

## Tiana Wilson-Buys Interview Transcript Season 3, Bonus Episode 1

Hello, and welcome to the Time Pieces History Podcast. Today, I'm talking to Tiana Wilson-Buys, productivity and time management coach and history fan. Tiana shares her love of medieval architecture over on Instagram - [@historietteuk](#) and on Twitter: [@historietteuk](#).

We talk about what she thinks we can learn from our past, what architecture tells us about what the world was like at a particular time, and the significance of the buildings left behind, as well as exploring a little more about Tiana's other passion, World War Two.

**GL:** Good morning Tiana! Thank you so much for being here with me today. I hope you're well.

**TW-B:** Thank you so much. Thank you for inviting me. Yes, we're still holding up during lockdown so not that bad.

**GL:** It's getting better, I think, isn't it? It's a funny time.

So, I have invited you because I know you're passionate about history, but I know that in your adopted hometown of Newcastle you're famous as a productivity coach and for booting bottoms. You've booted my bottom more than once. Can you tell the listeners a bit about what it is that you do when you're not delving into history, please?

**TW-B:** Sure. Well, my day job is, like you said, productivity strategist. And I work mainly with business owners in the creative industries to help them stay focused, help them stay on track and get things done. And just sort of increase their productivity and decrease the overwhelm.

I love working with creatives just because they are interesting people. So that is my day job and I do love it. Do I love it as much as history? I don't know, they are about 50/50 in my world.

**GL:** That's a brilliant answer. Obviously we know each other quite well. I follow you on Instagram and your feed is full of absolutely beautiful photographs of architecture and you're giving a lot of useful and really interesting information on all the buildings.

What is it that appeals to you about the architecture? I know you often focus on something that most people wouldn't even notice like a window or a little alcove or an interesting piece of coving. What is it that that you find interesting and that you think maybe it's important to document that?

**TW-B:** Well, you know, history in general over and above architecture, it's important that we learn from, from history. That's why I'm so passionate about it. We can learn from our past mistakes and hopefully not repeat them again. And we can build on past learning. So history as a subject is a very big place with a whole lot of things that we can learn, which always inspires me. But certainly on the architecture side, I believe if we can understand why something was built and how it was built, there's a story behind it.

So they built this castle in this specific location to ward off attackers, or to dominate that area. So then you can look back at the people who ordered the castle to be built and say, "Okay, Who were they? And why did they need that castle there."

So, for example, you'll see in the northeast of England, there are many castles and fortified houses purely because of the Scots always raiding the English and vice versa.

This whole area is full of beautiful architecture and it helps you understand why things were done. So you can look, like you said, at beautiful windows or arrow loops in specific places in a castle. Why did they have those arrow loops there? Possibly because they expected the attack from that direction. So it helps you understand the deeper history behind that specific structure. It's fascinating.

**GL:** It is. It's endlessly fascinating. Obviously the North East is full of castles because we were such a place of strategic importance. So there's a lot of good castles. If you like a castle, come to the North East - there's plenty to look at

**TW-B:** Absolutely. Castles, fortified houses, churches and town walls. There's so much to see and explore and learn from it. If I live six lifetimes I'll not be able to see it all. So, yes, there is a lot.

**GL:** I know that you've also got an interest in the war, in particular the Second World War. What is it that intrigues you about that? Because that's obviously fairly recent history and certainly in living memory for still some people; you know, parents and grandparents will have some experience of that in one way or another. Why is that of interest to you?

**TW-B:** Well, actually, my interest in the Second World War came before my interest in medieval history. So I started studying the Second World War when I was about 11 or 12 years old. And I suppose I got interested because both of my grandfathers fought in the war. So they were a little bit of talk about that at the time, when I was growing up.

And I met an older gentleman, who was a friend of my father, and he fought in the war and he, unlike many of the war veterans, was quite happy to chat about it. So I suppose that sparked my interest. But I suppose throughout my life of researching history, I've always liked to ask why or how. I like to understand the story behind the story. And certainly for the Second World War, it's questions like, why did the

Second World War start? And how did it come about that events sort of came together to trigger this massive conflict?

So I like to understand the deeper story and certainly the deeper story there is that people that are beaten down or oppressed will always rise up and fight back. Yes, they may lose the battle, but they'll fight. I mean, you can look at the Second World War, certainly. Germany as a nation was sort of beaten down at the end of the First World War, which I suppose triggered the Second World War in a way.

