

COLIN'S BLOG

Friday 27th April 2018

'May Day, May Day,' the year is marching on!

The first of May is a contradiction as far as days of observance go. It's a holiday suffering from multiple personality disorder; one identity dedicated to strike and protest, the other embracing all things spring and frolicsome.

In the late 19th century, leaders of the socialist Second International, were fighting for an eight-hour work day and they called for a global day of protest to be held on May 1, 1890. It has lived on as an international

workers' day and has received renewed vigour in the United States with the rise of the Occupy movement. But this is a relatively new side of the date, which was celebrated as a pagan festival in pre-Christian times and peaked as a celebration in the Middle Ages. Honouring the Roman goddess of flowers, Flora, the date was also associated with other festivals, such as the Celtic festival of Beltane and the Germanic festival of Walpurgis Night. Marking the beginning of spring, May Day has long been celebrated to mark vitality and fertility — which means that early incarnations of the holiday involved all kinds of raucous debauchery. Along with the frisky antics, some other traditions were born as well, some of which are listed here.

1. May Day is probably best known now for the medieval tradition of “dancing the maypole dance,” a custom that continues to be practiced. Fair young maidens circle the decorated pole weaving together patterns of ribbons in the process. Hawthorne and lily of the valley are traditional flowers used for garland. Similar ribbon dances were performed in pre-Columbian Latin America and were later incorporated into Hispanic ritual dances.
2. The pole is thought by many to (not so subtly) represent the masculine, while the decorations of flowers, wreaths and ribbons are thought to symbolize the feminine. Although some scholars assert that sometimes a tree is just a tree — the pole was not a phallic symbol, but rather a nod to the sacred nature of the tree. The pole was traditionally made of maple, hawthorn or birch; the men of a community would select the tallest, straightest tree they could find, and erect it in the village green.
3. The celebration of fertility and abundance led to couples disappearing in the fields and woods for a “roll in the hay,” so to speak — the practice of which promised abundance. In general, it was a day marked by a libidinous mood; excessive promiscuity encouraged increased fertility in general for the year to come.



KEEP IT DOWN, WE DON'T WANT THE RIOT SQUAD IN!

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4. Persecution of May Day festivities began as early as the 1600s, and in 1640 the Church ruled against the debauchery when the British Parliament banned the traditions as immoral. A much tamer version was brought back in 1644 under the rule of Charles II.

5. Some beliefs held that May Day, was the last chance for fairies to travel to the Earth.

6. Tradition dictates that washing one's face in the dew from May Day morning beautifies the skin.

7. The giving of May Baskets has, sadly, faded since the late 20th century. Small baskets of sweets and flowers would be left anonymously on doorsteps to the delight of neighbours. (We vote for a revival.)

8. In Italy, May Day is regarded as the happiest day of the year, by some accounts.

9. Since 1928, May Day in Hawaii has been known as Lei Day, a spring celebration that embraces Hawaiian culture and, the lei. The holiday song, "May Day is Lei Day in Hawai'i," was originally a fox trot, but was later rearranged as a Hawaiian hula.

10. The international distress signal, "mayday," has nothing to do with the first of May. It derives from the French *venez m'aider*, meaning "come help me."

Source: Mother Nature Network: -

<https://www.mnn.com/lifestyle/arts-culture/stories/10-curious-facts-about-may-day>

For more on the origins and history of Maypole Dancing: -

<http://tradamis.org/maypolehistory.html>

LATEST FROM ACTION FRAUD

Automated Action Fraud Tech Support scam calls

Posted 17th April 2018

ActionFraud, are aware of fraudsters claiming to be from Action Fraud contacting victims using automated phone calls in order to gain remote access to their computers and drain bank accounts.

How does this scam work?

Victims are receiving cold-calls from fraudsters purporting to represent Action Fraud. When the calls are answered, an automated voice asks the responder to "press 1 if you have made a report to Action Fraud." When the responder presses 1, they are transferred to a fraudster.

