

Nil Desperandum

Published for Haywards Heath & District Probus Club

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Isolated but not alone



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Riposte in kind

A 98-year old woman in the UK wrote this letter to her bank. The bank manager thought it amusing enough to have it published in the Times.

“Dear Sir,

I am writing to thank you for bouncing my cheque with which I endeavoured to pay my plumber last month. By my calculations, three 'nanoseconds' must have elapsed between his presenting the cheque and the arrival in my account of the funds needed to honour it. I refer, of course, to the automatic monthly deposit of my Pension, an arrangement, which, I admit, has been in place for only thirty-eight years. You are to be commended for seizing that brief window of opportunity, and also for debiting my account £30 by way of penalty for the inconvenience caused to your bank.

My thankfulness springs from the manner in which this incident has caused me to rethink my errant financial ways. I noticed that whereas I personally attend to your telephone calls and letters, when I try to contact you, I am confronted by the impersonal, overcharging, pre-recorded, faceless entity which your bank has become. From now on, I, like you, choose only to deal with a flesh-and-blood person.

My mortgage and loan payments will therefore and hereafter no longer be automatic, but will arrive at your bank by cheque, addressed personally and confidentially to an employee at your bank whom you must nominate. Be aware that it is an offence under the Postal Act for any other person to open such an envelope. Please find attached an Application Contact Status which I require your chosen employee to complete. I am sorry it runs to eight pages, but in order that I know as much about him or her as your bank knows about me, there is no alternative. Please note that all copies of his or her medical history must be countersigned by a Solicitor, and the mandatory details of his/her financial situation (income, debts, assets and liabilities) must be accompanied by documented proof.

In due course, I will issue your employee with PIN number which he/she must quote in dealings with me. I regret that it cannot be shorter than 28 digits but, again, I have modelled it on the number of button presses required of me to access my account balance on your phone bank service. As they say, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.

Let me level the playing field even further. When you call me, press buttons as follows:

- 1 - To make an appointment to see me.*
- 2 - To query a missing payment.*
- 3 - To transfer the call to my living room in case I am there.*
- 4 - To transfer the call to my bedroom in case I am sleeping.*
- 5 - To transfer the call to my toilet in case I am attending to nature.*
- 6 - To transfer the call to my mobile phone if I am not at home.*
- 7 - To leave a message on my computer (a password to access my computer is required. A password will be communicated to you at a later date to the Authorized Contact.)*
- 8 - To return to the main menu and to listen to options 1 through to 8.*
- 9 - To make a general complaint or inquiry, the contact will then be put on hold, pending the attention of my automated answering service. While this may, on occasion, involve a lengthy wait, uplifting music will play for the duration of the call.*

Regrettably, but again following your example, I must also levy an establishment fee to cover the setting up of this new arrangement.

May I wish you a happy, if ever so slightly less prosperous, New Year.

Your Humble Client"

[name and address withheld under the Data Protection Act]

Contributed by Peter Nilsson

PROBUS Magazine

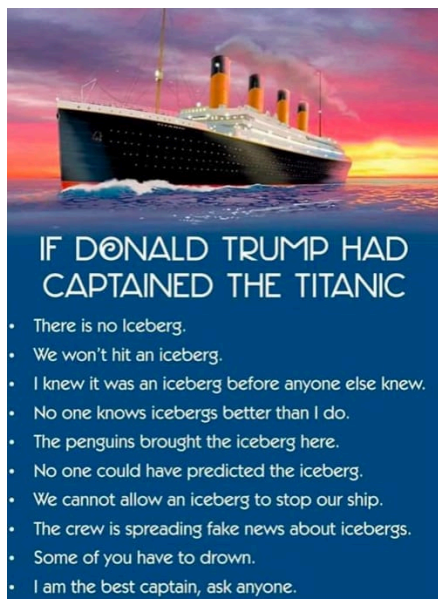
Eric Bassett has now distributed copies of the Summer Edition of the PROBUS Magazine to members of the Haywards Heath & District Probus Club.

The publishers of the magazine say that:

“Members who have received copies of the Summer edition of the PROBUS magazine, will have noticed it was considerably reduced both in scale and content. This resulted from advertisers, who subsidise the magazine, being reluctant to place adverts in the current lock down situation. These advertisers, mainly from the travel and tourism industries are not operating at this time.

It is anticipated that for the same reason there will be no autumn edition of the magazine produced this year.”

Instead of producing one magazine for the quarter and hoping for the best with advertising, the publishers say they will prepare a series of newsletters and distribute them online. We will see what our Club can contribute to that initiative.



How much sleep do you get each night?

If the first thing that popped into your head in answering the question about how much sleep you get each night was “not enough”, then you’re not alone. Getting enough of what you want may seem like a far-off fantasy for most people.

