

SCIENCE FOCUS

FEATURE



This week in science history: Apollo 13, Rosalind Franklin and England's 'green heart'

We look back at some of the most significant events in science, technology and natural history that changed how we view the world around us and beyond.

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"Houston, we've had a problem"



Apollo 13 astronauts Fred Haise, Jim Lovell & Jack Swigert waving as they emerge from rescue helicopter after ill-fated moon mission (© Time Life Pictures/NASA/The LIFE Picture Collection/Getty Images)

11-17 April 1970

The number 13 is unlucky for some, but for the crew of [Apollo 13](#) their dream journey to the Moon became a nightmare when an oxygen tank on board exploded. The Moon instantly changed from landing site to U-turn point.

The Apollo spacecraft needed to slingshot around our closest celestial body in an effort to speed up and saving enough fuel to return home. It was only due to the crew of Fred W. Haise, Jr, John L. Swigert, Jr and James A. Lovell, Jr. keeping cool heads (in temperatures of only 4°C) and saving as much water and energy as possible that they were able to survive. The crew happily returned on the 17 April, after six days of nail-biting tension as the world stood still, hoping for the safe return of the crew.

"Byte into an Apple" – a \$666.66 one

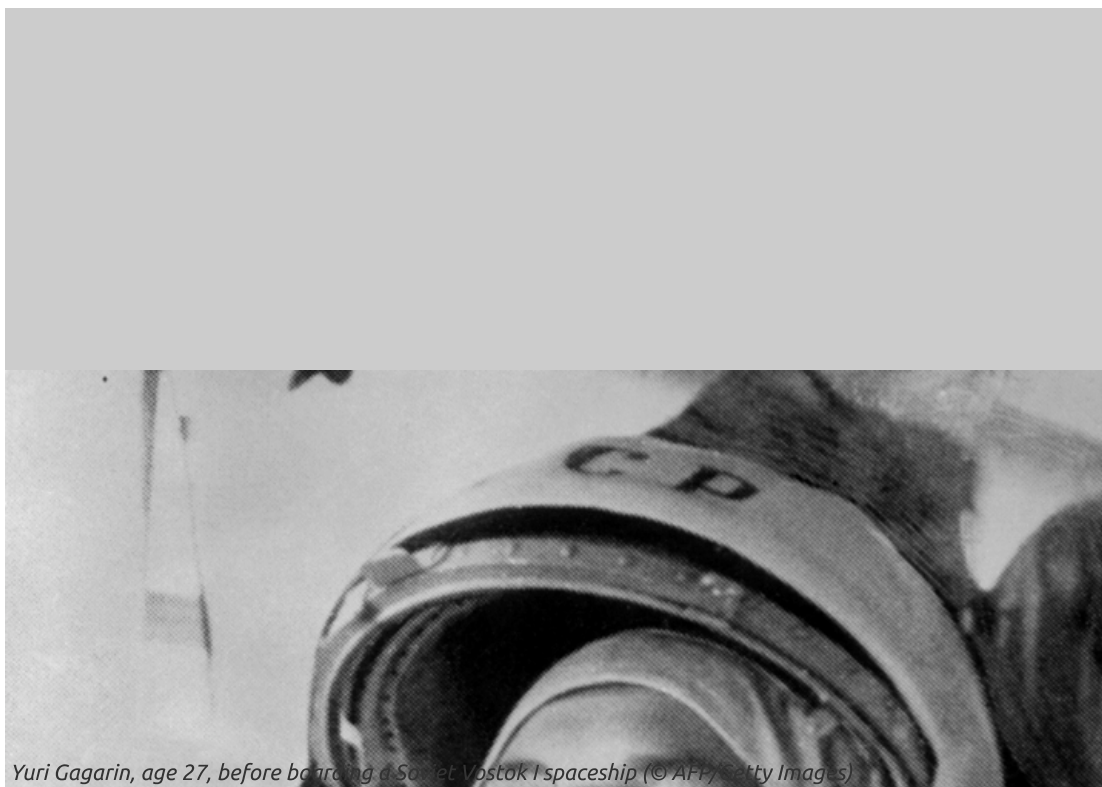


Steve Jobs (left) and Steve Wozniak at the first West Coast Computer Faire, where the Apple II computer was debuted, in Brooks Hall, San Francisco, California, 16/17 April 1977 (© Tom Munnecke/Getty Images)

