

Men in red trousers

Richard Barr conjures up images of pet hates and vents his wrath when unpleasant things happen



Richard Barr

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There is a saying in these parts that when you die you either go to heaven or the Cambridgeshire town of Chatteris

I have never been bitten by a dog but I have been stung by a bee. Lots of them in fact and it hurt like hell.

And what did I think as the bees swarmed around me, finding a path to my wrists between my bee suit and my unsuitable gardening gloves?

At home in thundering Norfolk I am the assistant bee keeper to my wife; she who knows each one of her 20,000 bees personally and by name. When there is a swarm the bees can be captured and rehomed in another hive. It is said that bees do not sting when they are swarming. This lot defied the rules and went for me big time.

But I am not writing about bees, though bees might be partly responsible for the syrupiness of the song from “The Sound of Music” – My Favourite Things – saccharine heaped on sugar drenched in honey: easily enough to induce diabetes in perfectly healthy people.

I thought of my bee stings when I heard this song again recently. I realised Julie Andrews got it completely wrong (I know, don’t shoot the messenger!) when she urged us to think of whiskers on kittens, bright copper kettles or brown paper packages (especially not those as they would signify more money has been spent at Amazon!) – whenever we are stung by a bee or bitten by a dog.

The song has its limitations as there are many other unpleasant things that can happen to us – like being the subject of an unjustified client complaint, sitting on a train for several hours because the track has melted (or the snow hasn’t) or being shouted at by a district judge with dyspepsia.

The reality is, when nasty things happen it is pointless to give a second thought to crisp apple strudels or snowflakes on your nose. You need to think of your pet hates.

So when a chihuahua bites your ankles, a judge shouts or a client moans here are some top pet hates to ruminate.

PEOPLE

- Professor Brian Cox. I am sure he knows more than anyone about the cosmos but it’s the way he seems to look down on me as if I am completely ignorant of matters scientific that gets to me (even if it is true).
- Or Chris Grayling (and no doubt shared by almost everybody). Though he is less fun now he’s out of government. In our

uniquely British way we will no doubt come to feel sorry for him.

- Men in flat caps who drive at 24 miles an hour along Norfolk’s roads.
- Men in shorts who vape and produce more steam in the streets than a traction engine on the road.

PLACES

There is a saying in these parts that when you die you either go to heaven – or to the Cambridgeshire town of Chatteris. There are other candidates but why make more enemies than you have to?

According to the Law Society there is just one firm of solicitors in Chatteris. If you subscribe to SJ do let me know and I will be pleased to remove your town from my list of unfavourite things with immediate effect.

THINGS

- Supermarket self-checkouts with their robotic instructions and incessant refusal to accept you have actually scanned your goods and placed them in the bagging area.
- *The Daily Mail* (though I have to admit I sometimes find myself intrigued by its stories).
- Diet drinks, gardening, time recording.
- Music on hold (and the need to press half a dozen buttons on your phone to get an answer to a simple question).
- Apostrophe’s indiscriminately dotted like ant’s whenever the writer want’s to expres’s plurals*.

RED TROUSERS

But of all these pet hates hold this image in mind if you would. A lovely client once told me – quite unprompted – that her most serious pet hate was men who wear red trousers.

So, when something unpleasant happens to you, just conjure up an image of a man in scarlet trousers and vent your wrath. You will feel a whole lot better and you might even want a spot of schnitzel with noodles.

Any other suggestions? Log on and post your comments on the SJ website.

* *The editors accept no responsibility! Ed.*

For more from the pen of Richard Barr read his book of SJ reminiscence *The Savage Poodle* available at £7.99 + P&P from Amazon UK or direct from Richard: Richard.barr@paston.co.uk

