# Nil *Desperandum*

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**Picture Credit: [Tinted]** *"laughter 'the best medicine' ?" by Neil. Moralee is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0*

## London laws to drive you mad

Let's get one myth out of the way. It's not true that you can't die in the Houses of Parliament, but you are entitled to a state funeral if you do. It's nonsense and not true: the Law Commission's Statute Law Repeals team, which has been responsible for rescinding 2,000 outdated laws since 1965, asserts that it is not illegal to die in the Houses of Parliament. The team also claims that it has been unable to trace any law that suggests that dying in a royal palace is grounds for a state funeral, just as have the House of Commons' authorities said on such matters.

But other London laws are real in whole or part:
- **Don't shake your rug out of the window before 8 am -** Did you know it's still against the law to beat your doormat after 8 am in London. That's what Section 60 (3) of the Metropolitan Police Act 1839 says. If you break this law, you can face a fine of £200.
- **Boiled egg etiquette -** thanks to Henry VIII's son Edward VI, anyone found breaking a boiled egg at the sharp end could be sentenced to 24 hours in the village stocks. Some say the King made the order because he was meticulous about etiquette. But all this may be untrue: the only statute of Edward VI's reign relating to eggs concerned the theft of eggs from birds' nests, rather than a particular manner of eating them, and it has been repealed. Neither is there evidence of a law on boiled eggs from any other period.
- **You're not allowed to carry planks along the pavement -** since the Metropolitan Act of 1839, there is to be no carrying of wooden panels down the streets of London.
- **It's illegal to be drunk in a pub -** shocker, but apparently true. Since **1839** you're not allowed to be drunk in licensed premises.
- **You can't catch a bus or call a taxi if you've got the plague -** in London, it is illegal for a person (knowingly) with the plague to flag down a taxi or try and ride on a bus. The law prohibits any person who knows that they have a notifiable disease (including the plague) from entering any form of public conveyance (bus or taxi) without first telling the driver.
- **No sliding on ice or flying a kite –** another classic from the Metropolitan Act of 1839, prevents fun in cold weather. Flying a kite, sliding on ice, slipping on snow or pretty much everything else that's fun is forbidden by Section 54 of the Metropolitan Police Act, 1939 if it's done in any street or thoroughfare and annoys anyone who lives there or is passing through. Offend, and you could face a £1,000 fine or 14 days in the clink.

Lastly, and not limited to London, British stamps must not be upside down. The Treason Felony Act 1848 makes it an offence to do any act to depose the monarch, but it seems unlikely that placing a stamp upside down fulfils this criterion. The Act itself certainly does not refer to postage stamps. According to the Royal Mail, it is perfectly acceptable to put a stamp upside-down.

Look up more at:
https://www.lawcom.gov.uk/app/uploads/2015/03/Legal_Oddities.pdf

## The Bosphorus Connection



Picture Credit: "Ortakoy Mosque & Bosphorus Bridge" by Dan Nevill is licensed under CC BY-ND 2.0

It's less than a mile long at 1,560 metres, but it is important nevertheless. On 30th October 1973, the continents of Asia and Europe were connected when a bridge (then called the Bosphorus Bridge) was opened. The bridge extends between Ortaköy (in Europe) and Beylerbeyi (in Asia). It was the first crossing since the Persian Emperor Xerxes constructed a pontoon bridge in 460 BCE.

The Bosporus or Bosphorus is a narrow, natural strait and an internationally significant waterway located in northwestern Turkey. It forms part of the continental boundary between Europe and Asia and divides Turkey by separating Anatolia from Thrace.

The bridge is one of the three suspension bridges spanning the Bosphorus strait (Turkish: Boğaziçi) in Istanbul, Turkey, thus connecting Europe and Asia (alongside *Fatih Sultan Mehmet Bridge* and *Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge*). The bridge was renamed *July 15th Martyrs Bridge* (15 Temmuz Şehitler Köprüsü) after the attempted coup in 2016.

If you are fond of walking across bridges, you will be disappointed with this one as it is open for pedestrians for just a couple of hours every year. The only time you can walk across the bridge is on the day of the Istanbul Marathon, on 16th October.

### History
The idea of a bridge crossing the Bosphorus dates back to antiquity. For Emperor Darius the Great of the Achaemenid Empire (522 BC–485 BC), as recorded by the Greek writer Herodotus in his Histories, Mandrocles of Samos once engineered a pontoon bridge across the Bosphorus, linking Asia to Europe, enabling Darius to pursue the fleeing Scythians as well as position his army in the Balkans to overwhelm Macedon. Mandrocles was an ancient Greek engineer from Samos who built a pontoon bridge over the Bosporus for King Darius I to conquer Thrace. Much later on, Leonardo da Vinci proposed a suspension bridge to Sultan Bayezid II in 1502 or1503.

## *Funny (and rude) street and place names*

The first part is excerpted from an Article by Fred Humphries in Sussex Life on 20th October 2020

Sussex Life asked its readers to suggest the county's weirdest, rudest, funniest and most bizarre place or street names and the response on social media produced 25 locations that'll give you a giggle when you're out and about in Sussex. Here they are:

- **The Dickers:** There's both an Upper Dicker and a Lower Dicker.
- **Knob Hill:** This one is nearly in Surrey.
- **Cock Hill:** This hill is thought to have been the site of a former Bronze Age settlement. There's also a Cocking Hill near Goodwood Racecourse.
- **Butts Brow:** From Eastbourne, you can walk to the Butchershole and all the way over to the Long Man of Wilmington.
- **Cocking:** Mmm. No comment.
- **Frog Hole Lane:** This lane is between Five Ashes and Cross in Hand.
- **Cross in Hand:** It is thought that this distinctive name comes from the Latin 'Cruce Manus' - meaning Cross in Hand.
- **Earwig Corner:** Not much information about this place is known except it's in Lewes.
- **Dumb Woman's Lane:** This lane is between Rye and Winchelsea gets its name.
- **Ballsocks Lane:** This road in Vines Cross has an easily misread name.
- **Fulking:** Lovely place, funny name.
- **Bachelor's Bump:** Take this bump when exploring Hastings Country Park.
- **The Dicklands:** This quaint crescent is in the village of Rodmell.
- **Titnore Lane:** Another Mmm.
- **Juggs Road:** A country lane leading to a walking trail taking you past Ashcombe Mill at Kingston, near Lewes.
- **Cockshut Road:** This road is just minutes from Juggs Road and provides access to Lewes Priory.
- **Rotten Row:** Nothing rotten about this street with a number of attractive properties in Lewes.
- **Little Trodgers Lane:** Smaller than Big Trodgers Lane if there is one.
- **Slonk Hill Road:** An interesting hill at Shoreham-by-Sea.
- **The Slipe:** Explore Arundel and the River Arun, and you'll come across this cul-de-sac.
- **Punch Copse Road:** It has nothing to do with fisticuffing the police.
- **Lewin Twitten:** This Haywards Heath alley was likely named after someone bearing that name.
- **Lickfold:** If you're in the Petworth area, make sure to drop into the Lickfold Inn, a lovely 16th century former coaching inn with food to die for.
- **Ripe:** This village near Chalvington has a long history going back to the Roman occupation of Britain.
- **Poppinghole Lane:** You can have a little break at Poppinghole Lane with Poppinghole Farm, a collection of holiday cottages in Robertsbridge.

There are many more odd village and street names in Britain. Take for example these, found at: https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/69445/43-charmingly-odd-british-town-names

- **Upton Snodsbury:** It's in Worcestershire, near North Piddle.
- **Pucklechurch:** In lovely South Gloucestershire.
- **Barton in the Beans:** It really exists, Hinckley and Bosworth district of Leicestershire.

- **Curry Mallet:** Right at a crossroads in Somerset.
- **Droop:** It's in Dorset.
- **Throop:** In Dorchester, near Affpuddle.
- **Plumpton:** In East Sussex, not far from Ditchling or Uckfield.
- **Lickfold:** In Lodsworth, near Petworth.
- **Bishop's Ichington:** In Warwickshire.
- **Queen Camel:** In Somerset, southeast of Compton Pauncefoot.
- **Great Snoring**: In Fakenham, Norfolk.

… plus many more.

There's a good list of Funny and Rude British Place Names (and London Streets) at: https://www.anglotopia.net/ultimate-list-of-funny-british-place-names/ Here's a small sample:

**London Streets**
- Back Passage, London
- Mincing Lane, London
- Mudchute, London
- Percy Passage, London
- Swallow Passage, London
- Trump Street, London
- Cumming Street, London
- Cockfoster, London
- Dick Turpin Lane, London
- Cock Hill, London
- Titley Close, London
- Cockbush Avenue, London

**English Village and Place Names**
- Cock's Green, Worcestershire
- Babes Well, Durham,
- Bachelors Bump, Essex
- Backside Lane, Oxfordshire
- Balls Green, Kent
- Balls Cross, West Sussex
- Bareleg Hill, Staffordshire
- Barking, Essex
- Beaver Close, Surrey
- Bedlam Bottom, Hampshire
- Beef Lane, Oxfordshire
- Beer, Devon
- Bell End near Lickey End, Worcestershire
- Bishops Itchington, Staffordshire

And if that's not enough for you, take a look at https://www.boredpanda.com/funny-english-place-names-signs/ - you won't be disappointed.

One lane near Haywards Heath that is very popular is **Slugwash Lane**. Which of the other names above is your favourite?

Picture Credit: "S L O W ... S N A I L" by Yogendra174 is licensed under CC BY 2.0

## The Siege of Kiev



Today, Kiev (Ukrainian name — Kyiv) is the largest and most populous city in Ukraine and is its capital. It officially celebrates its founding year as 482, but history is documented as going back at least 2,000 years (it is said that the city was founded by Sarmatians tribes in the 1st century). It is an archaeological site with the oldest settlement in the area dating back to 25,000 years BC.

The Mongol army seemingly came from nowhere and quickly became the *'horsemen of the Devil'*, enjoying victory after victory. It had been three years since the Great Khan and his Mongol Horde had entered the lands of the Kievian Rus. In those three years, nearly 500,000 inhabitants had been slaughtered by the feared warriors of the steppes. The Siege of Kiev took place in 1240 when on 6th December, the Mongol army under the command of Batu Khan occupied and destroyed the city. Before the siege, Mongol emissaries had asked for a peaceful surrender but were executed for their troubles. The city then came under attack for nine days, and its inhabitants were put to the sword just as they had been elsewhere - out of 50,000 people in the city, there were only 2,000 survivors. One may have been a distant ancestor as my paternal grandfather was born there in the late 1800s.

But back to 1240: following their victory, the Mongol army moved on from Kiev through Galicia and Podolia and on to Eastern Europe, one wing moving northwest and attacking Poland, marching through Bohemia and Moravia and then attacking Hungary, while another headed south and attacked Transylvania, Moldavia, and Walachia. Hungary was selected as a primary target because of its grasslands, which the Mongols considered a perfect base for their horses from where they could then attack western Europe. (Source: The Mongol Invasion of Europe - Ancient History Encyclopedia).

The defeat was a heavy moral and military blow to Halych-Volhynia (created by Prince Roman Mstislavich of Volodymyr-Volhynia after he conquered the Principality of Halych and united both lands into one state at the end of the 12th century) and allowed Batu Khan to proceed westward into Europe.

Britannica.com (here) records that Kiev was the first eastern Slavic state, and 1,000 years ago, it acquired the title *"Mother of Rus Cities."* Severely damaged during World War II, but by the mid-1950s, it had been restored, and in the second half of the 20th century, it enjoyed a well-developed economic and cultural life. The independence of Ukraine from the Soviet Union in 1991 renewed Kyiv's status as a major European capital, and it now has a population of circa 3 million.

### Watch the Siege
There's an interesting video on the Medieval Kingdoms website here.

Picture Credit: the picture above is a screenshot from the YouTube video.

## The Observer Newspaper and link with the "Dreyfus Affair"

Did you know that *The Observer* is published only on Sundays? It occupies the political space as its sister papers *The Guardian* and *The Guardian Weekly.* First published in 1791, it is the world's oldest Sunday newspaper.

The history of the Observer is a volatile and varied one. The paper was founded in 1791 by WS Bourne on the simple premise that *"the establishment of a Sunday newspaper would obtain him a rapid fortune"* (according to the Guardian here).

