

# Nil Desperandum

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Never Alone



Picture Credit: "Old Friends" by David Reece is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

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## The Rise and Fall of the Vanderbilts

Sources: • <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/one-of-the-us-s-richest-men-among-victims-of-lusitania-1.2198792> • [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred\\_Gwynne\\_Vanderbilt](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_Gwynne_Vanderbilt) • <https://dorkingmuseum.org.uk/alfred-gwynne-vanderbilt/> • [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RMS\\_Lusitania](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RMS_Lusitania) • [https://www.amazon.com/Fortunes-Children-Fall-House-Vanderbilt/dp/0062224069/ref=sr\\_1\\_1](https://www.amazon.com/Fortunes-Children-Fall-House-Vanderbilt/dp/0062224069/ref=sr_1_1) • <https://www.forbes.com/sites/natalierobehmed/2014/07/14/the-vanderbilts-how-american-royalty-lost-their-crown-jewels/> • <https://dividendrealestate.com/vanderbilt/> • <https://www.earlytorise.com/how-the-worlds-richest-family-went-broke/>



Picture Credit: "File: Bundesarchiv DVM 10 Bild-23-61-17, Untergang der 'Lusitania'.jpg" by Unknown is licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0

### Fate has two bites of the cherry

Returning home from a trip abroad in 1912, Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt booked a passage on the *Titanic*, but he changed his mind at the last minute and decided to stay in London. He may have thought that he had dodged fate in avoiding death when the *Titanic* hit an iceberg and sank, but fate finally caught up with him - in 1915, he set sail aboard the British ship *Lusitania*, which never reached its Liverpool destination.

### The Life and Death of Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt

Last month, Nil Desperandum featured the life of Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt, his marriages and infidelities, his massive inheritance and his disappearance (presumed drowned) when the *Lusitania*, passing West of Cork en-route for Liverpool, was torpedoed by a German submarine. The *Lusitania* sank to the bottom of the ocean, together with Vanderbilt and 1,197 other passengers. His body was never found. Nearly 30 Americans were among those drowned.

Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt was the second son of Cornelius Vanderbilt II, whose family had made a fortune in the United States' railway boom. When Cornelius Vanderbilt II died in 1899 (having disinherited his first son), he left the best part of his fortune to the 22-year-old Alfred, who is thought to have inherited some \$70 million – perhaps as much as \$150 billion in today's money. Horses, rather than business, however, were Alfred's passion. Alfred Vanderbilt spent some of his days (but not too much) in the family's business empire, travelling the world, or fox hunting, leaving enough time to enjoy romances with beautiful and wealthy women.

### Alfred's Sussex and Surrey connections

Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt was a member of *The Sussex Motor Yacht Club*, one of the oldest such clubs. It was founded in April 1907. In 1908, Alfred presented the Club with the Venture Challenge Cup – a handsome and very large silver trophy.

Alfred's passion was carriage racing and he was often to be seen racing his carriages at great speed up from the South Coast to London, recreating the great days of private coach travel. On these excursions, his guard would be attired in a gold-braided red coat and top hat. For the Holmwood stretch of the route, Vanderbilt had a particular fondness, his coachman blowing his horn to bring out local children in the hope of pennies or sweets.

An Anglophile with family connections in England and, in particular, the Dorking and Holmwood area, Alfred Vanderbilt spent as much time in Britain as in the United States. He is recorded as a regular guest at the Burford Bridge Hotel near Box Hill in Surrey. When driving from London to Brighton, he would stop to take lunch and collect telegrams.

Alfred Vanderbilt was married in Reigate in 1912 at a private ceremony with just four witnesses. Both he and his bride, another wealthy American, Margaret

Emerson McKim, had been previously married – Alfred's first wife divorced him for committing adultery with the wife of the Cuban Ambassador to London (she later committed suicide).

After Alfred died on the *Lusitania*, a memorial was erected on the A24 London to Worthing Road in Holmwood, south of Dorking in Surrey. The inscription reads, "In Memory of Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt, a gallant gentleman and a fine sportsman who perished in the *Lusitania*, 7<sup>th</sup> May 1915. This stone is erected on his favourite road by a few of his British coaching friends and admirers".

### World War I

On 7<sup>th</sup> May 1915, less than 20km\* from the Old Head of Kinsale off the coast of County Cork, German U-boat U-20 fired a single torpedo against the *Lusitania*, triggering a secondary explosion sank the giant ocean liner within 18 minutes.

\* But Wikipedia (here) puts it at 11 miles (18 km) 'off the southern coast of Ireland'.

The sinking caused international revulsion, but the Germans argued that the *Lusitania*'s manifest showed it was carrying a secret cargo of 50 tonnes\*\* of high explosive munitions destined for Britain and was a legitimate target. The Germans had introduced unrestricted submarine warfare in February 1915 in retaliation for the British naval blockade of the English Channel and the North Sea, which they claimed was strangling German commerce.

\*\* But Wikipedia (here) says the *Lusitania* was carrying 173 tons of war munitions and ammunition.

### The Vanderbilt Fortune

**Made:** The family fortune was founded by Alfred Vanderbilt's father (Cornelius Vanderbilt I, known as the Commodore). He was the son of a poor farmer and boatman, left school at 11 and made a fortune in shipping and railway in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The Commodore Vanderbilt managed to transform \$100 borrowed from his mother into a \$100 million dollar fortune by the time of his death in 1877. It is said that his inheritance to his family was more than was held in the US Treasury at the time.

When the Commodore died, he left a fortune to his son William who doubled it by his own death less than nine years later, having created the largest fortune in the world at the time (said to be \$300 billion in today's money). The Vanderbilts built Grand Central Station in New York. They had splendid mansions on Fifth Avenue. They bought America's finest racehorses and yachts. The family hosted massive parties, known as the "parties of the century".

But the omens were there: a shrinking fortune accompanied by a ballooning appetite to spend, just how long could it last?

**Lost:** The Commodore had urged that the bulk of the family fortune be endowed upon one descendant, but when his son William died in 1885, William left the family's stake in the business to his sons, Cornelius Vanderbilt II and William Kissam Vanderbilt. The division of the Vanderbilt fortune in the third generation coincided with a decline in family interest in New York Central - and a gradual increase in philanthropy as well as downright and wasteful spending.

Cornelius Vanderbilt II managed the railroads until he died in 1899. William Kissam Vanderbilt took over but retired soon after to concentrate on his yachts and thoroughbred horses, while brother George Vanderbilt's 146,000 acre Biltmore estate ate into his branch of the family fortune. Forbes (here) says that among the Vanderbilt family's prized assets were an impressive art collection of old masters and a string of houses in Newport, Rhode Island, including The Breakers, and ten mansions on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan.

Within a few short years, the Commodore's grandchildren had spent almost all of their inherited fortune. Within thirty years after the death of the Commodore, no member of his family was among the wealthiest people in the United States. And when 120 of the Commodore's descendants gathered at Vanderbilt University in 1973 for the first family reunion, there was not a single millionaire among them.

The Commodore once said, "Any fool can make a fortune. It takes a man of brains to hold on to it after it's made."

\*\*\* You can add to that, "A fool and his money are soon parted" - Thomas Tusser

The *Lusitania* sinking was a major factor in building support in America for a war.

Whilst the attack on *Lusitania* turned American public opinion against Germany, war was eventually declared some two years later only after the Imperial German Government resumed the use of unrestricted submarine warfare against American shipping in an attempt to break the transatlantic supply chain from the USA to Britain, and after receipt of the Zimmermann Telegram, but that's another story!



## Debrett's Golden Rules of Dining

Source: <https://www.debretts.com/everyday-etiquette/the-golden-rules-of-dining/>

We came across this advice last year and wanted to share it with you... During the pandemic, limited social contact took its toll on formal dining, and hosting and attending dinner parties seemed like a distant memory when lockdown rules restricted social gatherings.

However, there is no excuse for letting dining standards slip. Here are a few pointers that will serve you well:

- If using a knife and fork together, always keep the tines of the fork pointing downwards and push the food onto the fork. It may be necessary to use mashed potato to make peas stick to the fork, but turning the fork over and scoop is incorrect.
- Always eat pudding with a spoon and fork.
- Indicate you have finished your meal by placing your knife, fork (with the tines facing upwards) and/or spoon on the plate in the six-thirty position.
- Put salt on the side of your plate rather than sprinkling it on your food.
- Resist the temptation to mop up the sauce, or the last few mouthfuls of soup, with bread; eat only what can be eaten easily with a fork or spoon.
- Do not pick individual grapes from a bunch. Use either fingers or grape scissors to remove a small bunch.
- Pips and stones should be discreetly spat into a cupped left hand and deposited on the side of the plate or discarded.
- When served bread rolls, break into bite-sized pieces that are eaten individually. Break off a new piece for each mouthful, rather than dividing the rolls into chunks in advance.
- Butter, served with bread, should be taken from the butter dish with the butter knife and placed on the edge of your side plate. Each piece of bread is individually buttered.
- When eating soup, fill the spoon by pushing it away from you, towards the far side of the bowl. Bring this to the mouth and tip the soup in from the side of the spoon. Tilt the bowl away from you to get the last few spoonfuls.



Picture Credit: [Cropped] "Farm to table fine dining restaurant" by Les Roches is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0

### About Debrett's

Debrett's is a professional coaching company, publisher and leading authority on modern manners. It was founded in 1769 with the first edition of the *Peerage & Baronetage*. The company continues to share its expertise in social skills and building confidence through the Debrett's Academy and their publications. Their range of etiquette books include Debrett's Handbook, the Guide for the Modern Gentleman, the A-Z of Modern Manners and our Wedding Handbook.

Visit Debrett's at: <https://www.debretts.com/about-us/>

## A Confederacy of Dunces: A book worth reading

The *New York Times* described it as "a pungent work of slapstick, satire and intellectual incongruities - a grand comic fugue." Billy Connolly said: "It's my favourite book of all time."

The book, by John Kennedy Toole, is a monument to sloth, rant and contempt, a bear him off of fat, flatulence and furious suspicion of anything modern - this is Ignatius J Reilly of New Orleans, a noble crusader against a world of dunces. In magnificent revolt against the twentieth century,



Picture Credit: "Ignatius J. Reilly" by jwinfred is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

Ignatius propels his monstrous bulk among the fleshpots of a fallen city, filling his Big Chief tablets with invective until his maroon-haired mother decrees that Ignatius must go to work.

The book is very amusing, but the life of its author is anything but.

John Kennedy Toole was born in New Orleans in 1937. He received a master's degree in English from Columbia University and taught at Hunter and the University of Southwestern Louisiana. In 1969, frustrated at his failure to interest a publisher in *A Confederacy of Dunces*, he committed suicide. Toole's book was eventually published after his mother brought the work to the attention of Walker Percy and insisted that he read her son's manuscript. Percy became one of the novel's many admirers, and *The Confederacy of Dunces* was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1981. Following that posthumous success, *The Neon Bible*, which Toole had written when he was sixteen, was first published in 1989.

Source: <https://www.fantasticfiction.com/t/john-kennedy-toole/>

Toole was born to a middle-class family in New Orleans. From a young age, his mother, Thelma, taught him an appreciation of culture. She was thoroughly involved in his affairs for most of his life, and at times they had a problematic relationship. With his mother's encouragement, Toole became a stage performer at age 10, doing comic impressions and acting. At 16, he wrote his first novel, *The Neon Bible*, which he later dismissed as "adolescent". Toole received an academic scholarship to Tulane University in New Orleans. After graduating from Tulane, he studied English at Columbia University in New York while simultaneously teaching at Hunter College. He also taught at various Louisiana colleges, and during his early career as an academic, he was valued on the faculty party circuit for his wit and gift for mimicry. His studies were interrupted when he was drafted into the army, where he taught English to Spanish-speaking recruits in San Juan, Puerto Rico. After receiving a promotion, he used his private office to begin writing *A Confederacy of Dunces*, which he finished at his parents' home after his discharge.

*Dunces* is a picaresque novel featuring the misadventures of protagonist Ignatius J. Reilly, a lazy, obese, misanthropic, self-styled scholar who lives at home with his mother. It is hailed for its accurate depictions of New Orleans dialects. Toole based Reilly in part on his college professor friend Bob Byrne. Byrne's slovenly, eccentric behaviour was anything but academic, and Reilly mirrored him in these respects. The character was also based on Toole himself, and several personal experiences served as inspiration for passages in the novel. While at Tulane, Toole filled in for a friend at a job as a hot tamale cart vendor and worked at a family-owned and operated clothing factory. Both of these experiences were later adopted into his fiction.

Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_Kennedy\\_Toole](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Kennedy_Toole)

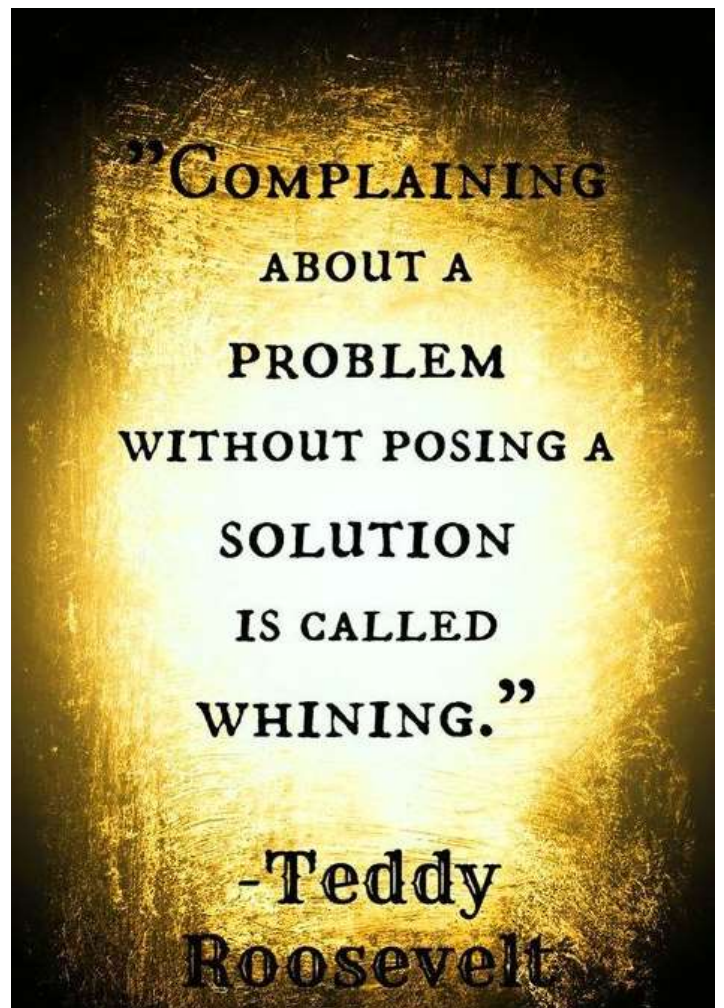
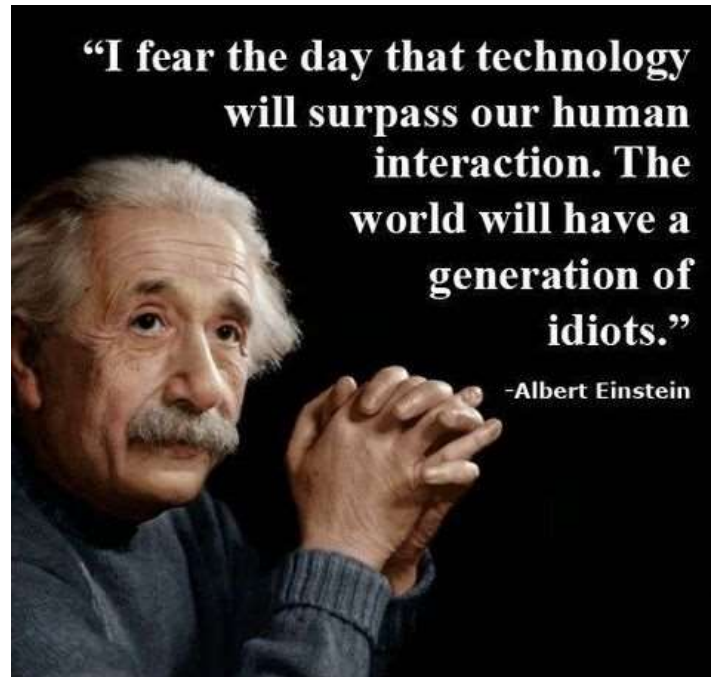
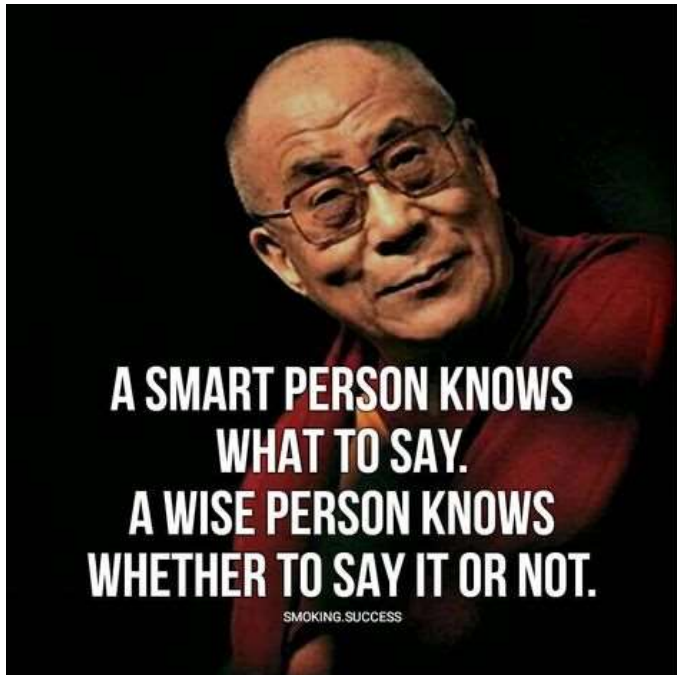
## What's a Mule?



Picture Credit: "Cargo Mules and wranglers - Bright Angel Trail - Grand Canyon" by [Al\\_HikesAZ](#) is licensed under [CC BY-NC 2.0](#)

"Mules are crafty animals, known for being sure-footed and stubborn, yet safe. In the more than one hundred years that mule wranglers have been taking dudes into the Grand Canyon, they've never lost a dude! That's because mules have a special set of breeding requirements. "A male donkey is called a **Jack**, and a female donkey is a **Jenny**. In horses, the male is a **Stallion**, and the female, a **Mare**. Breed a **Jack** with a **Mare** and you have a **Mule**. The result of this breeding is an animal with the shape and sure-footedness of a large donkey and the disposition of a horse, making it an ideal animal for trips along steep, narrow ledges like those found in the [Grand] Canyon."

**Source:** pages 235-236, *Grand Canyon Women: Lives Shaped by Landscape*, by Betty Leavengood, © 2004, published by Grand Canyon Association





## Ayn Rand, author of *Atlas Shrugged* and *The Fountainhead*

Sources:

- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ayn\\_Rand](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ayn_Rand)
- [https://books.google.com/books/about/Atlas\\_Shrugged.html?id=bVyCd7da8OcC](https://books.google.com/books/about/Atlas_Shrugged.html?id=bVyCd7da8OcC)
- <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Ayn-Rand>
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Fountainhead\\_\(film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Fountainhead_(film))
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atlas\\_Shrugged\\_\(film\\_series\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atlas_Shrugged_(film_series))



Picture Credit:  
Screenshot from  
the video at the  
link shown  
below.

### Who was Ayn Rand?

Ayn Rand (original name Alissa Zinovievna Rosenbaum) was a Russian-American writer and philosopher. She is known for her two best-selling novels, *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged*, and for developing a philosophical system, she named *Objectivism*. Her commercially successful novels promoting individualism and laissez-faire capitalism were influential among conservatives and libertarians and popular among generations of young people in the United States from the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. She was born in February 1905 and educated in St. Petersburg, Russia before moving to the United States in 1926. She died on 6<sup>th</sup> March 1982, in New York.

The arrival of a letter from her cousins in Chicago allowed her to leave Russia on the pretext of gaining expertise that she could apply in the Soviet film industry. Upon her arrival in the United States in 1926, she changed her name to Ayn Rand. She had a chance encounter with Cecil B DeMille in Hollywood, which led to work as a movie extra and eventually to a job as a screenwriter. Rand sold her first screenplay, *Red Pawn*, to Universal Studios in 1932.

### Objectivism

She described *Objectivism* as *"the concept of man as a heroic being, with his own happiness as the moral purpose of his life, with productive achievement as his noblest activity, and reason as his only absolute"*.

You can watch Ayn Rand introducing *Objectivism* on video at:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8VSBGu7-lrU>

### What is *Atlas Shrugged* about?

Google books (here) describes *Atlas Shrugged*:

*"Peopled by larger-than-life heroes and villains, charged with towering questions of good and evil, Atlas Shrugged is Ayn Rand's magnum opus: a philosophical revolution told in the form of an action thriller—nominated as one of America's best-loved novels by PBS's The Great American Read."*

*"Who is John Galt? When he says that he will stop the motor of the world, is he a destroyer or a liberator? Why does he have to fight his battles not against his enemies but against those who need him most? Why does he fight his hardest battle against the woman he loves? You will know the answer to these questions when you discover the reason behind the baffling events that play havoc with the lives of the amazing men and women in this book."*

*"You will discover why a productive genius becomes a worthless playboy...why a great steel industrialist is working for his own destruction... why a composer gives up his career on the night of his triumph...why a beautiful woman who runs a transcontinental railroad falls in love with the man she has sworn to kill."*

*"Atlas Shrugged, a modern classic and Rand's most extensive statement of Objectivism—her groundbreaking philosophy—offers the reader the spectacle of human greatness, depicted with all the poetry and power of one of the twentieth century's leading artists."*

### What was *The Fountainhead* about?

*The Fountainhead*, published in 1943, was Ayn Rand's first major literary success. The novel's protagonist, Howard Roark, is an intransigent young architect (said to be based on Frank Lloyd Wright—as he confronts conformist mediocrity) who battles against conventional standards and refuses to compromise with an architectural establishment unwilling to accept innovation. Howard Roark follows his own artistic path in the face of public conformity. Ellsworth Toohey, the architecture critic for *The Banner* newspaper, opposes Roark's individualism and volunteers to lead a print crusade against him. Wealthy and influential publishing magnate Gail Wynand pays little attention, approving the idea and giving Toohey a free hand. Dominique Francon, a glamorous socialite who writes a *Banner* column, admires Roark's designs, and opposes the paper's campaign against him. She is engaged to an architect, the unimaginative Peter Keating (Kent Smith). She never has met or seen Roark, but she believes that he is doomed in a world that abhors individualism. Wynand falls in love with Francon and exposes Keating as an opportunist.

### Films

Ayn Rand wrote *The Fountainhead* as a tribute to the creative freethinker: *The Fountainhead* became a 1949 American black-and-white drama film from Warner Bros. produced by Henry Blanke, directed by King Vidor, starring Gary Cooper, Patricia Neal, Raymond Massey, Robert Douglas and Kent Smith. Today, *The Fountainhead* has achieved the status of a modern classic. It is taught in college literature and philosophy courses, as well as in high school English classes.

*The Fountainhead* continues to be an example of its own theme: the struggle for acceptance of great new ideas in human society.

You can watch a trailer of *The Fountainhead*, [here](#). The picture below is a clip from the trailer.



*Atlas Shrugged* is a trilogy of American science fiction drama films. The series, adaptations of Ayn Rand's 1957 novel, is subtitled Part I (2011), Part II (2012) and Part III (2014); the latter sometimes includes *Who Is John Galt?* In Part I, railroad executive Dagny Taggart (Taylor Schilling) and steel mogul Henry Rearden (Grant Bowler) form an alliance to fight the increasingly authoritarian government of the United States. In Part II, Taggart (Samantha Mathis) and Rearden (Jason Beghe) search desperately for the inventor of a revolutionary motor as the US Government continues to spread its control over the national economy. In Part III, Taggart (Laura Regan) and Rearden (Rob Morrow) come into contact with the man responsible for the strike, whose effects is the focus of much of the series.

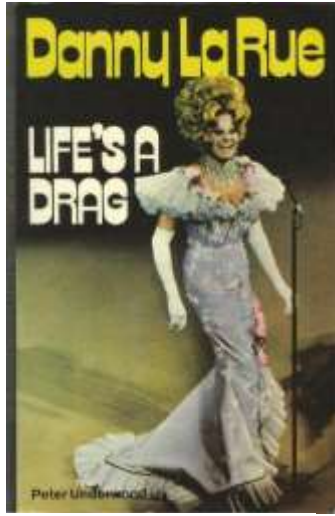
The films and books are **highly recommended**.

## A Brief Herstory of Drag

Sources: • <https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2018/05/16/drag-queens-a-history-rupauls-drag-race/>  
• [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drag\\_queen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drag_queen) • [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Faux\\_queen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Faux_queen)  
• <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/a-primer-on-drag-queens-in-popular-culture>  
• <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zbkmkmn>



Picture Credit: "Dame Edna" by Eva Rinaldi. Celebrity Photographer is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0



Picture Credit: "Danny La Rue: Life's a Drag (1975)" by Underwood1923 is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0

### What is Drag?

Drag is a type of entertainment where people dress up and perform, often in highly stylised ways. The term originated as British theatre slang in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and was used to describe women's clothing worn by men.

The origin of the word *drag* is uncertain; the first recorded use about actors dressed in women's clothing is from 1870. The word is believed to have been given to the art form as the dresses men wore to play female characters would drag along the floor. For most of history, drag queens were men dressed as women, but in more modern times, cisgender and trans women, as well as non-binary people, also perform as drag queens.

A faux queen, AFAB drag queen, female drag queen, bio queen, diva queen, or hyper queen is a drag queen who identifies as a cisgender woman, a transgender (FTM) man, or as a nonbinary person who was assigned female at birth ("AFAB").

Drag is a gender-bending art form in which a person dresses in clothing and makeup meant to exaggerate a specific gender identity, usually of the opposite sex. While the main purpose of drag has been for performance and entertainment, it is also used as self-expression and a celebration of LGBTQ+ pride.

### Terminology

While the following terms are among those used both by performers and in the media, many are considered offensive.

A **drag queen** is a person, usually male, who uses drag clothing and makeup to imitate and often exaggerate female gender signifiers and gender roles for entertainment purposes. Historically, most drag queens have been men dressing as women. In modern times, drag queens are associated with gay men and gay culture, but they can be of any gender and sexual orientation.

A **faux queen**, AFAB drag queen, female drag queen, bio queen, diva queen, or hyper queen is a drag queen who identifies as a cisgender woman, a transgender (FTM) man, or as a nonbinary person who was assigned female at birth ("AFAB").

By the way, 'herstory' was invented in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century to mean history that is written by women.

### When did drag start?

BBC Bitesize ([here](#)) says that drag began out of necessity, although that's not to say its participants didn't enjoy it. When Shakespearean theatre was shiny and new in the late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, the stage wasn't just a place of entertainment. It had strong links to the church, and with that came rules that only men could tread the boards. Women just weren't permitted to perform on stage so that men would play female roles. If a play featured a few female roles, then a couple of the men in the cast dressed as members of the opposite sex, so the story didn't suffer.

But, drag goes back much further than Shakespearean times. The Dame in pantomime is one of the most famous platforms for a drag performance, dating back to the dawn of theatre in many cultures. Cross-dressing has been documented in many ancient civilisations, including the Aztec Empire, Ancient Egypt and Ancient Greece. It's an art form that has existed since ancient times and has recently rocketed to mainstream popularity.

More recently, after World War II, although homosexuality was still frowned upon by society as a whole - even illegal in some cases - there were still drag acts who broke through the negativity and had successful careers. These include Danny La Rue in the UK, who made his name in the 1950s, and Dame Edna Everage from Australia - the flamboyant creation of comedian Barry Humphries, who first appeared in the 1960s. And of course, don't forget Lily Savage, the creation of Paul O'Grady.

### Drag Race – the US show

*RuPaul's Drag Race* is an American reality competition television series, the first in the Drag Race franchise, produced by World of Wonder for Logo TV, WOW Presents Plus, and, beginning with the ninth season, VH1. The show documents drag performer, actor model and singer RuPaul Andre Charles searching for "America's next drag superstar."

