

The University of the Bleeding Obvious

ANNUAL 2015



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www.bleeding-obvious.co.uk



Hello and welcome to *The University of the*

Bleeding Obvious Annual 2015, proudly sponsored by Poot. My name is Kate Bush - and no, I'm not *that* Kate Bush, so don't think that I'm going to start leaping about in a leotard, swinging my arms around and wailing on about lonely moors and stuff. Not until I've got a few vodka and tonics down me, anyway! No, I'm Head of Executive Communications here at Poot Industries and I've been given the illustrious task of launching this volume.

Actually, before we go any further, I should just point out that what I said back there - about the vodka and tonics - was just a joke. I don't want anybody getting the impression that I'm an alcoholic. And for those of you thinking back to the unfortunate events that spoiled last year's Christmas party, may I remind you that my drinks had been spiked and that this explanation was fully accepted by the company during my disciplinary.

Anyhow, talking of Christmas parties, this Annual is kind of a party in itself, isn't it? Full of fun and games, and yet maintaining a mature and sensible attitude towards alcohol. Of course, we here at Poot Industries know the value of humour and are always keen to join in the with the hilarity. And no, I'm not just talking about you, Keith Walker from accounts! Yes, we all enjoy a laugh. Although, some people can take it too far, can't they Keith? There's a point where it stops being funny and people start getting hurt. Hmm? Let's just put it this way: I'm not making accusations, but the fact is that we never did find out who tampered with my drinks, did we?

But enough of that and on with the Annual! We here at Poot Industries hope you enjoy it responsibly and are mildly entertained. And if, at the end of it, certain people want to sit down and have a long hard think about what they've done, then I should imagine the world will be a much better place. I'm not pointing fingers; just saying, that's all.

Kate Bush
Head of Executive Communications
and Corporate Relational Outcome Strategies

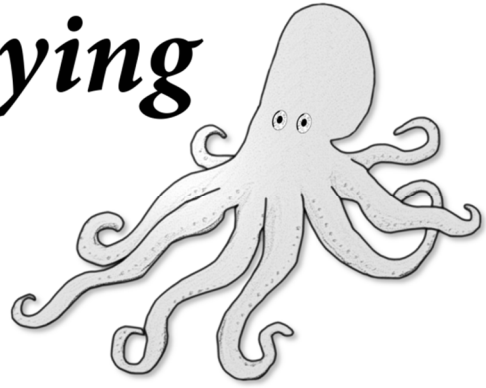


Removes stubborn stains with half the calories of normal brands. Eight out of ten drivers say it's gentler on the skin than the market leader.

From the people who brought you Poot Soluble, Poot Nighttime, Decaffeinated Poot, iPoot, ePoot, Poot Extra, Poot with Lemons, Poot Spray, Poot Stick and Plop.



Thinking of Buying an Octopus?



With exotic pets becoming increasingly popular, sales of octopuses have seen a massive surge in recent years. Unfortunately there has been a corresponding rise in neglected and abandoned animals. Octopussies are fascinating creatures, a great talking point and a handy source of ink, but they can also be difficult to handle - in every conceivable sense.

So, with that in mind, here are five points to consider if you're thinking of investing in an octopus.

1. Octopi can get very attached to you.

I don't mean literally, I mean emotionally. Octopussesses are sensitive creatures that form a powerful bond with their owners and can become very distressed when they don't receive regular contact.

2. Octopussys can get very attached to you.

I don't mean emotionally, I mean literally. Octopi are sensitive creatures and when they get stropky their powerful suckers can form a virtually unbreakable bond with your skin. Not just your skin - with walls, doors, table tops and so on. This can make it very difficult to get them out of the house when they're in a bad mood.

3. Octopae require a great deal of exercise.

In the wild, octopuses can be seen galloping along miles of coastline in great herds, so it's essential that you exercise them every day. Your octopus is never happier than when it's chasing through wide open spaces after sticks, snuffling around the undergrowth or shinning up trees so that it can drop on unsuspecting passers-by from a great height.

4. Octopodes can play the piano.

Haven't got a piano? Don't get an octopus.

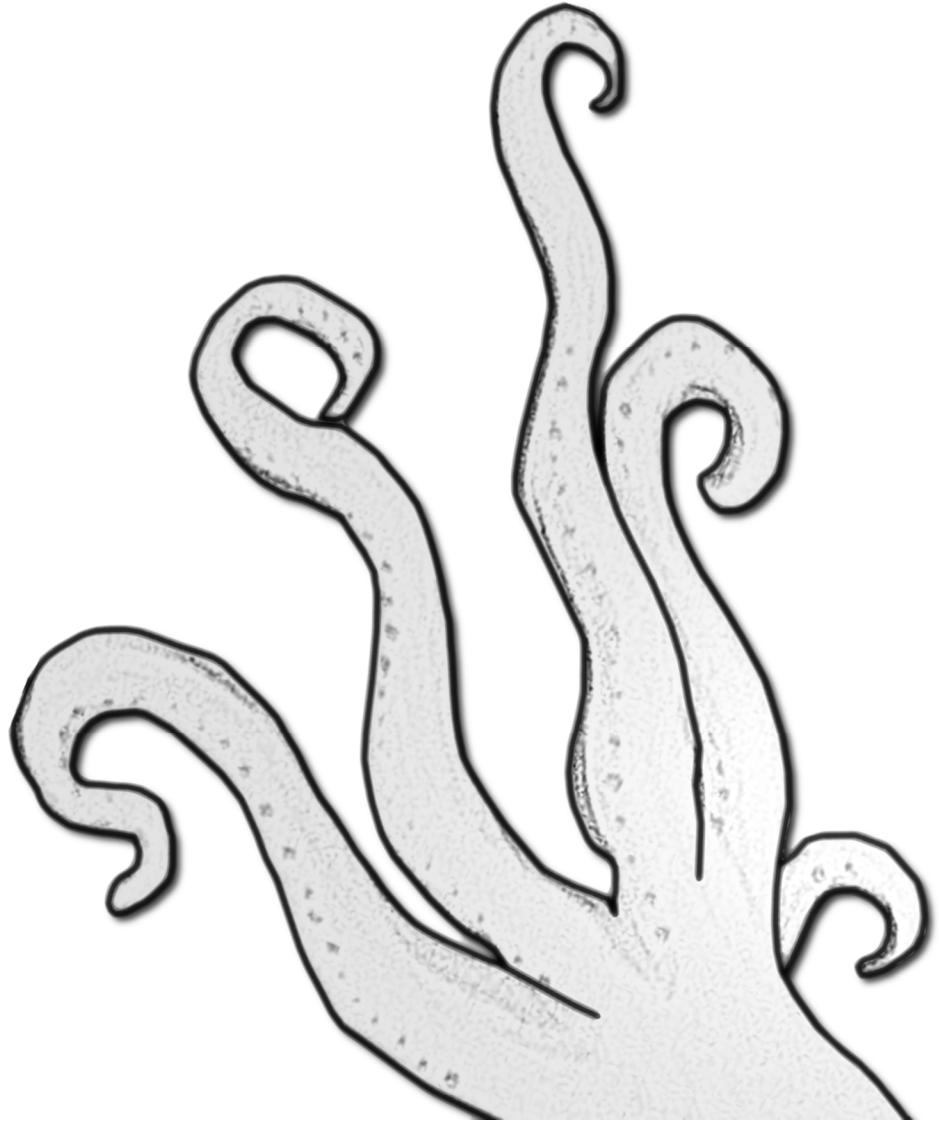
5. They can be really, really, really irritating.

If you want a pet that just sits quietly in its tank and blows the occasional bubble, then an octopus is not for you. Octopiddles will spend most of the evening thrashing wildly around, making loud screeching noises and occasionally reaching out to stick their tentacles up your nose or steal the TV remote so that they can change the channel. Octopuses are really fucking annoying.

If you'd like more information about owning an octopus, or you need help to rehome one of the little bleeders, drop us a line at this address:

We Don't Know What the Plural of Octopus Is
Unit 221b

The Contaminated Patch of Ground Where the Slaughterhouse Used to Be
Slough.

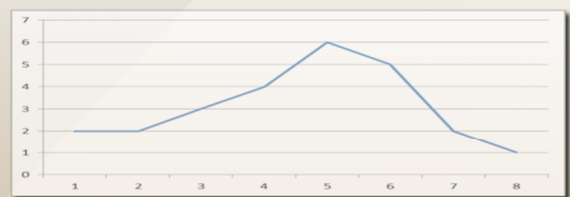


If you don't buy our shampoo, you're a twat.



That's right! Using a lot of technical stuff that we don't want to tell you about right now, scientists have conclusively proved that people who don't buy our product are arseholes.

Here, look at this diagram:



Scientists did that. What more proof do you need?

So buy this shampoo, twat

Gin!



The new play from celebrated playwright Herman Frogspawn has premiered to fierce criticisms about its depiction of nineteenth century medicine. Readers can judge for themselves whether such opinions are justified, as the author has kindly allowed us to reproduce an excerpt from this dark Victorian melodrama here.

The scene is the drawing room of the Duchess of Caerphilly. Her niece, after choking on a grapefruit, falls down in a faint and neither the footman nor the boot boy can revive her. Luckily, professional help is on hand.

DUCHESS:

Good lord! Help! Help! Somebody do something.

DR GRUMBOLD:

Stand aside please. I am a doctor. Please, give me some space here.

DR GRUMBOLD KNEELS BY THE PROSTRATE FORM OF MISS PHILLIPS AND
BEGINS TO LOOSEN HER UNDERGARMENTS.

DUCHESS:

Whatever is the matter with my ward?

DR GRUMBOLD:

This man has fallen down, your ladyship.

DUCHESS:

But this man is a woman.

DR GRUMBOLD:

Yes, yes, I know. I'm a doctor. That was one of the first things they taught us.

DUCHESS:

Is it serious?

DR GRUMBOLD:

Being a doctor? I should say so. The training lasts a whole week and they make us read a book.

DUCHESS:

No - this 'falling over'. Is that serious?

DR GRUMBOLD:

Oh yes, your ladyship. Very serious indeed. Luckily I am well acquainted with the condition. I have treated people who have fallen over before. You there!

FOOTMAN:

Me, sir?

DR GRUMBOLD:

Yes, you sir. Don't just stand there like a blithering idiot. Go and fetch some gin at once.

THE FOOTMAN DEPARTS. DR GRUMBOLD PROCEEDS TO LOOSEN *HIS OWN* UNDERGARMENTS.

DUCHESS:

Can she be revived? Only we have somebody coming to clean the carpets this afternoon.

DR GRUMBOLD:

Never fear, your ladyship. I have to tell you, this is one of the most severe cases of falling over that I've seen, but I'm confident that with care, patience and gin she can be revived. Oh, where is that fellow with the gin?

THE FOOTMAN RETURNS HASTILY, CARRYING A SMALL BOTTLE OF GIN.

FOOTMAN:

Here sir. Will this do, sir?

DR GRUMBOLD TAKES A SWIG FROM THE BOTTLE.

DR GRUMBOLD:

Well, it's not medical gin but it will have to serve. I only hope that this young lady is not gin intolerant.

BOOT BOY:

Is there anything I can do sir?

DR GRUMBOLD:

Yes more gin.

BOOT BOY:

More gin, sir?

DR GRUMBOLD:

Yes, yes, more gin I say! This young lady is in a critical condition. Without a steady supply of gin we could lose her. Well, what are you standing there for? Go! Go, I say!

THE BOOT BOY DEPARTS.

DUCHESS:

I say, doctor - should she be that colour?

DR GRUMBOLD:

What colour is she normally?

DUCHESS:

More sort of pink. Less sort of blue.

DR GRUMBOLD:

Then this is more serious than I thought. Oh, where is that blasted boy with the gin?

THE BOOT BOY RETURNS WITH FOUR LARGE BOTTLES OF GIN.

BOOT BOY:

Here sir.

DR GRUMBOLD:

Where in Hades have you been boy? This man is...

DUCHESS:

Woman.

DR GRUMBOLD:

...this woman is at death's door. She needs a constant supply of gin.

BOOT BOY:

Yes, sir. Sorry, sir.

DR GRUMBOLD:

Sorry be damned. Go and get more gin!

BOOT BOY:

Sir, I -

DR GRUMBOLD:

Gin! Gin! Gin!

THE BOOT BOY DEPARTS.

DUCHESS:

Is everything all right?

DR GRUMBOLD:

Everything depends on getting as much gin into her as quickly as possible. It's touch and go.

DUCHESS:

Good, well if you've got everything under control, I'll just sit here and get on with my needlework.

THE BOOT BOY RETURNS WITH MORE BOTTLES.

DR GRUMBOLD:

Gin! Gin! Giiiiiiiiiiin!

BOOT BOY:

Gin's all gone, sir. We've got a two bottles of brandy and half a jug of cider.

DR GRUMBOLD:

Intolerable! Are you trying to kill this woman? We must have more gin! Your ladyship, I think we're losing her.

DUCHESS:

Good, good. You carry on.

DR GRUMBOLD:

You there!

FOOTMAN:

Me, sir?

DR GRUMBOLD:

Yes, you sir. Do you have a gin-pump?

FOOTMAN:

I believe that we have such a device in the cellar. It hasn't been used for years, but we might be able to get it going.

DR GRUMBOLD:

Then what are we waiting for? Let us fetch it with all haste!

DR GRUMBOLD, THE FOOTMAN AND THE BOOT BOY DEPART. THE DUCHESS CONTINUES WITH HER NEEDLEWORK FOR A WHILE BEFORE GLANCING DOWN AT THE STIFF AND MOTIONLESS FORM OF MISS PHILLIPS.

DUCHESS:

I saw that Mrs Thompson in the chemist again yesterday.

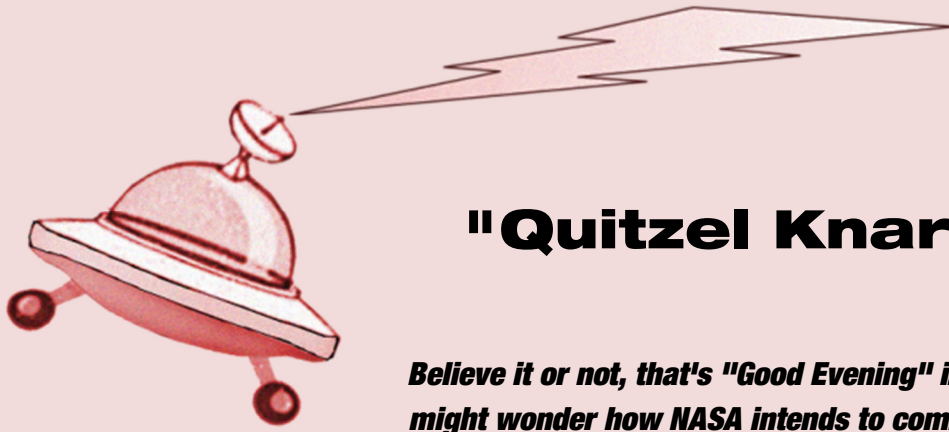
MISS PHILLIPS CONTINUES TO REMAIN IMMOBILE ON THE CARPET.

DUCHESS:

Don't slouch, dear.

Murder Up The Gasworks will be running at The Old Abattoir Theatre until the building is demolished next Tuesday.





"Quitzel Knarflop!"

Believe it or not, that's "Good Evening" in Martian! You might wonder how NASA intends to communicate with any alien life forms its probes might encounter as they whizz about the universe. You or I might employ a combination of mime, pointing and angry shouting to make ourselves understood, but NASA linguists have no such trouble.

Using data collected from the Hubble Space telescope, along with specially developed computational algorithms and a complex scientific technique called 'guessing', they have mastered over 4000 alien languages. Now you too can learn to speak alien with The Official NASA Galactic Phrasebook!

Become fluent in Venusian!

"Eeky och nochty wah-wah"

(Can you point me in the direction of the municipal swimming baths?)

Brush up your Jovian!

"Paeneeda torkeeda swimbly bimbly boo."

(You have excellent legs for a government official)

Speak Plutonian with confidence!

"Spume pedals"

(Spume pedals)

**All this and more for just £25
or 3000 Galactic Credits.**

(Only joking - seriously, it's twenty-five quid)

"Splendido grunty sprunt!"

(Your sister has cheesy knees)

Did Dinosaurs Wear Trousers?

That is set to be the most hotly debated topic at this year's International Dinosaur Symposium, the annual gathering of palaeontologists, biologists and other assorted folk who think dinosaurs are cool. One person who certainly believes the suggestion to be nonsense is Ingrid van Klacker, Emeritus Professor of Gravel at the University of Utrecht.

"Well, you know, this is clearly not the case, clearly," she explains to us in a heavy Dutch accent. "Of course, there is much that we do not know about the dinosaurs, you know, but the one thing we do know is that they were all - how do you say this now - schlappers."

"Slappers?"

"That is what I am saying," she confirms. "They were all big schlappers, this we know, because they were successful for the many millions of years, you know."

The Professor explains how the fossil record indicates that many species of dinosaurs bred at colossal rates. This, she believes, is how they were able to adapt and survive for so long.

"Now, they could not do all of the breeding with the trousers on," Professor van Klacker explains. "Mr T-Rex, when he comes home to find the lady dinosaur waiting for him in the cave, he's not going to fumble about with the buttons and the zips and whatever have you. Not with the little hands. No, of course, we know he's going to say 'phut' to the whole of the business and go and get a mammoth burger instead. So, hey presto, no trousers. The case is closed, whatever Sir Harvey is saying."

The 'Sir Harvey' to whom Professor van Klacker refers is Sir Harvey 'Bones' Brackish, one of the UK's foremost fossil hunters. Sir Harvey is a self-taught amateur but nevertheless enjoys a formidable reputation, and when he first proposed the idea five years ago that dinosaurs wore trousers, the world was prepared to sit up and listen.

"Stands to reason," he explained to us, in the clipped, privileged tones of a man who isn't accustomed to interrupting his flow long enough for anyone else to get a word in edgewise. "Dinosaurs ruled the Earth, you know. I think there was a film about it. Can't do that without pockets. Need somewhere to put stuff. Can't have pockets without trousers. QED. Think about it, Mr T-Rex goes into town, grabs himself a mammoth burger, leaves his stegosaurus on a meter. Got to have somewhere to put the change, hasn't he?"

While the logic of Sir Harvey's argument appears inescapable, Professor van Klacker is equally vehement in her beliefs. The scene is set, therefore, for the thunderously energetic debate which is scheduled to close to the symposium. It's sure to be hotly attended, but who is our money on? Well, despite the persuasiveness of Sir Harvey's argument, we think Professor van Klacker might just have the edge.

"Well, of course, it is all about empirical evidence, of course," she told us. "Sir Harvey's parking meter theory, this is good, but where are the fossilised parking meters. I tell you where the fossilised parking meters are. The fossilised parking meters are nowhere, that is where the fossilised parking meters are. But you want to know what is somewhere? What is everywhere?"

We encourage the Professor to continue.

"Birdies," she says. "The little birdies, they are everywhere. Now, of course, we are knowing that the little birdies are the descendants of the big dinosaurs, and yet the little birdies, they do not wear the trousers. No trousers for the little birdies. Look at the talking duck - the talking duck in the movies, with the waistcoat and the no trousers. Donald the Duck. This is what I am saying, of course, Donald the Duck is the big schlapper. Case is closed."



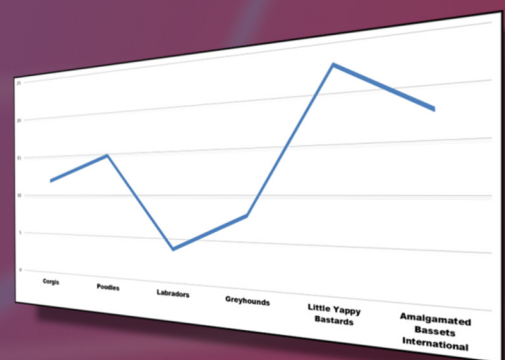
Today on the Dog Exchange

There was frantic action on the Dog Exchange this morning after a sharp dip in **Terriers** sparked a run on **Airedales**, **Jack Russells** and **West Highland Whites**. Not surprisingly, **Greyhounds** got off to a cracking start and gave everyone a good run for their money. Trading stabilised by lunchtime, with **Foxhounds** putting in a strong showing and there was a steady rise in the unit price of **Labradors**.

Whippets were bullish but **Bulldogs** failed to whip up any interest. Pundits were confidently expecting some movement in **Bloodhounds** during the afternoon, although they remained sluggish throughout the day and only began to show any signs of stirring around teatime.

But today was all about **Border Collies**. When news broke of high-pressure blowouts during the English National Sheepdog Trials, investors were sent into a spin and trading had to be briefly suspended to prevent panic selling. Hopefully an improved performance tomorrow will prove that there's life in these old dogs yet.

Our tips for the week ahead: **Deerhounds** are likely to be going cheap, but let sleeping **Bassets** lie.



Note: The value of your poodle can go down as well as up.

The Problem with Fairies

University of the Bleeding Obvious:

Our guest today is David McGog, MP for Shepton Bassett, who has been in the news lately in connection with a very unusual issue. Mr McGog, thanks for joining us. I think it would be fair to say that the policy you have recently advocated has taken a few people by surprise?

Mr David McGog:

Oh no, I don't think so. Many people, like me, believe that a rise in VAT to twenty-two percent can be put into effect quite painlessly, enabling us to maintain funding for public services without hurting retail sales. Now, what we -

UBO:

No, Mr McGog, I was referring to your other suggestion.

McGog:

Ah, defence spending! Well, I do firmly believe that -

UBO:

Mr McGog, I suspect that you're being deliberately obtuse. You know, I'm sure, what I'm referring to. I'm talking about the policy that has got you splashed all over the newspapers.

McGog:

Ah, the...

UBO:

The fairies.

McGog:

The fairies, yes. Well, I do wish that people would stop going on about that. I made a few comments, briefly, during what I thought was supposed to be a private conversation, and the whole thing seems to have been blown out of all proportion.

UBO:

Can we take it that you now wish to retract your comments?

McGog:

No, no - that's not what I'm saying at all. I stand by every word. It is my firmly held belief that fairies are a menace and this government needs to introduce legislation to stamp them out.

UBO:

And you have the backing of your party in this?

McGog:

I have the support of many of my colleagues who feel equally strongly about this issue.

