

Opinion – “Queue? Aye!!”



Perhaps it's an age thing. Perhaps it's my status as a grandfather of three. Perhaps both these factors have combined to festoon grumpy old man status upon me. But I suspect I'm not the only person to mourn the passing of etiquette on the streets of our wonderful capital city. Rudeness, ignorance and a self-centred approach seems all too common in an age where people simply must rush to get to their destination.

Preferring to sit in the passenger seat of life, I use public transport to make my way to the drudgery of work during the week, the joy of family commitments at the weekend and the not always joyful commitment of watching Heart of Midlothian FC attempt to claw their way back from a negative points total. Lothian Buses, it has to be said, do a splendid job in providing a comprehensive bus service in Edinburgh. Not everyone may share my view, of course, but in my experience their buses are reliable and efficient. My problem is waiting for a bus and an art that seems to have died on the streets of Edinburgh (and very likely the streets of every other city and town in the land) – queuing.

My daily routine is to leave the house bleary-eyed at 8.00am every morning and head for a bus in Leith to take me reluctantly to the office. It's very much Reginald Perrinesque – same routine, same time, same place. At the bus shelter there are the familiar faces who also go through the same routine as yours truly and there is the occasional flicker of a smile or nod of the head to acknowledge 'yep, here we go again'. We wait patiently glancing at the bus tracker which indicates the number 14 bus is 'due'. The bus tracker is a fairly recent invention which can have sinister tendencies. It lulls you into a false sense of anticipation when it flashes on its green screen that your bus is 'due'; more seasoned bus

travellers now assume that 'due' can mean the bus will arrive as much as three, four or five minutes later, depending on traffic.

Inevitably, just as the much-yearned for bus approaches the bus stop, there will be someone rushing along the pavement who shows a total disregard for those of us who have waited for what seems an eternity and plonks themselves in front of the bus stop at the street kerb. When said bus duly arrives, this ignoramus is first on the bus which can be quite infuriating if he/she takes the last remaining seat.

This is something that seems to be happening more and more. I've sadly accepted that me offering my seat to someone on a bus may invoke an outburst of 'Do you think I'm too weak to stand?' in much the same way as holding a door open for a member of the opposite sex can be unfairly labelled as sexist. However, the etiquette of recognising people who have stood at a bus stop far longer than you and have the right to get on the bus before you seems to have disappeared.

I used to think it was mainly tourists who didn't bother queuing and simply jostled their way past long-suffering city dwellers who have just spent ten minutes or so willing the numbers to come down on a large metal pole adjacent to the bus stop. However, it isn't just visitors to our city who behave this way. My Monday morning blues deepen when a callow youth will appear from nowhere blissfully unaware of the half dozen or so folk standing in frustration at a bus stop and simply stride on a bus whilst checking their Facebook newsfeeds on their mobile phone.

Princes Street, as you might expect, is quite bad for this as are the Bridges but I've also experienced this outside St. James Centre and at various points in Leith – particularly Great Junction Street and the foot of Leith Walk.

Now this may seem like the rant of a grumpy old man but I

suspect it's not just people of my age group (early 50s if you must know) who are sick to the back teeth of such ignorant behaviour.

It happens all too frequently and a restrained reaction from those of us standing open-mouthed at the arrogance of it all more often than not doesn't make a blind bit of difference – nor, in my experience, does 'Jist hud oan there, fella – there's a bloody queue' All you get is a vacant look accompanied by a shrug of the shoulders with a 'so what?' attitude.

I haven't yet been refused entry on a bus because some lout dived on before me and the rest of the queue and took the last available space, but I'm sure it's just a matter of time.

To paraphrase a well-known BBC television programme hosted by Stephen Fry, the next time someone pushes in front of me to get on a bus, I will likely respond by dragging back the offender with the words 'Queue? Aye!! Now get to the back of it!'