

FASCINATING FACTS

Issue N° 45

Date October 2026

GOAT HOUSES



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

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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.

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SOME NOTABLE NOVEMBER DATES

2 Nov.1936 World's first regular TV service started by the BBC an estimated 100 TV owners tuned in.

3 Nov.1942 Field Marshall Montgomery's troops break through the front line of Erwin Rommel's Afrika Corps capturing 9000 prisoners..

4 Nov.1843 The 5.5 metre statue of Lord Nelson was hauled onto the 60 metre column in Trafalgar Square.

5 Nov. 1605 Guy Fawkes is arrested beneath the House of Parliament in a plot to blow up England's King James I is uncovered.

8 Nov.1656 Birth of Edmond Halley, English astronomer and mathematician, best known for identifying the comet named after him.

9 Nov.1953 Death of the flamboyant Welsh bard Dylan Thomas at the age of 39. His heavy drinking and wild living contributing to his early demise.

10 Nov 1871 Henry Morton Stanley tracks down "missing" Scottish explorer and missionary David Livingstone to the shores of Lake Tanganyika.

11 Nov.1918 After four years and 97 days the guns finally fell silent as the Great War ended. Around 9 million lives lost with a further 27 million injured.

13 Nov.1850 Birth of Scottish author Robert Louis Stevenson whose classic tales include Treasure Island, Kidnapped and Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde.

14 Nov.1940 In one raid 449 German Luftwaffe bombers dropped 503 tons of bombs and 881 incendiaries onto the English City of Coventry.

15 Nov.1968 The largest passenger liner in the world, Queen Elizabeth, docked in Southampton at the end of her last transatlantic voyage.

16 Nov. 1724 Highwayman Jack Sheppard is hanged at Tyburn in front of an estimated crowd of 200,000.

18 Nov. 1852 A massive state funeral for the Duke of Wellington in London.

19 Nov.1620 The 180-ton wine ship Mayflower arrives at Cape Cod, America, with 87 Pilgrim Fathers.

20 Nov.1947 Princess Elizabeth married her cousin Lieutenant Philip Mountbatten at Westminster Abbey

22 Nov.1963 President John F. Kennedy was shot and killed in Dallas, Texas.

26 Nov.1922 Archaeologist Howard Carter and the Earl of Caernarvon make a hole in the door and gaze into the tomb of Tutankhamun.

28 Nov.1919 Nancy Astor is elected Member of Parliament for Plymouth, Devon, becoming Britain's first woman MP.

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FROM DANDY OF RANELAGH TO DIRTY DICK

Nathaniel Bentley or, as he became known as Dirty Dick, was born in 1735. His father, Thomas, was a successful City of London merchant and shopkeeper with a hardware shop, The Golden Lion & Case of Knives, in 46 Leadenhall Street, which also sold jewellery, and precious metals. It is claimed to have been London's first glazed hardware shop.

Thomas, who was possibly Church Warden, had donated a bell to his local Anglican church, St Katharine Cree which had to be rung annually on his birthday until he died. Nathaniel Bentley's mother died and his father married Bethia Plomer in 1741, the wealthy widow of William Plomer, a linen draper of Leadenhall Street who owned a mansion in the then-rural area of Edmonton. A wealthy woman she was a member of the Dissenter religious movement and persuaded Thomas to also become a Nonconformist.

HIGHLY EDUCATED

By 1750 Nathaniel, who is recorded in the British Museum, as a goldsmith/metalworker; was a highly educated wealthy multi-lingual elegant 15 year old teenager who dressed in exquisite tailor-made clothes and possessed impeccable manners. He became known as The Dandy of Ranelagh Gardens at the Royal Hospital Chelsea where in addition to his business activities, he was a patron of pleasure gardens at Chelsea and Vauxhall in Kennington or The Beau of Leadenhall Street.

By 1750 Ranelagh Gardens was a high society hotspot and the premier venue for royal and aristocratic mas-

querades, concerts, and social promenading. Bentley spent much of his leisure time visiting Ranelagh's massive, centrally heated rococo rotunda.

He inherited his father's successful Leadenhall Street hardware business of two shops and a considerable fortune in 1760 and initially continued his refined lifestyle even attending the coronation of Louis XVI of France in June 1775 where he "was identified as the best dressed and mannered English gentleman" at the French court.

TRADEGY STRUCK

But tragedy struck which totally upended his life earning him the nickname of Dirty Dick! Because of his education and manner Nathaniel was well liked locally, and always with a good looking woman at his side. But womanising is only so much fun, he had the pick of society. Then he finds the love of his life, a woman so beautiful and charming that he is completely won over, and changes his womanising ways that instant for just a chance to marry her! This was no marriage of convenience as was most common in those days. It was true romance and deep love. Nathaniel set about making preparations to ensure the wedding day was perfect for her. He had the room decorated with her favourite blue and white flowers and the table set as if for a royal banquet, with the finest foods and delicacies. The most expensive wines from France and Italy were lined on a side table, servants were placed to ensure every need was met. It was his wedding surprise for his bride. Giving attention to every detail was Nathaniel's way of showing how much he loved the woman who would be his wife when she returned with him to the

Henry Wilson, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons



room with their guests. But then on the eve of his wedding tragedy struck - his fiancée died.

