

# Crazy Days

**Tony Greenway ponders the sense and silliness that is the 'National Day' phenomenon**

**C**ome here. Oh, go on... closer than that. Come on. Give us a cuddle.

No, really – it's OK, because it is, officially, National Hug Month. To celebrate, I've been hugging people a lot lately – preferably blonde women in their late twenties and early thirties, but, frankly, I don't discriminate; and when they've asked me just what the hell I was doing (or words to that effect) I point out that it's National Hug Month and I'm simply getting into the spirit of the season. So far, this excuse seems to be working a treat.

There are loads of National Days, National Weeks and National Months cropping up throughout the year – but, just like the alarming number of reality TV shows featuring Simon Cowell, there are more of them than we could ever need or find use for. Most National Days have been dreamt up by the PR departments of various companies, organisations and charities; admittedly, some highlight and raise funds for extremely worthy causes.

Take National Hug Month, for example. Yes, it sounds a bit barmy out of context, but it's actually part of Help the Aged's campaign aimed at ending the loneliness and isolation experienced by more than one million older people in the UK. And despite its rather fruity title, it's an excellent way to raise awareness of – and funds for – a growing problem. So we commend it wholeheartedly – and ask you to

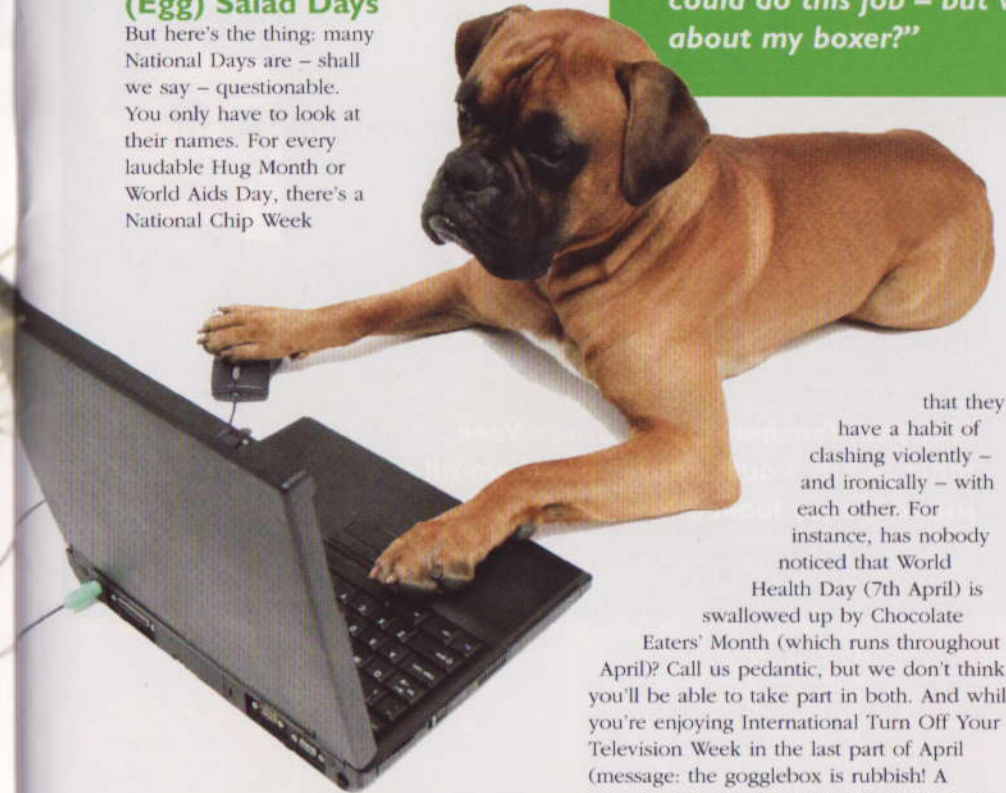


**National Straw Hat Week – celebrating the straw hat in all its .. er .. glory?**

hug someone immediately (we baggy the redhead in accounts, though).

## **(Egg) Salad Days**

But here's the thing: many National Days are – shall we say – questionable. You only have to look at their names. For every laudable Hug Month or World Aids Day, there's a National Chip Week



**“Take your Pet to Work Day – I always said a trained monkey could do this job – but what about my boxer?”**

that they have a habit of clashing violently – and ironically – with each other. For instance, has nobody noticed that World Health Day (7th April) is swallowed up by Chocolate

Eaters' Month (which runs throughout April)? Call us pedantic, but we don't think you'll be able to take part in both. And while you're enjoying International Turn Off Your Television Week in the last part of April (message: the gogglebox is rubbish! A complete waste of your time!), remember to prepare yourself for another big National event later in the year: World Television Day on 21 November (message: isn't TV amazing? It's revolutionised the way we live, you know). Talk about confused signals.