"I don't think the show could ever go mainstream," *Pink News* reported RuPaul as saying about *Drag Race* in 2016, "Because drag is the antithesis of the matrix." Despite this statement, the show is now watched by millions of viewers on US network VH1 and on streaming services globally and has become something of a cult phenomenon.

In 2009, the first series of *Drag Race* aired. Its mix of challenges, costume creation, skits and impersonations has made it appointment television for a surprisingly diverse audience (Dame Judi Dench is a big fan) and has even influenced the language itself.\*

\* See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zbkmkmn>

Gender-bending might not be new, he'll say, but it's certainly in full flow at the moment, due in no small part to the phenomenon of *RuPaul's Drag Race*.

### Bring those memories flooding back...

You can see how drag is performed with these videos:

- Click [here](#) to see Danny La Rue in full flow, live at Her Majesty's Theatre on 18<sup>th</sup> March 1984.
- Click [here](#) for Dame Edna meeting Michael Aspel, Richard Gere and Lauren Bacall.
- Click [here](#) to see Lily Savage chatting with Des O'Connor in 1996.

### Read all about it

Between the covers of "*Drag: The Complete Story*," you'll read stories that amaze and inspire. Having the courage to put on a dress and get onstage required a bit more intestinal fortitude in the 1800s than it does today. That some of those same performers wore their drag on the streets in their daily lives? It's mind-boggling. And that's just the fellas in frocks. "We're in a period now that's very much reexamining gender and identity," says the author (see [here](#)) Simon Doonan, a former drag queen who impersonated Queen Elizabeth.

The book is available at Amazon [here](#).



## A 1930 Shopping Guide

Source: <https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-your-shopping-guide-1930-online>



Lingerie, wallpaper, garages - there's something on offer for everyone in these lo-fi local cinema ads originally screened in Darlington.

This is a 1930 silent Advert, running for 5 minutes, from British Film Institute.

Click [here](#) to watch.

## Rare or Bloody?



Picture Credit: "Rare" by kevinmarsh is licensed under CC BY 2.0

If you like your steaks rare, you might say, "I like them bloody", but the red liquid that comes out of a rare steak isn't blood (the majority of which is removed during slaughter)\* but water retained in the muscle tissue mixed with a protein called myoglobin.

\* From [How to Geek](#), February 2021

If you go to Britannica.com ([here](#)), you'll find that there is a close chemical similarity between myoglobin and haemoglobin, the oxygen-binding protein of red blood cells. Both proteins contain a molecular constituent called heme, which enables them to combine reversibly with oxygen. The heme group, which contains iron, imparts a red-brown colour to the proteins. The bond between oxygen and haemoglobin is more complex than that between oxygen and myoglobin and accounts for the dual ability haemoglobin has to transport oxygen and store it.

## Ancient four-wheeled ceremonial carriage found in Pompeii

Sources: • <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-56222992>  
• <http://pompeiiisites.org/en/comunicati/the-four-wheeled-processional-chariot-the-last-discovery-of-pompeii/> • <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-italy-pompeii-idUSKBN2AR0EI>



Picture Credit: "Italy-1912 - Map of Pompeii" by archer10 (Dennis) is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

If your memory serves you well, you'll know that Pompeii was engulfed by a volcanic eruption from Mount Vesuvius in 79 AD. Nowadays, Pompeii is a vast archaeological site in southern Italy's Campania region, near the coast of the Bay of Naples.

In February 2021, it was reported\* that archaeologists had unearthed a unique ancient-Roman ceremonial carriage from a villa just outside Pompeii. The almost perfectly preserved four-wheeled carriage made of iron, bronze and tin was found near the stables of an ancient estate at Civita Giuliana, around 700 metres north of the walls of ancient Pompeii.

\* See [Reuters here](#).

The four-wheeled carriage was found near where three horses were uncovered in 2018, in a double-level portico connected to stables at an ancient villa at Civita Giuliana, north of the ancient city walls.

BBC News ([here](#)) say that officials describe the carriage as without parallel among other finds in Italy.

The carriage, along with its iron components, beautiful bronze and tin decorations, mineralised wood remains and imprints of organic materials (from the ropes to the remains of floral decoration), has been discovered almost intact in an excellent state of preservation.\*\*

\*\* See [PompeiiSites.org here](#)

## Classic gags discovered in an ancient Roman joke book

This was news to us when we read it\*\*\*. Whilst we may admire the satires of Horace and Lucilius, the ancient Romans haven't previously been thought of as masters of the one-liner. This could change though, after the discovery of a classical joke book. Celebrated classics professor **Mary Beard** has brought to light a book more than 1,600 years old, which she says shows the Romans not to be the "pompous, bridge-building toga wearers" they're often seen as, but rather a race ready to laugh at themselves. Written in Greek, *Philogelos*, or *The Laughter Lover*, dates to the third or fourth century AD and contains some 260 jokes which Beard said are "very similar" to the jokes we have today.

\*\*\* Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2009/mar/13/roman-joke-book-beard>  
See also: [45 Jokes from the Laughter Lover \(here\)](#).

**Roman Joke:** How did the cannibal feel after defeating his girlfriend in the Colosseum?

Well, he was gladiator.

## Remembering Mary Seacole

Excerpted from: <https://www.historyextra.com/period/victorian/mary-seacole-facts-life-crimea-war-nurse-british-hotel/> • <https://www.findmypast.co.uk/blog/history/mary-seacole>  
 • <https://www.theschoolrun.com/homework-help/mary-seacole>  
 • <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Mary-Seacole>  
 • <https://www.bl.uk/learning/timeline/item107678.html>  
 • <https://www.britishempire.co.uk/biography/maryseacole.htm>  
 • <https://www.maryseacoletrust.org.uk/learn-about-mary/>



Mary Jane Seacole (née Mary Jane Grant) was a British-Jamaican nurse, healer and businesswoman who set up the "British Hotel" behind the lines during the Crimean War. The hotel operated as a general store, restaurant and hotel. She used profits from the hotel to cover the costs of the medicines she provided to poor soldiers.

Picture Credit: "Mary Seacole" by Leo Reynolds is licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.0/)

Britannica.com ([here](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Mary-Seacole)) records that:

*In 1836 Mary Grant married Edwin Horatio Seacole, and during their trips to the Bahamas, Haiti, and Cuba, she augmented her knowledge of local medicines and treatments. After her husband died in 1844, she gained further nursing experience during a cholera epidemic in Panama and, after returning to Jamaica, cared for yellow fever victims, many of whom were British soldiers.*

A Jamaican healer, Mary Seacole faced unfairness and discrimination as a black woman when she tried to volunteer as a nurse during the Crimean War (1854-56). When the British turned down her offer of help, she volunteered to go to the Crimea independently.

When the Crimean War ended, Mary was bankrupt, she had spent all her money on goods for the hotel, which she now could not sell. Mary received four medals from a grateful British Government. In 1857, eighty thousand people (including many VIPs) turned up to honour Mary in a four-day gala held to raise money for her.

Much of what is known about Mary comes from her memoir, *The Wonderful Adventure of Mary Seacole in Many Lands*.

Now considered one of the greatest black Britons in history, Mary Seacole found lasting fame for her work during the Crimean War. The truth is that in her lifetime, her fame was even greater. Her name may be recognised by many, but few are aware of her remarkable life story. As well as a medical pioneer (though never formally trained), she flourished as a traveller, businesswoman, hotelier, entrepreneur and author, becoming a Victorian celebrity. She was no 'Black Nightingale' but entirely her own person and among history's great adventurers.

### Recognition

In 2004, Mary was voted number one in a poll of Great Black Britons. In 2016, St Thomas's Hospital commissioned a statue of Mary Seacole (see above), and two Covid-19 buildings were named in her honour in 2020 - both crucial steps. Yet, the recognition seems measly compared to the countless wards, hospitals, and even pubs named to honour Florence Nightingale.

### Recommended Reading

- *Mary Seacole: The Charismatic Black Nurse Who Became a Heroine of the Crimea* by Jane Robinson, published by Little, Brown, 2006.
- *Wonderful Adventures of Mrs Seacole in Many Lands*, by Mary Seacole (author), Sara Salih (editor), published by Penguin Books Limited.

## The lowdown on REM sleep

Sources: • <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/people-answer-scientists-queries-in-real-time-while-dreaming/> • <https://www.webmd.com/sleep-disorders/sleep-101>  
 • [https://www.cell.com/current-biology/fulltext/S0960-9822\(21\)00059-2](https://www.cell.com/current-biology/fulltext/S0960-9822(21)00059-2)



Picture Credit: "File: REM-sövn .jpg" by Lorenza Walker is licensed under [CC BY-SA 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/)

Just on the off chance you don't know what **REM** sleep is, here's an explanation:

*"Rapid eye movement (REM) sleep is a unique phase of sleep characterised by random rapid movement of the eyes, accompanied by low muscle tone throughout the body, and the propensity of the sleeper to dream vividly."*

Apparently, during REM sleep, people can hear and answer simple questions such as "What is eight minus six?"

According to WebMD ([here](https://www.webmd.com/sleep-disorders/sleep-101)), REM sleep usually happens about an hour and a half after you fall asleep. The first stage lasts ten minutes, and each subsequent stage gets longer, and the final one may last up to an hour. Your heart rate and breathing quickens. You can have intense dreams during REM sleep since your brain is more active.

During sleep, the brain moves through five different stages. One of these stages is rapid eye movement (REM) sleep. During this phase, the eyes move rapidly in various directions. The other four phases are called non-REM (NREM) sleep, followed by a shorter period of REM sleep, and then the cycle starts over again. Dreams typically happen during REM sleep.

Anyway, let's go back to the idea that even though they are asleep, a person can answer simple questions, such as "What is eight minus six?" It sounds a bit like science fiction but a study covered in a Scientific American article by Diana Kwon on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2021 demonstrates that, to some extent, this fantasy can be made real.

At this point, you might be forgiven for thinking this is bunkum. But it's not. Scientists already knew that one-way contact with people who are asleep is attainable. Previous studies have demonstrated that people can process external cues, such as sounds and smells, while asleep (see 2012 study [here](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0010028512000000)). There is also evidence that people can send messages in the other direction: lucid dreamers—those who can become aware they are in a dream—can be trained to signal, using eye movements, that they are in the midst of a dream.

What's new is two-way communication, which is more complex. It requires a person who is asleep to actually understand what they hear from the outside and think about it logically enough to generate an answer, according to Ken Paller, a cognitive neuroscientist at Northwestern University.

The findings were published in *Current Biology* ([here](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0960982221000592)). Well worth a read.



## Liquorice explained

Sources: • <https://petersgourmetmarket.com/where-was-licorice-candy-invented-licorice/>  
• [https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/licorice-root#\\_noHeaderPrefixedContent](https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/licorice-root#_noHeaderPrefixedContent)  
• <https://www.nhs.uk/common-health-questions/food-and-diet/can-eating-too-much-black-licorice-be-bad-for-you/> • <https://www.wakefield.gov.uk/Documents/culture-museums/museums/licorice-in-pontefract.pdf>

Picture Credit: "liquorice allsorts" by Jo Munday is licensed under CC BY 2.0



Liquorice (aka licorice) is the common name of *Glycyrrhiza glabra*, a flowering plant of the bean family Fabaceae, from the root of which a sweet, aromatic flavouring can be extracted. The liquorice plant is a herbaceous perennial legume native to Western Asia and southern Europe, although its popularity is strongest in Northern European countries, such as Finland, Iceland, Germany, the Scandinavian countries, and the Netherlands. In fact, the Netherlands consume more liquorice per capita than any other country.

### Where did Liquorice start?

It is considered one of the world's oldest herbal remedies. Medicinal use of liquorice dates back to ancient Egypt, where the root was made into a sweet drink for Pharaohs and was popular with Alexander the Great and Roman Emperors. It has also been used in traditional Chinese, Middle Eastern, and Greek medicines to soothe an upset stomach, reduce inflammation, and treat upper respiratory problems. Today, many people use liquorice root to treat ailments like heartburn, acid reflux, hot flashes, coughs, and bacterial and viral infections. It's regularly available from pharmacies as a capsule or liquid supplement.

Liquorice is first reported in England as grown at a monastery in Pontefract. It is not known who first brought it to Pontefract, but it was either crusaders returning from their campaigns or more likely Dominican monks in the 14<sup>th</sup> century who settled at Pontefract Priory close to the Castle. They can be thanked for doing so because we wouldn't have had the famous Pontefract Cakes without them.

### How Sweet!

What makes the liquorice root so special is the sweet-tasting compound, anethole, found within it. This aromatic, unsaturated ether compound is also found in anise, fennel and several other herbs, with that lovely sweet taste coming from *glycyrrhizin*, a compound known to be up to 50 times sweeter than sugar and definitely to be avoided by diabetics.

In the UK, the most popular form of liquorice are *Liquorice Allsorts*, but in continental Europe far stronger, saltier liquorice sweets are preferred. In the Netherlands, where the liquorice "zuete drop" is one of the most popular confectionery items. Some of the many forms of liquorice sold contain aniseed. Many of the preferred liquorice is mixed with mint, menthol or laurel.

### How is Liquorice made?

Liquorice sweets are made in one of two ways, depending on the size of the manufacturer, with smaller companies using a cornstarch moulding process, the hot, liquid liquorice being poured into the individual mould. Once cooled, the moulds are turned and the sweets fall out, ready to be packaged and packed. Larger companies also use extruders to produce the various forms of liquorice ropes available. In this case, the hot liquorice liquid, complete with colours and flavours, is boiled to the point where it thickens to a dough-like consistency before being forced, extruded through formers that give the 'rope' its shape.

### A Word of Caution

Eating too much black liquorice can be bad for you, particularly if you're aged over 40 and have a history of heart disease or high blood pressure, or both (see [here](#)). Also, be aware that black liquorice can interact with some medications, herbs and dietary supplements.

## Hard to beat Israeli Technology!



**TEL AVIV, Israel** - The Israelis are developing an airport security device that eliminates the privacy concerns that come with full-body scanners. It's an armoured booth you step into that does not X-ray you but will detonate any explosive device you may have on your person.