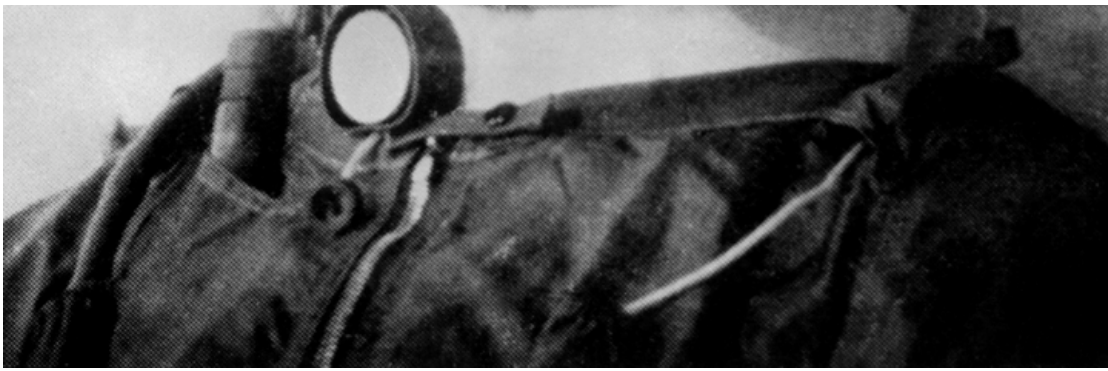
11 April 1976

Developer Steve Wozniak and his friend Steve Jobs had an idea to make money from selling fruit, but not the kind you'd get at a greengrocers. The *Apple I* was released on 11 April, 1976 costing a tasty \$666.66. Just one year later its successor, the [Apple II](#), lured people back into the shops again for another *byte*.

Yuri Gagarin's flying visit into outer space



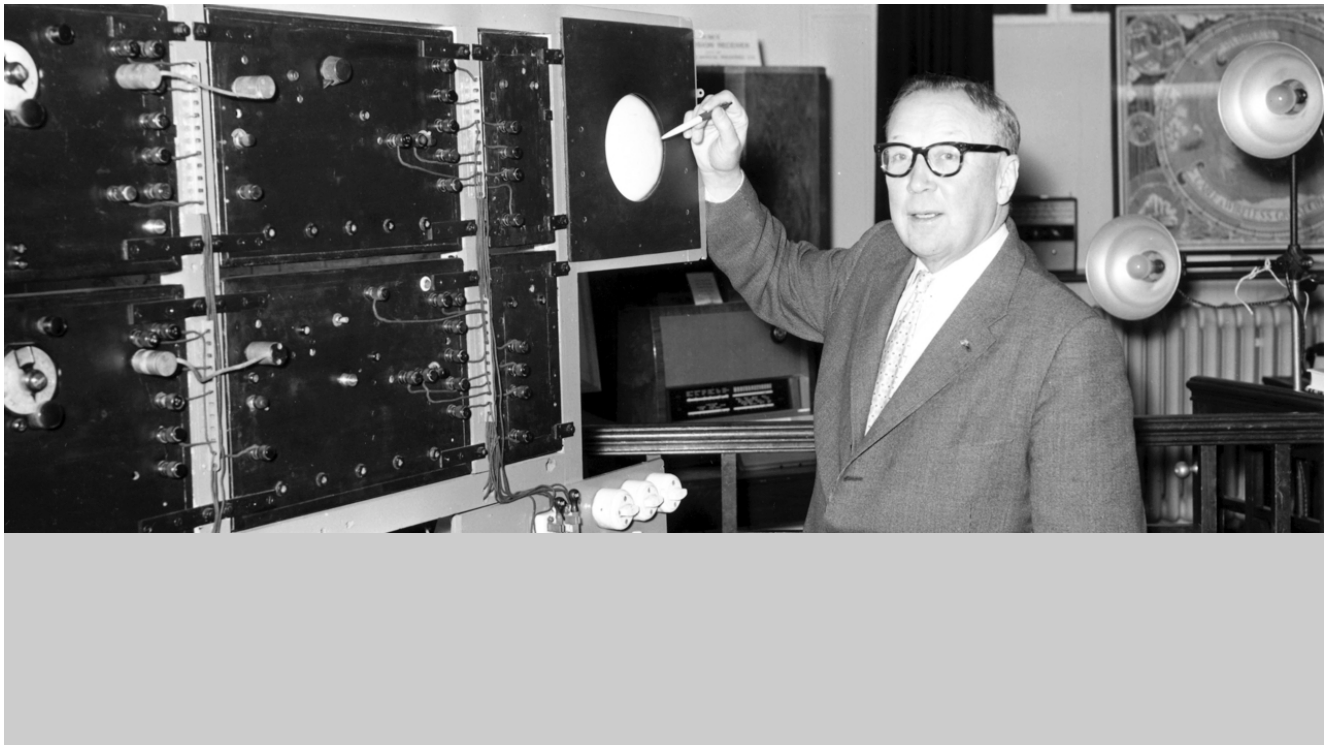
Yuri Gagarin, age 27, before boarding a Soviet Vostok I spaceship (© AFP/Getty Images)