Because we all wish we were enjoying a bit more sleep, it’s easy to convince ourselves that we’re not getting enough.

Across our world, the average amount of time spent sleeping each night is lower than you might think – it’s only 7 hours, 12 minutes. It depends on many factors – such as your age, where you come from and your gender.

One constant throughout the world is that women sleep more, spending 20 minutes more per night than men. Another constant is that men wake up happier than women.

Sleep average in the UK is 7 hours 34 minutes a night – placing us in fifth position after New Zealand, Netherlands, Finland and Australia. At the other end of the scale, the Japanese sleep on average for only 6 hours, 17 minutes every night.

You are likely to get the least amount of sleep when you are in your 40s, but it’s downhill from then onwards.

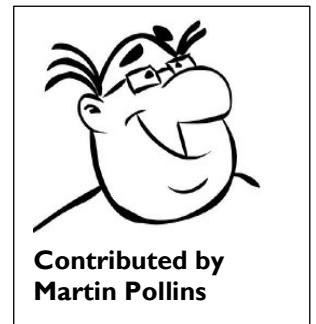


Contributed by
Martin Pollins

Alternative meanings for common words

Aadvark, n. A German expression to describe something that is difficult to do.
Abdicate, v. To give up all hope of ever having a flat stomach.
Abominable, adv. An explosive device swallowed by a bull,
Acknowledge, v. Having the know-how to break into people's bank accounts.
Acquire, v. A group of people that sing.
Acre, n. Someone with a pain.
Aftermath, n. Rest period after algebra class.
Agog, adv. A half-finished Jewish place of worship.
Antecedent, adv. Someone averse to seeds.
Artery, n. The study of painting.
Artificial, adj. Someone who works at an art gallery.
Avoidable, ad. What the bullfighter tries to do.
Balderdash, n. A rapidly receding hairline.
Circumvent, n. An opening in front of boxer shorts worn by Jewish men.
Coffee, n. The person upon whom one coughs.
Counterfeiters, n. Workers who install the feet on kitchen furniture.
Dilate, v. To live for longer than expected.
Esplanade, v. To attempt an explanation while drunk.
Flabbergasted, adj. Appalled by discovering how much weight one has gained.
Flatulence, n. Emergency vehicle that picks up someone who has been run over by a steamroller.
Frisbeetarianism, n. The belief that, after death, the soul flies up onto the roof and gets stuck there.
Gargoyle, n. Olive-flavoured mouthwash.

Hamlet, n. A small pig.
Infantry, n. A small, young tree.
Inkwell, n. An accomplished tattooist.
Lieutenant, n. Someone who spends much of his time in the toilet.
Lobster, n. Someone who throws poorly.
Lymph, v. To walk with a lisp.
Mobilisation, n. Removing your BT land line and switching all calls to your mobile.
Negligent, adj. Absent mindedly answering the door when wearing only a nightgown.
Nitrate, n. The price after sunset.
Oxymoron, n. A person as dumb as an ox.
Oyster, n. A person who sprinkles his conversation with Yiddishisms.
Pharmacist, n. An agricultural worker.
Pokemon, n. A Rastafarian proctologist.
Post-operative, adv. Someone from Royal Mail who delivers letters and parcels.
Presbyterian, n. Someone who cries while doing the ironing.
Proceed, v. A botanist (in favour of seed).
Professor, n. The opposite of confessor.
Psychopath, n. Crazy paving.
Ramification, n. A consequence that is forced down your throat.
Receipt, n. To sit back down.
Recovery room, n. A place to do upholstery repairs.
Rectitude, n. The formal, dignified bearing adopted by proctologists.
Sedate, v. To look at a calendar.
Stalemate, n. A leading cause of divorce.
Succeed, v. What a toothless budgerigar does.
Syntax, n. Paying a priest for absolution after doing something wrong.
Testicle, n. A humorous question on an exam.
Thesaurus, n. A dinosaur that studied words.
Transcendental, adj. Above the teeth.
Willy-nilly, adj. Impotent.



The old man on a plane

An old man boarded an airplane and took his seat. As he settled in, he glanced up and saw the most beautiful woman he had ever seen boarding the plane and walking down the aisle towards him.

The old man soon realised that the woman was heading straight towards his seat: As fate would have it, she took the seat right beside his.

Eager to strike up a conversation he blurted out: "Business trip or pleasure?"

The woman turned, smiled and said, "Business. I'm going to the Annual Nymphomaniacs of America Convention in Boston."

The old man swallowed hard, not quite believing what was happening. Here was the most gorgeous woman he had ever seen, sitting next to him and she was going to a meeting of nymphomaniacs!

Struggling to maintain his composure, he calmly asked: "What's your Business at this convention?"