Israel sees this as a win-win situation for everyone, with none of this nonsense about racial profiling. It will also eliminate the costs of long and expensive trials.

You're in the airport terminal, and you hear a muffled explosion. Shortly afterwards, you hear this announcement:

**"Attention to all standby passengers, El Al is proud to announce a seat available on flight 670 to London. Shalom!"**

## Fred and the Indian

Fred was driving home from one of his business trips in Northern Arizona, when he saw an elderly Navajo man walking on the side of the road. As the trip was a long and quiet one, he stopped the car and asked the Navajo man if he would like a ride.

With a silent nod of thanks, the Indian got into the car.

Resuming the journey, Fred tried - in vain - to make a bit of small talk with the Navajo man. The old man just sat silently looking intently at everything he saw, studying every little detail, until he noticed a brown bag on the seat next to Fred.

"What in bag?" asked the old man.

Fred looked down at the brown bag and said: "It's a bottle of wine. I got it for my wife."

The Navajo man was silent for another moment or two. Then, speaking with the quiet wisdom of an elder, he said:

"Good Trade."

**With sincere apologies for any irreverences on this page**

### Religion and Bears

A priest, a minister, and a rabbi want to see who's best at his job. So they each go into the woods, find a bear, and attempt to convert it. Later they get together. The priest begins: "When I found the bear, I read to him from the Catechism and sprinkled him with holy water. Next week is his First Communion."

"I found a bear by the stream," says the minister, "and preached God's holy word. The bear was so mesmerized that he let me baptize him."

They both look down at the rabbi, who is lying on a stretcher in a body cast. "Looking back," he says, "maybe I shouldn't have started with the circumcision."

### Lunch in the Park with a Blind Man

A Jewish man took his Passover lunch to eat outside in the park. He sat down on a bench and began eating.

A little while later, a blind man came by and sat down next to him.

Feeling neighbourly, the Jewish man passed a sheet of matzo biscuit to the blind man.

The blind man ran his fingers over the matzo for a few minutes, looked puzzled, and finally exclaimed, "Who wrote this rubbish?"

### The way sons turn out....

A Jewish father was very troubled by how his son turned out and went to see his rabbi about it.

"Rabbi Gilbertstein, I brought him up in the faith, gave him a very expensive Bar Mitzvah, and it cost me a fortune to educate him. Then he called me last week and said he's decided to be a Christian. Rabbi, I don't know why. Where did I go wrong?"

The rabbi stroked his beard and said, "Y'know, it's funny you should come to me. I too, brought up my son as a boy of faith, sent him to university and it cost me a fortune and then one day he came to me and said to me he wanted to be a Christian."

"What did you do?" asked the man of the rabbi.

"What else could I do but turn to God for the answer," replied the rabbi.

"Yes, but what did God say?" asked the man.

He said, "Y'know, it's funny you should come to me..."

### Fake News? Brexit: Roy could have done it faster...



Recently released archives show that Boris Johnson could have been replaced as Prime Minister by Roy Hodgson (the previous manager at Crystal Palace), who claimed to be able to get Britain out of Europe more quickly than anyone else.

Sorry, Roy!

Picture Credit: "File:Genève Indoors 2014 - 20140114 - Roy Hodgson.jpg" by Clément Bucco-Lechat is licensed under [CC BY-SA 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/)

### In the Ditch...

While riding my Harley, I swerved to avoid hitting a deer, lost control and landed in a ditch, severely banging my head.

Dazed and confused, I crawled out of the ditch to the edge of the road when a shiny new convertible pulled up with a beautiful woman driver, who asked, "Are you okay?"

"I'm okay, I think," I replied as I pulled myself up on the side of the car.

She said, "Get in, and I'll take you home so I can clean and bandage that nasty scrape on your head."

"That's nice of you," I answered, "but I don't think my wife will like me doing that!"

"Oh, come now, I'm a nurse," she insisted. "I need to see if you have any more scrapes and then treat them properly."

Although sort of shaken and weak, I agreed, but repeated, "I'm sure my wife won't like this."

We arrived at her place, which was just a few miles away and, after a couple of cold beers and the bandaging, I thanked her and said, "I feel a lot better, but I know my wife is going to be really upset, so I'd better go now."

"Don't be silly!" she said with a smile, "stay for a while; she won't know. By the way, where is she?"

"Still in the ditch with my Harley, I'd guess."





## Wivelsfield Historical Society

Source: • <https://www.wivelsfield-historical-society.co.uk/>



Picture Credit: "The test of time" by hehaden is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0

Wivelsfield Historical Society was formed in 1993 to foster interest in local history by talks, visits, walks and research. Before Covid and the lockdowns, they met usually on the third Thursday of the month, at 8 pm in Wivelsfield Village Hall, together with some weekend outings in the summer.

Typically speakers talk for an hour followed by tea, coffee and biscuits and a raffle, then a speaker question and answer session to end. There are plenty of parking spaces near the hall, including disabled bays.

- Annual subscription: £10 plus £1 per meeting.
- Visitors welcome at £2.50 per meeting.

Some events and guided visits are more expensive; please see individual entries on the programme [here](#).

Members are admitted to Burgess Hill and Hurstpierpoint Historical Society meetings at a reduced price on the production of membership cards.

Wivelsfield History Study Group (WHSG) consists of those members of Wivelsfield Historical Society who are actively engaged in researching and publishing all aspects of the history of Wivelsfield. It was formed by members of the Adult Education class who wrote the book on the history of Wivelsfield and formed WHSG in 1992.

The Group is open to all interested in adding to our local parish history research. WHSG also has an Associate Membership of genealogists who live too far away, some abroad, to meet regularly but who visit Wivelsfield every August for a reunion.

Publications by the Society are:

- Wivelsfield; the History of a Wealden Parish £11.95 (now out of print but available from local libraries)
- Walks around Historic Wivelsfield £3.95 (now out of print but available from local libraries)
- Guide to the Parish Church of St Peter & St John the Baptist (see Picture of Church Door above)

The Society maintains a very interesting library with books about Wivelsfield and some of the adjoining or nearby villages. Details are at:

<https://www.wivelsfield-historical-society.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/WHSG-library-4.jpg>

## "How a ring tells the story of a forgotten secret agent."

Source: Story by Jon Kelly, BBC News, Published on 7th March 2021 at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/stories-56215177>



Picture Credit: "Gedenkstätte Buchenwald - Eingangstor mit dem Spruch „Jedem das Seine“" by Daniel Mennerich is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

Daniel Mennerich explained: The main gate of Buchenwald concentration camp, showing the motto "Jedem das Seine", a German proverb meaning "to each his own" or "to each what he deserves." It is a translation of the Latin phrase *suum cuique*. After World War II, the phrase became notorious for its use as a Nazi slogan displayed at the gate of Buchenwald concentration camp.

A French World War II hero who worked as a British agent behind enemy lines had been all but forgotten. But now his story can be told - thanks to a 98-year-old British veteran and a golden engagement ring.

At 15:30 on 9th September 1944, just inside the front gates of the notorious Buchenwald Nazi concentration camp, 16 prisoners of war stood waiting. All were Allied agents who'd been captured behind enemy lines. Eight of them were Frenchmen working with the UK's Special Operations Executive (SOE) - Churchill's "secret army" - and the remainder were British, Canadian and Belgian. Before these men had been caught by the Germans, they had been parachuted into occupied territory to support the Resistance ahead of D-Day. Earlier that day, their block chief at the camp had been handed a list of their names. Each one had been struck through in red by the Gestapo.

The men had been given the impression they'd been summoned to be interrogated. They wouldn't necessarily have worried their lives were at risk - they'd been told they were to be exchanged for a group of German officers at some point in the future. But one of the prisoners was suspicious.

"Only little Marcel Leccia, who came from Ajaccio, said, 'We're going to be hanged,'" the block chief, a German political prisoner named Otto Storch who worked as a *kapo* or inmate-orderly, recalled after the war.

Leccia was 33, from a distinguished Corsican Resistance family, and his experiences of war had left him with reasonable cause to be distrustful - he'd ended up in Buchenwald after he was betrayed by a supposed comrade who was secretly working for the Germans.

A British officer who had once trained Leccia in guerrilla combat described him as impulsive and quick-witted, "never lost for words, cheerful, entertaining and very sociable" - as he put it, a typical Frenchman. Another noted his "cynical and imperious" manner. But Leccia had a tender side, too.

During his training, he had fallen in love with a fellow SOE agent named Odette Wilen and the couple had become engaged. So in Buchenwald, before gathering at the gates with the other prisoners, Leccia handed something to Storch. "He gave me his engagement ring," the block chief wrote in a report.

You can read what happened in the full story online [here](#).

## What did Miriam Makeba do?

Sources: • [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miriam\\_Makeba](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miriam_Makeba)  
• <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Miriam-Makeba>  
• <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2008/nov/11/miriam-makeba-obituary>



Picture Credit: "Miriam Makeba" by tom. Beetz is licensed under CC BY 2.0

In full Zensi (Zenzile) Miriam Makeba, Miriam Makeba, was born in March 1932, in Prospect Township, near Johannesburg, South Africa. After a rich and eventful life, she died in November 2008, at Castel Volturno, near Naples, Italy.

Miriam was a singer who became known as *Mama Afrika* (and the *Empress of African song*), one of the world's most prominent Black African performers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. She was also a songwriter, actress, United Nations goodwill ambassador, and civil rights activist. Associated with musical genres including Afropop, jazz, and world music, she advocated against apartheid and the white-minority government in South Africa.

Born to a Swazi mother and a Xhosa father, Makeba was forced to find employment as a child after her father's death. She had a brief and allegedly abusive first marriage at 17, gave birth to her only child in 1950, and survived breast cancer. Her vocal talent had been recognised when she was a child, and she began singing professionally in the 1950s, with the *Cuban Brothers*, the *Manhattan Brothers*, and an all-woman group, *The Skylarks*, performing a mixture of jazz, traditional African melodies, and Western popular music. In 1959, Makeba had a brief role in the anti-apartheid film *Come Back, Africa*, which brought her international attention, leading to her performing in Venice, London, and New York City. In London, she met Harry Belafonte, who became a mentor and colleague. She moved to New York City, became popular straightaway, and recorded her first solo album in 1960.

Makeba was among the first African musicians to receive worldwide recognition. She brought African music to a Western audience and popularised the world music and Afropop genres. She also made popular several songs critical of apartheid and became a symbol of opposition to the system, particularly after her right to return to the country of her birth was revoked. Upon her death, former South African President Nelson Mandela said, "her music inspired a powerful sense of hope in all of us."

The Guardian obituary article ([here](#)) says:

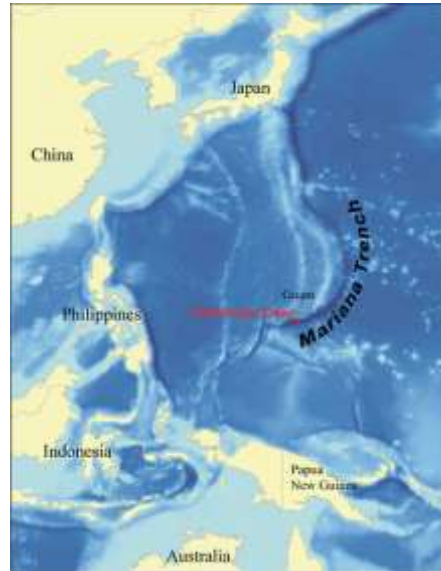
*"Makeba's career propelled her from township singing group to global celebrity, feted in some countries and banned from others. She was a natural and consummate performer with a dynamic vocal range and an emotional awareness that could induce the delusion of intimate contact in even the most impersonal auditorium. But her personal life was an epic tragedy of injustice, domestic upheaval, exile and torment."*

### WANT MORE?

- Makeba's autobiography, *Makeba: My Story* (co-authored with James Hall), appeared in 1988. It's available on Amazon [here](#).
- Here, you can hear and watch a video of Makeba singing Pata Pata (Live in 1967).

## Seven miles down, at the bottom of the sea...

Sources: • <https://spectrum.ieee.org/geek-life/profiles/don-walsh-describes-the-trip-to-the-bottom-of-the-mariana-trench> • [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trieste\\_\(bathyscaphe\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trieste_(bathyscaphe))  
• <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-53112621>  
• <https://blog.nationalgeographic.org/2012/04/17/where-is-challenger-deep/>  
• [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mariana\\_Trench](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mariana_Trench) • <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-48230157>



Picture Credit: "Mariana trench, Pacific Ocean" by Mudkipz\_KGM is licensed under CC BY 2.0

The *Mariana Trench* (aka *Marianas Trench*) is located in the western The Pacific Ocean about 200 km (124 miles) east of the Mariana Islands, after which it is named. It lies in the deepest part of the deepest ocean: measuring 2,550 km (1,580 miles) in length and 69 km (43 miles) in width; it is the deepest oceanic trench on Earth. The maximum known depth is nearly 7 miles (10,984 metres or 6,825 miles). If you could do so, you could easily bury Mount Everest in it.

The trench was first sounded during the *Challenger Expedition* in 1875 - the Challenger expedition (1872–1876) was a scientific study that made many scientific discoveries to lay the foundation of oceanography. The expedition was named after the naval vessel that undertook the trip, HMS Challenger - a 19<sup>th</sup> century Royal Navy ship.

On 24<sup>th</sup> March 1955, the Japanese Remotely Operated Vehicle KAIKO reached the deepest area of the *Mariana Trench* and made the deepest diving record of 10,911 metres (35,797 ft) on 24<sup>th</sup> March 1995.

During surveys carried out between 1997 and 2001, a spot was found along the *Mariana Trench* that had depth similar to that of the *Challenger Deep*\*, possibly even deeper.

\* The *Challenger Deep* is the deepest known point in the Earth's seabed hydrosphere, with a depth of 10,902 metres to 10,929 metres.

