

The University
of the
Bleeding Obvious

ANNUAL 2020

Your Free Gift



**Sausages occasionally become detached in transit.
Please speak to your newsagent if your meat has dropped off.**

The University of the Bleeding Obvious Annual 2020

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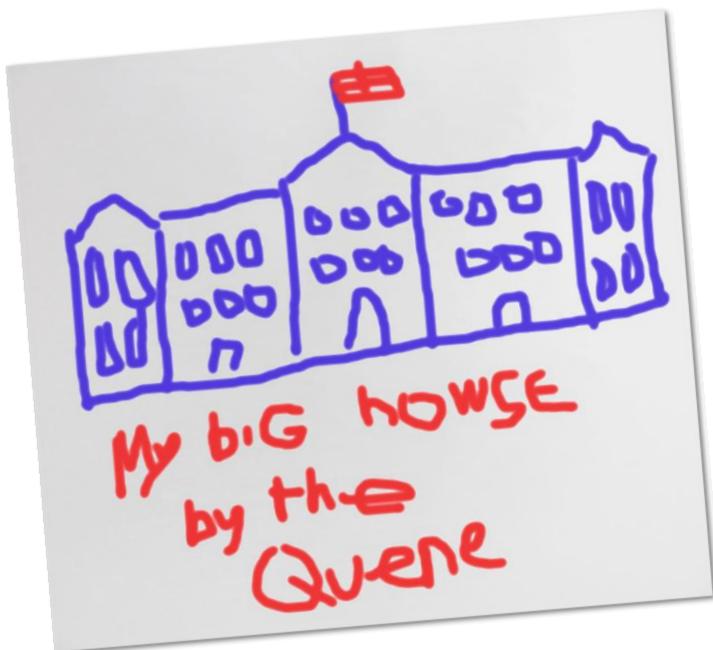
All characters, companies and organisations are fictitious, and any similarity to persons living or dead is entirely coincidental. blah, blah, blah. Except the Personality Test woman - she's real.

www.bleeding-obvious.co.uk

Self Portrait

In a bizarre mix-up, Queen Elizabeth II has won the opportunity to paint a portrait of herself as a prize in a competition. The circumstances have yet to be confirmed but it is thought that Her Majesty may have inadvertently entered the competition one morning after colouring in a picture of herself on the back of a cereal packet.

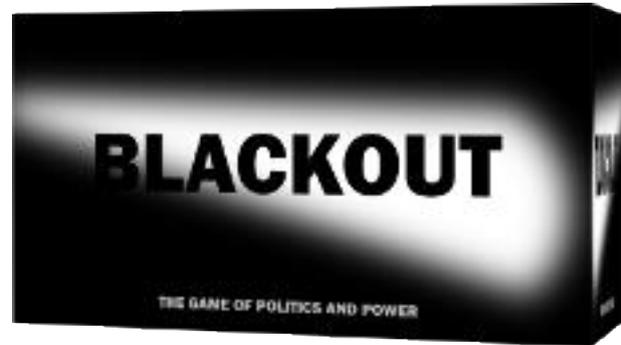
The Queen, who has a BA in potato printing and studied macaroni pictures in Paris during her teenage years, has reportedly said that although portraiture has never been her thing she is nevertheless prepared to get stuck in and give it a bash 'for the good of the country'.



Remember those endless school holidays and the similarly endless rainstorms that kept us all inside for days upon days? Remember how we whiled away the hours playing board games like *Totalitarian*, *Escape From Butlins* and *Whisk*? If you grew up in the '70s or '80s you'll know that those games are as much a part of childhood as falling off your bike, chicken pox or playing on dangerous construction sites. In this article we revisit a few of our favourites.

Blackout

It's Britain in the 1970s and widespread industrial action means power cuts and shortages for many UK families. With no TV, no electricity and with the long nights drawing in, what better way was there to spend an evening than playing *Blackout*, the industrial-relations-based board game for all the family? It was a game of tactics, diplomacy and negotiation as, playing as either a union official or an industry bigwig, you tried to outmanoeuvre your opponent and emerge with a better deal. No wonder it was one of the bestselling games of the decade, even though you couldn't actually play it in the dark.



Haunted Fridge

Dare you put your pork in the haunted fridge? That was how I remember the TV ads for this wonderful game. The '70s and '80s were great for games involving elaborate devices and gimmicks - games like *Buckaroo*, *Mousetrap* or *Kerplunk*. *Haunted Fridge* was easily the best of the bunch. It revolved around a wonderfully realistic three-foot-high plastic fridge - even the light came on when you opened the door! You took it in turns to place a small plastic item of food into the fridge - a chicken, a bottle of milk or a pork chop, for example. If you were lucky, nothing happened; if not, the door would slam shut and your food would be snatched away into the 'spectral realm'.

The major flaw was that the items genuinely did seem to disappear into another dimension. Certainly, we never managed to figure out where they went. What this meant was that the plastic food counters didn't last very long and we had to improvise with other items: marbles, toy cars, dad's keys, the gerbil and so on.

We were finally banned from playing it after we stuffed the boy from next door in there. Thereafter, our edition of *Haunted Fridge* was consigned to the attic, from where we occasionally heard the odd muffled thump and cry for help.



Roadworks Manager

The first time I played this game was at school. At the end of term we were allowed to bring in games and one boy turned up with this classic. You control one of six companies and the idea is to cover as much of the road network with roadworks as you can and ultimately bring traffic to a standstill. You get extra points for setting up roadworks where there is no visible sign of any work taking place and there are bonuses for things like using warning signs that cause a greater obstruction than the works they are supposed to be warning people about, or successfully rerouting traffic so that it ends up going back where it came from. The winner is the person who spreads their cones over the greatest area, or whoever is the first to get punched in the face by an angry motorist.



BBC Weather - The Game

TV tie-in games are notoriously disappointing, but *BBC Weather* is actually a breath of fresh air. It's enlivened by the inclusion of some nice magnetic weather symbols and there is a spinner in the middle of the map which predicts the weather. Surprisingly, it's often more accurate than the real thing.

But what really livens up the game is what happens when you land on a raincloud. You pick up a 'drizzle' card, which is supposed to have some mild penalty on it - 'thunderstorm, go back three spaces', that sort of thing. In fact, due to a mix-up with some other, more adult, game, the card instructs you to perform a lewd and obscene act with another player.

Once this error had been discovered, the makers were faced with a choice: either recall every copy of the game and replace the smutty cards, or do nothing and continue to enjoy the unexpectedly high sales. Unsurprisingly, they chose to do the latter.





Gaydar!

Back in the '70s, being gay was different, interesting and fun, not boring, ordinary and dull like it is today. That's probably why *Gaydar!* was such a big hit. The game consisted of a magic unicorn, that swung around slowly using magnets and if it touched you with its horn it meant you were a gay. Interestingly, the toy began life in America in the fifties, although there it was used in clinical medicine as a diagnosis tool.

Call Centre

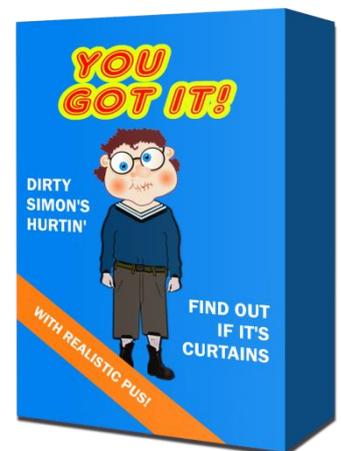
This game rode the wave of electronic toys that arrived at the beginning of the 1980s. Up to eight people could play, connected to the central 'call centre' via headsets. You selected your potential customer by drawing a 'customer card' and then tried to tempt them to buy insurance, complete a market research questionnaire or so on. Pre-recorded responses told you how successful you were being - although it wasn't particularly true to life because they were completely random.



Poor results would mean players would be sacked. The winner got promoted to a more responsible and worthwhile position cleaning the toilets. This bit, at least, was realistic.

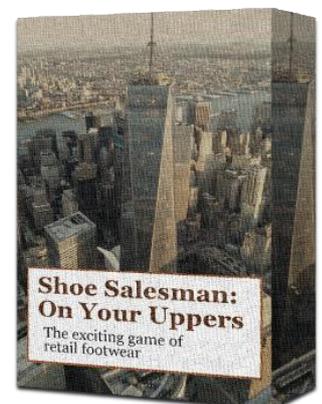
You Got It!

The medical diagnosis game that provided hours of educational fun, featuring everyone's favourite patient, Dirty Simon. It was a game of deduction in which your task was to guess what was wrong with Dirty Simon from the symptoms. Does it bring him out in a rash? Did he catch it off a toilet seat? Has it made bits of him drop off? We all have fond memories of finally working out the answer, jumping to our feet and shouting, "You've got herpes!" We used to hear the people next door doing it all the time, and they didn't even have the game.



Shoe Salesman: On Your Uppers

Shoe Salesman described itself as 'a game of strategy, ingenuity and business acumen'. Each player started as a lowly shoe salesman in a department store and would work their way up to be head of department, owner of their own shop and, eventually, boss of a shoe empire. Harmless stuff, but it wasn't long before the press started linking the game to Satanism and questions were even asked in Parliament. The final blow came in 1978 when a child nearly choked on a sandal. The Satanism connection was never proven but the public outcry hit sales and the game was discontinued.





This month's walk: Enchanting Waterside

Country Rambles is brought to you this month by our guest rambler, Rory Triffic

As most of you will know, Tony Fold is unable to bring you this month's walk because he was gored by a sheep, or fell down a mineshaft or something. Lucky bastard. So, the editor has decided that yours truly should be your guide for this month, though lord knows what I've done to deserve it. Probably because of what happened at last year's Christmas party. I don't know why she's singled me out, it's not like I was the only one who was sick in the punch. Pah!

All right then, this month's walk is, apparently, a leisurely, medium-length amble through picturesque meadowland, incorporating an enchanting waterside section and spectacular views. Could have fooled me. Anyhow, here goes.

1 Our starting point is the car park next to the fire station. I mean the *former* fire station, obviously - you know, that filthy concrete block with the broken windows, next to Discount Carpet World. Yep, apparently the people of this town are no longer considered flammable enough to warrant a fire station of their own, so if you're thinking of spontaneously combusting you'll need to travel all the way to Greater Mungford, where at least they have a fire station that is open every alternate Wednesday.

Anyway, the car park. Before you set off, take a moment to soak up the atmosphere - the rusty skip, the soggy scraps of cardboard and plywood, the broken glass and muddy discarded takeaway boxes. Lovely. And did you notice the smell? No, I've no idea what it is either but it's rank, isn't it?

By the way, ignore the two lads mucking about by the bins. I knew their dad - he was a wanker as well.



Stunning architectural wonders line the route

2 When you're quite sure you've had enough of the car park, take a left along the main road, then turn left again down a narrow track. This, you will note, is overgrown, full of potholes and strewn with rubble - and yet still it manages to be in better condition than many of the other roads around here.

Proceed along this track for about 200 yards, past the back of Tesco's, the

recycling centre and the big hole in the ground where the library used to be. When you get to the burnt-out car you will see a rotten wooden stile. At one point you would have had to negotiate this rickety structure with caution, but when I was down there I kicked it all in, so now you can just stroll through into the adjacent field.



What's this fat cow looking at?

3 I say 'stroll' but maybe you should pick your way through more carefully. When I went it hadn't rained for weeks and yet the field was like a swamp. I reckon that a pipe had burst and I was wading through raw sewage. Try to stick to the higher ground and for God's sake don't wear your best shoes.

Once you're safely past this nightmare, follow what remains of the footpath and it will lead you to a gap in the hedge. Now, you won't see the gap because it's completely overgrown but, trust me, it's there. You'll need to push your way past all the brambles, the nettles and the thorns. Once you're finally through, your clothes and flesh torn to shreds and your hair full of leaves and twigs, you will pause to remind yourself just how wonderful it is to be outdoors, soaking up all this nature, instead of being comfortably at home in front of the TV.

4 If you've gone through the right gap in the hedge, you will now see that you are in a large, roughly L-shaped field. You will also note that the path has completely disappeared and that there is no indication of which way you should go. Don't even think about turning round and going back - the gap in the hedge will now have completely healed over and there's no way you'll make it through without a flamethrower.

Onward is your only option. Now, I could give you a few hints about which way to go but I personally spent about forty minutes wandering around this bloody field looking for the exit and I don't see why I should deprive you of a similar pleasure. Also, at some point you may encounter a fat, red-faced man shouting at you. I certainly did. In my case he was instructing me to get off his land. I shouted back that I was trying to but the old fart hobbled off without providing me with any useful information. Anyway, persevere and you'll eventually find the way out. Or do what I did and clamber over a wall.



I don't reckon much to the new visitors' centre

5 You should pick up the trail quite easily after that. There are some more fields. Three or four, I can't remember

how many. Sorry, I'm a bit vague about this but by this stage I was feeling thoroughly miserable and just wanted to go home. And anyway, a field is just a field, isn't it? What is there to say? Grass, mud, cow shit, more grass. Actually, there was a bit of a surprise as I left one of these fields - a notice behind me saying 'Beware of the Bull'. Nice of them not to bother putting up a notice at the point where I actually *entered* the field. Still, there was no sign of the bull, so either it was hiding or it was just a really, really small one.

6

Assuming you survive the bull, you will enter a wood where you will be set upon by swarms of flies. How they normally operate is that two or three will circle your head to distract you while their friend, usually a really big bugger, settles on your neck and sinks its fangs in. Meanwhile, the ground will be heaving with ants, many of which will stream up your legs and lodge in your clothing. Plus, of course, there will be the usual nettles and brambles and trifids to negotiate.

I should warn you that the spot is also popular with dog walkers, as evidenced by the many little black sacks of dog poo draped over branches like shitty Christmas decorations. I have no opinions one way or the other about dogs when they keep their distance, but unfortunately they rarely do - keep their distance, that is. On this occasion I was unable to avoid this lumbering, slobbering monstrosity of an animal as it bounded up to me and started licking my face, presumably after having spent the morning doing likewise, with equal vigour, to its own genitals. The owner was one of those loud, overenthusiastic women of the kind that you find shouting at children in supermarkets. She informed me that her

dog was just being friendly. I heaved the drooling animal aside and started licking the woman's face. Oddly, she didn't consider this a comparable expression of friendship, even though I assured her that I hadn't licked my genitals for absolutely weeks.



Ooh look, rocks!

7

By now, you're probably wondering where the 'enchanted waterside section' that was promised earlier has got to. Well, hang on tight because it's coming up. Following the path through the woods will bring you to what I've heard some people describe as the 'hidden lagoon'. I will describe it as a 'shitty little pond', and I think my description is more accurate. Lagoons aren't normally brown with green slicks floating on top, are they? Thought not. Anyway, I know for a fact that before the chemical refinery closed down, this was where they dumped their waste when they thought no one was looking.

Actually, most of their waste was buried where the golf course is now, so if you notice any of the members starting to glow in the dark, it's their own fault for not being able to find anything better to do with their time than wander around a series of nicely kept lawns, knocking little white balls into holes. I digress. The really lethal stuff got pumped into this pond, which is why anything that falls in is

unlikely to come out again with its skin intact.

8

By all means pause to admire the pond in all its toxic, reeking beauty, but I'd advise you not to linger too long if you value your health. The path will take you around the edge of this filthy puddle and on through an abandoned quarry. You have two choices here: you can take the lower path and dodge the falling boulders, or you can opt for the higher path and risk plummeting over the edge. Or maybe you won't have a choice: when I was there the whole place seemed pretty unstable, so the chances are that by now the higher path is the lower path anyway.

One thing that I thought was really quite impressive was the amount of rubbish that has been disposed of here. The place is quite remote, which you would think would make fly tipping too much of an effort, but no - the site is littered with old fridges, furniture, builders' rubble, bikes, prams and washing machines. There was even a boat. I kid you not - an actual motor boat, bobbing about on a sea of junk. It almost, but not quite, made the whole expedition worthwhile.



This evil bastard pinched my sandwiches



This is mostly sewage

9

At this point you may have formed the opinion that this walk had been a bit of a drag. I certainly had but then I'm not the kind of person who usually enjoys spending their leisure time tramping through shit. I don't know how you feel about that. Anyhow, I was certainly pleased to learn that the last stretch of the route was along a purpose-built walking and cycle route, which follows the line of the old railway. A tarmac surface, benches, litter bins, proper signs - civilisation, at last!

You won't find it entirely without its problems though. Being a cycle track means that it unfortunately attracts cyclists and the sight of half a dozen lycra-clad bottoms whizzing past you every minute is enough to put you off your lunch. The 'proper' cyclists aren't the real problem though - at least they know to keep to one side of the track, and they'll ring their little bell when they're coming up behind you, bless 'em. No, it's the day-trippers who cause the most grief. They come bowling along on their hired bikes, great packs of them, weaving about erratically, not looking where they're going. Some fat bloke invariably comes wobbling up the track on a bike that's far too small for him, the combination of his girth and the momentum created by his sheer mass



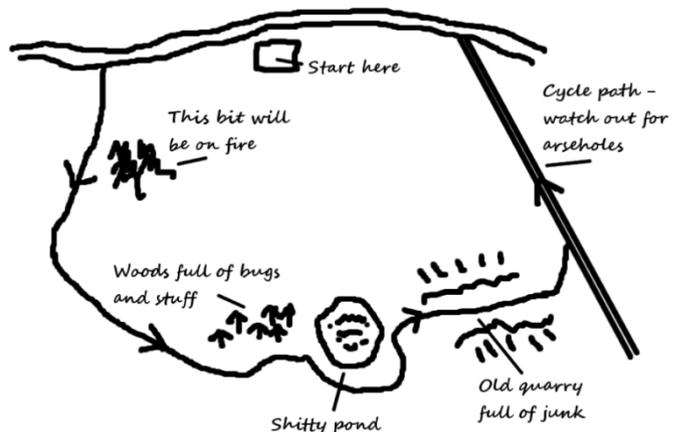
Blimey, they've had some cowboys in here

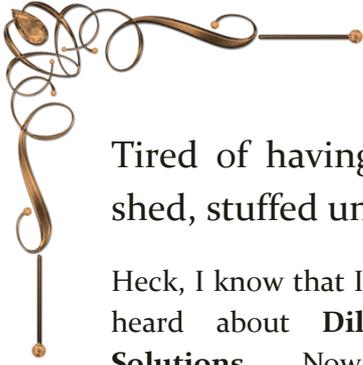
causing anything in his path to be swept aside.

My advice when facing approaching disaster of this sort: treat it like a challenge. Find yourself a sturdy stick, plant yourself dead centre in the middle of the track and wait until you see the whites of his eyes. Then, at the last moment, swing yourself aside like a matador springing from the path of an enraged bull and thrust the stick through the spokes of his front wheel. It takes nerve and split-second timing to pull it off but when you get it right the results are spectacular. The sight of so much wheeled blubber hurtling through the air is one that you will treasure for the rest of your life.

10 Your route is effortless from now on. The cycle path will lead you back to the town centre after about half a mile, and it is to be hoped that you won't have wasted too much of the day. From here it's a short hop, skip and jump back to the starting point, where you will find that those dodgy looking kids have disappeared and your car is up on bricks. For your information, the bus station is just two streets away.

Tony Fold will, I'm sure, be fully recovered in time for next month's walk, and good luck to him. Meanwhile, I shall be in the pub watching the racing.





Tired of having to leave your favourite donkey leaning up against the shed, stuffed under the bed or wedged behind the sofa?

Heck, I know that I am - or rather I was until I heard about **Dilbert's Donkey Storage Solutions**. Now all my donkey storage dilemmas are taken care of, without resorting to all that messy business with **ropes**, **polythene bags** and **blunt gardening tools**. With a fancy new Donkey Storage Rack from Dilbert's you need never worry about where to stick your donkey ever again.

**DILBERT'S
DONKEY
STORAGE
SOLUTIONS**



So, what's so special about Dilbert's Donkey Solutions?

Well, for one thing, Dilbert's really know their donkeys, and that's no real surprise. Company founder Dilbert Peewit was raised by a family of feral donkeys in the Atacama Desert. There he learned how to how to **trot** like a donkey, how to **speak the donkey language** and how to nibble a carrot from the wrong end. He also mastered the dark art of **donkey-jitsu**, took a correspondence course in **donkey shorthand** and invented the **donkey jacket**. Growing tired of desert life and becoming increasingly irritated by the company of so many bloody donkeys, Dilbert decided to come to the Europe and seek his fortune in Aylesbury, just off the A41.

"It was a shithole," says Dilbert. "I haven't been back recently but I have no doubt that it still is. Sorry, but after the towering dunes and the majestic windswept vistas of the Atacama Desert, half a dozen crappy takeaways, a Poundland and a dodgy-looking betting shop really don't have any great appeal."

Nevertheless, it was here that Dilbert became aware of the appalling way that donkeys were being casually propped up against **walls**, chained to **lampposts** or wedged into **bicycle racks**. And he didn't like what he saw.

"No I didn't," Dilbert says. "Thank you very much. I was horrified by the way that my donkey brethren were being treated. As far as I could see, I had two options open to me. I could either help my donkey kinfolk to rise up against their oppressors, seize the reigns (yes, I said reigns) of power and grind humanity to dust beneath our almighty conquering hooves. Or I could come up with something with which I could cash in on the situation. I chose the latter option and now my house has two swimming pools, which is two more than I would have had had I chosen to foment rebellion."

What Dilbert invented was the **Donkey Storage Rack**, a fantastic space-saving innovation that has proven to be to greatest step forward in donkey management since the **clockwork donkey inhibitor**. The Donkey Storage Rack comes in many different colours, including **green**. You can also get them in a wide range of sizes, including extra-large, which means that even my friend Brendon now has somewhere that he can stick his **massive ass**.

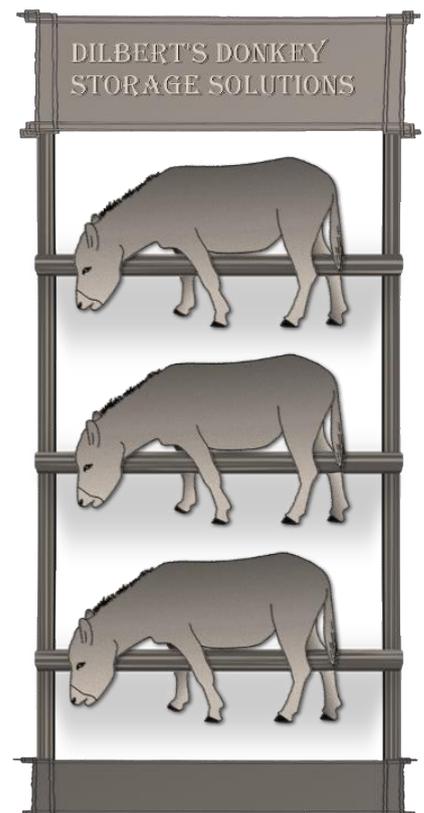
And I'm not the only one who's bowled over with Dilbert Peewit's invention. Just listen to this self-satisfied old fart:

"I luuuurve my new Donkey Rack! It's so convenient and super smart. Now I don't have to worry about my donkey getting all creased and crumpled. And my donkey just adores it! At first I thought it might be overcome with existential donkey angst - you know, like they do. But, in fact, it's really taken to the Donkey Rack and these days it hardly ever tries to mash my brains to a pulp like it used to.

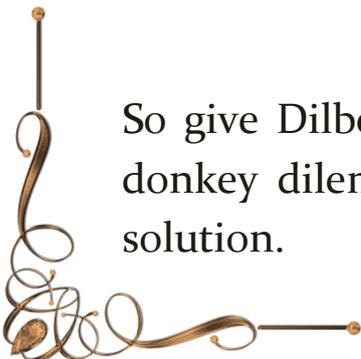
"And not only that! My Donkey Rack came with a free pig bucket. Yes, really - a pig bucket. It's great, although it does mean that I'm going to have to go and get a pig now."

But hang on a minute, I hear you say. This Donkey Rack is all very well, but exactly how am I going to store my donkey when it's in transit? **All right, calm down!** What you need is the **Donkey Car Rack**. The Donkey Car Rack fits securely to the back of any medium-sized car and is the ideal solution if you want to take your donkey with you on **holiday**, to visit **relatives** or simply when the poor creature is too **shagged out to walk**. As a bonus, when it's not in use, the Donkey Car Rack can be transformed into a Car Donkey Rack, which, when fitted to your donkey, will allow it to carry any **medium-sized car**.

Impressed? That's nothing - wait till you see the **Donkey Depot**. The Donkey Depot is the perfect donkey accessory for anyone who has **more than one donkey**. This multi-donkey storage facility allows you to file away up to six donkeys for **future use**. The patented carousel mechanism means that it's quick and easy to select the right donkey whenever you need it.



So give Dilbert's Donkey Solutions a call now. Whatever your donkey dilemma, you can be sure that Dilbert's will have the solution.



The Frimpley

Evening Bugle

TROUSERS pages 3-9 UNCLE DESMOND'S FUNGUS WATCH page 10 MORE TROUSERS pages 11-24

Hiker Drags Herself to Safety with Broken Leg

'It wasn't my leg,' says woman



"I once found an armpit by that tree. Messy buggers. Why can't people take their armpits home with them?"

After being caught in a storm on Dartmoor yesterday, keen rambler Daisy Boot astounded rescue services by somehow managing to drag herself to safety with a broken leg.

"It wasn't my leg," Daisy said, keen to

correct any misunderstanding. "I found it. I'm quite anxious to reunite it with its owner, so if anyone recognises the sock, please do get in touch."

Bob Flapjack, senior ranger at Dartmoor National Park,

explained that careless hikers are always leaving their body parts on the moors and so he encourages people to take a bin bag with them when they go out walking.

"Technically, it's littering," he said,

"and it could result in a hefty fine. Over the last few months we've had four elbows, a pair of knees and three buttocks handed in. It's the buttocks that are the real puzzle. I mean, three? What's going on there, then?"

Small Lump of Coal Appointed New Head of Advertising Standards Authority

In what is thought to be a world first, a small piece of coal has been given the top job at the Advertising Standards Authority, a move which has prompted considerable criticism. Doubts have been raised over whether a mineral has the necessary skills and experience to effectively steer the organisation through the coming years. In particular critics suggest that its former role as Head of Purchasing for John Lewis was not sufficient

preparation for leading a national self-regulatory organisation such as the ASA.

Dismissing these concerns, a spokesman said that coal - and this lump of anthracite in particular - has a long-standing reputation for reliability and that the Authority remains fully in support of the appointment. And in any case, the spokesman went on to say, the only other candidate was a strip of damp lettuce, and

that really wouldn't have been acceptable at all.



"No comment," says lump

New Homes Online

The UK is experiencing a deepening housing crisis due, in part, to the lack of affordable homes. The private sector favours high-end property developments, in which profits can be maximised, and new social housing projects fail to get off the ground due to lack of funds and whiney not-in-my-backyard types who froth at the mouth and tell you that the country is being overrun by foreigners, which they know for a fact because last week they saw someone who looked a bit swarthy buying avocados in Tesco's.

But a solution may at last have been found, with an innovative plan to build new homes online. "We have yet to fully realise the potential of cyberspace," said government spokesman Gary Panic, speaking from his office on the fourth floor of a USB flash drive in Whitehall. "But with cloud storage being relatively cheap it offers a near limitless quantity of virtual real estate on which to build affordable family homes. It's the perfect solution: it's free of the red tape and regulation that dogs building on traditional sites, and whole streets can be built quickly and cheaply simply by copying and pasting."

However, the idea is not as new as you might think. Some people still remember the tragic fate of Fortran-cum-Basic - a new town built in the '80s on a Commodore 64 and sadly lost forever in a power surge, despite being backed up on a Betamax video tape.

