

– Right. I will then. Thank you very much indeed, Emily. And welcome to everyone who's Zoomed in tonight for this third session on the history of France. But can you forgive me for a moment, especially if you're French, because I want to reflect on today's date. Today is Saint Crispin's Day. In other words, the anniversary of the Battle of Agincourt in 1415. A victory that cemented a new Anglo Norman society in England finally into one society, the un-English society, when Henry IV ordered his knight, mostly Norman French, to dismount and stand alongside the English Bowman. And he did this because he didn't trust his knights not to run if the battle was going against them. And so, these French knights had to dismount and stand shoulder to shoulder with the English Bowman. It's a great moment in English history.

Now, if you are French and you think, "Why is he rabbiting on about Agincourt?" Because it was the French that won the Hundred Year's War the Battle of Castillon in 1453. And that was a resounding French victory with clear consequences for the, I think one would say the power of the kings of France after that battle. So, the Hundred Years' War resulted in both the English and the French coming out of it with a real sense, a new sense of who they were. That's a story which I shall tell next week. So, my talk today is about the Dark Ages. That is the period of time after the Romans left France, Roman go. And before we can describe the arrival of the, well, really the first, I would say first real royal house of France, the Capetians, after Hugh Capet, C-A-P-E-T, the Capetians, in the 10th century. The Dark Ages have been described by an English historian, Michael Wood, as loose in terms of the time scale. And this is what Michael Wood says, it's very brief, but I think it's very well-written. And he simply says, "The Dark Ages is a title that one can only say was loose in the extreme. Beginnings it did at the end of the Roman period, the middle of the fifth century in France's case, and ending in the late 11th century," et cetera. That is to say the 1000.

Now, my story today will cover the period up to the year 1066, when a French-Norman army invades England. And that triggers the mediaeval warfare between the two countries, which lasts through to the date I've just given you in the middle of the 15th century. But one important thing to note is the phrase, Dark Ages was not a phrase that was ever contemporary to the period of the fifth, sixth, seventh, or whatever centuries. It appears that the phrase was first used by the Italian Renaissance poet Petrarch. Now, why Petrarch described this period after the fall of Rome as the Dark Ages was because the Renaissance was discovering classical learning, the learning of ancient Rome and Greece. And anything that didn't sort of match up to that, they regarded as barbaric. And it was Petrarch who described this period of time as the Dark Ages, but the phrase really took off

in the Enlightenment of the 18th century. Again, a great intellectual revolution in the Enlightenment. And again, looking at classical learning and the phrase Dark Ages in the English words, Dark Ages, is then used here in this country. But the term is used in all the languages of Western Europe during and after the Enlightenment and went on being used right the way through the 19th century across Europe. But today, many scholars reject the phrase. They reject it because they say it isn't true. There was a light in the darkness. And to portray it simply as a dark, black age, it is not a good idea, whether it be France, or whether it be England, or wherever you choose. Some historians, as I said last week, still refer to the Dark Ages. And I'm less happy about that phrase. There's been a new book published by Gabrielle and Perry called, it's on my blog, called "The Bright Ages." And it's uses the term bright ages as the opposite of Dark Ages, and it calls it bright ages for the whole of the mediaeval period. I'm sorry, it doesn't make entire sense to me. You can use it for the period I'm talking about from the mid fifth to the end of the, to the beginning of the 11th century. Make some sort of sense both in French history and in English history. But I'm not sure you can take it all the way through the Middle Ages. To describe the 14th century or the 15th century as a Dark Age is non-sensible in Western European terms and certainly in terms of France, as we shall see. So, we have a problem about how we look at this period. Now in their book "Bright Ages," which I have to say is an excellent book and my criticism is, as it were, mild criticism. They write this, "The myth of the Dark ages, which survives quite a really popular culture, allows the space for it to be whatever the popular imagination wants. If you can't see into darkness, the imagination can run wild, focusing attention on and giving outsized importance to the small things that you could see. It can be a space for seemingly clean and useful myths, fiction, useful to people with dangerous intentions." Ah, "Useful to people with dangerous intentions." They're referring there to the Nazis in Germany. History, you see, can be utilised in a present, to make political points in the present day, by referring to the past. Never a good idea. But leave that aside. Certainly if we look at English and Breton myths of the period, one figure stands out. That is the figure of King Arthur, who I'm sorry to say, did not live. He may be an amalgamation of all sorts of different people, but there is no evidence that King Arthur, there was a man called King Arthur, that lived. All the evidence is far, far too late. Now, if anyone like me sets out to talk as I am tonight, tonight in England, about the Dark Ages, you have to be careful.