### Descents

Several descents have been achieved, some manned, others unmanned:

- The first was the manned descent by Swiss-designed, Italian-built, United States Navy-owned bathyscaphe Trieste, which reached the ocean bottom on 23rd January 1960, with Don Walsh and Jacques Piccard on board. In the Spectrum article [here](#), Don Walsh describes the trip to the bottom of the *Mariana Trench*.
- Victor Vescovo achieved a new record descent to 10,928 metres (35,853 ft) on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2019 using the DSV Limiting Factor, a Triton 36000/2 model manufactured by Florida-based Triton Submarines. He dived four times between 28<sup>th</sup> April and 5<sup>th</sup> May 2019, becoming the first person to dive into *Challenger Deep* more than once.



- On 8<sup>th</sup> May 2020, a Russian team submerged the autonomous underwater vehicle Vityaz-D to the bottom of the *Mariana Trench* at a depth of 10,028 metres (32,900 ft). Vityaz-D is the first underwater vehicle to operate autonomously at the extreme depths of the *Mariana Trench*.
- On 10<sup>th</sup> November 2020, the Chinese submersible Fendouzhe reached the bottom of the *Mariana Trench* at a depth of 10,909 metres (35,791 ft).
- In April 2011, Richard Branson unveiled a new single-person submarine to go to the bottom of the *Mariana Trench* 'in the next two years', but this was quietly shelved in 2014.
- Film director James Cameron made a solo plunge to the ocean floor in 2012 in his bright green sub.
- In June 2020, Kelly Walsh, the son of ocean explorer Don Walsh, descended to the bottom of the *Mariana Trench*, repeating the first descent 60 years previously.

### The Seafloor under Threat?

An American explorer has found plastic waste on the seafloor while breaking the record for the deepest ever dive. Victor Vescovo descended nearly 11 km (seven miles) to the deepest place in the ocean - the Pacific Ocean's *Mariana Trench*. He spent four hours exploring the bottom of the trench in his submersible, built to withstand the immense pressure of the deep. He found sea creatures but also found a plastic bag and sweet wrappers.



Picture Credit: "Don Walsh- Bathyscaphe to the deepest ocean, 35,800 feet" by wbishoff is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

### The colour of Olives

Source: • [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/green-black-olives\\_n\\_56e9a34ee4b0860f99db4d6e](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/green-black-olives_n_56e9a34ee4b0860f99db4d6e)

Have you ever wondered why olives come in so many colours? If you thought that they're just different varieties, you would be quite wrong.



The Huffington Post article (see link above) describes the difference rather well: *The colour of the olive corresponds to how ripe they are when picked, in addition to the curing process they undergo. Green olives are picked before ripening, and black olives are picked while*

*ripe, which is when the colour has turned from green to black. Raw and freshly picked olives are inedible due to their very strong bitter flavour, so both green and ripe varieties are cured, either by being packed in salt, brine, or water, before being eaten.*

Picture Credit: "Olives" by Jurvetson is licensed under CC BY 2.0

## Geoff Duke: the original superstar of motorcycle racing

Sources: • <https://www.classicmotorcycle.co.uk/geoff-duke-first-global-superstar-of-racing/>  
• <https://mylifespaces.com/happy-90th-birthday-to-geoff-duke/>  
• <https://www.royalcanfield.com/uk/en/goodwoodrevival/blog/racing-heroes-geoff-duke/>  
• [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geoff\\_Duke](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geoff_Duke)



Picture Credit: "File:Huldiging Geoff Duke, winnaar 350cc, Bestanddeelnr 905-1931.jpg" by Daan Noske / Anefo is marked with CC0 1.0

Geoffrey Ernest Duke OBE (known simply as Geoff Duke and popularly known amongst the racing fraternity simply as 'the Duke') was a British multiple motorcycle Grand Prix road racing world champion. He was one of motorcycling's all-time greats of the post-war decade. World Champion six times, Duke raced on the best motorcycles (Norton, Gilera, BMW, NSU and Benelli) against the best competitors, including Umberto Masetti, John Surtees, and Mike Hailwood. He also stood out in other ways: he designed and wore a striking, tailored all-in-one black leather racing suit, later copied by many riders.

The Duke made his racing debut in 1948 in the Junior Isle of Man Grand Prix, riding a 350cc Norton on loan from the factory. At the beginning of his racing career, he won 350cc and 500cc doubles on a British Norton at the 1951 TT and World Championship, just three years after his first race. Although Nortons had seen him through his first victories, they were no match for his competitors' Italian machines, and he moved abroad in 1953 to the Italian motorcycle manufacturer, Gilera enjoying a string of three consecutive 500 cc world championships.

Duke briefly dabbled in Formula One, entering the 1961 German Grand Prix in a private Cooper-Climax but was forced to withdraw from that event as his car was not yet ready.

He was named *Sportsman of the Year* in 1951, awarded the RAC Seagrave Trophy and, in recognition of services to motorcycling, was awarded the Order of the British Empire in 1953. After retiring from racing, Duke became a businessman, initially in the motor trade and later in shipping services to the Isle of Man, highly revered. He died, aged 92, at his home on the Isle of Man on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2015 after being ill for some time.

You can view a video [here](#) and if you are interested, buy his autobiography, *In Pursuit of Perfection*, from Amazon [here](#).

## The Compton Brothers

Sources: • <https://www.vavel.com/en/football/2015/03/05/arsenal/458897-two-one-club-brothers-leslie-and-denis-compton.html> • <https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-denis-compton-1954-online> • [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Denis\\_Compton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Denis_Compton) • [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leslie\\_Compton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leslie_Compton) • <https://apps.lords.org/lords/tours-and-museum/museum/searchthecollections/artefactdetails/Archive/110025169>



Picture Credit: "Denis Compton and Patsy Hendren in 1937" by Robert Cutts is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

### Denis

Denis Charles Scott Compton CBE (1918 – 1997) was an English cricketer who played in 78 Test matches and spent the whole of his cricket career with Middlesex. He was often called 'the greatest batsman of his generation.'

Compton is regularly credited as one of England's most remarkable batsmen. Sir Don Bradman called him 'one of the greatest cricket players' he'd ever seen.

He is one of only twenty-five players to have scored over one hundred centuries in first-class cricket. In 2009, Compton was posthumously inducted into the ICC Cricket Hall of Fame. The Denis Compton Oval and a stand at Lord's Cricket Ground are both named in his honour.

Denis was also an accomplished footballer who played most of his football career at Arsenal and exploited his fame by making adverts

for Brylcreem. Whilst playing as a winger, he made his debut for Arsenal in 1936, taking the number 11 jersey at the club. Arsenal won the league championship (old First Division) in 1937–38. Denis was eventually successful with Arsenal, winning the League title in 1948 and the FA Cup in 1950.

In a 1990 interview by Ralph Dellar, Denis Compton talked about playing school cricket and being spotted in a match for Elementary Schools vs Public Schools by the Grand Old Man of English Cricket, Pelham (Plum) Warner. Denis had supporters early on (his father and school masters), and he always wanted to play cricket for Middlesex, although when growing up, he supported Surrey because Jack Hobbs was his hero and being a great fan of Wally Hammond and Les Ames. His debut was against Sussex, and he batted at number 11. He remembered (which was extraordinary as he reputedly had an awful memory) getting booed at Hove for being late and then bowling out George Cox, Hubert Doggart and David Sheppard.

You can view a 1954 BFI film about this sporting great [here](#).

### Leslie

Denis' older brother Leslie Harry Compton (1912 – 1984) also played football for Arsenal (as a defender) and cricket for Middlesex for whom he played as wicket-keeper from 1938 to 1956. He appeared 272 times, scoring 5,814 runs (an average of 16.75), and took 468 catches and achieved 131 stumpings. Together with his brother, he won the 1947 County Championship title with Middlesex

His football career eventually took off despite being down the pecking order throughout the 1930s and missing out on the success that Arsenal enjoyed at that time. He stuck with Arsenal and won a Charity Shield winners' medal in 1938–39, playing 19 times that season.

He served in the Army during WWII while continuing to play football for Arsenal. Leslie scored ten goals as a makeshift centre-forward in a wartime match against Leyton Orient, which finished 15–2 to Arsenal.

After the war ended, Leslie reverted to defence, becoming a mainstay in the Arsenal side at centre half. His form was such that he was selected for England for their match against Wales on 15<sup>th</sup> November 1950, making him, at 38 years and 64 days, the oldest post-war England debutant and the oldest ever outfield player to debut for his country.

In 1956, Leslie became landlord of *The Shady Old Lady* pub in Finsbury Park and famously had a photo for the press in which he served a pint of beer to the then Arsenal manager Tom Whittaker. In 1962, Leslie moved on to become the landlord of *The Prince of Wales* pub in Highgate.

Both brothers were outstanding sportsmen - Leslie was more successful in football and Denis in cricket. Unlike Denis, Leslie never played Test cricket for England. Denis and Leslie are the only brothers who have won the national title in football and cricket.



## Terms of Venery

Sources: • <https://www.dictionary.com/e/strange-animal-groups-listicle/>  
 • [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book\\_of\\_Saint\\_Albans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Saint_Albans)  
 • <https://www.babbel.com/en/magazine/english-collective-nouns>  
 • <https://grammar.yourdictionary.com/word-lists/list-of-names-for-groups-of-animals.html>  
 • <https://medium.com/@plewis67/terms-of-venery-2fc9c8684a23>  
 • <https://www.jellyfish.com/en-gb/training/blog/collective-nouns>



Picture Credit: "A Pride of Lions" by Zeetz Jones is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

### Terms of Venery (aka nouns of assembly)

Courtly hunting in France and England was all the rage in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, with its own specialised vocabulary known as "terms of venery" (venery being an archaic word for hunting). A brave gentleman might hunt a *pride of lions* while one less brave might target a *confusion of guinea fowl* or a lady could come across a *murmuration of starlings* or a *bellow of bullfinches* on her morning ride.

Terms of venery were the linguistic equivalent of silly hats: colourful, affected, fashionable, and very popular. And like most jargon, they were ripe for parody. Some say that it was *The Book of Saint Albans* in 1486 that started it all. Among its *compaynys of beestys and fowlys*, keen-eyed observers noticed several new species: a *Fightyng of beggars*, a *Gagle of women*, a *Sentence of Juges* and an *uncredibilite of Cocoldis* (an **incredulity of cuckolds** — wouldn't you be disbelieving if your better half were cheating on you?).

The tradition of using "terms of venery" — collective nouns that are specific to certain kinds of animals — stems from an English hunting tradition of the Late Middle Ages. In the course of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, it became a courtly fashion to extend the vocabulary, and by the 15<sup>th</sup> century, this tendency had reached exaggerated proportions. The focus on collective terms for groups of animals emerges in the later 15<sup>th</sup> century. To anyone learning English, these words must seem like cruel jokes, with no purpose other than to add complexity. And that's exactly what they are or seem to be.

Many animal groups have colourful, fanciful names: a *Murder of crows*, a *Covey of partridges*, and so on. Did you know that many, if not all, the group names can be traced back to *The Book of Saint Albans*, published in 1486, about angling, hawking and hunting. The book is attributed to *Juliana Berners* (or *Barnes* or *Bernes*), who gave animal groups imaginative yet oddly appropriate names. Berners, who had an intimate knowledge of wildlife, may not have intended these names to be taken seriously, but they were repeated through the ages and are now commonly used. Here, courtesy of Dictionary.com and others from the sources listed above are a few.

### The Book of Saint Albans

*The Book of Saint Albans* (or *Boke of Seynt Albans*) is the common title of a book printed in 1486 that is a compilation of matters relating to the interests of the time of a gentleman and not specifically to name for groups of different animals. It was the last of eight books printed by the St Albans Press in England. It is also known by titles that are more accurate, such as "*The Book of Hawking, Hunting, and Blasing of Arms*". The printer is sometimes called the Schoolmaster Printer. This edition credits the book, or at least the part on hunting, to *Juliana Berners* as

there is an attribution to her at the end of the 1486 edition reading: "*Explicit Dam Julyans Barnes in her boke of huntynge.*"

Scholarly reviews as to the sources of the *Book of Saint Albans* indicates that little in it was original. It is expressly stated at the end of the Blasyng of Armys that the section was "translated and compylt," and it is likely that the other treatises are translations, probably from the French. Only three perfect copies of the first edition are known to exist. A facsimile, entitled *The Boke of St Albans*, with an introduction by William Blades, appeared in 1881.

### Animal nouns of assembly

Here's our list. There will be others that didn't make it to the list — what have we missed? The group names for bees surprised us.

