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Harrowing Times

July - August 2017

£1.50
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Smallholder Sid...

...and spam scam

The rain was coming down in torrents. It was challenging the ancient pantiles on the roof of the Cowpat and Fly.

Smallholder Sid and his retinue (Allotment Holder Alice and Farmer Fred) were sitting damply in a corner of the snug. In another corner a bucket had been placed to catch drips from the rain that had penetrated the pantiles. The conversation of the evening was about computers. Smallholder Sid was extolling the delights of his new computer.

"Well not exactly new, but it looks clean and I bought it for a tenner at a car boot sale. It works a treat and I have got all my records on it. I have given every single turnip a number and entered it on a spread wotsit."

"Sheet," said Alice.

"Don't be rude," muttered Fred drowsily. He had leaned over in his chair and seemed to be heading in the direction of Alice's not insubstantial body.

"I wasn't being rude. I said 'sheet' not the s word."

"'Sheet' is an S word," retorted Fred.

"Anyway," continued Sid, irritated that he was being interrupted yet again when all he wanted to do was talk and sip his pint of Old Fart. "Anyway, I've now got my bank details on there and I can even pay bills direct from my computer. Saves a lot of hassle. I don't have to wait to park in the market place in North Walsham any more. I can just sit at my keyboard and Bingo my bills get paid."

"You ought to watch that," warned Alice who was not going to boast but knew a thing about computers too as she had an Amstrad computer that was 30 years old and ran on steam, "there are scammers about who can get hold of your money if you are not careful."

"Oh I don't worry about that. Do you know just before I came out I had a call from a very nice lady from British Telecom. She had a bit of a foreign accent but from what I could make out I had a problem with my 'rooter' whatever that is. Anyway she said not to worry. If I crank up my computer she would sort it all out for me. I was in a rush so I left her to it and came here."

"YOU DID WHAT?" bellowed Alice so loudly that the rafters in the snug rattled, a small shower of water poured into the bucket in the corner and Fred was so startled that he tipped his Old Fart over Alice's lap.

"We need to get to your computer fast. You have been scammed."

"Why?" moaned Sid, "She was a very helpful lady. In fact I was hoping to stay in touch with her."

"One question: how much money is in your bank account?" asked Alice.

"Not much. £15,000 maybe."



It was unheard of but they left their Old Farts undrunk and poured out into the pouring rain. They piled into Fred's pickup and he drove them all flat out (well at 35 mph) to Chez Sid.

They dashed over to the apple box on which Sid's computer sat. There was an error message displayed: "incorrect password please try again."

"That's a rum 'un," said Sid. "I gave them my password. No wait. I changed it didn't I to one I could remember. Called after my favourite pig. Silly me. I had better enter it again."

"No you don't". Alice's large frame prevented Sid from getting anywhere near the keyboard. "You have just saved your own bacon. Now get that password changed again and don't give it out to anyone on the telephone however much you think you fancy them."

"Yes that's it," said Sid. That was the password: BACON. ♦

Serious legal note

By forgetting his password Sid managed not to lose his money. Do not be deceived. Scammers come in many disguises. Do not believe them if they say your computer (or even router) is at fault, or your bank needs to verify your account. Like as not they are dishonest people who want access to your account.

Also do not open emails that come from people you do not recognise, especially if they have attachments. These are people who want to steal from you. If it is genuine it will be sent again. Far better to delete a hundred genuine emails than open one fraudulent one that will mess up your computer or empty your bank account.

Banks are very reluctant to pay up if your money is taken from your account fraudulently (though personally I think they should bear some responsibility even if you are a Sid and are taken in by Siren voices from across the world), but it is better not to get yourself into that situation. ♦

By Richard Barr

For more of what he writes log onto www.richardbarrwriter.co.uk

Listen to him from time to time on BBC Radio Norfolk (the Chrissie Jackson show)



Norfolk Organic Group consists of about 130 gardeners, smallholders, farmers and other people interested in growing organically, using resources sustainably and generally living a green life. Membership is £15/annum and covers a varied monthly program of speakers, events and visits. We also publish a quarterly newsletter. Contact us on Facebook or via our website at www.norfolkorganic.org.uk



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