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**Opening Extract from...**

**365 Reasons to be  
Proud to be a Dad**  
**The Greatest Dad Moments in History**

Written by Ian Allen

Published by Portico

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*To the three reasons I have to be proud to be a Dad –  
Chris, Nick and Debbie.*

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## PALINDROMIC DELIGHT



Although the first commercial traffic wouldn't pass through the Panama Canal until later in the year, on this day in 1914 the French crane boat *Alexandre La Valley* reached the Pacific Ocean. The much-delayed scheme had been started back in 1881 by the French, but was finally completed over 30 years later by the Americans. And including this feat here isn't a dig at Dads' DIY efforts that always have a similar deadline failure – it's an opportunity (all right then, an excuse) to repeat one of those fascinating palindromes Dads love to 'entertain' you with – 'A man, a plan, a canal: Panama!'

## WHERE'S MY BACON BUTTY?



There's nothing most Dads like more than a bacon bap, melting butter oozing down their chins, accompanied by a nice cup of sweet tea. Heaven! So what is there to celebrate about this day in 1940 when the British Government announced the rationing of bacon, butter and sugar? It should have been a Dad disaster. But it was a sacrifice in the national interest during World War Two, and hence Dads could brace their stiff upper lips in true Trevor Howard style, despite being desperate for a good fry-up. Bread, curiously, remained un-rationed during the war, only to be limited for a two-year period from 1946.

## WHY DON'T I-PHONE YOU?



On this day in 2007 Apple's Steve Jobs unveiled his latest shiny gadget designed to part Dads from their cash – the iPhone. With its touch-screen technology and all sorts of acronyms Dads pretend to know about, it has gone on to conquer the world of mobile phones, and the desperate efforts of competitors to keep up has led to huge choice in the smartphone marketplace. The iPhone, now on its seventh generation (though it will probably be its eighth or ninth by the time you read this), passed total sales of 500 million in March 2014 – most of them probably to replace ones that Dads have dropped down the toilet.

**HERE COMES THE BRIDE**



Mendelssohn’s famous ‘Wedding March’ from his music for *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* is the traditional tune for married couples to walk out to after their nuptials (not to be confused with the ‘Here Comes the Bride’ music that she normally walks *in* to – that’s Wagner’s ‘Bridal March’ from *Lohengrin*). Mendelssohn’s music was written in 1842, but it really took off in the public imagination when Queen Victoria’s daughter (also called Victoria) married Prince Frederick William of Prussia on this day in 1858. And as it’s the first tune he hears after passing on responsibility for his daughter to the groom, it’s got a soft spot in the heart of Dads too.

**SYDNEY WAS A RUM OLD COVE**



Today is Australia Day, the date officially commemorating the British claiming possession of New South Wales in 1788. But the same day 20 years later was another important Aussie date, and one guaranteed to make Dads sit up and take notice, if only by its name. Some historians reckon the Rum Rebellion wasn’t really about the crackdown on illicit booze at all; still, whatever its cause, the Governor of NSW had put a lot of noses out of joint and was deposed in an armed coup. His name was William Bligh, who had provoked the mutiny on the *Bounty* in 1789 – he was probably getting used to it ...

**WELCOME THE WIDGET**



In the 1960s Guinness were working on a way to allow their customers to enjoy a similar product to draught beer in their own home. Their boffins filed a patent on this day in 1969 for a device inside the can that would discharge gas into the beer and give it that distinctive head. ‘Technical problems’ meant the project was put on hold, and it wasn’t until the 1980s that Guinness returned to the challenge. After rejecting dozens of methods, they finally launched the nitrogen-dispensing widget at the end of the decade, and their competitors soon followed suit. And Dads ever since have been eternally grateful.

**RAIN LATER**

On this day in 1861 the foundations of a vital British tradition were laid when the first weather warning for shipping was broadcast by telegraph. It was the brainchild of Vice-Admiral Robert FitzRoy, who is the only person to have a shipping area named after them (in 2002, when the former area Finisterre needed renaming). Although most ships now rely on satellite data, the BBC shipping forecast is a much-loved institution listened to by many more people than actually need it. Countless Dads have rocked their infants to sleep in the small hours to its poetic cadence, preceded of course by the soothing strains of Ronald Binge's 'Sailing By'.

