

Smallholder Sid

By Richard Barr

Sid and the Apple

They were back in the snug of the Cowpat and Fly public house. It is a typical Norfolk village pub. No longer does it have sawdust on the floor or nicotine stained paintwork, but otherwise it is little changed since it first opened at around the time of the Second Ice Age. It has comfortable, if worn, furniture and many nooks and crannies into which the clientele can disappear - including the Snug, a small room off the main bar (still sporting an engraved piece of frosted glass announcing that it is the smoking room, even though the only smoke in the Cowpat and Fly comes from the stove in the Snug which occasionally belches - rather like Smallholder Sid - when the wind is in the wrong direction). This is where our heroes – Sid, Allotment Holder Alice and Farmer Fred meet for their regular close encounters.

The drinking pals had recovered from their previous abortive get-together when Sid showed off the go faster stripes of his disastrous new car (see the last issue of HT). And as usual Alice and Fred were having difficulty getting a word in edgeways because Sid was in full flow and unstoppable (or at least he would not be stopped until he had finished his first pint of that famous brew *Old Fart*).

Sid downed the last dregs and started looking expectantly at Farmer Fred in the hope that he might get the hint and buy the next round. Fred on the other hand was avoiding eye contact because he was gazing into the eyes of Alice who seemed to be rapidly becoming the love of his life.

“Oh, alright then, I’ll get the next lot. Same again then?” This, not from Fred but Alice who was relieved to have a few moment’s respite from Fred’s doe-eyed stare.

When all was replenished Sid put his hand into his capacious coat pocket (a pocket that had in its time seen a box of twelve bore cartridges, several gardening tools and a live hen) and produced.... an apple.

“So, what is this?” he asked portentously.

Fred averted his gaze from Alice and frowned.

Fred: “Gala?”

Sid: “Nope”

Alice: “Cox’s Orange Pippin?”

Sid: “Nope.”

Fred: “Crimson Crisp?”

Sid: “Nope.”

Alice: “Cortland?”

Sid: “Nope. Give up? Well it’s a law suit.”



Alice and Fred looked at each other as though Sid had finally lost his marbles, let alone his apples.

He then explained how his previous neighbours had been kind gentle people who kept bees and also kept quiet; how they had sold up and moved south; how Londoner Lennie had moved in; how the old apple tree on their side of the fence had produced a fine crop each year (yes they were Gala apples) and how by agreement Sid had helped himself to the apples that grew on his side of the fence.

But now Londoner Lennie is not only demanding the apples back but also has threatened to start a small claim in the county court seeking compensation from Sid.

"Bloody London types, they come here and think they own Norfolk," complained Sid.

"But didn't you used to live in London.... the East End?" suggested Alice.

"Well that's different. I have been here a long time and I know how to treat Norfolk folk proper," retorted Sid. That produced another knowing look between Alice and Fred.

Fred asked: "So what are you going to do about it?"

"That's where I want your help. He can have his bloody apples and next Sunday I plan to cut back the branches to his boundary. I'll need you to hold the tape measure. Then we will throw everything over the fence to his side. We'll start at 7am and I would like to borrow your noisiest chain saw Fred. If you agree, I'll buy all the drinks at our next meeting."

Fred and Alice were so startled that they agreed instantly.

And that is what they did. Read all about what happened next in the next thrilling episode. ♦

Slightly serious legal note.

Unfortunately Londoner Lennie is technically right. Even though the apples were on Sid's side of the fence they still belonged to him. Fortunately most neighbours are sensible: a little give and take goes a long way. But Sid was also entitled to cut the branches back to the boundary, but watch it. If the tree has a Tree Preservation Order you might be committing an offence if you do not get permission to lop the branches from the Trees officer at the local council. It is generally accepted that you can make noise between 7am and 11pm and a one off usually does not amount to a noise nuisance but Sid hoped that a 7am Sunday start with a chainsaw would cause maximum disturbance to Londoner Lennie.

For more silliness buy a copy of Richard's book *The Savage Poodle* (get it on Amazon or contact Richard on Richard.barr@paston.co.uk for details. Price now £7.99) or listen to him every month or so on the Chrissie Jackson mid-morning show on BBC Radio Norfolk (when he tries to be a little more sensible).