Victims are informed that their computers have been hacked, which has led to their online bank account being compromised and funds being withdrawn. One particular victim was told that £40,000 had fraudulently left their account.

Remote access

Questions that are commonly asked by fraudsters include asking whether the victim's broadband router is displaying flashing lights, as well as asking for/confirming personal information.

This leads to the fraudster asking for remote access to the victim's computer, via a remote access tool. Once the fraudster has gained remote access to the machine, they are often also able to access the victim's online banking – either with permission or without.

The fraudsters have used the names, “**Officer John Thompson**”, “**David Jones**” and have been using several different telephone numbers, with “**02921328585**” appearing on multiple occasions.

Victims have later discovered that it was not Action Fraud that had contacted them and accessed their computer and banking systems.

What you need to do: -

- Even if the caller is able to provide you with details such as your full name, don't give out any personal or financial information during a cold call. Never grant the caller remote access to your computer, never go to a website they give you and never install software as a result of the call.
- Action Fraud does not use an automated machine to speak to victims of fraud. If you receive a suspicious call, hang up immediately.
- If you think your bank or personal details have been compromised, or if you believe you have been defrauded, contact your bank immediately.
- Stop all communication with the caller, make a note of their details and report it to us. **Every report matters:** https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/report_fraud

ActionFraud

Report Fraud & Internet Crime

0300 123 2040

If you think you have downloaded a virus, consider having your computer looked at by a trusted technician in order to determine if malicious software was installed on your machine during the call.

JOIN THE GREAT PLASTIC PICK UP



HELP TURN THE TIDE ON PLASTIC | 11-13 MAY 2018

Do you want to help rid the country of the plastic that litters our best loved beaches, beauty spots and city streets?

We're delighted to announce that we have teamed up with the Daily Mail to launch a brand new national campaign - the Great Plastic Pick Up.

It's really easy to get involved and do your bit, just an hour or two can make a real difference. Sign up now to get involved and organise your own 'Pick Up'. <http://www.keepbritaintidy.org/>

£400 'ON THE SPOT FINES' FOR ILLEGALLY DUMPING LITTER

Householders who have their litter dumped illegally face £400 on the spot fines. This latest crackdown which will come into force this Autumn, is aimed at families and individuals, who fly tip or use a rogue man or woman with a van outfits to get rid of their waste. This follows an increase of incidents, now up a further 7%, to more than one million offences.

It is, of course, already illegal to fly tip or to allow an unauthorised person or persons to remove your rubbish, but councils rarely prosecute due to the high cost of bringing prosecutions. The new power of '£400 on the spot fines,' will make it easier for councils to take action.

SENSE & SENSIBILITY

Many estates and built up areas were constructed long before the popularity of motor vehicles caused the parking chaos and congestion which many of us witness or experience on a daily basis.

We all appreciate and realise the importance of motor vehicles in our daily lives, but, how many of us actually stop to think about ensuring that sufficient room is left on roadways to allow for the safe passage of emergency vehicles when they are called

deal with what could be life threatening situations. Sometimes there is barely room for a car to get through between parked vehicles, which means that an Ambulance or Fire Appliance would have no chance of getting through. For example: an average size Fire Engine (pump appliance), needs a minimum width of 3.7 metres to safely negotiate a road, and a minimum gateway width of 3.1 meters. The average turning circle between kerbs is 16.8 metres and 19.2 metres between walls.

When considering where to park, here is a reminder of some of the basic legally enforceable rules: **DO NOT stop or park: -**

- near a school entrance
- anywhere you would prevent access for Emergency Services
- at or near a bus or tram stop or taxi rank
- on the approach to a level crossing/tramway crossing
- opposite or within 10 metres (32 feet) of a junction, except in an authorised parking space. (Yellow lines are often painted at junctions but do not always stretch to 10 metres, however, this **does not** automatically exempt you from complying with this rule).
- near the brow of a hill or hump bridge
- opposite a traffic island or (if this would cause an obstruction) another parked vehicle
- where you would force other traffic to enter a tram lane
- where the kerb has been lowered to help wheelchair users and powered mobility vehicles
- in front of an entrance to a property
- on a bend
- where you would obstruct cyclists' use of cycle facilities **except** when forced to do so by stationary traffic.



