

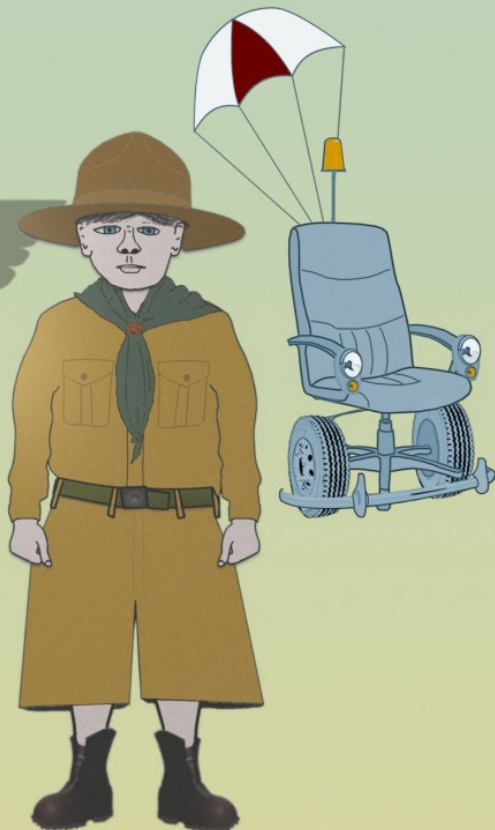
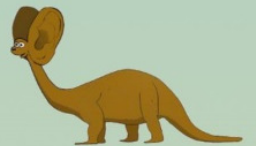
**THE
UNIVERSITY OF THE
BLEEDING OBVIOUS
ANNUAL
2016**



The University of the Bleeding Obvious

The University of the Bleeding Obvious Annual 2016
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Why is water transparent?

Fig 12b: Effect of adding Ribena to office goldfish bowl.



If orange juice is orange and milk is milky, why is water transparent? That's the question posed by Dr Leonard Skynard of the University of Applied Wallpapering in Reykjavik and after five years of strenuous investigation he now has the answer.

"Water is transparent so that fish can see where they are going," he told us. "This became apparent after we poured Ribena into our office fish tank and our goldfish kept bumping his nose on his little castle. As a side note I'd like to add that grass is probably green so that cows can see what they're eating, but a great deal more work needs to be done on this before we can be absolutely sure."

We asked Dr Skynard if he had anything else to tell us about this amazing new insight. "Absolutely not," he replied.

Scientist Discovers Square Route of Green

Route of Green

In a much anticipated announcement, Dr Rosemary Dulux of the Royal Institute of Mixing it Up in Greenwich revealed that she has finally discovered the square route of the colour green. "Turns out that it's a slightly pallid shade of yellow," she announced yesterday to an eager assembly of shady designers, blushing paint manufacturers and one somewhat gaudy collector of felt tip pens from Stevenage.

$$\sqrt{\text{green}} = \text{pallid yellow}$$

This is the culmination of over twenty years' work for Dr Dulux, who hails from a family of celebrated colourologists. Her father championed several new shades of orange in the seventies and her great great uncle invented purple in 1926, despite spending the majority of his life in black and white.

This discovery points the way to new improved industrial processes for making green things, but Dr Dulux's work doesn't end there. "I believe we're only really beginning to understand the mathematical basis for colour," she told us. "What happens when you divide blue by red? Can indigo be expressed to more than four decimal places? And what exactly does minus brown look like?"

But the question that Dr Dulux really wants to answer is whether 'pink' is actually a real colour. Pink is a theoretical impossibility because it is not a primary colour itself and cannot be made by mixing other primary colours. This has led various people to speculate that it's actually the result of complex tones spilling into this plane of existence from a parallel dimension. Dr Dulux disagrees and believes that if she can find a way of describing it scientifically it will pave the way for the discovery of new exotic colours such as 'burple', 'flistergringe' and 'splink'.

$$\text{pentagon with ?} + (\text{green} \times \text{blue})^2 = \text{pink}$$

A Letter from Mrs Womble

We've had a letter from a Mrs Edna Womble of Hartlepool, who is evidently under the impression that we are some sort of consumer service.

Dear Mr Obvious

My nephew recently bought a leopard from a major high street pet shop, but on getting it home he discovered that it was all bitey and kept trying to rip his arm off. Well, we did just what anyone else would do and took it back to the shop but the shop assistant said that they didn't do refunds and wouldn't give me my money back. Well, of course, I demanded to see the manager but he was off sick after being attacked by a mountain lion the week before. Naturally I stood my ground; I told them that I knew my rights and that I wasn't prepared to leave until I had seen someone in authority. Eventually the assistant manager came out of the back, covered in bandages and scratch marks, and bleeding profusely, but he just tried to fob me off by telling me we could exchange it for two hyenas or an okapi. I left the shop in a huff, promising to write a stern letter to his head office, returning only to collect my nephew, whom I found swaying hypnotically in front of the tank with the big snake in it.

I am presently in the process of penning my letter of complaint, in which I point out the defective nature of the leopard, the lack of safety warnings on the box and the fact that the only instructions appear to be in Italian. But my question is this - bearing in mind the terrible effect that this has had on my impressionable young nephew, my own status as an elderly and fragile pensioner, and mindful of the personal stress and anxiety that this situation had generated, how much should I ask for in compensation?

Yours sincerely

Mrs Edna Womble

Hey there! Ever considered a career in...

Printing

Being a printer is a great profession and now that you're in your final year at school it's time to start thinking about what you want to do with the rest of your life.

I know: jobs, huh? Boooring! But seriously, getting into the printing industry can be a very rewarding move. But don't take our word for it! Let's hear from Harry Starbuck - he's been a printer for over forty years. We stopped by to ask him a few questions and here's what he had to tell us.

Hi there Harry. So tell us, when did you first get into printing?

When? Ooh, now you're asking. Must have been 1971... No, I tell a lie, it was the year after. I went straight into a local print firm when I left school. I was only a gopher then, of course; just making the tea and sweeping up as I learnt the ropes.

Hmm, I bet that was challenging.

I'll say. There must have been a dozen guys and it was a bugger to try and remember who had sugar and who had milk.

That's great, Harry. Wow, awesome. But we kind of meant that learning the trade must have been a challenge. But I bet you had a great start, with plenty of qualifications from school and so on?

No, not really. I was thrown out of school for setting fire to the chemistry teacher, Mr Kline. He was a very dry man - he went up like tinderbox. No, I got the job at the printer's because my uncle was knocking off the director's wife.

Woah, too much information! But seriously guys, in spite of what Harry says, those qualifications are important. Yeah, we know - boring old exams, urgh! But they really *can* make a difference. We can't all be lucky and get our experience on the job, like Harry.

Or like my uncle.

Or like your... Anyway, I'm sure you knuckled down to some hard work. With a little bit of dedication and a whole lot of chutzpah, you must have graduated to the printing presses in no time!

Well, it doesn't happen overnight. You learn one letter at a time, upper and lower case. Then you repeat the whole thing again in italic and bold type. Finally you round off with three weeks on punctuation. In my case it took about eighteen months, but that was because there was a holdup after someone lost the 'p'.

Ha, ha! That's brilliant, Harry.

No, I'm being serious. We only had one of them. This was in the seventies, remember, when many letters were in short supply. Our consonants had to be shipped in specially from Sweden and they weren't cheap. We staggered on with an upside-down 'd' for a while, but it wasn't fooling anyone. Fortunately it was eventually found in a filing cabinet, misfiled under 'Q'.

Ah, the ups and downs of the printing industry. That's fascinating, Harry. But then, after seeing it through for eighteen months, you eventually became a fully trained printer, didn't you?

No! No, I didn't. I may have been competent with English characters but give me an umlaut or a caret and I wouldn't know where to start. To be honest, there was only one guy at our firm who could do those - or at least, he *said* he could do them. He was injured in a ballooning accident and retired to Penzance, and after that we had to get specialists in from the continent whenever we needed to print foreign characters. That's when we found out that this guy had been making it up all along. He had no more clue than the rest of us. I suppose we should have realised when he kept referring to them as 'weird squiggles' and 'funny hats'.

Well, that's great. So are there many opportunities to specialise within the printing industry?

Yes there are. I decided that I was going to specialise in colour.

Colour printing?

Yes. I specialised in the colour red. Red is a good colour to specialise in because it's one of the top colours that customers ask for. Of course, for full colour printing you need specialists in green and blue as well. That's how we were taught, anyway. A lot of modern printers use fake colours now - things like cyan and magenta. What's cyan? Who has ever gone into a DIY store and asked for cyan paint? Who's ever given cyan crayons to their kids?

Wow, well that's a lot of things for us to think about, Harry. So in conclusion, what would you say is the best thing about being a printer? The sense of pride in your craftsmanship? The chance to exercise your skills?

The stationery. Oh yes, without a doubt. You wouldn't believe the amount of stationery that I've knocked off from my employer over the years. You should see what's in my garage. I can happily say that I have enough paperclips to last me for the rest of my life. To be honest, I've got too much stuff, really. You don't know anybody who needs four hundredweight of Post-it notes, do you?

So there you have it. Being a printer is great fun and gives you a chance to provide a real service to the community. Why not give it a go!

Brought to you by the
- National Careers Institute -

Twenty-First Century Scouting



Britain has a new fourth emergency service, and it's one that might surprise you: the Scouts.

Hello there, my name is Sir Edmund Woggle, former CEO of several leading international investment firms and lifelong Boy Scout. I first joined the Scouts in 1955, rising quickly through the ranks to become Second Ferret, then Brown Otter and finally Chief Wombat. Through the years I've seen the Scout movement go through many changes, from the imposition of regulation cap sizes, the introduction of self-igniting campfires and the terrifying Basingstoke uprisings of the late eighties.

I pride myself that during my time I have contributed much to the Scouting movement myself. I don't want to blow my own trumpet but I have made several significant discoveries in tents, I was solely responsible for a number of innovations in knot design and have personally instigated many new badges - including one for blowing your own trumpet.

Last year, following many years of selfless devotion, a lifetime of distinction and an incident with an alpaca during the summer jamboree, I thought my career as part of this distinguished organisation was at an end. Time to cast aside my neckerchief, hang up my compass and release my knee-length shorts into the wild. But no, it seems I was wrong. My services were still required and it is for that reason that I am speaking to you now.

Hello again. I have been given the very great honour of bringing the Scouting movement into the twenty-first century. A somewhat belated commission given that we're already one and a half decades in, but on the principle that it's better late than ever I have been tasked with shaping the movement to meet the challenges of the future. And let me tell you, gone is the traditional image of the khaki-clad callow youth who knocks on your door during bob-a-job week and offers to wash your car for a quid. Today's Boy Scout is a smart, disciplined professional, with many specialist skills at his disposal, who will fully valet your vehicle to the highest standards, carry out a thorough service and, if necessary, entirely overhaul its major systems. For a quid. Well, at least he will until we have had chance to review our pricing structure.

Of course, there's more to our organisation than just cleaning the bird poo off your brand new Ford Smug or Nissan Trendy. We can provide help in genuine emergencies. Trapped under a fallen tree trunk? Call for a Scout! Lost a limb in a freak gardening accident? Call for a Scout! Stranded in the middle of the ocean on a burning raft surrounded by sharks? Call for a Sea Scout, they love that kind of thing.

You might not think it, but we have Scouts for every occasion. Flame retardant Scouts for use in house fires. Lead-plated Scouts for nuclear emergencies. Stealth Scouts for covert activities. And at the latest international Scout symposium in Amsterdam, a panel of twenty of the world's top Business Scouts proposed we invest in a troop of Space Scouts that can be launched from a campsite in Woomera to avert the imminent impact of near-Earth objects.

So, is the Scout movement dead? I should say not. Whatever your problem, whoever you are, when you're in trouble call for a Scout! Unless you're being set upon by a gang of muggers. We won't touch anything that might involve a punch-up. We leave that kind of thing to the Brownies.

A Modern Scout for a Modern World

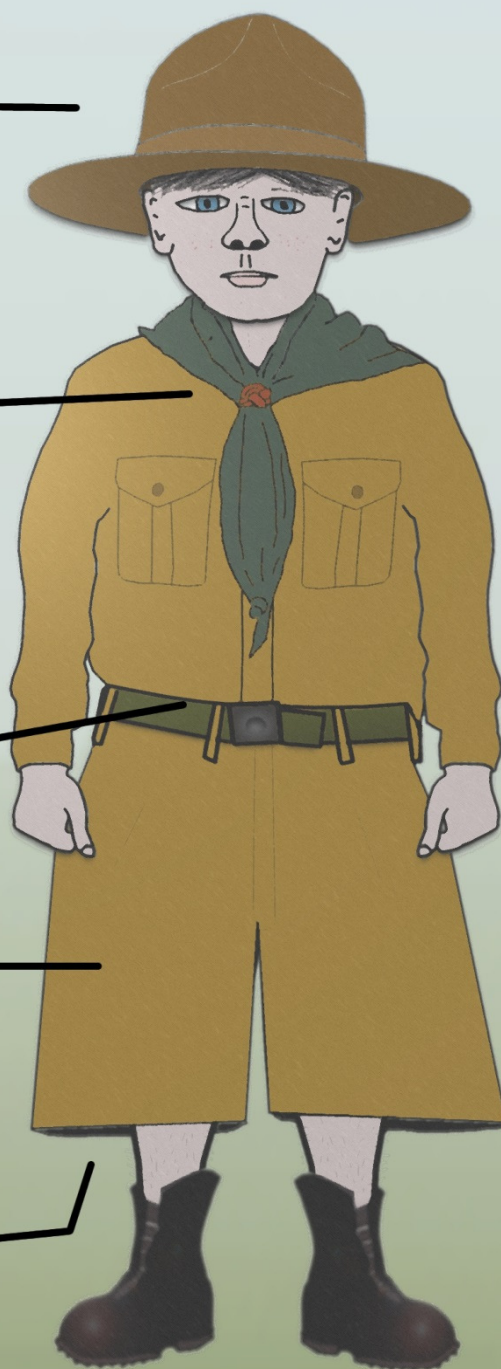
Teflon-coated hat protects against cosmic rays

Woggle with built-in satellite tracking system

Utility belt fitted with six-bladed penknife, defibrillator and heavy duty winch

Microwave pants

Ventilation duct



Petunia Mulch - Plant Psychologist

If you've got a drooping rose bush, a sagging hydrangea or a bent tulip it's very common to tackle the problem by investing in compost, new types of plant food or expensive sprays. But plant care is more than about the purely organic. To really care for your plant's wellbeing you need to take an holistic approach and consider its emotional and spiritual health. We all know that talking to your plants is beneficial, but do we really try to engage them in conversation, to understand their fears, their hopes, their dreams? Or do we just talk to them about the weather?

Well this is where I come in. My name is Dr Petunia Mulch and I am a plant psychologist. During the course of my work I have spoken to a great many flowers, vegetables, ferns and herbs and what has become clear is that many of them feel neglected and unappreciated.

This, of course, is not surprising. Take for example that marigold on your windowsill. I bet you hardly ever give it a second thought, do you? And why should you - after all, it looks healthy enough, doesn't it? But the fact is that marigolds are notoriously skittish and respond very poorly to loud noises and sudden shocks. Most of the time they will keep their inner turmoil securely hidden away, giving no clues to their anguish and frustration, but on occasion they can snap. I was once called out to a house in Rochdale where one plant, having been driven to distraction, had leapt out of its pot and smashed up the living room. It was subsequently found holed up in the kitchen behind the fridge, having taken the dog as a hostage.

On the other hand, you couldn't hope for a kinder, more sociable and good natured plant than a hyacinth. They just love daytime soaps and trashy talk shows and will thrive when placed next to a TV. They are also extremely garrulous and require a constant diet of gossip and friendly conversation. Ignore them and they quickly become despondent, and will rapidly wither and die.

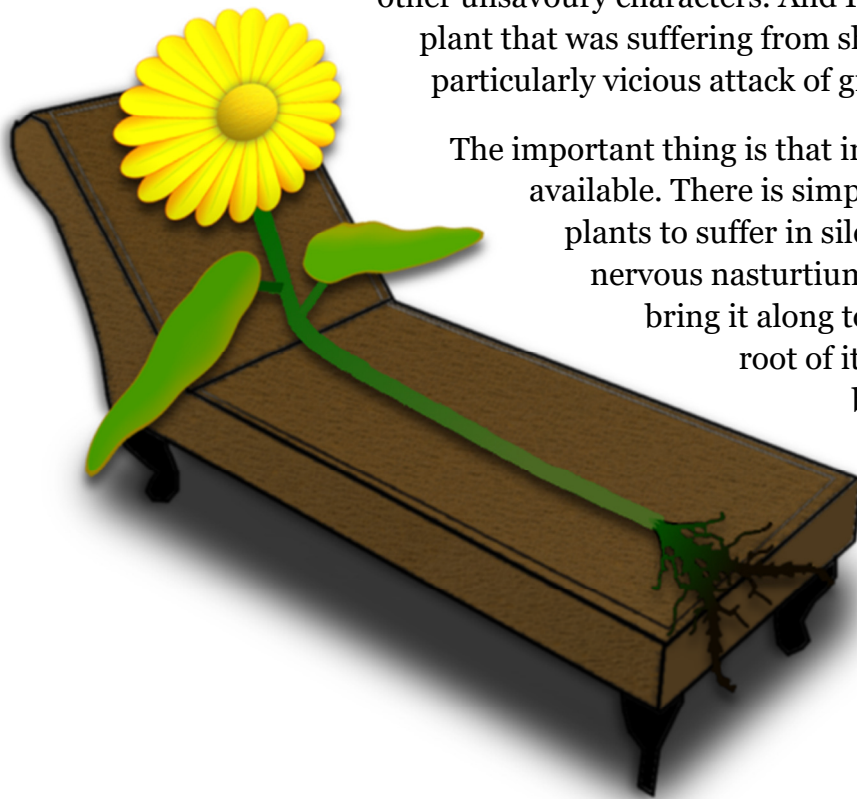
In fact, it was just this sort of light and friendly banter that got me interested in plant psychology in the first place. When I was a teenager I would spend hours in my father's greenhouse talking to the tomatoes about school, TV, music and boys. Not that those kind of things interested them, but they were kind enough to pay attention and in return I listened patiently to their rants about the unacceptable levels of noise coming from the cucumbers in the neighbouring allotment.

A firm friendship developed and I gained a real insight into the plant world and its problems, which very nearly made up for the growing sense of social isolation I felt as my human 'friends' struggled to understand why I would want to sit in the dark and listen to salad. I admit that I felt no great loss and even today I am generally more inclined to socialise with a carrot or a beetroot than with colleagues or family.

Not that I want anyone to think that I fraternise with my patients. I'm not a willow tickler or a gherkin stroker, or anything weird like that. I maintain strict professional boundaries at all times. In fact, as a plant psychologist I know that it is essential to discourage unwanted attention and inappropriate contact, as anyone who has been followed home by a daffodil will tell you.

I receive all my patients at my consulting rooms, a safe environment in which they are encouraged to talk over their concerns. Many of them still carry the scars of traumatic events that happened when they were just seedlings, and this often leads to deep seated fears of common gardening equipment such as trowels or wheelbarrows. Agoraphobia is also a big problem, especially for outdoor plants that have been raised inside. Rather than spreading themselves over fields and valleys and hillsides, they take to hanging around behind bus shelters with weeds and poisonous fungi and other unsavoury characters. And I once treated a spider plant that was suffering from shellshock following a particularly vicious attack of greenfly.

The important thing is that in all these cases help is available. There is simply no need for your plants to suffer in silence, so if you have a nervous nasturtium or a paranoid peony, bring it along to me and I'll get to the root of its anxiety, nurture its budding potential and help it to flourish.



In the market for a used policeman?

WAIT!



That second-hand constable could be stolen. Thefts of policemen are on the increase as criminals target serving officers to sell on the black market.

Police forces in the UK periodically sell off surplus policemen, *but only through authorised outlets*. That way they can ensure that all officers offered to the public are fully tested and compliant with current regulations.

If you should find a policeman being sold at a market, second-hand shop or car boot sale, the chances are that it's faulty, dangerous or bent. It might not even be a policeman at all, *merely a reconditioned traffic warden or two car park attendants welded together.*



So, if you're looking to purchase a cheap second-hand policeman, make sure you choose a retailer displaying the Copwatch sign.



Your Guarantee of a Quality Copper



PC Billy Columbo presents...

How to Spot a Ringer

'Evening all. Your average criminal is a shifty fellow and he has all sorts of tricks to hoodwink you, the unsuspecting consumb... cucumber... consumer, into parting with your hard-earned lolly. But if you stay sharp you can spot these three tell-tale signs that mark out a real constable from a ropey old bit of tat.

1. Always check the truncheon is intact. European laws prohibit the sale of policemen without a functioning truncheon. No truncheon, no sale.
2. Examine the helmet for cracks. Most policemen's helmets will have scratches or scuffs - this is normal wear and tear. However, cracks, splits or significant deformations could indicate that the officer has been in a serious accident and could be a write off.
3. Ask him the time. Everyone knows that if you want to know the time you should ask a policeman, as they are all calibrated to Greenwich Mean Time. Failing this simple test could indicate that the officer is a fake, or his battery is flat.

Finally, if you have recently bought a second-hand policeman and you think there may be something amiss, you can take it along to your local nick where the desk sergeant will look in its special secret place for its registration number.

Ambulance Crews Fail to Respond to Serious Belching

A Norfolk man is seeking to sue the local ambulance service after they took nearly three quarters of an hour to respond to a violent outbreak of wind. Dennis Findus was at home one Sunday afternoon when a ferocious and prolonged belch knocked him off his feet and startled the dog.

"It came out of nowhere," Mr Findus said. "One minute I was leaning over to switch on the TV for *Countryfile*, the next I was flat on my back behind the coffee table, staring up at the cobwebs around the light fitting and wondering why one of my slippers was on top of the bookcase."

Mr Findus puts the episode down to a combination of a heavy lunch, four cans of lager and unusually high air pressure for the time of year. "It was a perfect storm," he said. "But I knew that there was more to come and I had to get help as quickly as possible. I remembered from my basic first aid training that it's best to avoid any sudden movements or changes in altitude, so I remained on my back and inched over to the phone."

Official records show that the ambulance took 42 minutes to respond. To Mr Findus, lying in mortal peril on his living room floor, it seemed much longer. "The operator stayed on the line and tried to keep me calm," he said. "But there wasn't much she could really do. After all, she was safe and cosy in some operations room somewhere, whereas I was at the epicentre of a terrific outpouring of noxious gas and in constant fear that more was on its way. It was a nightmare."

In a statement yesterday, ambulance service bosses say that they regret any distress that Mr Findus may have experienced, but at the time all their units were attending a fart on the other side of town.

MIND YOUR WIND!



Intestinal gas is the number two threat to National Security, second only to socialism. It is well known that the enemy can use gas emissions to pinpoint our towns and cities. Using advanced listening devices, Jerry can hear the raucous noise of an episode of flatulence from across the channel and Stukas equipped with nasal amplifiers can home in on the source.

What to do if you expect a flatulent episode...

1. Try to contain it

Doctors know that holding in a trump or a windy-pops can be very dangerous, causing bloatage, burstage or even turning the trumpee completely inside out. However, it is the British thing to do and though you will perish horribly, you will die in the knowledge that your sacrifice helped to save the lives of your neighbours.

2. Use a Trump Shelter

Many districts now have public trump shelters, special airtight structures where the family can go to expel gasses, safe in the knowledge that they will not give away their position to the enemy. Nobody enjoys spending the night sitting in a fetid cloud of other people's wind, and this has been shown to be detrimental to both health and social standing. But in this time of national emergency, most of us know that this is the decent thing to do.