So I suppose the first point, if I'm being didactic and a sort of school teacher to all, I would say the first point, children, is to remember that the Dark Ages are not entirely dark and that is a phrase that you should question. What is true and what people now say is this, there was indeed a collapse of a civilization, that is Rome, but they prefer to talk about a transformation, a transformation of Roman culture into post-Roman culture in France, Gallo-Romanic culture,

Gallo-Romanic. And that change from a Roman world to a new world is very important in history of France, as it is for all Western European countries, because it's the moment that you can say that France begins to form in the way that we see France today. The France of Gaul was different in all sorts of ways, despite asterisks. The France that emerges after the fall of Rome is the beginning of the France we know today and that is replicated in the story of the history of England as well. This is a western European story of how Western Europeans coped with the fall of the Roman Empire. And although the details differ from one country to another, the theme is the same. Now, we noticed this change last week. I hope you might remember from Jeremy Black's history of France because Jeremy Black wrote this and I quoted it last week. "In the end, Gaul did not so much succumb to its Germanic invaders of the fifth century as become transformed by them." Well, that is absolutely true because one of the biggest groups that came were the Franks, who gave their name to the country. Not Gaul, but France. Not Gauls, but French. So, the very essence of France comes in this period and it comes from outside. But as we look at this, Gabriel and Perry in their book, "The Bright Ages," point this out and I think this is really very interesting. They're talking about the fall of Roman civilization of cities and roads and all the rest and they're write "But then circle changed again. Cities grow, towers climb towards the sky. Connections between regions that were never severed did stretch and attenuate over the centuries, bringing with them ideas and bacteria." The Black Death. What it's saying is although one civilization disappears, a new civilization comes about. The cities of Roman Gaul did not disappear. We know that you can visit them. We talked about now bond for example. And if you go there, as I said in the centre of Napoleon, you can see, touch, feel, road. But the city that grew up in the Middle Ages was different, different buildings, different administration, different in lots of ways, different agriculture, different in all sorts of ways. So it changes, it transforms. Now you might say, "Well, the houses that the well-to-do lived in in the 13th century in a city like Napoleon or a city like Lyon, were very different than the cities that their predecessors in Roman Gaul lived in." Yes, that's undoubtedly true. But then, to make a judgement that it was worse, now, that's when you get into some difficulties. It had started again. Well, if I guess give you one example from the late Middle Ages that develops, that is the development of the chimney, a very important development. Okay, we lost hypocausts, that is to say the Roman under floor heating. But we gained wonderful... Do you remember from childhood sitting in front of open fires, coal fires, wooden fire? Oh, absolutely fantastic. So, it's a question of judgement.

So, the second thing is the Dark Ages weren't always dark and it wasn't the end of a civilization when Rome left, but a transformation into a new world. And for our purposes, a new world that is giving birth to the France that we know today. Let's take a look at France's story in the aftermath of Rome and Roman Gaul. Several barbarian

tribes, as such as the Franks, they aren't the only ones. The Visigoths, the Burgundy, all sorts of people moved into Gaul. Why? Because they were pressurised by other tribes from the East moving into their territory such as the Huns from the East. Oh, stop. Think what I just said. The Franks move from Germany down into France. The Huns move into Germany, And the Hun was the words used by the French and the English during first World War. We're beginning to get a hint of the dividing of Europe into what is to become by the end of the 19th century, nation states, the nation state of France, and over the other side of horizon, the nation state of Germany. Franks or French and Hans or Germans. So, this period is very important in terms of the future structures of Europe and indeed the future. What is the word? The word might be prejudices that we have, national prejudices that we have, which sometimes are funny. The French calling us roast beef. We calling the French frogs. I mean it's a love-hate relationship, but sometimes it can be a lot worse than that. Remember, I said just now from the reading that this period was important because later politicians look back on it and the Germans look back on it in the 20th century twice. So, the past is important in understanding the present. And it's also important in making your own judgments about political opinions that might be expressed either in your own country or in this case in Germany in the late 19th and into the first half of the 20th century. Now, I'm seeing the invaders are coming from the north, from the east, they're coming from everywhere. Many of them settled in France so that the French are like every nation, the French become a mongrel race, if you like. We've got Gallic, who are, well, the Gauls, the Gallo-Romans. We've got people brought in by the Roman Empire. We've got Franks. We've got Visigoths. We've got Burgundy. We've got a whole range of people that eventually come together to beat the French. Now, I said when I opened about the Battle of Agincourt because the nobility and aristocracy were largely French. They were parted from the ordinary citizens in England who were Saxon. And Agincourt is as good a date as any to see these two people going together. If you don't want a warlike answer, then the other answer is 1400 when King Henry IV opened the English Parliament in English and not in French. So this idea of nationalism, if you like, emerges during the course of the Middle Ages on both sides of the channel. And it emerges when peoples see themselves not as separate, but as one.