### Problems
The first issue came off the presses on 4th December 1791, a Sunday, of course. Owned by Bourne, it was the world's first Sunday newspaper. Bourne soon learned that publishing newspapers was a tricky and costly business and laden with heavy personal debts, he tried selling the title to the government but failed. However, the government agreed to subsidise the newspaper in return for influence over its editorial content.

That seemed to work, at least for a while. But the business went through highs (only a few) and lows (plenty of them) until 1903 when the newspaper magnate Lord Northcliffe bought it. Family and editorial disagreements led to many changes, including in 1942, taking the unusual step of declaring itself non-partisan. Despite employing writing talent such as George Orwell, Paul Jennings and C. A. Lejeune, the ailing paper was sold to the US oil giant Atlantic Richfield and then to Lonrho plc (1981).

Another low came in in February 2008 when the newspaper was banned in Egypt after reprinting cartoons allegedly insulting Muhammed.

### A great exclusive
Under the editorial control of Seigfried Sassoon's aunt, Rachel Beer, from 1891, the newspaper paper achieved one of its greatest exclusives: the admission by Count Esterhazy that he had forged the letters that condemned innocent Jewish officer, Captain Alfred Dreyfus, to Devil's Island. The Dreyfus Affair was a political scandal that divided the Third French Republic from 1894 until its resolution in 1906. The Dreyfus affair is often seen as a modern and universal symbol of injustice, and it remains one of the most notable examples of a complex miscarriage of justice and anti-Semitism. It involved a French Jewish army artillery captain, Alfred Dreyfus, who was falsely



convicted of passing military secrets to the Germans. While Dreyfus was incarcerated, secrets continued to get to the Germans in Paris (thus exonerating Dreyfus), and Major Marie-Charles-Ferdinand Esterhazy became a suspect. The chief of the French army counterintelligence, Colonel Georges Picquart, eventually concluded that it was Esterhazy and not Dreyfus who had committed the original offence, but his superior officers refused to reopen the case, leaking false documents to the press in an effort to discredit the critics.

## The Albion

**Albion, the teams**

The words, *The Albion*, are usually associated with football teams such as Brighton & Hove or West Bromwich. But there are many other football (soccer) teams with the moniker, including:

- Witton Albion F.C. (Northern Premier League Division One North based in Northwich, Cheshire.
- Tadcaster Albion A.F.C. – an English football club based in Tadcaster, North Yorkshire.
- Stirling Albion F.C. – a Scottish football club currently playing in the Scottish First Division.
- Ossett Albion A.F.C. – an English football team in the Northern Premier League Division One North, based in Ossett, West Yorkshire.
- Forfar Albion F.C. – a Scottish football club based in Forfar, Angus.
- Burton Albion F.C. – a professional English association football club based in the town of Burton upon Trent, Staffordshire.
- Albion Rovers F.C. (Newport) – a Welsh football team from the city of Newport.
- Albion Rovers F.C. (Scotland) – This is a different Albon Rovers – they are a Scottish Football League team from the North Lanarkshire town of Coatbridge.

**Albion, the place:** Albion is an alternative name for the island of Great Britain. It is sometimes used poetically to refer to the island, but has fallen out of common use in English. The name for Scotland in most of the Celtic languages is related to Albion: *Alba* in Scottish Gaelic, Albain (genitive *Alban*) in Irish, *Nalbin* in Manx and *Alban* in Welsh and Cornish. These names were later Latinised as *Albania* and Anglicised as *Albany*, which were once alternative names for Scotland.

*New Albion* and *Albionoria* ("Albion of the North") were briefly suggested as names of Canada during the period of the Canadian Confederation Arthur Phillip, the first leader of the colonisation of Australia, originally named Sydney Cove "*New Albion*", but later, the colony acquired the name "*Sydney*". Sir Francis Drake gave the name *New Albion* to what is now California when he landed there in 1579.

The name Albion was used by Isidore of Charax (1st century BC – 1st century AD) and subsequently by many classical writers. By the 1st century AD, the name refers unequivocally to Great Britain. But this name for Britain did not remain popular among Greek writers and was replaced by Prettanía and Brettanía. From these words, the Romans derived the Latin forms Britannia and Britannus.

In his 2nd century Geography, Ptolemy uses the name (Alouiōn, "Albion") instead of the Roman name Britannia, possibly following the commentaries of Marinus of Tyre. He calls both Albion and Ierne (nēsoi Brettanikai, "British Isles"). In 930, the English king Æthelstan used the title *Rex et primicerius totius Albionis regni* ("King and chief of the whole realm of Albion"). Not to be outdone, his nephew, Edgar the Peaceful, styled himself *Totius Albionis imperator augustus* "Augustus Emperor of all Albion" in 970.

**Perfidious Albion** is a reference to the supposedly (and alleged) treacherous policies of Britain when dealing with foreign powers. It translates the French rhetorical phrase *la perfide Albion*, said to have been in use since the 16th century but popularised by Napoleon in the recruiting drive of 1813.

But most likely, the word Albion comes from Latin a*lbus,* "white", which would be an apt description of the chalk cliffs of Britain's southern coast.

## The world's first motorcycle

Picture Credit: "Daimler Reitwagen" by pilot_micha is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0

In 1885, in Bad Cannstatt, Germany, the German auto pioneers Gottlieb Daimler and Wilhelm Maybach added an internal combustion engine to a bicycle frame to make the world's first motorcycle. Daimler's son was the test driver. The motorcycle called the Daimler Reitwagen (Riding Car) actually had four wheels: one wheel in the front and one in the back and a smaller spring-loaded outrigger wheel on each side. The invention led to automobile production a year later. The motorcycle was essentially a wooden bicycle frame without foot pedals that was powered by a one-cylinder Otto-cycle engine and included a spray-type carburettor. The engine was small and powerful compared with other combustion engines of the day used for stationary operation.

Although 'motorcycles' existed before, the Daimler Reitwagen was the first motorcycle to use internal petrol combustion and the forerunner of all land, sea, and air vehicles to use this type of engine.

The first commercial design for a self-propelled cycle was a three-wheel design called the Butler Petrol Cycle, conceived of Edward Butler in England in 1884, but seems to have been slow off the mark in promoting and patenting the design. He exhibited his plans for the vehicle at the Stanley Cycle Show in London in 1884. The vehicle was built by the Merryweather Fire Engine company in Greenwich, in 1888.

In 1894, Hildebrand & Wolfmüller became the first series production motorcycle. One hundred twenty years later, the three top motorcycle producers globally by volume were Honda (28%), Yamaha (17%) (both from Japan) and Hero MotoCorp (India). In developing countries, motorcycles are considered utilitarian due to lower prices and greater fuel economy.

## Articles in Mid-Sussex Times
**Tuesday, 19th November 1940**

### BOOM IN FARMLAND.

There is a boom in farmland. Owing to the need for rapidly increasing food production and to the re-distribution of large numbers of the population throughout the country, many agricultural properties and farmlands have risen suddenly in value. In some cases the rise is estimated to be more than 20 per cent. in a single year. Whilst there was a glut of small country and farm properties a year ago, many agents report to-day that small holdings are almost unobtainable in certain districts. In the opinion of the Parliamentary Land Values Group in the House of Commons, this phenomenal rise demonstrates the urgent need for legislation to stop profiteering in land and to secure farmers against having to pay uneconomic rents in future.

### LIGHT LEAKS AID RAIDERS.

The Air Correspondent of "The Daily Telegraph" has emphasized the importance of a complete black-out in these days of air raids. He writes: "The German night raiding on London has lately shown a tendency to concentrate upon those periods when deficiencies in the black-out and the restricted lighting on the roads tend to cause a glow which can be seen from the air. Raiding aeroplanes come over directly darkness falls and continue to come during the first part of the night. There is then sometimes a lull until the early morning, when people are getting up and going to work, and then further sorties are made. Our own pilots say that our towns and even some of our villages can be picked out by the faint glow caused by light leakages and by restricted street and vehicle lighting. Such a glow, while it might not be much help for locating specific targets, would be an advantage to aircraft crews who come over to do generalized bombing of widespread regions." It is to be hoped that people careless about their lights will take the above to heart and exercise more care in future.

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**MY TEACHER POINTED HIS RULER AT ME AND SAID: "AT THE END OF THIS RULER, THERE'S AN IDIOT!"**



**I GOT DETENTION AFTER ASKING: "WHICH END, SIR?"**

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## *Rupert, the Bear*

*Off Rupert goes, he cannot fail*
*To thrill the others with his tale.*

On 8th November this year, Rupert the Bear will celebrate his 101st birthday.

BBC News reported last year, just before his 100th birthday, that to commemorate the milestone, Rupert has been honoured by the Royal Mail in a set of eight stamps.

Rupert first appeared in the Daily Express on 8th November 1920, as Little Lost Bear - the work of illustrator Mary Tourtel.

The character, whose famous red jumper was originally blue, was part of the newspaper's push to attract new readers. And every year (since 1936), the Rupert Annual comes out at Christmas time. Rare copies have fetched more than £20,000.

## Who was the toughest actor in Hollywood movies?

Source: https://www.quora.com/Who-is-was-the-genuinely-toughest-actor-in-Hollywood-movies

Answer: Pat Sullivan on Quora.com nominated Victor McLaglen. H (above), he is with John Wayne and Ward Bond (making them both relatively small) in The Quiet Man (1952). The Quiet Man was an American romantic comedy-drama film directed by John Ford. It sta John Wayne, (the absolutely gorgeous) Maureen O'Hara, Barry Fitzgerald, Ward Bond and Victor McLaglen.

If McLaglen doesn't come across as very tough in that movie, keep mind that it was 44 years after he went toe to toe with heavyweigh Champion Jack Johnson in an exhibition bout in 1908 and 34 years he was was named heavyweight champion of the British Army in 19 (after first joining the service at 14 during the Boer War until some realised his true age). Later, he was the Assistant Provost Marshall Baghdad as a Major (Royal Irish Fusiliers - 1918).

The film is notable for many things but perhaps most of all for Win Hoch's lush photography of the Irish countryside and a long, climac semi-comic fist fight. It was an official selection of the 1952 Venice Festival.

### The Man
Mostly sourced from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victor_McLaglen

McLaglen, full name Victor Andrew de Bier Everleigh McLaglen, was English film actor who held both British and American citizenship. H claimed to have been born in Tunbridge Wells, Kent, although his b certificate records Stepney in the East End of London as his true birthplace.

McLaglen left home at age 14 to join the British Army to fight in the Second Boer War. However, much to his chagrin, he was stati at Windsor Castle in the Life Guards and was later forced to leave army when his true age was discovered. Four years later, he moved Winnipeg, Canada, where he became a local celebrity, earning a livi a wrestler and heavyweight boxer, with several notable wins in the He also briefly served as a constable in the Winnipeg Police Force i 1907.

One of his most famous fights was against heavyweight champion Ja Johnson in a six-round exhibition bout at the Vancouver Athletic C 10 March 1909. This was Johnson's first bout since winning the heavyweight title from Tommy Burns. McLaglen toured with a circu between episodes, offering $25 to anyone who could go three rounds with him.

He returned to Britain in 1913. During the First World War, he served as a captain (acting) with the 10th Battalion, Middlesex Regiment. He continued boxing and was named heavyweight champion of the British Army in 1918. He was known as a character actor, particularly in Westerns, and made seven films with John Ford and John Wayne.

### The Plot of *The Quiet Man*
After accidentally killing an opponent in the ring, boxer Sean Thornton (John Wayne) leaves America and returns to his native Ireland, hoping to buy his family's homestead and live in peace. In doing so, he runs afoul of Will Danaher (Victor McLaglen), who has long coveted the property. Spitefully, Will objects when his fiery sister, Mary Kate (Maureen O'Hara), begins a romance with Sean, and refuses to hand over her dowry. Mary Kate refuses to consummate the marriage until Sean retrieves the money. It all ends happily!

SEE MORE:
See the Pub Scene in the film, The Quiet Man, at:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mFvbOdnzTKk

The picture left is a screenshot from the film at the above link.
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## A Living Hell

A Jewish Minneapolis couple decided to go out to Florida during a particularly icy winter. They planned to stay at the same hotel where they spent their honeymoon 20 years earlier. Because of hectic schedules, it was difficult to coordinate their travel schedules. So, the husband left Minnesota and flew to Florida on Thursday, with his wife flying down the following day.

