



Colin's Blog

7th July 2017

A bridge over troubled water

Water is the staff of life, without it, we would not exist, and one can connect this very fact across and throughout every aspect of our daily lives.

The picture above shows water as being the essence of peace and tranquility, but, as we all know, water is not always calm. Many situations in life create ripples, that sometimes turn into waves, often escalating into storms, which can cause anxiety, stress, depression, or worse, to set in, and play havoc with the mind and our perception of the world around us.

I can only imagine the total hell, that victims and the families of the Glenfell Tower inferno have endured, and indeed, the distress, anxiety and concern that the tragedy has caused amongst the local community, and the worry that has spread to those residents far and wide, who are living in similarly clad tower blocks across the UK.

If anything could possibly come good out of such tragedy, then, it has at least, exposed, the utter folly of extreme cutbacks and cost cutting. I accept that those in power, who have to balance the books, have unenviable challenges, but, must never lose sight of the ultimate value of life.

Regardless of our political beliefs, we have witnessed the government, rightly, receiving a rebuke and a reality check at the last election, which has caused them to rethink the way ahead, and to realise, that austerity is all very well, but it should not be allowed to put our Emergency services, or indeed, many of the workers in the public sector, under so many financial constraints, without sufficient resources to carry out the work that they are tasked to do, effectively.

I am not a 'yes man,' and, now I have finally retired, I am even more determined to fight for 'sense and sensibility,' to return to the good people of our country, and indeed, throughout the UK.

When we see those in responsible positions, go off track, even sometimes, losing the plot, we need to stand up and be counted, and, try to steer them back on course.

There is no doubt, that, we have become a nanny state, affecting many aspects of our daily lives. How far should we allow this to continue?

Where possible, we need to encourage everyone in the community, to take responsibility for themselves and their actions, if they are fit and able to do so.

Like many of my readers, I could stand on my soapbox and rant on for ages, about the state of the nation, and indeed the world, but, I too, have other responsibilities, and I must return to them shortly.

Saturday 1st July, marked the start of the National Scam Awareness Month, and I am going to continue with this theme, throughout the month.

I have regularly expressed my disgust and sometimes disbelief, at the audacity of the low-life members of society to come up with, and carry out atrocious scams, which affect everyone in society, but often, particularly, concentrate on targeting the elderly and vulnerable members of our communities.

SPAM HITS THE NEWS



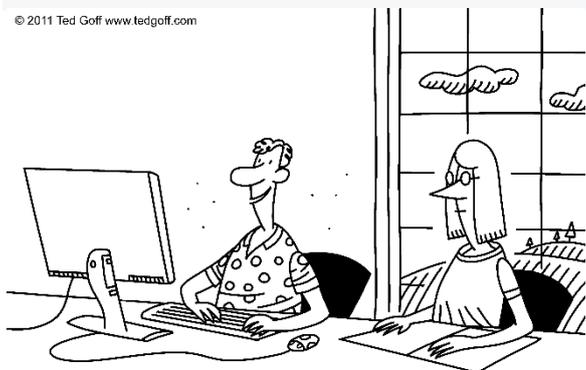
HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO 'SPAM!'

Now, here's a reality check, for many of you who are somewhat younger than me, and have never enjoyed the real wonders of SPAM especially as part of school dinners! Does anyone remember being fed 'SPAM FRITTERS'? I do.....

So, at least we can say that 'Spam is nothing new,' albeit now the name more commonly given to junk mail or malicious emails from nasty scammers!

Did you know, it's now 80 years since the legendary SPAM Chopped Pork and Ham was launched. Isn't it great to see it still has a place on the menu today?

© 2011 Ted Goff www.tedgoff.com



"Wow! I just won a big prize on the Internet and all I had to do was download something that made my computer freeze up!"

<https://takefive-stopfraud.org.uk/>





“If I can’t interest you in my new software, perhaps you’d like to buy the identities of the people who did buy my new software?”

“No, honest, I’m your new manager. You can give me all your passwords.”



Cyber attacks

An increasing concern to all governments around the world is the role of what is known as cyber-attacks. Cyber attacks occur when an individual or group of individuals hack into the computer system of a company, association or even government department and attempt to paralyse the system.

The motivation for carrying out a cyber attack can be vast; groups can range from those seeking information to sell on, to interest groups looking to bring down whole companies, and even terrorist groups looking to paralyse government departments. It is on account of the vast increases in cyber attacks in recent years that government spending has increased dramatically in a bid to protect national security information. Large companies have also increased their spending on computer protection systems as often the information they hold on their computers about their products or customers is the most valuable asset of their company. Computer hacking is illegal and carries severe penalties; it has increased dramatically over the last ten years and increasingly more groups, whether companies, governments, or even individuals are having to spend more money on computer defence systems as a result.

SOURCE: FINDLAW UK

The UK's biggest online legal information site, providing daily news, blogs, forums and articles to help you understand the law. FindLaw.co.uk is part of FindLaw.com, the world's leading provider of online legal information.

I recently accompanied my daughter to an internet safety audiovisual talk at my grandchildren primary school.

I was pleased to see two retired Essex Police detectives, who specialised in Child Protection, and indeed, also ran a training course which I attended when I was employed by Essex Police. They now have their own Security and Training company, and visit schools across Essex and beyond, opening the eyes of children, parents, carers, teachers, and indeed grandparents.

