



# LAWKIT

Life  
as we  
know it

four

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## How Normal People Ruined The Internet for the Rest of Us

David Lowry

## Road Closed

Katie Stevenson

## Tell Us Another One

Peter Huey

## Pigeon Killer

Ericka Lynch

## The Guide to Gig Going (part 2)

Jonathan Kirk

## Puppy Love

Gary McMurray

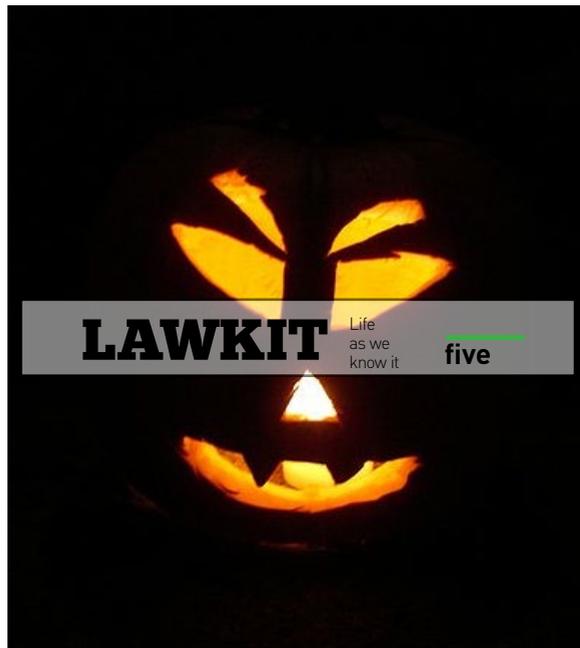
## Contributor's Guide

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## Life as we know it.

### A word from the editor

Welcome to our issue four of The Lawkit, our summer special, if you will.

Sadly, the internet has not yet progressed enough for us to digitally Sellotape a Double Lolly to the front of every issue. We did consider including a downloadable graphic of one, but assumed you wouldn't have found it as amusing as we would.

Instead, we've held off to pull in extra material for this issue, with six full articles for your perusal and enjoyment. And it's a pretty diverse bunch this time around. To whet your appetite, Lawkit #4 covers subjects as broad as the entire

internet, as deep as the foundations of human relationship, and as niche as the fine art of pogo-ing to rock music. (This involves a gravitational acceleration calculation. You have been warned.)

As always, we would love to hear as much feedback as possible. The best way, if you are on twitter, is to hit us up [@thelawkit](https://twitter.com/thelawkit). Alternatively, you can find us on Facebook, or e-mail [info@lawk.it](mailto:info@lawk.it).

Don't forget - this journal is about contributing and reading in equal measure - why not write something for the next one? Contact us for more.

# The Great Unwashed: How Normal People Ruined The Internet For The Rest Of Us

by David Lowry

## ONCE UPON A TIME, EVERYTHING WAS SIMPLER.

A friendship was a construct based on shared memories and experience. The web was one of many, and it hung between idle walls. A tablet was something that came in a packet of 16 and the internet was the demesne of nuclear scientists and the military.