ENTER DIRTY DICK!

Grief-stricken, Bentley, in his late 30's locked the dining room containing the wedding feast and refused to ever wash himself or clean his warehouse again. His shop became increasingly filthy, the windows became opaque with grime, and dust and dirt covered the goods and surfaces. He became famous for a second time but this time as Dirty Dick but he retained his polite and impeccable manners. His extreme filth inspired Charles Dickens' creation of Miss Havisham in Great Expectations. He became parsimonious living off 18 pence a day, cooking and eating cheap food. He would mend his clothes, wearing them until too dilapidated to use. He became a tramp, travelling Britain and begging for money. He died in the Crown Inn, Haddington, from fever in 1809 and was buried in a local church. At the time of his death Bentley had £400 to his name

Left—inside the centrally heated rococo rotunda. Right—external view of Ranelagh's rotunda



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Thomas Bowles, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

LENGTH OVER THE CENTURIES

Humans have invented many bizarre ways to measure the world. Bizarre measurements range from historical quirks to scientific certainty. But here are a few of the unusual!!

Many units of length were based on parts of the human body. The Nippur cubit was one of the oldest known units of length. The oldest known metal standard for length corresponds to this Sumerian unit and dates from 2650 BCE. |Discovered in Nippur, on the banks of the, Euphrates, archaeologists consider that this 51.85 centimetres long unit.

TRADITIONAL TERMS FOR LENGTH

Inch:

Width of man's thumb, length of 3 barley corns (Anglo-Saxon).

Palm:

3 inches. Width of man's palm. (slang term for hiding in a hand or stealing.)

Hand:

4 inches. Width of man's hand; used for height of horse at its withers (shoulders). Formerly, approx. 5 inch

Shaftment:

6 ins. 6½ in until 12th Century.

Span:

9 inches. Width of man's spread fingers.

Natural foot:

9.8 inches (approx). Anglo-Saxon.

Roman foot:

11.6 inches (approx). .

Foot:

12 inches. Length of big man's foot.

Cubit:

2 spans, 28 digits. Elbow to middle finger tip. Approx. 18 inches.

Military pace:

30 inches. Single step.

Megalithic yard:

2.72 feet. Proposed by some archaeologists.

Yard:

3 feet. Length of man's pace. Man's reach from nose to finger tip.

Tailor's or Cloth yard:

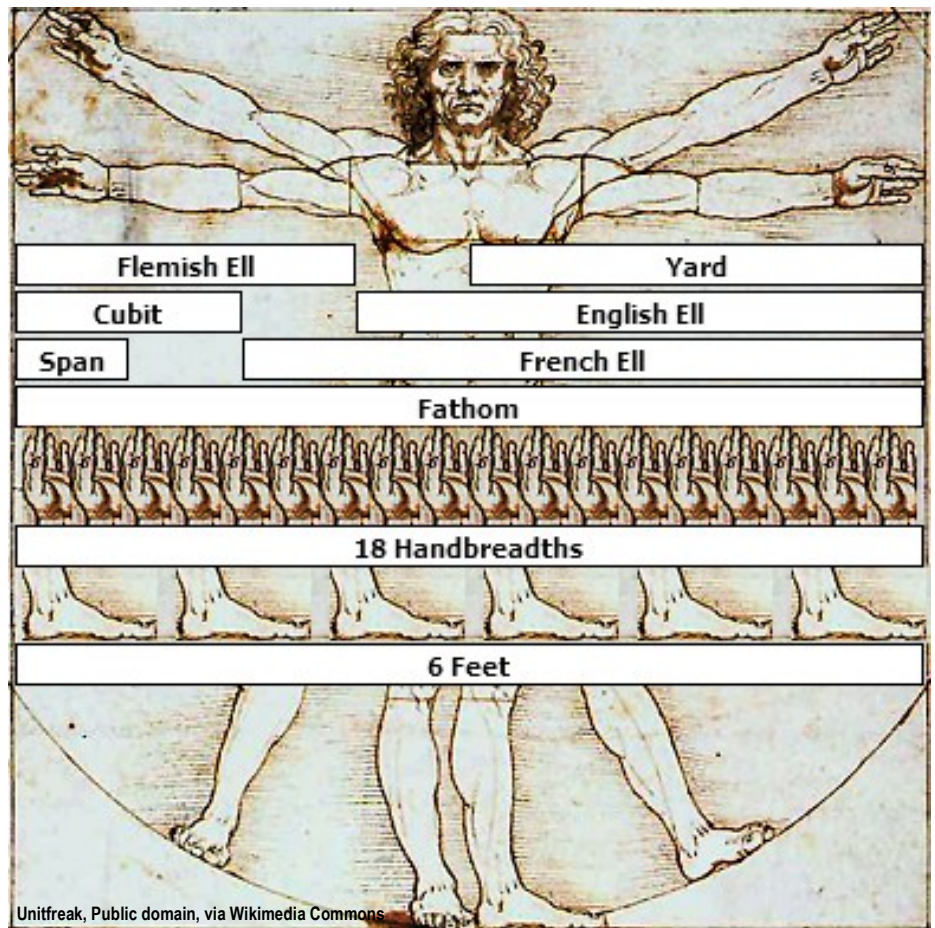
A yard plus an extra inch; ie 37 inches. cf. Baker's dozen.