12 April 1961

It took just 108 minutes for the Vostok 1 spacecraft to rocket Russian cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin into orbit and back again, making him the [first human](#) into outer space .

Watt an inventive family



Sir Robert Alexander Watson-Watt with the apparatus he developed to detect reflected radio echoes from enemy aircraft (© SSPL/Getty Images)

Born: 13 April 1892

Sir Robert Watson-Watt, a descendent of the famous engineer James Watt, continued the 'family tradition' of building ground-breaking inventions by developing radar. His work helped the British military during the Second World War.

A new era of spaceflight begins



The space shuttle orbiter Columbia touches down on Rogers dry lake at Edwards Air Force Base (© NASA)



14 April 1981

More than 200,000 people flocked to Edwards Air Force Base in southern California to watch the landing of the Space Shuttle Columbia, the first vehicle to return from space and land safely on dry land. This incredible achievement marked the beginning of a new era in spaceflight, where hardware would be used repeatedly on a number of missions.

Advertisement

Heavy rain



These hailstones are tiny compared to the ones that fell in Bangladesh (© iStock)

14 April 1986

In a storm of near-biblical proportions, the heaviest hailstones ever recorded fell in Bangladesh on 14 April 1986, killing 92 people. The biggest colossus of them weighed 1.02kg!

Christiaan Huygens - a titan among astronomers



Dutch mathematician, astronomer, and physicist Christiaan Huygens (© Stock Montage/Getty Images)

Born: 14 April 1629

If you want your name on a moon lander, an asteroid, a Martian crater and a mountain on the Moon, you have to have channel your inner Christiaan Huygens, who was born nearly 400 years ago this week. He is mainly known for his discovery of the moon Titan and observing [Saturn's](#) rings.

A genius sees the light of day



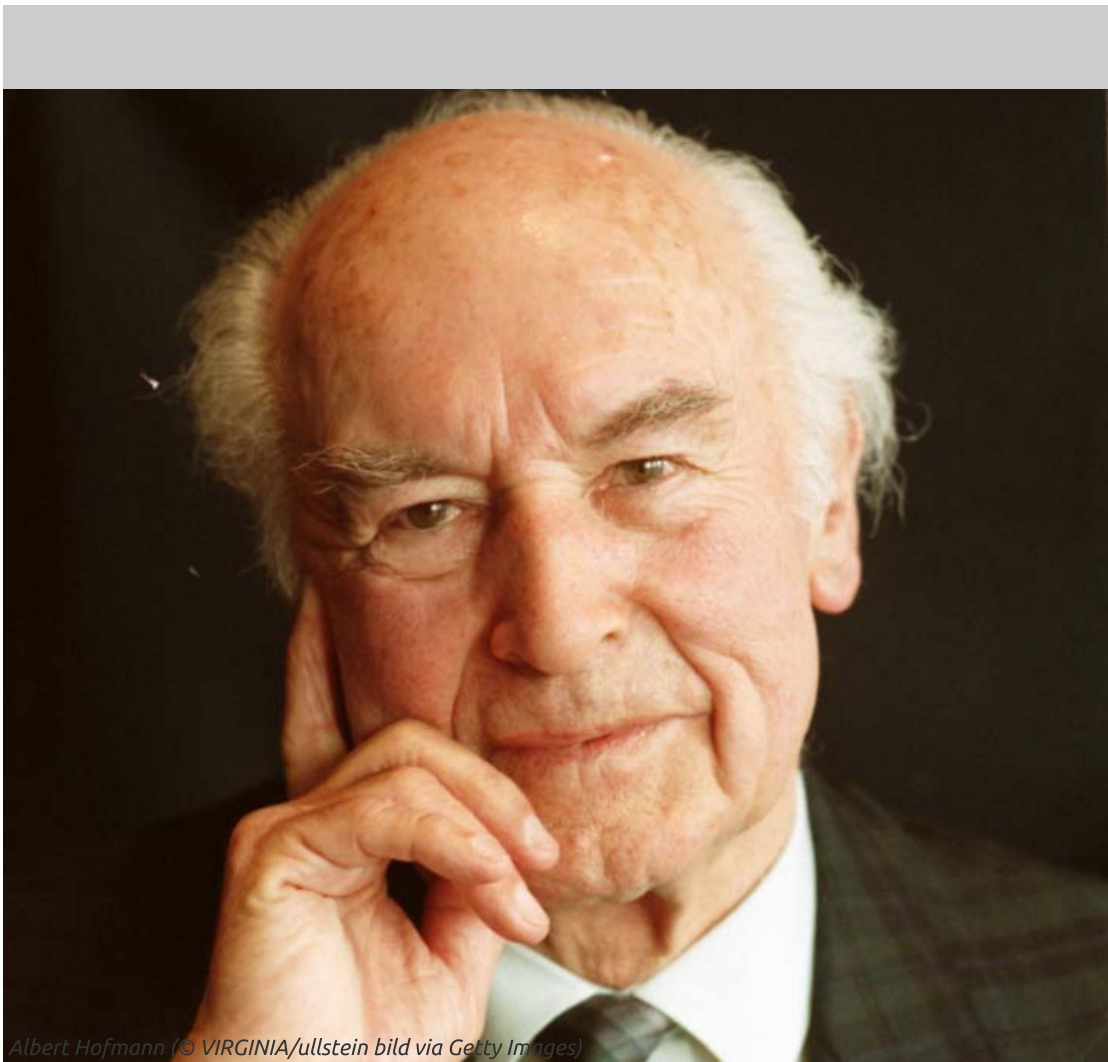
Leonardo da Vinci - self portrait (© Culture Club/Getty Images)