And if you look at further back in history, when Edward treated the Scots so badly in the 13th century, you had people rise up around William Wallace to fight back. So I think we can learn from these conflicts. And like I said, hopefully not repeat them. If we can learn not to oppress people, not to beat people down, maybe we will avert any further wars. I don't know but, for me, that's the deeper history.

**GL:** Yeah, I think if nothing else, I would hope it teaches us some compassion. In a sense, it's about thinking about the other person to the group of people, and what they want and what they need, as much as what we would like, isn't it? And I think that's a really good lesson to take from history.

**TW-B:** Exactly. And I just wish that as people and as leaders we can learn these lessons, but it seems, history keeps repeating itself sadly. I'm hoping for the day where we can actually sit down as a world and just say, look, let's learn from history and not do this anymore. But hey, there we go.

**GL:** Well, fingers crossed one day. There's obviously lots and lots of stuff still being written and published and discovered about the Second World War and, obviously, we've had the VE Day celebrations and commemorations recently. So there's a lot of things I think that are still misunderstood, or there are sort of accepted wisdoms.

Is there anything that you've noticed that's sort of conventionally accepted knowledge about the Second World War that's actually incorrect, and it's just become - particularly as somebody who's moved to the UK - all the things that the British say that are actually incorrect. Is there anything that's ever intrigued you or piqued your curiosity when you've been studying?

**TW-B:** Oh, there are many. The thing is, history gets written by the victors. You have to always remember that history is somebody's perspective. So whenever you research history, you have to bear in mind that this person wrote that bit of history with his or her perspective. And sadly, a lot of historians either don't do their research properly or they misunderstand or misquote things, and then misunderstandings happen.

And then this just gets more people follow that and repeat that and it's not always true. And it's little things, like there are a lot of people who believe that the Germans invented concentration camps, which is by no means the truth. I mean, in fact, it was

the British forces in southern Africa in the Republic of Transvaal and Republic of Orange Free State,

**GL:** That doesn't surprise me that it was the British?

**TW-B:** Yeah, it's during the second Anglo Boer War. They used concentration camps, sadly, very effectively in southern Africa. So it was by no means a German invention, although a lot of people believe that it was. So that's a misunderstanding or misconception. And another one of course - and this, I suppose, is put out there by sensationalist TV programmes - if you watch History Channel, they always have these documentaries and TV shows about how we fought the Nazis and how bad the Nazis were and it was the British against the Nazis. Well, actually, that is not quite true, because if you think about it, the Nazis was a political party. It was the National Socialist German Workers Party. You can't have a country fight a party? It's apples and pears, you know.

We fought the German nation, we did not fight the Nazis. And in fact, a lot of German soldiers were not members of the Nazi party. If you look at people like Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, he was never a member of the Nazi party. So, you know, I just think certainly the younger generations, they sort of have been swept up in this myth that we fought the Nazis. We did not. We fought the the German nation. Else if you want to say that we fought the Nazis, you have to say that it was the Tory party fighting the Nazi party, so you have to make that distinction. It's little things like that, but I think it gets perpetrated over and over by successive historians and TV presenters and all of this, and I just think things like that need to be made absolutely clear. If you're going to study history, you have to be precise, as precise as you can be.

**GL:** I think that's true. And I think you also have a responsibility if you studied it to report that back precisely. I think that's really interesting about, you know, this is a lazy way of looking at it that we fought the Nazis. Was it when Ratzinger became Pope? He was the German Pope and people said we can't have him as the Pope, he was in the Hitler Youth. *Everybody* was in the Hitler Youth because if you weren't in the Hitler Youth of the Junger Mensch, your family was going to be persecuted and tortured. And that was everybody. So you go, "Oh, he was in the Hitler Youth." As if as if as a little boy, that was what he wanted. And I think I think that's a really good point you've made. It's like lazy journalism isn't it?

**TW-B:** Yeah, it's quite right what you say. If you were not in the Hitler Youth as a young one in Germany, you and your family had no chance of surviving, really. And really, can you blame a four, five, six or seven year old for his political views? I mean, really? You have no political views! You do what you're told at that age. So yeah, I think, as you say, it's lazy history to just accept things like that at face value. You've got to think about the deeper story.