Ell:

3 feet 9 inches. Measurement of cloth. Double forearm.

Roman pace :

5 Roman feet (pedes). 58 inches (approx). Double step.



This derivation of the Vitruvian Man by Leonardo Da Vinci depicts nine historical units of measurement: the Yard, the Span, the Cubit, the Flemish Ell, the English Ell, the French Ell, the Fathom, the Hand, and the Foot. Da Vinci drew the Vitruvian man to scale, so the units depicted here are displayed with their proper historical ratios.

Geometric pace:

5 feet. 60 inches. Modern version of Roman pace.

Reed:

9½ feet (approx). 6 Hebrew cubits, possibly a measurement tool rather than a unit.

Rod, pole, or perch:

5½ yards. 16½ feet. Anglo-Saxon. Approx. 20 "natural" feet.

Acre (width):

22 yards. 4 rods. Width of a strip in the strip field farming system.

Acre (area), 22 by 220 yards, now simply 4840 square yards.

Chain (Gunter's or Surveyor's):

22 yards. 66 feet. 100 links. Length of cricket pitch. Each tenth link is a brass tag.

Chain (Ramden's or Engineer's):

100 feet. 100 links. Less common.

Bolt:

40 yards. 32 ells. Measurement of cloth.

Roman stadia:

125 passus. Approx 608 modern feet. Similar to cable and furlong.

Furlong:

220 yards. 40 rods. 10 chains. Length of an Ox plough furrow; length of a medieval strip field.

Roman mile (milia):

5000 Roman feet. 1000 Roman passus. 8 Roman stadi, Approx 4860 modern feet.

English mile:

5280 feet. 1760 yards. 8 furlongs. 80 chains. Changed from 5000 feet during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I.

Scottish mile:

5952 feet. 1984 yards. Old measure.

Irish mile:

6720 feet. 2240 yards. Old measure. Beware when told that an Irish distance is "a mile and a bit." The bit may be longer than the mile!

Country mile:

A vague, long distance – often much longer than a measured mile.

Roman milia.

12 Roman stadia. Approx. 7290 modern feet.

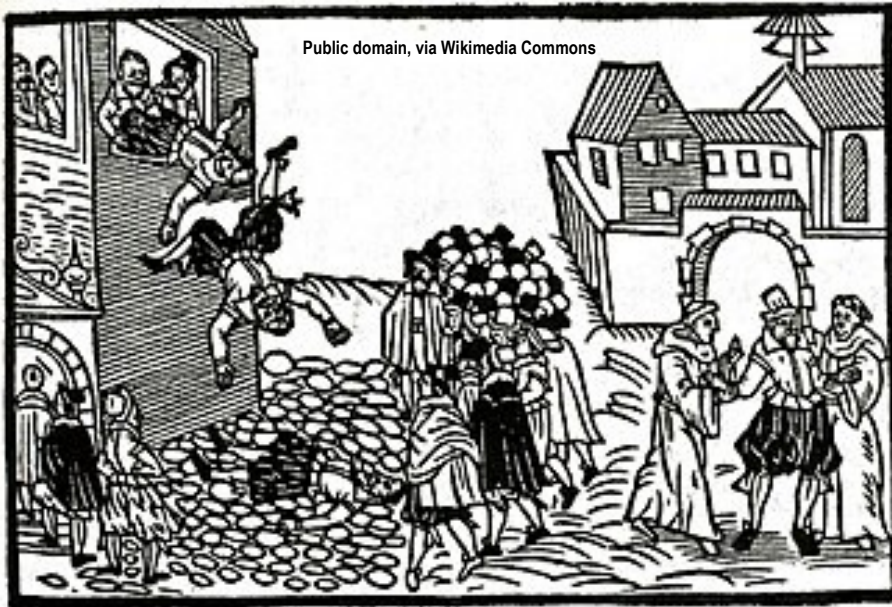
League

1½ miles. As used in the Devonshire Domesday Book.

League:

3 miles (usually). Various definitions; often approx. distance a person or horse can walk in one hour.

Defenestrations of Prague



1618 defenestration as illustrated on a contemporaneous leaflet

Defenestration; not a word commonly used in the English language although there have been a number of recent potential cases with Russian dissidents mysteriously 'falling' out of windows!

Although already existing in Middle French, the word defenestrate is believed to have first been used in English in reference to the episodes in Prague in 1618 when the disgruntled Protestant estates threw two royal governors and their secretary out of a window of the Hradčany Castle and wrote an extensive apology explaining their action.

In the Middle Ages and early modern times, defenestration was not uncommon as was lynching and mob violence in the form of murder committed together. The first Prague governmental defenestration occurred in 1419, the second in 1483 and the third in 1618, although the term "Defenestration of Prague" refers mainly to the third. The first and third defenestration triggered prolonged religious conflicts, while the second helped establish a religious peace in the country for 31 years.

