

Not a Lot of People
Know That



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and
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INTRODUCTION

First of all, a big hello to everyone who downloaded this ebook under the mistaken assumption that it's Michael Caine's autobiography. We apologise for having deceived you in such an underhand manner. Rest assured, the title is the only deceptive thing about this book.

Michael Caine's actual autobiography, *Blowing The Bloody Doors Off* is available from all good second-hand bookshops (price in pencil on the inside cover). Funnily enough, *Blowing The Bloody Doors Off* would be a fitting title for this book. Through the course of its informative, enlightening and thoroughly educational chapters, we intend to "blow the bloody doors off" received wisdom, reliability, validity and indeed, the very concept of knowledge itself.

There are many other books of facts available. We're not suggesting for one moment that these books contain inaccurate information or things the authors made up down the pub. We're not suggesting that at all.

For some reason, the morons at Philistine Press have decided to categorise this book as "humour". We're not sure why. Trust us when we say there is nothing even remotely humorous about this book. We sincerely hope you enjoy it.

David Hailwood and FJ Riley

SCIENCE

Snow is by far the greatest insulator on the planet. As anyone who has ever slept in an igloo will tell you, their ability to retain heat makes for an extremely warm and cosy interior. Igloos are, in fact, so warm on the inside that they inevitably melt shortly after they are built. The few remaining Inuit people who still live in igloos often have to get up three or four times in the night to rebuild their houses.

*

There is no such thing as calcium. When Dmitri Mendeleev put the periodic table together in 1869, he added an extra element, which he called *calcium*, from the Greek, meaning “imaginary substance”. In his own words, this was intended as “a joke.” However, to Mendeleev’s horror, thousands of copies of his periodic table were printed with the extra element included. The scientist was faced with the dilemma of either owning up to his stunt, or disguising it as fact. As his biographer, V.W. Groomspek notes, “Towards the end of Mendeleev’s life, he began to speak about his invention of calcium in public, but his claims were never met with anything other than uproarious laughter.”

All that talk about drinking milk to stop you getting brittle bones is just nonsense.

*

Paracetamol is a placebo. It is a completely useless substance with no pain relieving properties. Your headache was cured by psychological suggestion only.

The same applies to penicillin, and all vaccinations.

*

As any good naturalist will tell you, the best headache cure known to man is monkey urine. However, the urine must be completely fresh in order to have an effect. The best means of consuming this miracle cure is to persuade the monkey to urinate directly into your mouth.

*

The best cure for indigestion is pepper spray applied directly to the eyes.

YOUR SCIENCE QUESTIONS ANSWERED!

Q. Why don't fish have legs?

Ernest Yesmith, Reykjavik.

The truth is, most fish do have legs. They keep them tucked up underneath their bodies so they cannot be seen. Fish feet are inedible, so are removed before they are sold.

Fish often get tired of swimming, particularly salmon, who famously swim upstream. Often, when no one is watching, a salmon will climb out of the water, and take a stroll along the riverbank. Salmon can survive out of the water for up to forty-five minutes.

*

Q. Is time travel possible?

Mandy Fraser, Edinburgh.

Yes. A Russian scientist named Vladimir Agrachev created the first time machine in 1987. However, Agrachev was so concerned about the potentially catastrophic implications of his invention that he did not use it until 1989,

when he travelled back to his own laboratory in 1986, destroyed the machine, and shot himself.

No one has since been able to replicate Agrachev's machine, but if nothing else, at least we are able to say with one hundred percent certainty that not only is time travel a proven fact, but we don't need to worry about all those pesky "temporal paradoxes" that science fiction writers keep banging on about.

*

Q. How does television work?

Bill Rupture, Essex.

It's magic. That's why they call it "the magic of television". A lot of people are sceptical about magic, and will have you believe it doesn't even exist. But they're talking nonsense. How else do you explain time travel?

HISTORY

Hats were originally used as a means of keeping water out of canons. They did not become an item of clothing until 1824. Any drawings you may see of people wearing hats in the Middle Ages are, in fact, apocryphal. Hats do not predate gunpowder.

*

For many years under the Roman Empire, eggs were used as one of the principal ingredients in concrete. The historian, N.R. Frolic notes that in early Roman architecture, a typical concrete mixture contained “quicklime, pozzolana, aggregate and several medium-sized hen’s eggs.” The Romans believed that the eggs were good for the concrete “because of their binding qualities.” However, they were eventually rejected, partly due to expense, but mainly due to the smell that emanated from Roman concrete several days after setting.

This is why sometimes when you visit a Roman building, there’s a strange whiff in the air that you can’t quite put your finger on.