Now in France, it takes longer than that because people have a very strong commitment to their own area, to their own province, wherever it might be. Their own department in modern France. There isn't such, although the English feel an affinity with the county in which they were born, it's not quite the same as in France. And why the story differs, we shall see as we run through the next few weeks. At first, these invaders tried to placate and as the invaders came in the government. That is to say the Gallo-Roman government in post Roman Gaul tried to placate these invaders and, "Look, please don't kill us, William. Look, we'll pay your war bank to defend us against," well, against whom, "against my relatives coming after me." "Well, if you

pay me enough, I will defend the land for you until I decide it's probably better for me to join my friends and invade." Exactly what happened in England, happened in France. They tried the old Roman method of my employing part of the enemy, civilising your enemy, and then using them as the force to deter further enemy incursions. Well, it didn't work in England, post-Rome, and it certainly didn't work in France. Roman rule collapses. What does that mean? Well, it means in political administrative terms that the central authorities collapsed. It meant that there was no one collecting taxes. That the concept of a public financial chest or of a sense of a community across the country of Gaul disappeared. It also meant that central defence collapsed. Now, that was really important. The Romans had, as we well know, large numbers of legions posted around the Roman world when they were withdrawn to defend Rome. And the countries were left on their own, the provinces of Rome. They really couldn't do it. And so, central defence collapsed. It held out longer in France than it did in Britain, but all the same. The writing was on the wall when Rome withdrew its legions. There was also economic collapse. There was a fall in trade, which has been identified between France and Italy. There was a lot of trade. Well, obviously there was a lot of trade between France and Italy in Roman times. It's a relatively short distance. That stops. Also between France, Gaul and Iberia, the Roman provinces of Spain and the Portugal, that stops. There's a collapse. There's even a collapse of minted coinage.

Now, France appears to have really lost its proper coinage entirely after the defeat by Rome. And most people go back to barter. They did in England. But it takes a little longer for coinage to reestablish itself. Now, Charlemagne, which we would come to, made huge efforts to restore a coinage in France. But in truth, the coinage of France really only begins in the 10th century under the Royal House of Capet, of the Capetians. But in France, various dukes around France issued their own coinage, bishops. Now, that basically doesn't happen in England where the Saxon kings exercise central control. Although they minted the coins in different parts of England, it was the same coin. Incidentally, rather like the Euro as a common currency in Europe, so were these coins. Because if a Frenchman came to England, to London to trade, and he was buying something, and they would say, well, in English, "That would be 12 pennies." Well, what does that mean in French? It doesn't matter. You put the silver, that is to say the coin, on a weight and the English trader puts in the weight for 12 pennies. And the French trader puts in his suit until they balance. And when they balance, that's what he pays. Except you have to be very careful because there was a lot of dodginess going on in trading in the Middle Ages. So, let's move away from that and look at our first French hero. We've got two French heroes in this book. The first is a man called Clovis, C-L-O-V-I-S, Clovis, and he was one of the Frankish invaders. And in 486, he defeated really the last Gallo-Romanic leader called Syagrius. Sorry, it's a terrible name to pronounce in Latin. Syagrius, S-Y-A-G, Syagrius, R-I-U-S, Syagrius, Syagrius. I get it

out. One of those words that your tongue can't get round. Well, I can't. And Clovis defeated him. And he's a figure, if you like, like a King Arthur figure in mythology, except he was real. He was a Gallo-Roman soldier and it was the last real resistance to the Frankish invasion. Clovis defeated him 486, and in doing so, loosely controlled the whole of what we would call today, Northern France. In 507, Clovis defeated another tribe of Visigoths.] They were in central, they were in central Southeast France. And finally, he defeated the Alamanni, a number of these invading groups who had settled in Eastern France. So, this is a case of one group of invaders, the Franks, trying to control the whole of what used to be a Roman Gallo or trying to get as much as they could. Now, as important as Clovis was as a war leader, and he reestablished, maybe the word is established, not reestablished, the concept of one goal, one France. But there's something equally important than you may feel more important than his victories, because his victories didn't last. He set the stake in the ground, if you like, to say there must be one France ruled by one king. Yes, he did that, but it didn't last. What did last was he converted to Christianity and because he converted, all his lords converted and the people converted. If your leader converted, you had no choice but to convert basically. And so, it was Clovis that made the New France a Christian France.

