

Nil Desperandum

Published for Haywards Heath & District Probus Club

ISSUE 32

November 2022

Never Alone



Picture Credit: "Old and happy (?)" by szwerink is licensed under [CC BY-SA 2.0](#)

Index:

1. Me, by ELTON JOHN
1. The Temple of Saturn
2. Air-Conditioning for Dinosaurs
2. The Chapel near Ferring that drowned
3. The Mysterious Norns
4. Axiomatic, Bodacious, Oxymorons and more
5. "Subjective" vs "Objective": What's The Difference?
6. Places that may be too hot to handle
7. Ancient Egypt's Copper
8. The Sinking of the Lusitania
9. The Bridges of London
10. Gilbert & Sullivan
11. England's Smallest Church
11. The Oldest Temple of Worship in the World

Continued:

12. The SS Richard Montgomery
13. Case Law: Bizarre but Significant
14. Another Probos
15. Ötzi the Iceman's frantic final climb
16. Numbers & Superstitions
18. Secret Societies
19. The Great Pyramid
20. Bernina Express
20. Rocky Mountaineer
20. Rovos Rail
21. The Everlasting Appeal of the Orient Express
22. The Calendar
23. The lady spurned by Wellington
24. Drugs and World War II Villains



Me, by ELTON JOHN



This selection is from page(s): 9-11 of the book *Me* by Elton John, published by Henry Holt and Company, © Copyright 2019 by HST Global Limited

Picture Credit: <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Me-Elton-John-Official-Autobiography/dp/1509853316/>

A pre-teen Elton John discovers the music of Elvis Presley:

"It was my mum who introduced me to Elvis Presley. Every Friday, after work, she would pick up her wages, stop off on the way home at Siever's, an electrical store selling records, and buy a new 78. It was my favourite time of the week, waiting at home to see what she would bring back.

"She loved going out dancing, so she liked big band music – Billy May and His Orchestra, Ted Heath – and she loved American vocalists: Johnnie Ray, Frankie Laine, Nat King Cole, Guy Mitchell singing 'she wears red feathers and a huly-huly skirt'. But one Friday, she came home with something else.

"She told me she'd never heard anything like it before, but it was so fantastic she had to buy it. As soon as she said the words Elvis Presley, I recognised them. The previous weekend I'd been looking through the magazines in the local barber shop while I was waiting to have my hair cut, when I came across a photo of the most bizarre-looking man I'd ever seen.

"Everything about him looked extraordinary: his clothes, his hair, even the way he was standing. Compared to the people you could see outside the barber shop window in the north-west London suburb of Pinner, he might as well have been bright green with antennae sticking out of his forehead. I'd been so transfixed I hadn't even bothered to read the accompanying article, and by the time I got home, I'd forgotten his name. But that was it: Elvis Presley.

"As soon as Mum put the record on, it became apparent that Elvis Presley sounded the way he looked, like he came from another planet. Compared to the stuff my parents normally listened to, 'Heartbreak Hotel' barely qualified as music at all, an opinion my father would

continue to expound upon at great length over the coming years.

"I'd already heard rock and roll – 'Rock Around The Clock' had been a big hit earlier in 1956 – but 'Heartbreak Hotel' didn't sound anything like that either. It was raw and sparse and slow and eerie. Everything was drenched in this weird echo. You could barely understand a word he was singing: I got that his baby had left him, after that I completely lost the thread. What was a 'dessa clurk'? Who was this 'Bidder Sir Lonely' he kept mentioning?

"It didn't matter what he was saying, because something almost physical happened while he was singing. You could literally feel this strange energy he was giving off, like it was contagious – like it was coming out of the radiogram speaker straight into your body. I already thought of myself as music mad – I even had a little collection of my own 78s, paid for with record tokens and postal orders I got on birthdays and at Christmas.

"Until that moment, my hero had been Winifred Atwell, a big, immensely jolly Trinidadian lady who performed onstage with two pianos – a baby grand on which she played light classical and a battered old upright for ragtime and pub songs. I loved her sense of glee, the slightly camp way she would announce, 'And now, I'm going to my other piano'; the way she would lean back and look at the audience with a huge grin on her face while she was playing, like she was having the best time in the world. I thought Winifred Atwell was fabulous, but I'd never experienced anything like this while listening to her. I'd never experienced anything like this in my life. As 'Heartbreak Hotel' played, it felt like something had changed, that nothing could really be the same again. As it turned out, something had, and nothing was.

"And thank God, because the world needed changing."

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.

Eclectic excerpts delivered to your email every day

 Delanceyplace.com

The Temple of Saturn



Picture Credit: "Temple of Saturn" by vgm8383 is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0

The Temple of Saturn was an ancient temple dedicated to the god Saturn in Rome, Italy. Its ruins stand at the foot of the Capitoline Hill at the western end of the Roman Forum. The original dedication of the Temple is traditionally dated to 497 BC, but ancient writers disagreed greatly about the history of this site.

* Latin: *Templum Saturni* or *Aedes Saturni*.
Italian: *Tempio di Saturno*

Construction of the Temple is thought to have begun in the later years of the Roman Kingdom under *Tarquinius Superbus*. Its inauguration by the consul *Titus Lartius* took place in the early years of the Republic. It is the oldest Republican Temple after the Temple of *Jupiter Optimus Maximus*. The altar of Saturn, which stood in front of the Temple, is thought to have been much older – it was associated with Saturn's founding of the city. The Temple was completely reconstructed by *Munatius Plancus* in 42 BC.

The present ruins represent the third phase of the Temple of Saturn, built after a fire in 360 AD. The extant inscription on the frieze commemorates this restoration undertaken after the fire. In Roman mythology, Saturn ruled during the Golden Age, and he continued to be associated with wealth. His Temple housed the treasury, the *aerarium* where the Roman Republic's reserves of gold and silver was stored.

Saturnalia

Saturnalia was an ancient Roman festival and holiday in honour of the pagan god Saturn, held on 17th December of the Julian calendar and later expanded with festivities through to 24th December. *Saturnalia* celebrations are the source of many traditions we now associate with Christmas. The date has been connected with the winter sowing season, which varies from October to January in modern Italy. Remarkably like the Greek *Kronia*, it was the liveliest festival of the year.

Sources: • <https://www.worldhistory.org/article/636/temple-of-saturn-rome/> • https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Temple_of_Saturn • <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Saturnalia-Roman-festival>

Air-Conditioning for Dinosaurs

Sourced/Excerpted from and Further Reading:

- <https://www.scientificamerican.com/video/these-dinosaurs-had-a-complicated-air-conditioner-in-their-skull/>
- <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/article/new-discovery-shows-how-tyrannosaurus-rex-kept-its-brain-cool>
- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-49595680>
- https://blog.everythingdinosaur.co.uk/blog/_archives/2019/10/19/how-did-big-dinosaurs-keep-cool.html
- https://blog.everythingdinosaur.co.uk/blog/_archives/2009/06/30/4240822.html
- <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/special-skull-windows-helped-dinosaurs-keep-their-brains-keep-cool-180973036/>



What's the connection between the two pictures shown above. It's more than you might imagine.

Whilst dinosaurs developed many adaptations (like horns, spikes and bony plates) to protect themselves while they stomped and chomped around their territory, the cooling 'system' they used was strange but effective.

An article in Scientific American ([here](#)) explained that palaeontologist **Lawrence M. Witmer** had discovered that a group of dinosaurs (called ankylosaurs) had a secret weapon. It was even more important than their tanklike armour, and it was hidden where you wouldn't expect to find it – right inside their skull, within their nasal passages.

Perhaps it is the changing patterns of weather conditions self-inflicted by global warming around the world or something else that tickled their curiosity. Still, palaeontologists seem to have been puzzled at how these giant animals could regulate their temperature and survive under the **blazing Cretaceous-period sun**.

Using advanced scanning and 3-D modelling technologies in his Ohio University lab, Witmer and his colleagues discovered that *Euoplocephalus*, a genus of ankylosaurs, had strange corkscrew-shaped nasal passages that Witmer likens to a "child's crazy straw." A 2019 article on BBC News ([here](#)) is worth reading. Scientists noticed that alligators have blood-vessel-filled holes in their skulls, which seemed capable of regulating their bodies against the effects of highs and lows in ambient temperature.

Since 2019, the examination of fossils and 3-D images of *Tyrannosaurus rex*'s skull, scientists have discovered that the dinosaur had similar holes to alligators. In fact, according to a 2019 Smithsonian Magazine article ([here](#)), 'dinosaur skulls have something in common with Swiss cheese—they're both full of holes. From *Tyrannosaurus* to *Triceratops*, the skulls of the terrible lizards have the same eye and nasal passages common in many vertebrates, as well as additional pockets unique to reptiles. For example, a hole at the top and rear of the skull anchored jaw muscles for chomping through the Mesozoic world...'

Keeping cool wasn't just a requirement of ancient land animals. At the time when dinosaurs ruled the land, groups of prehistoric reptiles dominated the waters. Their fossilised bones reveal much about how these 'sea dragons' lived. They tell us about the shape of their bodies, the things they ate, and even how they determined their sex. According to Aurélien Bernard from the University of Lyon, in a National Geographic article from 2010 ([here](#)), the prehistoric remains can tell us whether these reptiles could control their body temperature:

'The majority of reptiles are 'cold-blooded.' Unlike mammals and birds, they can't generate and retain their own heat - their body temperature depends on their surroundings.'

But three groups of marine reptiles – the dolphin-shaped ichthyosaurs, the crocodile-shaped mosasaurs, and the paddle-flipped plesiosaurs [yes, it did exist] – bucked this trend. Whether in tropical or cold waters, they could maintain a constant body temperature that reached as high as 35-39 degrees Celsius.'

Watch a fascinating video about this [here](#).

Picture Credits:

Dinosaur - "IMG_0574" by Steve Starer is licensed under CC BY 2.0
Curly Straws - "Shanghai has an obsession with curly straws which I find really endearing given it's a big cosmopolitan city." by joeywan is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

The Chapel near Ferring that drowned

Sources:

- <https://www.littlehamptongazette.co.uk/heritage-and-retro/retro/remembers-chapel-near-fering-was-reclaimed-sea-400-years-ago-2966423>
- <https://kingston-wsx-pc.gov.uk/about-kingston/history-of-kingston/>
- <https://www.ferringhistorygroup.co.uk/the-drowning-of-kingston-chapel-2/>

Residents and councillors have banded together to commemorate a chapel near Ferring drowned by the sea centuries ago. Read on for the story behind it.

If you were to go back about 1,000 years, you would have found a small Chapel by the sea near modern-day Kingston on the coast of West Sussex.

Evidence shows that the village clustered around the Chapel and, in the Middle Ages, it had a small harbour. Medieval cogs with single, square sails, high sides, and flat bottoms may well have loaded/unloaded cargo there. These vessels were mostly associated with the seagoing trade in medieval Europe, especially the Hanseatic League, particularly in the Baltic Sea region.

As the years marched on, the settlement fought a losing battle against the waves until the Great Storm of 27th November 1703 destroyed the whole village. It must have been pretty rough that day as other places along the coast suffered the same fate. In the 500 years after the Norman conquest of 1066, at least 50 villages in West Sussex vanished. Nearly all were on the South Downs and coastal plain.

The Chapel that once served the old settlement of Kingston (called Kingston Manor) was lost to the sea, finally giving up the fight around December 1626.

The poor state of the Chapel was mentioned in a church inspection book in 1602. By 1635 it was noted in a survey that only the churchyard remained. It is believed that the Chapel remains were dismantled to build the new Ferring Church much further inland.

The Chapel's exact location is unknown, except to say that it is no longer on dry land.

But it is not forgotten: a memorial seat in Welsh stone, complete with a plaque giving details of the Chapel, was unveiled in September 2020 by Councillor Geraldine Walker, Chairman of Kingston Parish Council. She said it would allow residents to sit in a beautiful spot and look out towards the lost Chapel.

The Mysterious Norns

Sourced/Excerpted from and Further Reading:

- <https://norse-mythology.org/gods-and-creatures/others/the-norns/>
- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norns>
- <https://symbolsage.com/norns-norse-mythology/>
- <https://www.ancientpages.com/2020/05/18/norns-shapers-destiny-recorded-days-persons-life-norse-mythology/>
- <https://arithharger.wordpress.com/2014/05/25/the-norns/>
- [https://marvel.fandom.com/wiki/Norns_\(Fates\)_\(Earth-616\)](https://marvel.fandom.com/wiki/Norns_(Fates)_(Earth-616))
- <https://forgottenrealms.fandom.com/wiki/Norns>
- <http://nornlanguage.x10.mx/>
- <https://mythology.net/norse/norse-gods/norns/>
- <http://thetollkeeper.com/2018/09/29/the-three-sisters-of-many-names/>
- <https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Norn>
- <https://skjalden.com/norns/>
- <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Norn>
- <https://throwbackthursday.wordpress.com/2015/09/17/the-norns-and-their-influence-on-destiny/>

Main Source and Credit: Daniel McCoy, the creator of the enduringly popular website Norse Mythology for Smart People ([Norse-Mythology.org](https://norse-mythology.org))

Picture Credit/Attribution: [Re-Tinted] Amalia Schoppe., Public Domain, via Wikimedia Commons. File URL:

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/3a/No_rns_%281832%29_from_Die_Helden_und_G%C3%B6tte_r_des_Nordens%2C_oder_Das_Buch_der_sagen.jpg

The Norns were goddesses of fate in Norse mythology, but more often than not, they appear in the human world. According to Norse legend, they weave our fates. Their names are Urðr, Verðandi and Skuld, but that's just in Norse mythology. It's been suggested that they have so many aliases that, in later years, they could have been international spies. One such alias is the *Weird Sisters* (sometimes Wyrd Sisters), named after Urd, the first of the Norn, whose name means itself "fate."

According to Viking lore, the Norns live beneath the roots of Yggdrasill, which is said to be at the centre of the universe, where they weave the 'tapestry of fate' - each person's life is said to be a string in their loom, and the length of the string is said to be the length of the person's life.

Myth, saga, folktale, and archaeological evidence provide an idea of who these women really were.

Some sources name them *Urd*, *Verdandi*, and *Skuld*. Perhaps, they represent the "past," "present," and "future." They were depicted as living by Yggdrasill, the world tree, under Urd's well and were linked with both good and evil. Being frequently attendant at births, they were sometimes associated with midwifery



THE NORN

In Norse mythology, the Norns (pronounced like "norms" with an "n" instead of the "m"; Old Norse *Nornir*) are female beings who create and control fate. This makes them the most terribly powerful entities in the cosmos – more so than even the gods since the gods are subject to fate just like any and all other beings.

According to one description of the Norns in the Old Norse poem *Fáfnismál*, there are a great many of them, and no one knows the exact number. Some of them come from the gods, others from the *elves*, and still others from the *dwarves*.^[1] The poem *Völuspá*, however, has another grander account of them that has (perhaps deservedly) become the standard image that people today associate with the Norns.

In *Völuspá*, the Norns are mysterious beings who don't seem to come from any of the recognised kinds of beings who populate the Norse otherworld. They seem to be a category unto themselves. There are exactly three of them, and their names suggest their ability to construct the content of time: one is Urd (Old Norse *Urðr*, "The Past," and a common word for fate in and of itself), the second Verdandi (Old Norse *Verðandi*, "What Is Presently Coming into Being") and the third Skuld (Old Norse *Skuld*, "What Shall Be"). They live in a hall by a well (*Urðarbrunnr*, "Well of Fate") beneath Yggdrasil, the mighty tree at the centre of the Norse otherworld, which holds the Nine Worlds in its branches and roots.^[2]

Several different images are used for the Norns' fate-crafting activity throughout Old Norse literature. The three most common are casting wooden lots^[3], weaving a piece of cloth^[4], and carving symbols – likely runes – into wood.^[5]

There's no evidence that the Norns were ever worshipped. A person lamenting their fate is a relatively common element in Old Norse literature, and in ancient and medieval Germanic literature more broadly, so we can be sure that if the Vikings had thought it possible to productively petition the Norns to change their fates, they would have. But in the Norse view, fate was blind and utterly implacable. You couldn't change it; all that was left to you was to decide the attitude with which you would meet whatever fate happened to bring.

Looking for more great information on Norse mythology and religion? While this site provides the ultimate online introduction to the topic, the author's book *The Viking Spirit* provides the ultimate introduction to Norse mythology and religion period. The author provides a popular list of *The 10 Best Norse Mythology Books*, which you'll probably find helpful in your pursuit.

References:

- ^[1] The Poetic Edda. *Fáfnismál*, stanza 13.
- ^[2] The Poetic Edda. *Völuspá*, stanza 20.
- ^[3] Price, Neil. 2002. *The Viking Way: Religion and War in Late Iron Age Scandinavia*. p. 56.
- ^[4] Ibid.
- ^[5] Davidson, H.R. Ellis. 1988. *Myths and Symbols in Pagan Europe: Early Scandinavian and Celtic Religions*. p. 164.

Axiomatic, Bodacious, Oxymorons and more

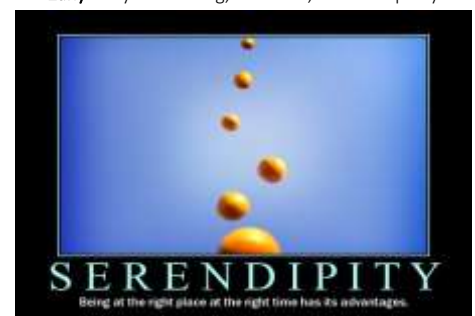
Don't be embarrassed or ashamed - you could be in good company. Although some of the following words may be used in everyday conversation, many people may look puzzled if you ask for them to be defined – I hope the following helps:

- ❖ **Acrostic** is a series of lines or verses (of a poem) in which the first, last, or other particular letters are taken to spell out a word, phrase, etc. Example:
P is for Playful, so fun to be with
O is for Obliging, accommodating towards people
L is for Lively, the life of the party
L is for Laidback, not sweating the small stuff
I is for Illuminating, and brightening lives
N is for Neat, carefully organised
S is for Smart, a keen intellect
- ❖ **Aesthete** - a person who is appreciative of and sensitive to art and beauty and is and indifferent to practical matters. Oscar Wilde was one.
- ❖ **Anachronism** - (from the Greek *ana*, 'against' and *khronos*, 'time') is a chronological inconsistency in some arrangement, especially a juxtaposition of persons, events, objects, language terms and customs from different periods.
- ❖ **Anagrams** – A word, phrase, or sentence formed by rearranging the letters of another. Example: *name* formed from *mean*.
- ❖ **Anthropomorphism** - is the attribution of human traits, emotions, or intentions to non-human entities. It is considered to be an innate tendency of human psychology. Examples: *Winnie the Pooh* and *Simba* (from the movie *The Lion King*).
- ❖ **Axiomatic** – means self-evident, taken for granted, clearly true and unquestionable. Example: *Death is inevitable*
- ❖ **Backronym** or **Bacronym** (also known as an **Apronym** or **Reverse Acronymy**) An existing word turned into an acronym by creating an apt phrase, the initial letters of which match the word to help remember it or offer a theory of its origin. Example: *Rap* has been said to be a backronym of "rhythm and poetry."
- ❖ **Bodacious** - this word is often used to describe a body's curves but can describe something remarkable or admirable.
- ❖ **Clichés** – An overused expression or idea. Example: *All is well that ends well*.
- ❖ **Elixir** – this is a magical or medicinal potion designed to cure. An example is a potion made in medieval times for everlasting life.
- ❖ **Ephemeral** - things (usually plants or some animals) that don't last forever – in other words, transitory or quickly fading. Example: *Bluebells*.
- ❖ **Epiphany** - an epiphany (from ancient Greek) is a once-in-a-lifetime experience of a sudden and striking realisation. Generally, it is taken to mean a scientific breakthrough or a religious or philosophical discovery.
- ❖ **Eudaemonia** – originating from the Greek word *eudaimon*, the word *eudaemonia* means the state of being lucky or happy. It takes its philosophical root in the work of the ancient Greek philosopher *Aristotle*.
- ❖ **Euphemisms** – A harmless word or phrase that may be used as a suggestive one. Example: *A bun in the oven* would be a euphemism for being pregnant.
- ❖ **Euphoria** - derived from the Greek word for healthy, it is now used to describe an intense feeling of happiness or elation resulting from a fortunate turn of events.
- ❖ **Felicity** - also a state of happiness. For example, you might find yourself in a state of felicity the next time you're surrounded by people you love.