**GL:** Because otherwise we're not learning anything from history are we?

**TWB:** Exactly. If there are misconceptions out there, of course we can't learn from history.

**GL:** It's important that people think about it. But there's obviously a lot of, I think because the war is still so recent in terms of history, I think people get a bit caught up in how they want to think about the Second World War - and the First World War - because everybody's family lost people. I think that kind of colours our view on it.

So moving on a little bit to more modern times. Obviously, you and I are recording this during the Covid-19 lockdown, although it's going to be published a little later on in the in the year. So hopefully, we'll have been released by then. Fingers crossed. We'll see how that goes.

Obviously museums and heritage sites have obviously been hit particularly hard during the lockdown. I think some of the biggest sites have certainly done quite well with virtual tours, but as an enthusiastic visitor to these venues, which I know you are, and you're also somebody with a great deal of business knowledge, what do you think they can do to encourage people to come back and look around and learn once the lockdown restrictions are eased. And certainly, also going into the future when people expect more in terms of digital and immersive experiences, what would you like to see as somebody who goes to a lot of these places?

**TW-B:** I think that's a very good question, because you're quite right that the heritage sector has been hit hard, the same as many other sectors during the lockdown and the whole Covid pandemic. One thing I would love to see heritage sites do - and maybe they will have learned this from this epidemic - is to maybe have more, let's call it taster sessions, virtually, so that people can sit in their homes like they are doing now and go and virtually visit sites. And you know, they can highlight maybe a small area or a small bit of a gallery or a castle or whatever, and just give people a bit of a taster, which might whet their appetites to then say, 'hey, let me make a bucket list of places where I want to go and visit and add this to bucket list.

And certainly during lockdown I've done as many virtual tours as I could, but sadly there are not that many available and I wish there would have been more. So something that heritage sites can do is offer taster virtual tours.

Another thing they could do is something much more practical to sort of get people back into the habit of going to visit these sites is small things, like free parking, or discounted tickets, or family tickets, just to sort of get the momentum going again. Certainly now, during the lockdown, a lot of people are struggling financially, so money will be a factor where if a castle charges, I don't know, £20 per person to go in, if they have a small reduction and say a family of four can go for 60 quid or whatever, it will make a difference and it will help people make that decision to go.

But another point, and my last point I would say, is they maybe need to think a little bit less traditionally in their marketing and they may want to think about using influencer marketing much more, now and in future, where if you get an enthusiastic

historian who is happy to go to a site and write a blog or do Facebook posts or Instagram or whatever it may be. That is the kind of thing that people sit and look at now. They're on social media and they see, 'oh, this person that I have been following for a while, and who I trust, is recommending that I go and visit XYZ castle.'

That will make a big impact on them, so I think heritage needs to think a little bit more 21st century and I know a lot of them have embraced it, but many of them are still very traditional in their marketing. So I think they need to do a mind shift. And go more into influencer marketing. That will have a huge impact for them.

**GL:** Yeah, I agree. I think that ticket prices and entry phases is a tricky one. Certainly in the northeast where almost all of our museums and galleries are free now, they do need to sustain themselves so that you know it's not unreasonable to charge. I think the thing that I don't like much is this annual ticket, so you pay an inflated fee for an annual ticket.

We were travelling back from France last year and we stopped halfway up between Dover and back to Newcastle. And we happen to stop, completely by chance beside the Battle of Bosworth Field. The site of Bosworth. So we thought, 'Well this is fantastic.' We didn't plan this, but this is an opportunity not to be missed. So we went the next morning, left the dog safely in the shade, and went in for a couple of hours. And the only ticket we could buy was an annual ticket. And the worst thing was, that we were obliged to sign the back of our tickets and show our driving licence to compare our signatures, so we couldn't even give them to anybody else.

I thought, 'Well, I'm not going to be back down here anytime in the next year. It's just chance.' But I think that's a shame because I understand why they do it, that's a sort of a sort of marketing tactic thing, but maybe they're missing out on people who would like to come just for one day or a couple of hours. And just think, you know, that £20 pounds or £25 is a little bit too much, especially if, as you said, as a family.

**TW-B:** I totally agree with you on that point. And it has been one of my little irks as well. I think they have to remember that a lot of people who come to visit their site travelled to do so. Certainly, if you look at my followers on Instagram, that I have lots of conversations with. They are from all over the world and they may travel from Brazil or from Denmark or from Singapore, for a specific holiday to come and see historical sites in the UK. They don't want an annual ticket. They just want to go there for the morning or the afternoon or the day or whatever.

