

Liebe Leserinnen und Leser,

sind Sie schon einmal Opfer eines Aprilscherzes geworden? Nicht nur in Deutschland, sondern auch in vielen anderen Ländern ist der 1. April ein Tag, an dem man Bekannte oder Kollegen gern mit kleinen Späßen und Streichen ein wenig neckt und auch die Medien mit haarsträubenden Geschichten und gezielten Falschmeldungen ihre Konsumenten auf die Schippe nehmen wollen. In einem Artikel auf den nächsten Seiten können Sie auch etwas zu den möglichen Ursprüngen dieser Tradition lesen.

Wir freuen uns, in dieser Ausgabe wieder einen Beitrag von einem unserer Mitglieder abdrucken zu können. Ab Seite 6 beschreibt Herr Hasse, von dem wir schon im vergangenen Jahr einen Bericht über seinen Urlaub auf den Seychellen lesen konnten, in einem ersten Teil seine Eindrücke von einer Reise durch China.

Die Magna Carta, die im Juni 1215 von König John Lackland auf Druck des englischen Adels besiegelt wurde, gilt als die wichtigste Quelle des englischen Verfassungsrechts. Ab Seite 10 finden Sie weitere Informationen zum Thema.

Wie schon in unserer letzten Ausgabe erwähnt, kann unsere Gesellschaft in diesem Jahr ihr 25-jähriges Bestehen feiern. Der Vorstand hat sich zu diesem Anlass etwas Spezielles einfallen lassen. Es ist vorgesehen, dieses Jubiläum mit einer gemeinsamen **Ausfahrt** in die Sächsische Schweiz am **Sonntag, dem 20.9.2015** zu begehen. Weitere Einzelheiten dazu werden Sie während unserer Veranstaltungen sowie im Newsletter, der Anfang August erscheinen wird, erfahren.

Ebenfalls im Herbst dieses Jahres, genau gesagt, am **Donnerstag, dem 26.11.2015**, werden wir unsere **Mitgliederhauptversammlung** und in deren Rahmen auch die **Vorstandswahl** durchführen. Im Zusammenhang mit Letzterer rufen wir die Mitglieder, die Interesse an einer Mitarbeit im Vorstand haben, auf, sich als Kandidaten für den neuen Vorstand aufstellen zu lassen. Wenden Sie sich diesbezüglich bitte an eines der Vorstandsmitglieder. Die offizielle Einladung zur Hauptversammlung und den Wahlschein, der auch für eine eventuelle Briefwahl verwendet werden kann, erscheint in der August-Ausgabe des Newsletters.

Zum Abschluss müssen wir leider eine traurige Nachricht überbringen. Vor einigen Tagen erreichte uns die erschütternde Mitteilung, dass unser langjähriges Mitglied **Renate Lorenz** verschieden ist. Frau Lorenz war ein treues und aktives Mitglied unserer Gesellschaft und hat viele Jahre im Vorstand und in der Revisionskommission mitgearbeitet. Wir werden ihr Andenken stets in Ehren halten.

Die Redaktion

A FOOLISH DAY

Every year on 1 April the unwitting, the gullible and the plain stupid are caught out by tall stories and practical jokes. But why do people play these jokes at all? And what is so special about 1 April that otherwise normal people do their best to make their nearest and dearest look stupid?

The origins of April Fools' Day are not very clear. Some see it as a celebration related to the turn of the seasons, while others believe it stems from the adoption of a new calendar.

Ancient cultures, including those of the Romans and Hindus, celebrated New Year's Day on or around 1 April. It closely follows the vernal equinox (20 or 21 March). In medieval times, much of Europe celebrated 25 March, the Feast of Annunciation, as the beginning of the new year.

In 1582, Pope Gregory XIII ordered a new calendar (the Gregorian Calendar) to replace the old Julian Calendar. The new calendar called for New Year's Day to be celebrated 1 January. That year, France adopted the reformed calendar and shifted New Year's day to 1 January. According to a popular explanation, many people either refused to accept the new date, or did not learn about it, and continued to celebrate New Year's Day on 1 April. Other people began to make fun of these traditionalists, sending them on "fool's errands" or trying to trick them into believing something false. Eventually, the practice spread throughout Europe.