Now, okay, we know that there were Christian communities in Gaul, but these have largely disappeared entirely. Maybe some underground Christians worshipping . It's Clovis who establishes the Christian Church. And that was a first stage to merging people into one. If all the people were Christian, they forget their ethnicities. They had this important thing in common. And of course, the history of Christianity in France is a very important one in cultural terms, as well as in political terms. So, Clovis is important. Clovis was also crowned in and baptised in Reims in 496, but he establishes capital in Paris. And so Paris becomes, remember he controlled the north first of France, so Paris becomes a capital. It's very strange where capital cities are in countries. I mean, if you look at France, it shouldn't be Paris. It should be lower down. And if you look at England, it certainly shouldn't be London. It should be further up. But it doesn't work like that. And Paris, which had been a Roman settlement, he chooses because it's in the land he totally controls in Northern France's capital. Crowned in Reims and Reims again becomes important later in our story. Reims is very much a place of French monarchy. Clovis said something else. He was king of the France. We would might say king of France. But he also used the term console, the Roman Latin term console, as though he was a governor. And he used that to pretend, I think there's no other word for it, to pretend that France was still Gaul and he was a console to the Eastern Roman emperor in Constantinople. The Western empire in Rome fallen. But the Eastern Empire in Byzantium doesn't fall until May, 1453. The Greek empire as it became. And he uses the term console. Now, that's important. Why? Because he's claiming continuity with Rome. He's claiming continuity

with Rome. There was really no continuity, but he claims it. And I think that is important. Jeremy Black writes this. Let me just read you a quote from him. He says, "This was important," using the term console, "this was important in cultivating a sense then and later of continuity between the Roman Empire and the kingdom of France." Well, he established the Royal House of the Merovingian, the first royal house of France, if you like. And it wasn't therefore entirely dark in France. This is light being entered into the darkness and black, right? "Like other barbarian rulers, Clovis consolidated his kingdom by murdering many of his relatives, yet jeopardised it by dividing his succession among his sons and grandsons." Now, this was a dreadful, dreadful era in France. The French kings divided the land between their sons. There's no primogeniture. Those of you who are lawyers, well, if you are common lawyers in English speaking lands, you know that there were different rules of, there were different rules of inheritance in Mediaeval England between, shall we say, Kent, which had gavelkind, and other areas. Now, the problem in France is the law divided up the inheritance and that is not suitable for firm government. Now, that did not happen even in Saxon England, but it certainly didn't happen when William of Normandy came. Why? Because William was aware of the history of France and he knew you couldn't do that. You had to ensure so that very often the Norman Kings had their children crowned during their lifetime or they had their heir crowned during their lifetime. So unlike King Charles here in England, he would've been crowned whilst his mother's still ruled. He wouldn't have been king, but he been crowned so that when his mother died, he was automatically king. Now, we don't need that in England because we have primogeniture.

Now later, of course, France has primogeniture with the Bourbons. But at this period, it does not. And it is a very much a break on how France develops in this period. Clovis died in 511, divided between his four sons. And so, darkness descended once more. But post-Roman France, Gaul, went on developing. In 534, the Merovingian, Clovis' Royal House, conquered Burgundy. And three years later in 537, conquered Baiuvarii. So he's moving down. He's attempting to recreate Roman Gaul. Now, we can call it France. He's trying to do that. He also tried to advance over the run, into what we now call Germany, but he couldn't succeed. He was pushed back to this side of the run. And there again, we had the rhyme, which we met last week and which we've met again. And I said it was Frank versus Teuton, France versus Germany. And that division exists still within the European Union in 2022. How the past intervenes? Well, Giscard d'Estaing, when President of France, at an EU meeting said and it was held at Aachen in Germany, which is the where Charlemagne's thrones, said, "Well, we must meet and discuss this economic problem in the light of Charlemagne." Well, Giscard d'Estaing was always referring to history. Those of you who are French will know that Giscard d'Estaing was a great historian of Napoleon. I think he had some, I think he had a front, I think he had a Napoleon complex, but that may be because he was shot. No, no, no,

no, no, don't go there. So finally, one of his sons, this is one of Clovis' sons, manages to rehash the idea of one France. But that was very short-lived because when he died, it was divided up between his sons. They couldn't sort of get over this. And as this happened, more and more of the aristocracy, and we can now use that word in a mediaeval sense, the aristocracy of France become over mighty subjects. They give themselves a Latin title. They call themselves dukes. Latin, dux. Dux was a war leader in late Latin. So, the dukes are Burgundy and Aquitaine and all the rest and they don't want a bow to a Merovingian king in Paris. And so, we get this strange jigsaw pattern of France in the early Middle Ages where there is a king, but there's also dukes who rule without reference to the king. And the king is always trying to pull the dukes into line. And that's a story that goes through the story of the war between England and France, because England becomes one of the dukes. And that's a story we will come to, Duke of Normandy, of course. And then, they pull other dukes in, promising them something the French king doesn't do. And then, the French king promises what the English don't. And so, France in a really rocky stage for a lot of the Middle Ages, because central control cannot be imposed from Paris. That was the great lesson that William the Conqueror learnt in 1066. When he came to England, he was having nothing to do with a French system. He would have central control.

