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FACTS

To Blow Your Socks Off

A QUITE INTERESTING BOOK

# 1,227 QI FACTS

## TO BLOW YOUR SOCKS OFF

Compiled by  
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& James Harkin

with the QI Elves  
Anne Miller, Andy Murray & Alex Bell



*faber and faber*

# Copyright

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# Introduction

*I am no poet but, if you think for yourselves as I proceed, the facts will form a poem in your mind.*

MICHAEL FARADAY (1791–1867)

Michael Faraday was one of the greatest scientists in history and the greatest experimentalist of them all. The son of a village blacksmith from a desolate part of Cumbria, he left school at 14 with only the most rudimentary education, and taught himself everything he knew by reading the books that passed through his hands during his seven-year apprenticeship to a London bookbinder.

At QI, we think a great deal of Michael Faraday, and we're not the only ones. Albert Einstein kept a picture of him on his study wall, alongside Isaac Newton and James Clerk Maxwell.

Like Faraday, we read a lot of books – on any and every conceivable subject, and the more madly random the better.

None of us claim to have an ounce of Faraday's genius, but all three of us, despite the fact that we each went to university (43, 31 and 16 years ago respectively), count ourselves as essentially self-educated.

We have achieved this together over the last ten years by applying the QI Research Method, which can be expressed in a single line. It is to 'read all of anything (even the footnotes) but *only* write down what you, personally, find interesting'. This not only reduces, by several orders of magnitude, the essentially infinite amount of available information in the universe, but it also has the delightful side effect that we really do 'learn something new every day'.

For instance, until 20 minutes ago, when we started writing this introduction, none of us knew that Michael Faraday (as in so many other ways) was more than 150 years ahead of us. For he did exactly the same thing as we now do: he read every book he came across, but only noted down what he found 'singular or clever'.

Core QI research always begins like this, in nuggets. Each bit is then added to our database, expressed in the clearest and sparest form that we can manage.

This simple way of distilling knowledge leaves behind a rich residue of

astonishment and delight, a small selection of which is before you.

Much of what we find lays bare, surprisingly often, what is *not* known, rather than what *is* known. Such information (or lack of it) can be returned to again and again without ever becoming dull. It bears thinking about, often. When Newton was asked how he had discovered the universal law of gravitation, he replied, 'By thinking on it continually.' Or, as another of our heroes, Ivan Petrovich Pavlov, put it: 'Do not become a mere recorder of facts, but try to penetrate the mystery of their origin.'

So here, in bite-sized pieces, nestling among the known and the numbered, are the mysteries of the enormous and the minuscule; of human comedy and tragedy; of heat, light, speed, life, art and thought.

As Faraday urged his students, we also try to think for ourselves. But more uncannily than that, coaxing these 1,227 items into an order that felt comfortable and right has had the strange result that they have indeed come to form a kind of poem in the mind.

We hope you enjoy reading them as much as we have enjoyed putting them together.

And, if you solve any of the mysteries, let us know.

JOHN LLOYD, JOHN MITCHINSON & JAMES HARKIN

*Everyone is entitled to their own opinions,  
but they are not entitled  
to their own facts.*

DANIEL PATRICK MOYNIHAN (1927–2003)





Asteroid  
1,227  
is called Geranium.

The ozone layer  
smells faintly of  
geraniums.

The centre of the galaxy  
tastes like  
raspberries.

The universe  
is shaped  
like a vuvuzela.



Light travels  
18 million times faster  
than rain.

The Queen is the legal owner  
of one-sixth of the  
Earth's land surface.

The name of the first human being  
in Norse mythology  
is Ask.

*Everybody* expected  
the Spanish Inquisition –  
they were legally obliged  
to give 30 days' notice.



Octopuses  
have three hearts.

Kangaroos  
have three vaginas.

Three of Fidel Castro's sons,  
Alexis, Alexander and Alejandro,  
are named  
after Alexander the Great.

The opening lines of  
Jerome K. Jerome's  
*Three Men In A Boat* are:  
'There were four of us.'



40% of the human race  
did not survive  
beyond its 1st birthday.

One in ten European babies  
is conceived  
in an IKEA bed.

The human heart  
pumps enough blood in a lifetime  
to fill three supertankers.

The word 'time'  
is the most commonly used  
noun in English.



10% of all the photographs  
in the world  
were taken in the last 12 months.

Between 1838 and 1960,  
more than half the photos taken  
were of babies.

The words written on  
Twitter every day  
would fill  
a 10-million-page book.

In 2008 a man in Ohio

In 2008, a man in Ohio  
was arrested for  
having sex with a picnic table.



The average person walks  
the equivalent of three times  
around the world  
in a lifetime.

The world's population spends  
500,000 hours a day  
typing Internet security codes.

The first book ever printed in Oxford  
had a misprint on the first page:  
they got the date wrong.

For 100 years, the flag of the  
tropical Turks and Caicos Islands  
in the West Indies  
mistakenly featured an igloo.



One third of Russians  
believe that  
the Sun revolves around the Earth.

46% of American adults

70% of American adults  
believe that the world  
is less than 10,000 years old.

46% of American adults  
can't read well enough to understand  
the label on their prescription medicine.

More than 50% of NASA employees  
are dyslexic,  
hired for their superior problem-solving  
and spatial-awareness skills.



Beyoncé Knowles  
is an 8th cousin, four times removed,  
of Gustav Mahler.

Shostakovich  
wrote his 8th Symphony  
in a henhouse.

Argentina  
is the 8th-largest country  
with the 8th-largest Jewish population.

8th January 1835  
is the only day in history  
that the USA had no national debt.



Italy's biggest business is the Mafia.  
It turns over \$178 billion a year  
and accounts for 7% of GDP.

George W. Bush and Saddam Hussein  
had their shoes hand-made  
by the same Italian cobbler.

The designer of Saddam's bunker  
was the grandson of the woman  
who built Hitler's bunker.

Churchill's secret bunker  
was in Neasden.  
It was so horrible  
he only went there once.



In his first year at Harrow,  
Winston Churchill was bottom  
of the whole school.

The Irish poet Brendan Behan  
became an alcoholic  
at the age of eight.

Leonardo da Vinci

worked on the *Mona Lisa* for 15 years.  
By the time he died in 1519,  
he still didn't consider it finished.

When the *Mona Lisa* was stolen  
from the Louvre in 1911,  
one of the suspects was Picasso.



Most diamonds are  
at least 3 billion years old.

There are enough  
diamonds in existence  
to give everyone on the planet  
a cupful.

A burning candle creates  
1.5 million tiny diamonds  
per second.

Under extreme high pressure,  
diamonds can be made  
from peanut butter.



The US tax code  
is four times as long

as the complete works of Shakespeare.

Shakespeare, Sir Walter Raleigh  
and King Charles I  
all had pierced ears.

An 'earworm' is a song  
that gets stuck in your head.

Over 100 billion neutrinos  
pass unnoticed through your head  
every second.



IKEA  
is the world's 3rd-largest user  
of wood and sells 2 billion  
Swedish meatballs a year.

In Afghanistan and Iraq  
it takes 250,000 bullets  
(three tons of ammunition)  
to kill each insurgent.

More Falklands veterans  
have committed suicide  
since the war  
than were killed during it.

A language  
dies every 14 days



...every 14 days.



The world's largest pearl  
weighs 14 pounds.

On average, American doctors  
interrupt their patients  
within 14 seconds.

There are over 14 billion light bulbs  
in the world  
but fewer than 14 million Jews.

People earning over £14,000 a year  
are the richest 4%  
on the planet.



There are eight times as many atoms  
in a teaspoonful of water  
as there are teaspoonfuls of water  
in the Atlantic.

There are more living organisms  
in a teaspoonful of soil  
than there are people on Earth,  
and a billion times more in a tonne  
than there are stars

than there are stars  
in the Milky Way.

Charles Darwin  
calculated that English soil contained  
50,000 worms an acre.

In 1999, Darlington FC acquired  
50,000 worms to irrigate their  
waterlogged pitch.  
They all drowned.



Three and a half Olympic swimming pools  
could hold all the gold  
ever mined in the world.

In 2011, Birds Eye sold  
225 billion frozen peas:  
enough to fill  
40 Olympic swimming pools.

If all the Birds Eye waffles  
sold in a year were stacked up,  
they would be 474 times higher  
than Mount Everest.

Edmund Hillary, the first man to climb  
Everest, was a professional beekeeper.  
When filling in forms,  
he always gave his occupation as  
'apiarist'.



The 10,000 trillion ants in the world  
weigh about the same as  
all the human beings.

If the 5 trillion spiders  
in the Netherlands took to eating  
humans rather than insects,  
they'd consume all 16.7 million  
Dutch people in just three days.

Alfred Kinsey, author of  
*Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male* (1948),  
had a collection of 5 million wasps  
and could insert a toothbrush  
into his penis, bristle-end first.

Biologically speaking,  
'bugs' are insects that suck.



Biologists cannot agree  
on definitions for the words  
'species', 'organism' or 'life'.

Behavioural biologists  
do not agree on what constitutes

‘behaviour’.

Psychologists  
cannot agree on  
what ‘personality’ means.

Anthropologists cannot agree  
on the meaning of the word  
‘culture’  
or on the meaning of the word  
‘meaning’.



*Abulia* n.  
The inability  
to make decisions.

*Astasia* n.  
The inability  
to stand up.

*Aprosexia* n.  
The inability  
to concentrate on anything.

*Apodysoiphilia* n.  
A feverish desire  
to rip one’s clothes off.



If all the Lego bricks ever manufactured  
were clipped on top of each other,  
they would make a tower ten times as high  
as the distance to the Moon.

Liechtenstein,  
the world's 6th-smallest country,  
is the world's largest exporter of  
false teeth.

In the 19th and early 20th centuries,  
having all your teeth removed  
and replaced with false ones  
was a popular  
21st-birthday present.

The road signs  
of the Austrian village of Fucking  
are set in concrete  
to deter thieves.



London,  
with a population of over 8,000,000,  
is not a city,  
though the City of London,  
with a population of about 7,000,  
is.

According to the Forestry Commission,  
London is  
‘the largest urban forest in the world’.

In 1894, *The Times* estimated that by 1950  
London would be nine feet deep  
in horse manure.

The Roman name for Paris was  
*Lutetia*,  
which translates into English  
as ‘Slough’.



In 1811, nearly a quarter  
of all the women in Britain  
were named Mary.

In 1881, there were only six men  
in Britain  
called Derek.

Only 4 Clives, 13 Trevors and 15 Keiths  
were born in the UK  
in 2011.

Naughty racehorse names  
that managed to escape  
the Jockey Club censor include

*Hoof Hearted, Peony's Envy,  
Wear The Fox Hat and Sofa Can Fast.*



In 2012,  
the Advertising Standards Authority  
ordered a Northampton-based  
furniture store to stop  
advertising its prices  
as 'Sofa King Low'.

Caterpillars make no noises  
other than chewing –  
though *Phengaris rebeli*  
strums its bottom like a guitar.

Every year,  
Peruvians eat more than  
60 million guinea pigs.

In Switzerland,  
it is illegal to keep  
just one guinea pig.



98% of British homes  
have carpeted floors.  
In Italy, only 2% do.

In Japan only 2% of adoptions are  
of children;  
98% are adult males  
aged 25 to 30.

It's unsafe for travellers to rely on  
'St Christopher' any more:  
he lost his sainthood  
in 1969.

10% of US electricity  
is made from  
dismantled Soviet atomic bombs.



Until 1913, children in America  
could legally be sent  
by parcel post.

There are 5.9 calories  
in the glue of a  
British postage stamp.

All the batteries on Earth store  
just ten minutes  
of the world's electricity needs.

Ancient Greek democracy  
lasted for only  
125 years



100 years.



The ancient Greeks  
had no word for religion.

China  
is the world's largest supplier of Bibles:  
one factory in Nanjing prints  
a million a month.

The dialling code for Russia  
is 007.

Collectively speaking, humans have spent  
longer playing *World of Warcraft*  
than they have existed  
as a species separate from chimpanzees  
(5.93 million years).



*Charette* n.  
An intense flurry of activity  
to finish something  
by a deadline.

*Muntin* n.  
The thin strip of wood or metal that  
divides the panes of glass in a window

divides the panes of glass in a window.

*Nikhedonia* (n.)

The pleasurable anticipation of success  
before any actual work  
has been done.

*Smout* (n.)

A small, unimportant  
Scottish person.



John Cleese's father's surname  
was Cheese.

Cleese grew up ten miles from Cheddar  
and his best friend at school  
was called Barney Butter.

Digestive biscuits  
have no particular digestive qualities.  
In the USA it is illegal to sell them  
under that name.

In 2010, the BBC spent  
nearly £230,000 on tea,  
but only £2,000 on biscuits.

Caffeine is made of  
carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen and oxygen:  
the same as cocaine, thalidomide,  
nylon, TNT and heroin.



The same man  
invented heroin and aspirin  
in the same year:  
Felix Hoffman, 1897.

Heroin  
was originally marketed  
as cough medicine.

Worldwide sales of cocaine  
earn more than  
Microsoft, McDonald's and Kellogg's  
combined.

More than 7,000 Americans die each year  
and 1,500,000 are injured  
as a result of doctors'  
bad handwriting.



Fewer than 5%  
of blind or visually impaired people  
in the UK  
can read Braille.

Attempting to swim the Channel

from France has been illegal  
for 19 years.

The water-flow of the Ganges  
is a state secret in India.

In 2012, Apple Inc.  
had more cash  
in the bank  
than the US government.



In 2012, 20% of the world's  
top 20 snooker players  
were colour-blind.

If you scaled a snooker ball up to  
the size of the Earth,  
it would have mountains  
three times higher  
than anything on the planet.

In 1903, its first year of trading,  
Gillette sold just  
168 razor blades.

The first advertising jingles  
were written down in newspapers;  
readers were expected  
to sing them themselves.



There are more than three times  
as many PR people in America  
as there are journalists.

The Nazis made it illegal  
on pain of death  
for apes to give  
the 'Heil Hitler' salute.

All but one of the ravens  
at the Tower of London  
died from stress during the Blitz.

British spies  
stopped using semen as invisible ink  
because it began to smell  
if it wasn't fresh.



Because Tonto means 'stupid' in Spanish,  
when *The Lone Ranger* was shown in  
Latin America, he was called Toro, 'bull'.

Florence Green,  
the last veteran of the First World War,  
died in February 2012. Asked what it was  
like to be 110, she replied,  
'Not much different to being 109.'

...from which to bring you.

On her 120th birthday,  
Jeanne Calment (1875–1997)  
the oldest person ever recorded,  
said, ‘I only have one wrinkle and  
I’m sitting on it.’

The UK retail industry  
makes £250 million a year  
from gift cards that no one redeems.



In the 12th century,  
the Danish army consisted of seven men.

In the 17th century,  
the salary of the Governor of Barbados  
was paid in sugar.

In the 18th century,  
the French navy buried their dead  
in the ship’s hold.

In the 19th century,  
tobacco was used for ‘rectal inflation’:  
blowing smoke up the anus  
to resuscitate the drowned.



Cardiff  
has more hours of sunlight  
than Milan.

Glasgow  
is twinned with  
Nuremberg, Bethlehem and Havana.

Toasters  
were banned in Havana  
until 2008.

The Dyslexia Research Centre  
is in Reading.



The technology behind smartphones  
relies on up to  
250,000 separate patents.

The human brain  
takes in 11 million bits of  
information every second,  
but is only aware of 40.

The water in a blue whale's mouth  
weighs as much as its entire body.

The ancient Romans  
discovered parrots could speak and  
taught them to say 'Hail Caesar'.  
When they got bored with this,  
they took to eating them instead.



The United States of America  
maintains a military presence in  
148 of the 192 United Nations countries.

On average, every square mile  
of sea on the planet  
contains 46,000 pieces of rubbish.

