

Nil Desperandum

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Never Alone



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Martha the Queen of the Dippers

Sources: • https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martha_Gunn • https://www.photohistory-sussex.co.uk/BTNCHAR_MarthaGunn.htm • <https://brightonmuseums.org.uk/discover/2020/03/04/queen-of-the-the-dippers-the-pioneering-and-entrepreneurial-martha-gunn/> • <https://www.womenofbrighton.co.uk/martha-gunn.html>



Picture Credit: "Martha Gunn, a Brighton bather holding a small child that she has just saved from drowning. Coloured engraving by W. Nutter, 1797, after J. Russell." is licensed under CC BY 4.0

Dippers

"Dipper" was the name given to the operator of a bathing machine used by women (and some men) bathers. The dipper pushed the machine into and out of the water and helped the bather into and out of the water. A dipper had to be large and strong to carry out this work, and Martha Gunn met both requirements. The Morning Herald described Martha Gunn as "The Venerable Priestess of the Bath".

The Brighton's Museum website says ([here](#)):

Martha didn't earn the nickname 'Queen of the Dippers' for nothing. She had a plethora of other skills – a scientific knowledge of the sea and the weather, for example, and an ability to interpret Brighton beach's temperamental waves that would ensure her clients were safe and didn't slip, lose their balance, or worse.

When sea-bathing became popular in the 1730s and 1740s, Martha found employment as a "dipper" on Brighton's seafront. Brighton was one of the top places for sea bathing because of its nearness to and access from London. When bathing in Brighton, bathers were separated by gender. They climbed inside bathing machines (wooden, enclosed crates) using a small ladder and, with all due modesty, changed their clothing before entering the water.

Modern Brighton began to emerge in the 1750s, particularly after Dr Richard Russell suggested that seawater could cure all manner of ailments. Dr Russell established a practice in Brighton from 1754, and the town quickly became the largest and most successful seaside resort in the UK. Dr Russell encouraged his patients to visit Brighton, where they could drink seawater and immerse their bodies in the sea. At that time, mixed bathing was discouraged. To ensure proper modesty, special "bathing machines" were introduced. The "bathing machine" was a small, wooden hut on wheels. Seaside visitors who intended to bathe in the sea could climb into the hut, remove their clothes and change into their swimming costumes without being spied upon. The wheeled huts or "bathing machines" were then rolled or pulled into the sea by strong bathing attendants or by horses.

Everything was going 'swimmingly' for Martha until around 1769 when Dr Awitzers' Baths (now demolished) opened its doors. This establishment had the advantage of providing indoor bathing in both hot and cold seawater. This was followed by other indoor baths - mostly near Pool

Valley with pipes coming in directly from the sea - and bathing on the beach became less popular.

Martha's popularity

Martha Gunn was well-known in Brighton and across the country - her image appeared in many popular engravings, including one in which she appeared repelling the invading French with a mop. In another, she is seen standing behind Mrs Fitzherbert and The Prince of Wales (the future George IV). She was said to have been a favourite of The Prince of Wales and enjoyed special privileges, including free access to the kitchen at the Royal Pavilion.

There is a pub in Upper Lewes Road, Brighton called the Martha Gunn, and she even has a bus named after her. The Brighton-based pop group Martha Gunn is named after her.

By accident, Scientists find life beneath ice shelves in the Antarctic

Sources: • <https://news.sky.com/story/scientists-accidentally-find-life-beneath-ice-shelves-in-the-antarctic-12218906> • <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2021/feb/15/researchers-rethink-life-in-a-cold-climate-after-antarctic-find> • <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fmars.2021.642040/full>

Scientists have accidentally stumbled upon sea life far beneath the ice shelves of the Antarctic - in a discovery that shows how creatures have "amazingly adapted" to a frozen world, according to a study.

Marine organisms were found on a boulder on the sea floor underneath the ice in what scientists say: "raises so many more questions than it answers."

Researchers drilled 900m (3,000ft) through the Filchner-Ronne ice shelf during an exploratory survey into the sediment core - but instead hit a rock of mud on the ocean floor. Footage from a camera sent down the drilled hole captured the existence of stationary animals, like sponges and previously unknown species, which were attached to the boulder.

Scientists have long held the theory that all life becomes less abundant as you move further away from open water and sunlight - but have said they will now need to find "new and innovative" ways to develop their findings.

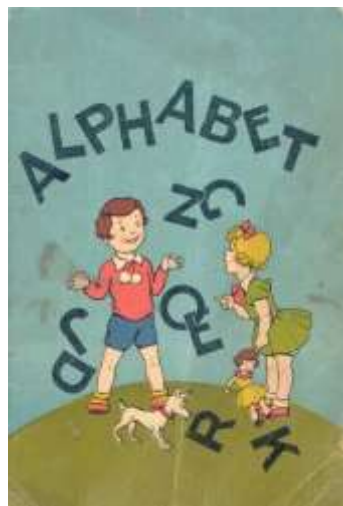
Details on the discovery have been published in **Frontiers in Marine Science**. Scientists say the floating ice shelves still represent the greatest new habitat in the Southern Ocean.

A Bishop, a Minister and a Rabbi, walked into a bar... ouch!!



Our Alphabet has changed a lot

Excerpted from: • <https://www.dictionary.com/e/letters-alphabet/>
 • https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_alphabet
 • <https://landscape.org.uk/OEtutorial/thealphabet.html> • <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wynn>
 • <https://readable.com/blog/the-five-lost-letters-of-the-english-language/>
 • <https://www.daytranslations.com/blog/origin-english-alphabet/> • <https://www.bl.uk/history-of-writing/articles/the-evolution-of-the-alphabet> • <http://www.todayifoundout.com/index.php/2013/09/the-origin-of-the-english-alphabet/>
 • <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/robert-cawdreys-a-table-alphabetical>



Picture Credit: "alphabet p0" by pillipat (agence eureka) is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

Introduction

The English alphabet, as you must surely know, is made up of 26 letters. But it was not always that way. English is often considered one of the more difficult languages to master, thanks to the incredible number of inconsistencies in the language. So, it should come as no surprise that the development of the modern English alphabet involved several languages, hundreds of years and a variety of conquerors, missionaries and scholars.

Background

The early alphabetic writing started about 4,000 years ago, probably in Egypt (between 1800 and 1900 BC). The origin was a Proto-Sinaitic (Proto-Canaanite) form of writing that was not very well known. Then, about 1100 to 1200 BC, the Phoenicians developed an alphabet further, and it was widely used in the Mediterranean, including southern Europe, North Africa, the Iberian Peninsula, and the Levant (the ancient lands in the Old Testament of the Bible (Bronze Age): the kingdoms of Israel, Ammon, Moab, Judah, Edom, and Aram; and the Phoenician and Philistine states). The alphabet at that time had no vowels. It was the Greeks, in 750 BC, who added vowels to the Phoenician alphabet, and the combination was regarded as the initial true alphabet. The Romans added some Etruscan characters and deleted other characters.

Alphabetic Systems

The British Library notes that alphabets (or alphabetic systems) can be subdivided into three different groups:

- **'alphabets'** which are writing systems with individual characters for both consonants and vowels, like the Roman and Korean alphabets;
- **'abjads'** whose main characters stand for consonants only (e.g. Arabic and Hebrew);
- **'abugidas'** where different character sets represent combinations of consonants with the vowel sounds attached to it (e.g. the Indian script Devanāgarī).

Usage and Changes

The system of writing we have all been taught can be traced to the Anglo-Saxons through their contact with the post-Roman world of Christian Europe. This is essentially the same alphabet that we use today, but there are some letters which, for the writing of Old English, have come and gone over time. There are four letters which we don't use anymore ('thorn', 'eth', 'ash' and 'wynn') and two letters which we use but which the Anglo-Saxons didn't ('j' and 'v'). Until the late Old and early Middle English period, they also rarely used the letters 'k', 'q' and 'z'. The problem was that the Roman alphabet was designed for the language of the Romans, in other words, Latin. But there were some sounds in Old English that don't exist in Latin, so there was no obvious way of writing them. One example of this is the sound we represent in modern English by the letters **th**.

There are several ways of dealing with this problem. You can amalgamate two separate letters into one new letter. You can adapt an existing letter to create a new one. You can put two letters together. Or you can

borrow a letter from a different alphabet. The Anglo-Saxons did all four.

The letter **æ** 'ash' is an amalgamated letter roughly representing a sound between 'a' and 'e'. Two letters were borrowed from the runic alphabet: **þ** 'thorn' and **ƿ** 'wynn', and one was adapted from the Latin alphabet **ð** 'eth'. Eth and thorn both represent the **th** sound, and wynn represents w. Because wynn has exactly the same sound as our modern w, a lot of editors just use w to represent wynn. Please note that **ð** (eth), **þ** (thorn), and **æ** (ash) can be displayed on your computer (if you have any trouble, just head for 'character map'), but wynn may be more difficult.

How old is our Alphabet?

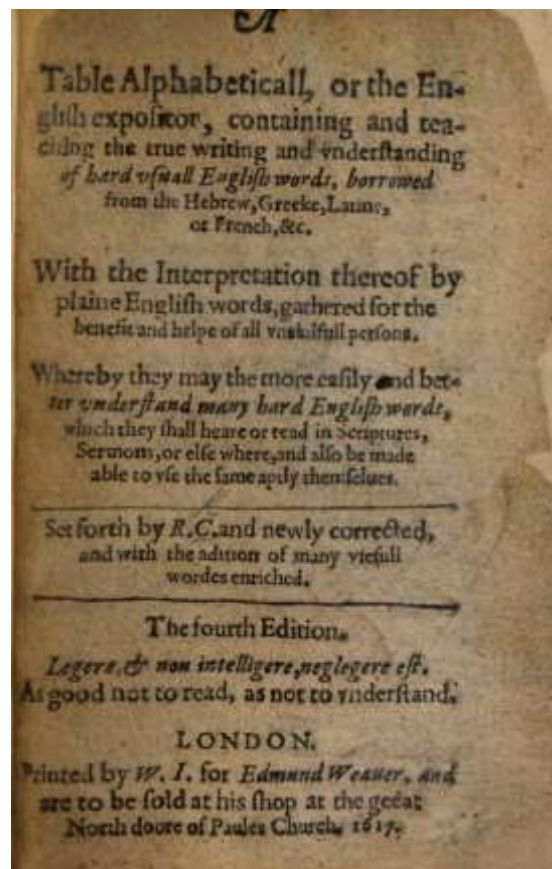
Let's look at Old English. English was first written in the Anglo-Saxon *futhorc* runic alphabet, also known as Anglo-Saxon.

The Angles and Saxons came from Germany and settled in Britain in the 5th century. The region they inhabited became known as "Angle-land," or *England*. Eventually, Christian missionaries introduced the Latin alphabet, which began to be adopted around the 6th century, and ultimately replaced Anglo-Saxon. But for some time, the alphabet included the letters of the Latin alphabet, some symbols (like **&** 'ampersand'), and some letters of Old English.

As Modern English evolved, the Old English letters were dropped or replaced, leaving us with the 26 letters in our alphabet.

The First English Dictionary

The printing press was invented by Johann Gutenberg in 1448. It was introduced to Britain in the mid-15th century by William Caxton. Then, in 1604, Robert Cawdrey published the first English dictionary (with only 3,000 words), *A Table Alphabeticall* (see below), with its uncomplicated word definitions resulted in English becoming more standardised and modern English, as we know it today, burst onto the scene.



Picture Rights: Held by The British Library. This work has been identified as being free of known restrictions under copyright law, including all related and neighbouring rights.
<https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/robert-cawdreys-a-table-alphabetical>

Zealandia – the hidden continent

Sources: <https://www.thejournal.ie/zealandia-continent-3244770-Feb2017/>
<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/zealandia-new-zealand-continent-geological-society-americas-journal-gondwana-a7584956.html>
<https://wtop.com/science/2017/02/new-continent-zealandia-discovered-underwater/>
 Technical Abstract © The Geological Society of America, Inc. is available at:
<https://www.geosociety.org/gsatoday/archive/27/3/article/GSATG321A.1.htm>

New Zealand sits on top of a previously unknown continent, two-thirds the size of Australia and mostly submerged beneath the South Pacific. It should be recognised with the name **Zealandia** (or *Te Riu-a-Māui*, in the indigenous Māori language), scientists have said.

The criteria of a Continent

Researchers said Zealandia was a distinct geological entity and met all the criteria applied to Earth's seven other continents — elevation above the surrounding area, distinctive geology, a well-defined area and a crust much thicker than that found on the ocean floor.

The 2017 Research Paper

In a paper published in February 2017, the Geological Society of America's Journal, *GSA Today*, Zealandia was reported as being five million square kilometres. The paper's authors said it had only three major landmasses, New Zealand's North and South Islands to the south, and New Caledonia to the north. The paper asserts that New Zealand, New Caledonia and other islands in the region could be considered part of a 1.9 million-square-mile land mass that is 94 per cent under water.

"This mostly underwater continent is geologically separate and distinct from Australia and Antarctica, and as highlighted by [author Nick] Mortimer and colleagues, should be treated as such," the GSA reported. "The scientific value of classifying Zealandia as a continent is much more than just an extra name on a list," they wrote. "That a continent can be so submerged yet unfragmented makes it (useful)... in exploring the cohesion and breakup of continental crust."

The Code of Hammurabi – what is it?

Excerpted from: <https://www.history.com/topics/ancient-history/hammurabi>

The *Code of Hammurabi* is one of the earliest and most complete written legal codes and was proclaimed by the Babylonian king Hammurabi, who reigned from 1792 to 1750 BC. Hammurabi expanded the city-state of Babylon along the Euphrates River to unite all of southern Mesopotamia. The Hammurabi code of laws, a collection of 282 rules, established standards for commercial interactions and set fines and punishments to meet the requirements of justice. *Hammurabi's Code* was carved onto a massive, finger-shaped black stone stele (pillar) that was looted by invaders and finally rediscovered in 1901.

Hammurabi was the 6th king in the Babylonian dynasty, which ruled in central Mesopotamia (today, Iraq) from c. 1894 to 1595 BC. 30 years into his reign, Hammurabi began to expand his kingdom up and down the Tigris and Euphrates river valley, overthrowing several kingdoms until all of Mesopotamia was under his control.