- ❖ **Idiom** - a phrase or expression that typically presents a figurative, non-literal meaning attached to the words or phrase. Example: *Bite the bullet*.
- ❖ **Inchoate** – this means something just begun and so not fully formed or developed; incomplete; rudimentary.
- ❖ **Insouciant** – it means being unconcerned, carefree, calm, and free from worry or anxiety.
- ❖ **Inure** - to accept or grow accustomed to something undesirable. For example, your family's constant criticism could inure you to toxic behaviour from loved ones.
- ❖ **Manumitter** - someone who frees others from bondage. A type of liberator. Someone who releases people from captivity or bondage.
- ❖ **Mellifluous** - this word refers to something sweet and enjoyable, even honey-like, especially when it comes to sound. Examples: You might find the early spring sounds of chirping birds or a newscaster's voice to be mellifluous.
- ❖ **Metaphors** – are a form of figurative language, which refer to words or expressions that mean something different from their literal definition. Metaphors are often compared with other types of figurative language such as antithesis, hyperbole, metonymy and simile. Example: *'You ain't nothin' but a hound dog, cryin' all the time.'* (you do remember Elvis Presley, don't you?)
- ❖ **Mnemonic** - any learning technique that aids information retention or retrieval in the human memory. Example: *ARITHMETIC: A rat in the house may eat the ice cream.*
- ❖ **Nadir** - an astronomical term that's been co-opted for everyday usage, nadir means the lowest point, as in the *"nadir of her popularity."* Its opposite term, *zenith*, has a similar appeal.
- ❖ **Nemesis** - the inescapable agent of someone's or something's downfall, a long-standing rival or an arch-enemy. Example: *Professor Moriarty* was the archcriminal nemesis of *Sherlock Holmes*.
- ❖ **Oblivescence** – the process of forgetting. Example: The extremely rapid *oblivescence* of common dreams is quite common.
- ❖ **Omnilegant** – it means you are extremely well-read or familiar with a great amount of literature.
- ❖ **Omnimath** – a term not unlike *Polymath*, an *Omnimath* is a master of everything.
- ❖ **Onomatopoeia** (or **Onomatopia**) - a figure of speech in which words evoke the actual sound of what they refer to or describe. Examples: the *hiss of a snake* or the *boom of a firework*.
- ❖ **Oxymoron** – A figure of speech in contradictory terms to give effect. Example: *authentic replica*.
- ❖ **Panacea** - it means *"all-healing"* in Greek. *Panacea* was the Greek goddess of healing. It's something that can fix anything, including solving difficulties or providing a cure for a disease. Example: *For some people, green tea is a panacea.*
- ❖ **Palindromes** – a word, number, phrase, or another sequence of characters that reads the same backwards as forwards. Examples: *Madam* or *Racecar*.
- ❖ **Paradox** - a statement that seemingly contradicts itself. Examples: *The beginning of the end*. *Youth is wasted on the young*.
- ❖ **Paucity** - the presence of something in small or insufficient quantities or amounts. A scarcity or dearth of something. It's the opposite of a *plethora*. Example: *A paucity of honest politicians*.
- ❖ **Pleonasms** – means using more words than is necessary. It may also be used for emphasis or because the phrase has become established in a

certain way. Examples: *black darkness* or *burning fire*.

- ❖ **Plethora** – this is a large or excessive amount of something. It's the opposite of *paucity*. Example: *A plethora of committees and sub-committees*.
- ❖ **Polymath** - A *polymath* is someone whose knowledge spans a substantial number of subjects, known to draw on complex bodies of knowledge to solve specific problems. In Western Europe, the first work to use *polymathy* in its title was published in 1603 by *Johann von Wovern*, a Hamburg philosopher.
- ❖ **Propinquity** - similar to *proximity*, the word can refer to someone who lives near you. Aside from your next-door neighbours and roommates, it can also refer to "nearness of relation," in terms of kinship.
- ❖ **Quintessential** - representing the most perfect or typical example of a quality or class. Example: *Strawberries and Cream at Wimbledon is British at its most Quintessential*.
- ❖ **Renaissance** - Renaissance is a French word meaning *"rebirth."* It refers to a period in European civilisation marked by a revival of classical learning and wisdom.
- ❖ **Retronym** – is a newer name for something to differentiate its original form/version from a more recent one. It is thus a word or phrase created to avoid confusion between two types, whereas previously, no clarification was required. Advances in technology are often responsible for the coinage of retronyms. Example: Manual transmissions in vehicles were just called *"transmissions"* until *automatic transmissions* were invented.
- ❖ **Sanguine** – means optimistic or positive, especially in an apparently bad or difficult situation. It comes from the Latin *sanguineus* bloody.
- ❖ **Serendipity** – a discovery of something good by accident. *Horace Walpole* coined the word in a letter to another *Horace (Mann)* in January 1754. Fortunate unplanned discoveries include *penicillin*, *Viagra*, x-rays, radioactivity and microwave ovens.
- ❖ **Similes** – they are like metaphors, but metaphors aren't similes. A metaphor makes a comparison by saying that one thing *is something else*, but a simile says that one thing *is like something else*. Example: *'He is as strong as an ox.'*
- ❖ **Spoonerism** - an error in speech in which corresponding consonants, vowels, or morphemes are switched between two words in a phrase.
- ❖ **Syzygy** - in astronomy, this is a near straight-line configuration of three or more celestial bodies (such as the sun, moon, and Earth during a solar or lunar eclipse) in a gravitational system.
- ❖ **Tautology** – is a phrase or expression in which the same thing is said twice in different words. Example: *First and foremost*.
- ❖ **Xanthoriatic** - not too clever in one area, but good at everything else.
- ❖ **Xenagogue** - acting as a guide; guiding someone.
- ❖ **Zany** - silly or amusing, eccentric, weird or quirky.



Picture Credit: "Serendipity" by The Rocketeer is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

"Subjective" vs. "Objective": What's The Difference?

Source:

• <https://www.dictionary.com/e/subjective-vs-objective>



Picture Credit: "OMG New Scrabble Words 2015" by Jonathan Rolande is licensed under CC BY 2.0

Has someone ever asked for your *objective* opinion? Or said that something is "entirely *subjective*"?

The words *subjective* and *objective* are used in all kinds of contexts, from journalism to science to grammar, and they're often discussed as opposites. But what do they actually mean?

In most cases, it comes down to whether something is based on personal experience or on verifiable facts. But it can get confusing. An opinion or viewpoint can be said to be *objective* or *subjective*, depending on how it was formed.

Quick Summary

Subjective most commonly means based on the personal perspective or preferences of a person—the *subject* who's observing something.

In contrast, *Objective* most commonly means not influenced by or based on a personal viewpoint—based on the analysis of an *object* of observation only.

What does *subjective* mean?

Generally speaking, *subjective* is used to describe something that exists in the mind of a person or that pertains to viewpoints of an individual person.

Sometimes, *subjective* means about the same thing as *personal*. Everyone's experience of an event is *subjective*, because each person's circumstances and background are unique, leading to different interpretations.

Subjective observation is centred on a person's own mind and perspectives, as opposed to being general, universal, or scientific. In this way, describing an observation as *subjective* often implies that it comes with (or is based on) personal biases.

In philosophy, *subjective* specifically means relating to an object as it exists in the mind, as opposed to the thing as it exists in reality (the thing in itself). All perception relies on your mind, so your perception of a thing is ultimately *subjective*.

What does *Objective* mean?

In most of its common uses, *Objective* is contrasted with *subjective*, often as if it's the opposite. *Objective* most commonly means not influenced by an individual's personal viewpoint—unbiased (or at least attempting to be unbiased). It's often used to describe things like observations, decisions, or reports that are based on an unbiased analysis.

Something that's truly *Objective* has nothing to do with a person's own feelings or views—it just deals with facts. When someone says "*Objectively speaking*," they're indicating that they're going to give an unbiased assessment—not one based on their personal preferences.

Journalists are trained to be as *Objective* as possible when reporting—to leave their opinions out of it and just record and present the facts. This is called *objectivity*.

What else does *Objective* mean?

In grammar, the word *objective* is applied to words that function as *objects*—the recipients of actions. In the sentence *The dog ate my homework*, the word *homework* is in the *objective case* (meaning that it's the *object*—the recipient—of the action). The word *subjective*, on the other hand, is applied to a word that's the *subject* of the sentence (in the given example, *the dog* is the *subject*—the one performing the action).

Learn more about the verbs that take direct objects—transitive verbs.

Objective is also commonly used as a noun meaning a goal or a target, as in *The Objective of this article is to teach you about the difference between objective and subjective*.

Examples of *subjective* vs. *Objective*

Now's the moment to think about some scenarios in which something might be classified as *subjective* or *objective*.

Let's say you're a restaurant critic. There may be certain foods that you *subjectively* dislike—ones that are just not to your taste. But when critiquing dishes, you must leave your *subjective* tastes aside and be *objective* about what you eat—making *Objective* judgments about things like how it's cooked and seasoned and how the ingredients work together.

Even if you're served a dish you *subjectively* don't like, it's your job to *objectively* assess its quality.

In a scientific experiment, your hypothesis might be based—at least in part—on your *subjective* opinion about what the results will be. But science is about being completely *objective* by gathering data and making conclusions based on the data.

In everyday life, your *objective* opinion is the one that sets aside your *subjective* preferences or feelings about something and instead assesses it based on facts and reality.

How to use *Subjective* vs. *Objective*

Use *subjective* when talking about an *opinion* or *feeling* based on an individual's perspective or preferences.

Use *Objective* when you talk about something—like an assessment, decision, or report—that's unbiased and based solely on the observable or verifiable facts.

Examples of *Subjective* and *Objective* used in a sentence

- ❖ All art is *subjective*—everyone has their personal interpretation.
- ❖ We want to record your *subjective* views on the topic, so just be honest.
- ❖ You can always count on her for an *objective* opinion, no matter what her personal feelings are.
- ❖ Although my *objective* assessment is that the book is poorly written, I can't help but love its enemies-to-friends plotline.
- ❖ The first part of the assignment is an *objective* analysis of the data; the second part is an essay on your *subjective* reaction to it.

Are you looking for more explanations?

Vocabulary doesn't have to be confusing—not with the help of a **Dictionary Academy Tutor™**.

Whether you need one-on-one or group study sessions, Dictionary Academy tutoring is custom-fit to meet your learning needs. Tutors aren't just those who help you conquer subjects you're struggling with—they can also offer study tips, strategies, and advice from an educator's perspective. It's virtual tutoring powered by the power of the Dictionary.

Word of the Day

If you're interested, why not build your own vocabulary with new words, definitions, and stories every day of the week? Go to <https://www.dictionary.com/> for details. It's well worth the effort.

Places that may be too hot to handle

Sourced/Excerpted from and Further Reading:

- <https://www.travelandleisure.com/trip-ideas/hottest-places-on-earth>
- <https://www.independent.co.uk/travel/news-and-advice/hottest-places-on-earth-b1818082.html>
- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-53825593>
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Highest_temperature_recorded_on_Earth
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_weather_records
- <https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/features/HottestSpot>
- <https://www.exoticca.com/uk/magazine/dont-take-chances-on-the-weather-these-are-the-hottest-places-on-earth/>

Some of the hottest places on Earth - from record-setting Death Valley in the US to the scorching Danakil Depression in Ethiopia - are exactly that: *too hot to handle*. But there are plenty of other places that are hot too. In the midst of winter, with rain, snow, sleet, and everything nasty that Mother Nature can throw at us, we all crave some sunshine and warmth.

Most of us want it to be warm - even hot. We love the idea of beaches, the sand, and getting a tan to be envied once we get back home. On top of our most-wanted list is sunshine. There are plenty of places available to us, but some of those mentioned below are far too extreme and should definitely not be on your bucket list.

Measurement

The highest temperature recorded on Earth has been measured in three major ways: air, ground, and via satellite observation. The former of the three is used as the standard measurement due to persistent issues with unreliable ground and satellite readings.

Air measurements are noted by the World Meteorological Organisation and **Guinness World Records**, among others, as the standard to be used for determining the official record. The standard measuring conditions for temperature are in the air, 1.5 metres (4 ft 11 in) above the ground and shielded from direct sunlight.

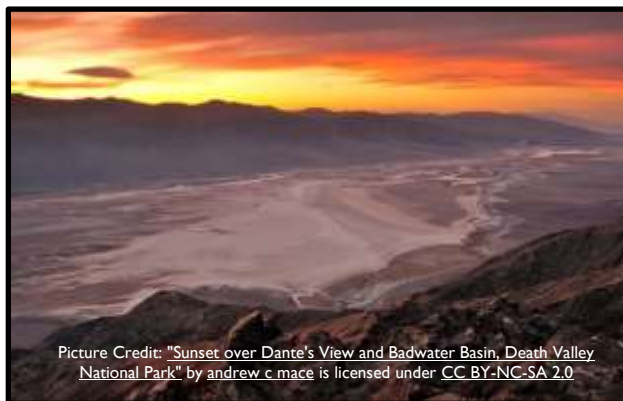
The current official highest verified air temperature on Earth is 54.4 degrees (134.1 °F), recorded at Death Valley's Furnace Creek on 16th August 2020.

Temperatures measured directly on the ground may exceed air temperatures by 30 to 50 degrees centigrade (54 to 90 °F). The theoretical maximum possible ground surface temperature has been estimated to be between 90 and 100 degrees centigrade (194 and 212 °F) for dry, darkish soils of low thermal conductivity. While there is no highest confirmed ground temperature, a reading of 93.9 degrees centigrade (201.0 °F) was allegedly recorded in Furnace Creek Ranch on 15th July 1972.

Temperature measurements via satellite tend to capture the occurrence of higher records, but due to complications involving the satellite's altitude loss (a side effect of atmospheric friction), these measurements are often considered less reliable than ground-positioned thermometers.

Hot Places

- ❖ **Athens, Greece:** The birthplace of the Olympic games set the record for continental Europe in July 1977, when it saw its highest temperature - 118.4 degrees.
- ❖ **Badlands, Australia:** The Badlands are desert lands in the Queensland region of Australia, where temperatures can reach 150 degrees.
- ❖ **Dallol, Ethiopia:** Ethiopia's Danakil Depression is known for its year-round heat. **Death Valley, US:** Death Valley was once the only route to reach California when travelling East to West. The highest temperature recorded here is 138. Death Valley is no stranger to heat. It sits 282 feet below sea level in the Mojave Desert in south-eastern California near the Nevada border and is the lowest, driest and hottest location in the United States.
- ❖ **Desert of Lut, Iran:** The Lut desert is one of the hottest and driest places on the planet. The surface of the soil can reach 159.3 degrees (as it did in 2005) - definitely too hot to stand on in your bare feet.
- ❖ **El Azizia, Libya:** A temperature of 58 degrees centigrade (136.4°F) has been recorded here.
- ❖ **Flaming Mountains, China:** The Flaming Mountains of the Chinese province of Xinjiang is as hot as Lut but with the bonus of a spectacular landscape. The surface of the mountain is said to reach temperatures of 50 to 80 degrees centigrade (122 to 175°F) in the summer. It is the hottest place in China.
- ❖ **Kebili, Tunisia:** The average temperature here is 133 degrees. The main concern of its inhabitants is to keep their water. It holds the record for the highest temperature recorded in the Eastern Hemisphere.
- ❖ **Mitribah, Kuwait:** The highest temperature in WMO's Region II, which encompasses most of Asia, was recorded here when it experienced about 129 degrees Fahrenheit.
- ❖ **Oodnadatta, Australia:** This is the site of the highest temperature recorded in the Southern Hemisphere, according to the World Meteorological Organisation's (WMO) Global Weather & Climate Extremes Archive.
- ❖ **Rivadavia, Argentina:** Rivadavia claimed the highest temperature recorded in South America, reporting 120 degrees in December 1905, according to the WMO.
- ❖ **Timbuktu, Mali:** From April to June are the hottest months of the year with temperatures during the day exceeding 129 degrees.
- ❖ **Tirat Tsvi in Israel:** With the highest documented temperature of 129 degrees in June 1942, Tirat Tsvi holds the temperature record among places in WMO's Region VI (Europe, including the Middle East and Greenland).
- ❖ **Turbat, Pakistan:** In May 2017, Turbat experienced blistering heat reaching about 128.7 degrees, one of the hottest temperatures recorded in Asia. Temperatures since have been higher still.



Picture Credit: "Sunset over Dante's View and Badwater Basin, Death Valley National Park" by andrew c mace is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

Strange Phenomena: Heat Bursts

In meteorology, heat bursts are a rare atmospheric phenomenon characterised by a sudden, localised increase in air temperature near the Earth's surface. Heat bursts typically occur at night and are associated with decaying thunderstorms. They are also characterised by extremely dry air and sometimes associated with strong, even damaging, winds.

Although the phenomena is not fully understood, the event is thought to occur when rain evaporates into a parcel of cold, dry air high in the atmosphere, making the air denser than its surroundings. The parcel descends rapidly, warming due to compression, overshoots its equilibrium level, and reaches the surface, similar to a downburst.

Recorded temperatures during heat bursts have reached well above 40 degrees centigrade (104 °F), sometimes rising by 10 degrees centigrade (18 °F) or more within only a few minutes. More extreme events have also been documented, where temperatures have been reported to exceed 50 °C (122 °F). However, such extreme events have never been officially verified.

My Favourite Hot Place

My favourite hot place is Scottsdale, a desert city in Arizona, east of the State capital Phoenix. It is known for its spa resorts and golf courses, including TPC Scottsdale. Scottsdale has a lot more to offer than just spas and golf courses.

Further north, trails wind through McDowell Sonoran Preserve, a desertscape of hills, rock formations, and cacti. Nearby is *Taliesin* West, America's greatest architect Frank Lloyd Wright's former home and studio.

Downtown Old Town Scottsdale has 1920s buildings and 19th century olive trees. The food is wonderful too. Scottsdale has more boats per head of the population than anywhere else in America. No high-rise buildings at all. With sunshine every day and low humidity, it is definitely on my list of places to visit again.

Ancient Egypt's Copper

Sources:

- <https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/ancient-cultures/ancient-egypt/copper-mines-in-the-arabah/>
- <https://www.artnews.com/art-news/news/pharaohs-mummy-figurines-source-ancient-egyptian-copper-1234596386/>
- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shishak>
- <https://www.natureasia.com/en/nmiddleeast/article/10.1038/nmiddleeast.2018.93>

The source of ancient Egypt's copper during a time of turmoil has been uncovered by researchers using lead isotope analysis. A new study published by a team led by Shirly Ben-Dor Evian in the *Journal of Archaeological Science* reveals that the material found inside four 3,000-year-old bronze funerary figurines called *ushabtis*, was sourced from the *Arabah Region*. The inclusion of copper offers potential proof that the civilisation continued to prosper during an understudied era known as the Third Intermediate Period, which ran from 1070 BCE to 664 BCE. This latest research indicates there was a copper exchange network between the Egyptians and the *Arabah Region** that continued to operate, even as other nearby empires were collapsing around Egypt.

* The Araba Region is the wide desert valley that forms the modern border between Israel and Jordan.

Because the sampling involved museum artefacts, X-ray imaging was performed to avoid sampling of any later metallic modifications and ensure the correct sampling process.

Historical Relativity

Ben-Dor Evian is a curator of Egyptian archaeology at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. She collaborated on the project with researchers from Tel Aviv University and Geological Survey of Israel. She noted that the research would aid in identifying materials from the Timna and Feynan copper mines that date back to the Third Intermediate Period.

Ushabtis were common grave goods in ancient Egypt. They were believed to perform any labour required in the afterlife on behalf of the deceased. The four royal *ushabtis*, examined by Ben-Dor Evian and her team, and currently housed at the Israel Museum, were recovered from Tanis, the Pharaoh's capital, and date to the reign of Psusennes I, who ruled from 1056 to 1010 BCE.