*

Up until 1937, there was no such thing as egg yolk. Yolks were developed using an early form of genetic modification, in an attempt to make eggs “a bit more lively”.

*

The very first advertising agency was started up in 1807. It folded a week later, due to poor advertising.

*

The first ever car crash took place in Nevada, USA, when a Ford Model T collided with a Ford Model T. The accident came as quite a blow to the Ford company, who in a charming piece of Roaring Twenties’ optimism, were marketing the Ford Model T as “uncrashable”. A spokesperson for the company said, “I suppose we should’ve learnt from that whole Titanic thing.”

The one remaining survivor of the crash, a Mr Dwight Bollinger, became a celebrity overnight, and spent the next five years touring the USA recounting his experience. In a famous piece of showmanship, Bollinger responded to an old man who started heckling him by roaring, “What do you know, old man? Sure, you may have lived a long life, but did you ever sit behind the wheel of an automobile? You weren’t there to see that man die, to see the terror in his eyes, or inhale those deadly fumes until you almost choked!”

The old man replied, "I fought in the Great War," but his voice was drowned out by the cheers of the crowd.

*

Cavemen used to paint using their own blood, which is where the term "dying for your art" comes from.

*

It's often been claimed that Van Gogh never sold a painting in his lifetime, but this isn't strictly true. Van Gogh supplemented his meagre income through a sideline in novelty paintings, with captions such as, "*Honk if you appreciate Monet,*" or "*If you can read this, what are you doing in my house?*" Very few of these paintings survive today, but a Russian billionaire recently paid in excess of thirty million dollars for a Van Gogh picture that reads, "*My other painting's a Renoir.*" The billionaire in question has reportedly hung the painting next to an original Renoir.

*

Hitler was originally a mime artist, but that proved even less popular than the whole "Nazi" thing. His trademark salute is actually the last remnant of his "walking against the wind" impression.

YOUR HISTORY QUESTIONS ANSWERED!

Q. In what year did Columbus “sail the blue”?

Margaret Jetson, Wiltshire.

1982.

*

Q. What was the longest war in history?

Bill Stepman, California

The Million Years War. This was fought between 2 Million and 1 Million BCE (dates are approximate).

*

Q. I've heard that Isaac Newton formulated his theory of gravity after an apple fell on his head. Is this truth or myth?

Myth. Gravity was first discovered several centuries previously by an African tribesman who was sitting under a particularly large watermelon plant. When the fruit landed on his head, the man was knocked unconscious, and slept for

three whole days. When he woke up talking about magnetic poles, his fellow tribespeople assumed he'd gone insane and burned him alive.

CRIME

No one has ever committed a crime in Hawaii.

*

Despite being involuntary, spontaneous human combustion is illegal in every country in the world apart from the Republic of Ireland, where ironically, it has never happened.

*

Jack the Ripper was killed by a copycat killer who, due to very poor London lighting, mistook his idol for a prostitute.

*

“He was such a quiet man who kept himself to himself.” How often have we heard these words applied to serial killers? Considering the findings of a recent study, this cliché is entirely justified. The sociologist, F.U. Mollusc has found that 96% of men who live alone will eventually turn out to be serial killers. Perhaps even more shockingly, Mollusc claims, “The other 4% are paedophiles.”

*

The most successful thief of all time is a Mr Duncan Goodhew (no relation). As a serial fraudster, Goodhew has amassed the equivalent of eight zillion English pounds. He also holds the record for most consecutive appearances on BBC's *Crimewatch* – a total of twenty-six appearances. Goodhew, a noted eccentric, has been quoted as describing this as his “greatest achievement.”

*

In America it is illegal in seventeen states to have sexual intercourse with a gameshow host.

*

According to a recent survey conducted by the Metropolitan Police, the “funniest crime of all time” occurred in 1997 when a group of art students broke into the Madame Tussauds exhibition in London. Each of the celebrity waxworks on display were stripped naked and arranged into a variety of inventive sexual positions. According to the official report, pairings included “Kylie Minogue with Rolf Harris, Elton John with Sylvester Stallone, and Margaret Thatcher with John Lennon.” A spokesperson for the Metropolitan Police said, “Of course, we don’t like to encourage this sort of thing, but nothing was stolen or damaged in the stunt, so there’s no harm done.”

The students received one hundred hours community service and a small trophy.

*

The first surgeon ever to be simultaneously charged with both “gross malpractice” and “graffiti” is a Mr Igor Skelton of Berlin, who in 1995, was found guilty of inscribing messages on patients’ internal organs. Skelton’s numerous acts of vandalism are alleged to have taken place over the course of fifteen years, during which time he created many secret inscriptions, mainly intended as insults against various colleagues.