The Code of Hammurabi

The text, compiled at the end of Hammurabi's reign, is a collection of legal precedents, set between prose celebrating Hammurabi's just and pious rule. It provides some of the earliest examples of the doctrine of "lex talionis," or the laws of retribution, sometimes better known as "an eye for an eye." It is one of the earliest examples of an accused person being considered innocent until proven guilty.

The 282 edicts are all written in *if-then* form. For example, if a man steals an ox, then he must pay back 30 times its value. The edicts range from family law to professional contracts and administrative law, often outlining different standards of justice for the three classes of Babylonian society—the propertied class, freedmen and slaves.

The Last Invasion of Britain

Story from: <https://www.onthisday.com/photos/last-invasion-of-britain-and>
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/23597967@N00/528026392>

In 1797, the European continent was engaged in a struggle with the French, which had deposed its monarchy following the French Revolution in 1787. This first conflict, between 1792 and 1797, consisted of a lightly-allied coalition (now known as the *First Coalition*) intervened against France for various political and territorial reasons.

By 1797, the Coalition's advances into France had been repelled by the French, who had moved further into territory surrounding the country. French general Lazare Hoche devised a plan to invade mainland Britain in this late phase of the conflict. The idea was to attack in support of the Society of United Irishmen (a revolutionary republican organisation allied with France) by landing a diversionary force in Britain and then the main force in Ireland.

Their aim was to start an uprising against the English and march onwards to Bristol and London. The initial plan was to land near Bristol, but adverse weather and tides forced the fleet to turn around and attempt a landing on the coast of Wales. On their way through the Bristol channel the fleet, under the command of American Colonel William Tate, was spotted from Ilfracombe.

The fleet was spotted off the coast of Pembrokeshire as it attempted to enter Fishguard harbour. A single shot from the cannons at Fishguard fort was all that was needed to turn the fleet around, and it landed on a nearby beach instead. Had Tate known that the defenders had hardly more ammunition than this, the outcome might have been very different.

Two forces (the main one in Ireland and the second one in Britain) were forced to cancel their attack due to inclement weather. A French force of 1,400 troops from the Black Legion, in four warships, landed on 22nd February 1797 at Carregwastad Head (or possibly Llanwnda), near Fishguard, Wales. Discipline among irregular troops collapsed almost immediately upon landing as they went off to loot nearby settlements.

Many of the French troops were conscripted prisoners, and discipline and morale were low. Many soldiers had simply vanished during the night, and the local Welsh population was far more hostile than they had expected.

British commander Lord Cawdor arrived with around 600 men on 23rd February, but held off attacking immediately. The French commanders believed the British had many more troops and, with no real prospect of escape or success, decided to surrender at 2 pm on 24th February 1797.

A peace treaty was signed in the Royal Oak pub in Fishguard and conducted on Goodwick sands.



Most of the French invasion force and its commander were imprisoned until they were sent back to France in a prisoner exchange in 1798.

Picture Credit: "The last invasion of Britain" by Walt Jabsco is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

The attack at Fishguard is the last time that enemy forces landed on British soil and is often referred to time hostile as the '*last invasion of Britain*.'

The Body

This selection is from pages 11-14 from a book with the same name, by Bill Bryson, published by Doubleday, © Copyright 2019 Bill Bryson

Picture Credit: "Hand in hand" by Images by John 'K' is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0



The largest organ in your body is your skin:

"Our skin is our largest organ, and possibly the most versatile. It keeps our insides in and bad things out. It cushions blows. It gives us our sense of touch, bringing us pleasure and warmth and pain and nearly everything else that makes us vital. It produces melanin to shield us from the sun's rays. It repairs itself when we abuse it. It accounts for such beauty as we can muster. It looks after us.

"The formal name for the skin is the cutaneous system. Its size is about two square meters (approximately twenty square feet), and all told your skin will weigh somewhere in the region of ten to fifteen pounds, though much depends, naturally, on how tall you are and how much buttock and belly it needs to stretch across. It is thinnest on the eyelids (just one-thousandth of an inch thick) and thickest on the heels of our hands and feet. Unlike a heart or a kidney, the skin never fails. 'Our seams don't burst, we don't spontaneously sprout leaks,' says Nina Jablonski, professor of anthropology at Penn State University, who is the doyenne of all things cutaneous.

"The skin consists of an inner layer called the dermis and an outer epidermis. The outermost surface of the epidermis, called the stratum corneum, is made up entirely of dead cells. It is an arresting thought that all that makes you lovely is deceased. Where body meets air, we are all cadavers. These outer skin cells are replaced every month. We shed skin copiously, almost carelessly: some twenty-five thousand flakes a minute, over a million pieces every hour. Run a finger along a dusty shelf, and you are in large part clearing a path of rough fragments of your former self. Silently and remorselessly, we turn to dust. 'Skin flakes are properly called squamae (meaning 'scales'). We each trail behind us about a pound of dust every year. If you burn the contents of a vacuum cleaner bag, the predominant odor is that unmistakable scorched smell that we associate with burning hair. That's because skin and hair are made largely of the same stuff: keratin.

"Beneath the epidermis is the more fertile dermis, where reside all the skin's active systems – blood and lymph vessels, nerve fibres, the roots of hair follicles, the glandular reservoirs of sweat and sebum. Beneath that, and not technically part of the skin, is a subcutaneous layer where fat is stored. Though it may not be part of the cutaneous system, it's an important part of your body because it

stores energy, provides insulation, and attaches the skin to the body beneath.

"Nobody knows for sure how many holes you have in our skin, but you are pretty seriously perforated. Most estimates suggest you have somewhere in the region of two or five million hair follicles and perhaps twice that number of sweat glands. The follicles do double duty: they sprout hairs and secrete sebum (from sebaceous glands), which mixes with sweat to form an oily layer on the surface. This helps to keep skin supple and to make it inhospitable for many foreign organisms. Sometimes the pores become blocked with little plugs of dead skin and dried sebum in what is known as a blackhead. If the follicle additionally becomes infected and inflamed, the result is the adolescent dread known as a pimple. Pimples plague young people simply because their sebaceous glands – like all their glands – are highly active. When the condition becomes chronic, the result is acne, a word of very uncertain derivation. It appears to be related to the Greek acme, denoting a high and admirable achievement, which a faceful of pimples most assuredly is not. How the two became twinned is not at all clear. The term first appeared in English in 1743 in a British medical dictionary.

"Also packed into the dermis are a variety of receptors that keep us literally in touch with the world. If a breeze plays lightly on your cheek, it is your Meissner's corpuscles that let you know. When you put your hand on a hot plate, your Ruffini corpuscles cry out. Merkel cells respond to constant pressure, Pacinian corpuscles to vibration.

"Meissner's corpuscles are everyone's favorites. They detect light touch and are particularly abundant in our erogenous zones and other areas of heightened sensitivity: fingertips, lips, tongue, clitoris, penis and so on. They are named after a German anatomist, Georg Meissner, who is credited with discovering them in 1852, though his colleague Rudolf Wagner claimed that he, in fact, was the discoverer. The two men fell out over the matter, proving that there is no detail in science too small for animosity.

"All are exquisitely fine-tuned to let you feel the world. A Pacinian corpuscle can detect a movement as slight as .00001 millimeter, which is practically no movement at all. More than this, they don't even require contact with the material they are interpreting. As David J. Linden points out in *Touch*, if you sink a spade into gravel or sand, you can feel the difference between them even though all you are touching is the spade. Curiously, we don't have any receptors for wetness. We have only thermal sensors to guide us, which is why when you sit down on a wet spot, you can't generally tell whether it really is wet or just cold.

"Women are much better than men at tactile sensitivity with fingers, but possibly just because they have smaller hands and thus a more dense network of sensors. An interesting thing about touch is that the brain doesn't just tell you how something feels, but how it ought to feel. That's why the caress of a lover feels wonderful, but the same touch by a stranger would feel creepy or horrible. It's also why it is so hard to tickle yourself."

Comment from Martin Pollins

Delanceyplace is a FREE brief daily email with an excerpt or quote they view as interesting or noteworthy, offered with commentary to provide context. There is no theme, except that most excerpts will come from a non-fiction work, mainly works of history, and they hope will have a more universal relevance than simply the subject of the book from which they came. And there is not necessarily an endorsement, and in some cases an excerpt may be particularly controversial, and Delanceyplace may disagree with some or all of it, but nevertheless deem it worth noting.

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Preserving eggs



Picture Credit: "Water-Glass of Egg Preserver" by oosp is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

Waterglass (also spelt *water-glass* or *water glass*) is a sodium silicate solution. Sodium Silicate reacts under acidic conditions to form a hard glassy gel. This property makes it useful as a bonding agent in cemented products such as concrete and abrasive wheels. It is also an excellent adhesive for glass or porcelain. A traditional use for it in a dissolved form is as a preservative for eggs. Fresh eggs stored under cool conditions in a viscous silicate solution will keep for months as it seals the pores in eggshells to stop them going bad.

The simplest solution to preserving eggs is to simply keep them cool. Eggs have a natural coating on the outside that helps keep the egg inside from spoiling. If that's washed off, the eggs must be refrigerated. Unwashed eggs, however, can be stored in a cool place for weeks. Other ways to preserve eggs include:

1. Greasing each egg carefully and thoroughly with Vaseline.
2. Boiling each egg for 10 seconds.
3. Deep-freezing the eggs.

Traditionally, a substance such as wax, or fats such as lard or butter, was used to coat the eggshell. It's said that if you coat fresh eggs in food-grade mineral oil, they will last up to 9 months.

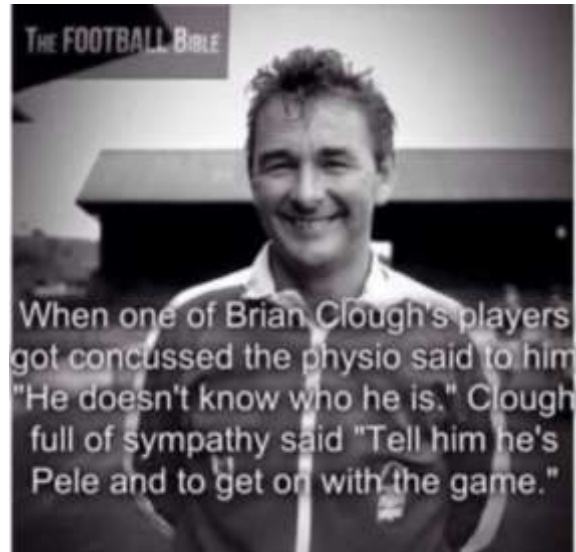
Pickling eggs

First, a caution: Home pickled eggs stored at room temperature can cause botulism. If you pickle your eggs, you must keep them refrigerated at all times.

Before the days of refrigeration, pickling was the usual option to preserve eggs, and other foods meant for consumption at a later date. Many people would preserve their fruit, vegetables and even meats such as sausage and chicken to store them for the long winter months. If small eggs are used, 1 to 2 weeks are usually allowed for seasoning to occur. Medium or large eggs may require 2 to 4 weeks to become well-seasoned. Use the eggs within 3 to 4 months for the best quality.

Sarsons, the vinegar people, have posted a recipe for pickling eggs at: <https://www.sarsons.co.uk/recipes/pickled-eggs>

Picture Credit: "Pickled Eggs" by MizD! is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0



The Irish-Italian Affair

It happened in 1964. Paddy McFlaherty was sitting in his local pub in Kerry when a fine looking Italian woman walked in. He offered her a drink and over the course of the night, he charmed her with funny Irish stories and songs. Sofia had never had a night like it before and decided to invite Paddy back to her room. And one thing led to another...

They had a passionate affair all that summer.

One night, a few months later, she confided in him that she was pregnant.

Not wanting to ruin his reputation or his marriage, Paddy gave Sofia a large sum of money and told her to go back to Italy to secretly have the child.

Paddy said that if she stayed in Italy to raise the child, he would also provide child support until the child turned 18.

Sofia agreed but asked how he would know when the baby was born. To keep it discrete, he told her to simply mail him a postcard, and write 'Spaghetti' on the back. He would then arrange for the child support payments to begin.

One day, about 9 months later, Paddy came home to his confused wife. 'Honey!' she said, 'you received a very strange postcard today.'

'Oh, just give it to me and I'll explain it later,' he said.

The wife obeyed and watched as her husband read the card, turned white, and fainted.

On the card was written:

Spaghetti, Spaghetti, Spaghetti. Oa couple of months laterne with meatballs, two without. Send extra sauce.

Food for Britons during and after World War II: A quick reminder

Excerpted from:

<https://www.historic-uk.com/CultureUK/Food-in-Britain-in-the-1950s-1960s/>
 • https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_cuisine • <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/the-uks-food-history-revealed-through-five-generations-of-data>

Introduction

British cuisine is the heritage of its cooking traditions and practices. Although Britain has a rich indigenous culinary tradition, its colonial history has profoundly enriched its native cooking traditions. British cuisine absorbed the cultural influences of its post-colonial territories, particularly those of South Asia.

In ancient times, Celtic agriculture and animal breeding produced a wide variety of foodstuffs. Anglo-Saxon England developed meat and savoury herb stewing techniques before the practice became common in Europe. The Norman conquest introduced exotic spices into England in the Middle Ages. The British Empire facilitated a knowledge of Indian cuisine with its "strong, penetrating spices and herbs".

The mid-20th-century British style of cooking emerged as a response to the depressing food rationing that persisted for several years after the Second World War, along with restrictions on foreign currency exchange, making travel difficult. A hunger for exotic cooking was satisfied by food writers and early TV chefs. Well-known traditional British dishes include full breakfast, fish and chips, the Christmas dinner, the Sunday roast, steak and kidney pie, shepherd's pie, and bangers and mash. British cuisine has many regional varieties within the broader categories of English, Scottish and Welsh cuisine and Northern Irish cuisine. Each has developed its own regional or local dishes, many of which are geographically indicated foods such as Cornish pasties, the Yorkshire pudding, Cumberland sausage, Arbroath smokie, and Welsh cakes.

