

Now John will sleep with his car keys

By Fiona Smith

JOHN MacKENZIE, from Milngavie, recently bought a new Audi sports car and was extolling the virtues of his classy motor to a friend over lunch last week.

His pal was suitably impressed . . . but pursed his lips. He didn't want to take the gloss off John's story, he said, but there might be a downside to having top-of-the-range wheels.

He then told John about a mutual friend whose house was recently broken into.

At first it didn't look as if anything had been stolen — until he went to get his car out of the garage.

The keys weren't on the hall table where he'd left them. And, sure enough, the fancy car wasn't in the garage.

The burglars had raided the house solely to pinch his car keys.

Targeted

John was shocked. Was this a one-off? Or are owners of expensive cars now being targeted in their homes?

Well, the bad news is that "true key theft", as it's known, is a big problem.

Since the end of June there have been 120 cases in the Strathclyde Police area. With total car thefts since July at 446 that's almost a quarter.

And it's not always fancy cars — recent targets include a £50,000 Mercedes, 4x4s, BMWs and Lexus, but Vauxhall Corsas have also been nicked.

Stolen

The cars have been stolen from all over Glasgow, its suburbs and more rural areas, often while owners were asleep.

They're sold on with minor changes, often to unsuspecting members of the public.

Police say true key theft is becoming more common because it's harder for thieves to bypass immobilisers and other alarms. It's easier to break into houses and get the keys.

Sergeant Callum Crawford of Strathclyde Police's stolen vehicle unit said, "We're all guilty of coming home and putting our car keys on a table or kitchen worktop. I've done it myself."

"Before we know it we're distracted by the TV or the kids and the keys lie there all night."

"It's worth keeping them somewhere like the bedroom. If a thief does get in he'll have a quick look round then get out, not wanting to disturb the owner."

Good news

Good news is several major insurance companies tell us they will pay out if car keys are stolen in a break-in — it's only if they're left in or near the car there might be a problem.

But on the other side of the coin, Sgt Crawford warns that if you find you've unwittingly bought a stolen car it will be re-united with the original owner and your insurance won't pay.

He advises speaking to your local crime prevention officer if you're worried.

But from now on John will be taking his car keys to bed.

Linda thought her rings had gone for ever

By Steven Bowron

LINDA MacISAAC, from Skeabost Bridge on Skye, went to the island's music festival in June.

It was held on Broadford airstrip, on one of the wettest days of the year. She and her friend Louise were in the main tent where a band called The Cuban Brothers were playing.

The pair started dancing away and, at one point, linked arms to birl each other round and round. But if Linda felt giddy from all the spinning, she was soon feeling sick when she realised her wedding and engagement rings were suddenly flying through the air, into the crowd.

The earlier soaking must have made her fingers so slippery the rings came off as if greased.

Revellers

Linda saw where they'd headed and pushed her way past other revellers to retrieve them. But there was no sign of the rings on the wet dirt floor.

Frantically she scabbled around, pleading with friends and others in the audience to help.

In the end, she spent two hours searching, in vain. Distraught, Linda spent the rest of the night at home crying her eyes out over the loss.

What made it particularly upsetting was that she had designed the white gold diamond solitaire engagement ring herself after a previous one from her husband Alasdair had been broken — she'd been popping letters in a postbox when her ring got caught and the stone had come away from the band.

Linda made sure it couldn't happen



again by having the stone in the new one sunk deep into the setting. As for the wedding ring, it wasn't even a year old.

Despite returning several times to search, Linda finally gave up hope of seeing her rings again.

The other day, however, Linda and Alasdair took a call from Peter Rodgerson, a client of their flooring and interior furnishings business.

He'd been along to the festival site a few times with his metal detector to see if he could pick up anything that might be worth a few bob.

Not only had he netted about £40 worth of coins but, to Linda's astonishment and delight, he'd also turned up her precious jewellery, which he knew she'd lost.

The detector's beeps had come at almost exactly the spot where Linda had been searching — but the rings had been trampled under mud.

They were so thick with dirt they had to be sent away for specialist cleaning.

Linda only got them back on Thursday. And the timing couldn't have been better as today is her 30th birthday — and their return is one of the best presents she could have wished for.