There are at least two difficulties with this explanation. The first is that it doesn't fully account for the spread of April Fools' Day to other European countries. The Gregorian calendar was not adopted by England until 1752, for example, but April Fools' Day was already well established there by that point. The second is that we have no direct historical evidence for this explanation, only conjecture, and that conjecture appears to have been made more recently.

Another explanation of the origins of April Fools' Day was provided by Joseph Boskin, a professor of history at Boston University. He explained that the practice began during the reign of Constantine, when a group of court jesters and fools told the Roman emperor that they could do a better job of running the empire. Constantine,

amused, allowed a jester named Kugel to be king for one day. Kugel passed an edict calling for absurdity on that day, and the custom became an annual event.

This explanation was brought to the public's attention in an Associated Press article printed by many newspapers in 1983. There was only one catch: Boskin made the whole thing up. It took a couple of weeks for the AP to realize that they'd been victims of an April Fools' joke themselves.



Spaghetti Harvest

One of the most famous April Fools' pranks occurred in 1957, when BBC news programme Panorama reported on Switzerland's spaghetti harvest. The region's mild winter and lack of natural spaghetti pests allowed for the fruitful production of home-grown spaghetti. The BBC received many calls from people interested in growing their own spaghetti, who were told that they should place a sprig of spaghetti in tomato sauce.

It is worth noting that many different cultures have had days of foolishness around the start of April, give or take a couple of weeks. Ancient Romans and Celts celebrated a festival of practical joking and mischief making at about the time of the vernal equinox, as do millions of India's Hindus. Even the French have taken this festival to their hearts calling it Poisson d'Avril, or

April fish. Perhaps there's something about the time of year, with its turn from winter to spring, that lends itself to lighthearted celebrations.

The following hoaxes were staged by newspapers, TV and radio stations and other institutions, and also the internet contributes to April Fools' Day:

Sweden Covers their TVs in Tights: In 1962, Sweden's only television channel announced that the station could be viewed in colour if one cut up tights and placed it over the television's screen, which would bend the television's light to make it appear in colour. Thousands of Swedes cut up stockings and taped them over their television only to realize they were victims of a hoax.

Loch Ness Monster Found: In 1972, a photo surfaced which the Flamingo Park Zoo in Yorkshire claimed to show the body of the Loch Ness Monster, discovered by a team of zoologists at Loch Ness. However, upon further inspection, the photo appeared to be of a seal. The zoo's education officer eventually confessed to the hoax, saying that he'd placed the seal in the water after shaving its whiskers.

The Earth Loses Gravity: in 1976, BBC Radio 2 reported that due to rare astronomical alignment of Pluto behind Jupiter, the Earth's gravity would decrease. Listeners were told to jump in the air at 9:47 AM to take advantage of this, which would result in a floating feeling. Many reported that they had felt this floating sensation, one woman even stating that she and her friends lifted from their chairs to float around the room together.

Big Ben Goes Digital: The BBC reported in 1980 that the famous Big Ben clock tower would be converted to a digital clock in order to modernize the tower's look. This outraged many citizens, as the clock tower was a historical part of London's culture. BBC Japan even offered the clock hands in a contest to the first four callers, which actually resulted in some bidding.

The Derbyshire Fairy: Lebanon Circle Magik Co. (which should have been the first clue) posted a picture of what looked like a small mummified fairy on their website in 2007, stating that a man had found the creature while walking his dog out in the country. The photo attracted thousands of visitors to the sites and resulted in many interested emails. But on April 1st, the site's owner admitted the creature was an April Fools' hoax. However, the most interesting part of this story is that many continued to contact the website stating that they did not believe that the fairy was a fake.

Helium Gas: In 2014, King's College, Cambridge released a YouTube video detailing their decision to discontinue the use of boy sopranos and instead use grown men who have inhaled helium gas.

