



# The Fitz Files

DEVON'S TREASURED BROADCASTING LEGEND DAVID FITZGERALD SHARES STORIES OLD AND NEW WITH READERS

## Crossed wires, duvet disaster, clock fire and ancestry shocks

AS a 'master of communication,' for the past week I have been communicating... masterfully.

On Monday I sent a text to 'farmer Rob' who supplies me with eggs, not only for the family but also for the food bank which operates locally. I needed to order ten dozen and called him up.

Delivery was sorted, payment was made, I would see him in a few hours. About 30 minutes later it dawned on me that I was heading for a meeting and would now be out of the house at the time when I had arranged for Rob to pop round. So, I texted him a simple message: "Off to Torquay, can you shove the eggs in the garage please."

About an hour later I got a message back from a dear old friend of mine who wished me all the luck in the world on the journey to Torquay and that he would have been delighted to deliver 120 eggs but he was on stage in London. The message I sent was to the actor Rob Daws, star of *Jeeves and Wooster*, playing Tuppy Glossop, plus *Outside Edge*, *Father Brown* and *The Sister Boniface Mysteries*... to mention but a few ... and not Rob Davies, purveyor of fine eggs and kiln dried wood!

Next, I decided to have a slight clear out of the house having just watched *Sort Your Life Out with Stacey Solomon*, the best piece of television for many a year. This action was endorsed fully by Mrs FitzGerald as recently I wandered off to have a haircut and came home with a scale model of a sailing ship and two ostrich eggs.

She claims I am a hoarder, I say collector. She joined in the clearance with great gusto and soon the dining room table became the collection point for jettisoned 'tut'. Books, drinking glasses, coffee mugs, clothes that would not fit the cat let alone me, were all dumped in piles plus a selection of old duvets.

In a matter of minutes, it started to look like the central section of one of those German owned supermarkets where you can buy a six-litre bucket of mayonnaise, an avocado and an inflatable sloth... (No... really... last season they were selling inflatable sloths... they have been replaced by unicorns this year).

Don't get me wrong, I love these supermarkets, I have recently pur-

chased... a neither imperial nor metric set of socket spanners to remove the air filter on a 1971 Trabant, a bargain at £9.99. It is also a real boost to my self-esteem as I've noticed when I am in there, I am never the fattest or the worst dressed.

"Wouldn't it be nice to donate the duvets to a local animal shelter," said my wife, which was a fantastic idea.

I should have packed them into the car at that point but as ever I got distracted as I had found a large pack of scented tea lights left over from Christmas 2009. After scattering them around the house, there was plenty of fresh space and I returned to the fly tipping in the dining room about 20 minutes later. Bundling up two duvets, I drove to my local animal shelter who were overjoyed to see the donation, as was Hector and his brother, two very elderly greyhounds.

Coming back home I had that wonderful warm feeling that I had done something useful for once... it was short lived. As I walked back into the freshly cleansed house, I noticed it was a little smokey as I had left a tea light burning on the mantelpiece which had set fire to the clock and the fireplace. At that point Mrs F emerged from the smoke filled fly tipping room to inform me that I had just taken two brand new duvets and left the old ones where she had placed them to be delivered to the animal shelter. There then followed quite a strong lecture which I thought was a little unfair as I pointed out that on the bright side, the brand new 12 tog duvets were now two dog duvets and best of all... were not smoke damaged.



Fitz has been getting into a tangle with technology, resulting in actor Rob Daws, star of *Jeeves and Wooster*, pictured below, receiving a request for ten dozen eggs. A house clear-out ended with Fitz setting fire to a clock and fireplace, below



I was sent to my office and told to do something useful so decided to catch up on emails which is when I noticed that my phone had a brand new programme download on the email system. Gone was the strangely useful sorted by date and subject, replaced by what appeared to be grouping messages by flavour and/or the emotional mood of the sender in pretty columns of four, as opposed to the totally confusing... "Here is your latest email".

When I did finally get something that I recognised, it came from a family tree site which I have been researching. The FitzGerald family have a long pedigree in Ireland, titles, land, castles and great political stature. That is at least one side of the family. In researching mine I have found that the paperwork was not kept, destroyed or used for other purposes. There was also a need for some members of my family to bend the truth a little in order to... stay one step ahead of the authorities.

In my initial enquiries I have discovered that both my grandfather and grandmother have two birth dates but no birth certificates. My grandfather is listed as a retired stockbroker in 1911 and a retired civil engineer in 1921. They were married... just not to each other! When they did change that status and finally got spliced, the addresses they gave as their residences are in fact part of the central reservation of a road in south London. The buildings were demolished in 1900, they got married in 1926... it seems nobody bothered to check.

The only certainty I came across in a family search is of my great aunt Ellen FitzGerald and my great aunt Maureen Ryan. We can thank the Irish prison system for keeping detailed records, so I easily found that Ellen was in for six months for prostitution and Maureen was keeping her company in the same prison under a charge for alcoholism and neglect. As far as I can see there have been no transportations or executions... yet.

Desperate for some semblance of dignity in my ancestry, I had checked my mother's side in the same email. Up popped one of the richest men in London in 1763, my great grandfather times five, who had made his money in whaling, not a great boast as a member of Friends of the Earth! I also noticed that his granddaughter times three died in the workhouse in 1926, placed there aged 72 as she had dementia, a sad indictment on society of the time.

However, suddenly a war survivor popped up, a London Regiment document of a distant cousin of my mother who had joined in 1914 and made it all the way through to August 1918. Had he fallen at Marne or Cambrai... hit by gas or bullet... no! By a lorry. He was run over near Chelsea barracks.

I hope you get to read this, I am about to email it to... somebody!