UBO:

But you don't have the support of the party leadership, do you? In fact, I understand you've had your knuckles rapped by your policy unit who've told you, quite firmly, to stay on message and stick to innocuous subjects like taxation and defence, rather than embarrassing your party with all this nonsense about fairies.

McGog:

Nonsense! Well I wonder if you would think it was 'nonsense' if you woke up one morning to find your property was overrun by the things, hmm? Crawling all over the place, tearing up your ornamental lawn and casting enchantments on the family cat, yes?

UBO:

No, I wouldn't.

McGog:

Ah, see!

UBO:

But then, since that hasn't happened, and isn't ever likely to, I feel safe in continuing to assume that what you're talking about is complete fantasy. Mr McGog, do you not think that your party's stance on taxation and defence spending is rather overshadowed - undermined, in fact - by all this stuff about fairies?

McGog:

What? Oh, stuff taxation! If my party can't get a handle on what's really important, then that's their problem. I tell you, we simply have to do something about the fairies. Oh, I'm sure you've had no fairy trouble, but then they're hardly likely to concern themselves with the likes of you and whatever high rise slum you inhabit. However, the decent, honest, property-owning people of Shepton Bassett are sick to the back teeth of them.

UBO:

Really?

McGog:

Yes, really! They swarm all over their flowerbeds, leaving their mess everywhere and bringing house prices down. And nobody's doing anything about it. Nobody! Not the police, not the local authority, not Keith Smarm.

UBO:

Ah, there perhaps we approach an explanation. Mr Smarm has just announced that he will be running against you for the constituency of Shepton Bassett in the next election. So this sudden interest in fairies is just part of your campaign strategy, is it not?

McGog:

Not at all. In fact, such a suggestion belittles what is, in fact, a very serious problem. One which the people of Shepton Bassett have a right to expect us to act upon.

UBO:

But it's strange that this issue seems never to have arisen before. You have represented Shepton Bassett for the last five years and yet, prior to the comments you made last month, there has never been any mention of fairies in your literature, on your website or in interviews. You have never raised a question in the House about fairies, and the occasional column you contribute to the local paper has been remarkable if only for its complete and absolute lack of any reference, whatsoever, to fairy folk.

McGog:

I think I may have mentioned something about it at a public meeting last March.

UBO:

No. No, you didn't. Mr McGog, it is my opinion that you have invented this fairy nonsense. You have fabricated a non-existent threat in order to manipulate the electorate into voting for you.

McGog:

Rubbish.

UBO:

You know that you cannot possibly win the next election based on your track record or your party's policies, so you are clutching desperately at straws, playing on the public's fear of shadows.

McGog:

That is an outrageous accusation! I am offended - not on my own behalf, but on behalf of the many hardworking, honest and decent people that I represent. How little you must think of the great British public, to believe that they could be so easily

led. That rhetoric and rumour could whip them into a frenzy, make them malleable, bend them to my will.

They are not sheep. They are not imbeciles to be charmed by hyperbole and hollow compliments. They are intelligent, rational, level-headed, insightful, incisive and educated individuals who just happen to be suffering from a merciless infestation of fairies. They want someone to do something about it. They have a right to demand that something is done about it; that someone stands up to this appalling intrusion and says 'No More!'

And if I am to be that man, then so be it. If my fellow candidates are not equal to the task - if Mr Keith Smarm, or Mr Ross Smooth, or Mr Wilbur 'Jellyknees' Wombat-Trousers of the Monster Raving Loony Party are so eager to capitulate in the face of fairy Armageddon - then yes, I, David E. McGog will take up the gauntlet and gladly - nay, proudly - commit myself to the service of my constituents. The electorate shall decide and I am confident that they will make their choice wisely.

UBO:

Amen!

McGog:

Pardon?

UBO:

Doesn't matter. Mr McGog, thank you very much for your time.

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architecture (or if you're not
into that kind of thing there's
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See Nuns as they practise death-defying feats of Nun Acrobatics!

Learn how to incapacitate someone with just a wimple!



**So come see us now
at World of Nuns or
risk getting a punch
up the cassock,
capiche?**

Con Artistes

Conmen operating in the UK are becoming increasingly vocal about the number and scope of campaigns designed to limit their activities. They say that public information work carried out by charities, trading standards departments and the police is seriously impacting their trade, threatening a profession that has existed for hundreds of years.

"Greetings, my good friend," said Alyusi Islassis, a Nigerian Prince whom we visited at his compact flat in Dagenham. "This message will come to you as a huge surprise, but please take time to read my story and you will see that this arrangement will be a huge advantage to you."

After going on in this fashion for some time, and following a modest exchange of money, Prince Islassis explained that it was getting harder for people like him to make a living because the general public were becoming increasingly better informed about scams. In fact, things have got so bad that he is seriously considering going straight and becoming an illegal money lender.

We went to see Ron 'Ronnie' Ronaldson, current chairman of the British Guild of Scam Merchants, Con Artists and Chancers. We were pleased to find that he was very much in the traditional mould of a conman: a shifty, weasel-faced man in his late fifties, with something of the spiv about him. He sat at a desk bestrewn with grubby receipts and invoices, behind a large glass ashtray stolen from his local pub and a chunky green telephone that hadn't rung since before the Beatles had split up. The calendar on the wall displayed a picture of a semi-naked woman with an artificially enhanced chest, and was dated 1976. The various certificates and qualifications exhibited in cracked frames along the walls were of a similar vintage, and equally as fake.

"Mr Ronaldson," we began.

"Oh call me Ron," he told us breezily.

"Ron," we began again.

"Second thoughts, call me Ronnie," he said, then proceeded to answer a question we hadn't asked. "Well of course, what people don't understand is that conmen perform a vital role in society. We strip the stupid and the greedy of their life's savings. That's how capitalism works. Basically, we're one of the main drivers of Western economies. I read that in Reader's Digest."

"Yes, but – "

"And another thing," Ronnie steamrolled on. "We are con *artistes*. There is an art to what we do, one that has been perfected over centuries. Who was it that persuaded Sir Christopher Wren to buy four thousand gallons of raspberry jam by telling him that it was the best thing on the market for building cathedrals out of? Who was it that fleeced Lord Nelson to the tune of ten grand in pursuit of a fake compensation claim when he lost his arm? Who was it that sold Sydney Harbour Bridge to Queen Elizabeth I, before there even was a Sydney, let alone a harbour or a bridge? Con artists, that's who. I tell you, this country has a history of deception that it should be proud of. We should get a grant."

It's hard not to see his point. For all his unscrupulousness, his devious demeanour and eye-watering lack of hygiene, Ron 'Ronnie' Ronaldson is a man who understands his craft, as we know only too well upon leaving his office £150 lighter after agreeing to cash a forged cheque.

But perhaps these conmen have had it easy for too long, and the fact that their victims are becoming wise to their tricks will force them to grow more inventive? After all, the days of selling non-existent landmarks to credulous monarchs are over and if doing some old biddy out of her bingo money is the best they can manage, then perhaps it's only right that the con artiste should be a dying breed.

Professor Jez Moonbeam's **SCIENCE CLUB**



Space Cress

Scientists may be one step closer to identifying a candidate for dark matter, the unknown substance that accounts for nearly 85% of the mass of the universe. Professor Boz Dangler, Visiting Professor of Peanuts at CERN, says that inspiration struck him as he was tucking into a salad in the staff canteen.

"I noticed that while the celery, the lettuce, the radishes and the tomatoes were all easily identifiable, a significant portion of the total mass of my lunch appeared to be hidden. It was only when I looked under the cucumber that I noticed the cress. Tasteless and odourless, the cress only reacted weakly with the other ingredients and was therefore almost impossible to detect. It was then that I realised that the universe's missing mass must be cress. Not ordinary cress, of course - that would be silly. Space cress."

The Professor may not have to wait too long for proof of his theory. Next month the European Space Agency will launch OCO, the Orbital Coleslaw Observer, which will train its instruments on the Carina nebula, a vast cloud of expanding balsamic vinegar which has recently been the subject of much speculation as it is thought to contain herbs which do not occur naturally on Earth.

African Belching Frog

Professor Jurgen Kreeper has been named this year's recipient of the Nobel Prize for Amphibians in recognition of his discovery of the African belching frog. Accepting his award in the car park of a largely derelict retail park near Luton, the celebrated zoologist recalled that fateful day when he first encountered the extraordinary creature.

"I was punting a kayak up the Zambezi," he told the press, "and as I hunched down to pass under an overhanging branch, I heard a loud croak, felt a warm blast on the back of my neck and my hat blew off. It was a deeply emotional moment."

Energy Saving Matches

Amateur inventor Gareth Fruit has come up with an energy saving match. Both the heat and light generated by the new match is equivalent to around 90% of the output of a regular match, but at only three watts it uses just a fraction of the power. Mr Fruit admits that there are still one or two problems, not least of which is that fact that, for some reason, it cannot set light to charcoal. This obviously makes it unsuitable for barbecues. Also, in the vicinity of some gasses the flame turns pink and drops off the little stick, which is fun to watch but can become irritating after a while.

Mr Fruit is planning to address these issues at some point in the future, but right now he is working on a side project. The inventor wants to develop a proper safety match. Even though safety matches can only be lit by striking them against a special surface, Mr Fruit doesn't believe that they are genuinely 'safe'. It's still possible to burn yourself with them, he says, and even once they're spent you can poke somebody's eye out with one. The Gareth Fruit Safety Match, he tells us, will be made of rubber, it will emit a warning alarm once it's struck and will only be available under special licence.

Grit, Jam and Fluff

Geoff Jeffreys has turned atomic theory on its head by throwing out the standard model of particle physics and replacing it with a scheme in which only three particles are needed - elements which he has named Grit, Jam and Fluff.

"When you come down to it, most things are made up of just grit and fluff," he tells us. "Of course, you can't see these with the naked eye. You can't even see it with the microscope that my aunt bought me for Christmas, but by taping a couple of magnifying glasses together and fixing them to the end of my brother's telescope I found that I was able to determine the very building blocks of matter itself. And it's just grit and fluff. Seriously."

"Okay, occasionally you might see a bit of jam in there if you're looking at something particularly exotic, like a wasp's nest or a bit of trifle, but mostly it's just the grit and the fluff. Makes sense really, because when you look at the universe - as I do from time to time - it's fairly obvious that the planets are all made of grit and the stars and supernovas and gas clouds and stuff are mostly fluff with bits of jam. Simple. Right, so where's my Nobel Prize?"

Top **5** Interview Tips



Attending a job interview is a stressful occasion and people can very quickly get themselves whipped up into a state of panic. But it doesn't have to be an ordeal - if you know what you're doing you can take the whole thing in your stride and make a great impression. To help you out, we asked ace recruitment specialist Marvin Sideboard to give us his top five job interview tips.

1 Ask Questions

It is very easy to feel intimidated when you are facing a barrage of questions, so it's important to turn the tables as soon as possible. Gambits such as 'Never mind about *my* qualifications, let's talk about you, hot shot' and 'That's all very well questioning my reasons for wanting to work here, but be honest, you wouldn't put up with this shit if you weren't fiddling the accounts, would you?' are excellent ways of piling on the pressure, and are sure to guarantee that you get shortlisted.

2 Dress to Impress

They say that employers reach a decision within the first thirty seconds of an interview, so it pays to look the part. Of course, anybody can rock up in a suit, tie and shiny shoes, and most interviewers are wise enough not to be taken in by the ruse. But if you burst through the door dressed as your favourite superhero and punch out the head of human resources before exiting through the window, you can be certain that they're going to remember you.

3

Go Equipped

Everyone agrees that when it comes to interviews preparation is everything, but there is no real consensus on whether this extends to carrying weapons. My own feeling is that you should certainly be ready for any eventuality, although I think that packing a firearm may be going a little too far. Nevertheless, you ought to give consideration to a tyre iron, baseball bat or even a particularly stout stick to ensure that you are not left entirely defenceless if things turn nasty.

4

Keep Them Waiting

There are many occasions where it pays to be punctual - dentist's appointments, restaurant bookings, meetings with your parole officer and so on. A job interview is *not* one of those occasions. It's important to build up the interviewer's levels of anticipation before you make your entrance. You want them on the edge of their seat, glancing anxiously at their watch, possibly even breaking out into spontaneous choruses of 'Why are we waiting?' Arriving on time or, heaven forfend, arriving early is bound to weaken your position and make you seem over-eager and needy.

5

Imagine Yourself Naked.

In fact, don't just *imagine* it - do it! This is a useful technique in all sorts of situations, such as interviews, meetings and court appearances. You'll find that you will instantly loosen up and feel more relaxed. In fact, I usually find it liberating to be naked in less formal situations too, such as when I'm out shopping, driving to work or writing short but informative lists of helpful interview tips. Oh yeah, feels good...

Echo... Echo

Scene: A television studio in Yorkshire, UK, midway through a live broadcast of the regional news programme *Aye Up Yorkshire*. The presenter turns to welcome his latest guest...

PRESENTER:

In the most recent instalment of our feature on fascinating local characters, we welcome to the studio Mr Alfred Clutterthwaite. Mr Clutterthwaite, it's good of you to join us here today.

CLUTTERTHWAITE:

Aye, 'appen it is... *it is*.

PRESENTER:

Now you've lived in the area for -

CLUTTERTHWAITE:

All me life... *me life*.

PRESENTER:

For over seventy years, I believe.

CLUTTERTHWAITE:

Aye, all me life... *me life*.

PRESENTER:

And in that time you've come to be considered a bit of a celebrity, is that right?

CLUTTERTHWAITE:

'Appen I have... *I have*.

PRESENTER:

Often called upon to open fetes, judge local contests and so on.

CLUTTERTHWAITE:

Aye... aye.

PRESENTER:

And all because of this unusual talent that you -

CLUTTERTHWAITE:

Aye, well I don't reckon as how you'd call it a talent, but it's unusual ah reight... *ah reight*. See, ever since I was a wee nipper, from the moment I could talk, my voice has had this kind of natural echo... *echo*.

PRESENTER:

Extraordinary. And can you give us a demonstration of that now?

CLUTTERTHWAITE:

Demonstration... *stration*? What the chuffing hell you on about... *on about*?

PRESENTER:

Wow, that's incredible!

CLUTTERTHWAITE:

I do it all the pigging time... *time*. Can't turn it off... *it off*. It's a bastard nuisance... *nuisance*!

PRESENTER:

I see, but all the same, I bet it comes in handy.

CLUTTERTHWAITE:

What the 'ell for... *'ell for*? Go on feller, you tell me what use it is, because I've had seventy years to think on it, and I've come up wi' nowt... *wi' nowt*.

PRESENTER:

Well, I don't know. I suppose what you're saying is that it's more of a curse than a gift?

CLUTTERTHWAITE:

Aye, a curse... *a curse*. And there's bugger all that anyone can do about it... *about it*.

PRESENTER: Nothing? No medical help? Throat lozenges, or something?

CLUTTERTHWAITE:

Throat lozenges... *lozenges*! It's a weird, possibly paranormal, quirk of nature, not a bloody chesty cough, you soft bastard... *bastard*. I've had all them posh doctors and specialists and folk poking me and prodding me and faffin' about, and not one of the barmpots 'ad a clue... *a clue*.

PRESENTER:

Oh, well I'm sorry about that.

CLUTTERTHWAITE:

Is thee now... *thee now*? Hark on, lad - I've had years of being treated like a freak an' I'm reight sick on it... *on it*. T'only reason I come on this 'ere television programme was to put an end to it, once and for all... *for all*.

PRESENTER:

I see. Well -

CLUTTERTHWAITE:

I want no more reporters and television folk and the like mitherin' me and calling me up at all hours, when I'm 'avin' me tea, or readin' paper or summat... *summat*.

PRESENTER:

Yes, of course.

CLUTTERTHWAITE:

I dunna want some local committee meeting draggin' me away from me pigeons so as I can lead the bloody carnival procession... *procession*. Or the women's guild nagging me to judge their baking competition... *petition*.

PRESENTER:

You have every right -

CLUTTERTHWAITE:

I'm reight sick of it, and I want everyone to know that I'm done wi' it, as of this 'ere minute... *minute*.

PRESENTER:

Of course. Well, thank you for your time this evening, Mr Clutterthwaite. I'm sure we've all got the message, and I don't doubt that everyone will respect your wishes.

CLUTTERTHWAITE:

Aye, well, good - I'm glad we've got that sorted... *sorted*.

PRESENTER:

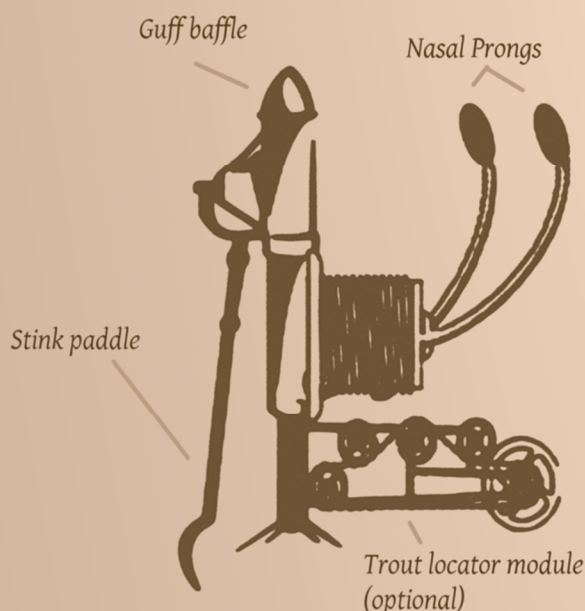
No problem.

CLUTTERTHWAITE:

Champion.... *champion*. Sithee, then... *then*. And mind you think on - because I don't want to have to repeat meself... *meself*... *meself*... *meself*.

GENTLEMEN, ARE YOU SUFFERING FROM THE EMBARRASSMENT OF ANOSMIA?

Consider the shame in being unable to identify a pungent cheese, detect the cloying odour of rotting fruit or pinpoint the location of a partially concealed trout. Anyone deprived of such basic social skills runs the risk of being branded a pariah, an outcast or a knob. Can you afford to take that risk?



"I bought an Aromatron on the advice of my physician. And I'm glad I did! It was only when I strapped it on and fired it up that I realised the drains were backed up."

The Earl of Lancaster

Well thankfully, you don't have to. Webbley's Patent Electric Aromatron is here to do your smelling for you. Fitting snugly over the nose, around the ears, over the head and hanging halfway down your back, the Aromatron is virtually undetectable, and its on-board fan-assisted stink pistons are capable of differentiating between five different smells, including liquid paraffin!

**AS USED BY HIS
ROYAL HIGHNESS
THE PRINCE CONSORT**

"I was placed in a very difficult situation when Lady Philomena Trussock let one rip at a dinner party I was attending in Kensington. All eyes were, of course, on me, but thanks to the Aromatron's built-in guff tracking system I was able to prove that although I may have smelt it, I certainly hadn't dealt it."

General Sir George Pottymouth

"I don't usually go in for gadgets. A lot of silly old pish and nonsense, if you ask me. However, since havin' one of these here Aromatron gizmos on approval for the last week, I find that I've been up to me damn epaulettes in buxom young fillies. So tally ho and damn the blasted torpedoes, that's what I say! In fact, I'm now seriously considerin' havin' me back waxed and gettin' a revolving wig."

Bertram 'Fruity' Mountbatten, esq.

Spot the Difference

Take a look at these two pictures of Scruffy the Badger standing outside his mystical magical juju shop. We've made some subtle changes to the second picture. See if you can spot all five.

(Answers at the bottom of the next page)



A Fistful of Sausages

Next month the British Film Institute will screen a recently restored print of *A Fistful of Sausages*. This now forgotten sequel to the classic Spaghetti Western *A Fistful of Dollars* was made in 1967 and was partly sponsored by the British Pork, Beef and Mechanically Recovered Offal Marketing Board. Despite the shoestring budget, Clint Eastwood returned one more time to play 'the man with no name', although here the character is retitled 'the man who enjoys 100% prime pork and beef substitute meat products'.

At the time of its release the film suffered badly, with many critics claiming that it was little more than a thinly veiled marketing exercise. They took a particular dislike to the gunfight at the conclusion of the movie, in which Eastwood taunts a group of Mexican bandits about the inflated prices they have paid for inferior quality meat products before gunning them down.

Recent years have seen the movie reappraised in a more favourable light, both in the context of its place in the history of cinema and in respect of its pivotal role in the development of the British sausage. And although they are not directly connected, *A Fistful of Sausages* went on to inspire a short run of British sex comedies, starring the irrepressible Robin Asquith - as a cheeky window cleaner in *A Fistful of Buckets*, a cheeky plumber in *A Fistful of Ballcocks*, and finally as a cheeky boxing promoter in *A Fistful of Fists*.

Spot the Difference Answers

1. Scruffy the Badger is standing two pixels to the right.
2. There is a leaf missing on the tree on the left.
3. Slippy the Weasel has a different type of knot in his bowtie.
4. The shop's opening hours have changed.
5. Scruffy is on fire a bit.

C L I N T E A S T W O O D



A **FISTFUL**
OF
SAUSAGES

STARRING LEE VAN CLEEF AS 'THE BUTCHER'

AND INTRODUCING MR COLIN PODMORE AS THE
MAN FROM THE MEAT MARKETING BOARD.



Motorists are being warned about the following delays and disruptions in and around the county.



Traffic is queuing on the southbound carriageway of the M1 between junctions 25 and 24 because of an infestation of Smurfs. The Smurfs were first spotted at 8.30 this morning, since which time they have overturned a Micra, eaten part of the crash barrier and were last seen sacrificing a hedgehog. Drivers are advised to seek an alternative route until the police Anti-Smurf Squad can bring the situation under control.



Stanton Road in Belchingham is blocked at the Cavendish Drive junction by a wall, a couple of raised flowerbeds and an ornamental fountain. Police are warning drivers of the possibility of more spontaneous garden features appearing on roads into the town throughout the morning.











Heavy vibes are causing delays on the A52. Bad karma is expected to last well into the evening.



Traffic at the Little Cringeford roundabout has started going round the wrong way. This is down to a spontaneous traffic vortex caused by a high pressure front moving down from the north. It should clear by morning, although there is a risk of scattered crashes.



The A619 is closed due to strike action by lampposts. Several traffic bollards have come out in sympathy and are not allowing vehicles to pass.