1419 DEFENESTRATION OF PRAGUE

The first defenestration of Prague involved the death of members of the city council by a crowd of Czech Hussites on 30 July 1419. Jan Želivský, the priest of the Church of the Virgin Mary of the Snows, led his congregation in a procession through the streets of Prague to the New Town Hall on Charles Square. The

town council members had refused to Exchange their Hussite prisoners. While they were marching, a stone was thrown at Želivský from the town hall and allegedly hit him. This caused the enraged mob to storm the town hall. Once inside they defenestrate the judge, the burgomaster, and several members of the town council, killing them all..

This led pro-Hussite Bohemian nobles to take control of Bohemia. The Pope responded by declaring a crusade against "Wycliffites, Hussites setting off the Hussite Wars.

1483 DEFENESTRATION OF PRAGUE

This second Prague defenestration enabled the local population to force a change in administration by throwing unpopular constables out of the town hall windows. Prague Hussites seized the town halls in the Old and New Town and partly threw the Catholic councillors out of the windows. The Calixtinite rebels first killed the New Town councillors and threw them out of the windows of the town hall. King Vladislav II. Jagiellon, who was currently staying in Trebic, wanted to punish the rebels. However, due to the resistance of the Bohemian nobility, he was forced to reconcile with them. This time the

leaders of all three Prague towns paid the price for this defenestration, News of the meeting with the governors did not remain secret and the next day not only the deputation of the Estates but also many other people headed to Prague Castle. Some hurried on foot, others rode on horseback. Of the five governors, only Vilém Slavata and Jaroslav Bořita from Martinice were present in the Czech office. At first it seemed that the meeting, watched by the crowd that crowded into the room, would be relatively peaceful. It was Jáchym Ondřej Šlik's personal attack on Martinic that made things dramatic.

1618 DEFENESTRATION OF PRAGUE

This was related to Bohemian resistance to Habsburg authority preceded the beginning of the Thirty Years' War. In 1617 Roman Catholic officials in Bohemia closed Protestant chapels that were being constructed by citizens of the towns of Broumov and Hrob, thus violating the guarantees of religious liberty laid down in the 1609 Letter of Majesty of Emperor Rudolf II.

In response, the defenders, appointed under the Letter of Majesty to safeguard Protestant rights, called an assembly of Protestants at Prague, where the imperial regents, William Slavata and Jaroslav Martinic, were tried and found guilty of violating the Letter of Majesty. The punishment was that, with their secretary, Fabricius, they were thrown from the windows of the council room of Prague Castle on May 23, 1618. Although inflicting no serious injury on the victims, it was a signal for the beginning of a Bohemian revolt against the Habsburg emperor Ferdinand II.



1662 woodcut of the 1618 event,

VALUE OF THE WORLD'S TOP NINE COMPANIES

Today, most of the top 10 companies by market capitalization are technology firms. The largest companies in the world by market capitalization are led by artificial intelligence and technology giants like Nvidia, Alphabet, and Apple. Valuations shift constantly based on daily stock market trading, but the top global firms typically exceed trillions of dollars in value. Until the early 2010s, many of the most valuable firms were traditional long-standing blue-chip industrial behemoths

NVIDIA \$5 TRILLION

Founded in 1993 Nvidia is an American multinational technology company based California. With \$40,000 in the bank (\$89,000 in 2025), the company was born and received \$20 million of venture capital funding It develops graphics processing units, systems on chips and application programming interfaces for data science, high-performance computing artificial intelligence and mobile and automotive applications. In the first quarter of 2025, Nvidia held a 92% share of the discrete desktop and laptop GPU market .

MICROSOFT \$4 TRILLION

An American multinational technology company it became influential with the rise of personal computers through Windows software. It expanded into internet services cloud computing, AI, video gaming, etc. The worlds largest software company by revenue it was founded in 1975 by Bill Gates and Paul Allen. Microsoft rose to dominate the PC operating system market in the mid-1980s, followed by Windows. . Its share price created 3 billionaires and 12,000 millionaires among Microsoft employees.

META \$2 TRILLION

Meta owns and operates several prominent social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Messenger, and Threads. Advertising accounts for 97.8 percent of its total revenue. Established in 2004 as TheFacebook, Inc., it was renamed Facebook, Inc. in 2005. In 2022, it was the world's third-largest spender on research and development, with R&D expenditure totalling US\$ 35.3 billion.

APPLE INC. \$4 TRILLION

An American multinational technology company based in Silicon Valley, it is known for consumer electronics, software and as the company expanded its focus from computers to consumer electronics. Apple is one of the Big Tech companies.

The company was founded to market Wozniak's Apple I computer. Its successor, became one of the first successful mass-produced personal microcomputers. To finance production, Jobs sold his Volkswagen Bus and Wozniak sold his HP-65 calculator. together they raised \$1,300 (\$7,400 in 2025).