Skelton was eventually found guilty after a former patient’s kidney was donated to medical research. On the kidney’s arrival at a nearby institute, students were horrified to discover the words “*Doctor Heinz is a knob, 100% true*” written across the organ.

In a public statement shortly after the event, Doctor Heinz, M.D. categorically stated that he was “not a knob.”

CELEBRITIES

Arnold Schwarzenegger can't speak a word of English. Every English sentence he has ever uttered has been spelled out phonetically on Teleprompters and cue cards, and often, the actor-turned-politician has no idea what he is actually saying. That's why you'll never see him look anyone directly in the eye during speeches and interviews, or indeed, on film.

It was only recently that Schwarzenegger was offered an Austrian translation of his film, *Kindergarten Cop*. Arnold has been reported as hurling the script across the room and exclaiming, in his native tongue, "They told me it was funny, damn it!"

*

Celebrities like to open restaurants. They also like to drink their own urine. In 2006, these two obsessions were combined when the magician, David Copperfield, opened his urine-based eatery, "*Tinkle Town*." Highlights from the menu included "Leak Soup" (priced at \$25), "The Wazzburger" (priced at \$50), and a bottle of "House Yellow Wine" (priced at \$100). The restaurant closed after just three days, following a scathing review, which described the food as tasting "like piss".

*

John Travolta's chin dimple was created by plastic surgery. That's why he hasn't got one in *Carrie*.

YOUR CELEBRITY QUESTIONS ANSWERED!

Q. A friend and I have been arguing for some time over who was the first celebrity. I say it was Socrates, but my friend insists it was Ella Fitzgerald.

What is the correct answer?

Toby Morris, Washington DC.

The correct answer is Ella Fitzgerald.

*

Q. Who is the least famous person in the world?

Jeanette Steele, Luxembourg.

The least famous person in the world is a man named Pierre Fink, who lives the life of a hermit in a remote part of the French countryside. He has been quoted as joking, “Even I haven’t heard of me!” Fink’s self-deprecating sense of humour has proven quite a hit with audiences, and he is currently doing the rounds on the chat-show circuit.

*

Who was the first ever chat show host?

James K. Loxford, Bognor Regis

Chat shows date back to prehistoric times when, following the killing of a particularly large beast, the victorious hunter was interviewed in front of a small audience, mainly using grunts and hand gestures. The name of the first ever chat show host is, unsurprisingly, unknown.

WORLD RECORDS

The world's longest web address is owned by an Oxford-based stationary company called "Pete's Pens". The full address is as follows:

`http://www.pensthatspeteswithoutanapostrophejustthesnoapostrophepensdot
comhatsallonewordnodotsordashesorhyphensanditspeteasinpeterthatsspelp-
e-t-
ewithansontheendsoletscapthatshttpcolonforwardslashforwardslashdoubley
oudoubleyoudoubleyoudotpetespensdotcomthatsalloneworddontforgetnowed
ontjustdopenswedoothertypesofstationaryandconsumableslikeprinterinkyouna
meitwedoitbutjusttorecaptheweaddressispetespens.com`

The company have blamed their unusual choice of address on "a hilarious administrative error". Following the blunder, the company decided against changing their address to something simpler, due to the publicity they'd received from their status as world record holders. A spokesperson for the company claimed that despite the extremely long address, their website receives an average of "four million hits per second."

*

The World Record For The Largest Number of World Records is held by Kenny Stoppag of Cardiff, who holds a total of over four thousand world records. Kenny's personal highlights include:

World Record For Most Uses of the Word "Brick" In a Day. (5,600)

World Record For Furthest Distance Travelled Rolling a Carpet Across a Field. (380 miles.)

World Record For Longest Amount of Time Spent Locked in a Room With a Cheese and Onion Pasty Without Eating it. (Three and a half days.)

World Record For Balancing a Pound Coin On Top of Your Head. This record attempt is still in progress. Kenny has been balancing the coin on top of his head for a year and a half. He admits that he's already shattered the existing record of fourteen hours, previously set by himself, and is now just doing it "for the glory." Kenny has slept standing up for the last eighteen months, making him the record holder for Most Amount of Time Spent Sleeping Standing Up. He has also attempted various other records with the coin on top of his head, making him the proud record holder for:

Largest Number of Paper Clips Straightened Whilst Balancing a Pound Coin on Your Head. (6,567.)

Largest Number of Cheese and Onion Pasties Eaten In One Sitting With a Pound Coin Balanced on Your Head. (12.)

Most Episodes of *Columbo* Watched Consecutively Whilst Balancing a Pound Coin on Your Head (400).

Kenny's personal favourite record is The World Record For Time Spent Talking In A Fake Cornish Accent. This record is also still in progress.

