

MITCHELL SYMONS

Why don't you smell when you're sleeping?

and other
facts explained



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Copyright

About the Book

DID YOU KNOW . . .

That the chances of being injured by a toilet seat at some point in your life are reckoned to be one in 6,500?

A group of giraffes is called a 'tower'?

A 'zyzzyx' is a type of wasp?

And that snail races start with the words 'ready, steady, SLOW!'

Amaze your mates and fascinate your family with this brilliant collection of facts.

Why don't you smell when you're sleeping?



Mitchell Symons

RHCP DIGITAL

**To YOU, the returning reader.
Thanks for your loyalty.
To YOU, the new reader.
Thanks for giving me a chance.**

Introduction

OK, regular readers (and a big welcome back to you!) will have got the drill by now and can start gorging themselves on all the new trivia I've found for you.

Newcomers (and a big hello to you!) should start here.

This is the thirteenth book in a series that started with *How To Avoid A Wombat's Bum*. But, within those eleven books, it's also the fourth pure trivia book. The other three being *How To Avoid A Wombat's Bum*, *How Much Poo Does An Elephant Do?* and *Why Does Ear Wax Taste So Gross?*

I've been collecting great trivia for over 30 years now and I still get a big buzz from finding a wonderful fact.

To write this book, I used my large library of reference books as well as the internet (although I tried to use this to check facts rather than, as is so tempting, as a tool of first resort).

Now for some important acknowledgements because without these people, this book couldn't have been written at all: (in alphabetical order): my fantastic editor Lauren Buckland, my wife and chief researcher Penny Chorlton, my lovely publisher Annie Eaton, and Nigel Baines.

In addition, I'd also like to thank the following people for their help, contributions and/or support: Gilly Adams, Luigi Bonomi, Paul Donnelley, Jonathan Fingerhut, Jenny Garrison, Philip Garrison, William Mulcahy, Nicholas Ridge, Charlie Symons, Jack Symons, Louise Symons, David Thomas and Martin Townsend, Harriet Venn, Clair Woodward and Rob Woolley.

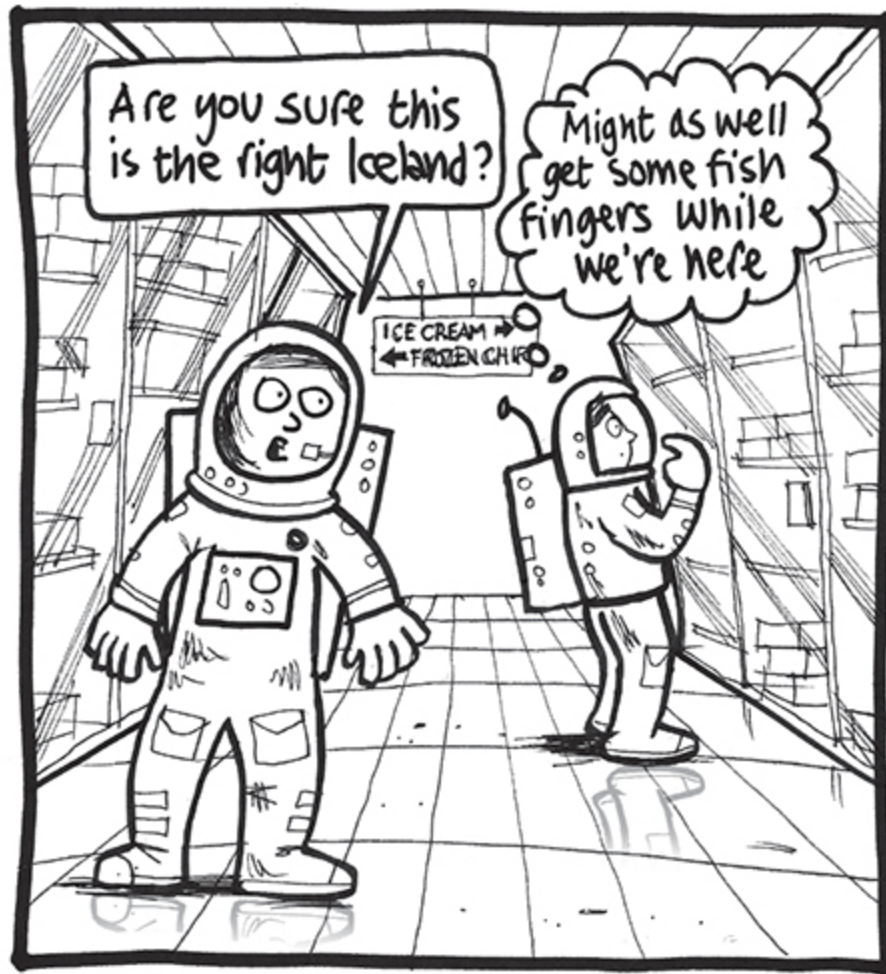
If I've missed anyone out, then please know that – as with any mistakes in the book – it is, as I always say, entirely down to my own stupidity.