Dealing with Rationing

Being creative food-wise in the 1950s was not easy. Rationing continued after World War II was over. When Queen Elizabeth came to the throne in 1952, sugar, butter, cheese, margarine, cooking fat, bacon, meat and tea were still rationed. In fact, rationing continued until 1954, with sugar rationing ending in 1953 and meat rationing in 1954. Food was seasonal (no tomatoes in winter) or not available at all (like bananas); there were no supermarkets, no frozen food or freezers to store it in, and the only takeaway was from the local fish and chip shop. Spam fritters were abundant as were salmon sandwiches, tinned fruit with evaporated milk, fish on Fridays and ham salad for high tea every Sunday.

The cook's armoury had only tomato ketchup or brown sauce to add some sort of flavouring. Heinz Salad Cream (or tinned potato salad) was available but no other salad dressings that we have today. Eating out was a rarity until the first Wimpy Bars opened in 1954, selling hamburgers and milkshakes – just like the Hollywood movies. With migrants from Hong Kong, Chinese restaurants began in the late 1950s and 1960s, followed by a dramatic rise in Indian restaurants. In the late 1960s, the famous Vesta curries and Vesta Chow Mein became available.

Official records of what people ate and how they survived during rationing were published by Defra in September 2016 ([here](#)). They show 1940s Brits ate seasonally and bought food from butchers, bakers and grocers rather than supermarkets. People ate four meals a day and relied on gardens and allotments to grow more than double the amount of food they bought.

In the 1940s, rural households relied on gardens and allotments to provide more than 92% of their fruit and vegetables in winter and 98% in summer. This ranged hugely with urban households who grew 12% of their fruit and vegetables in winter and 49% in summer. About a third of the household income was spent on food in 1940 compared to 12% nowadays.

suggested **Menus** *for a week*

	BREAKFAST	DINNER	SUPPER
Mon.	Scrambled Egg	Cold Meat and Salad Jam Roly-Poly	Welsh Rarebit
Tues.	Bacon and Tomatoes	Baked Stuffed Haddock Jacket Potatoes Cauliflower Apple Pie and Custard	Potato Soup Cornish Pasty
Wed.	Fish Cakes	Baked Rabbit Broiled Onions Baked Sliced Potatoes Macaroni Pudding Stewed Fruit	Savoury Omelet
Thurs.	Grilled Bacon and Potato Skin	Grilled Sausages Grilled Tomatoes Mashed Potatoes Greens Pancakes	Souped Herrings
Fri.	Porridge Anchovy Toast	Cheese and Potato Flan Steamed Carrots or Greens Marmalade Pudding	Sliced Tinned Sausages Salad
Sat.	Boiled Eggs	Mulligatawny Soup Tinned Salmon Rissoles Creamed Swedes or Carrots Mashed Potatoes Bread and Butter Pudding	Grilled Fish and Chipped Potatoes
Sun.	Kippers	Roast Meat Roast Potatoes Green Vegetables Yorkshire Pudding Fruit Pie and Custard	Cauliflower au gratin

NOTE.—Serve tea or coffee at breakfast, also toast or bread and cereals if desired.

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www.historic-uk.com

Defra has published the oldest versions of the survey reports from the 1940s when Britain's food supply was controlled by rations to the 1970s, when technology had advanced and kitchens were equipped with freezers. Our hunger for quick and easy meals had rapidly grown by the 1960s. Frozen peas had grown in popularity, and the consumption of flour, a cupboard must-have for decades, started to fall. As more families were able to buy fridges and freezers in the 1970s, the popularity of convenience food reached a new level, and by the end of the decade, almost all families across the country (95%) owned a fridge, allowing the modern family to keep food fresh for longer than before.

The US was far ahead of Britain so far as fridges and freezers were concerned. The first refrigerator to see widespread use was the General Electric "Monitor-Top" refrigerator introduced in 1927. The introduction of Freon in the 1920s expanded the US refrigerator market during the 1930s and provided a safer, low-toxicity alternative to previously used refrigerants. Separate freezers became common in the US during the 1940s; the popular term at the time for the unit was a *deep freeze* although these appliances did not go into mass production for use in the home until after World War II.

Since the end of World War II, immigrant communities have dramatically changed the food we eat in Britain. Apart from the effect of immigration on our food, there are other factors such as a burgeoning awareness of what people eat in other countries through TV and other advertising, foreign travel and a whole new genre of cookery books written by well-known chefs.

Back in 1952 in Britain, nearly half of all households ate no meals outside of the home and only one fifth ate one dinner a week out. By 1983, the average person ate three meals a week outside the home.

MORE INFORMATION

There's an interesting food timeline on the English Heritage website – [here](#).

Picture Credit: Sample menu for a week's meals from a 1951 cookery book.

Bad King John

Excerpted from these sources: <https://www.historyextra.com/people/king-john/>
<https://www.historyextra.com/period/medieval/king-john-evil-ireland-monster-nicholas-vincent-magna-carta/>
<https://www.ancient-origins.net/history-famous-people/king-john-worst-monarch-english-history-005896>



Picture Credit: "King John Statue, Egham" by Colin Smith is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

When it comes to Kings of England, there is strong competition for who can be called the worst. There is *Ethelred the Unready*, whose chaotic reign saw the country held to ransom by Viking invaders, and there is *Richard the Third*, forever associated with the murder of the young princes in the Tower of London. There is *Henry the Eighth* and his six wives. There is *Charles the First* who, like some of Henry's wives, ended up losing his head. And then there is King John - *Bad King John*.

King John ruled England from 1199 to 1216 AD, when he died in October of that year. He ruled Ireland for twice as long. He is perhaps most famous for signing Magna Carta at Runnymede in June 1215. He was obliged to seal Magna Carta – guaranteeing the liberties of his subjects - after a constant power struggle with his barons (the most important lords in the land).

To give King John some credit, it was not an easy time for him. If he were here today, he might say he did his best in the most difficult of times when there was a dispute between the English crown, which liked to control senior church appointments, such as the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Pope, who wanted his own men in these roles. During King John's reign, relationships with Rome reached a point where Pope Innocent III actually excommunicated John and placed an *interdict* on England for five years, which meant nobody could receive a church christening, marriage or funeral service.

Through military incompetence, John lost most of his family's lands in France. He lusted after the wives and daughters of his leading Anglo-French barons, bullied the church, refused to govern by custom or law, delighted in cruelty, especially to women and children, and in general revealed himself as a tyrant unfit to rule.

William Stubbs, the greatest of King John's Victorian biographers, put it like this: "*King John was the very worst of all our kings... polluted with every crime that could disgrace a man*". Two atrocities in particular were attributed to the king. In 1202, he either murdered or commanded the murder of his young nephew, Arthur of Brittany, deemed a rebellious rival for the throne. In 1210, and as a direct consequence of his second Irish expedition, he imprisoned the wife and son of his former favourite, William de Braose, allowing both mother and son to starve to death. According to the most detailed report, mother and son were locked in a cannibal embrace when their bodies were found, with Matilda having gnawed away her son's cheeks.

Stamp Collecting



Picture Credit: "File: Unused block of four 'Penny Black' postage stamps of Queen Victoria MET SF2002 399 10 img1.jpg" by William Wyon is marked with CC0 1.0

We all know that the proper name for stamp collecting is *philately*, don't we? But not many people know where the word comes from.

The word is the English transliteration of the French "*philatélie*", coined by Georges Herpin in 1864. Herpin, a Frenchman and a stamp collector himself, said that stamps had been collected and studied for a number of years, and a better name was required for the new hobby than *timbromanie* (roughly "stamp quest"), which was generally disliked. Herpin took the Greek root word *phil(o)-*, meaning "an attraction or affinity or love for something", and *ateleia*, meaning "exempt from duties and taxes" to form "*philatelie*".

Hey presto – stamp collecting gained a new name, *philately*.

As a collection field or hobby, philately appeared after the introduction of postage stamps in 1840 but did not gain large attraction until the mid-1850s.

It is believed that the first philatelist emerged on the day of the release of the world's first postage stamp, dated 6th May 1840, when the Liverson, Denby and Lavie London law office sent a letter to Scotland franked with ten uncut Penny Blacks, stamped with the postmark "LS.6MY6. 1840." In 1992 at an auction in Zurich, this envelope was sold for 690 thousand francs.

The idea of postage stamps came from Rowland Hill, an English teacher, inventor and social reformer. He proposed the penny postage system and is principally known for his development of the modern postal service in 1840, which was subsequently adopted throughout the world – within 20 years, postage stamps were used in 90 countries.

Interestingly, Rowland Hill, who became Sir Rowland Hill, lived his last few years in Brighton.

Millennials who don't know any knock-knock jokes

Excerpted from an article by Anita Singh, in The Telegraph 28th January 2021 at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2021/01/28/have-heard-one-millennials-dont-know-knock-knock-jokes/>

Knock, knock. "Who's there?" Avenue. "Avenue who?" "Avenue, you heard this joke before?" Then you must be a millennial. Apparently, the knock-knock joke is in danger of dying out, according to a survey, which found that 20% per cent of people aged under 30 had never heard of them. A further 75% of all ages agreed that the jokes are "old-fashioned" and "not as funny as they used to be".

The survey was carried out by Perspectus Global, an insights and research agency, who found that 26% of over-50s feel sad that old jokes have fallen out of fashion. It's the fault of social media, say 18% of Brits who believe it's that which has changed what we find funny today. David Arnold of Perspectus said: "The classic knock, knock joke is part of our national heritage. However funny or unfunny they may be, they still can put a much-needed smile on our faces. It would be sad if they were consigned to the joke book of history."

The old ones are the best: Five prime examples of knock-knock jokes:

Knock, knock

Who's there?

A little old lady

A little old lady who?

I didn't know you could yodel.

Knock, knock

Who's there?

Atch

Atch-who?

Bless you.

Knock, knock

Who's there?

Boo

Boo who?

There, there, don't cry.

Knock, knock

Who's there?

Olive

Olive who?

Olive next door, don't you recognise me?

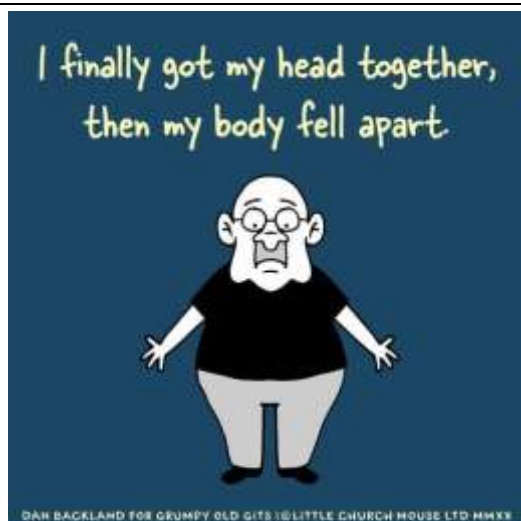
Knock, knock

Who's there?

Cash

Cash who?

No thanks, I'm allergic to nuts.



Ha! Ha! If you don't like these, try them on children or grandchildren

What did the duck say when it bought lipstick? Put it on my bill.

What do you call a pig that does karate? A pork chop.

What has a bed that you can't sleep in? A river.

Why were the teacher's eyes crossed? She couldn't control her pupils.

What starts with E, ends with E, and has only I letter in it? An Envelope.

How does an ocean say hello? It waves.

What lights up a soccer stadium? A soccer match.

What creature is smarter than a talking parrot? A spelling bee.

What's the difference between a hippo and a zippo? One is really heavy, and the other is a little lighter.

What did the mayonnaise say when the refrigerator door was opened? Close the door, I'm dressing.

I told my doctor that I broke my arm in two places. He told me to stop going to those places.

What do you call the wife of a hippie? A Mississippi.

The Vicar's False Teeth



A Vicar went to the dentist in the town for a set of false teeth.

The first Sunday after getting his new teeth, he talked for only eight minutes.

The second Sunday, he takes only ten minutes to deliver his sermon.

The following Sunday, he talked for 2 hours and 48 minutes.

The congregation had to whistle and shout to get him down from the pulpit and they asked him what happened.

The Pastor explained: 'On the first Sunday my gums hurt so much, I couldn't talk for more than 8 minutes.'

He went on: 'It was the same on the second Sunday - my gums hurt too much to talk for more than 10 minutes.'

But, he said: 'On the third Sunday, I woke up late and, in my hurry, I put his wife's teeth in by mistake and I just couldn't shut up...'

Apologies to the ladies. MP

Picture Credit: "False Teeth" by The Clear Communication People is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

In fact, it's not true!

Sources: • <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/1RsQY1BmYIX4828RxnRqm5p/12-amazing-historical-facts-that-homeschool-history-has-taught-us> • <https://www.rd.com/list/false-facts-everyone-believes/> • <https://doyouremember.com/64835/17-things-thought-true-actually-debunked-science>

Amazing Facts



According to the BBC source (see above), **Cleopatra**, the famed Queen of Egypt, is remembered for various things, including being unrolled from carpets (though it was more of a duvet), bathing in milk (unconfirmed) and using a snake to kill herself (it was probably just poison and no asp was involved). But one thing you may not know about her is that she married not one but two of her brothers, who were both called Ptolemy. In fact, everyone back then seemed to be called Ptolemy (including her father). Cleopatra is only a title, just like Pharaoh is a title. Cleopatra actually means "Glory to the Father". But what is important is that Cleopatra was not Egyptian but of Greek

heritage.

Picture Credit: "Suicide of Cleopatra" by paukrus is licensed under CC BY 2.0

Much of what we know about **Roman Gladiators** comes from films. But the reality of their lives was different to what we learned. For example, they didn't usually fight to the death.

It's often claimed that **Queen Victoria** told an equerry who had said a risqué joke, "We are not amused", but she didn't utter those words at all. Her granddaughter, Alice the Countess of Athlone, said that Victoria herself told her that she never said such a thing.

The entire story of the 1066 Battle of Hastings between King Harold and William the Conqueror is illustrated in the **Bayeux Tapestry**, which, in Donald Trump parlance, is fake news. For a start, it's not a tapestry but an embroidery as it is not woven. And the chances are that King Harold wasn't killed with an arrow in his eye at all (written reports from the time never mention this injury), but he was hacked to death by Norman knights. [See another story about the Bayeux Tapestry/embroidery on page 11.]