*

The world's worst driver is Glen Tunbridge of Huddersfield, who has failed his driving test over two thousand times. He has taken a driving test every day for the last nine years, and is directly responsible for the deaths of fourteen examiners, and over three hundred members of the general public. When asked why Mr Tunbridge has never been arrested for manslaughter, a spokesperson for Yorkshire Police said, "Come on, give the boy a chance. He's trying his best. Usually, the victim's families are sympathetic when they find out he's a world record holder. Let's face it, the kid's the nearest thing this town has to royalty."

*

The World Record for the largest quantity of cyanide pills consumed in a single sitting is eight. The holder of the record is Emilio Demarcos, now

deceased. Although the cyanide had no effect at the time due to Demarcos' incredibly slow metabolism, they kicked in thirty years later, at a pub quiz. Demarcos' team, the "Lucky Stallions" were reported as being, "Disappointed ... we really could've won that game."

*

The most elaborate signature of all time belonged to Ernest Wheelhouse of Rotterdam. The surface area of Wheelhouse's signature was twenty-six square feet, and often took several days to complete.

Wheelhouse is also credited with having invented those large novelty cheques used in charity telethons.

INVENTIONS

“Guillotine Syndrome” refers to the phenomenon of inventors being killed by their own inventions, which is a lot more widespread than many people think. In addition to the famous story of Mr Guillotine, the syndrome also has its lesser-known victims:

In 1959, Lloyd Goff Copeman, the inventor of the toaster, was killed when he was hit on the head by a toaster that had been hurled from a nearby fifth story window. His killer, a Mr Matthew Gravitas, later explained that he’d been thrown into an unexpected fit of rage after the toaster burnt his last crumpet. Gravitas was given a three year suspended sentence. He later died of spontaneous human combustion.

Alexander Schwartz, the inventor of the yoyo, was struck down by a deathblow to the left temple when attempting the notoriously deadly “round the world” trick. The International Yoyo Society has repeatedly assured consumers that this was “an isolated incident,” although last year alone, fourteen similar incidents have been reported as “almost happening.”

Karl Leber, the inventor of the rocking chair, was thrown across his laboratory by an early prototype. The resultant head injury resulted in a serious mental

condition, from which Leber later died. This is widely believed to be the origin of the expression, “Off your rocker.”

Jeremy Cakeworth, inventor of the fake dog turd, died after being hit on the head by a gigantic elephant dropping for which it is believed he was hoping to take measurements. Zoo officials were said to be “baffled” by this turn of events, though nonetheless “highly amused.” Mr Cakeworth’s wife stated afterwards in an interview with the press, “It’s how he would’ve wanted to go.”

*

Screensavers serve no useful function. They were invented one Tuesday lunchtime by a disgruntled software designer named Terrence Greenhouse. Greenhouse was surprised when his invention became the industry standard, and he later claimed, “I just did it because I like seeing people mildly irritated.”

Greenhouse became a multi-millionaire, moving into a Los Angeles mansion and employing a team of staff to cater for his every whim. According to employees’ accounts, Greenhouse filled their working days with pointless requests for his own amusement. In 2003, Greenhouse was successfully sued by his former head butler, who injured himself after being asked to “run up and down the stairs seventeen times.”

The butler, Abraham Wurlitzer, made so much money from the case that he can now afford to hire his own butler. Wurlitzer’s butler describes his duties

as “watching TV, playing video games and fetching the occasional pot of coffee.” The job also pays several times over the going rate. Following a particularly generous pay rise, Wurlitzer’s butler became so rich that he was able to employ his own butler. In a curious twist of fate, his new employee turned out to be none other than the inventor of the screensaver himself, Mr Terrence Greenhouse. Greenhouse needed the work having fallen on hard times due to a gambling addiction and a string of unsuccessful court cases.

A film adaptation of Greenhouse’s autobiography is currently in production, although the director, Edwin Hargreaves, has stressed he will not be dwelling on what he calls “the screensaver myth.”

*

Fire was not invented until 1857. Before that, people had to make do with electric lights.

*

Scrabble was invented as a way of passing on hidden messages in prison cells under the warders’ noses. A particularly notorious breakout attempt was thwarted in 1987 when a convicted arsonist gave misleading escape instructions on a Scrabble board, after the temptation of a triple-word score got too much for him.

MUSIC

The original version of Frank Sinatra's *My Way* included a verse that ran:

*I'll admit, in hindsight,
Not all my films were top notch,
But I still made High Society and Oceans Eleven,
And The Manchurian Candidate
Which was nominated for two Academy awards.*

Sinatra refused to sing the verse on the grounds that it didn't scan.