In 1251, Henry III was given  
a polar bear by the king of Norway.  
He kept it in the Tower of London,  
on a long chain so that it could  
swim in the Thames.

The tadpoles of the South American  
paradoxical frog  
are larger than the frog itself.



Historical Catholic clergy include:



Bishop Boil, Bishop Boom,  
Bishop Broccoli, Bishop Bolognese,  
Bishop Busti, Bishop Butt  
and Bishop Bishop.

*Kuku kaki kakak kakak ku kayak kuku kaki  
kakek kakek ku*  
is an Indonesian tongue-twister meaning  
'My sister's toenails  
look like my grandfather's'.

In the 2009 Formula One season,  
12% of Grand Prix drivers  
were called Sebastian.

People in Victorian Britain  
who couldn't afford chimney sweeps  
dropped live geese  
down their chimneys instead.



You are three times more likely  
to die in a plane crash  
than you are to be eaten  
by a mountain lion.

Gerbils can smell adrenaline  
and are installed in airport security areas  
to detect terrorists.

If you drilled a tunnel

straight through the Earth and jumped in,  
it would take you exactly  
42 minutes and 12 seconds  
to get to the other side.

A medium-sized cumulus cloud  
weighs about the same  
as 80 elephants.



Fred Baur (1918–2002),  
the designer of the Pringles can,  
had his ashes buried in one.

*Fred* is Swedish for ‘peace’.

Nobles present at the 18th-century  
battle of Bravalla between  
Sweden and Denmark included  
Hothbrodd the Furious,  
Thorulf the Thick, Birvil the Pale,  
Roldar Toe-Joint, Vati the Doubter,  
Od the Englishman, Alf the Proud and  
Frosti Bowl.

The Queen of England  
is related to  
Vlad the Impaler.



When customers visited  
the first supermarkets in the UK,  
they were afraid to pick up  
goods from the shelves  
in case they were told off.

Women buy 80%  
of everything  
that is for sale.

Between 1928 and 1948,  
12 Olympic medals were awarded  
for Town Planning.

On a clear, moonless night  
the human eye can detect  
a match being struck  
50 miles away.



In the US between 1983 and 2000,  
there were 568 plane crashes.  
51,207 of the 53,487  
people aboard  
got out alive:  
a survival rate of 96%.

Harry Houdini could  
pick up pins with his eyelashes  
and thread a needle

... 1 ...

with his toes.

The Sami people of northern Finland use  
a measure called *Poronkusema*:  
the distance a reindeer can walk  
before needing to urinate.

The Inca measurement of time  
was based on  
how long it took to boil a potato.



Potatoes were illegal in France  
between 1748 and 1772.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834)  
liked to eat fruit while  
it was still attached to the tree.

Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree,  
the great Victorian actor-manager, once  
hailed a taxi and got in. Absorbed in his  
work, he sat silently reading in the back.  
When the cabbie eventually asked,  
‘Where to, guv?’ Sir Herbert spluttered,  
‘Do you really think I would give  
my address to the likes of you?’

On average, most people  
have fewer friends  
than their friends have.  
This is known as the ‘friendshin naradox’

THIS IS KNOWN AS THE FRIENDSHIP PARADOX.



*Blissom* vb

To bleat with sexual desire.

*Eye-servant* n.

One who only works  
when the boss is watching.

*Hemipygic* adj.

Having only one buttock;  
half-arsed.

*Marmalise* vb

To give someone  
a thrashing.



The modern world's  
first international sporting fixture  
was a cricket match played in 1844  
between Canada and the USA.  
Canada won by 23 runs.

Baseball – the name and the game – was  
invented in England in the 1750s.

Baseball legend Babe Ruth  
always wore a cabbage leaf under his cap  
to keep his head cool. In South Korea,  
this is considered unsporting,  
unless the player has a doctor's note.

'Soccer' is not an Americanism.  
It's short for 'Association Football'  
and was popularised by  
Charles Wreford-Brown, captain  
of the English national team 1894–5.



James Naismith, a Canadian,  
invented basketball in Massachusetts  
in 1891. It was 21 years  
before it occurred to anyone  
to cut a hole in the bottom of the basket.

Captain John Smith  
of Pocahontas fame  
was the first man  
to use the word  
'awning'.

Aerosmith have made more money  
from *Guitar Hero*  
than from any of their albums.

When Matt Smith became  
the 11th Doctor Who in 2010,  
UK bow-tie sales doubled in a month.



98% of the 7 billion billion billion  
atoms in the human body  
are replaced every year.

Mongolia's largest airport  
is named after Genghis Khan.  
He had over 500 wives  
and a vast number of children:  
1 in 10 people in Central Asia today  
are his direct descendants.

*Anophthalmus hitleri* is a blind beetle found  
only in five caves in Slovenia.  
Named after Hitler in 1933,  
it is now endangered due to  
collectors of Nazi memorabilia.

Hitler's home phone number  
was listed in *Who's Who* until 1945.  
It was Berlin 11 6191.



At least 99%  
of all the species that ever existed  
have left no trace in the fossil record.

No scientific experiment  
has ever been done  
(or could be done)  
to prove that time exists.

If you could fold  
a piece of paper 51 times,  
its thickness would exceed  
the distance from here to the Sun.

Charles Blondin crossed Niagara Falls  
several times on a 1,000-foot tightrope:  
blindfolded, in a sack, on stilts,  
carrying a man on his back  
and cooking an omelette in the middle.



Michael J. Fox's  
middle name is  
Andrew.

Emile Heskey's  
middle name is  
Ivanhoe.

David Frost's  
middle name is  
Paradine.

Richard Gere's  
middle name is



1 in 1000.



1 in 50 Americans  
executed for murder  
had the middle name 'Wayne'.

1 in 50 Scots  
are heroin addicts.

1 in 50 Americans  
claim to have been abducted  
by aliens.

1 in 50 words  
in the lyrics of the winning entries of  
the Eurovision Song Contest  
is 'love'.



More people go to church  
on Sunday in China  
than in the whole of Europe.

The lead singer of Iron Maiden  
has a day job as a  
Boeing 757 pilot.

A greetings card  
that can play 'Happy Birthday'  
has more computing power  
than existed in the whole world in 1950.

You are 14% more likely to die  
on your birthday  
than any other day.



Oranges and lemons smell different  
due to chemically identical molecules  
that are mirror images of each other.  
An orange is really  
just a left-handed lemon.

Moon dust  
smells like gunpowder.

A typical microwave oven  
uses more electricity  
keeping its digital clock on standby  
than it does heating food.

As it grows,  
sweetcorn makes a squeaking noise  
like two balloons  
rubbing against each other.



Emissions from car exhausts  
are responsible for  
more deaths every year  
than road accidents.

You can legally buy cannabis  
in the US, but only as birdseed:  
the feathers of birds that eat it  
acquire a particularly  
glossy sheen.

Fidel Castro  
estimated that he saved  
ten working days a year  
by not bothering to shave.

Wild Bill Hickok's brother Lorenzo  
was nicknamed  
'Tame Bill Hickok'.



From 1912 to 1948,  
painting was an Olympic event.  
In 1924, Jack Yeats,  
brother of the poet W. B. Yeats,  
took the silver:  
Ireland's first-ever Olympic medal.

William Blake's one-man exhibition  
of paintings in 1809  
received only one review.  
The critic described him as a lunatic.

In 1891, Claude Monet won 100,000 francs  
in the French national lottery.

Pigeons can tell the difference between  
impressionist paintings by Monet  
and cubist works by Picasso.  
They can even tell when  
the Monets are hung upside down.



There are no cubes in Cubism.  
Cézanne's theory was that everything  
could be broken down into  
cylinders, spheres and cones.

Tour de France riders  
need to eat the equivalent of  
27 cheeseburgers a day.

Lightning strikes the Earth  
8.6 million times a day or  
about 100 times a second.

A single bolt of lightning  
contains enough energy  
to cook  
100,000 steaks at once.

100,000 pieces of toast.



Bovril  
was originally called  
'Johnston's Fluid Beef'.

Hovis  
was originally called  
'Smith's Patent Germ Bread'.

7-Up  
was originally called  
'Bib-Label Lithiated Lemon-Lime Soda'.

The Bank of America  
was originally called  
the Bank of Italy.



Reducing the voting age to 18,  
the introduction of 24-hour licensing  
and passports for pets  
were all policies initiated by  
the Official Monster Raving Loony Party.

The smallest known dinosaur  
was about four inches tall  
.....

and weighed less than  
a chihuahua.

Each year, drug baron Pablo Escobar  
had to write off 10% of his cash holdings  
because of rats nibbling away  
at his huge stash of bank notes.

The first-ever edition of the *Daily Mirror*  
came with a free mirror.



After two weeks of wear  
a pair of jeans will have grown  
a 1,000-strong colony  
of bacteria on the front,  
1,500–2,500 on the back  
and 10,000 on the crotch.

If all the salt in the sea  
were spread evenly over the land,  
it would be 500 feet thick.

The eruption of Krakatoa in 1883  
was the loudest sound in recorded history.  
It was heard 3,000 miles away  
in Mauritius.

Summer on Neptune lasts for 40 years,  
but the temperature is minus 200°C.



Summer nights in the Faroe Islands  
are so well illuminated that  
between May and July  
the lighthouses are turned off.

In the 1st century ad most ships  
in the northern hemisphere only sailed  
between May and September.

William Carstares (1649–1715)  
was the last man in Britain  
to be given the thumbscrew.  
As torture was illegal in England,  
he had to be taken to Edinburgh.

Mussolini tortured his enemies  
by forcing them to swallow  
massive doses of castor oil.



The second-largest lake in Bolivia  
is called Lake Poopó.  
It's not a freshwater lake.

The whole of Shakespeare  
contains only about 20,000  
different words –  
less than half the vocabulary of the

...than the vocabulary of the  
average English speaker today.

The whole of Liechtenstein  
can be rented for \$70,000 a night,  
for a minimum of two nights.  
It sleeps 900.

St Vitus  
is the patron saint of oversleeping.



The International Space Station  
is as roomy as a five-bedroom house  
and travels at 17,500 mph.

A marshmallow travelling at sea level  
would not begin to melt  
from friction caused by air resistance  
until it reached Mach 1.6  
(1,218 mph).

When a medium in a trance  
offered to answer any question,  
Groucho Marx asked,  
‘What’s the capital of North Dakota?’

The popular Los Angeles beverage  
Original New York Express Iced Coffee  
is made in a factory in Singapore.





Cameroon is home to the Eton tribe.  
The Eton word for 'thank you' is  
*abumgang*.

Arabic words are written right to left, but  
Arabic numbers left to right.  
Arabic speakers reading anything  
with a lot of numbers in  
have to read in both directions  
at once.

In 2010, the Catholic Church had an  
income of \$97 billion.

*Trombone*  
is French for  
'paperclip'.



The word 'gas' was invented by  
the Flemish chemist  
Jan Baptist van Helmont (1579–1644).  
He also invented the word *blas*  
but it didn't catch on.

The word 'gasoline'  
doesn't come from 'gas'. It comes from  
Cazeline – after John Cassell.

founder of the publisher Cassell & Co.,  
who was the first to sell it commercially.

Peter Mark Roget (1779–1869)  
invented the thesaurus  
and the slide rule.

Edwin Beard Budding (1775–1846)  
invented the lawnmower  
and the adjustable spanner.



In 1928, the Solomon Islands pidgin  
for ‘adjustable spanner’ was  
*spanner he go walkabout*  
and a ‘saw’ was  
*this fella pull-him-he-come-push-him-he-go*  
*brother belong axe.*

The Zulu for ‘Jack-in-a-Box’ is  
*udoli ohlala ebokisini ukuthi ufuna*  
*ukusabisa abantu abaningi.*

The Malay for ‘slate’ is  
*sejenis batu berwarna kelabu*  
*kebiru-biruan yang selalu digunakan*  
*sebagai atap ruman.*

*Wanklank*  
is Dutch for  
a discordant noise.



In 2010,  
Ghana banned  
the sale of second-hand underpants.

No one has ever seen an atom.  
They're too small to be seen  
by a microscope and can't be counted  
or weighed individually.

Plato thought  
that the smallest particles of matter  
were tiny right-angled triangles.

Since at least the time of Pythagoras in  
500 BC, no sensible educated person  
has believed the Earth  
was flat.



A snowflake that falls  
on a glacier in central Greenland  
can take 200,000 years  
to reach the sea.

The King James Bible  
has inspired the lyrics

of more pop songs  
than any other book.

In 2001,  
the *World Christian Encyclopaedia*  
counted 33,830 different  
Christian denominations.

Jehovah's Witnesses do not celebrate  
Easter, Christmas or birthdays.



For 48 years  
after tinned food was invented,  
people who wanted to eat it  
had to use a hammer and chisel.  
The can opener wasn't invented  
until 1858.

The screwdriver was invented  
a hundred years before the screw.  
It was originally used  
to extract nails.

'Marking' was invented  
at Cambridge University in 1792  
by a chemistry tutor  
called William Farish.

Margaret Thatcher  
was part of the team that invented  
the first...

Mr Whippy ice cream.



A single sperm contains 37.5 mb  
of DNA information.  
One ejaculation represents a data transfer  
of 15,875 gb,  
equivalent to the combined capacity  
of 62 MacBook Pro laptops.

70% of all animals in the jungle  
rely on figs for their survival.

In Antigua,  
'fig' means banana.

Linnaeus named the banana  
*Musa paradisiaca* because he thought it  
might have been the forbidden fruit  
of the Garden of Eden.



The citizens of Kuwait  
celebrated the end of the first Gulf War  
by firing weapons into the air.  
20 Kuwaitis died as a result of bullets  
falling from the sky.

The main predators of flamingos  
are zookeepers.

At the outbreak of the Second World War,  
zookeepers killed all the poisonous  
insects and snakes in London Zoo,  
in case it was bombed  
and they escaped.

The boa constrictor  
is the only living animal  
whose common name is  
exactly the same  
as its scientific name.



In the 318 years between 1539 and 1857,  
there were only 317 divorces  
in England.

At the 1900 Paris Olympics,  
events included Live Pigeon Shooting  
and Long Jump for Horses.

Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act,  
it is explicitly illegal in Britain  
to use a machine gun  
to kill a hedgehog.

In ancient Greek  
the word 'idiot' meant  
anyone who wasn't a politician

any one who wasn't a politician.



The Icelandic phone book  
is ordered by  
first name.

The human eye  
can detect 10 million  
different shades of colour.

Wombats  
have cubic faeces.

Harvard University  
has the largest ant collection  
in the world.



It takes a photon 40,000  
years to get from the centre of the Sun  
to its surface, but only 8.3 minutes  
to get from there to the Earth.

For water to flow 100 metres  
through the ground down a 1° slope takes  
5 days through gravel,  
13.7 years through sand and  
137 000 years through clay

10,000 years through clay.

In 1969,  
*Apollo 11* returned from the Moon  
in half the time it took to get from  
Boston to New York by stagecoach  
in 1769.

New York City drifts about one inch away  
from Europe every year.



Between 1960 and 1977, the secret number  
authorising US presidents  
to launch nuclear missiles was  
00000000.

Jimmy Carter once  
sent a jacket to the dry-cleaner's  
with the nuclear detonation codes  
still in the pocket.

Worried about his grades at law school,  
Richard Nixon broke into the Dean's  
office – only to discover that he was  
top of his class.

The highest scoring word in Scrabble  
is *oxyphenbutazone*, potentially earning  
1,178 points.  
(It's a drug used to treat arthritis.)





A coal-fired power station  
puts 100 times more radiation into the air  
than a nuclear power plant  
producing the same amount of energy.

Treasure Island in Lake Mindemoya  
on Manitoulin Island in Lake Huron  
is the largest island in a lake on an island  
in a lake in the world.

The strongest creatures on Earth are  
gonorrhoea bacteria.  
They can pull 100,000 times  
their own body weight.