In 1865, the novelist **Charles Dickens** was involved in a real-life drama. He was travelling on a train that suddenly plunged off a bridge. He escaped unharmed and was even able to help the other passengers before rescuers arrived. And he went back into his mangled carriage to grab his unfinished manuscript for *Our Mutual Friend*. Even though he wasn't permanently injured, the crash would have a major impact as he had *siderodromophobia* (look it up) and avoided travelling by train for the rest of his life. He also failed to turn up at the inquest investigating the crash, as he'd been travelling with his mistress at the time and was keen to keep that under the covers.

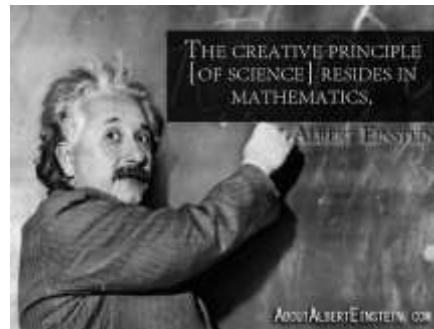
For a short time in the 1600s, England didn't have a king. **Charles I** had been removed from the throne and was beheaded. He was replaced by Oliver Cromwell, who acted as the "Lord Protector". Charles's son, **Charles II**, ran off to France, but when Oliver Cromwell died, his son took over but was useless as a King - so Charles II retook the throne in 1660. And Parliament decided that his reign actually started on the day his father was executed 11 years previously - almost denying that the Cromwell years happened at all.

Things you think are fact that are actually false

Thanks to David McCandless, there's a list of 51 favourite facts you've always believed in that are actually false. The list is on the Readers Digest website at: <https://www.rd.com/list/false-facts-everyone-believes/> Here are just a few of them:

- **Nero didn't fiddle while Rome burned:** Whilst 1st century Roman emperor Nero isn't blameless in the story of Rome's fiery fall, he definitely wasn't playing the fiddle during it, wasn't even in the city when the fire began. To cap it all, there was no such thing as a fiddle in ancient Rome – the instrument didn't appear until the 11th century.

- **Three Wise Men:** Nowhere in the Bible says there were three wise men. The biblical account of the wise men (or magi) is found in Matthew 2:1-12. Verse 1 says they were "men" (meaning they were male and there were more than one of them) and came from east of Jerusalem. The exact number of wise men and where they specifically came from are unknown. The number three has often been noted due to the fact that they gave three named gifts to Jesus of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.
- **Dogs sweat by salivating:** No, that not true at all. Dogs regulate temperature through panting. They actually sweat through their footpads.
- **Albert Einstein failed in Mathematics:** That's fake news too. Albert failed an entrance exam for a school, but he always excelled at mathematics.



Picture Credit: "The creative principle [of science] resides in mathematics." - Albert Einstein" by QuotesEverlasting is licensed under CC BY 2.0

The Do You Remember website has some interesting debunking of its own:

- **Blood is blue in your body:** A widely shared myth is that blood is blue until it is exposed to air or replenishes its oxygen. Because veins are a greenish blue, that theory sounds reasonable enough. But the fact is, human blood looks the same in your body as outside: red. That hue is brighter when it's oxygen-rich and darker when it needs that oxygen replenished, but it's red all the same. The tissue covering your veins affects how the light is absorbed and scattered, which is why the blood circulating your body looks blue.
- **Humans only use 10 per cent of their brains:** The idea of unlocking hidden brain power might make a compelling storyline for a movie, but it simply can't happen in real life. One fact playing into the myth is that 90 per cent of brain cells are "white matter" that help neurons survive, and only ten per cent is the "grey matter" of neurons in charge of thinking. But that white matter could never be used for brain power, so claiming 90 per cent of our brain is wasted is like saying you waste peanuts when you throw out the shells.

Brain Cells Blinking in Rhythm may hold clues to Alzheimer's Disease

Extract Credit: <https://www.scientificamerican.com/gallery/brain-cells-blinking-in-rhythm-may-hold-clues-to-alzheimers-disease/>

In humans and mice, a healthy memory is associated with a high level of synced neurons that turn on and off simultaneously. Those with neurological conditions such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease often have fewer brain cells blinking unanimously. A couple of years ago, Victor's lab leader Li-Huei Tsai and her team at M.I.T. found that when they surrounded mice genetically predisposed to Alzheimer's with sound pulses beating 40 times a second, the rodents performed better on memory-related tasks.

The researchers had previously performed a similar study with light flickering at the same rate, and the mice were found to experience additional improvements when the sound and light pulses were combined. Astoundingly, the mouse neurons synced up to the 40-beats-per-second rhythm of the audio pulses, though the mechanism behind this result and the reason the shift improves symptoms remain a mystery.

February: Love, Pancakes, Ash, Lent and Leap

Excerpted from: <https://www.dictionary.com/e/meaning-of-shrove-tuesday-mardi-gras-ash-wednesday-lent/> • <https://www.thesaurus.com/e/grammar/shrove-tuesday-meaning/>
 • <https://www.almanac.com/content/when-next-leap-year> • <https://www.historic-uk.com/CultureUK/Pancake-Day/> • <https://www.dictionary.com/e/february/>
 • <https://www.history.com/topics/valentines-day/history-of-valentines-day-2>
 • <https://www.timeanddate.com/date/leapyear.html#rules>

Picture Credit: "File:Relief Numa Pompilius cour Carree Louvre.jpg" is licensed under CC BY 3.0



The month of February is interesting, full of celebration and history. For a start, it's the shortest month of the year—and, depending on where you live, often the coldest. The original Roman calendar only had ten months because, curiously, the Romans didn't have winter as a season. But around 700 BC, along came the second king of Rome, **Numa Pompilius**, who changed things: adding January and February to the end of the calendar to conform to how long it actually takes Earth to go around the sun. The two new months were both originally 28 days long. Nobody seems to know why January acquired more days, though there are various unverifiable **hypotheses**. At that time all those years

ago, 1st March became New Year's Day, but later, in 153 BCE, the beginning of the year was moved to 1st January.

February used to be called **cabbage month**?

Dictionary.com says that before we adopted the Latin name for our second month, Old English used much more vibrant names to describe the month now known as *February*. The most common Old English word was *Solmonath*, which literally means "mud month." A lesser-used term was *Kale-monath*, which meant "cabbage month." Perhaps, the medieval English were eating a lot of cabbage in February? Strange.

But where did the word **February** come from?

Since other months, like January, are named after Roman gods, you'd think **February** was named after the Roman god *Februus*. Not so: the word *February* comes from the Roman festival of purification called *Februa*, during which people were ritually washed. In this case, the god was named after the festival, not the other way around.

Love (St Valentine's Day), Pancakes, Ash (Wednesday) and Leap (Year)

February has several things of interest but near the top of the list you'll find *Pancakes, Ash and Leap*. Right at the top of the list is **St Valentine's Day**, on 14th February every year. As History.com explains, across the UK, and USA and many other places around the world, flowers and gifts are exchanged between loved ones, all in the name of St. Valentine. The history of Valentine's Day—and the story of its patron saint—is shrouded in mystery. We do know that February has long been celebrated as a month of romance, and that St. Valentine's Day, as we know it today, contains vestiges of both Christian and ancient Roman tradition. But who was Saint Valentine, and how did he become associated with this ancient rite? The Catholic Church recognises at least three different saints named Valentine or Valentinus, all of whom were martyred. Read more [here](#).

Historic England explains that **Pancake Day** (or Shrove Tuesday) is the traditional feast day before the start of Lent on Ash Wednesday. Lent – the 40 days leading up to Christian festival of Easter – was traditionally a time of fasting and on Shrove Tuesday, Anglo-Saxon Christians went to confession and were "shriven" (which means *absolved from their sins*). A bell would be rung to call people to confession. This came to be called the "*Pancake Bell*" and is still rung today. Shrove Tuesday always falls 47 days before Easter Sunday, so the date varies from year to year and falls between 3rd February and 9th March.

Shrove Tuesday was the last opportunity to use up eggs and fats before embarking on the fast of Lent and pancakes are the perfect way of using

up these ingredients. In the UK and other parts of the world, Shrove Tuesday is better known as **Pancake Day** or Pancake Tuesday. It's also known as Mardi Gras in some places – every year, the people of New Orleans celebrate Mardi Gras, which is French for "Fat Tuesday." This holiday is the day before Ash Wednesday, and it begins a season of fasting, called Lent, for many Christians leading up to Easter Sunday.

Ash Wednesday is the first day of *Lent* and the day after *Shrove Tuesday*. It was first recorded in 1250—1300 AD. Like *Shrove Tuesday*, *Ash Wednesday* has a hint to tradition in the name itself. Religious observers of *Lent* place ash, typically in the shape of a cross, on their forehead as a sign of penitence and a reminder of mortality. Like all things associated with *Lent*, the day that *Ash Wednesday* falls on changes depending on the date of Easter.

While *Shrove Tuesday* gets much of the attention, it's really just a buildup to **Lent**, which is all about Easter. *Lent* is the period of 40 weekdays (46 days total) of fasting and penitence starting on *Ash Wednesday* and ending on the Saturday before Easter. It was first recorded before the year 900, and it comes from the Old English word *lænct*, meaning "spring or springtime." Easter is always the Sunday after the first full moon*. Since the last day of *Lent* is the day before Easter, the time period of *Lent* leads up to the longer days and shorter nights of spring.

* The timing of Easter (and therefore the timing of *Lent*) is based on something called the *vernal equinox* (equinox being the time when the sun crosses the plane of the earth's equator, making night and day of approximately equal length all over the earth and occurring about March 21 (vernal equinox, or spring equinox) and September 22 (autumnal equinox)).

Traditionally, followers abstain from meat on *Ash Wednesday* and every Friday leading up to Good Friday – the Friday before Easter. Some people may fast entirely or eat only one meal without meat. Others practice other forms of self-discipline and give up something they enjoy, like chocolate or social media.

Which brings us finally to **Leap Year** – a calendar year that contains an additional day added to keep the calendar year synchronised with the astronomical year or seasonal year. Usually, three out of four Februarys have 28 days but the fourth one has 29 days. Three criteria must be considered in the Gregorian calendar to identify leap years. Here are the rules:

- The year must be evenly divisible by 4;
- BUT if the year can also be evenly divided by 100, it is not a leap year;
- UNLESS the year is also evenly divisible by 400. Then it is a leap year.

Picture Credit: "Gaius Julius Caesar" by Bushtick is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0



Leap years in the western calendar were first introduced over 2000 years ago by Roman general Gaius Julius Caesar. The Julian calendar, which was named after him, had only one rule: any year evenly divisible by four would be a leap year. The trouble was that this formula produced too many leap years, causing the Julian calendar to drift apart from the tropical** year at a rate of 1 day every 128 years. This was not corrected until the introduction of the Gregorian calendar more than 1500 years later, when several days were skipped to realign our calendar with the seasons.

**A tropical year is the time that the Sun takes to return to the same position in the cycle of seasons, as seen from Earth; for example, the time from the vernal equinox to vernal equinox, or from the summer solstice to summer solstice.

As this story said at the beginning – isn't February interesting?

The Bayeux Tapestry warts and all

Sources: <http://e.historyextra.com/q/12EGPVoi7CWKO9HimXpvdJAN/wv>
 • <https://www.bayeuxmuseum.com/la-tapisserie-de-bayeux/decouvrir-la-tapisserie-de-bayeux/explorer-la-tapisserie-de-bayeux-en-ligne/> • <https://www.bayeuxmuseum.com/en/the-bayeux-tapestry/discover-the-bayeux-tapestry/what-is-the-bayeux-tapestry-about/>
 • <https://www.historyextra.com/period/second-world-war/why-the-nazis-fell-in-love-with-the-bayeux-tapestry/> • https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bayeux_Tapestry
 • <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Bayeux-Tapestry>



Picture Credit: "Bayeux Tapestry, First Meal" by profzucker is licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.0/)

What Is the Bayeux Tapestry about?

The Bayeux Tapestry recounts the events of the Norman Conquest in 1066 in embroidery form. The French, *Ministry of Culture - DRAC Normandie* says ([here](#)) that it has been classified as a Historical Monument since 1840 and inscribed since 2007 in the 'Memory of the World' register of UNESCO. The Bayeux Tapestry is a work, property of France, entrusted in deposit to the city of Bayeux by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1804. It is considered today as the most important monument of the textile arts of the Romanesque period, but also as a testimony of the conquest of England by Duke William of Normandy in 1066.

The Bayeux Museum website ([here](#)) explains the story of the Tapestry – beginning in 1064, when Edward the Confessor, King of England, instructs his brother-in-law Harold Godwinson to travel to Normandy to offer his cousin William the succession to the English throne. Although the end of the embroidery is missing, the story ends with the Anglo-Saxons fleeing at the end of the Battle of Hastings in October 1066. The Tapestry is an account of the medieval period in Normandy and England - it provides information about civil and military architecture such as castle mounds, armour consisting of a nasal helmet, hauberk and oblong shield and seafaring in the Viking tradition. The Tapestry, a band of linen on which are embroidered, in worsteds of eight colours, more than 70 scenes representing the Norman Conquest, shows 626 characters and 202 horses. It's a mighty piece of work: originally, the story may have been taken further, but the end of the strip has perished.

The Britannica.com website ([here](#)) describes the Bayeux Tapestry as: 'a medieval embroidery depicting the Norman Conquest of England in 1066, remarkable as a work of art and important as a source for 11th-century history.'

Having twice narrowly escaped destruction during the French Revolution, it was exhibited in Paris at Napoleon's wish in 1803–04 and thereafter was in civil custody at Bayeux, except in 1871 (during the Franco-German War) and from September 1939 to March 1945 (during World War II).

Restoration

Apparently, at some point in the next few years, the Tapestry is due to come to the UK on loan from its home in Bayeux, Normandy. Before that happens, a conservation brief was carried out on it to check its current condition. The status report took place during January 2020, at the time of the museum's annual closure.

Given the limited time required to examine the work of exceptional dimensions (nearly 70 metres (230 feet) long and 23 centimetres (20

inches) tall, the DRAC recruited a team of eight restorative-curators specialised in textiles, graduates of the Master's degree in Conservation of Cultural Heritage from Paris I University or the National Heritage Institute - the results were announced in January 2020:

'The Tapestry is a remarkable survival, given that it's not far from being a thousand-years old. But the conservation team did find 24,204 spots, 16,445 folds, 30 unstabilised tears, and a greater weakening of the first few metres of the work – all of which means that a restoration project is now planned, to take place in 2024.'