*

There are many conspiracy theories suggesting that Elvis Presley faked his own death. These theories are, of course, utter nonsense, but it's curious that no one ever questions Cliff Richard, the singer who successfully "faked his own life."

Following Richard's death in 1974, the tragedy was swiftly covered up by the singer's record label. Richard was replaced by a series of lookalikes, employed over a thirty-year period. The facts of the scandal have only recently come to light when a Richard impersonator named Barry Beavis was

replaced in favour of a “less wrinkly model.” Beavis has spoken out against his treatment, but thus far, his story is yet to be taken on board by the cynical mass media, despite irrefutable DNA evidence. It may be many more years before the public’s suspicions get the better of them.

*

At any one time in the UK, there are at least six musicians who have fallen asleep after being hypnotised by metronomes.

The first ever “hidden track” on a CD was created by accident by the German rock band, Funfzer, when recording their fifth and worst album, *Funfzer Twilight*. While recording the final track on the album, the entire band fell asleep after being distracted by a nearby metronome. On waking, they continued playing as though nothing had happened. The resultant period of silence was said to have been included on the final cut of the album “by accident”. The silence was described by many critics as “the best bit”.

*

DVD sales of the children’s TV programme, *Sesame Street*, have skyrocketed after being hailed as the voice of disenfranchised youth by the teenage “emo” scene. The emo website, emos-r-us.com describes the kids TV show as, “A terrifying vision of a post-apocalyptic world, inhabited by semi-literate mutants and deranged humanoids. In this nightmarish dystopian future, intelligent life

has regressed to the level of infancy. Simple tasks such as counting to ten and reciting the alphabet are regarded as great achievements. The mutant cast include the grotesque man-bird hybrid known as the “Big Bird” and a crazed bulimic named Cookie Monster.”

According to an official spokesperson for emos-r-us.com, the central figure behind this cult success is, “the aptly named Elmo, a character who has become so detached from reality that he constantly refers to himself in the third person, but whose overwhelming positivity and generosity of spirit is a beacon of hope to us all.”

Elmo has been hailed as a god by the emo community, boosting sales of Elmo t-shirts, masks, and of course, Elmo hand-puppets.

Elmo has responded to this surge of adoration in a typically chirpy fashion. In a recent interview on an American talk show, Elmo said, “Elmo doesn’t know who the emos are, but Elmo thinks they are great! Elmo encourages people to keep buying his merchandise!”

When asked if Elmo’s success has anything to do with his name sounding a bit like “emo,” a spokesperson for emos-r-us.com replied, “Don’t be so ridiculous.”

Other surprise hits on the emo scene are the music of Brian Eno, the novels of Elmore Leonard and the puppetry of Rod Hull and Emu.

YOUR MUSIC QUESTIONS ANSWERED!

Q. Who was the first rapper? Many people say it's Grandmaster Flash, but surely Gil Scott Heron qualifies as a significant precursor?

Samuel Noneman, Rome.

Samuel, you are wrong on both counts. The first ever rapper was the Romantic poet, William Wordsworth, whose rhythmic performance style is often lost on the printed page. He was also the first performance poet to begin his act with the expression, "Yo yo, word up."

*

Q. What is the biggest selling single of all time?

Carl Thrice, Penzance

In terms of record sales, Elton John's *Candle in the Wind*. If you take downloads into account, the biggest selling single of all time is Joe Dolce's *Shaddap You Face*.

*

Q. *Who is the world's most successful songwriter in the world?*

Larry Beagle, Japan.

The most successful songwriter of all time is a William Splodge, a reclusive French-Canadian, who has written songs under a variety of guises for almost ninety years, including a staggering three hundred and forty five number one singles. His impressive string of hits include all the songs usually attributed to Cole Porter, Lennon and McCartney and The Wombles. Splodge has described his song, *Remember You're a Womble* as his "greatest achievement."

FILMS

The following sequels are currently in production:

Kramer vs. Kramer 2:

Dustin Hoffman and Meryl Streep get divorced again.

Seven Brides For Seven Brothers 2:

Epic musical featuring seven divorces, seven remarriages, and fourteen funerals.

Walk The Line 2:

Biopic following the madcap adventures of Johnny's Cash's ghost.

*

In 1994, *Schindler's List* became the first film in history to be relinquished of all seven of its Oscars, following accusations of subliminal suggestions aimed at the awards judges. The leader of the campaign was the acclaimed media scholar, B.V. Finsbury, who stated, "It doesn't take a genius to work out what's going on here. The main character's name is Oskar! How much more obvious can you get? I was even affected by the film myself. I came out of

the cinema insisting that the film be given an Oscar – and I’m not even in the Academy!”