The husband checked into the hotel. There was a computer in his room, so he decided to send an email to his wife. However, he accidentally left out one letter in her email address, and without realising his error, sent the e-mail.

Meanwhile, somewhere in Houston, a Jewish widow had just returned home from her husband's funeral. The widow decided to check her email expecting messages from relatives and friends. After reading the first message, she screamed and fainted. The widow's son rushed into the room, found his mother on the floor, and saw the computer screen which read:

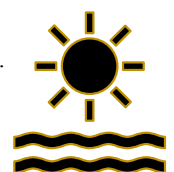*To: My Loving Wife…..*
*Subject: I've Arrived*

*I know you may be surprised to hear from me. But they have free WIFI here so I thought I would send you an email.*

*I've just arrived and have been checked in. I've seen that everything has been prepared for your arrival tomorrow.*

*Looking forward to seeing you then!*

*Hope your journey is as uneventful as mine was.*

*P.S. Sure is hot down here!*

## *Serbia and its capital city*

Picture Credit: "File:Belgrade in Serbia and Europe.png" by Zoupan is licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0

**Belgrade** (Serbo-Croatian Beograd: *"White Fortress"*) is the capital city of Serbia. It lies at the confluence of the Danube and Sava rivers in the north-central part of the country. To the north and west of Belgrade lies the Pannonian Basin, which includes the great grain-growing region of Vojvodina. It is one of the oldest cities in Europe and the only one built on the confluence of two rivers.

The city is located at the convergence of three historically important routes of travel between Europe and the Balkans:

- an east-west route along the Danube River valley from Vienna to the Black Sea;
- another that runs westward along the valley of the Sava river towards Trieste and northern Italy; and
- a third running southeast along the valleys of the Morava and Vardar rivers to the Aegean Sea.

The most significant landmark in Belgrade is the Beogradska Tvrđava, an imposing fortress at the confluence of the Danube and the Sav rivers. The fort is a testament to the city's strategic importance to the Roman, Byzantine, Ottoman, Serbian and Austrian empires.

**Brief History of Belgrade**

There is evidence of Stone Age settlements in the area. The city grew up around an ancient fortress on the Kalemegdan headland. The first fortress was built by the Celts in the 4th century BCE and was known by the Romans as Singidunum. It was destroyed by the Huns in 442 and changed hands among the Sarmatians, Goths, and Gepidae before it was recaptured by the Byzantine emperor Justinian. The Franks and the Bulgars later held it. And in the 11th century, it became a frontier town of Byzantium. In 1284 it came under Serbian rule, and in 1402 it became the capital of Serbia. The Ottoman Turks besieged the city in 1440, and after 1521 it was in their hands except for three periods of occupation by the Austrians (1688–90, 1717–39, and 1789–91). In 1804, Belgrade became the Serbian capital during 1807–13, but the Turks recaptured it. The Serbs were given control of the citadel in 1867 when Belgrade once more became the capital of Serbia. From 1921 Belgrade was the capital of the three successive Yugoslav states. The city's rapid population growth since World War II resulted primarily from the migration from rural areas of Serbia following industrialisation. Most of the inhabitants are Serbs; the largest non-Serb groups are Croats and Montenegrins. Since World War II, Belgrade has become an industrial city that produces motors, tractors and combines, machine tools, electrical equipment, chemicals, textiles, and building materials. It is the largest commercial centre in Serbia.

Since ancient times, the city has been known by many names – Alba Bulgariae, Alabanandor, Nandoralba, Nandorfejervar, Griechisch Weissenburg, Alba Graeca, Castelbiancho… but the name of the fortress that, when looked at from the Pannonian side and the rivers appear white, remained until today: WHITEcity (BEOgrad – Belgrade). Today, Belgrade is a modern European city with population of about 1.7 million people.

**Brief History of Serbia:** The Romans conquered parts of Serbia in the 2nd century BC, in 167 BC when conquering the West, establishing the province of Illyricum and the rest of Central Serbia in 75 BC, establishing the province of Moesia. Srem was conquered by 9 BC and Bačka and Banat in 106 AD after the Trajan's Dacian Wars. Interestingly, seventeen Roman Emperors were born in present-day Serbia. By the early 6th century South Slavs, present throughout the Byzantine Empire in large numbers, merged with the native population (Dacians, Illyrians, Thracians) and assimilated them, forming the base of the ethnicity of modern Serbs.

Serbia, officially the Republic of Serbia, is a landlocked country situated at the crossroads of Central and Southeast Europe in the southern Pannonian Plain and the central Balkans. Its population is a little over 8.7 million. It can trace its roots back to Yugoslavia, which came into existence after World War I in 1918 and constituted the first union of the South Slavic people as a sovereign state, following centuries in which the region had been part of the Ottoman Empire and Austria-Hungary. Its name was changed to the *Kingdom of Yugoslavia* on 3rd October 1929. Then came World War II. The Axis powers invaded Yugoslavia on 6th April 1941. In 1943, a Democratic Federal Yugoslavia was proclaimed by the Partisan resistance, and in November 1945, the monarchy was abolished. More name changes followed: Yugoslavia was renamed the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia in 1946 when a communist government was established. In 1963, the country was renamed again - as the *Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.* After an economic and political crisis in the 1980s and the rise of nationalism, Yugoslavia broke up along its republics' borders into five countries, leading to the Yugoslav Wars. Eventually, after several attempts to achieve some form of federacy, Montenegro and Serbia each became independent states in 2006, while Kosovo proclaimed its independence from Serbia in 2008.

Some famous Serbs (apologies for not naming all of them) include:

- **Nikola Tesla:** this renowned genius of the 20th century is responsible for many discoveries and inventions. Some of the most famous ones are the first hydroelectric power plant, alternating current, the induction motor, the system for the production and distribution of electricity and over 700 other patents.
- **Novak Đoković:** one of the world's best tennis players, apart from being one of the most famous Serbs, he has been proclaimed the best athlete of the year several times.
- **Karl Malden:** in Serbia, Malden is known as the first Serb (actually of Serbian-Czech descent) who managed to win the prestigious award of the American film academy – the Oscar. If you were to ask anyone in Hollywood whether they knew someone named Mladen Sekulović, they would probably say they had never heard of him. But if you were to ask people about Karl Malden, you would get a smile, a nod and a "yes"! And how could you not?
- **Mihajlo Idvorski Pupin:** one of the founders of the NASA agency, who, together with Nikola Tesla and Milutin Milanković, is considered one of the greatest and most brilliant Serbian minds.
- **Volter Bogdanić:** a three-time Pulitzer prize winner, Bogdanić embarked on journalism in 1973 and got the first of these prestigious awards working as a reporter for the Wall Street Journal.
- **Dušan Čarls Simić:** is one of the most authentic avant-garde poets, a Pulitzer prize winner, and the US Poet Laureate title owner.

## Heard the story about a herd of cows and a turtle?



This herd of cows didn't know what to make of a turtle that found its way into their field. The large herbivores seem scared but curious as to the reptilian intruder. Do you play with it or eat it? Or just smell it?

It's the calf who ends up being the most curious and brave. The youngster goes right up to the turtle and gives it a sniff, only to freak out the entire herd with his reaction! For heaven's sake, whoever would have thought that turtles could be so scary?

Find out what happens here.

## Ancient game die found

Sources: https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/ancient-cultures/daily-life-and-practice/ancient-game-die-discovered/ and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khirbet_Qana

Beit El is one of the locations in Galilee that researchers consider as a possibility for the biblical town of Cana,  where Jesus turned water into wine at the Wedding at Cana. Crusader maps have been cited as evidence identifying Khirbet Qana with the biblical Cana.

For almost two hundred years, Beit El has been claimed by some scholars as the site of biblical Bethel, where according to the Bible, Jacob dreamed of his famous ladder (Genesis 28:19) connecting Heaven and Earth. The ongoing Khirbet Kfar Mor excavations there have uncovered a rare Second Temple Period gaming die.

As part of excavation work led by the Archaeology Unit at the Civil Administration at the Khirbet Kfar Mor archaeological site in Beit El, a rare find was discovered: An ancient play die that dates to the Second Temple period. The excavations were carried out as part of an extensive project the Civil Administration has been heading at the site for over a decade. The project has led to the exposure of many archaeological finds, and only recently, dozens of jars and vessels were found in a cistern.  So far, the findings found at the site have testified to the economic routine of the locals who were engaged in the wine industry, olive oil production, growing pigeons, pottery production, and more.

Games have been a part of civilisation for a long time, possibly as long as civilisation itself. We all know that games of sport in the ancient Hellenic world inspired the modern Olympics. As Stephen G. Miller explains in "The Other Games: When Greeks Flocked to Nemea" (Archaeology Odyssey, July/Aug 2004): *"The sanctuary at Olympia was only one of four sites where games were held. Greeks also flocked to games at Delphi, Isthmia and Nemea."*

Games were so important that truce protected the audience as they travelled to watch. Each site awarded a different crown, "Olive at Olympia, laurel at Delphi, pine at Isthmia and wild celery at Nemea." Circuit victors were those who collected all four.

## A few words about Paganism

Source: https://people.howstuffworks.com/paganism.htm



Picture Credit: "**Pagan circle at Autumn Equinox, beneath The Long Man, on Windover Hill, Sussex Downs**" by **chrisjohnbeckett** is licensed under **CC BY-NC-ND 2.0**

When Christianity switched from a persecuted fringe sect to the mainline state religion of the Roman Empire in 415 CE, those in the new monotheistic mainstream came up with an insult for the polytheistic "hicks" who still worshipped the pantheon of Roman gods. They called them "pagans" from the Latin word paganus for "country dweller." In every way, the word sounds pejorative and derogatory, which was presumably precisely what it was meant to be.

While most of the rites and practices of Pagan belief systems died out centuries ago, some modern spiritual seekers have recovered those ancient wisdom traditions and now proudly identify as Pagan. By some measures, Modern Paganism is one of America's fastest-growing religions, with an estimated 1 million followers of various Pagan sects in the United States.

Modern Paganism (also called Neopaganism, Contemporary Paganism or just Paganism) is a revival movement that encompasses a wide and rich variety of polytheistic religious traditions: Sumerian, Egyptian, Greek and Roman practices, as well as Wicca (modern witchcraft), Ásatrú (the worship of Norse gods, goddesses and land spirits) and Druidism (an Indo-European priesthood).

Paganism has grown in popularity greatly during the last hundred years. Its growth coincides with a decline in Christianity in Europe and the increase in and access to knowledge of past and distant cultures.

If you are interested in this subject, you can read *Paganism Is the Oldest, Newest Religion,* by Dave Roos on How Stuff Works at:
https://people.howstuffworks.com/paganism.htm

## Accidental Innovation

Thomas Sullivan was a tea merchant in New York. In 1908 he despatched to customers samples of tea leaves in small silken sachets for them to try. Some people thought that the sachets were to be used like metal infusers. Customers were supposed to empty out the contents but instead they put the whole bag into the teapot and then added hot water.
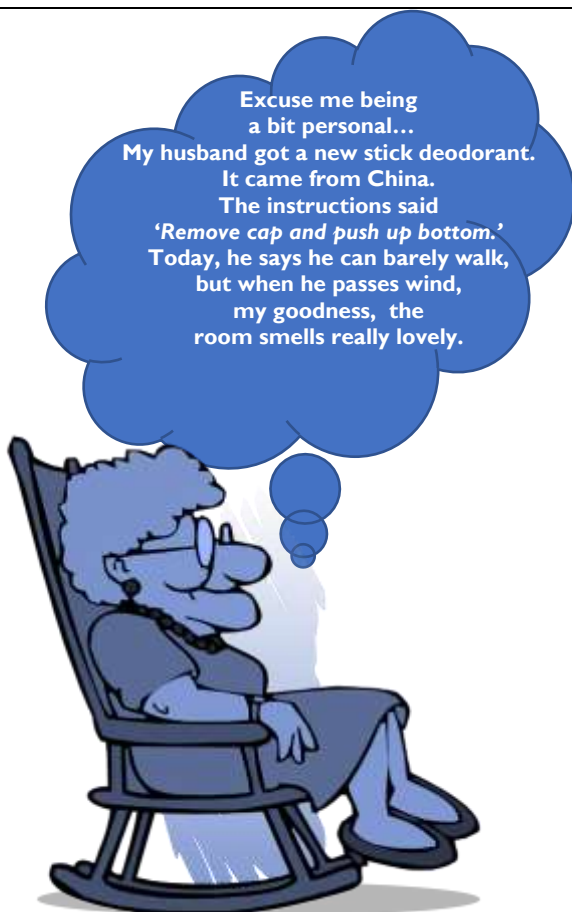
Sullivan heard back that the customers were happy with this new arrangement - so he designed teabags for large scale production. He made bags of gauze and then paper. He later added string and a tag so the bag could be easily removed.

