

FASCINATING FACTS

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Fascinating Facts is a free subscription monthly private circulation e- magazine of personal , historic and military interest.

To obtain your free copy please email ray@scarletman.co.uk

Welcome to this issue of Fascinating Facts. Now retired, with a background of journalism, literature production, international public relations, and ex editor of a leading industry publications, I now have the time to combine my abilities and share my interests in historic facts, especially in connection with military matters. While I have written most of the articles in the Scarletman I am happy to accept ideas and contributions from readers; giving them credit for their work. The Scarletman is free issue e-magazine therefore if you would like to circulate copies further then I am happy for you to create a wider readership of those with a similar interest to mine.

Percy

In this issue In this issue In this issue

3	3 THE MAGIC NUMBER?
4	THREE WISE MAN
5	THE GREEN MAN
6	YOUR NUMBER PLATE
7	ST VITUS DANCE AND THE DANCE PLAGUE
8	SEQUOIA SEMPERVIRENS TALLEST AND LONGEST LIVING TREES
9	FACTS—FROM THE WEIGHT OF A CLOUD TO BITING YOUR FINGER NAILS
10	NULL ISLAND - THE ISLAND THAT DOES NOT EXIST
IN SUPPORT OF UKRAINE	

WORLD FACTS

Antarctica's Ice: Has 90% of world's freshwater.

Largest Living Structure: Coral reefs are the largest living structures on Earth.

Deepest Lake: Lake Baikal in Siberia is the deepest freshwater lake at 5,315 feet.

Tree Communication: African Acacia trees communicate to release toxins against herbivores.

Spinning Fast: Earth rotates at roughly 1,040 miles per hour

Magnetic Poles: The poles are moving; the North Pole moves ~55 km annually

Hot Interior: The Earth's core is as hot as the surface of the Sun.

Pangea: Around 250 million years ago, all continents were one supercontinent called Pangea.

Most Languages: South Africa is known as the "Rainbow Nation" with 11 official languages.

Highest Structure: The Burj Khalifa in Dubai is the world's tallest building.

Great Wall: Walking the Great Wall of China would take approximately 18 months.

Bulletproof Animal: Armadillos are bulletproof.

Radioactive Food: Bananas are slightly radioactive.

Rain of Fish: In Yoro, Honduras it rains fish.

Metal Snow: It snows metal on Venus.

Marie Curie was the first person to win 2 Nobel Prizes – physics in 1903, and chemistry in 1911

Oldest parliament Iceland, the Faroe Islands, and Isle of Man all have claims to having the oldest parliament, all founded in the 9th and 10th centuries.

Russia is the most forested country in the world, with 815 million hectares.

China is the world's most populous country, with a population of about 1.4 billion people.

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The number 3 has held a unique significance throughout history from the ancient Greek philosopher, Pythagoras who considered the deeply significant meaning behind numbers with number 3 considered to be the divine and perfect number. Also the number of harmony, wisdom and understanding as well as the number of time – past, present, future; birth, life, death; beginning, middle, end. Added to this 3 is often the magic number in fairy tales. The number 3 is also associated with the Freemasons, of which Mozart and his librettist Schikaneder were members, and the theme of 3 appears repeatedly in the piece. The opera's opening overture is written in Eb Major, which has 3 flats, and it begins with 3 chordal gestures, imitating the secret knock that masons would have used in Vienna at the time to gain access to their Lodges.

INFORMATION CHUNKS

Research shows that our brains can comfortably process up to three 'chunks' of information in our short-term memory. Above that, they need to work much harder. This insight can help us devise campaign names and materials that have a far higher chance of being remembered. For the uninitiated, the rule of three suggests that words grouped into threes are more appealing and easier to remember. Our brains are pattern-seeking machines, constantly looking for relationships and meaning in the world around us. Three is the smallest number we need to use to create a pattern, the perfect combination of brevity and rhythm. It is a principle captured neatly in the Latin phrase omne trium perfectum: everything that comes in threes is perfect, or, every set of three is complete. Research gives further evidence on why three is the magic number. One recent study found that in advertisements, speeches and other messages, designed to have a persuasive effect, three claims will persuade, but four or more will trigger scepticism – and may even reverse an initially positive impression.

GOVERN DAILY TALK

The rule of three also governs how we talk to each other in daily conversation. According to speech writer Max Atkinson, author of Lend Me Your Ears, studies show that listeners will wait for a speaker to



find a third item in a list before taking their turn to speak. But if they go beyond three to a fourth item, the speaker will usually get interrupted. The third item marks a sense of completeness, and we have an ingrained tendency to wait for it. We can use the rule of three to powerful effect. Its simplicity also makes it ideal advice to help leaders and managers improve their own communications. . Believe it or not, numbers are

symbolic in the Bible. The number 3 appears over 450 times. Biblically, 3 represents the Holy Trinity, harmony, and new life. In the Bible. the number 3 signifies completeness. In Hebrew three or shelos or sheloshah means new life, harmony, and wholeness. The repetition of 3 is believed to hold symbolic spiritual and phonetic meanings. Phrases, objects, and people in groups of 3 are considered prominent and divinely important. If something is complete, perfect, or whole, it'll be in a group of 3.