Source: Internet

Review of the last months

29 January 2015

“My biking trip in New Zealand”

I had really been looking forward to **Gerhard Meyer's** video report about his bicycle tour of New Zealand which took the group of bicyclists from Christchurch, on the southern island, through various parts of the country and finally to Auckland, on the northern island, where the tour ended. I must admit that I was a little bit disappointed at the end.

The problems began right at the beginning when Mr Meyer gave some historical and geographical facts about New Zealand, which he did in very bad and halting English so that it was not easy to understand him. Luckily, he also showed some pictures which made it a little easier to see what he was talking about.

Also, the following video had some flaws that should have been eliminated at the latest during the post production. Although Mr Meyer had warned at the beginning that he is not very experienced in video making, he should have noticed the disturbing noises in some scenes, caused by the blowing wind, or that his narrations, that he had recorded during the filming, were sometimes hard to understand and in some cases even inaudible due to the unpleasant background noises. Moreover, several long-drawn-out scenes partly made the video a little boring.

But there were also some good moments. I liked the way he depicted the itinerary, starting in Wüstenbrand, by means of Google Earth and I found it interesting to see how the group managed to cope with the distance that was, however, not always done by bike but in parts by bus. Some pictures of the landscapes were simply breathtaking and the fence decorated with numerous bras really made me smile.

Although the audience applauded at the end, I'm convinced that I was not the only one who did it only out of politeness.

Der für Februar vorgesehene Vortrag “**Between Boston and Cape Cod – Impressions of the Freedom Trail and the New World**” musste wegen der Erkrankung von Frau Tröller leider ausfallen.

Journey into Saxon history

Saturday, 7 March, 10 a.m. Several members of the DBG gather in front of the former Schocken department store which houses the new Museum of Archaeology. **Thomas Mehnert**, who works as a city guide and is also a member of our society, had suggested giving a guided tour of the exhibition for us.

He welcomes us in the impressive foyer of the museum. After the necessary formalities and some introductory words we follow him into the Stone Age on the first floor. We see several animals that may have roamed the area of today's Saxony during that period, meet a Neanderthal man of glass and are astonished at the abundance of exhibits. Mr Mehnert explains everything with much commitment and knowledge.

The exhibition on the second floor takes us into the time when the people settled, began farming and learned to use metal. Here, too, many items such as models of houses, the wooden remains of a well and earthen vessels make the life of the people of that period comprehensible.

The final part of the exhibition on the third floor deals with the time from the Middle Ages to the start of the industrialization in Saxony. There we have the chance to witness the so called “Saxony Sculpture”, an installation in the shape of Saxony in the centre of the museum, that travels upward like a time-laps through the millenniums of history.

After two hours, the tour comes to an end. It's clear that Mr Mehnert had to make a certain selection of exhibits to point out to particularly. There is still so much more to discover and as for me, it was definitely not the last visit to this interesting museum.

Thank you very much, Thomas! I really enjoyed your guiding tour.

Siegfried Rosch

Vorschau auf unsere nächsten Veranstaltungen

Do., 30.4.2015, 19 Uhr, Veranstaltungssaal im DASTietz: "Iceland without ice", Vortrag in englischer Sprache von Siegfried Rosch

Do., 28.5.2015, 19 Uhr, Veranstaltungssaal im DASTietz: Vortrag in englischer Sprache von Silvia Tröller über ihre USA-Reise (Arizona, Nevada, Kalifornien), Teil 1

Do., 25.6.2015, 19 Uhr, Veranstaltungssaal im DASTietz: "Thomas Hardy", Vortrag in englischer Sprache von Eike Kronshage, TU Chemnitz

Wegen der Sommerpause findet im Juli kein Vortrag statt.

(Änderungen vorbehalten)

A TOUR OF THE REAL CHINA

Preface

Last autumn I toured together with my wife in a guided group around China. We travelled by coach, by train, by airplane and cruised downstream the Yangtze River. Obviously, the impressions of this great country, taken in the course of 15 days, may only be personal and superficial. Besides the sightseeing, I saw the great progress in many fields, learnt something about history and religion, saw some highlights and tested the Chinese cuisine. I would specially like to continue my general report in a first step about a tour around the real China and in a second step about the cruise on the Yangtze River.

