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# **LIFE, LOVE & MEMORIES**



# **MEMORY LANE**

**PUBLISHED BY AGE UK OLDHAM**

Welcome to our February edition of our newsletter, the first one of 2024 and, as you are probably aware, it is a leap year and this is how it comes about:

It takes approximately 365.25 days for Earth to orbit the Sun - a solar year. We usually round the days in a calendar year to 365 and to make up for the extra partial day it is added to the calendar every four years on the 29th February.

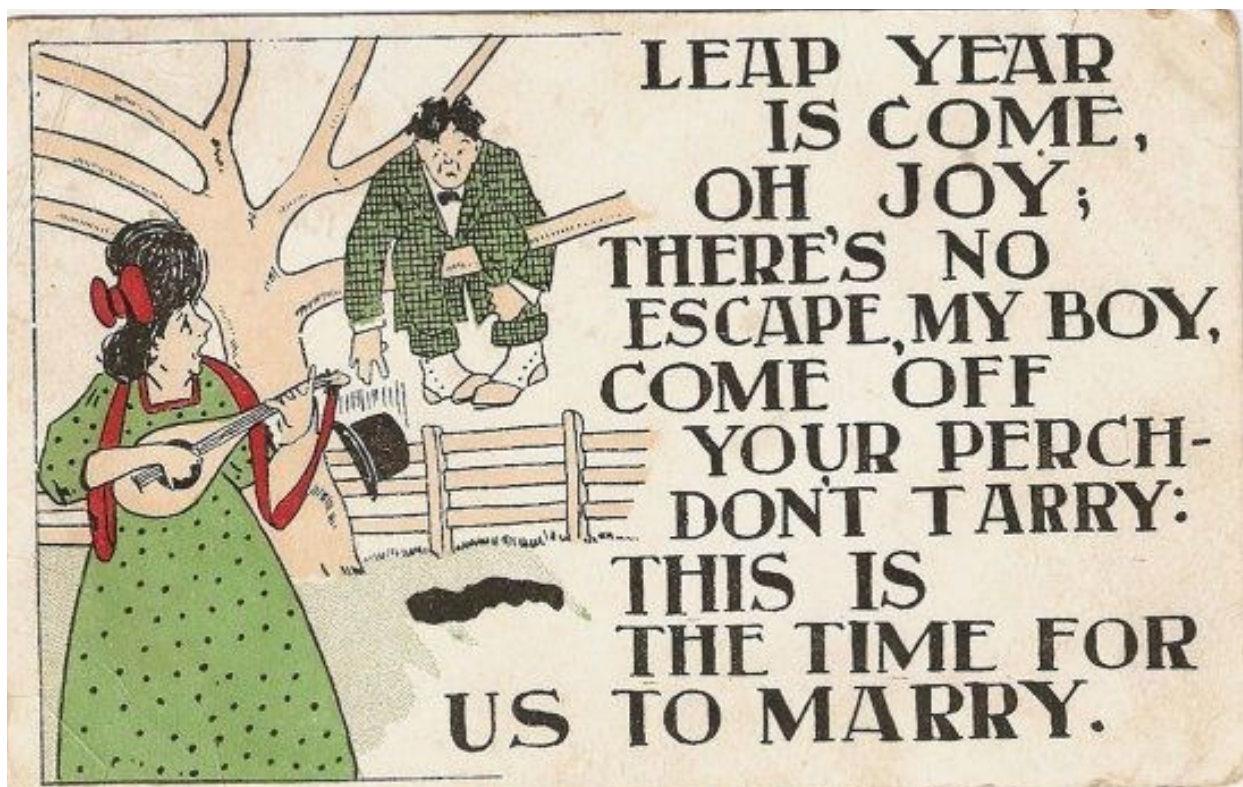
Leap years are important so that our calendar year matches the solar year - the amount of time it takes for Earth to make a trip around the Sun. Subtracting 5 hours, 46 minutes and 48 seconds from a year maybe doesn't seem like a big deal. But, if you keep subtracting almost 6 hours every year for many years, things can really get messed up.

