

# MAY



In his *Communist Manifesto* of 1848 **Karl Marx**, born 5 May 1818, wrote 'A spectre is haunting Europe – the spectre of Communism'. While the display of military hardware in the **May Day Parades** held in Moscow's Red Square did little to soften the outside world's view, the style of some of the marching owed much to John Cleese.



**Oak Apple Day** is celebrated on King Charles II's birthday, 29 May. It commemorates his successful evasion of Parliamentary troops when he hid in an oak tree after defeat at the Battle of Worcester in 1651. The event is remembered in the ubiquitous pub name.



Marking the end of the winter half of the year, **May Day** has been a day of festivities throughout the centuries. One of the most enduring of the traditions is the **Maypole**. Dancers circle the pole, weaving patterns with their ribbons.



One of the first great jazz soloists, soprano saxophonist **Sidney Bechet** was born in New Orleans on 14 May 1897 and died in 1959 on his 62nd birthday. In 1929 Bechet was jailed in France for wounding a passer-by during a pistol shoot-out arising from a disagreement over chord changes. Subsequently deported, he returned to Paris in 1950 to live out his life as a musical hero.



A screen test report on **Fred Astaire**, born 10 May 1899, which read: 'Can't sing. Can't act. Balding. Can dance a little'



Widely regarded as the greatest artist of the Renaissance in Northern Europe, **Albrecht Durer**, born 21 May 1471,



produced the first known self portrait in European art, a drypoint drawing, at the age of 13.



**Florence Nightingale**, born 12 May 1820 in Tuscany, pioneered nursing care in the army hospitals of the Crimean War, where ten times more British soldiers died from illnesses such as typhus, typhoid, cholera and dysentery than from battle wounds. In later life she was the first female member of the Order of Merit.

May 1840 saw the introduction of the Penny Post, with the **Penny Black** – featuring a portrait of the young Queen Victoria – issued as the world's first adhesive, pre-paid postage stamp.



Victoria's grandson, **George V**, became king on 6 May 1910, and was depicted on this equally handsome stamp issued in 1926.

