



Merewether Historical Society

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

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Meetings: Next meeting will be at the Merewether Bowling Club Caldwell St, on **Tuesday March 12**, 10.30 for a 10.45 start. Hope to see you all there.

Guest Speaker: Scott Holding will discuss Driving information for Older Drivers.

Birthdays in March Many happy returns to Pamela Boyd and Rosemary Richards and any others for whom I do not have the date. Hope the day was/is a very special one.



March Bus Trip:

March 19 Stroud Silo Hill Lookout for a home-made morning tea, then onto the Victoria Hotel Hinton for lunch. \$70 per head. Leaves St Augustine's Merewether 8.30 and the Gazebo opposite West's New Lambton 8.45.



What IS Leap Year? [Leap Year History: How Leap Day Came to Be | TIME](#)

"Why is Thursday Feb. 29 2024 rather than Mar. 1? The reason goes all the way back to at least 46 BCE, when Julius Caesar reformed the Roman Calendar. Before that time, a Roman year was ten days shorter than our years are, and divided into lunar months. In order to keep the year in tune with the seasons, an extra month would be tacked on occasionally. Caesar noticed, however, that Egyptians used a calendar based on the sun rather than the moon. So, in consultation with the Alexandrian astronomer

Sosigenes, he decided to create his own new system, hoping to solve the problem of the drifting seasons. Each solar year in the Julian calendar would be 365.25 days long. The months would have pretty much the lengths that we recognize today, and the shortest month would—as it does on Thursday 29 2024—get an extra day every four years to account for the annual accumulation of a quarter of a day.

To address the discrepancy between the old Roman calendar and the new one, Caesar made that first new year 445 days long. It would take decades for the new calendar to be widely observed, but the problem should have been solved. Except for one thing: an actual solar year is not 365 days and 6 hours long.



The average established by Caesar was only a little bit off—it was 11 minutes and 14 seconds too long—and Europeans kept using it for the next thousand-plus years. By 1582 though, those 11 minutes per year had accumulated to a 10 day discrepancy. This discrepancy interfered with calculating liturgical dates like Easter, which is set by the moon, so Pope Gregory XIII issued a Papal Bull to fix the problem. **As a result, in the year 1582, Oct. 4 was followed directly by Oct. 15.** Pope Gregory also set up a convoluted new scheme to prevent such a manoeuvre from being necessary in the future: Every four years would be a leap year, unless it was the beginning of a new century—except for every 400 years, when we *would* keep the extra day ("the exception to the exception,")

Skipping three leap days every 400 years would keep the calendar and solar years in

alignment, or at least closer to that goal—sometime near the year 4000 the current count will be one day off, as the current system is still 26 seconds ahead of the solar year.

But, although the Gregorian calendar—named for the Pope who developed it—was first introduced in 1582, England and its colonies didn't adopt the new calendar until 1752. By that point, the error was up to a whopping 11 days. That year, people went to sleep on Sept. 2 and woke up on Sept. 14.

Some other holdouts didn't adopt the Gregorian calendar until the 20th Century, Russia among them. Indeed, that's why the Bolshevik coup of Nov. 7, 1917, is confusingly called the October Revolution.

The phrase "leap year," which probably refers to the jump in days of the week—a calendar date usually moves forward one day of the week per year, but it moves two days in a leap year—predates the Gregorian calendar.

But the history of all this leaping has continued to evolve in modern times, even as recently as 1972, when leap seconds were introduced.



The advent of the atomic clock had led eventually to the decision to, "redefine the basic unit of time—the second—in terms of the precise tuning-fork-like vibrations of the cesium {a chemical element liquid at room temperature} atom." The new second would not always line up with the length of a solar day, because the Earth's rotation slowed over time, so a second could now be added or removed as needed.

As for why it took so long to get to this point, perhaps it was James A. Barnes of the National Bureau of Standards who put it best, back when the leap second was invented: "It takes time to agree on time."

Traditions and Superstitions of Leap Year: Here are some intriguing customs associated with leap years:



1. **United Kingdom (UK):** On the 29th of February, it's a tradition that women can propose to men. This custom dates back to the 5th century and is known as "Ladies' Privilege." Over a quarter of women today would be keen to propose during this leap year.
2. **Ireland:** Historically, if a man refuses a leap day proposal, he must compensate the woman with a gift. The penalty could be anything from gloves to a silk gown or even a fur coat.
3. **Scotland:** Women intending to propose are advised to wear a visible red petticoat to give their love fair warning.
4. **Denmark:** If a proposal is refused, the penalty is 12 pairs of gloves for the spurned maiden.
5. **Germany:** On the eve of May Day, young boys decorate birch trees with ribbons (a Liebesmaie) and place them on their crush's doorstep. In leap years, girls can do the same.
6. **Greece:** Marriages that take place in a leap year are believed to end in divorce according to Greek superstition.

Point to Ponder: *"What is life if, full of care, we have no time to stop and stare."* John Donne

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