Innovators are open-minded and quick to learn from failure. They are ready to observe and adapt when the unexpected happens.

According to the Daily Mirror, a survey by English Heritage showed that people rated the teabag as one of the most important inventions of all time alongside the wheel and the internet.

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Excuse me being a bit personal…
My husband got a new stick deodorant.
It came from China.
The instructions said
*'Remove cap and push up bottom.'*
Today, he says he can barely walk,
but when he passes wind,
my goodness, the
room smells really lovely.

## A new view of the Sistine Chapel's Frescoes

Sources:
https://theculturetrip.com/europe/italy/articles/michelangelos-must-see-frescoes-in-the-sistine-chapel/
http://www.museivaticani.va/content/museivaticani/en/collezioni/musei/cappella-sistina/tour-virtuale.html



Picture Credit: "File:'Cumaean Sibyl Sistine Chapel ceiling' by Michelangelo JBU35.jpg" by Michelangelo is licensed under CC BY 3.0

The Sistine Chapel takes its name from Pope Sixtus IV della Rovere, who restored it in the 15th century. The frescoes feature drape-like paintings on the lowest part of the walls, the Stories of Moses and Christ, and portraits of past Popes. The earlier works were by a team of Renaissance artists including Pietro Perugino, Sandro Botticelli, Domenico Ghirlandaio, and Cosimo Rosselli.

In 1508, Michelangelo Buonarroti was commissioned by Pope Julius II della Rovere to repaint the ceiling, which was previously designed with a starry sky by Pier Matteo d'Amelia. The original plan was to paint only 12 apostles, but Michelangelo created more than 300 figures on the ceiling and lunettes. The frescoes now feature the Stories of Genesis—from the creation all the way to the tale of Noah's Ark.

The Sistine Chapel is revered for the mural paintings, specifically frescoes, that adorn its expansive walls and ceiling. So popular is this artistic marvel that even though it's located within the sacred grounds of the pope's official residence in Vatican City, the Apostolic Palace allows visitors to see the paintings up close. And even from home, you can see it too for yourself, at least virtually, through Musei Vaticani's 360 tours: just click this link: http://www.museivaticani.va/content/museivaticani/en/collezioni/musei/cappella-sistina/tour-virtuale.html

Musei Vaticani's virtual tour lets viewers zoom in and out on the Sistine Chapel's interior walls. There's also Vatican's official website, where you can check out the 360-tour from another perspective, just click this link: http://www.vatican.va/various/cappelle/sistina_vr/index.html

Michelangelo's inestimable frescoed Sistine Chapel ceiling is one of the greatest works of art in the world and an important landmark of High Renaissance art. He was commissioned to paint the ceiling decades after the chapel had been built and didn't paint his famous scene of The Last Judgement until 25 years after the ceiling.

## Everything you wanted to know about Lawn Bowling

Sources and Credits: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southampton_Old_Bowling_Green
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bowls  https://www.britannica.com/sports/bowls
https://www.bowlsengland.com/about-the-sport/

### The Game

The fundamentals of how you play bowls and win the game are precisely the same. It's simple: all you need to do is to get your bowls as near as possible to a smaller white ball known as the "jack" or "kitty" than the bowls of an opponent – even if this is achieved by your bowl knocking aside an opponent's bowl or in moving the jack. Bowls, or lawn bowls, is played on a bowling green or rink, which may be flat (for "flat-green bowls") or convex or uneven (for "crown green bowls"). It is typically played outdoors (although there are many indoor venues), and the outdoor surface is either natural grass, artificial turf or cotula (in New Zealand).

Bowls is generally played on a flat lawn, about 40–42 yards square and surrounded by a shallow ditch and grass banks beyond. The green is divided into six rectangular sections, or rinks, each of which is about 18–21 feet wide. The bowls are also called woods, even though they may be made of rubber, wood, or some other material. Bowls measure from 4.75 to 5.75 inches in diameter and have a maximum weight of 3.5 pounds. They are black or brown in colour. They are also *biased*, or flattened on one side, so that they follow a curved course when rolled. The jack is white in colour, weighs 8 to 10 ounces and has a diameter of 2.5 inches (6.3 cm). Players deliver their bowls from a rubber mat measuring 24 by 14 inches.

To begin play, a jack is rolled to the opposite side of the rink, and it becomes the target so long as it stops at least 25 yards from the delivery mat. Players then bowl in turn. In singles and pairs (doubles) games, each player uses four bowls; in triples, every player has three bowls; and in fours, or rink games, two bowls per player are used. When all the bowls have been delivered, an end is said to be complete. In scoring, all the bowls of one team nearest to the jack at the finish of an end than the nearest bowl of the opposing team count for one point each. A game consists of 21 points in pairs or fours and 18 points in triples. There is no prescribed number of points in singles matches, but the usual number played is 21.

Bowls is a variant of the *boules* games, which, in their general form, are of ancient or prehistoric origin. Stone Age excavations have confirmed that some sort of game was played with rounded rocks which were rolled or bowled to a peg or other marker.

Historical evidence of bowls-like games has been found in the cultures of the Ancient Egyptians, the Aztecs, the early Polynesians, and various North American aboriginal cultures. Ancient Greek variants are recorded that involved throwing light objects (such as flat stones, coins, or later also stone balls) as far as possible. The aspect of tossing the balls to approach a target as closely as possible is recorded in ancient Rome. This game was spread to Roman Gaul by soldiers or sailors. A Roman sepulchre in Florence shows people playing this game, stooping down to measure the points.

### The world's oldest surviving bowling green

Southampton Old Bowling Green, situated on the corner of Lower Canal Walk and Platform Road, Southampton, England, is the world's oldest surviving bowling green. It was first used in 1299. Chesterfield Bowling Club in Derbyshire is believed to date back to 1294.

God's House Hospital was a refuge for poor travellers in Southampton The Hospital of "God's House" was founded in 1185 for pilgrims who were going either to the shrine of St Swithun at Winchester or to Canterbury. The green adjoining the Hospital had been established during the reign of Richard I the Lionheart for the recreational use of the Warden and was first used for a game of bowls in 1299. The bowling club that plays there now is believed to have been established in the 17th century because of the history of a competition known as the "*Knighthood*". According to the City of Southampton Society, it is also the only club with a "Master" in charge, a title carried forward from the earliest of days.

Wikipedia explains that a unique occurrence called the "Knighthood" competition is held annually when the members (gentlemen commoners) compete to obtain 7 points, with the winner being awarded the title of "Knight-of-the-green" and becoming a sir (in lower case). The competition is adjudicated by the members who have previously won the competition (Knights), who judge in top hats and frocked tails suits. Those who win are unable to compete again in future Knighthood competitions. This is the annual competition of the club with rules which are different from the normal variant of the game.

### History

Bowls in England has been traced back to at least the 13th century. The game eventually came under the ban of the king and parliament, both fearing it might jeopardise the practice of archery, then so important in battle. Statutes forbidding it and other sports were enacted in the reigns of Edward III, Richard II and other monarchs. Even when, on the invention of gunpowder and firearms, the bow had fallen into disuse as a weapon of war, the prohibition was continued. The discredit attaching to bowling alleys, first established in London in 1455, probably encouraged subsequent repressive legislation, for many of the alleys were connected with taverns frequented by the dissolute and gamesters.

William Shakespeare mentions the sport in Act III of Richard II indicating that both men and women could be found on the bowling greens. Sir Francis Drake is reputed to have been playing bowls while the Spanish Armada sailed up the British Channel in 1588.

By a 1541 statute of Henry VIII, not repealed until 1845 (in the reign of Queen Victoria) - artificers, labourers, apprentices, servants and the like were forbidden to play bowls at any time except at Christmas, and then only in their master's house and presence. It was further enjoined that anyone playing bowls outside his own garden or orchard was liable to a penalty of 6s. 8d.(6 shillings and 8 pence), while those possessed of lands of the yearly value of £100 might obtain licences to play on their own private greens.

The patenting of the first grass lawn mower in 1830 in Britain is believed to have been the catalyst for the worldwide preparation of modern-style greens, sporting ovals, playing fields, pitches, grass courts, etc. This in turn, led to the codification of modern rules for many sports, including lawn bowls.

Today, bowls is played in over 40 countries with more than 50 member national authorities. The home of the modern game is still Scotland, with the World Bowls Centre in Edinburgh. The International Bowling Board, the ruling body of lawn bowls, was founded in 1905. The English Indoor Bowling Association (EIBA) was founded in 1971.

### The Bowls

Selecting your first set of bowls can be a bit of a minefield. There are more than 30 models currently on sale, all with unique characteristics, in 8 different sizes, and a multitude of colours to choose from. The top 3 bowls for beginners are suggested to be Drakes Pride (Professional), Taylor (Vector VS) and aero (Quantum).

## "Intrusive" or "Obtrusive": What's The Difference?

Source: https://www.dictionary.com/e/intrusive-vs-obtrusive/

They look and sound similar. *Intrusive* and *obtrusive* both refer to something or someone who invades or is thrust into a situation in an unwelcome way. Their meanings are close enough that it can be easy to confuse them.

**How are *intrusive* and *obtrusive* alike?**
*Intrusive* and *obtrusive* have very similar meanings. They both involve inserting oneself into a situation, especially without being welcomed or invited. They're both adjectives that describe behaviours, people, or things. Both words have a common Latin root. The ending *-trude* - originally came from the Latin *trudere*. This word means "to thrust," which relates to the meanings of both *intrusive* and *obtrusive*.

**How do you use *intrusive*?**
*Intrusive* is much more common that *obtrusive*. *Intrusive*, as it is frequently used, can refer to internal, personal intrusions. A person can have *intrusive* thoughts. Questions can be *intrusive*. Here is one example:

"Citizens who accept positions in government that give them access to sensitive information—myself included, when I went to work for the White House in 2005—are asked highly *intrusive* questions about marriage and adultery." (*Wall Street Journal*)

A person can also be intrusive: *Lily is very **intrusive**, as she's always trying to insert herself in other people's conversations*. A baby's birth is one occasion where people might be considered *intrusive*:

"Your partner should probably be there. … [And] maybe one friend or family member who can fade into the background or be helpful and supportive without being *intrusive*."(Midwifery Today)

Those who are *intrusive* aren't always trying to get attention. They may interfere in others' affairs by accident. Let's say Lily goes into the living room to relax, only to find Jon and Jasmine having a private conservation in there. In this case, she's *intrusive* because she is unintentionally invading something she isn't meant to be a part of.

**How do you use *obtrusive*?**
Being *obtrusive* means being much bolder with the interference. So let's say Lily knows that Jon and Jasmine are talking in the other room and barges in, wanting to know what is going on. In this case because she is intentionally invading something, she's not meant to be a part of. At the same time, someone who constantly corrects another in a conversation is being *obtrusive*. They are intentionally interrupting someone else with comments. Also, *obtrusive* is often used to describe a physical interference. For example, planting a tree too near a neighbour's house.

### Sorry for the intrusion
Maybe https://wikidiff.com/intrude/obtrude can help:
As verbs, the difference between **intrude** and **obtrude** is that **intrude** is to thrust oneself in; to come or enter without invitation, permission, or welcome; to encroach; to trespass while **obtrude** is to proffer (something) by force; to impose (something) (on) someone or (into) some area.

## The first wagons arrive in California

Sources: https://www.sos.wa.gov/archives/timeline/detail.aspx?id=185
https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bartleson–Bidwell_Party
https://americasbesthistory.com/abhtimeline1841m.html
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/California_Trail



Picture Credit: "Water Wagon" by ...-Wink-... is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

What a journey! East to West. On 1st May 1841, a wagon train (with sixty-nine adults and several children) left Independence, Missouri. On 4th November that year, it reached its destination - California.