A dog has the same ecological footprint as  
two Toyota Landcruisers;  
a cat the same environmental effect as a  
Volkswagen Golf;  
two hamsters the same as a plasma TV.



Humans  
have the same number  
of hair follicles  
as chimpanzees.

Gorillas and notatoes

Ornithomimus and people  
have two more chromosomes  
than people.

The average person who lives to be 75  
will have spent six years  
dreaming.

The word *ambisinistrous* is the  
opposite of ambidextrous;  
it means  
'no good with either hand'.



James Garfield,  
20th president of the USA,  
could write Greek with one hand  
while writing Latin with the other.

Young Neanderthal girls  
had bigger biceps  
than an adult male human.

The second man to go over  
Niagara Falls in a barrel,  
Bobby Leach, survived the fall  
but later died as a result of  
slipping on a piece  
of orange peel.

An orange is a berry but  
a strawberry isn't.



Vatican City has  
the highest crime rate in the world.  
Though the resident population  
is only just over 800,  
more than 600 crimes  
are committed there each year.

90% of the crime  
in Helmand province  
is committed  
by the Afghan police.

50% more US soldiers committed suicide  
in Afghanistan in 2012  
than were killed in action.

In 117 AD, Emperor Hadrian declared  
attempted suicide by soldiers  
a form of desertion  
and made it a capital offence.



Jack Bauer,  
the lead character in the TV series 24,  
killed 112 people  
in the first five seasons of the show.

The longest hangover  
in medical literature  
lasted four weeks.  
It belonged to a 37-year-old man  
from Glasgow.

In 1715, a group of Jacobite rebels  
failed to take Edinburgh Castle  
because their rope ladders  
were six feet too short.

The first manager  
of the first McDonald's franchise  
was called Ed MacLuckie.



Coca-Cola in the Maldives  
is made from seawater.

A 'riot' in England and Wales  
must legally involve  
a minimum of 12 people.  
Under US federal law  
it's only three people  
and in Nevada  
only two.

More than 1 in 20 football injuries  
are caused by  
celebrating goals on the pitch.

Slavery was not made  
a statutory offence in the UK  
until 6th April 2010.



Diagnosed with pleurisy,  
Sir Robert Chesebrough, the inventor of  
Vaseline, decided to coat himself  
in his product from head to foot.  
He survived and lived to be 96.

In 1915, Charlie Chaplin entered  
a Charlie Chaplin lookalike contest  
in San Francisco. Not only did he not win,  
he failed even to make the final.

Male fruit flies rejected by females  
drink significantly more alcohol than  
those that have had a successful encounter.

In Inuktitut,  
*iminngernaveersaartunngortussaavunga*  
means  
'I should try not to become an alcoholic'.



2,520 is the smallest number

that can be exactly divided  
by all the numbers  
1 to 10.

2.5 million Mills & Boon novels  
were pulped and added to the tarmac  
of the UK's M6 toll motorway  
to make it more absorbent.

In 1999, more than 3,000 people  
were hospitalised after  
tripping over a  
laundry basket.

In 1997, 39 people in the UK  
found themselves in  
hospital with  
tea-cosy-related  
injuries.



*Deipnophobia* n.  
The fear of  
dinner party conversations.

*Nomophobia* n.  
The fear of being  
out of mobile phone contact.

*Metrophobia* n.  
Fear of poetry.

*Lachanophobia* n.  
Fear of vegetables.



Since 1990, the number of people  
living in poverty in China  
has fallen from  
85% to 15%.

A 'knot' is something  
tied in a single piece of rope or line.  
Something that joins two ropes  
together is a 'bend'.

A baby oyster  
is called a 'spat'.

More chimpanzees, gorillas and bonobos  
are eaten by people every year  
than there are in  
all the zoos in the world.



In the 19th century,  
sausages were marketed as  
'bags of mystery'.

If a vampire were to feed once a day  
and turn each of his victims  
into a vampire,  
the entire human population of the planet  
would become vampires  
in just over a month.

Relative to our galaxy,  
the Earth is travelling through space  
at more than 500,000 mph.

The Sun takes 220 million years  
to orbit the galaxy,  
a journey it has made  
20 times so far.



*Abbey-lubber* n.  
A lazy monk.

*Acrochordon* n.  
A wart that hangs down  
like a string.

*Apport* n.  
Something that appears out of thin air:  
the opposite of a vanishing.

*Autotelic* adj.  
Worth doing for its own sake.





Although Shakespeare's works run to  
more than a million words,  
only 14 exist in his own handwriting:  
12 of them are his signatures  
and the other two are 'by' and 'me'.

George W. Bush named  
*The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle  
as his favourite childhood book. It was  
published when he was 23 years old.

In 2012, Britain's Eurovision entrant,  
Englebert Humperdinck (76), was  
not only the oldest of the contestants,  
he was older than more than 20  
of the countries they represented.

Swans do not sing (before dying or  
otherwise), although one species, the  
Whistling Swan, whistles a bit.



There are ten times as many stars  
in the known universe  
as there are  
grains of sand in the world.

The ties bought in America

for Father's Day each year  
would stretch from New York to Rome.

There are thought to be 100,000  
uncharted mountains under the sea.  
Only 1,000 or so have ever been mapped.

Aborigines, whose culture reaches back  
to the last Ice Age, have names for  
(and can locate) mountains  
that have been under the sea  
for 8,000 years.



Just like humans,  
British cows moo in accents  
specific to their region.

95% of all data in the world  
is still stored on paper.  
Most of it is never looked at again.

The common shrew  
protects itself from predators  
by dying of fright.

The next person to walk on the Moon  
will almost certainly be  
Chinese.



Almost half of all babies in China  
are born by Caesarean section.

The half a million tonnes of chocolate  
eaten each year in Britain  
represent 87% of the entire  
annual cocoa production  
of Latin America.

A single zinc mine in Namibia  
uses a fifth of the country's  
electricity supply.

Per gram per second, more energy  
runs through a sunflower  
than through the Sun itself.



It takes ten times  
as much energy to heat water  
as it does to heat iron.

It takes ten times  
as much energy to turn water into steam  
as it does to bring it to the boil.

It takes an hour

to soft-boil an ostrich egg  
and an hour and a half  
to hard-boil one.

It takes between 70,000 and 150,000  
crocuses to make  
a kilo of saffron.



Alexander the Great  
washed his hair in saffron  
to keep it shiny and orange.

In 1999, a four-year-old girl  
turned yellow  
after drinking too much  
Sunny Delight.

Russian has no word for 'blue',  
only two different words for  
'light blue' and 'dark blue'.

Andy Warhol always wore  
green underpants.



25 million Bibles were printed in 2011,  
compared to 208 million IKEA catalogues.

The English version of Wikipedia  
has 50 times more words than  
the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

Up to 2010, Wikipedia had taken  
100 million person-hours to write:  
about the same amount of time  
that the population of the USA  
spends watching TV ad breaks  
in a single weekend.

There is more information  
in one edition of the *New York Times* than  
the average person  
in 17th-century England  
would have come across in a lifetime.



When Einstein published his  
Theory of General Relativity,  
the *New York Times* sent their  
golfing correspondent  
to interview him.

The historic news of the  
first manned powered flight  
by the Wright Brothers  
first appeared in the magazine  
*Gleanings in Bee Culture*.

*Dune*, by Frank Herbert, the world's best-selling science fiction novel, was rejected over 20 times before being accepted by a publisher of car manuals.

Ernest Hemingway bought the shotgun that he used to kill himself at Abercrombie & Fitch.



Leonardo da Vinci was the first person to observe the curvature of the human spine. Until then everyone had assumed that it was straight.

*Rosa whitfield* is a rose named after actress June Whitfield. As she pointed out, 'The catalogue describes it as "superb for bedding, best up against a wall".'

Someone who is *cock-throppled* has an extremely prominent Adam's apple.

The symbols used by !\$%@ing cartoonists to indicate swearing are called *grawlaxes*.



Jeremy Bentham's body  
has been dressed  
in moth-resistant underwear  
since 1939.

When Jeremy Paxman  
was at Cambridge, he failed  
to get into his college's  
*University Challenge* team.

Before Jeremy Clarkson  
became a journalist,  
he sold Paddington Bears  
for a living.

Jeremy Kyle's father  
was the Queen Mother's  
accountant and personal secretary.



A *babalevante*  
is someone who makes  
feeble jokes.

*Babeship*  
is another word for  
infancy.

*Borborygmi*  
are stomach rumbles.

*Buggerare*  
is Italian for  
'to cheat' or 'swindle'.



If you have a pizza  
with radius  $z$  and thickness  $a$ ,  
its volume is  $\pi z^2 a$ .

In 1998, 10,113 American women  
insured themselves against  
Virgin Birth  
at the millennium.

The first motorist to be fined  
for speeding in the UK was  
Walter Arnold in 1896.  
He was doing 8 mph in a 2 mph zone.

The first London Underground  
trains were nicknamed  
'sewer trams'.





The world's lightest metal  
is 100 times lighter than styrofoam  
and can rest on a dandelion puff  
without damaging it.

Graphene,  
the world's strongest material,  
is a million times thinner than paper  
but 200 times stronger than steel.

To break through a sheet  
of graphene as thick as cling film  
would take the force of an elephant  
balanced on the point of a pencil.

The pressure in the deepest ocean,  
at the bottom of the Marianas Trench,  
is equal to the weight of ten brown bears  
balancing on a postage stamp.



All polar bears are Irish:  
they're descended from brown bears  
that lived in Ireland  
over 10,000 years ago.

More than half the world's population  
is under 25  
and more than half of it  
is bilingual.

Established writers and artists are  
18 times more likely  
to kill themselves  
than the general population.

People with schizophrenia  
are three times more likely to smoke  
than the average person.



*Zischeln*  
is a useful German verb meaning  
‘to whisper angrily’.

The Italian verb *asolare*  
means ‘to pass time in a delightful but  
meaningless  
way’.

Hungarian has no words  
for ‘son’ or ‘daughter’,  
but nine specific words  
for different kinds of brother or sister.

In North Welsh,  
the word for ‘now’ is *rwan*,  
in South Welsh it is *nawr*,  
the same word spelt backwards.



Gold has its own E number.  
E175  
is officially suitable for consumption  
by vegetarians, vegans and members  
of all religious groups.

The Victorians  
made tiepins  
out of badgers' penis bones.

Some parts of Tasmania  
are so fertile that  
the topsoil is 70 feet deep.

Trinity College, Cambridge,  
has won more Nobel Prizes  
than the whole of Italy.



The human body has 100 trillion cells,  
each one a 10,000th the size of a pinhead  
but containing enough DNA instructions  
to fill 1,000 600-page books.

Every three seconds,

the Sun emits more neutrinos  
than the number of atoms  
in all the humans who have ever lived.

Neutrinos are 100,000 times  
smaller than electrons,  
but there are so many of them  
that they may outweigh  
all the visible matter in the universe.

If an atom were the size  
of the Solar System,  
a neutrino would be the size  
of a golf ball.



The man who sees to the needs of VIPs  
in the official presidential guest house  
in Washington DC  
is called Randy Bumgardner.

The founder of Pan American Airlines  
was called  
Juan Trippe.

The Archbishop of Manila  
from 1974–2003  
was called Cardinal Sin.

Robert Burns was never called  
Rabbie or Robbie – though he did

occasionally call himself Spunkie.



The film *Jaws* was based on a novel  
by Peter Benchley.

When he couldn't think of a title,  
his father, Nathaniel, suggested  
*What's That Noshin' On Ma Leg*.

As soon as tiger shark embryos  
develop teeth  
they attack and eat each other  
in the womb.

If the three quarks in a hydrogen atom  
were scaled up to the size of garden peas,  
the hydrogen atom  
would be 1,000 miles across.

If all the land in Finland  
were distributed equally,  
each Finn would have 14% more space  
than Heathrow Airport's shopping area.



Human saliva  
contains a painkiller called *opiorphin*  
that is six times more powerful  
than morphine.

The average American produces  
10,000 gallons of saliva in a lifetime:  
about the same amount of water as leaks  
from the average American home  
in a year.

The platypus and the echidna  
are the only mammals  
that could make their own custard:  
they both lay eggs  
and produce milk.

The Chupa Chups logo  
was designed by  
Salvador Dalí.



4,000 McDonald's hamburgers  
(as many as you could get from one cow)  
are eaten every minute.

Every year,  
4 million cats  
are eaten in Asia.

In 2011, Chinese billionaire Long Liyuan  
was murdered at a business lunch  
by means of poison in his  
slow-boiled  
cat-meat



There are about 6,900 languages  
in existence but more than  
half the world's population  
uses only 20 of them.

In English, the name of every number  
shares a letter with each neighbour.  
One shares an O with two, which shares a  
T with three, which shares an R with four,  
which shares an F with five, which shares  
an I with six – and so on indefinitely.

Archimedes' number *myriakis-myriostas*  
*periodu myriakis-myriston*  
*arithmon myriai myriades*  
is one followed by 80 quadrillion zeroes.

In 2010, YouTube was watched  
700 billion times, but 99% of the views  
were of only 30% of the videos.



In 1900, all the world's mathematical  
knowledge could be written in about  
80 books; today it would fill  
more than 100,000.

In 2005, the 54 billionaires in Britain  
paid only £14.7 million in income tax  
between them. Of this,  
£9 million came from  
James Dyson.



In 2011, only nine of the 62 owners  
of apartments in One Hyde Park, London,  
the world's most expensive block of flats,  
paid any council tax.

Over 600,000 companies  
(including 25 with flats in One Hyde Park)  
are registered in the British Virgin Islands  
(population 28,882).



In the first month of its life,  
a silkworm puts on  
10,000 times its birth weight.

A female ferret  
will die  
if she doesn't have sex for a year.

A six-inch catfish has  
more than  
250,000 taste buds.

A full Kindle  
weighs a billionth of a billionth  
of a gram  
more than a brand-new one.



There are over 1,200 species  
of bat in the world  
and not one of them is blind.

There are 4,800 species  
of frog in the world  
but only one of them goes 'ribbit'.

Eight times as many people belong to  
the National Trust  
as to the  
Conservative, Labour and  
Liberal Democrat parties  
combined.

Every human being  
starts out life as an arsehole:  
it's the first part of the body  
to form in the womb.



51% of British women under 50  
have never been married:  
twice as many as in 1980.

Kanye North and Kanye South  
(but not Kanye West)  
are parliamentary constituencies

~~The Parliamentary Government~~  
in Botswana.

The animal rights group PETA  
claims that cows can suffer humiliation  
if people laugh at them.

*Wagamama*  
is Japanese for 'selfish'.



In 2009, Exxon made \$19 billion profit  
but received a \$156 million  
federal tax rebate.

Only 2% of women  
describe themselves  
as beautiful.

In the 1950s,  
3-D films  
were known as  
'deepies'.

Loch Ness  
is deep enough  
and long enough  
to contain the entire  
population of the world  
ten times over.



40% of the electricity in Pakistan  
goes missing, half of it stolen:  
if there's a power cut  
(which is often),  
they just steal the wires.

In 2011, British trains were delayed  
by 16,000 hours because of people  
stealing metal parts from the railways.

After Einstein died,  
his brain was pickled,  
sliced into 240 cubes and  
left in a box marked 'Costa Cider'  
for 20 years.

Sir Walter Raleigh's devoted widow  
Elizabeth kept his decapitated head  
with her in a velvet bag  
for 29 years.



*Forflitten* adj.  
Overwhelmed  
by unreasonable  
and out-of-proportion  
scolding.

*Forwallowed* adj.  
Weary with being  
tossed about.

*Rhinorrhea* n.  
The medical condition  
otherwise known as  
'a runny nose'.

*Subitise* vb  
To perceive the number  
of objects in a group  
without actually  
counting them.



An *acrocomic* is someone with long hair.  
According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*,  
the word hasn't been used  
since it was coined in 1626.  
Until now, that is.

The word 'unfriend'  
first appeared in print in 1659.