Your gut is a tough cookie

by the doc

THE COLLECTIVE sigh of parental relief that greets the children's return to school is echoed in GPs' surgeries across the land.

Because the longer the summer holidays go on, the more ways bored youngsters find to get themselves into bother.

Last week some six and seven-year-olds foolishly decided it would be fun to play that old funfair game of trying to throw a ball into a clown's gaping mouth.

Except, of course, they used coins and each other's mouths. You can guess what happened. No-one choked, but one wee lad swallowed a penny. He spent it again in a day or so, but not before his mum had whipped him down to the surgery, worried he'd damage his insides.

Remarkable

Luckily, the gut — as we prefer to call the "insides" — is a pretty tough cookie. The one potential problem area for foreign bodies is the narrowest point, at the exit from the stomach. A small, smooth coin, though, should barely touch the sides.

How long it takes to get out depends on how often the host goes to the toilet. But on its way it'll pass through one of the most remarkable of the body's organs.

For most folk, "gut" is just another word for the stomach. But for medics it's the 30 feet of continuous tubing that runs from your gullet to your backside.

Yes, 30 feet. And some bits can get bigger, like the stomach with its expandable four-litre storage capacity, and the small intestine, which in size is akin to the Tardis.

Amazing sight of grieving elephants

SHOWING compassion and grief are part of what it is to be human. But when these qualities are seen in another species, must we conclude that human beings are not the only beings on the planet?

in my view

By Ian Redmond
The Born Free Foundation



■ An elephant mourns Eleanor's corpse in this picture by Shivani Bhalla of Save The Elephants.

A mother named Eleanor was bitten by a snake in northern Kenya recently. Her friend Grace tried to help her to her feet and comfort her but, sadly, after a painful night she died.

Every afternoon for a week Maya, a close family member, returned to stand near Eleanor's body, while other members of their wider community travelled miles just to touch the body or stand nearby, rocking quietly.

These moving scenes would be considered normal, if tragic, in any human community. But Eleanor, Grace and Maya are elephants. And these observations, captured on film by scientists, form the most detailed account yet of this extraordinarily human-like behaviour.

Satellite

Not only were the events leading up to, and after, the death of Eleanor observed at the site where she died, three of the five families that visited the body were also being tracked by satellite.

Some of them had been fitted with hi-tech GPS collars. These use the same technology that allows police to track stolen top-of-the-range cars, so the scientists knew exactly where those individuals were in relation to the fallen matriarch.

Every evening they moved up to eight kilometres away to search for

food, but day after day they returned by the following noon to continue their vigil.

Interestingly, not all the elephants involved were in Eleanor's family group, yet they showed genuine concern for her suffering and untimely demise.

Dr Iain Douglas-Hamilton, founder of Save the Elephants, and his colleagues have been studying these giant animals in Samburu National Park for almost a decade. He has pioneered the use of satellite tracking for conservation and research purposes, and written best-selling books and many scientific papers.

But these images of elephants showing compassion for the sick, and grieving for the dead, speak louder than any words. They raise profound ethical questions about how we treat them.

Anecdotes of the fascination shown by elephants for their dead (and curiously for human bodies they come across too, but not for other species) have been told for centuries.

I witnessed this behaviour myself a few years ago in Amboseli National Park, with an elephant speared by Maasai warriors.

The decomposing body lay at the centre of a web of fresh elephant trails, indicating many groups had arrived at this spot from all points of

the compass. One of the tusks had been drawn out of its socket and I circled around until I found it in long grass 15 paces away.

Suddenly a large tusker arrived and we backed off to give him space. He slowly approached the body, trunk tip hovering over the different parts, emitting barely audible rumbles.

Barely audible to human ears, perhaps, but elephants call in infra-sound — below the range of human hearing — and so he may have been communicating with other elephants miles away.

Scent trail

With trunk extended, he followed my exact scent trail to the tusk and seemed to be considering this information — which made me wonder, how do elephants, with their brain four times the size of ours, interpret the human obsession with their front teeth?

The lust for ivory jewellery, ornaments, billiard balls and piano keys has seen elephant numbers dwindle. And yet paradoxically, over the same period, researchers have revealed more and more about the

complexity of their society, the depths of their cognitive powers and self awareness, and now their compassion.