Now, although the Saxon Kings had central control, it was nothing like the control that William had come to that in due course. By the end of the seventh century, these aristocrats in France were gaining greater power within the palace in Paris of the kings. And the kings establish a post called mayor, M-A-Y-O-R, mayor of the palace, which was a sort of majordoma but more than that. He's really the executive arm of the crown and they could be very powerful men. And the system eventually led to civil war and the overthrow in the Merovingian dynasty. And the mayor of the palace called Pepin, died in 714. He had already given himself the title Duke and Prince of the Franks. He didn't claim to be king, Duke and Prince of the Franks. And then his son, Charles Martel, sometimes known as Charles The Hammer, emerged really as the real ruler of France. As the commanding officer of the Merovingians family's army, he defeated the tribes from Germany trying to come down from the north. He defeated them. That's perhaps not so important. But he had in 732 an enormously important victory. We don't know where the victory battle was fought, it was fought somewhere between Poitiers and Tours. If you've got the map handy and you don't know where Poitiers and Tours are, where it says Kingdom of Charles, Poitier is above the word Kingdom, and where it says West Francia, then Tour is just below that. So, it's in the area between the words West Point, Kingdom of Charles in the east of, sorry, in the west of France. Now, this battle sometimes called Poitier. It's called Poitier I think more in France. I'd always learnt here that it was called the Battle of Tours. But nowadays, I think we all say the Battle of Poitier. What did he do? Who did he defeat? He defeated an Islamic advance. Where

from? From Spain. The Moors. Not anything to do with the Crusades. It was the Great Arab expansion after the death of Mohamed. And it swept across North Africa. And it swept across the straits of Gibraltar to Gibraltar itself. And from Gibraltar, pushed right up Spain and Portugal it conquered. Now on the map, you can see the Umayyad Emirate of Cordoba. It shows you right in the north on the Pyrenees. And they didn't stop. They came over the Pyrenees and are advancing into France. And had Charles Martel lost the battle of Poitiers, then we might all be Muslim today.

Now, that view is I have to say the traditional view of the battle and that's how many French historians would still view it. I have to say I view it in that way. But there is a new view in amongst historians that say, "Hang on a moment, it wasn't really like that." And they maintain that it was little more than a raiding expedition on rich monasteries in the south of France or in the south west of France. And that the Muslims had no intention of conquering France. Well, I think we can argue and argue that until the cows come home and you won't get a definitive answer. But I think that had he lost, it would've left the whole of France opened to this Islamic advance. And if France had fallen, the rest of Western Europe northwards would've fallen and eastwards towards Italy as well. There would've been nothing to stop them. And certainly, I don't think they would've been stopped. In Britain, possibly because of the island nature, but I think we would all have been conquered. So, Charles Martel is important. Charles Martel's son, Pepin III, deposed the last Merovingian claimant to the throne and his son blasted French trumpets everywhere. He sung. He's the great irreplaceable Charlemagne. In Latin, Carolus Magnus, the Great Charles. Charlemagne is the son of this great war. I'm sorry, he's the grandson of this great war leader, Charles Martel, and the son of Pepin, the first of a new royal dynasty, the Carolingians, named after Charlemagne's father and so on. Carolingians. Merovingians first, then Carolingians. Charlemagne's the real deal. Charlemagne was born about 745. And a German monk, if I can find my book, I will read it to you. A German monk wrote this, a contemporary wrote this, of Charlemagne. This is a fantastic discussion. He lived at the same time and knew him. "Charles was large and strong and of," sorry, "and of lofty stature, though not disproportionately tall. The upper part of his head was round, his eyes very large and animated, nose a little long, hair fair, and face laughing in merry. He used to wear the national, that is to say the Frank dress. Next, his skin, a linen shirt and linen breeches. And above those are tunic, fringe with silk. White hose fastened by bands covered his lower limbs and shoes, his feet. And he protected his shoulders and chest in winter by a close fitting coat of otter or marten skins. Overall, he flung a blue cloak and he's always had his sword gird about him, usually one with a gold or silver hilt and belt." Now, that's the sort of king you want to see. King Charles will wear such a costume at his coronation. Although interestingly, that's another story. Blue is associated with the Royal House of France. Red with the Royal Houses of England. That's another

story, which I may tell someday.