*Berk* and *charlie* (as in 'a proper charlie')  
are rhyming slang for  
'Berkshire Hunt' and 'Charlie Hunt'.

The most popular beers  
in Turkmenistan are called  
(Berk and Charlie)

‘Berk’ and ‘Zip’.



As a reward  
for winning the part of Harry Potter,  
the 11-year-old Daniel Radcliffe  
was allowed to stay up  
and watch *Fawlty Towers*.

Durham University  
offers a Harry Potter module.  
It includes the topic  
‘Gryffindor and Slytherin:  
prejudice and intolerance in the classroom’.

The word ‘school’  
comes from the ancient Greek for  
‘free time’.

In particle physics, a ‘barn’ is an area  
that covers a billionth of the cross-section  
of a silk fibre. It’s called a barn because  
(in subatomic terms) it’s so huge.



In 2010, twice as many Britons died  
in accidents in their own homes  
as in traffic accidents.

The names Honda and Toyota  
derive from Japanese words for  
different kinds of rice field.

In French, Hungarian, Spanish,  
Irish, Italian, Portuguese,  
Latvian, Serbian, Croatian,  
Bosnian, Montenegrin and Tagalog,  
the words for 'time' and 'weather'  
are the same.

Britain  
is the windiest country  
in Europe.



The Inuit use the same word,  
*sila*, to mean both  
'weather' and 'consciousness'.

There are five categories of hurricane.  
The slowest outpaces a cheetah;  
the fastest beats the world's  
fastest roller coaster  
(149 mph).

There are at least 300  
earthquakes a year in the UK,  
but only 11 people have ever died in one.

There is no known scientific way  
to predict earthquakes.

or predicting earthquakes.  
The most reliable method is  
to count the number of missing cats  
in the local paper: if it trebles,  
an earthquake is imminent.



The amount of water on Earth is constant,  
and continually recycled over time:  
some of the water you drink  
will have passed through  
a dinosaur.

95% of the lead  
in British army bullets  
comes from recycled materials.

*A squishop*  
is a squire  
who is also a bishop.

*Muammar*  
is Arabic for 'long-lived'.



A newborn giant panda weighs  
less than a cup of tea.



The CIA reads  
up to 5 million tweets a day.

85% of the clicking on web ads  
is done by 8% of the people.  
Since 2008,  
the number of clicks has halved.

The 6-trillionth, 8-trillionth,  
9-trillionth and 10-trillionth  
digits of pi  
are all fives.



Under Chairman Mao,  
every Chinese family  
was obliged to kill a sparrow a week  
to stop them eating all the rice.  
The project was ineffective because  
sparrows don't eat rice.

Barley  
has twice as many genes as  
people.

Scotland  
has twice as many giant pandas as  
Conservative MPs.

Statistically speaking,  
the Vatican has two popes  
per square kilometre

per square kilometer.



Sending a man to the Moon  
and finding Osama Bin Laden  
cost the US government  
about the same amount of time and money:  
ten years and \$100 billion.

IMAX projectors weigh as much as hippos.  
Their bulbs cost \$5 million each  
and are bright enough to be seen  
from the International Space Station.

The International Space Station  
has cost more than 30 times  
its own weight in gold.

In 2005,  
Americans spent 6 billion hours  
filling in tax forms,  
at an estimated cost of \$265 billion.



Between 1948 and 1998,  
20,362 Israelis were killed in wars  
and 20,852 were killed on the roads.

The American TV sex therapist

THE AMERICAN TV SEX THERAPIST  
Dr Ruth Westheimer  
trained as an Israeli sniper.

*Snipur*  
is Icelandic for 'clitoris'.

Taking cocaine  
increases the chance  
of having a heart attack  
within the hour  
by 2,400%.



Oystercatchers  
don't catch oysters.

Cows carry cowpox  
but chickens  
don't carry chickenpox.

Cocks don't have cocks.  
In 97% of bird species,  
the males don't have penises.

The rooster on the Corn Flakes box  
is called Cornelius.  
They chose a rooster  
because the word *ceiliog*,  
Welsh for cockerel,  
sounds a bit like Kellogg.



Welsh  
has no single words for  
‘yes’ or ‘no’.

Russian  
has no word for  
‘bigot’.

French  
has no word for  
‘awkward’.

Latin  
has no word for  
‘interesting’.



Uranium  
is 40 times more common  
than silver  
and 500 times more common  
than gold.

In Spanish,  
the word *esposas*  
means both  
‘wives’ and ‘handcuffs’.

*Boghandler*  
is Danish for  
'bookseller'.

Serbia  
is the world's leading exporter  
of raspberries.



In 1956,  
there were only 12 cars  
on Ibiza.

About half a million mice  
live in the London Underground.

The Companies Act (2006)  
is the longest act in history;  
it is so complex that  
most British companies  
unwittingly break the law  
six times a day.

Per head of population,  
Britain has 13 times  
as many accountants  
as Germany.



The average pencil can write  
45,000 words,  
or a single line 35 miles long.

Venus rotates so slowly on its axis  
that its day is longer than its year.

Until the 1960s,  
the only reliable pregnancy test  
was to inject a woman's urine  
into a female African clawed frog.  
If the woman was pregnant,  
the frog would ovulate within 12 hours.

Chemotherapy  
is a by-product of the mustard gas  
used in the First World War.



The year after  
the American Civil War ended,  
a fifth of Mississippi's state budget  
was spent on artificial limbs  
for wounded soldiers.

More than 90%  
of all the blackcurrants  
grown in Britain

go into Ribena.

Nutmeg is illegal in Saudi Arabia  
because it is hallucinogenic  
if consumed in large quantities.

Mushrooms  
are more closely related to humans  
than to plants.



The first holiday  
organised by Thomas Cook  
was a temperance outing  
in the East Midlands.

Beijing, Seoul and Tokyo  
all mean 'capital'  
in their respective languages.

Athens is the only capital city in Europe  
where the air is more polluted  
outside than inside.

*Skoda*  
is Czech for  
'shame', 'damage' or 'pity'.



At least 109 journeys  
between adjacent London Tube stations  
are quicker to walk.

QI is the most commonly played word  
in Tournament Scrabble.  
It's pronounced 'chee' and means  
'life force' or 'energy' in Mandarin.

There are at least 27 million slaves  
in the world today,  
more than were ever seized from Africa  
in the 400 years of the slave trade.

Slaves in America in 1850  
cost the equivalent of \$40,000.  
The going rate today is \$90.



More than 80% of the world's population  
takes caffeine,  
in tea, coffee or cola,  
every day.

There is one and a half times  
more caffeine in milk chocolate  
than in Coca-Cola.



A lethal dose of chocolate  
for a human being is about 22 lb  
or 40 bars of Cadbury's Dairy Milk.  
A single M&M is enough  
to kill a small songbird.

Oliver Cromwell  
died of malaria.



To keep someone to prison in the UK  
costs £45,000 a year:  
one and a half times as much  
as it would take to send them to Eton.

Fictional Old Etonians include  
James Bond, Captain Hook, Bertie Wooster,  
Tarzan, John Steed from *The Avengers*  
and Mr Darcy from *Bridget Jones's Diary*.

St Brigid of Ireland,  
the 6th-century abbess of Kildare,  
was noted for the miracle of  
transforming her used bathwater  
into beer for visiting clerics.

It costs more to make the cardboard box  
that Shredded Wheat comes in  
than it does to make  
the Shredded Wheat itself.



The word botulism  
comes from the Latin *botulus*,  
meaning ‘a stomach full of delicacies’.  
Half a pound of botulinum toxin is  
enough to kill  
the entire human population of the world.

Botox is made from botulinum toxin.  
Almost all the botox in the world  
is made in a single factory  
in Ireland.

The average British woman  
spends £100,000 on make-up  
in a lifetime.

All blue-eyed people are mutants.  
The first ones appeared  
as recently as 5,000 years ago.



The scaly anteater, the banded anteater  
and the spiny anteater are not anteaters  
even though they all eat ants  
and are called anteaters.

In the 1950s, to allow babies of students  
at Trinity Hall, Cambridge,  
to enter the premises,  
they were re-defined as cats.

William E. Boeing, founder of  
United Airlines,  
had a pet Pekingese called  
General Motors.

General Electric is the only company  
remaining from the original Dow Jones  
index of 1896. Since then it has had  
fewer than half as many CEOs (4)  
as the Vatican has had popes (10).



*A basterly gullion*  
is 'a bastard's bastard'.

*Batology*  
is the study of blackberries.

*Botony*  
means  
'having three knobs'.

Swindon  
has the lowest demand for Viagra  
of any town in the UK.



The mute swan  
is not mute.

*Engastration*  
is the stuffing of one bird  
with another.

Cows eat only grass  
but have 25,000 taste buds:  
two and a half times as many  
as humans.

In American Samoa,  
it is illegal to beg  
with the aid of  
a public address system.



A new owl species  
is discovered approximately  
every ten years.

An adult produces enough hydrogen  
in their urine each year  
to drive a car  
2,700 kilometres.

In 2012, the population of Facebook  
passed 1 billion.

If it were a country,  
it would be the 3rd-largest  
in the world.

Before the Renaissance,  
three-quarters of all the books  
in the world were in  
Chinese.



About 200,000 academic journals  
are published in English each year.  
The average number  
of readers per article  
is five.

The average numbers of readers  
of any given published scientific paper  
is said to be 0.6.

There are two cs  
in the word Icelandic,  
but there is no letter c  
in the Icelandic language.

*Katujjiqatigiittiarnirlu*  
is Inuktitut for  
'simplicity'.



A barnacle's penis  
can be up to 20 times  
the length of its body.

27,000 trees  
are felled each day  
for toilet paper.

The average lavatory seat  
is much cleaner  
than the average toothbrush.  
Your teeth are home to 10,000 million  
bacteria per square centimetre.

The pleasant smell of earth after rain  
is caused by bacteria in the soil  
and is called *petrichor* –  
from Greek *petros*, 'stone' and *ichor*,  
'the fluid that flows  
through the veins of the gods'.



The muscles that close a crocodile's jaws  
exert a force equivalent to  
a truck falling off a cliff,  
but the muscles that open them  
are so weak that  
they can be kept shut by a rubber band.

The Royal Mail spends £1 million a year  
on a billion red rubber bands.  
British postmen use  
2 million of them every day.

A hammerhead shark  
can be rendered completely immobile  
for 15 minutes by turning it over  
and tickling its tummy.

*Tümmeler*  
is German for  
a bottle-nosed dolphin.



99% of Austrians are German,  
though most Austrians  
insist that they aren't.

It is commonplace for Austrians  
to claim that Hitler  
was in fact a German,  
whereas Beethoven  
was really an Austrian.

Beethoven  
was of Belgian extraction.

There are no moles  
in Ireland

in regard.



If all the asteroids  
in the Solar System  
were lumped together,  
they'd be smaller than the Moon.

There are six vehicles  
and 50 tonnes of litter  
on the Moon  
left behind by the Apollo missions.

Because there is no weather  
on the Moon,  
the footprints of the 12 men  
who walked on it  
are still there.

Most astronauts  
become two inches taller  
in space.



Google earns  
\$20 billion a year from advertising,  
more than the primetime revenues of  
CBS, NBC, ABC and FOX combined.



69% of people  
in the rear of an aeroplane  
survive crashes,  
compared to 49%  
at the front.

20% of people in the UK  
believe they have a food allergy,  
but only 2% actually do.

The American secret service  
tried to spike Hitler's carrots  
with female hormones  
to change him into a woman.



Almost 2,000 carrot seeds  
will fit into  
a teaspoon.

An estimated 18 million spoons,  
together weighing as much  
as four blue whales,  
go missing in Melbourne  
every year.

Melbourne  
used to be called  
Batmania.

Alice,

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

the 3rd-largest town  
in Australia's Northern Territory,  
used to be called  
Stuart.



40% of all bottled water  
sold in the world  
is bottled tap water.

The Antarctic is a continent  
entirely surrounded by oceans;  
the Arctic is an ocean  
almost entirely surrounded by continents.

The average American  
absorbs 34 GB of information a day,  
though half of it is obtained  
from playing  
video games.

Half the Saxon aristocracy  
were killed  
at the battle of Hastings  
in 1066.



More than twice as many people  
are killed by vending machines

as by sharks.

Placebos are 30% more effective  
as an antidote for depression  
than drugs.

If a tree were planted  
for each Coca-Cola sold,  
we could reforest the Earth  
in three years.

The inventor of 'Best before' dates,  
originally for milk,  
was Al Capone.



After his wife's death,  
a heart-broken Benjamin Disraeli  
found that she'd kept all the hair  
from the haircuts she'd given him  
in 33 years of marriage.

Elizabeth Taylor  
lived to be 79  
but she never learned  
to boil an egg.

The Perthshire village of Dull  
is planning to twin with  
Boring, Oregon.

More than 50% of koalas  
have chlamydia.



Ants can survive  
in a microwave:  
they are small enough  
to dodge the rays.

*Anthophobia*  
is the fear of flowers.

The Greek national anthem  
has 158 verses,  
but only two of them  
are ever sung.

The national anthem of Spain  
has no words.



Prince Charles  
is the longest-serving  
heir to the throne in British history.  
He has held the position  
for 60 years.

Some parts of Antarctica  
have had no rain or snow  
for 2 million years.

Bubblewrap  
was first produced in a  
New Jersey garage in 1957.  
Its inventors were trying to make  
easy-wipe textured wallpaper.

There is no such thing  
as a vegetarian snake.  
Snakes eat nothing  
except other animals.



For 249 years,  
the tallest building in the world  
was Lincoln Cathedral.

Angel Falls, Venezuela,  
is 17 times higher  
than Niagara.

A typical bird's feathers  
weigh more than  
twice as much  
as its bones.

Only 35%  
of the average person's  
muscles are used

Twitter followers are  
actual people.



‘Day dapple’ is an old Irish term  
for the time of day when  
a person can no longer  
be distinguished  
from a bush.

The ancient Greek for ostrich  
is *strouthokamelos*,  
or ‘sparrow-camel’.

‘Influenza’  
is Italian for ‘influence’:  
heavenly bodies  
were once thought  
to affect our own.

San Marino has eight times  
as many doctors per person  
as any other country in the world.



Humans  
have been hunter-gatherers  
for 99% of their history.

Ostriches  
can be trained  
to herd sheep.

The French for 'badger'  
is *blaireau*,  
which also means  
'shaving brush'.

WTF  
is the acronym of the  
World Taekwondo Federation.



In 2011,  
the Internet reached  
13.7 billion pages:  
one for every year  
since the Big Bang.

The entire Internet  
weighs about the same  
as one large  
strawberry.

A male right whale  
is half the size of a male blue whale  
but has testes five times bigger:  
each one weighs as much  
as a large horse.

1 ed 1 urner  
owns 50,000 bison.



Kestrels  
can locate voles from the sky  
because of ultra-violet light  
reflected by their urine.

Henry VIII had a Groom of the Stool  
whose duty was to see that  
‘the house of easement be sweet and clear’:  
in other words,  
to wipe the king’s bottom.

Sitting on the lavatory for eight hours  
uses the same number of calories  
as one hour’s jogging.

It was 33 years  
after loo paper was invented  
in Green Bay, Wisconsin,  
that it could finally be advertised as  
‘splinter free’.



Sudan  
has more pyramids  
than Egypt.



Steve Jobs was half Syrian.  
His annual salary  
as CEO of Apple  
was \$1.

‘Forty’  
is the only number in English  
that has its letters  
in alphabetical order.

43 million  
£1 coins  
currently in circulation  
are forgeries.



Since 2012,  
all new 5p and 10p coins  
issued by the Royal Mint  
have been magnetic.

The highest-value notes  
issued by the Bank of England are  
Giants (£1 million) and  
Titans (£100 million).

The chemical name for titin,  
the world’s largest known protein,  
is 189,819 letters long.

In Japan, Tintin is called Tantan  
because Tintin  
is pronounced 'Chin-Chin'  
and means 'penis'.