The Washington State website says:
"Two years later, wagon trains began branching to the north onto the Oregon Trail leading to the Pacific Northwest. A party of American settlers, led by Dr. Elisha White, arrived safely at the Whitman Mission near present-day Walla Walla in 1842, after having travelled across the country by covered wagon. They brought with them a message for Dr Marcus Whitman, informing him that his mission was to be terminated. Dr. Whitman rode back east almost non-stop to protest his removal. Having succeeded in stopping his removal, Dr. Whitman travelled home, surveying the trail to Oregon as he in order "*to open a practicable route and safe passage*" for immigrants. Dr. White's success, followed by Marcus Whitman's ride, encouraged prospective Oregon settlers. In 1843, the largest migration of pioneers to Oregon was underway; by October 1843, the population of the Willamette Valley was increased by 875 new settlers."

There had been previous wagon trains, both on the Oregon Trail and Santa Fe trails since the early 1820s. John Bartleson and John Bidwell would lead the train over a haphazard wagon road created by three previous smaller parties. The trip would take five months at fifteen miles per day; it would cover over two thousand miles, traversing the Oregon Trail and crossing the Great Salt Lake and Sierra Nevada Mountains.

There were problems with the arrival of United States immigrants in Alta California. Mexican generals had orders to evict any Americans who tried to colonise Mexican territory. When a portion of the Bartleson-Bidwell company arrived at Mission San Jose, they were detained, but eventually allowed to stay if they became Mexican citizens.

In 1844, Caleb Greenwood and the Stephens-Townsend-Murphy Party became the first settlers to take wagons over the Sierra Nevada and into California over what became the Truckee Trail. They abandoned their wagons in the early snow in the winter of 1844/1845 and finished retrieving their wagons from the mountains in the spring of 1845. In 1845, John C. Frémont and Lansford Hastings guided parties totalling several hundred settlers along the Humboldt River portion of the California Trail to California. They were the first to make the entire trip by wagon in one travelling season. In 1846 it is believed that about 1,500 settlers made their way to California over the Truckee branch of the California Trail—just in time to join the war for independence there. Many of the 1845 and 1846 emigrants were recruited into the California Battalion to assist the U.S. Navy's Pacific Squadron with its sailors and marines in the fight for California's independence from Mexico.

## *From Protest to Reformation*

Martin Luther, German theologian and religious reformer, was the catalyst of the 16th century Protestant Reformation. He started a movement that reformulated certain basic tenets of Christian belief and resulted in the division of Western Christendom between Roman Catholicism and the new Protestant traditions, mainly Lutheranism, Calvinism, the Anglican Communion, the Anabaptists, and the Antitrinitarians. He is one of the most influential figures in the history of Christianity.

Picture Credit: "Portrait of Martin Luther" by harry_nl is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

According to history, on the last day of October in the year 1517, Martin Luther posted on the door of Schlosskirche (Castle Church) in Wittenberg, Germany, his *Ninety-five Theses*, a manifesto that turned a protest about an *indulgence scandal* into the *Protestant Reformation*. Although the Reformation is usually considered to have started with the publication of the *Ninety-five Theses* by Martin Luther in 1517, there was no schism between the Catholic Church and the nascent Luther until the 1521 *Edict of Worms*.

Several questions arise:
- Who was Martin Luther?
- What are/were the Ninety-five Theses?
- What was the scandal?
- What was the Protestant Reformation?
- What was the Edict of Worms

### Martin Luther
Martin Luther, Order of St. Augustine (10th November 1483 – 18th February 1546) was a German professor of theology, priest, author, composer, Augustinian monk, and a seminal figure in the Reformation. Luther was ordained to the priesthood in 1507. He came to reject several teachings and practices of the Roman Catholic Church; in particular, he disputed the view on indulgences. Luther proposed an academic discussion of the practice and efficacy of indulgences in his Ninety-five Theses of 1517. His refusal to renounce all of his writings at the demand of Pope Leo X in 1520 and the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V at the Diet of Worms in 1521 resulted in his ex-communication by the pope and condemnation as an outlaw by the Holy Roman Emperor.

### The Ninety-five Theses
*The Ninety-five Theses or Disputation on the Power of Indulgences* by Martin Luther is a list of propositions for an academic disputation written in 1517.  It is considered a foundation document for Protestantism and the beginning of the Reformation in Europe. Luther originally had no intention of breaking away from the Catholic church, but assumed his call for theological and ecclesiastical reform would be heard, and ordinarily, his theses would have been of interest only to professional theologians. However, various political and religious situations at the time and the fact that printing had been invented combined to make the theses known throughout Germany within a few weeks.

Although Luther did not give them to the people, he did send copies to the archbishop of Mainz and the bishop of Brandenburg. Others, however, translated them into German and had them printed and circulated. By this, they became a manifesto that turned a protest about an indulgence scandal into the greatest crisis in the history of the Western Christian church.

You can read *The Ninety-five Theses* by clicking this link: http://rels365fa10.pbworks.com/w/page/30171051/Ninety-Five%20Theses

### The Indulgence Scandal
Indulgence, is a distinctive feature of the penitential system of both the Western medieval and the Roman Catholic Church granting full or partial remission of the punishment of sin. In other words, foregiveness.

In the autumn of 1517, an ostensibly innocuous event quickly made Luther's name a household word in Germany. Irritated by Johann Tetzel, a Dominican friar who was reported to have preached to the faithful that the purchase of a letter of indulgence entailed the forgiveness of sins, Luther drafted a set of propositions *(the ninety-five indulgencies)* for the purpose of conducting an academic debate on indulgences at the university in Wittenberg.

### The Protestant Reformation
The Reformation (aka the Protestant Reformation or the European Reformation) was a significant movement within Western Christianity in 16th century Europe. It posed a religious and political challenge to the Catholic Church and, in particular, to papal authority, arising from what were perceived to be errors, abuses, and discrepancies by the Catholic Church. The Reformation was the start of the split of Protestantism from the Roman Catholic Church.

Wikipedia (here) says The Catholic Church, throughout its long history, has on occasion been subject to criticism regarding various beliefs and practices. This includes differences of opinion regarding the use of Latin at Mass and the subject of clerical celibacy.

### The Edict (or Diet) of Worms
Diet of Worms was not a slimming meal but a meeting of the *Diet* (assembly) of the Holy Roman Empire held at Worms, Germany, in 1521, made famous by Martin Luther's appearance before responding to charges of heresy.

READ MORE:
*The Ninety-five Theses or Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences* is a list of propositions for an academic disputation written in 1517 by Martin Luther, professor of moral theology at the University of Wittenberg. It was originally published on 10th November 1517 Original title and language (Latin): *Disputatio pro declaratione virtutis indulgentiarum.*



A 2018 reprint of the 1910 Harvard Classics Edition, is available on Amazon at: https://www.amazon.co.uk/Ninety-Five-Theses-Martin-Luther/dp/1684222761/

## *Local Stores that are gone forever*

**By Martin Pollins**
Sources: From memory and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._Lyons_and_Co.

You must remember these stores from your younger days: Hanningtons (Brighton), Plummer Roddis (Hove) and Wades (Brighton). And the Lyons' Corner Houses – ah, that was a time to remember.

### Hanningtons

Hanningtons was a department store located in Brighton and was prominently situated in a central position in Brighton in North Street on the corner by East Street. It had an unbroken history of trading for nearly 200 years until its closure in 2001. It was the city's oldest, largest and most diverse department store: its 70 departments offered clothes and household goods of all types and services ranging from funeral arrangements to carpet cleaning. It was known locally as the "Harrods of Brighton".  It remained in family ownership until the 1960s, and subsequent owners ran the business according to the principles of the Hannington family. Hanningtons grew from a single shop on the town's North Street into a large store spanning numerous shop units on that road and neighbouring streets.

The Hanningtons store was damaged in one of the many bombing raids of the Brighton Blitz. On 29th November 1940, number 1 North Street was severely damaged, but there were no casualties.

The last member of the Hannington family, Dorothy Hannington, died in 1966. She set up a charitable trust to operate the store on behalf of the Royal London Hospital and the Royal Sussex County Hospital, but in 1969 this was disbanded, and the store was sold for £1,005,000 to South Bank Estates, a property company. In 2001, the directors decided to close the store and sell the buildings. The last day of trading was 30 June 2001, but a full-scale sale took place for weeks beforehand.  Parts of the business were sold off and some buildings disposed of, in particular, the furniture depository (see below) in Hove (built 1901-1904), which was sold to Legal & General and was converted into offices in 1972 for their use until 2005 after which it remained empty until it was converted into the Montefiore Hospital in 2011–12.

### Plummer Roddis

Plummer Roddis started out as separate companies in the 19th Century. William Plummer worked as a draper in Hastings and in 1871 had a store before opening another one in Southampton. George Roddis, in 1881, was a partner in a drapers & milliners business called Roddis & Goldsmith also in Hastings. In the late 19th Century, William Plummer, George Roddis and Reginald Tyrrell, joined forces as a company known as Plummer Roddis in 1898. The business grew and opened branches in Boscombe, Brighton, Bath, Eastbourne, Folkestone, Andover, Weymouth, and Yeovil. The Southampton store was destroyed by German bombing during During World War II. The head office of the Plummer Roddis group was based in Sillwood Road, Brighton. My wife tells me she had a Saturday job there in the late 1960s. By the early 1970s, most of the Plummer Roddis shops were rebranded as Debenhams. Interestingly, the Plummer Roddis business was mentioned in H. G. Wells book *Kipps: The Story of a Simple Soul*.

### Wades

Acknowledgement to the source: https://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/4895062

J Wade had been a draper who started his business from number 188 Western Road, Brighton, in the early 1890s. The company gradually expanded into numbers 189-191 over the next decade. Before this, number 188 had been in commercial use since at least the mid-1840s, with the longest tenure belonging to a china and glass warehouse during the 1860s. Number 189 was converted to commercial use in the mid-1850s and spent forty years as a boot and shoe warehouse before Mr Wade moved in. Neighbouring 190 had also been converted to commercial use by the mid-1840s and was an organ builder, artists suppliers and paper hanger until Wade took over in 1903. Lastly, number 191 was in commercial use by the mid-1840s and was home to John Cully, then his daughter, who were brush makers until 1913 when Wade expanded into their premises.

After the rebuild, Wades remained in business until the end of the 1970s, after which it was briefly taken over by Owen Owen Ltd, who closed the store in 1981. The following year it was taken over by Primark who remained until 2007 when they moved to bigger premises.

### Lyons Tea Shops

In the 1950s, Brighton had two Lyons tea shops; one on the corner at the bottom of St James's Street and the Steine – a real 'Lyon's Corner House' – and the other was halfway down on the south side of North Street. Lyon's tea shops were instantly recognisable by their art deco frontages. The shops were always painted in white, with gold lettering across the top of the window. They were typically large shops, with rows of formica-topped tables.  The shops were notable for their interior design, from the 1920s - Oliver P. Bernard being the consultant artistic director. Until the 1940s, they had a certain working-class chic, but by the 1950s and 1960s, they were quick stops for busy shoppers where one could drink a cup of tea and eat a snack or an inexpensive meal. The tea shops always had a bakery counter at the front, and their signs, art nouveau gold lettering on white, were a familiar landmark. Before World War II, service was to the table by uniformed waitresses, known as 'Nippies', but after the War, the tea shops converted to cafeteria service. Nippies wore a distinctive maid-like uniform with a matching hat.  The 'Nippy' made her first appearance on New Year's Day in 1925, and the word soon became a household name. By 1939, there were around 7,600 of them working around the country.

The brand started in 1894 and finally closed in 1981. The tea shops were slightly more upmarket than their ABC (Aerated Bread Company) counterparts.  Now, both Brighton shops are gone. Which do we miss more - the tea or the 'Nippies'?