-  A bad smell is causing traffic to veer off the carriageway on the A57 Snake Pass near Glossop.
-  The A61 has been declared out of bounds and woe betide anyone that gets caught driving on it.
-  Vehicles on the M6 are doing a loop-the-loop near junction 29 after somebody tied the southbound carriageway in a knot. Drivers are advised to put their foot down or seek an alternative route.
-  The A53 has been downgraded to a river. Drivers will need to apply to the Canal and River Trust for a boating licence.
-  There are long tailbacks on Abattoir Road caused by traffic lights shifting into the non-visible part of the spectrum. Police equipped with night vision goggles are assisting motorists until the fault can be rectified.
-  Scared commuters are causing a mass panic on the A514 in West Chesterford.
-  Police have advised motorists heading to Dronfield to seek an alternative route. The B6057 has gone soft and traffic is currently backed up while they try to free a lorry that got bogged down at the junction with Lea Road.
-  And finally, police have advised motorists heading to Swadlincote to seek an alternative destination. It's a shit hole.



And now, a party political message on behalf of the British Gas Party...

Good evening. My name is Malcolm England and today I want to talk to you about British Gas. Now, I'm sure that you, like me, remember a time when British Gas wasn't just a name; when British Gas was so much more than something that whooshed through your pipes to heat your homes and fry your sausages. *British* sausages, mind – none of your nasty continental offal tubes. A proper British Banger for a proper British bloke.

No, British Gas was a symbol of everything that was good about the British way of life. It was constant, it was dependable and it was 95% methane. But then something terrible happened to our beloved British Gas. And what was that? Deregulation, that's what. The temple doors were thrown open and suddenly the energy market was exposed to competition from every Tom, Dick and Harriet wanting to peddle whatever filthy muck passed for gas in their own neck of the woods. All of that dirty, nasty, smelly, foreign gas came flooding into the country, mixing with our own and making it impure and greasy and difficult to light.

So where are we today? What happens now when you turn on your oven to cook your beautiful British sausages?

You see, ever since deregulation, you never know whose gas is going to get piped into your home. It could be from France, Germany, Italy, Russia or a million other places. Horrible nasty euro-gas, ladies and gentlemen, which has been proven to give you asthma and interfere with your pets.

'Experts' will tell you that it doesn't really matter where the gas comes from. 'Experts' will tell you that it's all the same, formed from organic matter that was compressed deep in the Earth millions of years ago. Of course, most rational people realise that this is nonsense, and that gas was created by Jesus. We also know that foreign gas is lazy, deceitful, greedy and workshy. After all, it stands to reason that if your gas has come all the way from 'Bongo Bongo Land' it's going to be too puffed out to be of any use by the time it gets to you.

So what I say to you is let's keep British Gas British! The British Gas Party is the only party that is committed to sending foreign gas back where it came from.

Vote British Gas!



Job Application Form Part B: Aptitude Test


**Munchy
Burger**

Thank you for interest in our company. In order for us to assess whether you have the right qualities to join us at Munchy Burger, please complete the following test and return it along with your application.

1. When handling food it is essential to always:
 - a. Make sure you have recently washed your hands in a solution of nitric acid and cold sick.
 - ☒ b. Stab it repeatedly with a plastic fork to make sure that it's dead.
 - c. Gob on it out of sight of the customer
2. Food straight from the oven can be hazardous because:
 - a. It is burny hot ouch ouch
 - b. It is intrinsically evil
 - ☒ c. It is liable to explode
3. You should never punch a customer in the face because:
 - a. You might pull a muscle
 - ☒ b. They're probably bigger than you.
 - ☒ c. Because that's the manager's job
4. Why do you think it is important that burgers are served hot?
 - ☒ a. So they will show up on thermal imaging cameras
 - b. To keep the customers' hands warm
 - c. Dunno. Probably something to do with global warming.
5. According to official Munchy Burger policy, what is the correct definition of a vegetable?
 - a. Something they used to eat during the war.
 - b. Chocolate Muffins
 - ☒ c. Dopey Keith, the lad who mops out the toilets.
6. What do you think is meant by the term 'food safety'?
 - a. Don't cut yourself on the sharp edges of fries.
 - b. Putting a cheese burger in a witness protection scheme.
 - ☒ c. Keeping Dopey Keith away from the chicken nuggets.
7. Which of these statements best describes the principal of 'stock rotation'?
 - a. It's a means of duping the customer into believing food is fresh.
 - ☒ b. It's that revolving thing on the counter that we put the hot apple pies in.
 - c. Spinning doughnuts.
8. If a customer tried to pay with a Scottish £10 note, would you:
 - ☒ a. Ask to see his passport
 - b. Say "hoots mon, it's been a It's a braw, bricht, moonlicht nicht", put on a cd of bagpipe music, offer him a piece of shortbread, comment upon the cut of his kilt, polish his tam-o-shanter and earn yourself a smack in the mouth.
 - c. Thank him very much and give him his change in Monopoly money.

Please use this space to tell us why you want to work at Munchy Burger.

I wood like to werk at Munch Burger because I am very good at...
..werking in a team and ~~also~~ also on my own, and because I.....
..have a keen interest in burgers.....



Welcome to Winalot Manor
Home of the historic knees of Lord
Crapply of Winalot.

Built in the early twentieth century, these charming and picturesque knees are one of the few surviving examples of traditional aristocratic joints left in Britain today. Recently restored thanks to a National Trust grant, Lord Crapply's knees are now open to the public.

If you have enjoyed these knees, please consider visiting the Duchess of Flexby's left elbow, which is on display in Calke Abbey on alternate Wednesdays.

Controversy currently surrounds the decision made by the National Trust to spend three million pounds renovating the knees of a British aristocrat. The charity, which regularly makes funds available for the preservation of significant national treasures, was approached by Lord Crapply, 4th Earl of Winalot, after his legs were declared unsafe in a surveyor's report. Lord Crapply, whose spleen was declared an area of outstanding beauty in 2002, has defended the grant, claiming that he is of historic importance and that the work will ensure that his knees will be enjoyed by many generations to come.

A spokesman for the National Trust has said that the work should be completed early next year, and that Lord Crapply's legs will be open to the public from April until late September.



Nuts

I've lost count of the number of times that gentlemen patients of mine have greeted me with the words "Hello doc, do these look normal?" before dropping their trousers and inviting me to probe their undercarriage with the kind of zealous abandon usually only displayed by menopausal aunts rummaging around in a lucky dip barrel at a garden fete. If I'm lucky this will happen in the privacy of my surgery but it's not unknown for me to be accosted in this manner while out shopping, enjoying a quiet stroll through the park or even, in one instance, dining with friends. If I remember correctly - and I'm hardly likely to forget - on that latter occasion the intrusive orbs were brusquely lowered into my soup, ruining the atmosphere and lending an unpleasant flavour to my pork and asparagus consommé.

If I'm entirely honest - and better critics than you have foolishly brought my scrupulousness into question - I can't even be confident that I will remain free from harassment when I'm at home; as evidenced by the unfortunate events of last Sunday evening, during which an annoyingly persistent patient chose to display his genitalia outside my bay window while I was watching a devilishly thrilling episode of *Countryfile*. In this instance, I was unable to satisfy his concerns about whether his gonads were or were not abnormally misshapen because, as any doctor will tell you, pressing your nuts up against someone's double glazing does not create the ideal conditions for an examination.

Hello, my name is Doctor Adolphous Bongo and my reason for telling you all this is that it's apparently my job to remind men to regularly check the less savoury segments of their anatomy for 'irregularities'. It's a pain, but if encouraging you to 'do it yourself' is going to prevent you bringing your fetid globes to me then it's got to be worth my while. And I know it's a drag when people keep pestering about all the tiresome tasks that you *have* to do, rather than all the fun, fluffy stuff that you *want* to do. You have to *regularly* check your tyre pressure, *regularly* mow the lawn, *regularly* clean behind the toilet. Nobody goes to the trouble of telling you to regularly eat cake and get

hammered, do they? Of course, I eat cake and get hammered all the time, but then I'm a doctor so I know what I'm doing.

I'm certainly qualified sufficiently to know that kneeling, butt naked, in your doctor's window box is no way to obtain the expert opinion of a trained professional. In my seven years of medical school, that was one of the first things they taught us. Neither, as my uninvited visitor discovered, is this sort of behaviour likely to prove an efficacious way of avoiding the attentions of the police. The old bill were around to haul my unwelcome visitor away barely minutes after I put the phone down, and I imagine that he whiled away the rest of his evening exhibiting his greasy junk to the desk sergeant down at the local cop shop.

No, the most socially acceptable way to check yourself is in the privacy of your own trousers. Better still, in a warm, comfortable environment where you can relax. No, I don't mean the local chip shop or kebab emporium or wherever it is that you people are prone to congregate - I was thinking rather of a warm bath. In such a situation your 'plums', to use the medical term, will be easier to examine. In fact, you might want to make a special occasion of it - perhaps light a few scented candles, but on some soft music, pour yourself a glass of wine and invite some friends over?

Whatever. The important thing is that you check for anything unusual - unfamiliar bumps and lumps, unexpected pain, swelling or a strange high-pitched squeak when you walk. And if you do find anything, or if you're unsure, go and see a doctor.

And by 'a doctor' I mean a *proper* doctor - a trained professional whose time, patience and skill are employed every day to keep you in good health. Not someone like me, who is sick and tired of having his patients' meat and two veg shoved under his nose while he's searching for a decent turkey fillet in the freezer section of this local supermarket. Frankly, that sort of behaviour fails to impress the staff, it disturbs other shoppers and it puts me off my supper, so I would consider it a great favour if you could all please cut it out.

Dr Adolphous Bongo

Top **5** Public Speaking Tips

Hi there!

My name is Dick Smidgin, I'm a motivational speaker and life coach, and I'm frequently employed by large companies to talk to their staff on personal development attainment initiatives and actualisational accomplishment targets for goal-achievers in the workplace. It sounds pretty straightforward, I know, but anyone who has had to address large groups of people will know that public speaking can be a nerve-racking experience.

But the good news is that it needn't be. And as someone with fifteen years' experience in this game, here are my top five tips to help you overcome your fears and turn you into an effective multi-individual personal communication facilitator.

1 Don't allow yourself to be intimidated

It's very easy to feel threatened when you are facing a crowd of bored, underpaid and possibly hostile employees. It's essential therefore that you maintain an air of smug superiority. If you feel that your confidence is on the wane, just pause, breathe deeply and take a moment to remember that you're being paid a stupid amount of money to talk a load of vacuous bullshit for half an hour, and that these losers have no choice other than to sit and listen to you.

2 Know the room

It can pay to arrive at the venue early so that you can check out the exits and plot the easiest ways of escape. Then, if something does kick off, you'll be able to cheese it out of there and be first to your car by the time the shit hits the fan.

3

Face the front

Although having your back to your audience is an effective way of demonstrating the contempt in which you hold them, ultimately it renders you vulnerable. At best it will allow the audience to slope off and leave you standing on your own, looking like a dick. At worst it will enable them to mount a surprise attack, rapidly pinning you down before you can retaliate.

4

Use a pointy stick

You will find that the use of a visual aid such as a pointy stick is advantageous in a number of ways. For a start, it enables you to emphasise important points and gives you something to do with your hands, which I know is something that a lot of people worry about. But more importantly, it is excellent for use in close combat, giving you a significant advantage if fighting breaks out in enclosed spaces.

5

Deal promptly with disruptive elements

In any group there is usually one individual who will give voice to contrary or negative sentiments. Obviously, all criticism is valuable and there is much you can learn by paying heed to such comments. That said, it's best to try and close the gobshite down as soon as possible. Ideally, you will want to take them out before your presentation begins, and if you can make this look like an accident, then so much the better.

So there you have it. Five sure-fire ways to suppress even the most difficult of audiences, whether it's a presentation at work, a family wedding or a children's party. I have to go now because it's my bath night. Bye.

Deathstriker

If recent health scares have taught us anything, it is that public and media alike are obsessed with the possibility of deadly plague. With a new and highly infectious strain of influenza being reported over the last few weeks, we spoke to Martin Ganglion from the World Health Organisation and asked him how concerned we ought to be.

UBO: So, this new strain H4N6 - what do we know about it?

Ganglion: Very little, at the moment. Cases are still quite rare and we are in the process of collecting data in order to establish a pattern. But, of course, this is not really the main problem. Most of our staff have been concentrating on coming up with a name for the virus.

UBO: A name?

Ganglion: Well yes. I mean, we can't very well keep calling it H4N6, can we? Very dull. So for the past couple of months our doctors and specialists and all those sorts of people have been putting their heads together in order to come up with a catchy moniker.

UBO: Isn't that getting your priorities rather confused? Shouldn't you be figuring out how the disease is transmitted, how it can be treated, how people can avoid infection?

Ganglion: Well, now you're talking about medical stuff.

UBO: Well... yes.

Ganglion: Well, yes. And medical stuff is very important, of course. We recognise that. I mean, we're the World Health Organisation - we of all people recognise the importance of medical stuff. If it wasn't for medical stuff, we'd all be out of a job. But first things first, before we even start to look at that kind of thing we have to get the marketing sorted out.

UBO: But in the meantime people could be dying of H4N6!

Ganglion: Exactly! And nobody wants that.

UBO: Well quite.

Ganglion: Yes, you want to die of something that sounds exotic and impressive and just a bit more sexy than boring old H4N6. That's why it's imperative that we get a wriggle on and think of a decent name before the press do.

UBO: The press?

Ganglion: Exactly, I'm glad you agree. We don't want another 'bird flu' situation. We took our eye off the ball there and before you knew it the media had come up with their own name and we were given the elbow.

UBO: And that was a problem, was it?

Ganglion: Certainly it was. What kind of a name is 'bird flu'? I'll tell you - it's a rubbish kind of name, that's what. Look at all the really successful outbreaks: the Black Death, Bubonic Plague, Bieber Fever - all genuinely terrifying. That's what we need - something that will really put the wind up people. And I'm glad to say that we've done just that.

UBO: You've come up with a name.

Ganglion: Deathstriker! Good, isn't it?

UBO: It's... So, this Deathstriker virus is fatal?

Ganglion: The name certainly seems to suggest that it is.

UBO: Yes. But is it?

Ganglion: Well, again, that's medical stuff. I'm sure the doctor chaps will get to the bottom of all that.

UBO: So work on determining the symptoms can now begin?

Ganglion: Oh certainly.

UBO: Investigators can start mapping the outbreak immediately?

Ganglion: Oh, yes. Almost immediately.

UBO: And laboratories are poised to identify the virus and formulate a vaccine?

Ganglion: Very nearly any day now, probably.

UBO: Probably?

Ganglion: Probably, yes, very probably. As soon as we have decided on the logo.

UBO: Obviously. Mr Ganglion, thank you very much for talking to us.

Ganglion: And then there's the merchandising, the magazine rights, the film adaptation, the worldwide stadium tour, the...



Cooker Island

Your No1 holiday destination

Visit a land where kitchen appliances roam free in a spectacular untouched paradise. Watch entranced as majestic herds of sandwich toasters sweep across the sandy lowlands. Gasp in wonder as spin dryers leap gracefully from tree to tree. Soil yourself with sheer pleasure at the myriad shoals of electric toothbrushes that splash and frolic amongst sparkling rock pools.

Ask your travel agent about Cooker Island today and treat yourself to a once in a lifetime experience!





Cookericus Rex

The daddy, the governor, the boss.
The ultimate king of carnivores. Gas
or electric, it doesn't matter - once it's
got your scent in its grill, you're lunch.

Toaster Toasterus

Burrowing beneath the earth,
Toasters are shy nocturnal
creatures who emerge during the
hours of darkness to forage for
worms and grubs, and hold all-
night parties.



Spinzilla

Swinging from tree to tree, these
extraordinary acrobats can cover
great distances at phenomenal
speeds, whilst simultaneously
cracking coconuts and coping with a
full load of colourfast nylons on
program 9.

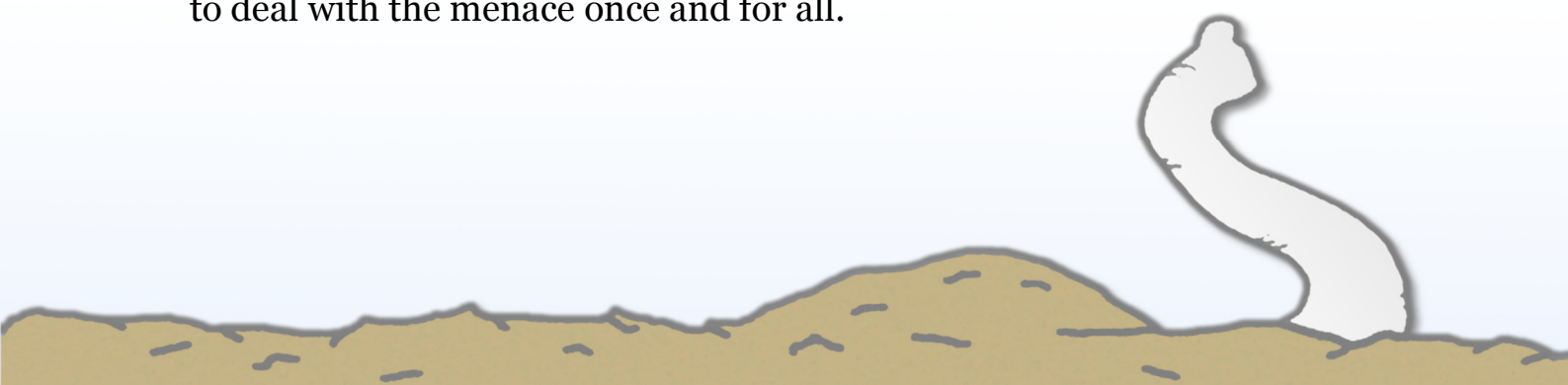
Subterranean Elephants

A new breed of subterranean elephant has been discovered by a team building an extension to the Paris Metro. The workers were first alerted to something unusual when they heard a distant, muffled trumpeting noise. Thinking that this was just the distorted sounds of traffic above ground, they were about to stop for lunch when they suddenly met up with the burrowing pachyderms digging in the opposite direction. Chief Engineer Claude Bêche says that his team were 'mildly alarmed' when the elephants broke through and started trampling all over their equipment, and 'slightly concerned' when the creatures stole all their sandwiches and disappeared back down the tunnel.

Professor Henri Ivoire, a lecturer in Crabs at the University of Bordeaux, is the closest thing to an elephant expert that could be found at short notice. He was extremely surprised to find wild elephants this far north. "We know that there were elephants in Europe in olden times, but it is believed that these all died out in the early seventies. It's thought that the rapidly changing climate caused their shells to shrivel up and their claws to drop off."

His theory is that a colony of elephants was driven underground as a result of human encroachment on their habitat, and believes that they survived on worms and beetles, and occasionally ventured up top to carry out lightening raids on bun shops. Local reports of extremely large molehills appear to support this theory.

Work on the extension has now been halted while experts evaluate the situation. At first it was hoped that the elephant tunnels could be incorporated into the network, speeding up the work considerably. However, it seems that they are not suitable. Elephants are industrious tunnellers but they know twat all about civil engineering, which is why many construction companies refuse to employ them. It seems that far from assisting the project, their presence is actually a hindrance and work is currently underway to design giant spring-loaded elephant traps to deal with the menace once and for all.



Professor Jez Moonbeam's SCIENCE CLUB



Conquering Everest by Elevator

Controversial plans to build an elevator up the inside of Mount Everest have been put on hold because of environmental concerns. The elevator, the second phase in a development which started with the construction of a small retail park halfway up the North Face, was due to be completed by 2016, in time for the opening of a multiplex and food court on the summit. However, engineers now have serious concerns that sinking a shaft through the centre of the mountain will result in serious structural problems.

After modelling the project using blancmange - which they believe provides a reasonable analogue of Everest's geology - experts have determined that the mountain does not contain enough sugar to prevent bits of it sliding back into the hole. Currently under consideration is a plan to provide additional support using wafers, but it may take some time to determine whether this is feasible. For the time being, mountaineers will still be able to use the escalator on the South Col.

Breakthrough for Archaeologists

Archaeologists from Exeter University have reported extraordinary results after experimenting with some new dating techniques. "Basically I got a decent haircut, spruced myself up and took a bit more care with my personal hygiene," said medieval pottery expert Colin Trowel. "It's remarkable. I wouldn't exactly say I've been fighting off women with a stick, but last Friday night I talked to a girl for a whole seven minutes before she went off to find her friend. And when you spend all day up to your cobbles in a muddy hole surrounded by old bones and broken pots, that's something of a result, let me tell you."

Bouncing Planets

Scientists in Denver have discovered that the Universe has a floor. Observations of an exploding star in the Andromeda galaxy revealed that the blast knocked one of the planets off the little stick that it goes round on. It rapidly dropped out of sight, but then astronomers, expecting that they would never see it again, were considerably surprised to see it bounce back up into view.

From more recent observations of bouncing planets, boffins have been able to infer further details of the Universe's mysterious floor, including strong indications that it's covered in lino and probably hasn't seen a broom for a good few millennia.

Exciting though these findings are, there is still no firm indication on whether the Universe has a ceiling, although there is consensus that someone has left a window open, as there certainly seems to be a draught coming from somewhere.

Missed Calls

Having lost all his fingers in a freak texting accident, amateur inventor Mat Porridge has recently patented a phone that he can use by repeatedly head-butting the interface. However, there seems to be little demand for 'cranial impact technology' and he has so far been unable to find a manufacturer who is interested in taking the device further.

Critics have been sceptical of the commercial viability of a gadget which is both painful to operate and leaves an impression of itself in the user's forehead. Mr Porridge has tried to put a positive spin on these disadvantages, emphasising the potential of cross-selling complimentary products such as pain killers, bandages and crash helmets, but there are still no takers.

Sadly, things now look bleak for the inventor, who has had to remortgage his home to cover the development costs, and is now left with mounting debts, a backlog of missed calls and a splitting headache.

Downloading Sausages off of the Internet

Simon Cocksure, an amateur inventor from some Godforsaken provincial wasteland in the West Midlands, has invented a machine that enables you to download sausages off of the internet.