The debate about re-opening the ivory trade will again be on the agenda at next year's Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species.

Elephants are still chained to the floor in lorries and driven around to appear in circuses, shows and TV ads. Others still live out lives of endless tedium in zoo compounds.

Perhaps these remarkable photographs of elephants demonstrating such human behaviour might lead those who hold their future in their hands, to treat them with more of the respect they so clearly deserve.

To find out more about helping humans and elephants to co-exist in peace, visit www.bornfree.org.uk/elefriends and www.savetheelephant.org

■ Ian Redmond OBE studied the famous cave elephants of Mt Elgon, Kenya, and, following their slaughter by ivory poachers, co-founded Elefriends.

Catriona has painted her way to fame



■ Catriona shows off some of her work.

By Iain Harrison

CATRIONA MILLER, from Udney in Aberdeenshire, first realised she had a talent for art during a primary school trip to Glasgow's Kelvingrove Art Gallery in the 1960s.

A decade later she won a scholarship to study at an art school in the north of England. But other things took precedence in her life and Catriona left college to start a family with her husband Roddy.

Over the years she continued to paint at home but she always had a hankering to go back to university. She finally achieved her dream in 2001 when she was offered a place at the renowned Gray's School of Art in Aberdeen.

With her two boys, Richard and Adam, grown up, Catriona pledged to take her studies seriously. Her ambition was to become an art teacher but, during her four-year degree course, she and her fellow students also often joked about making it big in the art world.

London collectors

One of these days, they'd quip, their paintings would attract the attention of some of London's major collectors.

At the end of the course the graduates displayed their work as part of an exhibition at Robert Gordon University.

Catriona's figurative paintings, in particular, went down a storm and she won a great deal of critical

acclaim locally. In fact, so many people bought her colourful creations she was able to build a made-to-measure studio in her garden.

Since then she has gone from strength to strength. Exhibitions of her work have regularly sold out and her oil paintings have attracted lots of plaudits across Scotland.

But it seems word of her talent has also spread south. Because, last month, Catriona received a note from one of the most famous art collectors in the world — Charles Saatchi.

Advertising guru

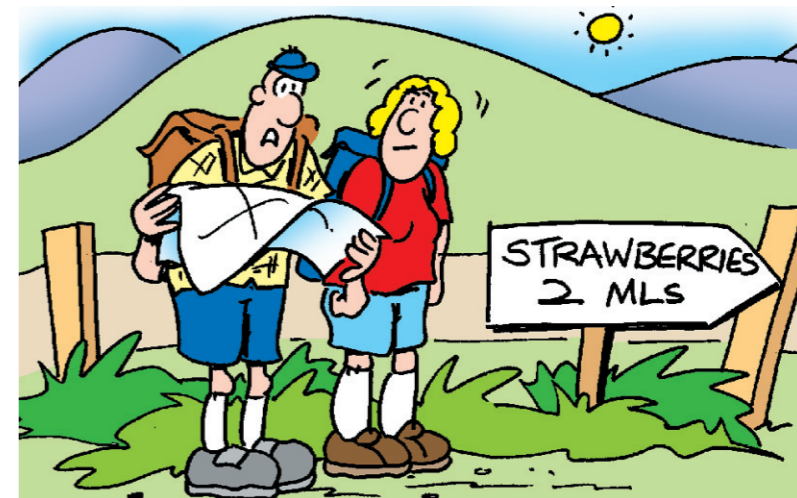
In what she described as a "very informal e-mail" the multi-millionaire advertising guru said he enjoyed showcasing little-known artists — and he wanted to feature her work on his famous London gallery's website.

Catriona is absolutely thrilled her paintings are now being displayed alongside masterpieces by some of the world's most talented young painters.

But she insists her new-found fame won't go to her head, because she simply doesn't have the time.

There's now so much interest in her work she's spending almost every waking hour in her studio trying to keep up with demand.

■ You can view Catriona's creations at the Riverside Gallery in Stonehaven and the Homes & Interiors Exhibition at the SECC in Glasgow on September 9/10.



"It's not even on the map!"

How did she go past overdraft limit?