And finally, but it's before your time…

### Stafford Department Store

Edward Dickinson Stafford owned and ran Stafford's department store in Brighton during World War I, and through the 1920s and 1930s, Mr Stafford built a new store in 1926 in the building in Western Road opposite what was the HMV store. In addition to his business interests, Mr Stafford was also a Brighton councillor and also served as a local JP. He campaigned to have Western Road widened during the early 1920s. He was also a leading figure in the Methodist community and a philanthropist. He lived in Hassocks and gifted the park (called Adastra) to the council and his home to the Salvation Army as an 'Eventide Home' calling it Villa Adastra. He also purchased a property from a Mrs Annie Ferguson, renaming it Stafford House before gifting it to a charity to provide holiday accommodation for youngsters.  He lost his son, Frederick John Ewart Stafford, aged only 19, on 22nd April 1917 in France during World War I and used the word Adastra in memory of him (Latin for "*To the Stars*").

Stafford's fancy goods and stationery shop was called "The Bazaar" and was located at 166 Western Road. He also had a toy, games and oriental store two doors away at Number 168 Western Road and a "counting house" and warehouse in Crown Street, as well as a store in Tunbridge Wells.

## Why were Viking ships so good?

**Excerpted from:**
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Viking_ships
https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/article/viking-ships/
https://www.ancient.eu/Viking_Ships/
http://www.hurstwic.org/history/articles/manufacturing/text/norse_ships.htm

For three turbulent centuries, the glimpse of a square sail and dragon-headed prow on the horizon struck terror into the hearts of medieval Europeans. Its portentous message was: *The Vikings are coming*.

Perhaps the greatest technical and artistic achievement of the European dark ages was the Viking ship. They were fast, had the strength to survive ocean crossings and had a draft of only about 20 inches, thereby allowing navigation in very shallow water. Ships were an important part of Viking society and permitted the Vikings to embark on their voyages of trading, raiding, colonising and exploring.

'Vikings' mean the seafaring Norse people from southern Scandinavia (present-day Denmark, Norway and Sweden) in the period (793–1066 AD) is known as the Viking Age.  The majority of Viking ships were designed for sailing rivers, fjords and coastal waters, while a few types, such as the *knarr*, could navigate the open sea and even the oceans, sailing from the Baltic Sea to Iceland, the Faroe Islands, Greenland, Newfoundland, the Mediterranean, the Black Sea and even Africa.

Viking ships were unlike other marine vessels of the time and had a unique structure - generally characterised as being slender and flexible boats, with symmetrical ends with a true keel. They were clinker-built (having overlapping planks that are riveted or nailed together). Some ships may have had a dragon's head or other circular object protruding from the bow and stern for design, although this is only inferred from historical sources. Whatever the intended use, the ships were versatile and could be used for several overlapping purposes.

The secret of the Viking ship's success lay in its unique construction. Expert woodworkers would first split oak tree trunks into long, thin planks using a broad axe instead of a saw. They then fastened the boards with iron nails to a single sturdy keel and then to each other, one plank overlapping the next. The Vikings gave shape to the hull using this "clinker" technique rather than the more conventional method of first building an inner skeleton for the hull.  Next, the boatbuilders affixed evenly spaced floor timbers to the keel - not to the hull; this ensured resilience and flexibility. They then added crossbeams to provide a deck and rowing benches and secured a massive beam to support the mast along the keel.

The *drekar,* or dragon-headed longships, were stealthy troop carriers. They were able to cross open oceans under sail and then switch to oars for lightning-fast hit-and-run attacks on undefended towns and monasteries – in doing so, they far-surpassed contemporary English or Frankish vessels in lightness and efficiency, longships carried Viking raiders from northern England to North Africa.

Other ship types included the *knarr,* or ocean-going cargo vessel, which enabled far-flung trade networks and the colonisation of Iceland, Greenland, and America.

The *knarr* drew on similar design principles as the longship but was higher and wider in relation to its length and had only limited numbers of oars to assist with manoeuvres in narrow waters.

The Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) website records that countless sailing experiments with replica ships continue to confirm the excellence of Viking ship design. Much less is known about Viking navigation methods on the high seas, although one of the Icelandic sagas—narratives of Norse history and legends written in Iceland in the 12th and 13th centuries—includes sailing directions from Norway to Greenland that rely on distant landmarks and the presence of birds and whales to signal the position of the land. The Vikings had no compass but were undoubtedly steered by the sun and stars.

W. W. Fitzhugh describes other features and their effects of Viking ships at https://www.ancient.eu/Viking_Ships/:
*The addition of oars and sails gave Viking boats an advantage over all other watercraft of their day in speed, shallow draft, weight, capacity, manoeuvrability, and seaworthiness. Viking boats were designed to be dragged across long portages as well as to withstand fierce ocean storms. Such ships gave the Vikings the ability to trade, make war, carry animals, and cross open oceans and at the same time provided sufficient protection and security for the crew. Sails, without which Viking exploration across the sea would have been profoundly more difficult, were actually a rather new element that only (re)appeared in Scandinavia towards the end of the 7th century CE, probably as a result of increased mercantile contacts with northern Europe, where sails were very much in fashion. The addition of sails is what turned Viking ships into the quick and deadly contraptions that became essential to their raiding strategies.*



The picture above shows archaeologist Gabriel Gustafson and his team during the excavation of the Oseberg ship, a 9th-century Viking ship near Tønsberg (100 km southwest of Oslo, Norway) in 1904. Discovered in Norway, the Oseberg ship is the best-preserved Viking ship ever found and reveals its Norse shipbuilders' graceful construction style.

## Look, who's talking now…

Sources: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Brough and
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/VentriloquismWikipedia

Originally, *ventriloquism* was a religious practice. The word itself comes from the Latin for to speak from the stomach, i.e. venter (belly) and loqui (speak). The Greeks called this gastromancy. The noises produced by the stomach were thought to be the voices of the unliving, who took up residence in the stomach of the ventriloquist. The ventriloquist would then interpret the sounds, as they were thought to be able to speak to the dead and foretell the future. One of the earliest recorded group of prophets to use this technique was the Pythia, the priestess at the temple of Apollo in Delphi.

### Emergence as entertainment

The shift from ventriloquism as the manifestation of spiritual forces toward ventriloquism as an entertainment form happened in the 18th century at the travelling funfairs and market towns. An early depiction of a ventriloquist dates to 1754 in England, where Sir John Parnell is depicted in the painting *An Election Entertainment* by William Hogarth as speaking via his hand. In 1757, the Austrian Baron de Mengen performed with a small doll. The entertainment form came of age during the era of the music hall in the United Kingdom and vaudeville in the United States. George Sutton began to incorporate a puppet act into his routine at Nottingham in the 1830s, but it is Fred Russell who is regarded as the father of modern ventriloquism. In 1886, he was offered a professional engagement at the Palace Theatre in London and took up his stage career permanently. His act, based on the cheeky-boy dummy "Coster Joe" that would sit in his lap and 'engage in a dialogue' with him was highly influential for the entertainment format and was adopted by the next generation of performers.

### Introducing Archie Andrews



Then, many years later, along came Archie Andrews. Archie was the ventriloquist's dummy used by Peter Brough in radio and television shows in the UK in the 1950s and 1960s. The most popular show in its radio format was called *Educating Archie*, which regularly attracted over 15 million listeners.

Archie was usually dressed in a broad-striped blazer, and addressed the ventriloquist as "Brough". The television scripts were written by Marty Feldman and Ronald Chesney. Incredibly, the radio show had a children's fan club that at one time had 250,000 members. Among future stars who appeared on the show were Tony Hancock, Dick Emery, Max Bygraves, Harry Secombe, Benny Hill, Beryl Reid and the young (14-year-old) and unknown Julie Andrews.

The mould from which Archie was made is believed to have been destroyed by German bombs during the Blitz of World War II. Archie himself, the last of his kind, was sold at auction in 2005 for £34,000.

Picture Credit: All rights acknowledged, Screenshot from BBC video (quality is not all that great) at:
https://www.facebook.com/leninsull/videos/185192808326109

## A Brief History of Father Christmas

Sources: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Father_Christmas
https://www.history.co.uk/article/history-of-santa-claus-father-christmas
https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/christmas/the-history-of-father-christmas/

The man is a mystery, that's for sure. Apart from his elves and reindeers, no one knows what Father Christmas really looks like. The mince pies, milk and sherry we leave out for him have an even more ancient origin being reminiscent of sacrifices to pagan gods that long pre-date Christianity.

The Gospels don't give a date for Jesus' birth so the reason we celebrate it on 25th December is because Pope Julius I in the 4th century AD proclaimed it so. He wanted to popularise Christianity and so appropriated existing pagan practises as everyone from the Romans to the Babylonians celebrated the beginning of the end of winter. This is perhaps why early representations saw him dressed in green, representing the green shoots of spring in the depths of winter.

Our American friends believe that Father Christmas is based at the North Pole and they don't give him that name anyway – his real name, they say, is Santa Claus. The truth according to Ancient Origins, is that Santa Claus began with Saint Nicholas (270 – 343), who was born in the village of Patara, an area which was once Greek but is now part of Turkey. He was born to wealthy parents, who died in an epidemic while Nicholas was still young. Nicholas used his entire inheritance to assist the needy, the sick, and the suffering. One account of Nicholas says that he presented three impoverished daughters with dowries so that they would not have to become 'ladies of the night'. On three different occasions, the bags of gold providing the dowries appeared in their home. They had been tossed through an open window and are said to have landed in stockings or shoes left before the fire to dry. This led to the custom of children hanging stockings or putting out shoes, eagerly awaiting gifts from Saint Nicholas.

English personifications of Christmas were first recorded in the 15th century, with Father Christmas first appearing in the mid 17th century after the English Civil War. The Puritan-controlled English government had legislated to abolish Christmas, considering it papist, and had outlawed its traditional customs, such as carol singing.

Although now known as a Christmas gift and benevolence bringer, and typically considered to be synonymous with Santa Claus, Father Christmas was originally part of a much older and unrelated English folkloric tradition. The recognisably modern figure of the English Father Christmas developed in the late Victorian period, but Christmas had been personified for centuries before then. Until Victorian times, Father Christmas was concerned with adult feasting and merry-making. He had no particular connection with children, nor with the giving of presents, nocturnal visits, stockings, chimneys or reindeer. But, as later Victorian Christmases developed into child-centric family festivals, Father Christmas became a bringer of gifts. The popular American myth of Santa Claus arrived in England in the 1850s, and Father Christmas started to take on Santa's attributes. By the 1880s, the new



customs had become established, with the nocturnal visitor sometimes being known as Santa Claus and sometimes as Father Christmas – in fact, totally interchangeable. English Heritable may have the answer to the mystery of Father Christmas, or rather an explanation of his English origins: From his earliest days until the 19th century, Father Christmas was a strictly allegorical figure. He was a symbol of the Christmas season, rather than a mythical being. He was often depicted as a merry old man who presided over festive parties, not a gentle giver of gifts. And that's largely because Christmas was celebrated differently, with much more emphasis on entertainment for adults rather than children.

Picture Credit: "Christmas card with Santa delivering gifts" by Free Public Domain Illustrations by rawpixel is licensed under CC BY 2.0

## 'Shiver me Timbers': Pirates who ruled the seas
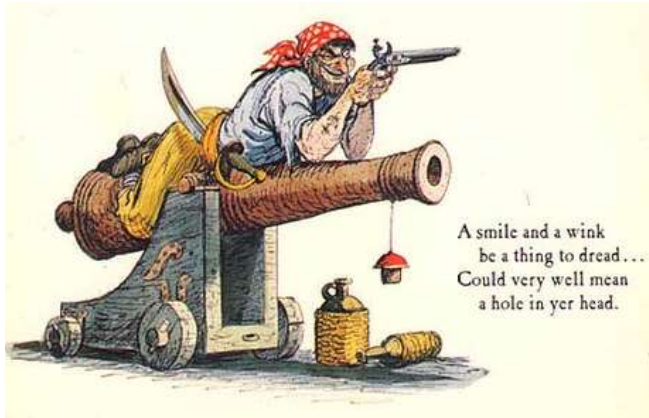


Picture Credit: "Pirates of the Caribbean postcard" by ste3ve is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

Pirates are criminals who steal vessels, people and goods on the sea and coastal areas. Privateers were privately-owned ships that captured sea trade under orders from various governments. On the other hand, buccaneers were government-sponsored pirate crews who attacked Spanish ships in the Caribbean during the 17th century.