Charlemagne was a man with a vision. The vision not just to create France, but to create the Roman Empire. And on your map, you can see all the areas on your map where it says, I will explain all of that in later, the Kingdom of Louis, the Kingdom will Lothair, and the Kingdom of Charles, all of that was Charlemagne's territory. Northern Italy, Germany, France, Switzerland, the rest, this is the beginning of what Charlemagne hope would be a new Roman empire. What Macron would see as a French dominated European Union perhaps. This is so important. He's not thinking in French terms. He's thinking in European terms. Thus in the EU, Charlemagne is a name that is positive to both the French and the Germans. That's why you see Giscard d'Estaing mentioned it at the conference at Aachen when he was president, because it resonates with the Germans and it resonates with the French. It's only is the British Agincourt, but it's important. It's very important. He had this dream and he did, as the map shows, was successful. Not entirely, he didn't take the whole of Italy. He didn't take Spain and Portugal, but he took a great sway of Western Europe. He did invade Spain to attack the Muslims, but was thrown back. Do you remember the "Song of Roland?" Well, that was part of the withdrawal, if you like, of the French troops from Islamic Spain. He established his capital in Aachen, where I said his throne was, now in Germany. If you're ever near Aachen please, please, please go into the cathedrals, a magnificent cathedral. But you can go up, you can pretty, well, you can't, but you pretty well can sit on Charlemagne's throne. It's an amazing moment. I've been there a couple of times and each time I've just stood in awe of it. I just think what a connection back to the eighth century. This is a throne, this very throne on which Charlemagne sat with a dream of a greater Europe, the same dream as the Eurocrat share in Brussels today. He also introduced the first mediaeval coinage that is of any value at all in France. And he was the one that set up the French system pounds, denier, and sous, which lasts right the way through until the revolution in 1789. And then in 799, a new threat comes to France, well, to the whole of Western Europe. The Northmen arrive and I'll read you a little short piece here.

"The year is 800. The Northmen come to the coast of France." Get the right page in a minute. "The Moors men arrive in France on the coast and begin to plunder. They are, the Northmen are Vikings from the far north. They're on the move. They also are being pushed by climate mainly to explore new lands. New lands to settle in." Well, new lands to plunder, first of all. And then, they see the wealth, and they see the goodness of the land because the Vikings are farmers. And they then decide to settle in France as they did in England. And this happened 15 years before Charlemagne's own death in 814. After his death, his son Louis took over. But then, France is divided after Louis' death into the three kingdoms. you can see on the map the Kingdom of Louis, think Germany, the Kingdom of Charles, think France, and the Kingdom of Lothair, man's name, one of the princes, divided

between the east and the west. East Francia become Germany. West Francia becomes France, which I mentioned last week. And the Middle Francia disappears. So, there is a France emerging. There is a Germany emerging. But it isn't one as Charlemagne had dreamed of. Charlemagne, I think, would be a tremendous supporter of the European Union today, provided he was in-charge, which is much how the Germans and the French see the EU. So, we now enter quite a new phase. In 855, Provence was added to France and remained French. But of course, the history of Provence has been different for 800 years, nearly a thousand years under the Romans. And subsequently, giving us a clue to why Provence is different to Northern France, why the language is different, the culture is different, the traditions are different. They're different worlds. Now, I know full well Avignon is in Provence, but my wife and I went on a holiday, a train holiday, and we were first based in Avignon and it was lovely and exactly what I'd expected. And it was very Southern French and the food was excellent, blah, blah, blah. Then, we went Arles and we arrived as dusk was settling over the city. And I got a quite different feeling. I thought, "This is different here." And when we explored, we could see the differences. Yes, there's lovely Roman things, great Roman amphitheatre where they still put on shows, but it seemed different. This seemed in many ways the real Provence. And so, there were differences, very, I mean, marked differences. If you take even today, a city like Arles and compare it to a city like Lyon in the north of France, very different. You think you are in different countries. In 845, a Viking army besiege Paris and only withdraws when the Carolingian kings pay them money. We call that in England, danegeld. And there's a very famous poem by Kipling that says, "If you pay the daners money, they only come back for more. And then you pay them again and they want more." In the same year of 845, Britain broke away as an independent state. France has difficulty in holding together. Well, no different than England. England split between Viking England and Saxon England and France split as well. It's difficult in a post-Roman world to hold these countries together, to even know what you are holding together. And that really brings me towards an end for this evening.

