



On **January 4th** use the force as Da Vinci Learning says Happy Birthday, Sir Isaac Newton!

SIR ISAAC NEWTON BIRTHDAY
Wednesday, 4th January 2012, at 20:00

Milestones of Science, Nature & Technology –
Isaac Newton and Gravitation

Even before Isaac Newton's day, apples fell – always downwards, never upwards. No one thought about it. That was the way things were. But Isaac Newton did think about it. He asked himself a simple question. What force makes the apple fall? This question led him to develop the idea of gravitation as a universal force. His three laws of motion lay foundations for most of classical mechanics, and dominated the scientific view of the physical universe for over three centuries before being challenged by Einstein's theory of relativity. Newton proved that motions of objects on Earth and in the universe are governed by the same natural laws by demonstrating the consistency between his theory of gravitation and the laws of planetary motion as defined by Johannes Kepler. In this way he removed any remaining doubts about the heliocentric worldview, advancing the scientific revolution. Apart from having founded classical mechanics he contributed greatly to modern acoustics and optics. He built the first practical reflecting telescope and recognized that white light consists of

a variety of colours, forming the visible spectrum. He also discovered what are known as Newton's rings – a characteristic feature of the diffraction of light. Sir Isaac Newton remains without doubt one of the greatest and most influential scientists of all time – not bad for someone who was supposed to take over the family farm but preferred to sit in his room and decorate the walls with drawings of all kinds, or who wrote more on hermeneutics of the Bible and occult studies than on science and mathematics, the subjects he is mainly associated with.

Once Upon a Time ... The Discoverers
The Chinese – Our Ancestors
Monday, 9th January 2012, at 18:30



The Chinese did it way ahead of anyone else. They were the first to discover paper, playing cards, matches, the decimal system, the steam engine, the compass, the parachute, the mechanical clock, the printing wheel, the rocket, the suspension bridge, and even brandy – all this centuries before other civilizations and cultures. 600 BC. The Chinese develop lined farming, intensive hoeing, the iron plough and later also the multiple row sowing machine. It took the Western World more than 2000 years to adopt these agricultural techniques and perfect them. The magic lantern, the forerunner of cinema, the universal joint, the precursor of car transmission, the steam engine, the water lock, hydraulic power and biological control of insects all follow in the coming centuries.

Holy Oil – A Cultural History of Olive Oil
Monday, 23rd January 2012, at 21:00



Much like the beginnings of mythology the origins of olive oil are obscured by time. The olive tree, however, has several roots. One root takes us back to Ancient Athens. While the size of Athens was still moderate and comfortable the city faced a simple question. Who would have the privilege of becoming the patron of Athens along with the greater region of Attica? The rest of the Greek land under Olympus had already been divided into territories. Two of the most prominent gods applied for the proposed job – Poseidon and Pallas Athena. A competition was to decide between the two so both were asked for a demonstration of their divine powers. Confident of his victory, the sea macho Poseidon took to the deed and thrust his spear at the rocky Acropolis with the usual arrogant force. Water sprang up instantly but it turned out to be saltwater. With an effortless move of the hand Pallas Athena let a seed drop into the barren ground. Remarkably, an olive tree rose up from the ground only to claim victory for Athena. Under the protection of the powerful goddess Athens grew into and flourished as one of the most influential and self-righteous city-states of Antiquity. And along with Athens flourished the olives. In time, olives spread through all of the Mediterranean all the way up to the “Pillars of Hercules”. The olive tree became one of the most widespread trees, cultivated by man. Its roots bring together cultures across thousands of kilometres only to remind us of their common history.



American Experience – The Pill
Saturday, 28th January 2012, at 21:00

In May 1960, the US approved the sale of the contraceptive pill, a drug that would arguably have a greater impact on American culture than any other in the nation’s history. Within five years, six-million American women had made it part of their daily lives. The change was remarkable. Just a decade earlier, the concept of a pill that women could take like aspirin to prevent conception seemed preposterous. Laws that criminalized the sale of contraceptive devices were still on the books in thirty states around the country, and most of the medical and scientific community were nervous of getting involved in the development of new forms of birth control. Margaret Sanger and

Katharine McCormick encouraged Gregory Pincus, a brilliant but discredited biologist, to do the research and then paid his bills. He persuaded a pharmaceutical company to risk a possible boycott to bring the Pill to market and enlisted the help of a highly respected Catholic gynecologist, John Rock, to do the field studies. The Pill team expected a backlash as soon as the drug hit the market. However, there was little protest. Millions of women swarmed to their doctors to get a prescription. The Pill changed the lives of women who came of age in the 1960s, while women in their sixties and seventies were often terrified at the prospect of having one baby after another for the duration of their fertile lives and not being able to talk honestly about their desire to prevent conception.