

Our history?

by BRIAN LOCKHART

It is amazing how much of world history has been re-written incorrectly.

The blockbuster movie, Braveheart, was a fun film to watch complete with the blue-painted faces of Scottish warriors, the overly graphic depiction of close quarters Medieval warfare and of course the fanciful kilts the men wore into battle.

However, ask a Scotsman what they think of the movie, and although they appreciate it for what it is, you will get an earful of the historical inaccuracies of the movie, including the fact that the kilt wasn't even invented until several centuries later.

The Scots are depicted as living in filthy conditions and the kids all had dirty faces for some reason. Even in the 12th century mothers took the time to wipe the grime off of a kid's cheek.

While Mel Gibson did produce and star in a rather epic movie, it was way off base in a historical context.

The gladiators in ancient Rome have a storied history. They were well trained combatants who would go into the forum to do battle and slay another man without a thought.

The forum ran full with the blood of the dead or dying.

At least that's the depiction of the events that occurred there. According to the movies, every battle in the ring ended with a big thumbs-down from Peter Ustinov and the resulting coup de grace when the man still standing thrust his sword or spear through his opponent's throat.

That's the image we seem to have from the Rome of couple of thousand years ago.

However, checking into actual historic records, the battles in the forum weren't quite the bloodbath that we thought ? and for good reason.

All those gladiators were slaves. Hence they were property. Someone owned them.

No wealthy slave owner wanted to see his investment disappear at the thrust of a sword.

They spent a lot of time and money training their gladiators to fight in the ring. They didn't want to see their slaves die ? it was bad for business.

Just like a modern boxing manager who doesn't match his fighter up against a far superior fighter and a sure loss, a slave owner wanted his fighters to be able to fight another day.

There were no doubt, deaths in the forum, but not like it is depicted in the movies.

That brings us to pirates.

Movies and a lot of books have swashbuckling stories of jauntily dressed pirates with peg legs, eye patches, and a parrot on their shoulder.

They say things like 'avast ye matey' and 'arr,' and speak, well, like a pirate.

The pirate captain is a charismatic leader in charge of the ship and orders his dutiful crew around while they sail the seas and bury their loot on random islands.

Historically pirates didn't 'talk like a pirate.' That whole way of speaking comes from the 1950 Disney movie, Treasure Island, starring Robert Newton as fictional pirate, Long John Silver.

His performance, full of 'arrrs' and 'shiver me timbers' seemed to have set the standard for pirate talk. Although real pirates wouldn't have sound any different than any other merchant seaman of the day.

As for pirate ship captains, they weren't really the leader of any ship.

Pirates were outlaws, desperado's and criminals - they just happened to be on a ship - a stolen ship.

As a gang of cutthroats, no pirate worth his salt would be talking orders from a 'captain.'

There were men called pirate captain, but in truth they had no more real say of what the gang was going to do than anyone else on the ship.

Modern history has been radically changed in just a few decades.

In 1963, John F. Kennedy, was not the popular president that media portrays these days. He was elected with the smallest margin of votes in history, and a lot of those votes were dubious.

Kennedy was a hated man in much of the US with a lot of enemies and some very unpopular policies and ideas.

A bullet changed all that.

After his assassination, he was referred to as 'beloved president' and his administration was named 'Camelot' by a wistful reporter to make it sound like that administration could do no wrong.

What a difference a few years and a bullet can make.

I wonder how our current history will play out in the future?

It would be interesting to read how historians record the first few decades of the 21st century in a book 500 years from now.

Maybe we will all be portrayed by a writer, or whatever form movies take in the future, as a society quite different than we really are.