I want to read a piece from the great historian, the great British historian Edward Gibbon on his very famous book, "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire." Gibbon is worth reading not so much for the history today, as for the language. And Gibbon wrote this, "The dregs of the Carolingian race," that ROYAL house of France Charlemagne's house, "the dregs of the Carolingian race no longer exhibited any symptoms of virtue or power. And the ridiculous epithets of the bold, the scammer, the fat, and the symbol distinguished the tame and uniform features of a crowd of kings alike, deserving of oblivion." Wow. Wow. In 987, the Carolingians are overthrown and the Capetians rule. And they're to rule France from 987 to 1328. And a little piece about them, "The Capetian period, 987 to 1328, sees the start of France's emergence as a more or less unified political entity. When

Hugh Capet was crown king of the Franks, his realm amounted to an area around Paris, roughly correspondent near the Ile-de-France and that was all. Not even Paris itself acknowledged his sovereignty. Until the late 12th century, France remained what did to become with the breakup of Charlemagne's empire, a collection of largely independent territories under the control of rulers, dukes, who defended the integrity of their feasts by a mixture of violence, diplomacy and marshall alliances." Well, that's what I've said, Charlemagne's dream not of the united France, but of a new Western Roman empire, even though he was crowned by the pope as emperor of the Romans. It was a title that was meaningless and his family couldn't hold onto it. And earlier, Clovis of the Merovingians had attempted create Gaul, not the Western Empire, but Gaul. And he failed. And now, we've got the new house of Capet, the Capetians. And they inherit a jigsaw with the pieces not joined together at all really, but laid out on the dining room table requiring to be put together. The last, the last of the Carolingian kings was unfortunately named, if we take the English words, Louis Do-Nothing. Just imagine, Louie Do-Nothing. Crikey, a politician looked like that sort of title today, wouldn't they? So, France is in a mess by the year 1000. It has failed to unite as England has united under the late Saxon Kings. It's failed to get the country shown of the Vikings and the king doesn't rule any everywhere in France.

But that isn't the end of the story. The Vikings, I said, came first as plunderers and then as settlers. And they settled in that what is called the land of the Northmen, or if you prefer in French and in English, Normandy. And their first great leader was a man called Rollo. Unfortunately, they called Rollo The Fat, but he's called Rollo. And it's from Rollo that descends William Duke of Normandy, who is not French. He's a Viking. He descended directly from Rollo and he wishes to have a proper kingdom. He's Duke of Normandy, true, but he doesn't like the idea there's a king of France who any moment might try, you know, interfere. And he seizes his chance as the House of Wessex is mourned, if you like. It's on its last ledge, like the last government here in Britain. And Williams seizes his chance and invades in October 1066, not very powerful where I'm sitting. And we all know the result. He didn't have only a Normandy army. He had a French army. Oh, why? Because he had announced, he's very clever with this. William had the announced to say to the Pope, "Will you designate this as a holy war?" Because the English-Saxon kings have appointed the Archbishop of Canterbury without reference to you. Now whether money change hands, I wouldn't like to say it, but the Pope said, "Oh yes, this is a holy war." Now if it was declared a holy war, French troops could be recruited by William. And what does William promise them? Land. "Come with me and I'll give you land," he says. And so, it is not a Norman invasion as the English think of it, it's a Norman-French invasion. And that's important. It's important in a number of ways. So, William arrives, conquers, and England has a Norman-French dynasty, but more than that, has Norman French aristocracy. And the

English becomes second rate citizens in their own land. And William's successors fancy their chances in the Hundred Years' War of becoming kings of France, as well as kings of England. There's much more to be said. Now, I'm coming up to where I've got to finish and I've got a quotation that I want to finish with. This is by a German monk who was alive at the time of Charlemagne. And he said, "Oh, Charlemagne was the keenest of all kings to seek out and support wise men so that they might philosophise with all delight. Almost all of the kingdom entrusted him by God was so foggy and almost blind, but he made it luminous with a new ray of knowledge, almost unknown to this barbarous land." The Dark Ages were not always dark. There were figures like Charlemagne who had a vision politically, but also had economic vision and most importantly, placed emphasis on education. In England, little bit later, we have King Alfred who placed emphasis on education. And that education was only possible in France because Clovis had accepted Christianity. And so, we are not in a dark world. We are in a post-Roman world. And that post-Roman world can produce beautiful works of art. It can produce scholars. In all of the sciences and humanities, this is not a dark age, it's a different age. So, thank you for listening. I'm sure there's lots of questions and people putting me right. Okay, let's have a look.

Q & A and Comments

- Whoops. Oh, that's very nice. Thank you, Jennifer. Thank you. Thank you, Andrea. Yeah, that's remote. Goes back to last night.

- Oh, Sally says, "You are wearing a spiffy tie and shirt. Is it to honour the new prime minister?"