Kim Il-Sung,  
founder of North Korea,  
was born on the day  
the *Titanic* sank.

Kim Il-Sung's grandson,  
Jong-Nam, was sacked as heir  
after being arrested trying to  
enter Japan on a false passport  
to visit Disneyland.

In the last 60 years,  
more than 23,000 North Koreans  
have defected to South Korea.  
Only two Koreans  
have gone in the opposite direction.

Korea  
is Finnish for  
'gorgeous'.



The exchange rate in Vietnam is about

20,000 dongs to the dollar.

It costs the US mint  
over 11 cents  
to make each 5-cent coin.

‘Hey Jingo!’  
is a conjuror’s call  
for something to appear –  
the opposite of  
‘Hey Presto!’  
which calls for it  
to be gone.

Between 1917 and 1940,  
the cure for patients with  
syphilis  
was to give them  
malaria.



Gatwick,  
the name of the UK’s  
2nd-largest airport,  
means ‘the farm where goats are kept’.

During the 2010 World Cup,  
100 bar staff at the pub chain  
Clover Taverns  
changed their names to  
Wayne Rooney.  
The company has since gone bankrupt.

In 2007, Robert Stewart of Ayr  
was put on the Sex Offenders Register  
for having sex with a bicycle.

In 1993, Karl Watkins  
of Redditch, Worcestershire,  
was jailed for having sex  
with pavements.



There is at least ten times  
as much crime on TV  
as there is in the real world.

Starbucks offers  
87,000  
different drinks combinations.

Britons eat 97%  
of the world's baked beans.

The last private resident  
of 10 Downing Street  
was called Mr Chicken.



Almost half of all Americans today  
are classified as 'living in poverty' or  
'barely scraping by'.  
46.4% pay no income tax.

The US has more lawyers per capita  
than any country in the world  
and twice as many prisoners  
as lawyers.

The US has only 5%  
of the world's population,  
but almost 25%  
of its prison population.

Since smoking was banned in 2004,  
the main currency in US prisons  
is mackerel.



Prisoners waiting to be executed on  
Death Row in America  
are given a physical beforehand,  
to ensure they are fit enough to die.

In his last week on Earth,  
Troy Davis, who was executed  
in Atlanta, Georgia, in 2011,  
was put on 'death watch'  
to stop him taking his own life.

The Death House

The Dean House  
at the State Prison  
in Huntsville, Texas,  
offers wheelchair access.

An estimated 150,000 people  
die in the UK every year  
because only 7% of Britons  
know how to give first aid.



When a Navajo baby  
laughs aloud for the first time,  
the family throws a party.  
The person who made the baby laugh  
provides the food.

The air breathed by a single person  
in an 80-year lifetime weighs more  
than a fully laden Boeing 747.

1968  
was the only year of the 20th century  
in which no member  
of the British armed services  
was killed on active service.

The London Underground  
has made more money from  
its famous map  
than it ever has from running trains.



In 2010, the Italian government  
had a fleet of 629,000 official cars:  
ten times as many  
as the US government.

Since its discovery in 1930,  
Pluto has travelled  
only a third of its way  
round the Sun.

Walter Schirra  
is the only one  
of the first six Americans in space  
not to have one of the Tracy brothers  
in *Thunderbirds*  
named after him.

Sucking a king's nipples  
was a gesture of submission  
in ancient Ireland.



In Vanuatu pidgin,  
Prince Charles is known as  
*nambawan pikinini blong Missus Kwin*  
and a helicopter is a  
*mixmaster blong Jesus Christ*.

In 1995,  
the number of TV programmes in Britain  
watched by over 15 million people  
was 225.  
By 2004, this had fallen to six.

In Romany, the word for television  
is *dínilo's dikkaméngro* or  
'fool's looking-box'.

In the film industry, a 'mickey'  
is a gentle camera move forwards.  
It's short for 'Mickey Rooney'  
(a 'little creep').



Bacteria and amoebas  
are far more different  
from each other  
than amoebas  
are from people.

Two-thirds of all the people in the world  
who have ever lived to be 65  
are still alive today.

There are 10,000 times  
as many photographs  
on Facebook  
as there are in the  
US Library of Congress.



Eight of the Earth's 88  
naturally occurring chemical elements  
were discovered  
in the same mine in Sweden.



The Malay word  
for water is  
'air'.

*Kummerspeck* ('grief bacon')  
is German for the weight put on  
from eating too much  
when feeling sorry for yourself.

The Finnish word for pedant,  
*pilkunnussija*,  
translates literally as  
'comma fucker'.

When he died in 1891, John Davey,  
a schoolmaster of Zennor, Cornwall,  
was the only person in the world  
that spoke Cornish.  
He had kept the language alive  
by talking to his cat.



The first Olvmnian

disqualified for banned substances  
was Hans-Gunnar Liljenwall of Sweden.  
In the 1968 Mexico Games,  
he had two beers  
to calm his nerves  
before the pistol shooting.

The first recorded incidence of air rage  
involved a passenger in First Class  
who shat on the food trolley  
after being refused another drink.

More than a third  
of the world's 43,794 airports  
are in the USA.

The world's largest cattle station,  
Anna Creek Station in South Australia,  
is larger than the state of Israel.



All ten species  
of the most venomous snakes in the world  
live in Australia.

Powerful acids  
in snakes' stomachs  
mean they will explode  
if given Alka-Seltzer.

The cost of fighting

a libel action in the UK  
is 140 times greater  
than the European average.

After the battle of Waterloo,  
the Marquis of Anglesey  
had his leg amputated.  
It was buried  
with full military honours  
in a nearby garden.



Folk healers in the Andes  
diagnose patients with guinea pigs,  
which apparently squeak  
when close to the source of the problem.

In 2003, six monkeys were funded  
by the Arts Council of England  
to see how long it would take them  
to type the works of Shakespeare.  
After six months, they had failed  
to produce a single word of English,  
broken the computer  
and used the keyboard as a lavatory.

In 2001, seven Chilean poets held a reading  
in the baboon enclosure of Santiago Zoo  
to demonstrate that baboons  
are more receptive to poetry  
than the average Chilean.



By 2020, the number of men  
of marriageable age in China  
will outnumber the women  
by 30 million.

Leo Tolstoy's wife  
wrote out the drafts of  
*War and Peace* for him,  
in longhand,  
six times.

Zeus had five wives.  
One of them was his aunt,  
another was his elder sister  
and a 3rd one he ate.

In 1672, an angry mob of Dutchmen  
killed and ate their prime minister.



Half of the world's  
black pepper  
is produced  
in Vietnam.

Feeding canaries  
red peppers  
turns them

orange.

The name  
Canary Islands  
comes from the Latin for  
'Isle of Dogs'.

Cat originally meant 'dog'.  
The word comes from  
the Latin *catulus*,  
a small dog or puppy.



White rhinos  
and black rhinos  
are the same  
colour.

Highways  
in the western USA  
are based on the  
migratory routes  
of bison.

The Alpine salamander's pregnancy  
can last for over three years.

Dragonflies  
flap their wings  
in a figure-of-eight motion.



In Bali, dragonflies are eaten with coconut milk, ginger, garlic, shallots – or just plain-grilled and crispy.

Salvador Dalí  
was terrified of grasshoppers.  
As a schoolboy, he threw such violent fits  
of hysteria that his teacher forbade them  
to be mentioned in class.

Kali is the Hindu goddess of  
death, violence, sexuality  
and  
motherly love.

The name Mali  
means ‘hippopotamus’  
in Bamanankan,  
the main language  
of the country.



The Nigerian navy has four warships  
whose names all mean ‘hippopotamus’  
but in different local languages:  
NNS *Erinomi* (hippo in Yoruba), NNS  
*Enyimiri* (hippo in Igbo), NNS *Dorina*  
(hippo in Hausa) and NNS *Otobo* (hippo in  
Idoma, Ibibio, Igbani and Kalabari)

tuuma, ijaw, igbani and Kalabari).

Over the years, the Royal Navy's fleet has included HMS *Seagull*, HMS *Keith*, HMS *Tortoise*, HMS *Wensleydale* and HMS *Cockchafer*.

A baby cockroach is called a 'nymph'.

When Escoffier was head chef at the Carlton Hotel in London, he got his English clientele to eat frogs' legs by slipping them on to the menu as *Nymphs of the Dawn*.



As a young man in London in 1914, Ho Chi Minh worked for Escoffier as a trainee pastry chef.

The South American revolutionary Simón Bolívar was, at various times, president of Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela.

Venezuela is Spanish for 'Little Venice'.

In 17th-century Venice,  
women's high-heeled shoes  
could be more than  
12 inches tall.



*Beckets* n.  
The little loops for a belt  
on a pair of trousers  
or a raincoat.

*Callypygian* adj.  
Having  
beautiful buttocks.

*Misophonia* n.  
Irrational rage and terror  
caused by the sound  
of people eating.

*Sciapodous* adj.  
Having feet  
large enough  
to be used as umbrellas.



The composer Arnold Schoenberg was  
superstitious about the number 13.  
As  $7+6=13$  he feared he would die aged 76.



And he did: on Friday 13th July,  
at 13 minutes to midnight.

William Herschel, discoverer of Uranus,  
lived to be 84 – the same number of years  
that Uranus takes to orbit the Sun.

Asked by a priest, ‘Do you forgive your  
enemies?’ the dying Spanish general  
Ramón Blanco y Erenas (1833–1906)  
answered, ‘No. I don’t have any enemies.  
I’ve had them all shot.’

In 2007, a Bosnian called Amir Vehabovic  
faked his own death to see  
how many people would go to his funeral.  
Only his mother turned up.



Baby koalas are weaned on their  
mother’s excrement. It is consumed  
directly from their mother’s bottom  
in the form of ‘soup’.

In Antigua, lizard soup is considered  
an effective cure for asthma –  
provided the patient  
isn’t told what’s in it.

The world’s largest known crocodile  
and the world’s smallest man

are from the same island  
in the Philippines.

The Aztecs sacrificed  
1% of their population every year,  
or about 250,000 people.  
They also sacrificed eagles, jaguars,  
butterflies and hummingbirds.



Hummingbirds  
have 2,000 meals a day  
and hibernate every night.

Seahorses  
are the only fish with a neck  
and the only family of animals  
where the male  
gives birth.

Crocodiles have no lips  
and can hold their  
breath for an hour.

The Cornish for 'breath'  
is *anal*.



Whenever the king of Swaziland  
rises from his seat,  
he must be greeted  
with cheers and gasps  
of astonished admiration.

In 1875, the king of Fiji  
brought back measles  
from a state visit to Australia  
and wiped out  
a quarter of his own people.

Queen Elizabeth I often drank  
two pints of strong beer  
for breakfast.

After weekend house parties at  
Sandringham, King Edward VII  
insisted on weighing his guests  
to make sure they had eaten well.



Lithuanian men  
are 200 times more likely  
to kill themselves  
than Jamaican men are.

Nigeria makes  
more movies every year  
than the US.

Only three members of the United

Only three members of the United Nations have failed to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: South Sudan, Somalia and the USA.

Only three places in the world have ever changed from driving on the right to driving on the left: East Timor (1975), Okinawa (1978) and Samoa (2009).



Iceland was once called 'Butterland' because the grass was so rich it seemed to drip butter.

After Switzerland, the world's largest per capita gold reserves are held by Lebanon.

There are more than 35 places called Lebanon in the USA and at least 38 Springfields. *The Simpsons* is based in Springfield, Oregon. This was kept quiet so viewers would think it was their own local Springfield.

Boots fitted with springs were forbidden by the original Queensberry Rules for boxing.



Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*  
has a sentence that is 823 words long,  
separated by 93 commas and  
51 semicolons.

When *Les Misérables* was first published  
in 1862, Hugo sent a snappish telegram  
to his publisher to ask how it was selling.  
The whole thing read, '?'  
The publisher's reply was effusive, '!'

Ernest Hemingway's mother was so  
ashamed of his novel *The Sun Also Rises*  
that, when it was scheduled for discussion  
at her book club, she refused to go.

Within 200 yards of the flat in Islington  
where George Orwell had the idea for *1984*,  
there are now 32 CCTV cameras.



In 2008, an MI6 officer  
appeared on *The One Show*.  
Halfway through,  
his moustache fell off.

Hitler's press secretary didn't approve of his moustache. 'Stop worrying about it,' said the Führer. 'If it's not in fashion now, it will be soon, because I'm wearing one.'

The shortest war ever fought was between Britain and Zanzibar on 27th August 1896. Zanzibar surrendered after 38 minutes.

When Rameses II's mummified body was shipped to France in 1974, it was issued with a passport. The mummy's occupation was given as 'King (deceased)'.



Barbara Cartland wrote over 600 books. She dictated them to her secretary between one o'clock and half past three in the afternoon, lying on a sofa with a white fur rug and a hot-water bottle.

Barbara  
is Latin for  
'strange woman'.

Barbara Windsor  
is 4 feet 11 inches tall: the same height as  
Joan of Arc and Queen Victoria.

In the 1930s, British women working  
for Directory Enquiries were required  
to be at least 5 feet 3 inches tall  
so they could reach the  
top of the switchboard.



Charles Dickens  
invented 959 named characters.  
Before deciding on the name Tiny Tim,  
he considered Small Sam, Little Larry  
and Puny Pete.

Dickens' shortlist  
for Martin Chuzzlewit's surname  
included Sweetledew, Chuzzletoe,  
Sweetleback and  
Sweetlewag.

John Steinbeck  
used 300 pencils  
to write his novel *East of Eden*.

The word pencil  
comes from a Latin word meaning  
'small penis'.



When trying out a new pen,

97% of people  
write their own name.

90% of everything  
written in English  
uses just 1,000 words.

20% of all road accidents  
in Sweden  
involve an elk.

12% of all the Coca-Cola  
in America  
is drunk at breakfast.



*Gongoozler* n.  
One who stares for a long time  
at things happening on a canal.

*Gossypiboma* n.  
A surgical sponge  
accidentally left inside  
a patient's body.

*Jentacular* adj.  
Breakfasty; breakfastish;  
of, or relating to, breakfast.

*Meupareunia* n.  
Sexual activity enjoyed



Sexual activity enjoyed  
by only one of the participants.



Gorillas  
can be put on the pill.

The German for 'contraceptive' is  
*Schwangerschaftsverhütungsmittel*.  
By the time you've finished saying it,  
it's too late.

On 20th August 1949,  
time appeared to stand still  
for several minutes,  
when hundreds of starlings roosted  
on the long hand  
of Big Ben.

The correct adjective  
to describe a thrush is  
*turdoid*.



If a silkworm  
is exposed to pure carbon dioxide,  
it crawls around aimlessly,  
apparently trying to remember  
what it's supposed to be doing.

Eskimos use refrigerators  
to stop their food from freezing.

The Sun's core is so hot that  
a piece of it the size of a pinhead  
would give off enough heat  
to kill a person 160 kilometres away.

Every living thing can be anaesthetised,  
even plants. Despite their successful use  
since the mid-19th century,  
no one really understands  
how anaesthetics work.



A trained typist's fingers  
cover about 16 miles a day.

Every US president with a beard  
has been Republican.

The Bible  
is the most shoplifted book  
in the USA.

The world's biggest frog  
is bigger than  
the world's smallest antelope.



The dik-dik is a miniature antelope  
that can go for months  
without water  
but dies after a week  
without salt.

One third of all the salt produced in the US  
is used to melt ice on roads.

British geologists have discovered  
more of the world's oil  
than the geologists  
of all the other nations  
put together.

After being annexed  
by the British Empire,  
the sarong-clad Burmese  
referred to their new overlords as  
'The Trouser People'.



Towards the end of each afternoon,  
Sir Philip Sassoon (1888–1939)  
hailed down the Union Jack  
that flew over his house  
in case the colours  
clashed with  
the sunset

the sunset.

Half of Napoleon's army  
at the battle of Eylau – 30,000 men –  
were burglars.