The Third Intermediate Period was a time of uncertainty and divided rule for Egypt, which faced multiple invasions and political upheaval, with a divided kingdom ruled by the Pharaoh in Lower Egypt and a high priest in Upper Egypt. Despite this, Psusennes was able to import copper from the thriving industry in Arabah, and these ties may have even allowed metal art to flourish in Egypt during this time.

Shishak

Shishak (aka Shishaq, Shoshek or Susac) was, according to the Hebrew Bible, an Egyptian pharaoh who sacked Jerusalem in the 10th century BCE. He is usually identified as being the pharaoh Shoshenq I**.

** In the early years after the decipherment of Egyptian hieroglyphs, on chronological, historical, and linguistic grounds, nearly all Egyptologists identified Shishak with Shoshenq I of the 22nd Dynasty, who invaded Canaan following the Battle of Bitter Lakes.

Shishak's campaign against the Kingdom of Judah and his sack of Jerusalem are recounted in the Hebrew Bible, in 1 Kings 14:25 and 2 Chronicles 12:1-12. According to these accounts, Shishak had provided refuge to Jeroboam during the later years of Solomon's reign, and upon Solomon's death, Jeroboam became king of the tribes in the north, which separated from Judah to become the Kingdom of Israel. In the fifth year of Rehoboam's reign, commonly dated ca. 926 BCE, Shishak swept through Judah with a powerful army of 60,000 horsemen and 1,200 chariots***, supporting Jeroboam. According to 2 Chronicles 12:3, he was supported by the Libim (Libyans), the Sukkiim, and the Kushites ("Ethiopians" in the Septuagint - the earliest surviving Greek translation of the Old Testament from the original Hebrew bible).

*** It has been claimed that the numbers of Egyptian soldiers given in Chronicles can be "safely ignored as impossible" on Egyptological grounds; similarly, the number of chariots reported in 2 Chronicles is likely exaggerated by a factor of ten—leading 60,000 horses through the Sinai and Negev would have been logistically impossible, and no evidence of Egyptian cavalry exists from before the 27th Dynasty. The treasures taken by Shishak are also highly unlikely.

Shishak took away treasures of the Temple of Yahweh and the king's house, as well as shields of gold that Solomon had made - Rehoboam replaced them with brass ones.

According to Second Chronicles, when 'Shishak king of Egypt attacked Jerusalem, he carried off the treasures of the Temple of the Lord and the treasures of the royal palace. He took everything, including the gold shields Solomon had made.'

Flavius Josephus in *Antiquities of the Jews***** adds to this a contingent of 400,000 foot soldiers. According to Josephus, his army met with no resistance throughout the campaign, taking Rehoboam's most fortified cities "without fighting." Finally, he conquered Jerusalem without resistance, because "Rehoboam was afraid." Shishak did not destroy Jerusalem but forced King Rehoboam of Judah to strip the Temple and his treasury of their gold and other movable treasures.

**** *Antiquities of the Jews* is a 20-volume historiographical work, written in Greek, by the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus in the 13th year of the reign of Roman emperor Flavius Domitian which was around AD 93 or 94. *Antiquities of the Jews* contains an account of history of the Jewish people for Josephus' gentile patrons. In the first ten volumes, Josephus follows the events of the historical books of the Hebrew Bible, beginning with the creation of Adam and Eve.

You may remember that *Shishak* is mentioned in Steven Spielberg's film *Raiders of the Lost Ark* as the pharaoh who seized the *Ark of the Covenant* from the Temple of Solomon during his raids on Jerusalem and hid it in the Well of Souls in Tanis.



Picture Credit: "jubilation figurines - Pharaoh exhibit - Cleveland Museum of Art" by Tim Evanson is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

What is Copper

Copper is a reddish-gold coloured metal that is ductile, malleable, and an effective conductor of heat and electricity.

- ❖ Copper combines well with other metals to form widely used alloys such as brass and bronze.
- ❖ Copper is considered a base metal, as it oxidises relatively easily. It has the symbol Cu.
- ❖ The name is derived from the Latin *aes Cyprium*, meaning ore from Cyprus.
- ❖ The discovery that copper could be alloyed with tin to form bronze gave rise to the Bronze Age.
- ❖ Copper was the first metal to be worked by man, along with gold and meteoritic iron, because these metals were among the few that exist in their native state, meaning the relatively pure metal could be found in nature.
- ❖ Brasses and Bronzes are probably the most well-known families of copper-base alloys. Brasses are mainly copper and zinc. Bronzes are mainly copper along with alloying elements such as tin, aluminium, silicon or beryllium.

The use of copper dates back more than 10,000 years. *Otzi the Iceman* (3300 BCE) was found with an axe, the head of which consisted of nearly pure copper. His hair contained high levels of the toxin arsenic, which may indicate he had been exposed to the element during copper smelting.

The oldest artefacts made with copper date back to the Neolithic period, being used for jewellery, tools, sculpture, bells, vessels, lamps and death masks, amongst other things. In terms of human development, so important was it that it gave its name to the *Copper Age*, today better known as the *Chalcolithic*. From Phoenicia to Mesoamerica, copper was a badge of elite status before becoming more widely available. It was a handy form of exchange in the trade between cultures. Eventually, copper symbolic goods were replaced by more manageable ingots, which, in turn, evolved into even more convenient coins. Gold and silver may have been common enough for the rich and powerful, but if there was one pure metal that ordinary people in the ancient world could get their hands on, it was copper. The legendary copper mines of King Solomon helped build the fortunes of Israel.

Source: <https://www.worldhistory.org/copper/>

The Sinking of the Lusitania

Sourced/Excerpted from and for Further Reading:

- <https://www.rmslusitania.info/>
- https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/RMS_Lusitania
- https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sinking_of_the_RMS_Lusitania
- <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Lusitania-British-ship>
- <https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-i/lusitania>
- <https://www.rmslusitania.info/lusitania/facts-and-figures/>
- <https://www.rmslusitania.info/blog/>



Picture Credit: This file is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Germany license, Bundesarchiv, DVM 10 Bild-23-61-17 / CC-BY-SA 3.0

We hear and read a lot about the sinking of the *Titanic* but much less about the sinking of *RMS Lusitania*. This article tries to rectify that shortcoming.

Prelude to Lusitania: Germany Announces Unrestricted Submarine Warfare

When World War I erupted in 1914, President Woodrow Wilson pledged neutrality for the United States, a position that most Americans favoured. Britain, however, was one of America's closest trading partners, and tension soon arose between the United States and Germany over the latter's attempted quarantine of the British Isles. Several US ships travelling to Britain were damaged or sunk by German mines, and in February 1915, Germany announced unrestricted submarine warfare in the waters around Britain.

The Lusitania's Beginning

It started 115 years ago on 7th June 1907. On that date, the *RMS Lusitania* left her slip at John Brown and Co., Clydebank, Scotland, ready to be outfitted to become the revolutionary, luxurious, historical, and (sadly) tragic ship that she turned out to be. Christened by Mary, Lady Inverclyde, *Lusitania* launched at 12:30 p.m. that day. There were plenty of people to witness the spectacle of the occasion: 600 guests and thousands of spectators.

At the time of completion, it was the largest ship in the world, although it was surpassed the following year by its sister ship, the *Mauretania*. Although luxurious, the *Lusitania* was noted more for its speed than anything else.

The Lusitania's Ending

The *RMS Lusitania* was torpedoed and sunk by the German submarine *U-20* on 7th May 1915, becoming a casualty of World War I. Nearly 130 American civilians died in the attack, turning American opinion against Germany, a turning point of the war. Even so, the United States would not declare war on Germany and

enter World War I until April 1917, nearly two years later. Interesting to note is that war was declared by the US only after the Imperial German Government resumed using unrestricted submarine warfare against American shipping in an attempt to break the transatlantic supply chain from the US to Britain, as well as after the Zimmermann Telegram**.

** The Zimmermann Telegram was a secret diplomatic communication issued from the German Foreign Office in January 1917 that proposed a military alliance between Germany and Mexico if the United States entered the war against them. Germany offered Mexico, Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico as an inducement. The telegram was intercepted and decoded by British intelligence – the decryption was described as the most significant intelligence triumph for Britain during World War I and one of the earliest occasions on which a piece of signal intelligence influenced world events.

Facts about the sinking

- ❖ Duration of sinking: 18 minutes.
- ❖ People aboard: 1,960 to 2,000.
- ❖ Survivors: 767 (4 died afterwards).
- ❖ Victims: 1,193 (plus the four who died afterwards).
- ❖ Americans killed: 128.
- ❖ Passenger ship carrying war materiel for the British Army when she was attacked by a German submarine and sunk.
- ❖ Wreck location - 11 miles (18 km) south of the Old Head of Kinsale, Ireland.

Facts about the Ship

- ❖ Gross tonnage: 31,550
- ❖ Length overall: 787 feet / 239.8 meters
- ❖ Beam: 87 feet 6 inches / 26.7 meters
- ❖ Draft: 33 feet 6 inches / 10.2 meters
- ❖ 4 Funnels, 2 Masts and 10 Decks
- ❖ Engines – the Parsons turbine engines were 25 feet long with 12 ft diameter rotors.
- ❖ Rudder - *Lusitania's* counter-balanced rudder weighed 56 tons.
- ❖ Boilers - 25 cylindrical Scotch (23 double ended, two single-ended) in four boiler rooms; 192 furnaces with total heating surface 158 350 square feet; steam pressure 195 pounds per square inch
- ❖ Top speed: 26.35 knots
- ❖ Career Length - seven years and nine months

Facts about the Passengers and Crew***

- ❖ **Saloon (1st Class) Passenger List** (291 total, 113 saved, 177 lost, one did not sail)
- ❖ **2nd Cabin (2nd Class) Passenger List** (601 total, 229 saved, 372 lost)
- ❖ **3rd Class Passenger List** (373 total, 134 saved, 239 lost)
- ❖ **Deck Crew List** (78 total, 41 saved, 37 lost)
- ❖ **Victualling Crew List** (306 total, 139 saved, 167 lost)
- ❖ **Engineering Crew List** (313 total, 112 saved, 201 lost)
- ❖ **Band** (five total, three saved, two lost)
- ❖ **Stowaways** (3 in total, all lost)
- ❖ **Cameronia Transfers** (see next)

*** Final Crossing (#202), leaving New York City on 1st May 1915

Fate

The *SS Cameronia* was an Anchor Line ship taken over by the British government as it was about to sail from New York on Saturday, 1st May 1915. As a result, all her passengers were transferred to the *Lusitania*, also departing on that day. These last-minute transfers delayed the *Lusitania's* departure by 2½ hours. The requisition of the *Cameronia* and the transfer of her passengers to the *Lusitania* not only added to the disaster's death toll but had the *Lusitania* not been delayed by the transfer, it would have been possible that the *Lusitania* and the German

U-boat would have missed each other on that fateful day on the Celtic Sea. The passengers had been warned before departing New York of the danger of voyaging into the area in a British ship.

Source: The Lusitania Resource at <https://www.rmslusitania.info/people/cameronia-transfers/>

Was the Lusitania a Legitimate Target?

The answer is probably YES. When *Lusitania* was built, her construction and operating expenses were subsidised by the British government, with the provision that she could be converted to an Armed Merchant Cruiser (AMC) if need be. At the outbreak of World War I, the British Admiralty considered the ship for requisition as an AMC - and she was put on the official list of ships of that designation.

The Admiralty then cancelled their earlier decision and decided not to use her as an AMC after all; large liners such as *Lusitania* consumed enormous quantities of coal and became a serious drain on the Admiralty's fuel reserves, so express liners were deemed inappropriate for the role when smaller cruisers would do. They were also very distinctive; so smaller liners were used as transports instead. *Lusitania* remained on the official AMC list and was listed as an auxiliary cruiser in the 1914 edition of Jane's *All the World's Fighting Ships*, along with *Mauretania*.

At the outbreak of hostilities, fears for the safety of *Lusitania* and other great liners of the time ran high. During the ship's first eastbound crossing after the war started, she was painted in a drab grey colour scheme to try to mask her identity and make her more difficult to detect visually.

The Cunard liner was attacked by *U-20* commanded by Kapitänleutnant Walther Schwieger. After the single torpedo struck, a second explosion occurred inside the ship, which then sank in only 18 minutes. The sinking turned public opinion in many countries against Germany.

The contemporary investigations in both the UK and the USA into the precise cause of the ship's loss were obstructed by the needs of wartime secrecy and a propaganda campaign to ensure all blame fell upon Germany. Argument over whether the ship was a legitimate military target raged back and forth throughout the war, but after the war, it was revealed that at the time of her sinking, she was carrying over 4 million rounds of machine-gun ammunition (.303 calibre), almost 5,000 shrapnel shell casings (for a total of some 50 tons), and 3,240 brass percussion artillery fuses.

Source: Mostly from https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sinking_of_the_RMS_Lusitania

What happened to the Survivors?

The sinking of the *RMS Lusitania* on 7th May 1915 was not the end of the story. After disembarking from their rescue vessels, the survivors were welcomed by the unprepared but unreservedly generous people of Queenstown (now Cobh).

Many of the survivors were taken to the Rob Roy Hotel or Queen's Hotel (the latter is now called the Commodore Hotel).

The Bridges of London

The River Thames is the second-longest river in the United Kingdom (only the River Severn is longer). The Thames has over 200 bridges, 27 tunnels, six public ferries, one cable car link, and one ford along its 215-mile journey. Here are the ones in Greater London:

- ❖ Tower Bridge: Opened in 1904.
- ❖ London Bridge: First opened in 50 AD, then again in 1209, 1831 and 1973
- ❖ Cannon Street Railway Bridge: Opened in 1866
- ❖ Southwark Bridge: First opened in 1819, then again in 1921
- ❖ Millennium Bridge: Opened in 2002
- ❖ Blackfriars Railway Bridge: First opened in 1864, then again in 1886
- ❖ Blackfriars Bridge: First opened in 1769, then again in 1869
- ❖ Waterloo Bridge: First opened in 1817, then again in 1945
- ❖ Hungerford Bridge: Opened in 1864
- ❖ Golden Jubilee Bridges: Opened in 2002
- ❖ Westminster Bridge: First opened in 1750, then again in 1862
- ❖ Lambeth Bridge: First opened in 1862, then again in 1932
- ❖ Vauxhall Bridge: First opened in 1816, then again in 1906
- ❖ Grosvenor Bridge: Opened in 1859
- ❖ Chelsea Bridge: First opened in 1858, then again in 1937
- ❖ Albert Bridge: Opened in 1873
- ❖ Battersea Bridge: First opened in 1771, then again in 1890
- ❖ Battersea Railway Bridge: Opened in 1863
- ❖ Wandsworth Bridge: First opened in 1873, then again in 1938
- ❖ Fulham Railway Bridge and Footbridge: Opened in 1889
- ❖ Putney Bridge: First opened in 1729, then again in 1886
- ❖ Hammersmith Bridge: First opened in 1827, then again in 1887
- ❖ Barnes Railway Bridge and Footbridge: Opened in 1849
- ❖ Chiswick Bridge: Opened in 1933
- ❖ Kew Railway Bridge: Opened in 1869
- ❖ Kew Bridge: First opened in 1759, then again in 1789
- ❖ Richmond Lock and Footbridge: Opened in 1894
- ❖ Twickenham Bridge: Opened in 1933
- ❖ Richmond Railway Bridge: Opened in 1848
- ❖ Richmond Bridge Opened in 1777
- ❖ Teddington Lock Footbridges: Opened in 1889
- ❖ Kingston Railway Bridge: Opened in 1863
- ❖ Kingston Bridge: First opened in 1190, then again in 1828
- ❖ Hampton Court Bridge: First opened in 1753, then again in 1778, 1865 and 1933

Source: Wikipedia (here)

History

Until sufficient crossings were established, the river provided a formidable barrier for most of its course – in post-Roman Britain during the Dark Ages, Belgic-Celtic* tribal lands, and Anglo-Saxon kingdoms and subdivisions were defined by which side of the river they were on. When English counties were established, the river formed a boundary between the counties on either side. After rising in Gloucestershire, the river flows between the historic counties of Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Middlesex and Essex on the north side, and Wiltshire, Berkshire, Surrey, and Kent counties on the south side.



An engraving by Claes Van Visscher showing Old London Bridge in 1616. St Magnus the Martyr's church can be seen. There have been many reincarnations of London Bridge since the original Roman crossing in AD50. The most famous and longstanding of these was the "Old" Medieval Bridge, finished in 1209 during the reign of King John.

Picture Credit/Attribution:
Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons. File URL:
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:London_Bridge_\(1616\)_by_Claes_Van_Visscher.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:London_Bridge_(1616)_by_Claes_Van_Visscher.jpg)

However, the many permanent crossings that have been built over the centuries have changed the dynamics and made cross-river development and shared responsibilities more practicable. The advent of the railways resulted in a spate of bridge-building in the 19th century, including the Blackfriars Railway Bridge and Charing Cross (Hungerford) Railway Bridge in central London.

Source: Wikipedia (here) * See History Files (here)

Tower Bridge

It is, perhaps, London's most famous bridge and may even be one of the most famous bridges in the world. It's the last of the Victorian bridges, built between 1886 and 1894. Tower Bridge was designed by Sir Horace Jones and built by John Wolfe Barry. Since its opening in 1894, it has been London's defining landmark, an icon of London and the United Kingdom. Horace Jones also shaped some of the most stand-out structures of Victorian London - including Leadenhall Market, Smithfield Market, and Billingsgate Market.



Picture Credit: "Tower Bridge Gate" by _Hadock_ is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

The walkways on the bridge became notorious for pickpockets and prostitution, although what the attraction was to conduct such activities on a narrow windy, walkway, is hard to understand. Even so, it caused its closure to the public from 1910 to the early 21st century. The two sections in the central span are called bascules, the French word for 'see-saw', and they rise to an angle of 83 degrees. More than 11,000 tons of steel were used in its construction, and the foundations needed more than 70,000 tons of concrete to support the structure. It also features over 31 million bricks and 2 million rivets.

Sources:

<https://owlcation.com/humanities/Bridges-across-the-Thames-in-London>
<https://www.towerbridge.org.uk/discover/history>
<https://www.londonxlondon.com/tower-bridge-facts/>

Earlier Bridges

The Romans founded London, and, just as we do today, they found that getting from one side of the Thames to the other was essential. The first bridge (close to the site of the present London Bridge) was built by the Romans around 50 AD. It's not known how many timber bridges followed the Roman one on this site. There is a reference to a bridge at the time of King Edgar (957-975)

Until the 18th century, the only bridge across the Thames was London Bridge. But London nearly had another bridge – it may have been partly built before it was abandoned. According to the source below, the bridge may have been started around 1599 during the reign of Queen Elizabeth Ist. It was shown on one map and in some documents. It wasn't in London as we know it today, but out in the countryside crossing the Thames, linking Blackwall with North Greenwich.

Sources:

<http://www.engineering-timelines.com/scripts/engineeringItem.asp?id=662>
<https://www.ianvisits.co.uk/blog/2014/06/30/londons-lost-bridge-across-the-thames-at-blackwall/>

It's one thing thinking about London's bridges and when they were built, but equally interesting is to think about the rivers which once ran through London – where are they now, you might ask. A BBC article, *The lost rivers that lie beneath London* (here), in October 2015, found plenty of answers. For example, at central London's St Pancras Road, a river once ran through grassy fields. It's one of many that was converted into a sewer as the capital's population grew. Another is *The Fleet*, probably one of the better-known rivers beneath Londoners' feet, a sewer that flows to Blackfriars Bridge. Paul Talling investigated how these rivers shaped the city and wrote a book about London's lost rivers (see here). The rivers formed borough boundaries and transport networks, fashionable spas, and stagnant slums - and all eventually gave way to railways, roads, and sewers. The rivers may now be underground, but their impact on London's landscape remains.