Mitchell Symons

P.S. How quickly can you find the fact that relates to the title of the book?

Firsts

The first astronauts to go to the moon trained in Iceland because the terrain was reckoned to be similar to the moon's surface.



The first pull-top can was invented by Ermal Cleon Frazee in 1959, after he had to resort to using his car bumper to open a can of drink.

The first commercial vacuum cleaner was so large it was mounted on a wagon. People threw parties in

their homes so guests could watch the new device do its job.

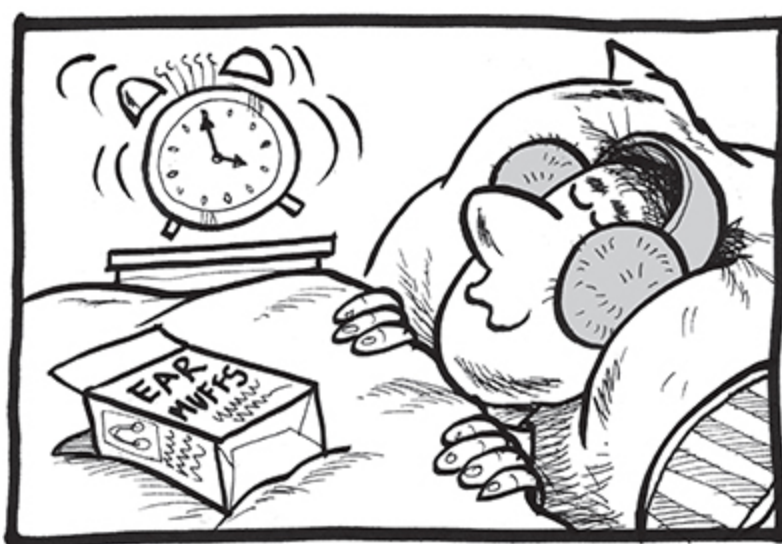
The first TV remote control – named Lazy Bones – was sold by Zenith in the US in 1950. It was connected to the set by a wire.

The first person killed in a car accident was Londoner Bridget Driscoll, who was run over in 1896 by a car travelling at four miles per hour.

Bugs Bunny was the first cartoon character to be pictured on a US postage stamp.

Leonardo da Vinci was the first person to record that the number of rings in the cross section of a tree trunk revealed its age. He also discovered that the width between the rings indicated the annual rainfall.

The first alarm clock could only ring at four a.m. I don't think that would have sold very well!



The first electric razor was invented by Jacob Schick during the First World War, while he was in the US

Army and stationed at an Alaskan army base. Tired of breaking the layer of ice that formed in the washbasin so that he could shave, he developed an electric razor which he patented in 1923. In 1931 his razor went on sale to the public (for \$25), and he had sold nearly two million by 1937.

The first Briton to be killed in a flying accident was Charles Rolls (of Rolls-Royce fame).

The first bagpipe was made from the liver of a dead sheep.

The first televised Wimbledon tennis match was in 1937.

The Olympic Games were filmed for the first time in 1936 in Berlin. However, the footage was not shown on home televisions, but on large screens around the city.

The first Olympic Games to be covered for a worldwide TV audience were the Rome Olympics of 1960.

The butterfly swimming event was first held at the 1956 Olympics. In fact, the event had been added to the Games because some swimmers were exploiting a loophole to swim butterfly in the breaststroke race!

France can boast the world's first department store: Le Bon Marché, which opened in Paris in 1838.

Ties (as in neckties) were first worn at the time of the Thirty Years War (1618 - 48) when the traditional small, knotted neckerchiefs worn by Croatian mercenaries fighting for the French were adopted as ties by Parisians.