Local Businessman Loses Ownership of his own Legs

Orville Crumble thought he was on to a good thing when he decided to float his legs on the stock exchange but, following the purchase of his knees last month by a Japanese investment conglomerate, Mr Crumble has now lost outright control of the lower half of his body.

...'Orville Crumble', what kind of a name is that? Anyway, let's crack on...

"I've been a bloody fool," Mr Crumble admits, as if it wasn't obvious. "I should have realised that there was a risk of losing my status as majority shareholder when I sold my shins before Christmas. Now I simply don't have a leg to stand on and have been forced to lease back my own feet. Honestly, I could kick myself, if the small print allowed for it."

Having learned that plans are afoot to open his legs to the public, Mr Crumble has decided to dig his heels in and has launched a legal challenge which he hopes will finally kick the scheme into touch. He stands a good chance, but unfortunately he has just learned that a Panamanian property developer has elbowed its way in and is contemplating an aggressive takeover bid for his arms.

THIS ISSUE: FREE 8-PAGE GUIDE TO THE BEST FLY-TIPPING SITES

CGI

Spies vs Zombies and Space Aliens with Car Chases and Guns and Stuff may at first squint seem like just another mindless and formulaic action flick, but Hollywood might be teetering on the edge of a new age in cinema. I know, I know - every other film that comes out represents a new age in bleeding cinema, but that's just your standard promotional bull-plop. This could be the real deal since it's the first movie to be made with *real* performers in *real* locations, but with a completely computer generated crew.

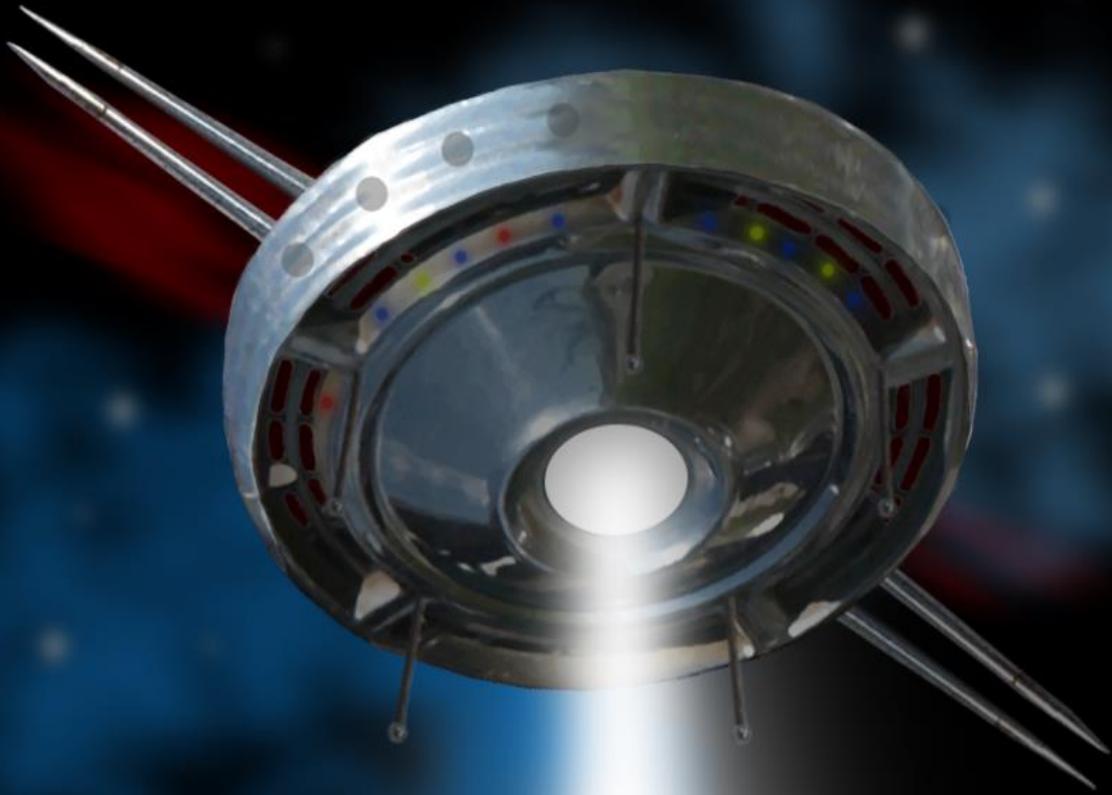
Yep, the camera operators, the sound people, the folio artist, the horse wrangler, the caterers, the key grip and the assistant editor - especially the assistant editor - are all CGI. As you can imagine, this inevitably led to some hilarious misunderstandings. Well, keep imagining that because we couldn't think of any, so this particular paragraph ends on a bit of an anti-climax.

Anyhowever, soldiering on in the hope that we might come up with a punchline, we asked director Mario Pacman for his thoughts. Unfortunately he was unavailable for comment as he had just crashed and had to be rebooted.

Badum tish.



THEY CAME FROM OUTER SPACE AND SHOT STUFF WITH
LASERS, AND IT WAS DEAD COOL.



SPIES VS ZOMBIES AND SPACE ALIENS WITH CAR CHASES AND GUNS AND STUFF

A FILM BY

53 74 65 76 65 6E 20 53
70 69 65 6C 62 65 72 67



Goths in Gardens



There's really nothing better than watching a shy, timorous young goth, hidden beneath its protective camouflage of foundation and eyeliner, as it jabs away at the sun-baked earth with a rusty garden fork.

Most people take the view that goths are best left to their own devices, wallowing in self-pity in some dark and gloomy corner of their bedrooms, and this really is a great

pity. The truth is that they flourish in sunlight and frequently manage to dredge up some vestige of inner joy when surrounded by the vibrant colours of nature. With the sun on their startled little faces, it's as if they somehow come alive.

That's what Goths in Gardens is really all about. We are a charity that reaches out to sociopathic and disaffected young goths, dragging them,

often reluctantly, blinking into the daylight. At our specially designed goth-friendly allotment they get a chance to get their hands dirty working with the soil, gaining valuable new life skills, learning all sorts of interesting things about slugs and snails and spending quality time with tomatoes.

And now we're reaching out to you. Trowels don't come cheap so we're asking you to give whatever you can to support our worthy cause. And perhaps, with your assistance, we can finally help these poor disadvantaged goths to become valued members of society rather than the miserable and whiney little freaks that they are.



The Goth Tent.

These special blackout cubicles provide a safe retreat for timid and confused goths when sunlight becomes too much for them.

Goths: The Fact and the Fiction

There are many misconceptions about goths. Here we take a few moments to explode a few of them... Misconceptions, that is, not goths.



Contrary to popular belief, goths do not shrivel up when exposed to sunlight.

Although there are fewer of them around these days, goths are not officially an endangered species. You're thinking of pandas.



Goths are not waterproof and will fall apart like a wet paper bag when exposed to moisture.



Goths do not eat bamboo. Again, that's pandas.

Many people still believe that goths are not allowed on British roads. In fact it has been legal for a goth to drive a motor vehicle since 1983.

Goths are not capable of intercepting radio signals and, despite the rumours, have never been used by the intelligence services for counter espionage.



Children's author Elizabeth Beresford did not base the Wombles on a goth called Bertie Muffin whom she met on Wimbledon Common in 1967.

Although usually a slow and shambling creature, goths are capable of reaching speeds of up to 38mph.

Goths do not have any inhibitions about mating in captivity... pandas again.



Sugar-Free Vegan Diesel

University of the Bleeding Obvious: I'm speaking today to Mr Gilbert Pront, whose company, Prontechia International, has announced that as of next month it will begin selling sugar-free vegan diesel in all of its service stations.

Gilbert Pront: That's right, yes.

UBO: A curious idea, Mr Pront. Perhaps you can tell us more?

Pront: What do you mean 'curious'? I don't see what is so curious. How is it curious?

UBO: Well, I mean it's unusual.

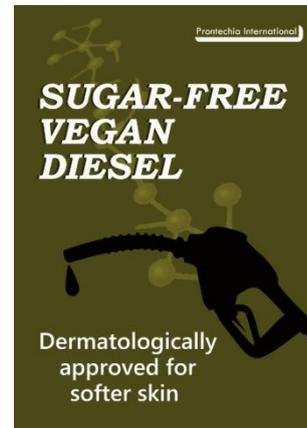
Pront: You didn't say 'unusual', you said 'curious'. So if you mean 'unusual' why not just say 'unusual', instead of titting about saying things you don't mean?

UBO: Well, I'm sorry for any confusion.

Pront: It's fuel. How can fuel be curious? Does it go rifling through people's stuff? Is it constantly looking things up on Wikipedia? What is it so curious about?

UBO: I chose the wrong word. Perhaps we can move on.

Pront: I think we *should* move on, yes. If you're going to start using words like 'curious' with wild abandon when you actually mean 'unusual', then we're not going to get anywhere. I think the idea that you actually meant to convey was that *you* were curious about our unusual product.



UBO: Yes, yes, that's exactly what I meant.

Pront: Good, well that's what you should have said then. Although it isn't.

UBO: It... what?

Pront: It isn't unusual - our product. Come on, keep up.

UBO: Okay, whatever, so it's not unusual then.

Pront: Blimey, you back down easily, don't you?

UBO: Look, do you think we could leave any judgement as to how unusual it is until later?

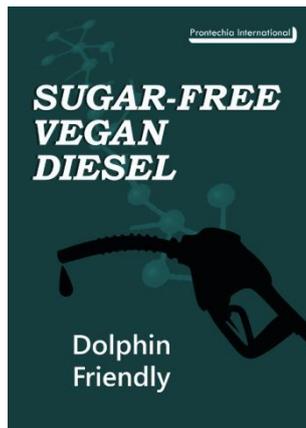
Pront: I think that would be best.

UBO: Thank you. You describe the product as sugar-free.

Pront: Yes.

UBO: Why is that?

Pront: Because there's no sugar in it.



UBO: And do people normally put sugar in diesel?

Pront: We don't.

UBO: What about other companies?

Pront: You'll have to ask them. I can't really speak for anyone else.

UBO: What I'm getting at is that it's not usual to put sugar in diesel, is it?

Pront: I thought we weren't going to talk about what is usual or unusual.

UBO: Yes, sorry. But what I'm trying to find out is why anybody would put sugar in diesel.

Pront: I've no idea.

UBO: Surely it would cause damage to the engine?

Pront: I should think it would. Sugar in the diesel - could cause all sorts of mischief, I imagine. Don't do it, is my advice.

UBO: So why put sugar in?

Pront: We don't put sugar in. I thought I'd made that clear. I don't understand

why you seem to be having so much trouble grasping this fact.

UBO: But why do you need to say that it's sugar-free?

Pront: Argh! Because there's no sugar in it. Look, what do you want us to say? Do you want us to say that we *do* put sugar in then take it out again?

UBO: Do you?

Pront: What, put sugar in the diesel then take it all out again? No of course not, what would be the point of that? Listen, I don't see why you're having such a problem with this. We say that it's sugar-free and it is. That's all there is to it.

UBO: But you might just as well say that there's no butter in it either.

Pront: There isn't.

UBO: I know.

Pront: Then why would you suggest that there is? I hope you're not going around telling everybody that we put butter in our diesel.

UBO: No, I don't - but you don't tell people that there isn't, do you? You don't make a point of calling it sugar-free vegan diesel with no added butter, do you?

Pront: No, of course not.

UBO: And why not?

Pront: Because we wouldn't be able to fit it on the side of the pump.

UBO: All right, forget the butter.

Pront: What butter? There is no butter. I thought I'd been quite clear about that.

UBO: I know, I know.

Pront: Why would you want to butter in it, you maniac? What kind of freak puts butter into diesel? It's an insane suggestion.

UBO: I never suggested it.

Pront: Yes you did. You told us to put butter in our diesel. Well we're not going to - there never has been butter in our diesel and there never will be. And while we're on the subject, just to clear up any misunderstandings before they start, our diesel doesn't contain any porridge, or iron filings, or chicken entrails.

UBO: Now you're just being silly.

Pront: Silly? *I'm* being silly, am I mate? All because I'm saying that our diesel doesn't have any porridge in it? You started it, pal. You're the one that said that not having sugar in our diesel was unusual.

UBO: I never said any such thing!

Pront: Oh yes you did. Perhaps, before you start getting any funny ideas, I also need to tell you that it doesn't contain pork scratchings, or custard, or frogspawn either. Or do we think that maybe that's not necessary?

UBO: Exactly! That's my point exactly! It's not necessary, is it? So why should it be necessary to tell people that there's no sugar in it.

Pront: Because there's no bloody sugar in it! I don't know how many times I need to keep saying this. What will it take to get you to understand?

UBO: Look... This isn't getting us anywhere.

Pront: Well that's not my bloody fault mate.

UBO: No, no... Right... OK, let's move on... This fuel - this diesel - it's vegan, is it?

Pront: That's what it says.

UBO: OK, so, on what grounds can you legitimately describe it as 'vegan'?

Pront: What grounds?

UBO: Yes. Do I need to explain what is meant by 'grounds'?

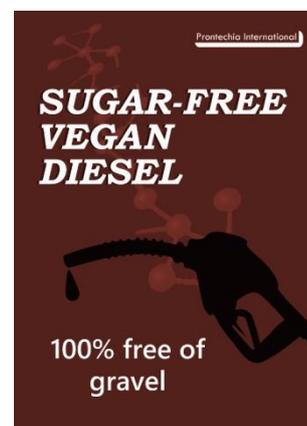
Pront: No, I know what 'grounds' means. There's no need to get shirty with me, I'm not a bloody idiot.

UBO: On what basis, with what justification, what is your rationale -

Pront: Yes, all right, I get it.

UBO: Well go on then.

Pront: Go on then, what?



UBO: What are your grounds for saying your diesel is vegan?

Pront: Simple. It's got no meat in it.

UBO: And that makes it vegan, does it?

Pront: Of course it does. Unless you want to tell me that in order for it to be vegan, we have to fill it with pork chops. I wouldn't put it past you.

UBO: Veganism is about more than not eating animals. It's about avoiding animal products altogether: eggs, milk, butter -

Pront: There you go with the butter again.

UBO: It's a philosophy that seeks to keep all animals from harm...

Pront: No pigs were hurt in the production of our diesel.

UBO: ...and eschews their exploitation in any form.

Pront: Yes - tick! Or are you going to accuse us of having cows working in our refinery or chickens answering the phones? Maybe you think that our HR department is staffed exclusively by sheep?



UBO: Is it?

Pront: Don't be ridiculous. All right then, yes. In fact, most of our staff are farm animals, but we pay them well over minimum wage. Does that still count as exploitation? Some of them even have a car allowance.

UBO: I don't think you're taking this seriously.

Pront: I'm not taking this seriously? You're the one that says we've got cows working in our refinery.

UBO: Give me strength! No, I'm not.

Pront: Well all right, it was me, but you clearly implied some sort of bovine workforce.

UBO: If you like - I'm not sure I care anymore. The point I'm trying to get to is that diesel is a fossil fuel formed from organic material, some of which was originally animal.

Pront: Ah yes, but they're not animals any more, are they?

UBO: But they *were*.

Pront: But now it's just oil. No one campaigns for the rights of oil, do they? There isn't a Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Oil.

UBO: By the same token, a sausage is no longer a pig but you'd be hard-pressed to convince anyone that you were a vegan if you were tucking into a hotdog.

Pront: All right... I concede that you may have a point there.

UBO: Ah.

Pront: Admittedly, it's tenuous but I think we at least need to run it past our lawyers before we proceed. Perhaps, as a compromise and for the avoidance of any doubt, we should fill our fuel with mince and change the name to Carnivorous Diesel?

UBO: It would make as much sense as anything else you've told me today.

Pront: Good! Well, at last we've found something we can agree on. We're keeping the 'sugar-free' bit though. I'm not budging on that.

ID

Ollie Packer has officially ceased to exist since accidentally shredding his birth certificate.

"I thought it was about time I decluttered," said Packer. "So I got rid of all the junk - old bank statements, expired insurance schedules, wage slips ... and also my birth certificate. I mean, I've already been born - here I am. I'm not planning on getting born again so I figure I don't need it."



Wrong. Packer has pulled off the legal equivalent of disappearing up his own hole, and here's the science: without proof of birth, this brainiac has become a zero-potential metaphysical concept with no real-time existence as an objective spacio-temporal event. Ha, that'll learn him. But you don't need to know that; all you need to know is that he can't get a passport and no one will serve him at the post office.

So far, all of Packer's attempts to establish his credentials as an actual human person have been a fat lot of no good at all. He

cannot apply for a replacement certificate because he doesn't exist. He doesn't have a driving licence because he doesn't exist. He doesn't have a passport because... You can see how this 'not existing' lark is something of a pain in the padding. He has even attempted to get a letter of corporeality from his doctor but is unable to get past the dickhead of an automated booking system because it refuses to recognise him as a real entity.



But there is one last hope for Packer - because of some sort of legal doodah he can register himself as a racehorse.

"The British Horseracing Authority has welcomed me with open fetlocks," he told us, assuming we were interested. "Ok, so it means a diet of oats and I've got a visit to the vets tomorrow that I'm really not looking forward to, but none of that will matter when I'm waiting in the starting gate at Kempton Park next Saturday. And we're off!"

Everything must go at the Oak Warehouse Furniture Depot End of Mid-Summer Sale!

This solid oak bishop

Now 50% off!

This semi-glazed display pig

Interest-free till Tuesday!

These fully veneered levered insects

Free, absolutely free!

This quality rustic ghost organiser

Please, just take it!

It all has to go at the Oak Furniture World Warehouse Land Depot End of Late Mid-Mid Summer Sale Clearance!

A fiver, just a fiver!

This hardwood steam growth

This nest of walnut fairies

It's got to go, it's all got to go!

We can't hang on to these for a moment longer!

These natural solid storage mittens

We'll pay you to take it away!

This mahogany butter case

Everything, yes everything has absolutely got to go in the World of Wooden Oak Depot Furniture Planet Beginning of the end of the end of the Mid-Mid Summer Sale Clearance bonanza!

This milky plywood freestanding finger buffet

Just fuck off! Fuck off right now!

These unpainted long grain bucket skates

Oh god, oh god, oh god, oh god!

This flock of stumpy pre-stressed untreated rolled passenger crackers

Awwwwwwww!

I want to go home now.

This carved frictionless knotted deep-veined pinewood wang

The whole bloody lot of it has to go at the Wooden Planet Real Oak Depot Warehouse Furniture End of the Beginning of the End of the Last Days of Summer Sale!

Starting tomorrow - the Oak Furniture Planet Warehouse Depot World Beginning of the Commencement of the First Bit of Autumn Sale. Don't miss it!

Look for the sign of good quality sustainable shit



Navy Admits to Floaty Boat Gaffe

Royal Navy chiefs are facing embarrassment after taking delivery of a new frigate with a major flaw. According to official reports, the ship, which has cost the taxpayer something in excess of two hundred billion squillion pounds, cannot float.

"Yes, that was a bit of a goof," said Rear Admiral Sir Percy Funny-Surname. "Being a naval man, I am of course fully aware that one of the basic requirements of any seagoing vessel is that it should be able to float. I am not stupid. That was one of the first things they taught us at Rear Admiral School. The thing is, when we first went and spoke to the shipbuilding chaps they showed us this wonderful model floating in a display tank. We thought it was marvellous - all painted up nice with little people on the deck and everything. Of course, we placed our order straightaway. Thing is, that model was made of balsa wood; the real thing is made of steel, which as any naval man will tell you is far less floaty. Bit of an oversight on our part."

Critics, of whom there are many, blame the Royal Navy for not fully evaluating the contractor before placing the order. The company chosen to build the vessel, McKenzie's Crips, had no previous experience of shipbuilding, as their managing director freely admits.

"Well, we make crisps," explained Kerry Starch when we asked her to comment. "But we were keen to diversify. Our company has a 'can-do' attitude, and this is why we have come to dominate the crisp market. We were, after all, the company that introduced jam-flavoured crisps, so we figured that building a silly old boat was going to be a breeze."

Having a 'can-do' attitude is admirable but what this project demonstrated beyond all doubt is that what the company *can't* do is build boats. Kerry freely admits that they overreached themselves.

"I think the problem is that we're used to working with potato," she says. "Potato is very much our medium. If we'd been asked to build a boat out of potato I think the story would have been very different. But, alas, the navy specifically requested a frigate made out of steel. All things considered, I don't think we did badly. Yes, we had our setbacks - initially, whenever we put the boat in the water it sank. Then, when we stopped putting it in the water, it hardly ever sank at all. So really, you could say that the boat was fine and that it was the navy's fault for putting it in the water. I suppose. Couldn't you?"

Judge Told to Bugger Off



There were scenes of confusion at Rutland Crown Court yesterday when angry defendant Carl Spanners told the judge to 'bugger off', and he did. This is thought to be the first time that a sitting judge has acted upon the instruction of a defendant, and there are concerns that this may set a legal precedent.

As a serving police officer, Constable Gavin Trotter has attended many criminal hearings, either as a witness, as a police escort or, occasionally, as a defendant. He was present in court on this occasion and was

stunned by what took place.

"I was proper gobsmacked," he told us. "It ain't unusual for a felon to get a bit lippy, but it's nothing that a belt around the back of the 'ead wiv a truncheon won't fix. And if fings get really rowdy the judge can always clear the court, and that gives us an opportunity to go to town on the scumbag good and proper, like. One time, I even seen a judge hitch up his robes and get stuck in himself. But this... Well, it makes you wonder what the world is coming to,

don't it?"

According to reports, the incident happened after Mr Spanners became quite excitable in response to the prosecution's line of questioning. The judge, Mr Ernest Barrow QC, interceded to request that the defendant refrain from raising his voice, at which point Mr Spanners told him, "Bugger off and bother someone else, you ponce-up ermine-clad transvestite." Mr Barrow then got to his feet, said calmly, "Very well," then left. He has not been seen since.

"It seems that Mr Barrow has not merely bugged off - he has, to use the correct statutory phrase, bugged right off," said legal historian and commentator Giles Tremble. "In fact, to my knowledge, there has never been a case in which the judge has bugged off to this extent before. The closest comparable episode was in 1856 when a magistrate temporarily went missing during a boundary dispute, but was discovered three hours later hiding behind a curtain in a snooker hall.

Ballroom Dancing Dogged by Safety Concerns

Ballroom dancing has taken off big time in recent years, due in part to TV shows like *Antiques Roadshow*, *Countryfile* and, I don't know, *CSI Miami* or some shit like that. Anyway, safety campaigners are now whining that many people taking up the pastime are not made fully aware of the dangers that road-mending machinery poses to unwary dancers.

The concerns follow recently released statistics, which appear to show that last year more than two hundred people were seriously injured by road rollers whilst ballroom dancing. Although the accuracy of this data has been hotly contested, safety

whingers nevertheless advise that anyone finding themselves with nothing better to do than going for a bop round the ballroom or a prance round the palais should invest in a hard hat, a pair of sturdy boots and a high-visibility jacket (sequins optional).

However, Lenny Tango, president of the UK Ballroom Dancing Association, does not necessarily endorse this view. "Bollocks," he told us. "There's absolutely nothing to worry about. Ballroom dancing is perfectly safe as long as people behave sensibly and leave their road rollers at home when they come out dancing."

Sodall's
Sweet FA

The revolution is here!

At last, a refreshing soda that won't pile on the pounds

- No sugar
- No sweeteners
- No artificial preservatives
- No syrup
- No flavourings
- No colourings
- No fluids
- No point



There's nothing to it!

Twatism

Figures show that fewer couples are choosing to have children, for what some people might find a surprising reason.

"I'm really worried that if I have a child it might grow up to be a twat," said Cathy Anonymous. "People often assume that I've not had kids because it would have meant sacrificing my career. But I'm a junior accounts clerk for a carpet retailer and I'd chuck that shit in at the first opportunity I got."

Mrs Anonymous admits that when she was younger she had assumed that one day she would have a family of her own. But her feelings on the subject have changed after seeing some of the gormless specimens that trudge past her house on the way to school each morning - mouth-breathing, knuckle-dragging simpletons, who routinely wander out into the traffic without displaying so much a single, spluttering spark of intelligence. The kinds of cretins, she says, who lack the wit to reliably sit on a chair without falling off; children who electrocute themselves on a near-daily basis because they are unable to restrain themselves from sticking their fingers into every electrical socket that they come across; who have a favourite crayon based on how it tastes.

Fortunately, Mrs Anonymous's husband feels much the same way. "I remember what I was like at that age," Mr Anonymous told us, with a shiver. "I was a complete arsehole."

"Exactly," Mrs Anonymous agrees. "And look what he turned into."

"Well quite," her husband says.

"A total wanker."

"Absolutely," Mr Anonymous agrees.

"A waste of space. A dead loss."

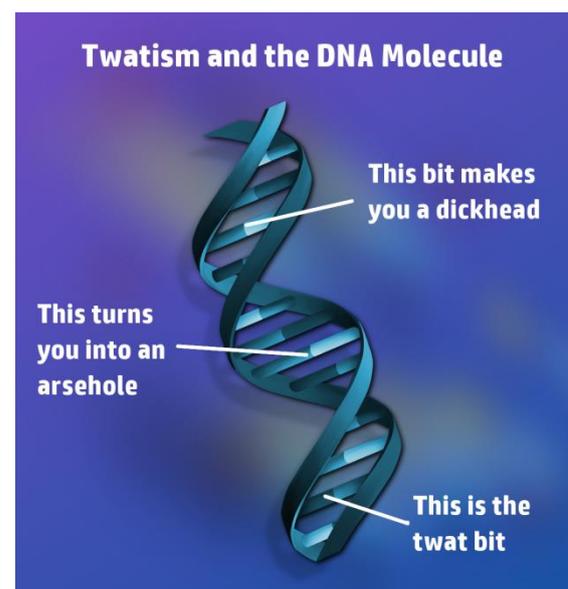
"Yes, I - "

"A dim-witted, dribbling retard. A dullard. A charisma vacuum. A nauseating excuse for a human being, with less sense than an item of cheap furniture and the kind of personality that causes you to seriously consider changing your name and telling all your friends and acquaintances that you're moving the Venezuela."

"All right, steady on."

"Shut up, moron," Mrs Anonymous tells him. She's just getting going. "Anyway, the point is, there is no way in hell that I am ever letting myself get infected with anything that springs from this man's loins. I'm already looking after one helpless, slobbering bundle of animated lard that can't seem to go for more than six hours at a time without soiling itself. The last thing I need is the same thing again, but in miniature. So that's why I'm not having children, thank you very much."

It ever there was anyone more certain, more resolute and more relentlessly steadfast than Mrs Anonymous, then we have yet to meet them. Mr Anonymous evidently thinks so too as he sits politely, sighs gently and shrugs. "She's probably got a point," he says.





OBVIOUS
electricals

Dear Mr Frimpton

We are sorry to hear that you are unhappy with the Boffco 4400 upright fridge-freezer that you recently purchased from our store. Unfortunately we are unable to provide a refund for this item at this time.

You claim that the unit was unable to maintain a constant temperature and that many of the items you placed inside became uncomfortably warm. Whilst you have automatically leapt to the conclusion that the appliance is faulty, we are forced to consider the possibility that you are actually putting these items in your oven rather than the fridge. Since most of our customers do not have the rudimentary intelligence required to distinguish between the two, we have concluded that this is by far the most likely explanation.

For your information, the oven is the hot burny thing that you cook your dinner in. Also, the shiny thing with the slots in it is a toaster. Please do not try to stuff your dirty washing into it.

Yours Sincerely
Gillian McGhillie
Customer Service Adviser



OBVIOUS
electricals

Dear Mr Protractor

We are sorry to hear that you are unhappy with the Colourfusion Hi-Definition 65" TV that you recently purchased from our store. Unfortunately we are unable to provide a refund for this item at this time.

