

'Dullsters': The anti-influencers celebrating the ordinary

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'Britain's dullest woman' Rachel Williamson with her Tom Jones postbox topper.

Rachel Williamson is a former police officer, self-described party animal, and Britain's dullest woman.

In 2021, the Rhyl, North Wales resident was awarded Anorak of the Year, a title she accepted with both good grace and tongue firmly in cheek.

“An anorak is a term for a dull person,” she explains on Thursday, “like somebody that collects tail numbers of an aeroplane. It’s just boring. Boring pastimes from boring people.”

Although Williamson is far from boring in reality, she is part of the [Dull Men's Club](#) (DMC): an international, social-media-based movement with the motto 'celebrating the ordinary'.

Among its more than 1.2 million members are pigeon-fanciers, a collector of bike locks, and more than a few folks who are very interested in outdoor warning sirens.

Other content includes pictures of cosy blankets, plants, blurry wildlife and carelessly-prepared food. Particularly common are cats: selfies with cats, posts about cats and occasional laugh-out-loud combinations of both.

“The cat in this picture died years ago,” wrote someone, “but my new one looks exactly the same.”



Kylie Davenport is the NZ moderator for the Dull Men's Club. She enjoys crocheting, talking about sports and watching hoof-trimming videos. Supplied

Far from the usual filter-heavy photos, humble brags and unachievable lifestyles usually displayed on social media, these are anti-influencers celebrating the mundane.

“Am I the only one that smooths out small chocolate foil wrappers every time?” was a recent post, as was “Does anyone else find it oddly satisfying to peel an apple, and have the peel not break and be removed all in one piece?”

Kylie Davenport is the club's New Zealand moderator and says Kiwis are punching well above their weight in the dull-stakes.

“At last count we had about 21,000... The one thing we all have in common is that we're just so flippin' laid back.”

The point of the DMC is joy, she says, and what's considered dull by some people is quite the opposite to others.

“It's not about keeping up with Jones, if your passion is collecting USB sticks then great; you're going to find your tribe.

“My uncle loves lawn bowls and could tell you all the minutiae involved until your eyes glaze over. But there are others who love it and that's the point - finding them.”

Davenport, meanwhile, likes crocheting and follows a lot of sports: topics she says can be pretty dull to a lot of people.

“I also watch a lot of videos about hoof-trimming cows. I don't have cows, I'll never have a cow. I live in suburbia for goodness sakes.”



Speed humps and judder bars are fascinating to some. AIMAN AMERUL MUNER / Stuff

Jason, a Dunedin man who says giving his last name would cause him way too much excitement, has been a member of the DMC for about three years.

“I’ve got a thing about judder bars. I take photographs of the different types; I have no idea why but they fascinate me.”

But since joining the club, he’s found they also fascinate someone else.

“There’s a guy in Britain who’s been photographing them for decades and we swap pictures and discuss the various specimens. My wife is just pleased she doesn’t need to hear about them any more.”

Another dull Kiwi is Nigel Worters, whose current hobbies involve raising 22 lambs and slowly renovating his Te Awamutu barn.

Worters says what makes the club “so fantastically dull is its complete lack of guidance.

“The DMC is a perfect example of how social media should work, with none of the toxicity that so many other groups have.”



Leland Carlson is the assistant vice president (the council's highest office) at the International Council of Dull Men. Supplied

The DMC was founded in 1988 when Leland Carlson and his mates were sitting in a New York bar and looking at a list of all the clubs offered in the city.

“There was fencing, boxing, judo, and one of my mates said ‘We don’t do any of that, do we?’ and I said ‘I guess we’re just dull.’

“The club was kind of a joke, sort of anti-achieving because New York is so pressure-driven. I call it more-itis: everyone wants something more exciting, bigger, grander.”

Membership was initially only open to men and limited to 17 spaces, the former rule quickly causing problems.

“It was the biggest bugaboo. We used to say women are too exciting, it would be rude to call them dull.”

When Carlson moved to Washington DC he began another club, then did the same thing in 1996 in the UK.

“I used to think park benches were my thing but I’m not nearly as into park benches as [club members] Steve Wheeler is into milk bottles or Kevin Berester is into roundabouts. I realised I like to collect collectors.”

These days the club welcomes women and produces calendars, while its founder has written books about members and is currently trying to get the word ‘dullsters’ listed in the Oxford Dictionary.

“People like to call us dullards but that word has other connotations. We're dullsters, the opposite of hipsters.”



A topper made by Rachel Williamson for the coronation of King Charles. Supplied

And while all members are dullsters, every year only one can win the anorak award.

Back to Rachel Williamson, who got the title of Britain’s dullest women because she was worried about being boring during the 2020 Covid lockdown.

One day Williamson was waiting for her sister Ruth to get their mum’s prescription when she saw how miserable everyone in the socially-distanced

line outside the chemist looked.

A keen knitter and crocheter since childhood, Williamson clocked a nearby postbox and decided to make it a sparkly topper, as a sort of hat. It took her three hours, and the next day she and Ruth cycled out at 6.30am and popped it on.

“Then it all went a bit mad. Everyone wanted to know who had done it; I thought I was going to get in trouble but everyone loved it so I just kept going.”

Dozens of toppers, various TV appearances and 18 months later, Williamson was not only crowned Anorak of the Year but also became Miss November in the club's 2022 calendar. The picture has her standing next to a postbox with a Tom Jones topper.

Since then, Williamson estimates she's made about 300 more - including ones with boobs for a breast cancer charity, seagulls, and football players - with no plans to slow down.

“Making people happy isn't very dull, is it?”

Hamiltonian Oskar Howell joined the DMC a few months ago and has found it a welcome respite from his job in social media.

“It's nice to switch off and enjoy something really mundane, dull and uninspiring.

“Often on social media there's so much visual feedback or selling, and it's great to relax, look at an average photo of a sunset or a collection of rocks. It's so sweet to take everything down a notch.”

Howell says what also makes the group so pleasant is the lack of in-fighting, trolling and nastiness that regularly ruins other internet communities.

“It's a space where there's no need to be controversial, hyperactive... So nobody

gets too worked up.

“I paint miniatures, collect wristwatches and read a lot of books; it’s the perfect group for me.”

And just as he believes the over-representation of New Zealanders in the club does great things for our laid-back international image, he’s not sure if we’re ready for a Kiwi to take Anorak of the Year.

“I think that’s probably way too exciting. You need to readjust your expectations.”

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