

# Decapitated Tea and the Threat of Andrex

My usual Saturday morning routine was spent having a cup of tea with my mother in a café in Leith. I was recovering from a splendid Friday evening in the Port o' Leith bar – if you want good old fashioned pub entertainment, it's the place to be for a cracking atmosphere – and my senses, therefore, weren't as sharp as they might have been. But I had to double-check Ma's assertion that, on a recent appointment at Edinburgh's Royal Infirmary, she opined 'there were a lot of obscene people and, as such, NHS workers really should know better'.

I pondered this statement for a moment. Obscene people working for the NHS? Things are worse than I had imagined. I was thinking of alerting the editor of The Edinburgh Reporter to a major news story when I thought I had better seek clarification. 'What do you mean by obscene, mother?

'Well,' she explained, 'so many of them were overweight. And they are trying to tell us we should eat healthily.'

I believe the word she meant was 'obese' although there could have been something she wasn't telling me. My dear old mum is 77 and while she is still relatively active and her mind is still quite sharp – she picks far more winners on the horses than I do – she does tend to get her words and meanings mixed up. There have been numerous examples over the years much to the amusement of other family members who really ought to know better.

Although she now lives in Edinburgh, she is an Aberdonian and was thrilled by Aberdeen's League Cup win the other week. A few years ago she accompanied me to a Hearts v Aberdeen game at Tynecastle. While I headed to my usual seat in the Wheatfield Stand, she made for the Aberdeen end. Prior to the

game we had discussed recent terrorist attacks and what terrorists may do next. She told me she was particularly concerned by the threat of 'Andrex'. I wondered briefly if we were likely to experience incessant bombing raids of toilet paper before surmising that what she meant was the threat of 'anthrax'. That said, when the Aberdeen team ran on to the Tynecastle pitch that afternoon, their supporters threw dozens of toilet rolls on to the field so perhaps she had a point...

Then there was a shopping trip where she fancied one of those 'George Formby' grills. I had to admit I hadn't realised there was such a thing and the prospect of having your eggs turn out nice again did have its merits. In the end, she settled for a George Foreman grill and I felt a twang of disappointment she didn't get her original choice...

Towards the end of last year, Ma fell and broke her wrist. This meant her dutiful son was charged with the task of getting her weekly shop. 'Don't forget to get my decapitated teabags' she would say on several occasions. As I scanned the shelves for decaffeinated tea bags, I wondered if she still had concerns over the threat of terrorism (or Andrex...)

As I departed her company on Saturday, I spoke about heading to see her after the Hearts v Hibernian game this coming Sunday – Mother's Day. She agreed this would be a good idea so long as I was in the right frame of mind, given that Hearts might be 'regulated' if they lost.

Perhaps if Hearts had been regulated during the Romanov era, relegation might not be a prospect now...

*(Editor's comment....Having spent more time in NHS hospitals than I really wanted to over recent months, your mother has a point about the obscene (sorry obese!) members of staff. But going back a decade or two medical staff were often heavy smokers, so perhaps this is the new smoking....?)*