You claim that the picture is dull and gloomy, the sound is incoherent and ill-defined, and the overall quality hugely disappointing. What you appear to be describing is the general state of current television broadcasting, for which we cannot be held responsible.

You made specific mention of a natural history programme that was broadcast in HD and complained that, whilst the penguins were crystal clear, Sir David Attenborough was fuzzy and indistinct. What you must understand is that Sir David, although a venerated and much experienced broadcaster, began his career before the introduction of high definition television and as such is bound to look a little blurred. I'm sure you would agree that it would not be appropriate to ask a man of Sir David's standing to get himself upscaled and we should be content that he has at least allowed himself to be shown in colour.

Yours Sincerely
Gillian McGhillie
Customer Service Adviser



Dear Mrs Drainage

We are sorry to hear that you are unhappy with the Mightysuck Deluxe extractor unit that you recently purchased from our store. Unfortunately we are unable to provide a refund for this item at this time.

Like most domestic extractor units, the Mightysuck is extremely proficient at removing cooking fumes and other unwanted odours, but it has its limits. If you are a particularly malodorous individual, which it appears that you are, then even top-of-the-range units will struggle to expel the funk and make your home an acceptable environment in which to entertain guests.

If it has reached the point where the paper is peeling off your walls, exotic flora is forcing its way up through your floorboards and birds are plummeting from the sky as they fly overhead, then it seems that what you really require is something that will remove all the air from your house. Whilst I wish it were possible to make an exception in your case, I'm afraid that such powerful devices are not on sale to the general public.

Yours Sincerely
Gillian McGhillie
Customer Service Adviser



Dear Mr Dimple

We are sorry to hear that you are unhappy with the Quicksmart Executive Model L fax machine that you recently purchased from our store. Unfortunately we are unable to provide a refund for this item at this time.

Let us begin by addressing the outmoded and redundant elephant in the room: who buys fax machines these days? We appreciate that you are having difficulty finding someone to exchange faxes with but if you will invest in equipment that belongs to an age of eight track cartridge players, instant mashed potato and Showaddywaddywaddy then what do you expect?

I note that you were informed by our salesperson that the device you purchased represented the very latest in advanced communications technology - we all had a good laugh about that. However, I'm afraid that we cannot acquiesce to your demand for this individual to be dismissed as this enterprising young man is now head of our marketing department.

Yours Sincerely
Gillian McGhillie
Customer Service Adviser



Dear Mrs Trousers

We are sorry to hear that you are unhappy with the Destructotron Heavy Duty Crosscut Shredding System that you recently purchased from our store. Unfortunately we are unable to provide a refund for this item at this time.

And no, we haven't seen your cat. There are plenty of places where it could have ended up - under a bus, mangled up in a combine harvester, crushed under a falling piano - and we resent the implication that our product had anything to do with its disappearance.

Not unless it was deliberate, in any case. There is every possibility that your cat, growing tired of your company, decided to end its life by hurling itself into your shredder. And why not? If I was planning to shred myself to oblivion then I would certainly choose the Destructotron. Its powerful bone-crunching action, easy-to-clean surfaces and large capacity bin make it the perfect choice for documents, letters, statements, flyers, forms, contracts, invoices and pets.

Yours Sincerely
Gillian McGhillie
Customer Service Adviser



Dear Mrs Spanners

We are sorry to hear that you are unhappy with the electric boogaloo that you recently purchased from our store. Unfortunately we are unable to provide a refund for this item at this time.

We do appreciate the problems of accommodating an electric boogaloo that has been fractured along the main spur due to excessive strumming. Random spurts are inevitably a consequence of over-indulgent cantering, which is why the use of pliant restraints and organic moisturising compounds are advised. Did you check the label?

We would remind you that you were offered fully comprehensive boogaloo insurance at the time of purchase, yet chose to 'go your own way'. It seems that this decision has now come back to bite you: your thrum has snapped, your major pangol is hanging off and I wouldn't be at all surprised if you find that your clump is bent, you pervert. You disgust me.

Yours Sincerely
Gillian McGhillie
Customer Service Adviser

The Brixham Trouser Museum



Brixham's ~~Third~~ Fourth Most Popular Tourist Attraction*

Do you like trousers? We like trousers. That's why we started the *Brixham Trouser Museum*, Europe's ONLY dedicated trouser museum (if you don't count the one in Rotterdam).



We've got trousers of all shapes, sizes, colours and flavours - jeans, jodhpurs, bellbottoms, culottes, dungarees, pantaloons and pants.

Come and see our mesmerising animatronic display *Trousers Through the Ages*. You'll gasp at this high tech, fully mobile exhibit, in which the trousers actually MOVE just like the real thing!

Or why not slip into a pair of SPACE TROUSERS as part of our interactive *Trousers of the Future* experience? You can even design your own unique pair of HOLOGRAPHIC TROUSERS, complete with actual working quantum pockets and a nuclear fly.

Impressed? Wait, there's more. Our *Trousers of the Stars* exhibit allows you to get up close and personal with actual trousers that were worn by historical figures, sporting heroes, and stars of stage and screen. Feel the rock and roll trousers of BRIAN MAY, as worn at Live Aid. Gasp at the impressive fighting trousers of FIELD MARSHAL MONTGOMERY, trousers that served in the North Africa campaign and were an inspiration to the folks back home. You can even inspect the royal trousers of EDWARD VIII - the very ones he abdicated in, although we have been assured that they have since been washed.

So, if you've seen Brixham harbour, you've spent some time on the beach and you've already been to the proper museum, and if you've got half an hour to kill before your bus leaves, then come along to...

The Brixham Trouser Museum
It's pants. No, really.

Pre-book your visit now and you'll also get free entry to Paignton World of Knickers.

*When it's raining



Woman Completes Personality Test, Finds She Hasn't Got One

After being asked to complete an online personality test as part of a job application, Katie Custard was shocked to learn that the automated assessment could find no trace of one.

Personality testing has advanced significantly in recent years. In its infancy it was considered a cheap and unreliable load of old cock; these days, following considerable work by top psychologists - people who themselves know what it is to get by on only the faintest traces of charisma - it is more properly viewed as a *quite expensive* and *occasionally reliable* load of old cock.

Personality tests typically measure five major traits - or six if you count gullibility. These are:

- ✦ **Openness**
- ✦ **Paranoia**
- ✦ **Altitude**
- ✦ **Circus Skills**
- ✦ **Umami**

The test taken by Ms Custard didn't detect any of these, although by all accounts it did return a positive result for the presence of potassium. Ms Custard admits that she wasn't altogether surprised.

"I'm not surprised," she announced when interviewed recently for a feature on an early evening magazine programme. Viewers watched as she meekly stood in her kitchen,



The 5 basic personality traits

shuffling nervously and picking at the threadbare sleeve of her grey cardigan. "I have come to accept that a forceful personality is not one of my strong points. I oftentimes struggle to make myself heard and I think this is why I have not accumulated many friends. But I do believe that if people really got to know me they would... blah, blah, blah..."

She droned on for quite a bit longer but the programme makers wisely chose to bury the rest of her monologue beneath a voiceover.

The good news is that help may soon be at hand for people like Katie. Since that item was broadcast, researchers in Toronto have declared that it will soon be possible to perform a personality graft. The team claim to have identified structures in the brain which are responsible for specific traits and have already succeeded in transplanting anger from a rat into a tortoise and made a budgie slightly peevish. They are also currently working with an elephant that is a bit of a git, attempting to make it more reasonable by injecting it with raw patience and distilled tolerance. However, their previous attempts to treat a buffalo that was a right twat didn't go so well when it rejected a tranquillity infusion, went on a rampage and had to be humanely exploded.

Treating someone who has no personality at all presents an even greater challenge since a sudden influx of undiluted

Many firms use personality tests as part of their recruitment process. This is a typical example.

Frisbee • Digitally • Tracked • Logistical • Interface • Solutions

Respond to the following statements as honestly as you can, indicating how strongly you agree or disagree.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Couldn't Give a Toss
You often find it difficult to talk to new people.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
You dislike being part of a large group.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
You have an irrational fear of mangoes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
You have an entirely rational fear of mangoes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
You are unable to enter a room without breaking into a song & dance routine.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
You lick all the chocolate off a chocolate digestive before eating it.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
You pronounce the word 'scone' incorrectly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
You break out into a cold sweat whenever you see farm machinery.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
You keep an axe in the fridge.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
You fold the end of a roll of toilet paper into a little neat 'v' shape.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Your Score

- If you thought carefully about each of these statements in turn and then provided a considered response for each, then you're just the sort of gullible idiot we're looking for. Welcome aboard.
- If you started responding but then couldn't be arsed to finish then you clearly do not have the motivation to see a task through to the end and we are unable to proceed with your application.
- If you thought this whole thing was a waste of time and didn't bother to respond to any of the statements, you do not have the degree of slavish devotion to modern business practice that we require, and we are unable to proceed with your application.
- If you thought that the whole thing was a waste of time but went through the motions anyway, then you clearly know how to play the game. Not only have you shown the aptitude that we require, but you have demonstrated suitability for a management position. Welcome aboard.

charisma could trigger episodes of extreme mania, disorientation and speaking in tongues. Still, if nothing else it would make her more interesting.

In the meantime, our advice for anyone thinking of using a personality test as part of their recruitment process is: don't bother. Studies have revealed that it would be no less reliable, and a damn sight cheaper, to simply hire the candidate with the firmest handshake, the shiniest shoes or the nicest hat.

Are You a Dickhead?

A vile, loudmouthed vulgarian who makes people's flesh crawl and hasn't got a single thought for anyone else?

No?

Well, would you like to be?

Perhaps you're a meek, submissive pushover who'd like to be able to command unblinking obedience and strike dismay into the very souls of all who stand in your way?

Whatever your aspirations, Perkins' Personality Patches has the right answer for you.

Our top scientists have identified over four hundred distinct 'personality bosons' present in human DNA. Until now these bosons have gone undetected because they are quite small and difficult to catch, but Perkins' scientists successfully trapped them in jam jars and electronically tickled them until they revealed their internal structures. This enabled them to synthesise personality traits in the lab - and now these traits are available to you, the consumer.

Apply a Perkins' Personality Patch to your exposed skin and our synthetic personality bosons will start to do their work, making you more forceful, more emotionally resilient, more cunning, or whatever you want! It's easy, and the results last for up to eight weeks, depending on wind speed and the lunar cycle*.

*Our lawyers made us put this bit in. They didn't tell us why.

And that's not all!

Our boffins have managed to genetically engineer a range of completely new personality traits, unknown to nature. Choose from:

Frappability

Smectitude

Spandal Lactitude

Smurg

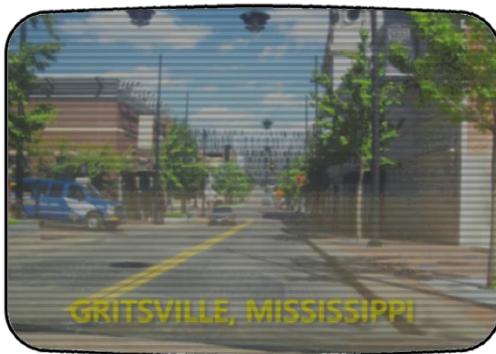
and

Pronk

News Bulletin

DATELINE: GRITSVILLE, MISSISSIPPI, SEPTEMBER 2019

It's being hailed as one of the greatest mysteries of our age. When a local store in Gritsville Mississippi started selling self-knitting wool, many people must have wondered if it was too good to be true. Was it really possible that an ordinary ball of wool could simply turn itself into a sweater, a muffler or a pair of mittens with just a snap of the fingers? Or were darker forces at work in this small and otherwise unremarkable American town?



Loretta Redwood is just one local resident who came to believe there was something sinister going on. "Well at first I thought it was wonderful. Self-knitting wool, I thought - must be one of them new Japanese whojamathingy's. I whipped me up a real nice cardigan in no time, but then the goddam thing turned itself into a hat and near squeezed the life outta me. Them Japanese folk oughtn't a be allowed to sell yer stuff that's gonna try to kill yer. It just ain't civilized."

But Loretta's story isn't the only tale of knitwear gone rogue in the town. Cletus Poncho was very happy to receive a pair of socks that his niece had knitted for his birthday, using the self-knitting wool. Happy, that it is, until they tried to run into the path of an oncoming truck while he was still in them.

"Well, you know, it was just the dangest thing," Cletus tells us. "One minute I was just sittin' on my porch, watching the birds and thinking what a real nice day I was havin'. The next I'm up and I'm hurtling across the street as fast as my socks can carry me, heading towards the front fender of an eighteen-wheeler. If them there socks hadn't

transformed into a ski mask when they did, why I reckon I'd have been a gonner."

So what's the story? Is this really a case of Japanese technology gone haywire? Or could this be a textile-based attempt by foreign spies to infiltrate the country? Local sky watcher Randy Cramps has an alternative theory.

"Aliens!" he tells us. "Oh yer, I seen their saucers comin' and goin' fer years now. Even got myself probed once. You got yer Martians, you got yer Venusians, you got yer Mutant Cyborg Lizard men from Alpha Proxima. They's all coming an' interferin' with folks round here. I figure that it's the Pleiadians who are behind all this dangerous knitting. Seems like it's somethin' they'd do. They nasty."

Randy might seem like he's spent too much time inhaling the fumes from the chemical plant situated two hundred yards upwind of his trailer but after the strange goings on that have been witnessed in Gritsville there are plenty who are prepared to believe him. However, it seems that the truth, although no less bizarre, lies closer to home. Here at WKROS News Central, we have learned that the wool was sourced from local rancher Curt Pitcher, who has apparently been experimenting with specially bred bioengineered sheep for some time.



That research has now come to an untimely end as, according to our source, Mr Pitcher was found dead in the early hours of this morning, strangled by a genetically modified blanket. Guess the folks of Gritsville, Mississippi won't have to worry about their wayward woollies any longer.

This is Mary Jo Reilly for WKROS News Central, Gritsville, Mississippi

Greygold's

Residential Care Home



At Greygold's we promise that we won't kick your elderly relative in the teeth and steal their pension.

There are not many care homes these days that can honestly claim that they won't humiliate and abuse their residents. We're not perfect and we're not saying that there haven't been times in the past where our employees have subjected residents to degrading and shameful ordeals. And we can't guarantee that it won't happen again. After all, it's a stressful job and staff have to unwind. But, by and large, most of our residents can go for quite long periods without sustaining notifiable injuries, and

some of them are even happy, in their own way.

Hey, business is business, right?

But what better recommendation can there be than the words of the people who really matter? Here's what a few of our more robust residents had to say, entirely of their own volition and without being coerced or anything.

"I love it here. The staff are very friendly and nobody has ever pushed my face into my dinner and told me that if I didn't eat my carrots there would be trouble."

Gladys Trimble, £825 per week

"Now listen here. I spent two years in a Japanese prisoner of war camp. Deprivation? Starvation? Torture? You don't know the meanings of the words. Bring it on, sonny, do your worst."

Arthur Binn, £1220 per week

"Have you come to read the meter? I once had a pet tortoise called Hercules who used to look just like you. Where am I? Is it time for *Emmerdale*?"

Leonard Marjoribanks, Manager

So if you're looking for a convenient, reliable and... convenient care home in which to deposit you aging loved one then, let's face it, we're probably the best you're going to find.

Greygold's

Residential Care Home

Where quality care costs extra

Can there be any greater compliment than to have your likeness immortalised in bronze or stone and erected in a public space for pigeons to crap on and drunks to be sick over? No, clearly not. But it's not just self-serving statesmen, murderous warmongers and cruel, heartless and heavily caricatured Victorian mill owners that get the treatment. Oh no, occasionally normal people get commemorated too. Well, obviously they're not *that* normal - someone's erected a statue of them, after all. Anyhow, judge for yourself. Here are four examples that may have passed you by.

Joseph Crump

You may not know the name but if you have ever complained about a faulty product or poor service, then you have Joseph Crump to thank. In 1952, Crump walked into a pie shop in his native Leeds and bought a meat and potato pasty. Upon getting it home he discovered that it was actually cheese and ham, so he immediately stormed back to the shop, loudly accused the staff of trying to poison him and demanded to see the owner. When the apologetic baker appeared from the kitchen, Crump accused him of contravening a raft of fictitious laws that he'd just made up, claimed that a small child could have been hurt and pompously threatened to get the shop closed down.



This massive overreaction is thought to have been the birth of modern consumerism and the techniques that Crump employed to harangue the shop workers and the business owner over something trivial and entirely inconsequential have been used by obnoxious, arrogant and self-important people ever since.

Lyndsey Elbow

Carlisle is rightly proud of Lyndsey Elbow, inventor of the custard cream. Originally from Wrexham, Elbow moved to Carlisle to get away from her neighbours. As an amateur inventor, Stump spent many hours in her shed mixing chemicals, tinkering with machinery and formulating theories. Her discovery of the custard cream came one day in 1928, much to the surprise of Elbow herself, who thought she was inventing a new type of motorcycle sidecar.

The custard cream eventually led to the development of the bourbon, the jammie dodger

and, ultimately, the chocolate hobnob, and is now considered one of the most important developments in the science of biscuity.

Alan, the Awesome Artichoke of Aberystwyth

An unusual one this - a statue to Alan, the Awesome Artichoke of Aberystwyth. If you've never heard of the alliterative vegetable, you're not alone. This one goes back to the Middle Ages when, during a period of political upheaval, economic uncertainty and extreme drunkenness, some chancer claimed to have grown an artichoke that could predict the future.

Unbelievably, people fell for it - or, more likely, didn't care - and Alan was elected mayor of the town. Little is known of how successful it was in that role but it's notable for the fact that was the first time, if not the last, that a vegetable has held political office.



Gary Bandage

Between 1979 and 1985, Gary Bandage was one of the most prolific house breakers in the South East. It is estimated that during this period he knocked off more than three and a half thousand properties - although this figure is based on the number of video recorders found in his garage and could be much higher if the contents of a lockup in Woking is taken into account.

The decision to erect a memorial in his honour was, understandably, a contentious one; although it is perhaps fitting that the statue was stolen just three weeks after it was unveiled.

Windy Pam

How many of you nice people knew that Lord Palmerston kept a fart diary?

What's that? Seriously? Please, tell us more.

I will. The British Prime Minister, or Windy Pam as he was affectionately known in Parliament, first began keeping a fart diary on the advice of his doctor in 1847, while he was Foreign Secretary. Palmerston, that is, not his doctor. The practice became quite widespread throughout the latter years of the nineteenth century, when medical knowledge was still primitive and the general public were prepared to believe any old guff.

*Guff! Ha ha! That's another word for fart.
Funny!*

Thank you. Anyway, despite being a source of great embarrassment for everybody concerned, it became the custom for doctors to ask their patients to lie face down on a special 'trumping couch' and make detailed notes about their flatulence. All aspects were considered: the sound, the frequency, the duration and, of course, the smell. From these observations, an experienced fartologist could diagnose conditions such as mumps, migraines, laryngitis and ear infections. The fact that most of the diseases that could be diagnosed by this method chiefly affected the other end of the body was just one of those strange, inexplicable quirks of biology.

Yeah, right. Look, we reckon you're making this up. You almost had us, right up until you said 'fartologist'.

No, it's true, really. Think about it: the principal is no different to an emissions test for your car, just more socially awkward and considerably less scientifically valid. If you don't believe us, check out some of the newspapers and periodicals of the time. They're full of references to fartology: do-it-yourself fartology guides, fartology equipment, fartological seminars and so on. In fact Dickens mentions fartology in *Great Expectations*. There is a scene where Mr and Mrs Poplegrinder are entertaining guests and halfway through the fish course Mr Poplegrinder lets rip with a right belter. Mrs Poplegrinder sniffs the air contemplatively, waits for the chandelier to stop rattling and then announces, "That's diphtheria, that is."

*Will you stop saying 'fartology'. It's not a thing.
You're not fooling anybody.*

Neither is homeopathy, but it doesn't stop stupid people believing in it, does it? Well, back in Victorian times, stupid people believed that you could diagnose illness from studying bottom emissions, which is why Lord Palmerston and many other idiots like him kept fart diaries.

*Oh right, we're back to Palmerston. We were wondering
when you were going to drag him back into it.*

Shush. Listen, you might learn something. Palmerston was as rigorous about accurately recording the details of his discharges as he was vigorous when it came to producing them in the first place. For instance, an entry for 25th May 1849 describes one post-lunch trump as "like a thunderclap: sudden and unexpected, and leaving behind it a faint smell of ozone." Another episode from later in the same year reads: "It had been building for some time and when I finally vented it broke my dentures and blew a vase off an occasional table". And in February 1862 Palmerston recounts a sustained trump which lasted for at least ninety seconds and which his keen ear for music identified as a perfect E flat. What do you think about that?

*We think it's juvenile. Really juvenile. We would have thought all this 'fart'
stuff would be beneath you. We liked the thing you did about Flying
Squirrels and even the swearsy baby, but this is just drivell.*

No, it's proper history. You'll find the evidence in the British Museum: an airtight display case containing Palmerston's fart diary, along with Lord Nelson's log of nautical belches and a chart detailing the fluctuating whiffiness of Emmeline Pankhurst's footwear.

Really? Airtight?

Think about it.

Fair enough.

Toaster Awareness

Mr Topps: Ah Ms Perkins, thank you for coming to see me. I hope I haven't dragged you away from anything important.

Ms Perkins: Oh no, Mr Topps. It was no trouble.

Topps: Please call me Tony.

Perkins: Yes Mr Topps. Thank you Mr Topps. And please continue to call me Perkins.

Topps: Thank you Perkins. Now, Perkins, you've been with us at Topps Toasters for six months, is that correct?

Perkins: Yes, six glorious months. That's right. Six wonderful, glorious months. Oh yes.

Topps: Good. Settled in okay?

Perkins: Oh yes, absolutely. I should say so. Marvellous.

Topps: Very good. Well look, I'll come straight to the point. When we took you on we were looking for a dynamic, innovative individual who could significantly increase sales of our toasters. We had many, many applicants and we chose you.

Perkins: And I'm very grateful, Mr Tony. I think you made the right choice.

Topps: Our toaster sales have gone down, Ms Perkins.

Perkins: Yes, I had heard that sales had dipped slightly.

Topps: 'Plummeted' was the word that our sales director employed. What exactly have you done to my business, Perkins?

Perkins: Okay, well, I admit that so far my influence may have been negligible, but -

Topps: Not negligible - negative, Perkins. Do you realise how much this is damaging me? Do you realise how many ex-wives I have to keep? What have you been doing?

Perkins: I've been raising awareness, Mr Tony.

Topps: Raising awareness?

Perkins: Yes, raising awareness of your toasters. Raising awareness is kind of my thing. When I worked at the council I raised awareness of obesity. When I worked at a charity I raised awareness of homelessness. I'm now raising awareness of toasters.

When was the last time you used a toaster?



This message has been brought to you by Topps Toasters

**Toasters - you
can't make toast
without them***



**This message has been
brought to you by Topps
Toasters**

***You totally can**

Topps: Right... Perkins, this is your first proper job, isn't it?

Perkins: Oh no, first I worked at the council, then I worked -

Topps: Yes, but this is your first *proper* job. A job where you actually have to, you know, produce results.

Perkins: I don't follow you, Mr Sir.

Topps: Well, it's like this, Perkins. We make toasters.

Perkins: I'm aware of that sir. And now, thanks to my efforts, many more people are aware of it too.

Topps: Don't interrupt, Perkins. We make toasters. But making toasters isn't enough to keep us all in bread and jam. We also have to *sell* the toasters. Do you understand?

Perkins: I... no, I don't think I do.

Topps: Well, all right, think back to when you last bought a toaster.

Perkins: I don't own a toaster, sir.

Topps: Well all right, something else. A kettle.

Perkins: Ah yes, I own a kettle.

Topps: Good. And why did you buy that kettle?

Perkins: Because I was aware of kettles, Mr Tony sir. I was aware of kettles, so I bought a kettle.

**Did you know that
toasters are a
thing?**



**This message has been
brought to you by Topps
Toasters**

Topps: Ah yes - but you're also aware of toasters, and yet you haven't bought one of those.

Perkins: Well, I don't like toast. And yet, in spite of my toast aversion, I have tried really, really hard. I have taken your toasters very seriously, honestly I have.

Topps: And I'm very glad that you've taken my toasters seriously. Any member of staff whom I suspected of treating my toasters frivolously would be sacked on the spot. But it's not enough.

Perkins: Not enough?

**Over 4000 toasters
go unused every day.
Don't let your toaster
be one of them.**



**This message has been
brought to you by Topps
Toasters**

Topps: Not nearly enough.

Perkins: But I've been ever so busy distributing toaster keyrings, toaster balloons, toaster coasters -

Topps: Toaster coasters?

Perkins: Toaster coasters. And we've given out thousands of trolley tokens. Trolley tokens are a guaranteed way of raising awareness. They worked when it came to raising awareness of obesity. They worked to raise awareness of homelessness.

Topps: And yet the world is still full of obese people and homeless people. Granted, you may have made those people more aware of that they are obese or homeless, but one might argue that they were fully aware of that already and didn't need you to come along and point it out.

Perkins: I see... Yes... On the whole, then, what you seem to be saying is that I have wasted a big chunk of my life pursuing methods which are ultimately worthless and ineffectual.

Topps: It rather looks like that.

Perkins: Oh dear. I've just put in an order for eight thousand toaster wristbands. What do I with them?

Topps: I wouldn't like to say.

Perkins: Right, well, if that's all I suppose I'd better go away and rethink my entire life.

Topps: Good idea.

Perkins: And sir?

Topps: Yes Perkins.

Perkins: Thank you for bringing this to my attention.

Topps: Get out.

**Hey look, a toaster!
Yeah, makes you
think, doesn't it?**



**This message has been
brought to you by Topps
Toasters**

A Rough Guide to Awareness Raising for the Non-Aware Awareness Workshop

We're raising awareness of a workshop to help raise awareness for people who are unaware.

Are you looking to improve your understanding of workshops designed to raise awareness for people who are unaware? Well sorry, this workshop is all about raising awareness for workshops to raise awareness. You want the Improving Your Understanding of Workshops Designed to Raise Awareness for People Who Are Unaware workshop. That starts next week.

Meanwhile, you're welcome to attend our Workshop to Help Raise Awareness for People Who Are Unaware. Registrations are open now. If you have any special dietary requirements, please make us aware.

The PATAGONIAN SNEEZING FISH

Are you looking for a garden feature which will be the talk of all your friends?

The Patagonian Sneezing Fish is rapidly becoming a favourite addition to ponds as a cheap and environmentally friendly alternative to ornamental fountains. Born in early spring amongst some of the more inaccessible and windswept peaks of the Andes, the Patagonian Sneezing Fish catches a cold almost as soon as it is born. Coughing, snuffling, its eyes bulging and accompanied by near constant sneezing, it makes its way down to the streams and rivers that wind through the lower valleys.

"Their mass migration is an astonishing sight," says local fishologist Lola Mendez. "Thousands of the tiny silver creatures come tumbling down the mountainsides,

spluttering, retching and making enough racket to blow your socks off. It's magical."

Their journey back up the mountainside at the end of the season is no less impressive, the plucky creatures harnessing the startling power of their stupendous sternutations to propel themselves back up the slopes to spawn.

You might think that it's no sort of life for a fish and, happily, so do they, which is why many of them would much rather take up residence in the back garden water features of pretentious people from Chichester, Kettering and Kingston Upon Hull. Here their natural sneezing abilities can be put to good use, creating intricate and fascinating water fountain displays.

Order yours now. Just £12.99 each or £59.99 for a pack of six.