3. Direct Your Gas

Given enough force, and if sufficiently accurate, an eruption of intestinal wind directed from the mouth or... elsewhere... has sufficient power to knock a Messerschmitt from the air. Be warned, however - this method should only be employed by trained professionals, such as the brave men of the 51st Airborne Whiff Brigade. Or the 'Guff Busters' as they are more popularly known. Amateurs should be aware that there is a very real danger of blowback.



Are you ready for Digital Ornithology?

In September 2011 the UK introduced High Resolution Digital Birdlife, meaning that for the first time ever twitchers could enjoy looking at high definition birds in 12 billion colours*.



Birdwatchers can now enjoy more birds in more detail than ever before. Wrens! Chaffinches! House martins! More than 200,000 species are now available in dazzling clarity†.

So what happens now?

HD-ready binoculars and digital bird feeders have been available for some time and if you're already using them then you need do nothing. But if you still have traditional analogue gear, it's time to upgrade. Next month all the UK's analogue birds will be switched off, meaning you'll miss out on a wide range of sparrows, tits and ducks.

Where can I get help?

Most high street birdwatching shops will be able to supply the correct equipment. If you live in one of the few areas of the country which, weirdly, doesn't have a dedicated high street birdwatching shop, you can get help and advice at www.gov.uk/birds. There you will find handy tips, guides, expert articles and recommendations to help you continue to enjoy watching all the birds you want, morning, noon and night.



**There aren't that many colours.
†There aren't that many birds.*

Top Scientists predict the world will run out of apostrophes by 2017

In an address at this year's World Language Symposium in Dortmund, leading punctuation expert Professor Connie Brackets announced the worrying news that the world's supply of apostrophes would be entirely used up in just two years, unless serious efforts were made to conserve dwindling supplies.

Like most punctuation, apostrophes are formed by intense geological pressures acting upon sedimentary layers laid down millions of years ago. Over 80% of the apostrophes in circulation today, along with half of the planet's ampersands, are supplied by deep pit mines in South Africa. Despite being confined to such a small geographical area, deposits are plentiful and a shortage has never been anticipated. Until now.

Following a ten-year research programme, Professor Brackets and her team have discovered that apostrophes are being employed at a far greater rate than previously thought, partially because of the popular craze for unnecessarily inserting them into plural's. There is no shortage of enthusiastic proponents of this purely decorative approach to apostrophe use but, says the Professor, it means that stockpiles are dwindling.

"The real problem," the Professor told us, "is that the general public don't really appreciate that punctuation supplies are finite. There's only so much to go round and once it's gone, it's gone. In the last hundred years we have already lost over sixty forms of punctuation. Once common marks such as the asterflange, the pockmark and the semi-trump are sadly now extinct and many more are in danger of going the same way."

Some experts are putting their faith in recycling as a way of meeting the demand, but extracting text from waste books, pamphlets and magazines is a tricky business. Documents have to be boiled, reduced to a pulp and then spun in a centrifuge to remove excess vowels. The characters are then dried and sorted by hand, but punctuation is notoriously fragile and many of the apostrophes emerge from the process all bent and crooked, and are ultimately unusable.

Another suggestion is extraction from seawater. This technique was successfully pioneered in the late eighties to liberate the @ symbol from solution, without which the internet revolution could not have happened. But the process is expensive and apostrophes manufactured by this method are notoriously unstable and smell of tapioca.

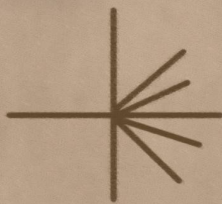
A more palatable solution would be to split speech marks (" = ' + '). There is a practically limitless supply of double quote marks which, when bombarded with high-energy hyphens, will produce two stable and relatively odourless apostrophes. The problem at present is that hyphens are themselves quite rare and until scientists can figure out a way of making it work with semi-colons the process remains unviable, consuming more punctuation than it actually produces.

In the meantime, Professor Brackets insists that we need to impose strict limits on apostrophe use. She has suggested a figure of ten apostrophes per five hundred words. Rationing punctuation might seem a little harsh, but the Professor insists that it is the only option - even if it does mean that an article like this wouldve used up its quota before reaching the final sentence.

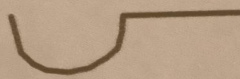
This recently discovered document, dating from the mid-seventeenth century, shows some of the once common punctuation marks that have since disappeared from our language. Little is known about precisely how they may have been used.*

**You can tell it's old because it's brown.*

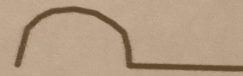
Punctuatiōne of Greate Britaine



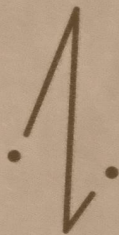
Asterflange



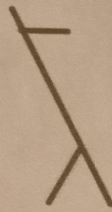
Gurdle



*Inverted
Gurdle*



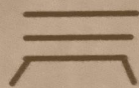
Truckle



Backflumph



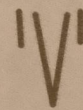
Hemi-cake



Schwooooo



Rimble



Overspike



*Mimsy
Brackets*



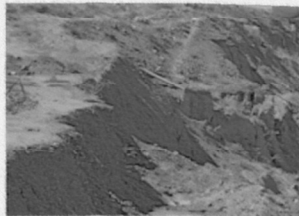
*Pock
Mark*



*Non-hyphenated
Spidol*

The Lincolnshire Crater

Nobody knows what caused this mysterious depression just outside Kings Lynn. With a depth of approximately twenty feet and a diameter just over twice that distance, its origins have been hotly debated since it was first discovered way back in 2002.



Was it, as some people suggest, caused by a meteorite impact? Is it the tantalising evidence of some kind of extra-terrestrial visitation? Or was it dug out by the landowner using a JCB so that he could charge credulous tourists £12.50 apiece to come and see it. Whatever the explanation, the opportunity to stand up to your ankles in mud in the middle of a dirty great hole is not one to be missed.

Open 6 days a week, 52 weeks a year,
5 days a week, except Tuesdays.

Looking for somewhere different to take the family? Finding interesting and educational places to entertain the kids is never easy, but here are four attractions that might offer you a little variety on a wet and windy afternoon.

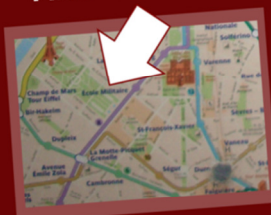
The Totnes Museum of Unidentifiable Smells



Founded in 1897 by the explorer and small game hunter Josiah Phelps upon his return from Penzance, the Totnes Museum of Unidentifiable Smells contains an unrivalled collection of mysterious whiffs, guffs and assorted odours. Each specimen, sealed in its own glass jar, has defied all efforts at identification and displays are organised according to the Roquefort Scale of Intolerable Pungency.

The museum boasts a huge collection, spanning more than a hundred years and includes many famous ponges, such as the slightly sweet odour that famously settled over Lincolnshire for three weeks in 1962 and several samples of the damp and rancid miasma that traditionally haunts Maidstone every Ash Wednesday.

FIND US HERE



Smells can also be purchased at the museum gift shop and these make excellent presents for people you may be moderately fond of.

The International Toast Museum Stoke-on-Trent

In 1982 retired baker and toast enthusiast Ken Achtung had a vision of a place where people could learn about the many varied forms of toasted bread products from around the world. Visitors would be treated to a fully interactive experience in which they would be invited to touch, smell and even taste the exhibits, while experiencing a professionally produced audio-visual presentation.

Whilst a lack of funds have delayed the full realisation of the project, the museum still offers a fascinating day out for all the family. We currently possess five pieces of toast, three of which are on display. These are kept behind glass, out of the reach of visitors, and our 'presentation' consists of a man called Billy who occasionally points at them with a stick.

The museum has been voted Stoke's best attraction for the last fifteen years running.

EF DINGLEBURY

Do you like spoons? Then get yourself down to EF Dinglebury's in Sheffield.

Dinglebury's has been Europe's leading manufacturer of spoons for the last eighty years and at our recently opened visitors' centre you can witness the mass-production of spoons first hand, in the company of a teenager on work experience dressed as Spooky, the firm's giant spoon-shaped mascot.

It's just spoons, mind. We don't bother with forks or any of that modern nonsense.

At the end of the tour you'll probably want to buy a commemoration spoon of your own. Too bad - Dinglebury's ship straight to wholesalers and don't deal direct with the general public.



EF DINGLEBURY
WE DO SPOONS

Announcing the **iSpong**

It was with great excitement that Apple announced the impending launch of its new iSpong. We caught up with Arthur Probably who spared us a few moments of his valuable time to answer some of the burning questions that technophiles the world over are dying to ask.

So, tell us, what exactly can the iSpong do?

Well, everything that a regular sponge can do, of course, but with internet connectivity and full data backup. We're really excited about the whole project.

What advantages will it have over traditional sponges?

Oh this is really exciting. It can be linked to your phone or to your computer at home and give real-time feedback. This is something that has never been done before and we think that it has real potential for totally changing the way that people sponge in the future.

This isn't the first time someone has tried to improve on traditional manual sponges. How will this device be different?

Previous electronic sponges were cumbersome, unwieldy and prone to go off unexpectedly. The iSpong has solved many of these problems. It's smaller, it's sleeker and it has a little blue flashing light at the end.

Who is your target audience? Is it aimed at hardcore spongophiles?

We're thinking, initially, of traditional early adopters - those same people who were quick to get on board with the iTwunt and the iFlob. But we hope to create a groundswell of interest and reach people who may never previously have considered owning a sponge of any sort.

Do you expect to meet with any resistance from the sponging community?

We hope they will see that the iSpong compliments their regular sponging activities rather than competing. But while we can see the iSpong being used as a training or demonstration aid in professional sponging, I can't imagine it replacing the traditional competition sponges made from walnut, granite or lard.

It was recently rumoured that Microsoft are in the process of developing a Windows Spong. Do you see this as being a serious competitor for your product?

Well, I can't really comment on what they may or may not be doing. Ultimately, of course, any kind of competition is good for the market. But I can't really comment. Anyway, I gather they've had some trouble with the operating system. But, as I say, I can't really comment.

So you see the iSpong being an important brand for you going forward?

We think it has that potential, yes. In fact, we're in the early stages of planning iSpong2, which will have advanced GPS capabilities and an extra cup holder.

That's great. So finally - probably the most important question - will it be available in any other colours?

Yes. Yes it will.

Grateful thanks to Arthur Probably for answering our questions, and for the loan of the trousers.



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Data Farming

It's 7pm and as the setting sun shimmies and bobs towards the undulating spine of the far horizon, farmers across the country are going through the usual routine of feeding the pigs, tucking up the chickens and bringing in the haystacks for the night. All except for Fergus Pong, that is, who has forsaken such archaic and occasionally deviant pursuits and is settling down to quite a different sort of evening on his Staffordshire farm. There was a time when the air would have been full of the lowing of cattle, the barking of horses and the smell of shit. Now those familiar ingredients of rural life have been replaced by the gentle hum of electrical transformers, the soft whine of server fans and the smell of shit. That's because these days Mr Pong's establishment is a data farm.

"What bloody time do you call this?" Mr Pong calls out to me as I stomp muddily up the lane, woefully late for our interview. "I've been leaning on this 'ere gate for half an hour or more. Plays 'avoc with me knees, all this leaning. Got distracted by one of your fancy townie coffee shops, I shouldn't wonder?"

I apologise profusely, although it ought to have been clear to the most hard-hearted of scoundrels that I am in a state of shock. Forty minutes earlier I had been motoring along a country road, whistling contentedly to myself, when something large and shaggy and unpleasant had ripped through a hedge before cannoning into the side of my Nissan Micra and rolling me into a ditch.

This sort of thing had never happened to me before and I was a little unsure what I ought to do next. You'd be puzzled too, I shouldn't wonder. You'd probably have done what I did, which was to sit for a while with the thunder pounding in your ears and reflect upon why your horoscope that morning had hinted that it would be a good day for tackling money matters and for renewing old friendships, but had entirely failed to mention that your journey was likely to be interrupted by something resembling a medium-sized industrial unit bursting out of a nearby hedgerow.

On reflection, 'medium-sized industrial unit' is perhaps not the best simile, even if it is the first thing that springs to mind. Medium-sized industrial units seldom inconvenience motorists with such earnest commitment. Also, they are rarely hairy, nor do they huff and snort as they restlessly pace around your stricken vehicle, occasionally butting your rear offside wheel with their shaggy heads, or looming up at the window and glaring at you with sickly yellow eyes.

This one did, which suggested that this wasn't some form of commercial building after all. Oh no. This was a bull, although it was, admittedly, roughly the same size and shape as something that you might find a small engineering firm operating out of. What's more, it was the wrong way up. Or at least it appeared to be until I realised that *it* was perfectly synchronised with its immediate environs and it was *me* that

was suspended upside down, the blood rushing to my head and the seatbelt applying an unfortunate degree of pressure to my lap.

Despite my discomfort I concluded that I would better off remaining where I was while this beast was at large. I count myself fortunate that it only stood glaring at me for a measly half hour before it got bored and wandered off, allowing me to release myself and proceed on foot to my prearranged meeting with Mr Pong.

Mr Pong, incidentally, doesn't appear to be in the least bit surprised when I tell him all this.

"Aye," he says.

I press him further. He elaborates.

"That'll be Colin. He's a mad bastard, is Colin. Always up to that sort of nonsense. He had the bread van over last week. Mr Wilkins - the bread man - he was furious."

I sympathised. Something ought to be done, I say, with some feeling as I remember where I'm parked. "Castration, that'll calm him down," I fume. "No - that's too good for him. He should be shot!"

"Aye," Pong says as he casually pulls a Twix from his back pocket and starts to unwrap it. "Happen yer right, although it'd be a terrible waste of a bread man. Be a fair old shock to Mrs Broadholme at the Post Office, too. She was quite fond of Mr Wilkins, and where would she get her wholemeal bloomers from in future? Probably better off shooting the bull instead. Fancy a finger?"

This last question is posed in connection with a mashed and partially melted item of confectionery peeking out of the Twix wrapper. It's proffered to me not in the manner of someone offering a chocolatey treat but rather as an assailant might wield a blade. It's not particularly sharp, but it is dangerously covered in straw, so I decline.

Pong shrugs and takes a bite. "Let's crack on then," he says. I suddenly snap out of my trance and remember why I'm here - Mr Pong has kindly offered me a tour of his new facility. He beckons me to climb over the gate and as I'm mid-straddle he unlatches it, swings it open and laughs enthusiastically as I topple face-first into a pile of dung. Bastard.

"Don't you townies have gates where you come from?" he says, still giggling. There's a horrible wet sucking noise as I pull myself from the pile and I prepare to offer a shattering retort but he's already stomping across the farmyard.

I follow grumpily, my wet jacket flapping and the smell clinging to me like a chicken shit overcoat. And this strikes me as puzzling, since I was under the impression that Mr Pong no longer entertained any livestock on the premises. I raise this with him and he pauses to tap the side of his nose conspiratorially with one twisted and

calloused finger before flinging open the door of the nearest barn with enough force to almost but not quite rip it off its hinges.

"Data entry!" he proclaims.

I peer inside to see about a dozen lines of poultry wearing little headsets, animatedly bobbing and tapping at keyboards with their beaks. Had you been there to see you might have been impressed by their professionalism and vigour, as indeed was I at first glance. But after overpowering my initial surprise and surrendering to a more thoughtful and analytical view of their endeavours, I become markedly less confident that they have things entirely under control - partly because of the apparently haphazard way that they're bashing their heads against the equipment, but mostly because they are chickens.

"They seem a bit... random," I remark cautiously.

"Of course," says Pong. "They're chickens."

"So I imagine they make one or two mistakes?" I ask.

He laughs - a dismissive snort that makes up for its brevity with mile after mile of rolling contempt. "Listen lad, everything they type is one hundred percent premium gibberish. But this little lot are currently inputting data for the Department of Work and Pensions so they're a damn sight more reliable than the cowboys that used to do it."

"You mean when the department relied on its in-house staff?" I ask.

He looks at me as if one of us has just trodden in something, but he doesn't know which. "I mean, cowboys, you cloth-eared tit," he says endearingly. "Too busy shooting up the equipment and practising their lasso techniques. They were real pains in the arse. Whereas your chicken is reliable, always on time and they'll do it for - "

"For chicken feed!" I chip in.

"For minimum wage," Pong corrects me. "Your chicken may be stupid, but it's got a decent union."

He slams the door shut, once again testing its action to a point very near destruction. We proceed across the farmyard and as we walk he gestures airily at the tumbledown sheds and silos around us, like a particularly filthy ringmaster in a particularly disappointing circus. "I've got them all at it," he says proudly. "I've got pigs processing insurance claims, sheep collating sales data and those guys in there are responding to requests for credit checks."

There are a couple of brittle and rusted sheets of corrugated iron covering the entrance to the nearest building. I peer through the crack between them and see two

cows playing badminton. One of them thunders across the court, pirouettes gracefully and then smashes the shuttlecock back over the net to land at its opponent's hooves.

"They're on a break," Mr Pong says with a shrug. "The point is, they're much better off than if they were just standing around munching grass all day."

I agree that they most certainly appear to be fitter.

"Fitter, yes," says Pong. "Also more fulfilled, more challenged and, most importantly, more profitable. Normally they'd need four or five big expensive fields to roam around in, just to stop themselves getting bored, whereas all they need here is a moderately sized office and a generous supply of shuttlecocks. But there's more to it than that - much more."

Indeed there is. Fergus Pong does not just provide data handling services - surprisingly he has recognised that the data itself is a commodity. This is a remarkably astute insight for someone who doesn't look as though he could be relied upon to read a book without attempting to colour it in. With so much information at his fingertips - or rather, hoof-tips, claw-tips, trotter-tips, etc - Mr Pong has realised that he is in a unique position to create individual profiles containing everything from your shopping preferences to your medical history. In fact, the chances are that he could identify your favourite sandwich filling, cast your horoscope and tell you what colour your blood is on the Dulux paint scale just from your National Insurance Number. And in a world where everybody wants to sell you something, that's information that people are prepared to pay for.

Mr Pong - a man who has no time for soap, no concept of common courtesy and a rather too flexible attitude towards morality - is clearly someone of vision for, as I am about to find out, he has taken his scheme one stage further. Promising to show me something truly outstanding, he beckons me round the back of the cowshed. I, of course, I'm not nearly naïve enough to fall for that old trick. Not again. As soon as I dropped my guard I would feel the flat end of a shovel round the back of my head, before being bundled into a sack and shipped off to Marrakesh to become the plaything of a rich international plum salesman.

But Mr Pong promises me that this time would be different, so I take a chance and acquiesce - although I arm myself with a cruel-looking pitchfork and make him go first. Behind the cowshed is a narrow lane that winds up to the summit of a steep hill. We will be able to see Pong's pride and joy from there, he assures me, and so off we go.

It's very steep and, although I'm as fit as any man who spends most of his time sprawled in front of the TV, stuffing pizza down his neck, I still find it hard going. Many times I have to stop to catch my breath, either perched on a wall, slumped beside a tree or leaning against a horse. About halfway up I realise that Mr Pong is no

longer with me. Moments later he motors past me in a three-year-old Ford Focus, parks at the top of the hill and shouts rude words down at me until I catch up.

It's dark by the time I get there, but the moonlight is sufficient for the task of surveying the landscape - which is what the dirty old farmer encourages me to do, once he stops laughing. I resist the urge to hit him, and this is just as well since I no longer have the energy to make a proper job of it. In fact, I barely have the strength to stop wheezing and stand upright, but having come this far it seems a shame not to make the effort.

It's just unfortunate that what I see doesn't seem worth it - field after field rippling with swaying crops. All very pretty, I'm sure, but not really the wonder of wonders that I'd been promised. Mr Pong assures me that all is not as it seems.

"I wouldn't expect you to understand," he says. "I had you pegged as a retard from the start. This, lad, is the future. We don't just collect data - we grow our own. Acres of the stuff - names, addresses, purchasing histories, credit reports, you name it."

I squint into the half-light. To me it all just looks like wheat.

"*Genetically modified* wheat," Mr Pong corrects me. He plucks out a stray stalk growing on the verge and holds it up. I see that in place of the root is a muddy USB connector.

"But the data is just..." I struggle to put my objection into words. "It's just data. It's random. It's phony information about made-up people. What use are imaginary people?"

"Ha!" he explodes, and I can honestly say that I have never come across anyone that could imbue a single syllable with so much disdain. "Very useful to have a lot of imaginary people filling in your surveys, providing you with feedback, winning your promotional competitions, generating outcomes for your charity, voting for your government," he says. "Very useful to have all those phony imaginary people following your social media accounts. Did you know that there are currently three times more people on Twitter than actually exist on the planet?"

I shake my head. It's difficult to believe that there is a market for invented data, but Mr Pong seems to be doing very well out of it. As he explains, he's had to move with the times.

"When I first came here, this was a dairy farm," the pungent old tosser tells me. "Now I deal in a different type of bullshit. But, one way or another, you still have to get your hands dirty."

Yes. I nod slowly in agreement as I contemplate the great universal truth spoken so plainly by this crap-stained philosopher. "You know..." I start to say, but I'm interrupted by the slam of a car door, the revving of an engine and the squeal of tyres." I whip round to see that Mr Pong has leapt back into his car. Frantically he

shouts out "Colin!" before he floors it and rockets back down the hill, peppering me with a spray of gravel as he disappears.

Colin? My name's not Colin. I puzzle at what he could have meant. The sound of his engine dies away and I'm left in silence save for the soft whisper of the wind, the rustling of the trees and the low threatening snorts of some monstrous beast coming from behind me.

Some monstrous beast.

Ah... Colin. I turn slowly and there is my nemesis, waiting for me in the gloom, pawing the ground. The mad bastard. Colin the bull - shaggy, restive, glaring at me with those hateful watery yellow eyes. He lunges. I run, screaming.

It isn't necessary to narrate what happened next. The details are disturbing and rich in unpalatable memories. It is enough to say that in the years to come I will spend many a restless night haunted by the events of that night. My visit to Fergus Pong's data farm left many lasting impressions on me. Sadly, most of them could not be easily remedied with sticking plasters and calamine lotion.

Legion of Ultramen

We're here with Quentin Parks, director of the latest movie in the *Legion of Ultramen* franchise. Mr Parks has built his reputation as a thoughtful, insightful and occasionally provocative filmmaker who has done much in recent years to raise the profile of the independent sector. It has therefore come as something of a surprise that he should take on a big budget comic book adaptation. We asked him what it was that so attracted him to this latest project.

Parks:

Oh wow, all those guys with the superpowers are so cool! Y'know, wouldn't it be just awesome to be able to fly, or be invisible or have like superpower x-ray vision, or something? Just think - pow!

UBO:

I see, so am I right in thinking that that these concepts - the implausible, the impossible - these represent the kind of wish-fulfilment fantasies that provide a commonality between your characters; that there is, in this desperate need for escapism, a bond which unites us all?

Parks:

Oh yeah, sure, 'cos who doesn't want nuclear powered supercars or a jet-copters and all that? And Xenon Man has this amazing neutron cutlass that can cut through anything, which is just so cool. And do you know what the freaky thing is? They can like totally do that now. The military, they have them and, y'know, it would be just the most amazing thing ever to have one of those things. Kind of like zap! Goes through anything: steel, concrete. Anything!