As part of this ongoing conservation project, the Bayeux Tapestry team have also produced a fabulous new online resource - a digital panorama of the entire embroidery. Be careful, once you start scrolling along, you'll be sucked into the fantastic detail of this artistic masterpiece. Click [here](#) to marvel at the work in all its glory. A little knowledge of the French language will help your enjoyment.

Who commissioned the Tapestry?

According to the Wikipedia account, the earliest known written reference to the tapestry is in a 1476 inventory of Bayeux Cathedral, but its origins have been the subject of much speculation and controversy. French legend maintained the tapestry was commissioned and created by Queen Matilda, William the Conqueror's wife, and her ladies-in-waiting. Indeed, in France, it is occasionally known as "La Tapisserie de la Reine Mathilde" (Tapestry of Queen Matilda).

However, scholarly analysis in the 20th century concluded it was probably commissioned by William's half-brother, **Bishop Odo**, who, after the Conquest, became Earl of Kent and, when William was absent in Normandy, regent of England.

The reasons for the Odo commission theory include:

- three of the bishop's followers mentioned in the *Domesday Book* appear on the tapestry;
- it was found in Bayeux Cathedral, built by Odo; and
- it may have been commissioned at the same time as the cathedral's construction in the 1070s, possibly completed by 1077 in time for display on the cathedral's dedication.

Nazi interest in the Tapestry

On HistoryExtra, Shirley Ann Brown ([here](#)) examined Nazi attempts to establish a Germanic presence in the celebrated chronicle of the Norman conquest. She explains how, on 1st August 1944, two SS officers drove a pair of trucks into the heart of Nazi-occupied Paris, and headed straight for the Louvre. These men were on a top-secret mission – one assigned to them by Heinrich Himmler, Reichsführer of the SS and one of the most powerful men in the Third Reich.

Himmler had tasked the two men with descending into the bowels of the world-famous art museum, seizing the Bayeux Tapestry and spiriting it away to a "safe place" far from the grasp of the Allies' rapidly advancing armies. Himmler was to be disappointed. A few days earlier, a group of local resistance fighters – tipped off by the codebreakers of Bletchley Park – had learned of the SS men's mission and rushed to the Louvre to protect the iconic embroidery.

Shirley Ann Brown is professor emerita of art history at York University, Toronto, a member of the Bayeux Tapestry Advisory Committee, and author of *The Bayeux Tapestry: A Sourcebook*. Her article is fascinating, and you will enjoy reading it.

Podcasts

History Extra, the official website for *BBC History Magazine* and *BBC History Revealed*, has some fantastic podcasts to bring the event of 1066 to life: click [here](#) to listen.

Everything you wanted to know about the Moon

Sources:

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- <https://www.thesun.co.uk/tech/5232103/blue-moon-rare-what/> • <https://www.loc.gov/everyday-mysteries/astronomy/item/what-is-a-blue-moon-is-it-ever-really-blue/>
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Picture Credit: "Moon phases" by MarkGregory007 is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0



The Natural History Museum

The Natural History Museum ([here](https://www.nhm.ac.uk/discover/factfile-the-moon.html)) provides a useful source of detail about our Moon:

• Moon Facts

Equator circumference: 10,917km Radius: 1,737km
 Average distance from Earth: 384,400 kilometres
 Temperature: -173°C to 127°C Moon type: rocky
 Average orbital speed: 3,683km/h (1.02km/s) Year length: 27 days

• How big is the Moon?

The Moon is a little over a quarter the size of the Earth, with a circumference of 10,917km around the equator and a radius (the distance from the core of the Moon to the surface) of just 1,737km. In relation to Earth, the Moon is much larger than would be expected, and this is thought to be due to how it was formed.

• How cold is the Moon?

There is almost no atmosphere on the Moon, which means it cannot trap heat or insulate the surface. In full sunshine, temperatures on the Moon reach 127°C - well above boiling point. There are 13 and a half days of high temperatures followed by 13 and a half days of darkness, and once the Sun goes down, the temperature at the bottom of craters can plummet to -173°C.

• Is there water on the Moon?

Due to its tilt, some parts of the Moon's surface never see sunlight, allowing water ice to survive in some of its craters. When India's Chandrayaan-1 lunar orbiter passed over the north pole of the Moon in 2009, it found more than 40 craters thought to contain water ice. This confirmed a discovery from the previous year that found water ice on the southern pole. In addition, the Moon has some water trapped in its rocks.

• How far from Earth is the Moon?

The Moon is orbiting Earth at an average distance of 384,400 kilometres, meaning it would take over 17 days non-stop to fly there on a commercial plane. Its orbit is not perfectly circular, but varies between 252,000 and 225,600 kilometres away. We tend to think it is closer than it actually is, simply because it is the largest celestial object in the sky.

• Is the Moon getting closer?

No. The Moon is actually gradually getting further away - every single year,

the Moon moves about four centimetres further out. This is because there is a small amount of friction between Earth and the tides, slowing our planet's rotation. As Earth's spin slows, the Moon is creeping away.

• How long is a day on the Moon?

It takes 27** days for the Moon to go around Earth and 27 days to rotate once on its axis. Because the Moon is orbiting Earth at the same rate at which it rotates itself, this means that the same side of the Moon always faces the Earth. This is known as synchronous rotation***.

** Other sources, for example, UniverseToday.com ([here](https://www.universetoday.com/2019/07/27/moon-rotation/)), says that a day on the Moon lasts as long as 29.5 Earth days. In other words, if you were standing on the surface of the Moon, it would take 29.5 days for the Sun to move all the way across the sky and return to its original position again. However, as with all bodies in the Solar System, distinguishing between different types of days (based on different types of periods) is necessary.

*** Synchronous rotation is why some people call the side that never faces the planet the 'dark side' of the Moon. This is somewhat misleading, however: it is more correctly referred to as the far side of the Moon. As the Moon orbits the Earth, most of its surface is bathed in sunlight at some point.

• Is there an atmosphere on the Moon?

Scientists thought that there was no atmosphere on the Moon for a long time, but recent studies have confirmed that there is one. The very thin atmosphere, known as an exosphere, contains helium, argon, neon, ammonia, methane and carbon dioxide. It also contains sodium and potassium, which are not usually found as gases in the atmospheres of Earth, Venus or Mars. Where this atmosphere comes from is still not known. Some theories suggest that the solar winds and high energy particles are stripping material from the surface of the Moon, while others propose that evaporation of surface material might be involved or even meteor impacts. It could also be a combination of all of these effects.

• Why are there so many impact craters on the Moon?

The thin atmosphere leaves very little to protect the Moon from asteroids. Early in the solar system's formation, all planets and moons were bombarded with rocks. The thin atmosphere on the Moon has meant that the impact craters have remained prominent - because the Moon has no weather, there is effectively no erosion on the celestial body.

• What is the Moon made of?

Like Earth, the Moon can be divided into the crust, mantle and core. At its very centre, the Moon has a solid iron core with a temperature of between 1,327°C and 1427°C. This is hot enough to create a surrounding molten liquid iron outer core but not hot enough to warm the surface. The mantle which envelopes the core is roughly 1,000 kilometres thick. During the early history of the Moon, this layer was once liquid magma and the source of the intense volcanic activity that led to the formation of the lava plains on its surface. As the magma cooled down, this process stopped. This is encased in a crust, made up mainly of anorthosite rock, rich in oxygen, silicon, calcium, and aluminium. The surface is coated with lunar regolith - a fine mix of dust, broken rock and material. While Earth's regolith is formed by erosion and weather, on the Moon it all comes from meteor impacts as the surface is blasted into fine pieces. In some places, this lunar regolith is just three metres deep, while in other parts, it has settled into drifts some 20 metres deep.

• How does the Moon cause the tides?

The gravitational pull of the Moon causes the water on the nearest side of Earth to bulge outwards, resulting in a high tide. Curiously, it also causes the water on the other side of the Earth to bulge outwards. This is because the Moon's gravity is not the only force acting on the planet's water, as Earth's own gravity also has to be taken into account. The resulting tidal force is stretching and squashing Earth, resulting in the water bulging on the two opposite sides of the planet. This is why we experience two high tides and two low tides per day.

Acknowledgement: We acknowledge that access to and use of the content provided on web pages is provided by the National History Museum (NHM) on terms set out on their website at <https://www.nhm.ac.uk/discover/factfile-the-moon.html>. We also acknowledge that subject to certain limitations, there is no copyright infringement by 'fair dealing'.

The Royal Museums Greenwich

The Royal Museums Greenwich website ([here](https://www.rmg.co.uk/discover/explore/names-full-moons-throughout-year)) provides an explanation of the names of full moons throughout the year. Blue moons, Harvest moons, Worm moons? Find out more about the ancient names associated with the phases of the Moon - and what they mean.

Continued >>>

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• What are the phases of the Moon?

When we look up at the Moon, we don't always see the same amount of its surface being lit up. This apparent change in the shape of the Moon is known as its 'phase'.

• What causes the phases of the Moon?

The phases of the Moon are caused by the relative positions of the Moon, Sun and Earth. Because the Moon produces no visible light of its own, we can only see the parts of the Moon that are lit up by other objects. A small amount of light comes from distant stars and the reflection of light from the Earth (known as Earthshine). However, the main source of light for the Moon is the Sun. At almost all times, half of the Moon is being lit up by the Sun, but this need not be the half that is facing towards the Earth. The only exception is during a lunar eclipse. If the Moon is between the Earth and the Sun in its orbit, then the back side of the Moon is being lit up, and the side facing the Earth is in darkness. This is called a **new Moon**. If the Moon is on the other side of the Earth compared to the Sun, then the near side of the Moon will be fully lit up: a **full Moon**.

• How many phases of the Moon are there?

The Moon goes through multiple stages of partial illumination during its different phases. These are the banana-shaped **crescent Moon**, the D-shaped **quarter Moon** and the almost complete **gibbous Moon**. Finally, each phase is also named after its position in the full 29.5-day cycle based on whether it is growing (waxing) or shrinking (waning).

• The eight phases of the Moon in order are:

- new Moon
- waxing crescent Moon
- first quarter Moon
- waxing gibbous Moon
- full Moon
- waning gibbous Moon
- last quarter Moon
- waning crescent Moon.

NOTE: Other sources put the number of phases as ten – see picture on the previous page.

The full, quarter and new Moons are all the instants in time when the Moon is exactly fully, half or not at all illuminated from our perspective on Earth. The crescent and gibbous Moons each last approximately a week.

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Moons with other names

• Harvest Moon

The term "harvest moon" refers to the full, bright Moon that occurs closest to the start of the autumn equinox. The name dates from the time before electricity, when farmers depended on the Moon's light to harvest their crops late into the night. This is why the harvest moon can fall any time between September and October. The Equinox is when the Earth's equator is almost directly in line with the centre of the Sun. This occurs twice a year - around late March (spring equinox) and late September (autumn equinox).

• Blue Moon

A "blue moon" is an additional full Moon that appears in a subdivision of a year: either the third of four full moons in a season or a second full moon in a month of the common calendar. The phrase in modern usage has nothing to do with the actual colour of the Moon, although a visually blue moon (the Moon appearing with a bluish tinge) may occur under certain atmospheric conditions.

NOTE: Owing to the rarity of a blue moon, the term "blue moon" is used colloquially to mean a rare event, as in the phrase "once in a blue moon."

What is a super blue blood moon?

Well, we know what a super moon is: as a reminder, it's when the Full Moon or New Moon occurs during the Moon's closest approach to Earth (its perigee). It is often called a supermoon. Super moon is not an official astronomical term - it was first coined by an astrologer, Richard Nolle, in 1979. He defined it as 'a New or a Full Moon that occurs when the Moon is at

or near (within 90% of) its closest approach to Earth in its orbit'. It is unclear why he chose the 90% cut off in his definition.

A blue moon is what you call the second full moon in one month. On average, they happen every two and a half years. But it's actually nothing to do with the Moon appearing blue! A blood moon is the name for viewing the Moon during a total lunar eclipse. Because of the way light passes through the Earth's atmosphere during an eclipse, red light from the Sun is reflected onto it and gives it a reddish colour and the nickname blood moon.

Never-ending

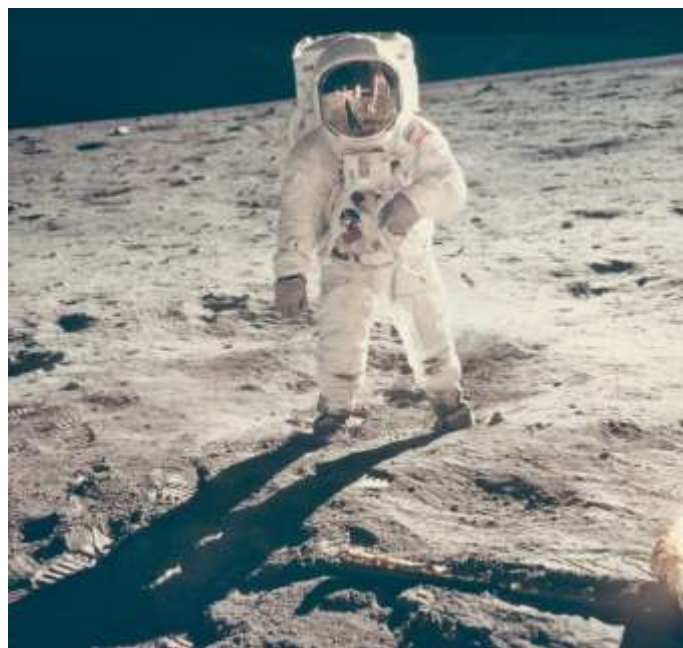
The story doesn't end there as the moon has multi-manifestations: there are Moons for specific harvests: Corn Moon, Barley Moon, Hay Moon, Grain Moon, Fruit Moon, Nut Moon, Blackberry Moon, Strawberry Moon. There are moons for killing: Buck Moon, Hunter's Moon, Hare Moon, Sturgeon Moon. There are Moons for growing things: Pink Moon (when the first spring flowers appear), Egg Moon, Budding Moon. There are Moons for harder times: Little Famine Moon, Big Famine Moon, Hungry Moon, Bony Moon, Dying Moon.