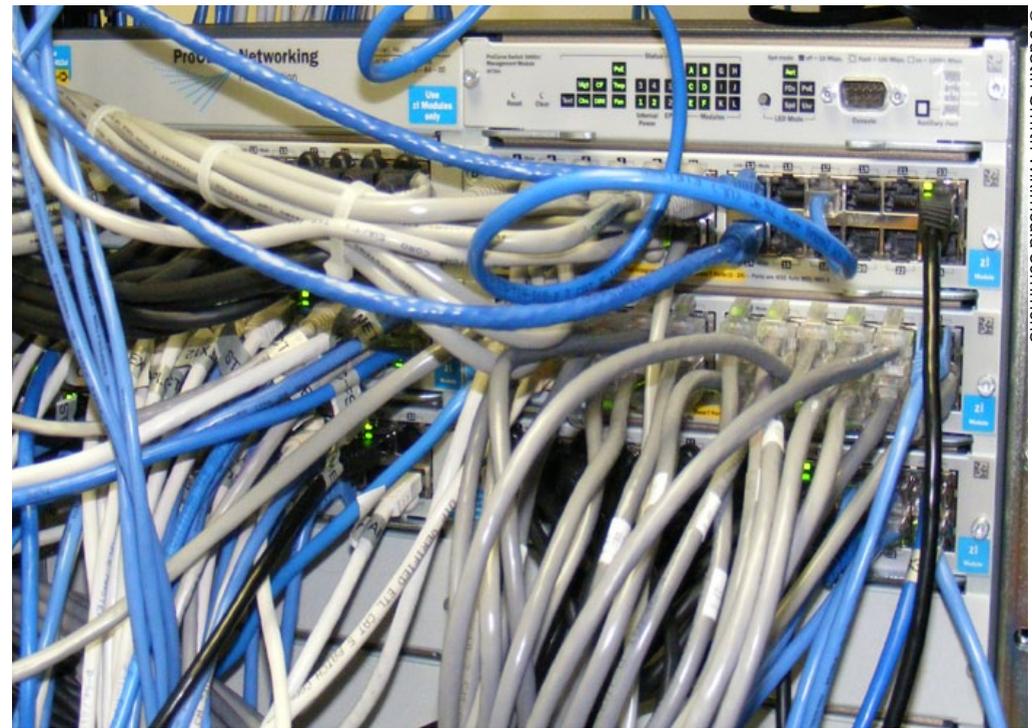
The Commodore and Atari era eluded me, too young and more interested in working out how to stand on my bike while stationary, and climbing the horse chestnut tree. A green screened Amstrad was my first computer. It was used for accounts, not mine, and writing. Two front-loaded disks and a distinct lack of entertainment ensued. To play a game it had to be 'loaded', not by disk, not by air... a different experience to the application store process of today. A few hours of typing left you with a glitchy but

functional circa 1990 version of Donkey Kong without splashing out on the original Nintendo... which eventually was bought.

The darling of 2010, Angry Birds, this was not. There was no point and click, and drag and fling. This took effort and you earned reward. Auto-save did not exist.

Fast-forward a few years to the beginnings of the web. The actual Internet, this time. It has been said that technology loses its capitalisation once it reaches mass appeal; we're nearly there. The web itself is 20 years old this week, the original document still exists. By the late nineties websites were bright, garish and their contents moved around too much. Where hamsters danced, badgers followed a few years after. Floppy disks started to die out.

You remember it. That's probably when you Got The Internet.



## THE INTERNET: NORMAL PEOPLE NEED NOT HAVE APPLIED.

A "Web Community" was an ecosystem fostered by people who, whilst separated by distance, would be the sort that would interact in real life. University researchers, the military, scientists and, let's face it, fans of primitive text-based computer games. You couldn't see the bytes past the nerds.

What am I getting at here? Well, in the Old Days communities were fostered by benevolent dictators. Bulletin Boards (the pre-cursors to forums) had moderators and if you stepped out of line or acted like a troll you got warned or banned;

mailing lists were the same. Access was for the few, and it was earned. Early adopters of services like Twitter 'got it'. There was no celebrity and none was required. The groups who formed on Twitter were like those from the early days. Your circle of followers was related to a real life concept.

Of the first thirty people I 'followed' twenty five were members of a website hosting company's community which continues to this day. The other five were Mac Rumors, Dave, Ruth, Andy and Alan. Four local web people: friends or acquaintance in real life. See? Soon, entertaining and intelligent celebs like Stephen Fry arrived,

John Mayer came and left, and Ashton Kutcher was one of the first to break the million mark. All three gained huge numbers of followers and engaged with their fans. The latter I don't know about, but Fry seemed to nearly have a twitter breakdown, and Mayer eventually left because he felt it inhibited his creativity. A case of throwing the baby out with the bathwater perhaps, but anyone with RSI (Refreshing Stream Injury?) will tell you - sometimes switching off is the best way to let yourself think.

## **TROLLS. KEYBOARD WARRIORS, LOWEST COMMON DENOMINATOR IDIOTS.**

Not the stars, not even loud-mouthed (and entertaining) characters like Piers Morgan, but the normal people. The fans who clamour for attention and recognition from their heroes. The masses who pester the footballers and TV stars for retweets of their charitable or vain causes. The many who believe for some reason that a retweet or a shout out will bring them some fame of their own. It only serves,

in my humble opinion, to irritate the aforementioned famous folks to an extent where Twitter will probably just become a PR tool and not something they engage in. How do you weed the wheat from the chaff? Unfollow the aforementioned Famous People. Which is a shame.