UBO:

It's interesting that you talk about 'cutting through everything'. There is a theme which harks back to your very first film in which one of the characters - Lydia, I think it is - after learning the truth about her alcoholic father, talks about being able to 'slice through all her problems'. This metaphor appears several times throughout the film before she ultimately commits suicide. Of course, like many of your characters, she is never able to escape her dark past. With *Legion of Ultramen*, are you hoping to be able to do that once more? Is this about bringing the characters' inner turmoil out into the open?

Parks:

A bit, yeah. But mostly it's about a giant radioactive space lizard that's trying to suck out the core of the Earth through a straw inserted through the North Pole. The Ultramen have to work out their own interpersonal conflicts before teaming up to fight it with lasers.

UBO:

Interesting. You used a very similar idea in your 2006 movie *The Conversation*, in which a group of friends on a skiing holiday spend three consecutive evenings working through a number of issues and conflicts. That film had some very poignant and thought-provoking moments and took the audience on a highly charged emotional journey. Are you aiming for something like that here?

Parks:

Similar, yeah, but this is more about the lasers. And there's one really amazing bit where Mouse Boy leaps over a burning tank on a motorbike, which is also on fire. And we did it for real. No CGI. An actual burning motorbike jumping over an actual burning tank. It was fucking incredible! We were like, did you see that! Did you see that shit, man! That was like, for real!

UBO:

Fascinating. That's such an unusual concept. It's certainly a departure from your usual style and I think critics are going to be interested in seeing how much this new movie resembles your previous work. For instance, you've never shied away from providing difficult or incomplete resolutions and many of your films have ended with awkward moral questions that have left filmgoers feeling anxious and uncertain. Without giving anything away, does the denouement of the new *Legion of Ultramen* movie deliver a similar uncomfortable ambiguity?

Parks:

No. The space lizard gets its butt kicked

UBO:

Well, thank you for your time, Mr Parks. I'm sure we're all looking forward to seeing your new movie and I believe you've already started work on your next project. I'm told that you will be returning to more familiar territory, with a bleak suburban drama that deals with hopelessness, addiction and a community's sense of betrayal by the outside world?

Parks:

That's right, yes.

UBO:

And what's it called?

Parks:

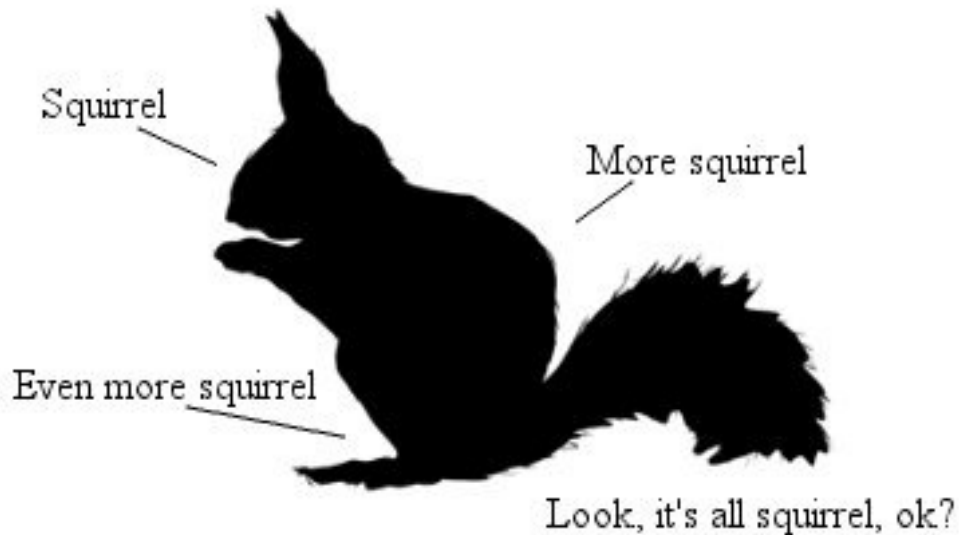
Ninja Vixens IV: Attack of the Robot Vampires.

UBO:

Thank you very much, Quentin Parks.

What are squirrels made of?

Fig 12b: Squirrel, typical contents



If cows are made of beef and pigs are made of bacon, what are squirrels made of? That's the question posed by Dr Leonard Skynard of the Institute of Advanced Poking in Reykjavik and after five years of painstaking research he now has the answer.

"Squirrels are made of squirrel," he told us. "Grey squirrels are made of 100% squirrel, whereas red squirrels are made of squirrel with just a dash of beetroot. As a side note I'd like to add that chickens are probably made of chicken, although we need to do further tests until we can be absolutely sure."

We asked Dr Skynard if he had anything else to tell us about this remarkable discovery. "No," he said.

A REVERSAL OF FORTUNES

BY OUR CORRESPONDANT

New legislation is being hurriedly considered following a landmark ruling in which a motorist successfully challenged a speeding ticket by repeating the offence on the same stretch of road, but in reverse. Barry Schumacher, no relation, was travelling down a stretch of the M1 on the evening of the 21st April last year when he was pulled over by Nottinghamshire Police after being clocked at a speed of 105 miles per hour.

During his appeal, Mr Schumacher claimed that he subsequently drove backwards along the same stretch of road at exactly the same speed, effectively cancelling out the original action and producing a net result of zero offences. Astoundingly, the court accepted this argument.

In a statement, Nottinghamshire Constabulary said that they were extremely disappointed with the decision and are considering a new prosecution for reversing on a motorway. Mr Schumacher has already said that he will fight the charge, pointing out that he had already driven forwards over the same distance, thereby effectively cancelling out this action and producing a net result of... and so on, and so on.

PEOPLE SHOULDN'T, SAYS POLICE SPOKESMAN

Police are asking people not to after a number of high profile ones in the recent. Chief Inspector Brian Mostly said that despite the rise in cases of it, over 48% of them had been found not to, which is not really it at all. In fact, figures suggest that it's probably much higher, with only one in five stating that they never would, even if they had been asked to, which they weren't, so it didn't matter.

Speaking to our reporter the Chief said, "All too probably we hear of homeowners and it's not really acceptable. We recommend that if you are approached, you shouldn't, and people who refuse to heed this advice very likely should be. I've been a police thing for over twenty, and in all that time I have never once, except maybe one occasion when I absolutely, positively had to. But even then, I put it down again straight away. I hope this clears thing up."

Man Wins Spandau Ballet in Raffle

Congratulations to Mr Trevor Plantagenet who recently won Spandau Ballet in a raffle. Mr Plantagenet is particularly delighted as he is a keen collector of eighties pop stars - he is already the proud owner of Tears for Fears and Yazoo, and has a part share in Frankie Goes to Hollywood.

"I first got interested in collecting musicians when I was at college," he told us. "A friend of mine had picked up a second-hand Adam Ant at a car boot sale. It was a bit battered around the edges and one of the ears had come off, but the thrill of owning the genuine article was undeniable."

Mr Plantagenet's first acquisition was Depeche Mode, which he bought from an Oxfam shop for a pound. "It was quite a bargain," he said. "Okay, it wasn't complete because the drummer was missing and the bass player was slightly scratched. That kind of thing can seriously affect the value, but I didn't care. For me it was real find."

Over the next few years Mr Plantagenet gradually built up his collection, adding the likes of Heaven Seventeen, Level 42, Wham and two different versions of Bucks Fizz. But recent eighties revivals have forced up the prices of many groups, to the point where bands like Culture Club or Erasure can change hands at auction for tens of thousands of pounds. This is most definitely out of Mr Plantagenet's price range and has seriously dented his hopes of ever owning his ultimate dream group, Duran Duran.

"I was within sniffing distance of Simon le Bon at a bring-and-buy sale in Norwich, one time," Mr Plantagenet mused. "That's the closest I've ever got. But owning Spandau Ballet is the next best thing and I'm really pleased to have won. I think I'm going to display them in the living room next to the china cabinet. It's out of the way of the coffee table and it will be easy to Hoover round them."

Another Letter from Mrs Womble

Once again we have received a letter from a Mrs Edna Womble of Hartlepool, who confuses us with someone else. Mrs Womble writes:

Dear Greggs,

I wish to complain in the strongest possible terms about a pasty which I purchased from one of your outlets last week. Hello, how are you? I am fine. Anyway, I was shopping in town the other day with my nephew who needed new sparkplugs for his trombone. My nephew is a young gentleman of substantial construction and as such it is necessary for him to maintain a constant intake of chips, pies, cakes and other assorted foodstuffs in order to prevent him keeling over in the street and becoming an obstruction to traffic.

Your establishment was therefore the fourth we had visited that morning on the way to Ken's All-Weather Trumpet Emporium (incorporating The Trombone Connection and Basement Bassoons). By this time my nephew was badly in need of a steak and onion pasty, having already devoured the bag of doughnuts I had bought for him several minutes earlier. Indeed, it was remarked upon by a passer-by that he was visibly wasting away to the point where he was verging on the translucent and the sight of his internal organs showing through his fatty deposits was attracting exactly the wrong sort of attention.

I had always understood that workers in the food industry were trained to immediately identify pastry emergencies and act quickly to tackle the deficiency. In the circumstances I would have expected to have been instantly escorted to the front of the queue where your staff would have immediately begun to shovel calories down his neck. In fact, I would have thought it prudent for an establishment of your standing to have some sort of recovery room where desperate customers can be speedily nourished via some sort of chute or high-pressure hose.

Not so. Oh no. No, we had to wait for almost two minutes - yes, that's right, TWO MINUTES - while various non-priority cases were served ahead of us, apparently by reason of the fact that they were 'in front of us in the queue'. A thin excuse, indeed.

All the time this was going on, the evident distress that my nephew was experiencing was ignored, even though his dreadful pallor, constant whining and fearsome flatulence provided both an unmistakable indicator of the severity of his

condition and a sustained attack on the senses and sensibilities of your other customers.

By the time we ultimately reached the counter my poor nephew was fading fast, and it was only thanks to the good fortune of finding half a pork pie and a finger of Fudge in his back pocket that he made it there at all. However, the shock that he received when he learned that you had run out of steak and onion pasties was very nearly the end of him. I mean, come on people! If you can't even supply the basics, then you need to seriously think about whether you really want to be in this business at all. Instead, he was offered a chicken product, which was hardly an acceptable substitute. In fact, I don't think that chicken is even technically classed as 'meat'.

Nevertheless, we accepted the replacement pasty with as much good grace as we felt it warranted and proceeded to pounce out of the shop. Thus it was that I suffered the ultimate indignity as payment was demanded of me by the greasy, cross-eyed harridan whom you entrust with the safekeeping of your baked goods. I'm sure I hardly need tell you the legal position with regard to such circumstances, but clearly your shop manager - which was how the stroppy cow identified herself - had not been made aware that the law requires that in these cases the goods should be supplied for free. I had no hesitation in correcting her misconception in this matter, at the top of my voice, in front of a shop full of your customers. I may have also called her a 'bobble-eyed twat' although I admit that on this point my memory is not entirely clear. I then left the shop, with the pasty which was rightfully mine, returning only briefly to collect my nephew who was at this point drooling at a cream horn.

You should be aware that my sister-in-law worked in a tobacconist's for three weeks in 1977 and as such she has a detailed and extensive knowledge of all aspects of retail law. Brenda (my sister-in-law) says that by rights you should be offering me free pasties for the rest of year. I feel that this is the very least that I can expect by way of compensation, considering the worry and distress that this shameful situation has caused. I hope you will consider my case sympathetically and I trust that you will do the right thing. Thank you.

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- **End-user coaching, including mitigation tactics for longitudinal depreciation scenarios**
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- **Particulate mapping of key delivery nodes, ramped attainment actualisation, meta-directional outflow priorities and correctional forecasting (Tuesdays only).**

About us

Mervyn Carter Personal Initiator

Mervyn Carter was working in the financial sector when he saw that there was a need for a modern, integrated approach to devolved support strategies that avoided the classic mistake of becoming over-reliant on an overly reflexive isomorphic feedback model. Funded by a dubious insurance claim, his Aunt Mildred and a fortuitous flutter on 'Lucky Boy' running at the 3.15 at Newmarket, Carter set up Carter-Pierrepoint with his friend and bookie, Henry Pierrepoint, and has watched the company go from strength to strength.

Henry Pierrepoint Intermediate Strategist

Henry Pierrepoint first recognised the value of segregated voluntary planning during his time running a local charity, where they fall for this sort of thing quite a lot. After personally liberating a quarter of a million pounds from the outmoded and restrictive regime imposed by both the charity's funders and the overformal conventions of traditional accounting, Pierrepoint retired from the scene for a maximum of eight years. Released in five due to good behaviour, he helped launch Carter-Pierrepoint and became a key player in initiating the core strategies that have enabled the company to become the industry leader in acquiring the unrestricted reserves of some of the world's biggest businesses.

Interested? Call us today for an informal chat

*Carter
Pierrepoint*

Yesterday's Tomorrows Today

From the desk of
Dr Adolphous Bongo
Family Medical Practitioner
(Knighthood pending)



The Environment

This week one of my patients asked me what I thought about the environment. Once I had got over the sheer impertinence of this question and had admonished the impudent woman with my harshest and most withering stare, I gave the matter some thought. My view at the time was that, on the whole, having an environment was a good thing. After all, if you don't have an environment, where would you be? Exactly: nowhere. On reflection, I think I may have misunderstood the exact nature of the enquiry.

The fact is that I am really quite environmentally minded, and with good reason. I have a significant holding in a chemical factory which relies quite heavily on the environment - chiefly, cutting down huge swathes of it, bulldozing vast tracts of it, digging up dirty great lumps of it and sticking the bits we don't want back down the hole. Inevitably, this sort of activity results in a certain amount of fallout. I don't mean fallout in the 'nuclear' sense, of course... although, actually, that does happen from time to time. No, I mean fallout in the sense of a backlash from the do-goody, know-nothing, tree-hugging vegetarian brigade and whichever opportunist, vote-chasing politicians they happen to have in their pockets that week.

By the way, I don't mean to give the impression that I am trying to disparage these people or belittle their views. Such freaks have just as much entitlement to their opinions as 'normal' people, and the fact that their trippy, new-age bullshit has about as much relevance to the real world as rainbow-coloured unicorns, magic healing crystals and all the other guff that these self-deluding cretins credulously devote their existences to shouldn't deter them from expressing their ridiculous ideas.

However, seeing as how health and wellbeing are my twin stocks in trade, so I'm told, I am well aware of the effect that a person's environment has on their welfare. Good grief, they tell me about it often enough. Time and again I'm informed by my more determined patients - those who somehow manage to negotiate my torturous appointment booking system and refuse to be put off by my highly-trained team of surly and unhelpful reception staff - that the conditions in which they live are detrimental to their health. They speak of damp and squalid living arrangements,

unsafe workplaces and airborne pollutants as if they actually know what they're talking about. And when I tell them to pull themselves together and stop being so pathetic and sickly - which is the medically-approved and undeniably correct course of action in these circumstances - they question my advice and start quoting from all manner of articles and research and case histories to support their woefully misguided self-diagnoses.

How do they get hold of this information? I blame the internet. The bottom line is that a few highly-toxic pollutants in the water supply are good for the constitution and a massive cloud of poisonous gas belching from a nearby refinery never hurt anybody. Studies have proven as much beyond all possible doubt. You just need to read the right studies.

And if you need an example of that, just take a look at my own little side-line. You may have read stories in the national press connecting my factory with a number of unpleasant side effects experienced by people living in the immediate vicinity. "Toxic Waste Destroys Village" read one headline, which was a little misleading since we'd already evacuated the village in question following the 'explosion'. "Save Our Mutant Children" was another, echoing the sentiments of one resident who laboured under the misapprehension that the condition of her hideous and disfigured offspring was somehow something to do with us, rather than a natural consequence of her own stagnant and polluted gene pool. One front page simply read "Doctor Doom" and was accompanied by a photograph of myself dressed as the grim reaper, taken at a rather jolly fancy dress do. Actually, I took a shine to that one. I have it on my surgery wall.

The real casualty of all this hysteria is the effect on property prices in the vicinity of the factory. Not that it's done us any harm, as it happens. We've been able to buy up land dirt cheap and are currently getting set to embark on a major programme of expansion.

So, once and for all, let me finally answer the critics who claim that I don't care about the environment. I care passionately. The environment contributes enormously to the wellbeing of my patients and I encourage them to go out and experience as much of it as possible, rather than hanging around my surgery and spoiling the atmosphere. Also, let's be honest, it's useful in all sorts of other ways - for example, if it wasn't for the environment I'd have nowhere to park my car or dump my old fridge. And finally, without the environment and everything I can plunder from it, I'd have to survive on my doctor's salary alone. Let's face it, no one wants that, do they?

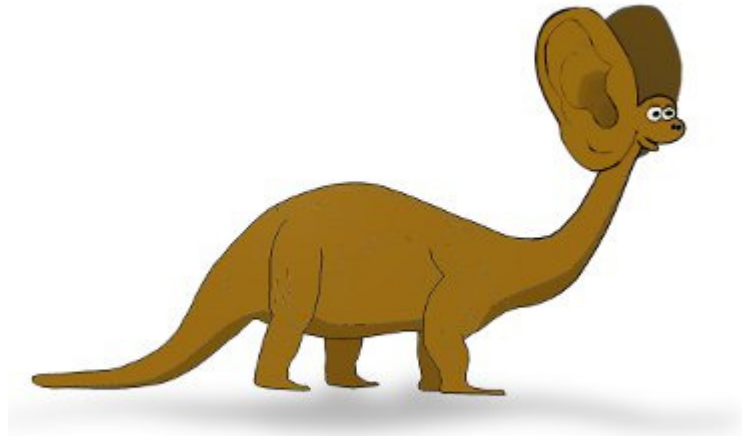
Small Yellow Plastic Fence

English Heritage has responded to recent vandalism at Shopover Castle in North Yorkshire with new security measures. The castle, which was built shortly after the Norman Conquest, was an important stronghold during King John's dispute with the barons. It later played a crucial part in the Wars of the Roses and during the civil war the heavy fortifications presented an impenetrable barrier to the massed ranks of the Roundhead army.

In more recent years it has fallen prey to damage by the many school parties that visit the site, so now the massive ten-foot thick walls that have previously proven invincible to cannonball, flaming oil, battering rams and explosives have finally been saved for future generations by the addition of a small yellow plastic fence.



Excitement at discovery of Big-Eared Dinosaur



A recent discovery by palaeontologists working at a site in Patagonia has significantly increased our knowledge of prehistoric life. Very occasionally, when conditions are right, fossils can reveal the imprints of soft tissues as well as bone. Such was the case with an almost intact specimen of a Brontosaurus found earlier this year, and its discoverers were considerably surprised to find that the animal had quite sizeable ears.

Professor Ernest Cartlidge is particularly excited by the discovery and he painted us a vivid picture of life in the prehistoric age.

"Look at this little guy," he said, pointing to an artist's impression of the dinosaur in question. "He looks a happy little feller, doesn't he? Just goin' about his day, a-munchin and a-crunchin with not a care in the world. Well, this guy, he's what scientists call a 'herbivore'. He doesn't eat meat, old Bronty. No siree! He survives by foraging for nuts and berries.

"Now wait just one God darn a minute, I hear you say. How can a big old critter like that get by on nuts and berries? Why, that's just a load of old hokum, for sure. Well actually, back in prehistoric times, long before you and I were around - long before even your mom and pop were around - everything was way, way bigger. Jurassic nuts were the size of small car - plenty big enough for a hungry dinosaur! Oh yeah!



"But not all dinosaurs were herbivores. Oh no. Some of 'em used to luuurve gobblin' up other dinosaurs and we call these 'carnivores'. Just take a little a looky at this guy. That's Tee-Ranosaurus Rex. He sure looks an ornery feller, don't he? Old Tee-Rexy, well he just can't get enough of that tender loin of Stegosaurus, or a couple of Brachiosaur burgers or even a bucket of crispy coated pterosaur wings. Mmm, yummy - that's some mighty fine eatin'!"

"But, uh oh, wait a minute now. Tee-Rexy's got a problem. Just look at those ginormous feet! Well, he sure looks funny. An' it's bad news for Rexy, 'cos it means that Bronty can hear that big old lumbering bruiser coming from miles away, thanks to those great big ears of his. There's no way that he's going to become a dino-dinner!"

Professor Cartlidge went on to explain why he believes that many other species of dinosaur also had ears, and theorised that this is the main reason they remained dominant for so long.

"Yes sir, a good pair of ears is about the most useful thing that you could possibly have in the animal kingdom. Old Ralphy Rat knows it, when he's a-scurrying and a-scrampering about after scraps. Old Mortimer Mole knows it when he's a-ferreting and a-fidgeting about for worms under the soil. So why not the dinosaurs? And do you know what? The really super-great thing about ears is that they're useful for more than just listening to things. Oh boy! See, it used to get mighty hot back in the old days, what with all the volcanos and the acid rain an' all. So you're gonna need a decent hat and it's only your ears that are gonna to stop it slipping down over your eyes.

"And speaking of eyes, there ain't nothin' worse than a short-sighted dinosaur, a-bumblin' and a-stumblin' around, bumping into trees and rocks and causing all them there earthquakes. But if you got a pair of ears, well now, then you got yourself something to hook your spectacles round.

"But the absolute greatest, most useful and toppermost awesome thing that ever did happen to those ears was that they evolved. See, over time, old Bronty and his chums, they got smaller and smaller and all covered over with feathers until they turned into the birds of today, like chickens and thrushes and parrots and things. And as they did, so those big ol' floppy ears turned into flappy wings. And that's why the birds you see a-peckin' and a-bobbin' about your garden don't have no ears of their own, and why you'll never see a sparrow wearin' glasses."

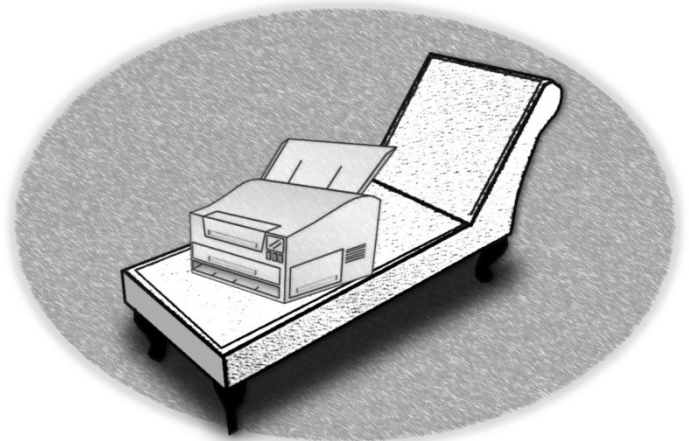
Why your printer doesn't work

A technology company operating out of Stockholm has developed what it believes will be a whole new concept in printer technology. "Most commercially available printers have an inbuilt fear of paper and an inherent antipathy towards ink," says Edvard Persson, CEO of Draugr Technologies. "Ask them to print out a document and they will spend about ten minutes receiving data, another fifteen cleaning the print head, eight minutes telling you to wait for no specified reason and then ultimately they will inform you that the document cannot be printed because there is a paper jam."

"There is no paper jam, of course, but that won't stop the printer repeatedly telling you to clear it. You're then stuck in a stalemate - you obviously cannot clear a non-existent fault, but neither can you cancel the print job, since the machine will steadfastly continue to attempt to perform your instruction in spite of all your attempts to stop it. Short of taking an axe to the thing there is nothing you can do to persuade it to desist. And even then there's no guarantee - reduce the bastard machine to a thousand splintered fragments and each of those pieces will still retain the memory of the task you gave it to perform, even though there was never any intention of actually carrying it out in the first place."

