

Waste paper

Throwing out rubbish is like flushing the loo. Everything disappears never to be seen again – at least not until the fox pays a visit.

In these parts we do wheelie bins, but wheelie bins sometimes get full. The ubiquitous black bin bags then rest beside the bins in the hope that the dustmen (oh alright, the recycling executives) will bend the rules slightly and take them even though it is writ large that 'thou shalt not cram into a wheelie bin so much rubbish that the lid thereof is impossible to close'.

During the night a fox had opened the bags and spread their contents over a large part of the garden. As I gathered up the resulting mess I counted: 23 tea bags (we had many visitors that day), seven plastic ready meals containers, two tins of tuna, one two-litre milk carton, half a loaf of mouldy bread, some chicken wings with foxish teeth marks, a mug with a crack in it, some cheese that was so far past its sell by date that it was moving around on its own accord – and *The Daily Telegraph*, which could not be recycled because it had been used to clear the ashes from the grate.

Yes, the *Telegraph*. As Shakespeare might have put it had he been around to bring his writing up to date, all the world's a newsagent and one man in his time pays for many papers.

Left, right and centre

For me it started with *The Guardian*. I read it for many years even after I ceased to regard myself as a trendy leftie, partly because old habits died hard and partly because it seriously increased the blood pressure of my late father-in-law whenever he saw me reading it.

Then came middle life and time to shift to the right. Now *The Times* itself has gone through its own seven ages. Not long before I started reading it there was no news on the front page – just classified advertisements. Slowly it metamorphosed to its present condition. I hope that the proprietors will not mind if I describe it



now as an overgrown tabloid with slightly longer words, and a disappointing page three.

This covered the entire age of my life when the waist swelled and "wise saws and modern instances" sprung forth – or at least quips in *Solicitors Journal*.

I did not think I had reached the next age bringing with it the "lean and slippered pantaloons with spectacles on nose and pouch on side" but after great debate (and having called several high-ranking family meetings and made all the necessary risk

interpreted. Take two examples:

First came the report of a woman being prosecuted for "theft by finding" when she helped herself to some potato waffles that had been thrown out by Tesco.

Also in the past week was the Chelmsford Crown Court case of the flying sausage. A meaty missile thrown in a food fight hit a woman in the eye and the police charged the sausage thrower with assault. The case, like the sausage, was thrown out because the judge ruled that it could damage the reputation of the judicial process:

"The case, like the sausage, was thrown out because the judge ruled that it could damage the reputation of the judicial process: 'The case is stale, if not the sausage'"

assessments) it was finally decided to ditch *The Times* and start taking the *Telegraph*.

Changing newspapers is like moving house or swapping partners – you are out of your comfort zone. You no longer know where to turn to to see who has died, or what the weather will be or find the crossword (I could never do *The Times* crossword). Each paper has its own character.

Get real

Reluctantly, I have to admit the *Telegraph* is currently compatible with my current stage of development. Its news stories focus on the quirky. More to the point, they spare no mercy for idiocies in the law or the way it is

"The case is stale, if not the sausage."

My comment: get real guys. Technically it may be theft to take something that has been abandoned, and technically you can assault someone with a sausage, but do we really need cases in the courts like that? But I must watch my words. I am soon to become a father-in-law and if I become too reactionary I know who will be flaunting *The Guardian* under my nose and challenging my blood pressure.

Richard Barr is a consultant with Scott-Moncrieff Harbour and Sinclair. Contact: richard.barr@paston.co.uk. If you don't know what I am talking about log onto the online edition of this article and read your Shakespeare