An option for users to be able to tick a box and instantly ignore all those who have ever used the phrase "please RT" — it would probably make the world a better place. I'm sure.

## **THE GREAT UNWASHED**

Every technology changes once it reaches the mass market. Early adopters help mould a product in the form they desire and their hosts respond. Facebook added Apps, Twitter recognised that users were "retweeting", "@-replying" and "DMing" and updated their platform to make these into features.

The public, however, have a habit of ruining the fun for everyone else.

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David publishes the Lawkit but most of the time he's building websites for a design studio in Belfast, wishing he was a Proper Designer. He irregularly posts photos and writes at <http://lawk.it/dave>

# Road Closed

by Katie Stevenson

"Sorry, road closed", a round policeman of about forty nods toward the yellow diversion sign. "Head on up there," he says as his wide fingers gesture me right, toward Central Station.

Now, there are two things that pop into my head when a road is closed. Until a few months ago my mind would probably have jumped to the 'fatal road traffic collision' option, but more recently, and with the presence of the police helicopter overhead the 'bomb scare' option pops up first. I sigh and follow the yellow sign.

It's a clammy day, so my window is halfway down. Enough to let a cooling breeze in, but still giving my hair protection from the 'I've just been through a wind tunnel look'. Not trusting the Department of Environment and their terribly

placed diversion signs I swing round to try and approach my house from an alternate direction.

There are a lot of people on the Cregagh Road. An oddly diverse bunch, Families, old men, teenage girls wearing short shorts who appear to have spilt a bottle of fake tan over themselves, all mingle around together. Suddenly through my rolled down window I hear the cause of the diversion.

In a moment of realisation I recall what month it is; early June, start of the marching season. I curse myself at my ability to forget year on year that this strange season exists. The memory consigned to a far flung area of my brain, until I'm in the middle of it, bumper to bumper, driving behind the 'Rising Sons of the Boyne' flute band. The company dressed in their regalia; smartly

ironed blue trousers and trimmed blazers, brightly play some tune which I do not recognise, but know is not 'The Sash', the only loyalist song I could name.

Having watched the trooping of the colour earlier in the day I consider the similarity of the scene in front of me. The crowds waving flags, the tradition, the pride in the perfectly rehearsed music, the well turned out band. The only thing giving them away at first glance are the tattoos; whole sleeves on the young men and faded swallows on the hands and arms of the older marchers.

Not getting anywhere fast I decide to pull over and watch for a while, remembering that I quite enjoy the deafening rhythm of the bass drums and the shrill song of the flutes. I indicate left into a small street where the kerbs are painted red, white and blue. Parking my car beside the beginnings of a bonfire site I observe the wooden palettes stacked like Jenga blocks. The young boys who usually mind the wood are temporarily absent; stand-

ing on the side of the road waving their flags and practicing tossing their batons I presume.

Locking the car with the high pitched melody of the flutes audible in background, I am struck by the sense of alienation I feel. It catches me slightly off guard. A few thousand metres from where I presently live, a community is gathered celebrating a tradition that I have a limited knowledge of. To try to describe it feels like doing it an injustice.

I do not share the strong loyalist sympathies displayed on the flags in front of me, reflected in the names of the bands. But, neither do I feel completely separate from this group of people.

I am confused.

Approaching a grimy bus stop I decide that this is an ample vantage point. I sit down beside a peeling poster which informs me that I am watching the East Belfast UVF memorial parade. I feel uncomfortable but the music holds me to my seat,

the vibration from the side drums reaches me through concrete and heavy, hot air. The family sitting on the kerb in front of me seem to know what's going on. They have a few picnic chairs assembled on the tarmac and a cool box containing a range of alcoholic beverages.

I eavesdrop.

The pre-teenage girl shouting that she can "see Dave" is told off by a string of expletives from her father, while her younger sibling Cody scrambles onto the roof of the bus stop to get a better view.

"Your tracksuit will be boggin" his

mum yells, but he ignores her and she returns to her cigarette and plastic bottle which, by the slur in her voice, I assume contains something stronger than coke.

For a second I pity the girl, told off so forcibly by her father, but I am challenged by my subconscious. "You're a snob" it spits at me. "What do you know of these people? You're so far removed from this you think you're better than them." I try to protest but the band passing me now, the 'Shankill Young Defenders', are playing The Sash. I hum along as proof that I am part of this. Whatever 'this' is. Again I am confused.