Men on the Moon

In 1969, three men on the Apollo 11 spacecraft successfully landed on the moon. It was the first time that humankind had done so and was an event that caught the attention and imagination of the world. Since 1969, there have been other lunar landing – see the list ([here](#)) on Wikipedia,

The folk at Penguin Random House UK ([here](#)) have put together ten out-of-this-world facts about the first moon landing, and it's worth reading to remind ourselves of those gigantic steps towards space exploration. Here are some facts to whet your appetite:

- When Neil Armstrong landed the lunar module, there were only 30 seconds of fuel left.
- While Neil Armstrong may have been the first man to set foot on the moon, Buzz Aldrin was the first man to go to the toilet there, using a unique tube in his spacesuit!
- A remarkable woman called Katherine Johnson carried out the calculations that made the mission to the moon possible and got the astronauts home again. Katherine's incredible achievement made it possible for other women and people of colour to follow in her footsteps, breaking down barriers of race and gender.



Picture Credit: "Man on the moon, 20 July 1969" by Thomas Cizauskas is marked with CC-PDM 1.0

If you wondered what a tragus piercing is, read on...

Excerpted from: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/magazine/4545330.stm>



Picture Credit: "Tragus piercing" by khrystunaA is licensed under CC BY 2.0

What is it?

A tragus piercing is the perforation of the tragus, which projects immediately in front of the ear canal to insert and wear a piece of jewellery. The piercing itself is usually made with a small gauge hollow piercing needle, and typical jewellery would be a small diameter captive bead ring or small gauge post style piercing jewellery. A related piercing is known as the antitragus piercing. Just before Christmas 2005, BBC News ([here](#)) reported that Hollywood star Scarlett Johansson had been flaunting an earring in her tragus and asked: *what does it say about a person?*

The tragus is the new belly button in the world of piercing

"The number of people getting their tragus pierced has really grown over the past few years, it is viewed as something slightly unusual," says a spokesman for Primitive Origins, a piercing and tattoo studio in London. "But people try and read too much into piercings. They do make a statement, but they are transient and can be taken out at any point. There is far more psychology behind tattooing because it is permanent."

Ear piercing has existed for thousands of years and was often used to communicate. The Romans associated ear piercing with wealth and luxury, while ancient South American and African tribes pierced and stretched ears to show their social standing. Men and women of all ages are attracted to the idea of ear piercing – is it something you would consider?

Scientists find 'one in a million' super-Earth

Excerpted from: <https://www.cnet.com/news/scientists-spot-one-in-a-million-super-earth/>
See also: <https://www.space.com/30231-super-earth.html>

Toward the centre of our galaxy, in a star system far away, is a planet with features that remind us of home on [Mother Earth](#). Astronomers at New Zealand's University of Canterbury (UC) have discovered a particularly rare super-Earth. "The new planet is among only a handful of extra-solar planets that have been detected with both sizes and orbits close to that of Earth," said UC in a news release in May 2020 ([see here](#)). A super-Earth is a planet that is close to Earth's size and mass, but not so big that its surface is surrounded by a gas envelope — like a small version of Uranus. If the super-Earth is in the habitable zone of its star and has a life-friendly atmosphere, it could host life, but that is not a guarantee.

"Extra-solar planet" is another term for *exoplanet*, which describes a planet located outside our solar system. We only have artists' impressions of what these planets might look like, but they continue to fuel our curiosity as we seek out distant worlds that feel familiar. The newly spotted exoplanet's year lasts about 617 days, and it travels around a much smaller star than the sun. It's located near the Milky Way's central bulge of stars. For scale, Earth is about 25,000 light-years away from the galactic centre.

The researchers published their findings in *The Astronomical Journal* ([here](#)).

Herbs

Excerpted from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nine_Herbs_Charm
• British Herbs <http://www.bhta.org.uk/about-herbs/herb-facts/>
• RHS Guide to Growing Herbs <https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/profile?pid=679>
• Herbal Histories: from the National Trust magazine for Spring 2021, page 59



Picture Credit: "herb garden" by Amanda Kae's Photoz is licensed under CC BY 2.0

Introduction

The word herbaceous is derived from the Latin *herbaceus* meaning "grassy", from *herba* "grass, herb". Herbs have a variety of uses, including culinary, medicinal, and in some cases, spiritual. In general usage, herbs are plants with savoury or

aromatic properties used for flavouring and garnishing food, medicinal purposes, or fragrances, excluding vegetables and other plants consumed for macronutrients. Culinary use typically distinguishes herbs from spices:

- Herbs generally refer to the leafy green or flowering parts of a plant (either fresh or dried)
- Spices are usually dried and produced from other parts of the plant, including seeds, bark, roots and fruits

Tea comes from the leaves of the *Camellia Sinensis* plant, a shrub native to regions of Asia. Some herbs can be infused in boiling water to make herbal teas (also termed *tisanes**). Typically the dried leaves, flowers or seeds are used, or fresh herbs are used. Herbal teas tend to be made from aromatic herbs, may not contain tannins or caffeine, and are not typically mixed with milk. Common examples include chamomile tea, or mint tea.

* *Tisanes* are teas that don't contain leaves of the *Camellia Sinensis*. Instead, they are infusions made from other plants' leaves, roots, berries, and spices.

Herb Facts

Did you know that...

- Fresh herbs contain more antioxidants (fighting cancer and heart disease) than some fruit and vegetables.
- Rosemary is rich in antioxidants that help maintain vitality and slow the ageing process.
- The Romans believed that the consumption of mint would increase their intelligence and the smell of mint in their houses was also a symbol of hospitality.
- Growing a pot of basil in the kitchen may smell good to us but not so to flies and mosquitoes who are repelled by the aroma.
- Mint leaves or oil deters ants and so a few scattered leaves in your cupboards can prove a useful, natural solution.
- Fresh herbs aid the digestion of food (especially fat) and help eliminate toxins from the body.
- Chives have a beneficial effect on the circulatory system, lowering blood pressure.
- Dill is effective for the treatment of colic, gas and indigestion. It was once an important herb in witchcraft and a purported aphrodisiac. It has a distinctive sour flavour that makes an interesting and sometimes unexpected statement in cooking. The leaves, seeds and flowers of the plant can all be used.
- Today we use the majority of the traditional 'strewing' herbs to make scented sachets to deter moths, for pot pourri to sweeten the room and a variety of other aromatic uses.
- Herbal seeds have been found in pre-historic cave dwellings dating back as far back as 500,000 years ago. Our ancestors have always used herbs in cooking and health remedies.
- The Egyptians studied herbs and used them in medicinal and religious functions as far back as 3500 BC.

Continued >>>

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- The Chinese began the organised study of herbs in 2500 BC. Written records in China have survived showing the uses of herbs that date from 100 BC.
- Parsley is a natural breath freshener, particularly in combating the potency of garlic.
- Ancient records reveal recipes for herb infused oils and creams in the tombs of legendary beauties such as Cleopatra.

Etymology

In botany, the term *herb* refers to a herbaceous plant, defined as a small, seed-bearing plant without a woody stem in which all aerial parts (i.e. above ground) die back to the ground at the end of each growing season. Usually, the term refers to perennials, although herbaceous plants can also be annuals (where the plant dies at the end of the growing season and grows back from seed next year), or biennials. This term is in contrast to shrubs and trees.

Culinary Herbs

Some plants are used as both herbs and spices, such as dill weed and dill seed or coriander leaves and seeds. There are also some herbs, such as those in the mint family, that are used for both culinary and medicinal purposes. Herbs can be:

- *perennials* such as thyme, sage or lavender
- *biennials* such as parsley, or annuals like basil
- *perennial herbs* can be shrubs such as rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*) or trees such as bay laurel (*Laurus nobilis*) – this contrasts with *botanical herbs*, which by definition cannot be woody plants

Some plants are used as both herbs and spices, such as dill weed and dill seed or coriander leaves and seeds. There are also some herbs, such as those in the mint family, that are used for both culinary and medicinal purposes.

Medicinal Herbs

Herbs were used in prehistoric medicine. As far back as 5000 BCE, there is evidence that Sumerians used herbs in medicine was inscribed on cuneiform. In 162 CE, the physician Galen was known for concocting complicated herbal remedies that contained up to 100 ingredients. Some plants contain phytochemicals that have effects on the body. There may be some effects when consumed in the small levels that typify culinary "spicing", but some herbs are toxic in larger quantities. For instance, some types of herbal extract, such as the extract of St. John's-wort (*Hypericum perforatum*) or of kava (*Piper methysticum*), can be used for medical purposes to relieve depression and stress. However, large amounts of these herbs may lead to toxic overload that may involve complications, some of a serious nature, and should be used with caution. Complications can also arise when being taken with some prescription medicines.

Herbs have long been used as the basis of traditional Chinese herbal medicine, with usage dating as far back as the 1st century AD and far before. In India, the Ayurveda medicinal system is based on herbs. Medicinal use of herbs in Western cultures has its roots in the Hippocratic (Greek) elemental healing system.

The Royal Horticultural Society Guide to Herbs

The Royal Horticultural Society provide a brief guide to growing and using some of the most commonly-grown herbs:

- **Basil (*Ocimum basilicum*):** Grow in rich, light, well-drained to dry soils in the sun. Pinch out growing tips to encourage bushiness and delay flowering, though regular sowings are still needed for a summer-long supply. Leaves are picked during the growing season and used fresh or dried. Purple-leaved cultivars have ornamental value
- **Bay (*Laurus nobilis*):** Grow in well-drained soil in the sun or part shade. Bay also lends itself well to container-growing. Trim to shape in summer, removing suckers from standards and topiary as they appear. Leaves can be picked in summer for drying.
- **Caraway (*Carum carvi*):** Grow in well-drained, fertile soil in full sun, tolerant of heavy soils. Leaves and roots used fresh as a vegetable, seeds, when ripe, used dried.

- **Chervil (*Anthriscus cerefolium*):** Grow in rich, light, moisture-retentive soil in part shade. Has delicate aniseed flavour; leaves are used fresh in salads or in French cooking; flowers and roots are also edible.
- **Chives (*Allium schoenoprasum*):** Grow in rich, well-drained soil in full sun, though it is tolerant of wet conditions and heavy soils. Cut down to the ground after flowering to produce fresh leaves. Chives have a mild garlic-like flavour; leaves, bulbs and flowers are all used.
- **Coriander (*Coriandrum sativum*):** Grow in well-drained fertile soil in full sun, but leaves may be more productive in part shade. Leaves and roots are used fresh, especially in Thai cooking. Dried seeds can be used in curries and pickles.
- **Dill (*Anethum graveolens*):** Grow in well-drained neutral to slightly acid soil in the sun. Leaves are cut in spring and summer for using fresh or dried; seeds harvested in summer for use dried, all widely used in cooking, especially Scandinavian cookery.
- **Marjoram (*Origanum vulgare*):** Grows best in well-drained to dry, neutral to alkaline soil in the sun. Leaves are picked during the growing season, often dried in Italian, Greek and Mexican cuisine.
- **Mint (*Mentha spp*):** Grown in rich, moist soil in the sun or part shade where it may become invasive, so it is best grown in a container and regularly divided. The aromatic leaves are used for flavouring and tea.
- **Parsley (*Petroselinum crispum*)** Grow in rich, well-drained neutral to alkaline soil in the sun or part shade. Pick leaves just before flowering and use fresh, an essential ingredient in French, Italian and Middle East cookery.
- **Rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*):** Grow in well-drained, ideally neutral to alkaline soil in full sun with shelter in cold areas as it rarely survives prolonged freezing. Remove dead stems and weak growth in spring, prune after flowering to encourage bushy growth. Fresh or dried leaves are used for flavouring, especially meat such as lamb. Fresh sprigs can be steeped in vinegar or olive oil.
- **Sage (*Salvia officinalis*):** Grow in well-drained to dry neutral to alkaline soils in full sun. Sage dislikes damp conditions and low light in winter. Many cultivars have excellent ornamental value. Hard prune in early spring to promote bushy growth. Leaves are used to flavour many dishes, especially meat. Fresh or dried leaves are used for tea.
- **French tarragon (*Artemisia dracunculus*):** Grow in well-drained, neutral to slightly alkaline soil in the sun. Pick leaves before flowering. Has distinctive, aromatic leaves used to flavour chicken and egg dishes, salad dressing and sauces
- **Thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*):** Grow in well-drained, even stony poor soils in the sun; most thyme prefer neutral to alkaline soil. Trim lightly after flowering to maintain a bushy habit. The leaves and flowers flavour many dishes, especially French cuisine

Herbal Histories: from the National Trust magazine for Spring 2021

- **Thyme:** the Romans used thyme for massage oils baths, and as an antidote for snakebites, it is a wonderful stock flavouring and is used in stews and as a good accompaniment for carrots and leeks. Because thyme has a strong flavour, you don't need to use much of it.
- **Tarragon:** Once called little dragon mugwort, tarragon is aromatic, has a slight aniseed taste and grows well in containers. French tarragon needs to be grown from cuttings. Tarragon is excellent in vinegars and salads or with chicken, fish and eggs.
- **Marjoram:** is closely related to Oregano and is often used in Italian dishes, tomato sauces and pasta. It is said to have been grown by Aphrodite, the goddess of love. Greek oregano is good for drying. Marjoram is milder, and usually, it is used whilst fresh.
- **Lovage:** Has recently been rising in popularity. This herb had a taste similar to celery and can be used in stews, soups and salads. As it can grow up to 1.8 m high, take care where you plant it.
- **Parsley:** has traditionally been used to garnish meat and fish salads. It brings a bright and mildly bitter punch to a plate. It is also used in tabbouleh and as one of the key ingredients in a French herb bundle or bouquet garni, adding flavour in soups and stocks.

The History of Brighton

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Brighton

• <http://www.visitoruk.com/Brighton/timeline.html> • <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brighton>
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 • <http://www.brightonhistory.org.uk/> • <http://www.brightonhistory.org.uk/history/Burstow.html>
 • <http://www.localhistories.org/brighton.html> • <https://spartacus-educational.com/ITbrighton.htm>



Brighton may have set out as an ancient fishing village, emerging as a health resort in the 18th century, but now it is a vibrant and bustling city.