- Aardvark - a flock, an armory (or armoury)
- Albatrosses - a rookery or a gam
- Alligators - a congregation
- Alpaca - a herd
- Anteaters - a candle
- Antelope - a herd, a cluster or a tribe
- Ants - an army, a colony, a nest, a bike or a swarm
- Apes - a shrewdness, a troop
- Armadillos - a roll
- Baboons - a flange, a troop
- Badgers - a cete, a colony
- Barracudas - a school
- Bats - a colony, cloud, flock or camp
- Bears - a sleuth or sloth
- Beavers - a family, a colony
- Bees - a bike, a swarm, a cast, a cluster, a colony, a drift, an erst, a grist, hive, nest, rabble or a stand
- Bison - a herd
- Boars - a herd, a sounder
- Boxers (Dogs) - a comedy
- Buffalo - a gang or obstinacy
- Buffalo - a herd, a troop, a gang or an obstinacy
- Buffalo - an obstinacy
- Butterflies - a flight, a flutter, a rabble
- Camels - a caravan, a flock, a herd, a train
- Caterpillars - an army
- Cats - a clowder, a glaring, a clowder, a cluster, a clutter, a pounce
- Cattle - a herd, a drove, a yoke, a team
- Cheetahs - a coalition
- Chickens - a flock, a brood, a peep, a clutch
- Chinchillas - a colony
- Clams - a bed
- Cobras - a quiver
- Cockroaches - an intrusion
- Cod - a school
- Coyotes - a pack
- Crabs - a cast
- Cranes - a herd, a sedge, a seige
- Crocodiles - a bask, a congregation, a nest
- Crows - a murder
- Deer - a bunch, a herd, a mob, a rangale
- Dinosaurs - a herd, a pack
- Dogs - a pack (wild), a kennel, a mute, a litter (young)
- Dolphins - a school, a pod, a herd, a team
- Donkeys - a herd, a drove, a pace
- Doves - an arc, a cote, a dole, a dule, a flight, a piteousness, a pitying
- Dragonflies - a cluster, a flight
- Ducks (or mallards) - a flock, a herd, a badling, a brace, a safe, a sord, a sore, a waddling, a bunch, a paddling, a raft, a skein, a string, a team
- Eagles - a convocation
- Eels - a bed, a swarm
- Elephant seals - a pack
- Elephants - a parade, a herd, a memory

- Elk - a gang or a herd
- Emus - a mob
- Falcons - a cast
- Ferrets – a business, a busyness
- Finches - a charm
- Fish - a school
- Flamingos - a flamboyance or a stand
- Flies - a business, a cloud, a swarm
- Foxes - a skulk or leash
- Frogs - an army
- Gazelle - a herd
- Geese - a gaggle, a flock, a plump, a skein, a team, a wedge
- Gerbils - a horde
- Giraffes - a journey, a tower, a herd, a corps
- Gnats - a cloud, a flock, a rabble, a swarm
- Gnus - a herd, an implausibility
- Goats - a herd, a flock, a tribe, a trip, a trippe
- Goldfinches - a charm
- Goldfish - a troubling
- Gorillas - a band, a troop, a whoop
- Grasshoppers – a cloud, a swarm,
- Grouse – a covey, a pack
- Guinea fowl - a rasp, a flock
- Guinea pigs - a herd
- Gulls - a colony, a flock
- Hamsters – a horde
- Hamsters - a horde
- Hares - a band, a down, a drove, a flick, a husk
- Hawks - a cast, an aerie, a staff, a leash, a flight, a flock, a kettle, a boil, a cauldron
- Hedgehogs - an array
- Herons - a flight, a sedge, a sege, a siege
- Herring - an army, a glean, a shoal
- Hippopotami – a bloat, a herd, a thunder
- Hornets - a bike, a nest, a swarm
- Horses - a stable, a stud, a harras, a herd (wild horses), a band (wild horses), a team (work horses), a rag (colts), a string (ponies)
- Hounds – a cry
- Hummingbirds - a charm
- Hyenas - a cackle
- Iguanos – a mess
- Jackals – a pack
- Jaguars - a shadow, a leap a prow
- Jays - a band, a party, a scold
- Jellyfish - a smack, a smuth, a fluther, a brood, a bloom
- Kangaroos – a mob, court, troop, herd
- Kittens - a litter or kindle
- Lapwings - a deceit, a desert
- Larks - an exaltation
- Lemurs – a conspiracy
- Leopards - a leap, a lepe
- Lice - a colony
- Lions - a pride, a sawt
- Lizards – a lounge
- Llamas – a herd, a flock
- Lobsters - a risk
- Locusts - a cloud, a host, a swarm
- Magpies - a flock
- Mice - a colony, a nest
- Mole - a company
- Moles - a labour
- Mongooses - a troop, a committee, a delegation
- Monkeys - a barrel, a troop
- Moose - a herd moose
- Mosquitoes - a swarm, a cloud
- Mules - a pack
- Nightingales - a flock
- Octopus - a consortium
- Ostrich - a flock, a troop
- Otters - a family, a romp, a bevy, a raft
- Owls - a parliament
- Oxen - a team or yoke
- Oysters - a bed
- Panthers - a claw
- Parrots - a pandemonium, a flock
- Partridges - a covey
- Peacocks - an ostentation
- Pelicans - a pod
- Penguins - a huddle, a rookery, a colony, a huddle, a waddle (penguins on land), a raft (penguins in water)
- Pheasants - a flock, a bouquet, a nest, a nide, a nye
- Pigeons - a flock, a flight, a kit
- Pigs - a drift or drove (younger pigs), or a sounder or team (older pigs), a litter (piglets)
- Polar bears - an aurora, a celebration, a pack
- Porcupines - a prick
- Porpoises - a pod, a school, a shoal
- Puppies - a litter
- Quails - a bevy
- Rabbits - a herd, a nest, a litter or a wrack (young rabbits)
- Raccoons - a gaze, a nursery, a committee, a smack, a brace, a troop
- Racehorses – a field
- Rainbow fish - a party
- Rats - a colony, a horde, a mischief
- Rattlesnakes - a rhumba
- Ravens - an unkindness
- Red deer - a herd
- Reindeer (Caribou) - a herd
- Rhinoceroses - a crash, a herd
- Rooks - a building, a parliament
- Salmon - a bind, a leap, a run salmon, a draught
- Sardines – a family
- Sea lions - a pod
- Seals – a herd, a pod, a rookery
- Sharks - a shiver
- Sheep - a flock, a fold, a herd
- Skunk - a stench, a surfeit
- Snails - an escargatoire, a rout, a walk
- Snakes - a nest, a ball
- Spiders - a cluster, a clutter
- Squirrels - a dray or scurry
- Starlings - a chattering, a murmuration
- Stingrays - a fever
- Swans – a lamentation, a bevy or game (if in flight - a wedge)
- Termites - a colony, a nest, a swarm
- Tigers - an ambush or streak
- Toads - a knot
- Turkeys - a gang or rafter
- Turtles - a bale or nest
- Wallabies - a mob
- Walruses – a huddle, a herd, a flock
- Wasps - a swarm, a hive, a colony, a nest
- Water buffalo - a herd
- Weasels - a colony, gang or pack or a sneak
- Whales - a pod, school, or gam
- Wild cats - a destruction
- Wolves - a pack
- Wrens – a herd
- Yaks – a herd
- Zebras - a zeal, a hed, a cohort or a dazzle



## Pirates of the fairer sex

Sources: • [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anne\\_Bonny](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anne_Bonny)  
• <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Anne-Bonny>  
• <https://www.historyireland.com/early-modern-history-1500-1700/grainne-mhaol-pirate-queen-of-connacht-behind-the-legend/> • [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grace\\_O%27Malley](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grace_O%27Malley)  
• <https://www.historyextra.com/period/tudor/grace-o-malley-pirate-queen-ireland-irish-history-biography-facts-grainne-ni-mhaile/> • <https://www.rmg.co.uk/stories/topics/grace-o-malley-irish-female-pirate> • <https://www.nps.gov/articles/dyk-women-pirates-in-the-usa.htm>  
<https://www.rmg.co.uk/stories/topics/grace-o-malley-irish-female-pirate>

Most pirates were men. One of the reasons for this is that it was traditionally believed to be bad luck to have a woman onboard a pirate vessel. But there were pirate women, and when they commandeered a target ship, the incumbents no doubt cursed their bad luck in running into them.

Piracy attracted the fair sex for the same reasons as it did for men - the money, the adventure, and some to escape terrible situations at home.

One from the late 16<sup>th</sup> century from Ireland, one from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, also from Ireland, one more from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, one a convict from England, and the last one - a fiery Irish woman still very much revered today. Here they are:

### Anne Bonny

Anne Bonny, née Anne Cormac, was born near Cork, Ireland but grew up in the early 1700s in Charles Towne (now Charleston), South Carolina, U.S.), Irish American pirate whose brief period of marauding the Caribbean during the 18<sup>th</sup> century enshrined her in legend as one of the few to have defied the proscription against female pirates. Wikipedia says it is recorded that Bonny had red hair and was considered to be a "good catch" but may have had a fiery temper; at age 13, she supposedly stabbed a servant girl with a knife. Her father had disowned her after she married small-time pirate James Bonny and they moved to the Bahamas, which, was a sanctuary for pirates. James eventually turned informant to the governor, turning in many of his former comrades. Anne spent time in the taverns with other pirates and fell in love with John "Calico Jack" Rackham, pirate captain of the *REVENGE*. Anne joined Calico Jack as part of his pirate crew became one of the most famous female pirates of all time. She and Calico Jack were active until they were captured in 1720 and sentenced in Jamaica to be hanged for piracy, although she probably evaded the noose as she was pregnant at the time.

### Mary Critchett

Mary Critchett was one of six convicts sent from England to Virginia to serve their time. During the night of 12<sup>th</sup> May 1729, escaped, boarded the vessel *JOHN AND ELIZABETH* and overpowered the crew, becoming a pirate in the process. She and other prisoners were captured and were tried in Williamsburg, Virginia. Convicted of piracy, they were sentenced to hang.

### Rachel Wall

Rachel Wall was born about 1760 in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. At age 16 years, she left home and met George Wall, a fisherman, and travelled with him to Philadelphia, New York City, and Boston. After disappearing for some ten years, George returned and Rachel joined him as a pirate. After stealing a ship, they targeted vessels up and down the New Hampshire coast. They would pretend they were in distress, with Rachel calling to nearby vessels for help. When they approached to render aid, they would be robbed. But her career as a pirate was short-lived and she was hanged for piracy in the oldest public park in the United States, Boston Common on 8<sup>th</sup> October 1789.

### Grace O'Malley

Grace O'Malley (1530 - 1603) is one of the most famous pirates of all time and was active in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. She grew up in County Mayo, Connacht, a province in the West of Ireland. From the age of eleven, she forged a career in seafaring and piracy and was considered a fierce leader at sea and a shrewd politician on land.



Picture Credit: "File: Statue of Gráinne Mhaol in Westport House.jpg" by Bastun is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0

Grace successfully defended the independence of her territories at a time when much of Ireland fell under English rule and is still considered today 'the pirate queen of Ireland.'

Grace O'Malley (in her native Irish language *Gráinne Ní Mháille*, also known as *Gráinne O'Malley*), was the head of the *Ó Máille* dynasty in the west of Ireland, and the daughter of *Eoghan Dubhdara Ó Máille*. In Irish folklore, she is commonly known as *Gráinne Mhaol* (anglicised as *Granuaile*) and is a well-known historical figure in 16<sup>th</sup> century Irish history.

Grace's name was also rendered in contemporary English documents in various ways, including *Gráinne O'Maly*, *Graney O'Mally*, *Granny ni Maille*, *Grany O'Mally*, *Grayn Ny Mayle*, *Grane ne Male*, *Grainy O'Maly*, and *Grande O'Maillie*.

Gráinne Mhaol's reputation is as an Irish pirate who lived in Ireland in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. She sailed from island to island along the west coast with her fleet of ships. She raided as she went, building up a great hoard of wealth and earning her title as the Pirate Queen. She was also one of the last Irish leaders to defend against English rule in Ireland. To this day, Grace O'Malley is seen as a symbol of Ireland and an inspiration for many modern songs, theatre productions and books. Through these, her legend lives on.

### FURTHER INFORMATION

- **Watch:** You can see a video about Female Pirates) [here](#).
- **Read:** *Bad Girls Throughout History: 100 Remarkable Women Who Changed the World*, by Ann Shen, published by Chronicle Books: available on Amazon, [here](#), or read DelanceyPlace extract [here](#).

## Where did the Vikings get the iron ore to forge these special swords?

Source: • <https://www.quora.com/Where-did-the-Vikings-get-the-iron-ore-to-forge-their-tools-and-weapons-I-never-heard-about-them-being-miners>  
• [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ulfberht\\_swords](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ulfberht_swords) • <https://allthatsinteresting.com/ulfberht-swords>  
• <https://www.thevintagenews.com/2018/02/21/ulfberht-viking/>



Picture Credit: "File: Schwert 2 Ulfberht.jpg" by Wolfgang Sauber is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0

### YOU NEED TO KNOW

All steel contains iron, but it also contains carbon. The primary difference between iron and steel is that the former is a metal, whereas the latter is an alloy. Iron is simply a metal element that occurs naturally on Earth. In comparison, steel is a man-made alloy that combines iron and carbon together.

### The Mystery

The following is a fascinating mystery. It's about Viking swords made from a type of steel that wouldn't be invented until the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The swords are called *The Ulfberht swords*. Etymologically the name *Ulfberht* comes from 'Ulf' meaning 'Wolf' and 'Berht', which is the same suffix as 'Bert' in the German names Gilbert, Norbert, Herbert, Robert etc. and means 'Bright'.

The Vikings were the most ferocious warriors of the Middle Ages. Especially fearsome were the warriors who went into battle wielding a formidable weapon: a Ulfberht sword.

### The Ulfberht Swords

The Ulfberht swords are about 170 medieval swords found in Europe, dated to the 9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> centuries, with blades inlaid with the inscription +VLFBERHT+ or +VLFBERHT+. That word is a Frankish personal name that became the basis of a trademark of sorts, used by multiple bladesmiths for several centuries. Most of the swords were found in Scandinavia - 44 from Norway and 31 swords from Finland.

Some experts claim the swords may come from Germany, in the Taunus region, because of the high level of arsenic found in the iron. Extremely rare and valuable, they were very sought-after weapons for the most elite Vikings. The swords were a symbol of wealth, status, and they would perform better than what most other people were using.

The original Ulfberht sword type dates to the 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> century, but swords with the Ulfberht inscription continued to be made at least until the end of the Viking Age in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. A notable late example found in Eastern Germany, dated to the 11<sup>th</sup> or possibly early 12<sup>th</sup> century, represents the only specimen that combines the Ulfberht signature with a Christian "in nomine domini" inscription (+IINIOMINEDMN).

The quora article ([here](#)) puts it like this: 'For a short period between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> century at the height of the Viking age, [either] an unbelievably talented Blacksmith or likely a group of blacksmiths started making the finest steel swords in the medieval world.'

These were not normal swords. They stood apart from all other weapons of the medieval age, being made from a unique steel of such high quality, seeming to belong to another age entirely. The blacksmithing craftsmanship put into some of these blades remains a thing of beauty.

The metallurgy used was way ahead of its time, and resulted in swords which would have been stronger, more resistant to wear or damage, and may have looked like Damascus Steel\*. They were said to have been virtually indestructible, sharper, stronger, and more flexible than anyone else's. That gave the user a huge advantage in battle.

\* Damascus steel was the forged steel of the blades of swords smithed in the Near East from ingots of Wootz steel (a crucible steel characterised by a pattern of bands and high carbon content) either imported from Southern India or made in production centres in Sri Lanka, or Khorasan (the present territories of northeastern Iran, parts of Afghanistan and southern parts of Central Asia).

To forge the iron which the swords are made of, the ore needs to be heated to around 3000 degrees (F). It then liquefies, and the impurities are removed. It is then mixed with carbon to strengthen the iron. However, medieval technologies, which are what the Vikings would have been using, would not have been able to heat any metal or substance that high a temperature. In those days, the impurities would have been removed by hammering them out of the iron.