The penalty for adultery in ancient Greece  
involved hammering a radish  
into the adulterer's bottom with a mallet.  
Radishes were a lot longer  
and pointier in those days.

An octopus can ooze through an opening  
no bigger than its own eyeball.



Humans and elephants  
are the only animals  
with chins.

Sir Charles Isham,  
a vegetarian spiritualist,  
introduced garden gnomes  
to England in 1847.  
He hoped that they would attract  
real gnomes to his garden.

Until the late 15th century,  
the word 'girl' just meant a child.  
Boys were referred to as 'knave girls'  
and female children were 'gay girls'.

The use of the English word 'gay'  
to mean homosexual  
is older than the use of the term  
'homosexual' to mean gay.



The Serpentine in London was the first  
man-made pond in the world  
designed to look  
as if it wasn't  
man-made.

Albanian has 27 words  
for different kinds of moustache  
and 30 for eyebrows.

In the 9th century,  
Ireland was called 'Scotia' and  
Scotland was known as 'Albania'.

Six ten-billionths of the Sun is gold.  
If the 1,200,000,000,000,000 tonnes of it  
could be extracted,  
there would be enough to gild Scotland  
to the depth of half a mile.



Beavers have transparent eyelids so they can see underwater with their eyes shut.

The Old Testament book of *Leviticus* forbids the eating of cuckoos, ferrets, camels, swans, crabs, frogs, chameleons, eels, hares, snails, lizards, moles, ravens, ospreys, vultures, lobsters, owls, storks, herons, bats, pelicans, lapwings, prawns and eagles.

1,000 baby eagles were eaten at the Archbishop of York's enthronement feast in 1466.

Zeppo Marx, the youngest of the Marx Brothers, designed the clamping device that held the atom bombs in place before they were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.



Oprah is 'Harpo' backwards.  
Oprah Winfrey's real name is Orpah  
(after the sister of Ruth in the Bible)  
but no one could say or spell it properly  
so she eventually gave up  
correcting them.

The flowers of the coffee bush  
smell like jasmine.

Jasmine is a member of the olive family.  
Marie is a member of the Osmond family.  
Her first name is Olive.

In 1987, American Airlines saved \$40,000  
by removing an olive  
from each salad  
in First Class.



In an average year in Britain,  
trousers cause  
twice as many accidents  
as chainsaws.

100,000 mobile phones  
are dropped down the loo  
in Britain every year,  
and 50,000  
get run over.

People are 1% shorter  
in the evening  
than they are  
in the morning.

The Metropolitan Police  
employs 39% more people  
than the Royal Navy.



Cranberries bounce when ripe:  
another name for them is 'bounceberries'.  
One that bounces seven times  
is in perfect condition to eat.



*Horripilation*  
is another word  
for getting goosebumps.

The technical word  
for a French kiss is  
*cataglottism*.

*Cockshut*  
is another word for twilight –  
the time of day when chickens  
are put to bed.



If all the time our eyes  
are shut when blinking  
is added together,  
we spend 1.2 years  
of our waking lives  
in pitch darkness.

Every time a woodpecker's beak  
hits a tree, its head is subject to  
1,000 times the force of gravity.

The smallest trees in the world  
are the dwarf willows of Greenland.  
They are two inches tall.

The world's smallest test tube  
has a diameter  
10,000 μm.

10,000 times narrower  
than a human hair.



Antarctic islands include  
Disappointment Island, Fabulous Island,  
Desolation Island, Monumental Island,  
Inexpressible Island, Pourquoi Pas Island,  
Shag Island, Circumcision Island and  
Shoe Island.

In 2008, Usain Bolt  
set the world record for the 100 metres  
with one shoelace undone.

Every electron in the universe  
knows about the state of  
every other electron.

Honeybees  
always know where the Sun is,  
even if it's  
on the other side of the world.



The national anthem of Bangladesh  
includes the lines:  
'The fragrance from your mango groves  
Makes me wild with joy.'

One in three men in Britain  
of Bangladeshi origin  
works as a waiter.

Towels are a central part  
of the culture in Belarus,  
even appearing on the country's flag.  
At a traditional Belarusian wedding,  
the bride walks to the church  
dragging a towel.

13% of Belarus  
is swamp.



In 2011, a 61-year-old woman  
gave birth to her own grandson.  
The baby was conceived with an egg  
donated by her 35-year-old daughter.

The American Psychiatric Association  
listed homosexuality  
as a mental illness  
until 1973.

Sudan is the only country  
that still has crucifixion  
as an official form  
of capital punishment.

By the age of 18,  
the average American child  
will have seen 200,000  
murders on television.



In German,  
a *Turnbeutelvergesser*  
is a boy who's too weedy  
for school sport and 'forgets'  
to bring his gym bag.

*Schattenparker*  
is German for someone  
who parks his car in the shade.

*Depp*  
means 'twit'  
in German.

*Thud!*  
the Discworld novel by Terry Pratchett,  
is published in Germany as  
*Klonk!*



The Basque word  
for 'cold' is

*hotz.*

The Russian word  
for 'sock' is pronounced  
'no sock'.

If you say the letters S.O.C.K.S  
aloud in English, you will find yourself  
pronouncing the Spanish for  
'it is what it is'  
almost perfectly.

If you forget the tilde (~)  
over an N when asking  
how old someone is in Spanish,  
you will end up asking them  
how many anuses they have.



When Montenegro became  
independent from Yugoslavia,  
its Internet domain name went from being  
.yu to .me

The Irish word *leis* (pronounced 'lesh')  
has four different meanings.  
*Bhí leis leis leis leis* means  
'His thigh was naked also'.

A *bourdaloue* was a gravy-boat-like  
receptacle that ladies would squeeze

between their thighs  
if they needed to urinate at court  
in Georgian England.

George W. Bush, Dick Cheney and  
Donald Rumsfeld  
all have slime-mold beetles  
named after them.



Since 1700, new beetle species  
have been discovered  
at the rate of  
one every six hours.

The short-circuit beetle is so named  
because it eats the lead covering  
of telephone cables.

*Cartwrightia cartwrighti* is a scarab beetle  
described by Oscar L. Cartwright.  
As you are not supposed to name  
a species after yourself,  
he claimed to have named it  
after his brother.

Deathwatch beetles  
attract mates  
by repeatedly banging  
their heads on the floor.



During his first teaching job in 1925,  
Evelyn Waugh set out  
to drown himself at sea,  
but turned back  
after being stung by a jellyfish.

The Irish name for jellyfish is  
*smugairle róin*,  
which literally translates as  
'seal's snot'.

The French  
for a walkie-talkie is  
*un talkie walkie*.

The Eiffel Tower  
has the same nickname  
as Margaret Thatcher.  
It's known as *La Dame de Fer*  
(‘The Iron Lady’).



Crime, disease and average  
walking speed increase by 15%  
as a city doubles in size.

People all over the world  
are walking 10% faster

...flying 10% faster  
than they did a decade ago.

Airlines all over the world are flying  
10% slower than they did in 1960  
(to save on fuel costs).

As an apple falls to Earth,  
the Earth falls very, very slightly  
towards the apple.



Isaac Newton served as MP for Cambridge  
but spoke in the House only once.  
He asked for a window to be closed  
because it was draughty.

Bram Stoker,  
the author of *Dracula*,  
married Oscar Wilde's  
first girlfriend.

Arthur Ransome,  
author of *Swallows and Amazons*,  
married Trotsky's secretary.

Two-thirds of all the poetry  
sold in the UK by living poets  
is by Seamus Heaney.





The Slavonic name  
for God is  
Bog.

In 1568, the Catholic Church  
condemned the entire population of  
the Netherlands to death for heresy.

In the 1930s, the Rev. Frederick Densham  
of Warleggan in Cornwall  
alienated his flock by painting the church  
blue and red, surrounding his rectory  
with barbed wire and replacing  
the congregation with  
cardboard cut-outs.

Stalin had shamans  
thrown out of helicopters  
to give them a chance to  
prove that they could fly.



It is most likely to be raining  
at 7 a.m.  
and least likely  
at 3 a.m.

In Maori.

the word Maori  
means 'normal'.

Princess Anne  
was the only woman  
not to be gender-tested  
at the 1976 Montreal Olympics.

Anne, Duc de Montmorency (1493–1567),  
was a French general and politician.  
He was named after his mother,  
Anne Pot.



Pol Pot,  
the Cambodian dictator  
responsible for the deaths  
of 21% of his country's people,  
was a former  
geography teacher.

The Swahili word  
for a coconut is  
*nazi*.

'Mother-in-law'  
is an anagram of  
'Hitler woman'.

Both Stalin and Hans Christian Anderson  
were the sons of a cobbler and a

washerwoman.



In 1187, as a symbol of unity  
between their two countries,  
Richard I of England  
spent a night in the same bed  
as Philip II of France.

In 1381, Richard II made Chelmsford  
the capital of England  
for one week.

In 1517, Richard Foxe,  
the blind bishop of Winchester,  
founded Corpus Christi College, Oxford.  
On his first visit to the new college,  
he was led twice round the main quad  
to make it seem bigger than it really was.

In 1953, Keith Richards' musical career  
began as a choirboy  
singing at the Queen's coronation.



No male jaguar  
has ever successfully mated  
with a female tiger:  
if it were to happen, the resulting animal

would be known as  
a 'jagger'.

Early draft names for  
Walt Disney's seven dwarfs included  
Flabby, Dirty, Shifty,  
Lazy, Burpy, Baldy  
and Biggo-Ego.

Strictly speaking,  
the plural of dwarf  
is dwarrows.

In 2011, Toyota announced that  
the official plural of Prius was  
Prii.



Research using rabbits  
has led to 26 Nobel Prizes  
for Physiology or Medicine.

To process their food  
with maximum efficiency,  
rabbits swallow up to  
80% of their own faeces.

The Sumatran rabbit  
is so rare and shy  
that the nearest humans  
have no word for it in their language.

Bugs Bunny  
is not a rabbit  
but a hare.



The sloth is the only animal  
named after one of the Seven Deadly Sins.  
During the rainy season,  
its metabolism slows down so much  
that it can starve to death  
on a full stomach.

Dolphins shed  
the top layer of their skin  
every two hours.

Paper can only be recycled six times.  
After that, the fibres  
are too weak to hold together.

A 2011 study by Nobel Economics laureate  
Daniel Kahneman of 25 top Wall Street  
traders found that they were  
no more consistently successful  
than a chimpanzee tossing a coin.



A 2011 study in the journal *Psychology, Crime and Law* tested 39 British senior managers and CEOs and found that they had more psychopathic tendencies than patients in Broadmoor.

Since 1980, the salaries of executives in FTSE 100 companies have risen by 4,000% compared to 300% for their employees.

An average pay rise of 50% in 2010 took the annual earnings of the directors of Britain's FTSE 100 companies to £2.7 million each: over 100 times the national average.

At the end of 2011, the FTSE index stood at 5572: 1358 points lower than it was at the end of 1999.



Google was originally called Back-Rub.

The *acnestis* is the part of the back that is impossible to scratch.

The most common treatment

for angina is  
nitroglycerin.  
It comes in pills, sprays or patches.

All Bran  
is only  
87% bran.



*Malo kingi* is a jellyfish  
named after Robert King,  
an American tourist  
who died in Australia  
after being stung by one.

The man after whom  
Parkinson's disease is named  
was once arrested for plotting  
to assassinate George III  
with a poisoned dart.

The man after whom  
Tourette's Syndrome is named  
was shot in the head  
by one of his patients.

Spix's macaw  
is named after  
the first man to shoot one.



Until 1857, it was legal for  
British husbands to sell their wives.  
The going rate was £3,000  
(£23,000 in today's money).

The most common reaction  
from men confronted by  
TV Licensing Enforcement Officers is,  
'I thought my wife  
was dealing with it.'

King Herod's first wife  
was called Doris.

Thomas Edison  
proposed to his second wife  
in Morse code.



The first escalator was for fun,  
rather than for practical purposes.  
It was installed at Coney Island  
in New York and ridden by 75,000 people  
in its first two weeks.

Attendants bearing brandy and  
smelling salts stood at the top of the first  
escalator in Harrods. to revive shonners



...became light-headed, to leave shoppers  
who became light-headed on the ride.

At least one person a week in the UK  
changes their middle name  
to 'Danger' by deed poll.

If all the British Empire's dead of the  
First World War were to march  
four abreast down Whitehall, it would  
take them almost four days and nights  
to pass the Cenotaph.



At the age of 19, J. S. Bach  
walked 420 miles to see  
a performance by the composer  
Buxtehude.

To *chork*  
is to make a noise like feet  
walking in waterlogged shoes.

*J'ai des rossignols*  
(‘I’ve got nightingales’)  
is French for  
unexplained noises  
coming from a car.

250,000 birds were killed  
by the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill in 1989.  
About the same number die

from crashing into window glass  
in the US every day.



Only half the passengers and crew  
who reached America on the *Mayflower*  
in November 1621  
survived until the following spring.

Two-thirds of the world's caviar  
is eaten aboard  
the *QE2*.

There are 35,112 golf courses  
in the world,  
half of them in the USA.

All the world's golf courses put together  
cover more land area  
than the Bahamas.



The land around the Iron Curtain  
lay untouched for decades. In 1989,  
it was turned into a nature reserve  
1,400 kilometres long, but less than  
200 metres wide.

Victorian guidebooks advised women  
to put pins in their mouths  
to avoid being kissed in the dark  
when trains went through tunnels.

Beekeeping is illegal under the  
New York City Health Code,  
because bees are  
‘naturally inclined to do harm’.

Herring talk out of their arses,  
communicating by firing bubbles from  
their backsides that sound like  
high-pitched raspberries.



The filament of the first  
commercial light bulb,  
patented by Thomas Edison in 1880,  
was made of bamboo.

The tall chef 's hat or *toque blanche*  
traditionally had a hundred pleats  
to represent the number of ways  
an egg could be cooked.

It was once suggested that  
New York should be called Brimaquonx,  
combining the names  
of all the city's boroughs –  
Brooklyn, Staten Island, Manhattan,  
Queens and Bronx –

into one.

Tibet has a smaller GDP than Malta,  
but is 4,000 times its size.



*Hamesucken*  
is the crime of assaulting someone  
in their own home.

*Hapax legomenon*  
describes a word or phrase  
that has only been used once.

*Haptodysphoria*  
is the feeling you get from  
running your nails  
down a blackboard.

*Hydrophobophobia*  
is the fear of  
hydrophobia.



Women buy  
85% of the world's Valentine cards and  
96% of all the candles  
in America.

Einstein  
gave his \$32,000 Nobel Prize money to  
his first wife, Mileva,  
as part of their divorce settlement.

The best-selling work of fiction  
of the 15th century was  
*The Tale of the Two Lovers*,  
an erotic novel by the man who later  
became Pope Pius II.

*Tiramisu*  
means 'pick me up'  
in Italian.



The names of the English rivers  
Amber, Avon, Axe, Esk, Exe, Ouse,  
Humber, Irwell, Thames and Tyne  
all mean 'river' or 'water'  
in various ancient languages.

There are no rivers  
in Saudi Arabia.

The Onyx River  
is the only river in Antarctica.  
It flows for just 60 days a year  
in high summer.

The river with the largest  
discharge volume  
in Albania is the Seman.  
About 100 miles north of the Seman  
is the small town of  
Puke.



The gold medals at London 2012  
were the largest and heaviest  
ever awarded at a Summer Olympics,  
but are only 1.34% gold.

In 1979, the Uruguayan footballer  
Daniel Allende transferred  
from Central Español to Rentistas  
for a fee of 550 beefsteaks,  
to be paid in instalments  
of 25 steaks a week.

In 1937, Gillingham FC  
sold one of their players to Aston Villa for  
three second-hand turnstiles,  
two goalkeepers' sweaters, three cans of  
weed-killer and an old typewriter.

Typewriters used to be known as  
'literary pianos'.