**BYE-BYE BABY**

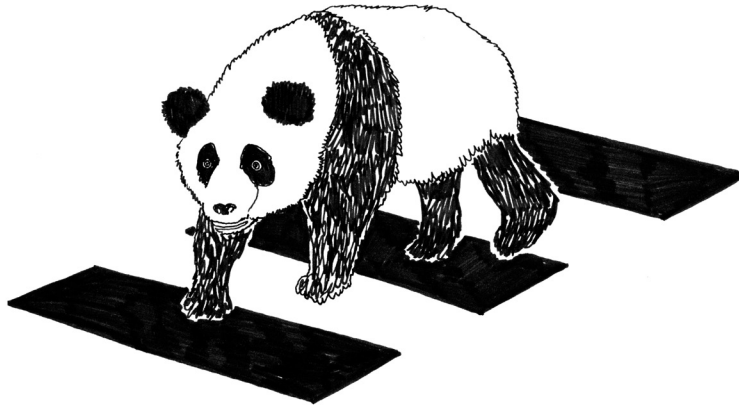
The infamous dictator François 'Papa Doc' Duvalier gave Dads everywhere a bad name with his bloodthirsty regime that saw the murder of around 30,000 Haitians, and his son 'Baby Doc' wasn't much better when he took over in 1971 – he lived a life of luxury while his people starved. So it was a big hurray from Dads everywhere when Baby Doc was overthrown today in 1986 and forced to flee the country. Baby Doc returned in 2011 to 'help' his country but was arrested and in 2014 faced trial for corruption and human rights abuses.

**WHAT THE DEVIL?**

On this night in 1855 there was a heavy snowfall in Devon, to nobody's surprise. And when residents woke up the next morning, it seemed that someone – or something – had been out that night leaving a trail. Over a distance of between 60–160km (40–100 miles), a series of hoof-like trails had appeared. But what was perplexing was that the trails led straight over rivers, haystacks and houses, even being left on rooftops and high walls. Locals lost no time in blaming the devil for these cloven prints. Numerous theories have been put forward since, blaming runaway balloons, hopping rodents and escaped kangaroos, but whatever it was it seems too complicated and well executed to have been a Dad playing a trick on his kids.

**HOW MUCH?**

Dads are constantly amazed at the amount of money shelled out in football on transfer fees and wages, seemingly oblivious to the connection between this and their own willingness to stump up ever-increasing amounts for season tickets and Sky subscriptions. In August 2014 Manchester United smashed the British transfer record when they paid Real Madrid £59.7m for Ángel di Maria. But



### WHY NO CHICKEN CROSSING?



With the plethora of animal-themed traffic crossings, you'd have thought the chicken, butt of so many road-related Dad jokes, would have been included. We'd had the good old-fashioned zebra crossing in Britain since 1949, but today in 1962 technology began its jack-booted march when the first panda crossing was unveiled in London. With its confusing combination of 'flashing' and 'pulsating' amber lights, the endangered panda was soon superseded by pelicans, puffins and toucans. Since 2007 there have even been equestrian Pegasus crossings – though any creature less in need of help crossing the road than a winged horse is hard to imagine ...

### IT'S A BIT COLD UP HERE



The 14th Duke of Hamilton was a real Boys' Own hero and a great role model for Dads to inspire their kids with. He was an early flying pioneer, the youngest squadron leader of his day, and was the chap German deputy PM Rudolf Hess surrendered to in World War Two. Not only that, he was humble enough to work at the coalface of his father's mines to experience what it was like for the miners. He was also a sensible fellow, taking the easy way up Everest on this day in 1933 when he became the first person to fly over the world's highest mountain.