AMAZON \$3 TRILLION

Since July 16, 1995, when Amazon website was launched, initially sourcing books directly from wholesalers and publishers it has grown to more than 2.6 billion visits each month, while the UK site adds roughly 276 million per month. In 2021, it surpassed Walmart as the world's largest retailer outside of China, supported by its subscription plan, Amazon Prime, has over 200 million subscribers worldwide and is the second-largest private employer in the USA. The company has 1,576,000 employees and often referred to as The Everything Store

SPACE X \$2 TRILLION

An American aerospace manufacturer and provider of space transportation, telecommunications, and artificial intelligence services, SpaceX, is based in Texas. The company develops and flies the Falcon 9, Falcon Heavy, and Starship launch vehicles, the Dragon spacecraft, and conducts more orbital launches annually than any other launch provider. Connectivity, operates the Starlink satellite constellation; and AI, conducted through its wholly owned subsidiary SpaceXAI, It operates the social network X, and builds and runs large-scale data centres.[

ALPHABET \$4 TRILLION

Google created a new public holding company, Alphabet Inc to restructure Google by moving subsidiaries to Alphabet. the worlds third largest publicly traded company. Alphabet has been described as a Big Tech company. On 10 December 2024, the company unveiled its new quantum computing chip, Willow which solved a complex problem in five minutes, a task that would take a classical computer longer than the age of the universe. Institutional investors, own over 60% of shares in Alphabet . The two founders each control around 3% of all shares

SAUDI ARAMCO \$2 TRILLION

Saudi Aramco officially the Saudi Arabian Oil Company, is a majority state-owned petroleum and natural gas company, and the national oil company of Saudi Arabia Headquartered in Dhahran. Saudi Aramco has both the world's largest proven crude oil reserves, over 270 billion barrels and largest daily oil production of all oil-producing companies. It operates the Ghawar Field —the world's largest onshore oil field-and the Safaniya Field -the world's largest offshore oil field. Its oil production total was 12.7 million barrels of oil equivalent per day.

BROADCOM \$2 TRILLION

Established in 1961 as HP Associates Broadcom Inc. is an American multinational designer, developer, manufacturer, and global supplier of a wide range of semiconductor and infrastructure software products for data centre, networking, software, broadband, wireless, storage, and industrial markets. In 2025, some 58 per cent of Broadcom's revenue came from its semiconductor-based products and 42 per cent from its infrastructure software products and services. It is the ninth largest holder of patents among the top semiconductor vendors,

GOAT TOWERS

Based on a multi-story decorative tower, a goat house, is basically a European garden folly. An early example was built in Portugal in the 19th century at a winery in Portugal's Vinho Verde region. Since 1981, more goat towers have been built.

FIRST KNOWN

The first recorded goat tower was built in Portugal by Fernando Guedes da Silva da Fonseca at Aveleda, near Penafiel, one of the oldest wineries in the Vinho Verde region of Portugal.

The stone walled three story tower has a counter-clockwise spiral wooden ramp and is one of several follies on the winery's estate. According to Francisco Guedes Almeida, a 13th generation family member the goat tower and the estate's other follies were built by various ancestors, one of whom "thought the goats did not belong to the plains ... so they built the goat tower, so they could have a mountain."

TEXAS GOAT TOWER

Following a visit to Aveleda, Fairview built its goat tower in 1981, which is used by the winery's herd of 750 Saanen, Swiss mountain goats. It has a steeply sloped metal roof and a wooden spiral ramp encircling the



Maggieworld, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons

tower and has become a tourist attraction in the Cape Winelands area. Using images of the tower and the goats in their branding, of a wine called Goats do Roam, a pun on Côtes du Rhône, and one called Goat Roti, a pun on Côte Rôtie.

A TOWER BUT NO GOATS

The Fairview tower inspired others and in 1998, despite not owning any goats Illinois farmers David and Marcia Johnson built a 6 storey 31-foot-tall 8-ft-diameter goat tower in Shelby County, construct-ed from 5000 hand-made bricks and with 276 steps. Christened "The Tower of Baaa",the Johnsons purchased 11 Saanen goats,

In a Waunakee, Wisconsin, goat petting zoo, there a steel goat tower designed in a Bavarian style to match other buildings in the area.

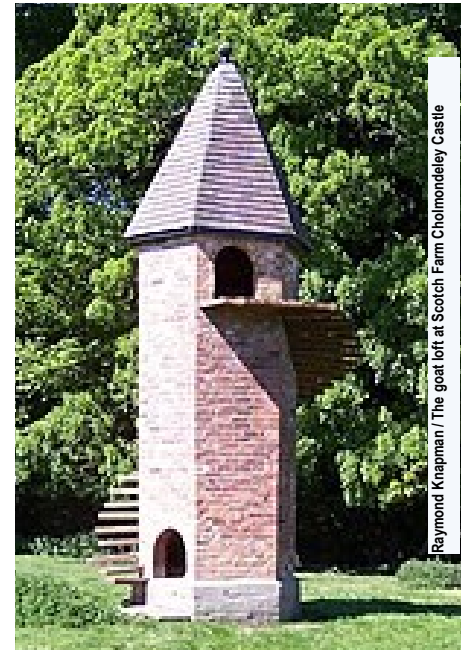
In 2018, Henly Hills Farm in Dripping Springs, Texas, USA, the owners built a three-story goat tower for their rescued goat herd. The goat tower at Fairview Winery in South Africa inspired one at Henly Hills, In 2019, the Maryland Zoo built a climbing structure for their herd of goats, calling it a "goat castle".

