

# A simple test of time.

19 March 2012 · agile, investigation, learning, testing, time

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Last week I was performing another of my 5 minute testing exercises. As posted before, if I get a spare few minutes I pick something and investigate. This time, I'd picked Google Calendar.

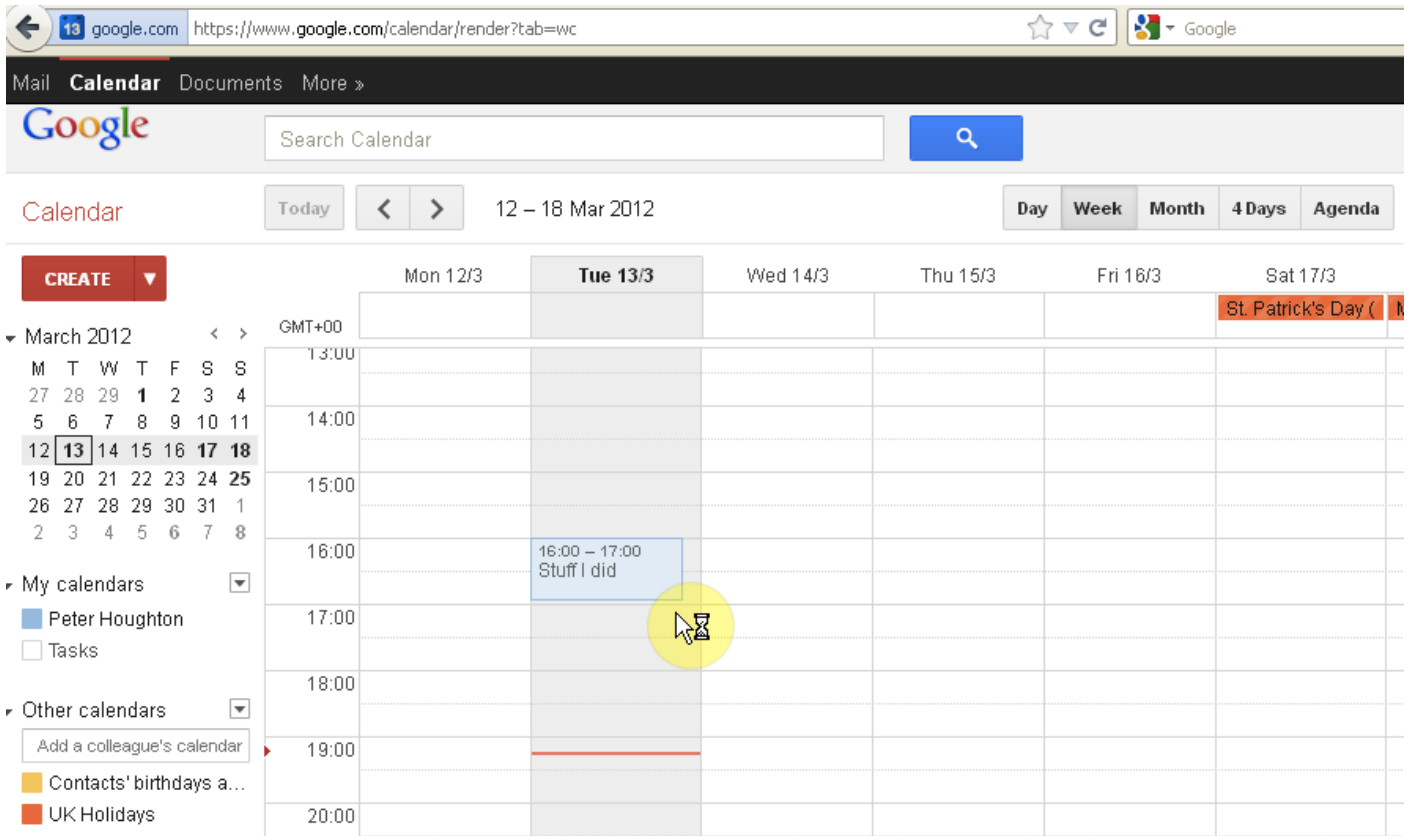
One thing people use calendars for is logging what they have done. That is, they function as both schedulers and record keepers. You add what you planned to do, and they also serve as a record of what you did - useful for invoicing clients or just reviewing how you used your time.