For example, July is in our summer but if we never had leap years, all those missing hours would add up into days, weeks and even months and eventually, in a few hundred years, July would actually take place in Winter.

The older generation will know that the seasons were far more predictable in their youth and now with the advent of global warming who knows what it will be like in 100 years with or without leap years?

Around the world there are many historic superstitions and traditions pertaining to leap year and England is no exception:

The right of every women to propose on 29th February each leap year goes back hundreds of years when the leap year day had no recognition in English law (the day was 'leapt over' and ignored, hence the term 'leap year').



*Thanks to Sue Livesey for suggesting this article.*

*People of Oldham by Rosemary Bailey*

## **Dame Sarah Lees and Her Daughter, Marjorie**

Sarah Anne Buckley who became Dame Sarah Lees was born on 13th November 1842 in Mossley.

On 30th July 1874 she married Charles Edward Lees of Werneth Park in Oldham. He came from a family of highly successful cotton manufacturers. Soon after their 20th wedding anniversary Charles was taken ill and died the same week. He left Sarah and their 2 daughters nearly £890,000 excluding land and property, to be divided 3 ways.



**Dame Sarah**



**Dorothy and Marjorie  
Lees, Sarah's daughters**

Sarah was determined to use the money left to her for the good of the local community. She supported various causes in Oldham such as commissioning recreational grounds, supporting the Nursing Association, Oldham Hospital and scholarships for Grammar Schools. She acquired her first public role on the Education Committee in 1902. She was also a patron of Oldham Poor Children's Holiday Association and Sanitorium School.



**In 1907, aged 65, she became the first woman to be elected to Oldham's Town Council, representing Hollinwood Ward as a Liberal. This was soon after the Qualification of Women Act which was passed in the same year.**

**In 1909 she was the first woman to receive the Freedom of the Borough of Oldham and then in 1910 she became Mayor of Oldham, only the second woman to be installed with that title in the UK.**



**Dame Sarah Lees in her Mayoral robes and chain of office.**

**After a tram strike was resolved while she was Mayor, Sarah drove a tram herself through Oldham to ensure that the trams were in the right place at the right time once the service resumed.**



At the start of WW1, Sarah presented the Oldham branch of the St John Ambulance Society with a fully equipped ambulance destined for the war. In recognition of her war work she was made a Dame of the British Empire in 1917.

She died in 1935 and left her former home, Werneth Park, to the town.

A monument to Dame Sarah was put up in 1937 in Werneth Park by the townspeople of Oldham.



Dame Sarah



Memorial to Dame Sarah in Werneth Park





**Marjorie was born on 13th August 1878. Like her mother she became active in local politics and made charitable donations to the local community.**



**Marjorie Lees**

**In December 1908 Chadderton Urban Council were informed that Miss M. Lees of Werneth Park, was offering to give them £3,113 to purchase a plot of land from the trustees of C. E. Lees, her late father. The land, comprising about 11 acres lay between the Werneth to Hollinwood railway line and Coalshaw Green Road, and ran from Stanley Road to the now demolished Rose Mill.**

**It was to be used as a recreation ground for children and adults for all time. It was to be officially opened by Miss Lees, using a gold key, on 25th May 1912. The adjoining playing fields are now a suburban housing development.**

**In 1910 Marjorie became Mayoress when her mother became Mayor.**

**In 1919 she was elected to Oldham Council following her mother's resignation from the same seat, serving on the Council until she stepped down in 1934.**

**She died on 11th May 1970 at the age of 91.**



**This year a blue plaque was placed on the wall of her Werneth Park home to celebrate her 145th birthday. It was placed next to the one honouring her mother.**