Gilbert & Sullivan

Sourced/Excerpted from and for Further Reading:

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gilbert_and_Sullivan
- https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Gilbert_and_Sullivan
- <https://eno.org/discover-opera/beginners-guide-gilbert-sullivan/>
- <https://eno.org/discover-opera/explore-more/gilbert-and-sullivan-s-best-loved-songs/>
- <https://www.gsarchive.net/>
- <http://web.mit.edu/gsp/www/gands.html>
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Story_of_Gilbert_and_Sullivan
- <https://www.gilbertandsullivanociety.org.uk/>
- <https://www.huntingdontheatre.org/articles/perfectly-outrageous-the-story-of-gilbert-and-sullivan/>
- <https://saraleeetter.com/2016/06/29/gilbert-sullivan-101-all-fourteen-operas/>
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_W._S._Gilbert_dramatic_works

Gilbert and Sullivan was the Victorian-era theatrical partnership of William Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan and the operatic/musical works they created together, becoming arguably, the fathers of the modern-day blockbuster musical loved by enthusiastic fans worldwide.



Attribution:

Studio Ellis & Walery: Alfred Ellis (1854-1930)[2] & Walery (Stanislas Julian, Count Ostrorog, either senior (1830 - 1890) or junior (1863 - 1935).) Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Sir William Schwenck Gilbert
(Knighthood 1907)



Attribution:

Photo of Sir Arthur Seymour Sullivan first published in 1893 by Alfred Ellis & Walery

Sir Arthur Seymour Sullivan
(Knighthood 1883)

The comic operas they wrote are both witty and satirical and remain as funny now as they were when first written. The librettos (words) were written by Sir William Gilbert, and the music by Sir Arthur Sullivan for Richard D'Oyly Carte.

Who were Gilbert and Sullivan?

William Gilbert was born in London in 1836, the son of a naval surgeon. Two years later, he was kidnapped in Italy - payment of the ransom money (£25) secured his release and safe return to his parents. He started his adult working life by studying law and became a barrister, but his interest lay elsewhere - in drama, drawing, music, and poetry.

Arthur Sullivan was also born in London and was six years after Gilbert. His father, a theatrical musician, later became bandmaster at the Royal Military College in Sandhurst. From an early age, young Arthur was encouraged to take an interest in music - so much so that by the age of eight, he was a good singer and a proficient musician in several instruments.

Richard D'Oyly Carte

Richard D'Oyly Carte was born in London in 1944 and became an English talent agent, theatrical impresario, composer, and hotelier during the latter half of the Victorian era. He was a successful businessman and built two of London's theatres and a hotel empire. His opera company ran continuously for over a hundred years, and his management agency represented some of the leading artists of the day. D'Oyly Carte brought Gilbert and Sullivan together and nurtured their collaboration in the Savoy Operas series. He founded the *D'Oyly Carte Opera Company* and built the state-of-the-art Savoy Theatre to host the Gilbert and Sullivan operas.

Gilbert and Sullivan Operas

A brief description of the operas is as follows:

- ❖ **Thespis:** The Gods on Mount Olympus are old and weary, so they decide to take a vacation to Earth while a troupe of actors take their place. (1871)
- ❖ **Trial by Jury:** A woman sues her would-be husband for Breach of Promise of Marriage. (1875)
- ❖ **The Sorcerer:** A young couple about to be married decide to share their happiness with the whole village by hiring a sorcerer to make a love potion to make everyone fall in love. Naturally, this doesn't work out as planned. (1877)
- ❖ **HMS Pinafore or The Lass that Loved a Sailor:** A lowly sailor and his Captain's beautiful daughter find their love thwarted by their differences in rank, an evil shipmate, and an incompetent Lord. (1878)
- ❖ **The Pirates of Penzance or The Slave of Duty:** Young Frederic, finally free of his apprenticeship to a band of pirates, falls in love with Mabel, the daughter of a Major-General. But, the Pirate King, and the nurserymaid he scorned, take advantage of his sense of duty to keep him from enjoying his newfound happiness for long. (1879)
- ❖ **Patience or Bunthorne's Bride:** The dragons love the ladies, but all the ladies love Bunthorne, the self-absorbed Aesthetic - except for Patience, the milkmaid he loves. Until, of course, an even more Aesthetic Aesthetic comes along and steals them away. (1881)
- ❖ **Iolanthe or The Peer and the Peri:** Iolanthe, a fairy, is allowed to return after being banished for the crime of marrying a mortal. Unfortunately, her half-human/half-fairy son is having some difficulty with the Lord Chancellor, who will not grant permission for him to marry Phyllis. But the fairies agree to help him, despite the opposition of the entire British Parliament. (1882)
- ❖ **Princess Ida or Castle Adamant:** Prince Hilarion and his father, King Hildebrand, await the arrival of Princess Ida (to whom he was betrothed as an infant) and her father, King Gama. But Gama arrives without his daughter - she has founded a university for women and has given up the Company of men. But Hilarion



and his friends determine to infiltrate the University, dressed as women. (1884)

- ❖ **The Mikado or The Town of Titipu:** The son of the Mikado of Japan is disguised as a wandering minstrel to escape his father's order to marry the elderly Katisha. He finds that the girl he loves is engaged to be married to the Lord High Executioner of Titipu. But that's the least of his worries when his father at Katisha show up searching for her intended. (1885)
- ❖ **Ruddigore or The Witch's Curse:** Young Robin Oakapple and Sweet Rose Maybud are in love but are too shy to tell each other until Robin's foster brother, Richard Dauntless (a sailor), woos Sweet Rose himself. But Young Robin is secretly none other than Sir Ruthven Murgatroyd, Baronet of Ruddigore, the latest in a noble line cursed to do an evil deed every day or be tortured to death by the ghosts of his ancestors. (1887)
- ❖ **The Yeomen of the Guard or The Merryman and his Maid:** Colonel Fairfax, sentenced to die in an hour on a false charge of sorcery, marries Elsie Maynard, a strolling singer. But then he escapes, causing complications. In the end, Elsie's boyfriend, Jack Point, dies of a broken heart. Or does he? (1888)
- ❖ **The Gondoliers or The King of Barataria:** Two Venetian gondoliers marry - then learn that one of them is the King of Barataria and was married in infancy to Casilda, daughter of the Duke of Plaza-Toro. Unfortunately, nobody knows which of them is the king. (1889)
- ❖ **Utopia, Limited or The Flowers of Progress:** Princess Zara of the Kingdom of Utopia returns from England, bringing the Flowers of Progress to teach the naive Utopians how to make their country as great and glorious as England. Yet, somehow, everything doesn't quite seem right. (1893)
- ❖ **The Grand Duke or The Statutory Duel:** As leading comedian Ludwig prepares to marry the soubrette, Lisa, their Company achieves an opportunity to act on their conspiracy to overthrow the Grand Duke of Pfennig-Halbfennig, and Ludwig becomes the Grand Duke. Unfortunately, several other women have a prior claim on the Grand Duke's hand in marriage. (1896)

England's Smallest Church



Picture Credit: "Lullington Church" by Mark Bridge is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

BLink, and you might miss it. If you head over towards the village of Alfriston in East Sussex, you will find a tiny hamlet called Lullington. A village lay to the west in days gone by, but now only a few houses remain.

Just over nine miles southeast of Lewes, the hamlet lies on a shoulder of the South Downs, where the River Cuckmere cuts through the downs. Alfriston is on the opposite bank of the river.

There is a 12th century church (from around 1180) that is claimed to be the smallest church in England* measuring only 256 square feet. If you want to be pedantic, it is not a church at all but the chancel (the part nearest the altar) of a once larger church that stood on the site but is now all but destroyed – thought to be as a result of a fire in the days of Oliver Cromwell.

* See *Discovering England's Smallest Churches*, by John Kinross, published by Weidenfeld & Nicolson, mentioned in *The Spectator*, [here](#).

The church originated as a chapelry of Alciston. It later belonged to Battle Abbey but was transferred to Richard de la Wych (Saint Richard), Bishop of Chichester, in 1251.

Excavations in 1965/66 showed that, probably in about 1350, the nave and tower spaces were made into one, with a new porch. The tower was not necessarily removed, as in Heybridge, Essex, where something similar happened, yet the tower remains. In the early 16th century, the walls were thickened with brick, probably after a fire.

Lullington Church, also known as the *Church of the Good Shepherd*, is open daily and used throughout the year for worship but can seat only about 20 people. That is just about

enough for the number of its parishioners.

As you might expect, creature comforts are few - there is no electricity, and the evening services are conducted by candlelight. People are wed and blessed here with weddings and baptisms conducted, but only every now and then.

You can visit the church, courtesy of a video by Richard Vobes (aka *The Bald Explorer*), [here](#). Very entertaining.

The Smallest Church in Sussex, by the *British Sea Power* band, was recorded in the church. The organ music featured in that song was made using the harmonium inside the church [here](#).

Sources for this article:

- <https://cuckmerechurches.org.uk/the-good-shepherd-lullington/>
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lullington_Church

The Oldest Temple of Worship in the World

Göbekli Tepe is a Neolithic archaeological site near the city of Şanlıurfa in South-Eastern Anatolia, Turkey. It includes two phases of use, believed to be of a social or ritual nature by the site discoverer and excavator Klaus Schmidt.

Its oldest layer dates to around 9000 BCE, the end of the Pre-Pottery Neolithic A (PPNA). The younger phase, radiocarbon dated as between 8300 and 7400 BCE, belongs to the Pre-Pottery Neolithic B. During the early phase, circles of massive T-shaped stone pillars were erected, classified as the world's oldest known megaliths*. Excavations have been ongoing since 1996 by

the *German Archaeological Institute*, but large parts remain unexcavated. In 2018, the site was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

* A megalith is a large prehistoric stone that has been used to construct a structure or monument, either alone or together with other stones. There are over 35,000 in Europe alone, located widely from Sweden to the Mediterranean sea.

Evidence indicates that the inhabitants were hunter-gatherers who supplemented their diet with early forms of domesticated cereal and lived in villages for at least part of the year. Tools such as grinding stones and mortar & pestle, found at Göbekli Tepe, have been analysed and suggest considerable activity in cereal processing, although no evidence of agriculture has been found at the site itself, which may be explained as it dated back about 11,500 years. Before Göbekli Tepe, archaeologists thought temples and religious buildings were found only where farming communities (beyond hunting/gathering) stood. But at Göbekli Tepe, temples were found before farming was established; and it uprooted a long-held belief. This is one reason why Göbekli Tepe is significant. Archaeozoological evidence hints at large-scale hunting of gazelle between midsummer and autumn.

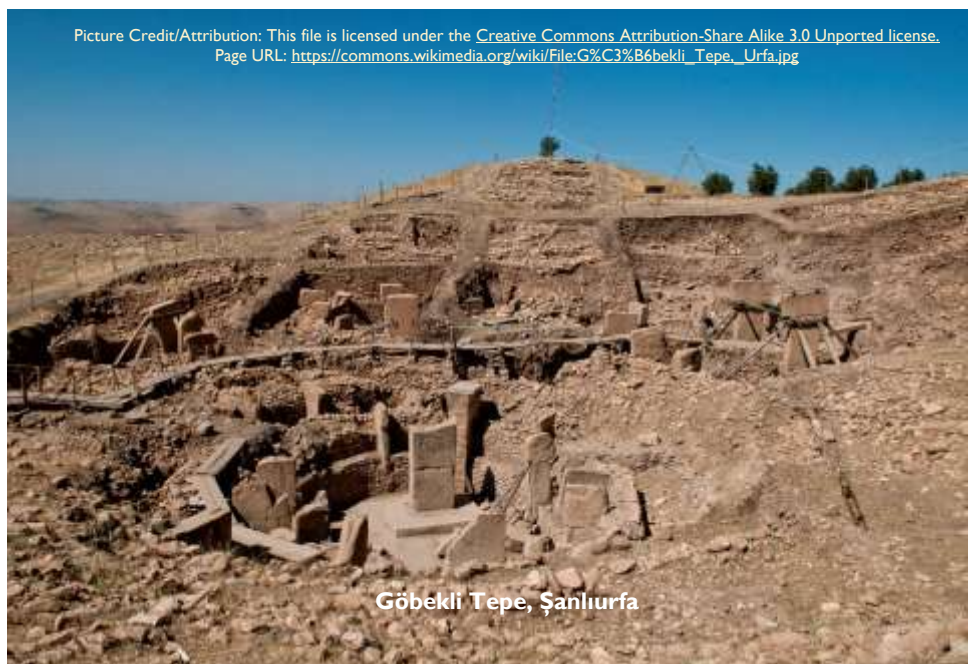
The ideas formulated and practised here launched a thousand civilisations and perhaps as many religions.

Go back in time – watch a video [here](#).

Sourced/Excerpted from and for Further Reading:

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/G%C3%B6bekli_Tepe

Picture Credit/Attribution: This file is licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license](#).
Page URL: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:G%C3%B6bekli_Tepe_Urfa.jpg



Göbekli Tepe, Şanlıurfa

The SS Richard Montgomery

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

SS Richard Montgomery is an American Liberty ship built during World War II. She was named after Richard Montgomery, an Irish soldier and officer. Montgomery originally served in the British Army and fought in North America during the French and Indian War and Pontiac's War. Montgomery served as a general in the Continental Army during the American Revolutionary War and was killed at the Battle of Quebec.

In August 1944, the ship was wrecked on the Nore sandbank in the Thames Estuary, near Sheerness, while carrying a cargo of munitions. The estimated 1,400 tonnes of explosives remaining on board present a hazard, although the likelihood of explosion is remote.

The *SS Richard Montgomery* is not alone – the Thames Estuary is home to around 767 recorded wrecks: the earliest known are documented from battles recorded in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle 893-894. The figure also includes downed aircraft from the Second World War and wrecks of Thames barges.

Final Journey

The *SS Richard Montgomery* was launched on 15th June 1943. In August 1944, on what turned out to be her final voyage, the ship left Hog Island, Philadelphia, USA, having been loaded with 6,127 tons of munitions. She travelled from the Delaware River to the Thames Estuary, then anchored while awaiting the formation of a convoy to travel to Cherbourg, France, which had come under Allied control on 27th July 1944, during the Battle of Normandy.

When *Richard Montgomery* arrived off Southend, she came under the authority of the Thames naval control at HMS Leigh, located at the end of Southend Pier. The Harbourmaster, responsible for all shipping movements in the estuary, ordered the ship to a berth off the north edge of Sheerness middle sands, an area designated as the Great Nore Anchorage. On 20th August 1944, she dragged anchor and ran aground on a sandbank around 820 ft from the Medway Approach Channel, in a depth of 24 ft of water. When the tide went down, the ship broke her back on sandbanks near the Isle of Sheppey.

A Rochester, Kent-based stevedore company was tasked with removing the cargo, which began on 23rd August 1944. By the next day, the ship's hull had cracked open, the bow end to flood. The salvage operation continued until 25th September, when the ship was finally abandoned before all the cargo had been recovered, and afterwards, it broke into two separate parts, roughly amidships.

According to a 2008 survey, the wreck is at a depth of 49 ft (on average) and is leaning to starboard. At all times, her three masts are visible above the water.



Map of the Thames Estuary with the exclusion zone around the wreck of *SS Richard Montgomery*. The file is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported license.

The quantity of unexploded munitions involved is a concern, and the ship is monitored by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency and is marked on the relevant Admiralty Charts. In 1973, it became the first wreck designated as dangerous under section 2 of the Protection of Wrecks Act 1973: with an exclusion zone around her monitored visually and by radar. An investigation by *New Scientist* magazine in 2004, based partly on government documents released in 2004, concluded that the cargo was still deadly and could be detonated by a collision, an attack, or even shifting of the cargo in the tide. The deterioration of the bombs is so severe that they could explode spontaneously.

Doing nothing is not an option

The UK government's Receiver of Wreck commissioned a risk assessment in 1999, but the result remains unpublished. The Maritime and Coastguard Agency convened with local and port authorities to discuss the report in 2001 and concluded that "*doing nothing [was], not an option for much longer*".

One of the reasons that the explosives have not been removed was the unfortunate outcome of a similar operation in July 1967 to neutralise the contents of the Polish cargo ship *Kielce* that sank in 1946 off Folkestone in the English Channel. During preliminary work, *Kielce* exploded with a force equivalent to an earthquake measuring 4.5 on the Richter scale, digging a 20-foot-deep crater in the seabed and bringing "panic and chaos" to Folkestone. Fortunately, there were no injuries. Worryingly, *Kielce* was at least 3 or 4 miles from land, sunk in deeper water than had a cargo of explosives "just a fraction" of the *Richard Montgomery*.

According to a *BBC News* report in 1970, if the munitions on the *Richard Montgomery* were to be exploded, it would throw a 1,000-foot-wide column of water and debris nearly 10,000 feet into the air and generate a wave 16 feet

high. Almost every window in Sheerness (pop. circa 20,000) would be broken, and the blast would damage buildings. Later reports (2012) lowered the 1970 estimates, but concerns about an explosion remain. For example, critics of government assurances that the likelihood of the munitions igniting is remote argue that one of the fuses of the 2,600 fused-fragmentation devices could become partially flooded and undergo the chemical reaction producing *copper azide*. A knock, such as that caused by the ship breaking up further, or a collision on the busy shipping lane, could cause the *copper azide* to explode and trigger an explosive chain reaction detonating the bulk of the munitions. Wreck.

Is a Thames Estuary Airport feasible?

A new Thames Estuary Airport has been proposed at various times since the 1940s. Is it pie in the sky - and how would a giant 'bomb' in the flight path affect decisions? The increasing calls for a new airport in the Thames estuary would mean a solution would have to be found to remove the wreck, or at least make it safe, should the airport be built. In June 2020, the Department of Transport announced it was looking for a contractor to remove the ship's masts as they were "*placing undue strain on the rest of the vessel structure*".

Picture Credit: "*SS Richard Montgomery*" by socarra is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0



Case Law: Bizarre but Significant

Sourced/Excerpted from and for Further Reading:

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donoghue_v_Stevenson
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chapelton_v_Barry_UDC
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haughton_v_Smith
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carlill_v_Carbolic_Smoke_Ball_Co

The modern English legal system didn't just appear in its current form overnight. English case law has evolved over centuries to become the complex and intricate body of today's laws. Often the decisions can be tough to follow.

When studying to be an accountant, 66 or 67 years ago, I was advised by my tutors to buy Geldart's *Elements of English Law*. They said a solid understanding of the law was a helpful tool in the practice of my chosen profession (to be truthful, it was my mother rather than me who decided that accountancy was the career I should pursue, but that's another story). Geldart's was a great little book, and I'm sure I still have it somewhere.

Here are a few case decisions which became significant landmark decisions. I hope you will find them interesting.



Picture Credit: "Donoghue v Stevenson Snail in a Bottle | Paisley Scotland <http://bit.ly/2pb5Sdg>" by paisleyorguk is licensed under CC BY 2.0

Donoghue v Stevenson (1932), Known as the "Paisley Snail" or "Snail in the Bottle" case

This case was a landmark court decision in delict law (Scotland) and English tort law by the House of Lords. It laid the foundation of the modern law of negligence, establishing general principles of the duty of care that manufacturers owe to consumers.

Mrs May Donoghue drank a bottle of ginger beer in a café in Paisley, Renfrewshire. Unknown to her or anybody else, a decomposed snail was in the bottle. She fell ill and sued the ginger beer manufacturer (Mr Stevenson). The House of Lords held that the manufacturer owed a duty of care to her, which was breached as it was reasonably foreseeable that failure to ensure the product's safety would harm consumers.

The decision fundamentally created a new type of liability in law that did not depend upon any previously recognised category of tortious claims. Lord Atkin famously said when deliberating the case, "The rule that you are to love your neighbour becomes in law: you must not injure your neighbour."

Chapelton v Barry Urban District Council (1940) - Known as the "Deckchair" case

I remember this from my Geldart studying days when training for my professional exams. It was an English contract law case focused on offer and acceptance and exclusion clauses. It stands for the proposition that a display of goods can be an offer and a whole offer rather than an invitation to treat and serves as an example of how onerous exclusion clauses can be deemed not incorporated in a contract.

