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A murmur - on the use of language

I WAS expected to walk around the outside of the factory to get to my office. However, the most direct route was straight across the factory floor, so I always took it.

I felt that, by shunning the orthodox, I showed myself to be a fellow who was bursting with executive energy.

At the corner of the middle rank of machines on the shop floor, near to the glass box in which my desk sat, stood a machine that churned out endless fur-longs of flue liner.

In charge of this monster, and feeding it with stacks of metal foil, day after day, was a very tall man of Afro-Caribbean extraction.

Dave's hours were long. He'd be standing in place when I arrived early and he would still be there if I left late in the evening. After a week or two, we descended to nod to each other as I strode past his territory.

One morning I noticed a Gunn and Moor cricket bat resting against Dave's machine. I always bought G&M for my own use, and this one looked very fine

indeed, with a straight grain and a pristine blade.

I gestured that I would like to heft it, to feel its balance. He nodded and grinned. I went through the ritual, then replaced the beautiful artefact, and yelled through the noise... 'It's a very good bat, I wish you many runs with it!'

As I was turning away, he tapped me on the shoulder. 'You want a bet on the game?'

'Huh?' I gargled, trying to think. To which game did he refer?

'West Indies, man!' he said, with reverence in his voice.

His was a justifiable reverence, too. Those were the days, in the mid to late seventies, when Holding and Garner, Richards and Lloyd were in their pomp. They were part of the finest team that ever graced the playing fields of the English-speaking world.

'...er, OK..' I said, entering into a state of prayer for torrential rain, or for a severe head cold to strike down at least two of the 'fearsome foursome'.

'I'll have a quid on it with you...' I added quickly, lest he suggest a fiver.

We ended up betting a quid on every international cricket match for more than a year.

It was, within the limits of our shared interest, an odd sort of friendship. I would congratulate Dave when the local paper recorded his high scores, which it regularly did, and he would just as regularly shake his head sadly at my own efforts.

But the crux of this little tale is the exchange of cash. Whenever I passed his station he would rub his thumb across the tips of his first two fingers in the universal sign for payment due, and mouth the words... 'Give me your money, h*nkny!!'

To which I would invariably reply with the two-fingered gesture made famous by the English archers of old, and with the words, sometimes audible if I was near to his machine, 'Up yours, you *****'

The money almost

always passed from me to him. In the 12 month period, which contained at least two test series and many ODIs, Dave doubtless came to treat me as a reliable source of additional income.

By the end, I estimated that I had paid for at least 75 per cent of his Gunn and Moor bat.

In the inevitable course of things, my office was moved to another place, and Dave's familiar gesture became an amusing memory.

It is hard to imagine that an amicable enmity such as ours, and in particular our crude expression of it, would be permitted these days. We'd both be locked up, I expect.

I can truthfully state that, each time I handed over a pound, with the words 'Here you are, you ***** so-and-so', I acknowledged that Dave had the resilience, the generosity of spirit, the strength of character, and the sense of humour, not to

take offence at mere words.

'Thank you, h*nkny,' (or, on the rare occasions when he handed me a quid, 'Here you are, you *****d') he'd say, and grin at me - returning the compliment.

It seems that the modern policing of language implies a woeful expectation that certain groups are incapable of possessing the strength required to stand up for themselves, and thereby to give back as good as they get.

The thought-police imply that such groups are somehow less than capable; that they are folk who cannot be anything but dreadfully damaged when someone says boo in their presence.

This is a gross injustice to them. I have more respect for my fellow human beings than that.

Words cannot create malice, any more than malice can be rendered sweet by the use of sweet words.

Simon Turnbull

Looking for a new computer?

AS Christmas is fast approaching, I thought now would be a good time to provide a round up of what is considered a reasonable specification for a computer at the moment.

I know it's a daunting process, with all the options, add-ons and upgrades available, but to go with a little knowledge in hand will take some of the stress out of the process.

One of the first things to remember is that computers have never been cheaper, and even a year or two ago you would have had to spend almost twice the money to get anywhere near the specification of today's machines.

Things have slowed down to some extent in the computer world in the last 12 months. Processors are faster, but not significantly so, and that's partly because the software has not been around to take advantage.

Until Windows Vista comes out, theoretically sometime late next year, there isn't the need for much more computing power for most people.

Most people measure a computers performance by the speed of the main processor, which is expressed in 'Ghz'. So is a 3Ghz machine 50 per cent faster than a 2Ghz machine? Well, yes and no.

If all you were doing was mathematical calculations, then yes the machine would be approximately 50 per cent faster, but very few people do that.

Most people are reading and writing files from the hard drive, documents, pictures and the like, and in this instance the hard drive and memory components have a pretty large effect on overall performance.

Without a corresponding upgrade in

those components, the machine won't benefit from the faster processor as much as you'd like.

The processor however is usually responsible for a large percentage of the overall machine price, sometimes as much as 50 per cent. By choosing a slightly slower processor, you have plenty of money to spend on extra memory and disk, which are the things generally that will increase the relative performance.

My advice is that you should look for machines with at least a 2.4Ghz processor, 512mb of memory, and 100Gb of hard drive storage.

If it was a choice between a 3Ghz processor and 1024mb of memory, I'd take the memory. In fact, you'd probably save enough for 2048mb of memory (although you might not make much use of that much). You'd be looking to spend around the £600-700 price range for that specification.

If you are interested in PC gaming, photo editing or video editing (even just home movies), you'll want to put more memory, hard drive space and possible graphic card specification high on your list of priorities.

Laptops are a much harder choice. You've got additional factors such as weight and battery life to consider, and these are probably going to be more important than the raw specification of the machine.

Laptops are always a compromise, even if you've got unlimited funds. How much you'll carry it around, will you use the battery or mains, and what you want to do on it are all important factors and much more difficult to summarise here.

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SPORT

Wiveliscombe Cricket Club

THE 1st XI under the leadership of Derek Sharland has had quite a good season in Division Four of the West Somerset Cricket League - we shall finish mid-table.

A mixture of youth and experience has produced some good results, winning games against Brompton Ralph 2nds, Fitzhead 2nds and Ashbrittle 2nds.

The club has run a youth section in the local Taunton and District Youth League, U11, U13 and U15 on Friday evenings and Saturday mornings.

Thanks to Denis Quick, Dave Willis, Trevor Stark, Guy Vercoe and many parents for transporting players to matches. Lynne Adams must be thanked for making tea and coffee on Sunday mornings.

The U11s reached the quarterfinals of the cup competition. We hope to run the same age groups in 2006 and if any local businesses would like to sponsor the senior XI or the youth teams please ring Chris Burston on 01984 624833 mobile 07976929814.

Wivey Ladies Rugby

THE team are playing again in South West Two League and the season's fixtures are on the website: www.zyworld.com/ivorbigun/WIVEYLADIES.htm

New players welcome.

The next home game is against Old Redcliffians on October 9th.