## DAD'S GOT THE BLUES



Dads have a pretty simple dress code: office? Suit. Anywhere else? Jeans. So it was a great day in 1873 when Jacob Davis teamed up with Levi Strauss to patent their copper-studded denim clothing. It took a while (until the 1950s, actually) before jeans caught on as leisurewear, but once they did there was no stopping them. The Levi Strauss company operates worldwide and is now just one of countless jeans manufacturers, but their famous 501s are still 'the Original'. Opinion is divided as to whether the best way of looking after jeans is to wash them, freeze them, bake them or just leave them to get filthy.

## SUMMERTIME, AND THE LIVING IS ... EARLY



Dads love that extra hour they get in bed in the autumn, forgetting they paid for it when the clocks went forward in the spring. It all began today in 1916 as part of the war effort to save coal; if William Willett, the man who had long campaigned for the measure to make the most of daylight but who died in 1915, had had his way, the country would have put the clocks forward by 20 minutes every weekend for a month, which seems to be over-complicating it a bit.

## NOW WHERE DID I PUT MY GLASSES?



Squeamish Dads, look away now – while those who quite like performing a bit of first aid on cuts and bruises could pick up a few tips. Today in 2014 at the Royal London Hospital, Shafi Ahmed performed the first operation streamed live online using Google Glasses. He removed cancerous tissue from the liver and bowel of 78-year-old Roy Pulfer while 13,000 medical students around the world watched; they could even type questions to the surgeon while he worked.

## PICK A WINDOW, YOU'RE LEAVING!



We've already touched on Dads' sketchy historical knowledge and their penchant for snappy titles to keep them interested (see 28 January). Well, the Defenestration of Prague today in 1618 must be up there with the Diet of Worms. From the Latin word *fenestra* (window), defenestration means to throw someone out of a window, and that's exactly what happened to three Catholic bigwigs. In fact, this was the *second* DoP – the citizens of Prague had a practice in 1419, and obviously developed a taste for it. Although the 1618 victims survived a 21-m (70ft) drop (either by a miracle or a handily placed dung-heap, take your pick), the incident led to the Thirty Years' War.

**WILLIAM ISN'T TELLING**



Dads, definitely don't try this one at home, you'll never get the blood out of the carpet. Today in 1953 William Burroughs, Beat Generation novelist and most famous for his *Naked Lunch* in 1959, was playing a drunken game with his wife Joan Vollmer. She balanced a glass of water on her head, he aimed his gun at it *à la* William Tell. Both were drunk and/or drugged-up. Joan might not have been expecting him to pull the trigger; maybe Burroughs never meant to. The gun went off, Joan was shot through the head, and a lucky Burroughs was only convicted of manslaughter.

**DON'T MAKE ME TAKE THE OATH T-T-T-TWICE**



It's a shame we've lost the knack of giving pithy nicknames to kings and queens and just go on boringly numbering them. It would be much more fun if Victoria the Fat had been succeeded by Edward the Randy, for instance. They knew how to do it back in ninth-century France, when Louis had Charles the Bald for a Dad (poor old Dad) and Charles the Simple for a son. Unsurprisingly, Louis the Stammerer was a nervous type who was crowned King of France twice, the second time today in 878. After giving away some of his land to Wilfred the Hairy, he died in 879.

**TIME TO FIND ANOTHER CLICHÉ**



Dads, are you fed up of being told you're about as much use as a chocolate teapot? Well, any Dad watching BBC's *The One Show* (OK, it's a long shot, but stay with me) today in 2014 would have been punching the air as they watched the world's first such working model being put through its paces. Developed in York by Nestlé's Product Technology Centre, it was made by building up layer after layer of special dark choccy using a silicon mould, and delivered a cuppa that was described as being 'a lovely cup of tea' with (guess what?) 'a slight hint of chocolate'.

**A BUG'S LIFE**



It's no wonder Dads can't get on with computers when there are so many bugs in them. The very first one was discovered today in 1947 when Grace Hopper, a US Navy scientist, was working on the Harvard Mark II, a very early model. She had to remove a dead moth that was stuck between the relays of the machine, and noted in the log book, 'First actual case of a bug being found'. 'Amazing Grace' went on to become not only a rear admiral, but a pioneering figure in computing history, showered with awards and honours.