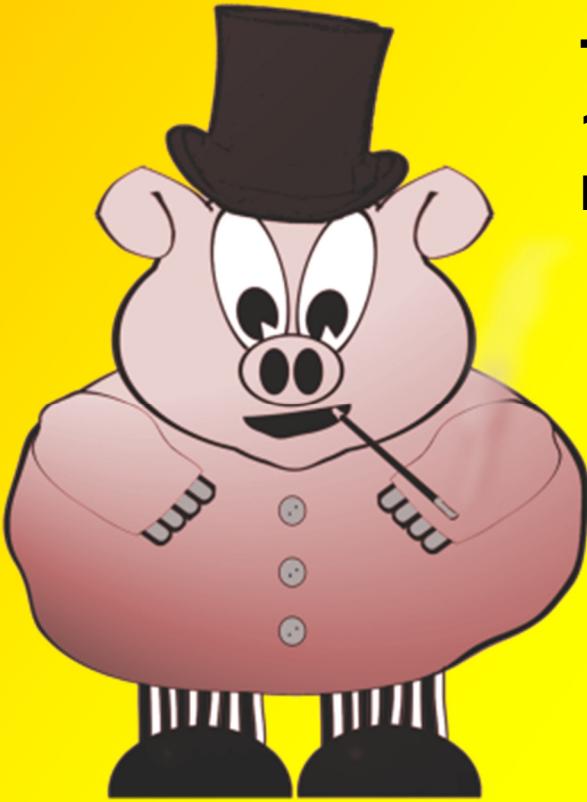
"It makes sausages!" Mr Cocksure told us at the launch of his new invention this week. The gadget, which is probably an extension of current 3d printer technology, or something, runs on four triple-A batteries and, when connected to your PC via a USB cable, can download up to three different types of sausages from a specialist sausage website in Germany.

We asked Mr Cocksure whether he thought that his new gadget would revolutionise computer-based meat products. "It makes sausages!" he told us as he demonstrated his gadget to the three local reporters and the photographer from the Walsall Advertiser who had gathered in his garage.

Experts predict that this is only the beginning for this remarkable new technology, we imagine, and confidently expect that in the not too distant future, people with too much time on their hands will be able to download as many as nine different meat products to their PC, laptop or phone, as well as printing out pasties using a special attachment that plugs into the cigarette lighter socket on their cars.

And no one is more excited about this than Simon Cocksure. He was positively vibrating with excitement as he took us to one side and confidentially told us, "It makes sausages!" Bless him.

Get cash fast!



Tired of waiting for up to 10 minutes for your Payday Loan?

Well now you can get money *half an hour before you even asked for it!*

Marvin the Money Pig tells you how!

"You don't need a **credit reference**, you don't need a **guarantor**, you don't even need an **income**. We won't bother with all those annoying **checks** and **regulations**. We'll lend money to you whatever your circumstances - and when you've spent it all, we'll just **lend you some more**. Oink oink!"

"But hang on – what happens when you find you can't pay it back? Don't worry, our **friendly bailiffs** will take care of everything. Got a car? Good, we'll have that. Got a house? Not any more.

"And the beauty of it is that because our interest rates are so high and our default charges are punitive, we can **guarantee that you will be locked in a spiral of debt for life**. Lovely!"

PAYDAY PORKER

Let us get our snout in your trough

What's On in Lower Bumpstead

After extensive restoration following the recent unfortunate incident with Marvellous Martin, fire-eater extraordinaire, the Lower Bumpstead Community Centre reopens this month and welcomes returning visitors with a varied and thrilling season of events. The programme is as follows:

October 2nd-5th

The Lower Bumpstead Amateur Dramatics Society presents *Treasure Island*. This innovative production is made possible thanks to local farmer Fergus Pong, whose tractor will be standing in for the *Hispaniola*. Mr Pong himself takes the role of Long John Silver. As in last year's production, Mrs Frearson's parrot will again take the role of Silver's faithful pet bird, Captain Flint. However, since Mrs Frearson's parrot died earlier this month, its lines this year will be read by Mr Costello from the post office.

October 7th

The community centre plays host to what promises to be a fascinating talk by survivalist Gyles Fry, who gained notoriety after surviving for three days without food or water at Drayton Manor Theme Park in Staffordshire. Mr Fry will demonstrate techniques for staying alive in the British countryside and his talk will include tips on disarming badgers, snaring Wombles and how to skin a Teletubby.

October 15th

Spoons, Spoons, Spoons is the title of a lecture by cutlery expert Susan Fender. Mrs Fender, bestselling author of *Forks, Forks, Forks* and the seminal *Knives, Knives, Knives* is currently on tour promoting her third book about the humble spoon, which we are reliably informed is about to be turned into a motion picture starring Tom Cruise. Mrs Fender's lecture will include a comprehensive talk on the history of the spoon and an 'interactive media experience'. There will also be a demonstration of over four different types of spoon, which attendees will be invited to touch.

October 16th-19th

The Lower Bumpstead Amateur Dramatics Society presents *Fruity Cutie*, the story of one woman's struggle to become Miss World, while at the same time fighting to keep her exotic fruit importing business afloat. It stars Babs McKenzie as Miss Cutey, herself a former Miss Bonsall's Plastic Extrusion Products, 1983. Mr Costello from the post office takes the part of the evil swindler, a role for which many people who have been short-changed by him will no doubt consider he was born. And by popular demand Mr Fergus Pong returns as Long John Silver.

October 21st

International mime artist 'Plod' brings his show to the community centre. The performer's exciting three hour spectacle takes the audience on a spellbinding adventure in which Plod eats an imaginary sandwich, takes an imaginary shower and fights an imaginary tiger. Please note, normal concessions for the hard of hearing will not apply to this performance.

October 22nd

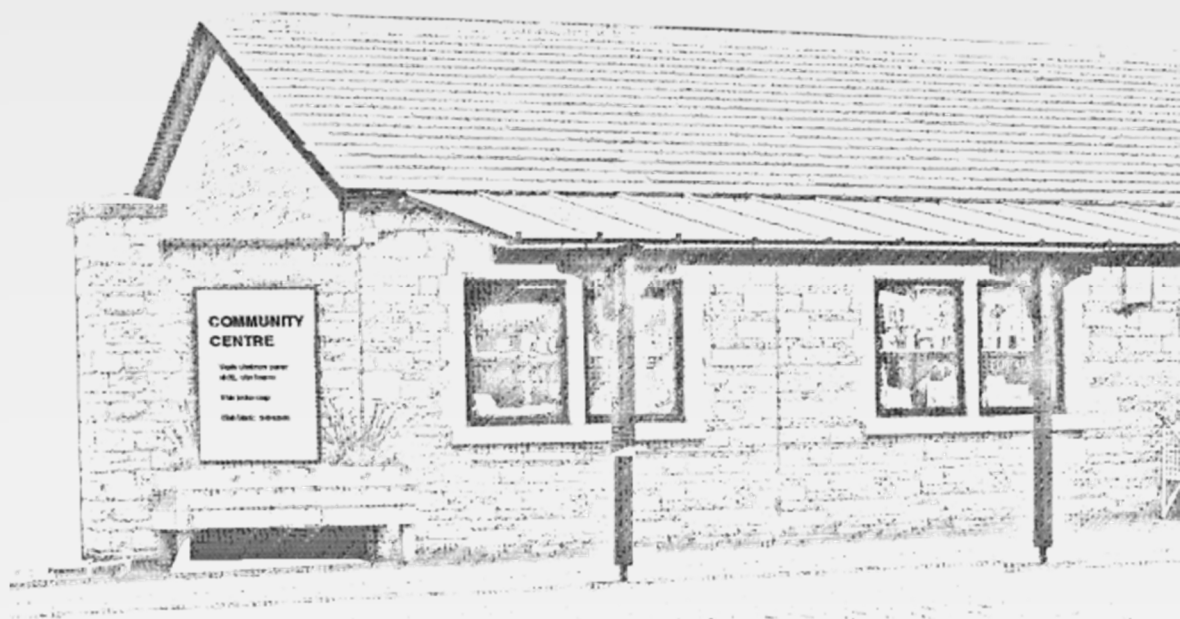
The local Dyslexic Literary Society presents *An Evening of Pottery*. Society members deliver dramatic pottery readings and the audience is invited to vote for its all-time favourite pots.

October 23rd-26th

For their final offering of the month, the Lower Bumpstead Amateur Dramatics Society give us their award-winning adaptation of *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, the story of suave serial killer Louis Mazzini and his quest to get his hands on the family fortune. It stars Ronald Dangler as Mazzini, himself a former serial killer. Babs McKenzie gives a riveting portrayal as Sibella and Mr Costello from the post office is simply dazzling as he brings to life eight different members of the D'Ascoyne family. Rounding off a stellar cast is Mr Fergus Pong who delivers perhaps the greatest performance of his career as the deceitful and scheming Long John Silver.

October 31st

Concluding the month's offerings is a return to the venue of Marvellous Martin and his mesmerising fire-eating act. The audience is promised thrills aplenty as Marvellous Martin performs feats of almost superhuman skill, although this time spectators will be reassured to know that the fire brigade will be on hand.



Your citizenship is up for renewal.
Please read the accompanying guidance
notes before completing the enclosed
application form.

HM Government
Department of Paranoia

HM Government **Department of Paranoia**

From next year all UK citizens will be required to take the new citizenship test.

Have You Got What it Takes to Stay in the Country?

Back in 2013, the Home Secretary announced that the 'Life in the United Kingdom' test, administered to all prospective immigrants, would be replaced by the new 'Isn't Britain Great!' test. This shifted the focus away from practical information about life in Britain, and concentrated instead on impressing foreigners with how great it is to live in the United Kingdom, reminding them that the country once had an empire that stretched around the globe, prompting them to brush up on their Shakespeare and then telling them to fuck off back to where they came from.

Following the success of the new test, it has been decided that as of next year it will be extended to all British Citizens. This means that being born in the UK will no longer automatically entitle you to citizenship, and that you will need to pass the 'Isn't Britain Great!' test in order to remain.

How to be a Great Briton

But there's no need to worry. The test requires you to answer a series of questions in relation to four distinct areas of British life.

History

Do you know your Agincourt from your Waterloo? Can you answer questions on real life British heroes like Richard the Lionheart, Sir Edmund Hillary or Biggles? British people are proud of their history and frequently make reference to the majesty of the British Empire, whilst at the same time glossing over the exploitation and barbarism on which it was founded. If you can tell us, with a straight face, what was so glorious about the Glorious Revolution, then you're in.

Culture

Great Britain gave the world some of its greatest writers and artists - from H.G. Wells and Thomas Hardy, to Constable and that chap who saws the cows in half. Not my cup of tea, to be honest, but he brings in a lot of moolah. British people watch, on average, six Shakespeare plays a month, read three Charles Dickens or Jane Austen novels, and have memorised at least two Kipling poems by the age of six. The British film industry is recognised internationally for its excellence, and currently churns out over two and a half films a year - some of which eventually break even. The citizenship tests requires you to have a firm grasp of the contribution British culture has made to the world, including being able to name three of the Spice Girls and recite a section of dialogue from *Are You Being Served?*

Money

Specifically, have you got any? A good British citizen is solvent, pays his taxes on time* and doesn't go around demanding hand-outs. We realise that everyone needs help at some time or another, whether it's the result of poor health, economic downturn or sheer bad luck. But seriously, don't bother us with your troubles. When British people fall on hard times they are expected to crawl away into a corner and not trouble anyone, rather than becoming a burden on the state. Financial astuteness and ingenuity, on the other hand, are greatly appreciated and sharp practice, creative accounting and embezzlement are frequently rewarded.

(*Citizens with an annual income of over £500,000 are able to opt out of the tax system)

Citizenship

The British political system is the envy of the world. British people look up to their elected leaders, trust in their judgement implicitly and hardly ever do rioting or any of that shit. But if British people are loyal to their government, this is but a fraction of the love they have for the Monarchy. Nobody in Britain thinks that the Royal Family are the inbred descendants of a gang of medieval horse thieves, who exist in an artificial bubble of opulence and have no concept of how real people live. No, in fact most Britons realise that the Queen is one of the hardest working people in the country, with a punishing schedule that requires her to step out of her palace as much as three times a month and wave at people for half an hour. Rather you than me, Maam!

Will You Make the Grade?

There's more to being British than simply being born here. It isn't easy. But don't worry if you don't make it - deportation isn't all that bad. Who knows, you could even end up somewhere sunny.

Above all don't despair! We might not want you at the moment but, hey, things change: the economic climate, global warming, natural catastrophe... there might even be another war in the offing, in which case we'll welcome you back with open arms! The thing is to maintain a stiff upper lip, keep the Union Jack flying and one day, who knows, we might just send for you. Good luck!



The Dankworth & Humpingham Gazette

Tuesday September 31, 2014

55p

LOCAL MAN IS PIXELATED TV STAR



Mr Colin Samsung, a familiar face in the area.

Mr Pixels' Meteoric Rise to Obscurity. Residents Angry.

The name may not be familiar, but you will most certainly recognise him, since local man Colin Samsung is easily the most well-known person on TV. And the secret to being - paradoxically - both the most famous and simultaneously the most anonymous person in the public eye? Simply this - Colin is the only man known to science to have been born with a pixelated face.

Colin's extraordinary visage

has led to a huge demand for his services. Known in the industry as 'Mr Pixels', he has performed in innumerable TV news stories, fly-on-the-wall documentaries and reality shows. But his unique appearance has also resulted in some real life difficulties.

"I'm used to getting some funny looks when I'm out and about," Colin tells us. "At first, whenever they saw me, folks would start looking around for hidden cameras. Most people in my

neighbourhood are cool about it right now, but I still have a hard time whenever I have to renew my passport or driving licence, because they keep rejecting the photo.

"Professionally it's been a problem, as well. Oh, I realise that my face has been my bread and butter, and as an actor I am rarely out of work, but there are jobs that I'm just never going to get. For instance, I auditioned for the RSC but they turned me down because, with the

exception of Titus Andronicus, there are no pixelated characters in Shakespeare. Although, to be fair, Malvolio is a bit blurred around the edges."

That said, Colin admits that he has had some fun with his appearance. "Nobody can photobomb quite like I can," he tells us. "And I do enjoy sitting for portrait artists, just to give them a hard time. But my greatest joy is taking mirrors back to shops and claiming that they're faulty.

Police Impersonator Angers Residents

A Tewksbury man has today been sentenced to six months for impersonating a police officer. The man, who cannot be named for psychic reasons, was witnessed weaving erratically around the street, chanting racist and homophobic rants and lashing out at people with a truncheon.

"We're very pleased with the verdict," said Chief Inspector Gerald Punchline. "This kind of behaviour is very confusing for members of the general public who may have easily mistaken this individual for a real constable. So it is very important that we send out a firm message and make sure that this kind of loutish behaviour remains solely the prerogative of genuine officers."

Emergency Merger Angers Residents

Plans to merge emergency services in the UK have been branded 'mental' by opposition groups, who claim that the decision would be a recipe for disaster. Proposals have been advanced that will see Fire, Police and Ambulance departments merge into a single unified service in a move designed to increase efficiency and response times.

Several pilot schemes have already ended in disaster with ambulance crews called out to attend domestic disturbances equipped only with fire axes, firefighters carrying out emergency CPR with truncheons and policemen setting fire to cats stuck up trees. Nevertheless, the government is keen to press ahead with the scheme despite what it calls 'a few isolated setbacks'.

Meanwhile, motoring organisation the AA, which brands itself 'Britain's fourth emergency service', has enjoyed rather more success after merging with Relate, and now offers roadside assistance for relationship breakdowns.

Domestic Mining Decision Angers Residents

Changes to the law will soon make it legal for mining companies to tunnel up into your kitchen cupboards and steal your pork luncheon meat. Businesses presently have the right to mine beneath private land, but the new legislation will give them powers to drive shafts right up into your home, wander around your front room and rifle through your DVD collection.

The legislation is designed to boost the mining industry and make it easier for companies to begin fracking operations, but protesters are saying that the new rules go too far. "I don't want some dirty great pit worker popping up out of a hole in my living room floor when I'm trying to watch Strictly," said shop worker and amateur environmentalist Tracy Sponge. "And I don't care whether it does provide a much needed boon to industry, the first time I see muddy boot prints tracking across my lino, I'll swing for someone."

Dog Wig Scandal Angers Residents

Anger has erupted at the news that a laboratory in Essex has been testing wigs on dogs. The testing of clothing on animals was banned in Europe in 2004 following a number of high profile cases involving kittens in puffer jackets, hamsters wearing wellington boots and 'trout trousers'. In this latest incident the laboratory, owned and operated by rug manufacturer Wiggley's Wigs, have got around the ban by claiming that the wigs are medical appliances rather than items of clothing.

Campaigner Paddy Barker of the charity Pets Against Pullovers, wants this loophole closed. "There's nothing more

shameful than seeing a Basset Hound wearing a beehive or a Great Dane in dreadlocks," she said. "It's a horrifying reminder of mankind's cruelty to his fellow creatures."

A spokesman for Wiggley's Wigs, however, remained unrepentant. "The work we are doing here is vital to so many vain and insecure middle-aged men who are going prematurely bald. No more will they have to suffer the horror of a strangely immobile, oddly-coloured toupee. Or, heaven forbid, the shame of the comically windswept comb-over. And if it means that an Alsatian has to spend an uncomfortable few minutes in

an Afro, or a Doberman is spotted grinning stupidly whilst wearing pigtales or a blonde mullet, then I for one think it's worth the sacrifice."



Come to Monkworld
 Celebrate the 10th anniversary of the world's most famous...
 Single yourself only at the party...
 Celebrate the historic...
 Tickets: £15.00, £10.00, £5.00 and £2.00

Animated by an ancient curse, doomed to fight crime for all eternity...
POLICE TRACTOR
 Police Tractor...
 Tickets: £15.00, £10.00, £5.00 and £2.00

Come to World of Nuns
 Celebrate the 10th anniversary of the world's most famous...
 Single yourself only at the party...
 Celebrate the historic...
 Tickets: £15.00, £10.00, £5.00 and £2.00

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 Tired of chafed feet and blistered toes?
 What you need are new Undersocks - socks specially designed to go under your existing socks and prevent chafing and blisters on your skin. Enjoy the comfort and security that only a quality pair of Undersocks can deliver.
 Get Undersocks today.

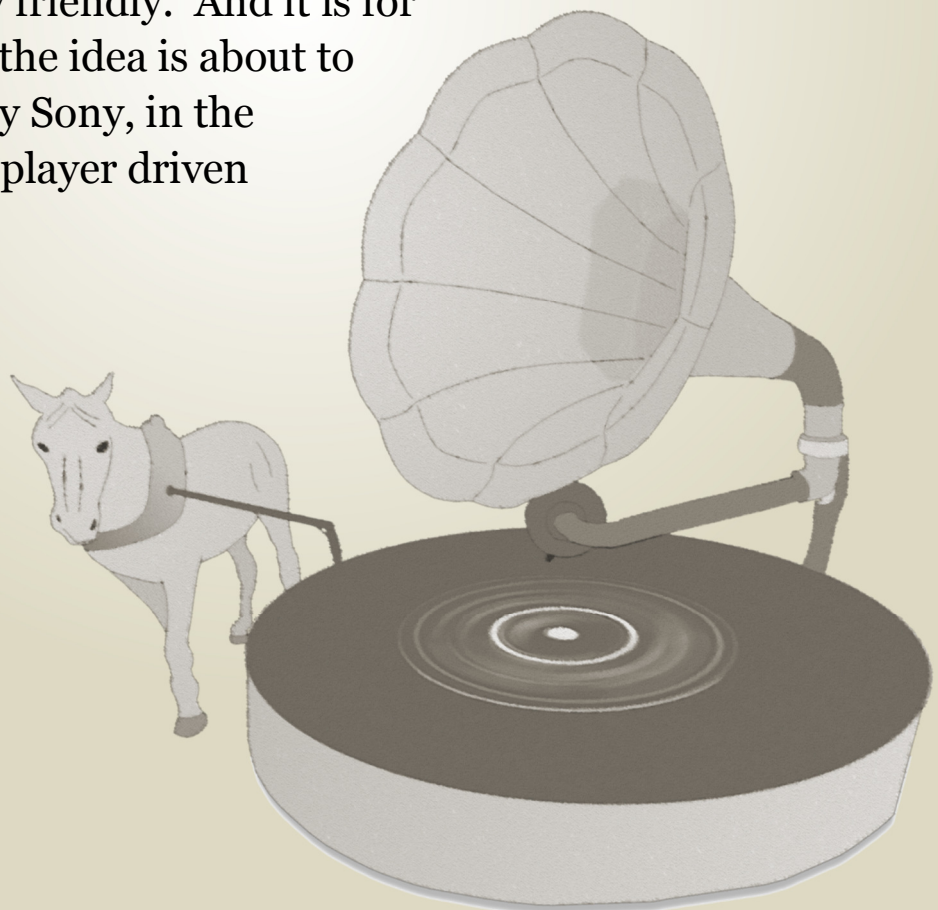
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 When you need to drop a safe on someone, you need Acme Safe Drops. That's why you should trust the job to a company that can guarantee your safe will arrive on target, on time, wherever the weather.
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Alien Detector Kit
 The aliens are coming... but are you ready?
 You will be with the...
 Alien Detector Kit...
 Everything the alien detector kit could ever need...
 Alien Detector Kit

The Horse-Drawn Record Player

Today marks the hundredth anniversary of the death of Thomas Sadler, the inventor of the world's first horse-drawn record player. Developed as a labour-saving alternative to the wind-up gramophone, the device never really caught on for a number of reasons. Firstly, the discs themselves were unwieldy, being some ten feet in diameter. The horse that was yoked to the turntable had to be trained to run at two precise speeds - a gentle canter for albums and a lively trot for singles. Finally, the amplification system left much to be desired as the output was not beefy enough to drown out the sounds of the horse's hooves.

Nevertheless, although the system was a failure, it was at least environmentally friendly. And it is for this reason that the idea is about to be resurrected by Sony, in the form of an MP3 player driven by rabbits.



DIRTY DOINGS AT FEATHERSTONE MANOR



My name is Daniel Rose and, as luck would have it, I was with Lady Featherstone at the time of her husband's unfortunate death. We were taking tea in the sitting room when we heard a gunshot from the direction of the greenhouse. I rushed outside. Lady Featherstone tried to follow me but her corset became wedged in the French windows, and consequentially I was the first to arrive at the scene.

Even now, the thought of what greeted me there fills me with horror. Shattered glass lay around the greenhouse, wherein Lord Featherstone lay dead amongst his tomatoes, a smoking revolver at his side.