David Chapelton went to a beach with his friend, Miss Andrews, at Cold Knap, a district of Barry in South Wales. There was a pile of deckchairs with a notice next to them saying: "Barry Urban District Council. Cold Knap. Hire of chairs 2d. per session of 3 hours." It also said tickets should be obtained from attendants. Mr Chapelton took two chairs from an attendant, paid the money and received two tickets. He put them in his pocket. On the tickets was written: "Available for three hours. Time expires where indicated by cut-off and should be retained and shown on request. The council will not be liable for any accident or damage arising from the hire of the chair."

When Mr Chapelton sat on the chair it gave way, the canvas tearing from the top of the chair. He was injured. The County Court judge held the council would have been negligent, but the ticket exempted that liability. Mr Chapelton appealed.

The Court of Appeal upheld Mr Chapelton's claim, overturning the judgment at first instance; it held that there was a valid offer when the chairs were on display, accepted when picked up by the defendant. Therefore, the ticket was merely a receipt of the contract, and the exclusion clause could not be incorporated as a term because it was too late.

Haughton v Smith (1973)

Haughton v Smith was a judicial case in which the House of Lords ruled that it was impossible to commit the crime of handling stolen goods where they were not stolen, nor could an offence of attempting to 'handle' them be committed in the same circumstances.

In this instance, police stopped a van on a motorway and discovered it contained stolen goods. Trying to catch the accomplices (who were waiting to receive the stolen goods), the police allowed the van to continue to the next service station. One of the waiting men, Roger Smith, was convicted of attempting to handle stolen goods.

The police plan had worked, and they had caught the accomplice, but the House of Lords overturned this decision, concluding that the goods were no longer "stolen" once the police had recovered them. Roger Smith couldn't be convicted of stealing goods that were not stolen. This ruling would later be overturned by the Criminal Attempts Act 1981, which created laws concerning the attempt of crime.

Carlill v Carbolic Smoke Ball Company (1892)

This is an English contract law decision by the Court of Appeal, which held that an advertisement containing certain terms to get a reward constituted a binding unilateral offer that could be accepted by anyone who performed its terms.

The Carbolic Smoke Ball Co. made a product called the "smoke ball" and claimed it would cure influenza (or at least got sick with flu) and several other diseases. It advertised that buyers who found it did not work would be awarded £100, which was a considerable amount of money at the time.

The Company was bound by its advertisement, which said:

'£100 reward will be paid by the Carbolic Smoke Ball Company to any person who contracts the increasing epidemic influenza colds, or any disease caused by taking cold, after having used the ball three times daily for two weeks, according to the printed directions supplied with each ball.'

The words used are construed as an offer which the buyer accepted by using the smoke ball, thus creating a contract. The Court of Appeal held that the essential elements of a contract were all present: including offer and acceptance, consideration, and an intention to create legal relations.

The Company may have been somewhat unfortunate in that Elizabeth Carlill happened to be married to a solicitor. She saw the advertisement, bought one of the balls, and used it three times daily for nearly two months until she contracted the flu on 17th January 1892. She claimed £100 from the Carbolic Smoke Ball Company and brought her claim to the Court. The Company argued it was not a serious contract. The Court of Appeal unanimously disagreed and rejected the Company's arguments. The Court held that there was a fully binding contract for £100 with Mrs Carlill. Among the reasons given by the three judges were:

- 1) *that the advertisement was not a unilateral offer to all the world, but an offer restricted to those who acted upon the terms contained in the advertisement;*
- 2) *that satisfying conditions for using the smoke ball constituted acceptance of the offer;*
- 3) *that purchasing or merely using the smoke ball constituted good consideration, because it was a distinct detriment incurred at the behest of the Company and, furthermore, more people buying smoke balls by relying on the advertisement was a clear benefit to Carbolic;*
- 4) *that the Company's claim that £1000 was deposited at the Alliance Bank showed the serious intention to be legally bound.*

Another Probus

Sourced/Excerpted from and for Further Reading:

- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Probus_\(emperor\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Probus_(emperor))
- <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Probus>
- http://dbpedia.org/resource/Marcus_Aurelius_Probus
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marcus_Aurelius_Probus
- <https://finds.org.uk/romancoins/emperors/emperor/id/60>
- <https://historycooperative.org/marcus-aurelius-equitius-probus/>
- <https://www.livius.org/articles/person/probus/>



Picture Credit: "Portrait of Probus 276-282 CE Marble" by mharrsch is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

This story is **not** about Probus Clubs – the clubs for retired or semi-retired people (mostly men only) from all walks of life, which operate worldwide. It is about a Roman emperor called *Marcus Aurelius Probus*. He ruled from 276 to 282. His family origins are unclear. According to various accounts, his father (*Maximus* or *Dalmatius*) was either a market gardener, a minor state official, or a soldier*.

* Britannica.com say that Probus' father was a Balkan military officer.

The future emperor Probus was born between 230 and 235 (the exact date of birth is uncertain, but according to the *Alexandrian Chronicle*, he was born in 232) in Sirmium (modern-day Sremska Mitrovica), Pannonia Inferior.

Probus became an active and successful general as well as a conscientious administrator, and in his reign of six years, he secured prosperity for the inner provinces while withstanding repeated invasions of barbarian tribes on almost every sector of the frontier. After repelling the foreign enemies of the empire, *Probus* was forced to handle several internal revolts but demonstrated leniency and moderation to the vanquished wherever possible.

In his reign, the facade of the constitutional authority of the Roman Senate was fastidiously maintained, and the conqueror, who had carried his army to victory over the Rhine, professed himself dependent on the sanction of the Senate. Upon defeating the Germans, *Probus* re-erected the ancient fortifications of

'wall-builder' emperor Hadrian between the Rhine and Danube rivers, protecting the Agri Decumates** and exacted from the vanquished a tribute of manpower to resettle depopulated provinces within the empire and provide for adequate defence of the frontiers.

** The Agri Decumates or Decumates Agri ("Decumatan Fields") were regions of the Roman Empire's provinces of Germania Superior and Raetia; covering the Black Forest, Swabian Jura, and Franconian Jura areas between the Rhine, Main, and Danube rivers; in present southwestern Germany, including present-day Frankfurt, Stuttgart, Freiburg im Breisgau, and Weißenburg in Bayern.

Marcus Probus became a highly accomplished military man, much like the emperor *Aurelius*. When *Florian* was betrayed by his own men, his rival *Marcus Probus* became emperor.

Marcus Probus spent most of his reign trying to consolidate the empire, generally by strengthening the borders increasingly attacked by Goths, Vandals, Germanic tribes, etc.

After celebrating a triumph for his German victories, *Marcus Probus* set out again for the east. In his absence, *Carus*, the Praetorian Prefect, raised support and made a bid for power. *Probus* sent troops back to crush the movement, but these troops defected to the usurper.

After repelling the foreign enemies of the empire, *Marcus Probus* faced several internal revolts but demonstrated leniency and moderation to the vanquished wherever possible.

Upon defeating the Germans, *Marcus Probus* re-erected the ancient fortifications of the emperor Hadrian between the Rhine and Danube rivers, protecting the Agri Decumates, and exacted from the vanquished a tribute of workforce to resettle depopulated provinces within the empire and providing for adequate defence of the frontiers.

After the defeat of the Germanic invaders in Gaul, *Marcus Probus* crossed the Rhine to campaign successfully against the Barbarians in their homeland, forcing them to pay homage. In the campaign's aftermath, *Marcus Probus* repaired the ancient fortifications erected by the emperor *Hadrian* in the vulnerable space between the Rhine and Danube in the territory of Swabia. More significantly, *Marcus Probus*, by forcing from the vanquished tribes a tribute of manpower, established the precedent of settling barbarians within the empire as auxiliaries on a large scale. The provinces suffered depopulation by war, disease and chaotic administration, heavy taxation, and extensive army recruitment, during the crisis of the Third century, and the barbarian colonies, at least in the short term, helped to restore frontier defence and the practice of agriculture.

The army discipline that *Aurelian* had repaired was extended under *Marcus Probus*, who was more reserved in cruelty. One of his principles was never to allow the soldiers to be idle and to employ them in times of peace on useful works, such as the planting of vineyards in Gaul, Pannonia and other districts, to restart the economy in these devastated lands.

In 280–281, *Marcus Probus* put down three usurpers, *Julius Saturninus*, *Proculus*, and *Bononus*. The extent of and reasons for these revolts is not clear.

We know that *Proculus* and *Bononus* were the commanders of Gaul and Germany and had risen in revolt, declaring themselves joint emperors in AD 280.

Gaius Julius Saturninus was a senior officer under *Marcus Probus* in Syria. According to *Historiae Augusta****, *Saturninus* led a short-lived revolt, which began with his proclamation as *Augustus* by the troops under his command in Alexandria, Egypt. At first, we are told that *Saturninus* declined the honour, but later in about 280 AD, he appears to have proclaimed himself *Augustus* in Syria after a change of heart.

*** *Historia Augusta* is a late Roman collection of biographies, written in Latin, of the Roman emperors, their junior colleagues, designated heirs, and usurpers from 117 to 284.

Marcus Probus was keen to start his eastern campaign, which the revolts in the west had delayed. Towards the end of 281 AD, he returned to Rome and celebrated his achievements. In the spring of AD 282, he headed for Sirmium (his birth city) on the Danube, where he hoped to prepare a campaign against Persians.

But morale in the army had reached a low point. When not campaigning against barbarians or rebels, *Marcus Probus* had asked them to work - draining land, erecting buildings and defences, building bridges, and even planting vineyards. Whether they regarded the work as too hard or undignified, we don't know.

It was no less disharmonious in Britain, where its governor declared himself emperor. A Mauretanian** commander named *Marcus Piavonius Victorinus* was sent to crush that attempt and appeared to do so swiftly. *Victorinus* was emperor in the Gallic provinces from 268 to 270 (or 269 to 271) following the brief reign of *Marius*. It is said he was murdered by a jealous husband whose wife he tried to seduce.

*** From Mauretania, a region of ancient North Africa corresponding to present-day northern Morocco and western and central Algeria north of the Atlas Mountains.

Assassination

Despite his widespread popularity, *Marcus Probus* was killed in a mutiny of the soldiers while in the middle of preparations for the Persian war, which would be carried out under his successor *Carus*.

Different accounts of *Marcus Probus*' death exist.

According to *Joannes Zonaras*, the commander of the Praetorian Guard, *Marcus Aurelius Carus*, had been proclaimed emperor by his troops. *Marcus Probus* sent some troops against the new usurper, but when those troops changed sides and supported *Carus*, *Marcus Probus*' remaining soldiers assassinated him at Sirmium in September/October 282 AD.

However, according to other sources, *Probus* was killed by disgruntled soldiers, who rebelled against his orders to be employed for civic purposes, such as draining marshes.

Ötzi the Iceman's frantic final climb

Sourced/Excerpted from and for Further Reading:

- <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/scientists-reconstruct-otzi-iceman-final-climb>
- <https://www.exploringlifemysteries.com/otzi-the-iceman/>
- <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%96tzi>
- <https://www.nationalgeographic.co.uk/history-and-civilisation/2017/11/5-surprising-facts-about-otzi-iceman>
- <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/article/news-otzi-iceman-food-DNA-diet-meat-fat>



Picture Credit: "Verwandtenbesuch in Bozen - 160616" by "Besenbinder" is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

Introduction

Let me introduce you to Ötzi, also called the Iceman. He is the natural mummy of a man who lived between 3400 and 3100 BCE. He was discovered in September 1991 in the Ötztal Alps (hence the nickname "Ötzi") on the border between Austria and Italy.

Ötzi is believed to have died in 3255 BCE at the age of 45. The discovery of an arrowhead embedded in his left shoulder and various other wounds suggest he was murdered.

The nature of his life and the circumstances of his death are subjects of much investigation and speculation.

He is Europe's oldest known natural human mummy, offering an unprecedented view of Chalcolithic (Copper Age*) Europeans.

His body and belongings are displayed in the South Tyrol Museum of Archaeology in Bolzano, South Tyrol, Italy.

*The Copper Age was the transitional period between the Neolithic and the Bronze Age - taken to begin around the mid-5th millennium BC and ends with the beginning of the Bronze Age proper, in the late 4th to 3rd millennium BC, depending on the region.

Researchers are now meticulously tracing Ötzi's movements before his murder. Many questions remain unanswered, such as: Why

was he on the mountain? Was he running away - being chased? If so, why?

Researchers have concluded that Ötzi would have stood at around 5 feet 5 inches tall and weighed about 110 pounds. You might say he was small and wiry.

Examination of the body

Ötzi's frozen, mummified body was found by two German tourists from Nuremberg. Ötzi has been examined thoroughly, x-rays conducted, tissues dated, and intestinal contents reviewed in minute detail. His remains had been covered in ice so soon after his death that only minimal deterioration of the body had taken place, as a result of which researchers were able to piece together facts about Ötzi's life. Pollen and dust located on Ötzi's body combined with analysis of tooth enamel composition told researchers that Ötzi had spent most of his childhood in the village of Feldthurns. Later in his adult life, Ötzi had moved north into the valleys and away from the Feldthurns area. Additionally, it is believed from the analysis of Ötzi's blackened lungs tissue that he had spent much time breathing in the smoke of campfires.

Researchers have been able to determine what Ötzi ate shortly before his death and where he ate. Evidence of two meals was recovered. The first meal consisted of meat from a goat/antelope creature called a chamois. The second meal was made up of herb bread and red deer meat. In addition to these mainstays, each meal was accompanied by fruits and roots plus grains, specifically einkorn wheat bran. The food recovered from Ötzi's stomach was not only able to tell researchers what Ötzi fed on before he died, but it was also able to tell researchers where he fed. Pollen recovered in the chamois remnants showed that Ötzi had eaten his meal in a mid-altitude conifer forest. Additional pollen indicated that crops that grew native to this area included legumes and wheat. The condition of pollen recovered from Ötzi's remains suggests that his death took place in the springtime.

Source: <https://www.exploringlifemysteries.com/otzi-the-iceman/>

A mossy mystery

A retired professor of archaeobotany at the University of Glasgow and the lead author of the new research, James Dickson, has been studying Ötzi since 1994. That was when he received samples of organic remains excavated from the site where the mummy was found. Dickson says he was immediately intrigued when he saw flat neckera (*Neckera complanata*), a moss species that historically has been used for caulking** boats and log cabins. Flat neckera was found in relatively large quantities at the site, often stuck to Ötzi's clothing. The moss may have been part of Ötzi's toolkit, though its purpose is still unclear. Was it used for insulation? Or perhaps toilet paper? In any case, the species only grows at lower altitudes; its presence helped researchers start mapping Ötzi's final journey.

Source: National Geographic, [here](#).

** Sealing joints or seams against leakage.

Ötzi's health

It seems that Ötzi was not in the best of health. He had whipworm (*Trichuris trichiura*), an intestinal parasite. During CT scans, it was observed that three or four of his right ribs had been cracked when he had been lying face down after death or where the ice had crushed his body. He also suffered from gallstones and arthritis. One of his fingernails (of the two found) shows three Beau lines indicating he was sick three times in the six months before he died. The last incident, two months before he died, lasted about two weeks. It was also found that his epidermis, the outer skin layer, was missing, a natural process from his mummification in ice. Ötzi's teeth showed considerable internal deterioration from cavities - perhaps brought about by his grain-heavy, high-carbohydrate diet. DNA analysis in February 2012 revealed that Ötzi was lactose intolerant, supporting the theory that lactose intolerance was still common at that time, despite the increasing spread of agriculture and dairying.

Source: <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%96tzi>

Clothes and Shoes

Ötzi wore a cloak made of woven grass and a coat, a belt, a pair of leggings, a loincloth and shoes, all made of leather of different skins. He also wore a bearskin cap with a leather chin strap. The shoes were waterproof and wide, seemingly designed for walking across the snow; they were constructed using bearskin for the soles, deer hide for the top panels, and a netting made of tree bark. Soft grass went around the foot and in the shoe and functioned like modern socks. The coat, belt, leggings, and loincloth were constructed of vertical strips of leather sewn together with sinew. His belt had a pouch sewn to it that contained several items: a scraper, drill, flint flake, bone awl, and dried fungus.

Source: <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%96tzi>

Tools and equipment

Other items found with Ötzi were a copper axe (see below) with a yew handle, a chert-bladed knife with an ash handle, and a quiver of 14 arrows with viburnum and dogwood shafts. Two of the arrows were broken, and were tipped with flint and had fletching (stabilising-fins), while the other 12 were unfinished and untipped. There was also an unfinished yew longbow that was 72 inches long. The 3.7-inch-long axe head is made of almost pure copper, produced by a combination of casting, cold forging, polishing, and sharpening.

Source: <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%96tzi>

Surprising Facts

Ötzi had more than 50 tattoos on his body (made by cutting the skin and rubbing charcoal in the wound). But something else more remarkable has been discovered.

Gene researchers looking for unusual markers on Ötzi's sex chromosome have reported they have uncovered at least 19 genetic relatives of Ötzi in Austria's Tyrol region.

Source: National Geographic, [here](#).

Numbers & Superstitions

Sourced/Excerpted from and for Further Reading:

- <https://people.howstuffworks.com/13-superstitions-about-numbers.htm>
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Mysterious_Numbers_of_the_Hebrew_Kings
- <https://people.howstuffworks.com/numbers-bible.htm>
- <https://www.agapebiblestudy.com/documents/The%20Significance%20of%20Numbers%20in%20Scripture.htm>
- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Superstition>
- <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/article/130913-friday-luck-lucky-superstition-13>
- <https://www.encyclopedia.com/education/news-wires-white-papers-and-books/numbers-forbidden-and-superstitious>

Introduction

Do you believe in superstitions? If so, why are some numbers lucky while others should be avoided at all costs? For example, take number 13. It's a number that's long been associated with bad luck, at least in our culture. Some buildings have no 13th floor, some aircraft have no 13th row, and some hotels have no room with that number. Also, some racing car drivers reject the number 13 to identify their cars, and some street numbers are altered to avoid the use of the number 13. Witches are said to gather in covens of 13, a belief found in the Teutonic mythology of Scandinavian folklore, and it was widespread in the Middle Ages.

An explanation of why number 13 is an unlucky number is given [here](#). It's often seen as an ill omen representing hostility, rebellion, apostasy, defection, corruption. Number 13 is the 6th prime number and, of course, number 6 is itself regarded as being unlucky.

In the Bible, Judas is the 13th person (Jesus, number 1 plus the 12 holy Apostles); Judas is always named last in the list of Apostles. The Israelites marched around the city of Jericho 13 times before the city collapsed. Ishmael, the illegitimate son of Abraham, was 13 years old when he was circumcised. The Virgin Mary often appears on the 13th day of the month.

There's an old Norse myth that says when a 13th guest shows up to a party attended by 12 gods, one of the gods would die, followed by tremendous destruction.

The Bible

The Bible is full of numbers — how many rivers flowed out of the Garden of Eden (four), the length, in cubits, of the walls of Solomon's temple (60), and so on. But what are we to make of all of those numbers? Do we take them at face value or invest them with mystical significance? These and many other issues are covered in an article by Dave Roos [here](#).

Numbers were esoteric symbols with divine significance. Both Jewish and later Christian readers of the Bible took inspiration from Pythagoras and tried to get mystical meaning from numbers using all manner of creative methods. For example, in both the Hebrew



and Greek languages, letters and words also have numerical values. Since there were no Arabic numerals back then (1, 2, 3, etc.), numbers were written out with letters. In Greek, alpha is 1, beta is 2, and so on. This means you can take any word from the original Greek New Testament and turn it into a number or the other way round - take any number and turn it into a word.

In Hebrew, the practice of assigning symbolic meaning to the numerical values of words is called *gematria* and was popular with kabbalists and Jewish mystics. In Greek, it's called *isopsephy* and was a favourite technique used by Christian *gnostics* searching for deeper meaning in the New Testament. The Bible has several examples of the use of numbers with luck or bad luck ascribed to them. For instance:

Unlucky Number 6

- ❖ 666 is the number of the Beast.
- ❖ The sixth of the Ten Commandments is the sin of murder [Exodus 20:13]
- ❖ All six of the letters which represent the number system of the Roman Empire added together produce the number 666: I = 1; V = 5; X = 10; L = 50; C = 100; D = 500 [there is no letter/number M. 1000 was two Ds back-to-back which resembled an M].