A point remembering should you ever wish to challenge an allegation of 'Obstruction.' It has been what is known as 'case stated' in law, and used as a legal precedent that:-

As a general rule: 'A brick in the road is an obstruction, therefore a vehicle must be.' (Individual circumstances may apply).

CYCLING MATTERS



Cycling Two Abreast: Cyclists are allowed to cycle two abreast, with the following exceptions: -

Rule 66 states you should never cycle more than two abreast, and **ride in single file on narrow or busy roads.**

http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/TravelAndTransport/Highwaycode/DG_069837

This means cycles are perfectly legal to cycle side by side on most roads in the UK. Obviously, some common sense needs to be used to work out if and when cyclists need to single out to let cars overtake but on the majority of UK roads cycling 2 abreast is allowed. Usually a group of cyclists will shout forward that a car is waiting ("Car Up") and if the road is too narrow for the car to pass the group safely while they are two abreast they will single out. However, if there is enough room, but there are oncoming cars preventing the overtake, the group will probably not single out. **Under normal road cycling conditions, where roads are open for use by other road users, there is positively no legal exception for members of cycling clubs or other cyclists, to ignore rule 66 and the practise of cycling 3 or four abreast is obstructing the free passage of other road users and is illegal.**

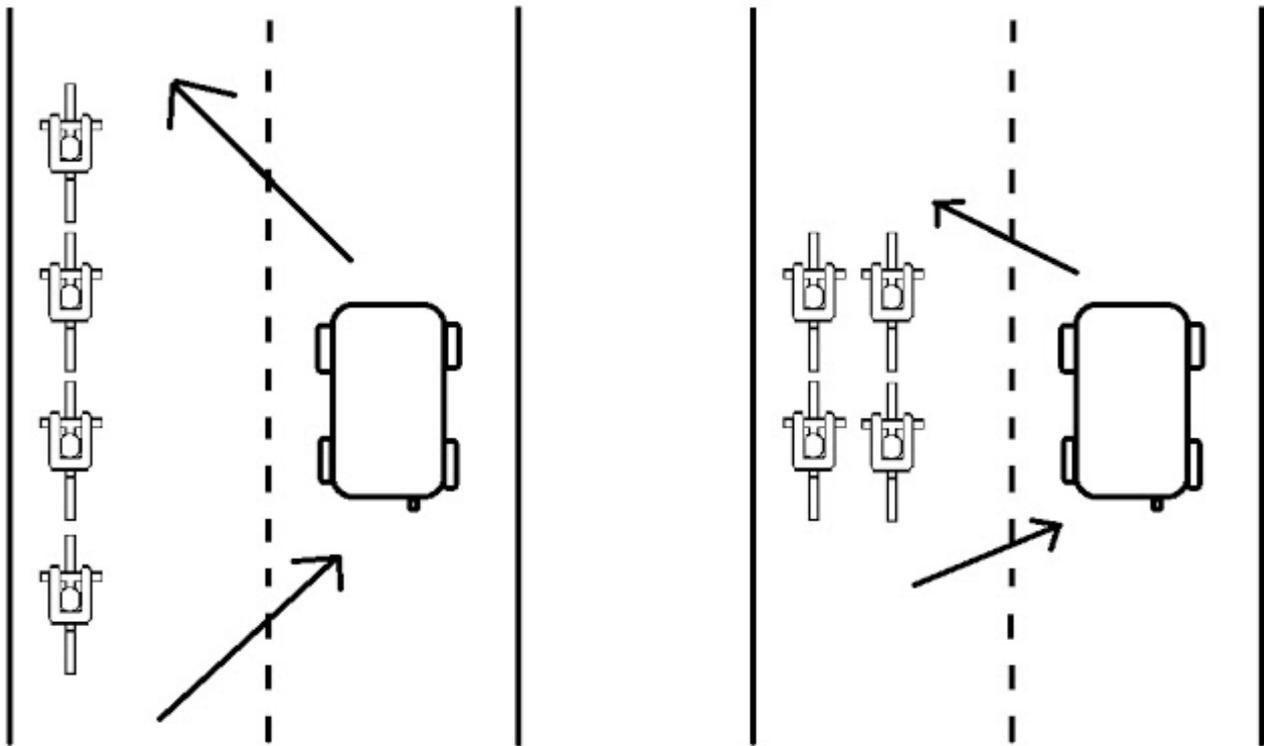
So why do cyclists cycle two abreast? There are many reasons why cyclists choose to cycle two abreast, so I'll give you the reasons that I know of.