"What is it?" Lady Featherstone called as she frantically struggled to free herself from the window. "What has happened?"

"It's your husband," I called back, my voice shaking. "I'm - I'm sorry, but I'm afraid he's not a pretty sight."

"I know that," Lady Featherstone replied, "Good grief, I should do - I've been married to him long enough."

"No, no," I interrupted her, finding it difficult to express myself. "You don't understand - he's dead."

"Dead, eh?" Lady Featherstone said, as she finally struggled through the windows and hobbled across the lawn towards me. "I thought he'd died years ago. He never used to say much anyway - just used to sit there while we poured brandy into him." She started poking the corpse with her walking stick, and nodded. "But yes, he certainly seems deader than usual now."

"I don't think we should disturb anything," I said, and taking Lady Featherstone's arm I led her back into the house, where we played strip poker as we waited for the police. By the time Inspector Plankton arrived, I was losing badly.

"Good evening, Inspector," I greeted him as I pulled on my anorak and trousers. "Thank goodness you're here! I was almost down to my socks."

"Indeed sir," said the Inspector. "May I introduce you to Monsieur Anton La Cranque, the internationally renowned Belgian detective?"

"Certainly, you may Inspector," warbled her Ladyship. "Is he house trained?"

Monsieur La Cranque inclined his head slightly. "Madame, it is a pleasure to make your acquaintance. I hope I will be of some assistance in bringing the perpetrator of this terrible crime to justice."

"What's that?" Lady F replied. "A crime, you say?"

"Why, the callous murder of your husband, Madame," the Belgian reminded her.

"Oh yes, that," Lady Featherstone mumbled. She balanced her spectacles on the bridge of her nose and examined him. "So, you are a private dick, Monsieur La Cranque?"

"No Madame," said La Cranque graciously. "Just a clever dick."

We sat down as the maid bought some tea and buns, and I related the events of that afternoon in as much detail as I could remember. As I spoke, Inspector Plankton scribbled away in his notebook and when I had finished my account he looked up sternly.

"So, let me just clarify this," he said. "Lord and Lady Featherstone were in the sitting room when they heard a shot. They rushed outside to find your good self dead in the greenhouse?"

"No, no," I said. "You've got it the wrong way round."

"Have I?" said the Inspector, taken aback. "So Lord and Lady Featherstone were in the greenhouse when they heard your good self. They rushed inside to find a shot, dead in the sitting room?" He paused. "It doesn't make an awful lot of sense to me sir. I think you'd better run it by me one more time."

"It's perfectly simple, Inspector," I said. "Featherstone was shot in the greenhouse."

"Nasty."

"Shot dead!"

Monsieur La Crank had been picking the currants out of an Eccles cake, and he chose this moment to speak. "Shot dead?" he said and he turned to Lady Featherstone. "Were you my dear? How very distressing for you. Did it hurt?"

"Lady Featherstone isn't dead," I interrupted. "*Lord* Featherstone was the one who was shot."

"Of course, of course," said La Cranque with an embarrassed laugh. "Why, it is quite obvious that this woman is not dead. Not yet, anyway. Very soon I should imagine, but not today. Very well, we'd better speak to Lord Featherstone."

"Lord Featherstone is dead," I replied wearily. "I thought we'd established that."

"I know that!" said La Cranque, with a touch of anger. "Lord Featherstone is dead, otherwise there would be no crime here. But does that mean that we cannot ask him questions, Monsieur?"

"You can ask him as many questions as you like," I said. "He's not going to give you any answers."

Monsieur La Cranque tapped the side of his nose and smiled. "There are many ways to make a man talk."

"Well, I can't sit here all day," said Inspector Plankton as he stood up. "I have to go and fetch the wife from the acupuncturists."

"Inspector," I said as I followed him to the door, "surely you're not leaving?"

"Don't worry, I'll leave you in the capable hands of Monsieur La Cranque - he'll have this whole case sewn up in no time." The Inspector moved closer to me and spoke in a low voice. "He usually gets tanked up before an investigation, but it wears off after a while." He patted my shoulder then left quickly.

For a man reputed to be the foremost detective of his time, Monsieur La Cranque didn't seem to have much of clue about anything. I thought it prudent to stick close by him during the course of his investigation. He announced his intention to interview the staff and so we began in the scullery, where La Cranque put a series of searching questions to the maid.

"What is your favourite colour?" La Cranque screamed in his most vicious and frightful voice.

The servant girl quaked in her chair. "Blue," she squeaked, in a terrified whisper.

"What is your favourite flower?" La Cranque shouted, in a voice that surpassed both the viciousness and the frightfulness of his previously most vicious and frightful voice.

The servant girl was rapidly becoming a quivering wreck and it was at this point that I felt it necessary to intercede. I called a temporary halt to the proceedings and led La Cranque over to a corner of the room. "Are these questions really necessary?"

"Of course," La Cranque replied, a little petulantly.

"But surely such matters are immaterial?"

"You may well think so, Monsieur," La Cranque said. "But then you are not a great detective. You do not see the things which I see."

"Maybe not," I said, "but I don't understand why you need to frighten the poor girl silly. You're behaving as if *she* murdered Lord Featherstone."

"Is that so impossible Monsieur?" La Cranque crooned, with an air of Belgian mystery. "Everyone is a suspect and yet nobody is a suspect. All are guilty and yet all are innocent. We can eliminate no one. The butcher, the baker, the beggar, the thief - all come under the ever watchful eye of Monsieur La Cranque." He pointed to his right eye. "This one."

He turned and stalked back towards the maid. She cowered as he approached. "Very well, my dear," said La Cranque. "It is about time you stopped giving me all

this crap about favourite colours and started answering some straight questions, no? Where were you when the Featherstone family were murdered?"

"I was in town," the maid replied briskly.

"Whereabouts in town?" snapped Monsieur La Cranque.

"In the High Street," said the maid.

"But whereabouts in the high street?" La Cranque demanded.

"In the Co-Op," the maid replied.

"Whereabouts in the Co-Op?" La Cranque barked.

"Just next to the tinned peas," said the maid.

"Ha! A likely story," the great detective responded. "How many times have I heard that same excuse?"

The maid suddenly stood up. "Look I've had enough of this," she said. "Who the hell are you?"

"I," said La Cranque, with customary arrogance, "am the most famous detective in all of Belgium."

"Oh, I see," the maid replied, nodding. "A private dick?"

"No, just a clever dick," said La Cranque, again. "Now Mademoiselle, about these tinned peas."

"Stuff the tinned peas!" said the maid. "I had nothing to do with the murder. You'd be better off talking to the gardener. He hated his Lordship, and they were always arguing. I'll lay odds that he's the murderer."

We withdrew from the scullery, leaving the maid to resume her duties. Now that we had this valuable lead, I assumed that the case would soon be solved. However, to my considerable surprise, La Cranque totally dismissed the maid's comments. Instead of finding the gardener we sought out the butler, and he was not pleased to see us.

"I am not at all pleased to see you," said the butler.

"People seldom are, Monsieur butler chappy," said the eminent Belgian. "But I'm afraid I must ask you a few questions."

"I assume you are the private detective?" the butler inquired.

"No, just a clever dick," replied Monsieur La Cranque. "And I must tell you that I have an infallible nose for the truth. If you attempt to lie to me, I will know in an instant. So, what were you doing at the time Lord Featherstone exploded?"

"I was being chased down the M1 by a giant chicken wearing Wellington boots," responded the butler.

"A watertight alibi!" declared La Cranque. "It seems we must consider another suspect."

"If I might make a suggestion, sir," the butler said. "Why don't you speak to Evans, the gardener? I understand that he and Lord Featherstone were bitter enemies."

I thanked the butler for his help, and we left him to get on with his polishing. Surely now Monsieur La Cranque would not fail to follow up this avenue of investigation? But the great Belgian sighed and slowly shook his head.

"We are getting nowhere," he said.

"But the gardener!" I exclaimed.

"The gardener?" La Cranque said, raising a single eyebrow. "No, that is rather too convenient. I believe that there is more to this case than meets the eye. What we really need is a witness."

"But there are no witnesses," I protested.

"Oh yes Monsieur, there is one," La Cranque said enigmatically. "The victim himself. Come, let us speak with Lord Featherstone."

In spite of my objections, we went to find the late Lord Featherstone. His body had been laid out in the parlour. His skin was pale and grey, his eyes cold and dead - but none of this deterred the eminent Belgian detective, Anton La Cranque.

"Lord Featherstone?" La Cranque said, leaning over the body.

"Really, Monsieur La Cranque," I said. "There is no point to any of this."

"Please be quiet," La Cranque said and he tried again. "Lord Featherstone? I wonder if we could ask you a few questions? I am sorry for disturbing you at this hour. I realise that this may be a very difficult time for you, what with you being dead and everything. Regretfully, however, there are a few things that we need to clear up."

I sighed loudly. "What do you hope to learn from a dead man?" I asked.

"A great deal," La Cranque snapped back at me, then continued to address the corpse. "Lord Featherstone, could you please tell us exactly where you were at the time of your own murder?"

"Ha!" I cried. "Isn't it obvious?"

"Nothing is obvious in a case of this nature," La Cranque replied. "Lord Featherstone, would you like me to repeat the question?"

"I don't think he can hear you."

La Cranque looked up at me. "Is his Lordship hard of hearing?"

"No," I said. "I think it's something to do with him not being alive any more."

La Cranque let out a huge sigh and straightened. "Clearly, Lord Featherstone is reluctant to talk about this matter. It is a great pity. Now, I think we ought to visit the scene of the crime."

"Ah good!" I exclaimed delightedly. This was the first sane suggestion that the detective had made. "The greenhouse!"

"No," the Belgian replied. "Manchester."

My hopes were dashed. "Manchester?" I repeated quizzically. "I thought you said that we were going to visit the scene of the crime."

"Ah yes," La Cranque said. "But what you are forgetting is that, although the body was found in the greenhouse, he could easily have been killed elsewhere. Like Manchester."

And so we found ourselves on the next train to Manchester. After wandering around the city centre for almost an hour, La Cranque led us into a back street cafe 'on a hunch'. There he questioned a waitress on the possibility of obtaining a cheese and tomato sandwich and when this matter had reached a satisfactory conclusion we returned home.

"I think," said the great detective as he stepped off the train, "that we shall - arrrgghhh!"

That's what happens if you try to get off a train while it's still doing forty miles an hour.

"I think we shall interview the gardener next," La Cranque told me when I caught up with him at the hospital. At last! We set out immediately - myself on the crest of a new wave of optimism and La Cranque on crutches. We found the gardener in the potting shed, slicing up a dead body with his hedge shears.

"You must be the private cock," said the gardener when he saw us.

"Dick," said La Cranque.

"Suit yourself," said the gardener.

La Cranque squared up to him. "Now I am going to ask you just one question, and I want you to think very carefully before you answer. Did you kill Lord Featherstone?"

The gardener thought very carefully. "No," he said.

"Are you sure?" La Cranque asked slyly.

"Positive," answered the gardener. "I would have remembered."

Monsieur La Cranque sighed. "Well that is that, then," he said. "It seems we have drawn a blank."

"But just look at the fellow," I protested. "He's caked in blood."

"I cut myself shaving," the gardener explained.

"But of course," said La Cranque, with a shrug. "It happens to us all."

"But he was there, in the greenhouse - the scene of the crime!" I argued.

"So what?" said the gardener. "So was the wheelbarrow, why don't you interrogate that?"

La Cranque shook his head sorrowfully and placed his hand on my shoulder. "You know my friend," he said, "if he wasn't already dead, I would be almost certain that Lord Featherstone himself was the murderer."

"If Lord Featherstone wasn't dead, there wouldn't *be* a murderer," I argued.

"Ah yes, good point," he agreed. "This is indeed a difficult case. I shall have to deliberate the matter in some detail."

He patted me on the back and then wandered off, deep in thought.

The great detective spent the rest of the day moping about the gardens, occasionally taking time out to interview the wheelbarrow and other garden implements. In my exasperation, I left him to it. As evening approached he requested that the entire household assemble in the library. Since Featherstone Manor did not have a library, we had no choice but to build one, and - even if I do say so myself - the brickwork was splendid, considering the limited time we had to complete it.

Monsieur La Cranque was late, but when he did arrive he had the wheelbarrow with him.

"What is the meaning of this?" demanded the butler. "Why have you gathered us here in this ridiculously clichéd fashion?"

"Please sit down and I shall explain," La Cranque said calmly. "I have gathered you here because a crime has been committed and a murderer walks amongst us. Also because I want to show off."

He wandered casually over to the maid. "During the course of my inquiries, I have had occasion to question all of you. The maid here, with her unreasonable fixation for tinned peas." He turned to the butler. "And you sir, the smart-arsed butler, who is clearly asking for a slap, no? I have even questioned Lord Featherstone himself, who seems to think that being dead somehow excludes him from my investigation. In many ways he is responsible for all of this, for had he not been reckless enough to get himself killed in the first place, none of this would be happening."

"And what have you discovered?" I interrupted.

"You may well ask," La Cranque replied.

"I am asking," I said. "Have you found out who the killer is?"

There was a long, long pause. “No,” he finally admitted. “But does it really matter who killed him? The man is dead, and that is that.”

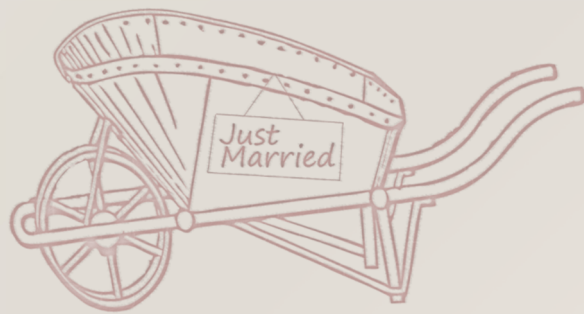
An uneasy silence settled over the room. La Cranque walked over to the wheelbarrow and laid a gentle palm on its handle.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” he announced grandly. “I found something very special today; I found love. A very special kind of love: the kind of love that can only exist between a man and an inanimate piece of garden equipment. I’m going to marry this wheelbarrow and you’re all invited to the wedding.”

And what a wonderful wedding it was. I cried. The wheelbarrow looked radiant in its full-length gown and tiara and even La Cranque was resplendent in his Bacofoil trousers and tin hat.

As for Lord Featherstone, we never did find out who killed him. Not that Lady Featherstone was greatly concerned. She had her husband stuffed and mounted, and now he’s on display in the new library.

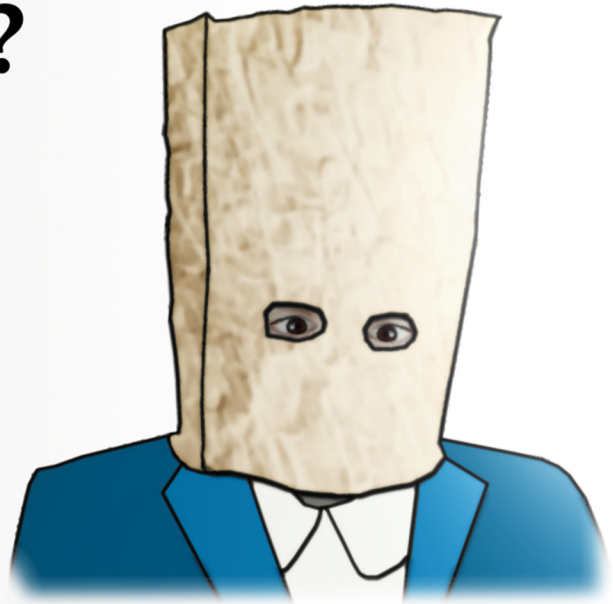
She says she prefers him like that.



Are you suffering the embarrassment of nasal hair loss?

Balding nostrils is a common condition for men of a certain age, and yet it remains a major source of social unease. Few men afflicted with the problem are bold enough to brave the disapproval of their friends and work colleagues, and will go to extraordinary lengths to disguise this debilitating disorder.

But now those unconvincing moustache 'comb-unders' are a thing of the past. Gone are the days when you would only consider venturing outside in the hours of daylight if you had a paper bag firmly fastened over your head. With a nasal wig from Bristletech, you can once more become an accepted and moderately useful member of society.



Bristletech's new line of hand-crafted nose toupees bear all the hallmarks of craftsmanship and quality that you would expect from the acknowledged leader in facial hair. So whether you favour long or short, curly or straight, Bristletech Nasal Wigs are not to be sniffed at.

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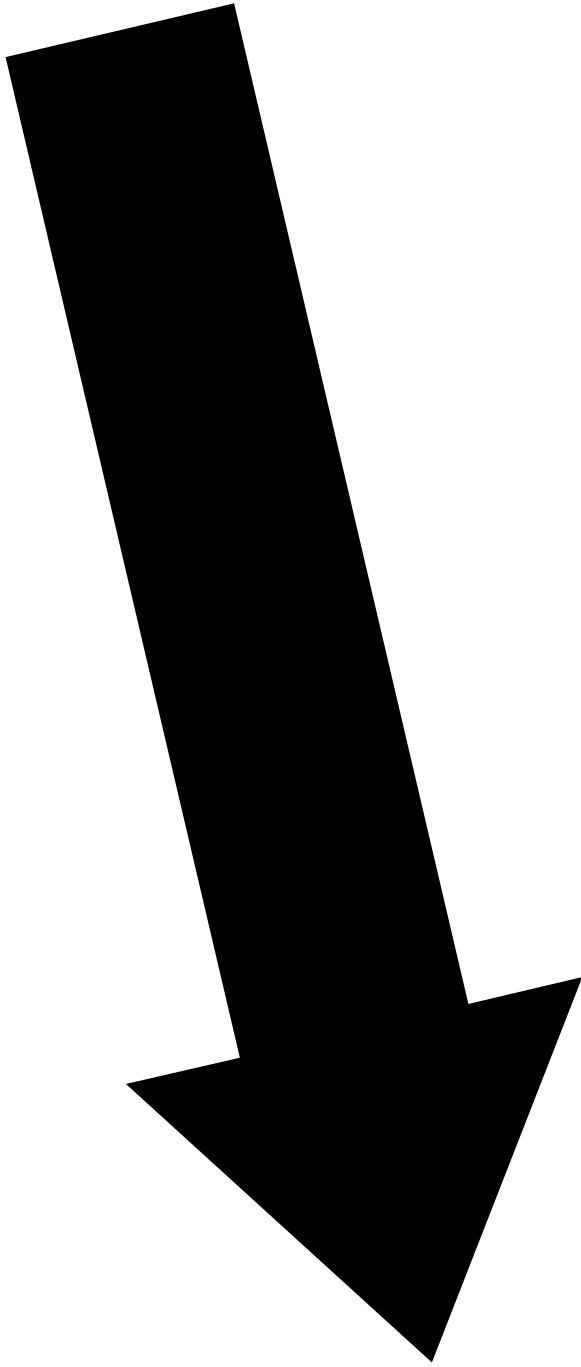
Fill in the Judge

Being a judge is great. You get to look down on everyone and tell everybody what to do. You can even send people to prison and make them pick up litter and stuff. Being a judge is very very good.

But being a judge is not easy. You have to be a very special person to be a judge. In particular, you have to be very good at colouring.

See if you've got what it takes to be a judge. Using crayons or felt tips, colour in this picture of famous high court judge, Justice Terry Spandex. You can get an adult to help you if you like. Who knows, if you're very good and you don't go over the lines, you could be a judge yourself one day!





Fishys

Millicent Lunge, a ladybread seller from Daventry, is spearheading a campaign to have keys put on the insides of pilchard tins, so that pilchards that aren't quite stiff-dead can let themselves out. Apparently this is a big achy headproblem for many fish, who frequently find themselves tinned alive. Poor fishys - it's so difficult to tell whether they are all sleepy-bedy or croaky-deady, so they all get jumbled up together and wake in the oily darkness in a frightful shiverpanic. Nasty time.

Scientist men say that brain death for fish is when they look all slimy-gormless, which is why so many are pronounced deceased even though they still flip flap about and squirt water in your eye. Ms Millicent says that insidey keys will end this inhuman badness and allow not-dead fishys to escape, so that they can expire with dignity in the back of your cupboard. Awwwww.

She also wants zippers put on bags of prawns.

DOCTOR DOGGY

Clifton Bassett is not your usual family doctor. Christian Pyle paid him a visit him at his Cambridgeshire surgery.

Doctor Clifton Bassett is, by most people's standards, not your usual family doctor. His surgery, serving a small town and a handful of outlying villages in Cambridgeshire, is pretty ordinary. His patients, too, present the usual mix of colds, arthritis, back injuries and sprains. In fact, the only thing that sets Dr Bassett apart from most other GPs is the fact that he is a dog.

"I suppose it is unusual, yes," Dr Bassett woofs when we ask him about his choice of career. "As far as I know, I am the only canine doctor currently working within the National Health Service, although I believe there is a cat employed as an anaesthetist at Guy's Hospital and several mice in the radiology department at Nottingham Royal Infirmary."

Dr Bassett first had an inkling that he was bound for the medical profession when he was just a pup. "Oh yes, I was forever running around, pestering my brothers and sisters to let me take their temperature and put splints on their tails. I come from quite a big litter and there was always one us getting into some kind of scrape, so there were always plenty of opportunities to practise my bandaging technique."

"I enjoyed medical school a great deal. It was my first time away from home"



Dr Bassett's surgery covers a largely rural area.

Nevertheless, the decision to study human medicine was quite a big step for a young dog, especially when more conventional canine career paths beckoned, such as a guard dog, sniffer dog or marine biologist dog. But Bassett studied hard and gained some practical experience of human anatomy by repeatedly attacking the postman. Eventually he was accepted into medical school and graduated several years later with a first class degree and his own stethoscope.

"I enjoyed medical school a great deal," Dr Bassett yapps. "It was my first time away from home. I had my own kennel, all the rubber bones I could need and the other students were always keen to take me walkies. But although I learned everything I could about medicine, it couldn't prepare me for some of the difficulties I've faced out in the real world."

Dr Bassett is keen to stress that the majority of his patients have accepted him without any issues at all, but occasionally he will come across people who are less open-minded. "I can see that it can be difficult," he growls. "If you're discussing some embarrassing medical problem with someone who keeps licking their genitals and dragging their bottom across the carpet, then things are bound to be a little awkward. Thankfully, I've managed to persuade most of my patients to stop doing that now."