The real China

Arriving in Beijing (Peking), all around I saw new highways, new residential buildings with 20 – 30 storeys, not only in the city centre, but in the outskirts as well. At first I thought it was like this only in the capital, but when our group visited Xian, Luoyang, Zhengzhou, Yichang, Chongqing and Shanghai the scenery was the same. All the hotels, where we stayed, are outfitted in modern European style, sometimes equipped with computers in every apartment. Although the keyboards are like in our country, the input is in Latin transcription of Chinese, termed Pinyin. The computer automatically transforms these Latin characters into Chinese ones.

Although I don't understand Chinese, I zapped through all the television channels and noticed the following: Every day 2 of some 30 channels are showing events of Sino-Japanese wars! Obviously the Chinese will not and are not to forget.

All important sights of the capital, like the Summer Palace of Emperors, the Square of Heavenly Peace, the Forbidden City, the Temple of Heaven, the Ming Tombs and the Great Wall, located about 70 kilometres to the north of Beijing, are obligatory to every guided tour. I think the readers of our Newsletter may know these sights very well; therefore I'm not going to report about them in particular.

Together with all modernity and the antique sights, the existence of old residential quarters in the capital, also in every town, continues dwindling. We walked through those quarters too, saw the daily life of the people, the cook shops, the street vendors – sometimes with exotic foods for sale, like living snakes or tortoises, even horse penises. Sure, the hygiene in that surroundings is of a low level. Therefore I wasn't ready for a snack and bought our food in modern supermarkets instead. I once experienced a shock there. Unexpectedly, fat pop-eyed frogs, sitting in a glass cabin, stared at me!

In all hotels of higher standard, European and Chinese dishes are available. I successfully learnt to eat with chopsticks, though with difficulties at the beginning, and tried an unusual meal: boiled and pickled chicken feet.

After going sightseeing of various temples and pagodas, I was impressed by the Buddhist Longmen Grottos. There are as many as 10,000 statues within the 1,400 caves, ranging from 1 inch (25 mm) to 57 feet (17 m) in height.

(see www.whc.unesco.org/en/list/1003)

Also impressive was the Buddhist Shaolin monastery of fighting monks. The thousand-year old tradition is not only a reflection of the past, but a living experience to the youth.

(see www.shaolin.com.cn)

In the vicinity of that establishment are located some secular Shaolin educational schools, well desired by children of both sexes because, if graduating successfully, the reputation and career-opportunities, in police service for instance, are very good.

The religion of Buddhism came to China in the first century AD and is being practised like Christianity, Islam and Taoism, but not by the majority of the people. Fundamental for Chinese culture and behaviour is the great philosopher Confucius, who introduced the term of harmony.



Photos: Peter Hasse



A unique artefact to me was a sculpture of a horse, created by the Huns, who occupied parts of China in ancient times.

Near to the city of Xian is located the famous excavation site of Terracotta warriors, a world heritage and, to my impression, a newly originated national monument of Chinese pride and glory. In the various old archives, however, an indication of it was not to be found. This site was spotted by chance in 1974 when peasants were digging for a well. The fact is remarkable that the ancient Chinese were capable, in the 2nd century AD, to produce arms of stainless steel, as the find proves. (see www.bmy.com.cn)

By airplane, our group left this last stay for the next part of the journey – a cruise downstream the Yangtze River.

The report will be continued in the next issue.

Peter Hasse

This and that from the 'island'

Cloud Bar

It may not serve any booze, but the Cloud Bar on the beach at Anderby Creek in Lincolnshire, UK, has been sanctioned by The Cloud Appreciation Society as the world's first 'Official Cloudspotting Area'.