Photograph copyright Helen Robinson, 2007

# Tell Us Another One

by Peter Huey

I am a Protestant. Church of Ireland born and bred, but this world of the Shankill Defenders, of bass drums and swallow tattoos is something that I know little of. I am British only for my love of Prince William and allegiance during the Olympics and other major sporting events. At all other times I am Northern Irish. I enjoy the banter, I detest Guinness, I play the tin whistle moderately well and the Bodhrán badly. I play club cricket and attended a respectable state grammar school, yet I still thoroughly enjoy a traditional ‘session’ on a Sunday evening in a dodgy republican bar behind Castle Court.

I wonder what these people standing around me would think if they knew who I was. If they knew that a Gaelic jersey hung in my wardrobe beside my Ulster rugby top. If they knew that alongside my Protestant

upbringing I had learnt to play Irish instruments.

I think of the people who live only a few streets away where the signs are bi-lingual. Do the residents of Lúb Thulach Phointinsèir feel the same alienation from this as I do? Do they sit inside their houses, as oblivious as I would have been, if it were not for the round policeman and the yellow DOE diversion signs?

When the final band passes forty five minutes later I walk away leaving Cody and his older sister to their lives.

I go back to mine.

By the time I return to my car the young boys are back guarding the wooden palettes.

“Hey missus, you *gat* any wood for the bonnie?”

---

KT is a newly qualified teacher from County Down living in Belfast.

I like movies. It’s probably not a shock to anyone who knew me at university, where my three years of undergraduate study seemed to pretty much revolve around sitting in a cinema. Which isn’t quite true, but on occasion (usually Mondays) was not entirely inaccurate either. My theory is you could divide film into two broad categories if you wished: those with narrative, and those without. Now, a film theorist would probably slap down my personal definitions of these: those films that make sense, and those that don’t. Or, those that most of us can sit through, and those that most of us will get out our phones and start playing Angry Birds during. Film theorists would tell you that’s not really the definition of narrative, and strictly speaking they would be completely correct. But I would point out, wanting to make arguments like that would be one

of the reasons I think their 1987 documentary about potato farming falls into the latter category.

Film is, obviously, primarily a medium for telling stories. Cynics will say this is mostly to get you, the viewer, to pay to watch said stories. Besides that salient detail, there’s a hell of a lot of narratives floating around the cinema and TV screens at any one time, with a huge cumulative audience absorbing these stories.

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Initially at the behest of the publisher of this very journal, I’ve recently been imbibing several episodes of the ever-popular radio series *This American Life* - [thisamericanlife.com](http://thisamericanlife.com), a public radio show based entirely around the telling of stories. Often following a particular theme for that episode, contributors bring a myriad of stories to the airwaves.

Sometimes these stories have involved deep research across North America, chasing after interesting leads and people. Sometimes, a contributor simply spends a quarter of an hour telling a tale from their past experience. The range is wide, but the stories are compelling; TAL claims a weekly download count exceeding 400,000.

That's a lot of people listening to stories well told.

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I hate small talk (not unlike German people, apparently.) This has recently been a subject of some angst at home. Living in a new area, going to new places, my wife is a big fan of "meeting people."

I loathe "meeting people."

Don't get me wrong, it's not an anti-social thing. Though I appreciate some regular, head-soothing personal space, I am a social animal as much as the next guy. But...

Ok, remember that first week at university? That week when every single conversation you had involved these four statements: "Where are you from?" "What school did you go to?" "What are you studying?" and "Where are you living?" and then you moved on to

the next person?

I wanted to just headbutt people by the second or third day. And this is sort of happening again. When we go to the church at the top of our road on a Sunday morning, there's always that painful thirty seconds or so after the service ends before one simultaneously turns to the stranger to the left or right and says, "I don't think we've met before..."

It is not that I don't want to get to know you in this situation. I enjoy conversing, and I like getting to know people properly. But this five minute small talk ritual is destroying my soul. I know you're talking, but I'm really just staring at you, trying to embed the association between your name and face in my head.

My wife laughs at this. But I envy her. You see, she works in a hospital environment, where one spends their whole day talking to strangers. I too have worked in similar social settings, but there this blethering on is different. It's a tool, it's how you engage someone before you get to the task at hand. Not so with "meeting people".