Picture Credit: "Brighton Pavilion" by p_a_h is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/)

The location of the city, just 50 miles from London, has made it a popular destination for tourists, renowned for its diverse communities, quirky shopping areas, large and vibrant cultural, music and arts scene and its large LGBT population, leading to its recognition as the "unofficial gay capital of the UK". Brighton has been called the UK's "hippiest city" and "the happiest place to live in the UK".

But first, let's go back in time.

The naming of the City

The etymology of Brighton lies in the Old English *Beorhthelmes tūn*, which means Beorhthelm's farmstead or village. The name has evolved through several incarnations: *Bristelmestune* (1086), *Brichelmeston* (1198), *Brighthelmeston* (1493), *Brighthemston* (1610) and *Brighthelmston* (1816). *Brighton* came into everyday use in the early 19th century.

The Terrain, in brief

The western section of the cliffs at Black Rock, near Brighton Marina, is an unusual outcropping of palaeolithic Coombe Rock, revealing in section a paleocliff cut into Cretaceous Chalk. Two hundred thousand years ago, the beach was significantly higher, and this clear stratum can be observed preserved in the cliff. Protohumans hunted various animals, including mammoths, along the shore. The preservation of this raised beach and associated evidence of a coastal paleolandscape has led to protected status for the cliff. This section can be seen directly behind the car park of supermarket Asda.

Starting in The Neolithic period

The Neolithic period is interesting: Whitehawk Camp is an early Neolithic causewayed enclosure dating to 3500 BC. Its centre is some way towards the transmitter on the south side of Manor Road (which bisects the enclosure), opposite the Brighton Racecourse grandstand**. Archaeological enquiry (by the Curwens in the 1930s and English Heritage in the 1990s) have determined four concentric circles of ditches and mounds, broken or "causewayed" in many places. Significant vestiges of the mounds remain, and their arc can be traced by eye. The building of a new housing estate in the early 1990s over the south-eastern portion of the enclosure egregiously damaged the archaeology and caused the loss of the ancient panoramic view.

* NOTE: As a schoolboy, we were made to run cross-country on a route near the Brighton Racecourse and return, via Wilson Avenue, to the sports pavilion at East Brighton Park – long after the Neolithic period!

The fate of a neolithic long barrow** at Waldegrave Road is also interesting, providing hardcore during the building of Balfour Road. The workers were regularly disturbed by the concentrations of human remains poking through their foundations. An important pre-Roman site is *Hollingbury Castle* (also known as *Hollingbury Camp* and *Hollingbury Hillfort*), situated next to the Hollingbury Golf Course. It is one of the numerous hillforts found across southern Britain.

** NOTE: Long barrows are a style of monument constructed across Western Europe in the fifth and fourth millennia BCE, during the Early Neolithic period. Typically built from earth and either timber or stone, those using the latter material represent the oldest widespread tradition of stone construction in the world. The long barrow has surprising similarities to the funeral mound found at Sutton Hoo in Suffolk in 1939.

The Norman Conquest to the 17th century

As with other settlements on the south-east coast, Brighton appears to have developed as a landing-place for boats; the early function of the landing-place as a fishing centre is reflected in payment from one manorial holding of a rent of 4,000 herrings recorded in Domesday Book shortly after the end of the Saxon period in 1086.

The Domesday Book also records that at the close of the Saxon period, Brighton was held by Earl Godwin (King Harold's father), one of the most powerful earls in England with extensive land holdings in Sussex.

After the Norman conquest, King William conferred the barony of Lewes to his son-in-law William de Warenne. The Domesday Book of 1086 contains the first documentary evidence of a settlement on the modern site of Brighton. The settlement was made up of three manors, the first being described as *Bristelmestune*. There wasn't much to the place then although a church was mentioned with a value of £12.

To give you some idea of its explosive growth, *Brighthelmston* was a fishing village in the 16th century, with 400 fishermen and sixty boats, yet by the early 17th century, it had become the largest town in Sussex with a population of nearly 4,000 people.

During the reign of Henry VIII, Brighton was burned to the ground by French raiders. The only good thing to come out of the event was the creation of the first map of Brighton. The original map is held at the British Library, but Brighton Museums have 19th century copies of the map which show how the town was laid out in the early 1500s.

Georgian times were interesting for Brighton

Modern Brighton began to emerge in the 1750s. After Dr Richard Russell suggested that seawater could cure all manner of ailments and set up a practice in Brighton from 1754, it quickly became the largest and most successful seaside resort in the UK.

The Brighton (Royal) Pavilion

John Nash built the Brighton Pavilion (started in 1815) for the Prince Regent. Britannica.com ([here](https://www.britannica.com/place/Brighton-Pavilion)) records that:

'In 1783, the Prince of Wales, later the prince regent and then King George IV, made the first of his many visits to Brighton. His powerful patronage of the locality extended almost continuously to 1827 and stamped the town with the distinguished character still reflected in its Regency squares and terraces. His Royal Pavilion, designed in Indian style with fantastic Chinese interior decorations, was built on the Old Steine, where fishing nets were once dried. The pavilion now houses a museum and art gallery, while the Dome, originally the royal stables, is used for concerts and conferences. Maria Fitzherbert, the secret wife of George IV, is buried in St. John's Roman Catholic church. Victorian Brighton grew rapidly with the opening of the railway (1841) connecting it with London.'

The Brighton Hollywood at Whitehawk that never happened

On 7th November 1925, the *Evening Argus* reported that 'the possibility of "a British Hollywood" in the neighbourhood of Brighton was being discussed. It may have been the right place, but it was the wrong time: during the early 1920s, British film production went into a dramatic decline. From a total of 145 films in 1920, the number had dropped to only 45 in 1925. This coincided with a boom in cinema building, the Regent in Brighton being at the forefront of the trend. By 1925, British films accounted for only five per cent of business at the UK box office, the rest being almost exclusively American. Nearly a third of America's global film export earnings came from Britain.

FURTHER READING

A Brief History of Brighton, England, By Tim Lambert, at: <http://www.localhistories.org/brighton.html>

The Queen who had five step-mothers

Excerpted from these sources: • <https://www.historyextra.com/period/tudor/bloody-mary-tudor-relationship-stepmothers-henry-viii-anne-boleyn/> • <http://under-these-restless-skies.blogspot.com/2013/12/anne-boleyn-wicked-stepmother.html> • <http://www.thetudorswiki.com/page/The+Tudor+Stepmothers> • <https://www.biography.com/royalty/mary-tudor> • https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_I_of_England



Picture Credit: "Portrait of Mary Tudor, Queen Mary I (1516 - 1558), circa the 1550s" by Iisbyl is marked with CC-PDM 1.0

About Mary

Mary Tudor was born on 18th 1516 at the Palace of Placentia in Greenwich, England. She was the only child of King Henry VIII and his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, to survive through childhood. She was baptised as a Catholic shortly after her birth. Mary was truly Henry's daughter – unyielding and with an iron will. Her always-fragile health suffered, but her father was unsympathetic. As far as he was concerned, her misery could end as soon as she was once again an obedient daughter and get along with his wife (whoever that was at the time), but until then, she could suffer in a situation of her own making.

Mary Tudor, who succeeded her half-brother Edward, was the first queen regnant of England and Ireland, reigning from 1553 until she died in 1558. She is best known for her religious persecutions of Protestants and the executions of over 300 subjects. She sought to return England to the Catholic Church and earned the name "Bloody Mary." She died at St. James Palace in London on 17th November 1558 and was succeeded to the throne by her half-sister Elizabeth.

Mary and her Stepmothers

Mary Tudor, the eldest daughter of King Henry VIII, was never short of mothers. She had five stepmothers plus, of course, her birth mother, Catherine of Aragon. Mary's father, King Henry VIII, in pursuit of five further wives, had famously separated from her mother. It left Mary as the only living child of her parent's union. By the age of 27, she had five stepmothers foisted upon her. Mary always remained close to her mother, but the same cannot always be said for her relationships with the stepmothers who followed.

Henry VIII was married six times during his 38-year reign. The last five of his wives were stepmothers to his children:

- Queen Anne Boleyn (stepmother to princess Mary Tudor, daughter of Queen Catherine of Aragon)
- Queen Jane Seymour (stepmother to the princesses Mary Tudor, daughter of Queen Catharine of Aragon and Elizabeth Tudor, daughter of Queen Anne Boleyn)
- Queen Anne of Cleves (stepmother to princesses Mary and Elizabeth Tudor and prince Edward Tudor, son of Queen Jane Seymour)
- Queen Kathryn Howard (stepmother to the princesses Mary and Elizabeth Tudor and prince Edward Tudor)
- Queen Katherine (or Catherine) Parr (stepmother to the princesses Mary and Elizabeth Tudor and prince Edward Tudor)

The Tudor Kings and Queens

Henry VII (1485 – 1509)
Henry VIII (1509–1547)
Edward VI (1547–1553)
Lady Jane Grey (1553)
Mary I (1553 – 1558)
Elizabeth I (1558 – 1603)

When Anne Boleyn became Queen of England, she and Mary fell out. Queen Anne was, by many accounts, Mary's least favourite stepmother and had a bad and unhappy relationship. Mary refused to accept any other woman as queen except her mother and started fighting hard for her rights as an heir to the throne. Queen Anne's downfall was inevitable as she soon disappointed Henry and was sentenced to death. Before her execution, it is said she asked for Mary's forgiveness.

Relationships with the stepmothers that followed seemed to go from bad to worse until Katherine Parr came along and caught the King's eye, and he entered into his sixth and final marriage on 12th July 1543. Both Princess Mary and Elizabeth attended the wedding at Hampton Court. Mary and Katherine's good relationship did not change after Katherine married Henry, although it is unlikely that Mary truly considered her a stepmother in the same way that Elizabeth and Edward did.

Queen Katherine was a driving force in restoring both Mary and Elizabeth to the line of succession. She was an attentive stepmother for all three of Henry's children, from overseeing their educations to having their portraits painted. That said, evidence suggests that Mary did enjoy a close relationship with Jane Seymour, Anne of Cleves, and Katherine Parr. As a stepdaughter, Mary would surely not always have been easy to get on with, but she survived a very uncommon, even dangerous situation: constant competition with five others to be the most prominent royal woman in England.

Mary and her half-sister Elizabeth (later Elizabeth I)

Henry and Anne's daughter, Elizabeth, was born on 7th September 1533, an arrival that did not make Mary's relationship with Anne any less hostile. Mary was now required to acknowledge Elizabeth as a legitimate princess and Henry's heir, something she refused to do, but which, upon Mary's death, happened anyway.

Mary and her half-brother Edward (later Edward VI)

Edward VI was King of England and Ireland from 28th January 1547 until his death, succeeding his father. Edward, the son of Henry VIII and Jane Seymour, and England's first monarch to be raised as a Protestant, was crowned at the age of nine. During his reign, the realm was governed by a regency council because Edward never reached maturity. Edward's reign was marked by economic problems and social unrest that in 1549 erupted into riot and rebellion. The transformation of the Church of England into a recognisably Protestant body also occurred under Edward, who took great interest in religious matters. Although his father, Henry VIII, had severed the link between the Church and Rome, Henry VIII had never permitted the renunciation of Catholic doctrine or ceremony. It was during Edward's reign that Protestantism was established for the first time in England with reforms that included the abolition of clerical celibacy and the Mass and the imposition of compulsory services in English.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The complete information from HistoryExtra ([here](#)) was first published in February 2021 and provided an excellent view of the relationship Mary Tudor had with her stepmothers. And, if you want to know more about the Tudors and find loads of fun things to watch etc., go to the English Heritage website [here](#).



Picture Credit: "Portrait of King Henry VIII 1540c." by Iisbyl is marked with CC-PDM 1.0

Genius

Sources: <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/the-age-of-achievement>
 • <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/people-who-accomplished-incredible-things-shockingly-young-age-a7520131.html> • <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-16425522> • <https://www.britannica.com/list/7-famous-child-prodigies>



Picture Credit: "You're a genius" by Éole is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

Age is no bar.

Doctors say it's all downhill from 45. A study in the *British Medical Journal* suggests that our brains begin to deteriorate from the age of 45. Examining the vocabulary, comprehension and memories of seven-thousand 45-70-year-olds, the researchers from University College London (UCL) found a 3.6% decline in the second half of their forties.

In the BBC article ('Brain function can start declining 'as early as age 45'), it reported that the Alzheimer's Society said research was needed into how changes in the brain could help dementia diagnoses. Previous research had suggested that cognitive decline does not begin much before the age of 60. But the results of the UCL study show that it could start in middle age.

Nonsense - history suggests otherwise. In the *Spectator* article, Paul Johnson says the UCL findings will surprise history students. Whilst men and women have achieved positions of power at all stages of life, it is remarkable how many have lived in obscurity until their 40s but have then gone on to do remarkable things. Here are some examples in the political arena of leading statesmen of their time:

- **Oliver Cromwell** only came to prominence in England in his late forties creating the most formidable army in Europe and leading it to overwhelming success. Then he switched to civil government, becoming Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland, and Ireland at the age of 53, and ran one of the most successful administrations in English history.
- In the United States, **George Washington** developed into a victorious general in his late forties and was 57 when he became president. **Abraham Lincoln** did not come to national prominence until he was in his late forties, and all his achievements were accomplished in his fifties. **General Dwight (Ike) Eisenhower** was 54 when he was Supreme Commander of the D-Day invasion of Europe in WWII. He was 62 when he became president. **Ronald Reagan** made the transition from films to politics and was president in his seventies.
- If we look at the British prime ministers of the 19th and 20th centuries, we find outstanding examples of men achieving supreme office, or holding it, late in life, sometimes very late. **Lord Palmerston** held Cabinet office for a greater proportion of his long life than any other man in our history and died in office aged 80. **William Ewart Gladstone** was prime minister four times, on the last occasion aged nearly 83. **Stanley Baldwin** was for many years an unnoticed backbench member of Parliament before becoming Chancellor of the Exchequer at age 55 and a year later was promoted to prime minister. **Lloyd George** became Prime Minister at 53, bringing astonishing energy and attention to detail to his premiership. When **Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill** became prime minister for the first time, he was 65, and he held the job, with ever-increasing power and authority, as he put it himself, for five years. The opinion both of contemporaries and of historians since is that no one could have done it so well. In 1951 he began his second premiership, aged nearly 77.

