

## OH JUST LET THE POOR MAN SHOOT HIS BOW

The day hadn't started well, the B&B he had stayed at was inefficient and breakfast was cold, slow and unexciting. Arriving at the shooting ground hadn't helped, the car parking was badly organised and vehicles were parked all over the place, on verges, across pathways, indeed on any bit of free ground, level or otherwise. He was glad that he had brought the Range Rover and not one of the other cars.

The Admin arrangements left much to be desired and despite the friendliness that he had come to expect from Archers, the ladies in the admin caravan seemed to be, well how should he put it, "in a bit of a kerfuffle" as his old nanny would have said. Having been redirected from one queue to another, having waited ten minutes in the wrong one, he reached the window. Foreboding welled up in him, he just knew that the next question and its implications would cause more stress all round.

"Name" the voice in the window intoned, her stress levels already astronomical, she avoided the pleasantries of a "Good Morning".

"Mingus De-ell" he answered, already knowing what the reply would be. The lady made no immediate reply but turned her attention to a complex system composed of three box files and a card index, after three searches through each, and perhaps in response to the growing mumbles which signified growing disquiet of the archers in the queue behind him, she eventually turned back to the window, "Have you pre-registered?" "Yes Three weeks ago" he replied. Exasperatedly she responded "How do you spell that then"

Slowly, patiently and calmly, he spelled the letters one by one, as he had learnt from a very early age it was often necessary "M-E-N-Z-I-E-S --D-A-L-Z-I-E-L". The admin lady repeated the letters almost to herself, as she turned with a puzzled air back to the filing system. A few minutes passed in silence, except from the noises off from the queue, then her face creased in triumph, as he held up an index card "Ah ...men zays, dal zeel, here you are, group 8, start at peg 16" and handed him his score card. He was just about to turn away, when it came, the question he always dreaded, "Men zays, like the Newsagents, right ?, ..Dal Zeel, like that TV Cop ?"

A broken man, he just nodded and turned away, silently cursing his parents for their choice of first name to add to an already problematical surname.

It had to be admitted that they would never have thought of the trouble it might cause, and in the land of his birth, in the social circles of his family it was never an issue, but go out into the world and it was, especially when you came to an open shoot in the North Midlands whose accents and expressions were strange to him. He managed to decipher most of the accents, but still could not understand being addressed as 'duck'. Not that the North Midlands was alone for its strange ways of pronouncing aristocratic Scottish names, nor did it have a monopoly on generic appellations, Lowland Scotland for instance was prone to address everyone as 'hen', Cornwall had the perhaps dangerous tendency to address people as 'my lover' and in the NE 'hinny' was still to be encountered.

A person's name was of course especially dear to them, as Dale Carnegie, he of "Making friends and influencing people once wrote, "Nothing is sweeter to a person than the sound of his or her name" and thus he was forever condemned to having to spell his first and family names and to be compared to newsagents and fictional police officers, he paused and thought a thought that had never before occurred to him, that was whether the founder of the newspapers chain had the same problem and did his staff have to deal with it every day.

He Menzies (Mingus) didn't have any answer to the issue, he had tried on a few occasions to use his title but when you said you were a Laird that also provoked some discussion, and

explanations as to Laird being a Scots Lord .....and when he added that he was the Laird of **Garioch**, which is actually pronounced Geerie.....then all reasonable and normal conversations disappeared like a misshot arrow into the undergrowth.

It also raised the question as to why a Scottish Laird was here at all. Menzies had then to explain that whilst he was the Laird from somewhere in Aberdeenshire and that was his family estate, he also lived in Manchester and London and an apartment on the Cote d'Azur. It all rather got in the way of Archery, which was in fact why he was there. Even after explaining that *'yes he did shoot with guns sometimes'* as country gentlemen were supposed to he actually preferred the bow and arrow and that he enjoyed travelling to different places to shoot the paper targets and 3Ds in preference to real deer.

Field Archery was not a tradition in his Scottish world nor in the South of France, so it was during his time in the UK that he had time and opportunity to practice the art of shooting. In fact he was a keen archer and owned and used both a traditional long bow and a modern compound. The long bow had been hand made for him by his Gillie on the Garioch estate from wood from the estate, the compound was also hand or maybe machine crafted from the supplier in the USA to his exact specifications. Yes Menzies Dalziel was well connected and could afford the best but he didn't wish to put up barriers nor revisit the class struggle, especially in the company of ex miners from the Notts Coalfields, he just wanted to shoot.

He didn't care if he was any good, he didn't bother about the score, he liked the company, in that he liked to listen to the chat and maybe if he thought he could get away with it, make a few neutral, friendly comments himself. He liked visiting places he would otherwise never have seen and he looked forward to a hot bath and a nice meal at the end of the day when the archers had all dispersed, along with a glass of the single malt from his distillery, which reminded him, he better give a bottle to the organiser for the raffle before meeting his group.

Returning to the start point for the briefing after his errand, he checked who he was shooting with, a Joe, a Peter, an Amanda.....as the signal was given to form up, he decided on who he would be that day, he would use his middle name Callum, that is to say the Gaelic form of Malcolm.....or maybe he would just answer to anything and enjoy the archery.

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