Liz Leafloor put together a great article (at: https://www.ancient-origins.net/history-famous-people/famous-pirates-0014676) about the Golden Age of Piracy, when men and women made untold fortunes in gold, silver, jewels, and goods while riding the high seas and bringing their foes low… often down to the depths of Davey Jones' locker. And many of them became famous pirates who are still well remembered today. Be they buccaneers, privateers, corsairs, freedom fighters, or just murderous thieves. One thing's for sure – they burned brightly for a short time, and their remarkable (and sometimes savage) lives are now the stuff of legends.

Here are some of the pirates Ms Leafloor describes in her article, followed by a few others I've discovered:

**Captain Morgan** (Welsh, 1635-1688) is perhaps the most famous pirate of the buccaneering era. Briefly arrested in 1672, knighted in England, he served as Governor of Jamaica, living respectably until his death at age 53.

**Sayyida al-Hurra** (Iberian, 1485-1561) was a notorious female pirate who lived between the 15th and 16th centuries. After taking to piracy, she formed an alliance with the infamous pirate Oruç Reis.

**François l'Olonnais** (French, c. 1630 – c. 1669) is considered one of the cruellest and bloodthirsty pirates of all time. The Spanish were often the victims of his cruelty, so he earned the nickname "Flail of the Spanish."

**"Black Sam" Bellamy** (English, 1689 – 1717) sailed the seven seas, plundering and pirating. In his late teens, he joined the British navy and fought in several battles. In 1716, after a mutiny aboard a ship, he was named the new captain, and in only one year, he and his crew robbed more than 50 ships in the Atlantic and the Caribbean, accumulating the equivalent to $120 million in today's money, making him the richest pirate ever.

**Hayreddin Barbarossa** (Greek, c. 1466/1478-1546) was one of the most notorious pirates of his day and one of the most successful naval commanders of the Ottoman Empire in the 16th century. He had three brothers, and they all became pirates and attained riches and fame by capturing European vessels in the Mediterranean Sea and preying on Spanish and Portuguese ships as independent corsairs (see an explanation of corsairs at: http://www.thewayofthepirates.com/types-of-pirates/corsair/)

**Blackbeard (born Edward Teach)** (English, c. 1680 – 1718), Blackbeard intimidated enemies by barrelling into battle with a wild persona; coiling smoking fuses into his long, braided beard, strapping multiple pistols and daggers across his chest, while clutching two swords. He was finally captured and beheaded by the Royal Navy; his head was raised upon a stake to warn other pirates off Virginia. He was approximately 35 when he died. Blackbeard was a central force during the "Golden Age of Piracy," and books, plays, and movies would romanticise his story right up until today, including the now-iconic character Captain Jack Sparrow in *Pirates of the Caribbean.*

**Francis Drake** (English, 1540 – 1596 AD) was known as "my pirate" by Queen Elizabeth I. He was a privateer (licensed pirate) for the English government. He sacked the Spanish army, his greatest foe, many times, and relentlessly plundered Spanish cities off the coast of Florida. He sailed his most famous voyage in 1577 and became the first English captain to circumnavigate the globe while raiding ports and Spanish vessels loaded with treasure along the way. Queen Elizabeth knighted him immediately upon his return.

**Ching Shih**, sometimes known as Madame Cheng (Chinese, 1775 – 1844), was one of the most successful pirates in history. Once a prostitute, upon the death of her pirate husband, she took over his entire "Red Flag Fleet" (so huge that it equalled all the combined fleets of all the other most successful pirates) and his pirate ways. Her wealth and infamy grew. Ching Shih controlled more than 1,500 ships and 80,000 men. The Chinese government eventually offered universal pirate amnesty in exchange for peace; she accepted this and lived out the remainder of her years in charge of a casino and brothel.

Now for some I've discovered:
http://www.thewayofthepirates.com/famous-pirates/

**Bartholomew Roberts** He was the last great pirate of the golden age who plundered more than 400 ships. His boldness and abilities made him one of the most successful pirates.

**Benjamin Hornigold** A man who was a privateer, pirate and pirate hunter during his career. He is also well-known because his apprentice and partner was Blackbeard.

**Calico Jack** A typical small-time pirate, whose fame comes from the fact that two of the most famous woman pirates, Anne Bonny and Mary Read, sailed under his flag.



**Charles Vane** A very skilful pirate who was brave enough to stand against the mighty governor, Woodes Rogers. However, a couple of unfortunate events ended his career sooner than he expected.

Picture Credit: "Pirate flag" by Vienze Ziction is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0

## *Dreyfus, Guilty but Innocent*

Following on from the mention of the Dreyfus Affair in the story about the Observer newspaper on page 3 of the edition of Nil *Desperandum*, the following (source, here) will be of interest to readers.

In 1894, the French Army's counter-intelligence section, led by Lieutenant Colonel Jean Sandherr, became aware that information regarding new artillery parts was being passed to the Germans by a highly placed spy, most likely on the General Staff. Suspicion quickly (perhaps too quickly and too conveniently) fell upon Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish artillery captain, who was arrested on the charge of treason on 15th October 1894. The evidence was supposedly discovered by a French spy at the German Embassy in Paris who discovered a ripped-up letter in a waste basket with handwriting said to resemble that of Dreyfus.

On 5th January 1895, Dreyfus was summarily convicted in a secret court-martial, publicly stripped (called *cashiering*) of his army rank, and sentenced to life imprisonment on Devil's Island in French Guiana. Following French military custom of the time, Dreyfus was formally degraded (cashiered) by having the rank insignia, buttons and braid cut from his uniform and his sword broken, all in the courtyard of the École Militaire before silent ranks of soldiers, while a large crowd of onlookers shouted abuse from behind railings: "*Death to Judas, death to the Jew.*"

Dreyfus cried out: "*I swear that I am innocent. I remain worthy of serving in the Army. Long live France! Long live the Army!*"

In August 1896, the new chief of French military intelligence, Lieutenant Colonel Georges Picquart, reported to his superiors that he had found evidence to the effect that the real traitor was the Major Ferdinand Walsin Esterhazy. Picquart was silenced by being transferred to the southern desert of Tunisia in November 1896.

When reports of an army cover-up and Dreyfus's possible innocence were leaked to the press, a heated debate ensued about anti-Semitism and France's identity as a Catholic nation or a Republic founded on equal rights for all citizens. Esterhazy was found not guilty by a secret court-martial before fleeing to England.

Following a passionate campaign by Dreyfus's supporters, including leading artists and intellectuals such as Émile Zola. he was given a second trial in 1899 and again declared guilty of treason despite the evidence in favour of his innocence. However, due to public opinion, Dreyfus was offered and accepted a pardon by President Émile Loubet in 1899 and released from prison; this was a compromise that saved face for the military's mistake.

If Dreyfus had refused the pardon, he would have been returned to Devil's Island, a fate he could no longer emotionally cope with; so officially Dreyfus remained a traitor to France, and pointedly remarked upon his release:
"*The government of the Republic has given me back my freedom. It is nothing for me without my honour.*"

Dreyfus's prison sentence on Devil's Island had taken its toll on his health. He was granted retirement from the army in October 1907 at the age of 48. As a reserve officer, he re-entered the military as a Major of artillery at the outbreak of World War I. Serving throughout the war, Dreyfus rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel.

The trial and imprisonment of Dreyfus, as well as the public demonstrations of antisemitism in France, spurred Theodor Herzl to write *The Jewish State* in 1896 and convene the first World Zionist Congress in 1897, and eventually to the formation of the State of Israel in 1947.

## *Low- Living*

Excerpted mainly from and based on https://adventure.howstuffworks.com/coober-pedy.htm



Picture Credit: "**Coober Pedy Hotel**" by **swampa** is licensed under **CC BY 2.0**

We've all heard of high-living… you know, living in houses worth millions, overlooking the magnificent Bay of Naples or this or that, where champagne flows instead of water, and there's a Rolls Royce or two on the driveway and a Ferrari by the largest motor yacht in the Marina.

There's another kind of living – you could call it low-living.  Caroline Eubanks describes it here.

Located in the vast outback of South Australia is the town of Coober Pedy. But don't expect to find a city skyline or tall apartment buildings. Because here, most of the roughly 2,500 residents live in underground houses, eat in underground restaurants and even worship in underground churches.  The picture above is of the Cooper Pedy Hotel.

Coober Pedy looks like something straight out of a movie—probably because it is. In 1985, Mel Gibson, Tina Turner and a team of filmmakers descended onto this barren mining town in the South Australian outback to shoot *Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome*. The other-worldly landscape, which is checkered with ruddy-coloured mounds of sandstone—the result of years of opal mining—was the perfect backdrop for the post-apocalyptic movie. That very landscape, not to mention the lure of finding a pricey opal, has drawn people here for years. It's also forced the town's residents underground—literally.

Coober Pedy has just two gas stations, two grocery stores, a post office, a liquor store, and a handful of hotels and shops catering to visitors. It's more than 700 miles from Uluru, one of Australia's most iconic landmarks, and a stopover on the journey south to Adelaide.

On the way into town, mounds of dirt discarded from the mines give it an almost lunar landscape. Signs warn visitors of open mine shafts throughout the area.

The town is sometimes referred to as the "opal capital of the world" because of the quantity of precious opals that are mined there

Aboriginal people lived on this land for thousands of years before the arrival of Europeans. The name "Coober Pedy" means "white man in a hole," so-called for the miners that inhabit the town. In 1975, the town's Aboriginal community adopted the ancestral name of Umoona. The name comes from a type of tree found in the area, also meaning "long life."

## Atheism and Agnosticism

The words atheist and agnostic conjure up a number of different perceptions and meanings. It seems simple enough, but when it comes to questioning the existence of gods, the subject is a tricky one that is often misunderstood.

See if this helps you to understand:
- Atheism is about belief or, specifically, what you don't believe. An atheist doesn't believe in any god.
- Agnosticism is about knowledge or, specifically, about what you don't know. An agnostic doesn't know if any gods exist or not.
- It is common for people to be both agnostics and atheists or agnostics and theists.

Confused? You're not the only one.

Agnostic atheism is a philosophical position that encompasses both atheism and agnosticism. Agnostic atheists are atheistic because they do not believe in any deity and are agnostic because they claim that the existence of a deity is either unknowable in principle or currently unknown in fact.

Learn Religions (here) suggests that the most precise definition of an atheist is anyone who does not affirm the proposition that "at least one god exists." This is not a proposition made by atheists. Being an atheist requires nothing active or even conscious on the part of the atheist. All that is needed is not "affirming" a proposition made by others.

Learn Religions says that an agnostic is anyone who doesn't claim to know whether any gods exist or not. It's an uncomplicated idea, but the trouble is it may be as misunderstood as atheism.

**Atheism is about belief. Agnosticism is about knowledge**
One major problem is that atheism and agnosticism both deal with questions regarding the existence of gods but:
- atheism involves what a person *does or does not believe;*
- agnosticism involves *what a person does or does not know;*
- *belief and knowledge* are related but are nevertheless *separate issues.*

Simple, isn't it?

## Summary of Religions and Beliefs

The University of Bolton (here) provides a helpful summary of today's religions:
- **Agnosticism:** the view that the truth of metaphysical claims regarding, in particular, the existence of a god or gods, or even ultimate reality, is unknown and may be impossible to know. One can be an agnostic as well as an atheist or religious believer.
- **Atheism:** describes a state of having no theistic beliefs; that is, no beliefs in gods or supernatural beings.
- **Baha'i:** The Baha'i Faith began in Persia in 1844 with the declaration of a new religion, distinctive from the Shi'a Islam found there. Key beliefs include belief in one God; the unity of mankind; equality of opportunity for men and women; and elimination of prejudice.