Among the leading composers, for example, **Verdi** and **Wagner** wrote works of distinction at all periods of their life, but their more formidable creations were produced from their late forties onwards. Verdi was 74 when he composed *Otello* and 80 when he produced *Falstaff*. Wagner was past 60 when he wrote *Götterdämmerung* and even older when *Tristan und Isolde* and *Parsifal* emerged. **Beethoven** was 53 when he wrote his Ninth Symphony.

In painting and sculpture, manual dexterity almost inevitably declines at a certain age. But take **Michelangelo** – when he began 'the Last Judgment' in the Sistine Chapel, he was 61 and was 66 when he finished it. All of his best architecture was done in middle age or later: he did not begin to work on St Peter's until he was 71.

Youth is no bar either.

The *Independent* article looks at the issue of lifetime achievement in a different way, focusing on people who have achieved success at a time when they were too young (in the minds of most people, anyway) to do so. Mark Zuckerberg (*Facetime*), Evan Spiegel (*Snap*), Steve Jobs (*Apple*), and Bill Gates (*Microsoft*) are among those who spring to mind when we're thinking about people who achieved extraordinary success at a young age. But the idea of the young prodigy isn't really a modern phenomenon, and the *Independent* article goes on to name 17 individuals throughout history who accomplished incredible things early in life. It's worth reading ([here](#)).

Britannica.com ([here](#)) provides a list of 7 child prodigies. A few stand out:

- **Blaise Pascal developed a calculator at 19:** 17th-century French mathematician Blaise Pascal was streets ahead of his time on several fronts. At age twelve (in the mid-1600s), he began studying geometry. Seven years later, he began developing a handheld calculator. Pascal still went on to enjoy success as an influential mathematician, philosopher and physicist. When Pascal invented a mechanical adding and subtracting device, it was the first calculating machine to be manufactured in significant numbers and the first to be used for business. In the 1640s and 1650s, Pascal established himself as one of Europe's greatest mathematical and scientific minds while also writing on religious and philosophical subjects.
- **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart wrote his first symphony at 8:** Mozart was something of an 18th century child star, a child prodigy par excellence, playing songs on the harpsichord at four years old and composing simple music at five, acquiring enormous fame and success at an early age but only to burn out later in life. At the age of five, he was already composing little pieces, which he played to his father with whose help he wrote his first symphony when he was eight.
- **Mary Shelley published 'Frankenstein' at 20:** Born in 1797, Mary Shelley was the daughter of philosophers Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin. A casual challenge amongst friends inspired Shelley to write the classic novel "Frankenstein." The book was published when she was only 20 years old.
- **John von Neumann, the mathematician extraordinaire:** It's said that, at the age of six, the Hungarian American mathematician John von Neumann could joke with his father in classical Greek. He could memorise pages from the telephone book and answer questions about the names, numbers, and addresses or just recite the page from top to bottom. Von Neumann came to be regarded as the preeminent mathematician of his era, responsible for major contributions in mathematics, physics, economics, and computer science.
- **Stevie Wonder, blind at birth and growing up in poverty:** Despite his difficulties, Stevie Wonder (born Steveland Judkins Morris) managed to become a skilled musician in early childhood, learning to write music, sing, and play the piano, organ, harmonica, and drums. In 1962, at age twelve, he began recording music and performing professionally under the name Little Stevie Wonder. By his 21st birthday, he had written or co-written more than a dozen hit songs.

The Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt Story

Excerpted from: • <http://www.rmslusitania.info/people/saloon/alfred-vanderbilt/>
• https://military.wikia.org/wiki/Alfred_Gwynne_Vanderbilt_1 • https://real-life-heroes.fandom.com/wiki/Alfred_Vanderbilt • https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_Gwynne_Vanderbilt

Picture Credit: Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt: "A Knight in Newport" by TRiver is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0



Mr Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt, a member of the famous Vanderbilt family of philanthropists, was age 37 in 1915. He was a millionaire sportsman from New York City, New York, United States and was travelling on RMS *Lusitania* bound for Liverpool as a first-class passenger, with his valet Ronald Denyer to a meeting of the International Horse Breeders' Association. When *Lusitania* was torpedoed, Vanderbilt and

Denyer assisted many others, especially children, to safety. Vanderbilt did not attempt to save himself and was last seen giving his lifebelt to passenger Alice Middleton. Vanderbilt was lost in the sinking on 7th May 1915. He and Denyer were among the 1,198 passengers who did not survive the sinking. Their bodies were never found.

Marriages and Scandal

At a young age, Alfred Vanderbilt inherited a massive fortune of \$40 million and control of the Vanderbilt railroad empire. With no interest in business matters, the youth squandered his wealth on horses and women on two continents. None of the Vanderbilts gave as much fuel for gossip to the curious public as Alfred. By the time the extravagant playboy boarded the *Lusitania* on 7th May 1915, he was the subject of numerous scandals, including the suicide of four different women. Alfred Vanderbilt is a major character in David Butler's 1983 novel *Lusitania*. Unlike in actual history (so far as is known), the novel establishes Vanderbilt and Alice Middleton as having a shipboard romance, which leads up to his final gesture of saving her life.

On 11th January 1901, Alfred had married Miss Elsie French, daughter of the wealthy Francis Ormonde French, and brother of Amos Tuck French, father of Miss Julia Estelle French, who married Jack Geraghty, the son of a liveryman. They were married in the Zabriskie Memorial Church of St. John the Evangelist, Newport, Rhode Island, by Reverend George Brinley Morgan, a cousin of Miss French, and the Rev. Charles E. Beattie, rector of the Church. Alfred's brother Reginald Vanderbilt was the best man. A son, William Henry, was born to them on 24th November 1901.

Elsie filed for divorce on 1st April 1908 for Alfred's adultery aboard his private railway car, the *Wayfarer*, with Mary Agnes O'Brien Ruiz, wife of the Cuban attaché in Washington. The two had met during one of Vanderbilt's trips to London when he had saved her life. She had been on a horse in Rotten Row that had run away with her on it, and Vanderbilt, with much style, grabbed the reins and brought the horse to a stop. The divorce papers were sealed, and the divorce reportedly cost Vanderbilt \$10 million.

Agnes Ruiz was duly divorced by her husband. Devastated, she committed suicide by poison in her London hotel room in 1914. While Alfred's friend Charles Williamson was able to testify in court to ensure that Alfred would not be found at fault for the suicide, the scandal followed Vanderbilt for some time afterwards.

Pressured by family, Alfred married again on 17th December 1911 to Margaret Emerson Smith Hollins McKim, a divorcee herself. She had been granted a divorce from Dr McKim in Reno, Nevada, on 30th April 1910 on the grounds of "drunkenness and cruelty." Margaret was a daughter of Captain Isaac E. Emerson of Baltimore and heiress to the Bromo-Seltzer fortune. Alfred and Margaret were married in Reigate, 25 miles outside of London. Margaret and Alfred both had a passion for horses, and the Vanderbilt estate in Newport had the largest private horse-riding ring in the world.

Lusitania

Vanderbilt was a frequent traveller on the *Lusitania* and, in some years, made as many as seven crossings. Vanderbilt's was travelling on the *Lusitania* in May 1915 to direct a meeting of the International Horse Breeders' Association. The 1914 meeting had been cancelled due to the First World War outbreak, but it was

decided that there would be no cancellation in 1915. Alfred's other purpose for travelling abroad, as Slidell said, was to return "to England to offer a fleet of wagons and himself as a driver to the Red Cross Society, for he said he felt every day that he was not doing enough." Margaret and the two children decided to stay in New York City, in the Vanderbilt Hotel on Park Avenue. The night before sailing, Alfred and Margaret saw the Broadway play *A Celebrated Case*, co-produced by fellow *Lusitania* passenger Charles Frohman.

The morning of the sailing, a notice from the German Embassy appeared in the newspapers, warning Americans to keep away from Allied ships. Vanderbilt and his wife just laughed the warning off. That same morning, a telegram arrived for Alfred, saying: "*THE LUSITANIA IS DOOMED. DO NOT SAIL ON HER.*" The note was signed simply, MORTE.

On the second day of the voyage, Vanderbilt received a telegram from his wife saying, "*FREDDIE DIED EARLY THIS MORNING LOVE MARGARET.*" 'Freddie' (Frederick Martin Davies, a builder) was an old Yale friend and one of Alfred's closest. Frederick had wanted to marry Alfred sister Gertrude in Autumn 1893 when they were in their twenties, but nothing came to pass.

Later in the voyage, Vanderbilt received another telegram, this one from one British woman named May Barwell, saying, "*HOPE YOU HAVE A SAFE CROSSING. LOOK FORWARD VERY MUCH TO SEEING YOU SOON.*" From then on, Vanderbilt's mood improved considerably.

On Thursday afternoon, 6th May, Vanderbilt stopped by Charles Frohman's suite, where Frohman was throwing a party. Although the *Lusitania* was not due in Liverpool until Saturday morning, the private parties had been scheduled early so that passengers could pack on Friday night. Vanderbilt was also in attendance at the ship's concert later that night.

Heroism

After the *Lusitania* was torpedoed by a German submarine, Alfred and his valet Ronald Denyer calmly assisted several women and children to safety. Fellow passenger Oliver Bernard was surprised by Vanderbilt's composure, and Oliver would never forget the grin on the millionaire's face. Alfred was heard remarking to another passenger, "*Well, they got us this time, all right.*"

On B Deck, Second Steward Robert Chisholm saw Vanderbilt "vainly attempting to rescue a hysterical woman." Chisholm shouted, "*Hurry, Mr Vanderbilt, or it will be too late!*" Vanderbilt did not listen and continued assisting women and children. Thomas Slidell saw him put a lifebelt on a woman's shoulders and then walk away without saying anything. The truth was, Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt, the renowned sportsman and ladies man, did not know how to swim. Even so, Alfred did not attempt to push his way through the mad crowd and into a lifeboat. One of the last people to see Vanderbilt was Owen Kenan, on the port side near the verandah café. Owen jumped with Denyer at the last minute. Denyer would not survive. Nurse Alice Middleton, a second cabin passenger, is thought to have accepted Vanderbilt's offer of a lifebelt.

The New York Times, Tuesday, 11th May 1915, page 2: contained a tribute to Alfred Vanderbilt purported to be by Mrs Ethel Lines: "*People will not talk of Mr Vanderbilt in future as a millionaire sportsman and a man of pleasure. He will be remembered as the children's hero, and men and women will salute his name. When death was nearing him, he showed gallantry which no words of mine can describe. He stood outside the palm saloon on the starboard side of the Lusitania with Ronald Denyer by his side. He looked around at the scene of horror and despair with pitying eyes. I hope the young men of Britain will act with the same cool bravery for their country that Mr Vanderbilt showed for somebody's little ones.*"

Alfred's wife Margaret shut herself in her room of the Vanderbilt Hotel, refusing to believe that her husband was dead. She told her sister-in-law Gertrude, "I will not believe Alfred is dead until I get conclusive proof." Margaret continued to send cables to friends in England and Ireland, desperate for any news they might have. On Saturday afternoon, Margaret was persuaded to move into the Vanderbilt mansion on 57th Street. Before the weekend was over, a \$5,000 reward was posted for the recovery of Alfred's body. Vanderbilt's body was never found. Of Alfred's \$26 million estate, his eldest son William inherited \$5 million and the Congressional Medal. Margaret received eight million in properties in England and America, and the remaining sons Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt and George Washington Vanderbilt received the rest.

More 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://dorkingmuseum.org.uk/alfred-gwynne-vanderbilt/> • https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RMS_Lusitania • https://www.amazon.com/Fortunes-Children-Fall-House-Vanderbilt/dp/0062224069/ref=sr_1_1 • <https://dividendrealestate.com/vanderbilt/>

Fate has two bites of the cherry

Returning home from a trip abroad in 1912, Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt booked passage on the *Titanic* but changed his mind at the last minute and decided to stay on 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* on a passage that never reached Liverpool.



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

The Life and Death of Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt

On the previous page, I wrote about the life of Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt, his marriages and infidelities, his massive inheritance and his disappearance (presumed drowned) when the *Lusitania*, as it was 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.

Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt was the second son of Cornelius Vanderbilt II, whose family had amassed 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 22-year-old Alfred, who is thought to have inherited some \$70 million – some say 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 (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.

The Vanderbilt fortune

Made

The family fortune was founded by Alfred Vanderbilt's father (Cornelius Vanderbilt, known as the Commodore), The son of an impoverished farmer and boatman, who left school at 11 and made a fortune in shipping and railway in the first half of the 19th century.

When Cornelius Vanderbilt died in 1877, he left a fortune worth €150 billion in today's money, and his son William doubled the family wealth. The Vanderbilts built Grand Central Station in New York. They had splendid mansions on Fifth Avenue. They bought America's finest racehorses and yachts. They hosted massive parties, known as the "*parties of the century*", and were bountiful philanthropists. They were rich and famous.

Lost

William Vanderbilt doubled the inherited fortune over the next ten years creating the largest fortune in the world at the time. Within a few short years, his children (the Commodore's grandchildren) had spent almost all of it: within thirty years after the death of the Commodore Vanderbilt, 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 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.*"

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 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, particularly, the Dorking/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, where, when driving from London to Brighton, he would stop to take lunch and to collect telegrams. 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, May 7th 1915. This stone is erected on his favourite road by a few of his British coaching friends and admirers.*"

Alfred Vanderbilt was married in Reigate in 1912 at a private ceremony with just four witnesses. He and his bride, another wealthy American, Margaret Emerson McKim, had been previously married, his first wife having divorced him for adultery with the wife of the Cuban Ambassador to London who subsequently committed suicide.

World War I

On 7th May 1915, less than 20km* from the Old Head of Kinsale off the coast of County Cork, Ireland, German U-boat U-20 fired a single torpedo against the *Lusitania*, triggering a secondary explosion that 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 condemnation, 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 *Lusitania* sinking was a major factor in building support in America for 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**.

Obvious signs that humanity is regressing...

Contributed by Alan Tatnall