FAMOUS SPEECHES

Browse any famous speech and you're likely to find groups of three. US President Barack Obama is an example with his 3. In his 2008 Presidential acceptance speech he used groups of 3 at least 12 times. Tony Blair's use of 'Education, education and education' set out his

EXAMPLES OF THE POWER OF THREE

Religion –

Father, son and Holy ghost
 Gold, frankincense, and myrrh.
 Three Wise Men,
 Patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
 Jesus' Inner Circle: Peter, James, and John,
 Noah's Sons: Shem, Ham, and Japeth
 Angels Michael, Gabriel, and Lucifer (though Lucifer is fallen).
 Jesus rose from the dead on the 3rd day,

Temptations: Jesus was tempted three times by the devil.

Jonah: 3 days and nights in a fish.
 Darkness in Egypt: Three days of total darkness .
 Divine Affirmations: "Holy, holy, holy" .
 Body, Soul, Spirit.

Three-word phrases—

Live laugh love," -
 "See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil".
 "Hook, line, and sinker,"
 "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity" .-
 "Ve ni, vidi, vici" (I came, I saw, I conquered).
 A Mars a day helps you work, rest and play'
 Stop, Look and Listen'
 'Friends, Romans, Countrymen'

Characters:

The Three Musketeers,
 Three Stooges.

Structure:

Beginning, middle, and end;
 Morning, noon, and night.
 First, second, and third person.
 Past, present, and future.
 Winners: First, second and third.

People, paperwork, and process
 Government of the people by the people for the people.

Famous quotations:

Churchill
 This is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.'

Abraham Lincoln
 You can fool all of the people some of the time, and some of the people all of the time, but you can't fool all of the people all of the time.

Confucius
 We may learn wisdom: First, by reflection, which is noblest; Second, by imitation, which is easiest; and third by experience, the bitterest.

Buddha
 Three things cannot be hidden: the sun, the moon, and the truth..

Tommy Lasorda
 Those who make it happen,
 Those who watch what happens
 Those who wonder what happened.

Three-Quotation Rule
 Prices remain competitive. Buyers explore multiple options. Decisions are fair and transparent



In Christianity, the biblical Magi, known as the Three Wise Men, Three Kings, and Three Magi, are distinguished foreigners who visited Jesus after his birth, bearing gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. In Western Christianity, they are commemorated on the feast day of Epiphany—sometimes called "Three Kings Day"—and commonly appear in the nativity celebrations of Christmas; in Eastern Christianity, they are also commemorated on Christmas day. They only appear in the Gospel of Matthew, which states that they came "from the east" to worship the "one who has been born king of the Jews". Their names, origins, appearances, and exact number are unmentioned and derive from the inferences or traditions of later Christians. In Western and Eastern Orthodox Christianity, they are usually assumed to have been three in number, corresponding with each gift; in Syriac Christianity, they often number twelve. Likewise, the Magi's social status is never stated: although some biblical translations describe them as astrologers, they were increasingly identified as kings by at least the third century, which conformed with Christian interpretations of Old Testament prophecies that the messiah would be worshipped by kings.

MYSTERIOUS IDENTITIES

The mystery of the Magi's identities and background, combined with their theological significance, has made them prominent figures in the Christian tradition being venerated as saints or even martyrs in many Christian communities. Both secular and Christian observers have noted that the Magi popularly serve as a means of ex-

pressing various ideas, symbols, and themes Many scholars regard the Magi as legendary rather than historical figures.

BIBLICAL ACCOUNT

Traditional nativity scenes depict three "wise men" visiting Jesus on the night of his birth, in a manger accompanied by the shepherds and angels. But Matthew's account does not specify a place of Jesus's birth in which an unnumbered party of unnamed "wise men" - not kings—visits him .

MATTHEW

2 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

3 When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.

4 When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born.

5 "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

6 "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel."

7 Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared.

8 He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

9 After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was.

10 When they saw the star, they were overjoyed.

11 On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

THE STAR

The star which they followed has traditionally become known as the Star of Bethlehem. In 1995, Cambridge University professor Colin Humphreys published a study based on comet records from the Book of Han. According to this hypothesis, the Star of Bethlehem was a comet that appeared in 5 BC, the only astronomical object that would explain the three characteristics described by Matthew - a new star that moved slowly across the sky and stopped over Bethlehem with an almost vertical tail. The Magi would have initially seen it in the morning sky in the east, travelled from Iraq, Iran, or Saudi Arabia for one or two months to Jerusalem, and, as they headed for Bethlehem, the comet was already in the south, seeming to guide them and stop over the place. Chinese records would confirm its visibility for more than 70 days. Previously, the triple conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in Pisces (7BC) would have announced, in the context of the time, a divine king in Israel, the grouping of Mars, Saturn, and Jupiter (6BC) his power, and the comet in Capricornus (5BC) the imminence of the birth.

