date starting with the oldest object to the most recent.



- a. Tutankhamun's Death Mask
- b. Alfred Jewel
- c. Rosetta Stone
- d. Reliquary Casket of Thomas Beckett
- e. Magna Carta
- f. Lycurgus Roman Cup
- g. Coin of Hadrian
- h. Mechanical Galleon
- i. Lindisfarne Gospels

c. AD 715	1323 BC	AD 117	AD 1215	c. AD 871	AD 300	196 BC	c.1200 AD	AD 1585
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**** Answers on next page ****



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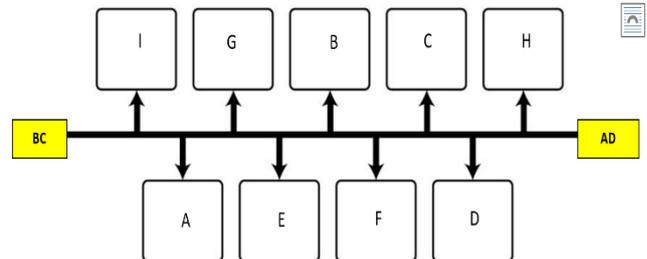
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QUIZ ANSWERS



Many thanks to the following AA members for their contributions to the newsletter:

- Alan Newham
- John Goldsborough
- Kay Fothergill
- Margaret Ablett

Front photo: Stephen Hutchinson taking a well-earned break after a hard day's graft.