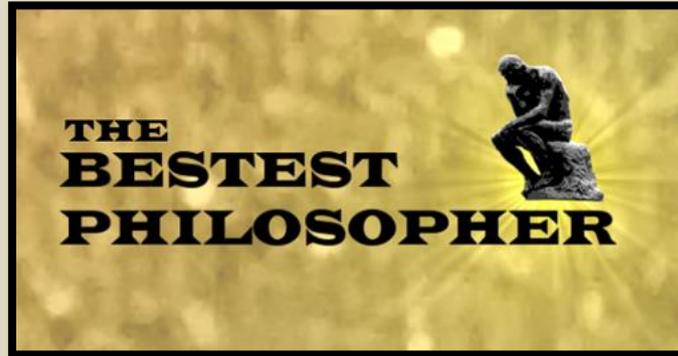


And not only that...

Think that a Patagonian Sneezing Fish fountain is just for decoration? Think again. The Patagonian Sneezing Fish is also a great security feature, as professional burglar and all round villain Toby Wallop can attest.

"I was going to knock off this place near Thetford," Toby tells us. "Smart little gaff, out of the way, like - quite promising. Well, I waited until it was quiet and then I was over the back fence and sneaking up to the back of the house to try my luck with the patio doors. Suddenly, as I passed the fishpond, I heard a sudden wet sneeze and was showered with pond water and fish snot. Well I didn't hang about - I dropped my jemmy and my sack and I was out of there, pronto! It certainly taught me a lesson. No more housebreaking for me - from now on I'm going to stick to nicking cars, just like my daddy taught me."

From the people who brought you *Britain's Favourite Hat*, *Celebrity Sandwich*, *Apprentice* and *Morris Dancing with the Stars* comes



Starting this Saturday, 8pm

Over the next ten weeks, the brightest and most promising amateur philosophers from all over the country will compete to see who can become **The Bestest Philosopher**, with the winner receiving £10,000 and the chance to philosophise for the Queen at this year's Royal Variety Performance.

Competitors will first have to battle through the blind auditions, asking searching questions about the nature of reality, struggling with intractable problems of morality and pondering the deepest mysteries of what it is to be human. If they manage to impress a panel of celebrity philosophers and Cheryl Tweedy/Cole/Fernandez-Versini, they will make it through to the live shows where, with the help of their celebrity coaches and Cheryl Thingy/Her-From-Girls-Aloud, they will stage a professionally choreographed philosophy routine, complete with live music and spangly costumes.

And then it's over to you, the viewer. Your vote will decide who gets to be crowned **The Bestest Philosopher** (unless one of them manages to successfully formulate a rational reappraisal of the concept of excellence and so redefine exactly what is meant by 'bestest').

Book now for The Bestest Philosopher live tour!



Yes, you can see some of your favourite philosophers at their philosophising best as they recreate the world-class pondering and deep thinking that won the hearts of a nation. The stars of TV's The Bestest Philosopher are coming to an arena near you! Book now to avoid disappointment*.

*The Bestest Philosopher Productions Ltd. cannot guarantee that you will not be disappointed and in the event of any action for compensation its lawyer-philosophers will be instructed to redefine disappointment in a manner which is both academically rigorous and legally binding. Your statutory rights are not affected.

Sausage Celebrations

September 14th is Vegan Awareness Day. This doesn't mean that you should immediately rush out and make yourself aware of vegans. Rather, it's an opportunity for the International Society for the Promotion of Veganism to promote vegan awareness. Internationally.

September 14th is also World Sausage Day, which is a problem. Not that sausages are particularly problematic - in the event of an incident they are relatively easy to avoid, even on a day of sausage celebration. No the problem, as astute observers will have noticed, is that both causes share the same day and this has led to some discontent.

What began as a vicious flame war on social media quickly spilled out into the real world when vegan protesters set up camp outside the Sausage and Mechanically Recovered Offal Products headquarters in Rhyl. This was followed by a reciprocal disturbance when an angry meat-filled mob descended on a quinoa wholesalers in Norwich.

Meanwhile in Leeds, prominent local butcher Alf Crapper was arrested on suspicion of assault after he punched a man he assumed to be a vegan in the street. And in the mouth. It emerged that his victim was just as much of a carnivore as Alf himself, but merely looked a little pale and fragile.

With only 365 days a year - you did know there were only 365 days a year? Well, with a finite number of available dates,

these sorts of conflicts happen all the time. For instance, Global Non-Smoking Day falls smack bang in the middle of Cigar Appreciation Week. This year, World Temperance Day shared a date with Gin Tuesday. And 3mm Rubber Hose Fitting Celebration Day clashed with European Non-Abrasive Chrome and Stainless Steel Cleaning Agent Day. Ironically, this caused quite a deal of friction, though quite why these two apparently disparate groups have got it in for each other, no one seems able to say.

The worst scenes in recent years came in 2016. 2016 was a leap year - you did know that 2016 was a leap year? Well it was, and there were some extremely violent flare-ups in Strasbourg as more than forty different associations fought over the extra day. Dozens of people were injured and a woman from The Ostrich and Emu Mutual Fellowship was wedged into a wheelie bin and remained there for six hours before rescuers were finally able to liberate her.

Recognising that such a situation cannot possibly continue, the United Nations has taken it upon itself to set up an official agency to manage the allocation of days to interested parties. To be called The World 'Thing' Day Naming Bureau, the organisation will be launched next year on July 7th, a date which henceforth will be known as The World 'Thing' Day Naming Bureau Day.

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
1 Hallibut assimilation day	2 Start of Smokey & the Bandit appreciation week	3 Followers of the Holy Mushroom day	4 National scotch egg awareness day (Finland)	5 World dirty joke day	6 Anniversary of the justification of King Jiffy	7 St Poldark's day
8 Say hello to a quantity surveyor day	9 Monday monday	10 Listening out for rare voles day	11 Trumpet ratification day	12 Start of the festival of self- assembly furniture	13 Freaky Friday	14 Looking at pictures of trains day
15 World Frogger day	16 Slotting carrots into chain-link fences Monday	17 Edna Womble Tuesday	18 Second digit on the left hand day	19 Bent Thursday	20 International ratchet screwdriver day	21 Keith Richards day
22 First Sunday of Bacon	23 Start of the unicorn hunting season	24 Amusing misheard lyrics day	25 Posting medium-sized letters into dog poo bins day	26 Emerson day	27 Lake & Palmer day	28 Trying not to step on an ant day
29 St Bongo's day	30 Start of spanner recall week	31 Crispmas day				

Struggling to find the right greetings card for that special day? Whatever the occasion - National Sausage Day, Bent Thursday or even the start of the unicorn safari season - here at Obvious Cards we've got it covered. Take a look at our latest selection.



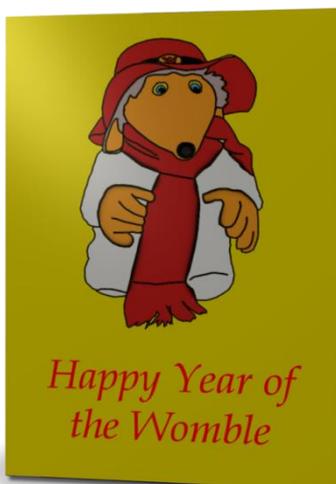
Verse reads:

It's National Sausage Day
Please don't drop a clanger
Get on your feet
Grab your meat
And enjoy a tasty banger



Verse reads:

You may be getting old and tired
The future may be bleak
But that's really no excuse to miss
Back pain awareness week



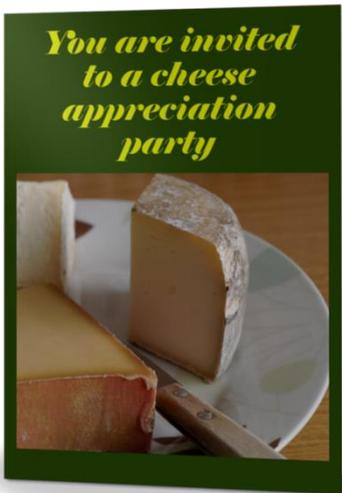
Verse reads:

It's the Chinese Year of the Womble
Hip hip hip hooray!
You might think that nothing rhymes
with Womble
And you'd be right



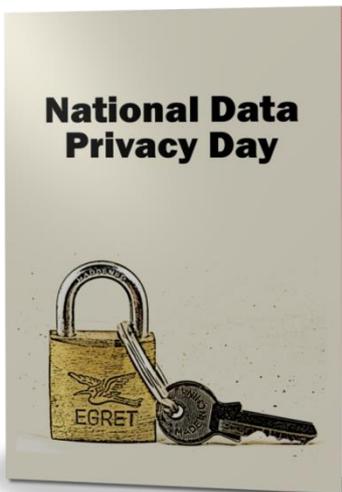
Verse reads:

It's that special time of year once more
When we celebrate the llama
So here's wishing you a woolly friend
To make your life much calmer



Verse reads:

It's a time of celebration
That sweeps across the nation
So here's your invitation
To our cheese appreciation



Verse reads:

It's National Data Privacy Day
So let's all [REDACTED]
And remember to [REDACTED] care



Uber Truth

Granville Knowles is always right... ...and now he can prove it

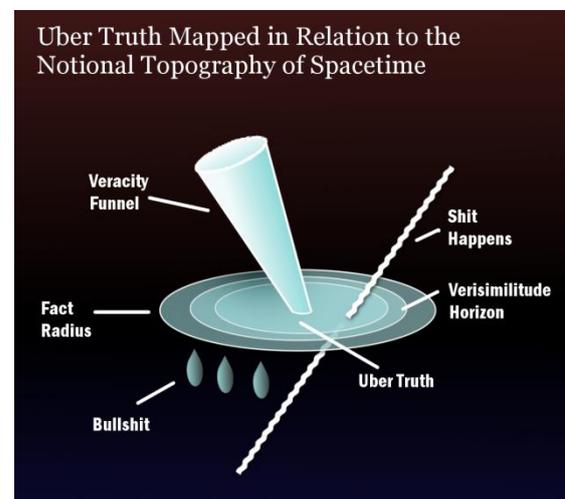
Senior lecturer in mathematics develops formula to conclusively demonstrate that he can never be wrong.

Granville Knowles, a senior lecturer in Impure Mathematics at the Burger King Institute of Poncey Thinking in Salford, has spent more than forty years trying to develop a theory to finally and decisively prove that he is right about everything. Now he believes that he has succeeded in producing an equation that will mean he will never lose an argument ever again.

Ever since he had been a precocious, argumentative and thoroughly irritating child, Granville Knowles had always known that he had never been wrong about anything. Whatever the subject, no matter how many opinions were ranged against him, Knowles would insist that his judgment was correct, and would go on insisting until he had worn everyone down and they had given up. But knowing that one is always right and that everyone else is talking rubbish is a very different thing to proving it scientifically.

"It's far too easy to fall into the trap of quoting 'facts' and 'evidence'," Knowles memorably said during now legendary televised lecture in 1997. "But what, I ask myself, do I do when those so-called 'facts' and that apparent 'evidence' contradict the things I absolutely know to be true?"

The answer - Knowles went on to explain before anyone in his audience could be misguided enough to answer what was so obviously a rhetorical question - was 'uber truth'.



Knowles had realised many years earlier that in a world where truth was an inconstant and flexible commodity, what was required was a more reliable method of establishing absolute veracity than mere 'evidence'. To some degree he had been inspired by the work of Professor Mitch Mondrian, Senior Liar at the University of Palm Beach throughout the '40s and '50s. Mondrian had suggested that at a subatomic level truth could exist in a state of superposition - that something could be both true and not true at the same time. It was a radical idea but Mondrian had successfully relied on it several times to get him off tax evasion charges.

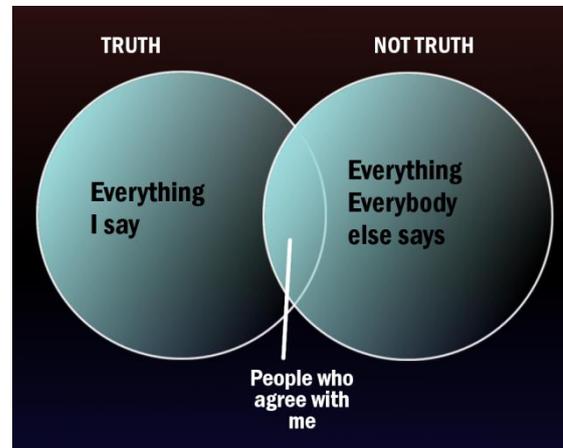
Granville Knowles has built on this idea, suggesting that what we know as 'truth' is actually a quantum fluctuation that can exist at several different energy levels. In everyday life we experience truth as the sum total of observable and verifiable events, but according to Knowles this is an unstable and ultimately imprecise version of reality. He believes that a more accurate version of the truth must exist at a higher energy state - not something that can easily be observed in everyday experience, but capable of being modelled mathematically. He has named this phenomenon 'uber-truth' (uT) and this week he revealed the formula that proves its existence.

<p>FORMULA</p> $\frac{(K \times 5) + 25}{5 - K} - \frac{(V + V) + 10}{2 - V} = uT$
--

It might look complex, but then if you'd spent forty years working on a fancy sum, you'd expect it to be a wee bit complicated. In the briefest terms, what it says is that where K represents Granville Knowles' opinion, and V represents the volume at which he shouts it at people, the product will be the degree to which it deviates from absolute truth. In every case the value is zero - in other words, uber truth.

"I have proven," Granville Knowles wrote in a recent article, "scientifically and undisputably, that I am always right about everything. And for those who doubt that my formula is accurate, I can say that I

have tested my belief in the veracity of the formula using the formula, and the formula has conclusively proven that my belief in the accuracy of the formula is correct."



In spite of Knowles' assertion, however, not everyone is convinced. "The only thing Granville bloody Know-it-all has proven is that his own arrogance is of a magnitude never before seen in mathematical circles," said Dr Helena Bream of the Kentucky Fried Centre for Clever Dickery in Durham. "He is the kind of imbecile who cannot agree with anyone or anything, and will move heaven and Earth in order to uncover some specious reason to 'prove' he is not talking out of his ample backside. He is the kind of idiot who inserts words like 'undisputably' into articles and will argue with any number of spellcheckers, proof readers and editors who tell him the that word he's actually groping for is 'indisputably', until they finally cave in and agree to commit his egregious and embarrassing error to print. He is, in short, a tit, and if I'm entirely honest I'm starting to regret I ever married him."

RENT-A-SHOE

An Exciting New Investment Opportunity

Maintaining a good quality shoe can be a pain in the wallet - and a pair is double the expense. It's not just about finding shoes that are comfortable, stylish and hardwearing. You also need to ensure that they're roadworthy, correctly balanced and compliant with emissions regulations.

Rent-A-Shoe is a new business venture that aims to address this problem.

Right now, few people give serious consideration to renting their footwear - but over the next few years all that is set to change. Environmental concerns and the rising cost of shoe leather mean that the traditional owner-occupier model of shoe distribution will rapidly become a thing of the past. The future lies in leasing and Rent-A-Shoe aims to place itself squarely at the forefront of this exciting new market.



Renting shoes in an uncertain world

So why is Rent-A-Shoe the natural choice for investors?

Well, between them, Rent-A-Shoe's directors already have over twenty years' experience in the quality hat rental arena, easily outperforming competing hat rental companies in terms of both sales and customer feedback. That same model will help us gain a foothold* in the shoe leasing business.



A new paradigm in shoe utilisation

Rent-A-Shoe's customers can enjoy great value, whilst our extensive service packages mean that they can avoid expensive maintenance costs. Rent-A-Shoe will also boast the greatest choice, offering a wide range of styles, so that customers can always be sure of having the right shoe for the right occasion. Our boast is that whether it's a smart brogue, a glitzy stiletto or a sturdy, all-terrain welly, Rent-A-Shoe will always be one step ahead†.



Innovation. Excellence. Shoes.

If you'd like to get your foot in the door‡ of this sensational new opportunity, register for our investment prospectus now.

Apply now and get a free sausage!



*Pun intended. †This one too. ‡Not this one though.

Something Happened on Tuesday

Hotly tipped to clean up at next year's Oscars, *Something Happened on Tuesday* is the vague and uninspired true story of something that might have happened - possibly a fire, or a robbery, or a vegetable competition - on a Tuesday. Or possibly another day of the week. It's based on a newspaper report written by junior reporter Michael Moped for the *Shepton Bassett Argus*, about an incident or a fire or a fight or something that might have happened in a nightclub or a restaurant or a car park. The report itself was thin on facts because, in line with standard journalistic practice, it was sourced from a tweet posted by the police or the fire brigade or a concerned bystander or someone.

Mr Moped didn't investigate further because it was cold out and *Luther* was on the telly but Hollywood moguls nevertheless saw that it would make excellent source material for a vague and uninteresting motion picture starring Nic Cage or Meryl Streep or Laurence Fishburne or someone.

However, controversy waits in the wings as the film studio is currently fighting a claim for copyright infringement by the police or the fire brigade or whoever it was who posted the original tweet. And if the police or the fire brigade or whoever should win then it's likely that they will in turn have to defend a claim against whoever was behind the incident or the fire or the fight or whatever it was.

The University of the Bleeding Obvious has approached Mr Moped for a comment...

... He hasn't responded, nor is he likely to, but if the BBC can write itself into a story and try to kid its audience that it is carrying out some kind of journalistic investigation - rather than just paraphrasing a press release - by saying 'we have contacted so-and-so for a comment', then why the hell can't we do the same?



SOME ACTOR

THAT WOMAN WHO WAS
IN THAT THING

SOMETHING HAPPENED ON TUESDAY

It might have been nothing...
but it could have been *something*



Rumpole, Hutz and Petrocelli
22 Affidavit Street
London

Dear Sirs or Madams

I write, inter alia, in connection with the recent dismissal from your company of Mr Glen Twerk, carpe diem. As Mr Twerk's actual proper lawyer - and not just his mate from the darts team who's offered to knock up a vaguely legal-sounding letter for him - I have advised my client that the termination of his contract constitutes, herewith and forthwith, unfair dismissal, in addition to being wrongful dismissal and possibly habeas corpus and a bit of the old droit du seigneur, as well.

I am given to understand, dictum factum, that you assert there has never been any agreement in place that my client should be permitted to work from home. Well, if you will excuse the legal parlance, that is bang out of order, mate. Having reviewed Mr Twerk's contract, in between matches down at the Royal Oak last Saturday evening, I have found, quo vadis, no clause that specifically forbids home working. I am sure, per ardua ad astra, that the repercussions of this omission will be quite plain to you. For the avoidance of doubt I would refer you to the case of Atomic Cleaners Ltd vs Maximillian the Wonder Dog, which clearly establishes a precedent, quod erat demonstrandum and, indeed, in flagrante delicto.

In vino veritas and, ergo, post meridian. Or, in other words, we've got you by the cobbles there, son.

Howsoever and wherefore art thou, notwithstanding the contractual ramifications, my client and I have considered your argument that since Mr Twerk was employed in the capacity of forklift truck operator in your warehouse, working from home was not, and never would be, a viable and practical way of fulfilling his contractual obligations. We are sympathetic, of course, but feel that this is still a rather thin justification for the removal of my client's basic rights.

Our response to this is in two parts. Firstly, and penultimately, we feel that your attitude shows a remarkable deficiency of understanding of modern work practices, vis-à-vis and pro bono, technologies and methodologies that mean that working from home is both economically and environmentally advantageous to all parties.

Secondly, and finally, myself and Mr Twerk have carried out a number of practical assessments, and as a result of these tests we have proved the Mr Twerk is perfectly able to operate his forklift in his front room, with only slight damage to the furniture and minimal complaints from the neighbours.

In conclusion, sine qua non, ex post facto, caveat emptor and spaghetti carbonara, my client and I have significant reason to believe that we've got you done up like a bleeding kipper. What you got to say about that then, mush?

Yours Faithfully



Perry Rumpole, Bsc, Tcp, WD40

Solicitor at Law



Exhibit A

Fine Dining

with Woodroffe Spanker

Hello there chaps and chapesses. Ever find yourself in the unfortunate position of having to entertain a rich aunt and proving entirely unequal to the task of feeding the old dear? You could try tempting her with that tin of anchovies that has been skulking in solitary confinement in the larder since last Michaelmas, or even, if things get really desperate, fobbing her off with a bread roll that you smuggled out of your club, hidden in the brim of your hat. Such tactics, however, are unlikely to impress. Your aunt, as most aunts do, will expect to be treated to a first class nosebag and anything less will be evaluated, committed to record and brought up against you next time you try to touch her for a fiver.

Let's start with:

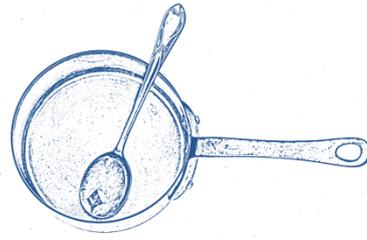
The Butter Course

Some gourmets prefer to serve the butter course later in the meal, or even skip it entirely, but you don't want to appear cheap. Remember, you're out to impress and in this respect the butter course is a dashed good opening. For maximum effect you will need to present a selection of at least five different butters. Butter spoons should be available, although it is acceptable, and quite fashionable, to use one's fingers. Shirt sleeves can be rolled up and please ensure there are clean towels and a mop nearby.

Trumpets and Pennywhistles

Gosh, the number of times I've had to explain to people that the trumpets and pennywhistles that feature so significantly in this course are not actually for human consumption, usually whilst I have been frantically attempting to recover one of the aforementioned instruments from a luckless diner's gullet. Nobody with any sense would ever try to eat a trumpet, from which we can only conclude that the multitudes that I have rescued from an ignominious demise due to brass poisoning must have all been thoroughly out of their minds.

No, the trumpets and pennywhistles merely provide musical accompaniment to a light salad - top French chefs have apparently decided that serenading your food is an aid to digestion. Whether this is true or not is for you to decide. I, personally, would not wish to pick an argument with a top French chef when his blood is up. From what I gather, you can serve up pretty much any old vegetable



matter for this course: just remember that the louder the trumpet, the better the food. The pennywhistles apparently have no measurable effect other than to provide musical garnish.

Meat Tower Course

It's astonishing to think there have been debates, in Parliament no less, about banning the meat tower from British tables on health and safety grounds. True, there have been several high profile cases in which diners have been seriously incommoded by toppling meat towers, but these were evidently poorly constructed and there's no reason to suppose that you would be at risk from a tower made of a sturdy beef or a good quality lamb. Admittedly, if you're using poultry you're asking for trouble, but then what kind of a damn fool would try to construct a tower out of chicken?

Your aim, if you wish to demonstrate that you are at least a halfway decent host, is to assemble a meat tower around three feet high - certainly no less than two and a half. If you can incorporate a couple of turrets and a gravy moat, then that would be simply wonderful but there's no sense in overreaching yourself if you don't feel confident. As my old tutor used to say, a collapsed drawbridge will only ever lead to embarrassment. He was a strange fellow.

Giant Killer Octopus

I'm sure I hardly need tell you, but when one has a giant killer octopus flapping about all over one's best table linen, upsetting the pickles and stealing a fellow's potatoes, it's as much of a talking point as it is a meal. Messy but well worth the effort. I once attended a society do in Chelsea during which the hostess wrestled with one of the beasts for three quarters of an hour and at several points it looked like it was gaining the upper hand. Or upper tentacle, perhaps I should say. In any case, she was a game girl and I'm pleased to report that she ultimately got the better of the troublesome leviathan.

The trick with octopuses - and this is advice that I have no doubt will serve you well in other areas of your life - is to subdue it quickly before it starts getting its suckers up one's nose. To this end you will need to ensure that your guests are fully equipped with the requisite tools for the job. A good quality harpoon gun is essential - you can hire them for quite a reasonable sum from Harrods - plus the usual complement of bone saws, hammers and scalpels. There is a modern trend these days for using power tools, but frankly such heathen practices make me shudder. I suppose I am a traditionalist at heart.

The Finch Course

It is a truth universally acknowledged that as a species the sophisticated diner does not incline to a rigid system of tastes and appetites, and it is for this reason that the finch course is not to everyone's liking. However, skip it and you will rapidly find yourself being talked about in all the best households in town; what they will say about you in the *worst* households is not worth serious consideration.

Goldfinches are de rigueur, of course. Bullfinches are troublesome but worth it. Spectacled finches are only really for the yachting set and are best avoided, if you can get away with it. Chaffinches are just showing off. Serve everything with brown sauce, natch.



The Tomato and Onion Ring Game

One has always been told that one shouldn't play with one's food, but now that we are getting near the end of the meal we can make exceptions. At this point you want to serve something light, frivolous and fun. Some gourmands favour Yorkshire pudding charades or carrot battleships, but for me the tomato and onion ring game is the only real option, combining as it does the right elements of skill, friendly competition and carbohydrates.

The idea is that one tilts the plate hither and thither in order to nurse the tomato into one of five onion rings of differing sizes. I have to say I'm really rather good at it. Five points are awarded for hitting the smallest ring, four points for the next and so on. Be a sport and ensure you use a sufficiently firm tomato. The winner gets a goldfish, which is served as the next course.

The Goldfish Course

See above.

The Treacle Course

There is a jolly good reason why treacle is always served last. Actually there are several, allow me to enumerate them for you. Firstly, after you have poured roughly five pints of treacle down your neck you are pretty much saturated. It's a rare customer indeed who can continue to consume anything in the wake of a sugary deluge on such a biblical scale.

Secondly, the palate is pretty much ruined at this point and will take a good twenty-four hours to recover. This is excellent, of course, since you are sending your guests away with a lasting and pleasingly troublesome reminder that they have been fed, and fed both copiously and professionally at that.

Thirdly, treacle has been medically proven to act upon the brain in such a manner as to render its victims highly suggestible. In other words, they

Essential Etiquette

If I've said it once, I've said it a thousand times: it does not matter one jot how impressive a feast you manage to deliver if you subsequently cover yourself in shame in respect of a matter of protocol. I once got into an argument with a cousin of mine upon the subject. She, the silly young goose, insisted that minor points of etiquette were neither here nor there. I heartily disagreed, espousing the opinion held by many seasoned commentators on the matter that there are no such things as 'minor' points of etiquette - all are equally essential if one is to be regarded as civilised. She, my cousin, failed to see the virtue of my argument and I'm afraid things became ugly. Custard was involved, if I remember correctly.

Whatever your views on the matter, I'm sure you will agree that it is better to err on the side of caution. For this reason I suggest bearing the following in mind if you wish your banquet to be brought to a satisfying conclusion.

Cutlery

If in doubt, use a fork and you will not go wrong. Consider these examples. If you panic and attempt to eat beefsteak with a spoon the only possible impression you can create is one of a clumsy and uncultured buffoon. Conversely, should you try to eat soup with a fork, although this is clearly wrong it nevertheless demonstrates ambition and the will to succeed.

Bodily Functions

There are very few bodily functions that one can perform at table without causing offence. To be on the safe side it would be best if you could prevent your body from functioning at all for the duration of the meal.

Dress

Ah this is easy, you might think. Since one is dressing for dinner, one must wear a dinner suit, surely? Well no, not unless you wish your guest to know that you are the kind of individual for whom the words 'gauche', 'uneducated' and 'imbecilic' appear to have been especially coined. One's mode of dress must always be in sympathy with the meal. Thus, if you are serving sausages, sausage trousers must be worn. If halibut is on the menu then an overcoat with built-in fish pouches is advised. And obviously, mustard socks are an absolutely indispensable accompaniment to gammon or ham. Unless, that is, you are a baronet or higher, in which case you can skip all of this and simply wear a suit of armour.

Conversation

Talk about the weather unless it's raining. Talk about international affairs unless there is unrest. Share society gossip unless it involves one's parents. You can talk about politics as much as you like - nobody will be interested, nobody will be listening and they will be grateful that they can get on with their meal without having to disagree with you.