Lucky Number 7

- ❖ In Hebrew, seven is shevah (shebah) from the root shava (shaba or sheba), meaning "to be full."
- ❖ To swear an oath in Hebrew is "to seven oneself."
- ❖ The sacred Menorah has seven branches (six on each side of a central shaft) and seven cup shaped lamps for the olive oil
- ❖ It took Solomon seven years to build the Temple in Jerusalem. [1 Kings 6:37-38]
- ❖ There are seven annual holy feast days observed under the Law of the Sinai Covenant [Leviticus 23:1-44]

What is a Superstition?

In an article published on HBR ([here](#)) titled 'Bad-Luck Numbers that Scare Off Customers,' the author says that while superstitions exist in many parts of the world, the numbers associated with bad luck — or good — tend to vary from one place to another.

In China, the pronunciation of the word for the number four is like that of the Chinese word for death - many buildings in China omit the fourth floor. In Japan, number nine is feared because it sounds like the Japanese word for torture or suffering. Some Italians are superstitious about Friday the 17th because rearranging the Roman numeral XVII can create the word "VIXI"—translated from Latin to mean "my life is over."

Most superstitions arose over the course of centuries and are rooted in regional and historical circumstances, such as religious beliefs or the natural environment. For instance, geckos (small lizards) are believed to have medicinal value in many Asian countries. In China, *Feng shui* is a belief system that is said to have a negative effect on different places; for example, a room in the northwest corner of a house is "very bad." Similarly, the number 8 is a 'lucky number' in China and is a more common number than any other number in the Chinese housing market.

Definitions

Although referring to something as a *Superstition* is often done in a pejorative way, there have been several attempts to define *Superstition*. Here are some of them:

- ❖ Richard Webster's *The Encyclopedia of Superstitions* summarises various dictionary definitions by saying that 'superstitions are irrational fears of the unknown; or blindly accepted irrational beliefs or practices, which are not based on knowledge or facts but ignorance.'
- ❖ The *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) defines superstition as 'unreasonable or irrational or groundless awe, fear, notion or belief about something unknown, mysterious, or imaginary, especially in regard of religion; religious belief or practice based upon fear or ignorance; in specific meaning: An irrational religious belief or practice; a tenet, scruple, habit, etc. based on fear or ignorance.'
- ❖ According to OED, excessively credulous or a widely held but irrational belief in or reverence for the supernatural belief or supernatural influences, especially as leading to good or bad luck, or a practices based on such beliefs also constitutes superstition.
- ❖ *Oxford Learners Dictionaries* defines a superstition as, 'the belief in view that particular events happen in ways that cannot be explained by reason or science; or that the belief that particular events brings good or bad luck, for example, breaking a mirror brings bad luck.'
- ❖ According to Merriam Webster, a 'false conception about causation or belief or practice emanating from ignorance, fear of the unknown, trust in magic or chance' amounts to superstition.
- ❖ *Cambridge Dictionary* denotes superstition as a 'belief that is connected with old ideas about magic etc., without grounding in human reason or scientific knowledge.'
- ❖ Diderot's *Encyclopédie* defines superstition as 'any excess of religion in general, and links it specifically with paganism. >>> Continued

<< Continued

Number Phobias

Phobias are types of anxiety disorders, at some psychiatrists think so. Here are some 'number' phobias:

- ❖ The fear of numbers is called **Arithmophobia**. It is sometimes called **Numerophobia**.
- ❖ **Hexakosioihexekontahexaphobia** means fear of the number 666.
- ❖ **Hexaphobia** (from Greek hexa, meaning "six") or **Sexaphobia** (from Latin sex, "six") is the fear of the number six.
- ❖ **Triskaidekaphobia** is fear or avoidance of the number 13.
- ❖ The fear of Friday the 13th is called **Paraskevidekatriphobia** or **Friggatriskaidekaphobia**.
- ❖ **Anginophobia** (from the Greek ennea meaning "nine"), also known as **Nomeaya** (from Latin novem meaning "nine"), is fear of the number 9.
- ❖ **Decaphobia** (from deca, Greek for "ten") is the fear of the number 10.
- ❖ **Hendecaphobia** (from hendeca, Greek for "eleven") or **Undecaphobia** (from undeca, Latin for "eleven") is the fear of the number 11.

Examples of Superstitions

Superstitions often focus on the idea that one thing causes another thing to happen without any scientific evidence to prove or support it. Below are several examples. It is easy to dismiss superstition as absurd, but only those who can break a mirror without a second thought are entitled to do so.

- ❖ **Getting pooped on by a bird** in Britain is deemed lucky, although as you make your way to the dry cleaners afterwards with your new suit, you might not agree.
- ❖ **Walking under ladders** is a definite no-no if you want to avoid bad luck. In medieval times, people believed a ladder leaning against a wall resembled the gallows, where they used to hang people condemned to death.
- ❖ **If you spill salt**, it's best to throw a pinch over your left shoulder into the eyes of the Devil to ward off any bad luck.
- ❖ In 19th century England, it was considered **good luck to spill tea leaves**. People at the time would scatter loose tea leaves in front of their home to protect their family from evil spirits.
- ❖ **Black cats are generally believed to bring bad luck** because of their association with demons and witches, which were often considered symbols of evil omens. In Britain, if a black cat walks towards you, it is thought to bring good luck, and if it walks away, it is considered to take your good luck with it.
- ❖ If you have **a new pair of shoes**, it's bad luck to put them on a table – this is thought to come from the North of England and is thought to relate to the coal mining industry.
- ❖ Some housewives believed that **food would be spoilt if it was stirred 'widdershins'** – that is, in the opposite direction to that of the sun.
- ❖ You can actually attract good luck just by **carrying a rabbit's foot with you**.
- ❖ **Walking backwards** will surely bring bad luck if you come from Portugal or Italy.



Picture Credit: "4 leaf clovers" by merwinlittle deer is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

- ❖ Examples of regional superstitions abound - in Sussex, **peony root necklaces** were put on children to help with teething and to chase away evil spirits. In Humberside, a traditional rhyme recommends **breaking the shell of a boiled egg** to stop any witch from using it as they pass by to escape to sea. In Yorkshire, housewives used to believe that **bread would not rise if there were a corpse in the vicinity** and to **cut off both ends of the loaf** would make the Devil fly over the house. **The Devil throws his club over Northumberland's blackberries in late autumn**, rendering them poisonous. Whooping cough will never be caught by a Lancashire child who has ridden upon a bear. And to **kill a beetle in the East Riding of Yorkshire** will surely bring on the rain. Everyone knows that **'a watched pot never boils'**, and in Dorset, it's common knowledge that a **slow-boiling kettle** is bewitched and may contain a toad.
- ❖ To protect your house from witches, **a rowan tree should be planted**, and **under no circumstances must hawthorn be brought into the house before May Day** as it belongs to the Woodland God and will only bring bad luck.
- ❖ According to Hungarian and Russian customs, **sitting at the corner of the table is bad luck** - the unlucky diner will allegedly never get married.
- ❖ **Crossed knives at the table signify a quarrel**, while a **white tablecloth left on a table overnight means the household will need a shroud in the near future**.
- ❖ **Two women must not pour from the same teapot** otherwise, a quarrel will ensue.
- ❖ An English superstition says that if two women are drinking tea together and **one wants to have a baby, then she should do the pouring** and will become a mother within a year - hence the saying: *"shall I be mother?"*.
- ❖ **Never stir anything using your knife** (like soup or coffee) because that will bring bad luck. Remember: *stir with a knife and stir up strife*.
- ❖ A Scottish superstition says it is **bad luck to stir tea with anything other than a spoon**, as using the handle of a fork or spoon will stir up trouble. Also, **if two spoons are placed on the same saucer, it could mean the drinker will marry twice** or, if a young girl, will go on to have twins.
- ❖ You can expect bad luck if **a knife falls and sticks in the floor**.

- ❖ If you make tea too weak, then you will fall out with a close friend. On the other hand, if the tea is too strong, you'll make a new one.
- ❖ It's **bad luck to pour hot water from a kettle if your palm faces the ceiling** when finished.
- ❖ It's **bad luck to cut your fingernails or toenails after dark**, at least according to superstitions in Turkey, India, and South Korea. In Japan, it could mean you will have a premature death.
- ❖ **Opening an umbrella inside the house is said to bring bad luck** – this dates back to ancient Egypt when peacock feathers and papyrus were used to protect people from the sun. Opening them when indoors would be seen as an insult to the sun deity 'Ra' and means you would be cursed.
- ❖ **Touching wood is a widely-known superstition**, said to bring good luck or ward off bad luck.
- ❖ Many believe **breaking a mirror will give you seven years of bad luck**.
- ❖ **Whistling indoors and at the sun are both ill-advised actions** according to Russian and Norwegian superstitions, respectively. Whistling indoors supposedly leads to financial problems in Russia. In Norway, whistling at the sun supposedly causes rain.
- ❖ **To pass on the stairs is unlucky**, but to stumble going up foretells a wedding.
- ❖ **No modern bride will allow her bridegroom to see her on the wedding day before she gets to the church**, as it would be unlucky to do so. To be kissed by a passing chimney sweep (if you can find one these days) is very good luck.
- ❖ **Carrying a new baby three times around the house will protect the child from colic**. It was also believed that teething troubles could be eased if the gums were rubbed with the mother's gold wedding ring.
- ❖ **Choosing the pram or pushchair before the baby is born is quite safe**, but it must not be delivered to or brought into the home until after the baby is born.
- ❖ **Six ravens must remain at the Tower of London at all times or the English crown will fall**. And in Ireland and Scotland, **seeing a single magpie is supposed to be unlucky**, but two or more are fine.
- ❖ Magpies can signify good or bad luck depending on how many you see. **Seeing a lone Magpie is said to bring sorrow to your life**. **Seeing two, however, is lucky**.
- ❖ **The four-leafed clover is a symbol of luck and good fortune**. A simple explanation for their lucky reputation is that they are extremely hard to find (it is thought there are 10,000 three-leaf clovers for every four-leafed one).

Sources:

- <https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/life/g4489/strangest-superstitions/>
- <https://www.british-study.com/en/blog/wonderfully-weird-british-superstitions/>
- <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/articles/2017-01-13/13-superstitions-from-around-the-world>
- <https://www.historic-uk.com/CultureUK/British-Superstitions/>
- <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/features/tales-of-folklore-and-superstition>

What superstitions have I missed? Drop me a line to let me know.

Secret Societies

Sourced/Excerpted from and for Further Reading:

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secret_society
- <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/secret-societies-you-might-not-know-180958294/>
- <https://www.history.com/news/secret-societies-freemasons-knights-templar>
- <https://www.britannica.com/topic/secret-society>
- <https://londonist.com/london/features/london-s-secret-societies>
- http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1860871_1860876_1861005,00.html

In 2017, National Geographic published *Secret Societies: True Tales of Covert Organisations and their Leaders*. It looked like a fascinating subject, and one I could not easily resist. I investigated further, and what I found is noted below. In presenting it, I hope that I do so without personal judgment or evaluation.

The National Geographic booklet has a poignant note, which is worth mentioning here:

'The desire for inclusion and influence may explain why, across 4,000 years of human civilisation, we are so fascinated by these societies, and why their claims continue to haunt us to this day.'

What is a Secret Society?



Picture Credit: "All-Seeing Eye Cloud Sketch" by Tech109 is licensed under CC BY 2.0

The exact qualifications for labelling a group as a secret society are not universally agreed upon, perhaps even disputed. However, definitions generally have some common features and rely on the degree to which the organisation insists on secrecy and might involve:

- ❖ the retention and transmission of secret knowledge (that is, known only to members of the organisation);
- ❖ the denial of membership or knowledge of the group;
- ❖ the creation of personal bonds between members of the organisation; and
- ❖ the use of secret rites or rituals which solidify members of the group.

There seem to be many definitions of what constitutes a secret society, some of which are presented below. Wikipedia ([here](#)) says: A secret society is a club or an organisation whose activities, events, inner functioning, or membership are concealed. The society may or may not attempt to conceal its existence. The term usually excludes covert groups, such as intelligence agencies or guerrilla warfare insurgencies, that hide their activities and memberships but maintain a public presence.

Alan Axelrod is the author of the *International Encyclopedia of Secret Societies and Fraternal Orders*, which contains over 800 A-to-Z entries describing the names, natures, and purposes of secret societies throughout history and worldwide. He defines a secret society as:

- ❖ an organisation that is exclusive;
- ❖ claims to own special secrets; and
- ❖ shows a strong inclination to favour its members.

Britannica.com ([here](#)) describes a secret society as:

'any of a large range of membership organizations or associations that utilize secret initiations or other rituals and whose members often employ unique oaths, grips (handshakes), or other signs of recognition. Elements of secrecy may vary from a mere password to elaborate rituals, private languages, costumes, and symbols. The term may be applied to such widely divergent groups as US College fraternities and sororities, the Ku Klux Klan, and international Freemasonry as well as to similar phenomena in ancient or pre-colonial cultures.'

A further characteristic common to most secret societies is the practice of rituals that non-members are not permitted to observe or even know the existence of and are designed to remain obscure and mysterious to outsiders.

Some secret societies have political aims and are illegal in several countries. Italy and Poland, for example, ban secret political parties and political organisations in their State constitutions. Secret societies are clearly very different from, for example, a village horticultural society or local historical group. But, and perhaps unfairly in some cases, by their very name and nature, secret societies inspire curiosity, fascination, and distrust.

Secret Societies at Places of Learning

Many student societies established on university campuses in the United States, Britain, and elsewhere have been considered secret societies. Perhaps best known is *Skull and Bones* at Yale University. The influence of undergraduate secret societies at other US colleges has been publicly acknowledged, if anonymously and circumspectly, since the 19th century. British Universities, also have a long history of secret societies or quasi-secret societies, such as *The Pitt Club* at Cambridge University, the *Bullingdon Club* at Oxford University, and the *16' Club* at St David's College. In France, *Vandermonde* is the secret society of the *Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers*.

Secret Societies: Past and Present*

- ❖ *The Secret Osirian Cult* - the Osirian religion, focused on vindication, fertility, and resurrection, had a great appeal for ordinary Egyptians, but this funerary cult was restricted to the upper classes.
- ❖ *The Eleusinian Mysteries* - initiations held every year for the cult of Demeter and Persephone based at the Panhellenic Sanctuary of Eleusis in ancient Greece. They are the "most famous of the secret religious rites of ancient Greece."
- ❖ *The Pharisees* - members of a Jewish religious party that flourished in Palestine during the latter part of the Second Temple period (515 BCE–70 CE). The Pharisees' insistence on the binding force of oral tradition ("the unwritten Torah") remains a basic tenet of Jewish theological thought.
- ❖ *The Mithras Cult* - Mithraism, also known as the Mithraic mysteries, was a Roman mystery religion centred on the god Mithras.
- ❖ *Gnostic Christians* - Gnostics worshipped two (or more) gods whereas Christians worshipped one God. Gnostics focused on the eradication of ignorance; Christian concern was the eradication of sin.

- ❖ *The Cathars* - Catharism was a Christian dualist or Gnostic movement between the 12th and 14th centuries which thrived in Southern Europe, particularly in northern Italy and southern France.
- ❖ *The Knights Templar* - a religious, military order of knighthood set up at the time of the Crusades becoming a model and inspiration for other military orders. Founded to protect Christian pilgrims to the Holy Land, the order assumed greater military duties during the 12th century.
- ❖ *The Teutonic Knights* - The Order of Brothers of the German House of Saint Mary in Jerusalem, a Catholic religious order founded as a military order c. 1190 in Acre, Kingdom of Jerusalem, was formed to aid Christians on their mission pilgrimages to the Holy Land and to establish hospitals.
- ❖ *The Assassins* - a Nizari Isma'ili sect of Shia Islam who lived in the mountains of Persia and Syria between 1090 and 1275, during which they held a strict subterfuge policy in the Middle East through the covert murder of first Muslim, and later Christian leaders considered to be enemies of their State. The modern term *assassination* is based on their tactics.
- ❖ *The Jesuits* - a Roman Catholic order of religious men founded by St. Ignatius of Loyola, noted for its educational, missionary, and charitable works. The order has been regarded by many as the principal agent of the Counter-Reformation and later a leading force in modernising the church.
- ❖ *The Rosicrucians* - the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosæ Crucis, also known as the Rosicrucian Order, is the largest Rosicrucian organisation in the world. It has various lodges, chapters, and other affiliated bodies throughout the globe, operating in 19 different languages.
- ❖ *The Freemasons* - fraternal organisations that trace their origins to the local guilds of stonemasons at the end of the 13th century. It requires that a volume of scripture be open in meetings, that every member professes belief in a Supreme Being, excludes women, and the discussion of religion and politics be banned at meetings.
- ❖ *The Hongmen* - the *Tiandihui*, the *Heaven and Earth Society*, also called *Hongmen*, is a Chinese fraternal organisation and, historically, a secretive folk religious sect in the vein of the Ming loyalist *White Lotus Sect*, its ancestral organisation.
- ❖ *The Illuminati* - in use from the 15th century, applied to various groups claiming to be unusually enlightened. The original Illuminati group was founded in Bavaria in the 18th century by Adam Weishaupt, an anti-clerical professor who wanted to limit the interference of the Church in public life.
- ❖ *Scientology* - a set of beliefs and practices invented by American author L. Ron Hubbard. It has been defined as a cult, a business, or a new religious movement, and is popular with Hollywood stars.
- ❖ *The Knights of Malta* - in the 11th century (as 'Knights Hospitaller'), they established a hospital in Jerusalem to care for pilgrims of any religious faith or origin. Pope Paschal II officially recognised the monastic community as a lay religious order.
- ❖ *Opus Dei* - formally known as the *Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei*, is an institution of the Catholic Church which teaches that everyone is called to holiness and that ordinary life is a path to sanctity.

* Others, not mentioned here due to lack of space, include *The Italian Mafia*, *Nazi Occult Groups*, *Skull and Bones*, *The Ku Klux Klan*, *Propaganda Two (or Due)*, *The Odessa*, *The Chinese Triads*, *The Priory of Sion* and *The Red Army Faction*.

The Great Pyramid

Sourced/Excerpted from and for Further Reading:

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Pyramid_of_Giza
- <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Pyramids-of-Giza>
- http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/egyptians/pyramid_builders_01.shtml
- <https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/860673/Ancient-Egypt-Pyramids-Giza-Atlantis-lost-civilisation-Gerry-Cannon>
- <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/giza-pyramids>

The Great Pyramid of Giza (also known as the Pyramid of Khufu or the Pyramid of Cheops) is the oldest and largest of the pyramids in the Giza complex bordering present-day Giza in Greater Cairo, Egypt. It is the oldest of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World and is the only one to remain largely intact. It is arguably the largest single building ever erected on Earth. Its sides rise at an angle of 51°52' and are accurately oriented to the four cardinal points of the compass.

This story is but an introduction to the Pyramid of Khufu. I hope you enjoy it.

The ancient Greek historians

The ancient Greek historian Herodotus, writing in the 5th century BC, mentions the Pyramid. In the second book of his work *The Histories*, he discusses the history of Egypt and the Great Pyramid. His report was created more than 2,000 years after the structure was built, meaning that Herodotus obtained his knowledge mainly from various indirect sources, including officials and priests of low rank, local Egyptians, Greek immigrants, and Herodotus's own interpreters. As such, his explanations present themselves as a mixture of comprehensible descriptions, personal descriptions, erroneous reports, and fantastical legends; as such, many of the speculative errors and confusions about the monument can be traced back to Herodotus and his work.

Between 60-56 BC, the ancient Greek historian Diodorus Siculus visited Egypt and later dedicated the first book of his *Bibliotheca Historica* to the land, its history, and its monuments, including the Great Pyramid. Diodorus's work was inspired by historians of the past, but he distanced himself from Herodotus, claiming he told 'marvellous tales and myths.'

Pliny the Elder

During the Roman Empire, Pliny the Elder argued that "bridges" were used to transport stones to the top of the Great Pyramid. When writing in the first century AD, he argued that the Great Pyramid had been raised either "to prevent the lower classes from remaining unoccupied" or as a measure to prevent the pharaoh's riches from falling into the hands of his rivals or successors.

