

TASC Clarion Article Feb/Mar 2018

Let me ask you something, do you believe in evolution, the idea first made popular by Charles Darwin following his voyages on the Beagle? I ask you this because recent reports have concluded that in the UK alone, one in ten people do not. That I must admit is a much higher than I would have suspected.

I was looking up some recent scientifically related newspaper articles to read out to our group at the first Science Club talk of 2018, and this is one of the amazing stories I came up with. The research, which was also carried out in the US and Canada, found that 9% of people believe that humans and other living things were created by God and have always existed in their current form.

This started me thinking about another interesting and seemingly growing group of people, and I have actually met one, the Flat Earthers, who are sure that the Earth is flat! It is hard to find actual statistics about the numbers but evidently there are over forty thousand members of various Flat Earth Societies in the US alone and a growing number of online websites dedicated to these ideas. Apart from the fact that in 240 B.C. the Greek astronomer Eratosthenes made the first good measurement of the size and diameter of the Earth using some pretty straight forward geometry and it has been also common knowledge that sailing ships with tall masts seemed to slowly sink into the horizon and finally disappear, how would this be if the Earth was flat. At sea level the horizon is only about 3 miles away.

Anyway, following these revelations I introduced our first speaker of the year, Nasiru Ibrahim, who is a post graduate student at Buckingham University Applied Computer Department. His talk was basically an update from a previous talk given by a colleague of his at the beginning of last year. The talk was on the viability of using Gesture authentication for accessing modern day devices i.e. smart phones, tablets etc.

Nasiru had his own special statistics with which he opened. Evidently 71% of Internet usage is now on mobile devices; mobile users spend 89% of their time in Apps and 11% of their time in a browser. Following this he outlined the various different ways that authentication could be achieved and their respective good and bad points. We found out that many people tend to rely on easily crack-able passwords, such as password and 123456, as well as shapes like Z and 5 for pattern unlocking methods.

In conclusion he has been investigating using combinations of standard methods along with Biometric identification techniques to improve the security of our everyday mobile devices.

Our next Science Club meeting will be on the 15th February, and visitors are always welcome. For more details phone 01296 712 561.

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