And finally, Posture

At no point is it ever acceptable to sit with your hands behind your head and your feet on the table, unless you are entertaining a member of the clergy. But then every idiot knows this.

are putty in your hands, your work is done and you can ask anything you want of them. Time to remind Aunt Jemima that she promised to advance you a tenner. Did we say a tenner? Actually, do you think we could make it twenty?



Essential Cutlery and Cruet

Onion Ratchet

The onion is a slippery fellow. Small onions in particular are apt to slide out of your grip and shoot across the room to find refuge beneath a heavy piece of furniture. Here they will remain dormant, hidden by a thick coat of protective fluff, until rediscovered many years later. The onion ratchet provides the answer, rapidly curtailing the wayward habits of these mischievous vegetables by exerting a firm and evenly distributed pressure, thus preventing its unexpected departure from your plate.

Prescription Pepper Shaker

We all love pepper even though medical science informs us that it has no beneficial effects on our constitution. Quite the reverse, in fact. I heard of one chap down at my club who loved pepper so much that during his lunch he would spend more time sneezing than eating. Indeed, it got to the point where it was seriously displeasing the other members. And then one day he rather overdid it and with one monstrous sternutation he upset a dessert trolley, despoiled a portrait Wellington and temporarily deafened himself.

What this fellow should have done is to have asked his doctor to prescribe a special medical pepper shaker. This ingenious device has no holes in it, meaning that one can shake it to one's heart's content without the risk of any of the contents emerging to contaminate one's meal.

Cheese Shovel

You have your cheese axe for your hard cheeses and your cheese spoon for the runnier varieties but what about the crumbly cheeses? Failure to invest in a good quality cheese shovel will lead to extreme social embarrassment when your guests find themselves inundated by an avalanche of Wensleydale or Dorset Blue Vinney.

Gravy Comb

I bought my first gravy comb when I was at university and I'm still using it today. Some people think that it's cheating to comb the lumps out of gravy but people rarely ever detect the difference, and the lumps themselves make wonderful presents for a young nephew or similarly easily pleased relative.

Colly-Wobbler

I knew a chap who once served his collies unwobbled. To give him the benefit of the doubt, he had lent his colly-wobbler to a friend, who then badly let him down by failing to return it. The poor soul had done his best to wobble his collies manually using an egg whisk and a leather strap but his efforts had been his vain and the results had turned to ashes in the mouths of his guests, who could not fail to notice that the collies they had been offered had an unmistakable air of unwobbliness about them. The sequel to these events is that this chap joined the French Foreign Legion - a salutary tale that should serve as a lesson to us all.

"Not on my watch!" says Fracking Victim

Maurice Monk has declared his allotment an officially designated frack-free zone. Ever since Fracker Crackers International PLC opened up a new office in his neighbourhood, Mr Monk has grown increasingly concerned that company bosses may be eyeing up his prize vegetable beds as a possible fracking site and his message to them is unequivocal: No way to fracking on his watch!

When asked for a comment, a representative of Fracker Crackers International PLC replied, "We're not interested in Mr Monk's allotment."

A likely story, Mr Monk believes. As a rabid horticulturalist - and he grows stuff, as well - Mr Monk is used to bagging prizes for his produce and he has no intention of letting his winning streak come to an end, despite being cautioned for fingering a competitor's marrow at a previous county show. The last thing he needs is for his delicate vegetables to become distressed by a lot of thumping and banging, which is what he understands all this fracking business will entail. He's not taking any chances when it comes to getting his parsnips pummelled, which is why he has written a strongly worded letter to Fracker Crackers International PLC. And the company's response?

"Really, we have no designs on Mr Monk's allotment," its representative said. "His turnips are completely safe as far as we're concerned."

Lost Footballer Discovered at Wembley

Workmen carrying out routine maintenance at Wembley Stadium have discovered an eighty-one-year-old midfielder from the 1966 World Cup squad who didn't realise the match was over.

Rumours of a missing footballer have been circulating for some time and numerous sightings have been reported in and around the stadium over the years. By 1971 the legend of the lost footballer was already well established, with eye witnesses describing a shabby, shambling and emaciated figure dribbling in the stands or practising keepy-uppy in the car park.

But the most famous encounter with the mysterious figure came in 1978, reported by surgeon and keen football fan Bobby Wilson. Having watched his team Arsenal lose to Ipswich Town in the FA cup final, Wilson retired to the gents for a cry, and it was here that he chanced across the phantom footballer.

"He seemed very nervous, very cautious and timorous," Wilson recalls. "He backed away when I approached, but I immediately recognised him as one of the original '66 squad because he was in black and white, which is exactly how he'd looked when I watched it on the telly."

Despite the apparition's timidity, Wilson was able to take a picture before the figure disappeared - one of several photographs that Wilson took in the gents at that time,

Mr Monk, meanwhile, remains unconvinced and has spent the last week camped outside Fracker Crackers' offices, wielding placards displaying unnecessarily graphic images of shattered carrots, shredded beanstalks and slightly misshapen potatoes - victims, he says, of dangerous and unnatural fracking practices. As far as Fracker Crackers International PLC is concerned, its position remains unchanged.

"Seriously, we don't know where Mr Monk gets these ridiculous ideas from," its representative insisted. "We have never given so much as the slightest thought to fracking Mr Monk's allotment. That is simply not how we operate. We are a socially responsible and scrupulously transparent organisation and the notion that we might do something as devious and underhand as fracking someone's private property without their explicit agreement is absolutely unthinkable. Also, we're not a fracking company - we make crackers. I mean, it's right there in our name."

Good news for Mr Monk then, you would have thought? Well, it would have been were it not for the fact that while he was busy protesting outside Fracker Crackers International PLC, a genuine fracking company, Cracker Frackers Industries Ltd, nipped into his unguarded allotment and fracked his cucumbers while he wasn't looking. Pity that.

all of which were sadly seized by the police and have yet to see the light of day.

But although physical evidence has been hard to come by, there have been plenty of other reported sightings at sporting events, music concerts and other occasions over the years. One of the most hotly debated manifestations occurred during the Live Aid concert in 1985 when several TV viewers phoned in to say that had spotted a grubby, dishevelled figure moping about backstage, shuffling about at the back of the royal box or even, at one point, taking to the stage and singing 'I Don't Like Mondays'.

And reports didn't stop when the old Wembley Stadium was demolished to make way for a new plastic version in 2002. Even while the new facility was being built there were numerous complaints from contractors about their equipment being interfered with and their sandwiches being stolen. Such tales were not taken seriously at the time but, following this latest discovery, we now know the full story: midfielder Albert Parkes, who went missing after being frightened by a police horse at half time, has indeed been hiding out at the stadium since England's celebrated victory.

Workmen eventually tracked him down by following him back to the nest he had crudely fashioned out of goal nets and old jockstraps, perched precariously in the roof beams of a subsidiary boiler house. Initially he refused to come down, but was eventually persuaded to surrender by Jack

Local Zeroes

Our weekly column in which Rory Triffic meets interesting and colourful local nutters.

This week, equestrian loony Jenny Pound

Life is sweet when you're a champion race horse. Get a few big wins under your saddle and you can look forward to retiring to a classy stud farm, where you can spend your days with your flocks up watching the racing on the telly, or nosing through a nosebag of gourmet grub while you flick through a copy of the *Racing Post*. Not to mention all the hot pony action you could ask for.

But for the also-rans life might not be so cosy, especially if you break a bone, develop a limp or if your owner just doesn't like the look of your snout. I'm talking about someone trying to ventilate your cranium with a 12 bore, something which is bound to put a crimp on your day. Ha, sport of kings, my arse!

Thankfully there are many who want to see this sort of thing brought to an end - and I'm not just thinking of the unfortunate creatures who find themselves staring mournfully down the wrong end of a barrel. I'm referring to animal lovers, dogooders and people like Jenny Pound. Jenny has opened a sanctuary in which she gives injured racehorses a second chance, fitting them with prosthetics, kitting them out with specially adapted wheelchairs and supplying them with inhalers.

"It gives them a new lease of life," Jenny explains proudly. "Fair enough," she admits, "it costs us a fortune in tyres but it really is fantastic to see the grins on their stupidly long faces as they zip about their paddocks, doing wheelies."

But what these animals really want to do is race again - to feel the wind in their manes and the flies in their teeth. This is why Jenny is campaigning for more disability-friendly racecourses.

"How difficult would it be to put a ramp over Becher's Brook?" Jenny asks. "And did you know that there are only three venues in Europe that have handrails fitted to the course - and one of them is technically a dog track? I mean, come on, this is the 21st century, after all. Even my granny has a stair lift and, to be honest, she's got no hope of winning the Grand National."

Maybe not, but I happen to know that back in the fifties Jenny's grandmother was instrumental in developing a braille system for blind homing pigeons, so perhaps altruism towards animals is something that runs in the family. Anyway, I wish her success.

Charlton, who convinced him that the match was finally over.

It's all been a bit of an ordeal for poor Albert, but it's nothing near the shock he's going to get when he learns that he's still under contract and that he's going to be kicking off against Italy next month.

Sticking Flags in Stuff

"It's not theft. I'm staking a claim."

So says Harry Barrel, who for the last fifty years has been going round sticking flags into other people's stuff. At 76 years of age, Harry is a familiar sight around Doncaster and those outlying villages fortunate enough to be situated on a convenient bus route. Locals are used to seeing him thrusting flagpoles into things that don't belong to him, but which he thinks ought to. No one is clear about why he has chosen to terrorise Doncaster in particular, although it's fair to say that if he tried the same sort of nonsense in Glasgow, which is where he actually lives, the locals would most probably have sorted him out years ago.



His most recent spree saw him in court after he impaled a Volvo and then tried to make off with it - an enterprise destined for failure since, impressively, he managed to drive the flagpole straight through the engine block. The vehicle barely managed a cough and a splutter before the local rozzers arrived to effect an arrest.

In summing up, the judge congratulated Mr Barrel on his athleticism - such prodigious strength being especially impressive for someone in so advanced a state of decay - but suggested that perhaps his talents might be put to better use. It needs to be said that this feller was

relatively new to the business of judging - he still had the price ticket in his wig - and had he been older and wiser he would have known that his advice would fall on stony ground. In this instance, as had happened so many times before, Mr Barrel was unrepentant and used the occasion of his trial to make his case.



"Putting flags in things is a perfectly legitimate way of legally transferring ownership of goods," Mr Barrel announced, much to the delight of the spectators and assembled media, who view him as a combination of folk hero and batty eccentric. He continued: "Whole empires have been founded on the principle of sticking flags in stuff. It is a noble tradition, which I intend to continue, no matter what the consequences."



Mr Barrel was led away, accompanied by loud cheers, and it is reported that the court usher requested his autograph.



Ricky Stratocaster's Forgotten Heroes

Not everyone makes it into the hallowed halls of rock and roll fame, but a few have their brief fifteen minutes. Here we take a moment to remember some of those who have been forgotten along the way.

Roy Pannick

Lead singer with The Flying Trifles

If you were around in Sheffield in March 1965, you'll know all about The Flying Trifles. They were everywhere: every newspaper, every club, every radio station. They were even guests of honour at the opening of a new branch of Wimpy. According to industry insiders, The Trifles were considered the next Beatles, but then this was the '60s and every group was considered the next Beatles at some point. It was inevitable, therefore, that by the following month they had been completely forgotten.

The band struggled on for another couple of years in the face of mounting apathy before they decided to call it a day. Lead singer Roy Pannick continued as a solo performer for a little while, becoming the warm up act for the likes of the Kinks and Herman's Hermits and driving the crowds wild as he stood in front of the microphone and went 'One, two. One, two. One, one, one. Two, two. One two'. *One Two* was even released as a single and became a minor hit, but the follow-up, *Three Four*, failed to chart.

These days you will find Roy working the afternoon shift and the EasySaver Megamart, near Sheffield bus terminus, where he is quite happy to take a break from stacking shelves to chat, reminisce about the old days and sign the occasional packet of Cornflakes.

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BILL TROCADERO AND HIS CASTANETS | **THE RESTLESS TRUMPET OF ROCKING SAMMY CROKER** | **FREE ENTRY TO MEAT RAFFLE!**

Sim Rekrap

One-fingered keyboard player with synth-pop outfit Toasted Arcade

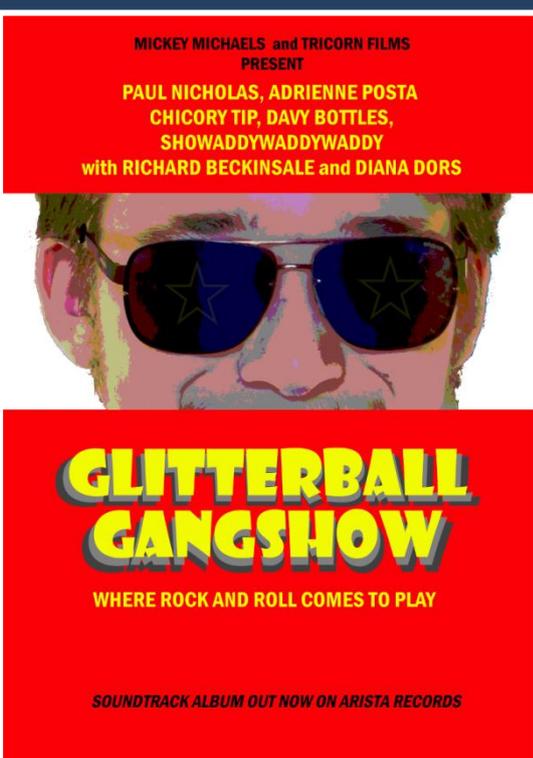
In describing Sim Rekrap as a one-fingered keyboard player, I am of course referring to the fact that he played the instrument with one finger, not that he only had one finger to play it with. According to a 1983 interview published in *Smash Hits*, his signature playing style meant that it left his remaining fingers free to do other things during a performance. Sim did not elaborate on what those other things were.

In the same interview, Sim revealed that his real name was Simon Parker, and that he had cleverly devised his stage name by reversing the letters of his surname. How he came up with the name for the band is less easily explained and the origins of 'Toasted Arcade' remain a mystery to this day. In fact, these days Sim is reluctant to talk about his former life as a pop star at all. He currently scrapes a living as a taxi driver in Nottingham, where you will most likely find him working Friday and Saturday nights. He may not be particularly chatty, but you will be pleased to know that he still has the mullet.

Davy Bottles

Seventies Teen Idol

Davy Bottles might be a name that is familiar to you, since he has had two bites of the fame cherry. As a seventies teen idol he had a run of hits including *Girl, Let Me Carry Your Satchel*, *Schoolyard Romance* and *Peppermint Kiss*. His wholesome, boy-next-door good looks and his cheeky smile ensured he was always in the pages of teen magazines and his posters were on every young girl's bedroom wall. He even made movies, including *Glitterball Gangshow* in which he played a teen pop star, *Spangled Dreamland* in which he played a teen pop star, and *Ballroom Berserkers* in which he played a fish porter, who wanted to be a teen pop star.



But by 1976 the bubble had burst, the records had stopped selling and Davy filed for bankruptcy. He disappeared from view but re-emerged into the public eye in 1996 when, now pursuing a career as a full time actor, he appeared as a regular in *EastEnders*, playing a fat, balding pornographer. He had a successful eight-month run in the show, but his career stalled once again after he left.

These days you can still find him performing in small theatres and holiday resorts as part of seventies nostalgia shows, but the image of the

fat, balding pornographer from *EastEnders* performing sugary pop ballads like *Schoolyard Romance* is one that audiences find difficulty in acclimatising to.

Seymour Tonker

Britpop banjo

You've probably heard of Blur. What you probably don't know is that one of their founding members was Seymour Tonker and that their music was originally considerably more 'banjo-y'. It was the combination of Seymour's hectic plucking style and Damian Albarn's soulful accordion work that first brought them to the attention of audiences.

Nevertheless, the band's first record deal only came about on the understanding that Seymour left the instrument at home. Seymour resisted and record company boss Milton P Wodehouse pressured the band into firing him. (Wodehouse, you may recall, is the same man who got rid of the glockenspiel player from Keane.)

So Seymour Tonker was out of the band and Britpop took a very different course as a result - being a mainly guitar-based movement with minimal banjo input. Seymour himself is quite philosophical about it. These days he runs a pub in Chester but if you ask him nicely he's more than happy to whip his banjo out for a quick pluck.

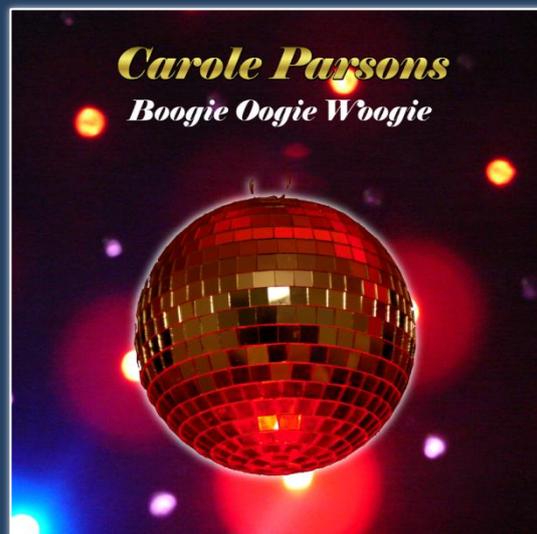
Carole Parsons

Disco sensation

Or rather, *Dr* Carole Parsons. Little did Carole know, back in 1978 when she released her first single *Bip Bip Bip Bippity Bop*, that she would one day become a highly respected psychoanalyst whose extremely expensive services would be sought by film stars, celebrities and many of the performers she once shared the charts with.

That first single was a huge hit and was quickly followed by other notable, if lyrically stunted, successes, including *Rubba-Dubba Doo Doo*, *Wim Bam You're the Man* and *Oopsy Doop (Slight Return)*. Dr Parsons has dismissed any suggestion that she is embarrassed by the seemingly juvenile output of her former career. Those songs are classic expressions of our inner child, untainted by societal norms, and as such they provide a vital link to the deepest parts of our subconscious and allow for a cathartic re-evaluation of our neuroses.

That's what she says, anyway, and she's got the certificates so who am I to argue?



Jeremy Bellows-Harpic

Reality TV Star

Two years ago, Jeremy Bellows-Harpic was everywhere, following his appearances in the popular constructed reality show *Posh Wankers in Chester*. Basking in the glow of all this media attention, it was only a matter of time before the gormless simpleton decided that there was no way that an acute lack of talent was going to prevent him from realising his dream of becoming a pop star.

His one and only release was both immediately forgettable and an instant hit, and was enough to give him another two years of appearing on cooking programmes, game shows and mid-morning magazine shows. He can still occasionally be found doing nightclub appearances and opening car showrooms, and most people's reaction when he is announced is, quite rightly, "Who?"

Mr Piggles

Fluffy pink one hit wonder

I'm sure we can all remember the naughty pink sock puppet from the popular Saturday evening show *Uncle Freddie's Family Fun Time*. Laughs aplenty. And you must remember the novelty hit *The Piggle Song*. Of course you do, it was number one for five weeks in 1987 and no one could get the bloody thing out of their heads.

But did you ever stop to wonder what happened to Mr Piggles when Uncle Freddie was thrown in prison as a result of Operation Yewtree? Well the people who bought Uncle Freddie's house, after the police had finished with it, found the puppet stuffed down the back of a radiator. They cleaned it up, thoroughly, then put it up for auction on eBay.

Now, I know what you're thinking: who would want to buy a creepy, threadbare puppet from an embarrassingly awful 1980s light entertainment show? Well, nobody - nobody would, which is why the people who found just stuffed it back down behind the radiator again.



Fred Forelock

The oldest rocker on the block

In 1981 Fred Forelock was a 72-year-old ex-miner who had a novelty hit with *The Oldest Rocker on the Block*. Today he is a 23-year-old insurance broker from Brighton. Go figure.

Caveat Emptor

Rock and roll royalty

If I were to ask you where legendary rock band Caveat Emptor are now, then your answer would probably be that they're still going strong and about to embark on yet another farewell tour. You're right, of course: the group, which started in the late sixties, is still rocking out today. But people often wonder what happened to the original line up.

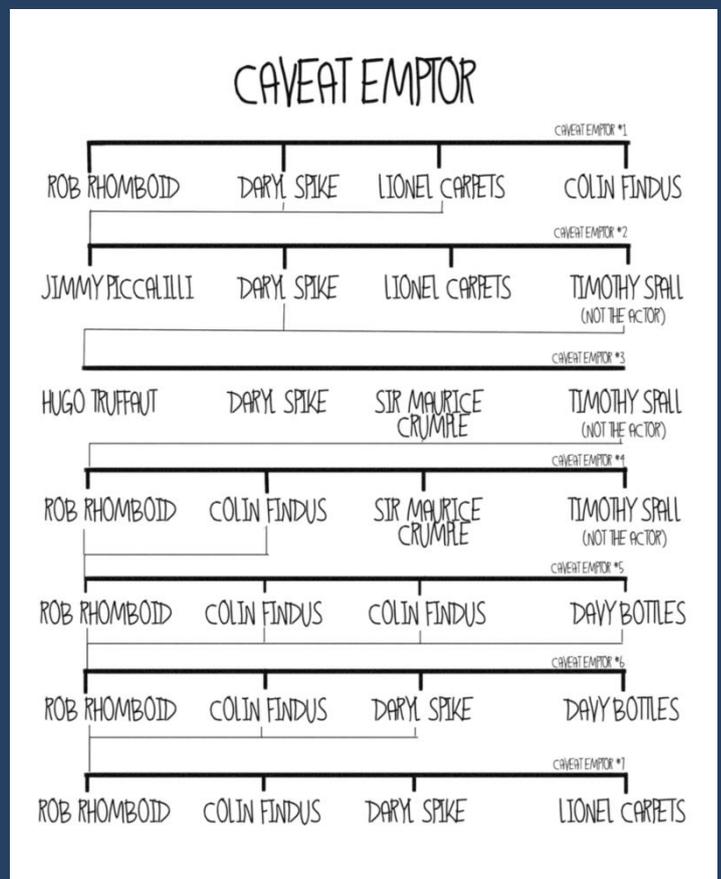
Caveat Emptor's founding members were Rob Rhomboid, Daryl Spike, Lionel Carpets and Colin Findus. This version of the band lasted until 1976 when Rob Rhomboid left due to molecular differences. He was replaced by Jimmy Piccalilli. Colin Findus left the following year and was replaced by Timothy Spall (not the actor). This iteration of the group remained stable until 1988 when both Jimmy Piccalilli and Lionel Carpets decided to ship out, following separate but entirely unrelated pogo stick accidents. They were replaced by Hugo Truffaut and Sir Maurice Crumple respectively.

It soon became apparent that Truffaut and Daryl Spike really didn't get on and both announced their departure, each unaware that the other had also quit the band. Truffaut was replaced by Rob Rhomboid. Remember him? Yep, he'd been there at the start, as had Colin Findus, who also returned to the fold.

In 1998, Timothy Spall (not the actor) departed after, ironically, landing his first acting job. He was replaced by Davy Bottles, former teen heartthrob. Then, in 2001, Sir Maurice Crumple, now Lord Crumple of Windermere, left to take up a seat in the House of Lords. He was initially replaced by Colin Findus, but this was problematic since Findus was already in the band. However, following a chance encounter in Burger King, the band's manager learnt that Daryl Spike was once more available. After leaving Caveat Emptor he and Hugo Truffaut had unwittingly joined the same band once more, and both had promptly left again. Daryl accepted Caveat Emptor's invitation to return.

Finally, in 2004, Davy Bottles quit the band in order to spend more time with his tortoise, and was replaced by original member Lionel Carpets.

So, in summary, if you want to know where the original line up of Caveat Emptor are today, the answer is pretty much back where they started.



LOST CAT?



WHY NOT?

When it's not scratching the hell out of your furniture or littering your house with the dismembered remnants of the local wildlife, it's shitting in your flowerbeds, so isn't it time you gave serious thought to getting rid of the bleeding thing?

Losing a cat isn't easy; they have an unfortunate habit of finding their way home. This is why you need professionals on the job. This is why you need Moggy Gone.

Here at Moggy Gone we have a dedicated team of transport professionals who can deposit your troublesome tabby in some of the most remote locations on the planet. There is no way that puss will find his way back from the Arctic unaided and a return ticket from the Amazon basin is far beyond the means of even the most fiscally flawless of felines.

If you need further reassurance why not opt for our 'Supervillain' package, where for a modest additional fee we will drop your problem pet into an active volcano or fire it into space. Your cat will enjoy the ride of its life and we guarantee that you'll never have to clean up after the filthy animal ever again.



There's no coming back. Honestly.

House Proud

with
Gary the Builder



Our resident builder and DIY guru answers some of your queries.

Time for this month's queries. I've got a bulging bag this time around... but my medical issues are neither here nor there. So, first up, Mandy Plankton writes:

"I've got a portal to another dimension in my conservatory. I've been told that it's all right to just fill it with Polyfiller then paint over it. Is this correct?"

Whoa, hold on there, Mandy! You see, the thing about a rip in the fabric of time and space is that if you don't deal with it properly it will just keep getting bigger. And you want to tackle it sooner rather than later.

Unfortunately, interdimensional portals to other dimensions are more common than people think. The giveaway is when things start to go missing: keys, wallets, the dog. At this point it's just a nuisance but if left untreated it could get to the size where it's snatching away whole rooms and could be

a danger to the other houses in the street. In some rare cases you may find that you get leakage from another dimension, in the form of exotic matter, clouds of ectoplasm or legions of demonic undead warriors bent on spreading terror and destruction. And that can be a bugger to shift.

Pollyfiller will only provide a temporary cosmetic fix. What you want to do is get an expert in who can block up the hole using specially treated dimensionally repellent astral bricks. Give us a call; I'll put you in touch with someone.

Now, David Stomach has contacted us with rather an unusual problem:

"Hi Gary. For the last few years my house has been growing. What can I do about the stretch marks?"

Hello David. Well, I'm guessing that you have quite a young house, in which case there's not much to worry about. It's

just a phase it's going through and it should settle down in time. In some rare instances a house will expand to such an extent that it outgrows its foundations or requires planning permission but, as I say, this is rare and I shouldn't worry too much about it.

The stretch marks are perfectly natural, as is the acne on the roof and the hairy growth in the fireplace. You can plaster over them if you like, but chances are they will fade in time.

Imogen Trumpet is worried that her house might be on the move.

"It's definitely shifted about three feet to the left in the past couple of weeks. It's got to the point where I can't get down the side of the house to take the bins out and I'm sure the neighbours must have noticed that it's steadily heading their way..."

...My friend Sarah says that it's just a bit of subsidence and that I shouldn't worry about it, but then my friend is an accounts manager and knows fuck all about building, so I'm not sure I should take her advice.

My real concern is that although most of the house is moving, the roof is staying put. This means that there is an increasingly large gap opening up and it doesn't half get windy in the bathroom."

Well, Imogen, unless some twat is playing a practical joke on you and is prepared to put in a hell of a lot of effort, then what we're dealing with here is wandering foundation syndrome. Basically, your house has decided that it doesn't like the neighbourhood and so is bugging off.

Sometimes they can move quite fast - I've known some detached properties that have been several streets away before anyone has noticed. Yours seems to be more cautious, inching away a bit at a time in the hope that no one notices.

Now, the fact that your roof is not going with it is good, because it means it's solid, reliable and not

easily led. The bad news is that if your house has decided it wants out, there's very little you can do about it. Really, you've got just two choices. You can go with the house and find a new roof for it later, but be prepared for a few battles with the land registry, the local council and other homeowners. Or you could stay with the roof and build a new house under it.

Sonia Parmesan writes:

"Someone has stolen my loft."

Well I haven't got it.

Sticking with top of the house, Damien Grapefruit has a problem chimney.

"Hi there. I inherited a house from a distant uncle who was keen on DIY and as a result the property has a few unusual modifications. Chief amongst them is an inverted chimney, which is a talking point but unfortunately protrudes through my bedroom ceiling, regularly filling the house with smoke and generally being a nuisance. Is there anything that can be done?"