With children as young as reception and class one age and above, now quite savvy as to the world of computers, tablets and indeed, smartphones, we all need to be on the ball and to keep an eye on what children are accessing on the internet.



Having completed the Police Training course seemingly, only a few years ago, I was amazed, gobsmacked, and indeed concerned, as to how the nasty side of the worldwide web has advanced, and is now so prevalent, especially through social media, with many of the sites now honey traps, entrapping vulnerable children of all ages, and enticing them into the web of many paedophiles, who lay in wait for the unsuspecting surfer or chat room user. Social media has its good points, but, it is also a platform from which those who one could say, hover on the dark side of the web, ready to strike!

If, like me, you are concerned, or worried about children and young people, who are being put at risk as they use the internet, check out this website: -

<https://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/>

We cannot choose our colour,



Equality means dignity.
Martin Luther King

Creed or gender.

We need love and understanding,

In order to love and understand others.

SHOPPING SCAM

According to the Citizens Advice Bureau, The number of people shopping online who have been conned into buying Jewellery, electrical equipment and flights that don't exist, is rocketing. Apparently, the CB were contacted by 555 victims of 'Phantom Goods Scams,' in the first three months of the year, averaging out to each person losing £1,100.



A report by the National Audit Office states that Banks are sitting on around £130million pounds of cash that has been seized from fraudsters, but has not been traced back and refunded to victims.

They say that, in their opinion, Police, Government and the banking industry are not doing enough to prevent scams!

CHARITIES IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Like many people, I choose to donate to a few of my favourite charities, on a monthly basis. I believe that, whilst I can, the small amounts that I donate, will help.

I do this, of my own free will, but nothing annoys me more, than to receive a call from a fundraising agency contracted by a charity, with the aim of pressurising me to donate more.

My response is to say that: "I give what I can, to several charities of my choice each month. If you are not happy with this, then I will cancel my direct debit to the charity that you are canvassing for!" I refuse to be hassled into parting with my pension!

Well, in the news this week, charities that pester the public will face fines of up to £25,000. The Fundraising Preference Service has been launched this week, and as a regulatory body, they will be able to call for huge penalties against charities that ignore demands to stop fundraising messages by phone, text, mail or email.

Speaking as someone who spent seven years as a County Fundraising Manager for a National charity. I consider this to be long overdue!

The Daily Mail published a big article on this, last Wednesday: -

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/money/markets/article-4665706/Now-finally-banish-charity-junk-mail.html?ITO=1490>

Royal Mail recently announced that it has successfully stopped one million scam mail items from reaching UK homes since the launch of its latest drive against fraudsters in November.

The impounded scam mail is currently being stored in a secure warehouse in an undisclosed location before it is destroyed by trained operatives.

"We are working hard to try and stop this terrible material from reaching UK households," said Stephen Agar, Managing Director of Letters at Royal Mail. "Every item of scam mail, however, is one item too many. We continue to fight against the fraudsters who cause so much misery."

Consumer Minister Margot James said: "Since the industry roundtable I hosted last year, Royal Mail has been ramping up its efforts to protect vulnerable consumers from receiving scam mail. Stopping a million items since November is a significant milestone. These scams can have a devastating impact on those affected, and that is why this government is committed to ensuring that action is taken."

Louise Baxter, Team Manager, National Trading Standards Scams Team, said: "Mail scams tend to target vulnerable individuals such as older people living alone or people living with a health condition or disability. As well as leaving people out of pocket – we estimate that £5-10 billion is lost to scams each year in the UK – victims

are often left feeling a sense of shame and social isolation. That's why we're working so hard with Royal Mail to help identify fraudulent mail to stop it from reaching households in the first place."

The million-item milestone follows the launch of several new initiatives aimed at protecting consumers from scam mail which can include invitations to participate in lotteries with fake prizes and letters from "clairvoyants".

In November, Royal Mail announced the co-ordination of an industry-wide response to tackle fraudulent mail at its source including the launch of an industry-wide code of practice, developed by Royal Mail and supported by firms including Whistl and UK Mail.

In March, Royal Mail announced changes to the terms and conditions governing bulk mail contracts. The changes enabled Royal Mail to follow up on solid intelligence by refusing to carry mail that is suspected to be fraudulent.

In April, Royal Mail began proactively contacting by Special Delivery households receiving high volumes of scam mail. Under the initiative Royal Mail blocks and impounds scam mail at its major distribution centres before it reaches the customer's letterbox. Legitimate business and personal mail continue to be delivered to the customer in the usual way.

Impacted customers are able to contact a dedicated Royal Mail helpline, email or Freepost address for more information if they have any concerns.

These recent initiatives build on work Royal Mail has already done in tandem with the National Trading Standards Scams Team to protect its customers from fraudulent items of mail. In 2014, the company set up a joint initiative with the National Trading Standards Scams Team introducing a new process for terminating the mailings of companies that send fraudulent mail. This resulted in thousands of frontline workers being trained on how to identify scam mail and spot potential victims of scam mail.



DRONING ON

Drones continue to pose a danger to aircraft, with at least one near miss or dangerous incident reported every week.

More on this next week.....