A sequel, entitled *Schindler’s Other List*, is currently in production.

*

Most Hollywood stars employ “ghost-writers” to produce their autobiographies. The same rule applies to actors who turn to directing. Every one of Robert Redford’s movies has been “ghost-directed” by a reclusive former screenwriter named Edwin Hargreaves. Although by all accounts the pair have a good working relationship, Hargreaves has been quoted off the record as saying, “Robert Redford couldn’t direct his own piss into a bucket.”

The most appropriate use of the term “ghost-directed” must apply to Clint Eastwood, who continued to be credited as director of several films, long after his death in 1987.

*

Remakes currently in production:

Psycho:

A frame-by-frame remake of the classic remake from 1998.

Carry On Camping:

American version starring Pamela Anderson as Barbara Windsor, Harvey Keitel as Sid James, and Jean-Claude Van Damme as Kenneth Williams.

The Great Escape:

Lighthearted romp set in Guantanamo Bay.

James Bond – Tomorrow Never Dies.

A spokesperson for the Bond society stated, “We realise we only made that one a few years ago, but we really haven’t had a better script since then. With any luck, it’ll be almost as good as the original.”

LANGUAGE

The latest edition of *Oxford Dictionary of English Idioms* includes the following new proverbs:

“You can teach a parrot to beatbox, but you can’t make it MC.”

“Never send a floppy to do a USB stick’s job.”

“A text in the hand is worth two in the inbox.”

More alarmingly, the expressions “Patience is a virtue” and “A stitch in time saves nine” are no longer part of the language, and it is therefore illegal to say them in public. Anyone caught uttering illegal proverbs will be arrested and sentenced to deportation.

*

In the Greek language there is no word for “spoon-bender”.

*

The English and Spanish languages are identical. The only difference is that every word is an anagram. It's basically one big "Brain Teaser" puzzle.

*

"Jesus lives" is an anagram of "Satan rocks."

"Sigmund Freud" is an anagram of "Schizoid freak."

"No it isn't" is an anagram of "Make you look though, didn't I?"

*

The most amusing word in the English dictionary is, ironically, "suicide".

*

The plural of lemon is "lemon" – not "lemons," as is commonly thought. Some might think this is not a particularly important distinction, but they are wrong.

*

Only forty-eight of the words in the original English dictionary were actually in use in the English language at the time. The rest were just made up, under deadline pressures, to fill space.

*

The worst translator of all time was Karl von Splice, whose German translations of American motion pictures of the 1970's were recently voted "the biggest inaccuracies in cinema history" by a panel of experts. Among his catalogue of disasters, the panel highlighted Splice's translation of the "mirror scene" from *Taxi Driver*:

"Are you wearing my shoes? ... Well, I don't see anyone else wearing shoes round here ... Whose shoes are you wearing?"

Splice's translation of *Jaws* is almost entirely nonsensical. The word "shark" is translated as "screwdriver" throughout, and the word "boat" is repeatedly translated as "xylophone," creating one of the most unfathomable lines in German cinema: "We're going to need a bigger xylophone."

FOLKLORE

In Scandinavia, toenail clippings are said to bring good luck when placed in a lover's handkerchief.

*

In Japan it is believed to be extremely good fortune to be hit and killed by a limo driver. The most extreme case of this having occurred was in 1997 when limo driver Ando Takamura successfully backed over himself in the hope of winning the weekly lottery. Sadly he was still a full five numbers short.

*

Until the 18th Century, castration was believed to be the only cure for measles.

*

Danish folklore has its own version of the Robin Hood myth, the title of which usually translates as "Ruben Hash and His Disgruntled Gathering." Like his English counterpart, Ruben Hash stole from the rich to give to the poor. He worked part time as a janitor, and was a master in martial arts. The Disgruntled Gathering was a loose collection of like-minded individuals,

known for their support of Ruben Hash's cause, as well as their prolonged bouts of depression.

SPORT

In the original game of snooker, all the balls on the table were black, including the cue ball. The colour system was introduced in order to make the game less confusing. Recently snooker purists have called for a return to the “all black” game, and hold their own “all black” tournaments, mainly attended by confused rugby fans.

*

Badminton was created in Holland in 1927 when a tennis ball got struck by lightning during a game between two friends. When the storm had died down, the players decided to resume their game, but having no other ball to play with, they were left with the curiously shaped remnants of their ball. They called this new ball “shuttle” because of its aerodynamic qualities, and “cock” because of its similarity to the male sex organ. They combined their names, “Bad” and “Minton” to give this new sport its name. The game was called “Mintonbad” for the first four years.