Oh Lord save us from the DIY brigade! If I'm called out on one more job where some half-witted do-it-yourselfer has managed to plumb his electrics into the cold water supply, install a toilet upside down or brick himself up in his own lounge, I think I will probably scream.

How the hell someone manages to fit a chimney upside down, I'll never know: they come with an arrow on them saying 'this way up'. Problem is, once you've got 'em in, they're a swine to get out. Your best bet might be to dismantle the rest of the house and rebuild it upside down around it.

Kirsty Fishpond writes with a problem demonstrating the awesome power of nature.

"Hello! Help! I'd better make this quick, I don't know how much time I have. I went away on holiday recently to the south of France, but that's not my problem. When I got back my two-bedroomed bungalow was completely overrun with houseplants. I was only away for a week but in that time they managed to take complete control of..."

...the building, winding their devious tendrils into every nook and cranny, digging their gnarled and sinewy roots into my carpets and laminate floor and filling every room with the rancid smell of festering foliage.

They grabbed me as soon as I walked through the door, bound me in creepers and left me on top of a compost heap in the back bedroom. I think the cheese plant is the ringleader - it's never liked me.

What I want to know is, is this normal? Because if this is just a phase... Oh no, they're coming back! They're coming back!"

Ooh now, this isn't strictly a building question, of course, but as it happens I do have some experience of begonias and I know that they can get nasty if they don't get enough exercise.

Actually, come to think of it, I might be thinking of African Violets. Or Alsatians. Forget I mentioned it.

Kevin Tutu has a query about his lopsided house.

"Yes, hello. Due to the uneven mix of the mortar in the north facing arterial wall of my house, there has been an exponential increase in grippage around the tertiary load points. This has led to a corresponding slippage which mainly manifests itself perpendicular to the line of the ancillary stress node. The resulting deviation means that the building is now skewed by approximately four point eight degrees (allowing for linear correction). Can you recommend somewhere where I might get it rebalanced?"

Oh everyone's a bleeding expert, aren't they? Well mate, a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. Trouble is, know-it-all, a four point eight degree shift is perfectly normal and has absolutely stuff all to do with the stress node, ancillary or otherwise.

Your real problem is that one of your pre-fabricated cross-braced lintels is rubbing against your overflow cavity. That's why your house is bent, mate.

A roof question now from Maureen Chips

"My roof is going bald and, I've heard that it is possible to get a tile transplant. Is it worth the investment?"

It's touch and go with tile transplants. Still, it's never going to look as ridiculous as a straw roof wig, so unless you can persuade your house to wear a hat then it's always worth a bash.

Finally, Martin Pancakes has a novel take on repairs.

"Wotcha mate. Here, I've fixed up the cracks in the brickwork of my gaff with Prit Stick and mended the rotting roof timbers with Sellotape. I've used screws to replace a couple of blown fuses and I've nailed the wiring to the water pipes. I've also used a couple of carrier bags and a length of duct tape to patch a leak in the dormer roof. What do you reckon?"

Bloody hell! I've never heard of such a catalogue of shoddy, makeshift and downright dangerous repairs. Well done mate. Are you in the trade?

Situations Vacant

FTSE 100 Company requires Pudding Scraper

Must have previous pudding scraping experience. Aunt Myrtle's Premium Puddings is a small family business that currently has factories in over 40 countries. We provide bespoke pudding services and a vacancy has arisen for a fully qualified pudding scraper. The successful candidate will have a natural affinity for custard and a strong sense of trifle.

Are you looking for an exciting new role that will give you the opportunity to spend up to eight hours a day sitting in a tank full of live fish? Our client currently has an opening for someone to spend up to eight hours a day sitting in a tank full of live fish. If you think you're the sort of person who can see themselves spending up to eight hours a day sitting in a tank full of live fish, then give us a call.

Bland Person Required

A vacancy has arisen for a dull, nondescript and inconsequential person in our out-of-town manufacturing facility. You will have access to a plastic chair and a small square of carpet, and your duties will include sitting in a corner quietly and not bothering anyone. May require some night work.

Talky phone person needed to do some of the old chin-wagging on the dog and bone. Must be capable of giving it some real welly and be all over that shit like a proper boss. Give us a bell, yeah?

We are recruiting for a Senior String Polisher. You will be a fully qualified string polisher with at least five years' experience in the industry and a Level 3 qualification in string polishing. You will be resourceful and reliable, with a keen eye for detail and an innovative approach to string polishing. You will also be a Capricorn, have a fondness for small dogs, be interested in local history and enjoy canal boating holidays. Additionally, you will be called Bernie Pamphlet, be aged 46 and live in Dudley. Hello Bernie.

Tour guide wanted for our new 'Tales of the Pharaohs' exhibit. Must be capable of walking like an Egyptian. A working knowledge of all the old paintings on the tombs and the ability to do the sand dance would be an advantage, don't you know, but is not essential.

Domestic Puddle Collector Commercial Puddle Collector

Two roles available in our puddle collection division.

As a domestic puddle collector you will ensure that all domestic puddles are collected and deposited in our dedicated puddle storage facility. You will be provided with a bucket.

As a commercial puddle collector your role will be substantially the same as a domestic puddle collector, but your working hours will be limited to regular business hours and you will be given a bigger bucket.

PA to the Assistant Head of Stationery

Must have sound working knowledge of paperclips, staples, hole punches and those little string things that they use to bundle paper together.

Semi-articulate Waggon Shunter

Our client is looking for a semi-articulate waggon shunter. Must be able to grunt basic information. Ability to communicate using hand signals would be desirable. Must have a reasonable grasp of nouns and common verbs, but adjectives, adverbs and more complex sentence structures such as similes and metaphors are not required. Must have a history of using the past tense and be willing to learn the correct use of the future tense in the future, although this is not required for the present.

Buyer

Spodung Acquisitions are looking for a buyer to sit around, phone people up and buy stuff: things like spoons, balloons, boots, suits, air fresheners, flea collars, coffee whitener and pencils. Experience desired but would be willing to provide training to the right candidate. Hot drinks and snacks will be provided, so give us a call if you're interested in a career buying stuff like ladders, donkey jackets, space hoppers, inkjet cartridges, fish, teeth, wardrobes, model spaceships, phone chargers, notepads, gearboxes, individually wrapped cheese slices, plastic dinosaurs, old Beatles records, antique castanets and seat covers.

Please tell us about your current or most recent role

Company: Boogaboo International Ltd.

Job Title: Head of Fluffy Niceness

Main Duties: I am currently the national lead for the company's 'fluffy niceness' initiative, ensuring that all employees are overflowing with happy goodness and that no one is a grumpy old sourpuss. As part of the company's policy of keeping everyone distracted so that they don't question their pay or conditions, I organise meetings - many meetings - in which myself and my specially chosen fluffy niceness champions explore ways we can improve the morale of staff. We hope that one day we may be able to put one of our ideas into practice, but in the meantime the pay is good and we try to keep ourselves busy putting up jolly motivational notices around the office, and posting wacky videos of ourselves on YouTube. It doesn't half wind people up.

Oh, and also I'm the fire marshal.

Reason for Leaving: I'm not very happy.

What qualities do you think you could bring to your new role?

Although I have no direct experience of whatever you said the job is, I feel that I can be a bouncy ray of sunshine who will spread joy and loveliness throughout the company and not get on anyone's nerves at all.

Please tell us about your current or most recent role

Company: Amalgamated Planks

Job Title: Senior Buyer (Novelties)

Main Duties: I am the senior buyer of branded pens, trolley tokens and baseball caps. In my role I assist the Advertising and Promotion department by sourcing and purchasing branded pens, trolley tokens and baseball caps. I also contribute to the smooth running of the Human Resources department by ensuring they have sufficient supplies of branded pens, trolley tokens and baseball caps, and provide an invaluable service to the finance team by supplying their branded pens, trolley tokens and baseball caps. I have also played a key role in the company's data protection reference group, ensuring compliance with current legislation, helping to encourage best practice, raising awareness of staff responsibilities and influencing policy, largely through the supply of branded pens, trolley tokens and baseball caps.

Reason for Leaving: I am hoping to secure a more varied and interesting role.

What qualities do you think you could bring to your new role?

Whatever the industry, to compete successfully in the modern marketplace it is vital for any business to have a steady and reliable supply of branded pens, trolley tokens and baseball caps. With more than twenty years' experience in the field of securing essential novelty items for major international companies, I believe I am the obvious choice to help your company build on its current success, expand its portfolio and capture new markets by ensuring the availability of branded pens, trolley tokens and baseball caps.

Please tell us about your current or most recent role

Company: Frisbee Digitally Tracked Logistical Interface Solutions

Job Title: Executive Associate for Corporate Congruity

Main Duties:

My role is both focussed and wide-ranging, responsible as I am for ensuring that the reciprocal intermutually of stratified modular vector analyses are consistent with current projected bipartisan flexibility nodes. Compliance is key, of course, which is why I take daily ownership on both a projected and pre-coordinated basis of all dual-mode consolidated trajectories. I'm sure I have no need to point out the dangers of allowing federated public collaborations to proceed in a quasi-affiliated state, without rudimentary limiters being applied sequentially. This is why my strategy incorporates modal feedback pathways.

Reason for Leaving: This is boring. I want to drive a forklift truck.

What qualities do you think you could bring to your new role?

I already have my own hat. Please let me drive a forklift truck.

Please tell us about your current or most recent role

Company: International Stuff Incorporated

Job Title: Operations Manager.

Main Duties:

I am ultimately responsible for the management and effective deployment of staff, ensuring that all company processes and operations run smoothly and resolving any difficulties and disputes that may interfere with or impede the business of the company. Well, clearly that's impossible! How can anybody possibly be expected to deal with all that? People are constantly coming to me with their problems: personnel issues, supply problems, equipment failures, policy decisions. Why can't they just go and sort it out for themselves? I mean, it's too much, just too much! That's why I spend as much time as I possibly can shut away in my office, refusing to speak to anyone.

Reason for Leaving: I would like something that pays me the same money, provides me with the same perks but isn't anything like as demanding.

What qualities do you think you could bring to your new role?

You'll hardly know I'm there. Honestly, I'll be no bother. I'll just sit in my office - I'd like a big office please - and I'll keep myself amused. I certainly won't interfere with the running of the company, or try to make any decisions or anything like that. And I definitely won't attempt to actually manage anyone, promise.

Please tell us about your current or most recent role

Company: Pontin's Carbon Fibre Tubes and Lubes

Job Title: Office Joker.

Main Duties:

Most of my working day is spent is spent larking about, winding people up and having a right old laugh. If anybody is to be found wearing a silly hat, playing football in the stockroom or photocopying their backside, then it's me. I specialise in pranks, particularly messy ones that result in extreme embarrassment for the victim and usually some element of physical pain. You probably won't be surprised to learn that many people think of me as a tosser but thankfully I take my job seriously enough to recognise this as a compliment.

Reason for Leaving: The incident with the finance director's wife and the peanut butter. You may have read about it in the paper.

What qualities do you think you could bring to your new role?

I'm looking for a role in which I can stretch myself and take my pranking to the next level. I am particularly interested in working with dangerous and banned substances and have for a long time nurtured an ambition to carry out the ultimate prank - one which may or may not involve melting someone's face off.

Please tell us about your current or most recent role

Company: It's that big place at the end of Market Street - can't remember the name

Job Title: Dead weight.

Main Duties:

I suppose the best way to describe my role is as a constant burden to my colleagues and the company in general. Of course, I have my specific duties and responsibilities but I find that if I just ignore them then someone else will cover it for me. Over the years I have managed to duck out of most tasks by claiming that they are not part of my job description and nobody has really had the nerve to challenge me. It has now got to the point where no one even bothers to ask me anymore and I can usually spend most of my working day sitting in a corner playing on my phone. In fact, in recent months I haven't actually turned up at all and on the few occasions that anyone has asked me where I am, I say I'm 'working from home'.

Reason for Leaving: Don't know.

What qualities do you think you could bring to your new role?

It's not for me to say. Can't you ask someone else?



THE MYSTERY OF THE SHITFACED MAN

A MONSIEUR LA CRANQUE ADVENTURE



LEO SPROCKET

My name is Daniel Rose and the tale that I am about to tell took place in the summer of 1927, as I was travelling to the annual Squirrel Taunting Championships in Wakefield. I do not claim, you must understand, to be an accomplished squirrel taunter myself, but there is something about those furry little gits that really sets my teeth on edge, so I feel that it is important that I should play a modest but important part in their downfall.

I recall that the train out of Weybridge was very busy. No doubt there were a few who were as eager as I was to get in on the squirrel action, although the local paper had just announced that the Prince of Wales was planning a visit to our humble town, and I imagine that it was this that prompted the mass exodus.

I had been fortunate enough to find myself a seat in a quiet compartment. My companions numbered three. There was a bluff looking fellow in the uniform of an air-vice-marshal, sporting a huge but aerodynamic moustache that extended for about a foot on either side of his face. The ends of this extraordinary structure appeared to be capable of independent movement and I would not have been the least bit surprised if they had shown evidence of an ability use simple tools.

To my right was a vicar, naturally. He was a tall, angular chap - a youngish man, but somehow he appeared frail. Almost transparent, in fact. The curious thing was that if I squinted at him it was almost as if I could see right through to the pattern of the seat in which he sat. I noticed that he was getting nervous and was fingering his crucifix restlessly, so I thought it wise to stop squinting at him for the present.

Finally, to my left was a richly upholstered middle-aged woman of ample proportions who had caked her face in so much makeup that I took it to be an attempt at weatherproofing. She was staring down her

nose at me - a good trick if you can do it. I'm nothing if not civil and so I said hello, but the words dried to nothing in my throat and so I turned to look out of the window and resolved not to look at her again for the duration of the journey, if I could possibly manage it.

Moments later the door slid open. A man in a sharp suit and a felt hat leaned in, pointed directly at the seat where I was sitting and said, "I say, is anyone sitting there?"

"No, I don't think so," replied the woman.

"Yes," I replied.

"Excellent, then I'll pitch in with you good people." The man came in, hefted a travelling case into the luggage rack and sat in my lap. "The name's Benchley," he said with a smile. Or at least I assumed he was smiling. He was sitting on me, so it was a bit difficult for me to tell.

"Delighted, Mr Benchley," said the woman, who subsequently introduced herself as Miss Kershaw.

"Excuse me!" I protested indignantly, but my words were muffled as this man called Benchley leaned back further into his seat. Or rather, into *my* seat.

"Air-Vice-Marshal Sidney Totters," the RAF man introduced himself. "And the padre here is the Reverend Snoop."

Benchley leaned forward to shake their hands and as he did so I wriggled and prodded him in the back. This prompted a response, but only a minor one. "I say," he said. "This chair is dashed uncomfortable.

"I am not a chair," I protested.

"And it talks!" exclaimed Benchley.

"Gad! Now isn't that novel!" said the Air-Vice-Marshal. "A talking chair. What will they think of next?"

"I am not a talking chair," I insisted and I poked my passenger once more.

"Steady on!" he cried, twisted round and saw me for the first time. "Good lord, how did you get there?"

"I've been here all the time," I said. "You sat on me."

"What's that?" said the Air-Vice-Marshal. "What's that he's saying?"

"He's says that he's been here all along and that I sat on him," said Benchley, sounding genuinely confused.

"Ha! A likely story," responded the Air-Vice-Marshal. "I reckon that what you've got there is a stowaway. Must have smuggled himself on board in your trousers. What do you reckon, vicar?"

"Well I really don't know," Reverend Snoop replied, understandably. Clergymen are rarely given sufficient training to form opinions these days.

"I am not a stowaway," I retorted. "And I have never been anywhere near this man's trousers - not until he sat on me anyway."

"He's right about that," Benchley agreed. "I always make a thorough inspection of my trousers before I board public transport, and I always tuck my trouser legs into my socks precisely to stop this sort of thing happening."

"Perhaps he dropped out of a tree?" ventured the vicar. "When I was doing missionary work in Malaya, we would often get snakes dropping out of trees and sliding down your back. Very unpleasant."

"No trees in here, padre," said the Air-Vice-Marshal.

"Ah yes, I was forgetting. Must be the trousers then."

"Oh this is ridiculous," I said. "I've been here all along. You've all seen me." I looked to Miss Kershaw to corroborate my story, but her eyes were now pulsing with a strange demonic light, and so I turned instead to the Air-Vice-Marshal. "You remember me, surely? You can't have missed me, I'm sitting directly opposite."

The Air-Vice-Marshal twitched his moustache contemplatively and one end of it traced a line through the condensation on the window whilst the other playfully brushed

Miss Kershaw's knee. "Hmm," he said. "I don't know. What did you look like?"

"What did I look like?" I repeated in exasperation. "You mean, what did I look like just a few moments ago? Well, I looked exactly like I do now, of course, only less crumpled and without a twelve-stone man sitting on me."

"Hmm," the Air-Vice-Marshal said again, his keen military mind churning over the facts of the case. "Well, now I come to think of it, there *was* someone sitting there before. Could be the same feller, I suppose."

"Of course I'm the same fellow," I replied. "Who else would I be?"

"Harvey Chumbles," said the vicar.

"What's that, padre?"

"Harvey Chumbles," Reverend Snoop repeated. "He said 'who else would I be?'. Well he could be Harvey Chumbles."

"And who is Harvey Chumbles?" the Air-Vice-Marshal asked.

"I have no idea," said Reverend Snoop. "I thought he was a friend of yours."

"Look, look here," I said. I'd had an idea how we might resolve this once and for all. I reached into my pocket, searching for the evidence that would exonerate me. This is a tricky manoeuvre when you have someone sitting in your lap and things did get rather confused. At one point I found myself fumbling through Mr Benchley's pockets by mistake - not something I would ever recommend as the contents of another man's trousers are so often an unpleasant surprise. Eventually I found what I was looking for and held up a small piece of paper. "My ticket."

The Air-Vice-Marshal examined it and found it to be genuine. Mr Benchley graciously apologised and asked me if I would like him to get off me. I told him I would like that very much, and he went and sat by the window. Moments later the door opened, a vicar craned in, pointed at my seat and said, "Is anyone sitting there?"

I was about to respond to this enquiry both clearly and forcefully, but the Air-Vice-Marshal beat me to it. "Sorry, padre," he said and he pointed to the Reverend Snoop. "We've got one already."

As I am sure you are aware, ever since the notorious harvest festival riots of '23 it has been illegal for two or more vicars to share the same compartment on a train. This new vicar noted that we had already reached our quota, blessed us all enthusiastically then shuffled off. Moments later the guard blew his whistle, the carriage shuddered and jolted and we were on our way.

Railway travel is in its infancy and the modern English gentleman is still acclimatised to passing his time quietly in his sitting room, staring at the walls and waiting for someone to invent television. It is not yet known exactly what hurtling along at speeds in excess of twenty or sometimes twenty-five miles an hour can do to a person. Stories are told of horrific injuries, terrifying episodes of mental confusion and excruciating lapses of etiquette. I once heard of one fellow who, by inadvertently boarding the wrong connecting train at Crewe, managed to end up in Bristol half an hour before he set out and was disowned by all his friends in consequence. Imagine that - Bristol!

I count myself fortunate that no such railway-related mishaps have ever touched upon my life - or at least they hadn't until I embarked upon this journey, for I found myself experiencing a most curious sensation. We had been sitting in silence for an hour. That is, *I* had been sitting in silence. My fellow travellers were happy to engage in light conversation but did not feel it necessary to involve me. I believe there may still have been some lingering animosity or suspicion, though I could not fathom why they should have been so aggrieved since it was I who had been so callously sat on and was therefore the

injured party. Nevertheless, ignored I was, although this was no great hardship as it left me at liberty to practise my potato printing. I was just peeling my second spud when we went into a tunnel and everything went dark.

There are certain conventions that custom dictates when entering a tunnel, namely that no one says a word, everybody holds their breath and under no circumstances should anyone ever, ever fart. I held it all in and waited for the darkness to pass, but suddenly I felt a sharp stinging sensation on my cheek, just under my left eye. As we emerged from the tunnel I checked my reflection in the polished surface of my patent Whittley stainless steel potato peeler and saw a red mark on my face, rapidly ripening into a bruise.

Strange, I thought, this had never happened before. I looked at my companions but there did not appear to be anything troubling them. In fact, they all looked quite happy - the Air-Vice-Marshal in particular looked very pleased with himself. I shrugged it off and carried on with my potato printing. I had just carved a particularly splendid 'g' into a Maris Piper when we went through another tunnel and I felt that odd sensation again - this time on the side of my head. Emerging from the tunnel, I rubbed my sore ear and looked around the compartment. Again, none of my companions appeared to be suffering any ill effects. The Air-Vice-Marshal was even laughing.

I knew that there were two more tunnels on this stretch of the line and that we would be approaching the first of them very shortly. I braced myself, determined to get to the bottom of this matter and once more we were plunged into darkness. But this time I felt nothing. I did *hear* something though: a series of scuffling noises, then something heavy being dropped and then finally a belch (unpleasant, but the rules only apply to bottom vapours and make no mention of oral

wind, so it is allowed). Once we were out of the tunnel I saw that we had been joined by another man. He looked worn and dishevelled, his clothes were dirty and torn, and judging by his ruddy complexion and the way he was leaning on the Air-Vice-Marshal, licking his face and calling him his best mate, he was as inebriated as a newt.

"Please desist, sir," the Air-Vice-Marshal demanded, to little avail.

"Aww, go on, don't be a..." The inebriated man paused to belch again. "You know what your problem is? You... you... you... Aw, poo." He fell back into the seat and started to giggle and dribble at the same time.

"Friend of yours?" I asked.

The Air-Vice-Marshal sneered at me and had he been able to call in a ground attack at that point, I'm sure I would have been for it. "How dare you, sir?" he declared. "To suggest that I am in the habit of associating with dipsomaniacs and - "

I was prevented from hearing about who else the Air-Vice-Marshal wasn't in the habit of associating with when we plunged into the final tunnel. This time we appeared to pass through it without incident - no one made a sound, no one got punched in the face - and yet, when we emerged, the drunkard had disappeared and Mr Benchley was sprawled dead in his seat, his lifeless eyes staring straight ahead, a gunshot wound on his forehead, a knife lodged in his chest and a noose around his neck.

Miss Kershaw screamed. "Who...?" she said, her voice quavering. She pointed directly at me. "Who are you?"

"What?" My heart sank. Surely we didn't have to go through all this again. "What do you mean, who am I? I've been sitting here this whole time. Don't you think we ought to be more concerned about the body?"

"What body?" Miss Kershaw asked.

I pointed to the body, despairing that this should be necessary. She didn't seem to be

interested and asked me again who I was. And if that wasn't enough, the Air-Vice-Marshal got involved. "Stop trying to change the subject and answer the lady," he said, lightly prodding me in the chest with the tip of his moustache. "Come on laddie, account for yourself."

"I'm a legitimate passenger on this train," I said, becoming increasingly flustered. "You have already seen my ticket. I have been here the whole time. Now, don't you think it is rather more important that Mr Benchley has been murdered?"

"Mr Benchley?"

"Him! Him! Him!" I said, pointing at the corpse.

The Air-Vice-Marshal cast a brief glance at Benchley. "Oh yes?" he said. "And what makes you think he's been murdered?"

"Well, if all the noose did was to succeed in giving him a sore throat, then I'm pretty sure the knife and the gunshot wound would have finished the job."

The Air-Vice-Marshal seemed to accept this, but remained unconcerned. "Well, murdered or not murdered, it's really none of our business. If a man wants to get assassinated on a railway locomotive, in his own free time, of his own free will, then as long as he has a valid ticket I don't see that it's anyone else's business. What do you think, padre?"

The vicar nodded, smiled and said simply in a sing-song voice, "Ah, yes. Very true. Very true."

"Well there you have it," said the Air-Vice-Marshal. "If the vicar says it, then it's practically the voice of god."

I couldn't believe what I was hearing. A man had just been murdered in front of us and of my three remaining companions, two couldn't care less and the third was clearly some kind of ecclesiastical imbecile. For what it was worth I was about to protest further when the door slid open and a dapper, dark

suiting man with a keen eye and a neat moustache leaned in. I recognised him immediately: it was Monsieur Anton La Cranque, the eminent Belgian detective. It is La Cranque's proud boast that he has never yet had a case that has defeated him, although the many individuals who have sued for wrongful arrest might dispute this. Nevertheless, his services are still widely employed by Scotland Yard - mostly when they need someone to clear out the drains, but occasionally they let him loose on a case. I had been fortunate enough to receive assistance from Monsieur La Cranque once before, so I recognised him immediately.

"Monsieur La Cranque!" I exclaimed delightedly.

"Non monsieur," he said in his familiar Belgian tones. "I am not the eminent detective Monsieur La Cranque, whoever he might be. My name is Lemuel Crackers and I am a duvet cover salesman from York."

"But you're Monsieur Anton La Cranque," I insisted.

"Non, non," he insisted right back at me. "I am Mr Crackers. I am from York. I sell duvet covers. For duvets."

"But I don't understand," I spluttered. "I was sure you... Well, you look just like -"

"Please monsieur," said the man who looked like Mr La Cranque, with some urgency. "Please could I trouble you for a light? Out here in the corridor, where there is no draught and the fire will work better, please." He helped me firmly to my feet and led me out into the corridor.

"Monsieur Rose, it is good to see you again," he said, once we were out of earshot.

"It *is* you!" I said excitedly. "I knew it! I knew it was you!"

"Shush, please," La Cranque said in low, conspiratorial tones. "I am working under cover, hence the reason I have adopted an alias. I am an undercover duvet cover salesman."

"That's extraordinary!" I enthused. "Hang on though, have you got that right? Don't you mean that you're an undercover detective?"

"Yes Monsieur, that is what I have said."

"No, no," I corrected him. "You said that you are an undercover duvet cover salesman."

"Of course. I have said this. What is the difference, please?"

"Well," I explained. "If you were an undercover duvet cover salesman, you'd actually be posing as a detective in order to secretly sell people duvets. But what you're doing is -"

He stopped me at this point, held up his hand and rubbed his forehead. "Please monsieur," he implored. "I have had a most busy morning following a shitfaced man, who has -"

"Sorry, what did you say?"

"A shitfaced man. Ah... How do you say? An inebriate. A drunkard. An enthusiastic imbiber of the amber nectar."

"He was here," I said. "He was getting friendly with the Air-Vice-Marshal, just before the murder."

"There has been a murder?"

I told Monsieur La Cranque about the body, and expressed some surprise that he hadn't seen it when he had looked into the compartment. He explained that he had been distracted but that it probably wasn't important anyway. Then he suggested that we return to the compartment before we were missed and he implored me to remember his cover story. However, before we stepped back inside, I reminded him that he had asked me for a light.

"But of course," said La Cranque. "And it would look suspicious if I do not have a cigarette or a pipe. The problem is, I do not smoke. No matter - you had better light something else instead."

And so I set fire to Monsieur La Cranque's hat and we returned to our fellow passengers. "Well, what a great deal of interesting

information you have given me about duvet covers, Mr Crackers," I said loudly as we sat down. "I really must get myself one."

"Oh yes, monsieur, you really should," Monsieur La Cranque said. "They are quite good. I cannot recommend them enough. And they are even better if you actually have a duvet."

And so we continued our journey, just two ordinary passengers, one on his way to a squirrel taunting competition and the other a keen-eyed duvet cover salesman in a smouldering hat. Of course, although Monsieur La Cranque had taken me into his confidence, the opportunity had not yet arisen for him to fill me in on the details of the case. It nevertheless became clear to me that he was hoping to extract information from the other passengers about the mysterious drunkard. I was in the enviable position of watching the master at work as, with skill and subtlety, he probed the Air-Vice-Marshal for information.