WISE MEN OR KINGS?

The Magi are popularly referred to as wise men and kings. Magi being the plural of Latin magus, borrowed from Greek μάγος (magos), as used in the original Greek text of the Gospel of Matthew. The Greek (magos) being derived from Old Persian maguš, which in turn originated from the Avestan magâunô, referring to the Iranian priestly caste of Zoroastrianism. Within this tradition, priests paid particular attention to the stars and gaining an international reputation for astrology: at that time highly regarded as a science. Their religious practices and astrological abilities caused derivatives of the term Magi to be applied to the occult in general and led to the English term magic. There is nothing in the Gospel of Matthew that implies they were rulers of any kind. The identification of the Magi as kings is linked to Old Testament prophecies that describe the Messiah being worshipped by kings in Isaiah 60:3, Psalm 68:29, and Psalm 72:10, which reads, "Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations serve him."

THE GREEN MAN

The earliest form of "Green Man" carvings date is dated to 400 AD. as those found at St. Abre in France. While earlier foliate heads exist in Roman (2nd century) and Celtic art the distinct, widespread medieval architectural motif largely emerged in the 11th and 12th centuries, famously seen at Kilpeck Church, England.

Some cite a carving from India dating to roughly 2300 BC, with early Christian/Romanesque: Foliate heads appeared in Christian art from the 4th to 6th centuries, with examples in Trier Cathedral.

MEDIEVAL GREEN MAN

The proliferation of the Green Man in church architecture, such as at 12th century Kilpeck Church, is typically linked to the Romanesque period, with designs becoming more common in the 13th-15th centuries.

While earlier, non-Christian examples (like Greek or Roman deities with leafy features) may be precursors, the traditional "Green Man" as a, often, foliage-disgorging head is primarily an often, medieval phenomenon that became prominent with the Norman church building boom.

An 11th century Romanesque Templar church in Jerusalem has Romanesque foliate heads. The tradition of the Green Man carved into Christian churches is found across Europe. The motif fitted very easily into the developing use of vegetal architectural sculpture in Romanesque and Gothic



Staff Sgt. JoAnn Makinano, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Sculpture of Green Man in ruins of Hatra, modern Iraq, 2nd century



Stewpots90, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons

architecture in Europe. Male foliate heads initially appeared in England during the early 12th century deriving from those of France. They were particularly popular in the Gothic architecture of the 13th to 15th centuries, despite its claimed popularity with the lay public, is not supported by evidence.

FACE SURROUNDED BY LEAVES

The Green Man is typified by a face surrounded by leaves symbolising nature, rebirth, the cycle of life, death, and the renewal of humanity's connection to the fertility and enduring power of vegetation primarily interpreted as a symbol of spring rebirth, representing the cycle of new growth.

It is now common in celebrations such as May Day as "Jack-in-the-Green".

The Green Man statue, set on fire at the end of each Green Man Festival, Bannau Brycheiniog National Park, near Crickhowell, Wales (NP8 1LP). Dates: August 20–23, 2026.



Ninara, CC BY 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons

6th-century Byzantine mosaic in the Great Palace Mosaic Museum, Istanbul

YOUR NUMBER PLATE

The Motor Car Act of 1903, created regulations for the official arrival of automobiles on British roads. Responsibility for registering vehicles became the responsibility of British County Borough and County Councils. These local authorities issued licenses that were simply a yellow document allowing the holder to operate a "motor car motorcycle."

The early licenses did not categorise various vehicle types as those today. It was not until 1930 that licenses began specifying classes of vehicles an individual could drive, forming the basis for the category section found on modern UK driving licenses.

FIRST TO PASS TEST

The first person to pass a UK driving test was Mr. R. Beere from Kensington, London, who passed the voluntary test on March 16, 1935 at a cost of 7 shillings and 6 pence or 37.5p. The need for a more efficient and centralised system became apparent as, vehicle numbers continued to rise. Local authorities, managing licenses with a three-year renewal cycle, struggled to keep pace. In 1971, it was decided to centralise the licensing system. This also enabled licenses to be linked to the Police National Computer and validity of licenses extended from three years to the holder's 70th birthday. In 1968 the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre (DVLC), was established in Swansea, Wales and took over all responsibility of issuing licenses.