I don't usually care too much about what you thought of that thing we just mutually went through. I'm not that interested in exactly

where you live, or how long you've been here for.

Please, just tell me something about yourself.

There's a line with people, isn't there? The five minutes I spent vaguely interested in Google Plus presented me with placing people in Circles (if this means nothing to you, don't worry - it's just a segue into the next point anyway.)

A couple of the default groupings are "Acquaintances" and "Friends".

My Acquaintances circle is pretty empty. I don't really want any.

I'm not trying to say that if someone doesn't immediately confess something massive to me, I will shun and ignore them. It all has to start somewhere, but...

Do you know anyone, that you see regularly, that you know next to nothing about? For example, you know their name, and what they do (it's probably in work, after all) but you don't know a single story about them? Those are acquaintances. Those are people I care nothing for.

Perhaps someday I will get to know a story about them, and then I will care. But for now, I'm just that fickle.

I don't want to just "meet people." I want to feel like I know them. Back to stories.

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The essence of humanity seems to be based around the sharing of stories. But what makes a story interesting?

Perhaps it is vested interest. A lot of anecdotes kick off with something along the lines of, "Something similar happened to me..." and a story we can identify with is then related. This may be the teller wanting to hear the sound of their own voice, and spotting the opportunity to chip in, but, either way, he and the listener may also be bonded through this realisation of shared experience.

Similarly, we read books about things we like and watch things we enjoy watching. And whilst we may not learn anything particularly useful by watching the entire rerun of Season 2 of Scrubs, we will almost certainly laugh our heads off and feel, in a way, bonded to it. Even when it gets to Season 7, and it's just not funny any more, we might stick with it out of loyalty. Or maybe that's just me.

Or, we receive these narratives to learn. Learning the best method

by following someone else's example. Or learning, perhaps, not to do something the same way. Maybe just gaining the knowledge of the experience of others. Either way, we want to hear these stories.

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Most days, my opening routine in the office is the same. I boot up everything. Check Mail. Check Twitter. Open Google Reader and take a few minutes to read through all the blogs posts from the last 24 hours, which conveniently takes about the same amount of time as it does to drink my coffee. Once that's out of the way, I might think about actually doing something 'useful'.

It seems strange, on the face of it, that once I have checked what communications I have received (which, before getting stuck into whatever the current project is, makes some sense) the next step is always to sit and read stories. Maybe it equates to the gentlemanly tradition of dissecting the day's newspaper over breakfast. But it's not the same - of

the forty or so subscriptions I have in Reader, nearly half are people I know.

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Back to acquaintances, where we'll finish. I've just finished speaking to one - a "remember that one time we did that thing together" person. The person in question is perfectly normal, but falls into the trap that many I meet seem to—let's not converse about anything new, but instead, desperately struggle to set up common ground through the shared experience we once had (in this case, a volunteer week we did together about eight years ago.) It was a good week, from the little I now remember of it. Justifiable as the foundation, but not the entirety of a friendship.

I like you well enough, but I don't know you. Tell me something about yourself first.

Tell me a story.

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Peter curates the Lawkit, makes videos, is a husband to Ruth and likes to make music. Read and hear more at <http://lawk.it/pete>

# Pigeon Killer

by Ericka Lynch

I hate pigeons on a good day. The term "rats with wings" I use regularly, with gusto even. The flying scourge that decorate monuments, block walk ways and audaciously stare you down when you eat your lunch burn no pity within my breast. I almost enjoy watching the wayward beasts as they thoughtlessly amble across a crowded highway, dare I say it, playing chicken with oncoming traffic. However, the tune of my hateful mantra was recently changed due to the plight of one pitiful pigeon. Here is the retold account of that fateful day.

It was a beautiful sunny day in front of St. Anne's Cathedral. The wind was gently laughing through the trees as I settle down for a few moments of solitude to quietly consume my breakfast and morning cup of joe before work. I knew that a fleet of pigeons lived close by and

was hoping to finish my breakfast unnoticed by the neighbourhood flock. To my dismay, they found me. The gathering scavengers assembled before me, bobbing their empty heads before me and my breakfast. The sideways glances of lust they gave my muffin made me blush. I turn away sheltering its innocence so that only my peripheral vision was accosted by the horde.