So, there we have it. The finest Viking swords were made of a special type of steel that wouldn't officially be invented until Benjamin Huntsman in England used coke rather than coal or charcoal to achieve temperatures high enough to melt steel and dissolve iron. Huntsman's process differed from some of the other processes in that it took a longer time to melt the steel and to cool it and allowed more time for the diffusion of carbon\*\*.

\*\* In the early 1980s, I was finance director of a newly-floated Daventry company chaired by Sir Monty Finniston called Metal Sciences which had patented a method to make shot blasting grit from swarf (basically metal turnings). The metal, heat-treated with carbon in what seemed to be oversized concrete mixers but were special furnaces, was then passed through a water curtain and conveyed to large crushers. The iron was certainly hard all right as it had to be to do its job in shot blasting – so hard in fact that it often broke the crushers!

## Add to your Vocabulary: Abecedarian

Here's another unusual word: **Abecedarian**. It means: *arranged in alphabetical order*.

### ORIGIN

The English noun and adjective *abecedarian* has several closely related senses. As a noun, it means "someone learning the letters of the alphabet," and more loosely, "a beginner in a field of learning." As an adjective, *abecedarian* means "pertaining to the alphabet; arranged in alphabetical order; elementary, rudimentary."

*Abecedarian* comes from Medieval Latin *abecedariānus*, a derivative of Late Latin *abecedarius*, an adjective and noun first used by St. Augustine of Hippo. As an adjective, *abecedarius* means "pertaining to the alphabet; alphabetical." As a masculine noun, *abecedarius* means "one learning the alphabet"; the feminine noun *abecedaria* means "elementary instruction," and the neuter noun *abecedarium* "the alphabet." The noun *abecedarium* has been in English since the days of the Old English monk and scholar Byrhtferth of Ramsey, who used the word.

In modern English, *abecedarium* is a fairly technical word, meaning "an ancient writing system using an alphabet," usually referring to the languages of ancient Italy (e.g., Latin, Oscan, Umbrian, Etruscan), the many dialects and local alphabets of ancient Greece. In the sense of "someone learning the letters of the alphabet", *Abecedarian* entered English at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Source: Dictionary.com



## DeLorean: Back 'from' the Future

Sources: • <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m000qw8/delorean-back-from-the-future>  
• <https://screenrant.com/back-future-delorean-time-travel-88-mph-reason/>  
• [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_DeLorean](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_DeLorean)

Picture Credit: "DeLorean DMC-12 (Cars & Coffee Of The Update)" by @CarShowShooter is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0



### Introduction

The documentary on BBC iPlayer ([here](#)) tells of John Z DeLorean's extraordinary but doomed attempt to build the sports car of the future in Northern Ireland in the 1980s. It is the stuff of legend. A buccaneering American entrepreneur, DeLorean had film star looks, a famous fashion model as a wife and an enormous ego that drove him to rival the giants of the US car industry. Millions of pounds of British taxpayers' money later, an unprecedented social experiment with Catholics and Protestants working side by side in relative harmony in West Belfast ended in a trail of corporate waste, greed, fraud and, incredibly, an FBI cocaine-trafficking sting. Using rare and unseen footage filmed by Oscar-winning directors DA Pennebaker and Chris Hegedus, and through colourful news archive documenting his life and career, this film is the first in-depth psychological profile of DeLorean, a man who rose from the ghettos of Detroit to build his American dream in war-torn Belfast, a dream that quickly went up in smoke.

### The Man

John Zachary DeLorean (1925-2005) was an American engineer, inventor, and executive in the U.S. automobile industry, widely known for his work at General Motors and as the founder of the DeLorean Motor Company. He managed the development of a number of vehicles throughout his career, including the Pontiac GTO muscle car, the Pontiac Firebird, Pontiac Grand Prix, Chevrolet Cosworth Vega, and the DMC DeLorean sports car, which was featured in the 1985 film *Back to the Future*. He was the youngest division head in General Motors history, then left to start the DeLorean Motor Company (DMC) in 1973. Production delays meant that DMC's first car did not reach the consumer market until 1981 when a depressed buying market was compounded by lukewarm reviews from critics and the public. After a year, the DeLorean had failed to recoup its \$175 million investment costs, unsold cars accumulated, and the company was in deep financial trouble.

In October 1982, DeLorean was charged with cocaine trafficking after FBI informant James Hoffman solicited him as a financier in a scheme to sell 220 lb (100 kg) of cocaine worth approximately \$24 million. DMC was insolvent at the time and in debt for \$17 million. Hoffman had approached DeLorean, a man whom he barely knew with no prior criminal record, and DeLorean was able to successfully defend himself at trial under the procedural defense of police entrapment. The trial ended in a not guilty verdict in August 1984, by which time DMC had declared bankruptcy and ended operations.

### The Car

The DMC DeLorean (often referred to simply as the "DeLorean") is a sports car and was the only automobile manufactured by John DeLorean's company (DMC) for the American market from 1981 to 1983. The vehicle was designed by Giorgetto Giugiaro and stood out for its gull-wing doors and brushed stainless-steel outer body panels.

The car was widely known for its disappointing lack of power and performance, which did not match the expectations created by its looks and price tag. Although its production was short-lived, the car was made memorable through its appearances as the time machine in the *Back to the Future* media franchise after 1985.

Throughout production, the car kept its basic styling, although minor revisions were made to the hood, interior and wheels. The first production car was completed on January 21, 1981. About 9,000 DeLoreans were made before production halted in late December 1982, shortly after DMC filed for bankruptcy. Despite the car having a reputation for poor build quality and a less-than-satisfying driving experience, the DeLorean continues to have a cult following driven in part by the popularity of the *Back to the Future* movies. An estimated 6,500 DeLoreans are still on the road.

### Failure

Prior to the release of the DeLorean, there was a waiting list of anxious buyers, many of whom paid over MSRP (the manufacturer's suggested retail price). However, that exuberance subsided very quickly, and production output soon far exceeded sales volume. October 1981 was the highest month of sales for DMC with 720 vehicles sold but by December that year, the US was falling into recession, and interest rates were rising, which further negatively impacted sales. Despite this, instead of reducing production, John DeLorean doubled production output, further adding to the backlog of unsold cars. By the end of 1981, DMC had produced 7,500 vehicles but had only sold 3,000. By this point, DMC was in deep financial trouble and sold only 350 units in January 1982, and the next month DMC was placed into receivership.

In February 1982, unsold 1981 model year cars were "priced for immediate clearance" in hopes to make room for the more expensive 1982 model year cars. In March, telegrams were sent to all 343 dealerships requesting each buy six vehicles to help save the company; none of the dealers responded with a sales order. By this point, dealers were sitting on unsold stock as were the quality assurance centres and hundreds more sitting on the docks in Long Beach, California. By the end of May 1982, production at the factory was shut down. Another attempt in July 1982 was made to revive sales by offering discounts to dealerships and offering a 5-year/50,000-mile (80,000 km) warranty with the first year or 12,000-mile (19,000 km) portion secured by a major insurance carrier, but it was not successful.

Picture Credit: "BE024293" by Sabatini is marked with CC PDM 1.0



### The Film - Back to the Future (aided by the flux capacitor)

In the film, Marty McFly (Michael J Fox), a 17-year-old high school student, is accidentally sent thirty years into the past in a time-travelling DeLorean car invented by his close friend, the eccentric scientist Doc Brown (Christopher Lloyd). To do so, the car, with its *flux capacitor*, had to reach 88mph. But why 88mph? One theory (see [here](#)) suggests that it was chosen by Doc Brown so that after the DeLorean travels through time, it arrives at its destination at the same physical space from which it departed. This requires maths best left to a physicist, along with a few leaps of faith, which is why it's more plausible to assume that the interval was a technological limitation of the flux capacitor. Another, less scientific, explanation is that Doc Brown chose double 8s because the number is the infinity sign rotated 90 degrees.

## Why can't we remember being born?

Source: • <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20160726-the-mystery-of-why-you-cant-remember-being-a-baby> • <https://science.howstuffworks.com/life/inside-the-mind/human-brain/remember-birth.htm> • <https://qbi.uq.edu.au/brain/learning-memory/why-you-cant-remember-being-baby> • <https://www.livescience.com/45731-can-people-remember-birth.html> • <https://www.mic.com/articles/93307/scientists-have-discovered-why-you-cant-remember-being-a-baby> • <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/observations/why-humans-give-birth-to-helpless-babies/> • <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/human-babies-long-to-walk/>



Picture Credit: "New Born Baby" by Worlds Direction is marked with CC0 1.0

It used to be thought that the reason we can't remember much of our early childhood is that, as young children, we just aren't able to make long-lasting memories of events - the reason is that you can't access a memory if it's not there. But now, it seems that infants and small children can and do form memories.

### Childhood Amnesia

From the most dramatic moment in our lives – the day we were born – to our first crawl across the floor, our first steps, first words, first food, right up to nursery school, most of us can't remember anything of our first few years. Our brains are undeveloped. Even after our precious first memory, the recollections tend to be few and far between until well into our childhood. This gaping hole in the record of our lives has been frustrating parents and baffling psychologists, neuroscientists and linguists for decades.

Psychologists refer to the inability of most adults to remember events from early life, including their birth, as *childhood amnesia*. Sigmund Freud looked into this, as you would have expected him to do so, and he was the first to coin the term *infantile amnesia* (now more broadly referred to as childhood amnesia). He did so as long ago as 1899 to explain why his adult patients had a scarcity of childhood memories. He proposed that people use it as a means of repressing traumatic, and other urgings claiming that humans create screen memories, or revised versions of events, to protect the conscious ego.

Another explanation is that when new cells grow in young brains, they crowd out the circuits where memories are formed. The MIC article, [here](#) notes that when researchers experimented with mice, they found that when they slowed down their ability to make new brain cells, they helped them craft more solid memories. Conversely, when they sped up their brain-cell-generation, the mice had a harder time remembering. In other words, more new brain cells meant fuzzier memories, and fewer new brain cells meant clearer ones.

### Declarative Memory

*Declarative memory* consists of facts and events that can be consciously recalled or "declared." It's also known as *explicit memory*, and is based on the concept that this type of memory consists of information that can be explicitly stored and retrieved. Declarative memory differs from procedural memory, which encompasses skills such as using objects or movements of the body that are deeply embedded and are performed without being aware. *Declarative memory* comprises *episodic memory* and *semantic memory*, and researcher Endel Tulving of the University of Toronto first proposed the distinction between episodic and semantic memory in 1972. Read more on this [here](#).

### It's all because our brains are not fully formed at birth

A 2012 blog on the *Scientific American* website ([here](#)) says that the nine-month gestation period for human babies places a heavy metabolic burden (measured in calories consumed) on the mother. By nine months or so, the metabolic demands of a human fetus threaten to exceed the mother's ability to meet both the baby's energy requirements and her own, so she delivers the baby. Once outside of the womb, the baby's growth slows down to a more sustainable rate for the mother. The baby's brain then continues development outside of the womb, nearly doubling in size in the first year.

A baby horse can walk, even run, within an hour after birth. A newborn baboon baby can cling to its mother's hair while she jumps through the trees. Many babies from other life forms are more agile than their human counterparts. The reason is simple - humans are born with brains that are largely immature and nowhere near fully formed and with little control over their movements. This uniquely human attribute results from a lengthy evolutionary battle between big brains and narrow pelvises – see [here](#).

The fact is, according to Australia's University of Queensland's Brain Institute ([here](#)), that the human brain is not fully developed when we are born—it continues to grow and change during this important period of our lives. And, as our brain develops, so does our memory.

Perhaps you are as confused by all this – if so, the BBC article about why you can't remember being a baby may help. It's available [here](#).

## Scurvy: aboard HMS Salisbury

Sources: • <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC539665/> • [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS\\_Salisbury\\_\(1746\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Salisbury_(1746)) • [http://hekint.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/sailors\\_scurvy-final.pdf](http://hekint.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/sailors_scurvy-final.pdf) • [TheEconomistSimplyScience](#)

Scurvy is a thousand-year-old stereotypical disease characterised by apathy, weakness, easy bruising with tiny or large skin haemorrhages, brittle bleeding gums, and swollen legs. Untreated patients could easily die. An extract from the *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* says 18<sup>th</sup> century sailors often suffered from this disease. In 1747, James Lind M.D. conducted his classic experiments aboard *HMS Salisbury*, in which he cured scurvy with oranges and lemons. Rather than calamity, however, the ship's physician, James Lind, spotted an opportunity. He chose 12 sickly sailors and divided them into pairs. "They all in general had putrid gums, the spots and lassitude, with weakness of knees," Lind wrote in "*A Treatise on the Scurvy*", published in 1753. These sailors were isolated from the rest of the crew and each pair was given different potential treatment for scurvy: a daily quart of cider; spoonfuls of vinegar; a concoction made from horseradish, mustard and garlic; sea water; 25 drops of "elixir"; or oranges and lemons. Otherwise, their diets were identical to those on the rest of the ship. In just under a week, the two sailors who had been given oranges and lemons were back on duty and were nursing the others, all of whom remained ill.

By the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, the ability to fix positions at sea allowed ships routinely to make long voyages out of sight of land. The lack of fresh vegetables and fruit meant that sailors commonly developed scurvy, and from being solely an affliction of explorers, the condition took on military, colonial and economic dimensions. Attempts to deal with it were hampered by confusion between different disorders and a lack of a scientific approach. Before James Lind's *Treatise* of 1753, those who wrote about scurvy had seldom seen it for themselves, and 'no physician conversant with this disease at sea had undertaken to throw light upon the subject'. Lind was not the first to treat scurvy with citrus fruit, but his fame endures because of his contribution to scientific medicine in using a comparative experimental design. His study took place 'on board the *Salisbury* at sea' between 20<sup>th</sup> May and 17<sup>th</sup> June 1747, yet the British Royal Navy did not adopt citrus rations until 1795.



## Grumpy 'Old Gits'

Source: life, experience and some help from <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/git>

The *git* being written about here has nothing to do with the software created in 2005 to develop the Linux operating software.

The *git* in this article refers to a term of insult with origins in English denoting an unpleasant, silly, incompetent, annoying, senile, elderly or childish person. That's definitely not you, is it?