UDDERLY RIDICULOUS

In May of 2026, Canada's first mural painted goat tower was unveiled, in the township of Blandford-Blenheim, Ontario. The structure is a 28 feet tall pentagon shaped goat tower, located at Udderly Ridiculous Farm Life.

Ekeby, a dairy farm in Moss, Norway, owned by Finn-Erik Blakstad,

built a tower based on the Fairview tower In 2010, Finca el Rocío, a goat farm in Valle de Calamuchita [es] in Villa General Belgrano, Argentina, built a goat tower for their herd of Anglo-Nubian goats. Hampton Roads Winery in Surry, Virginia, claims to have built at 34 foot (10 m) tall the tallest goat tower in the world to house their herd of Nigerian Dwarf goats.



Raymond Knapman / The goat loft at Scotch Farm Cholmondeley Castle

CHOLMONDELEY CASTLE , In England Cholmondeley Castle Gardens Cheshire, there is a goat tower for their herd of pygmy goats.



Marcia Rittmueller Johnson, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons

A goat tower in Illinois,



Gail Edwin Aguir, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons

The Aveleda goat tower

HELICOPTER THE GET OUT OF PRISON CARD

It may surprise you that there have been over 50 attempted prison breaks involving a helicopter between 1971 and 2020 of which 36 were successful! One of the earliest instances was the escape of Joel David Kaplan, nicknamed "Man Fan", on August 19, 1971, from the Santa Martha Acatitla in Mexico. Kaplan was a New York businessman who not only escaped the prison but eventually got out of Mexico and went on to write a book about his experience, *The 10-Second Jail-break*.

FRENCH RECORD ESCAPES

France has had more recorded helicopter prison escape attempts than any other country, with at least 11. One of the most notable occurred in 1986, when the wife of bank robber Michel Vaujour, Nadine Vaujour, studied for months to learn how to fly a helicopter. Using her newly acquired skills, she rented a white helicopter and flew low over Paris to take her husband from the roof of his fortress prison. Vaujour was later seriously wounded in a shootout with police where he was shot in the head and his wife was arrested.

REPEATED ESCAPEES

The record for most helicopter escapes goes to convicted murderer Pascal Payet, who has used helicopters to escape from prisons in

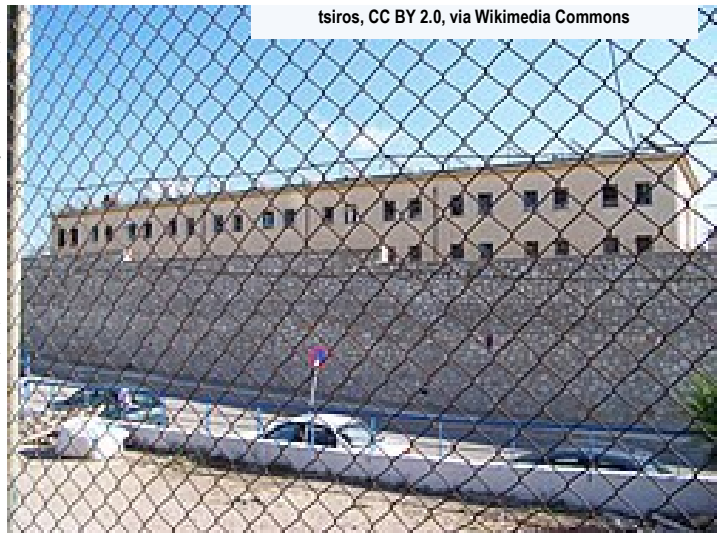
2001, 2003 and most recently 2007.

Another multiple helicopter escapee was inmate Vasilis Paleokosas, known popularly as the 'Greek Robin Hood' who, on February 22, 2009, escaped for the second time from Korydallos Prison. To thwart attempts of this nature, many prisons have taken precautions such as nets or cables strung over open prison courtyards.

FIRST UK ESCAPEE

One of the two UK escapees was Joe B. O'Hagan, a founder of the Provisional IRA, he served on its Army Council till imprisoned in the Republic of Ireland. On 31 October 1973 an IRA member hijacked a helicopter and forced the pilot to land in the exercise yard of the prison's D Wing at 3:40 p.m. Three prisoners who were also members of the IRA escaped aboard the helicopter. Another prisoner was quoted as saying, "One shamefaced screw apologised to the governor and said he thought it was the new Minister for Defence (Paddy Donegan) arriving. I told him it was our Minister of Defence leaving."