As I reengaged my breakfast I noticed a flicker of something limping in the corner of my eye. Quickly dismissing the idea of humpbacks and cathedrals, I assumed it must be one of the pigeons. I turn to discover one of these feathered fiends was hopelessly bound by a murderous piece of twine. Being a creature of non-opposable thumbs, it had no way of freeing itself from its bonds. The deeper stirrings of my nature were suddenly awakened at the

sight of such a pathetic creature. My compassions overruled my deep-seeded hatred, and I began to wildly grope for a rescue plan.

I needed something sharp to cut twine from its feet. A list filtered through my head: a sharp stone; nail trimmers; a broken bottle. Then I remembers a forgotten item in my bag left there after a botched wrapping job; a pair of scissors. I had the tool of liberation: now all I needed was the pigeon.

Although its bonds hindered its walking its wings were fully capable of flight. Therefore, I knew I must lure the pigeon close enough through the bait of my muffin that I might quickly grab and free the unsuspecting bird. A game of cat and mouse ensued. I nonchalantly sprinkled the crumbs close enough to bring the pigeon within snatching distance. Attempt after attempt was made to no avail. It constantly flew out of my reach. I began to grow desperate. I had the tool for its freedom, I had the solution, but my time was running out (I had to be at work soon!) Knowing that I could never catch the skittish creature on my own, I soon began to look for reinforcements.

Just then, a passerby suddenly appeared. Driven mad by desperation, I interrupt his thoughts with my frantic plea, "Excuse me? Could you please help me catch that bird?" The look he gave me made me realise how ludicrous my request was to someone who was not engaged in Operation Pigeon Rescue. However, not saying a word, he made a feeble step toward the pigeon in order to placate the crazy American. Of course, all of the pigeons quickly flew just out of reach. He turns



to me and his only response was, "Those things are a nightmare to catch." His words immediately stabbed my pride. Did he think I was doing this for fun? I quickly retorted, rather indignantly, "Well, I wouldn't know, I've never tried to catch a pigeon before." Remember, my hatred still existed for the species, regardless of this one desperate ornithod. But as he walked away I realised all of my efforts to save this pigeon were futile. I could no more catch and rescue this winged creature then I could bottle the wind. Deflated, I picked myself up, cast a fleeting glance at the fated pigeon and made my way to work.

My attempt at an honourable rescue had failed. Saddened by my vain emancipation, I heavy-heartedly made known my recent saga to a work colleague. She patiently listened to my dramatic tale and disparaging failure. I told her of each crumb I sacrificed, of my vain hopes of catching the trembling creature, of the heartless man who did little to help the ill-fated bird. As the last pinions of the relayed plot were put into place she paused for a moment taking in all that I had said. I fancied I could see a glistening of a sympathetic tear shinning in her eyes at such a tragic account. After what seemed an appropriate amount of silence, she regained my eye contact and firmly stated, "You're a pigeon killer," and walked away. The words hit home, but her pronouncement was true. I knew that day that pigeon would die due to my failure as a human being.

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This is Ericka's second contribution to the Lawkit. She is a teacher from Seattle, voluntarily living in Belfast.

# A guide to gig going (part 2)

by Jonathan Kirk

We continue our journey through the dos and don'ts of gig going, starting with a look at some of the best moves for the most energetic place at any rock gig: the mosh pit.

## 1. THE POGO

The pogo means jumping up and down in time to the music. Some music is too fast to be able to do this, so don't bother. To illustrate the dangers of not doing this, I have provided this simple maths problem:

At 22:30, a chin leaves the air and is travelling downwards at a rate of 9.8 m/s. On the same plane, a shoulder is heading in the opposite direction, leaving the floor with the same rate of deceleration. Equidistant from their respective starting positions is point X, measuring 20 cm, where both entities collide. Given that teeth are not biting the tongue, what is the total amount of pain that the chin is in?

## 2. THE MOSH

- a) Push someone, using any part of your upper body.
- b) Repeat (a), until gig finishes.

## 3. THE CIRCLE PIT

- a) To form a circle pit, either shout "circle" or move your arm round in a circular motion.
- b) Clear a space in the middle of the pit by pushing everyone back until a large circle is formed.
- c) Wait.
- d) At an appropriate time, dictated by the music, and usually when things get heavier, the fun ensues.

e) A circle pit is essentially a race to see who can get to the middle first. Helpful tactics include jumping, sprinting, and pushing people out of the way.

f) Very large circle pits are still a race, but this time the race is more around the perimeter of the circle, pushing the edge of the circle as you run round.