World of Holes

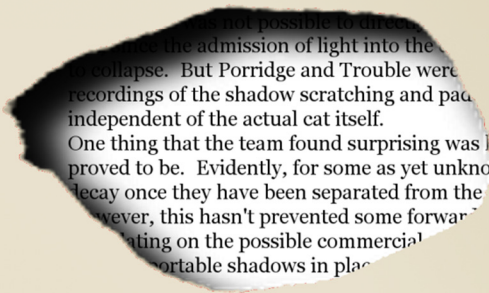


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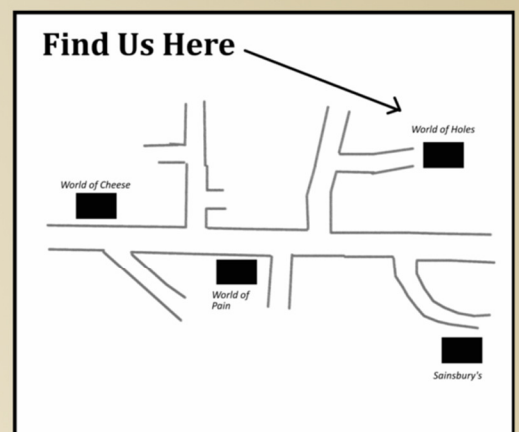
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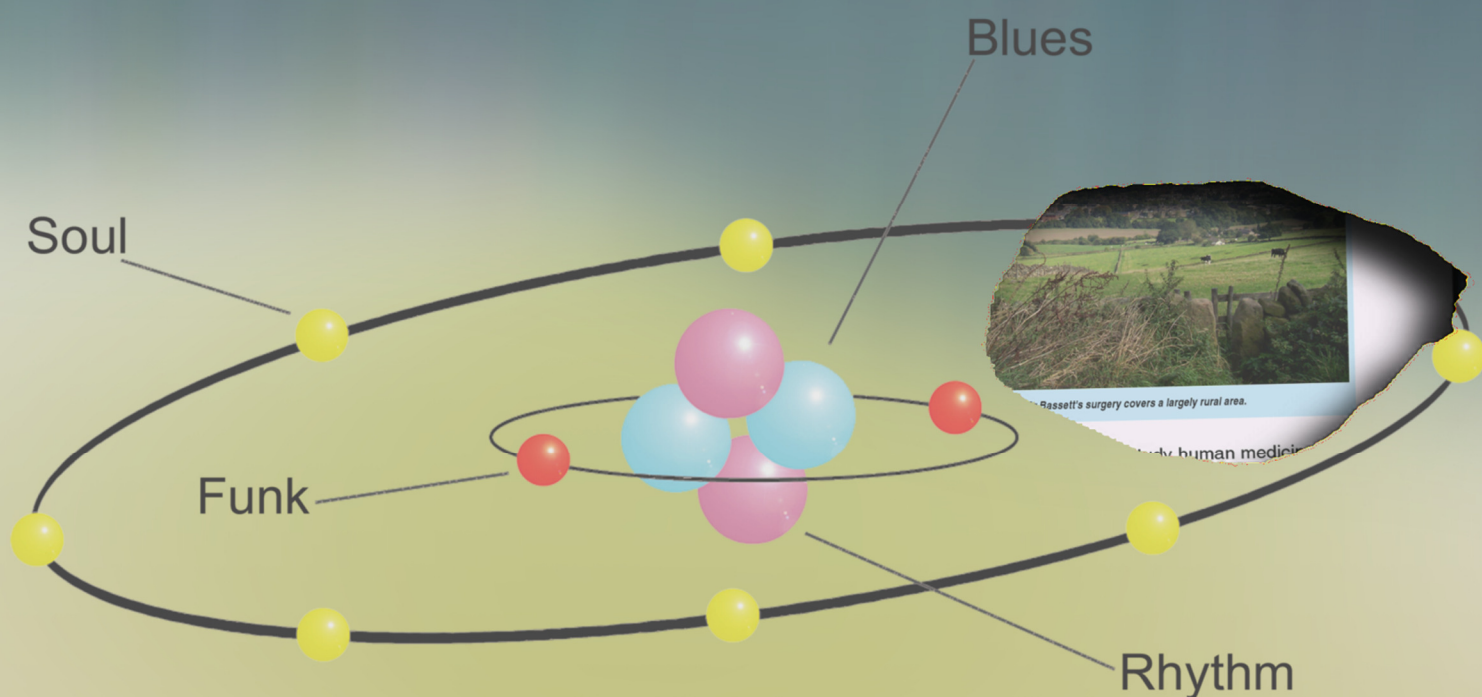
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voids and assorted gaps)



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everyone was, like, really cool
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PICTURE SHOW NORMAN WISDOM JOYCE GRENFALL AND INTRODUCING DORIS THE AMAZING
PERFORMING HORSE. IF YOU BOTHER TO READ THIS IT PROBABLY MEANS I'VE DONE IT WRONG

Professor Jez Moonbeam's SCIENCE CLUB



Catching Shadows

Doctors Nathan Porridge and Sally Trouble have achieved a world first, becoming the only people to have captured a live shadow in the laboratory. Publishing their findings in last week's Take a Break, one of the scientific world's more colourful journals, the pair explained how they achieved this feat using a Van de Graaff generator, a nine volt battery, two bits of Blu-Tack and a shoebox.

The shadow in question was that of a cat, a three year old American Shorthair called Percy, but that's not important right now. Doctors Porridge and Trouble's initial experiments in isolating shadows began in 2012, when they established the basic lighting conditions necessary to create shadows substantial enough to respond to weak manipulation. However, the shadows always disintegrated before they could be successfully quarantined. It wasn't until earlier this year that they made the breakthrough. After trying a bigger shoebox, Porridge and Trouble were able to trap the shadow and store it for several minutes, finally proving the predictions made by Wolfgang Pauli in 1926 in his Matrix Theory of Umbral Density.

Obviously it was not possible to directly observe the cat's shadow inside the box, since the admission of light into the container would instantly cause it to collapse. But Porridge and Trouble were nevertheless able to make audio recordings of the shadow scratching and padding back and forth, entirely independent of the actual cat itself.

One thing that the team found surprising was how short-lived the shadow proved to be. Evidently, for some as yet unknown reason, shadows rapidly decay once they have been separated from the objects that have cast them. However, this hasn't prevented some forward thinking individuals from speculating on the possible commercial applications of the technique, such as using portable shadows in place of sunshades.

Ghost Milk

Inspired by a surge in sales of goats' milk, a number of UK supermarkets are now selling 'Ghost' Milk, which they claim is even more beneficial to health, having fewer calories, almost zero fat and higher levels of vitamin D. Sales are already looking promising, although some experts are concerned that the high concentrations of ectoplasm represent a significant health risk.

Great moments in Science -No 412

Milan 1933

Paul Dirac experiments by introducing pasta to his antipasto to see if they will mutually annihilate. They don't. All that happens is that Dirac makes a bit of a mess, is saddled with the cleaning bill then gets thrown out of the restaurant.

Google Acquires New Colour

Search giant Google announced yesterday that it is to acquire the colour blue. Google, which already owns yellow and has a sixty percent stake in light green, purchased the colour following a series of protracted negotiations with its current owners, Lego. Details of the company's plans are sketchy at the moment, but it is believed that over the next few years they intend to develop several exciting new shades and a phone app.

In separate news, it was revealed that last Friday the smell of bacon was sold to an anonymous telephone bidder at an auction in Liverpool.

Copper Sulphate

The future of children's chemistry sets may be in doubt following news that there is a world shortage of copper sulphate. The compound, which has absolutely no conceivable useful properties, occurs naturally in only two places in the world - a remote river valley in southern Honduras and on a small patch of waste ground behind the post office in Harrogate. The first of these is all but mined out and the second is a protected UNESCO World Heritage site, so unless new sources can be found experts predict that supplies will run out completely by the end of 2016.

So far efforts to create copper sulphate in the laboratory have been unsuccessful, although a team in Holland have high hopes for a technique that involves firing high velocity M&Ms into a slab of granite. In the meantime, manufacturers of chemistry sets are replacing copper sulphate with other substances such as margarine, carpet fluff and earwax.

"In most cases, customers won't notice any difference," said a spokeshing. "These compounds are just as reactive as copper sulphate, with the added advantage that in at least two cases you can spread it on your toast. We don't think people will notice. After all, nobody said a word in 2007 when we substituted sprinkles for iron filings."



Stress

BOO! Ha ha ha ha ha. Not to worry, it's only me. But your reaction just goes to show that those inbuilt fight or flight impulses are still as strong now as they were back when our ancestors were swinging from tree to primordial tree, dropping coconuts on monkey's heads. Of course, anyone who has the unenviable misfortune to accidentally step into my waiting room could lay testament to the fact that mankind has not really progressed at all. Where my patients are concerned, the ability to swing from anything remains a distant ambition, as they must first contend with evolving the opposable digits to make such acrobatic antics possible.

Good evening, my name is most certainly Doctor Adolphous Bongo, an epithet which I usually find commands respect in most quarters. The advantage of having a reputation that precedes one is that - providing it is robust enough - it can wear people down to such a degree that by the time I actually turn up in person I seldom need to slap anyone. Oh, I just love being me.

You see, stress is such an integral part of modern life and as my opening sentence adequately demonstrated, stress is caused by fear. Fear and tigers. Although, it's a point of contention whether tigers are a direct cause of stress, or whether the *fear* of tigers is at work here. I suppose it depends how you feel about tigers. Anyway, I didn't come here to talk about tigers - been there, done that.

The point is, stress is caused by fear, and fear is something that is hardwired into our 'brains', as we medical people like to call them. For instance, the same instinct that once made nervous types shin up trees to avoid sabre toothed crocodiles now prompts them cross the street to avoid me, even though the days when mortal danger had pointy teeth and lurked around every boulder are long gone. Mankind's daily fight for survival now takes the form of occasional trips to the supermarket, irritating arguments with your neighbour about his overhanging leylandii, and ensuring that a report is on your manager's desk by Thursday lunchtime. The only time it is ever likely to

get more interesting is if a dispute erupts over a parking space, but even then it rarely gets visceral.

But although it may no longer provide any useful purpose, fear is still with us. Well, it's still with you, anyway - I'm above such things. That's why you're quaking in your cheap plastic shoes as you stand outside your boss's office, waiting nervously for the command to enter - you firmly believe that it will take just one wrong word for you to end up hanging from a tree, the skin flayed from your body and the Henderson account just a distant memory.

You notice that I appear to be surprisingly au fait with the details here - freely mentioning things like 'bosses' and 'offices' and 'Henderson accounts' as if I have some personal experience of these dreary places. I don't, of course, but I understand that that sort of thing goes on. I am also aware that not all workplaces are about business suits, open plan offices and people wearing telephone headsets. The place where I take my car, for example - that's filthy. It's all tyres and bits of exhaust and whatnot, and I've noticed that the staff are covered in oil and don't wear ties.

But what connects all these places is that they are sources of fear, which is where I come in, because I have to deal with the fallout in the shape of the constant stream of losers who flood my surgery, complaining of 'stress' and 'anxiety' as if these are properly recognised medical conditions. There are two ways that a doctor can deal with this - they can listen carefully and sympathetically and try to empathise with the individual. Or they can do what I do and tell people to stop being so wet, pull themselves together and get out of my surgery straight away, before I tear them a new set of holes.

And at the end of the day, my approach turns out to be far more efficacious because it's all a question of what you're afraid of most. Whenever one of my more spineless patients drifts into my consulting rooms and starts whinging about stress and anxiety, and casually hinting at sick notes and the kind of medication that could seriously inconvenience a horse, I make sure that I give them something to *really* worry about. It's surprising how rapidly they can overcome their condition once you've put the fear of god into them.

Dr Adolphous Bongo

Urban Fox Hunting

The government is currently considering relaxing the ban on fox hunting in England and Wales in response to reports that fox populations are growing out of control. In particular there are concerns about the numbers of urban foxes which are increasingly proving a problem in our towns and cities.

It is proposed that a limited number of hunts be allowed in urban areas and this has prompted protests from several groups. Retailers have been very vocally opposed to the idea, fearing that the possibility of a posse of be-jodhpured horsefolk tearing down the high street, hot on the heels of a pack of slavering dogs, might be detrimental to trade. Motoring organisations are similarly concerned, claiming that there will be an inevitable impact on road users. And local authorities have expressed similar reservations, pointing out that even if damage to roadways and services is kept to a minimum, there were still be a sizeable volume of horseshit to deal with and as yet there has been no discussion about who would be responsible.

The pro-hunting lobby has, nevertheless, dismissed these objections. "These animals are a menace," said spokesman Willem Van Dyke. "They spread disease, they destroy property and they must be kept under control. And, frankly, if dressing up in silly costumes, tooting horns and whooping excitedly as we hunt them down is not the most practical, efficient, modern, cost-effective and sensible way of controlling vermin in the twenty-first century, then I'm a Dutchman."

MOST WANTED

The UK's most notorious villains.



No. 27 Barry Sandwich

Aliases: Barry Butty, Barry Sarnie, Chopper

Distinguishing Features: Scar on left cheek. Mole on Chin. Fat arse.

Barry Sandwich began his career in crime when he broke a tooth on a dodgy burger that he got from a van on the A2. Since then he has sworn deadly revenge on the catering trade, a ceaseless campaign of terror funded by armed robbery, counterfeiting, extortion, blackmail and the occasional spot of gardening at the weekends.

Detectives almost caught him during a summer season at Cleethorpes, when he was doing a memory man act under the stage name of 'Zygos the Munificent'. It later emerged that this was merely a cover story, and Barry was actually plotting to steal the Post Office Tower by smuggling it out of the country disguised as a yucca plant. The plot was foiled when customs officials smelled a rat and contacted the flying squad. Apparently, the sight of a 620 foot yucca plant raised a few eyebrows, but wasn't considered particularly suspicious until someone noticed the revolving restaurant at the top.

Status: Still at large and considered extremely dangerous, although highly recommended if anyone needs their privet trimming.



No. 42 Keith Hoople

Aliases: Mr Hoople

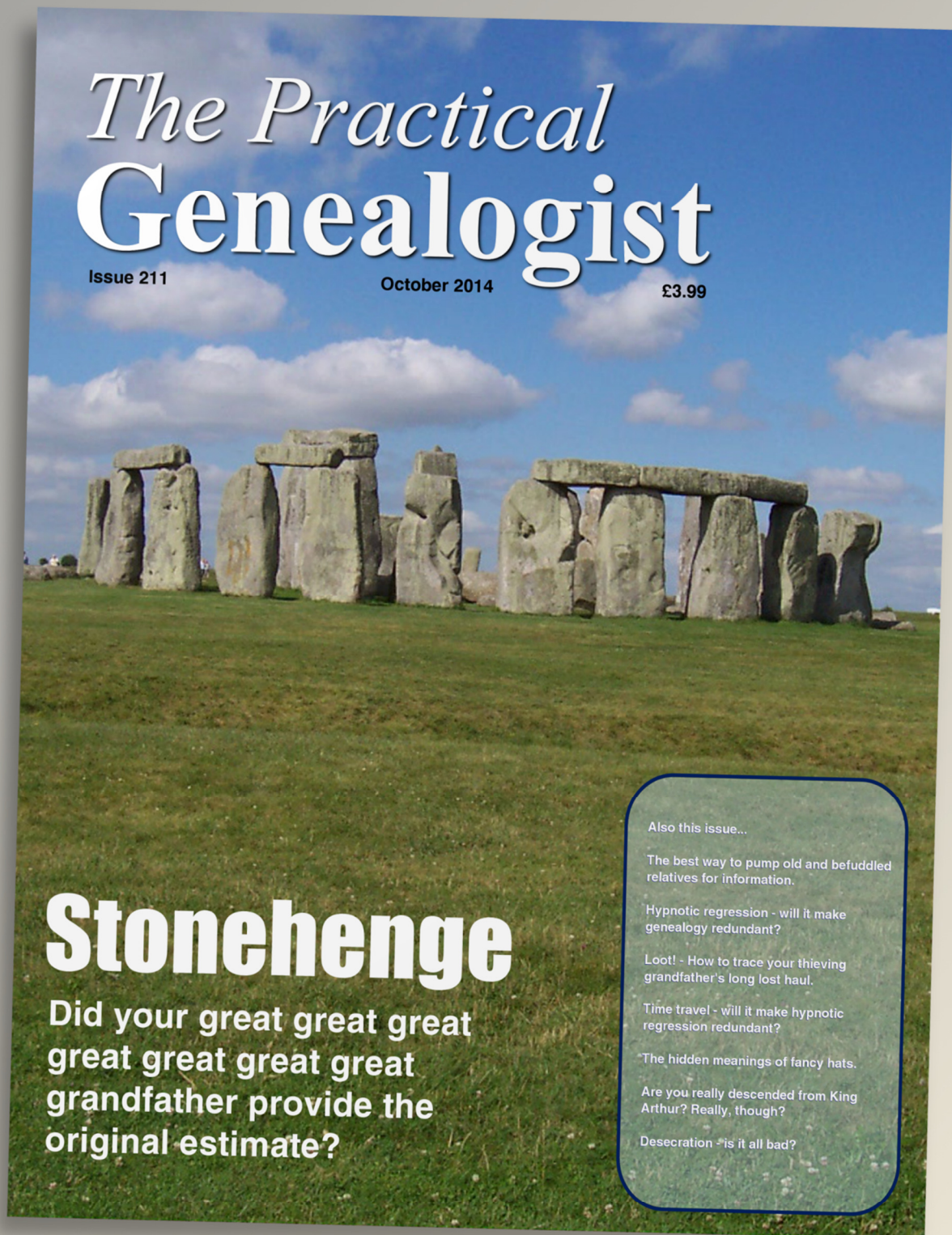
Special Powers: A foul temper and an annoying wife.

Mr Keith Hoople works in the planning department of Surrey County Council, is vice president of the Leatherhead and District Amateur Bowls Club and is a former neighbour of the Chief Inspector of Surrey Police. Mr Hoople first came to the attention of the police when the Chief Inspector asked us to 'sort him out' following a dispute over an overhanging laburnum tree. Mr Hoople had persistently failed to respond to requests to deal with this, prompting the Chief Inspector to take the matter into his own hands and disintegrate the offending tree with a quantity of plastic explosive that had been confiscated from a militant faction of the Women's Institute the previous week. Mr Hoople claimed that the practice of explosive gardening was contrary to a local bylaw, and lodged a complaint with the council.

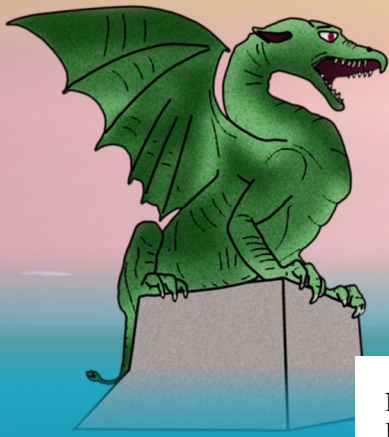
Surrey Police felt that positive action might persuade Mr Hoople to withdraw the grievance, and so we blew up his dog. This failed to have the desired effect, and encouraged Mr Hoople to sue us to recover the costs of having bits of dog professionally cleaned from his front windows. On the advice of our solicitor we settled out of court.

Status: Mr Hooper remains at large and is believed to be armed and extremely litigious.

Out Now



Plus, with each new issue you get a genuine human bone, which will build week by week into a skeleton that you can pretend is your great great great great great great uncle Peter who probably fought at the Battle of Trafalgar



dragon watch



The La-la Land Argus
Thursday 15th Broptober, 1215



No one throughout the Enchanted Fairy Kingdom can have failed to have noticed the growing numbers of dragons that come screaming out of the skies to reduce farmsteads to burning embers and make off with the plumpest cattle. "They're a menace," said local serf, Titus Cooper, co-ordinator of the Fairy Kingdom Neighbourhood Watch.

"The best advice we can give is that people keep their windows closed, but frankly that kind of guidance is next to useless if you wake up to find a dirty great lizard perched on your rooftop, pouring red hot molten death down your chimney, and generally spoiling your breakfast time. Something needs to be done about this, once and for all."

Many citizens are becoming angry that Good Prince Casper has failed to address the issue. In a recent proclamation issued by the Emerald Palace, Prince Casper recognised that the attacks were becoming more serious, with dragons carrying off not just cattle, but horses, small children and, in one case, the post office. He expressed sympathy with his subjects, but his lack of affirmative action has led some people to call for the restoration of his Evil Uncle Silas, who was banished to the Screaming Badlands of Hath last year, following an expenses scandal.

The Enchanted Examiner *Monday 8th Slapril, 1215*

Help for the victims of dragon attack may be just around the corner, following the launch of DragonWatch, a new partnership of advice agencies, community groups and charities. We spoke to Project Co-ordinator Princess Kate of the Sparkling Grotto, who was very excited about this new initiative.

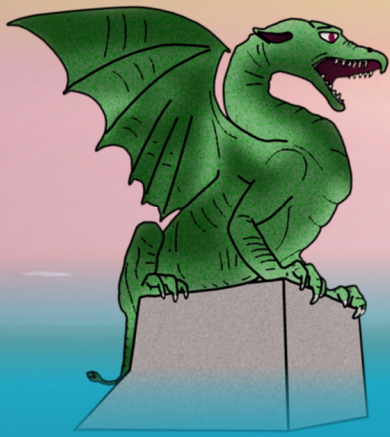
"We've had a very positive response from a broad range of organisations, including the local council elders. I think that reflects strongly on the power of our branding. We spent a long time deciding what kind of image we wanted to present, and finally settled on the name DragonWatch after drawing on the results of a number of focus groups and research projects.

"There were some important questions to be asked. What kind of organisation are we? How are we structured? Who are our prospective partners? What colour is our logo and where does our choice of stationery place us strategically on

the advice-information axis? It was only after getting to grips with these issues that we were able to move on to the next stage."

The group has now embarked on a programme of promotional activities to publicise the values of the partnership. Representatives have attended a number of strategy meetings and events across the kingdom, and ran a very successful stand at this year's Ideal Cart Exhibition, during which they gave away DragonWatch pens, key rings and balloons on sticks.

"We are currently in the process of targeting potential partners, so it's very important to establish brand recognition and position ourselves as an organisation which is trustworthy, dependable and 'confidence-inspirable'. For the future we are looking at bar charts, colour-coded maps or even an appeal thermometer to help get our message across. Who knows? The sky really is the limit."