While we're in Croatia . . . the Statute of Korcula – which was drafted in the Croatian town of the same name in 1214 and signed in 1265 – was the first European Act to prohibit trading in slaves. Korcula is also claimed as a possible birthplace of the explorer Marco Polo.

The world's first university was established in Takshila, India (now in Pakistan), in 700 BC. Over 10,500 students from all over the world studied more than 60 subjects, including algebra, trigonometry and calculus, which were all first studied in India.

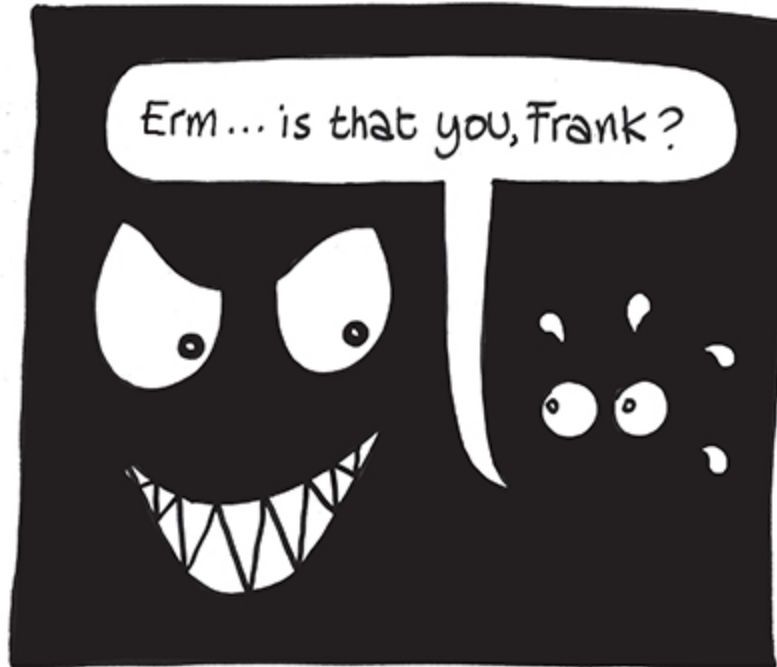
Belgium was the first country to issue electronic passports.

San Marino entered the Eurovision Song Contest for the first time in 2008.

Africa's first republic, Liberia, was founded in 1822 thanks to the efforts of the American Colonization Society, which decided to settle freed American slaves in West Africa. Liberia, which means 'land of the free', became home to (as they were known) Americo-Liberians, who established a settlement in Monrovia (named after US President James Monroe).

In 1993 the Netherlands became the first country to allow euthanasia (mercy-killing for the terminally ill) under certain strict conditions.

Singapore is home to the world's first night zoo: the Night Safari.



The Indian mathematician Aryabhatta first came up with the mathematical concept of zero at the end of the fifth century.

Abba's *Waterloo* was the first Eurovision Song Contest entry to reach the US Top Ten.

The first internet hoax to reach a mass audience was the 1994 claim that Microsoft had bought the Catholic Church.

A Japanese surgeon named Hanaoka Seish performed the world's first operation under general anaesthesia in 1804.

An American inventor named William Bullock patented the first continuous-roll printing press (also known as a web rotary printing press) in 1863, which went on to revolutionize the printing industry. Four years later, his invention killed him when his leg got caught in the machine and he developed gangrene.

The world's first oil wells were drilled in China in the fourth century AD.

Onlys

There are only four clubs in the English Football League with names that start and end with the same letter: Liverpool, Charlton Athletic, Northampton Town and Aston Villa.

Alaska is the only US state that can be typed on a single row of a keyboard (the middle row!).

David Duchovny is the only actor to win a Golden Globe for both Drama and Comedy.

The only mammal species in which the female is normally taller than the male is a type of antelope called an okapi.

Henry VII was the only English king to be crowned on a field of battle.

There are only eight different surnames on the island of Tristan da Cunha. They are: Glass, Green, Hagan, Lavarello, Patterson, Repetto, Rogers and Swain.

New Hampshire is the only US state where adults don't have to wear seat belts in cars.

Three babies have been born on the London Underground. The first was called Thelma Ursula Beatrice Eleanor. She was born in 1924 on a Bakerloo line train at Elephant & Castle. Check out her initials!

