

Parcel Delivery

The Edinburgh Reporter's Mike Smith had the joyful experience of waiting for a parcel delivery. Clearly, he enjoyed the experience so much he felt he had to share it with our readers...

It seemed like a good idea at the time. The newly appointed Mrs Smith – it's been nearly two months since we got wed – saw a few things we needed for the house and decided to make the purchases on-line. I'm not one for trailing around the shops, as the new Mrs Smith is beginning to discover, so I encouraged her plan to purchase the goods via t'internet and arranged for a suitable delivery date. As I say, it seemed like a good idea at the time...

My good lady ordered a microwave oven, kettle, toaster, pedal bin, toilet roll holder and electric toothbrush (they were out of cuddly toys) Just as she completed the order Bruce Forsyth appeared with his glamorous assistant and checked the scores on the doors (it's a Generation thing, younger readers – ask your parents)

Order complete, a delivery date was arranged for Thursday. So far, so good.

Now we may live in an age of instant communication with the aforementioned internet, mobile phones and 'smart' technology. We can transfer money between bank accounts in seconds and instantly converse with someone on the other side of the world through wonderful inventions such as Skype. However, there remain tasks which have yet to catch up with technology – and arranging a parcel delivery where everything goes to plan appears to be one of them.

The date was agreed – but the time of delivery couldn't be arranged. All we could get from one of the country's leading retail stores was *'we'll deliver between 7.00am and 8.00pm'*.

Really? You can't be more specific? Not even indicate if delivery will be in the morning or afternoon? *'No, sorry, all our delivery vans are packed up first thing in the morning and are out all day'*.

Hmm. So taking a half day off work won't help – it will need to be a full day. And you'll need to have an understanding boss (you want time off for what?! Don't you know we have a deadline to meet for that report I asked you for?!)

So it was that I arose from my slumber, bleary-eyed, ready for the remote chance the delivery would be bang on 7.00am. As we say in Scotland when two positives go together to form a negative – aye, right.

In the interests of fairness, I should point out here that the delivery of our goods happened at 12.10pm. Ah, so only half the day gone then. The delivery chap, somewhat lacking in customer service skills, handed over three items – two boxes and a black bag.

'Is that all six items?' I asked, curiously.

'No idea, pal' came the reply. 'I was just told to deliver three parcels to this address. Are you Mrs Smith?'

'Do I look like Mrs Smith?' I asked, not expecting an answer but getting one anyway.

'No really. Well you'll need to sign here' he replied before thrusting a digital contraption into my hand. I signed and he disappeared into the afternoon.

On unwrapping the delivered goods it soon became apparent there was an item missing. The electric toothbrush. With an air of inevitability, I phoned the shop – sorry, retail outlet – which, after a ten minute delay 'queuing' to talk to a customer sales agent, brought the following conversation.

'Have you got an order number?'

'Yes' and I reeled off a long code.

'Hang on, I'll check on my computer.' No words were spoken for a few moments, the only sound I could hear was the tapping of a keyboard.

'Ah, I can see what's happened' said the agent with a Lancashire accent (I got enough of these at work...) 'Your item has been sent to Wales'

'Really?' I asked with rising incredulity. 'Any reason why, given I live in Edinburgh?'

'Dunno' she replied. 'What I'll do for you is I'll contact the depot and arrange for another item to be delivered'

'I'm grateful, I'm sure' I said. 'Will this be this afternoon?' I asked far too optimistically.

'Oh no' came the reply, 'we'll phone you sometime next week when it's ready to be despatched'

'Next week? No, no, no. Can't you deliver it to one of the Edinburgh shops? I could collect it from there'

'Hang on, I'll just check. Which shop would you like it delivered to?'

'Well the one in central Edinburgh is the one which is less of an inconvenience'

Silence.

'Hello?' I asked with a growing feeling of despair. 'Are you still there?'

'Yeah, I'm just checking. You can collect it from our central Edinburgh store after 4.00pm'

'Grand. I'll go round later this afternoon'

'Oh no, not today – Monday'

By now, my irritation level was approaching red for danger but I accepted Monday afternoon and left it at that. Until Mrs Smith arrived home and advised she had received a text message from said retailer confirming that, due to unforeseen circumstances, they were unable to deliver the goods ordered.

But they'll deliver it on Friday.

Sometimes I ask myself why life is so difficult...