**Their former home is now the Werneth Park Lifelong Learning Centre.**

## **QUIZ QUESTIONS**

1. How many hours from Tulsa was Gene Pitney in 1963?
2. What is 9:30pm on the '24 hour clock'?
3. In which countries is Anzac Day marked on 29th April?
4. What is the last of the year's four Quarter Days?
5. On which day does the 'Grouse shooting season' open?
6. What do the initials GMT and BST stand for?
7. What famous person was killed on 22nd November 1963?
8. What day in England is St George's Day?
9. Which month is named after the 'Roman God of War'?
10. How did Boxing Day get its name?
11. At 12 noon GMT, what is the time in New York?
12. What do the letters 'am' and 'pm' stand for?
13. What material marks a 13th Wedding Anniversary?
14. In France, what date is celebrated as Bastille Day?
15. Which day precedes Ash Wednesday?
16. What crucial world championships are held on Good Friday at Tinsley Green in Sussex?
17. Julius Caesar was murdered by Cassius and Brutus on the 'Ides of March' which day is it?
18. How long does it take for the Earth to travel one and a half million miles: a day, a week, a month, a year?
19. Which festival is celebrated by both Anglican and Roman Catholic churches on 1st November?
20. What are the two times of year when the Sun is overhead at the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn?

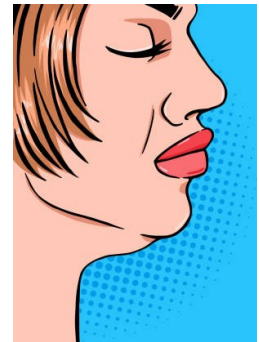
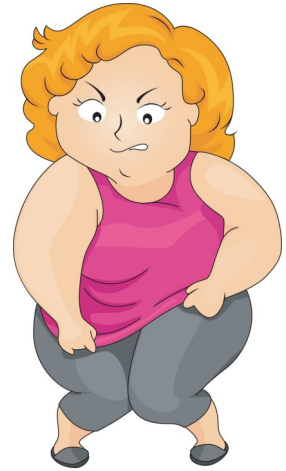
## ANSWERS TO QUIZ

1. 24
2. 21:30
3. Australia and New Zealand
4. Christmas Day
5. 12th August (the Glorious Twelfth)
6. Greenwich Mean Time, British Summer Time
7. President John F Kennedy
8. 23rd April
9. March
10. Traditionally, money from boxes placed in church during Christmas services was distributed to the poor of the parish
11. 7am
12. Ante Meridian (before noon) Post Meridian (after noon)
13. Lace
14. 14th July
15. Shrove Tuesday
16. Marbles
17. 15th
18. A day
19. All Saints' Day
20. The Solstices



## SURGICALLY ENHANCED - Extracts from a poem by Pam Eyres

I stand before the mirror and I feel my spirits sink  
I'm so bored with this old body it's so normal, round and pink  
It hasn't got the shingles or a nasty, chesty cough  
But it needs a few adjustments, a few sections slicing off  
So jab it, stab it, bruise it and give it all a tweak  
Insert the bags of saline in the hope that they don't leak  
Inject the collagen, carve me a monumental pout  
So I'll have lips of blubber once the stitches have come out  
I'm going to have my neck done it's so crepey, slack and loose  
They haul it up and stretch it I think they do it with a noose  
I've been studying my bottom, it's not looking very well  
It needs lifting up and sculpting and judicious bags of gel  
So as I walk down the high street and you view me from the back  
I'll be bouncy and mischievous like two ferrets in a sack!  
I'm having liposuction on my abdomen and thighs  
I'm hoping to reduce myself to a quarter of my size  
Considering my bosom, well, it's looking rather sad  
But then I must remember the two children that I've had  
And in my fond maternity produced a potent brew  
So now the kids are fifteen stone and over six foot two  
But returning to the 'bristols' I don't want the past to wreck 'em  
So I'll have them surgically enhanced like Mrs Beckham  
I can't afford the luxury and treatment that she can  
So I've booked in on the cheap to have it done in Pakistan  
My husband can regard himself a very lucky man  
That I'm going to be surgically enhanced!



## BUILDINGS OF OLDHAM - CIVIC CENTRE

The Civic Centre tower is the Oldham's centre of local governance. The fifteen storey building has housed the vast majority of the council's offices since its completion in 1977. Standing at the summit of the town, the tower stands over 200 feet (61 m high). It was designed by Cecil Howitt & Partners, and the topping out ceremony was held on 18 June 1976. Part of the building joins onto an older office block which dates from the mid-1960s. That was originally headquarters for Oldham's Regional Health Authority before their move to St. Peter's Precinct.