The Cloud Bar was the idea of artist, and Cloud Appreciation Society (CAS) member, Michael Trainor. Replacing a disused beach shelter, the handsome wooden structure looks out to sea from this unspoilt stretch of the Lincolnshire coastline. On the viewing platform, are 'Cloud Menus' identifying the different formations, mirrors that can be swiveled to reflect different parts of the sky and specially designed cloud-viewing seats, on which visitors can recline and enjoy the view.

Local members of the CAS and Society photo gallery editor, Ian Loxley, attended the opening ceremony, in which BBC weatherman (and Society member), Paul Hudson, cut the blue ribbon. It was a shame that the event was rather marred by the weather: there was barely a cloud in the sky.

(<http://cloudappreciationsociety.org/>)



Unsinkable

The former headquarters of the shipping company responsible for building the ill-fated Titanic has got a new lease of life – as a plush hotel.

Albion House in Liverpool, the former base of White Star Line - arguably the most famous shipping operators in the world - has undergone a £5.5million renovation to become a luxury hotel which pays homage to the fateful ship.

The former offices have been replaced by lavish apartments, extravagant dining rooms are modeled on the Titanic's original dining halls while the bar and restaurant Carpathia, named after the vessel that rescued survivors, offers views of the Liverpool waterfront from two 100-ft long balconies.

The grade II listed building, which was built in 1896 by the architect Norman Shaw, reopened last year as 30 James Street - Home of Titanic, after standing empty for 10 years.



Island for sale

Tanera Mòr, a Scottish island in the Inner Hebrides, is officially uninhabited, after its last remaining permanent residents, Lizzie and Richard Williams, the owners of Tanera Mòr, moved to the mainland. It was the last inhabited island of the Summer Isles off the north west coast of Scotland, until the owners put it up for sale.



It has been on the market since May 2013 and the price was reduced last year from £2.5million to offers over £1,950,000. The price includes its very own approved postal service and licence to design and issue private Summer Isles postage stamps, much sought after by collectors.

Tanera Mòr is home to a salmon fish farm, several holiday cottages, a small sailing school, a café and a post office, which printed its own stamps since 1970.

This was the first year since her parents bought the island no new stamps were designed, Mrs Williams explained.

Sources: Internet, The Daily Mail

Our language section

Go with the better sound

Der folgende Artikel stammt aus der amerikanischen Zeitung Washington Post und befasst sich mit bestimmten unregelmäßigen Verben und die Probleme, die man (nur als Amerikaner?) damit haben kann.

Of the making of irregular verbs, there shall be no end. So spake the masters of English some centuries ago, and having spoke, they began by conjugating irregular verbs ending in "-ink".

Some scholar doubtless has totted up the number of irregular verbs in contemporary use. In his "Modern American Usage", Bryan Garner lists 174 of these confounders.

Among them are sink/sank or sink/sunk; shrink/shrank or shrink/shrunk; and stink/stank or stink/stunk.

Perversely, "slink" will not conform with nonconformity: It is slink/slunk or slinked/slunk.

*What is the writer to do? The several alternatives have identical meanings. They take up the same amount of space. The choice finally comes down to the writer's ear. In a given context, what **sounds** better?*

As every sensitive writer learns from the cradle, words have penumbras, auras, remembered usage. The choice of "sank" or "sunk", for one example, is entirely up to the writer. Would we write of the battleship ARIZONA that

it sank at Pearl Harbor? Or sunk there? What about Tiger Woods? He sank five birdie putts in a row. Or sunk them? In each instance, my ear whispers "sank". He may have sunk them in your ear. It seems an odd placement, but so it goes.

Perversely, a writer's ear could well favor "stunk" over "stank". Metaphorically, an actor's performance "stunk to high heaven". But we might say of Monday's fish that by Wednesday they stank.

Is there a subtle distinction between the dress that shrank and the dress that shrunk? I asked my wife, the columnist Marianne Means. After a long pause she voted for "the dress shrank". I asked why? "It just sounds better", she said.

James J. Kilpatrick

Alphabet riddle

In diesen 8 Scherzfragen geht es um die Buchstaben des Alphabets. Finden Sie die Antworten?