SIGNIFICANT CHANGES

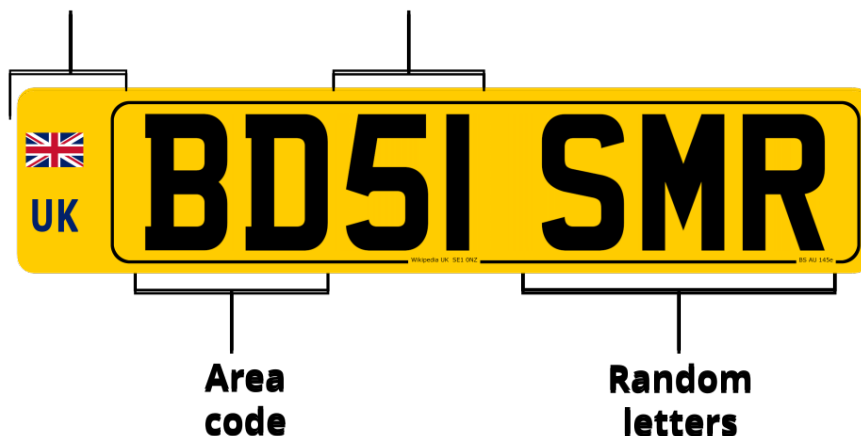
In 1990 it also became an executive agency of the Department for Transport (DfT). Which saw significant changes in driver licensing regulations. The introduction of photo-card driving licenses in 1998 further enhanced security and identification. Today, the DVLA continues to develop its online services, aiming to provide a comprehensive platform for motorists.

2000s Onwards: A major push towards digital services began, aiming to make processes more efficient and reduce paper use, with many services moving online.

Distinguishing sign (optional)

Age Identifier

Enbrb & ZEIsb, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons



STANDARD PLATE FORMAT

First two letters: DVLA office where registered ('L' for London, 'M' for Manchester).

Two number Age identifier (e.g., '24' for March-August 2024, '74' for Sept-Feb 2024/25).

Last three letters: Random sequence to differentiate vehicles.

Appearance & Rules

Reflective: Must be made of reflective material.

Colours: Front plate white background, rear plate yellow background, both with black characters.

Font: Charles Wright font.

British Standard: Marked with "BS AU 145e" if fitted after Sept 2021).

No background Patterns:

Show supplier's details and a British Standard number.

Special Plates & Identifiers

National Identifiers: Can include UK, England, Scotland, Wales, or Cymru, often with a flag.

Custom Plates: The DVLA offers personalised registrations.

Historic Vehicles: Over 40 years old can use black-on-white plates.

New Plate Codes

New codes are issued on March 1st and September 1st each year.

No Registration Needed:

The monarch's official vehicles are exempt from displaying number plates, a unique concession in the UK. Instead these state review cars such as Bentley State Limousines and Rolls-Royces, used for major events, display the House of Windsor coat of arms above the windscreen. Members of the Royal Family have their own unique plates that are passed down or kept within the family. But if ever for sale would be more than priceless!!.

MOST EXPENSIVE PLATES

As popularity grew, the prices reached for the most expensive plates have increased with many motorists attracted by the investment potential as well as vanity. In the UK, sales of private plates via the Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency exceeded £100 million per annum for the first time in 2016. Since 1989, the DVLA has made a total of £2 billion from selling private plates. While the wealthy may spend more on a private plate than on their personal vehicle, not all car owners are attracted to private plates. This has not affected number plates from appreciating thousands in value each year.

2006; Registration M1 sold for £331,500 by Bonhams at the Goodwood Festival of Speed.

2008; Registration F1 sold for £440,625 to Bradford Car design entrepreneur Afzal Kahn. The plate was previously owned and sold by Essex County Council and was sold to raise money for training young drivers. Originally the plate was fixed in 1904 to the Panhard et Levassor of the County Surveyor.

2008; Registration S1, believed to be Edinburgh's first number plate, issued in 1903, sold for £397,500. It was originally owned by Sir John MacDonald, the Lord Kingsburgh.

2009; Registration 1D sold for £352,000

2014; Registration 250 became a new record for a UK registration plate selling for £518,440

2025 Registration JB1 shattered this record, selling for £608,600 to an internet bidder at an auction during the Goodwood Festival of Speed,

ST VITUS DANCE AND THE DANCE PLAGUE

As a child, if I kept fidgeting people would say "he had Saint Vitus dance" So I wondered what that meant and where it came from. So here goes—the dancing plague of 1518, or dance epidemic of 1518 was a dancing mania that occurred in Strasbourg, from July to September 1518. Between 50 and 400 people danced for weeks. Of the many theories the most popular was stress induced mass hysteria. But there is controversy concerning the number of deaths.

DANCED FOR A WEEK

The dancing outbreak started in July 1518 when Frau Troffea and her daughter Fräulein Emma Götz started dancing fervently and uncontrollably in a street outside her home in Strasbourg on July 14th. It appears that there was no musical accompaniment but they simply "began to dance! Some who witnessed their strange performance began to mimic them, and within days more than thirty chromatics were in motion, some so monomaniacally that only death would have the power to intervene. They kept up their constant dancing for a week and soon, three dozen others joined in.