## 4. HEAD BANG

- a) This is perfect if you have long hair. If not, just make an angry face instead and move on to #5.
- b) Nod / circle your head back in forth in time to the music. But with the tenacity akin to headbutting someone.
- c) If the tempo is too fast and you can't keep up, halve your headbanging speed.
- d) Be aware of people both in front and behind you. This can be done by holding your hand out in front of you so that you can judge distance. This is similar to how a cat judges width with their whiskers. Also be aware that long hair combined with stubble acts like Velcro.

e) Be careful not to headbutt girls behind you in the teeth. Twice.

There is no real preventative advice here, but let me tell you - her boyfriend will not take kindly to it.

## 5. CROWD SURF

- a) If you intend to crowd surf, take off your belt, and carefully store all items that are likely to fall out.
- b) The aim of the crowd surf is to keep the person in the air, but also away from the stage. This is where the enemy (security) reside. If you like, think of the floor as a spike pit that you have to keep the surfer off.
- c) To get the surfer in the air, you'll generally need about 3 people. One to give them a foot up, and two (or more) to lift them on top of the crowd.
- d) You can do it. Put your back into it. If you spot a crowd surfer, use your hands to hold them aloft, but using your back is better.
- e) If you see a gap in the crowd near a surfer, GET THERE IMMEDIATELY. Falling 6 feet straight to the crowd is not fun I imagine.

## 6. STAGE DIVE

- a) Not recommended as you'll gen-

erally get kicked out.

b) But still, if you get onto the stage, well done, but be prepared to act quickly.

c) If you are in the crowd and see someone about to jump (sometimes by the band), form a really tight crowd near where they are going to land. The more people, the easier it will be to keep them from falling. Put your hands in the air. Think of it as a game of “catch the human”.

d) The stage diver will then run and jump once they reach the edge of the stage. Always aim to land horizontally on the arms of the crowd. Anything else will result in major pain.

e) The stage diver will magically transform into a crowd surfer.

## 7. MOSHIQUETTE

a) If someone falls over, form a circular space around them, and help them up. Always be looking out for people who have fallen over.

b) If someone drops / loses something / needs to tie their shoe lace, again form a circular space around them until they find what they are looking for.

c) Protect each other.

d) Don't pull people's hair or nip them.

e) Smile. Although they look violent and scary, mosh pits are fun, and there to be enjoyed.

## 8. POST GIG

a) If all steps have been followed, you should be out of breath, exhausted, and a sweaty mess. You may find that the envelope you put your ticket in has sealed itself due to the amount of sweat in your



pocket. A good sign indeed my friend.

b) Stretch again. This should avoid some post-gig cramp, and make the next couple of days a little less painful.

c) Hang around outside the venue / stage to try and meet the band, or get a setlist / guitar pick etc.

d) Drink some water. Go on, you deserve it.

e) Once clear of the venue, put on your new t-shirt. Your old one will

be drenched, and a fresh t-shirt is just what you need. But make sure that no-one at the gig sees you wearing it, as they'll just think you're a stupid fanboy.

In all my gigs, I've never fallen over. I have one scar from where my leg collided with the stage, but that was my own fault, and once got hit in the jugular and couldn't breathe properly for a few minutes. But that's it. Follow the rules, and you'll be safe.

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Jonny Kirk is famous for many things: winning the Banter 500, owning an actual Simpson's arcade machine, and breaking his leg mid-Daredevil impersonation. We recommend googling 'Father Ted's House' if you want to see more.

# Puppy Love

by Gary McMurray

Perhaps it's just a 'ruff' patch, but my family think I'm barking mad.

Picture the scene. I'm visiting my girlfriend's house, enjoying some time with her, getting to know her parents better, taking things easy. There's just one problem: the family dog. Susie is a Jack Russell terrier, lively, lots of fun, a lovely dog really. She particularly enjoys jumping up on my knee, at the behest of my wife-to-be. Except I'm terrified of dogs.

I can't quite remember where my fear started. At one time, I happily went with my granda to take our minister's dog for a walk (Hector, belonged to the Rector!), without a problem. But at some point, somewhere along the line, dogs became the enemy. Something to be feared.

