

Oh, for goodness sake. How did we let things get so bad?

DICK LUMSDEN
shakes a metaphorical
fist at the irritants of
everyday life

I'm sure the day will come when I start to slow down. When I walk noticeably slower and have no real need to get everywhere as fast as I possibly can.

But I'm not there yet. And nothing irritates me more when walking along a busy street, than people in front and around me not walking at an acceptable rate of progress. Actually, scratch that...yes there is...its people who walk slowly and then suddenly - for no obvious reason - stop dead in their tracks causing me to bang into them and create a pavement pile-up.

You might think I am being a bit intolerant here, you might say that life is too short to get wound up about amateur pedestrians who don't follow good pavement etiquette.

But the dawdlers are just the tip of a much bigger iceberg, made up of all my pet hates and irritations, any one of which is likely to get me started.

Whether I'm walking to work, or being dragged out on a shopping expedition, the streets are a potential minefield for me.

Everywhere I look, I see people spitting, dropping litter, leaving chewing gum traps for me to stand on, it's a nightmare. Who brought them up?

But it isn't just the obviously anti-social behaviour which winds me up. Couples walking hand in hand taking up the whole width of the pavement - or worse - whole families of four strung out like a human necklace forcing everyone to step into the road to avoid them.

And the roads are no better than the pavements. Cars with one headlight out, or one stuck on full beam. Cyclists with no headlights at all. Boy racers with suspension hanging as low as their trousers, over revving their engines to make a noise which compensates for their lack of intelligent dialogue. Every one of them I come across is like another pin being stuck in my own personal voodoo doll.

Innocent looking puddles which mask potholes that are ankle deep, broken paving slabs, streetlights which never light, overflowing rubbish bins topped by McDonalds fizzy drink cartons - it's a wonder I ever make it to my destination.

Am I alone in thinking that not enough people care any more? I know that public money may be tight, but we shouldn't just have to accept such a blatant lowering of



■ Dick finds breaches of train etiquette, and particularly of Tube train etiquette, extremely annoying Photo: YUI MOK

“The party that brings back 'please' and 'thank you' and outlaws curries and burgers on trains? Now you're talking...”

better half a century ago. But that would be foolish. I'm sure people still dawdled, and held hands back then. Maybe I just didn't notice.

But one thing I am sure of, a great many more people in this age of society have lost a grip of their moral compass, and things that would not have been acceptable 50 years ago are now the aggressive norm.

People who barge aboard a Tube train before letting other passengers off; non-regular train passengers on commuter trains who believe the overhead luggage rack is for other people and not for their pile of coats and bags which they absolutely must have alongside them at all times.

Overweight, overbearing mothers who allow their screaming toddlers to run riot in shops. Dog owners who don't scoop the poop. Idiots

Even in the comfort of your own living room there is no escape. Automated cold calling interrupting dinner or EastEnders. Or the steadily increasing avalanche of spam emails originating from Mother Russia and elsewhere offering dodgy drugs, penis extensions, sexy girlfriends or get-rich-quick schemes. There seems to be no end to it all.

I don't support any political party, and heaven knows the next 90 days before the General Election are going to throw up no end of occasions when I will wave a metaphorical fist at the TV or radio. But if any one of the parties were to include something in their manifesto about bringing some pride back to this country, then I would seriously think about

supporting them.

The party that brings back please and thank you. The party that brings back good manners. The party that outlaws curries and hamburgers on trains. The party that makes it illegal to wear a hoodie over a hat - now you're talking.

But politicians are as bad as everyone else - and how can they ban curries when they themselves are on the biggest ever gravy train?

Sadly, I think we have gone too far to ever get back what we have lost. But it doesn't mean I have to like it.

I'm off to lie in a darkened room and think happy thoughts.

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