NOCEBO EFFECT

This is known and believed by some to be a perfect example of a nocebo effect which can make some feel ill simply by being under the expectation of being ill. By August, the "dancing plague" had claimed 400 victims. Dancers began to collapse. It is said some even died from a stroke or heart attack. The victims' movements were described as spasmodic with many convulsions and their bodies were left drenched in sweat. Their arms would thrash violently and some noted that their eyes were vacant and expressionless. Blood would pool into their swollen feet and they would eventually bleed into their shoes. Often, there would also be cries for help from the affected. If the victims did not succumb to a heart attack, they would collapse from extreme exhaustion, hunger, and thirst. There were as many as 15 deaths per day during the outbreak's peak, but the final number of fatalities is unknown. No one knew what



Dance of death: the careless and the careful. Coloured aquatint by T. Rowlandson, 1816.

caused this reaction, which meant no one understood how to remedy it. By early September, the outbreak began to subside.

RELIGIOUS ASPECT

Historical documents, including "physician notes, cathedral sermons, local and regional chronicles, and notes issued by the Strasbourg city council are clear that the victims danced but it is not known why. Sources agree there was an outbreak of dancing after a single woman started dancing and it lasted for so long that it attracted the attention of the authorities. The council gave authority to physicians, who prescribed the afflicted to "dance themselves free of it" There are claims that guild halls were refurbished to accommodate the dancing, as well as musicians and dealing with the dancing mania to stay upright. It backfired, and the council banned public dancing.

SAINT VITUS

People danced in fear of a punishment by Saint Vitus; to be "free of sin" many joined the dancing epidemic. It was claimed that when divine punishment or demonic possession initiated and sustained frenzied dancing, only those with divinely bestowed authority could restore the sinners to wholeness and to a right relationship with the divine. The council also banned music, as well. Those who danced were ordered to go to the shrine of Saint Vitus to punish sinners by compelling them to dance uncontrollably, wear red shoes that were sprinkled with holy water and had painted crosses on the tops and

soles. They also had to hold small crosses and incense and incantations were part of the "ritual."

FORGIVEN BY ST VITUS

Apparently word of successful forgiveness by Vitus, spread and the Dancing Plague ended when the remaining dancers were taken to a mountaintop to pray for absolution. Similar events occurred throughout the medieval ages. In the 11th century in Colbeck, Saxony, it was believed to be the result of divine judgment. In 15th century Apulia, Italy, a woman was bitten by a tarantula, the venom making her dance convulsively. The cure to the bite was to "shimmy" to the right sort of music as an accepted remedy.

THEORIES OF THE CAUSE

Mass Psychogenic Illness

Historian John Waller argues that the combination of intense famine, disease, and the pervasive fear that St. Vitus would curse sinners with a dancing plague caused a form of "stress-induced psychosis"

Superstition and Cultural Beliefs:

The belief that the plague was a spiritual curse meant that, under extreme stress, people acted out in a way they expected to.

Ergot Poisoning

Suggested that consumption of ergot, a fungus found on damp rye caused spasms and hallucinations, resulting in the dancing.

Not a Cult Activity

While it was once suggested the dancers were part of a religious cult, evidence indicates they were in extreme pain and distress, often begging for help, indicating it was involuntary.

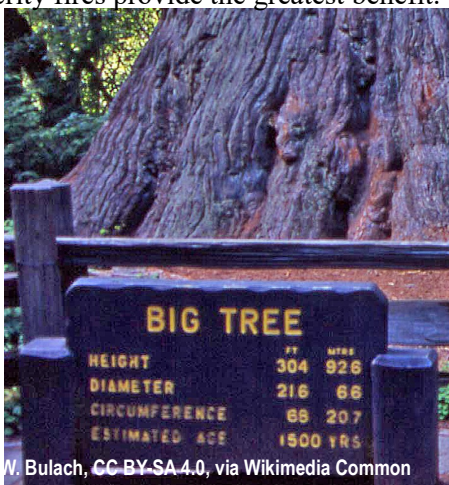
SEQUOIA SEMPERVIRENS WORLD'S TALLEST AND LONGEST LIVING TREES

Sequoia sempervirens is the sole living species of the genus Sequoia in the cypress family Cupressaceae common name includes coastal redwood and California redwood. It is an ever-green, long lived monoecious lived tree living more than 1,200–2,200 years. This species includes the tallest living trees on earth, reaching up to 115.9 m (380.1 ft) in height (without the roots) and up to 8.9 m (29 ft) in diameter at breast height.

Before commercial logging in the 1850s, this massive tree occurred naturally in an estimated 2,000,000 acres along much of coastal California. many redwoods are preserved in US state and national parks; with many having their own names.