### SECRET BUNKER

It was reported in the Manchester Evening News that a secret relic of the Cold War hidden under a town hall could finally be revealed.

The nuclear stand-off between the US and Russia may have thawed out decades ago, but a collection of never-before-seen images released by council chiefs in Oldham cast an eerie light on the tensions of the times. During the height of a global panic, a nuclear bunker was built under the then newly-constructed Oldham Civic Centre.



It was designed to act as a safe room to protect the town's decision-makers and civic leaders from any nuclear attack or fall-out. Thankfully it was never used, but many thousands of people have walked into the 200ft-high tower off West Street ever since without knowing what lies beneath their feet.

Today the bunker, made up of subterranean corridors and rooms, is used for storage.

The different chambers, reinforced by concrete and brick, were part of the centre's overall design. It opened in 1977 but the bunker wasn't publicised.

The fascinating images reveal boxes of binary code tape, which would have been used to send messages to the government, still on the floor. Abandoned telephones and an old exchange system also give a glimpse of how the post-apocalypse survivors would have kept in contact with the world.

Spare fuses and light bulbs are revealed and abandoned sinks, desks and chairs also give a glimpse of how office equipment has changed over 40 years.

The council said only a select few people would have gained entry should the sirens have sounded - senior councilors and officers, police chiefs, engineers, doctors and communications experts.

## A trip to London - by Michael Shore

When I visited London for my 87th birthday everyone was surprised that the last time I was there it was 1950 and I was on a school trip!



We went to see the Crown Jewels in the Tower of London but the main purpose of the trip was to visit the new addition to London Zoo, Brumas the polar bear.

### The Tower of London

Brumas was born in November 1949 and was the first baby polar bear to be successfully reared in the United Kingdom. Although Brumas was female many people believed her to be male due to incorrect reporting in the press. Brumas was named after her keepers Bruce and Sam. The keepers paraded her around in a buggy! People were very excited after all the wartime austerity and the visitor numbers at London Zoo increased from 1 million to 3 million, a figure unmatched to date. Brumas died in May 1958.



**Brumas on display (left)**

**Brumas with her mother Ivy (right)**



*Jean's recipe:*

## **GRAPE PIE**

Serves 4

### **Pastry**

2 cupfuls of flour

½ teasp salt

1 teasp cream of tartar

4 tbsp butter

½ teasp bicarbonate of soda

Milk or water to mix

### **Filling**

½ lb seedless grapes

1 cupful of sugar

1 tbsp lemon juice

2 tbsp flour

1 tbsp butter

### **Method:**

Make the pastry and use half to line a 8" pie dish.

Wash grapes, cut in half leaving skins on.

Mix the flour and sugar together and sprinkle half over the grapes.

Pour over the lemon juice and mix well.

Sprinkle the remaining flour and sugar over the bottom of the pastry case (to prevent soginess).

Place the grapes in the case, putting dabs of butter here and there on top of grapes and then cover with the pastry lid.

Bake for 30/40 mins in a medium oven.

## RUBBISH RUTH RAMBLES



This is the story of a lady who started her own litter picking campaign and wants the word spreading. **She says:** “Everywhere I go I talk ‘a load of rubbish’ – to people in the street, on trams and trains, at airports, in pubs and restaurants, on cruise ships and in foreign lands. But my main passion is to continue travelling by bus pass around the UK, promoting the campaign, meeting wonderfully-inspirational and supportive people and enjoying amazing experiences whilst also having a great deal of fun!”

In the past she has been mentioned on local radio, Oldham Chronicle and other publications.