1. Why is U the happiest letter?
2. What is the longest word in the dictionary?
3. What word becomes shorter when you add two letters to it?
4. How can the letter A help a deaf lady?
5. We see it once in a year, twice in a week and never in a day. What is it?
6. How do you make the number one disappear?
7. Can you name the two days, apart from Tuesday and Thursday, that start with the letter T?
8. What is at the end of a rainbow?

Auflösung aus Newsletter Nr. 72 "Cryptic Christmas carols"

1. O Come, All Ye Faithful
2. Away In A Manger
3. Hark, The Herald Angels Sing
4. It Came Upon A Midnight Clear
5. Silent Night
6. The Twelve Days Of Christmas
7. Deck The Halls
8. God Rest Ye, Merry Gentlemen

Zur Auflösung aus Newsletter Nr. 71 "At the hotel" noch eine kleine Ergänzung: Bei Lösung 7 fehlt "credit card".

King John and the Barons

800 years ago, the Magna Carta was signed in June 1215 between the barons of Medieval England and



King John. 'Magna Carta' is Latin and means "Great Charter". The Magna Carta was one of the most important documents of Medieval England.

It was signed (by royal seal) between the feudal barons and King John at Runnymede near Windsor Castle. The document was a series of written promises between the king and his subjects that he, the king, would govern England and deal with its people according to the customs of feudal law. Magna Carta was an attempt by the barons to stop a king - in this case John - abusing his power with the people of England suffering.

Why would a king - who was meant to be all powerful in his own country - agree to the demands of the barons who were meant to be below him in authority?

England had for some years owned land in France. The barons had provided the king with both money and men to defend this territory. Traditionally, the king had always consulted the barons before raising taxes (as they had to collect it) and demanding more men for military service (as they had to provide the men). This was all part of the feudal system.

So long as English kings were militarily successful abroad, relations with the barons were good. But John was not very successful in his military campaigns abroad. His constant demands for more money and men angered the barons. By 1204, John had lost his land in northern France. In response to this, John introduced high taxes without asking the barons. This was against feudal law and accepted custom.

John made mistakes in other areas as well. He angered the Roman Catholic Church. The pope, vexed by John's behaviour, banned all church services in England in 1207. Religion, and the fear of Hell, were very important to the people including the barons. The Catholic Church taught the people that they could only gain entrance to Heaven if the Catholic Church believed that they were good enough to get there. How could they show their goodness and love of God if the churches were shut? Even worse for John was the fact that the pope excommunicated him in 1209. This meant that John could never get to Heaven until the pope withdrew the excommunication. Faced with this, John climbed down and accepted the power of the Catholic Church, giving them many privileges in 1214.

1214 was a disastrous year for John for another reason. Once again, he suffered military defeat in an attempt to get back his territory in northern France. He returned to London demanding more money from taxes. This time the barons were not willing to listen. They rebelled against his power. The barons captured London. However, they did not defeat John entirely and by the Spring of 1215, both sides were willing to discuss matters. The result was the Magna Carta.

The document can be divided into 63 clauses:

The first clauses concern the position of the Catholic Church in England. Those clauses that follow state that John will be less harsh on the barons.

Many of the clauses concern England's legal system. The Magna Carta promised laws that were good and fair. It states that everyone shall have access to courts and that costs and money should not be an issue if someone wanted to take a problem to the law courts.

It also states that no freeman (i.e. a person who was not a serf) will be imprisoned or punished without first going through the proper legal system. In future years the word "freeman" was replaced by "no one" to include everybody.

The last few sections deal with how the Magna Carta would be enforced in England. Twenty five barons were given the responsibility of making sure the king carried out what was stated in the Magna Carta - the document clearly states that they could use force if they felt it was necessary.

To give the Magna Carta an impact, the royal seal of King John was put on it to show people that it had his royal support.



(www.historylearningsite.co.uk/magna_carta.htm)

WELCOME

Wir freuen uns, unsere neuen Mitglieder

Frau Renate Ziegler
Frau Käte Angelika Wutzler

in unserer Gesellschaft begrüßen zu können.