"Lecturer," she responded. "I use information that I have learned from my personal experiences to debunk some of the popular myths about sexuality."

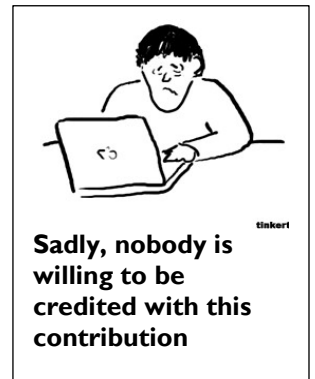
"Really?" he said. "And what kind of myths are they?"

"Well," she explained "One popular myth is that African-American men are the most well-endowed of all men, when in fact it is the Native American Indian who is most likely to possess that trait. Another popular myth is that Frenchmen are the best lovers when actually it is Scotsmen who are

the best. I have also discovered that the lover with absolutely the best stamina is the Irish."

Suddenly the woman became a little uncomfortable and blushed. "I'm sorry," She said "I shouldn't really be discussing all of this with you. I don't even know your name."

"Tonto," the old man said, "Tonto McTavish, but my friends call me Paddy."



QUIZ 1

Contributed by our own Quizmaster, David Waite

- 1) What is the original name for Istanbul?
- 2) Who was Alexander Von Humboldt?
- 3) When, and for how long was our country without a King or Queen within the last five hundred years?
- 4) What is the principal town of Rutland?
- 5) What is the capital of Albania?
- 6) What external empire controlled the Netherlands from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries?
- 7) At what age can you seek a driving licence?
- 8) When was the first population census in the United Kingdom and what was the estimated level of population?
- 9) Who was John Maynard Keynes?
- 10) Who was the earliest famous philosopher of whom we have written record of his work?
- 11) What two word English phrase derives from the French word *trouver* = To Find
- 12) What one English word derives from the Latin word 'to fight'?
- 13) What is the name of an old narrow river, now enclosed, which joins the Thames in central London from the north side?
- 14) Which two American states are located north of California, to the boundary with Canada?
- 15) What does the word econometrics mean?
- 16) Who completed, and when was the first dictionary completed?
- 17) What name is marmalade derived from?
- 18) How old is Prince Phillip?
- 19) What is the second largest city on The Isle of Man, after Douglas?
- 20) When did all women receive the right to vote in U.K. general elections?

Click [here](#) for answers



To Zoom or not to Zoom, now that's a Question...

According to the last Probus Magazine, some Probus Clubs are holding Zoom meetings on-line. These meetings, on a Computer, Tablet or Mobile Phone, are easy to set up and are free if the duration is less than 40 minutes.

Haywards Heath & District Probus Club keep members (and widows/partners of former members) up to date via a regular Mailchimp email update or via *Nil Desperandum*. The committee has also established a regular ring round system to keep in touch with members during the lockdown.

By the way, what is Zoom?

Zoom is a web-based video conferencing tool with a local, desktop client and a mobile app that allows users to meet online, with or without video. Zoom users can choose to record sessions, collaborate on projects, and share or annotate on one another's screens. Put simply, Zoom unifies cloud video conferencing, simple online meetings, and group messaging into one easy-to-use platform.

This is what a Zoom session looks like on a computer:



The last two Club Committee Meetings have been held on Zoom and have worked very well indeed.

Yes or No?

The question for you is this:
How do you feel about our Club holding a Zoom meeting for all members... a 40-minute opportunity to chat, to catch up, to cheer up those who are fed up with being locked down. Or are we doing enough already?

Please let me know what you think:
mpollins@onesmartplace.com

Jobs for the Girls



Ellen Church: Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ellen_Church

The first female flight attendant was a 25-year-old registered nurse named Ellen Church. She was hired by Boeing Air Transport (predecessor of United Airlines) in 1930 when it was thought that all stewardesses should be nurses.

Other airlines followed suit, hiring nurses to serve as flight attendants. In the United States, the job was one of only a few in the 1930s that allowed women to take on this job. In the wake of the Great Depression, it led to large numbers of applicants for the few positions available with over two thousand women applying for only 43 positions offered by TWA in December 1935.