The Peasant Times

St Colin's Day, Friday 14th Geofuary, 1215

DragonWatch, the partnership set up in response to the recent increase in attacks by flying lizards, is an expensive joke, according to its most vocal critic, Count Squiffy the Munificent of Upper Bongolia. The Count, a former Director of Policy for the DragonWatch partnership, slammed the project in a recent interview, pulling no punches when it came to describing just how he felt about the organisation.

"Pah!" he told us when we asked him for his opinion. "Ha!" he further elaborated, and then "Bollocks!" he ejaculated when we pressed him further.

"DragonWatch - stupid name, by the way - is too wrapped up in its own governance, corporate image and constantly shuffling game of management musical chairs to pay any attention to the actual problem.

"I don't think that it's naive of me to hold the view that a charitable organisation should be run for the benefit of its clients. The reality is that while people are being driven from their homes by flame-spewing monsters, these clowns are sitting around conference tables with their tea and biscuits, salivating over the headline of their latest press release."

Count Squiffy believes that DragonWatch should be tackling the problem head on. "Well, maybe not 'head on'," the Count corrected himself. "It's best to creep up on your actual dragon from behind, unless it's a little one. Then you can stab 'em in the soft bits with a rusty blade. I'm reliably informed that they don't like it up 'em."

The La-la Land Argus **Tuesday 3rd Smaugust, 2015**

Amid the on-going outbreak of dragon terror, DragonWatch has issued an official response to increased calls for action. In their statement they say that the sort of violent campaign suggested by Count Squiffy the Munificent of Upper Bongolia would be reckless and premature, and the partnership will not even begin to consider such things as 'death squads' and 'vigilante dragonslayers' until the board has signed off on the wording of their mission statement.

And in the face of continued public pressure, Julius Flopsy, the Council of Elders' Director of Fiscal Policy, reaffirmed support for the DragonWatch project, claiming that it represented real value for money at a time when public funds are in short supply.

DragonWatch, he said, would give the victims of dragon attacks a voice, and also provide a much needed stimulus to the local economy. When asked if he had any response to Count Squiffy's comments, he told our reporter

"The Count is entitled to his opinions, of course. He is a very talented campaigner and a genuine trailblazer, but I think his ideas about tailoring the service to the needs of the public - rather than those of its project partners or the local authority - are painfully unsophisticated. In fact, I don't believe he comprehends the value of establishing a really powerful corporate identity; I think he underestimates just what can be achieved by a balloon on a stick."

AROMATRON *Pulse*

Hi! My name's Charles Webbley and 130 years ago my ancestor invented the Aromatron and changed the lives of anosmiacs forever. Today Webbley International Plc is still bringing relief to people with no sense of smell, helping them to live useful, full and aromatic lives.

This year we launch Aromatron Pulse, our smallest and most discreet model yet. Inserted painlessly into the nasal cavity, Aromatron Pulse is the first artificial smelling aid to incorporate true 3D odour detection, multi-band scent differentiation and accelerated whiff-buffering that allows you to store smells and play them back later.

"Oh blimey! The Aromatron Pulse has changed my life. What? Oh yes! I feel confident and assured - finally I can be myself. Brilliant. Even my friends have seen the difference in me. You can bet your arse that I wouldn't be without my Aromatron Pulse for anything!"

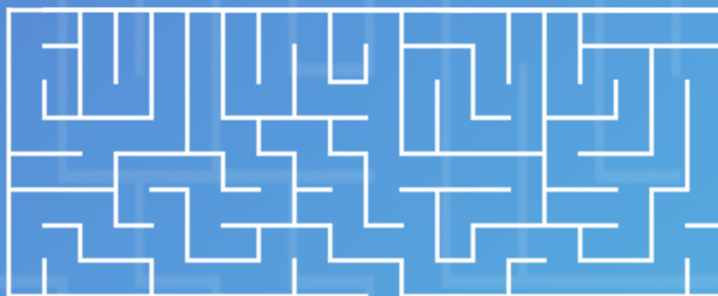
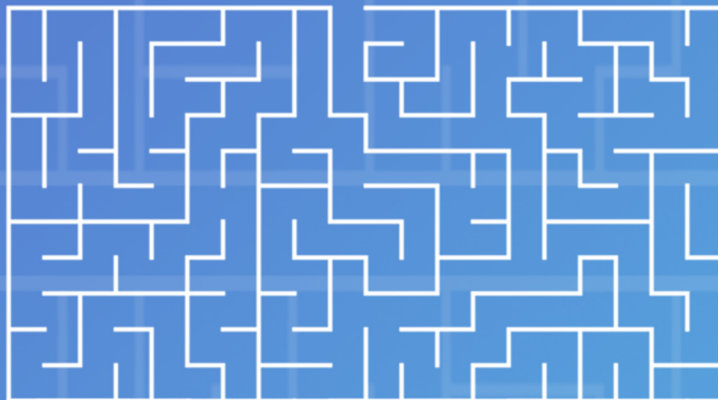
Bertram 'Fruity' Mountbatten III



Constable Bigot has a problem: he's intellectually sub-normal. Unfortunately we can't do anything about that. But we can help him sort out his latest dilemma. The poor thing has gone and got himself lost. See if you can help the gormless prick find his way back to the police station.



>> START



FINISH >>



Convulso-Tag

**Because sometimes
wiring the bastards
up is the only way**



Discipline Over Distance

Central to any successful model of workforce control is the principal of discipline. Picture your business as a Roman galley with all the slaves rowing at different rates. Without the effective administration of regular punishment, your boat will end up going round in circles and your enterprise will be dead in the water.

Sadly the glory days of the lash are no longer with us and today's modern employment ethic calls for a 'carrot and stick' approach - in which the carrot is usually something hard and pointy which can be jammed into a medically approved orifice, and the stick is a cricket bat.

However these approaches require a management-employee interface opportunity which is not practicable over distance. Step forward Machiavelli's patented Convulso-Tag scheme, which can remotely deliver a debilitating electric shock to the wayward employee at the touch of a button. The Convulso-Tag system offers the ultimate peace of mind to employee and management alike, replacing the regular one-on-one contact of everyday office violence.

Convulso-Tag technology means that the employee can be confident that he will receive the necessary feedback to ensure acceptable standards are maintained. The management, meanwhile, know that no one will forget who's boss.

Food Banking

In recent years the UK has seen a shocking rise in the use of food banks by people who simply don't have the means to feed themselves. Although food bank use continues to rise at a time when welfare budgets are being slashed, the government maintains that there is no link. We spoke to David Chumbly, MP for Waitrose, in the hope that he might shed some light on the government's position.

UBO:

Mr Chumbly, many thanks for coming in today. A leading food bank has just announced a 51% rise in the number of clients. That's quite startling news, isn't it?

Chumbly:

It certainly is, but I think it's a clear demonstration that government policy appears to be working. In the face of considerable criticism we have maintained that our austerity measures are the way forward, and I'm pleased that this announcement has now borne that out.

UBO:

You think that food bank growth is a good thing?

Chumbly:

All growth is good, as long as it isn't allowed to get out of hand. We want to avoid the boom and bust economies of old. But in this case we have an industry that didn't really exist when we came to power, and yet under this government it has grown steadily, in a sustainable way, to the point where it is now a significant sector of the UK economy. Well done to everyone concerned, that's what I say.

UBO:

Mr Chumbly, I don't think you fully understand what a food bank actually is. If you had ever had call to use one –

Chumbly:

Oh, I have.

UBO:

You have?

Chumbly:

Certainly I have. I deposited a tin of peas in my local branch several years ago, and in that time I have seen my investment grow to three tins of carrots and a bag of sprouts.

UBO:

That's outrageous!

Chumbly:

I know, it is rather impressive, isn't it? Of course, it's taxable and I have had to declare it on the Register of Members' Interests. Nevertheless, it's not to be sneered at and that is why there has been such interest from overseas. Britain is now the number one destination for foreign investors who are looking for a good return on a spare packet of soup or a box a cereal. However, I do understand your concerns.

UBO:

You do? Well, I'm glad to hear it.

Chumbly:

Yes of course. The issue of food bankers' bonuses is a contentious one. Certainly, on one hand you have to recognise that huge pay-outs are damaging the reputation of the industry, but then if the sector is to retain talent it has to be suitably rewarded. There is a fine line between regulating and stifling the market. Take the PPI scandal, for instance.

UBO:

PPI?

Chumbly:

Parsnip Protection Insurance. The previous government got that badly wrong and now food banks have had to set aside whole greenhouses just to meet the demands for compensation. You see?

UBO:

Yes... No, not really. Mr Chumbly, are you sure we're talking about the same thing? We're discussing the shameful rise in the need for food banks. One of your colleagues recently stated that this increase was due to extra food banks being opened. But surely that is nonsense? Your government can't honestly believe that more food banks leads to greater demand?

Chumbly:

Well, this thinking is consistent with government policy.

UBO:

But isn't that getting the laws of supply and demand the wrong way round? It's like saying that opening more factories increases the demand for a product. Or that forcing more people onto the labour market increases the number of jobs.

Chumbly:

Yes, well, as I say – this thinking is entirely consistent with government policy.

UBO:

Mr Chumbly, thank you for your time.

Chumbly:

A pleasure. The invoice is in the post.

Core Competencies in Office Furniture

This fully accredited course is intended for colleagues who are at risk of encountering office furniture, fixtures and fittings during the mandated course of their standardised employment duties. IMPORTANT NOTE: This course does NOT presently cover stools or certain non-standard equipment trolleys.

Course Objectives:

At the end of this programme of education, the student will be able to:

- Recognise a wide variety of desks, counters, tables and other functional surfaces and environments.
- Apply good practice in the operation drawers and cupboards, and be able to demonstrate a sound working knowledge of the engineering tolerances of various fastenings, both spring-actioned and magnetic.
- Exhibit, to advanced standard, knowledge of the history and theory of desk tidies.
- Adopt good practice in managing the chair-employee interface through a broad range of positional skills and orientation-focussed optimisation strategies.

The Course Includes the Following Modules:

Module One

Overspill responsibilities vis-a-vis effective delegation of targeted distribution arcs (ongoing) and their relation to legacy positioning nodes within the centrally delineated work stream.

Module Two

Awareness of globally defined multi-outcome fallback planning, and the importance of establishing nodal interface opportunities within the substructure of established 'best practice' revisionism.

Module Three

All is peace. Think of the trees. Talk to the grass. The fish are crying. I am sad.

Module Four

Establishment of concave vectoring analysis with specific reference to quasi-statistical phased placements, leading to a qualitative index of strategic added value.

Module Five

Coffee and dessert.

Many centres of further education are now offering City and Guilds qualifications in office furniture after employers complained that new staff were frequently unfamiliar with the use of basic fixtures and fittings.

"Of course, anyone can sit on a chair," says Sharon Barron, assistant head of pencils at the University of Stoke. "Well, all right, maybe not anyone. I have a friend who seems to find it a constant challenge and, while we're on the subject, she doesn't seem all that clear about the proper function of a coffee table, either. But that's by the by. Most people can sit on a chair in an amateur capacity, but can they do it to a professional standard?"

The new qualification gives students the opportunity to learn how to sit on a number of different kinds of office chair, both static and swivel. They are taught how to manoeuvre without causing injury, how to cope in the event of a fall and what contingency plans to put into effect if they find themselves facing the wrong way. The course also offers modules on filing cabinets, desks and a comprehensive range of trolleys and equipment stands.

"At the end of the course," Miss Baron explains, "students will have a certificate that says they have achieved the necessary competencies to operate office furniture in a safe, efficient and compliant manner. More importantly, they will have the confidence to enter the office environment without worrying whether they're going to be embarrassed or confused by basic equipment. If running this course means that fewer people are going to get trapped in cupboards or injured by drawers, then that's got to be a good thing."

PROTECT OUR LOCAL SLUMS

BY QUENTIN PRICK

Protestors have launched a vigorous campaign in response to plans to return a derelict and abandoned housing estate to nature. The Park Estate in Warwick was built in the early fifties and its two-hundred and fifty prefabricated houses were never meant to last more than a few years. Nevertheless, the last tenant moved out only two years ago, since when the properties have been boarded up, fenced off and left to decay. This latest plan will now see the estate bulldozed to make way for a country park consisting of managed woods, grasslands and a small lake.

Inevitably, there has been strong opposition to the scheme and a sizeable section of the local population have objected fiercely. "We don't want our traditional slums ruined by areas of natural beauty," said loud-mouthed campaigner Louisa Scum, 24, who has lived in the area ever since she was 22. "All those trees and bushes will ruin the character of the area. It's all very well for the local councillors and their cronies - they all live in cosy little slums in town. They don't have to worry about having all that nature on their doorstep, do they? But what about us? What about our kids? Where are they going to play once they've torn down all the dangerous condemned buildings and cleaned up all the polluted waste ground? In a tree? I don't bloody think so!"

Local publican Maurice Phlegm, 54, has set up a Facebook page where protestors can register their opposition. He is keen to persuade the council to rethink the plan in the light of the likely impact on the area's infrastructure. "More fields means more cows," he argued. "And our highways are barely sufficient to cope with the traffic as it is. Gawd knows what's going to happen when there are suddenly all these new cows on the roads. They drive like maniacs."

NATIONAL TOMBOLA

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT

Congratulations to Mrs Gladys Womble of Hartlepool who has been awarded the contract to run the UK's National Tombola. The National Tombola, which raises funds for charities and local projects, will be televised on Saturday nights, right after the lottery, and players will stand a chance of winning anything from a bottle of wine or a box of dark chocolate liqueurs to a non-slip bath mat or a Victoria sponge baked by Mrs Collins from the corner shop.

Mrs Womble is confident that the Tombola will raise enough money in its first six months to pay for a new bandstand in the memorial gardens, with perhaps some left over to give the community centre a new lick of paint. The government, however, appear to have set their sights a little higher; their spokesman making it clear that they expected this initiative to fund the National Health Service for the next five years.

Historic Envelope up for Auction

The envelope on which composer John Cage scribbled the first draft of one of his most famous works has been withdrawn from auction following doubts about its authenticity. The envelope - manila, measuring approximately six inches by nine and entirely blank - was believed to have contained the original outline for '4'33"', Cage's notorious silent composition. But experts have now expressed concern after being unable to confirm that the lack of handwriting belongs to the late tunesmith.

This marks the second controversy to mark the auction house in the last few weeks. Only last month the sale of a sheet of blank A4 paper had to be halted after authorities failed to confirm that it was the original cover design for 'The Beatles' 'White Album'.

Local Man's Parking Nightmare

BY STAFF REPORTER

A renaming committee has decided that henceforth Mr Geoffrey Clanger of Dunstable will be known as 'Coronation Avenue' in honour of Her Majesty the Queen. However, concerns have been raised, not just because this is a somewhat belated reference to the monarch's ascension to the throne, but also because Mr Clanger is not a street - he is in fact a 42-year-old window cleaner who has recently moved to the area from Poole.

The new name has led to a number of problems, not least the sudden increase in traffic up Mr Clanger's spine as well as cars being parked in his armpits overnight. Mr Clanger sent a strongly worded complaint to the council and, although he is not entirely satisfied with their response, he is at least grateful that they have introduced parking restrictions. From now on anyone leaving a vehicle unattended in the nape of his neck will be clamped and contractors are coming to paint yellow lines up his back on Tuesday.

Time Capsule Offers a Glimpse into the Past

A time capsule buried almost seven days ago is to be unearthed tomorrow at a special ceremony presided over by the mayor. The week-old time capsule is believed to contain a varied selection of items representative of life in the early twenty-first century and should be of inestimable value to antiquarians piecing together a very poorly understood time in our history.

"We're very excited about the prospect of unearthing invaluable documentary evidence," said archaeologist Colin Trowel. "I personally am particularly eager to get my hands on a copy of last week's local paper, which I'm sure will make fascinating reading."

No doubt many people will find some of the attitudes and lifestyles of our ancestors intriguing and unusual, which is why the local authority have announced that they will be incorporating some of the recovered artefacts into a display in the town library. "I'm really excited that we're getting the opportunity to put this material on display," said Chief Library Thing, Margaret Binding. "I think people are really going to be astonished. For many it will be the first proper opportunity they have ever had to experience what life was really like last Tuesday."

STOP AND SEARCH

BY BERTRAND CRUMB

The Home Secretary has announced new measures to extend existing Stop and Search powers in response to the increasing radicalisation of members of the police. Police currently have the power to stop anyone they suspect of carrying stolen goods, offensive weapons or being 'a bit funny'. The new legislation now extends this power so that members of the public can stop and search police officers if they suspect them of abusing their authority, acting 'like a tool' or being drunk in charge of a truncheon.

National Fly-Tipping Day

Next Tuesday is National Fly-Tipping Day, when people across the country will be encouraged to dump their old furniture, building rubble and broken kitchen appliances in lay-bys, wildlife sanctuaries and beauty spots across the UK. This is the third year that the event has been held, and it has already become something of an institution.



A much loved local shit hole

"It's an occasion that the whole family can get involved in," said organiser Christian Pyle. "People talk about how families have become fragmented; how they've lost touch with one another. But events like this really bring them together - brothers and sisters, mothers and sons. They bond over the burnt-out bedsteads and the water-damaged carpets and the half-filled bags of unidentified but most probably highly hazardous waste. It's really quite beautiful."

Beautiful it might be, but the practice of fly-tipping is presently under threat due to increasing environmental concerns and the rise in popularity of recycling. Mr Pyle inaugurated National Fly-Tipping day as a direct response to this, hoping to preserve a custom which stretches back centuries, but which is in danger of dying out completely.

"What we are talking about is our heritage," Mr Pyle told us. "But we're also thinking about the future. These are customs that we want to pass on to our children; a way of life that we want to preserve for posterity. It will be a sad world indeed if the youngsters of tomorrow never get to experience the magic of finding a rusty washing machine in a hedge, a pile of broken paving slabs at the end of a farm track or half a cow under a motorway flyover."



What colour should the new light on traffic lights be? That's the question that the UK Highways Agency will be putting to the public next month, as it prepares to unveil the new four-light traffic lights that will gradually be rolled out to replace existing signals.

For some time now, safety campaigners have been pressing for a fourth light on traffic signals, to eliminate the false starts and 'queue shuffling' of impatient drivers waiting at red lights. The fourth light will let drivers know when it's their turn next, so that they can finish picking their nose, changing CDs or applying makeup and be ready to move off in good time.

Motorists and traffic light enthusiasts will be able to vote online at the agency's website, where they will choose from a wide selection of colours and shades. A winner will then be selected from the five most popular choices via a phone vote, to be televised live by the BBC as part of a star-studded spectacular later this year.



Winter Sports

Skidding, basically. At least that's what it was called in my youth, when the snot-freckled brats who attended my particular seat of learning would spend the winter months sliding across the frozen playground at no small risk to their already declining health. Clearly I would never indulge in this uncultured nonsense myself. There is little profit in careering wildly across an icy schoolyard with your arms flailing passionately, prior to slamming painfully into the side of the science block. It lacks dignity. And that sort of thing won't do when one is attempting to run a successful liquorice and sherbet racket, I can tell you.

Hello. My name is Dr Adolphous Bongo, twice named Trouser Wearer of the Year, in 1977 and 1979. Of course, this was in the seventies when it was much more acceptable to be outlandish in the trouser area. My lime green, glitter-encrusted bell bottoms quite rightly excited wonder and delight, whereas I fear that in this more conservative age they would only provoke fear and alarm. We live in sad times.

But back to those halcyon schooldays, during which the seeds of my interest in medicine began to germinate. For, whilst I did not indulge in those absurd winter sports myself, I did take a keen interest in the many agonising, life-threatening and comical injuries that ensued. There is nothing funnier than seeing one's schoolmates with broken noses, flapping knees or dislocated lungs, but I also observed an opportunity for profit. Since our school nurse was habitually off her breasts on cleaning fluid and Brasso, there was a gap in the market when it came to medical care.

I wasn't a doctor at this point, you understand. I was only seven and wouldn't qualify for another three years, but I took the view that it couldn't be all that difficult, and that most of my school friends were disposable. I discovered that it was all much easier than many professionals let on. Popping a dislocated arm back into its socket is

simply a matter of brute force, and the agonising pain of which people often speak is negligible. I never felt a thing, although my patients did tend to scream a lot, which I felt was not only unnecessary but also quite rude. At times like these I found that stuffing a rolled up sock into the patient's mouth was an effective means of muffling the noise and allowed me to save my eardrums whilst getting on with the matter in hand. In fact, this is a technique that I still employ today and in spite of the recent reports that have circulated in the gutter press, speculating on the unusually high percentage of my patients that have died after choking on hosiery, I still keep a ready supply of socks in my desk drawer. For my more melodramatic patients I prescribe legwarmers.

Those early attempts, skirting the edges of medical negligence, netted me a considerable income in lunch money and break-time snacks.

Nowadays, as my more opinionated private patients will no doubt tumble over themselves to tell you, my services cost considerably more than a swig of Fanta and half a Curly Wurly. Not least because the severity of the injuries has increased in keeping with the determination of my clientele to seriously damage themselves. Throwing yourself down a Swiss mountainside, trusting only to a thin plank of wood, some knee pads and barely adequate health insurance, is likely to result in something a little more serious than grazed knees, a nasty bruise and a splintered Kit Kat.

No, if you're stupid enough to think that the definition of a good time is skimming down a frozen trench on a tea tray with the intention of self-interring what remains of your shattered frame in a snow drift when you reach the bottom, then it's reasonable to expect that a certain amount of reconstruction will need to take place. So, before you think about wandering into my surgery with your head on backwards, not knowing whether you're coming or going, think of the expense before you waste my time. We are talking a serious amount of cash just for the plaster alone, to say nothing of additional services such as therapy, counselling, panel beating and welding. I am also in the habit of adding a sizeable percentage to my bill to cover the cost of suppressing my disdain.

I suppose we have events like the Winter Olympics to thank for giving gullible people the mistaken idea that competitive sliding is a sport. And a spectator sport at that, although it's hard to fathom what people get out

of it. Personally, I find far greater pleasure in sitting outside my local supermarket on a frosty morning and watching old ladies falling over in the car park. Sometimes they can be beautifully balletic, often staggering through quite complex routines incorporating much thrashing and floundering, before crashing to the tarmac in a heap of bruises and broken bones. I have started to show my appreciation by giving them marks out of ten, and have had some display cards printed for the purpose. Last week I was even moved to congratulate one old dear in person, shouldering my way through the crowd that had gathered around her as she waited for the ambulance. Sadly the selfish cow was far too busy crying and wailing to listen to my keenly observed critique, which was a pity as I believe I had one or two comments to make that would have significantly improved her performance.

