

TT 13 Day 17

I'm afraid it is time to talk (briefly, I promise) about ailments. The Guvnor has one or two which infuriates him as he has, fortunately, led a fairly trouble-free life. He hates hospitals because 'they are full of sick people' and other patients and visitors who are moaning and whingeing about the canteen or that the lift isn't working, or they have to pay for the carpark. I remind him to balance that with the fact that they are staffed by altruistic, highly trained, devoted and vocational people in the NHS who work hard and aren't paid very much. He nods and says, "You're a wise old dog, Turbo, no mistake; thanks for your perspective on this but I have to tell you that when you go to the vet it is a private practice and I have to pay an arm and a leg before they will let you come home. Leaving you there while we save the money isn't an option either."

Now that I have explained that contretemps, perhaps we can get on? He was due to have a new hip last week and just a few days before it was scheduled, all 'unnecessary' operations were cancelled. Fair enough, I thought, but then I didn't appreciate that he has been in pain for longer than I have been on this earth (and I am 8) and that human beings work themselves up to such events whereas I only realise something momentous is about to happen when I am put gently into the car rather than told to jump in and then I spot the shape of the wooden building at the top of the hill.

I mentioned yesterday that Loopy has come into season (this is different from spring emerging from the rigours of winter, apparently) it reminded me of when I had my operation. Yesterday I called it

'neutering', a word I don't like but it is arguably better than 'castration,' don't you think? Anyway, I had fathered two sets of puppies via two wives producing a total of eight beautiful little dogs, most of whom live around here. The Guvnor and his wife thought that was enough and there was a behavioural benefit as well – that I would be a less aggressive terrier and more discriminate as to where I raised my leg. Cheek!

It happened, and a week later the Guvnor took me up to have my stitches checked or removed (can't remember which now). He proudly led me into the waiting room on my lead whereupon I tackled a cat who was minding her own business in her basket and peed on the counter. He was appalled and acutely embarrassed, but I gave him that look that spells out, 'What do you expect? I'm still a Jack Russell and that's what we do'. That great countryman, Willy Poole who died in 2017, said fondly of his dog, Biggles, 'he was a bloody little dog – but we all loved him.'

Willy loved his hounds too and the Guvnor was reminded of the visit by a member of the Royal Family to a cavalry regiment in Germany. Programmes for such visits usually involved a briefing followed by seeing some typical training, then drinks in the Sergeants' Mess and lunch with the officers. On this occasion, the officers were gathered in the ante room in their squadron groups and when the VIP party arrived with B Squadron the CO had a mind block while introducing the Officer Commanding to HRH. The conversation went something like this: "Sir, this is Major um, um, er, um... - oh, heck; I don't know what's the matter with me. I'll be forgetting the names of my hounds next". History doesn't relate how HRH reacted.