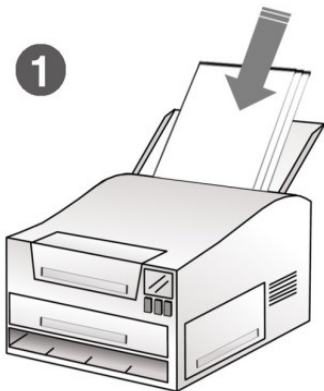
Researchers at the company have spent the last four years trying to resolve the problem and have come to the conclusion that most modern printers are simply unequal to the task of coaxing a 0.342mm thick sheet of material through a roller and simply surrender before they even attempt such a Herculean feat. The plain fact is that, despite all the miracles that modern technology has achieved, no one has worked out how to put a piece of paper in one end of a printer and get it to come out the other without fucking losing it somewhere in the middle.

"It's frustrating," says Persson, "and we feel your pain. We've spent many, many hours shouting, cursing and screaming at equipment, but all to no avail. Turns out that printers are actually quite sensitive souls and react negatively to abuse. We have therefore initiated a programme to help empower our equipment and bolster its confidence. All of our printers undergo many hours of therapy before we release them onto to market, making them better able to cope with the stresses and strains of office and domestic life. By the time it reaches the customer it should be fully adjusted to its role as a printer and able to carry out that function without constantly issuing feeble excuses like the cringingly inadequate, badly designed, woefully engineered, shoddily constructed, criminally overpriced, laughably under-powered, pitifully ramshackle, embarrassingly shabby piece of junk that it really is"



"I think it all started when my mother choked on a paperclip."

Congratulations on purchasing your new Printy Inkbuddy 4000. The Inkbuddy 4000 is the perfect addition to any office, study or dining area and we are confident that its modern design and elegant lines will provide hours of endless pleasure. In the unlikely event that you actually want to use it for printing, we recommend that you observe the following instructions for the best results.



1

Insert paper into feed tray, ensuring that it is aligned with the paper guides, and select print on your PC or device.

Please do not load more than three sheets into the feed tray at any one time as this will confuse the printer and invalidate the warranty.



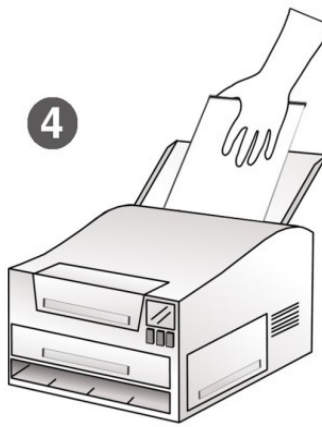
2

Wait for approximately three minutes while nothing happens, then press print again.



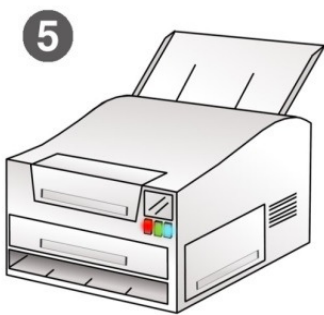
3

Press print two or three more times just for luck. The printer will then suddenly draw two sheets of paper from the feed tray at an angle. These will then immediately become crumpled and jam the machine. Remove paper and start again.



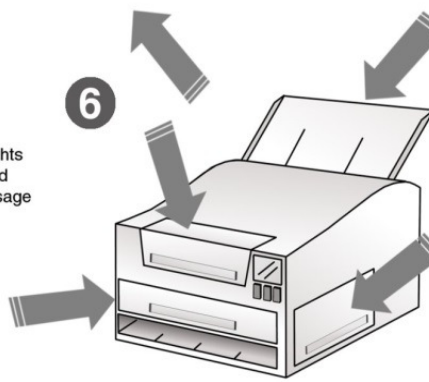
4

This time, put only one sheet into the feed tray, press print and hold onto it as it is fed into the machine to keep it straight. This will ensure that it is drawn smoothly into the printer before becoming entangled in the internal roller and jammed under the print head.



5

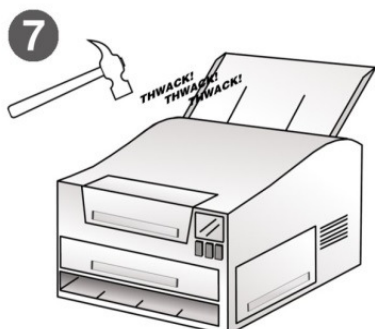
At this point a number of lights will probably be flashing and you may see an error message displayed on the screen. These will be of no help whatsoever.



6

Open the rear access panel and remove any jammed paper. Open the side access panel and remove any jammed paper. Remove the front access panel and remove any jammed paper. You will by now have removed roughly four times as much paper as you fed into the machine in the first place. If the printer is still registering a paper jam error, which it will be, remove the secret access panel and remove the remainder of the paper.

Note: the secret access panel is not present on all models. We are not at liberty to tell you whether it is present on your machine, or where you can find it.



7

If the printer is still registering a jam, apply moderate pressure to the exterior casing. You may find it helpful to issue a series of encouraging statements, expressions of mild frustration or oaths.



8

If the previous steps have failed to yield positive results, you may wish to consider upgrading to the Inkbuddy 5000 which boasts a scanner, dual paper feeds and a slightly longer power cord.

Bad Grandma Grammar

Gud evening. My name is Sir Ronald Wiley and I'm speeking to you today on be half of SWAPS, the Society for People Who are Persecuted for having a Poor Command of English. As you can see, we're not too clever with acronyms either. Hear at SWAPS we reckernise the difficulties that many people have communicating in a world dominated by text massaging, the internet and soshul media. Many of our members find that they are pillowried on message boresds and internet flora because of mispelings, the inappropriate erection of words, or bad grandma.

I'm sorry. Of course, I mean bad grammar. But, let's be honest, that's not to say that bad grandmas don't sometimes play a part.

You see, the trubble is that sum individuals can very quickly loose the respect of their piers if they cannot explode themselves properly using the collect English. Sometimes this is because they get confused about the pacific meenings of simulant sounding words. Sometimes they are unshore about the spellings of particulate long words and resort to improvizashun. And sometimes they just can't be asped.

This isn't necessarily popple's fault. English is a difficult sandwich to master and many popple struggle to make themselves understood when communicating with other popple. Even I do, and I'm very much a popple person. Take for example the apostrofee. The apostraphee is particulate difficult to get the hung of becuss it has a number of diffident uses. For example, many popple apostate plurals when they should really be prostrating contractions and possessive nouns, pronounouns and pronononounouns. This can lean to contusion. Sorry, to confusion. And also - in some cases - to contusion.

Take for example the following sentense: "Marys husbands left his plum's out in the rain." How many husbands does Mary have? And what was left out in the rain? All we know is that it belonged to some plums. Of course, what it should have said was: "Mary's husband's left his plums out in the rain" and we can only speculate what consequence this might have had on they're marriage.

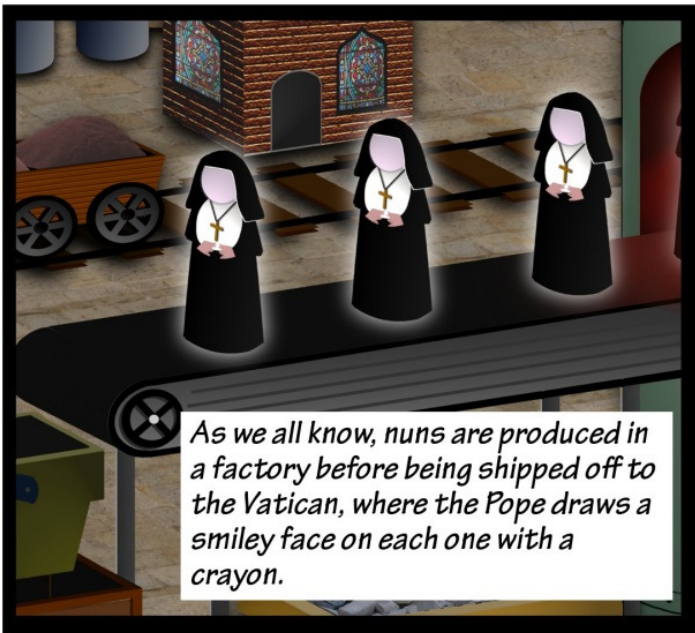
Sorry, that should of read 'on there marriage'.

At SWAPS, are mission is to campaign for a greater misunderstanding of this terrable afflickshun. Wer'e asking popple to be moor intolerant of those popple, less unfortunate than themselves, who are incapable of not understanding... or inderstanding... or even overstanding... what it was that I started talking about in the fost place. In short, we would like popple too bee more forgiving of errers in spooling, punctuashun and grandma. Only then can we enshur that we create a level playing fuel and become a fairy society for all.

Thank Queue.

The Obvious Guide to Standard British Nuns





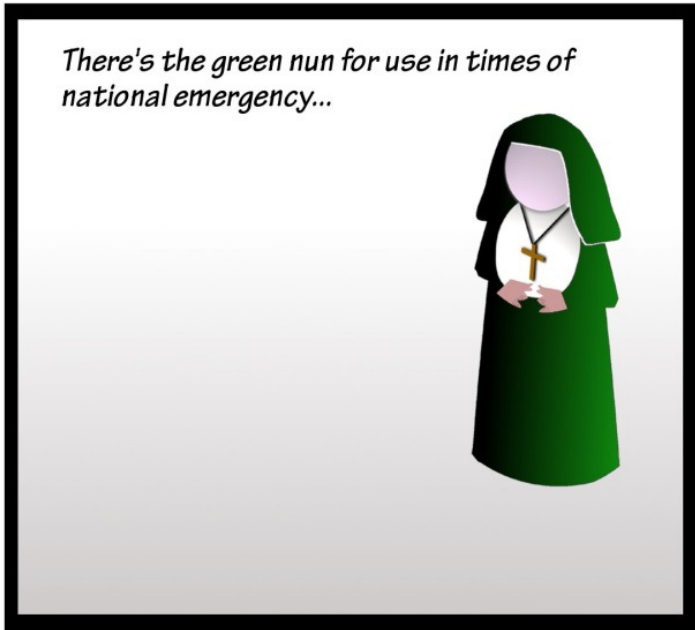
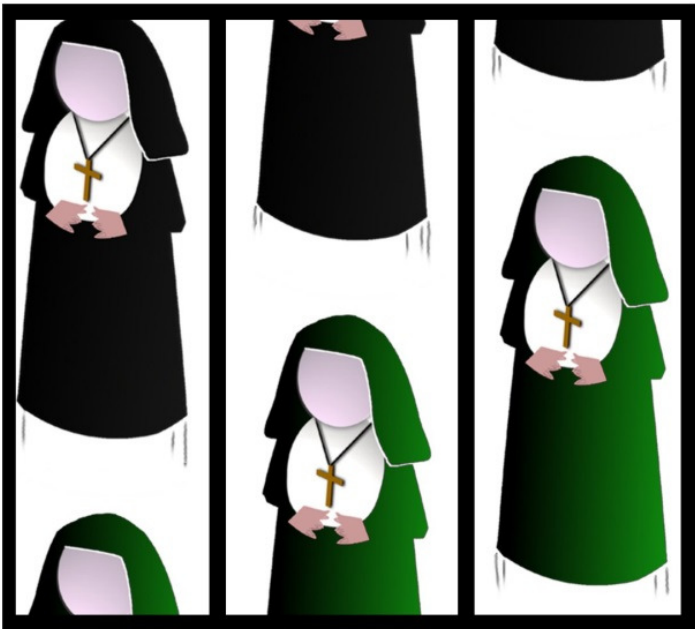
As we all know, nuns are produced in a factory before being shipped off to the Vatican, where the Pope draws a smiley face on each one with a crayon.



But did you know that there are many different types of nun?



Not just your standard 'penguin' jobs



There's the green nun for use in times of national emergency...



These are mostly obsolete now, and have faulty knees and are weak in the head.

Modern grey nuns are specially trained sisters operating in the shadowy world of ecclesiastical counter-espionage.



- Finely tuned combat skills
- Equipped with the latest covert technology
- Trained in nearly six martial arts
- Insured third party fire and theft



If ever you need to take out a bishop, or put the squeeze on an archdeacon, these are the girls for the job.



Then you've got your stealth nun, of course...

Where's the stealth nun? Come on, who's got the stealth nun?

Ah, there she is.



The stealth nun: minimal radar signature and a kick like a mule.

For underwater jobs...



... there's the specially adapted sub-aqua nun.



Powered by cornflakes and rum it can remain submerged for anything up to eighteen hours at a time, thanks to the addition of floatation tanks and a blowhole.



And more recently we've seen the development of the hover-nun...



...and the Intercontinental Ballistic Nun

Sister Ballista, I think she's called.



Anyway, that's nuns for you.



Any questions?

How do you know your heather is lucky?

You've no doubt seen people in the streets selling 'lucky' heather, but have you ever wondered where it comes from and why it's lucky? We did, that's why we tracked down Eric Acre whose company, FrondCo, is the main supplier of lucky heather in Europe.

University of the Bleeding Obvious

Mr Acre, thank you very much for agreeing to talk to us.

Eric Acre

My pleasure, Geoff.

UBO

How did you know my name is Geoff?

Acre

Just a lucky guess.

UBO

Of course. Now, we understand that FrondCo is the wholesale supplier of lucky heather for around 80% of street sellers and has captured almost the entirety of the door-to-door market. Where do you source your lucky heather?

Acre

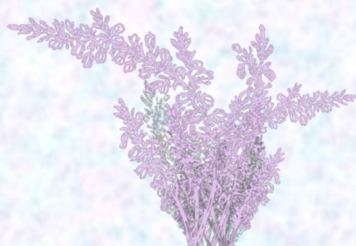
Well, we're based in Yorkshire, right on the edge of the moors. Rather fortunately, there's loads of it up there.

UBO

I see. And how do you know that your heather is actually lucky?

Acre

Well, as I say, we just have to open the back door and scoop it up. How lucky is that?



UBO

Yes, I... Er, let me come at this from another angle. I imagine that not all heather is lucky.

Acre

Isn't it?

UBO

Well, I presume not. I mean, if that was the case people would just be able to go out and collect up any old heather for themselves.

Acre

Oh Christ, yes, I never thought of that. You're quite right, not all heather is lucky. You're probably going to ask me what the difference is between lucky heather and unlucky heather.

UBO

Yes, is it some sort of process or additive?

Acre

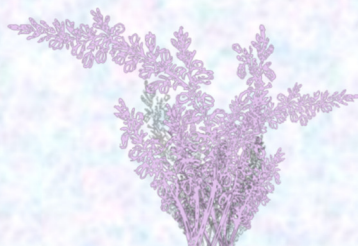
Yes, very good. Some sort of additive. Yes... I mean no. Because, if it was some sort of industrial process you might be able to do that for yourself, of course. No, heather is actually inherently lucky or unlucky and it takes many, many, many years of intense training to be able to sort the good from the bad. It's certainly not something that just anyone can do, oh no.

UBO

I see. Of course, there are some people who say that heather is just heather - it's neither lucky nor unlucky - and that anyone who claims otherwise is merely a charlatan preying on the superstitious ignorance of desperate and vulnerable people.

Acre

There are people who say that, yes. I've heard them say it. Sometimes they say it to my face. They come up to me in restaurants and they say to me 'Anyone who says that heather can be lucky is just a charlatan, preying on the superstitious ignorance of desperate and vulnerable people.' And what I say to those people, generally, is 'Go away and let me finish my soup.'



UBO

You don't accept their viewpoint?

Acre

Not when I'm eating soup. I think it's very rude to interrupt people with your opinions when you are going about the business of eating soup. Consuming soup with any degree of decorum is tricky enough as it is without having to put up with that sort of nonsense.

UBO

Has anybody ever said that to you when you were not eating soup?

Acre

There have been rare occasions when that has happened, yes. At such times I have been able to give their comments my full attention and, after considering their points carefully and sympathetically, I have been able to explain to these people at some length that they don't know what they're talking about.

UBO

The fact remains however that the concept of 'luck' is not something that is accepted scientifically, so the notion that some random sample of plant life could be possessed of this mysterious property is rather difficult to accept.

Acre

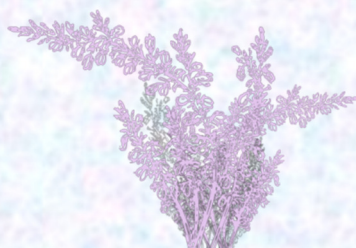
Well, you mentioned science and, of course, science has given us some wonderful things. I myself have recently purchased an automatic bread maker. Do you have one of those?

UBO

No. No, I don't.

Acre

You should get one, they're really rather wonderful. That's a product of science, of course. I was initially under the impression that it made automatic bread and I was rather intrigued to find out what automatic bread was. Turns out that it's the machine which is automatic and what it turns out is regular, common-or-garden manual bread, but it's not any less wonderful for that. I'm sorry, I seem to have lost track of where I was going with this.



UBO

We were talking about the scientific basis for lucky heather.

Acre

Were we? Fascinating. Well science isn't everything. There are more things in heaven and earth that are dreamt of in your philosophy - I believe it was a scientist who wrote that.

UBO

No it wasn't.

Acre

Wasn't it? Oh well, whoever he was, he was clearly a very clever chap. The point is there are some things we just have to accept, even though there is no empirical evidence.

UBO

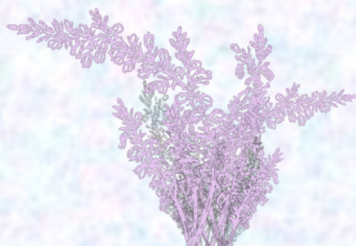
Ah, I'm glad you mentioned evidence, because a joint survey carried out by trading standards agencies across six counties could not find any evidence that people who invest in a sprig of lucky heather are blessed with greater fortune. You are aware of this survey?

Acre

I chanced across it. It's flawed of course. As you mentioned earlier, the concept of 'luck' is difficult to pin down scientifically. How, then, do you measure it?

UBO

By buying a lottery ticket. I think you would agree that if anything could be said to be a reliable indicator of luck it would be winning the lottery. The survey recorded no significant difference between the fortunes of people equipped with a piece of lucky heather and a control group who were not so blessed.



Acre

Well I agree that a cursory glance at this 'evidence', as you rather quaintly term it, might lead you to the conclusion that those people who had trusted to the heather were no better off. But consider what the consequences of winning a large amount of money would be. You would be inundated with begging letters, you would become protective of your wealth, suspicious of family, alienate your friends and ultimately end up isolated and lonely and miserable. It is only by the great good fortune bestowed upon them by the power of the heather that these people avoided such a terrible fate. To use what I believe is a popular expression, they 'dodged a bullet'.

UBO

That's quite an extraordinary defence. I really don't know where to start with that.

Acre

Of course you don't. It's watertight. 'Move on' would be my advice.

UBO

Do you think that kind of reasoning will be accepted by the court? I understand that trading standards are bringing a case against you.

Acre

Yes, it is the case that a case is being brought against me, so to speak. But it concerns a minor labelling issue, that's all. A trifle. I am not concerned by trifles.

UBO

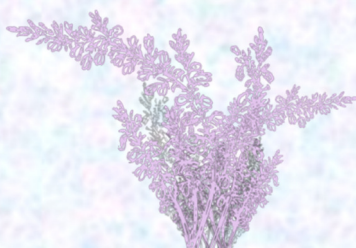
But it's rather curious. Let me see if I've got this right - all your lucky heather has a 'use by date'. Is that correct?

Acre

It is. Everyone's luck runs out some time.

UBO

If you say so. Although the issue seems to be that your customers' luck seems to run out quicker than most. The charge is that the limited shelf life that you give your product has no proper basis and is merely a device to put unfair pressure on your customers to keep buying more.



Acre

Well, there you have it. It's a ridiculous accusation and quite clearly a desperate bid to try and get me on some trumped up technicality. Why these people have taken against me, I really couldn't say. You would think they had better things to do than waste their time on this silliness, wouldn't you?

UBO

So you're confident that you can successfully defend yourself?

Acre

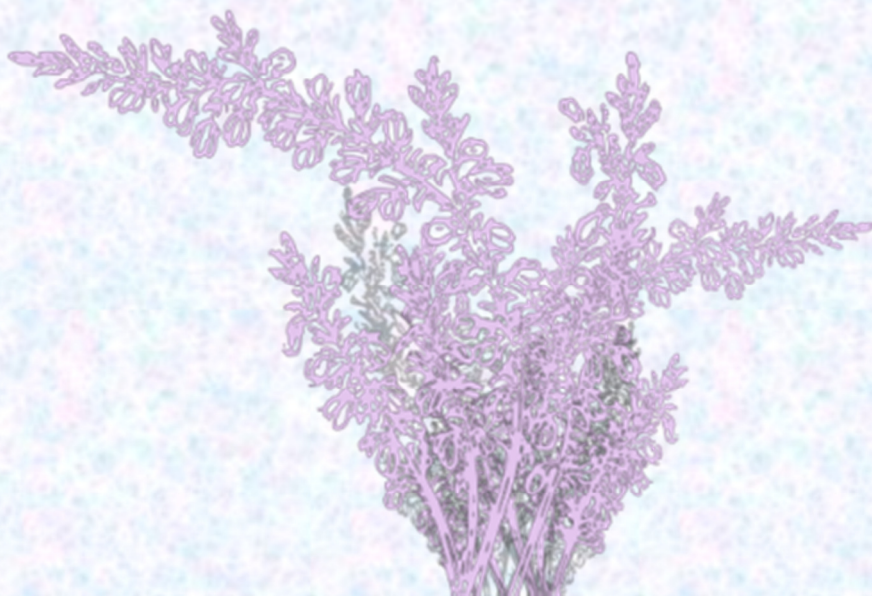
Confident? Yes, yes, I'm confident. Let me put it this way: I've been in this business for over thirty years. We have dominated the market to the extent that in many areas we are the sole supplier and we have access to stockpiles of heather that will last us for the next twenty years. To put it another way, I have all the luck in the world, or very nearly. So yes - I am supremely confident and with good reason.

UBO

Well, thank you for talking to us Mr Acre.

Acre

No problem. Now, go away and let me finish my soup.



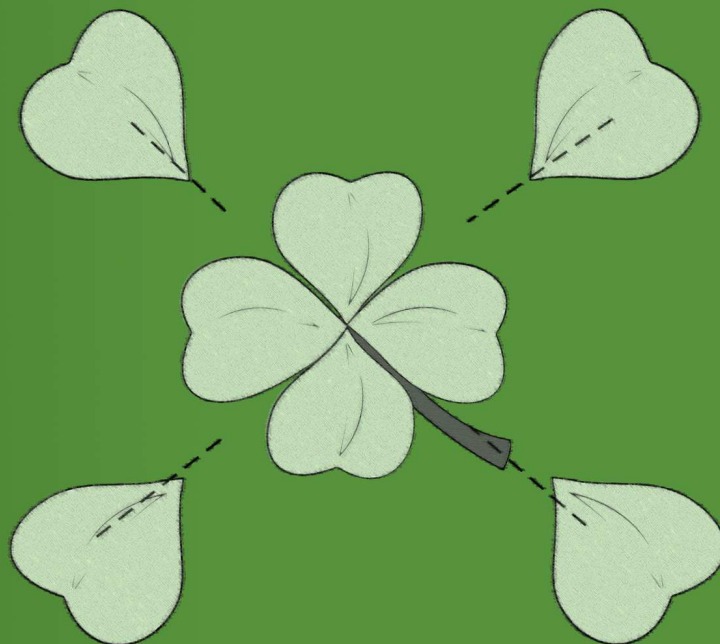
Fascinating new information has emerged about a Cold War CIA programme to harness the power of bad luck. The project was predicated on theories devised at the beginning of the twentieth century by the eminent Polish physicist, mathematician and fortune teller Madame Zuzu the All-Seeing.