Recommended Viewing



If you're looking for something to view try 'Vicar of This Parish' presented by the late poet laureate Sir John Betjeman (above), in a BBC presentation available at: <https://youtu.be/Utow19Qj9js>. The vicar was Robert Francis Kilvert (1840 - 1879), whose diaries reflected rural life in the 1870s in his various parishes around Hay-on-Wye. There is a Kilvert Society - my wife and I once toured 'Kilvert country' and found it most interesting.
Contributed by Brian Bridges

Where words come from

Contributed by Quizmaster, David Waite

LATIN WORD	ENGLISH TRANSLATION	NEW WORD
Pugna	To fight	Pugnacious
Magister	Chief, Master, Director	Magistrate
Bellum	War	Belligerent
Arteria	Windpipe	Artery
Altercatio	Dispute	Altercation
Circa	Around	Circle
Grandis	Large/Great	Grand
Globosus	Spherical	Global
Grates	Thanks	Grateful
Trico	Mischief-maker	Trick
Propensi	Inclination	Propensity
Insipiens	Senseless or foolish	Inspid

English words derived from the French language

FRENCH WORD	ENGLISH TRANSLATION	NEW WORD
Accompagner	To go with	Accompany (verb)
Chanter	To sing	To chant (verb)
Courir	To run	Courier (noun)
Comprendre	To understand	Comprehend (verb)
Crayon	Pencil	Crayon (noun)
Esperer	To hope	Aspire (verb)
Fait Accompli	A thing that has already happened or been decided	We use this phrase
Fenetre	Window	Fenestration (noun)
Gateau	Cake	Gateau (noun)
Jour	Day	Journal (noun)
Marcher	To walk	March (verb)
Morceau	A piece	Morsel (noun)
Mur	Wall	Mural (noun)
Parler	To talk	Parlance (noun)
Plein	Full	Plenty (noun)
Porter	To carry	Porter (noun)
Tomber	To fall	Tumble (verb)
Quitter	To leave	Quit (verb)
Regarder	To look at	Regard (verb)
Rire	To laugh	Roar (noun or verb)
Vetements	Clothing	Vestment ~ official ceremonial robe (noun)

How To Save New Brain Cells

by Tracey J. Shors. Published in Scientific American in March 2009:



The brain can grow new neurons, but these disappear unless cognitively challenged:

“Fresh neurons arise in the brain every day... Recent work, albeit mostly in rats, indicates that learning enhances the survival of new neurons in the adult brain. And the more engaging and challenging the problem, the greater the number of neurons that stick around.

“These neurons are then presumably available to aid in situations that tax the mind. It seems, then, that a mental workout can buff up the brain, much as physical exercise builds up the body...

“In the 1990s scientists rocked the field of neurobiology with the startling news that the mature mammalian brain is capable of sprouting new neurons.

“Biologists had long believed that this talent for neurogenesis was reserved for young, developing minds and was lost with age. But in the early part of the decade Elizabeth Gould, then at the Rockefeller University demonstrated that new cells arise in the adult brain— particularly in a region called the hippocampus, which is involved in learning and memory...

“Studies indicate that in rats, between 5,000 and 10,000 new neurons arise in the hippocampus every day. (Although the human hippocampus also welcomes new neurons, we do not know how many.) The cells are not generated like clockwork, however. Instead their production can be influenced by a number of different environmental factors. For example, alcohol consumption has been shown to retard the generation of new brain cells. And their birth rate can be enhanced by exercise. Rats and mice that log time on a running wheel can kick out

twice as many new cells as mice that lead a more sedentary life...

“Exercise and other actions may help produce extra brain cells. But those new recruits do not necessarily stick around. Many if not most of them disappear within just a few weeks of arising. Of course, most cells in the body do not survive indefinitely. So the fact that these cells die is, in itself, not shocking. But their quick demise is a bit of a puzzler. Why would the brain go through the trouble of producing new cells only to have them disappear rapidly?

“From our work in rats, the answer seems to be: they are made ‘just in case.’ If the animals are cognitively challenged, the cells will linger. If not, they will fade away.”

Found in Delancey Place on 10/10/2018:
Original Story by David Christian.

People keep making new brain cells throughout their lives (well, at least until the age of 97), according to a study on human brains reported on by the BBC.

The idea has been fiercely debated, and it used to be thought we were born with all the brain cells we will ever have.

The researchers at the University of Madrid also showed that the number of new brain cells tailed off with age.

Most of our neurons - brain cells that send electrical signals - are indeed in place by the time we are born.

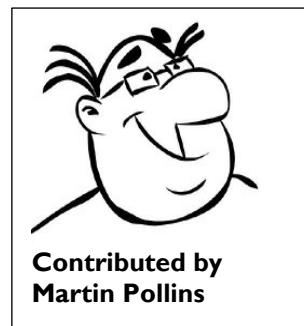
Studies on other mammals have found new brains cells forming later in life, but the extent of "neurogenesis" in the human brain is still a source of debate. The study, published in Nature Medicine, looked at the brains of 58 deceased people who were aged between 43 and 97.

The focus was on the hippocampus - a part of the brain involved in memory and emotion. It is the part of the brain that you need, to remember where you parked the car.

Neurons do not emerge in the brain fully formed but have to go through a process of growing and maturing.

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-47692495>



Contributed by
Martin Pollins