

TT (the Dog Blog) Day 10

With every 'non-essential' shop, business and activity now shut down, the enormity of these measures is hitting us. What is classed as 'essential' and what is not is an interesting conundrum; for example, where do pet shops stand? The Guvnor knows because he telephoned our local outlet this afternoon and asked, first, if they were open for business and, second, how many people were in the shop. The answer was 'yes' and 'none' so he donned his rubber gloves and headed down to do some essential shopping – green vegetables (which, normally, he could do without) and some paracetamol which his whole family needs routinely but which you cannot get for love nor money. On the way back he called in at the pet shop and, true to their word, it was not only open but empty. He bought a large bag of lamb and rice kibble and sixteen poo bags which means that Clyde, Loopy and I will be fine at both ends of our spectra for the foreseeable future.

I really think that if they are sensible about the lockdown, the Guvnor's wife is going to have to face the freezer and, sooner or later, get to the bottom of it. They were talking about this earlier today and she was saying that the freezer(s) have not really ever been empty except when they last moved abroad. The Guvnor racked his brain to remember when that was. "Horrors", he shouted, waking me up in the process; "that was in 1982 when we were sent to Hong Kong, so there could be a pheasant in there that is older than our youngest daughter". I'll report back later.

They then veered 'off piste, or in my language 'down a rabbit hole', for a bit while they argued about whether the word

'rack' was correct in this context or whether it was 'wrack'. In the end Mr Google, with supporting documents from the Oxford English Dictionary and finally confirmed by Giles Brandreth came up with the following: 'To rack one's brain is to torture it or to stretch it by thinking very hard. To wrack one's brain would be to wreck it. This might sort of make sense in some figurative uses, but rack is the standard spelling where the phrase means to think very hard'. So, there you have it but, pedantises aside, until we don thick rubber gloves and, like Scott in the Antarctic, venture into the icy unknown we will not know what exactly is down there in our freezer; Scott, himself, perhaps?

I mentioned Giles Brandreth. His book on the life-saving importance of correct punctuation, grammar and good English is an auxiliary bible in our house and is appropriately called 'Have you eaten Grandma?' Well, of course, this prompts one to wonder about how that should be punctuated - if at all? In the introduction he goes on:

'I'd like to see your mother, Alice', said the teacher when Alice opened the door. 'She ain't here, miss,' Alice replied. 'Why, Alice, where's your grammar?' the teacher asked. 'She ain't here neither, miss', said Alice.

It seems that Scrabble has had a resurgence of popularity already in this 'lock-down' era. The Guvnor likes Tim Vine who told of the occasion when he stumbled down the steps and spilled his Scrabble letters on the ground; he said, 'The word on the street was...' The Guvnor himself never won a single game, probably because his spelling was crap.