### Ruth’s Story:

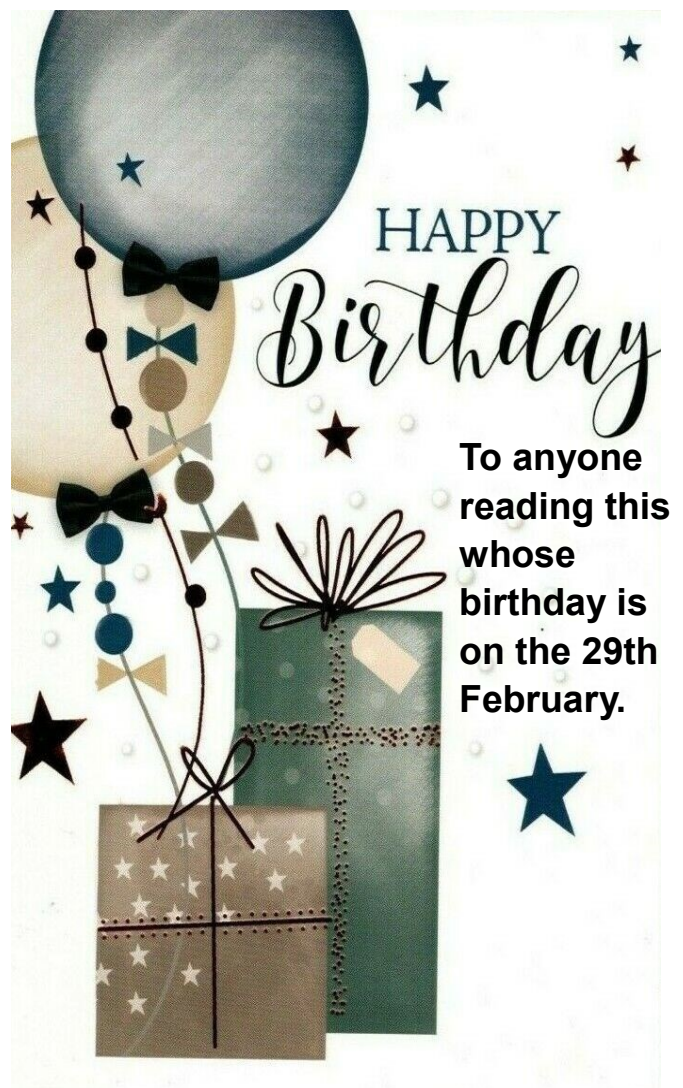
In May 2016 I decided to have an adventure and travel by free bus pass from Oldham to Paignton to visit my family who lived there. I’d done that journey many times by train, coach, plane and car and needed a change! It took me 4 days, staying overnight in 3 Hanover Housing Association (of which I am a resident) guest rooms at Walsall, Redditch and Bristol. I travelled on 24 buses, spent £40 on accommodation and NOTHING on transport. I met some fascinating people, journeyed through beautiful countryside, explored several towns, made copious notes, took a photograph every hour, and frequented as many Wetherspoons as I could – if only to use the loo! I loved every minute and vowed I would soon be planning my next trip. That same year I completed 4 trips in total, each one lasting about 5 days, and covered the country from Newcastle to Carlisle in the North and Paignton to London in the South.

At about the same time as my first trip I read an article on Facebook about a Leeds-born man called Edmund Platt who went to live in Marseille and was so appalled by the amount of rubbish in the city that he began a campaign called 1 Piece Of Rubbish, to try to encourage everyone to pick up at least one piece of rubbish every day. This was such a simple idea that I decided to incorporate it into my travels and very soon I was taking photographs of my hand putting rubbish into bins, in every town and city I visited. I posted them on Social Media sites to try to gain momentum for the campaign.