It's Safer! Simply put, it's safer for cyclists to ride two abreast, it means that motorists usually have to overtake in a proper manner rather than overtaking in the same lane as the cyclists. If a group of cyclists are in single file, motorists will often assume they can overtake in places which are not safe and will not leave the cyclist enough room. Motorists should give cyclists the same amount of room they would give another car when overtaking (please see the Overtaking Cyclists page for more details) which means they should be on the other side of the road and would have to wait until there are no oncoming cars. Being in two files usually forces this scenario but riding in single file can lead the motorist to think they can overtake on the same side of the road if there are oncoming cars thus not giving the cyclist the correct amount of space.

It allows motorists to overtake quicker!?!

Riding two abreast also allows the motorist to overtake the group of cyclists quicker as there is less distance between the front and rear of the group (about half!!). This means that the motorist is past the group in less time, spending less time on the other side of the road and alongside the group of cyclists and therefore safer all round.

For those that cannot understand this, here is an illustration:-



So presuming that the car needs to give the cyclists the same space as another car (again see Overtaking page), there being one or two lines shouldn't matter in terms of distance needed to pull out to the right but two lines decreases the distance for which the car is performing the overtaking manoeuvre and therefore the time which to complete it making it safer all round.

It's sociable! Cyclists out for a long ride will have a much more enjoyable ride if they have someone to talk to, and enjoying the ride is the main point of the ride for most. Most cyclists prefer to have someone to chat with but this does not mean that they are not riding safely, most car drivers will talk to their passengers and this is not regarded as unsafe driving!

REMEMBER: It is absolutely illegal to ride your bicycle along a footpath or pavement, unless it is shared with a designated cycle path!



SENSE & SENSIBILITY IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

THE ORIGINAL COUNTRY CODE INTERPRETED

- Enjoy the countryside and respect its life and work (**Don't destroy our heritage**)
- Guard against all risk of fire (**Don't light fires or barbecues, drop or discard cigarettes or matches where they can ignite the surrounding areas**).
- Fasten all gates, especially where there are livestock etc., (**Means what it says**).
- Keep your pets under close control (**dogs on leads unless under strict proper control**).
- Keep to public paths across farmland (**Avoid damage to crops or upsetting livestock**).

- Use gates and stiles to cross fences, hedges and walls. (They are there for good reason).
- Leave livestock, crops and machinery alone (Better safe, than sorry).
- Take your litter home (discarded litter can endanger livestock, wild animals and birds. It encourages vermin, and can sometimes ignite causing widespread destruction).
- Help to keep all water clean (Do not use it as a toilet or waste facility).
- Protect wildlife, plants and trees (There are laws in place to prohibit their picking, removal and damage, as well as the damage of the Eco structure).
- Take special care on country roads
- Make no unnecessary noise. (Respect the peace and tranquility of your surroundings). (Cyclists and Horse riders must respect other users, by riding single file on busy or narrow roads, and allow others to pass without hindrance).