The escape became Republican lore and was immortalised by "The Helicopter Song", which contains the lines "It's up like a bird and over the city. There's three men a'missing I heard the warden say".



tsiros, CC BY 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons

Korydallos Prison Greece

SECOND UK ESCAPEE

At 15.16 hr on December 10, 1987 John Kendall a gangland boss, and Sydney Draper who was serving a life sentence for murder were sprung from Gartree's exercise yard with the aid of a hijacked Bell 206L helicopter. The escape caused great controversy at the time and led to a tightening of security at the prison. Kendall, a member of an £80 million drug smuggling operation dubbed the "Gangster Granny" network, was recaptured 10 days later. Draper who murdered neighbour Kevin Shepperson remained at large for 13 months.

IN FICTION

Prison escapes by helicopter has been featured in over 20 films, TV, video games and books from 1967 to 2021. In 5 the escapes were foiled. One of the best known of these was *Superman: Last Son of Krypton* where a philologist named John Lightfoot is sprung from prison by one of Lex Luthor's henchman, but is killed when the helicopter crashes moments later.



Michael C. Berch (User:MCB), CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons

Prison de la Santé where on May 26, 1986, Michel Vaujour was flown out of the prison by his wife



HNS, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons

Mountjoy Prison where on October 31, 1973, three IRA members escaped in a hijacked helicopter

SOME HISTORIC MISCONCEPTIONS

THE PYRAMIDS

Archaeological evidence shows that the pyramids were not constructed with slave labour. They used labourers with a combination of skilled workers and in the off season poor farmers with the participants paid in high-quality food and tax exemptions. The idea that slaves were used originated with Herodotus, and the idea that they were Israelites arose centuries after the pyramids were constructed.

ROWING GALLEYS

A misconception depicted in films such as *Ben Hur*. In ancient times they were usually rowed by paid laborers or soldiers. Slaves were used only in times of crisis, in some cases even gaining their freedom after the crisis was averted. Roman merchant vessels, were manned by slaves, often even with slaves as ship's master.

CURSE OF TUTANKHAMUN'S

Tutankhamun's tomb is not inscribed with a curse on those who disturb it. It was a media invention of tabloid journalists.

ROMAN SALUTE

The so-called Roman salute, in which the arm is fully extended forwards or diagonally with palm down and fingers touching, was not used in ancient Rome. The gesture was first associated with ancient Rome in the 1784 painting *The Oath of the Horatii* by the French artist Jacques-Louis David, which inspired later salutes, most notably the Nazi salute.

VOMITORIUM

Wealthy Ancient Romans did not use rooms called vomitoria to purge food during meals so they could continue eating. Also vomiting was not a regular part of Roman dining customs. The root of "Vomit" and "vomitorium" derive from Latin meaning "to spew forth" and was related to a passageway out of a stadium allowing quick exit at the end of an event.

CAESAREAN

A caesarean operation has no connection with Julius Caesar being born by a caesarean section. Such a procedure

would have been fatal to the mother at the time, and Caesar's mother was still alive when he was 45 years old.

THE DARK AGES

This time in the Middle Ages as a time of ignorance, barbarism and superstition is rejected by modern historians.

Research shows that the average age of death in the middle ages was not 30. While was an estimate at birth caused by high infant and adolescent mortality, the life expectancy among adults was much higher; a 21-year-old man in medieval England, for example, could expect to live to the age of 64.

KING CANUTE

King Canute did not command the tide to reverse in a fit of delusional arrogance. According to the story, his intent was to prove to sycophantic advisors that no man is all-powerful, and that all people must bend to forces beyond their control, such as the tide.

JUS PRIMAE NOCTIS

There is no evidence that *jus primae noctis* ("the right of the first night")—a supposed legal right for a lord to sleep with a bride on her wedding night—ever existed in the Middle Ages.

IRON MAIDENS

There is no evidence that, in the Middle Ages, iron maidens were used for torture, or even yet invented. Instead they were pieced together in the 18th century from several artifacts found in museums, arsenals etc to create spectacular objects intended for commercial exhibition.

CLOCKWISE SPIRAL STAIRS

Spiral staircases in castles were not designed in a clockwise direction to hinder right-handed attackers. While clockwise spiral staircases are more common in castles than anticlockwise, they were even more common in medieval structures without a military role, such as religious buildings.

PLATE ARMOUR

This misconception was based on armour used in tournaments in the late Middle Ages which was significantly heavier than that used in warfare and may have required a

crane to get them into a saddle. They needed to be able to fight on foot in case they could not ride their horse and could mount and dismount without help.

CHASTITY BELTS

The existence of chastity belts, designed to prevent women and men from having sexual intercourse, were invented in medieval times is disputed by modern historians. Most existing chastity belts are thought to be deliberate fakes from the 19th century.

FLAT EARTH 1

Medieval European scholars did not believe the Earth was flat. Scholars have known the Earth is spherical since at least the sixth century BCE.

FLAT EARTH 2

The myth that Columbus proved the earth was round was propagated by authors like Washington Irving in *A History of the Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus*. His efforts to obtain support for his voyages were not hampered by belief in a flat earth, but by worries that the East Indies were further than he presumed. He grossly underestimated the Earth's circumference because of two calculation errors.

DISCOVERING AMERICA

Columbus was not the first European to visit the Americas, Leif Erikson, and possibly other Norsemen explored an area of coastal North America. Excavations at L'Anse aux Meadows prove that at least one Norse settlement was built in Newfoundland, confirming a story in the *Saga of Erik the Red*.