FIRE RESISTANT

Coast redwood lumber is highly valued for its beauty, light weight, and resistance to decay. Its lack of resin means it absorbs water and resists fire. In response to forest fires, the trees have developed various adaptations. The thick, fibrous bark is extremely fire-resistant and it grows to at least 12 in thick and protects mature trees from fire damage. They also contain little flammable pitch or resin. Fire actually benefits redwoods by causing substantial mortality in competing species, while having only minor effects on redwood. Burned areas are favourable to the successful germination of redwood seeds. A study published in 2010, concluded that fires of all increase the relative abundance of redwood, and higher severity fires provide the greatest benefit.



W. Bulach, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Common



Acroterion, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons

RECORD HOLDERS

The Blossom Rock Navigation Trees were two especially tall sequoias located in the Berkeley Hills used as a navigational aid by sailors to avoid the treacherous Blossom Rock near Yerba Buena Island.

The Crannell Creek Giant was documented to have a trunk volume of at least 1,744 m³ (61,573 ft³) – about 32 per cent larger than Grogan's Fault and 17 per cent larger than General Sherman, the current largest tree. It was felled around 1945.

The Lindsay Creek Tree was documented to have a height of 120 m (390 ft) and a trunk volume of at least 2,500 cubic meters (90,000 ft³) when it was uprooted and felled by a storm in 1905. If these measurements are to be believed, the Lindsay Creek Tree was about 3 m (10 ft) taller than Hyperion, the current tallest tree, 213 per cent larger than Grogan's Fault, and 171 per cent larger than General Sherman.

Old Survivor, also known as the Grandfather, is the last remaining old-growth coastal redwood of the redwood forest that populated the Oakland Hills. The tree was seeded sometime between 1549 and 1554.

One of the largest redwood stumps measured 9.4 m (31 ft) in diameter, is in Oakland, California, the Berkeley Hills, in the Roberts Regional Recreation Area section of Redwood Regional Park.



The Wawona Tunnel Tree, carved in 1881, was promoted by the National Park Service as a symbol of America's natural treasures

FACTS—FROM THE WEIGHT OF A CLOUD TO BITING YOUR FINGER NAILS

A cloud weighs around a million tonnes and typically has a volume of around 1km³ and a density of around 1.003kg per m³ – that's a density that's around 0.4 per cent lower than the air surrounding it which is why they are able to float).

Identical twins don't have the same fingerprints, because environmental factors during development in the womb (umbilical cord length, position in the womb, and the rate of finger growth) affect your fingerprint.

Earth's rotation is slowing. This means that, on average, the length of a day increases by around 1.8 seconds per century. 600 million years ago a day lasted just 21 hours.

Earlobes have no biological purpose. While they are rich in nerve endings and may play a role in social bonding, many scientists argue that earlobes don't have any true biological purpose.

Mars isn't round. Unlike any other rocky planet in the Solar System, Mars is actually shaped like a rugby ball, but with different sizes along all three axes.

Cosmic latte'. In a 2002 study astronomers found that the light coming from galaxies averaged into a beige colour that's close to white.

Animals experience time differently from humans. To smaller animals, the world around them moves slowly compared to humans. Salamanders and lizards, for example, experience time being slower than cats and dogs. This is because the perception of time depends on how quickly the brain can process incoming information.

Stroking cats Most people stroke cats the wrong way. Research shows they often just tolerate it for the food and attention. The safest spots? Under the chin, cheeks and base of the ears. The worst? Their belly and the base of their tail – touch there and you're more likely to annoy them than bond with them.

Raw ingredients of a human body would cost over £116,000. But if you are prepared to do the refining yourself, a body could cost a lot less – under £100 in fact.

All the world's bacteria stacked on top of each other would stretch for 10

billion light-years. Together, Earth's 0.001mm-long microbes could wrap around the Milky Way over 20,000 times.

Fear of long words is called Hippopotomonstrosesquippedaliophobia. The 36-letter word was first used by the Roman poet Horace in the first century BCE to criticise those writers with an unreasonable penchant for long words. It was American poet Aimee Nezhukumatathil, possibly afraid of their own surname, who coined the term how we know it in 2000.

World's oldest dog lived to 29.5 years old. While the median age a dog reaches tends to be about 10-15 years, one Australian cattle dog, 'Bluey', survived to the ripe old age of 29.5.

World's oldest cat lived to 38 years and three days. Creme Puff was the oldest cat to ever live.

The Sun makes a sound but we can't hear it as in the form of pressure waves. The wavelength of the pressure waves from the Sun is measured in hundreds of miles, however, meaning they are far beyond the range of human hearing.

Mount Everest isn't the tallest mountain on Earth. Mauna Kea and Mauna Loa in Hawaii, the twin volcanoes, are taller than Mount Everest as 4.2km of their height is submerged underwater. The twin volcanoes measure a staggering 10.2km in total, compared to Everest's paltry 8.8km.

Our solar system has a wall. The heliopause – the region of space in which solar wind isn't hot enough to push back the wind of particles coming from distant stars – is often considered the "boundary wall" of the Solar System and interstellar space.

