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He is also village care taker in H.rose  
He knows all about clearing up other peoples' shit

## ~~The Story of How John M Shat in my Shed~~

The story begins when we started having conflicts with John Martin the Sheffield Allotments Officer, a number of years ago.

We have in fact known each other nearly 15 years from when Richard and I approached the council about a change in use for an area of allotments that had long since been abandoned. \*15 years on the site is still abandoned. The story then from John Martin and the Planning Officer we arranged to meet was that if we had good suggestion we would also need some organisation behind us and funding proposals. That lay for a long time and Richard and I eventually moved onto other projects. By such seeds much else flows.

Almost 10 years from that time both Richard and I had our own organisations with strong interests in the allotments, With Richard it was many diverse growing projects and for me it was waste disposal systems compatible with typical allotment activities, notably composting. The scale of composting undertaken by SOFI (5 tons of leaves annually and RECYC 25 tons of compost annually on its 3 allotment sites).

However we never got any encouragement from the Council and sometime obstructive. We assert that all these activities benefited the allotments generally and we seldom received any complaints and none were substantive. We took the rules and more importantly the principles of the allotments to heart.

There came a time when the tenancy of an allotment held by a friend called John Mortimer was threatened with eviction. The allotment site was a shared project like so many others on the sites. In disputed circumstances, the allotment was lost and John Mortimer didn't want to pursue the matter. This whole episode on top of previous disputes bothered a few of us and I wrote a poem about it. By happenstance I could write about John M and John M having a verbal dispute about keeping unfeasible rules and they both 'lose the plot' as it were.. Months went by and I produced a small booklet of poems with that unnamed poem in it.

Some months after that I heard that a BBC film crew with Monty Don was coming to film on our allotment site everyone would have been very excited. The reason being that our site on Marsh Lane was a good example for the city. Many people were busy like I was tidying up their plot. Our plot is open with no locks on the gate or shed. In the middle of the shed I placed 3 booklets of Poems for Friends under a poster of Monty Don I kept from the days I was employed to promote composting.

When I next returned some days later I was told that my allotment was filmed for the program and perhaps even a mention of my glorious Gooseberry Bush. My neighbour Bernard was the star performer as he showed off his Kalaloo and sweet potatoes. A very big moment for him. I however was greeted on my allotment site by the sight of my bright yellow booklets smeared into a big shit on the middle of a chair in the shed. The smell of shit was very strong as it was a few days in the hot sun. Still wet enough to make the thought of disposal, revolting. I showed Bernard and Steve who were with me to confirm that it could not be an act of a drunkard, vandal or animal.

I lit a fire outside the shed and I burnt the lot, chair and all and it was all ashes in a few hours.

I believe it was a statement. Nothing else was touched and there was no other indication of any wonton acts.

Now, I must think who would do this? What message am I to get? After a few days after talking to some friends about this I phoned the police. (Crime Number 1305). I didn't share my suspicions except to say that such acts could be repeated in more dangerous ways and nobody should be going around shitting on shed furnishings to intimidate people. I would report the incident to the Officer in charge of Allotments but He is the one who is most likely to have done this.

I have felt in the last few days that I would find it extremely hard to accuse him and maybe he knows this but I believe I know a few other things about the person who did this. I don't think it is the act of a person who had premeditated this. The shit would have been a spur of the moment thought by someone in a particular mood resulting in this obscene act.

I believe the poem damns John Martin and I wouldn't mind if he read the poem. I also don't think he would like it seen in print.

I had a chance to see him at the Department of Environment and Leisure Scrutiny Committee a few days later. I had previously shared my concerns to Bernard Little, the Green Party Councillor, and we were both able to sit and observe the Cttee. while they discussed allotment management proposals. I wanted badly to present John Martin with an edition of Poems for Friends but I felt I could not do it in the end. He did know I was there and he never made eye contact. I had had some advice to do nothing in these situations 'it's what they don't want'. I also feel that the poem has more power in it that I expected. The next day I distributed the poem to the pigeon holes of the Councillors on the Scrutiny Panel.

At the moment I am planning to reprint the poem and distribute it as posters at various allotment sites around the city.  
It is not about fair comment because it is about my friend John losing his allotment and his many trees in an arbitrary fashion and that's simply not right.

And all that was in part because of what has been growing into a serious feud outside any standard rules of behaviour.

So here's the Poem:

Johnny, Johnny, Quite Arbitrary,  
How does your garden grow?  
Some you like and some you don't,  
But mostly we don't know.

John M John M; You've lost the plot.  
How high should privet grow?  
The rule states 5 feet high  
"...But also 5 feet low."

John M, John M, Quite Arbitrary  
How can we keep the rules,  
Draughted in 1908.  
You must think we're fools.

John M, John M, ...about these Trees.  
Everyone has got them growing.  
'Your position is untenable.  
Its time you should be going.'

Barry New Feb 5 2006