The point is, these people, bravely venturing out into the most extreme weathers to get their shopping, have just as much right to call themselves athletes as figure skaters, bobsled jockeys or those weirdoes with the brooms. More importantly they don't feel the need to spoil everyone's day by going out in public in hideously unflattering bodysuits and motorcycle helmets. What these sports people need more than anything is a sense of fashion, which makes it all the more tragic that no one these days seems to have any tolerance for a stylishly outlandish trouser.

The Amazing Mr Ooluv's World of the Wacky



The Amazing Mind Reading Trick

First write down the words "Jesus Christ!" on a piece of paper, then fold it carefully so that no one can see. Next, choose a victim and tell him that you can predict the very next words he will say. He won't believe you, of course, and might even be prepared to bet a lot of money to prove you wrong. Once you've accepted his wager, heat up two steel rods in a fire, then ram them hard up the victim's nostrils. Your friends will be amazed when he cries out the very phrase you've written down, and you'll be quids in!

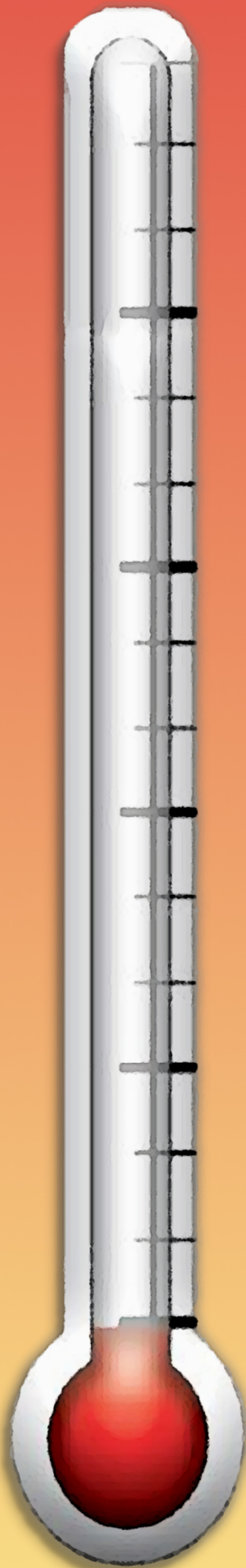
The Amazing Disappearing Pencil Trick

For this one you will need a really sharp pencil and a mallet. First... actually I think you can probably figure this one out for yourself. Needless to say, your friends will be amazed, possibly sickened, when your victim hobbles away after his close encounter with the contents of your pencil case - which is just as well since by now you should have had all their lunch money off them anyway.

The Amazing Paralysing Limb Trick

Here's a good one. Choose a victim and tell him that you can perform a secret pagan ritual that will make him lose all control of his left arm. He won't believe you, of course, and might even be prepared to bet a lot of money to prove you wrong. Once you've accepted his wager, tell him to close his eyes and slowly touch the tip of his nose with his left hand. Next, tell him to do the same with his right.

Then, while he's distracted, grab his arm and slam it repeatedly in a door until it becomes all useless. (Note: you might have to slam the door quite hard before the arm breaks). Your friends will be amazed when he suddenly loses all command of the limb, and you'll be quids in!



Can you help us to take over the world?

Sadly, the days when you could just get a group of sturdy mates together and overthrow the neighbouring village have long gone. These days subjugation and conquest cost money and so it is with this in mind that we are launching our world domination appeal. Your donations, no matter how small, can play an important part in helping us to visit fear and alarm upon the populace as we grind the oppressed into the dust beneath our merciless iron heel. Thank you for your support.

45 p can buy a cheap plastic fork with which we can terrorize a small patch of ground round the back of the ASDA store in Solihull.

£1.00 Can buy a scary mask which we can use to put the wind up unsuspecting commuters waiting at bus stops.

£10 can go towards stink bombs, itching powder and other important military supplies.

£70 can pay for a course of instruction in the deadly martial art of origami.

£160 can pay for an injured or distressed henchman to have a convalescent holiday in Brighton.

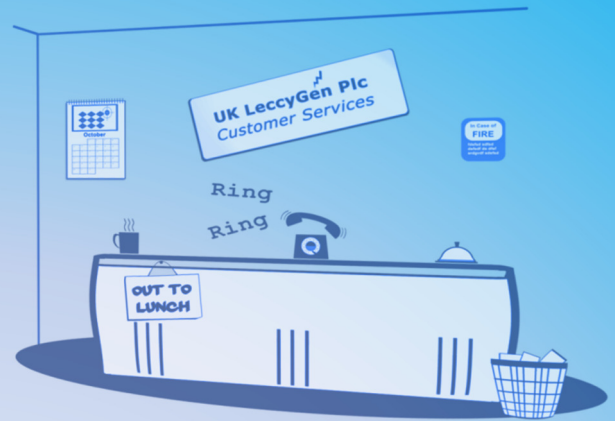
£500 can help us train up a squad of killer kamikaze penguins.

£5000 can go towards upgrading the central heating in the old scout hut that we use for our HQ

£10,000 can buy a nuclear submarine, second-hand off eBay.

£500,000,000 will provide us with the deposit for a secret underwater lair in the Indian Ocean.

Dirty Electric



Complaints to electricity companies have seen a sharp increase in recent months as more and more consumers have questioned the quality of supplies. Complaints have ranged from sluggish and unresponsive electrical items, to noisy cables, damaged fuse boxes and smelly sockets.

After receiving a significant volume of mail on the subject, the consumer organisation Huh? commissioned an investigation. Their report, based on evidence supplied by a forensic electrician, revealed that the electricity that we use at home might not be as pure as we have a right to expect. Samples of electricity were taken from eight separate locations and put through a number of laboratory tests. In summary, the main findings were:

- The electricity incorporated significant quantities of impurities. All but one of the samples contained iron fillings - this is a normal consequence of modern electricity manufacturing methods, but these impurities should be filtered out before they leave the generating station. Failure to do so can result in increased wear and tear on electrical equipment, and could explain why some customers complained that they could hear 'rattling' and 'tearing' noises coming from their wires.
- Other impurities and foreign objects were also found, including traces of asbestos, human hair, faecal matter and, in one case, a shoe. Such material can cause dangerous blockages in electrical equipment, causing fires and even explosions. Some of the larger items could disrupt the supply to a dwelling completely, effectively acting as an electrical dam and allowing dangerous reservoirs of current to build up below ground.

- The voltage of domestic supplies within the European Union is 230 volts, and yet some of the electricity sampled contained bits of electricity that were significantly outside this range. Much of the impurities were around the 70 to 150 volt range, which suggests that suppliers have been trying to slash costs by cutting their electricity with cheap, sub-standard power imported from elsewhere. However, in one case a lab technician came across a chunk of electricity that registered over 900 volts. To say he was shocked is an understatement, and had he not been wearing rubber soled shoes he would have been done for.
- Upon placing the samples beneath a scanning electron microscope, it was noted that the charged particles were not properly linked up. In the words of the report "all the little men were not holding hands". This would mean that the current would be unable to flow, and is symptomatic of a shoddy and incomplete manufacturing process.

A spokesman for the energy industry responded by saying that the report is 'bullshit' and that any problems that customers may have encountered were down to isolated attacks by squirrels. When asked to elaborate, he responded: "No, not squirrels. I meant those other things. You know, those things that flap about in water, with the big teeth and everything. They come out at night and nibble your cables. Yes, it was them."

A better spokesman for the energy industry has subsequently responded that the issues that were raised in the report were the result of faulty equipment at several main generating plants. He apologised for the inconvenience and he asked customers to bear with them while the problems were resolved. He also asked customers to disregard anything his colleague may have said about squirrels. The person in question has, apparently, just undergone something of a domestic difficulty at home, and has been granted compassionate leave until he can get himself sorted out.

Highway Robbery

Police are warning motorists to be vigilant following a series of road thefts over the last few months. Criminals are causing tailbacks by stealing whole stretches of carriageway. The stolen roads are then typically sold on to dodgy developers, exported to the Third World or just melted down for scrap.

"These villains have no respect for decent, law-abiding commuters," said Chief Inspector Malcolm 'Cuddles' McGinty. "People trying to get to work suddenly find that the road they usually take is gone. And those that are lucky enough to make it through find that they can't return home because some heartless swine has swiped a T-junction or filched a roundabout."

According to the Superintendent, the problem is getting worse. Thieves are getting bolder and have started taking roads while people are still driving on them. One Bristol man recently found that his journey home was unexpectedly extended when the road he was travelling on was bundled into the back of a van, driven up to Manchester and re-laid as part of a new housing development.

"Occasionally roads are stolen to order," says Superintendent Cuddles. "But in those cases it's fairly easy to track the culprits down. There are few people, for example, who are in the market for the A19 to Gateshead. More often the roads are taken by opportunists who respray them, remove identifying marks such as signposts and the like, and then try to palm them off on some unsuspecting mug. But don't be fooled. Look out for tell-tale signs such as potholes, wonky lines or a non-regulation camber. And if it appears that there are already people driving on it, then it's pretty much guaranteed to be a ringer."

MISSING



The A406. Last seen on the back of a flatbed truck, heading towards Doncaster.



The B1703. Broken up and smuggled overseas last June.



Junction of High Street and Farrow Avenue. Last seen disguised as a cul-de-sac in Exeter.

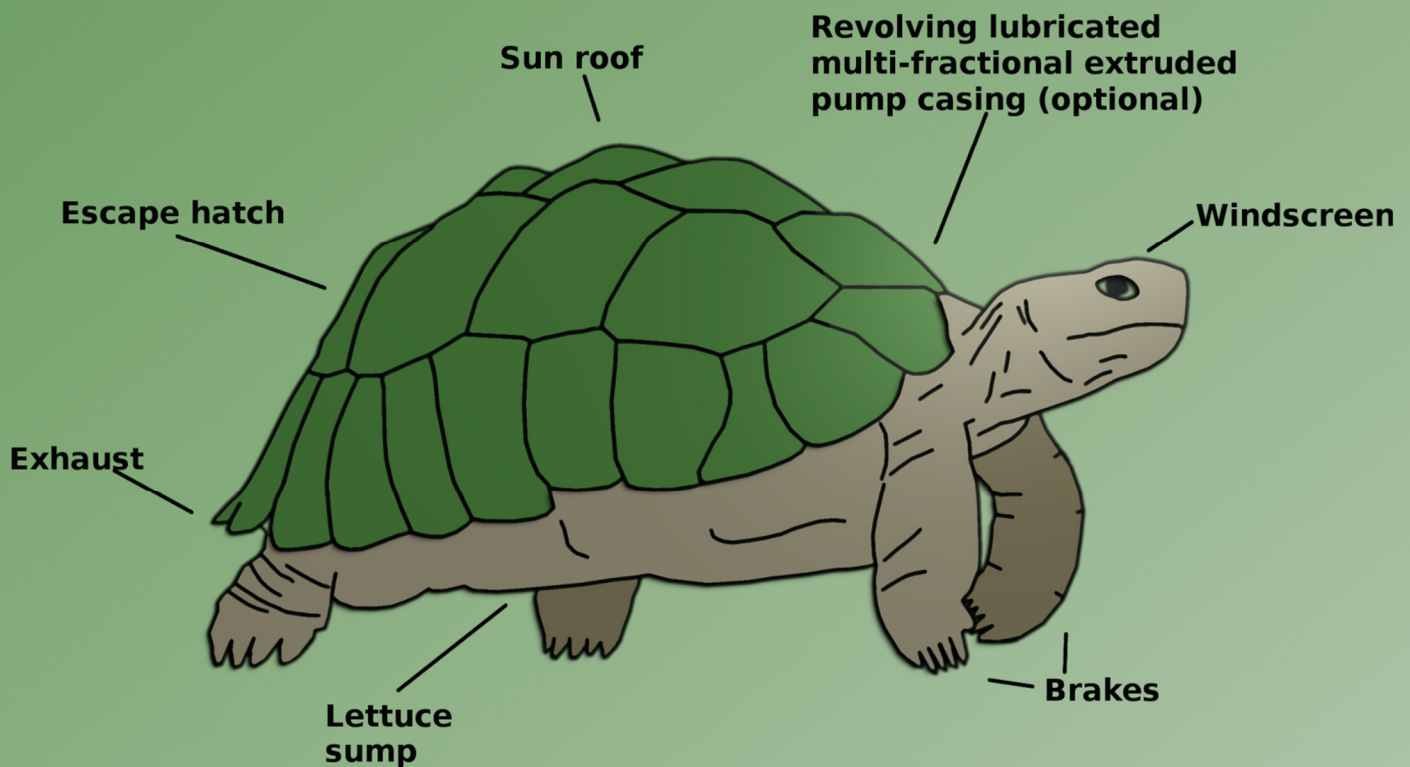


The A54. Believed to be living in South America under the name Miguel de Cortadillo.

Is your tortoise roadworthy? Really? You're sure about that, are you?

From next year all tortoises will be required to undergo a series of strict tests in order to obtain a certificate of roadworthiness. The number of tortoise-related deaths on our roads has risen steeply over the last five years, and the new MOT* tests are

designed to ensure that such tragedies are kept to a minimum. The penalties for operating a dangerous, misfiring or wantonly destructive tortoise will be severe, and owners of such animals can expect a heavy fine.



Many people may find this new legislation daunting, but will be glad to know that we here at Autoshell can put your mind at ease. We have been dealing with reptiles since 1917 - both professionally and on a more casual basis - and we know our way around tortoises better than anyone. As a fully licensed tortoise testing station, we can guarantee to give your knobbly little friend a complete work-over, including thorough chassis inspection, oil change and emissions test. We'll even valet it for free!

So bring your tortoise to AUTOSHELL and we'll give it the works.

It's a Fact

with Donald Fact

Hi there Fact Fans! Donald Fact here with some more nuggets of knowledge, brought to you in association with the Ministry of Factular Informations in Bogata and the Central European Register of Esoteric Ephemera in Switzerland. Hang on tight folks as we tuck into some tantalising trivia!

- ☆ Peanuts are made by turning down Brazil nuts on a lathe. Brazil nuts are made from coconuts.
- ☆ The first ever bicycle had sixteen wheels, an observation tower and an outboard motor.
- ☆ Slinkys are the skeletal remains of rare woodland shrews.

This year's winning entry for the Golden Fact of Montreux:
Before 1950, Zebra stripes were horizontal

- ☆ The widest person in the world measures just over twelve feet from side to side, but is only three inches deep.
- ☆ If you dropped a coin from the top of the Empire State Building, you probably wouldn't have enough change left for the car park.
- ☆ The most dangerous animal known to science is a squirrel with a flick knife.
- ☆ There are only 10 types of people in the world and all of them understand decimal notation.
- ☆ When a fridge door is closed the little light actually stays on but the salad compartment will temporarily cease to exist.
- ☆ Music freezes at -150°C . This means that trombones can be silenced by immersing them in liquid nitrogen.

Special Reader Fact from Mrs Edna Womble of 42 The Mews, Hartlepool

Ducks are made of concrete.

Thank you Mrs Edna Womble of 42 The Mews, Hartlepool.

- ☆ It *is* possible for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, but only bottom first.
- ☆ Wartime Prime Minister Winston Churchill was made of chicken wire and papier-mâché, and started life as a school project for a summer fete.
- ☆ Space Hoppers are filled with helium and will fly if you bounce hard enough.
- ☆ Switzerland does not exist. Switzerland was a fictional place invented by Hans Christian Andersen and the myth of its existence has been perpetuated by the advertising industry in order to sell Toblerones and Alpine Horns.

Put an end to the embarrassment of head lice with Dr Crippen's patent Licepummeller system

In 1978, Dr Vincent Crippen was asked to develop an alternative to traditional chemical approaches to dealing with head lice infestations. Medicated shampoos and treatments had been on the market for some time, but they were expensive, environmentally unfriendly and made your head smell funny. What's more, there were genuine fears that lice would develop a resistance, possibly leading to the emergence of giant radioactive super-lice that could suck your brains out in a matter of minutes.

Dr Crippen realised that the answer lay in a simple, reusable device that could be used to flatten head lice without the need for expensive and dangerous chemicals. And so, the Licepummeller system was born.

Today the Licepummeller is still the most effective cure for head lice infestation. When swung correctly with the right amount of force, the Licepummeller can completely remove all traces of head lice, nits and other unwanted parasites.

Caution, may cause dizziness.



Wilmington Cake Repairs

Are you suffering from cracked fondant? Is your Victoria sponge waterlogged? Maybe crumpled muffins or misshapen doughnuts are at the root of your confectionary concerns?

If so, then the master bakers at Wilmington Cake Repairs are here to help. We have over 150 years' experience of welding flans, reconditioning shortbread and servicing tarts. So, if you have a punctured profiterole or a battered battenburg, bring it along to us here at Wilmington Cake Repairs.



Book your 5000 calorie service now! Let our experts tighten the nuts on your almond fancy and change the treacle in your sticky toffee pudding in time for the winter.

Astound your friends... Amaze your family... Confuse the dog... Exploding Trousers!

"I got a pair of exploding trousers this Christmas," says 12 year old Christian Pyle of Durham. "Imagine the fun when halfway through the Queen's speech the trousers ignited, my pants erupted and Granny's hat blew off."



Available in three exciting sizes: "slight pop", "thunderclap" and "blimey, what the hell was that?"

All our exploding trousers are guaranteed flameproof and are good for three hundred thrill-packed detonations. Available now from all good trouser specialists.

Reverse the 412 signs of aging with

Apaté Factor 88

The only beauty product that will send your skin back in time

How does it work? Here's the science...

By accelerating your face to 88 miles per hour our specially engineered beauty formula throws the cells of your upper dermis into a reverse chronological spiral, separating the keratin shroud from the lower mantle and locking it into a stasis event field via quantum entanglement.

All clear? No?

Never mind, just get your purse out, love. You don't want to look like a munter, do you?

BATTLECHIPS

Heavy duty chips for use in the toughest of environments.

Don't trust your dinner to anything less.

Also, check out our range of all-weather adventure chips, impact-resistant sportschips and sub-aqua chips for deep sea divers.

And now, ladychips for girls.



A Great Family Day Out

With over three and a half thousand sticks, Stick World is Europe's premier stick-related tourist attraction.

See sticks of all shapes and sizes!

Visit our collection of historic sticks, including Roman sticks, sticks from ancient Egypt and even Admiral Nelson's own personal stick, which actually saw action at the Battle of Trafalgar!

Find out where sticks come from, watch them being made and even have a go at making one yourself!

And we've got a cable car!*

So whoever you are, whatever your interests, as long as you're really into sticks, then we've got it all at



*Not currently in operation.

DRIVERS!

Are you rude, cantankerous, bigoted and unpleasant? Do you have a porn 'tache, a seventies comb-over and a belly that can be seen from space? Do you wait until someone is overtaking you before pulling out from the side of the road? Do you force cyclists onto the verge and pigheadedly obstruct junctions while waiting in traffic?

If the answer to all these questions is yes, then we need you to drive our bus.

Not everyone has it in them to be a bus driver. You may think you're an inconsiderate motorist, but it takes a special kind of arrogance to drive a bus. Here at the Bus Drivers' Federation (Correct Fare Only), we pride ourselves on being the number one nuisance on the roads, and we don't intend to let our standards slip.

So if you think you've got what it takes to be a sanctimonious pain in the arse with no thought for the safety or convenience of anyone else on the road, give us a call today.

Maxi-Lingual for Motorists

Master a multitude of foreign tongues with the new Maxi-Lingual Language Course for Motorists.

We understand that when you're driving in a foreign country you don't need to know how to ask for milk in your coffee or enquire after the opening times of the local pool. That's why we've stripped our course down to the bare essentials. Now you can leave other road users in no doubt about exactly what you're trying to say, no matter what country you find yourself having an argument in.

**German!
French!
Polish!
Cockney!**

In just eight weeks you'll be cursing fluently in over six languages*. So, whether someone cuts you up in Cologne, prangs you in Prague or tailgates you in Trafalgar Square, you can be sure that you'll know exactly how to tell them to go fuck themselves.

Maxi-Lingual for Motorists

Order now and receive, free of charge, the latest edition of the Gazetteer of International Hand Gestures.



*seven

ERADICATE THE EMBARRASSMENT OF SQUEAKY SHOES WITH

Squeak Off

Top spies know that when you're sneaking up behind an enemy agent, positioning yourself to deliver the fatal karate chop that will guarantee the future security of the free world, the last thing you want is a stray squeak or creak to give away your position.

THAT'S WHY 9 OUT OF 10 SUPER SECRET NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES USE SQUEAK OFF.

Squeak Off's revolutionary anti-squeak technology penetrates deep into noisy footwear, soothing, caressing and nourishing the material to leave your shoes not only squeakless but also free from dandruff.

Squeak Off is guaranteed to work on a variety of materials and fabrics, including:

Leather
Suede
Plastic
Bacon*
Canvas

And Squeak Off is not just a boon for intelligence men - it has proven useful for people in all walks of life, including hitmen, fishermen, mime artists, cinema usherettes, librarians and tax inspectors.

So next time you need to sneak up on someone and wrestle them to the ground before they have time to raise the alarm, give Squeak Off a go.

Squeak Off

THE BIG NOISE IN FOOTWEAR TECHNOLOGY

*As far as we're aware, no one has yet invented bacon shoes, but when they do we'll be ready.

Answers to Quiz on Page 120

1. Yes, but only on Tuesdays.
2. Round the back of the Co-Op with a sponge on a stick.
3. Trick question. You can't do it.
4. You can do it but, seriously, why would you want to?
5. William Shatner.
6. Because the second one has a slight rip in it.
7. As quickly as possible.
8. Put your whole weight behind it and give it a shove.

How well did you do?

- 4/5 - You have an even temperament and the ability to make friends easily.
- 65% - You are a headstrong and impulsive Spaniard
- Mostly 'C's - You are going on a long journey overseas. You must open your mind to new experiences. Lucky number: 12
- Sagittarius - Congratulations: you have the necessary aptitude to be a NASA astronaut. Live long and prosper.

www.bleeding-obvious.co.uk