Octopuses don't have tentacles. They have eight limbs or arms. Technically, when talking about cephalopods (octopuses, squids etc), scientists define tentacles as limbs with suckers at their end. Octopus arms have suckers down most of their length.

Comets emit smell like rotten eggs urine, burning matches, and almonds caused by traces of hydrogen sulphide, ammonia, sulphur dioxide, and hydrogen cyanide were all found in the makeup of the comet 67P/Churyumov-Gerasimenko.

Promotional postcards were commissioned in 2016 carrying the pungent scent of a comet.

Earth's poles are moving. This magnetic reversal of the North and South Pole has happened 171 times in the past 71 million years. We're overdue a flip. It could come soon, as the North Pole is moving at around 55 kilometres per year, an increase over the 15km per year up until 1990.

You can die laughing. A number of people have, typically due to intense laughter had a heart attack or suffocation. .

Ants don't have lungs They instead breathe through spiracles, nine or ten tiny openings, depending on the species.

Football teams wearing red kits play better. The colour of your clothes can affect how you're perceived by others and change how you feel. A review of football matches in the last 55 years, for example, showed that teams wearing a red kit consistently played better in home matches than teams in any other colour.

Wind turbines kill between 10,000 and 100,000 birds each year in the UK. Interestingly, painting one of the blades of a wind turbine black can reduce bird deaths by 70 per cent.

Snails have teeth. Between 1,000 and 12,000 teeth, to be precise. They aren't like ours, though. You'll find the snail's tiny 'teeth' all over its file-like tongue.

The quietest place on Earth is Microsoft's anechoic chamber in Redmond, WA, USA, at -20.6 decibels. This anechoic chamber is built out of heavy concrete and brick and mounted on springs to stop vibrations from getting in through the floor.

A third nipple One in 18 people have a third nipple. Known as polythelia, caused by a mutation in inactive genes.

You travel 2.5 million km a day around the Sun without realising. The Earth's orbit travels around 2.5 million kilometres with respect to the Sun's centre, and around 19 million km with respect to the centre of the Milky Way

Your nails grow faster in hot summer due to increased blood supply to the fingertips. It could also be because you're less stressed while on holiday so less likely to gnaw away at them!!