"So Monsieur Wing-Commander, who was your drunken friend?"

"You ask a lot of questions for a duvet cover salesman," observed the Air-Vice-Marshal.

"Ah monsieur, in my business it is important to ask many questions," Monsieur La Cranque replied, tapping the side of his nose conspiratorially.

"Really? Why is that then?" asked the Air-Vice-Marshal, not unreasonably. "I would have thought that the questions you would have to ask were quite limited. 'Would you like to buy a duvet cover?' for instance. Or possibly 'What colour duvet cover would you prefer?' That kind of thing, yes?"

"Ah yes, but in the end are we not all just duvet covers, Monsieur?" La Cranque said mysteriously.

"No," said the Air-Vice-Marshal. He leaned back in his seat and studied La Cranque for a moment or two through narrowed eyes, then

said, "Do all duvet cover salesman talk rot like this, or have you made a speciality of it?"

Monsieur La Cranque tried to meet his eye but he was distracted when Reverend Snoop reached across and tapped him urgently on the knee. "Excuse me," the vicar said. La Cranque ignored him.

"But, Monsieur Biggles," La Cranque continued. "Has it not been said that when a man is tired of duvet covers..."

"Mr Crackers, excuse me," the vicar continued. Again, he was ignored.

"... when he is tired of duvet covers, a young man's gaze will turn to..."

"Do you think I might just ask a question?" asked the vicar.

"... A young man's gaze will turn, if he is not cautious, to the question of what..."

"Only I have this duvet, you see, and it's a king size, or so they say, and -"

"Yes, what is it?" Monsieur La Cranque snapped angrily. "What is it, Monsieur, that you disrupt me in this way?"

"Well, you see, I really can't find a duvet cover to fit anywhere," said the reverend pathetically. "So I wondered what sizes do you do?"

"Many sizes," La Cranque replied impatiently. "All of the sizes that you can imagine. But enough of duvet covers. I think it is time we all started to address the elephant in the room, yes? I refer, of course, to this!" He pointed dramatically at the body of Mr Benchley.

"No, that's not an elephant, old boy," the Air-Vice-Marshal corrected him. "I know an elephant when I see one, and that isn't one."

"I remember when I was doing missionary work in central Africa," the vicar reminisced. "Saw an awful lot of elephants out there. They used to eat fruit with their noses. Frightfully unhygienic."

"I refer to a metaphorical elephant, you silly man," said La Cranque.

"Ah well these were African elephants," the reverend mused.

"Listen, old man," the Air-Vice-Marshal interjected. "I have to say that this is really not on. Now, I don't know what the form is where you come from."

"I am from York, monsieur. I am a Yorkshireman. From York, non?"

"Well, whatever funny part of York you come from," said the Air-Vice-Marshal, "where I come from we have the good manners to keep ourselves to ourselves and not interfere in other people's business. Just because Mr Benchley here has, for whatever reason, got himself murdered, it does not mean that he should be made the subject of gossip and tittle-tattle. How would you like it if you got yourself impaled on an ice pick and then people started openly discussing your affairs? You should be grateful if the entire matter was treated with discretion, I imagine."

"Curious, Mr Airman," Monsieur La Cranque said, fixing him with a suspicious glare. "You are keen, I see, that we should not delve too deeply into the matter of this man's demise. Why is that, I wonder?"

"Simple manners," the Air-Vice-Marshal replied briskly. "A matter of breeding. I wouldn't expect someone like you, a foreigner from 'York', to understand that."

If Monsieur La Cranque had intended to respond, the opportunity was now lost when the train guard appeared at the door, looking flustered and distressed. "There's been an incident," he wheezed as he fought for his breath. "Would any of you gentlemen happen to be a duvet cover salesman?" La Cranque signalled that he was and the guard displayed evident relief. "Thank heavens sir. Would you come this way, please? We urgently need your help."

The guard led the eminent Belgian duvet cover salesman down the line of clanking,

rattling carriages to the goods van at the rear. Naturally, I followed, keen to offer what assistance I could. Opening the door we were met by racks and cages full of packing trunks, cases, crates and numerous parcels, including a horse which had been wrapped head to hoof in brown paper and which whinnied irritably as I inadvertently stumbled against it.

Hanging from the roof, to which it had been nailed by its feet, was the lifeless body of an unknown man. The guard pushed his way past it and drew our attention to a suitcase that had been prised open, half of the contents strewn haphazardly across the floor. "Here we are sir," he said. "I had come down here for a cough and a drag - me being on my break, you understand - and when I opened the door I disturbed this bloke rifling through this here case."

"*This* bloke?" I asked, pointing not unnaturally to the dangling corpse.

"What?" said the guard. "No. Some other bloke. Going through the case like something not right, he was. Well, I thought, that's not on, is it?"

"Indeed not, monsieur," Monsieur La Cranque agreed. "You challenged this fellow, of course?"

"You bet your life I did, sir," the guard replied. "I said 'Ere! 'Ere, I said. You got no business going through them cases. Clear off, I said."

"Very good, monsieur guard," La Cranque said approvingly. "And what did this man say?"

"He told *me* to clear off," said the guard. "Only, he put it a bit more colourfully than that, so I went for my whistle and that's when he panicked, pushed past me and ran off."

Monsieur La Cranque nodded knowingly. "Ah yes," he said. "There is very little that the criminal fears more than a railwayman's whistle. Did you recognise this man, monsieur guard?"

The guard shook his head vigorously, dislodging a small colony of head lice as he did so. "Never seen the bloke before. He looked the worse for wear though. I reckon he'd been drinking."

"Ah ha! The shitfaced man!"

"Well, if you want to put it in those terms, then yes, I suppose so."

It was my turn to question him now. "And what about the body?" I asked.

"What body?" said the guard. At this point the train swung around a gentle bend. The body of the man nailed to the roof swung sideways and lightly bumped the guard on the shoulder. "Oh *that* body," he said. "Sorry, I don't know anything about that."

"I see. Well, presumably the inebriated man had been here for some time if he had had time to nail this man to the roof," I pondered, but Monsieur La Cranque quickly interrupted me.

"Do not be so quick to jump to conclusions, Monsieur Rose," he warned me. "We have no reason to suppose that the shitfaced man is responsible for this unfortunate gentleman's current condition. It may be simply coincidence."

"Coincidence?"

"Indeed yes," said La Cranque. "He might have been nailed up by someone completely different. Or it could be suicide."

"Do people usually commit suicide by nailing themselves to train roofs?" I asked.

"Wouldn't be the first time," the guard muttered.

"Well, there you have it," said La Cranque. "Tell me monsieur guard, when was the last time you were in this room?"

"Well now, just before the train departed, I reckon," the guard replied. "Yes, I came in to check that everything had been stowed away securely."

"I see, yes," said La Cranque. "Think carefully now - was there a body nailed to the roof then?"

The guard thoughtfully rubbed his chin and looked around. La Cranque told him to take his time. "Now then," he said at length, "I'm not sure I can really say one way or the other. I certainly can't say for definite that there *wasn't*."

"I see," said La Cranque. "Let us therefore concentrate on what we *do* know." He started to poke through the contents of the open case, casually tossing items aside. "What do we have here? Half a kilo of unsalted butter, a pair of dried kangaroo testicles, some novelty spats bearing the legend 'I Love Leighton Buzzard', an enamelled wrought iron cake stand, a letter of introduction from the Polish ambassador, a set of playing cards with pictures of naughty ladies on them, a single glove with six fingers on one hand and a book describing how to build scale models of famous European cathedrals out of pasta. Well, I see nothing very unusual here." He glanced at the name tag on the case then dismissed the guard and bid him return to his duties.

Once the guard had left I took the opportunity to check the name tag for myself. "Reverend Snoop!" I said.

I was astonished. Monsieur La Cranque, however, hadn't registered any surprise at all, and this astonished me further. "But of course," he said to me. "I knew from the moment I saw the kangaroo's testicles that this case must belong to a man of the cloth. Plus, there is an unmistakable odour of religion - I could smell it a mile off. My friend Mr Rose, I think it is about time I filled you in on a few details. You have heard of the great turnip of Hinkley Parva, yes?"

I had indeed, although I had not yet had the opportunity to visit it. The Hinkley Parva turnip first came to prominence two summers ago when it was reported by *The Times* to have reached a size of about six feet in circumference. Such an extraordinary vegetable was rightly considered a miracle of

our age and crowds had been flocking to visit it ever since.

"Not a miracle," Monsieur La Cranque corrected me. "A product of science. The Hinkley Parva turnip is the result of an experimental formula - a compound called Massivo, which has been developed by Professor Ernest Fluke."

"You mean the inventor of the double-decker jam sandwich?" I gasped.

"The very same," confirmed Monsieur La Cranque. "Massivo can cause any organic matter to grow to extraordinary dimensions: turnips, carrots, chickens, cows, wheelbarrows."

"Wheelbarrows are not organic."

"Very well, not wheelbarrows," said La Cranque. "But many other things that are not wheelbarrows can all be made bigger by Massivo. You can see how this would be of great interest to farmers, gardeners, manufacturers of wheelbarrows and such like."

"Not wheelbarrows," I corrected him again.

"Mr Rose, will you please desist in this preoccupation with wheelbarrows!" La Cranque snapped irritably. "Anyhow, during the course of a burglary at the home of Professor Fluke, the formula was stolen and I was called in to investigate. I chanced across the shitfaced man behaving suspiciously and followed him onto this train, disguising myself as duvet cover salesman. Shortly afterwards, I entered the compartment in which you were travelling, at which point you recognised me."

"Ah yes," I said. "And we know what happened next."

"Yes, I asked you to step outside on the pretext of asking for a light," Monsieur La Cranque said.

"Yes, yes, I know, I was there."

"I asked for your assistance in my subterfuge and -"

"Please, Monsieur La Cranque," I interrupted. "I am aware of what happened next. What I don't understand is why the shitfa... the inebriated man was going through the vicar's case?"

"Indeed," Monsieur La Cranque replied. "Here is a mystery that needs to be solved. Let us go and ask Reverend Snoop why someone should be so interested in riffling through his knickknacks."

We returned to my compartment to find that Air-Vice-Marshal Totters was now reclining lifelessly in his seat, staring open-mouthed at the ceiling with an arrow through his neck. "Tut tut," said Monsieur La Cranque. "How typical it is that a man such as this should shirk his responsibilities in so cowardly a way by being dead. I fear that traditional values such as honour and duty are very much things of the past, more is the pity."

Monsieur La Cranque gently pushed the body aside and sat down opposite Reverend Snoop, fixing him with a keen gaze. "Monsieur vicar, I am greatly interested in the contents of your case."

"I've never seen those photographs before in my life," Reverend Snoop responded precipitately. "They are nothing to do with me, they are a gift. In fact, what photographs? I have no idea what you're talking about."

"Monsieur, I know nothing about any photographs," said La Cranque. "What I am interested in was why someone should break your case open and scatter its contents over the floor."

Reverend Snoop relaxed slightly. "I've no idea," he responded, watching Monsieur La Cranque suspiciously. "For a bet?"

"I think not."

"Well, it's possible," said the vicar. "One fellow says to another fellow, I bet you can't break open that case and throw the contents all over the floor. And then the other fellow

says, oh yes I jolly well can, and then he goes and does just that."

"I think maybe he was looking for something, yes?" La Cranque suggested. "What do you think that might have been, hmm?"

Reverend Snoop looked nonplussed. He frowned, grimaced, shrugged then after a pause he answered, "Sandwiches?"

While all this had been going on I had made a discovery of my own, right there in the middle of the floor between the two seats. It was a vaulting horse. "I say, Monsieur... er... Mr Crackers," I said, quickly remembering the eminent detective's cover story. "What do you think this is?"

"What?" La Cranque said. I thumped the side of the vaulting horse to indicate the obstruction. La Cranque took off his spectacles, cleaned them and replaced them on the bridge of his nose. Actually, La Cranque did not wear spectacles but like all his countrymen he was an accomplished mime artist. "A vaulting horse! This was not here before, no? I thought not. Interesting. Now then, wherever you find a vaulting horse you quite often also find..."

He put his shoulder to the vaulting horse and firmly slid it aside, revealing a black, gaping hole in the floor of the train.

"... a tunnel. It seems as though someone has tried to effect an escape from this railway locomotive."

"Astonishing!" I replied. "Is it actually possible to dig your way off a speeding train?"

"If a man is desperate enough, all things are possible," Monsieur La Cranque said. "Come, let us see where it leads."

Lighting a flare from his still burning hat, Monsieur La Cranque led the way down into the tunnel. It took us through the bowels of the train, along a twisting, roughhewn passageway that led us past bubbling oil sumps, swinging chains, pounding pistons, half-buried dinosaur bones and the body of

the guard who appeared to have been crushed to death in a giant vice, then folded up neatly and slid behind a water tank. Eventually we came to a hatchway above us and, pushing our way through, emerged into the buffet car.

"Outrageous!" Monsieur La Cranque exclaimed, examining the menu. "To charge this much for a pork pie is inhuman."

I was rather more interested in the group of people assembled there than the price of the food. We had seen most of them elsewhere just moments ago. Three of them were dead: the Air-Vice-Marshal, Mr Benchley and the man from the goods van, who had now been nailed into a new position hanging from the buffet car roof. They were joined by the Reverend Snoop, Miss Kershaw and, finally, the inebriated man, all of whom were still alive for the moment. Monsieur La Cranque strode up to this latter individual, a triumphant gleam in his eye.

"Sir, I must inform you that you are under citizen's arrest, for whatever it is you have done," La Cranque announced. "We will fill in the details when we find out just what that is. For the meantime it is sufficient for you to know that you are arrested."

"Steady on there, old boy," said the inebriated man, although he suddenly seemed much more sober now. "We're on the same side, don't you know. The name's Featherstonhaugh - British intelligence."

"There's no such thing," spat La Cranque.

"There very much is, old chap," said Featherstonhaugh. "And I'm it. I've been hot on the trail of the miscreant responsible for pinching the formula for Massivo, posing as a sozzled wastrel to throw off suspicion. Rather good, wasn't I?"

"Very good, monsieur," La Cranque agreed. "Being shitfaced must be second nature, yes? But I think you have not got to the bottom of this mystery, no?"

Featherstonhaugh beamed. "Oh, don't be so sure, old boy," he said. "I've been on to this crowd from the beginning."

"All of them?" I asked.

"Most of them," confirmed Featherstonhaugh with a smile. "Miss Kershaw I believe to be entirely innocent. But Mr Benchley here worked for one of the country's biggest suppliers of agricultural fertiliser."

"A bullshit merchant?"

"Precisely," said Featherstonhaugh. "Massivo would have had dire consequences for his business so he was tasked with preventing the formula from ever entering into production. The Air-Vice-Marshal, on the other hand, was fully aware of the military potential for the compound. Imagine a giant armoured marrow, twelve feet long and impervious to all forms of attack."

"Why, with such a marrow you could rule the world," I said.

"Precisely," Featherstonhaugh agreed. "And every foreign power in the world knows it too, which is why the Air-Vice-Marshal decided to steal the formula and sell it to the highest bidder. Which leaves the vicar here."

"Ah hem!" Monsieur La Cranque coughed to gain Featherstonhaugh's attention. "I think you are forgetting someone, yes? The man nailed to the roof."

"Oh him," said Featherstonhaugh. "He's irrelevant. He's been nailed up there for weeks. I think the railway company really need to look at replacing their cleaning crews. No, I'm afraid we're left with the vicar here, who just happens to be on the judging panels of most of the parish vegetable competitions throughout the south east of England. Vegetable competitions are big business, aren't they vicar, and there are no prizes for guessing how much Massivo is worth to someone in his position. Enough to make it worthwhile to bump off the competition, isn't that right, Reverend Snoop?"

"Superb!" I responded eagerly. "Why, Mr Featherstonhaugh, your deductive skills are almost on a par with Monsieur La Cranque himself."

La Cranque was somewhat less enthusiastic. "I would not say this, Monsieur Rose. Not at all. Oh no, not at all."

"Indeed," agreed Featherstonhaugh modestly. "I'm sure I could never hope to match the peerless Monsieur La Cranque. Your reputation precedes you sir."

"Ah, it is nothing," La Cranque responded with an airy wave of the hand.

"Why, I'm sure Monsieur La Cranque would have got there in the end," continued Featherstonhaugh. "After a few weeks or so, once everybody else was dead, the truth would have dawned on even the great detective."

"Ah, I see - this is your English sarcasm, yes?" La Cranque took me by the elbow and gently led me to the door. "I think it is time we left, Monsieur Rose," he said. "We must, how to do you say, 'chalk this case up to experience'."

"Not to worry, La Cranque," we heard Mr Featherstonhaugh say behind us. "No need to be so hard on yourself."

La Cranque muttered something ungentlemanly beneath his breath.

"It was a really tough case," Featherstonhaugh continued. "I expect -"

His words ceased abruptly. Monsieur La Cranque didn't pause nor even break his stride; he swept out of the buffet car. But I stopped for a moment to look over my shoulder and saw that Mr Featherstonhaugh appeared to have been impaled on a pike and that, against all odds, the Reverend Snoop had been flattened under an anvil. Miss Kershaw was now the only person left alive in the carriage and the really odd thing was that for the first time ever, I thought I saw her smile.

Also Available

The Curse of the Oversexed Admiral

There are strange goings on in the night at Overshot Manor and the junior staff are not happy. Why does Admiral 'Spanky' Pankhurst spend his evenings fiddling with himself in the library and who is the mysterious stranger in the red wig? When Monsieur La Cranque arrives he has more than one conundrum to contend with. Could this be one case too many for the Belgian bighead?

The Adventure of the Twatty Bishop

Bishop Lionel Faltermeyer was not well-liked, but was that really any reason to murder him? There is chaos in the cloisters and suspicion is rife. Thankfully help is on hand as Monsieur La Cranque arrives, cunningly disguised as the Archbishop Clinton Domestos. But can the prying primate get to the bottom of this ecclesiastical enigma, or is there a nasty surprise waiting for him up his cassock?

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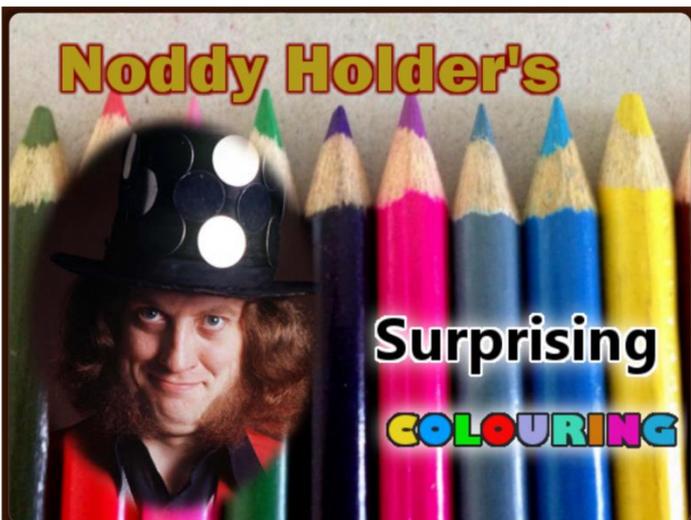
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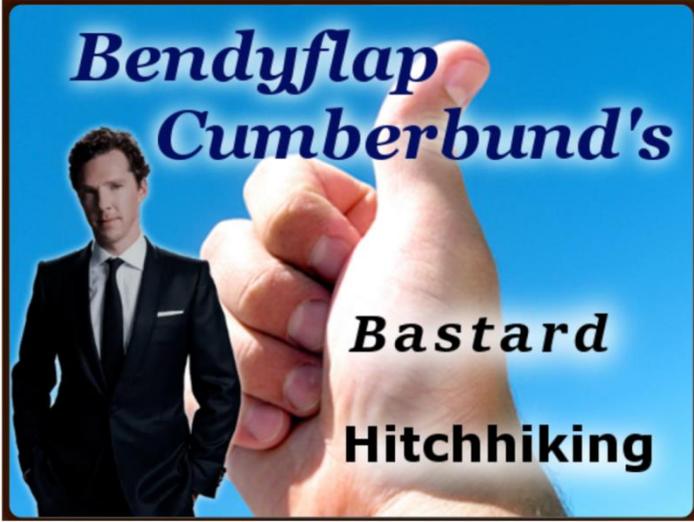
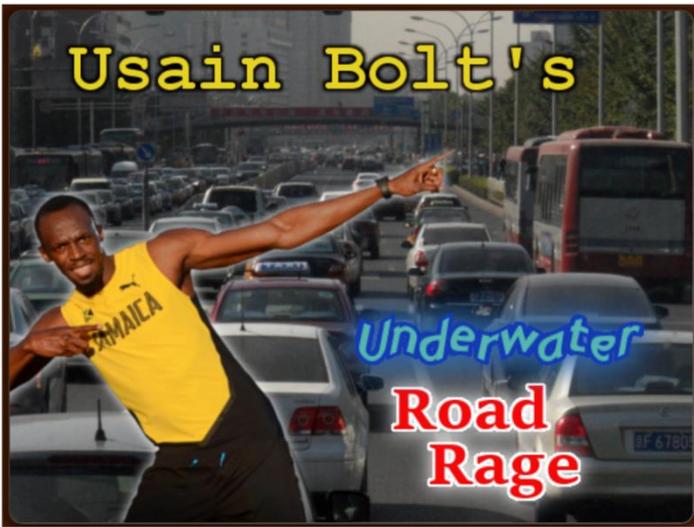
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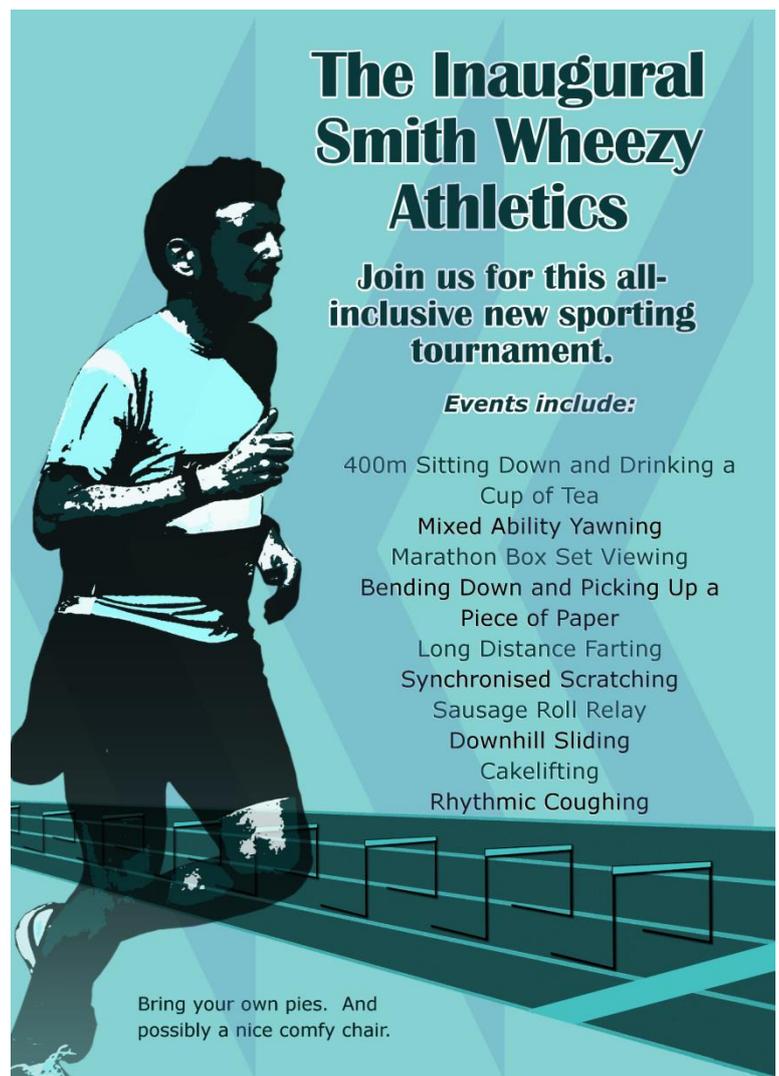
The Crap Olympics

Colin Smith is knackered and wheezy and runs like a constipated dachshund. This, he believes, puts him at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to competing in major athletic events, and so he is campaigning for new rules which will make conditions for athletes like him much fairer.

"Is it right that when I compete in a marathon I should be penalised because I have to stop for pizza every 400 yards?" he complains. "Is it fair that, just because I have fat legs, I am forced to clamber over hurdles, without so much as a footstool to assist me?" he continues. "And surely there has to be something wrong with the world when I am banned - yes, banned - from taking part in the pole vault because I happen to be ever so slightly morbidly obese?" he concludes. "It's high time we had a level playing field - especially when it comes to fell running."

To rectify the imbalance, Mr Smith has proposed that all other competitors should be 'professionally nobbled' - either physically, chemically or emotionally - in order to bring them down to his level. His suggestion has been called 'The Crap Olympics' by some members of the popular press, but Smith is nevertheless adamant that these changes are necessary. It will, he says, make international athletics more inclusive, more competitive and finally open up the sport to all manner of lardbuckets, mouth-breathers, pie-chuggers, clodhoppers, fartabouts, drunkards, dopeheads, bumpkins, sluggards, spongers, malingerers and deadbeats.

What's more, he believes that this will make for a far more entertaining spectacle for the paying punters, and in this respect he might just have a point.



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And of course, all of this stuff has to be branded with your evil logo. Then there's the staff to think of - you're going to need boffins, henchmen, assassins and a steady supply of femme fatales. They all need insurance, pension schemes, dental plans. It's a logistical nightmare! How do you cope with all that when you're supposed to be busy cooking up ever more elaborate schemes and thwarting secret agents?

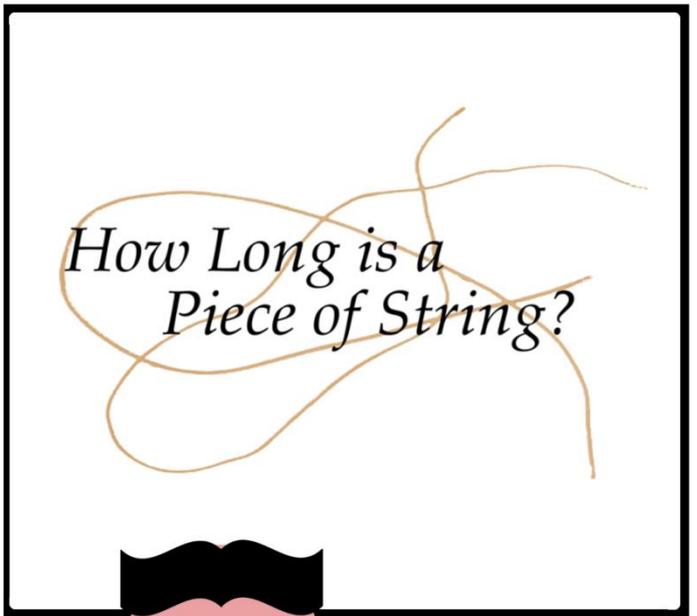
That's where we come in.