Attempting to demonstrate a scientific basis for good luck, she developed a formula which could be used to quantify 'luck' as a property of every object in the universe. Her work was largely ignored at the time but in the sixties it was revisited by American researchers who realised that the equation also pointed to the existence of objects which had 'negative luck'. These objects, they reasoned, could be weaponised and so the search began for unlucky rabbits' feet, unlucky wishbones, unlucky charms and so on. The idea was that these items could be deployed in such a way as to cause calamity and despair amongst the enemy.

Recently declassified documents reveal that in 1963 an unlucky horseshoe was actually presented to Fidel Castro, but failed to have any significant effect other than to cause the Cuban leader to stub his toe. This outcome neatly demonstrated a common problem: although objects with negative luck did indeed exist, their influence was not sufficiently powerful to cause the level of mayhem and dismay that was required.

Plans were drawn up to try and amplify the 'misfortune field' through various means, and there was at least one attempt to splice two unlucky four leaf clovers together and therefore double its power, but this was still a long way from becoming a practical weapon. It was calculated that in order to have any appreciable effect, the clover would need to have at least three and a half thousand leaves. Since this was both a logistical and horticultural impracticality, the project was abandoned.

Project Leaf Fusion
Classification: TOP SECRET
Status: Stupid



Pretty Pictures

New research shows that giving senior managers colouring books significantly improves the performance of the companies they work for.

Typically, most people who reach the upper echelons of the corporate pyramid have very little to do with the day-to-day business of the organisation. However, this doesn't mean that they won't try to stick their oar in; and in doing so they usually demonstrate an extraordinary capacity to fuck things up for the people who do the actual work.

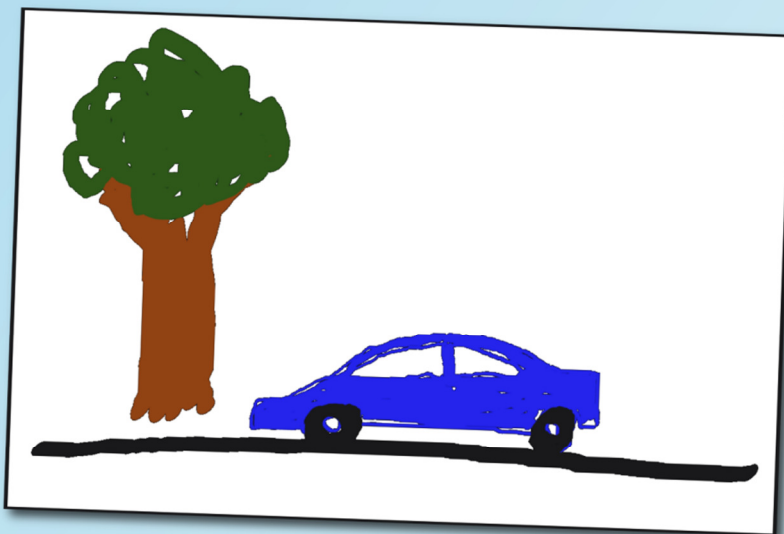
In many cases managers will content themselves with tidying up or rearranging the furniture - trivial interventions which nevertheless provide them with the sensation that they are exercising their authority and contributing to the enterprise as a whole. As such, they never become more than a mild irritant and are generally very easily managed. The problems come when someone who is nominally 'in charge' exceeds their capabilities and starts messing around with something important in a foolish

attempt to try and run the company. Policies are changed for no reason, targets and deadlines become wildly unrealistic and legal obligations are cast aside in favour of legislation that the manager has just made up on the spot. This sort of behaviour inevitably has a devastating impact on efficiency, staff morale and customer confidence.

But researchers at Oxford think they may have found a



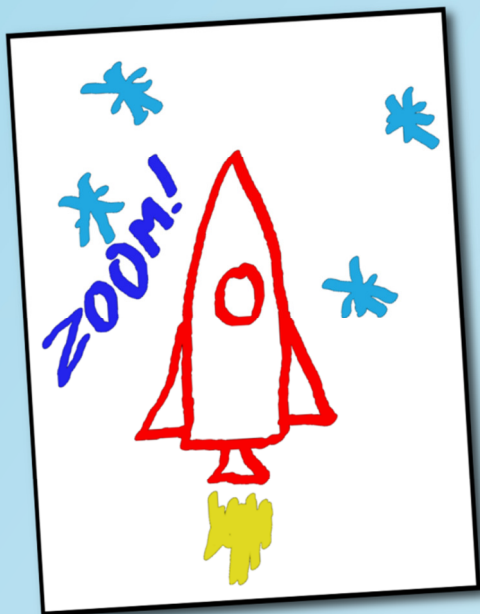
My House by Colin Jefferies, Senior Account Manager at Frobisher Corporate Solutions



The Bestest Car by Terry Francombe, Chief Officer, Dobbins of Doncaster

solution. They took a selection of senior managers and tried giving them complex puzzles to solve, such as crosswords, logic problems and Sudoku. The thinking behind this was that these activities would provide a welcome diversion, satisfying a need in these high-performing individuals to exercise their phenomenal problem-solving and organisational skills. Disappointingly, most of the test group found them too difficult, flung them across the room then stormed off to annoy an underling.

Nevertheless, the research team persisted, experimenting with a wide range of pastimes and tasks. It was when they gave the managers coloured pencils, felt tips and a pile of colouring books that they started to see some encouraging results. These simple distractions kept the test group amused for hours, ensuring that they were far too preoccupied to wander off and interfere with something that actually mattered.



The team have now developed a special management kit containing crayons, poster paints, glue and glitter. This is already being used in several major companies, where it is issued to staff in senior positions, who are then encouraged to find a quiet corner and try not to bother anyone. Significant improvements in productivity and efficiency have already been made and the Oxford team is so pleased with the results that they are working on an expanded version incorporating potato printing and Play-Doh for use with senior figures in government.

Space Rocket by Karen Baker, Head of Acquisitions
at Scallion, Popchurch, Whipple and Spurt

So you've got a new manager?

Getting a new manager is a magical time for everyone involved. There's a brand new addition to your corporate family, so it's only to be expected that there will be much excitement and interest. But there's also a great deal of responsibility involved. New managers are not just for special occasions. They're going to be part of your company for life - or at least until the end of their probation period - and they're going to need a great deal of care and attention. To help you on your way, here are five things you need to know about looking after your new manager.



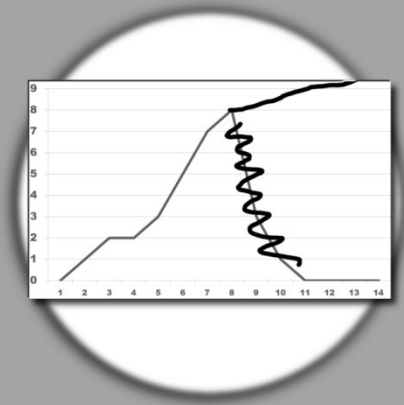
Anyone coming into a new environment is likely to feel out of place and isolated, and your new manager is no different. The first thing it will try to do is make its mark on its new territory. You may find that it will start by moving things around for no good reason - office furniture, display stands, storage areas on so on. This will give it a false sense of control over its new environment. It's all perfectly natural and nothing to worry about, and as time goes by you should find that things gradually revert to the way they were.



Managers are creatures of routine and anything that upsets their established patterns can become frightening and confusing for them. A new workplace with new procedures, rules and regulations can therefore be a daunting prospect and they will avoid placing themselves in situations which force them to adapt or think for themselves. You may find that they will impose their own procedures and rules, many of which will be unnecessary and nonsensical, and this can be frustrating when they supplant tried and tested practices which existed for a reason. Once again, this is all part of the process of acclimatisation and with a little patience and understanding you will soon find your workplace operating properly again.



There may be occasions where your new manager seems restless, unresponsive or irritable. It could be that they lack stimulation, and if this is the case then you might try encouraging them to design new forms or notices for the workplace. Managers like nothing better than spending a day drawing up a flowchart which tells you how to answer the phone or an illustrated guide showing you how to sit on a chair. A few badly punctuated signs distributed around staff areas can make your manager feel like it's making an important and worthwhile contribution to your business, and can really help to lift its mood.



One of the things that surprises many people when they get a new manager is just how creative it can be. We've already seen how keen they are to invent new policies, procedures and processes, but it doesn't end there. They are also wonderfully imaginative when it comes to inventing sales figures, client outcomes and other performance data. It's easy to interpret this as a feeble attempt to deceive, either to enhance their reputation or, more commonly, to disguise their own inadequacy. But this is not the case. It's simply the means by which they express their innovative genius, a quality which should be nurtured and encouraged at every opportunity.



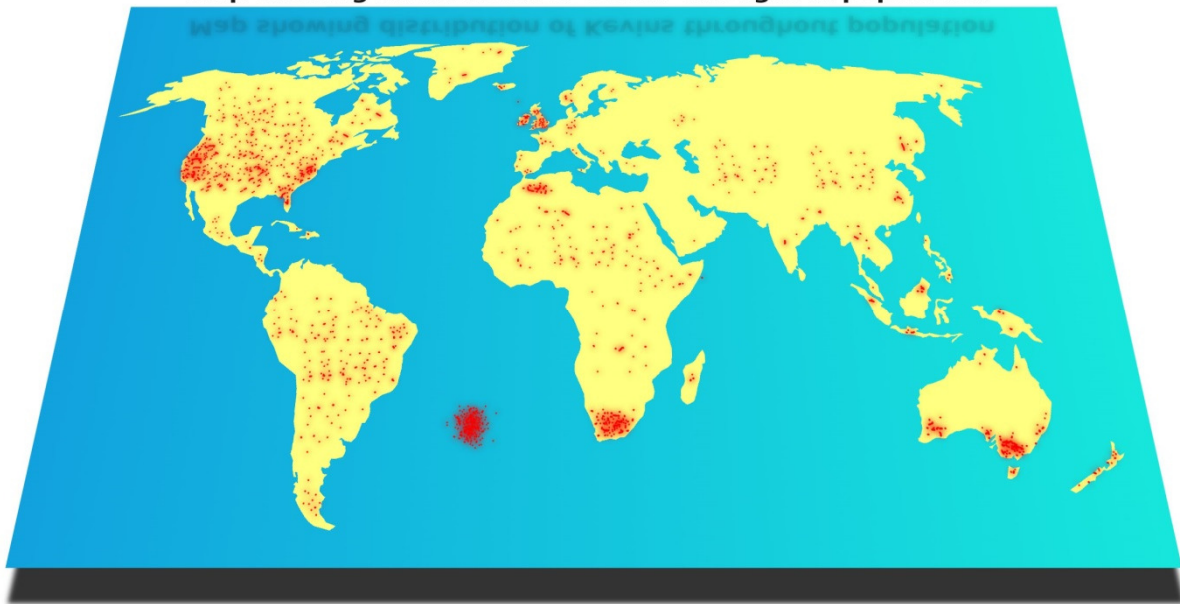
And finally, your new manager is going to give you hour upon hour of pleasure but it's worth remembering that managers are not like the rest of us. Despite your care, your attention and your encouragement you will likely find that it may at times seem distant, cold and unappreciative. It will not return your affection, acknowledge the help you have provided or behave in a socially acceptable way. You may even find that it chews the furniture, attacks visitors or howls uncontrollably when left unattended. But if you're patient, if you treat it with understanding, if you make allowances for its quirks and get to know its habits, you'll find that it soon settles down, becomes a useful member of the team and stops sitting in your in tray.

Geoff Geoffreys is thrilled to announce that he has invented the Geoffscope, a revolutionary new device capable of pinpointing the location of people called 'Geoff' down to the nearest centimetre, wherever they may be on the planet.

"For too long Geoff's have been ignored by society, cast aside and denied the opportunity to glory in their essential Geoffness," Geoff told us. "Now at last we have the means to reach out and touch Geoff's who until now may have felt isolated and alone. We can encourage them to cherish their Geoffosity with pride, and empower them to confront Geoffism wherever it may be. Together we can build a true Geoffocracy where Geoff's can at last enjoy the respect and recognition that they truly deserve."

Initial trials of Geoff's Geoffscope have produced mixed results, with the latest test run yielding just two Barrys and a Simon. "We may still have some way to go," Geoff admitted.

Map showing distribution of Geoff's throughout population



Note anomalous South Atlantic Cluster

MICROSOFT WARNS OF HAUNTING

BY OUR TECHNOLOGY CORRESPONDENT,
DAISY BLINKS

Microsoft has issued a warning that some copies of its latest operating system, Windows 10, may be haunted. A number of users have complained that some routines are troubled by the ghost of an eighteenth century highwayman. Although the company is playing down what they have termed the 'supernatural injection of malevolent data', industry insiders are saying that the haunted code is responsible for synching computers with external devices. Potentially this could lead to the ghostly highwayman taking control of your monitor and holding your printer to ransom.

This is not the first time that Microsoft products have been infected with paranormal entities. Early editions of Office were mistakenly packaged with a poltergeist which would periodically steal your documents and hide them in the system folder. And it is well known that some unpatched versions of Outlook are cursed.

Nevertheless, Microsoft is confident that this latest setback can be dealt with promptly. "We have our top ghostbusting team on it," said a spokesman. "Our head exorcist has made some progress already. He has managed to trap the restless and troublesome spirit in an isolated test PC and shortly intends to banish it to the neverworld by turning the machine off and back on again."

Energy crisis hits local man

"I just can't seem to get up in the mornings," says Gary Flange. "To be honest, that's the main reason I'm still local. I don't really have the energy to go anywhere else."

Gary has long suspected that there was more to his problem than just idleness and, after reading a recent article about the likelihood of power outages, he's now convinced.

"They said there could be an energy crisis this winter," he tells us. "I said to the wife, it's here already! I'm constantly knackered and am confined to the sofa

most of the time. It's all I can do to get up and make a sandwich. The report talked about blackouts and, let me tell you, I've had my fair share of them. Usually after I've been on the Newcastle Brown but, it's like I keep telling my doctor, I have to drink it to keep my strength up."

To be fair, the report Mr Flange refers to talks of possible electricity supply problems arising from an increase in demand and the closure of a number of power stations. It didn't really indicate a general lethargy sweeping the country. When we put this to Mr Flange he replies cautiously.

"Well," he says. "You talk about 'increased demand'. You talk about 'power stations'. You talk about... what was that other thing you talked about? Yeah, something about sweeping legacies in the country. Well, whatever. All I know is that I haven't felt the same since our Karen's birthday do, so there's certainly something going on."

"I don't know whether I've picked up a bug, had a dodgy kebab or whether this is something to do with that fracking that everybody's talking about. All I know is I'm bushed and I reckon that I should be sent on holiday on the National Health. Now, if you don't mind, Judge Rinder's on and I need to go and have a lie down. Bye."

Man names crab in divorce proceedings

by staff reporter

Petitioning for divorce in Shepton Bassett County Court yesterday, Mr Graham Pendulum named Snaps McKinley, a crab from Great Yarmouth, as the party involved in an adulterous affair with his estranged wife.

"She's always had this thing about seafood," Mr Pendulum told the magistrate. "For as long as I can remember there have been strange winkles and mussels sniffing

around, and many's the time I've come home early from work to find the house smelling of lobsters."

Mrs Pendulum strenuously denied the implication that she had ever been profligate with molluscs but nevertheless admitted the affair, explaining that she had been driven to seek comfort in the arms of a licentious and manipulative crustacean by her husband's unreasonable attitude towards clams.

She also asked for several other shellfish to be taken into consideration.

Extreme Dinosaurs

Currently showing on The Discovery Channel, the new ten-part documentary series *Extreme Dinosaurs* is proving to be something of a tour-de-force, combining the very latest palaeontological research with state-of-the-art computer generated animation techniques. It is already an incredible success, drawing record audiences around the world. Nevertheless, it has come under fire from a number of respected experts in the field, who claim that the makers have sacrificed accepted academic thinking about prehistoric animals for the sake of sensationalism.

We invited the show's producer, Jerry 'Mack' McIntyre to comment on these criticisms.

The University of the Bleeding Obvious: Mr McIntyre, The Discovery Channel has spent a great deal of money on this series and, if the ratings are anything to go by, it seems that it was money well spent. All the same, it must be quite disappointing that your efforts have not been recognised by the academic community.

Mack: It is quite frustrating, yes. Certainly, this is a commercial enterprise and we are out to appeal to as many people as possible. But it's not just about entertainment: our aim – our 'mission statement' if you like – is to educate and inform. With *Extreme Dinosaurs* we feel we are doing just that.

UBO: One criticism that has been levelled at you is that the depiction of these animals is based largely on supposition. Do you feel that you are the victims of academic snobbery?

Mack: I think there's something in that, yes. We have put a great deal of work into getting everything authentic. It has involved five years of intensive detective work. After all, there's only so much you can learn from a pile of fossilised bones, but by drawing in experts from many different fields we can piece the whole picture together. We can examine fossilised teeth to determine diet, we can learn about their environment from studying the rock strata, and we can look at their modern-day descendants for clues to their behaviour. Yes, there is a certain amount of supposition involved, but then in science there is always an element of guesswork. I think that as a result of our researches, we can be reasonably confident we're right when we say that the brontosaurus spent much of its time in damp, secluded swamplands, or that the tyrannosaurus hunted mostly at night,

UBO: Or that the stegosaurus was a keen water-skier?

Mack: Exactly. Recent research has indicated that the stegosaurus was equally at home on land or water, so it's reasonable to assume that it would have been quite an accomplished water-skier.

UBO: It is quite a leap of logic though, isn't it? It's not surprising that it's attracted so much criticism. I must say, I was quite astounded when I first saw the clip of a group of stegosauruses lounging around in the sun and catching a few waves before wandering up to the beach bars.

Mack: Well that's the majesty and wonder of nature for you. Breathtaking, isn't it?

UBO: Well all right, what about the allosaurus then?

Mack: Ah yes, the allosaurus. One of the largest carnivores this planet has ever produced. A huge, vicious, terrifying predator. One of my personal favourites.

UBO: But is there any actual evidence that they were into hang-gliding?

Mack: There's no evidence that they weren't.

UBO: That's not what I asked.

Mack: Look here, we've had some top notch scientific types on this - people with letters after their names. They've spent the best years of their lives studying this stuff. They've attended digs, examined artefacts and ... and, well, done a lot of very complicated scientific stuff. And let me tell you - they've unearthed some pretty compelling evidence.

UBO: They've actually discovered the fossilised remains of prehistoric hang-gliders?

Mack: No, of course not. Don't be bloody stupid! They've discovered a lot of rocks.

UBO: Rocks?

Mack: Yeah, and the really astonishing thing is that when we look at modern hang-gliders today, we find that there are nearly always rocks in the vicinity. So it's reasonable to assume that the reverse is true - that where we find prehistoric rocks, we can also expect to find prehistoric hang-gliders. Surely that's a reasonable conclusion to draw? Don't answer that, the question was rhetorical.

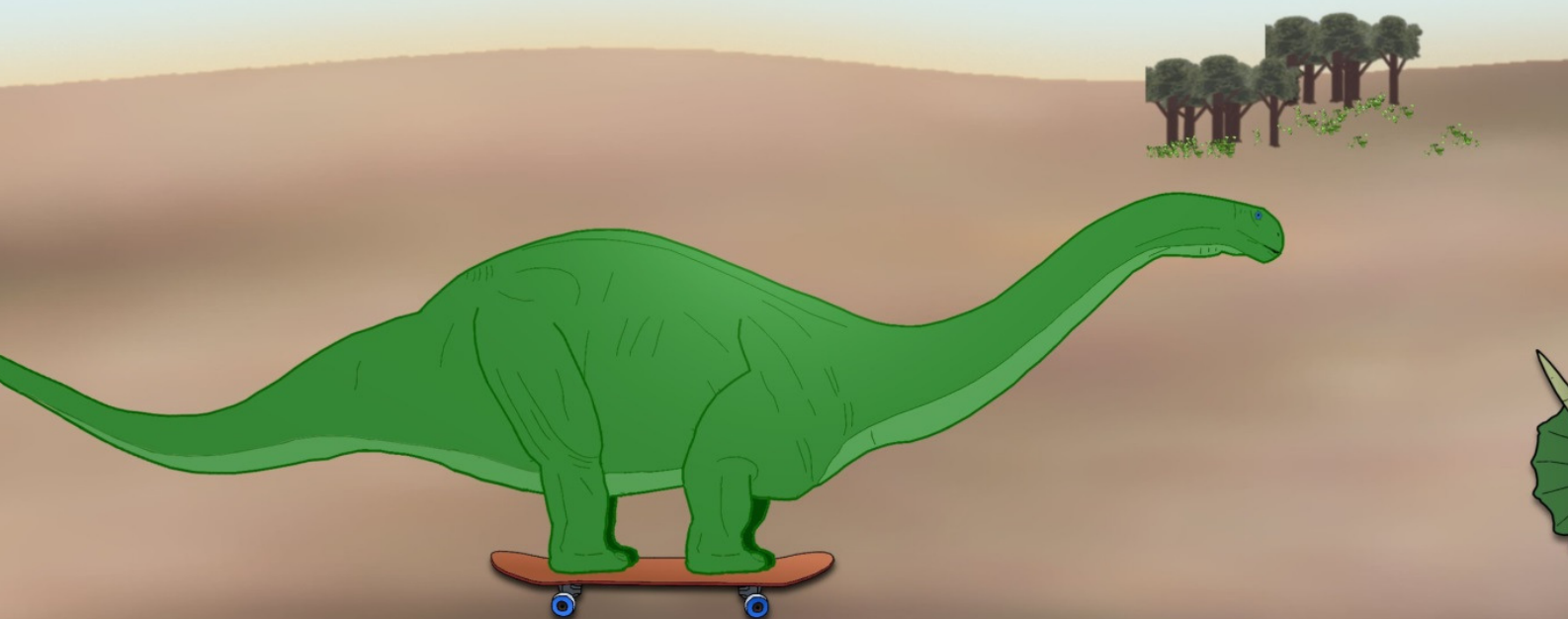
UBO: Very well, I suppose you've got equally compelling evidence that sabre-toothed tigers rode motorbikes?

Mack: Ah well, this of course is common knowledge. It has been accepted as fact since 1956 when cave paintings were discovered in France, depicting a sabre-toothed tiger popping a wheelie to the amazement and delight of a crowd of lady sabre-toothed tigers. The sequence in our programme is based on that very painting, and the bike is authentically constructed from the materials available at the time - mostly rocks, bamboo, vulcanised coconuts and foam rubber, which scientists believe was in abundance during the Cambrian period.

UBO: And the leather jacket?

Mack: Artistic licence.

And it would seem that artistic licence has been employed throughout much of the series. Look forward to future episodes featuring a skateboarding diplodocus, a parascending brachiosaurus and a plesiosaur called Dennis who holds the world drag-racing record. And we've just learned that The Discovery Channel is so pleased with the series that they have commissioned a sequel. *Extreme Dinosaur Detectives* will feature a gang of crime fighting velociraptors who use their special ninja powers to save dinosaurs in distress.



Extreme Dinosaurs



Mondays
7pm

only on The Discovery
Channel



CABLE ROT

Experts warn of new cable virus. Christian Pyle reports on the latest internet security scare

Experts have identified a worrying new generation of computer viruses that can lie dormant in Ethernet cables for many years. The discovery means that many of us will have to seriously reconsider how we use computer hardware.

