

Opinion

The best of quirky intentions

I STARTED this column with the best of intentions.

I'd already decided my **Big Farming Story of the Week** was a new Minister for Primary Industries as we farewell David Carter and welcome Nathan Guy to, arguably, the most important job in New Zealand agriculture.

My **Big Political Story of the Week** was John Key's new Cabinet and the **Big Sporting Story of the Week** could be nothing other than the Black Caps vacating the outhouse for the penthouse.

Even though I admire his benevolent streak I had no qualms awarding my **Brickbat** to Gareth Morgan. From telling Ricki Herbert how to coach football to sermonising about the evils of owning a cat, Morgan has gone from philanthropist to megalomaniac. All that Trade Me money, it would seem, has gone to his head.

Which leaves this week's **Bouquet**. A friend lent me a copy of 1227 QI Facts, a book based on the television show QI, hosted by Stephen Fry. The more I read, the more immersed I got. What started as a hard-hitting column neatly wrapped up with a couple of quirky facts has, in (quirky) fact, ended up the opposite. I hope you enjoy these interesting excerpts as much as I did:

- President Woodrow Wilson kept a flock of sheep on the White House lawn. He sold the wool and gave the money to the Red Cross.
- Bill Clinton was mauled by a sheep at the age of eight and didn't learn to ride a bicycle till he was 22.
- Before signing the trade embargo against Cuba, John F Kennedy got his press secretary to buy him 1000 Cuban cigars.
- Prisoners waiting to be executed on death row in the United States are given a physical beforehand, to ensure they are fit enough to die.

From the Lip



Jamie Mackay

- Italy's biggest business is the Mafia. It turns over US\$178 billion a year and accounts for 7% of GDP.
- In 1894 The Times estimated that by 1950 London would be nine feet (2.7m) deep in horse manure.
- It is most likely to be raining at 7am and least likely at 3am.
- Since 1990, the number of people living in poverty in China has fallen from 85% to 15%.
- By 2025 there will be more English speakers in China than in the rest of the world put together.
- 11 of the 12 men to have walked on the Moon were in Boy Scouts.
- Two-thirds of the world's caviar is eaten aboard the luxury liner the QE2.
- In an average year in Britain, trousers cause twice as many accidents as chainsaws.
- Sudan has more pyramids than Egypt.
- In 1915 Charlie Chaplin entered a Charlie Chaplin lookalike contest in San Francisco. Not only did he not win, he failed to even make the final.
- King Henry VIII had a Groom of the Stool, whose duty was to see that "the house of

easement be sweet and clear" – in other words, to wipe the king's bottom!

- The inventor of "best before" dates, originally for milk, was gangster Al Capone.
 - 69% of people at the rear of an airplane survive crashes, compared to 49% at the front.
 - Sending a man to the Moon and finding Osama bin Laden cost the US government about the same amount of time and money – 10 years and \$100 billion.
 - Loch Ness is deep enough and long enough to contain the entire population of the world 10 times over.
 - Just like humans, British cows moo in accents specific to their region.
 - From 1960 to 1977, the secret number authorising US presidents to launch nuclear missiles was 00000000.
 - President Jimmy Carter once sent a jacket to the dry cleaners with the nuclear detonation codes still in the pocket.
 - Worried about his grades at law school, Richard Nixon broke into the dean's office, only to discover he was top of his class.
 - John Cleese's father's surname was actually Cheese. Cleese grew up 10 miles (16km) from Cheddar and his best friend at school was called Barney Butter.
- And, finally, how about this shocking fact?
- Every human being starts out life as an ar##hole, because that is the first part of the body to form in the womb!

Your View

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NO YOU'RE NOT: Charlie Chaplin entered a Charlie Chaplin lookalike contest – and lost.