The Cambridge Dictionary says that a *git* is a person, **especially a man**, who is stupid or unpleasant. Surely, that's fake news.

If you are one yourself (you cannot possibly be one), or want to become one (no, you don't really, do you?), or maybe you know someone who is one (surely, everyone knows at least one of them), just go to this website and have a great laugh:

<https://www.facebook.com/grumpyoldgits/photos/>

Go on, don't wait a moment more, it will be good for you.

The good thing about *gits* is that the term is marginally less pejorative than *berk*. It's good to know that. It makes some people feel better about themselves, knowing that there are people (probably lots of them) who are not as cheerful and, well, nice, as you are.

*Git* is usually used as an insult, more severe than *twit* but less severe than true profanity and may often be used affectionately between friends. *Get* can also be used with a subtle change of meaning. "You cheeky get!" is slightly less harsh than "You cheeky git!".

*Git* is frequently used in conjunction with another word to achieve a more specific meaning. For instance, a "*smarmy git*" refers to a person of a slimy, ingratiating disposition; a "*jammy git*" would be a person with undeserved luck. The phrase "*grumpy old git*", denoting a cantankerous old man, is used with particular frequency. Not sure if that is progress or not.

In parts of northern England, Northern Ireland and Scotland, *get* is still used in preference to *git*. In the Republic of Ireland, *get*, rather than *git*, is used.

If you are planning a career in politics, a word of advice: be careful about how you look and speak. Try to be cheerful too, as the word *git* has been ruled out by the Speaker of the House of Commons as it amounts to being unparliamentary language.

Finally, it's important to say that *git* is not new. The late John Lennon thought so. He called Sir Walter Raleigh (think tobacco and potatoes) "*such a stupid git*" in The Beatles' song, "*I'm So Tired*". John might have said *an old dog*, or a *rotter* or *cad* but not a *git*.



Picture Credit:  
"Grumpy" by andrewr is licensed under CC BY 2.0

## Received via Facebook - should we be worried?

A little girl was leaning into a lion's cage. Suddenly, the lion grabs her by the collar of her jacket and tries to pull her inside to slaughter her, all under the eyes of her screaming parents:

A biker jumps off his Harley, runs to the cage and hits the lion square on the nose with a powerful punch.

Whimpering from the pain, the lion jumps back, letting go of the girl, and the biker brings the girl to her terrified parents, who thank him endlessly.

A BBC reporter, Laura Kuenssberg, had watched the whole event.

Laura, addressing the Harley rider says, "Sir, this was the most gallant and bravest thing I've seen a man do in my whole life."

The Harley rider replies, "Why, it was nothing, really. The lion was behind bars. I just saw this little kid in danger, and acted as I felt right."

Miss Kuenssberg, "Well, I'll make sure this won't go unnoticed. I'm a BBC journalist, you know and tomorrow's news will run this story. So, what do you do for a living, and what political affiliation do you have?"

The biker replies, "I'm a British Army veteran, a Conservative and I voted for Brexit."

The journalist leaves.

The following morning the biker turns on BBC News to see if it indeed brings news of his actions.

BBC Headline: RIGHT WING UK VETERAN ASSAULTS AFRICAN IMMIGRANT AND STEALS HIS LUNCH.

And THAT pretty much sums up the BBC's approach to the news these days....😏😏😏

\*\*\*\*PLEASE LIKE/SHARE BOTH THE JOKES AND THE PAGE\*\*\*\*



## Sea Slugs sever their heads and regenerate brand-new bodies

Source: • [https://www.eurekalert.org/pub\\_releases/2021-03/cp-tss030221.php](https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2021-03/cp-tss030221.php)  
• [https://www.cell.com/current-biology/fulltext/S0960-9822\(21\)00047-6](https://www.cell.com/current-biology/fulltext/S0960-9822(21)00047-6)

You've heard of animals that can lose and then regenerate a tail or limb, but a whole body doesn't seem possible. Scientists reporting in the journal *Current Biology* on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021 discovered two species of regenerating sea slug that can do even better: shedding and then regenerating a whole new body complete with the heart and other internal organs. The researchers also suggest that the slugs may use the photosynthetic ability of chloroplasts they incorporate from the algae in their diet to survive long enough for regeneration.

The discovery was a matter of pure serendipity. Mitoh is a PhD candidate in the lab of Yoichi Yusa. The Yusa lab raises sea slugs from eggs to study their life-history traits. One day, Mitoh saw something unexpected: a sacoglossan individual moving around without its body. They even witnessed one individual doing this twice.

The researchers report that the head, separated from the heart and body, moved on its own immediately after the separation. Within days, the wound at the back of the head closed. The heads of relatively young slugs started to feed on algae within hours. They started the regeneration of the heart within a week. After about three weeks, regeneration was complete. If you don't believe it, watch the video [here](#) or read the [text](#) here.

## The Rise and Fall of Babylon

Excerpted from • <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Babylon>  
 • <https://history.howstuffworks.com/history-vs-myth/babylon.htm> •  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fall\\_of\\_Babylon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fall_of_Babylon)  
 • <https://www.history.com/topics/ancient-middle-east/babylonia>  
 • <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/by-the-rivers-of-babylon-we-remember-zion/>



Picture Credit: Screenshot from the video.

Do you remember Bony M singing *By the Rivers of Babylon* (listen/watch the video [here](#))? They were a very popular Euro-Caribbean vocal group during the disco era of the late 1970s.

The lyrics are adapted from the texts of Psalms 19 and 137 in the Hebrew Bible:

*"By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down  
 Yeah, we wept, when we remembered Zion..."*

### Where was Babylon?

History.com ([here](#)) says Babylonia was a state in ancient Mesopotamia. Babylon, whose ruins are located in present-day Iraq, was founded more than 4,000 years ago as a small port town on the Euphrates River. It grew into one of the largest cities of the ancient world under the rule of Hammurabi. Several centuries later, a new line of kings established a Neo-Babylonian Empire that spanned from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean Sea. During this period, Babylon became a city of beautiful and lavish buildings. Biblical and archaeological evidence point toward the forced exile of thousands of Jews to Babylon.

### Religious Background

Psalm 137 is a lament of longing for a community torn from home. In 586 BC, the Babylonian empire conquered Jerusalem, destroyed the first Temple built by King Solomon, and uprooted large numbers of people, deporting them hundreds of miles to the east. This tragedy is mourned in the psalm, which includes such famous lines as *"By the rivers of Babylon"* and *"If I forget you, O Jerusalem."* This psalm is well known from Jewish liturgy and from popular music (from Bach to this famous reggae song from the 1970s). The Psalm is recited on the eve of Tisha B'Av, which commemorates the destruction of the Temples and this ancient psalm, older than the *kinot* (a passionate expression of grief or sorrow), captures the pain of exile from the Land of Israel.

### Babylon was a very large city in its heyday

The HowStuffWorks article says that at the height of Babylon's glory in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, the city was the largest and wealthiest in the ancient world. It was the capital city of the ancient Babylonian empire, which itself is a term referring to either of two separate empires in the Mesopotamian area in antiquity. These two empires achieved regional dominance between the 19<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries BC and again between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries BC. The city, built along both banks of the Euphrates river, had steep embankments to contain the river's seasonal floods.

The earliest known mention of Babylon as a small town appears on a clay tablet from the reign of Sargon of Akkad (2334–2279 BC) of the Akkadian Empire. The site of the ancient city lies just south of present-day Baghdad.

The Amorite king Hammurabi founded the short-lived Old Babylonian Empire in the 18<sup>th</sup> century BC. He built Babylon into a major city and declared himself its king. Southern Mesopotamia became known as Babylonia, and Babylon eclipsed Nippur as the region's holy city. The empire waned under Hammurabi's son Samsu-iluna, and Babylon spent long periods under Assyrian, Kassite and Elamite domination.

King Hammurabi turned Babylon into a rich, powerful and influential city. He created one of the world's earliest and most complete written legal codes. Known as the Code of Hammurabi, it helped Babylon surpass other cities in the region. After the Assyrians had destroyed and then rebuilt it, Babylon became the capital of the short-lived Neo-Babylonian Empire, a neo-Assyrian successor state, from 609 to 539 BC.

The *Hanging Gardens of Babylon* ranked as one of the *Seven Wonders of the Ancient World*. After the fall of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, the city came under the rule of the Achaemenid, Seleucid, Parthian, Roman, and Sassanid empires. Babylon was the largest city in the world, c. 1770 – c. 1670 BC, and again c. 612 – c. 320 BC. It was perhaps the first city to reach a population above 200,000. And it was large - maybe 890 to 900 hectares (2,200 acres).

### The Fall of Babylon

"The Fall of Babylon" denotes the end of the Neo-Babylonian Empire after it was conquered by the Achaemenid Empire in 539 BC. Nabonidus (Nabû-na'id, 556–539 BC), son of the Assyrian priestess Adda-Guppi, came to the throne in 556 BC, after overthrowing the young king Labashi-Marduk. For long periods he entrusted rule to his son, prince and coregent Belshazzar, who although a capable soldier, was a poor politician – leaving him unpopular with many of his subjects, particularly the priesthood and the military class. To the east, the Achaemenid Empire had been growing in strength. In 539 BC, Cyrus the Great invaded Babylonia, turning it into a satrapy of the Achaemenid Empire. Cyrus then claimed to be the legitimate successor of the ancient Babylonian kings and became popular in Babylon itself, in contrast to Nabonidus.

Several factors arose, which would ultimately lead to the fall of Babylon. The population of Babylonia became restive and increasingly disaffected under Nabonidus. The Marduk priesthood hated Nabonidus because he suppressed Marduk's cult and his elevation of the cult of the moon-god Sin. He excited a strong feeling against himself by attempting to centralise the religion of Babylonia in the temple of Marduk at Babylon and thus alienated the local priesthoods. The military party also despised him on account of his antiquarian tastes. He seemed to have left the defence of his kingdom to Belshazzar while occupying himself with the more congenial work, like excavating foundation records of the temples and determining the dates of their builders. He also spent time outside Babylonia, rebuilding temples in the Assyrian city of Harran and also among his Arab subjects in the deserts to the south of Mesopotamia. Nabonidus and Belshazzar's Assyrian heritage is also likely to have added to this resentment. In addition, the Mesopotamian military might had usually been concentrated in the martial state of Assyria. Babylonia had always been more vulnerable to conquest and invasion than its northern neighbour, and without the might of Assyria to keep foreign powers in check, Babylonia was ultimately exposed. You can read more ([here](#)).

### What's left today?

Wikipedia ([here](#)) says the site at Babylon consists of several mounds covering an area of about 2 by 1 kilometre (1.24 mi × 0.62 mi), oriented north to south, along the Euphrates to the west. Originally, the river roughly bisected the city, but the course of the river has since shifted so that most of the remains of the former western part of the city are now inundated. Some portions of the city wall to the west of the river also remain.

Only a small portion of the ancient city (3% of the area within the inner walls; 1.5% of the area within the outer walls; 0.1% at a depth of Middle and Old Babylon) has been excavated. Archaeologists have recovered a few artefacts predating the Neo-Babylonian period. The water table in the region has risen greatly over the centuries, and artefacts from before the Neo-Babylonian Empire are unavailable to current standard archaeological methods. Additionally, the Neo-Babylonians conducted significant rebuilding projects in the city, which destroyed or obscured much of the earlier record.

Sadly, Babylon was pillaged numerous times after revolting against foreign rule, most notably by the Hittites and Elamites in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Millennium, then by the Neo-Assyrian Empire and the Achaemenid Empire in the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium. Much of the western half of the city is now beneath the river, and other parts of the site have been mined for commercial building materials.

### Babylon is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site\*

Babylon was inscribed as a *UNESCO World Heritage Site* in 2019. Babylon is situated 85 km south of Baghdad. The property includes the ruins of the city, which, between 626 and 539 BC, was the capital of the Neo-Babylonian Empire. It includes villages and agricultural areas surrounding the ancient city.

Its remains, outer and inner-city walls, gates, palaces and temples, are a unique testimony to one of the most influential empires of the ancient world. Seat of successive empires, under rulers such as Hammurabi and Nebuchadnezzar, Babylon represents the expression of the creativity of the Neo-Babylonian Empire at its height. The city's association with one of the seven wonders of the ancient world—the *Hanging Gardens*—has also inspired artistic, popular and religious culture on a global scale.

\* [Description available under license CC-BY-SA IGO 3.0](#)



Finish with a Smile

EAGLE 7 October 1955

## Harris Tweed, EXTRA SPECIAL AGENT

MR STINKWELL, SCIENCE MASTER AT BLURCESTER COLLEGE, AND SUSPECTED OF CARRYING ON SINISTER ACTIVITIES THERE, HAS INADVERTENTLY DROPPED SOME BOTTLES FROM HIS CASE.

PROBABLY PERFECTLY INNOCENT SCIENTIFIC SPECIMENS...

BOTTLES, BOY? PROOF? NONSENSE! THEY SMELL QUITE HARMLESS TO ME...

BUT, SIR—WAIT!

NO, NO, SIR—DON'T SMELL THEM! LOOK AT THE LABELS!

GREAT SCOTT! "MUMPS"—"CHICKEN-POX"—"MEASLES"—"WHOOPING COUGH"—AND "SCARLET FEVER!"

DON'T YOU SEE, SIR? FOR SOME REASON OR OTHER, STINKWELL'S TRYING TO RUIN THE SCHOOL—AND, AS IF HE HADN'T DONE ENOUGH ALREADY...

...HE'S NOW TRYING TO LET LOOSE FIVE EPIDEMICS, ALL AT THE SAME TIME!

LET ME HAVE 'EM BACK, SIR—I'VE GOT AN IDEA...

AND A FEW MINUTES LATER...

THAT'S LUCKY—STINKWELL'S GONE OUT AND LEFT THE CASE BEHIND!

THERE! THAT'LL PUT PAID TO HIS LITTLE GAME!

HEY-BOY, BOY!

THOSE BOTTLES—EPIDEMICS—I'VE JUST REALIZED SOMETHING!

I TOOK A SNIFF AT ALL OF 'EM! NOW I SHALL PROBABLY CATCH THE LOT!

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