

A Fair Catch

I picked up a copy of the Daily Mail the other day, it's okay I haven't joined Reform – I was in the dentist waiting room and it was that or a rather appropriately dog-eared copy of Rhodesian Ridgeback news from several years ago.

I started to worry that I might be about to let a right-wing bloke with a drill remove several perfectly good teeth if we started to talk politics.

Anyway, as it turned out I didn't have anything to worry about, although I confess I was feeling more than the usual anxiety I suffered on these occasions.

Back to my point, there was an article which listed the most stressful situations that people could suffer.

Divorce, getting married, losing your car keys and stubbing your toe were listed- obviously I made the last two up.

However, one in the top 5 that caught my eye was moving house – something Brenda and I were seriously considering at this point in time – well not specifically at the Dentists obviously, but it was under discussion.

I decided to ignore the warning – it was the Daily Mail after all!

The 'moving on' discussion had progressed to the point where we had asked a couple of estate agents to give us a price.

The first to visit was a bloke of about 12 with a wispy bit of fluff on his top lip, I imagine he was probably over 20...but not by much.

He was smarmy and tut tutted as he wandered around our terraced gaff making derogatory comments about everything from the decor to my prized vinyl collection mumbling something about Spotty something.

I saw Brenda wince when he openly guffawed at her prized collection of porcelain pigs.

He left and said he'd send a valuation when he had time.

The second agent was a middle-aged lady with a nice smile and was very complimentary as she wandered from room to room – and she was very enthusiastic when she saw the pigs.

Both estimates of what we could reasonably get arrived in the next two days and Mr Snooty's was a grand and a half higher than the much more friendly lady's.

So naturally we went with Mr Horrible – it was more Brenda's decision and she commented that for the difference I could buy her some nice jewellery.

She refrained from mentioning something to go on a finger on her left hand, but I got the message and was wondering if the nice lady would, in fact, have been a better choice.

I also decided not to mention that I had earmarked the potential extra cash for a paint ball weekend with my mates – I'm not especially smart, but I'm not suicidal!

Mr Offensive informed us that our place didn't qualify for a brochure but we'd get a paper handout and be included in their newspaper ads for the next two weeks.

He also said that we wouldn't get escorted visits and we'd have to show people round ourselves.

We weren't actually inundated with viewings, but then as I kept indicating to Bren – we only needed one live punter.

Most of the visitors were young couples – a bit like us when we first bought 7 years previous.

We did have one bloke of about fifty who said he was looking for his daughter who wanted her own place.

Nearly all those who came asked for a few minutes to look around by themselves to get the feel of what it might be like to live there.

This wasn't a problem for us as we were getting fed up with painting on increasingly false smiles and talking about pleasant neighbours, good schools and the total absence of crackheads in the park - all the time with crossed fingers behind our backs.

Finally, we got an offer – one that exactly matched the one that the nice lady had said we could expect – that stuck a bit in my throat – no paint balling, although on the plus side it probably meant that there'd be no going down on one knee for a bit longer.

Everything progressed quite quickly and we realised with undisguised horror that we needed to pack up

Every night and weekend for the next few weeks we were surrounded by boxes from the removers and tried desperately to clear all the clutter that we had accumulated over the last 7 years.

It wasn't particularly organised and several times I got annoyed when I couldn't find things that I was sure were where I had left them – Brenda was the same and mentioned some jewellery she couldn't lay her hands on – quite sensibly I immediately changed the subject. She also seemed to have apparently mislaid a pig or two and I tried to paint on a sympathetic look.

Eventually we had pretty much packed everything we wanted to take with us to the very lovely semi for which our offer had been accepted – we were getting very excited.

But we still had a pile of stuff that was surplus to requirements.

I was all for taking it to the tip, but Bren said there were some things that we might get a few bob for.

Not wanting to explore what she wanted a few bob for, I went along with her suggestion that we booked a spot at the Sunday boot fair in the local park.

With all the items loaded in the car as well as our pasting table to display them on, we duly pitched up at 8 on Sunday.

The whole area was heaving but there seemed to be more tyre kickers than serious punters.

But we did get rid of most of the stuff, even if we did have to haggle and get far less than things were probably worth. But frankly I dreaded dragging it all back home, so we largely accepted what was offered.

With the table pretty much empty Bren said she was going for a wander – I nodded, but secretly hoped there wasn't a stall with antique rings on offer.

She hadn't gone far when I heard her shout.

I hurried over to see her remonstrating with a man who looked vaguely familiar. She was holding a vinyl copy of the Beatles White album – with the number 113 on it.

It took me just a second to realise that my album had featured exactly the same number.

She was also holding up a pink porcelain pig that she said was just like the one she had.

The bloke was brazen asking aggressively what was she going to do 'Call the Police?'

No need she said putting her hand in her pocket “Detective Sargent Brenda Jones...you’re nicked”

The guy scrambled towards his van and rapidly drove off through the crowd knocking over several stalls.

After the fuss died down we looked at the stall and saw a number of familiar looking items.

Brenda said she had noted the number of his van and that we’d have to take the rest to the station as most was probably nicked.

“You didn’t have time to get your warrant card out Bren” I commented.

“Don’t be soft John” she replied “I was bluffing – I don’t take it boot sales”

I grinned at her...my girlfriend and soon I hoped to be my fiancée.

She giggled when she heard me say “ I suppose we could call it a fair cop!”