And also, at the end of the day for somebody like me who visits sites all the time, I'm not necessarily going to go back to a site that I've already visited. Like we said earlier, in the northeast of England there are hundreds of sites to go and see and I already need six lifetimes to cover them all. For me to go back to the site, that has to be a very, very special site. To buy an annual ticket is, or to force me to buy an annual ticket is, a little bit on the ridiculous side so I'm with you on that point.

**GL:** Yeah, I do wonder sometimes if sometimes it's places where they have a particularly nice restaurant or a coffee shop, so really, it's a bit that you might go back for a coffee and cake rather than the actual site.

**TW-B:** Hey! I'll always go back for cake!

**GL:** Well, yeah. I mean if it's *really* good cake, I'd definitely be making a repeat visit. But yeah, I think I understand why they do it, but I'm not sure it sits comfortably with me and it puts me off some places. If I know that's what they do before I get there I think it would put me off a little bit.

Brilliant, a lot of good stuff there. And my final question is one that I'm asking all of my guests, because I love the answers that people are giving me. If you could spend a day in history, when would you travel back to or which person from history would you like to meet?

**TW-B:** Oh my word, what a question. There are so many, and there are so many conversations I would love to go and have back in history. Certainly, just because I'm *really, really* curious, I would love to go and have a conversation with Edward II, sort of in the early months of 1327. Because I want to find out, did he really die in 1327? Or did he live on for another ten, fifteen odd years? I would love to know that and have the answer to that.

Then there's another one, but this is from historical interest but also maybe monetary interest. I would love to go and have a conversation with Jacques de Molay, I would say in 1312 or so, sort of after the Knights Templars were arrested but before he gets burnt at the stake just to ask him way is the Knights Templar treasure? I want to know!

**GL:** The Knights Templar certainly are still fascinating people, aren't they? And even more than the Knights Hospitaller and I just think, 'Wow, imagine being a religious order of warriors and having all of that money power.'

**TW-B:** It's fascinating

**GL:** It is really fascinating. I think we can blame or thank Dan Brown for that as well, can't we, a little bit?

**TW-B:** That's true. So yeah, I think a lot of modern day, sort of historians are fascinated with the Knights Templar and everybody asks the question, 'Where did the treasure go?' So if, if there's a question I want answered, I think that could be it.'

There are many conversations, I would love to go and have. If you look into history, there are people who are leaders who made a specific decision, and now, in hindsight, you can look at it and think, 'Oh, that wasn't the right decision. Maybe he could have done something differently.'

So I think maybe it's a good thing that we can't time travel because maybe we'll go and warn them. I'll go and speak to King Harold in 1066 and say, "All you have to do is wait, you don't have to go into battle against William. You just have to wait and starve them out." So I think it's a good thing we can't time travel, but yes, if we could, I would have a lot of conversations.

**GL:** I think one that's in the news at the minute is that Hilary Mantel has just published the third of the Thomas Cromwell stories, and I would be quite tempted to go back and say to Henry VIII, "Don't bump him off because you're gonna regret it."

**TW-B:** Exactly. It's little things like that

**GL:** "You can't just stick his head back on. Think about what you're doing, Henry." I think Henry VIII seemed like somebody who was a bit axe-happy, and afterwards thought, 'Ugh, I probably shouldn't have done that."

**TW-B:** Well, exactly. And now with all our clever hindsight, we can go and warn people and we'll change history all together. So yeah, it's a good thing we can't go back in time because it will change history. One decision can make a big difference.

**GL:** Yeah, exactly.

That is brilliant. Thank you so much for your time and your knowledge. Tiana. I'm sure the listeners would like to know more about your Instagram and maybe even have their own bottoms booted. Where can people go to find out more about you?

**TW-B:** Well, the easiest place is probably on Instagram, where my account is [@HistorietteUK](#). That's where I post a lot of pictures and a lot of information and research and that kind of thing. And then of course, I have my blog, [Historiette](#), on which I write blogs about historical sites I visit and all such things. So those are the two places I would say it's the best to find me there and see what I'm up to.

**GL:** Fantastic. Thank you. I'll make sure that both are in the show notes

Thank you very much for your time. Hopefully we'll see each other in the real world sooner rather than later. Fingers crossed.

**TW-B:** Fingers crossed. Thank you. Thanks so much for having me. This was fun.