***“Small positive acts, when multiplied by millions of people, can transform the WHOLE WORLD.”***

*A Birthday Quiz provided by Reggie Heapy*

1. Who famously sang Happy Birthday Mr. President at a birthday celebration US President John F. Kennedy held in May 1962?
2. Harry Potter discovers he is a wizard on his birthday. What age did he turn on this birthday?
3. In the UK, the King's Birthday Parade is more commonly known as what?
4. In 2022 Rishi Sunak received a fixed penalty from the Metropolitan Police after attending a gathering during lockdown for whose birthday?
5. Is the first note sung in the traditional song 'Happy Birthday to You' higher or lower in pitch than the last note sung in the song?
6. In Monopoly, if you get a Community Chest card saying it is your birthday, how much money do you collect from each player?
7. Who ran for US President in 2020, running for a political party called the 'Birthday Party' and saying when we win, it's everybody's birthday'?
8. Who stuck his tongue out for a famous photo taken in 1951 on his 72nd birthday, refusing to smile as he had been smiling for photographers all day?
9. At the beginning of The Lord of the Rings, who is celebrating his 'eleventy-first' birthday?
10. Which Beatles' song, which was one of the first songs written by Paul McCartney, was particularly relevant to him on his birthday in 2006, with his grandchildren recording their own version of the song for this date?





## ANSWERS TO BIRTHDAY QUIZ

1. Marilyn Monroe
2. 11
3. Trooping The Colour
4. Boris Johnson's
5. Lower
6. £10
7. Kanye West
8. Albert Einstein
9. Bilbo Baggins
10. When I'm Sixty-Four (it was his Paul McCartney's 64th birthday)



## SHOPPING IN OLDHAM THROUGH THE YEARS



Buckley & Procter. Lees Road can be seen on the right.



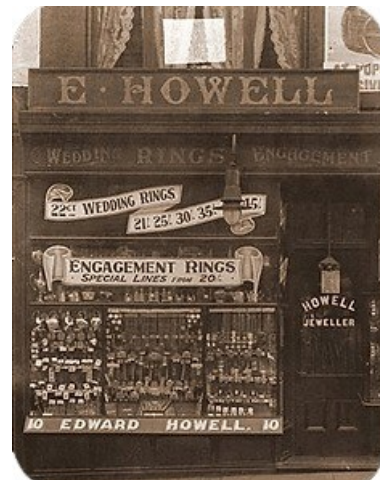
High Street with John Collier on the left and Woolworth's the white building in the centre.



The old Market Hall before it burned down in the early 1970's.



One of the two avenues. Shops included Biscuit Box, George Glass, Morris's shoes, Valeria. Ladies, did you buy your first pair of tights from there?



Many of our older readers will have bought their wedding and engagement rings from this jewellers



## ANIMAL CORNER

### Max the Dog and Daisy the Duck

The heartwarming moment in which the dog gives its duck friend a tight hug before bidding farewell.

In a world often filled with tales of indifference and strife, there emerges a heartwarming story that reminds us of the boundless capacity for love that exists within all creatures, transcending the boundaries of species. This extraordinary tale revolves around an unexpected bond between two unlikely companions: Max the dog and Daisy the duck. Their story has captured the hearts of millions, serving as an inspiration to all who encounter it.

**An Unlikely Friendship:** Set in the tranquil countryside Max, a loyal dog, and Daisy, a gentle duck, found themselves sharing the same loving household. Despite their striking differences in appearance and natural instincts, a profound and genuine connection blossomed between these two unexpected friends. Their unique bond would soon become a beacon of love and compassion for people worldwide.

**A Touching Embrace:** One serene afternoon by the pond, a passerby witnessed a truly remarkable sight. Max, renowned for his gentle nature, approached Daisy and wrapped his paws around her in a warm and tender embrace. The powerful display of affection between the dog and the duck melted the hearts of all who bore witness. Max's loving gesture towards Daisy was a testament to the boundless power of compassion.

**A Ripple of Kindness:** The impact of Max and Daisy's heartwarming embrace extended beyond the realm of the internet. Inspired by their story, individuals began performing acts of kindness within their own communities. Animal shelters reported increased adoptions and donations, and people volunteered their time to aid animals in need. Their love initiated a chain reaction of compassion and goodwill, spreading positivity far and wide.



*This story has been round the world on the internet.*



## SPORTING GREATS

### CAPTAIN MATTHEW WEBB



**Born:** 19 January 1848, Dawley, Telford

**Died:** 24 July 1883, Niagara River

**Known for:** Swimming the English Channel

Captain Matthew Webb was an English seaman, swimmer and stuntman.