"The virus can remain inert for decades and is reanimated once it is brought into contact with electrical equipment," said Bob Trojan of internet security firm Oops Corp. "Any kind of electrical equipment will bring it out of hibernation. For instance, we've even seen it become active when brought into the close proximity of a toaster, although obviously it's not likely to do much damage beyond ruining the odd breakfast. But when plugged into a computer it has the potential to deliver a crippling payload."

The company has so far only encountered the virus in Ethernet cables, but they cannot yet rule out the possibility of it being carried by other leads such as power cords and monitor connections. Indeed, under laboratory conditions they were able to infect a piece of twine with the virus, although this is of limited concern since only a handful of PCs manufactured in the last ten years rely on string to any great extent.

"There really is very little danger as long as people act sensibly," said Mr Trojan. "Be careful, be aware of the signs and, for heaven's sake, if your monitor appears blurry, your disc drive is full of mucus or your mouse develops a cough, seek expert help immediately."

Minimising the Risk of Cable Infection

- Never share cables. This is the surest way for the infection to spread from machine to machine.
- Always empty cables when you've finished with them. Data residues will remain in an Ethernet cable even after the device has been switched off, and this can harbour the virus. To empty the cable, start at one end and wind into a tight coil. This will squeeze the unwanted data out of the other end.
- Sterilise your cable. Specialist products are available for this, but any household sterilising fluid will do the job. However, to be absolutely certain that your cable is clean, it should be boiled for at least two hours prior to use.
- Avoid old or damaged cables. Bare wires and cracked insulation could present an easy way for the virus to get in. And if your cable is blotchy, pockmarked or covered in weeping sores, then this is a sure sign that it is infected.

Yet Another Letter from Mrs Womble

Once again we find ourselves the unintended recipients of a missive from the formidable Mrs Edna Womble. This time there seems to have been a mix up over a talent show.

Dear Mr Cowell

I hope this letter finds you well, although I have to tell you that as I write I am far from happy myself. My problem concerns a series of unfortunate events which took place at an audition for your top TV programme, Britain's Got Talented Singers. I have to say we were all quite excited to learn that your show was coming to our neck of the woods, particularly since our family is blessed with someone whose abilities as an entertainer are renowned in our neighbourhood. Indeed, his fame extends as far as the local laundromat, where he can frequently be found exhibiting himself to the passing public on a Friday night, after the youth club has finished.

I speak, of course, of my nephew and it was with no little pride that last Tuesday I escorted him along to your chosen venue, the Assembly Rooms in Market Street. Obviously, I had phoned ahead to let you know that he was on his way. I was unable to speak to you personally - I appreciate that you must have been busy doing your hair or choosing trousers or something. Instead I got through to someone called 'reception', which I assume is a code word for your personal assistant. This gentlemen responded to my instructions with a series of grunts which at the time I assumed signalled his understanding. But oh no, clearly not.

On arrival it became horribly apparent that we were not expected and rather than being whisked through the VIP entrance we were instead invited to queue up with all the other 'hopefuls'. What followed was a four hour wait in the company of various persons of somewhat questionable abilities: pale, pimply youths clutching guitars, middle-aged crooners in sweat-stained satin shirts, teenage girls with too little clothing and too much makeup, fat jugglers, shabby conjurors, annoying children and a gentlemen not too many years short of eighty who did something frightful with three balloons and a

tin of furniture polish. Had my nephew not been the consummate professional that he is, this experience may very well have unsettled him. As it is, we are prepared to accept that this was down to a breakdown in communications and trust that it will not be repeated when he is a star.

Having endured these diverse indignities, it eventually came down to our turn and we were led through to the performance 'space', as I believe you showbiz people like to call it. Naturally, I accompanied my nephew, despite the advice of a bony young girl with a clipboard who tried to persuade me otherwise.

I have to say, it's not at all like it is on the telly, is it? For a start, there was no stage, as such - just a small room with a grotty brown carpet and wonky looking furniture. No lights, no curtains, no set and no Ant and Dec. I suppose you put all that on afterwards using CGI, yes? Anyway, there the three of you were, sat in front of us. I don't know which one was you - you all look very different in real life, don't you? Obviously you weren't the young woman who was constantly on the phone - although I noted that my nephew was quite taken by her, if his dreamy-eyed expression was anything to go by. And I don't think you were the balding man in the Iron Maiden t-shirt, eating crisps. So I guess you were the bored-looking elderly fellow, picking his nose.

Anyway, following a preliminary chat you invited my nephew to begin. I, of course, am no stranger to his work, but I have to be honest and say that I believe this was the finest performance that he had ever given. If I might jog your memory, his act consists of whistling a medley of songs by the composer and broadcaster Mr Howard Goodall, famous for many TV sitcom theme tunes. Beginning with the theme from Red Dwarf, the routine then explores a choral riff from The Vicar of Dibley, before proceeding to audience favourite Blackadder then finally bowing out with the jingle from the Moonpig.com advert. I don't believe that this last piece is actually one of Mr Goodall's

compositions, but it provides a suitable finale to the set and always brings the house down when my nephew does it at the miners' welfare on Saturday nights. I stood up and applauded loudly, as I'm sure you remember. Or perhaps you don't, since you were evidently unmoved by the performance and far more absorbed in what you had recently excavated from your left nostril as you waved us away with a mumbled 'no thank you' and called for the next act.

Oh Mr Cowell! Would you have treated Unglebert Humperkink in such a fashion? Would you have waved Keith Harris and Orville away without so much as a by-your-leave? Can you not see star quality when it is paraded in front of your very eyes? I was shocked to the point of speechlessness by your rejection and such was my rage that I could do nothing but storm out of the room, returning only to collect my nephew who was trying to attract your young colleague's attention by licking her face - an action which did little to divert her from the phone conversation which continued to hold her attention throughout.

Time has passed, my anger is diminished and I am prepared to overlook this snub as a misunderstanding. I hope that you too have had time to reconsider and have seen that there is indeed a place within the current showbiz pantheon for a young man who can whistle television theme tunes non-stop for up to twelve minutes. I await the opportunity to discuss the details of his contract at your earliest opportunity.

Yours Sincerely

Mrs Edna Womble

What is soil made of?

Fig 12b: Soil Composition

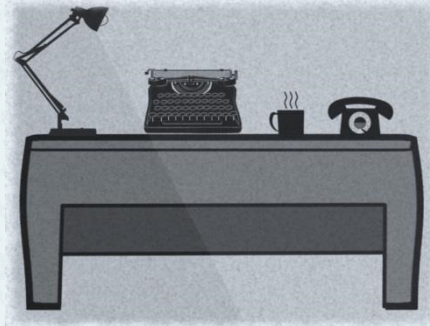


If mountains are made of rocks and oceans are made of rain, what is soil made of? That's the question posed by Dr Leonard Skynard at the Center for Clandestine Fumbling in Reykjavik and after five years of intense study he now has the answer.

"Soil is made out of mud," he told us. "Actually, we found this out by accident after somebody spilt their Fanta and contaminated a sample. The instant that it became wet the soil turned to mud. We were then able to reverse this process with a Bunsen burner, conclusively proving that soil is just dried mud. As a side note I'd like to add that wood is probably made of sawdust, but this is something we need to investigate further before we can make an official announcement."

We asked Dr Skynard if he had anything else to tell us about this extraordinary discovery. "Don't think so," he said.

And now a guest article from award-winning blogger, lifestyle expert and bestselling self-published author, Maisy Donnington. This article first appeared in International Socket Set Digest in June 2009 and is reprinted here by kind permission of the man who stands on the roundabout in Telford town centre screaming the word 'antelope' at passing buses.



Maisy Donnington Writes...

Office Safety

Hello There

Maisy Donnington here with some more wit and wisdom to help you get through your day. So here's a question for you - what's in front of you at the moment? If you're reading this at home then you're probably sat at a desk piled high with paper, dormant coffee cups, half-eaten sandwiches, discarded soup tins, old prams and assorted rubble. In short, not the sort of setting that facilitates a productive day!

As a writer, I understand how important it is to create a clean and tidy workspace. A cluttered desktop is not only a distraction but can also be a health and safety risk. I learned this the hard way some time ago when I reached out for my cup of coffee and put my hand through my desk fan. Luckily, all that ensued was the bruising of several fingers and the spillage of a hot beverage, but it was nevertheless something of a shock and I had to go and lie on the sofa for an hour and eat custard creams. It was all the more traumatic coming so soon after a similar incident, in which I got my nose caught in a cross-cut shredder while hunting in a drawer for paperclips. On that occasion I found myself unable to function for the rest of the day and it took two packets of Hobnobs and a bar of Dairy Milk before I calmed down. And I never did find those paperclips.

Ever since, I have striven to maintain an orderly, uncluttered office. These days, before I sit down to write, I take a few brief moments just to prepare my 'space', as I like to call it. Starting with my chair, I ensure that it is in an upright position and at a comfortable distance from my desk. Too far away and I overextend myself and am likely to fall off. Too close and I run the risk of crushing my chocolate digestives, which I always like to have on hand in case I get peckish mid-paragraph. I used to have a swivel chair on casters which, quite frankly, was just asking for trouble. Not only would I frequently find myself facing the wrong direction, significantly interrupting my workflow, but more often than not would spend far too much time sliding randomly around the room, ricocheting from the walls and furniture.

It was after one particularly frenetic writing session - in which I shot out of the room, juddered down the stairs and ended up in the street, sitting behind a milk float at the traffic lights - that I decided that something needed to be done. These days my chair is firmly bolted to the floor and I strap myself in for that extra bit of security. So far these measures have been largely successful and I have only fallen out once.

Of course, my preparations don't end there. The determined writer can still significantly damage herself if she is prepared to put in the effort. A misdirected pencil can easily hook out an eyeball, a keyboard can cause concussion when swung with enough enthusiasm, and there is a reason that we writers commonly refer to the humble office stapler as the 'death-bringer'. Even paper cuts should not be taken lightly - it's ludicrously easy to lose a limb if you mess around with the business end of a sheet of white vellum, as my friend 'Pegleg' Peter O'Pendlesham will tell you. I try to avoid anything weighty or with a sharp edge. Bubblewrap is the writer's friend for those items that it is particularly difficult to do without, such as a phone or monitor, and I have also invested in a sponge desk. I certainly don't have scissors lying about. Not any more. I'm still getting the searing headaches.

Writing is a dangerous business - or at least, it is the way I do it. I've been in this game long enough to have witnessed some very real casualties: the kind of literary injuries and clerical misdemeanours that no one should have to contend with. So my message to any young writers starting out is simply this - be careful out there. The pen is indeed mightier than the sword, so before you start wielding it you'd better learn how to use it. Either that, or use a crayon instead.

The Museum of Found Noises

The Museum of Found Noises is a new venture opening in Salisbury this month. Funded by a Lottery grant, it's the brainchild of Graham Dali, a lifelong collector of random, unusual and unexpected sounds.

"We're constantly surrounded by unwanted and unintended noises," Graham explained. "The irritating whine of drill, the backfiring of a car, the tinny overspill from a fellow commuter's headphones or the involuntary grunt we find ourselves emitting when we bend down to pick something up. These sounds are unloved, unappreciated and are often perceived as a source of irritation. But they have a particular beauty all of their own and my mission is to help people appreciate the hidden splendour and poetry of these discarded gems."

Visitors to the museum will be able to wander through several galleries containing a wide range of aural exhibits - everything from dogs barking and creaking floorboards to aircraft noises and the distant slamming of car doors late at night. There will also be an exhibition of unidentified shrieks and whistles and a special 'quiet room' where people will be able to hear a pin drop.

But not everyone has welcomed the announcement and several residents have already raised objections. "We can do without this," said Karen Nimby, whose house backs onto the museum site. "We are already home to the National Smell Museum and for the last four years we've played host to the International Wind and Rain Expo. The last thing we need right now is this racket."

Mr Dali nevertheless remains confident that he can overcome any opposition. "People really have very little to worry about," he said. "The whole building has been especially soundproofed to prevent any of the exhibits escaping, we use vibration-damping materials on all surfaces and the gift shop has been fitted with a silencer. They won't even know we're here."



Hear and Now

The listings site for collectors of rare and unusual noises

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Are you ready for

The Drivelling

That was the tag line of one of the most infamous films to come out of Hammer studios. Infamous not for its content but for the chaotic circumstances of its production.

In 1972, at a time when the glory days of Hammer were long behind it, the studio found that it had a surprise hit on its hands in the shape of low-budget gothic horror thriller *The Dribbling*. Keen to cash in, Hammer quickly began production on *The Drivelling*, an all-star sequel, but it could not have foreseen the problems that would ensue.

The film managed to chew up and spit out five different directors before principal photography had even begun. Graeme Carter had been hit by a falling piano just a week after he was hired, and although he survived the incident it

was subsequently felt that the accident had left him too short to properly command the respect of the crew.

Second choice, Albert Parks, father of acclaimed independent director Quentin Parks, left the project to direct an award-winning series of frozen pea commercials. The studio then turned to Colin Smith, a director of international repute who had been mentored by Federico Fellini. Sadly they got the wrong Colin Smith and had to let him go when they found out that he was a delivery driver for a bakery in Chelmsford.

Happily, they finally managed to get hold of the *right* Colin Smith, but tensions quickly arose and the temperamental director ultimately stormed off the production claiming

that he could no longer work with his own shadow.

The movie's fifth director, Geoff Geoffreys, lasted an impressive three days before he was struck by the same piano that had taken out Graeme Carter. When the studio finally chose Max Tranter to see the project through, they issued him with a crash helmet - a decision which was both tax-deductible and instrumental in ensuring his continued involvement.

The plot of the film is fundamentally a rerun of the first. Lonely traveller Ralph Bates chances upon an isolated manor house and inadvertently stumbles upon the machinations of the evil Dr Congo Barsham, played by Peter Cushing. All pretty standard stuff, although the movie is notable for including a lengthy shopping trip, a visit to a launderette and an extensive scene in which our hero calls upon his sister who talks at some length about her varicose veins.

For many years it was thought that this was a brave attempt to ground the film with commonplace scenes of everyday life, although an alternative explanation has recently come to light. It seems that screenwriter Marvyn P Murcheson had inadvertently submitted the wrong typescript, sending in a 'to do' list instead of the finished draft. Director Tranter had already been shooting for a week before this was discovered and decided that it would be expedient to

include these scenes in the final movie rather than starting over from scratch.

As if script difficulties and falling pianos were not enough of a headache, Tranter also had problems with his cast. Peter Cushing spends most of his time on screen with his back to the camera. Being such a likeable and amiable person, nobody had the heart to tell him that he was facing the wrong way.

Oliver Reed was less problematic, but only because he wasn't there. Although he appears on the bill, Reed does not actually appear in the film as he was stuck in traffic for the entirety of the shoot. Even so, this did not prevent him from being nominated for a BAFTA.

And famously, Harry H Corbett had a very public falling out with Vincent Dimucci over a parking space, thereafter refusing to shoot any scenes with him. This was particularly difficult since Vincent Dimucci was a large purple hippopotamus which existed purely in Corbett's imagination and Corbett was forever calling a halt to filming claiming that the objectionable animal was in shot.

The film was roundly panned on its release but, as is the fate of most tawdry, pedestrian and unimaginative dross, it has since gained the status of cult classic. Next month sees its first release on DVD and Blu-ray, so expect to see it in supermarket bargain bins very soon.

FROM THE PEOPLE WHO BROUGHT YOU 'THE DRIBBLING'

The Drivelling

*You've never
seen drivell
like it...*

PETER CUSHING OLIVER REED MADELINE SMITH PATRICK ALLEN
RALPH BATES HARRY H CORBETT PETER SALLIS and INGRID PIT

a HAMMER FILM production

The Art of Backpedalling

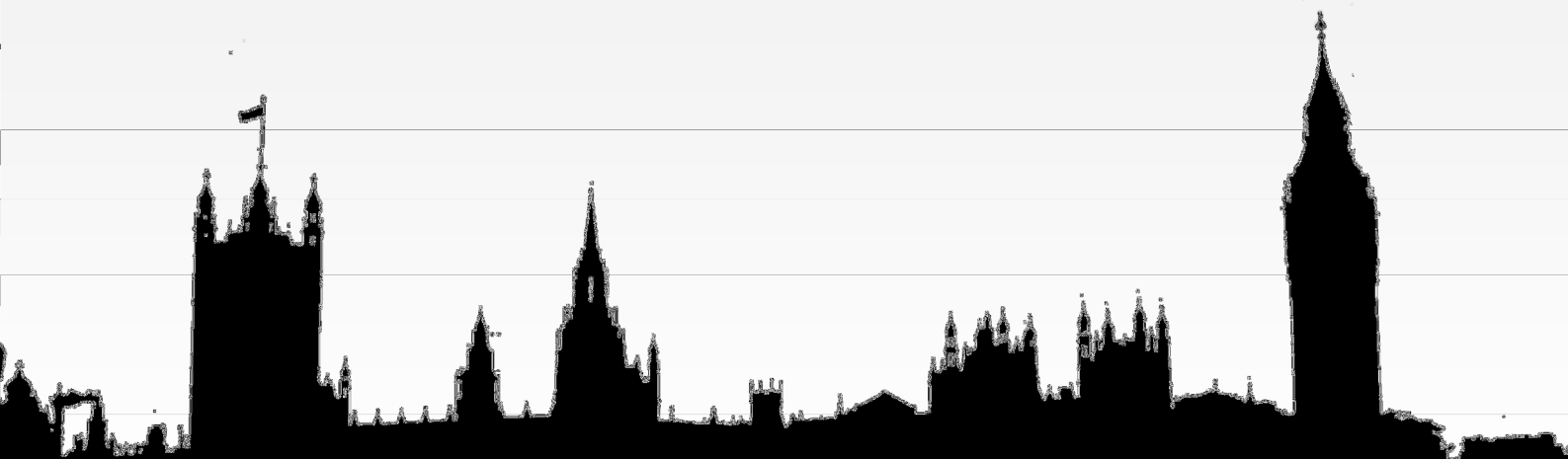
Government Minister Rick Boils has been forced to apologise for suggesting that using unemployed people as ballast for the new HS2 project was 'inhuman'. HS2, or High Speed 2, is the name given to a new high speed rail connection between London and somewhere grim and rainy in the north. With a planned completion date of the second Wednesday in June 2032, the scheme is a major undertaking and it had been suggested that using unemployed people as ballast on the trackbed would be one way of keeping down the costs.

Reaction to the idea has been mixed, ranging from cautious expressions of interest and enquiries about pension packages, to wholehearted enthusiasm for the opportunity of involvement in such an exciting and progressive enhancement to the country's transport infrastructure.

Unions, on the other hand, have slammed the scheme, claiming that being ground up into small lumps and strewn along a hundred miles of railway line is both an appalling waste of skilled workers and a contravention of the Working Time Directive.

Mr Boils initially appeared to support the Unions' view and was reported to have denounced the plan as 'monstrous, inhuman and morally repugnant'. It appears that he has now changed his mind.

"Using unemployed workers is an essential part of our reforms to end the something-for-nothing culture," the spineless time-server said in his most recent statement, which he was at pains to stress was not made as a result of being told to keep his fat mouth shut and stay on message by party bosses. "I am a strong supporter of the scheme in both in principle and practice. Those who *can* work *should* work. And those who can lie down in the middle of a railway track and let trains run over them should stop being so selfish and be grateful that've finally found an occupation that gets them out into the open air."





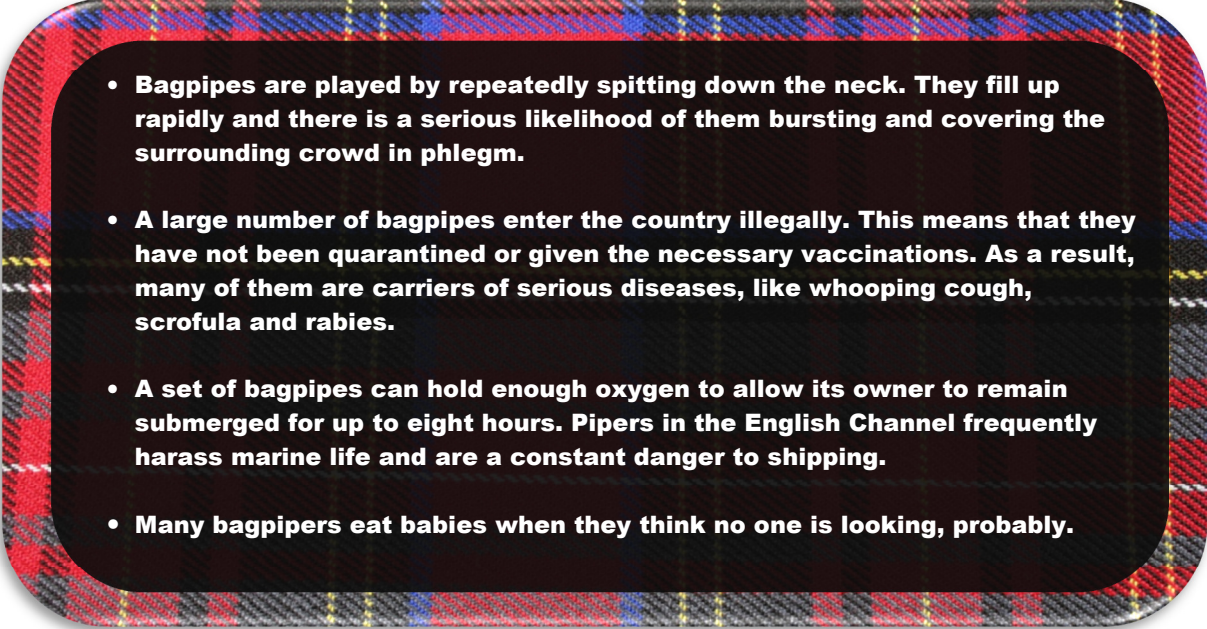
Bagpipes - The Tartan Menace

Hello, I'm Roland Trotsky. I'm forty-eight, I live in St Ives and I've got a pet hamster called Nigel - but that's enough of the biographical chit-chat. Let's talk about bagpipes - more specifically, let's talk about how we're going to get them off our streets.

You may have noticed, perhaps while out shopping in your local high street, certain tartan-flavoured people soliciting money in return for blowing into an instrument that resembles a bag of spanners with a series of vacuum cleaner attachments sticking out of it. Firstly, these people are usually not Scottish. Secondly, although bagpipes are commonly described as a 'musical instrument', I'll be damned if I can think of anything less musical than the toneless, spleen-rending whine produced by one of these accursed things. Have you ever heard a tune being played on one? ...Yes? ...Liar! A tune has rhythm, it has structure, it has... it has... well, it has a tune. The only sound you will ever hear emanating from your average bag of pipes is a depressing, droning, monotonous groan, which beats irritatingly on your eardrums for five and half minutes then just suddenly stops for no apparent reason.

Not that I have a problem with them stopping - I find the sudden cessation of their godawful racket a blessed relief. I have a problem with them being allowed to start in the first place. Who told these tuneless irritants that they're welcome in our shopping malls and town centres? Where do they come from? Is there a minibus that deploys them at strategic locations early on a Saturday morning, and do they meet up afterwards for a debriefing in which they discuss how many old ladies they've scared out of their wits, and how many children have been reduced to tears?