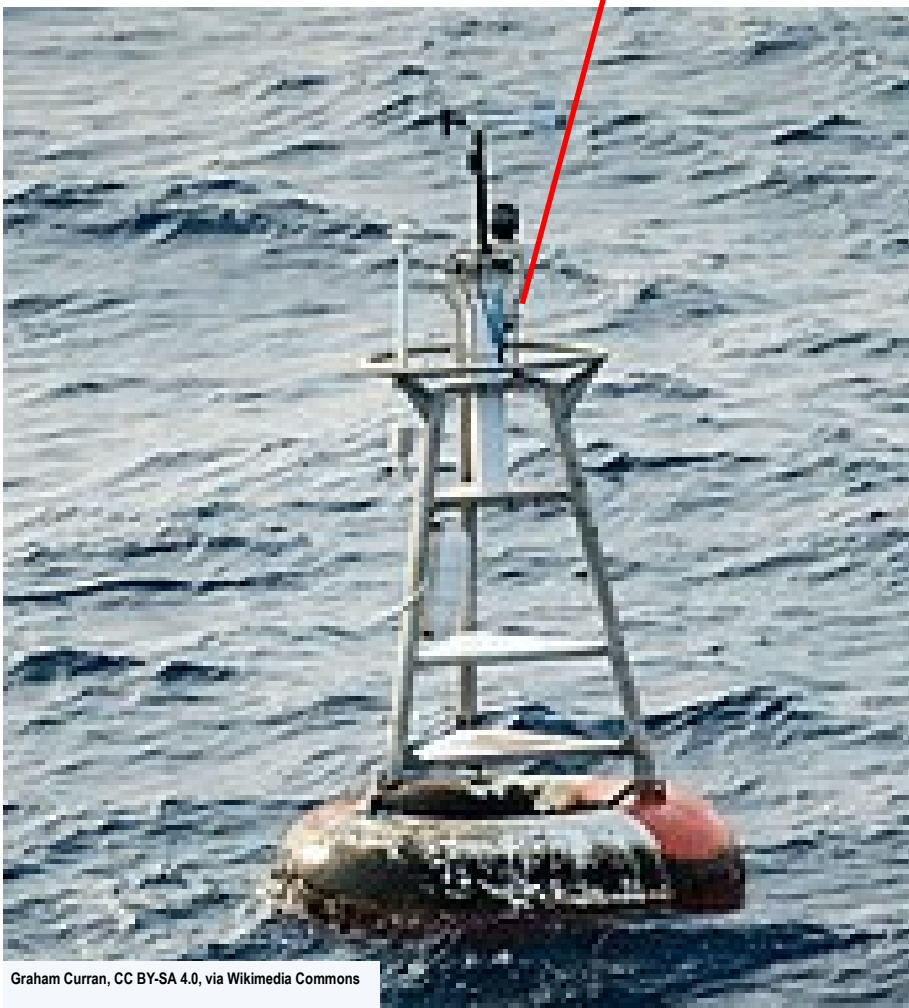
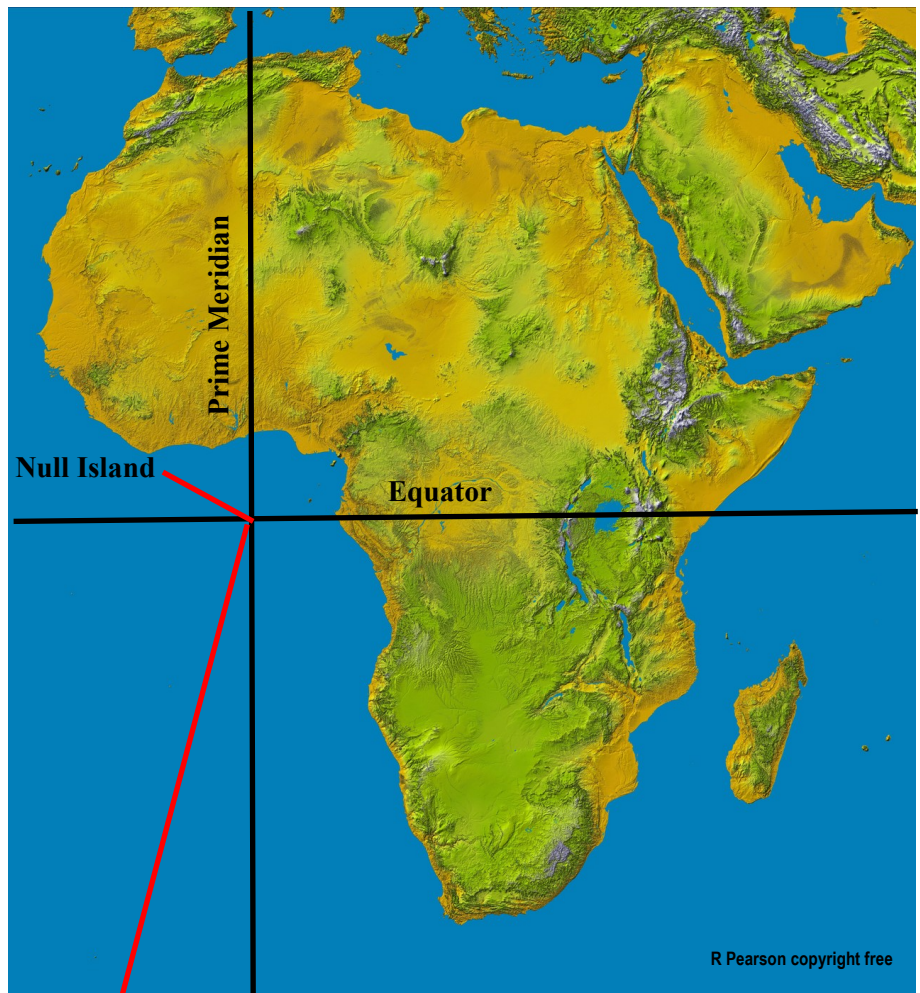
NULL ISLAND - THE ISLAND THAT DOES NOT EXIST AT

0°00'00.0"N 0°00'00.0"E

Registered on maps as an island, but is not an island, Null Island is the location at zero degrees latitude and zero degrees longitude (0°N 0°E), where the prime meridian and the equator intersect. As there is no landmass located at these coordinates, it is not an actual island although the name is often used in mapping software as a placeholder to help find and correct database entries that have erroneously been assigned with the coordinates of 0,0. Although "Null Island" started as a joke within the geospatial community, it has become a useful means of addressing a recurring issue in geographic information science

MOORED 600 KM OFF GHANA

The point on the Earth's surface defined as Null Island is located in the Atlantic Ocean, roughly 600km



from the coast in the Gulf of Guinea. The seabed depth there is around 4,940 m (16,200 ft). The nearest land to Null Island is a small islet 570 km to the north in Ghana. The nearest mainland is Achowa Point between Akwidaa and Dixcove, both in Ghana.

RESEARCH USE

In terms of computing and placename databases, the coordinates for Null Island were added to the Natural Earth public domain map dataset 2010–2011. It is now part of the Prediction and Research Moored Array in the Tropical Atlantic (PIRATA) a multinational network of ocean buoys that collects real-time atmospheric and oceanographic data to study ocean-atmosphere interactions, improving predictions for climate events like droughts, floods, and hurricanes affecting the Americas and Africa. A joint project between France, Brazil, and the U.S., PIRATA provides crucial data for climate research, model validation, and forecasting, forming a key part of the Global Tropical Moored Buoy Array.

“Soul Buoy” at zero degrees latitude, zero degrees longitude, known as “Null Island.”