

Is changing the clocks a waste of time?

An animated history

For thousands of years mankind has adjusted the measurement of time in accordance with the sun.

But ancient civilizations altered their daily schedules to hours of sunlight, rather than Daylight Saving Time in the modern sense.

As society evolved, the notion of living strictly by the hours of sunlight faded away.

While in Paris in 1784 Benjamin Franklin first noticed the waste of daylight as everyone slept through morning sun.

In a letter published in the 'Journal De Paris'. Franklin joked that Parisian's should get up earlier and benefit from the natural light. He suggested ringing church bells and firing canons in the streets at sunrise!

It wasn't until 1895 that New Zealand entomologist George Vernon Hudson proposed the modern day version of Daylight Saving Time. His idea of shifting the clocks forward by two hours in the summer... simply didn't fly.

A decade later in the UK, the British builder William Willet had the same idea. Willet campaigned, proposing to advance the clocks by 80 minutes over four Sundays in April, and then the reverse in September.

In 1908 the Daylight Saving Bill offered a simpler proposal: a single change of one hour. Though the scheme had prominent backers such as Winston Churchill and Arthur Conan Doyle, it didn't make it through parliament during Willets' lifetime.

In 1916 Germany was the first country to put the idea into practice, in a bid to conserve energy during World War One. Britain and other countries soon followed suit.

Britain continued its use making it official in 1925 with the Summer Time Act. But its adoption by other countries since has been ad hoc and inconsistent.

Even in these enlightened times, the notion of changing our timepieces twice a year remains divisive. If everybody was in agreement, just think how much time could be saved.