## **The American Day**

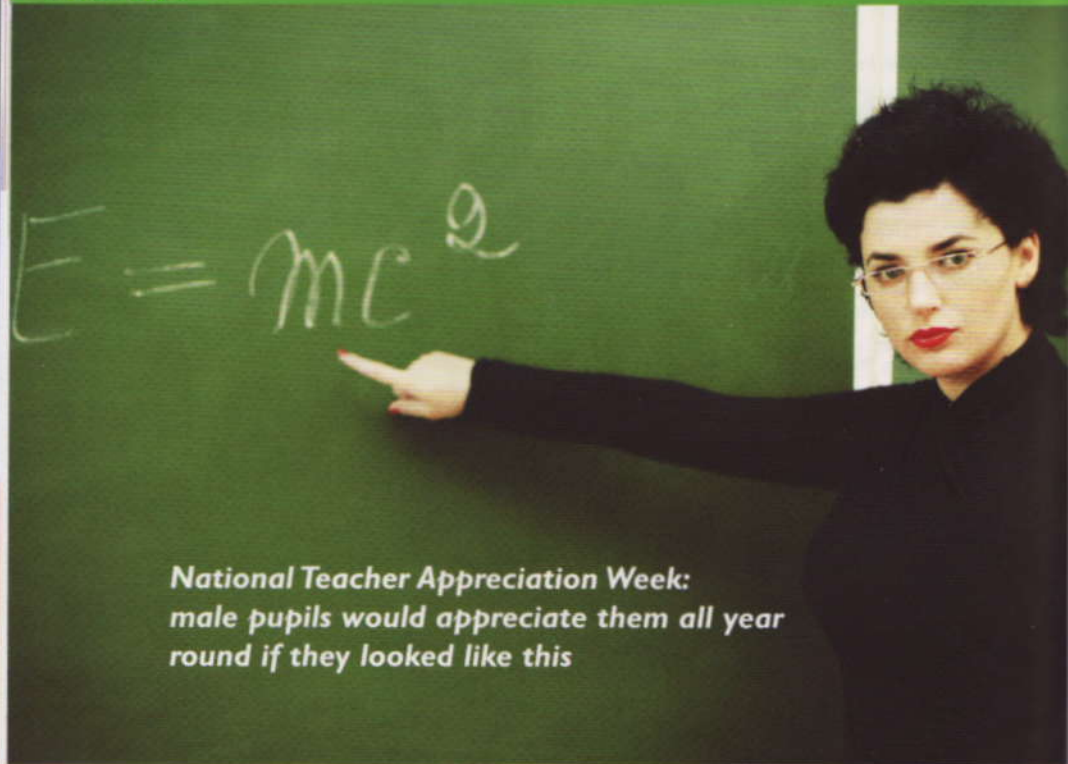
Yet in the UK, we get off fairly lightly because extensive research has shown (carried out, it has to be said, by us one Tuesday afternoon, just before the pubs opened) that the number of National Days you are asked to celebrate in your country increases in direct proportion to how American you are. In the USA (where they're VERY American), they have National Days, Weeks and Months coming out of their ears – and most of them are very silly indeed. The case for the prosecution? Well, I ►

(celebrating fast food... in... um... the most obese nation in Europe!). For every commendable National Make-a-Wish Day (supporting that fantastic children's charity) there's a Straw Hat Week (celebrating straw hats in all their glory). In April alone, we are invited to observe International Turn Off Your TV Week (do these people not know about the West Wing repeats on a Sunday night?); National Reading a Road Map Week (our advice: if you're THAT bloomin' hopeless, splash out and buy a Sat Nav, for goodness sake); and – really – National Egg Salad Week (a hard one that, especially if, like me, you're allergic to dairy produce in all its forms).

There are other problems with the National Days phenomenon, too; namely,



## FEATURE



**National Teacher Appreciation Week:  
male pupils would appreciate them all year  
round if they looked like this**

submit that, in April, the Stars and Stripes will be waving for National Lingerie Week (coinciding happily with National Professional Secretaries Week and National Teacher Appreciation Week), National Bubblegum Week, National Adult Films Week and – no joke! – National Mattress Turnover Week (not, we are assured, in any way related to National Adult Films Week – but you never know.) I rest my case.

Still, don't get too smug, because later in the year in the UK, we'll have Be Nice to Nettles Week (well OK – but only if they're nice to us first) and the now famous Bring

Your Pet to Work Day (I have a pet python called Prescott – can he come?). There's also a National Moth Night and a World Naturalist Day (pop your clothes on that chair... and bring a friend).

In fact, there's a day, week or month for pretty much everything under the sun. Which is why we thought we would start *EssentialLocal* Month, for thousands of south Londoners who simply can't get enough of *EssentialLocal*. Oh, who are we kidding. Every month is *EssentialLocal* month, as far as we're concerned.

And you still haven't given us a cuddle. ●

**“Can it merely be happy coincidence that  
National Lingerie Week coincides with  
National Teacher Appreciation Week?”**