Webb was born in High Street, Dawley (now part of Telford), in Shropshire, one of fourteen children of a surgeon, Matthew Webb, and his wife Sarah Cartwright Webb, who moved with the family to Madeley High Street in 1849, and then by 1856 to Eastfield House, Coalbrookdale. He acquired his ability to swim in the River Severn at Coalbrookdale. In 1860, at the age of twelve, he joined the training ship HMS *Conway* for two years, then entered the merchant navy and served an apprenticeship with Rathbone Brothers of Liverpool.

Whilst serving as second mate on the Cunard Line ship *Russia*, travelling from New York to Liverpool, Webb attempted to rescue a man overboard by diving into the sea in the mid-Atlantic. The man was never found, but Webb's daring won him an award of £100 and the first Stanhope Medal, and made him a hero of the British press.

In the summer of 1863, while at home, Webb rescued his 12-year-old brother Thomas from drowning in the Severn near Ironbridge.

On 12 August 1875, Webb made his first cross-Channel swimming attempt, but strong winds and poor sea conditions forced him to abandon the swim. On 24 August, he began a second swim by diving in from the Admiralty Pier at Dover. Backed by three escort boats and smeared in porpoise oil, he set off into the ebb tide at a steady breaststroke. Despite stings from jellyfish and strong currents off Cap Gris Nez which prevented him from reaching the shore for five hours, finally, after approximately 21 hours and 40 minutes, he landed near Calais - the first successful cross-channel swim. His zig-zag course across the Channel was nearly 40 miles (66 km) long.

He was the first swimmer to complete a Channel swim without artificial aid; in June 1875, American Paul Boyton had swum across in 24 hours but was wearing an inflatable suit.

*continued...*

cont...

After his record swim, Webb basked in national and international adulation, and followed a career as a professional swimmer. He wrote a book called *The Art of Swimming* and licensed his name for merchandising such as commemorative pottery. A brand of matches was named after him. He participated in exhibition swimming matches and stunts such as floating in a tank of water for 128 hours.

In May 1879, Webb won the swimming Championship of England at Lambeth Baths, by competing with champions from other cities. He covered a distance of 74 miles by swimming for fourteen hours a day over a period of six days. In September 1879, he competed for the Championship of the World against Paul Boyton. Webb won but was accused of cheating and so the prize money was withheld.

On 27 April 1880, Webb and Madeline Kate Chaddock were married at St Andrew's Church, West Kensington, and they had two children, Matthew and Helen.

Webb's final stunt was to be a dangerous swim in the Niagara Gorge through the Whirlpool Rapids on the Niagara River below Niagara Falls, a feat many observers considered suicidal. Although Webb failed in an attempt at raising interest in funding the event, on 24 July 1883, he jumped into the river from a small boat located near the Niagara Falls Suspension Bridge and began his swim. Accounts of the time indicate that in all likelihood Webb successfully survived the first part of the swim, but died in the section of the river located near the entrance to the whirlpool. Webb was interred in Oakwood Cemetery, Niagara Falls, New York.

In 1909, Webb's elder brother Thomas unveiled a memorial in Dawley. On it reads the short inscription: "Nothing great is easy." The memorial was taken away for repair after a lorry collided with it in February 2009. The landmark memorial was returned after full restoration and was hoisted back onto its plinth in High Street in October 2009. Two roads in the town (Captain Webb Drive and Webb Crescent) and the Captain Webb Primary School in Dawley are named after the swimmer.

Webb has a statue in Dover, and a memorial plaque with his portrait was also unveiled in the parish church at Coalbrookdale. Webb House of the Adams' Grammar School in Newport, Shropshire, is named after Webb.

A book about Webb's life was written in 1986 entitled "Nothing Great Is Easy" by author David Elderwick. It has the tagline "The Story of Captain Matthew Webb, The First Man To Swim The English Channel".



**PUBLISHED BY AGE UK OLDHAM  
LIFE STORY VOLUNTEERS  
EDITOR  
JOAN HOLMES**



# Life Story

Every life has a story...