And a very important appendix to the code: -

**When in the countryside with children, young people and other adults: -
Lead by example!**



SENSE & SENSIBILITY

KEEP SAFE THIS SUMMER

Many of us will be out and about with our family and friends and, enjoying outdoor activities over the next few months.

Here are a few thoughts and facts to consider: -

- **A Fire can destroy a tent in less than 60 seconds!**
- In the UK, around 79,000 fires are started on grass and heath land every year (This is an average of 216 every day!)
- On average, 1,400 fires per year occur in caravans.
- Avoid: open fires in the countryside. Always have them in safe, designated areas.
- Never, throw cigarette ends or matches out of car windows. (Such thoughtless actions, are the cause of thousands of fires every year).
- Don't leave bottles or glass in woodlands, or anywhere that sunlight shining through glass, can start a fire.
- Remember, Barbecues and excess alcohol do not mix. Always ensure that safety guidelines are followed, and that the Barbecue is under the control of a responsible, sober adult.

Children are naturally curious about barbecues! They want to see what's going on, how well-lit it is, what's cooking and are always keen to know when it's going to be ready to eat. They're drawn to where the cooking is going on, yet that's the most dangerous place to be. In fact, each year about 1,000 people suffer injuries, such as burns, caused by barbecues.

Ensure children are supervised well at any barbecue. Tell them of the dangers of going close to the barbecue and that the person doing the cooking needs to have plenty of space to cook safely. Running about and playing in the garden may not be practical if the garden is small, and you don't want to run the risk of a child colliding with the barbecue.

Instead, organising for an adult to play games with children away from the cooking area is beneficial, such as inside the house or in a front garden. Or, if you haven't got much space, perhaps they can take them out to a park whilst the cooking is in action. This way, they could certainly use up some energy and work up an appetite before they come back and eat!

Setting the Barbecue Up Safely: -

Firstly, ensure that it is alright to light a barbecue or Fire at your chosen location. (Many open spaces such as Epping Forest are protected by Bylaws which make it illegal to do so).

To ensure everyone stays safe when you're barbecuing, the person in charge needs to set up the cooking device correctly, on a clear flat surface, light it properly and take care as they start to cook.

- Before you start, ensure the barbecue is in good working order.
- Find a place to set it up where the ground is flat and way from any sheds, fences, trees or overhanging shrubs.
- Never light a barbecue indoors or in a garage.
- Use charcoal and cover the base of the barbecue - about two inches deep.
- Always follow the manufacturer's instructions for lighting your barbecue, as models differ.
- If it's windy, ensure the wind is blowing away from you when you light the barbecue.
- Keep children away from the barbecue as you light it.
- Don't wear loose clothing, or anything could dangle onto the flames.
- Don't use any flammable accelerants, such as paraffin or petrol.
- Light the barbecue at arm's length.
- Once the barbecue is lit, keep children away from it.
- Keep a bucket of water close at hand, in case of emergencies.
- Never leave the barbecue unattended and don't try to move it whilst it's lit.
- When you've finished cooking, don't try to move the barbecue until it has cooled down completely. Then empty the ashes onto garden soil.
- Don't put ashes straight into a dustbin or wheelie bin - if they are still even slightly hot, they'll melt the plastic and cause a fire.

REMEMBER THESE SOBERING THOUGHTS:-

**ONE TREE CAN MAKE A MILLION MATCHES
ONE MATCH CAN DESTROY A MILLION TREES!**

**ONE CIGARETTE BUTT CAN DO JUST AS MUCH
DAMAGE!**

**DISCARDED GLASS BOTTLES OR BROKEN GLASS
HEATED BY SUN RAYS CAN IGNITE FIRE**

FINALLY

**IF THERE ARE NO LITTER BINS PROVIDED
ALWAYS TAKE YOUR LITTER HOME!**

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You can also read my blog at: <http://www.eppingforestnhw.org.uk/>



HELPING COMMUNITIES TO HELP THEMSELVES