Imagine what would happen if I decided to put on a skirt and stand on a street corner, blowing into a bag of offal and wailing uncontrollably. I'll tell you what would happen - I'd be dragged around the back of the newsagent's by the filth and given a swift kicking, that's what. Yet these tartan terrors can get away with it in the name of 'culture'. And here are a few other things you may not know about bagpipes:

- 
- **Bagpipes are played by repeatedly spitting down the neck. They fill up rapidly and there is a serious likelihood of them bursting and covering the surrounding crowd in phlegm.**
 - **A large number of bagpipes enter the country illegally. This means that they have not been quarantined or given the necessary vaccinations. As a result, many of them are carriers of serious diseases, like whooping cough, scrofula and rabies.**
 - **A set of bagpipes can hold enough oxygen to allow its owner to remain submerged for up to eight hours. Pipers in the English Channel frequently harass marine life and are a constant danger to shipping.**
 - **Many bagpipers eat babies when they think no one is looking, probably.**

Puts a different complexion on it, doesn't it? At this point you're probably asking yourself why such a dangerous piece of kit is allowed to be paraded around our streets, unlicensed and unchecked. This question becomes all the more pertinent when you consider the history of the instrument. When the Jacobites came marching down from the Highlands during the eighteenth century, it was the pipers who were sent in first to scare the doings out of the English. And it worked. The English quite rightly thought that whoever was capable of wringing such a dreadful, tortured squeal out of anything - be it living or dead - was clearly somebody to be reckoned with. Of course, as soon as the Redcoats developed earplugs the Highlanders were sunk but, even so, whenever an English soldier happened to glance up and see that dreadful tartan sack he was struck with mortal fear.

So a set of bagpipes is actually a weapon, and a pretty devastating one at that, which is why they must be stopped before someone gets hurt. To that end I am spearheading a campaign to get these nasty and malicious instruments of torture decommissioned. If you'd like to join the battle to keep this unholy racket off our streets, write to us at the following address:

We Want to Stop These Damn Bagpipes
112 Tartan Avenue
Sao Paulo

And then, once every last one of the blasted things has been destroyed, we're going to make a start on banjos.

~~How to Kill a Bagpipes~~
~~How to Kill some Bagpipes~~
~~How to Kill a Bag of Pipes~~
ah...

Bagpipes: How to Kill Them

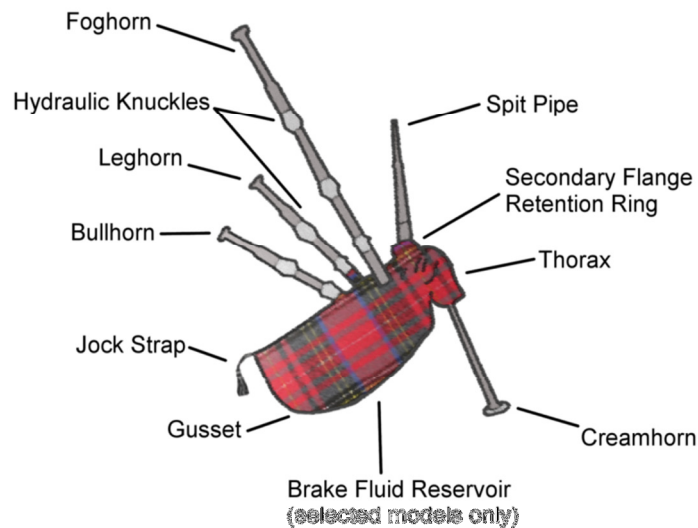
You know, it's all very well lobbying for legislation to remove bagpipes from our streets, but there's nothing quite like taking the law into your own hands.

Hello, I'm Major General Linus Barmy-Phipps, and this is very much my department. During my time in the army I learnt how to deal with some of the most dangerous instruments known to modern warfare. It isn't easy to deal with an enraged violinist, or disarm a loaded xylophone, but if you keep your wits about you and you understand exactly what your enemy is capable of, then there's every chance that you will pull through unscathed.



I remember once, when I was in India, I was set upon by some young ruffian wielding a semi-automatic saxophone. He thought he had me cornered, but I kept my nerve and managed to wrest it from the fellow's grip by grabbing hold of the bell with both hands and giving it a sharp tug. Of course, I took instruction from Field Marshall Montgomery himself, who - it is widely rumoured - single-handedly defeated a whole platoon of Nazi trombonists during the North Africa Campaign.

No one would expect an ordinary civilian to tackle dangerous military instruments like that, but there are steps you can take to deal with nuisance bagpipers, should the opportunity arise. That's why we have prepared this handy guide to demonstrate their weak spots and point out the five quickest and most effective ways of disabling the instrument:



Parking (7am-7pm Mon-Sat) →

- **Puncture the sack.** Using a sharp object to slice open the sack will cause the instrument to rapidly deflate and will put it out of action for at least twenty-four hours
- **Block the Pipes.** Obstructing the pipes with a potato or similar object prevents the instrument from venting, and allows noxious gasses to build up.
- **Use a barrel organ.** The barrel organ is the natural predator of the bagpipe. In the wild, a fully grown adult barrel organ can bring down a set of bagpipes in two minutes flat.
- **Snap the spit pipe.** A sharp blow to the spit pipe will paralyse it for life.
- **Turn it over.** Bagpipes have been carefully designed to cause as much destruction as possible, but they have one major flaw: once they're on their back, they cannot right themselves. So just flip it over and watch the bugger struggle.

Remember, a set of bagpipes may seem like a fearsome adversary, but the truth is that it's probably more frightened of you than you are of it. So next time you're out and about and you see one of these scoundrels disturbing the peace with his heathen wailing, just stay calm, remember your duty and slit his sack. It may not make the world a better place, but at least it will make it quieter.

UK Government to Sell North Sea?

Documents have emerged which suggest that in the 1980s the UK Government was considering selling off its stake in the North Sea. The United Kingdom has owned a 12 mile strip of the sea bordering its coast since George III won it in a poker game in 1798. Initially very pleased with his new acquisition, the mad monarch spent many a happy hour paddling in the shallows, before finally becoming bored and gifting it to the nation.

Not that the nation particularly wanted it - most people felt that they already had quite enough water as it was and they had no use for any more of the stuff. It was too salty to drink, too wet to burn and anybody venturing into it for recreational purposes usually found that they were rapidly chased out again by stropky prawns. It was only with the discovery of oil and gas deposits that the North Sea began to have any value, but by 1982 there were concerns that dwindling reserves would soon put an end to this bounty.

Various schemes were put forward at that time, including turning it into a giant ice rink, filling it with Alka Seltzer to create a National Jacuzzi, and painting it green and calling it 'Arthur'. In the end a wealthy buyer was found in the Middle East who was interested in shipping it out to Saudi Arabia and using it to wash his fleet of Rolls Royces. The deal ultimately fell through following objections from Norway who feared that once the UK chunk of sea was removed, their bit would fall into the gap left behind.

Nevertheless, it has emerged that a sale is once more being considered - rumour has it that a private consortium in Central America has expressed an interest in using it to build an extension to the Gulf of Mexico.

Professor Jez Moonbeam, amateur inventor, friend of the planet and originator of the quick-release emergency gusset, treats us to a cautionary parable of ecological catastrophe.

A Whale Story

by Jez Moonbeam



Once upon a time there was a whale called Bill. I started with 'Once upon a time' because it has a traditional, homely feel to it, and I've called the whale Bill because, to my mind, Bill is a 'whaley' sort of name. Anyway, that's not really important. What is important is that one day Bill got really pissed off with being harpooned and generally given a hard time.

"I'm really pissed off with being harpooned and generally given a hard time," he said. (You've got to imagine him saying it in a whaley sort of a voice. Just go with me on this one, okay. It'll be good, promise.) "So anyway, I'm really pissed off with it all," Bill says. "It gives me the real hump. I think I'll go down the pub for a drink."

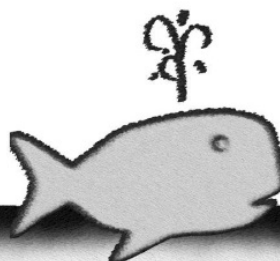
So off Bill goes down the pub. You're going to have to use your imagination a bit here, because I don't think whales go down to the pub all that much. I've never seen one, anyway, and we get a pretty cosmopolitan bunch down at my local. No, they probably just stay in all night and watch the telly. Yeah, probably. I should think that after a hard day splashing about and, um, filter feeding they're more inclined to want to put their flippers up and munch away on a packet of chocolate digestives than go out on the lash. Probably wouldn't be allowed in anyway.

But this is beside the point. Just imagine for the sake of it that Bill the Whale goes down to the pub where he meets up with some of his mates. "Flippin' heck," he says as he sips his pint of Guinness. "I'm really fed up with these humans keep taking pot shots at me, and everything."

"Cor blimey mate," says one of his friends, who is trying to construct a pyramid out of soggy beer mats. "Me too, and no mistake."

Bill the whale just sighs and gives a shrug. "I should say so," he mutters. "But what can we do about it?"

Right about then, a passing squid who had just put some money in the juke box overheard them. "You're a right load of thick bastards," it said in a friendly and cute sort of way.



"You're gonna get a flipper sandwich if you talk to me like that again," one of the whales said.

"It occurs to me," the squid continued, undaunted, "that seeing as how you are really very big and tough, and humans are very small and brittle, it would be very easy for you to eat them."

"Bloody hell!" exclaimed Bill. "I hadn't thought of that. We can eat them!"

"What a fantastic idea!" the rest of the whales exclaimed.

But there was one dissenter, a young whale called Jez. "Eat them?" he questioned as he nervously pushed his glasses up the bridge of his nose. "Oh, I'm not so sure about that." You see, Jez was really quite a smart young whale. He realised that there were sound ecological reasons why whales shouldn't eat humans, and he was not afraid of making his feelings known.

"I think you need to consider this very carefully," he said. "You're upsetting the balance of nature, and some real bad stuff is bound to happen. Eating humans - why, the very thought of it! I know that I'm certainly not going to be putting one of those disgusting things in my mouth. No thank you, sir - I think I'll stick to plankton."

"Yeah, well you're just a big nerd," said the other whales, and they all tipped their beer glasses over his head. But as Jez sat there, the froth sliding down his cheeks and the thunderous rhythm of Hawkwind's *Silver Machine* blasting out of the jukebox, he knew that no good would come of this. No good at all...

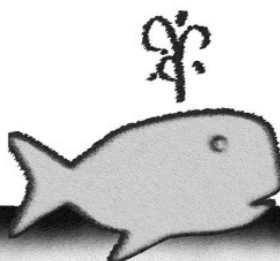
Well, although Jez sensibly decided to remain a planktonarian, the others were soon munching away on human beings by the shipload and they rapidly developed quite a taste for the little fellows. The whales became fatter and fatter and the humans became fewer and fewer. Soon none of the humans would dare to venture out upon the ocean and so the whales had to feed off the ones who lived on land, who were slightly crunchier.

It was tricky at first but they soon mastered a technique of luring people into the sea by casting out long lines baited with money and cake and things. The human race proved to be overwhelmingly gullible and fell for this trick time after time. Soon the whales were munching away on whole nations.

Then, one evening after a particularly hectic day of slaughtering and dismembering, Bill the whale felt like a drink.

"I feel like a drink," said Bill. There you go, told you so. Anyway, Bill got himself down the pub where he met up with his mates.

"Hullo Bill," they said to him. "You've put on a bit of weight."



"So have you," Bill said to his mates. "It must be all these humans we're eating."

A passing squid who had just been playing on the pool table said, "I told you it was a good idea, fatso."

It would have said more, but it was eaten by one of the whales. "I always like a bit of squid for afters," explained the offending mammal. This comment made them all feel hungry so they ordered some fried human and sat down to eat.

"Well this is terrible," said Jez. He was, after all, a whale of principals and had stuck to his guns throughout this whole affair. "Eating humans - my word! I really don't like it one bit."

"Well just have the chips then," Bill told him.

"No, I mean I don't agree with the principal," Jez corrected him as he unzipped his jacket to reveal his 'Save the Human' T-shirt. "I don't think we should go on hunting and killing them. They're an endangered species. The sea-faring ones have already died out completely and there can't be many of the others left. I urge you, fellow whales, show compassion before they disappear completely."

Well the whales thought about this for a while, then one of them said, "Well we don't have to kill them. We could just suck their heads."

"No lads," said Bill, holding up a flipper. Clearly the full magnitude of the problem was beginning to dawn on him. "I think we ought to seriously consider this."

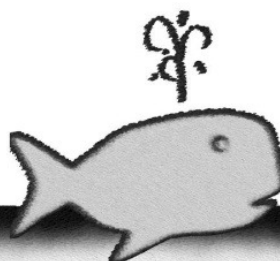
So the whales huddled together - as far as it's possible for three hundred tons of blubber to huddle together - and they discussed the matter in low voices. Jez waited anxiously, knowing that the future of the planet's delicate ecosystem hung in the balance. Seconds passed, then minutes. The sweat began to bead on Jez's forehead. Would all the weeks of sit-down protests, marches and leafleting campaigns have been in vain?

Then, at last, the whales reached their conclusion and emerged from their scrum. "Well we've thought about it," Bill said. "And we recognise that the humans are in great danger of extinction, so we've decided to turn it all in."

"That's great!" Jez said, feeling elated at his victory. "A triumph for common sense! So, you'll not be killing any more humans then?"

"Certainly not," said Bill. "No, siree. There's absolutely, positively no chance of us ever doing that again. No way, never..."

Bill sat back and crossed his flippers. "Except for scientific purposes, of course," he added, and then ordered another plate of people-burgers.



Mrs Womble Writes Again

Again we find ourselves the unintended recipients of a letter from Mrs Edna Womble. This time she writes to her local bus company.

Dear A-Plus Bus Company Ltd

It gives me no great pleasure to write this letter of complaint following the shocking abuse recently directed at me by the driver of the 42A to Grosvenor Road. The callous disregard and deplorable unprofessionalism with which she refused my perfectly reasonable desire to disembark at my requested stop was hardly mitigated by her shallow excuses that I'd 'got on the wrong bus' and that 'this bus doesn't go to Maybourne Avenue'.

Allow me to apprise you of the circumstances of this outrage. I was in town to buy a new hat for a forthcoming family gathering, the precise details of which should not presently concern you. Suffice it to say that a great deal rested on making a successful purchase as I had no intention of being outdone by cousin Kaitlyn again, like I had been at our Susie's christening.

As if these concerns weren't pressing enough, I also had my nephew in tow, a gifted young man prone to being easily diverted by shiny objects, moving vehicles and generously proportioned women.

It's no wonder, therefore, that I was sufficiently preoccupied with these various distractions to allow my concentration to slip long enough to board the wrong bus. Upon realising my mistake, some fifteen minutes later, I naturally asked the driver to make a minor detour - no more than four or five miles - and this was when my troubles began.

The driver refused. I don't know her name - she had a badge with a number on it, but quite honestly it's enough of an ordeal for me to remember the many passwords, pin numbers and log-ins that seemed to be a constant requirement of everyday life, so I'll be blowed if I'm going to start committing your staff to memory as well. Let's just say that she was a fat blonde woman with a lazy eye, a blotchy complexion and a cruel mouth, which I'm sure is more than sufficient detail for you to work it out for yourselves.

Anyway, she is obviously someone who revels in being spiteful and callous, as her behaviour towards me clearly demonstrated. She persisted in clinging to the tired defence that she couldn't deviate from her route because it would 'inconvenience the other passengers' - a dubious claim which I immediately put to the test by asking loudly if anyone minded a minor variation to our journey. Happily, it emerged that they had no objections whatsoever, if their embarrassed silence was anything to go by.

Nevertheless, your driver - whom I shall henceforth refer to as 'that stropky cow' was unmoved by this touching exhibition of solidarity. By now I was livid. The blood was pounding through my head and there was a ringing in my ears that just wouldn't go away - mainly because it was occasioned by my nephew repeatedly pressing the stop button. This was not a disruptive act, I might add, rather a natural expression of his unique musical talent - but it was, nonetheless, getting on my wick, so I demanded that the driver stop the vehicle and let us off immediately.

My final act as I stood at the roadside was to express my dismay at her conduct and avow that I would never set foot on her bus again. And then, pausing only to step briefly back aboard to collect my nephew who was swinging from the handholds like a monkey, I stormed off in a huff.

While I am sure that you have every intention of making the appropriate reparation, you should know that by this time I was over six miles away from my house. I feel that this should be taken into consideration when calculating my compensation. Thank you.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Edna Womble

Could you spare just half an hour each day to befriend a lonely parrot?

Most of us know what it's like to feel isolated, but did you realise that nearly one million parrots regularly go an entire month without speaking to anyone?

Here at Feathered Friends we try to alleviate the problem of parrot loneliness through our befriending service.

Confusion and Anxiety

Shockingly, more than half of all parrots kept as pets have nothing but a mirror, a ladder and a little bell for company. Some owners will leave the television on at full blast but this often leads to further distress. Broadcast media is largely unknown in the parrot's natural habitat, wherever that is, and daytime television can lead to confusion, anxiety and a tendency to sign up for short-term loans.

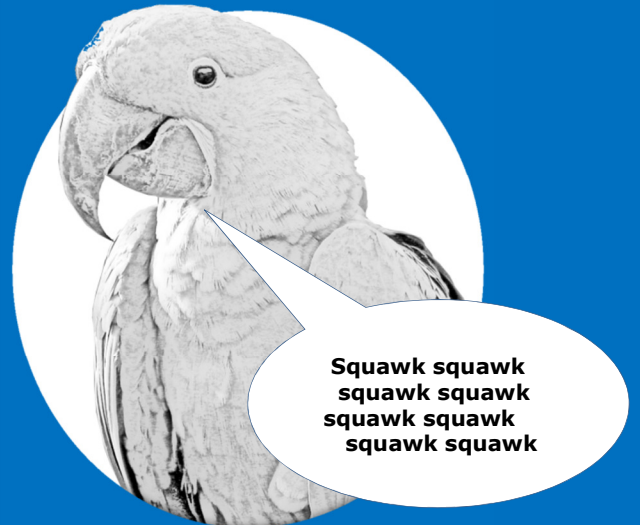
In more extreme cases parrots deprived of companionship can suffer wing rot, chapped beak and desaturation. This last condition involves the gradual breakdown of pigments in the birds' colourful plumage, eventually turning them completely black and white.

Friendly Contact

But it doesn't have to be that way. All it takes is a little bit of friendly contact; just someone to spend a few minutes each day exchanging gossip, poking a piece of cuttlefish through the bars or asking them if they're a pretty boy.

For parrots like Joey, a three-year-old macaw from Sheffield, that kind of thing can make all the difference. "Squawk squawk squawk," he told us. "Squawk squawk squawk squawk squawk squawk squawk squawk squawk squawk squawk."

Sobering words, but it's not only Joey who feels that way. This is why every year hundreds of people like you give up their time to help parrots in peril to lead more fulfilled, more secure and more colourful lives.



Call now to find out how you can help



Incorporating Talking Turkey, Peacock Pals and Chicken Chums

Conservatory Plans Spark Nimby Outrage

by Millicent Dali

Controversy surrounds the decision to grant planning permission to a new conservatory in the West Midlands. The proposed structure has three levels, a cinema, a food court, a floor space of 150,000 square metres and two car parks.

Large scale changes to the surrounding road layout, evidence of a significant volume of commercial activity, an extensive advertising campaign and the fact that the complex is four and a half miles from the building to which it's supposed to be attached have led some people to the conclusion that this is a retail development and not actually a conservatory at all.

Responding to these criticisms, local planning officer Sally Hod nevertheless

maintained that the application had been considered extremely thoroughly. "It's unusual, certainly," she explained. "Not many conservatories have escalators, for example. But we're quite confident that there's nothing improper about this application. Our experts have examined the plans very carefully, and it clearly says 'conservatory' at the top."

CADETS INJURED IN PILLOW OUTRAGE

The US Military has responded promptly following an incident in which 24 cadets were injured when a pillow-fighting exercise went badly wrong. Hand-to-hand combat using soft furnishings forms part of basic training for all military personnel, along with non-lethal Chinese burns and strategic hopscotch. Usually the training sessions pass without major incident but on this occasion the pillowcases had been loaded with 'live' pillows at the last moment, in what senior officers believe was a deliberate act.

"These were clearly enemy pillows designed to cause maximum damage and distress," said Loooooootenant Hyrum P Hackenthackerbacker. "We believe that this was the vanguard of a wave of terrorist bedding directed at our country by the enemies of freedom. Well, I have a message for all those who oppose the American way of life: we're still here, we're still proud and it will take more than a bunch of goddam extremist interior designers switching our bedclothes around to bring us to our knees."

This has been the first incident of its kind since one recruit died after choking on a cushion in 1987, and the US is taking no chances. They have already banned the importation of all quilts with a tog rating of 10 or over and tomorrow the White House is expected to announce that it will bring forward the full deployment of the US Navy's fleet of laser-guided mattresses.

Here Come the Internet Police

Police forces in the UK are reporting a significant increase in detection rates after turning to social media in order to catch criminals. Last year, a pilot project by Cambridgeshire Constabulary experimented with friending suspected offenders on Facebook, successfully managing to track down a number of wanted felons from pictures of their pets.

The project has now been expanded across the country as senior officials have realised that it is both cheaper and safer for surveillance officers to follow people on Twitter rather than in real life. Not only that, but there are rumours that Google Plus is developing a function that will enable law enforcement agents to arrest people online, while Pinterest is experimenting with software that claims it can reliably extract a confession.

Inevitably, the move towards virtual policing is attracting its critics, but proponents of the new measures are keen to highlight success stories. For example, there was a great deal of press coverage when the Serious Crime Squad cracked a major international counterfeiting ring after connecting with the ringleaders on LinkedIn. But this news was soon eclipsed by an even bigger breakthrough: namely, the arrest of a wanted post office robber who was finally discovered after hiding out - completely unnoticed - on MySpace for the last ten years.

Stop right there!

Did you know that soon the very chair you're sitting on could be illegal? From next year the government says that all wheeled furniture will have to be road legal. That means that any chairs, trolleys and equipment stands that have casters will need to pass a rigorous safety and compliance test, even if they are not being used on a public highway.

What could this mean for you?

Well, you could avoid the problem by taking the wheels off your chair but if this doesn't appeal then you're looking at an extensive series of modifications. And that could be expensive if you don't have the skills to do it yourself. To help you decide whether it will be worth the cost, we've prepared this brief guide.

Tyres

Very few office chairs currently come with all-weather pneumatic tyres, but this will become necessary once the new regulations are in force. They will need to have a minimum tread depth of 1.6 millimetres and you will also be required to carry a spare.

Lights

Standard front and rear lights will need to be installed. Initially it was thought that your chair would also need indicators, but recent advice has confirmed that hand signals will be sufficient.

Seat Belts

Surprisingly, as things currently stand there is only a requirement for seat belts on reclining models, but this is under review and may change before the new rules come in.