*

Table tennis was invented in Belgium by a civil servant named Mary Klass, who says she got the idea while watching a tennis match through the wrong end of a pair of binoculars.

This was also said to be the inspiration behind the game, *Sebbuteo*.

*

Snowball fighting has now been made an official event at the Winter Olympics.

*

During the 1930s gold shortage, tobacco products were awarded in the Olympics as a substitute for medals. The winners smoked their prizes on the podium accompanied by their country's national anthem. Gold medallists smoked cigars, silver smoked cigarettes, and bronze had to make do with chewing tobacco.

This is the origin of the expression "Close but no cigar."

CONSPIRACY THEORIES

Hitler is still alive, almost into his twelfth decade. He's been keeping a low profile, but friends at his Top Secret nursing home, say he's "Hanging on in there, waiting patiently for the Nazi Revolution so that he can die happy."

*

Although it is never mentioned in biographies, Winston Churchill only weighed seven and a half stones. He wore a "fat suit" in the belief that the extra girth gave him more authority. Early in his political career, he experimented with stuffing clothes up his jumper, but that just made him look pregnant. He later developed the highly sophisticated prosthetic we have come to recognise as "Churchill." Insiders have revealed that the man inside the suit is virtually unrecognizable – a fact that allowed Churchill to successfully fake his own death in 1965.

Churchill is still alive, and lives in the same nursing home as Hitler.

*

Christopher Columbus faked the American landing. The whole thing took place in a desert in Egypt.

*

NASA are currently in the final stages of faking a mission to Mars. An anonymous insider has revealed that they got the idea from the film, *Capricorn One*.

TRIVIA

The Amazon contains at least five lost tribes of television documentary crews, three of which were originally sent in to document the lives of the other two.

*

Tofu was invented during the Vietnam War to patch up wounded soldiers.

*

The main cause of obesity is taking deep breaths.

*

If you drink a mixture of Coca-Cola and Pepsi in the same glass, you will die.

*

Spontaneous human combustion is the commonest cause of death in Finland, where children as young as seven regularly burst into flames.

*

The oldest known victim of spontaneous human combustion is a Mr Graham Mullet of Birmingham, UK, who exploded at the age of one hundred and sixteen, destroying three whole aisles of the branch of Tesco he was shopping in at the time. The only groceries to survive the incident were three jars of pickled onions and a tin of “value” kidney beans. The beans were later purchased by SHCAS, the Spontaneous Human Combustion Awareness Society, and placed on display in their museum in Helsinki. SHCAS have refused to disclose exactly how much they paid for the tin, but a spokesperson for the society has been quoted as saying, “It wasn’t bloody “value,” I’ll tell you that much.”

*

Donner kebabs are so called because they are made from the flesh of organ donors.

*

Cyanide was one of the original ingredients in spaghetti bolognese. The dosage was not high enough to kill people, but it often made them violently ill. The recipe was changed in 1912 when an absent-minded Italian chef accidentally left out the cyanide from a pot of sauce he was preparing. To his delight, he found his customers came back for more the following night, as not only was his bolognese delicious, they didn’t vomit immediately afterwards.

*

Oranges are actually a really, really, really dark shade of yellow.

*

Energy saving light bulbs take more energy to change than standard ones.

*

The first ever abominable snowman sighting turned out, in fact, to be a snowman. Lance Klegger, the man who made the sighting, was quoted as saying, "Well it scared the living shit out of *me!*" Lance is most commonly attributed to suffering the first recorded case of the well-known illness "Frostophobia"; fear of particularly well made snowmen.

*

Umpteen is a real number. It traditionally falls between thirteen and fourteen, but has been out of use for many years due its incompatibility with the decimal system. In Roman Numerals, Umpteen was written XUM, and can still be seen inscribed in ancient architecture. The Romans created the extra number in order to emphasise the rapid period of physical growth, usually occurring in

adolescence between the ages of thirteen and fourteen. For men, umpteenth birthday celebrations were seen as “coming of age” celebrations, and during the ceremony the young man would be thrown into the air umpteen times, in an early version of “the bumps”.

Up until 1962, the umpteen times table was taught in schools, and pupils attending many of England’s more traditional boarding schools can still be heard chanting the refrain:

“One times umpteen is umpteen,

Two times umpteen is twenty six point five...”

And so on.

*

Squirrels don’t have knees.

GEOGRAPHY

The world's smallest river is situated on the end of a blade of grass in Inverness.

*

The world's smallest lake consists of a single molecule. It is located in a laboratory in Brussels.