YOU TOO, BRUTUS?

This popular misconception comes from William Shakespeare's play *Julius Caesar*. There is no proof that Julius Caesar ever said "Et tu, Brute?" ("You too, Brutus?") during his assassination. The prevailing theories are that he remained silent, or that his last words were "καὶ σύ, τέκνον;" ("You too, child?").

ICELAND

The Norse did not name Iceland "Iceland" as a ploy to discourage oversettlement. According to the *Sagas of Icelanders*, Hrafnar-Floki Vilgerðarson saw icebergs on the island when he travelled there, and named the island after them.



Above—20 January 2009: Protesters in the United States shoed an inflatable replica of George W. Bush. This is a replica of al-Zaidi's shoe.

Shoe-throwing, showing the sole of one's shoe or using shoes as an insult are forms of protest in many parts of the world. The earliest shoe-throwing, recorded as an insult, dates back to being mentioned twice in Old Testament. Modern incidents with shoes being thrown at political figures have taken place in Australia, India, Ireland, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Pakistan, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the Arab world. There were nearly 100 shoeing world wide in the 19 years from 2007 to 2026.

MORE SANDAL THAN SHOE

The first recorded shoeing was in 359 AD when Roman Emperor, Constantius II, was giving a speech from a hillock to a group of Limigantes to ask for their loyalty, when he was hit by a shoe thrown by one of them. The thrower shouted "Marha, marha!" in a "signal of war."

SHOEING GEORGE BUSH

This received world wide attention when Muntadhar al-Zaidi threw his shoes at President Bush on 14 December 2008 at a press conference in Baghdad, Iraq. Posters of former U.S. President George W. Bush's face have since appeared through the Middle East with shoes attached to them! Since then copycat incidents in Europe, North America, India, China, Iran, Turkey and Australia have been reported. Some people refer to former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice as kundara, meaning "shoe". In Taharah and Islamic hygienical jurisprudence shoes are considered unclean, especially in the Arab World.

THE SHOER SHOED

On 1 December 2009 Muntadhar al-Zaidi, who shoed George W. Bush, was shoed himself in Paris by an exiled Iraqi journalist, who accused him of "working for dictatorship in Iraq". When he was being escorted out of the room, Al-Zaidi went back to him with his shoe to hit him back, striking him in the back of the head with the shoe. The incident occurred while al-



Taiwanese people donated old shoes in support of shoe-throwing protests against the Ma Ying-jeou administration and the ruling party KMT

Zaidi was speaking about his experiences during the Bush shoeing and its aftermath. Al-Zaidi later noted, "He stole my technique."

ENGLAND SHOEING

On 7th August 2010 the President of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari was shoed by a 50-year-old Sardar Shamim Khan, sitting in the front row at the rally who hurled a pair of shoes at him, during his visit to Birmingham. Khan was wrestled down by security guards shouting "killer" as Zardari spoke during a political rally at the International Convention Centre. The shoes did not hit Zardari, who did not respond to the attack. Khan was believed to be a Pakistani national from Derby and was dressed in a traditional Shalwar kameez. Following the incident, he was led away by police, questioned, and later released without charge. Shamim Khan said that he was angered by Zardari's spending a week-long trip to Europe event while there were floods raging in Pakistan.

GORDON BROWN SHOEING

20 January 2009 February the Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao was in London, discussing economic cooperation and trade relations between China and the United Kingdom with British Prime Minister Gordon Brown. He was scheduled to give the Rede Lecture at the University of Cambridge entitled, "See China in the Light of Her Development". As Wen came to the end of his lecture, 27-year-old German national Martin Jahnke, stood from the audience, blew a whistle and shouted, "How can the university prostitute itself with this dictator here? How can you

listen to these lies he's telling?" Jahnke then threw his shoe at Wen, but it landed a few feet away. Fellow members of the audience shouted at Jahnke, "Shame on you". Jahnke was escorted from the lecture and arrested on suspicion of breach of the peace and attempted assault. The return of a prodigal is worth more than gold", said the message from Wen, posted on the Foreign Ministry website. A district judge later concluded there was insufficient evidence to prove that Jahnke's behaviour had caused harassment, alarm or distress to anyone in the lecture theatre. "I didn't want to hit the premier personally. I thought just placing the shoe on the stage would be universally understood. It was meant to be was a symbolic protest. During his trial, Jahnke's lawyers alleged that his prosecution was being pushed forward under pressure from the Chinese government, and that there had been political interference in the trial/ This accusation was dismissed by the trial judge due to lack of evidence.

LATEST SHOEING—2026

The latest recorded shoeing was on 12 July 2026 during a WNBA game between the New York Liberty and the Toronto Tempo, when New York player Betnijah Laney-Hamilton threw teammate Jonquel Jones' shoe during a stoppage in play, striking Toronto player Marina Mabrey on the back. Officials assessed Laney-Hamilton her second technical foul of the game, resulting in her ejection. Laney-Hamilton stated after the game that she had intended to return the shoe to Jones and did not intend to hit Mabrey.