



Harrowing Times

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Smallholder Sid

By Richard Barr

Sid, a good man and true? (not to mention Fred and Alice)

Our intrepid trio Smallholder Sid, Allotment Holder Alice and Farmer Fred find themselves meeting far away from the Cowpat and Fly in this month's thrilling episode.

He was outraged. He had let the envelope sit on the mantelpiece for a couple of days before opening it. He never liked brown envelopes that had official lettering on them. As like as not they were from the tax man demanding money or the Department of Agriculture telling him that he had not yet submitted his quarterly return on the number of feathers on each of his hens.



Smallholder Sid peeled back the envelope and gingerly removed the document. It had the government coat of arms on it. Initially he read only the word "SUMMONS" at the top of the form. His heart sank. He could never keep up with "them buggers that sit on their arses in Whitehall pushing useless bits of paper round their desks". He assumed he was to be prosecuted for some minor matter. His bird scarer too loud? His goats had not had their beards trimmed in

the right style? His hens did not have adequate en-suite bathrooms?

But then he looked again and found that the form called itself a JURY SUMMONS and he was ordered to present himself at the local Crown Court on Monday fortnight.

"I'm not bloody doing that," he said to his dog which was lying under his feet. The dog looked worried and faintly wagged its tail while Sid read on. He (Sid, not the dog) soon came to the warning on the form that said he could be fined £1000 if he did not show up or if he was drunk when he did.

Throughout Norfolk others were opening their brown envelopes. One swore at his pig. Another muttered discreetly at her geraniums (even though she did not have any).

Sid could not find any decent excuse for not doing jury service, so with a heavy heart and in a crumpled suit he presented himself grumpily at the court the next Monday but one. He lined up to go through security. When his turn came a loud klaxon sounded as he went through the metal detector. Two security men immediately took him by the shoulders and asked him to empty his pockets.

By the time he had finished there lay on the table seven no 8 screws, two three-inch bolts, a 7mm drill bit, seventeen assorted washers, one wing nut, a small pair of pliers and a plug for the kitchen sink. These evidently dangerous items were laboriously listed by the security staff and Sid was promised that he could have them back at the end of the day.

Relieved of his weapons of mass distraction he found his way to the jury waiting area and had his name checked off by a bored looking woman wearing a



batman cape. He was shown the water dispenser but thought to himself that the experience would be so much more satisfactory if it dispensed Old Fart. Holding a plastic cup of tepid water he sat down to watch as others in crumpled suits and dresses joined him.

In the meantime an old pickup pulled into the court car park belching blue smoke (the pickup not the car park) and shortly afterwards two familiar figures emerged, looked bewildered at the imposing court building, went in different directions and eventually came together at the entrance.

The men on security relieved Allotment Holder Alice of a pair of secateurs and Farmer Fred of a dangerous looking mole wrench.

It was not long afterwards before the pair discovered Sid. For a fleeting moment he looked pleased to see them before he resumed his normal miserable countenance.

"Well bugger me," he said

"I'd rather not," replied Alice. That was as far as they got before they, along with nine others were marched into court where they were given a lecture on not being drunk, not listening to the news or making Google searches and above all not falling asleep.

Sid was placed next to an angry young man with a ginger beard. Alice and Fred were some distance from him, separated by people who looked as though they had not only just been to a jumble sale but were wearing what they had bought there. Shortly afterwards everyone was made to stand while the judge, resplendent in a wig and purple and scarlet, limped in leaning heavily on his walking stick.

Once he was settled everyone was allowed to sit again – and the show got under way.

"SILENCE," shouted the woman in the batman robe (even though the courtroom was so quiet that you could hear a pin drop). Put up the prisoner.

Shortly afterwards a nervous youth appeared in the dock accompanied by a stout prison warden.

He (Tommy Trunch) was charged that on 19th February last he assaulted Archibald Aylsham occasioning actual bodily harm, to wit a broken nose.

What happened next?

Was Sid appointed foreman of the jury

Did Sid, Fred and Alice fall out in the jury room?

Did Fred fall asleep?

Was Tommy guilty?

If you can stand the tension, read about what happened in the next issue of Harrowing Times....

For more silliness buy a copy of Richard's book [The Savage Poodle](#) (available on Amazon and has five star reviews) or listen to him every month on the Chrissie Jackson mid morning show on BBC Radio Norfolk (when he tries to be a little more sensible).