Calendars and software based on them are inherently difficult to program and as such are often a rich source of bugs. People make a lot of assumptions about time and dates. For example that something ends after it starts.

That may sound like something that 'just is true', but there are a number of reasons why that might not be the case. Some examples are:

- You type in the dates the wrong way round (or mix up your ISO and US dates etc)
- You're working with times around a [DST](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daylight_saving_time) switch, when 30min after 0130h might be 0100h.
- The system clock decides to correct itself, abruptly, in the middle of an action (A poorly implemented [NTP](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Network_Time_Protocol) setup could do this)

Google Calendar is widely used, and has been available for sometime, but I suspected bugs could still be uncovered quickly.



I opened Google Calendar, picked a time that day and added an item: Stuff i did. You can see it above in light-blue.

Mail **Calendar** Documents More »

Google Search Calendar

← **SAVE** Discard changes Delete More Actions

**Stuff I did**

13/3/2012 16:00 to 17:00 2000 Time zone

All day  Repeat...

Event details Find a time

**Where**

**Calendar** Peter Houghton

**Description**

**Attachment** [Add attachment](#)

I then clicked on the item, and edited the date. But butter fingers here, typed in the wrong year. Not only that I type only the year in. So now we get to see how Google calendar handles an event ending before it begins.

Mail **Calendar** Documents More »

Google Search Calendar

← **SAVE** Discard changes Delete More Actions

**Stuff I did**

13/3/2012 16:00 to 17:00 Time zone

All day  Repeat...

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Calendar Peter Houghton

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Attachment [Add attachment](#)

Google Calendar appears to have deleted the date. OK, maybe its just deleting what [it assumes] is obviously wrong. But why the hour glass? (□) What was Google's code doing for so long?

A few moments later, after not being able to click on anything else in Google Calendar, I'm greeted with this:

The screenshot shows the Google Calendar interface. At the top, there are navigation links for 'Mail', 'Calendar', 'Documents', and 'More'. Below this is the Google logo and a search bar for 'Search Calendar'. A toolbar contains buttons for 'Back', 'SAVE', 'Discard changes', 'Delete', and a 'More Actions' dropdown menu. The main content area is titled 'Stuff I did' and shows an event for '13/3/2012' at '16:00'. There are checkboxes for 'All day' and 'Repeat...'. Below this is a 'Find a time' button. The 'Where' field is empty. The 'Calendar' dropdown is set to 'Peter Houghton'. A large 'Warning: Unresponsive script' dialog box is overlaid on the event details. The dialog text reads: 'A script on this page may be busy, or it may have stopped responding. You can stop the script now, or you can continue to see if the script will complete.' It provides the script URL: 'https://www.google.com/calendar/static/c9d2e246f712100ff3e734e5e8a37246calendarjs\_doozercompiled\_\_en\_gb.js:550' and a checkbox for 'Don't ask me again'. There are 'Continue' and 'Stop script' buttons. To the right of the dialog, there are 'Guests can' options with checkboxes for 'm', 'in', and 'se'. At the bottom left, there is an 'Attachment' section with a link to 'Add attachment'.

OK, so if I click yes, that's good right? Otherwise won't I be disabling the Calendar code? A few moments later... The window goes blank...



A little later, the page reappears and you get another chance, and the Calendar starts to give you better warnings. But none-the-less that wasn't a good user experience, and certainly a bug.

These are simple to catch bugs, so I'm often left wondering why they are often present in widely used software that probably had considerable money expended in its development. This bug is quite repeatable and present across different browsers and operating systems. All it took was a little investigation.