The raw materials needed to make a  
desktop computer, including  
530 lb of fossil fuels,  
50 lb of chemicals and  
3,330 lb of water,  
weigh two tons:  
about the same as a rhinoceros.

*Exocet* is French for  
'flying fish'.

Ancient Scandinavians  
believed that the Aurora Borealis was  
the result of huge shoals of herring  
reflecting light into the sky.

The word 'döner'  
in *döner kebab*  
is Turkish for  
'rotating'.



Woodrow Wilson  
kept a flock of sheep  
on the White House lawn.  
He sold the wool and gave the money  
to the Red Cross.

Bill Clinton  
was mauled by a sheep

at the age of eight and didn't learn  
to ride a bicycle till he was 22.

Before signing the trade embargo  
against Cuba, John F. Kennedy  
got his press secretary to buy him  
1,000 Cuban cigars.

Ronald Reagan's pet name for  
Nancy Reagan was  
'Mommy Poo Pants'.



After George W. Bush  
was re-elected president in 2004,  
the number of calls from US citizens  
to the Canadian Immigration authorities  
jumped from 20,000 to 115,000 a day.

One of the main contributors  
to the original *Oxford English Dictionary*  
cut off his penis in a fit of madness.

The longest palindrome in the  
*Oxford English Dictionary* is 'tattarrattat'.  
James Joyce used it in *Ulysses*:  
'I knew his tattarrattat at the door.'

The longest palindrome written by one  
poet about another is W. H. Auden's:  
'T. Eliot, top bard, notes putrid tang  
emanating is sad I'd assign it a name'



...naming, is said, to assign it a name.  
Gnat dirt upset on drab pot toilet.'



James Joyce  
married a woman called Nora Barnacle.  
She once said to him,  
'Why don't you write books  
people can read?'

During rehearsals for *Peter Pan*,  
J. M. Barrie ordered Brussels sprouts  
every day for lunch, but never ate them.  
When asked why, he said:  
'I cannot resist ordering them.  
The words are so lovely to say.'

Botanists  
cannot tell the difference  
between broccoli and cauliflower.

Rhubarb  
is a vegetable.



Some species of scorpion  
survive on one meal  
a year.

The Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul  
has only 5% of the country's population  
but provides 70% of its fashion models.

The trap-jaw ant  
has the fastest bite in the world:  
its jaws close 2,300 times faster  
than a blink of an eye.

The statue of Winston Churchill  
in Parliament Square is electrified  
to stop pigeons perching  
on its head.



In Bolivia,  
the Quechua word for 'baby' is  
*guagua* –  
pronounced 'wah wah'.

A baby echidna  
is called  
a 'puggle'.

Baby puffins  
are called  
'pufflings'.

Baby hedgehogs  
are called  
'hoglets'.



In 19th-century Britain,  
'mock-turtle' soup was often  
made from cow fetuses.

Dogs can smell where electric current  
has been and human fingerprints  
that are a week old.

Lord Byron's mail often contained  
locks of hair from adoring female fans.  
Some of the clippings he sent them  
in return actually came from  
his pet Newfoundland dog,  
Boatswain.

As soon as Lord Byron left England  
for the last time in 1816, his creditors  
entered his home and repossessed  
everything he owned, right down to his  
tame squirrel.



In 1899, Dr Horace Emmett  
announced that the secret  
of eternal youth was injections  
of ground-up squirrel testicles.  
He died later the same year.

Squirrels  
can remember the hiding places  
of up to 10,000 nuts.

More than 10,000 seashells  
had to be crushed to make  
the purple dye to colour  
a single Roman toga.

The Latin verb  
*manicare*  
means  
'to come in the morning'.



In the novel that the film *Pinocchio*  
was based on, Jiminy Cricket  
was brutally murdered and  
Pinocchio had his feet burned off and  
was hanged by villagers.

Donald Duck's  
voice started out  
as an attempt to do  
an impression  
of a lamb.

Red Bull  
is illegal in Norway, Denmark,  
Uruguay and Iceland.

Sitting Bull  
was originally called  
Jumping Badger.



When Fidel Castro  
seized power in Cuba,  
he ordered all Monopoly sets  
to be destroyed.

The human body grows fastest  
during its few first weeks in the womb.  
If it were to keep growing  
at the same rate for 50 years,  
it would be bigger than  
Mount Everest.

To produce beef  
takes 16,000 times its own weight  
in water.

The Turkish for 'cannibal'  
is *yamyam*.



On 30th June 1998, England lost to  
Argentina in a World Cup penalty

shoot-out. On that day, and for two days afterwards, the number of heart attacks in England increased by 25%.

The first violence of the French Revolution took place at a luxury wallpaper factory.

In 1811, crimes punishable by death in Britain included sheep stealing, impersonating a Chelsea Pensioner, 'strong evidence of malice' in children aged 7–14, living with gypsies for a month and stealing cheese.

In 2011,  
cheese was the  
most stolen food  
in the world.



Buzz Aldrin's  
mother's maiden name  
was Moon.

*Fritinancy*  
is the buzzing of insects.

Most bees buzz in the key of A,  
unless they are tired,  
when they buzz in the key of E.

British moths include  
the Uncertain, the Confused, the Magpie,  
the Lackey, the Drinker, the Streak,  
the Ruddy Highflyer, the Buff Arches,  
the Figure of Eighty, the Anomalous, the  
Dark Dagger, the Lettuce Shark,  
the Isabelline Tiger, the Waved Tabby  
and the Mother Shipton.



The cake  
for the Queen Mother's wedding  
in 1923 weighed  
half a ton.

The three  
most searched-for individuals  
in the Nobel Peace Prize  
nomination database are  
Mahatma Gandhi, Joseph Stalin  
and Adolf Hitler.

*A corpocracy*  
is a society ruled by corporations;  
a *coprocracy* is one ruled by shits.

The first mobile phones  
cost £2,000 each and  
had a battery life of  
about 20 minutes.



The world's first weather map,  
published in *The Times* on 1st April 1875,  
gave the weather for  
the *previous* day.

During the First World War,  
explosions from the battle of the Somme  
could be heard on Hampstead Heath.

*Handschuhschneeballwerfer* is German slang  
for 'coward'. It means someone who  
wears gloves to throw snowballs.

Two French kings were killed by tennis:  
King Louis X (1289–1316) caught a  
fatal chill after one game and  
Charles VIII (1470–98) never recovered  
from a coma after another one. He had  
banged his head on the door lintel  
on the way into the match.



Humans kill  
at least 100 million sharks a year,  
or about 11,000 an hour.

Female aphids give birth  
to other live female aphids that are



already pregnant with yet more  
female aphids.

A flock of snipe  
is known as a 'wisp'.

The bee hummingbird  
is the world's smallest bird.  
It weighs about as much  
as a tea bag.



John Ainsworth Horrocks (1818–46),  
who introduced camels to Australia,  
was also accidentally shot by one.  
He died of gangrene a month later,  
but had the camel executed first.

The Czech general Jan Zizka ordered  
his skin to be turned into a war drum  
after his death. It was beaten at times of  
national emergency, such as the outbreak  
of the Thirty Years War in 1618.

George Kakoma, the composer of  
Uganda's national anthem, sued his  
government for lost royalties in 1962.  
He won the case and was paid 2,000  
Ugandan shillings, equivalent to 50p.

A 'jackstraw' is a 16th-century word for a

person of no substance or worth.



A boar produces 200 ml of semen  
each time it ejaculates,  
compared to  
a man's 3 ml.

King George III's urine  
was blue.

The most times a person  
has been stung by bees  
without dying is 2,443.

A 'conscientious objector'  
was originally one who  
refused to have their children inoculated.



Skiing  
was introduced to Switzerland  
by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle  
in 1893.

Nelson Mandela  
was not removed from  
the US terror watch list

until 2008.

The polar explorers  
Roald Amundsen and Ernest Shackleton  
both explored  
in Burberry.

Two-thirds  
of the world's population  
has never seen snow.



The French for candyfloss is  
*barbe à papa*  
(dad's beard).

The Hebrew for candyfloss is  
*searot savta*  
(grandma's hair).

The Afrikaans for candyfloss is  
*spookasem*  
(ghost breath).

*Moer-my gesig* is Afrikaans for  
'a face you want to punch'.



Before he became prime minister of Australia in 1983, Bob Hawke got into the 1955 *Guinness Book of Records* for drinking two and a half pints of beer in 11 seconds.

11 of the 12 men  
to have walked on the Moon  
were in the Boy Scouts.

In 1937, comic acrobat Joseph Späh survived the *Hindenburg* airship disaster by jumping out of the window.

The French for  
'window-shopping'  
is *faire du leche-vitrines* or  
'window-licking'.



France has 36,782 mayors,  
five of whom are mayors of villages  
that ceased to exist 92 years ago.

In 1992, the rules governing what the French may legally christen their children were relaxed. The following year, the most popular name for baby boys was 'Kevin'.

The French philosopher Voltaire's

explanation for why the fossils of  
seashells are found on mountaintops was  
that they had been left there by ancient  
picnickers with a taste for seafood.

The French mathematician Descartes  
had a theory that monkeys and apes  
were able to talk – but kept quiet  
in case they were asked to do any work.



Work  
is three times more dangerous  
than war.

A single human male  
produces enough sperm in a fortnight  
to impregnate every fertile woman  
on the planet.

None of the best-known  
English swear words  
are of Anglo-Saxon origin.

Under the provisions of the  
1912 Scottish Protection of Animals Act,  
the Loch Ness monster  
is a protected species.



Before they were famous,  
Clive James and Sylvester Stallone  
had jobs cleaning out lion cages.

Eric Clapton and Jack Nicholson  
grew up believing their grandmothers  
were their mothers and their mothers  
were their sisters.

Olivia Newton-John  
was president of  
the Isle of Man Basking Shark Society.

John Cleese, Michael Caine and Marc Bolan  
all bought Rolls-Royces  
before they could drive.



The last words of Henry Royce,  
co-founder of Rolls-Royce, were:  
'I wish I'd spent more time  
in the office.'

When *The Office* first aired in 2007,  
it had the second-lowest audience  
appreciation score on the BBC  
after *Women's Bowls*.

When Radio 4's *Woman's Hour*  
began in 1946 it had a male host

began in 1970, it had a male host.

Early items included  
'Cooking with Whale Meat' and  
'I Married a Lion-tamer'.

'Broadcasting' comes from farming –  
it originally meant scattering  
seeds across a field.



Scolding and eavesdropping  
were illegal in England  
until 1967.

Abortion was illegal in the UK  
for only 164 years,  
between 1803 and 1967.

To avoid being caught breaking the law  
by a speed camera,  
you would have  
to be travelling at  
28,000 miles per hour.

In 1999, a gang of thieves  
was forced to do community service  
along a road in Rotherham.  
The next spring the daffodils  
coming into bloom spelt out the words  
'shag' and 'bollocks'.



*A williwaw*  
is a sudden gust of wind  
coming off a high plateau.

*Mollynogging*  
is an old Lincolnshire word  
for hanging out  
with loose women.

*Areodjarekput*  
is an Inuit word meaning  
'to exchange wives  
for a few days only'.

*A special bastard*  
is someone born out of wedlock  
whose parents later married.



Although they didn't meet  
until they were teenagers,  
Prince Albert and Queen Victoria  
were born in the same year  
and delivered by the same midwife.

The average human being  
gets through 900 skins in a lifetime.



The air in an average-sized room  
weighs about 100 pounds.

The US navy  
has more aircraft carriers  
than all the other navies  
of the world combined.



An animal the size of an elephant  
could evolve to an animal the size of  
a sheep in 100,000 generations,  
but for an animal the size of a sheep  
to evolve to the size of an elephant  
would take 1.6 million generations.

After a meal,  
a Burmese python's heart  
grows by 40%.

Squid travel faster  
when they jump through the air  
than they do under water.

Lava can flow  
as fast as  
a sprinting greyhound.



If melted down for scrap,  
a bronze medal from London 2012  
would be worth less than £3.

In 2008, archaeologists in Cyprus  
found a 7th-century curse  
inscribed on a lead tablet that said,  
'May your penis hurt when you make love.'  
Nobody knows who made the curse,  
or why.

The *Malleus Maleficarum*, a 15th-century  
treatise on witchcraft, warned that  
witches stole men's penises  
and kept them in birds' nests.

The average person in the UK  
talks about the weather  
44 times a month to  
18 other people.



The average Briton  
suffers from 9,672 minor injuries  
over the course of a 78-year lifespan.

The National Health Service  
is the world's 4th-largest employer

is the world's 11th largest employer,  
after the US Defense Department,  
the Chinese Red Army  
and Walmart.

The NHS has halved superbug deaths  
and saved 10,000 lives  
in the last four years simply  
by getting doctors and nurses  
to wash their hands.

If everyone in the world  
washed their hands properly,  
a million lives  
could be saved a year.



*Mundungus* n.  
The stench of tobacco.

*Quaquaversal* adj.  
Going off in all directions.

*Pixilated* adj.  
Slightly mad or confused,  
having been led astray by pixies.

*Rasceta* n.  
The creases  
on the inside of the wrist.



The first commercial chewing gum appeared in 1871, after Thomas Adams had failed to make car tyres from the same ingredients.

The first chewing gum made by William Wrigley Jr (in 1892) was given away free with his baking powder.

Lilt, the soft drink with the 'totally tropical taste', is completely unknown in the Caribbean.

Before the Queen puts her shoes on, a member of the royal household wears them first to make sure they are comfortable.



Spiders are extremely carnivorous. 10,000 spiders sealed in a room will eventually result in one enormously fat spider.

Americans eat 500 million pounds of peanut butter a year, enough to coat the floor

enough to eat the meat  
of the Grand Canyon.

Every month in the Netherlands,  
133 billion insects are killed  
colliding into cars.

Once a year, on 22nd August,  
Prince Hans-Adam II,  
the ruler of Liechtenstein,  
invites the whole country  
to a party at his house.



In online dating sites  
you are more likely to come across  
a teacher or lecturer  
than someone from any other profession.

Since 1959, it has been legal  
to marry a dead person in France,  
providing you can prove the wedding  
was already planned.

*Warmduscher*  
is German for 'wimp':  
a person so pathetic  
he only takes hot showers.

A survey of  
a working-class area of London in 1915  
found only 12 houses with baths.

Nine of them were being used  
for storage.



One third of patent applications  
in America in 1905 were  
related in some way to the bicycle.

Every year, a thousand letters  
arrive in Jerusalem addressed to God.

In 2009, a retired policeman called  
Geraint Woolford was admitted to  
Abergale Hospital in north Wales  
and ended up next to another retired  
policeman called Geraint Woolford.  
The men weren't related, had never met  
and were the only two people in the UK  
called Geraint Woolford.

Geraint is the only word spoken  
in England and Wales that rhymes with  
'pint' – though in Scotland you might hear  
'behint' (Scots for 'behind').



There are two rhymes in English  
for purple: *curple*, a strap passing

under a horse's tail, and *hirple*,  
to walk along dragging  
one leg behind the other.

The African giant pouched rat  
can smell tuberculosis 50 times faster  
than a laboratory scientist  
can identify it.

Electrons move  
along an electricity cable  
about as fast as  
honey flows.

80% of people  
who die from anorexia  
are aged at least 45.



A red blood cell  
can make a complete circuit  
of your body in 20 seconds.

If your stomach acid  
got on to your skin  
it would burn  
a hole in it.

A pumping human heart  
can squirt blood  
a distance of  
20 feet.

30 feet.

When we blush,  
our stomach lining goes red too.



Christopher Columbus  
suffered from arthritis in his wrist  
as a result of a bacterial infection  
caught from a parrot.

John Wayne  
once won Lassie the Dog  
in a game of poker.

The founder of match.com,  
Gary Kremen, lost his girlfriend  
to a man she met on  
match.com.

At Ronnie Barker's memorial service  
in Westminster Abbey in 2006,  
four candles were carried  
instead of the usual two.