Built as a Tomb

Egyptologists have concluded that the Pyramid was built as a tomb for the Fourth Dynasty Egyptian pharaoh Khufu. They estimate that it was built in the 26th century BC, and it took about 27 years to build. Historically the Great Pyramid had been attributed to Khufu based on the authors of classical antiquity, first and foremost being Herodotus and Diodorus Siculus.



Picture Credit: "Pyramids of Giza" by andreas bjarlestam is licensed under CC BY 2.0

However, during the middle ages, several other people were also credited with the construction of the Pyramid.

Age

The Great Pyramid has been determined to be about 4,600 years old by two principal approaches: indirectly, through its attribution to Khufu and his chronological age, based on archaeological and textual evidence; and directly, via radiocarbon dating of organic material found in the Pyramid and included in its mortar.

Radiocarbon dating

Mortar was used generously in the Great Pyramid's construction. In the mixing process, ashes from fires were added to the mortar, organic material that could be extracted and radiocarbon dated. A total of 46 samples of the mortar were taken in 1984 and 1995, making sure they were clearly inherent to the original structure and could not have been added at a later date. The results were calibrated to 2871-2604 BC. A reanalysis of the data gave a completion date for the Pyramid between 2620 and 2484 BC, based on the younger samples.

Height

Initially standing at 481 feet, the Great Pyramid was the tallest man-made structure in the world for more than 3,800 years. Throughout history, the majority of the smooth white limestone casing was removed, which has lowered the Pyramid's height to its present 454 feet. What can be seen today is the underlying core structure.

The Stones

The Great Pyramid was built with about 5.5 million tonnes of limestone, 8,000 tonnes of granite, and 500,000 tonnes of mortar. Most stones are not uniform in size or shape and are only roughly dressed. The outside layers were bound together by mortar. In the main, local limestone from the Giza Plateau was used. Other blocks were imported by boat down the Nile: White limestone from Tura for the casing, and granite blocks from Aswan, weighing up to 80 tonnes, for the King's Chamber structure. When finished, the Great Pyramid was cased entirely in white limestone. The Pyramid was once topped by a capstone known as a *pyramidion*. The material it was made from is subject to speculation, although limestone, granite, basalt, or solid/white gold are often suggested.

The Workforce

The Greeks believed that slave labour was used, but modern discoveries made at nearby workers' camps associated with construction at Giza suggest that it was built instead by thousands of conscript labourers.

The Chambers and Funerary Complex

There are three known chambers inside the Great Pyramid. The lowest was cut into the bedrock, upon which the Pyramid was built but remained unfinished. The so-called Queen's Chamber and King's Chamber, that contains a granite sarcophagus, are higher up within the pyramid structure. Khufu's vizier (a 'Prime Minister') Hemiunu (also Hemon), is believed by some to be the architect of the Great Pyramid.

The funerary complex around the Pyramid consisted of two mortuary temples connected by a causeway (one close to the Pyramid and one near the Nile), tombs for the immediate family and court of Khufu, including three smaller pyramids for Khufu's wives, an even smaller "satellite pyramid" and five buried solar barges.

In 1837, four additional Relieving Chambers were found above the King's Chamber after tunnelling to them. The chambers, previously inaccessible, were covered in hieroglyphs of red paint. The workers who were building the Pyramid had marked the blocks with the names of their gangs, which included the pharaoh's name (e.g., "The gang, The white crown of Khnum-Khufu is powerful"). The names of Khufu were spelt out on the walls over a dozen times. Another of these graffiti was found on an exterior block of the 4th layer of the Pyramid. The inscriptions are comparable to those found at other sites of Khufu, such as the alabaster quarry at Hatnubor, the harbour at Wadi al-Jarf, and are present in pyramids of other pharaohs as well.

Entrances

There are two entrances into the Pyramid; the original and a forced passage, which meet at a junction. From there, one passage descends into the Subterranean Chamber, while the other ascends to the Grand Gallery. Above the King's Chamber are a series of five Relieving Chambers. Tourists can enter the Great Pyramid via the Robbers' Tunnel (the origin of which is the subject of much discussion and dispute): long ago, it was cut straight through the masonry of the Pyramid. From the original entrance, a passage descends through the masonry of the Pyramid and then into the bedrock beneath it, ultimately leading to the Subterranean Chamber.



Picture Credit: "Pyramids of Giza - Cairo, Egypt" by whl.travel is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

Bernina Express

Sourced/Excerpted from and for Further Reading:
 • https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernina_Express



Picture Credit: "Trenino Rosso del Bernina - Rätische Bahn" by matteo.galli is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0

The hills are alive – with enchantment and scenery in the fabulous landscapes of the Swiss Alps. I refer, of course, to a ride on the scenic *Bernina Express Train*, also known as *The Red Train*.

You can travel from Tirano in Italy to Valposchiavo / St. Moritz / Davos and Chur in Switzerland on one of the most stunning train rides in the world, crossing the magical UNESCO Heritage Route between Thusis - Valposchiavo and Tirano. The Bernina Express runs through the ancient landscape of Switzerland's beautiful Grisons (Graubünden), making short work of 55 tunnels, 196 bridges, and steep inclines along the way. Special observation cars allow you to admire the route as well as the mighty glaciers, viaducts and even palm trees from the comfort of your seat.

The Bernina Express connects Chur (or Davos) in Switzerland to Poschiavo in Switzerland and Tirano in Italy by crossing the Swiss Engadin Alps. The train also runs along the World Heritage Site (2008) known as the Rhaetian Railway in the Albula / Bernina Landscapes for most of its journey.

The train has been operated by the Rhaetian Railway Company for the purpose of, well, sightseeing. It does that with panoramic coaches with enlarged windows. Although its name includes the word "express," it isn't really a high-speed train. The trip on the Bernina Express through this World Heritage Site is a four-hour railway journey.

The Albula line was constructed between 1898 and 1904; it has been operated by the Rhaetian Railway since its inauguration. The Bernina line was built between 1908 and 1910 and operated independently until the 1940s when it was acquired by the Rhaetian Railway. The Bernina Express uses gradients of 7% to negotiate the difference in the height of about 1800 metres from the summit at Ospizio Bernina to Tirano.

If I were you, I would add it to my bucket list, although I haven't (yet) travelled on this train.

ALTERNATIVES TO THE ORIENT EXPRESS

Rocky Mountaineer

Sourced/Excerpted from and for Further Reading:
 • https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rocky_Mountaineer

Rocky Mountaineer is a Canadian rail-tour company based in Vancouver operating luxury scenic trains on three rail routes in British Columbia and Alberta. A fourth route is planned in Colorado and Utah.

Rocky Mountaineer began as a once-weekly VIA Rail Canada daytime service between Vancouver and Calgary/Jasper in June 1988, called the 'Canadian Rockies by Daylight.'

In June 1989, VIA began its second season of the service, renaming the service as the *Rocky Mountaineer*. Scheduling remained the same as the previous season. After the end of VIA service in 1990, the route's branding was sold to Armstrong Hospitality Group Ltd, which ran its first train in May 1990.

Accolades abound: Rocky Mountaineer has been awarded the "World's Leading Travel Experience by Train" at the *World Travel Awards* seven times for its *GoldLeaf* service and was recognised by *National Geographic Magazine* as one of the "World's Best Journeys" (2007). The *Society of American Travel Writers*, the world's largest group of professional travel journalists and photographers, rated the Rocky Mountaineer as the world's top train ride (2009). It is the busiest privately-owned passenger rail service in North America, having transported over one million passengers since 1990.

Rocky Mountaineer's *GoldLeaf* service has a custom-designed, bi-level, glass-domed coach with full-length windows and reclining seats that can be rotated to accommodate groups of four passengers. Service is provided by three or four onboard hosts and a culinary team, with hot meals prepared on the train and served in the lower-level dining car. Beverages and snacks are also offered to guests throughout the journey. The two levels of the *GoldLeaf* coach are accessible by a spiral staircase or an ADA elevator.

Rocky Mountaineer trains operate exclusively during the day to maximise scenic views (of which there are many) - no sleeper service is available.

Having travelled on this train, I can thoroughly recommend it. The views are spectacular, and the service is six stars.

Rocky Mountaineer taken in Canmore, Alberta

Attribution: This file is licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) license. Page URL: [HERE](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rocky_Mountaineer_in_Canmore.jpg)



Rovos Rail

Sourced/Excerpted from and for Further Reading:
 • https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rovos_Rail

Picture Credit: "Rovos Rail Steam Engine South Africa (2)" by Tips For Travellers is licensed under CC BY 2.0



Rovos Rail is a private railway company operating out of Capital Park Station in Pretoria, South Africa. It runs its *train hotel* on a regular schedule on various routes throughout Southern Africa, from South Africa to Namibia and Tanzania. The trains consist of restored Rhodesia Railways (NRZ) coaches with two lounges, two restaurant cars, and private sleeping compartments, each with private ensuite facilities.

The train has three types of on-board accommodation, the smallest being a Pullman, at 76 square feet; the largest being the Royal Suite, which is half a train car, and 172 square feet. All types of cabins have an ensuite shower, sink, and toilet. The Royal Suite also has a Victorian-style bathtub. Wow, talk about luxury, this train has everything you'd ever want.

The company was started in 1989 by Rohan Vos and is still family-owned. Their website says it all:

'Since its establishment in 1989, Rovos Rail has earned an international reputation for its truly world-class travel experiences. In a series of bespoke train journeys lasting from 48 hours to 15 days, Rovos Rail links some of the continent's greatest destinations with a variety of off-train excursions. Step aboard the vintage wood-panelled coaches and sit back as some of the most varied scenery imaginable unfolds beyond the windows. With discreet and friendly service, top cuisine, and a selection of South Africa's finest wines, Rovos Rail harks back to a simpler, more elegant era encompassing the timeless grace and high romance of African exploration.'

The beautifully rebuilt trains, which may be hauled by diesel or electric locomotives, carry a maximum of 72 passengers in 36 superbly appointed suites and are also available for charter, while the Events Train caters for up to 250 guests and is suitable for daytime journeys.'

Rovos Rail is another experience not to be missed under any circumstances. The company describes it as 'The Most Luxurious Train in the World.' I loved it.

The Everlasting Appeal of the Orient Express

Sourced/Excerpted from and for Further Reading:

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orient_Express
- <https://www.tripfiction.com/novels-set-on-board-the-orient-express/>
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stamboul_Train
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parker_Pyne_Investigates#Have_You_Got_Everything_You_Want?
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murder_on_the_Orient_Express
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/From_Russia_with_Love_\(novel\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/From_Russia_with_Love_(novel))
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Travels_with_My_Aunt
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flashman_and_the_Tiger

The Train Company

In 1882, Georges Nagelmackers, a Belgian banker's son, invited several guests to a railway trip of 2,000 km (1,243 mi) on what has been described as his "Train Edair de luxe" (lightning luxury train). Unless he was very far-sighted, he couldn't possibly have imagined what he had started.

The train left Paris Gare de l'Est on Tuesday, 10th October 1882, just after 18:30 and arrived in Vienna the next day at 23:20. The return trip left Vienna on Friday, 13th October (oblivious to the superstition of bad luck attributed to that date) at 16:40 and, right on cue, re-entered the Gare de Strasbourg at 20:00 the next day. Fast forward one year - Georges Nagelmackers founded *Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-Lits* (CIWL), which expanded its luxury trains, travel agencies, and hotels all over Europe, Asia, and North Africa. Its most famous train remains the *Orient Express* - a long-distance passenger train service that operated until December 2009. Its routes then disappeared from European railway timetables, reportedly a victim of high-speed trains and cut-rate airlines.

The Venice-Simplon Orient Express train, a private venture by *Belmond*, using original CIWL carriages from the 1920s and 1930s, continues to run from London to Venice and other destinations in Europe, including the original route from Paris to Istanbul.

Although the original *Orient Express* was simply a regular international railway service, the name became synonymous with intrigue and luxury rail travel.

The Train that launched a literary genre

The glamour and rich history of the *Orient Express* has frequently lent itself to the plot of books, films, and television documentaries.

Some of the books featuring the famous train, before and after Agatha Christie's 1934 masterpiece *Murder on the Orient Orient Express*, are:

- ❖ ***Dracula* (1897) by Bram Stoker:** the narrative is related through letters, diary entries, and newspaper articles. It has no single protagonist but opens with solicitor Jonathan Harker taking a business trip to stay at the Bulgarian castle of Count Dracula. Harker escapes the castle after discovering that Dracula is a vampire, and the Count moves to England and plagues the seaside town of Whitby. A small group, led by Abraham Van Helsing, hunt Dracula and, in the end, kill him.

- ❖ ***Stamboul Train* (1932) by Graham Greene:** the book was renamed *Orient Express* when published in the United States. It focuses on the lives of individuals aboard a luxury express train making a three-day journey from Ostend to Istanbul. Mabel Warren and Janet Pardoe join the train later in Cologne. Josef Grünlich joins it in Vienna. Although these characters are travelling for different purposes, their lives are intertwined in the journey.

- ❖ ***Have You Got Everything You Want?* (1933) a short story by Agatha Christie:** A young, attractive woman named Elsie Jeffries boards the Orient Express at the Gare de Lyon. She is shown to her compartment but is obviously in something of a quandary. On the journey, she makes her way to the adjoining carriage is labelled "Parker Pyne," which triggers a memory of something. She returns to the restaurant car and is placed at the same table as Parker Pyne and speaks to him. He finds she is unhappy. The cause is her husband of 18 months. He has worked in Constantinople for two weeks - she is on her way to join him. One week ago, in his study, she found a piece of blotting paper on which was part of a message which referred to her. It used the words "just before Venice would be the best time." She cannot imagine what will happen to her when the train reaches this point. Pyne checks when they will arrive in Venice and promises to help.

- ❖ ***Murder on the Orient Express* (1934) by Agatha Christie:** After taking the Taurus Express from Aleppo to Istanbul, Belgian private detective Hercule Poirot arrives at the Tokatlian Hotel, where he receives a telegram prompting him to return to London. Through the concierge, he books a compartment on the Simplon-route *Orient Express* service leaving that night. Other passengers include opinionated American matron Caroline Hubbard; Russian Princess Natalia Dragomiroff and her German maid Hildegard Schmidt; Swedish missionary Greta Ohlsson; vulgar American businessman Samuel Ratchett, with his secretary/translator Hector McQueen, and his English butler Edward Henry Masterman; Hungarian Count Rudolph Andrenyi and his wife Elena; talkative Italian-American car salesman Antonio Foscarelli; English Colonel John Arbuthnot; American salesman Cyrus B. Hardman; English governess Mary Debenham; and Greek medical doctor Stavros Constantine. Early the next morning, he is awakened by a cry from Ratchett's compartment next door. Pierre Michel, the train's conductor, knocks on Ratchett's door, but a voice from inside responds, "It is nothing. I was mistaken". When Poirot rings his bell for water, Michel tells him that the train is stuck in a snowbank. Bouc tells Poirot that Ratchett has been murdered. The murderer must still be on board, having no way to escape in the snow. As no police are on board, Poirot takes up the case.

- ❖ ***From Russia, with Love* (1957), a James Bond novel by Ian Fleming:** The story centres on a plot by SMERSH, the Soviet counter-intelligence agency to assassinate Bond. SMERSH plans to commit a grand act of terrorism in the intelligence field. It targets the British secret service agent James Bond who has been listed as an enemy of the Soviet state, and a "death warrant" is issued for him. His death is planned to precipitate a major sex scandal, which will run in the world press for months and leave Bond's and M16 reputations in tatters. Bond's intended killer is Donovan "Red" Grant, a British Army deserter and psychopath whose homicidal urges coincide

with the full moon. Much of the action takes place in Istanbul and on the Orient Express.

- ❖ ***Travels with My Aunt* (1969) by Graham Greene:** The novel's narrator is Henry Pulling, a conventional and uncharming bank manager. He has taken early retirement in a suburban home with little to look forward to. He is faced with the dilemma of remaining a bachelor or marrying a Miss Keene. His life suddenly changes when he meets his septuagenarian Aunt Augusta for the first time in over 50 years at his mother's funeral. Despite having little in common, they form a bond. On their first meeting, Augusta tells Henry that his mother was not truly his mother, and we learn that Henry's father has been dead for more than 40 years. He travels with his aunt to Brighton, where he gains an insight into one of her many past lives. Their voyages take them from Paris to Istanbul on the Orient Express, and as the journey unfolds, so do the stories of Aunt Augusta.
- ❖ ***Flashman and the Tiger* (1999) by George MacDonald Fraser:** the story begins with Flashman going to Berlin with Henri Blowitz to help him get a copy of the Treaty of Berlin and publish it before anyone else has it. He also meets Caprice, a beautiful member of the French secret service. Five years later, he is looking for an excuse to leave London and avoid being sent to Sudan with Charles George Gordon. Luckily, a letter from Blowitz arrives inviting him to Paris. He takes the maiden journey on the *Orient Express* and makes the acquaintance of a princess, Kralta, supposedly so that she can sleep with him. This turns out to be a ruse by the princess and Otto von Bismarck, and Flashman is forced to join with Rupert Willem von Starnberg, son of the villain from Royal Flash, and save Emperor Franz Josef from death by Magyar nationalists. It turns out that Starnberg has plans of his own, and Flashman must save the Emperor and himself.



1888 Poster Advertising the Orient Express

Attribution: Jules Chéret, Public Domain, via Wikimedia Commons. Page URL: [HERE](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Orient_Express_Poster_1888.jpg)

The Calendar

Sourced/Excerpted from and for Further Reading:

- <https://www.calendar.com/history-of-the-calendar/>
- <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/history/timeline-calendars-2169718.html>
- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calendar>
- <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Gregorian-calendar>
- <https://www.britannica.com/science/calendar>
- <http://www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/PlainTextHistories.asp?historyid=ac06>
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_calendars
- <http://www.todayifoundout.com/index.php/2013/09/the-evolution-of-the-modern-day-calendar/>
- <https://mathshistory.st-andrews.ac.uk/Astronomy/bhistory/>
- <http://www.webexhibits.org/calendars/year-history.html>
- <https://eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/SEhelp/calendars.html>
- <http://www.webexhibits.org/calendars/timeline.html>
- <https://www.altalang.com/beyond-words/6-calendars-around-the-world/>
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_calendars

Introduction

You may think a calendar is simply nothing more than (by its use) a way of knowing when **now** is. The fact is that calendars are not simple at all and represent the most ambitious attempt by humanity to control and recognise time. They are based on three astronomical certainties: (1) The Earth spins on its axis (**a day**), (2) The Moon circles the Earth (**a month**) and (3) The Earth revolves around the Sun (**a year**).

For primitive people, there were only two measures of time available: the **day** (the in-between space between two nights) and the **month** (the period between new moons). We have moved on since then – as explained below.

Etymology

The word calendar is taken from the Latin *calendae*, the term for the first day of the month in the Roman calendar, related to the verb *calare* ('to call out') – taken as meaning the new moon had just been seen. The Latin *calendarium* meant 'account book, register' (as accounts were settled and debts were collected on the *calends* of each month). The Latin term was adopted in Old French as *calendier* and then in Middle English as a *calendar* by the 13th century (the spelling *calendar* is early modern).

What is it?

A *calendar* is a system of organising days, achieved by naming periods – typically days, weeks, months and years. As we know, a *date* is a single, specific day within such a system. Before today's calendar, the most common form was the *lunisolar calendar* – a lunar calendar that occasionally added one intercalary month to remain in synch with the solar year over the long term. The solar calendar is based on the sun's movement and is the one with which people are most familiar. It differs from lunar calendars that calculate months using the moon.

Different Calendars

Roman calendar

The *Roman calendar* contained remnants of a very ancient pre-Etruscan 10-month solar year. The calendar was reformed and adjusted countless times. In the Roman Republic (509-27 BCE). It was also known as the *Republican calendar* and is the earliest calendar system from Rome for which historical evidence exists. It was used until 45 BC when it was replaced by the *Julian calendar*.

