



Merewether Historical Society

"A society aimed at recording memories of the past for the benefit of the next generation."

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The Chronicle

February 2025

Meetings: Next meeting will be at the Merewether Bowling Club Caldwell St, on **Tuesday 11 February, 2025**, 10.30 for a 10.45 start. All are invited to join us for lunch at the end of the meeting.

Guest Speaker: Dr Phillip Kendall will speak on using dentistry to solve a mystery..

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Birthdays in February: Many happy returns to Sharon Nevile, Joan Salmon, Bill Jackson, Monica Jordan, Terry Knowles and other members who are celebrating. Flower and Birthstone are the Violet and Amethyst.

Bus Trips; Details to follow but please save the following dates: March 18, July 15 and a tour to Broken Hill September 8.



We have all grown up knowing the nursery rhymes we were taught as infants and young children, and hopefully have passed them on to our own grandchildren. Throughout history, lullabies and nursery rhymes have been used as educational tools to teach children about morality, history, and proper behaviour. However I doubt that many of us know the true origins of these verses so read on to get the real story.

[The True Stories and Meanings Behind some Nursery Rhymes and Lullabies - WeHaveKids](#)

"Lullaby" is a derivative from Jewish folklore meaning "Lilith abi" which, when translated to the English tongue, simply means "Lilith, go away."

Lilith, a she-demon, was said to have been Adam's first wife (before Eve), so the term "lullaby" was coined in order to protect children from her.

Over time, the term "lullaby" stuck, and we now think of it as a soothing song used to calm children.

However, history shows us that some lullabies are anything but soothing and are, in fact, horrifying if you understand their origin and know how to read between the lines.



What does "Three Blind Mice" really mean?

"Three Blind Mice"

*Three blind mice, three blind mice,
See how they run, see how they run.*

*They all ran after the farmer's wife
Who cut off their tails with a carving knife,
Did you ever see such a thing in your life
As three blind mice.*

The "farmer's wife" refers to Queen Mary I, otherwise known as Bloody Mary, the one who burned hundreds of Protestant "heretics" in Tudor England. The "three blind mice" were three noblemen who were convicted of plotting against her and who, as a result, she had burned alive at the stake.

"Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary"

Mary, Mary, quite contrary

How does your garden grow?

*With silver bells and cockle shells,
And pretty maids all in a row.*



Again, this is said to be a reference to Queen Mary I of England, written to heckle her time on the throne. "Contrary" describes her style of leadership, and "How does your garden grow" mocks her inability to produce living children.

Mary I, a Catholic, was widely known for her persecution of over 300 Protestants during her reign, so "silver bells and cockle shells" is a euphemism for her torture devices. "Pretty maids all in a row" referenced both her numerous miscarriages and the many dead bodies that accumulated over her 5-year reign.

"Ring Around the Rosie"
Ring around the rosie
Pocket full of posies,
Ashes, ashes,
We all fall down!



This nursery rhyme references The Black Death in Europe, a bubonic plague pandemic that lasted from 1346 to 1352. The plague would appear as black sores on the bodies of the afflicted. People stuffed "posies," a type of flower, into their pockets so they couldn't smell the dead bodies that were piling up everywhere.

The ashes fell after they burned the bodies to prevent the spread of infection. Although not *everyone* "fell down," The Black Death wiped out a significant 20% of the world's population.

"Humpty Dumpty"
Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
All the king's horses and all the king's men
Couldn't put Humpty together again.



There is no evidence as to where history places this but there are a number of theories. The version we know today was first

published in 1810. Some believe it refers to the average village drunkard and others believe it's a reference to King Richard III of England, who was often portrayed with a humpback. The story is that King Richard III went to war at the Battle of Bosworth, where he fell off of his horse and was chopped into pieces by his rivals.

"Jack and Jill"
Jack and Jill went up the hill
To fetch a pail of water.
Jack fell down and broke his crown,
And Jill came tumbling after.

People often question the validity of this nursery rhyme since water is typically found at the bottom of a hill instead of at the top. However, other theories suggest that it has a much deeper meaning than originally thought.

Jack and Jill are assumed to represent France's King Louis XVI and Queen Marie Antoinette, a couple that was said to be greedy, carelessly wasting money on finery, although some point out the dates don't necessarily correlate. King Louis XVI was beheaded (lost his crown) in 1793, and Marie Antoinette was beheaded (came tumbling after) around 10 months later.

Point to Ponder: I am a great believer in luck, and I find the harder I work the more I have of it! *S Leacock*

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