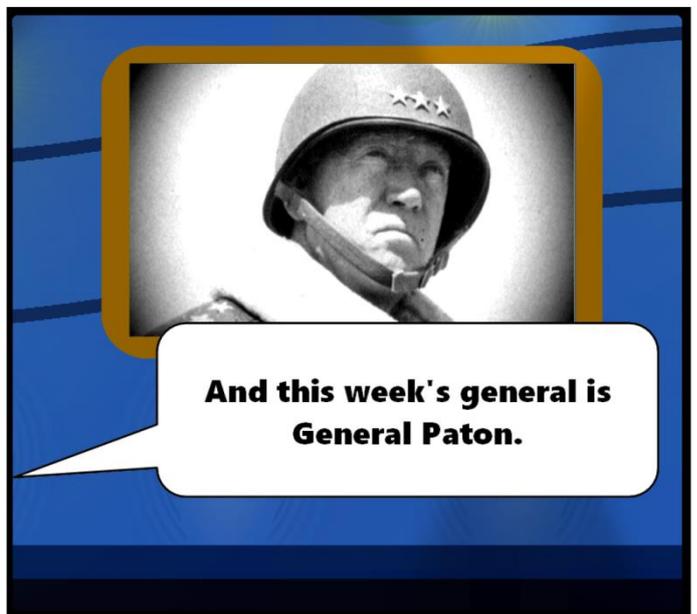
Diabolical Supervillain International is proud to have served the supervillain industry for the last fifty years. We'll take care of all the mundane, everyday stuff and leave you free to design your own uniform, strut about laughing maniacally and trade witty one-liners with your arch nemesis.

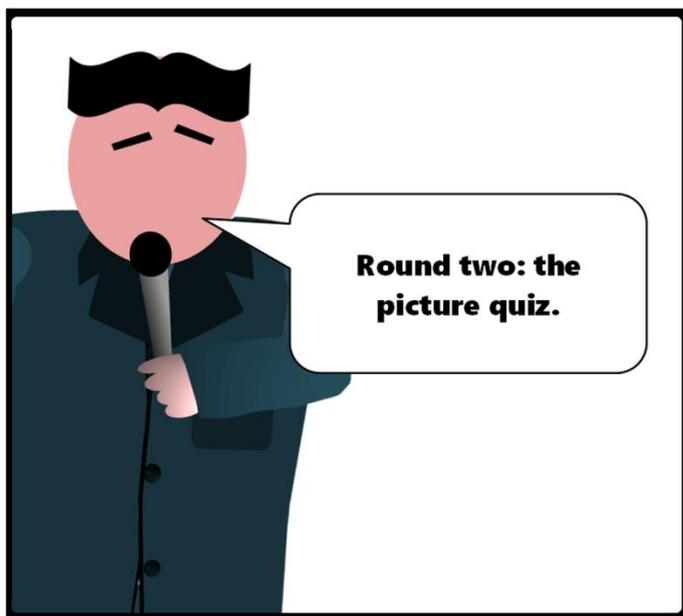
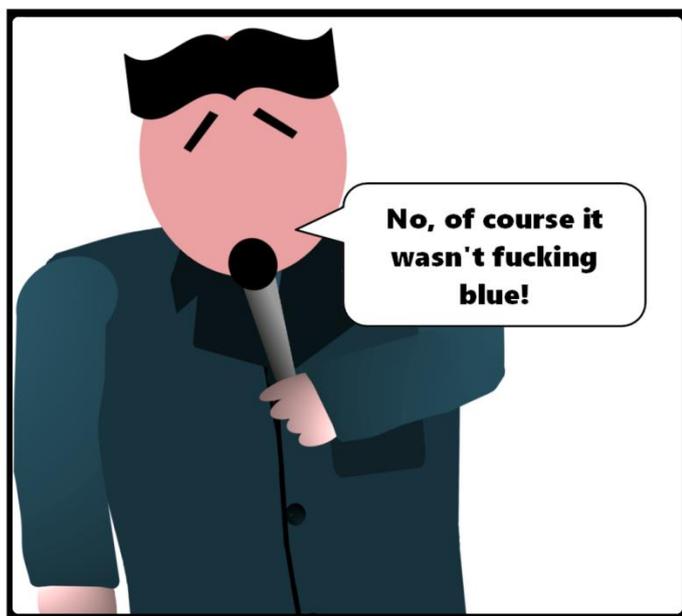
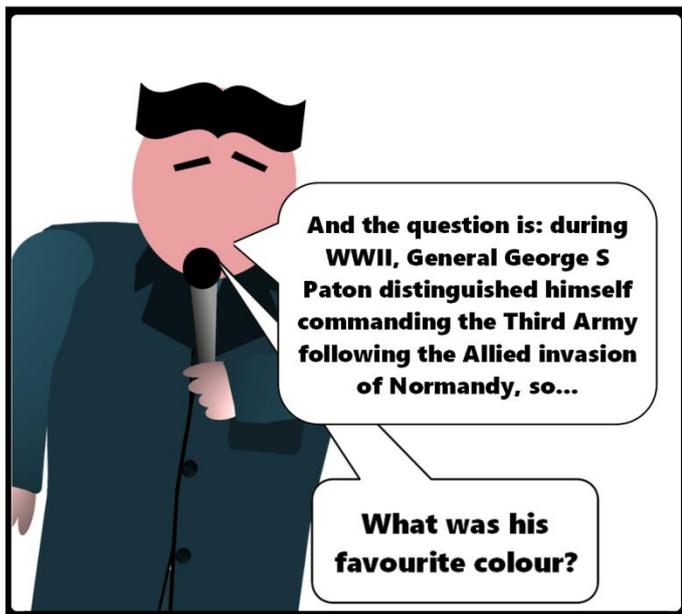
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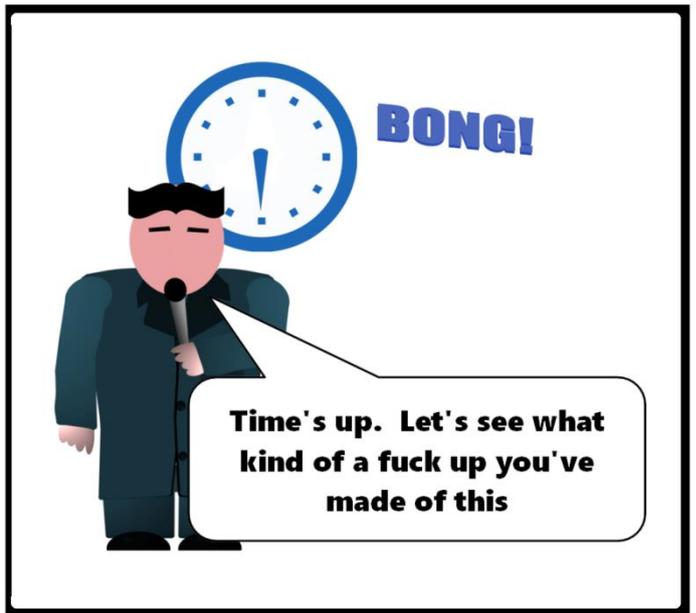
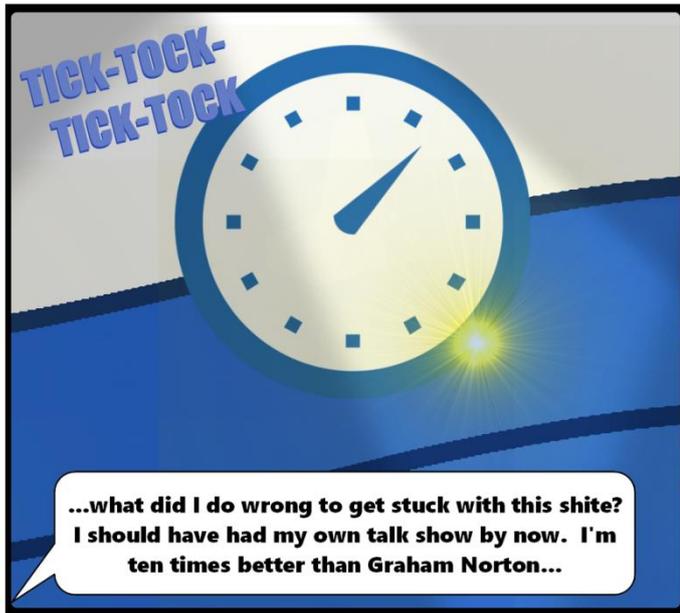
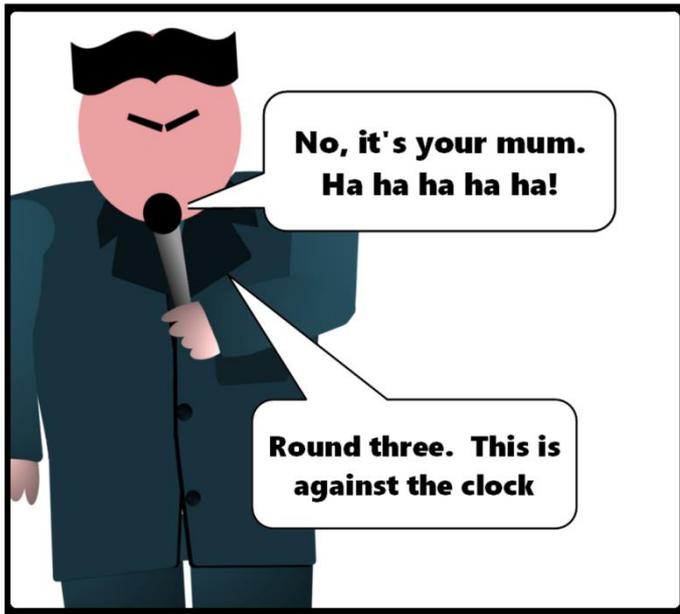
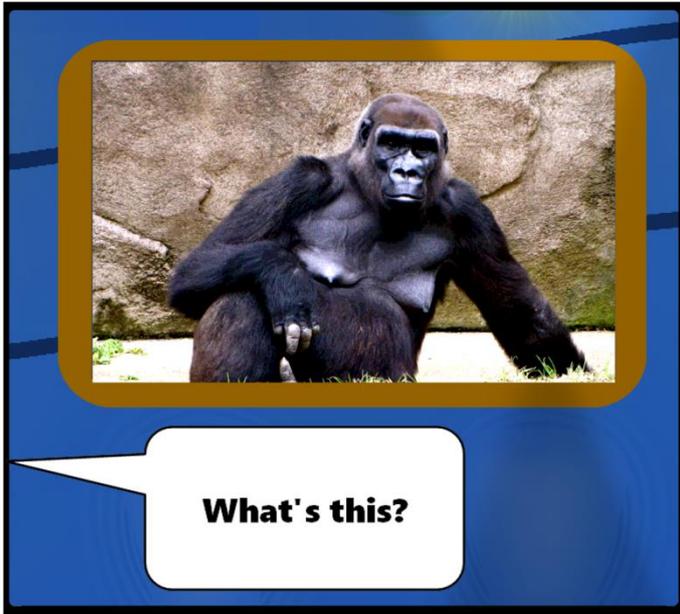


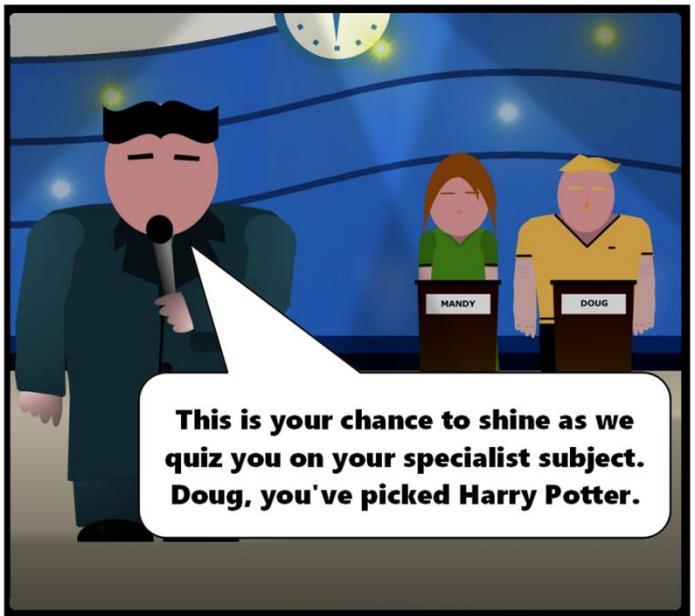
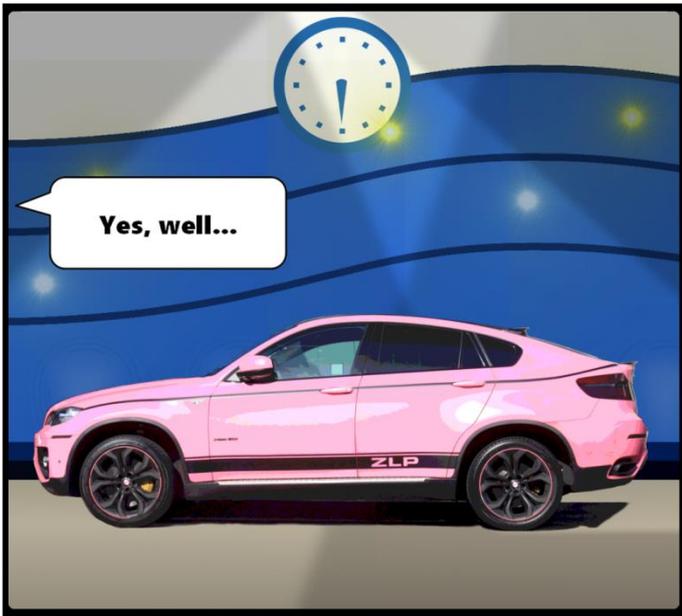
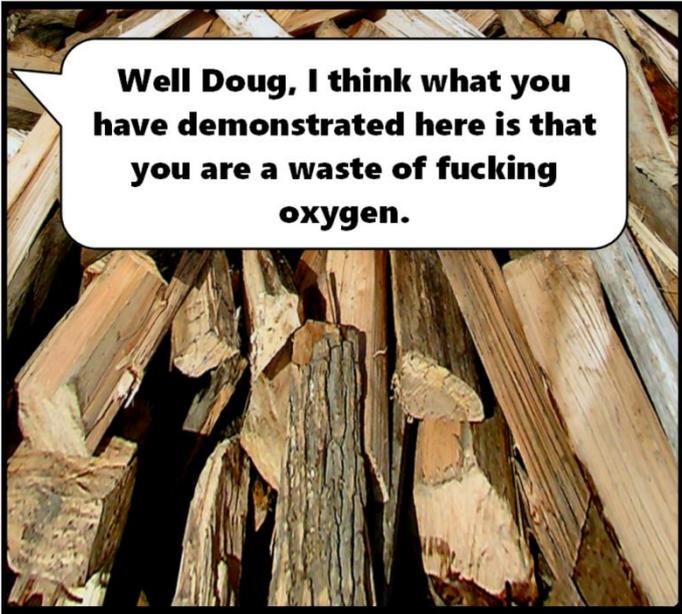
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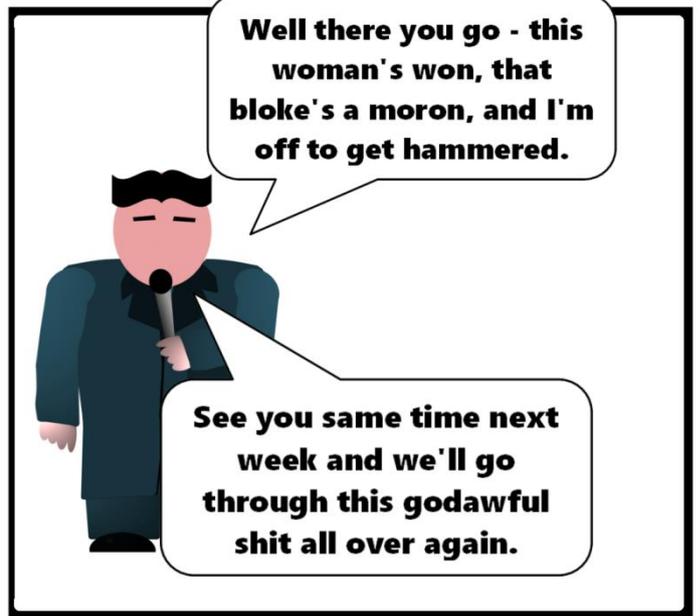
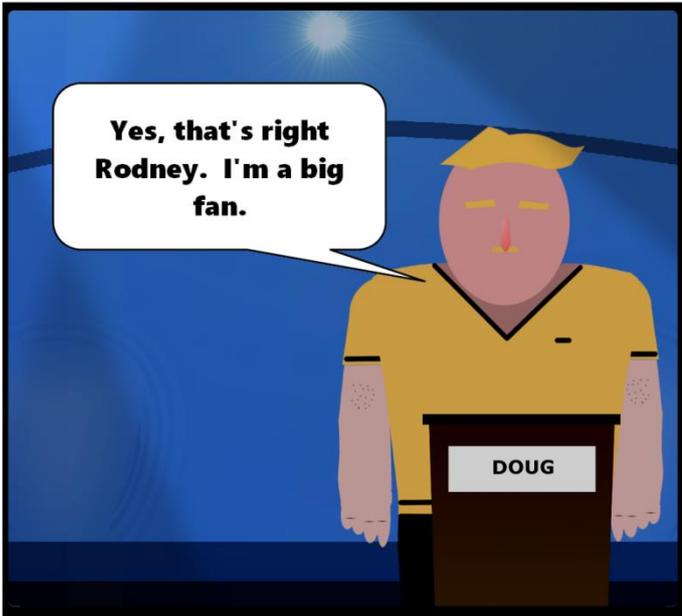












The F1 Thing

Very little can compete with Formula 1 when it comes to glitz and glamour, but what is it really like to find yourself behind the wheel? We spoke to F1 racing legend Ralph Trundle.

Hi Ralph, many thanks for speaking to us today. Can you tell us what made you decide to be an F1 driver?

Oh yes. Well, being a racing driver is dead good because you get to go really fast. Really, really fast - much faster than you can go on proper roads. During a race you can go over seventy and the police can't even pull you over, or anything. And Formula 1 is the best one of all the formulas. It's one better than Formula 2, and it's two better than Formula 3.

So is it difficult being a racing driver? What skills are needed?

Well you've got to be able to drive. I can drive, I've passed my test. Have you passed your test? I have - I did it last week. It was really tricky. You have to check your mirrors - we don't have mirrors on F1 cars. Also, you have to do three-point turns. You don't do those during a race. Not on purpose, anyway.

Tell us how you prepare for a race. Do you have a special regime?

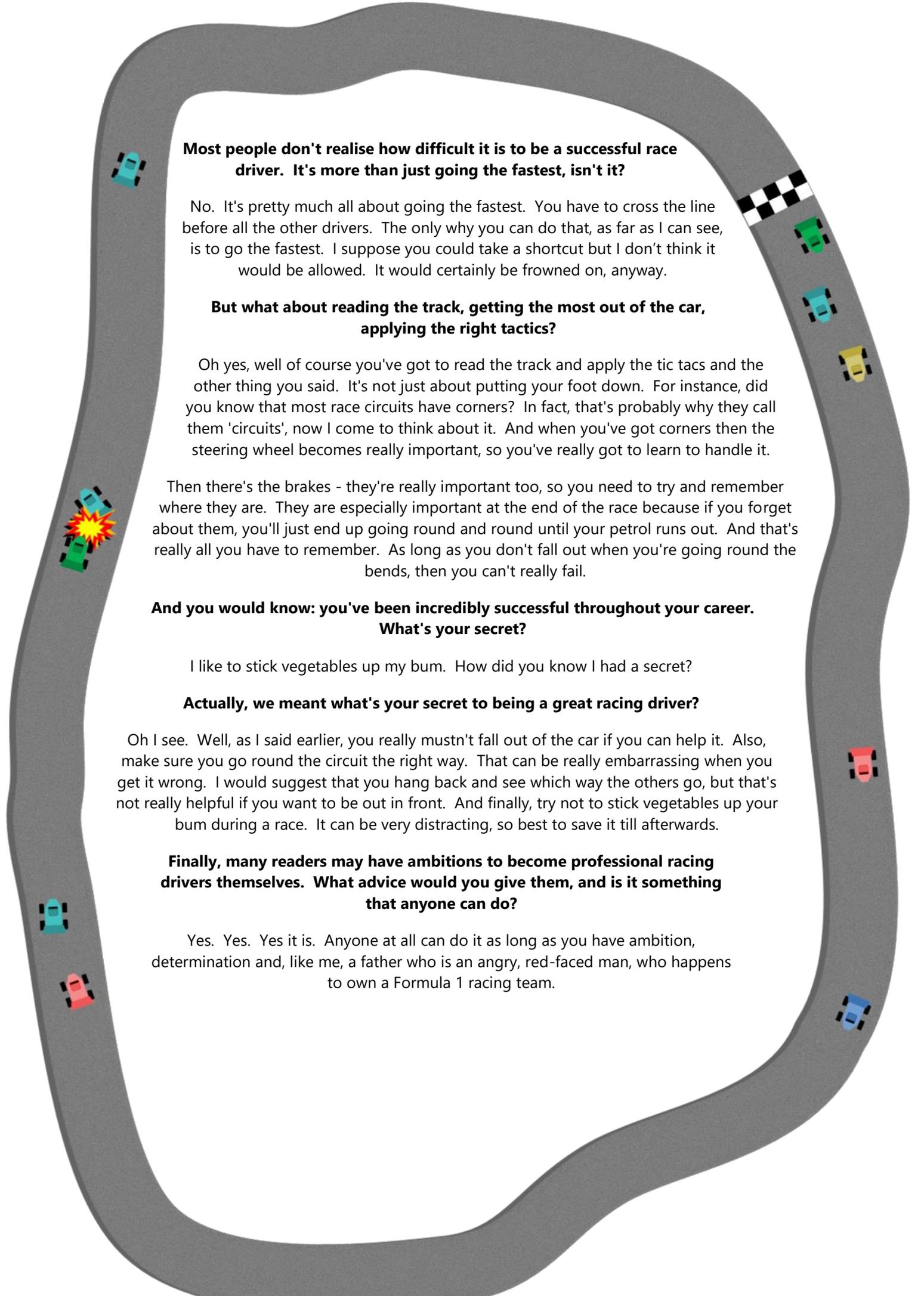
I don't have a regime. I've not seen one, anyway. I'm not sure what a regime is - what would it look like? Anyway, I've got too much on my mind before a race to go looking for regimes. I'm not allowed to watch TV after 9.00 o'clock the night before and I have to go to bed early.

When I wake up in the morning I put on my lucky underpants, brush my teeth so they're minty fresh then I set off to the track. When I get there I have to sit in the pits while a big scary man with a red face talks me through the team tactics. He gets really angry when I don't pay attention but I've got a good memory and the tic tacs are usually something simple like 'go fast' and 'try not to crash'. Then it is time for my toast.

Take us through what goes through your head when you're on the starting grid. What do you think about?

Oh well, I think about what I'm going to have for my tea. And I think about what I will do if it rains, because F1 cars don't have roofs, so they can fill up with water really fast and the noise of the rain drumming on my helmet makes my head feel funny.

I also think about my hobby, which is collecting pictures of tractors and pasting them into my scrapbook. I like tractors a lot and if I wasn't a racing driver I would probably be a farmer, although I don't much like cows because they look at me funny. But the thing that I think about most when I am waiting on the grid is the angry man with the red face in the pit.



Most people don't realise how difficult it is to be a successful race driver. It's more than just going the fastest, isn't it?

No. It's pretty much all about going the fastest. You have to cross the line before all the other drivers. The only way you can do that, as far as I can see, is to go the fastest. I suppose you could take a shortcut but I don't think it would be allowed. It would certainly be frowned on, anyway.

But what about reading the track, getting the most out of the car, applying the right tactics?

Oh yes, well of course you've got to read the track and apply the tic tacs and the other thing you said. It's not just about putting your foot down. For instance, did you know that most race circuits have corners? In fact, that's probably why they call them 'circuits', now I come to think about it. And when you've got corners then the steering wheel becomes really important, so you've really got to learn to handle it.

Then there's the brakes - they're really important too, so you need to try and remember where they are. They are especially important at the end of the race because if you forget about them, you'll just end up going round and round until your petrol runs out. And that's really all you have to remember. As long as you don't fall out when you're going round the bends, then you can't really fail.

And you would know: you've been incredibly successful throughout your career. What's your secret?

I like to stick vegetables up my bum. How did you know I had a secret?

Actually, we meant what's your secret to being a great racing driver?

Oh I see. Well, as I said earlier, you really mustn't fall out of the car if you can help it. Also, make sure you go round the circuit the right way. That can be really embarrassing when you get it wrong. I would suggest that you hang back and see which way the others go, but that's not really helpful if you want to be out in front. And finally, try not to stick vegetables up your bum during a race. It can be very distracting, so best to save it till afterwards.

Finally, many readers may have ambitions to become professional racing drivers themselves. What advice would you give them, and is it something that anyone can do?

Yes. Yes. Yes it is. Anyone at all can do it as long as you have ambition, determination and, like me, a father who is an angry, red-faced man, who happens to own a Formula 1 racing team.

Big Lumps of Blue

Everybody knows what a tog is and how it relates to the ratings given to duvets. I won't patronise you with all that - we all know that from school. However, there are some specialised units of measurement that we're sure you won't have heard of. Here's just a few.

The Queak

The queak (qk) is a unit of measurement that goes back to the beginnings of the Catholic Church, when bishops used it to describe the noise that was produced when they poked the Pope in the belly button.

Nowadays manufacturers of squeaky dog toys measure the pitch of their products in queaks. Anything between 1 and 10qk can only be heard by dogs and some children, but is never used since if owners can't hear the toy it they will assume it is broken. Generally a dog toy will squeak at between 11-50qk. Over 50qk is deemed to be far to irritating to be commercially viable and anything above 100 will make your ears bleed.

The Floop

A floop (fl) is a measure of how droopy something is, as in 'you see that weeping willow over there, I reckon that must be about seventy floops'. It is commonly used in horticulture, although it also crops up in interior design and the medical profession.

There is a limit to how droopy something can be. It cannot be less than 0fl, since this is a straight line and, strictly speaking, it cannot be more than 140fl, since this is a complete circle. If you ever hear a medical professional describe any part of your anatomy as being more than 140fl you would be wise to seek either a second opinion or an engagement in a travelling circus.

The Pique

The Pique (pq) is a measure how irritated you are with a work colleague. For example, if you are annoyed by someone whistling tunelessly and intermittently in the workplace, it might register as 12pq. Alternatively, a manager who constantly changes her bloody mind, is always shifting her workload onto other people, blames everyone else for her own failings and is incapable of learning even the most basic lessons from her serial fuck-ups might score as high as 40 or 50pq.

For information, 20 piques are equal to 1 strop and 10 strops equal a huff. One hundred huffs equate to a mega-huff, and that's usually when things start to get messy.



The Smollett

A smollett (smol) is used to measure the difference between the time someone *says* they are going to turn up and the time that they actually arrive. It is named after its inventor, Victoria Smollett, who was awarded a Nobel Prize for her work in this field in 2014, but didn't turn up to collect it until three years later - a value of 1500smol on her own scale.

The Froppetmetre

A froppetmetre (fm) is an interesting one because it does not have an absolute value, being entirely dependent on context. It is defined as a gap which is too narrow to be problematic but just wide enough to be annoying. Thus, when alighting from public transport, the gap between the bus and the kerb might be narrow enough for passengers to step across but just slightly too wide for people with short legs to do so with complete confidence.

The froppetmetre is closely related to the froppetminute (fmin), which is a similarly infuriating period of time. For example the delay that causes an automatic door to open mere moments before your nose touches the glass, or intermittent windscreen wipers that don't quite manage to keep up with the rain.

The Cubic Splurge

How do you measure toothpaste? Tricky one, because toothpaste can be measured by volume whilst it is in the tube and by length when you squeeze out a line. So what is needed is a single, consistent unit of measurement - that unit is the cubic splurge (cs).

The cubic splurge is essential to the manufacture of stripy toothpaste. The stripes are constructed on a different production line, or even in a different factory altogether - you may have seen them being delivered on the backs of very, very, very long lorries. It's important that these stripes are exactly the same length when they get stuffed into the tubes, and it's thanks to the cubic splurge that your toothpaste comes out in stripes rather than being all red, all white or spilling out in big lumps of blue.