***The Comedy of Errors* is the only Shakespeare play that doesn't have a song in it.**

Bhutan is the only country that officially measures its nation's level of happiness.

Until 1896, India was the world's only source of diamonds.

Guyana is the only English-speaking country in South America.

Saudi Arabia is the only country where women aren't allowed to drive.

The United States and the Philippines are the only countries that allow bounty hunting.

Sailing is the only sport that has a triangular course.

In 1894 Earl Rosebery became the only Prime Minister to own a Derby winner.

An Austrian man named Adam Rainer (1899 - 1950) is the only man in recorded human history ever to have been both a dwarf and a giant. At the age of 21 he was just 3 foot, 10½ inches, but then he had growth spurts that saw him grow to an incredible 7 foot, 8 inches.

New Zealand is the only country that has every type of climate in the world.



Sir Ken Adam, the original production designer of the James Bond films, was the only German to fight for the RAF in the Second World War.

There are only two full-length Disney feature films in which both parents of the main characters are present and alive throughout the movie: *101 Dalmatians* and *Peter Pan*.

Harry Lee played his only Test cricket match in 1931 - some 15 years after being declared dead in the First World War.

Words

Thirteen per cent of the letters in any given book are 'e'.

Using only the right-hand side of a keyboard, the longest word that can be typed is 'johnny-jump-up', or, excluding hyphens, 'hypolimnion'.

Here is a six-word sequence in which each new word is formed by adding one letter to the beginning of the previous word:

hes (plural of 'he', used as a noun to mean a male)
shes (plural of 'she')
ashes
lashes
plashes (plural of 'plash', a splashing sound)
splashes

The word 'gorilla' comes from the Carthaginian language of Tunisia.

'Widow' is the only female word in the English language that is shorter than its corresponding male term (widower).

There are only two words in English that end in the letters 'shion' - 'cushion' and 'fashion'.

A kangaroo word is one that contains all the letters, in order, of another word that has the same meaning. Examples include 'masculine' (male), 'observe' (see) and 'flammable' (inflammable).

The three-syllable word 'hideous', with the change of a single letter, becomes a two-syllable word with no vowel sounds in common: 'hideout'.

There are only three English words that end in the letters 'cion'. These are 'coercion', 'scion', and 'suspicion'.

'Zzyzx', a place in California, and 'zyzzyx', a type of wasp, consist of only the last three letters of the alphabet.

For many years, the word 'set' had the longest entry in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, but it has now been overtaken by the word 'make'. 'Make' and 'set' are followed by 'run', 'take' and 'go' - in that order.

The word 'Iouea' (a genus of sea sponges), is the only word to contain all five vowels and no other letters.

The English-language alphabet originally had only 24 letters. The letters 'U' and 'J' are both more recent additions.



There are only two sequences of four letters in alphabetical order that can be found in English words: 'rstu' and 'mnop'. Examples of each are 'understudy' and 'gymnophobia'.

The word 'shampoo' comes from the Hindu word 'champo', meaning 'to massage'.

Faulconbridge, a town in the Blue Mountains of Australia, uses half the alphabet, including all five vowels, and doesn't use any individual letter twice.

Words that came to English via the Czech language include 'robot', 'pistol' and 'dollar'.

The ten-letter word 'soupspoons' consists entirely of letters from the second half of alphabet, as does the hyphenated 'topsy-turvy'.

'Asthma' and 'isthmi' are the only six-letter words that begin and end with a vowel, and have no other vowels in between.

Contronyms

A contronym is a single word that has opposite meanings, for example:

‘Sanction’ can mean approve or punish.

‘Clip’ can mean to cut or to fasten (clip together).

‘Cleave’ can mean to split apart or to join together.

‘Screen’ can mean to shield or to present.

‘Bound’ can mean to be going (to be bound for London) or to be tied up (unable to move).

‘Left’ can mean remaining or to have gone.

Palindromes

A palindrome is a word or sentence that reads the same backwards or forwards - like 'Madam, I'm Adam'.

Here are some more:

A Santa deified at NASA

A coup d'état saved devastated Puoca

A new order began, a more Roman age bred Rowena

Denim axes examined

Dennis and Edna sinned

Feeble Tom's motel beef

Lisa Bonet ate no basil