- No, we have to wait to see what he turns out. I don't know who the home secretary is, that's my test.

- Q: James says, "Did the Franks speak German? If so, why did they not impose on the Gaul?"

- A: No, they don't. They speak their own language. And the language that is adopted, the language it becomes French has its basis in Latin. It's a Romance language, not a Germanic language like Germany and Britain. It's a Romance language. And French evolves through Gallo-Roman France. And of course, it incorporates Celtic words, German words.

- Q: "How important is the feudal system as a defining trade of the Dark, Middle Ages?"

- A: Not at the Dark Ages. Of the Middle Ages, yes, definitely. And I will say something about feudalism next week because the feudalism between France and England is slightly different, and that's

important.

- Q: Shelley said "Were tribes and Huns in France nomadic? Or did they move to get more space or avoid famines?"

- A: No, you're right. They moved to find space to live, which would be safe to live in and not to live with the Huns that come in. And incidentally, it's the Huns that bring German language in to answer back to an earlier question.

- Q: Mitzi says, "Wasn't Mussolini trying to bring back the Roman empire when he developed fascism?"

- A: Yes, in to some extent, but Mussolini is a very odd man, as we all know. Yes, when he attempted to establish an Italian empire in Africa, which he never visited, he had Roman style triumphs. But there was no way that he, in any way, would've been able to threaten Western Europe. I mean his military capabilities in terms of the Italian army were pretty zero. Oh, well because Charlemagne.

- Q: "How did inheritance change under Charlemagne?"

- A: Because Charlemagne saw the problem and had his son Louis inherit. But that doesn't work again with Louis' sons. Yes, Charlemagne did set up schools.

- Q: Says Rona, "Didn't he set up schools?"

- A: Yes, he did. And it's the church that run these schools.

- "From the musical 'Pippin,'" oh, Arlene, I dunno a musical called "Pippin." I learned that Pippin was a son of Charlemagne. Yes, he did have a son called that who controlled Provence for was joined to France. Well, they had their own dukes, their own rulers.

- Q: "I'm sorry to ask, but the Franks were described as tribes entering Gaul from East. Were they Germanic tribes?"

- A: Yes, they were Germanic tribes. And remember that Germany is in the east, as well as the north, in Austrasia. Nanette says, oh, well thanks Nanette.

- Esther says what is my email address. If you go to my blog, you will find it. My blog is talkhistorian.com, talkhistorian.com. On that, it gives my email address, but I've got a feeling it. And then, my blog address is on the stuff that you receive from Lockdown has that. If you don't get it, ask me next time and I'll try and send it to you.

- Oh, well that's good. I'm glad some people liked it.

- "Home secretary is Braverman." Oh, you've ruined my evening. Oh, that is not good news for me. And a fellow lawyer in England who I know very well, Irene says, "Home Secretary Braverman, the Justice Secretary Raab, could it be worse?" Well, for most lawyers, the answer is no, it couldn't be.

- Incidentally, Americans, Suella Braverman is banned from practising in the States. Oh, dear. They're all telling me the same. Oh, that is bad news.

- "The Normans used cavalry," says Catherine "during the invasion of England."

- Q: Yes. "Did the Vikings use cavalry?"

- A: Well, to a limited extent, but they couldn't carry many horses on the boats. Not really.

- Q: "What were the implications of the plague?"

- A: The Black Death. Well, when it said bacteria, we'll talking about that. Maybe next time, I'll mention the Black Death in France. It comes to England via France.

- Q: "The Saxons came from Saxony and to England," says Stuart, "Where did the Anglos come from?"

- A: They came from Southern Denmark. You know the bit which joins with Germany, that's where they came from. Yes, they also left because of pressure on them too. Absolutely right.

- Q: Oh, Josie says, "Do you think the gold work in Charlemagne's treasury in Aachen compares to the treasures in the Tower of London?"

- A: I wouldn't think, Josie, of ever comparing. I just think they're fantastic in Aachen. And what you see in the Tower of London is largely of a different age historically. Go to both. But if you've not been to Aachen and you are there, please go. It's lovely. It's wonderful. It's beautiful.

- I think I've come to the end of the questions, Erica. No, I think I've answered the question about the language because there wasn't German where the France came from. That comes in later. They're speaking their own languages and those languages disappear into Gallo-Roman language, which is a bastardised Latin. And out of it comes the Romans language we know as French. But remember, that in the south of France, it's different. And that's one of the reasons that the *lenga d'oc* in the north is different from the *langues d'oïl* in the south.

- I think probably then I'd come to an end for this evening. Thanks,

everyone. And I think next week everybody, I think we're back on the straight and narrow on Maldivians. See you then.