By Bill Hicks

CLAIRE FEELEY, from Paisley, has a TSB current account with an overdraft facility of £200.

A couple of weeks ago she did some shopping in a supermarket that cost her £109.78. Next day she spent £4.03 and, the day after, another £19.45.

Claire used her debit card each time — but didn't realise the first purchase had taken her past her overdraft limit.

First she knew when she got a letter from Lloyds TSB saying she'd gone £27.58 over, and they were charging her £30.

Problem

Her branch told her the problem was those three transactions she'd made, and that confused her.

If she's at a cash machine and the amount she wants to take out will put her past her overdraft limit, the machine tells her and won't let her do it.

So why did the same thing not happen at the checkout?

Bizarrely, Claire was told her transactions had been allowed to save her embarrassment at being refused payment in front of other customers.

She didn't buy that for a minute, and even if it was true she would rather have been embarrassed than charged £30 for being overdrawn, something she's never been in 24 years as a TSB customer.

She reckons that if banks can prevent customers overdrawing at their ATMs surely they can do it at checkouts too?

Connected

Well, it's true that shop checkouts are connected to banks, but unlike cash machines they don't belong to the banks.

The Association for Payment Clearance Services and Lloyds TSB both say it depends on the system the shop uses for card transactions.

Often it's only if a transaction is above a certain amount that a checkout will connect to the customer's bank, so if the purchases are relatively small the fact they'll breach the overdraft limit might not show up.

APACS also pointed out that some transactions might not be processed until overnight, but many are authorised at the time and if the amount is unusually large compared with the customer's normal purchases, it might be stopped as a means to cut down potential fraud.

Direct contact

But with Claire's later purchases being for small amounts, that wouldn't have happened.

The bottom line is that when you're using a hole in the wall you're in direct contact with your bank, but in a shop there's a middle man, so it's down to you to make sure you know how much money is in your account — maybe by checking at an ATM before you start shopping.

However, the good news for Claire is that Lloyds TSB were so sad to hear of their loyal customer's distress they've waived her £30 charge.



■ Andrew hands over the keys to John Murphy.

Dilemma for Dalrymple's Post Office dynasty

By Sarah Johnson

WHEN ANDREW GRANT was a boy he loved helping his dad, James, in the family business in Dalrymple, Ayrshire.

Ever since his great-grandfather, also called James, opened the premises in 1888 the Grant name had remained above the door of the Dalrymple Post Office and General Store.

And Andrew knew that one day, when he grew up, he would follow in their footsteps.

His great-grandfather, grandfather Andrew and dad were all tailors to trade and when the business first opened it was two shops — one a grocer's, the other a tailor's.

As the years went by the tailoring business fell off, so it became a post office in 1952. But the general store continued to be a place for folk to get together and have a chat as well as to do their shopping.

The family remained at the heart of the community, even after Andrew's father's sudden death in 1957. His wife,

Christina, took over and 10 years later, after working for seven years as an electrician, Andrew did the same when she retired.

With his great-grandfather's name engraved on the glass panel in the front door — where it still remains today — the Grant family was etched into the history of the store.

And outside, above the shop, the name CL Grant — in memory of his mum, Christina — remained.

Nearly 40 years later, Andrew, now 61, has seen many changes in his home town and the running of the post office, working tirelessly at the counter to keep the business thriving like it always did. So when he decided to retire earlier this year, he was left with a dilemma.

With two grown-up daughters, Allison (27) and Julie (25), having successful careers, one as a radiographer and the other in marketing, there was no one to carry on the family tradition.

After many sleepless nights Andrew realised there was only one option — to sell.

Putting the business on the market was a poignant and heart-rending moment. In fact Andrew often came close to changing his mind over the following weeks.

But Dalrymple Post Office and General Store is so popular there was plenty of interest in the business. Andrew kept a stiff upper lip and sold it to local man John Murphy.

Last week, 118 years and four generations after James Grant first opened the doors to the store, his great-grandson, handed the keys over to a new family to begin a new dynasty.

Customers and staff say Andrew will be sorely missed but they won't forget their old post-master.

And with Andrew and his wife, Eileen, staying in the village he'll never be too far away to offer help to the new owners and have a friendly chat with old friends.