- **Buddhism:** A way of living based on the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama. The Five Precepts are the basic rules of living for lay Buddhists – to refrain from harming living beings; taking what is not given; sexual misconduct; harmful speech; and drink or drugs which cloud the mind.
- **Christianity:** Based on the teaching of Jesus Christ. Christian groups differ in their interpretation of his teaching, life, death and resurrection, but these matters are at the heart of the way of life of all of them.
- **Humanism:** the belief that we can live good lives without religious or superstitious beliefs. Humanists make sense of the world using reason, experience and shared human values and aim to make the best of the life we have by creating meaning and purpose for ourselves. Humanists work with others for the common good.
- **Hinduism:** An ancient tradition of related beliefs and practices that developed in the Indian subcontinent. Core ideals and values shared by most Hindus would include respect for elders; reverence for teachers; regard for guests and tolerance of all races and religions.
- **Islam:** revealed in its final form by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The essentials of Muslim practice are summarised in the five pillars of Islam – declaration of faith; ritual prayer; welfare; a month of fasting during Ramadan; and pilgrimage.
- **Jainism:** An ancient philosophy and ethical teaching that originated in India. The main principle is ahimsa – which is the avoidance, where possible, of physical or mental harm to any living being. Jainism is a religion without a belief in a creator god.
- **Judaism:** Based around the Jewish people's covenant relationship with God. Jews believe they are challenged and blessed by God. Love of one's neighbour is the great principle of social life and the founding inspiration of the Jewish community.
- **Sikhism:** The religion founded by Guru Nanak in India in the 15th century CE. There is one God, people should serve by leading a life of prayer and obedience. Sikhs believe their soul then passes through various existences and will become one with God.
- **Zoroastrianism:** a religion founded in ancient times by the prophet Zarathushtra, who taught that Ahura Mazda (Lord of Wisdom), the all powerful and perfect creator, grants humans Vohu Manah – a clear rational mind with which to dispel ignorance.

There are other religions not listed above, such as Shinto, a religion that is unique to Japan or Hockey, a religion in Canada. In fact, there are an estimated 10,000 distinct religions worldwide. About 84% of the world's population is affiliated with Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, or some form of folk religion.

Wikipedia, here, provides a Table showing 'believers', by religion or followers (2015):

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Christianity (31.2%) | Islam (24.1%) | No religion (16%) |
| Hinduism (15.1%) | Buddhism (6.9%) | Folk religions (5.7%) |
| Other religions (0.8%) | Sikhism (0.29%) | Judaism (0.18%) |

Daniel Defoe described the original definition as follows: *"Religion is properly the Worship given to God, but 'tis also applied to the Worship of Idols and false Deities."*

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## Ancient "snack bar" found in Pompeii ruins

Picture Credit: "Pompeii's version of a fast food eatery that the Romans called a thermopolium" by mharrsch is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

In the year 79, the city of Pompeii was buried in a sea of ash and pumice when the volcano on nearby Mount Vesuvius devastatingly erupted, killing between 2,000 and 15,000 people. That may be a long time ago, but even today, archaeologists are still making extraordinary discoveries. In December 2020, they unveiled their latest discovery — an extremely well preserved ancient fast food shop.

The *Thermopolium,* as it is called, emerged in the open space, which acts as a crossroads between *Vicolo delle Nozze d'Argento* and *Vicolo dei Balconi,* which has now been entirely uncovered. The frescoed *Thermopolium* is in an exceptional state of preservation. The decorations include an image of a Nereid (sea nymph) astride a sea-horse and an illustration that appears to be a trademark picture of the shop itself. Amphorae (two-handled clay jar) found in front of the counter are decorated with smaller versions of the same image.

The *Thermopolium* – the word comes from the Greek "thermos" for hot and "poleo" to sell – was very popular in the Roman world. Pompeii alone had around 80 of them.

Partially excavated in 2019, the *Thermopolium of Regio V* would have been a shop where hot food was sold, the equivalent of today's snack bar or, perhaps more accurately, a snack bar counter. It is now visible in its entirety, with rich decorative still-life frescoes, food residues, animal bones and victims of the eruption. The archaeologists found duck bone fragments and the remains of pigs, goats, fish and even snails in earthenware pots. Some of the ingredients had been cooked together rather than prepared separately as a Roman-era paella. Crushed fava beans, used to modify the taste of wine, were found at the bottom of one jar.

All very eerie but extremely interesting.

## How Thomas Becket's feud with Henry II led to murder



Picture Credit: "Bramley, Saint James, Thomas à Becket" by Pete Reed is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0

Thomas Becket, also known as Saint Thomas of Canterbury, Thomas of London - and later Thomas à Becket - was Archbishop of Canterbury from 1162 until his murder in 1170. He is venerated as a saint and martyr by both the Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion. He engaged in conflict with Henry II, King of England, over the rights and privileges of the Church and was murdered by followers of the King in Canterbury Cathedral. Soon after his death, he was canonised by Pope Alexander III.

King Henry II and Thomas Becket may have argued at length about the power of the church, but at the root of their dispute was a clash of personalities.

The murder took place at dusk on the evening of 29th December 1170. Thomas Becket was confronted in the half-light of his cathedral by four knights who claimed to bear a message from King Henry II. A violent argument soon broke out during which Becket, the Archbishop of Canterbury, was cruelly and savagely murdered despite his status in the realm and the sanctity of the place in which it happened.

READ or HEAR MORE
The historian Richard Barber has written several books on medieval England, including *Edward III and the Triumph of England* (Allen Lane, 2013). His article about the feud between Thomas Becket and King Henry II was first published in 2015. You can read it at:
https://www.historyextra.com/magazine-issue/august-2015/

There's a Podcast on the History Extra website, too:
https://www.historyextra.com/period/medieval/thomas-becket-murder-emily-guerry-podcast/

### A relationship turned sour

The relationship between King and Archbishop had started out in harmony and friendship. According to Ben Johnson on Historic UK (online at: https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofEngland/Thomas-Becket/), they hunted and played chess together, and people said the two men '*had but one heart and one mind'.*

When, at the age of 21, Henry became King, Becket became his Chancellor. Both furious workers, they laboured tirelessly to bring law and order to Henry's realm.   But, when he donned his archbishop's robes, Becket's whole demeanour seems to have changed, as, according to Ben Johnson, he '*appeared to have experienced a religious conversion.'* Even so, King Henry and Becket remained good friends until they clashed over clerical privilege: Henry stated that the church was subject to the law of the land, but Becket insisted that the Church was above the law.

## A brief look at Holidays

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### Etymology
Let's start with where the word *holiday* comes from. It comes from the Old English word *hāligdæg* (*hālig* "holy"+ *dæg* "day"). Originally, the word referred only to special religious days. The modern use varies geographically. In North America, it means any dedicated day or period of rest or relaxation. In the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand, *holiday* is often used instead of *vacation*.

### How it all started
It was Lancashire cotton workers in the 1870s who helped develop a genuine working-class seaside holiday system. They saved all year to convert the traditional (unpaid) one-week Wakes holidays into seaside breaks, and in doing so, helped change the character of many northern seaside resorts. Wakes Weeks, when factories closed, were still pretty strong in the north in the 1970s (Glaswegians brought their own police with them to Blackpool for their Wakes Week).

In 1939 a new law in Britain said that everyone must have one weeks annual paid holiday. By the 1950s, two weeks were standard, and by the 1980s, most people had at least four weeks' annual holiday. New Years Day was made a bank holiday in Britain in 1974. In Britain, the first Monday in May was made a bank holiday in 1978.

### Early Players in Modern Times
#### Thomas Cook
Picture Credit (below): [Cropped] **"Image taken from page 13 of '[Cook's Handbook for London. With two maps.]'"** by **mechanicalcurator** is licensed under **CC BY 2.0**

The first organised tours date back to Thomas Cook, who, on 5th July 1841, chartered a train to take a group of temperance campaigners from Leicester to a rally in Loughborough, eleven miles away. The idea took off, and by 1872 he was undertaking worldwide tours, albeit with small groups.

Thomas Cook & Son (commonly called Thomas Cook or simply "Cook's") grew to become one of the largest and most well-known travel agents before being nationalised in 1948. In the early 1950s, the company began promoting holidays abroad. The proverbial *writing was on the wall* for the company when they made a costly decision by not going into the new form of cheap package holidays. The company went into sharp decline. The Guardian newspaper (here) ascribes its ultimate failure after 178 years in business to its inability secure a £200m lifeline from its bankers, including government-owned RBS, although its woes go back much further – a victim of a disastrous merger in 2007, ballooning debts and the internet revolution in holiday booking. Add in Brexit uncertainty, and it was perhaps only a matter of time before the giant of the industry collapsed – which it did in the autumn of 2019.

### Billy Butlin
To keep up with the move to annual holidays, the British seaside offered the original 'all-inclusive' holidays - the holiday parks that still thrive today. A name synonymous with holiday camps is Billy Butlin, but did you know he first caught the public's attention as the man who brought Dodgem cars to the UK? In 1936, he opened his first Butlin's holiday camp in Skegness and offered families a week's board and entertainment for the equivalent of a week's wages. The much-modernised parks are still loved by families and have long since shrugged off their Hi-de-Hi! Holiday camp image.

### Fred Pontin
Frederick (Fred) William Pontin founded the Pontins holiday camps and was one of the two main entrepreneurs in the British holiday camp business in the 30 years after World War II, alongside Billy Butlin. Fred Pontin opened his first holiday camp in 1946 on the site of a former U.S. army base (built during World War II), at Brean Sands near Weston-super-Mare in Somerset at the cost of £23,000. Within a year, he had six camps. Over the years, he bought more camps and personally ran them for a year, before selling them to the syndicate. He gradually expanded his empire to thirty sites. The camps were smaller and less expensive than Butlin's holiday camps. In 1978, the company was sold to Coral for £56 million.

### Holidays in Ancient Times
Where did the first idea to go on holiday come from? Was it a moment of genius, or a dream of time in paradise for a week?  The starting point is the Ancient Romans who, when they weren't busy conquering most of the known world, were infamous for enjoying themselves. We all know about their love of gladiator fights and eating until they fell asleep, but did they have any concept of what we'd now call a holiday?

The Romans were the first civilisation to indulge in what we'd now consider travelling for pleasure. But, rather than the one to two weeks that we manage to get away each year, wealthy Romans would look to get away for a staggering two years but first, they had to put an infrastructure (such as border control) in place to allow for holidays to happen. The Romans even had guidebooks, with *Pausanias' Description of Greece* (see here) setting the standard for what a travel guide could look like.

### Medieval Holidays
In the Middle Ages, wealthy people went on pilgrimages for religious reasons. However pilgrimages were not really holidays as such.

In the 14th century, Chaucer wrote the Canterbury Tales about a group of pilgrims on their way to Canterbury. In England people went on pilgrimages to shrines in places like Winchester. Sometimes people went on pilgrimages abroad to places like Rome or Jerusalem. Pilgrimages in England ended during the reign of Henry VIII when shrines like those of St Thomas A Becket were destroyed.

However in the Middle Ages there were no holidays as we know today. People travelled for work, for war or for religious reasons. People were allowed to rest on *Holy Days* during which poor people danced and played a very rough form of football. The men from adjoining villages played on a 'pitch', which could include woods and streams.

## *Finish with a Smile*



Picture Credit: "Black Humour" by mikecogh is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

A common theme in British humour is poking fun at people who take themselves too seriously or are too arrogant. Here is a story containing all four British countries:

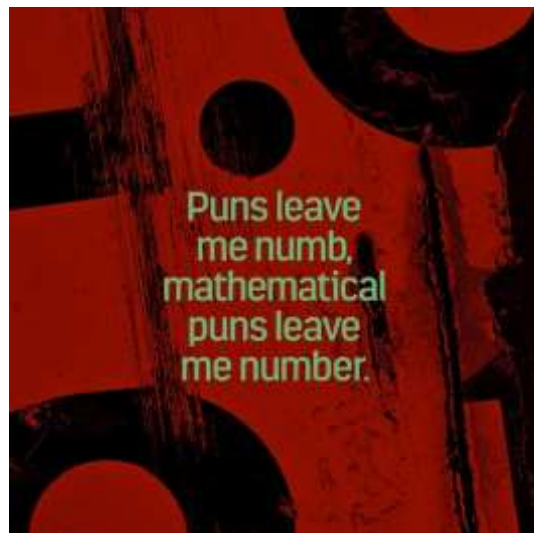An Englishman and an Irishman approach two average looking women in a pub.

*"Can we buy you a drink ladies?"* asks the Englishman.

*"If you want"* replied one of the women arrogantly in a strong Welsh accent

*"Are you two ladies from Scotland?"* asks the Irishman. mischievously.

*"I think you mean Wales, you idiot"* one replied.

*"I'm sorry"* he responded, *"Are you two wales from Scotland?"*



Picture Credit: "Divisive humour (lock)" by Brett Jordan is licensed under CC BY 2.0



Picture Credit: "dilbert2004887970523" by Roy JH Tan is licensed under CC BY-ND 2.0