It was heightened by my most

memorable (and most terrifying) pastoral visit ever whilst at minister school. I was on placement in a rural parish, and was tasked to call at a certain home. My placement minister had warned me about the dog, which made my anxiety levels rise, and my willingness to visit plummet. Week after week I would put it off, until I knew I had to visit this Friday.

I arrived, rang the doorbell, and heard the barking. After postmen, ministers must be a dog's second favourite snack, and it was ready for me! The man came to the door, and turned to lead me into the room, only the dog wasn't moving, and wasn't allowing me inside! I wasn't going to force myself, so had to wait for the man to realise I wasn't following him, come back to the door, and hold the straining dog back as I entered.

Could it get much worse? Of course it could. Seated at the kitchen table opposite the husband and wife, I was very conscious of a puddle forming on my knee. I hadn't wet myself - it was dog drool as it sat guarding its master and making sure I didn't come too close, ready to attack at any moment.

Thankfully the family realised, and the dog was banished to another room, allowing me to complete my visit and dash off before the dog was released again!

Is it any wonder I wasn't fond of dogs. Fast forward from those nights where I was Susie's adventure playground to last night. Back in the same room, with the same people. Only the dog has changed. Susie went to doggy heaven several years ago, but now there are two dogs running around - the new puppy,

Poppy, and our dog, Pippa, both miniature Jack Russells.

Our dog? Yes! After lots of lobbying, we got Pippa over a year ago. The first few nights were desperate as she howled for her mother and siblings, but she's quickly settled into our wee house, so that we're now inseparable. As it turns out, I'm the chief feeder, walker, and poo-picker-upper, and enjoying it immensely. The canine capers are continuing, and we're having great fun with a dog that never stops running about, always playful, so that even the outside toilet trips in the middle of the coldest nights of winter with snow higher than Pippa's head seem like fun.

Diamonds may be a girl's best friend, but girls, you can keep your diamonds; it's a dog every time for me.

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Gary has recently moved to the damper climes of Fermanagh with his wife Lynsey and their dog. Read more at <http://lawk.it/gary>

# A Contributor's Guide

Apparently, you should never read a book by its cover. It's not strictly true. You should hopefully be able to tell a lot about the tone of the Lawkit from its appearance alone. It's maybe a little minimalist, but that's because the words take priority. People have given of themselves to write things, and we recognise their effort by letting the words tell much of the story.

Lawkit should read like a collection of well-written blog posts. Pithy, self-contained articles which are accessible but assume interest.

We accept articles about pretty much anything. So you can write on a topic of your choice. This might actually seem even worse than being given a set subject. Well, we do have a list of suggested subject areas to get you started. These include: politics, technology, outdoors, film, music, faith, science, sport, gadgets or food. Or any combination of those.

## WHAT'S THE POINT OF LAWKIT?

It's about Life As We Know It. It's about sharing knowledge. But you don't have to be an expert to write on something, as long as you have an interest in it - because if you are interested in something, then you will almost certainly want to 'discuss' it with others.

To that end, don't try to argue for something you don't believe in. You will fail.

Don't be afraid to be specific or niche. Everyone likes geeking out every now and again.

Be clear about your topic from the start: 500 words and no waffle is highly preferable to 1500 with - and it'll get cut down anyway. Slaughter your babies - omit needless content or someone else will.

A good place to start is usually whatever bit you've spent the most time on. It'll be the weakest.

If you only have twenty minutes to bang out something, you should definitely go for it.

So knowledge is king, but clarity is the Grand High Poobah; you can speak a bit academically and still say accessible to the casual reader. It's a fine line to walk, but you can do it. Because there's nothing more irritating than being obtuse for the sake of it, and you know it.

Don't use Lawkit to sell stuff, unless you're willing to pay a little for it. If you are, thank-you for giving us all a little something for our efforts. That said, if you are involved in something that you feel people might like to hear about, please tell us - the worst we'll say is 'maybe', and then probably get you to do it anyway.

And if you're willing to contribute by doing more than just writing, we'll love you forever.

Got all that? Get scribbling.

e-mail submissions to [info@lawk.it](mailto:info@lawk.it)

follow us now [@thelawkit](https://www.instagram.com/thelawkit)



# Life as we know it.

The next edition of @**THELAWKIT**  
will be published on September 30th  
as usual on <http://lawk.it>

Your comments and contributions are  
welcome. Submissions for #5 by September 19th.