

10 Quirky facts

1. A mysterious presence lingers in the Queen's House: it was first captured on camera by Rev. Hardy in 1966 while climbing up the Tulip staircase and it was last seen in 2002. Beware of sudden chills, you might spot something...
2. The National Maritime Museum has a quirky collection of objects, such as the coconut that Sir Francis Drake presented to Elizabeth I upon its return in 1580, and several 'war trophies' – items removed from Germany under the provisions of the Potsdam Conference (post-WWII).
3. Many round-the-world sailors visited Greenwich after their voyages – Sir Francis Drake and Sir Francis Chichester were knighted at Greenwich. Robin Knox-Jonston's yacht Suhaili was exhibited at the National Maritime Museum in 1999. Dame Ellen MacArthur came to Greenwich to celebrate after her recent victory in B&Q, 2005.
4. In 1894, an anarchist attempted to blow up the Royal Observatory at Greenwich – the first international terrorist attack in Britain. A few years later (1907) Conrad wrote the book 'The Secret Agent', inspired by this event.
5. The Cutty Sark is inhabited by two maritime ghosts - Captain Wallace who jumped overboard, and sailor John Francis who was bludgeoned to death on board.
6. Queen Elizabeth's Oak Tree can be found in Greenwich Park. This ancient hollow tree was planted around the 12th Century and died in the 19th century but was propped up by ivy until it collapsed in 1991. As a child, Elizabeth I danced and played around the tree with her parents King Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn. Legend has it that the tree was also a lock-up for offenders.
7. Following Nelson's death on 21 October 1805, his body was placed in brandy and escorted to England; in Chatham, the body was removed from the barrel and laid in a coffin made from the mast of L'Orient - a French ship which blew up during the Battle of the Nile - as Nelson himself requested. The body was then taken to Greenwich and lay in state in the Painted Hall from 5–7 January 1806. More than 15,000 people came to pay their respects and many more were turned away.
8. The Royal Naval College hosted JASON between 1962 and 1996. The unsettling 'guest' was a fully-functioning nuclear reactor used by Royal Navy for experimental purposes. JASON was one of very few reactors operating within a major population centre but has now been fully dismantled.
9. During a walk in Greenwich Park, Anne Boleyn's handkerchief once fell to the ground in front of a nobleman. Her Tudor contemporaries regarded the incident as a demonstration of her adulterous tendencies, arrested her and sent her to the Tower of London.
10. The skeleton of a 100-year-old Moby Dick was recently discovered in Greenwich. The giant whale was stranded in the middle of London flourishing whaling industry and was immediately butchered for its oil and whalebone, fetching up to £4,400 (or £400,000 in today's money).