*

As chaos theory has proven, tidal waves are caused by butterflies flapping their wings in Brazil. In an attempt to avert these natural disasters, the Brazilian government has ordered a mass culling of butterflies. Unfortunately, the culling has not yet gone according to plan. A spokesperson for the cull explains, "We originally tried shooting them out of the air, but they keep dodging the bullets. Then we tried pesticides. This worked for a while, but now the little buggers have built up immunity. You spray them with poisonous chemicals, and they don't bat an eyelid. They're getting bigger too. It's like *Attack of The Killer Butterflies*. Seriously. You couldn't make this stuff up!"

*

If you were to record every single episode of the TV series, *Casualty* on videocassette and unravel them all, you'd have enough tape to wrap around the world umpteen and a half times.

If every single shoebox in the world were to be flattened out at the same time, they would cover the entire surface of China seventeen times. (The Anti Recycling Society recently used this fact on the front of a piece of promotional literature, accompanied by the advice, "Never flatten a shoebox.")

If you were to collect together all the facts about things being laid end to end and wrapped around the world a certain number of times, and wrote them all out in one long, continuous sentence and then wrapped it around the world, you'd be defying the laws of physics.

YOUR GEOGRAPHY QUESTIONS ANSWERED!

What is the capital of Australia?

Leonard Helm, Belgium.

Sydney. A lot of people say Canberra, but they're wrong. It's a common misconception.

*

What is the world's tallest man-made structure?

Rebecca Lathe, Buckinghamshire.

Jim's house. Jim lives on the top of Everest. You can't get much taller than that.

*

What is the best country in the world?

Salvador Swayze, Czech Republic.

According to a recent survey, the world's favourite country is "Garth Brooks."
Apparently, not everyone understood the question.

STATISTICS

1 in 600 paper cuts end in fatality.

*

At least 46% of suicide bombings are misinterpreted cases of spontaneous human combustion.

*

20% of university lecturers are human clones.

*

When given the option in a survey, 38% of British people list “I don’t know” as their occupation.

*

One in three vegetarians are likely to resort to cannibalism by the age of forty-five.

*

One in ten newsagents contain a hidden bowel disruptor near the magazine stand to stop idle browsing, which is why if you flick through a magazine for more than five minutes you'll suddenly have the uncontrollable urge to use the lavatory.

*

If everyone in the world were to simultaneously join hands, 112,000 people would instantly contract swine flu.

*

One in thirty detectives accidentally take their own lives whilst attempting to demonstrate how a crime was committed.

*

On average, the Queen breaks wind 37 times a minute.

*

47% of murder victims have a west-country accent.

*

Hot pants are so called due to the added protection the thermal insulation provides against spontaneous human combustion. People who wear hot pants are 96% less likely to spontaneously combust than those who don't.

*

You are five times more likely to be killed in a dolphin attack than by sharks. The whole "swimming with dolphins being good for the soul" idea is a popular misconception. Dolphins hypnotise their victims with the aid of sonics, bringing about a momentary feeling of elation and inner peace. It is then that they move in for the kill.

"It was amazing! I truly felt at one with nature, without a single care in the world," said recent dolphin victim Helena Moonstruck. "It was then, of course, that I realised my leg was off."

*

Watching television increases your life expectancy. TV has often been presented as one of the principal causes of obesity and ill health, but according to a recent study by the University of Michigan, people who watch television live an average of thirty-seven years longer than people who don't.

In a statement, Professor James Nutkin said, “This makes absolutely no sense. If watching television turns out to be beneficial to a person’s health, that may well be the case for everything else we once considered “bad” for us – beer, cigarettes, saturated fat.” Professor Nutkin made this statement via email while bingeing at his local *Dunkin’ Doughnuts*.

The study made an assessment of the general health of the average television-watcher with the average non-television-watcher. For its television-watchers, the study used a sample of middle-class Americans. The samples from non-television-watchers came mainly from the deaf-blind community and the homeless.

QUOTATIONS

“I always make a point of owning up to a fart. I don’t leave things hanging in the air.”

Winston Churchill.

*

“Crime doesn’t pay. I can barely afford the maintenance costs on my enormous house.”

“Mad” Frankie Fraser.

*

“A gentleman who drinks port is like a man who eats asparagus: a complete tosspot.”

Oscar Wilde.

*

“Do you think the hat’s a bit much?”

Abraham Lincoln.

*

“What do you mean we don’t have a big red button? *America* has a big red button. I want a big red button.”

David Cameron.

*

“I want to be beaten to death by a cello. We all have to go sometime, so it seems foolish not to express a preference.”

Andre Previn.

*

“I suppose most of my academic work springs from the fact that I fancy my mum.”

Sigmund Freud.

*

“Sorry, I can’t think of anything funny to say this afternoon. Will you people leave me alone?”

Groucho Marx.

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