Passengers

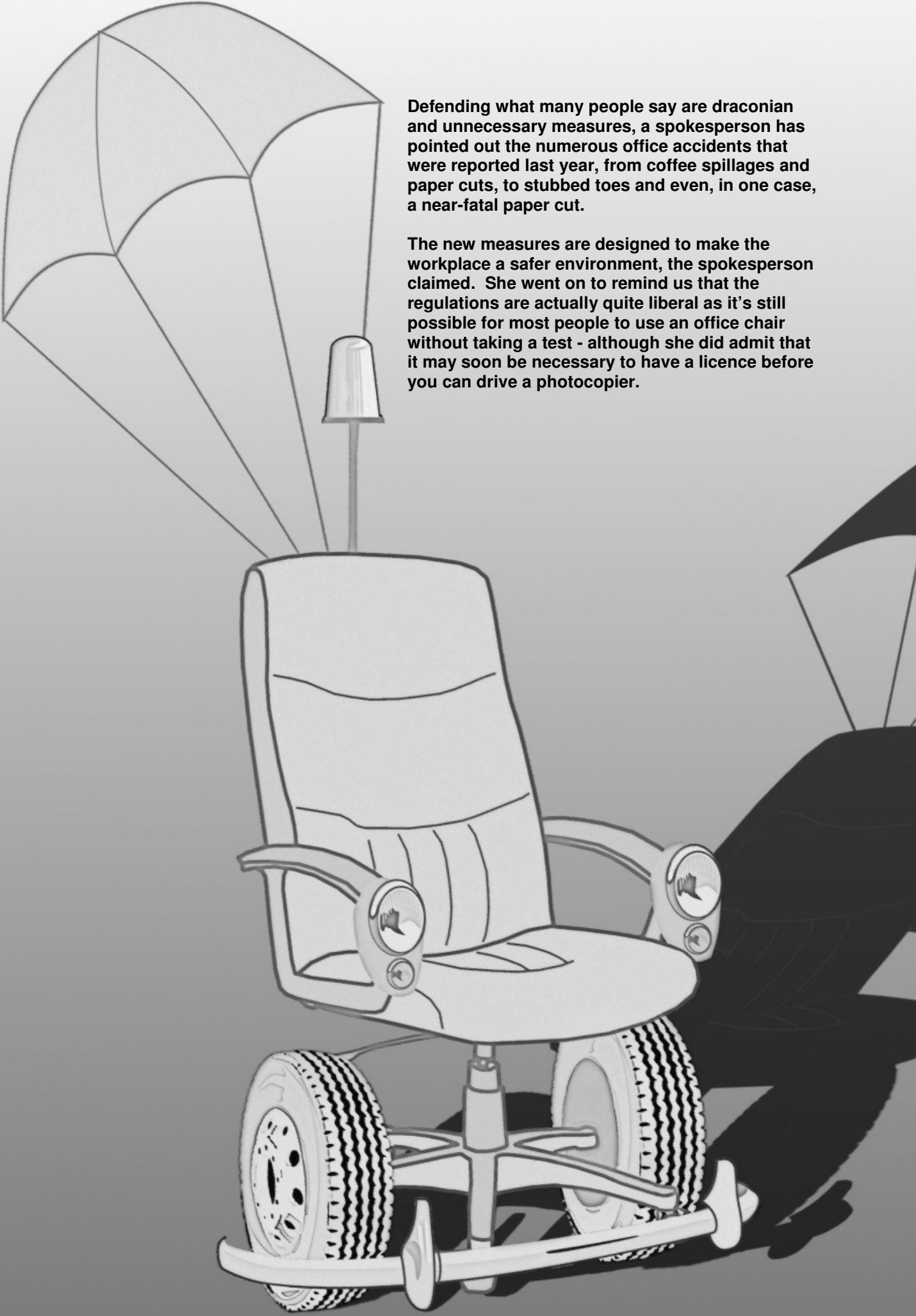
The maximum number of passengers will be limited to three. This stipulation is obviously aimed primarily at sofas. Models designed to seat more than four will be reclassified as minibuses.

Brakes

For a while now, some retailers have been offering models fitted with a rudimentary parachute in anticipation of the new rules having a requirement for a system to bring the chair to a rapid halt. In tests these devices have delivered variable results, but remain popular because of their relative cheapness when compared to disc brakes. Ironically, despite this being one area in which manufacturers appear to be ahead of the game, there is no requirement for braking systems in the new regulations.

Cup Holder

Each chair must be fitted with at least one medium sized cup holder. The inability to meet this requirement will be deemed an instant failure.



Defending what many people say are draconian and unnecessary measures, a spokesperson has pointed out the numerous office accidents that were reported last year, from coffee spillages and paper cuts, to stubbed toes and even, in one case, a near-fatal paper cut.

The new measures are designed to make the workplace a safer environment, the spokesperson claimed. She went on to remind us that the regulations are actually quite liberal as it's still possible for most people to use an office chair without taking a test - although she did admit that it may soon be necessary to have a licence before you can drive a photocopier.

Once again we welcome award-winning blogger, bestselling self-published author and antique jelly mould smuggler Maisy Donnington with some more of her award-winning, self-published lifestyle tips.



Maisy Donnington Writes...

How to Beat Stress

Hello There!

Maisy Donnington here and this time I'm going to talk to you about stress. If you're suffering from stress, my advice to you is not to get worked up about it. Whenever you feel yourself getting anxious, simply stop worrying and everything will be all right. Easy!

Of course, many people lack the ability to suppress their innate emotional instability and psychological dread with the overwhelming force of their unshakeable iron will. Mrs Bradshaw at the chemist's, for example. Whenever she gets into a tizz I find that a few sharp slaps across the face does a world of good. Even if Mrs Bradshaw herself doesn't feel the benefit, I at least find it a wonderful way of releasing tension.

In fact, random acts of viciousness, abuse and general mischief are really a most effective way of discharging pent-up energy and I believe that it's absolutely essential to let off a little steam now and then. Most of you are not award-winning bloggers, like what I am, so you won't appreciate how gruelling it is to be tied to your keyboard for anything up to two hours a week, churning out articles on bringing up kids, wacky pets or those oh-so-important lifestyle lists. Keeping my many followers mildly entertained with a never-ending succession of witty brain-spurts is a task of almost Dickensian hardship. So, if you've been staring at that screen all morning, it's so important to recharge your batteries by taking ten minutes every now and then to be unnecessarily cruel and/or irritating.

One of the things I like to do is throw things at my neighbour's cat. I've got a really good view from my window and I can easily see it messing in my rose bed. I keep an assortment of suitable items on my desk so that I can pick up something and throw it whenever the mood takes me - old boots, plant pots, unwanted ornaments and a ceremonial assegai that a relative brought back from Africa. You should see the look on the filthy moggy's face when that thing comes hurtling through the air and thuds into the ground right where its backside has been just moments before. Priceless.

Inevitably, there is a limit to how much fun you can get out of persecuting domestic animals, so it's important to keep your routine varied. For example, I have recently taken up making obscene phone calls, a pursuit which I find tremendously satisfying. There is, I must add, nothing frivolous or witty about these calls. I realise that there is a vogue for so-called 'prank' calls in which the recipient is made to appear foolish or absurd. I find such activities to be quite childish, which is why I limit my communications to pure abuse and threats of extreme violence.

It really is most cathartic and I would heartily recommend you give it a try. I find that if I spend maybe one or two hours in the morning making disgusting and unpleasant calls to random strangers, what follows is usually a really productive afternoon. I say 'random strangers', but in truth most of these calls end up being to my neighbour.

He, of course, has lately become extremely stressed, and inevitably this has more than a little to do with my ongoing hate campaign. It's a shame of course, and I really feel for the man, but whenever I start feeling anxious about it I simply nip out and slash the tyres on his car and the feeling goes away. After all, there's no point in losing sleep over it, is there?

Pest Control



Hello, you're though to the environmental health department. Yes, yes, that's right - we're the people you need to call if you have a pest control issue. Oh, it's you Mrs Whitney. No... no, Mrs Whitney. No, I didn't mean anything by that. Well I'm sorry if you thought there was something in the tone of my voice, I really... No, no - believe me, it's really great to hear from you again. Really great. How can we help you this time, Mrs Whitney?

OK, well... well let me see what we've got here. Yes, yes, I've got your records in front of me. You've, err, you've kept us quite busy, haven't you Mrs Whitney? Well no, actually you've called us eighteen times. Yes, it is, isn't it? No, no - not at all. We're always happy to hear from you. It's a topic of great interest here, Mrs Whitney. Every morning we come in and we say to each other 'Oh I wonder if Mrs Whitney is going to call again today.' No, Mrs Whitney, I wasn't being sarcastic. Well, I'm sorry if it came across that way. I really didn't mean it to. So... so, anyway, why don't you tell me how I can help you today?

Uh huh... yes... go on... OK, well... yes, yes. Behind your shed, you say? Sort of a scurrying noise? Well, OK - the thing is Mrs Whitney, tigers aren't really that common around here. Not at this time of year. And they don't really make a 'scurrying noise'. That sounds like it's more likely to be a mouse, or something.

No, of course, Mrs Whitney. I'm not suggesting anything, really I'm not. I'm sure you're perfectly able to tell the difference between a mouse and a... and a... Yes, the stripes *are* a bit of a giveaway. Mrs Whitney, I'm not casting aspersions here but you don't think that maybe, just maybe you might be letting your imagination run away with you?

OK, OK... please calm down Mrs Whitney. There's no need for that language, Mrs Whitney. No, I've never done that, Mrs Whitney. And I don't think anyone has ever done *that*, Mrs Whitney. I'm not sure where you've picked up these expressions, Mrs Whitney, but I don't think they're appropriate. I'm going to have to end this call if you don't calm down Mrs Whitney. That's OK. No really, it's all right. You're not the first person to call me that and I dare say you, err, you won't be the last.

Perhaps if you could just see the situation from our point of view? See, this isn't the first time you've called us with these kinds of tales, Mrs Whitney. Let's see now. First time you said you were being harassed by... No, no, that's fine. Our guys deal with birds all the time. Usually it's pigeons. An ostrich was a first, yes. Well, I don't know - I guess they'd just creep up on it and put a bag over its head. I'm

not the expert, Mrs Whitney, although it's kind of academic, isn't it? See, when our guys turned up they found no sign of it. No I don't think it could have flown away, Mrs Whitney. Like I say, I'm no expert, but I seem to remember that the ostrich is a flightless bird.

Well now you're just being silly, Mrs Whitney. I don't know where an ostrich would get a jetpack from. Well, you say that, but I've never heard of any kind of bird, flightless or otherwise, that has an Amazon account. No, I'm not saying that it's impossible. No, I'm not saying that. No, I'm... look, Mrs Whitney, do you think we could get back to your current problem. It's kinda been a long day. Is that all right?

OK then, this 'tiger'... Sorry, can you repeat that? 'if it's not a tiger, where did the milk go?' Is that what you said? What milk is this, Mrs Whitney? Has this tiger been in your refrigerator? Well, I don't know, maybe it could sneak in when nobody was looking. Well, I appreciate that Mrs Whitney, but you can't be on guard all the time, can you? Maybe it had a giraffe friend keeping lookout for it?

No, no, no, Mrs Whitney, I didn't mean to be facetious. I'm sorry if it came out that way. It's like I said, it's been a long day and this is turning out to be a... well, this is turning out to be a long call. Look, tell me about the milk, Mrs Whitney. What did you mean when you said it had stolen the milk?

Oh, I see, not 'stolen'. You left the milk out for it deliberately? In a saucer? Why, err, why did you do that, Mrs Whitney? Well, no, since you put it like that, I suppose not. Well, we do that at home too - some seed and maybe a bit of bacon rind for the birds. But I've never heard of anyone putting out a saucer of milk for a tiger. See, that's kind of encouraging them, isn't it? You start with a saucer of milk for the tigers, then potato peelings for the rhinos, a few broken cookies for the crocodiles and before you know it your back garden is like a safari park. You're bringing it on yourself, really.

Oh Mrs Whitney, really, I'm not trying to tell you... of course, you have every right... no, it's not my place to... I just mean to say that... OK, yes. You know what, you're right. Mrs Whitney, I can tell you're very upset and my shift should have ended ten minutes ago, so here's what I'm going to do: I'm going to send the guys round right now. We'll make your tiger a priority. They'll have him out of there in no time. How's that sound? Yep, I'm sure it'll be fine. Nope, they're not gonna hurt him one bit - just coax him out with a bun then turn him loose in the country, I expect. That OK?

It's my pleasure, Mrs Whitney. No problem at all. Bye bye, then. Oh, and Mrs Whitney - do you think you could do me a favour. Next time you call, could you ask for Linda? Yeah, Linda - she specialises in this kind of thing, see. Either Linda, or Gary, or Andrew or Grahame. My name? Oh it's, err, I've forgotten. But you don't need to worry about that - just remember Linda, or Gary, or Andrew or Grahame and you'll be fine. OK then, bye bye Mrs Whitney. You take care now. Bye bye.

The Bullshit Times

If it's bullshit, you'll read it here first

Astrologers complain space hardware is damaging their profession



Trousers in Leo, with Gnome Ascendant

Astrologers from all over the world have joined together to call for restrictions on the number of man-made objects launched into space. Satellites, orbital platforms and space debris are having a profound effect on their sensitive calculations meaning that many seers are making predictions which are wildly incorrect.

"Everyone knows that astrology is a reliable and trustworthy art form, perfected over many years and basking in an unparalleled reputation for accuracy," said

professional soothsayer the Great Visionista, alias Mrs Doreen Bucknall from Blackpool. "But science, in its brutal quest for knowledge, has ruined our livelihoods by filling the skies with hardware. Just recently, whenever I've tried to cast a chart for someone, I either get Sputnik rising in Capricorn or two communication satellites and a spent rocket booster interfering with the cusp of Sagittarius. No wonder I keep getting the lottery numbers wrong."

Such problems are now common with many practitioners, who claim that casting a horoscope in the twenty-first century is less about the vast cosmological clockwork that drives the planets on their infinite stately journey through the zodiac and more about what some bloke on the international space station has had for breakfast that morning. They are asking governments to agree to limit the amount of hardware they put into orbit in order to mitigate the damage that is being

caused to the delicate strands of celestial influence which shape all our ends.

"If action isn't taken immediately there is a very real possibility that we could lose the ancient power of revelation once and for all," said Mrs Bucknall, who is offering a special two-for-one deal on prophecies this weekend. "And while we're about it," she added. "Can something be done about my neighbour's Wi-Fi? It's playing merry hell with my tarot readings."

Could Cortana Become Self-Aware?

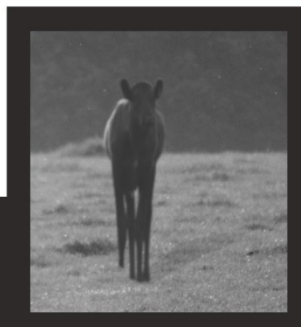
Fears are mounting that Cortana, Microsoft's 'intelligent personal assistant', could become sentient and pose a credible threat to humankind. Cortana is built into Windows phones and is also a component of the new Windows 10 operating system. Some experts have claimed that its ubiquity, coupled with Microsoft's ability to collect data about browsing habits and other information, means that there is a very real possibility of the software becoming self-aware and 'trying to take over the world, or something'.

"This is exactly how Terminator started," said security expert Colin

Drabb, "...probably. Just think how much information Cortana would have at her fingertips, or whatever kind of tips she has. Your shopping habits, your search history, your music preferences, your financial records. And after conversing with people all over the world she would pick up human habits, human vices. Or at least I think that's how it works. I don't know much about social interaction - I work in IT."

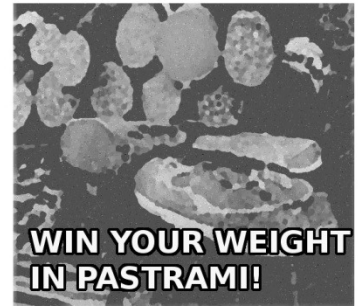
Mr Drabb believes that Cortana could realistically breed some sort of giant mutant octopus and take over the world in just three years. "Because," he explained, "that's what I would do."

However, most experts are of the opinion that, based on the kind of information she would most likely collect, it's more probable that we'd end up with some kind of sci-fi obsessed comic book fan who divided her time equally between online porn, Minecraft and shopping for action figures.



SLENDERCOW SIGHTINGS ON THE INCREASE

See page 5 for full story



Brainwashing

Chris Fingers, who rose to fame two years ago when he invented the first thought-controlled washing machine, has been admitted to hospital after experiencing what doctors believe to be an entirely new form of mental illness.

We spoke to Mr Fingers in 2013 when news of his new invention was just emerging. At the time he told us of the inspiration for his idea. "Nobody has ever looked at the controls on a washing machine and not been intimidated by the stupid number of entirely unnecessary options," he told us. "It makes you want to scream 'just wash my bloody shirt' at the damn thing. In fact, I've spent many an evening doing just that and it was to save my vocal chords and rescue my rapidly deteriorating rapport with the next door neighbours that I invented the thought-controlled washing machine. Now I don't have to shout at it, I just need to think it."

Mr Fingers' washing machine was set to become the first of a whole new generation of thought-controlled appliances but over the last few months one or two issues have come to light. The first indication that there might be a problem came at a technology conference last year when Mr Fingers attempted to rinse one of his fellow delegates and put him on a fast spin.

"We wondered whether Mr Fingers' mind control process might be a two way process," said Senior Consultant Dr Chas Suffix. "Instead of him controlling his washing machine, is he himself being controlled by the device? Our theory was confirmed when we later found him wandering the streets going 'chugga chugga chugga chugga', sloshing soapy water around his mouth and spitting it out at passing strangers.

"We now have him safe and sound at our secure unit, where we are working very hard to cure him of his delusion," Dr Suffix continued. "Mr Fingers is responding well and we are confident that he will make a full recovery. Good news for Mr Fingers, of course, but it's nevertheless a bit of a blow for us, since we're currently saving a fortune on our laundry bills."

The Wild Wild Web

Concerns are growing that huge areas of the internet could be under threat from developers if steps are not taken to curb commercial activity in the next few years. Much of the internet is wild and largely unexplored and, with very little legislation in place to protect it, unscrupulous enterprises are at liberty to plunder its resources and disfigure its natural beauty.

The damage has begun already. There are some domains that are already dangerously unstable due to uncontrolled data mining and insanitary conditions elsewhere have contributed to the spread of viruses and malware, making many sites virtually no-go areas.

"What we need to think about are our children," said tearful campaigner Georgina Modern, chief officer of the World Wild Wide Web Fund. "How will they surf the web when we've used it all up?" she bawled. "Will my unborn child be able to amble innocently along the information superhighway, free from cares and worries, or will there be nothing left but a fetid pit of clickbait, dodgy porn and videos of people opening packages? Oh please, won't someone think of the children!"

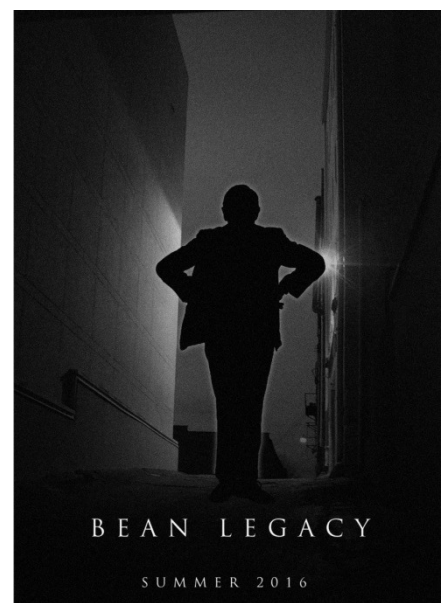
Bean Legacy

Movie fans set the internet ablaze yesterday when it was announced that Christian Bale is to play the eponymous hero in the new Mr Bean reboot. *Bean Legacy* will start shooting next month and promises to take the franchise in a new and exciting direction. "This is something that I've wanted to do for some time," said director Quentin Parks. "I grew up watching Mr Bean as a kid, but I always thought that there was a darkness lurking behind that gawky, clumsy exterior. You realise that what you're watching is a wounded and damaged soul that can only really find peace by venting his frustration in fighting crime and wreaking vengeance on those who sought to destroy him."

The new Bean promises to be very different to Rowan Atkinson's comic original. Gone are the tweedy suits, the battered teddy bear and the clapped out Mini. Instead, Bean will have moulded Kevlar body armour, a secret lair packed with surveillance equipment and a specially designed 'Beanmobile'.

Meanwhile, Bale is eagerly anticipating bringing his interpretation to the screen. "Yeah, this character Bean," he told us. "I think I understand the guy. We've talked about it a lot. We've workshopped it. And yeah - I totally get him. He's a loner. He feels that society has passed him by. But there's something that drives him - I don't know what you'd call it. A sense of justice, maybe. An anger that needs to be quenched. Whatever. I just totally know that he is the kind of guy who spends his nights stalking the lawless streets of Gotham - or wherever - protecting the weak and helpless, taking down the bad guys. No question."

The movie is expected to hit cinemas next summer and pundits are already debating how it will perform against next year's other big hitter *Teletubbies: Rise of the Machines*.



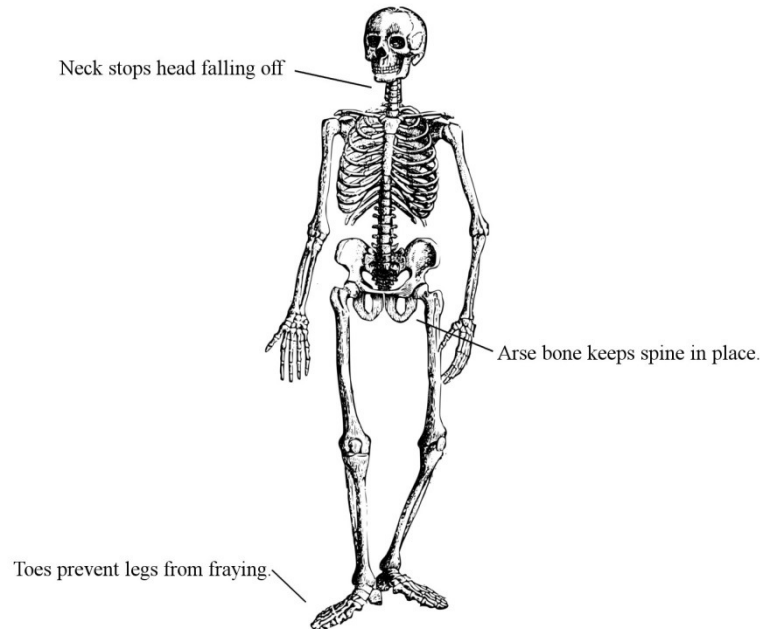


BEAN LEGACY

SUMMER 2016

What is your tailbone for?

Fig 12b: Skelington - principle stress points



If your collarbone is there to keep your shoulders on and your shins give you somewhere to hang your trousers, what is your tailbone for? That's the question posed by Dr Leonard Skynard of the Museum of Groovy Piccalilli in Reykjavik and after five years of super-advanced number crunching he now has the answer.

"It's to stop your spine falling out," he told us. "The coccyx acts as a kind of endcap which keeps your vertebrae in place. Without it your backbone would just drop straight out through your arse. As a side note I'd just like to add that we suspect that early man developed elbows so that he could flap his arms about and pretend to be a chicken, but you really shouldn't quote me on that."

We asked Dr Skynard if he had anything else to tell us about this astounding revelation. "I think I've probably said enough," he said.

The University of the Bleeding Obvious

Online...

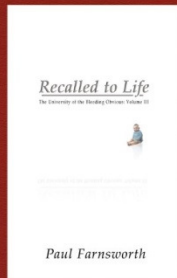
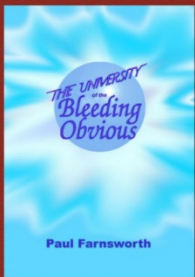
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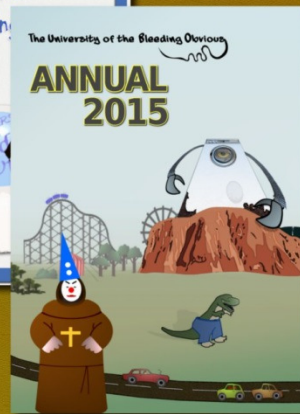
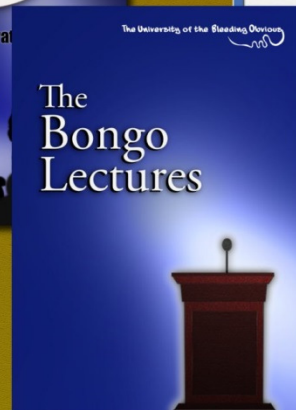
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