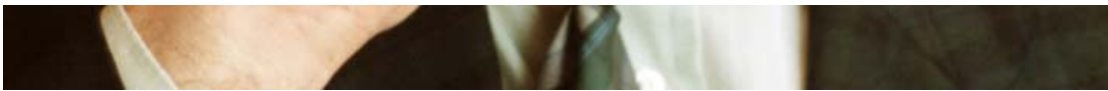
Born: 15 April 1452

Leonardo da Vinci achieved more during his lifetime than painting the mysterious smile of the *Mona Lisa* or *The Last Supper* - the Italian was an all-round [genius](#), who studied almost every discipline of science. He examined the human anatomy, invented a parachute, developed musical instruments and much more.

The hallucinating effects of LSD discovered by accident.



Albert Hofmann (© VIRGINIA/ullstein bild via Getty Images)



16 April 1943

Swiss chemist Albert Hofmann was testing synthesised *lysergic acid diethylamide's* pharmaceutical properties in his lab when he accidentally touched his mouth with fingers covered in the chemical, becoming the first person to experience the hallucinogenic effects of the [drug](#) LSD.

The woman who used X-Ray to photo DNA



Rosalind Elsie Franklin (© Universal History Archive/UiG via Getty Images)

Died: 16 April 1958

Rosalind Franklin may only have lived to the age of 37, but in that time she made major contributions to the discovery of the [DNA](#) and its double helix structure. Sadly she would never join her colleagues receiving the Nobel Prize for her research, being awarded to colleagues Francis Crick, James Watson, and Maurice Wilkins four years after her death from ovarian cancer, but she remains an iconic female figure in the world of science.

England's 'green heart' becomes the first national park



River Manifold Valley near Ilam, Peak District National Park, Derbyshire, England (© Alan Copson/Getty Images)



17 April 1951

The beauty of the Peak District's nature inspired writers like Lord Byron, D.H. Lawrence and Jane Austen long before it was officially acknowledged in 1951, when the district became Britain's first national park. Today, an amazing 10 million people explore the park every year!

A promotional banner for Science Focus Magazine. The background is dark with a subtle starry pattern. On the left, the text 'SCIENCE FOCUS MAGAZINE' is displayed in white. In the center, 'SAVE 40%' is written in large, bold yellow letters, followed by 'WHEN YOU SUBSCRIBE' in white. On the right, there is a small image of the magazine cover, which features a red apple and the headline 'IS ANYTHING GOOD FOR YOU ANY MORE?'.