Despite playing the Fonz  
for ten years in the sitcom *Happy Days*,



Henry Winkler never learned  
to ride a motorcycle.

The maize needed  
to fill a single Range Rover's  
petrol tank with biofuel  
would feed a person  
for a whole year.

J. R. R. Tolkien  
typed the 1,200-page manuscript of  
*The Lord of the Rings* trilogy  
with two fingers.

*Quantophrenia*  
is an obsessive reliance  
on statistics.



The first published crossword  
was called a word-cross.

The hand jive was invented  
at the Cat's Whiskers club in Soho.  
The premises were so small and cramped  
that there was only enough room  
for people to dance with their hands.

Feeding curry to a sheep  
reduces the amount of  
methane in its farts  
by up to 40%

by up to 10%.

More than half the trash  
collected on the summit of Ben Nevis  
is banana peel.



You could listen to a radio on the Moon  
but it's virtually impossible  
aboard a submarine.  
Radio waves travel  
much more easily through space  
than through water.

Areas of the Moon include  
the Ocean of Storms,  
the Marsh of Decay  
and the Lake of Death.

By law, buskers in Dublin  
must have a repertoire of  
at least 20 songs.

The opposite of plankton is *nekton* –  
creatures that move through water  
at will, rather than merely drifting.  
Fish, dolphins and humans are nekton.



When John Hetherington  
ventured out in public  
wearing the first top hat,  
it was considered so shocking that  
children screamed, women fainted  
and a small boy broke his arm  
in the chaos.

In October 2008,  
inflation in Zimbabwe  
reached 231,000,000%.

The average car in Britain is parked  
for 96% of the time.

Casanova  
was a librarian.



India has almost 155,000 post offices:  
more than any country in the world  
and almost twice as many as China.

Chess, Ludo and Snakes and Ladders  
were all invented in ancient India.  
Snakes and Ladders was called  
*Moksha Patam* – ‘the path to liberation’.

South-east England  
has a lower annual rainfall  
than Jerusalem or Beirut.

50 to 100 people kill themselves  
on the London Underground each year,  
but official records state that  
only three babies  
have ever been born there,  
in 1924, 2008 and 2009.



Women make  
25% of the films in Iran,  
compared to  
4% in the US.

By 2025, there will be more  
English speakers in China  
than in the rest of the world put together

A new skyscraper  
is built in China every five days.  
By 2016, there will be four times as many  
as in the whole of the US.

The electrical energy  
that powers each cell in our bodies  
works out at 30 million volts per metre,  
the equivalent voltage  
of a bolt of lightning.



The Netherlands  
exports more soy sauce  
than Japan.

Tokyo  
has three times as many  
Michelin-starred restaurants  
as Paris.

Bricklehampton  
is the longest place name in the UK  
with no repeated letters.

A vulture can safely swallow  
enough botulinum toxin  
to kill 300,000 guinea pigs.



More than seven times  
as many people in the UK  
visit museums and galleries every year  
as attend Premier League football games.

Manchester United  
is the most hated brand in Britain  
and the 7th most hated in the world.

Angola has the world's best record  
at football penalty shoot-outs.  
They have never lost one.

Ants nod to each other  
as they pass.



The Swiss  
own more guns per head  
than the Iraqis.

Saudi women  
have won the right to vote,  
but not the right  
to drive to the polling station.

In Norway, 'Odd' and 'Even'  
are common male first names.  
You can even (oddly)  
have 'Odd-Even'.

Richard the Lionheart's  
younger brother, John,  
was nicknamed 'Dollheart'.



A *smellsmock* is a priest

who indulges in extra-curricular  
activities with his flock.

Japanese sheep go  
'meh'.

*Gymnophoria*  
is the sense that someone is  
mentally undressing you.

A *gynotikilobomassophile*  
is one who loves to  
nibble women's earlobes.



The Afrikaans  
for an elephant's trunk is  
*slurp*.

*Brenda*  
means 'inside'  
in Albanian.

Baghdad means  
'God's gift'  
in Persian.

The first man to use the word  
'bored'  
was Lord Byron in 1823.



The world's oldest living thing  
is a patch of Mediterranean sea-grass  
between Spain and Cyprus.  
It is estimated to be 200,000 years old.

The word  
Twinings  
in the tea company's  
original 300-year-old typeface  
is the oldest continuously used  
commercial logo in existence.

Every time he made a cup of coffee,  
Beethoven counted out exactly 60 beans  
to make sure it was always  
exactly the same strength.

A female chimpanzee  
in a fit of passion has the  
strength of six men.



Higgs bosons,  
assuming they exist at all,  
exist for approximately  
one zeptosecond –  
a thousandth of a billionth



of a billionth of a second.

The Hundred Years War  
lasted for  
116 years.

There are more pigs in China  
than in the next  
43 pork-producing countries combined.

Some pigs suffer from  
mysophobia,  
the fear of mud.



*Tyrosemiophile* n.  
One who collects  
cheese labels.

*Ultracrepidarian* n.  
Someone who doesn't know  
what they're talking about.

*Zemblanity* n.  
Bad luck occurring  
just as expected:  
the opposite of serendipity.

*Zinzulation* n.  
The sound made  
,

by power saws.



The seven years' preparation  
for the 2008 Beijing Olympics  
reduced unemployment in the city to zero  
and increased the average income by 89.9%.

Many of the doves  
released at the opening ceremony  
of the 1988 Seoul Olympics  
were accidentally roasted alive  
when the Olympic flame was lit.

More than 50% of Team GB's medals  
in the 2012 London Olympics were won  
in sports where the athlete is  
sitting down or kneeling.

At the 2012 London Olympics,  
which lasted for 17 days, the athletes were  
provided with 150,000 free condoms –  
approximately 15 each.



British troops in India  
during the Second World War were issued  
with the memorable advice:  
'Defeat the Axis,

Use Prophylaxis’.

In 1951, more than 200 British MPs  
were voted in by over 50%  
of their electorate.  
In 2001, none were.

99% of all the words in the  
*Oxford English Dictionary*  
do not derive from Old English,  
but 60% of the most  
commonly used words do.

*Francach* is an Irish word  
that means both ‘rat’ and ‘Frenchman’.



Argentine scientists have discovered  
that giving hamsters Viagra  
helps them recover from jet lag  
up to 50% faster.

To *dringle*  
is to waste time  
in a lazy manner.

The UK is the fattest nation  
in the European Union  
and the 28th-fattest in the world.

The USA is the 9th-fattest nation

THE USA IS THE SIXTH LARGEST NATION  
in the world. Eight of the top ten  
are Pacific island nations, led by  
Nauru, Micronesia and the Cook Islands.



The 1 million inhabitants of the  
Chinese city of Zhuji make 8 billion  
pairs of socks a year:  
35% of total worldwide  
sock production.

In Italy, 13  
is not an unlucky number,  
but 17 is.

Kailash Singh of India stopped  
washing after his wedding 38 years ago,  
hoping it would help him to have a son.  
To date, he has seven daughters.

*Schimpf-los* is a 24-hour German hotline  
that allows customers to  
release pent-up aggression by  
swearing at telephone operators.



Chamois can  
balance on a ledge  
less than two inches wide

less than two inches wide.

Three-quarters of the French  
take their annual holiday  
in France.

The huge gong  
that was struck before Rank films  
was made of papier mâché.

To 'baffle' someone  
once meant to subject them  
to public disgrace  
by hanging their picture  
upside down.



Edward Elgar (1857–1934)  
is the only major composer  
to have mastered  
the bassoon.

The Wars of the Roses  
weren't called that.  
Sir Walter Scott invented the name  
four centuries after the conflict.

*A walleter*  
is an indispensable word  
for someone who has a wallet.

Before becoming an artist,  
Magritte was a professional  
wallpaper designer.



The playwright  
Tennessee Williams (1911–83)  
choked to death  
on a bottle cap.

If the mass in a one-kilogram bag of sugar  
could be converted into energy,  
it would be enough to drive a car  
non-stop for 100,000 years.

There were no recorded boxing matches  
anywhere in the world  
between the fall of the Roman Empire  
and 1681.

Only three  
of the original 60 clauses  
of Magna Carta  
are still in force.



The soldiers of Edward III  
dressed up as swans for banquets.  
The king himself came

as a pheasant.

The EU  
spends over a billion Euros a year  
on translation.

A third of the 250 Americans  
who catch leprosy every year  
get it from  
armadillos.

90% of the bullets  
bought by the Ministry of Defence  
are used for training purposes.



The number of ten-year-olds  
in Britain who hold  
legal shotgun licences  
is 26.

More than a third  
of the world's smokers  
are Chinese.

A lethal dose of caffeine  
is about 50 double espressos.

Red Bull  
was originally called  
Red Bull Energy Drink

Red water Buffalo.



President Obama's secret-service nickname is 'Renegade'. Ronald Reagan's nickname was 'Rawhide', Bill Clinton's was 'Eagle' and George W. Bush was known as 'Trailblazer'.

MI5 used to own special kettles that it kept specifically for steaming open envelopes.

Sitting in a 15-minute meeting uses more energy than Usain Bolt expends over three 100-metre sprints.

Almost any domestic cat can run faster than Usain Bolt.



Over a distance of about a mile, a carrier pigeon is faster than a fax machine.

Modern homing pigeons find their way home without the



find it more convenient to  
follow motorways and ring roads  
and turn left and right at junctions  
rather than using their  
in-built navigational abilities.

Brazil nuts are so radioactive  
that a pocketful will set off the alarm  
at a nuclear power station.

The *Oxford English Dictionary*  
takes 9,000 words to describe  
the 45 different meanings  
of 'at'.



A male rhinoceros beetle  
can lift 850 times  
its own body weight.

Alan Turing,  
the father of computer science,  
chained his mug to a radiator  
to stop anyone else at work from using it.

The proud owner  
of the first silicone breast implant  
was a dog called Esmeralda.

There are only  
two beret factories  
left in France.



In 1367, King Charles V of France  
explicitly banned the wearing  
of shoes shaped like penises.

In 2008, pet hamsters  
were banned in Vietnam.

Monty Python's *Life of Brian*  
was marketed in Sweden as  
'The film that's so funny,  
it was banned in Norway.'

The banning of the fez  
in Turkey in 1925  
led to riots, executions  
and a thriving fez-smuggling trade.



The Turkish  
for 'ski' is  
*kayak*.

*Dalek*  
is Croatian for  
'far-away thing'.

*Smegma*  
is Latin for  
'detergent'.

The Afrikaans  
for 'astrology' is  
*sterrewiggelary*.



Theoretically the Pope can resign  
but, since he is the Supreme Pontiff,  
there is no one qualified  
to accept his resignation.

Vatican City  
is the only place in the world  
where cash machines  
offer instructions in Latin.

Since the Second World War,  
only 20 babies born in the UK  
have been called Adolf.

The 'G-spot' was nearly called  
the *Whipple Tickle* –  
after Professor Beverley Whipple,  
who coined the expression  
that we know today.



Cow's hooves  
are used to make  
the foam in fire extinguishers.

The first potatoes  
introduced to Britain  
were used to make desserts.

In 1976,  
one person in the USA  
was killed by an outbreak of swine flu,  
but the vaccine introduced to combat it  
killed 25.

There are 1,000 times  
as many bacteria  
in your gut  
as there are stars  
in the Milky Way.



Bacteria  
are about as different  
from viruses as  
metronomes are  
from giraffes.

Most antibiotics

are made from bacteria.

Bacteria  
can get viruses.

*Viruses* can get viruses.  
A new one recently discovered  
in a French cooling tower  
was found to be infected  
by another, smaller one.



Scallops  
have up to 100 eyes.

The praying mantis  
has only one ear,  
which is located  
between its legs.

Until the 19th century  
the English word  
for actors was  
'hypocrites'.

The Japanese  
for 'handbag' is  
*handubagu*.



In 1947, the Duke of Windsor  
bought the Duchess of Windsor  
a black patent leather  
Hermès wheelbarrow.

In 1915, the lock millionaire Cecil Chubb  
bought his wife Stonehenge.  
She didn't like it,  
so in 1918 he gave it to the nation.

Since 1815, Belgium has paid  
the Duke of Wellington's family  
more than \$46 million  
as a reward for winning  
the battle of Waterloo.

The First World War  
officially ended on  
3rd October 2010.



Wars kill more civilians  
than soldiers: in a war,  
the safest place to be  
is usually in the army.

The world's worst maritime disaster

was the sinking of the *Wilhelm Gustloff*  
by a Soviet submarine in 1945,  
with the loss of 9,343 lives.

35 years after leaving school,  
the majority of people  
can still identify  
90% of their classmates.

The speed of the wind  
has fallen  
by 60%  
in the last  
30 years.



Half of all the species  
in the world live in  
the rainforest canopy.

The human brain  
is more complex  
than an exploding star  
or the US economy.

Every day,  
plants convert  
sunlight into energy  
equivalent to six times  
the entire power consumption of  
human civilisation.

For a million years,  
the human population of the Earth  
was less than 26,000.



The last two speakers  
of the Mexican language Zoque  
are both in their seventies  
and refuse to speak to one another.

More than one in five Americans  
believes that the world will  
end in their lifetime.

Thomas Edison's last breath  
is held in a vial  
at the Henry Ford museum in Detroit.

99% of all the species  
that have ever lived  
are now extinct.



# Tasting Notes

*Anyone who is practically acquainted with scientific work is aware that those who refuse to go beyond fact rarely get as far as fact.*

T. H. HUXLEY (1825–1895)

This book is rather like a whisky still – an immense amount of malted barley, water and smoke have gone in at the top to produce the slow drip of concentrated liquor at the bottom. Feeding that still, alongside the three of us, have been the matchless team of QI Elves led by Bo’sun Justin Pollard and Piers ‘Flash’ Fletcher. Andrew Murray, Anne Miller and Alex Bell have done most of the heavy lifting. Will Bowen, Molly Oldfield, Chris Gray, Rob Blake, Jenny Doughty and Liz Townsend pitched in at key points and Sarah Lloyd’s careful management made sure we ended up with cask-strength single malt and not a cheap supermarket blend.

Once again the Faber team of Stephen Page, Julian Loose, Eleanor Crow, Paula Turner and Dave Watkins proved they are the best in the business.

Now its over to you. The sources for each fact can be found online at [www.qi.com/1227](http://www.qi.com/1227). Please do let us know if you have a quibble or a correction. And add your own discoveries via our Twitter account @qikipedia. As Mark Twain once reminded us:

*Get your facts first, and then  
you can distort them  
as much as you please.*

# Index

*This is here to help you find your favourite bits. Like the facts themselves, we've kept it as simple as we can. The rule is: each entry has only one word.*

*If you can't find 'polar bears' try 'bears'; for 'Adam's apple' try 'apple' or 'Adam's' and so on. Capital letters at the start of an entry indicate a proper noun or name – 'bugs' are insects and 'Bugs' is the Bunny.*

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John Lloyd CBE is the creator of QI and the man who devised *The News Quiz* and *To the Manor Born* for radio and *Not the Nine O'Clock News*, *Spitting Image* and *Blackadder* for television. His favourite page is 2.

John Mitchinson, QI's Director of Research, has been both bookseller and publisher and looked after authors as diverse as Haruki Murakami, The Beatles and a woman who knitted with dog hair. His favourite page is 306.

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## ***By the Same Authors***

THE BOOK OF GENERAL IGNORANCE

THE SECOND BOOK OF GENERAL IGNORANCE

THE BOOK OF ANIMAL IGNORANCE

ADVANCED BANTER: THE QI BOOK OF QUOTATIONS

THE QI BOOK OF THE DEAD

THE QI 'E' ANNUAL

THE QI 'F' ANNUAL

THE QI 'G' ANNUAL

THE QI 'H' ANNUAL

*also by John Lloyd (with Douglas Adams)*

THE MEANING OF LIFF

THE DEEPER MEANING OF LIFF



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