Julian calendar

Julius Caesar reformed the Roman calendar in 46 BC as the *Julian calendar*. He borrowed from Egyptian and Jewish calendars by creating a solar year of twelve months, each of 30 days, but with



The Prague Astronomical Clock (or Prague Orloj) is a medieval astronomical clock in Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic. Picture Credit: "Pražský orloj" by George M. Groutas is licensed under CC BY 2.0

five days remaining, which he dealt with by having a leap year every four years, dissociating the calendar month from the lunar month. The *Julian calendar* adopted 1st January as the start date of each year. This date has remained in place even with the Gregorian calendar.

Gregorian calendar

The *Gregorian calendar* was introduced by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582 and is the international standard used almost everywhere in the world for international trade and other civil purposes. The widely-used solar aspect is a cycle of leap days in a 400-year cycle designed to keep the duration of the year aligned with the solar year. The lunar aspect approximates the position of the moon during the year, and is used in the calculation of the date of Easter – the most important day for Christians is the resurrection of Christ and *Gregorian* is a Christian calendar.

The Gregorian calendar is one of about 40 active calendars in use in the world today but is not completely accurate: it runs 26 seconds fast every year. This equates to an error of six days every 10,000 years.

Geonologytime magazine states that the spring equinox date was miscalculated on the *Julian calendar*. Easter was the first Sunday following Full Moon after the Spring equinox. This worried Pope Gregory III, who introduced the *Gregorian calendar*. Apart from easter, the *Julian calendar* was miscalculated by 11 minutes. These 11 minutes made the *Julian calendar* longer than the *Gregorian calendar*. Each *Gregorian* year has either 365 or 366 days (the leap day being inserted as 29th February), amounting to an average *Gregorian* year of 365.2425 days (compared to a solar year of 365.2422 days).

The Islamic or Hijri Calendar

The *Islamic calendar* is a Lunar calendar and contains 12 months based on the motion of the Moon. The calendar started in AD 622 during the emigration of Muhammad from Mecca to Medina. It is a Lunar calendar with 12 months in a year of 354 days or 355 days. But starting in 639 AD, Caliph Umar started the Muslim Calendar, counting it from the Lunar month. Each month starts when the lunar crescent is first seen by a human observer's eye after a new moon. The 12 months are: Muharram, Safar, Rabi' al-Awwal, Rabi' al-Thānī, Jumādā al-

Awwal, Jumādā al-Thānī, Rajab, Sha'bān, Ramaḍān (the month of fasting), Shawwāl, Dhū al-Qa'dah, and Dhū al-Hijjah

A day within the Islamic calendar is defined as beginning at sunset. Since the Islamic Lunar year is 11 to 12 days shorter than the solar Gregorian year, the Islamic New Year doesn't come on the same day of the Gregorian calendar every year. The first day of the week corresponds with the Sunday of the planetary week. Each month begins approximately at the time of the new moon. The months

are alternately 30 and 29 days long except for the 12th, Dhū al-Hijjah, the length of which is varied in a 30-year cycle intended to keep the calendar in step with the true phases of the moon.

Hebrew calendar

The Hebrew calendar (aka Jewish calendar) is a lunisolar calendar used today for Jewish religious observance, and as an official calendar of the state of Israel. It determines the dates for Jewish holidays and appropriate public reading of Torah portions, *yahrzeits* (dates to commemorate the death of a relative), and daily Psalm readings, among many ceremonial uses. In Israel, it is used for religious purposes, provides a time frame for agriculture, and is an official calendar for civil holidays, alongside the *Gregorian calendar*. The present Hebrew calendar is the result of a process of development, including a Babylonian influence.

AD or BCE?

The calendar epoch used by the *Gregorian calendar* comes from the medieval convention established by *Dionysius Exiguus* (a 6th-century monk born in Scythia Minor) and is associated with the *Julian calendar*. The year number is variously given as AD (for Anno Domini) or CE (for Common Era or Christian Era).

The naming of the Months

The Romans used their gods, emperors and kings as names of the months on the calendar, which are explained as follows:

- ❖ January was initially named after the Roman god of *Gates of Janus*, the god of beginnings and endings.
- ❖ February was *Februus*, the god of purification.
- ❖ March was *Mars*, the famous Roman god of war.
- ❖ April was *Aprilis* which means *to open* in Latin. It meant the blossoming of trees and flowers, and it was a special month to honour *Venus*, the goddess of love. *Aprilis* is also derived from the Greek Goddess of love, *Aphrodite*.
- ❖ May was *Maia Maiestas*, the goddess of springtime.
- ❖ June was named after *Juno*, the goddess and wife of *Jupiter* and protector and mother of *Mars*.
- ❖ July is named after Emperor *Julius Caesar*.
- ❖ August was *Augustus*, the first Roman emperor.
- ❖ The remaining months derive their names from *Romulus*, Rome's first King and conqueror. September is *Septem*, the 7th month of *Romulus*. October is *Octo*, the 8th month of *Romulus*. November is *Novem*, the 9th month of *Romulus*. December is *decem*, the 10th month of *Romulus*.

For a comprehensive calendar list, click [HERE](#).

The lady spurned by Wellington

Sourced/Excerpted from and for Further Reading:

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Angela_Burdett-Coutts,_1st_Baroness_Burdett-Coutts
- <https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofBritain/Angela-Burdett-Coutts/>
- <https://spartacus-educational.com/EDburdett.htm>
- <https://victorianweb.org/gender/burdettcoutts.html>
- <https://www.coutts.com/insight-articles/news/2019/inside-coutts/angela-burdett-coutts.html>
- <https://www.historytoday.com/archive/months-past/angela-burdett-coutts-born-london>
- <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Angela-Georgina-Burdett-Coutts-Baroness-Burdett-Coutts>
- <https://www.londonremembers.com/subjects/baroness-angela-georgina-burdett-coutts>



Picture Credit: "Angela Burdett-Coutts. Wood engraving." is licensed under CC BY 4.0

Introduction

She was a 19th century philanthropist and one of the wealthiest women in Britain during her lifetime. She inherited £1.8m from the estate of her stepgrandmother when she died in 1837 and spent most of her wealth on scholarships and endowments. She also co-founded (with Charles Dickens) a home for young women who had 'turned to a life of immorality' to help them turn their lives around. Her name: Angela Burdett-Coutts, born Angela Georgina Burdett, the daughter of Sir Francis Burdett, 5th Baronet, and Sophia, formerly Coutts, daughter of banker Thomas Coutts.

Personal Life

Angela was a wealthy and educated woman who defied the social conventions of her day and class. Her father was the leader of the Radicals in the House of Commons and was himself the most controversial MP in England and opponent of William Pitt the Younger.

Because of her work with under-privileged, Angela became known as the *Queen of the Poor*. She was an acquaintance of politicians of the day and a friend of both Charles Dickens and the Duke of Wellington, to whom she proposed marriage despite the great disparity in their ages. After Wellington declined her proposal, she shocked polite society by marrying her 29-year-old secretary, the American-born William Lehman Ashmead Bartlett, who became MP for Westminster in February 1881. Her new husband changed his surname to Burdett-Coutts. Because of her

husband's American birth, a clause in her stepgrandmother's will forbidding her heir to marry a foreign national was invoked. Burdett-Coutts forfeited 60 per cent of her income to her sister.

As a granddaughter of Thomas Coutts, the founder of the famous London bank with that name, Angela Burdett-Coutts was one of the wealthiest women in Victorian England. She was also one of the busiest, helping to manage the bank, and was very active in an enormous range of philanthropic projects.

Dedications

Charles Dickens dedicated his novel *Martin Chuzzlewit* to her, and she had many royal and eminent friends. George MacDonald Fraser's book *Flashman's Lady* refers to her (fictional) love for James Brooke (The White Rajah) and his rejection of her due to his physical affliction. She also puts a lecherous Flashman firmly in his place by dislocating his thumb. Angela Burdett-Coutts also features in Terry Pratchett's novel *Dodger*; in an afterword, he states that part of his reason for writing the book was to bring Burdett-Coutts to the attention of modern readers. George Meredith wrote a poem, 'Angela Burdett-Coutts,' in her memory.

The Reverend Richard Harris Barham, in a ballad he wrote under the pen name "Thomas Ingoldsby" for Queen Victoria's coronation as part of the Ingoldsby Legends, referred to her as "Miss Anjaley Coutts."

Scholarships, endowments, and philanthropy

Burdett-Coutts spent most of her wealth on scholarships, endowments, and many philanthropic causes. One of her earliest charitable acts was to co-found (with Charles Dickens) a home for fallen women in trouble for theft and prostitution. The home was known as *Urania Cottage*. She was a patron of artists and actors and the explorers David Livingstone and H.M. Stanley.

Benefactor of Churches, Schools, and Hospitals

She avoided taking sides in partisan politics but was actively interested in improving the condition of indigenous Africans or the education and relief of the poor or suffering in any part of the world. Though she made no particular distinction of creed in her charities,

Angela Burdett-Coutts was a notable benefactor of the Church of England, building two churches – including St Stephen's Church, Rochester Row, Westminster – and endowing church schools.

She was involved in financing a new primary school in Westminster, known as Burdett-Coutts & Townshend Foundation Church of England Primary School.

She funded vital medical research for illnesses such as cancer. She gave an interest-free loan to build *Royal Marsden Hospital* and continued through financial donations to support the hospital once it was operational.

Work Abroad

Abroad, she endowed the bishoprics of Cape Town and Adelaide (1847) and the founding bishopric of British Columbia (1857).

In 1864, she financed the Ordnance Survey of Jerusalem, whose primary goal was to find better drinking water for those living in the city. During this work (1864–1865), the group, led by Charles William Wilson, produced the most accurate and comprehensive map of Jerusalem but was unable to find a new source of water. *The Jerusalem Post* commented that "Charles Wilson's work on the Jerusalem Ordnance Survey served as the basis for all future Jerusalem research." Burdett-Coutts later helped fund other explorations in the Holy Land, sometimes in conjunction with the Palestinian Exploration Fund. This effort included a subsequent offer to fund another exploration to find water for Jerusalem, led by Charles Warren.

NSPCC and RSPCA

In 1884, she co-founded the London Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, which became the *National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children* (NSPCC) in 1889; she also founded the Westminster Technical Institute in 1893 and was closely involved with the *Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals* (RSPCA). She was the first woman to be a member of the *Royal Society*. She was also the president of the *British Goat Society*, although the reason for her affinity to goats is unknown - other than her involvement with the RSPCA.

Social Housing

Burdett-Coutts founded Columbia Market in 1869 in Bethnal Green in the East End of London, the district where much of her work was carried out. With her project in Columbia Square, she became a pioneer in social housing. Through her support of missionary and nursing efforts, she was associated with *Louisa Twining* and *Florence Nightingale*. Her small housing development, Holly Village, on the corner of her estate, is now in private hands and may still be seen in Highgate.

Recognition

Her work was acknowledged by the Crown - in 1871, in recognition of her philanthropic work, Queen Victoria conferred on her a *Suo Jure* ('in her own right') peerage as *Baroness Burdett-Coutts of Highgate and Brookfield in the County of Middlesex*.

On 18th July 1872, she became the first woman to be presented with the Freedom of the City of London at the Guildhall, and in 1874 she became Edinburgh's first woman Freeman and was also presented with the Freedom of that city.

King Edward VII described her: "after my mother, she is the most remarkable woman in the kingdom."

She died on 30th December 1906, and her body is buried at Westminster Abbey, although they had expected her ashes for interment.

Drugs and World War II Villains

Drugs

During World War II, amphetamine (made in Germany in 1887 but shelved until the 1920s when German researchers started looking at options to use it as a treatment for almost any ailment, including depression) and methamphetamine (developed in Japan in 1919) were used extensively by both the Allies and Axis forces for their stimulant and performance-enhancing effects – principally to keep awake. But when the addictive properties of the drugs became known, governments began to impose controls in their availability and usage. Kamikaze pilots received high doses of *Pervitin* (one of Hitler's favourite drugs) before suicide flight missions, whilst Japanese factory workers also used methamphetamine to work longer hours and to offset tiredness.

Unlike Germany, drugs were not widely used in Russia, although some say Stalin was not entirely drug-free. Legislation against drugs first appeared in post-revolutionary Russia, in the 1922 *Penal Code of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic* (RSFSR), which criminalised drug production, trafficking, and possession with intent to traffic. Within two years, it was expanded to cover the whole of the Soviet Union. He may not have been overly fond of drugs, but he was very fond of his liquor and drank prodigious amounts of alcohol. He prided himself on being able to drink his men under the table.

The Italians

Benito Amilcare Andrea Mussolini

Mussolini served in the Royal Italian Army during the Great War but was wounded and discharged in 1917. During the Spanish Civil War, Italy provided huge amounts of military support to General Franco's forces, and in doing so, distanced itself from Britain and France. Aligning his country with Germany and Japan at the start of World War II as part of the Axis didn't work out well for Mussolini. The Italians suffered defeat after defeat, but Mussolini continued to party with several mistresses. In that pursuit, at least, he appears to have been amorously successful.

Mussolini was the leader of the National Fascist Party in Italy during World War II. He ruled Italy as Prime Minister from 1922 to 1943. Not unlike Adolf Hitler, he removed all political opposition through his secret police and outlawed labour strikes during a period when Italy was transformed into a one-party dictatorship.



In June 1941, Italy participated in the invasion of the Soviet Union, and when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor in December 1941, Italy declared war on the United States. More military disasters for the Italians occurred until the Italian elders could stand it no more and passed a motion of no confidence in Mussolini. He was dismissed and placed in custody. In September 1943, he was rescued from captivity by German paratroopers and Waffen-SS commandos. He died on 28th April 1945 when he was executed, together with his mistress Clara Petacci, by Italian communist partisans as the couple attempted to flee to Switzerland. Cruelly, his body was taken to Milan, where it was hung upside down at a service station to publicly confirm his death. Mussolini, like Stalin, was a short man (height 5' 6½" - 1.69m). He was colloquially known as *Il Duce* ('The Leader').

Dr Theodor Morell, the personal physician who administered drugs to Adolf Hitler ('Patient A') in huge quantities, also treated several other high-level patients, including Mussolini (who was called 'Patient D'). We don't know who Patients B and C were. Although Mussolini was given the same drugs as Hitler (but not the same quantities or frequency), there's no evidence to say whether or not he was an addict.

The Japanese

The Japanese *Kamikaze* ('divine wind') tactic was suggested on 19th October 1944 by Japan's Vice-Admiral Onishi, who later became known as 'The Father of the *Kamikaze*'. Onishi was opposed to the attack on Pearl Harbor because he felt it would lead to a full-scale war with a foe that had the resources to overpower Japan into an unconditional surrender.

The Japanese Prime Minister

Tōjō Hideki was a soldier, statesman, and Prime Minister of Japan from 1941 to 1944) and a military leader during most of the Pacific theatre portion of World War II. He was a strong supporter of the Tripartite Pact (Axis) between Japan, Germany, and Italy. After the war ended, he was tried for war crimes and executed.

The Japanese Emperor

Emperor Hirohito was the Japanese monarch throughout World War II. He was the 124th Emperor of Japan according to the traditional or natural order of succession. He reigned from Christmas Day 1926 until he died on 7th January 1989, a fair stint by any measure. At the start of the Emperor's reign, Japan was the ninth-largest economy in the world, the third-largest naval power, and one of the four permanent members of the council of the League of Nations. After Japan surrendered in 1945, Hirohito was not prosecuted for war crimes as many other leading government figures were, and his degree of involvement in wartime decisions remains controversial.

Chūichi Nagumo

During World War II, Nagumo was a Japanese admiral in the Imperial Japanese Navy and one-time commander of the Kido Butai (the carrier battle group that carried out the Pearl Harbor attack on 7th December 1941), when a Japanese force of six carriers and 423 aircraft attacked the United States base. He was later criticised for failing to launch a third attack on Pearl Harbor, which might have destroyed essential fuel oil storage and repair facilities. Nagumo committed suicide during the Battle of Saipan, shooting himself in the temple.

Mitsuo Fuchida

Fuchida was a captain in the Imperial Japanese Navy Air Service and a bomber aviator in the Japanese navy. He is perhaps best known for leading the first wave of air attacks on Pearl Harbor on 7th December 1941. Fuchida was responsible for the coordination of the entire aerial attack. After the war ended, Fuchida became a Christian evangelist and travelled through the United States and Europe to tell his story.

The Russians

Joseph Stalin (also known as 'Uncle Joe')

Joseph Stalin was the Russian leader in World War II and is generally regarded as one of the most notorious dictators in history. He was born with a webbed left foot and contracted smallpox at the age of seven, scarring him for life with pockmarks on his face. He also had a slightly deformed left arm, thought to have happened from a childhood injury.

As an adult, Stalin was short – measuring only 5 feet 4 inches (1.63 m) tall. Because of his ruthless attitude, the Soviet Union was transformed into one of the biggest and most-feared superpowers. His birth name (Ioseb Besarionis Jughashvili) was changed to Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin.

Stalin was the dictator of the USSR from 1929-1953. Under his rule, the USSR was transformed from a society ineptly backward in technological advancement into an industrial superpower. He may be described as a Soviet revolutionary and politician who held his country in an iron grip. Indeed, the name he adopted means 'man of steel'. He ruled the Soviet Union for over three decades and formulated his policies as 'Stalinism'. The notion of propaganda was greeted with open arms, and often relied on what they called the 'miracles of science' to boost the status of their fledgling State.

Stalin started out in World War II as an ally of Nazi Germany: in 1939, on the eve of World War II, Stalin and Hitler signed a non-aggression pact, the Brest-Litovsk treaty. Stalin then proceeded to annex parts of Poland and Romania and the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. He also launched an invasion of Finland. However, when the Germans turned away from an invasion of Britain and chose to attack Russia instead (on 22nd June 1941), the man of steel eventually rose to the challenge, albeit not straightaway.

Perhaps Stalin was stunned by Hitler's audacity to invade Russia, or because he was in shock (but his first stroke was in the months after the war finished) and he could not believe Hitler would break the agreement they had, or even had a nervous



breakdown - but whatever the reason, he reacted extremely slowly to the German invasion. In hindsight, the Soviets and the Germans could never be friends: the two regimes were ideological enemies who were ideologically miles apart, and a war between the two was almost bound to happen at some time or other. When Hitler invaded Poland, and with the nonaggression pact reached with Russia in his back pocket, he was confident that the Soviets would not oppose him.

The Yalta Conference (also called the Crimea Conference and codenamed the Argonaut Conference), held in early February 1945, was the World War II meeting of the heads of government of the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union to discuss Germany's and Europe's post-war reorganisation. – see the picture above. The problem of Poland's future was a particular focus of the Yalta conference. Stalin agreed that free elections should be held in Poland as soon as possible. He also accepted Churchill's pleas that members of the Polish and Yugoslav governments in exile should be included in the new administrations of those countries.

Over the years, there have been many rumours have circulated about *how* Stalin died or even *where* he died. An official view was that he died in the *Kremlin*, but there is perhaps too much evidence that says he died at his home.

What is agreed is that Stalin died on 5th March 1953. He had previously suffered a breakdown or heart attack after Hitler invaded Russia on 22nd June 1941 despite the nonaggression political and economic pacts the two countries had previously signed. The most popular explanation for Stalin's death is that he died from a cerebral haemorrhage (or blood clot in the brain), a common and often fatal subtype of a stroke. Shortly before his death, Stalin had turned on Soviet Jews in a campaign that promised a new wave of purges and party upheaval. Jewish doctors were among those targeted by Stalin. Little wonder then that it took some hours for a doctor to attend at the scene of Stalin's death. Statements from the party leaders tried to reassure the Russian public that none of the doctors treating Stalin was connected to the alleged conspiracy. The popular belief is that the cerebral haemorrhage was caused by an excess of the blood thinner Warfarin but how it got into Stalin's blood remains a mystery.

Stalin, like Churchill in London, raised the fighting morale of his military forces, although he was not a great orator. He stopped the persecution of the Orthodox Church. It was a popular step in the right direction.

As the Soviet resistance against German forces intensified, Stalin asked the Allies to agree on a division of territorial spoils after the war. The rest is history.