

Keep calm, ladies BRITAIN'S DULL



Margaret with Stan

The mow must go on

I was walking up the pathway to my front door with a friend when, all of a sudden, she stopped in her tracks.

'Well,' she said, 'all I can say is that you've got a lot of patience. I wouldn't put up with that.'

I nodded and replied: 'To be honest, I never thought I would either.'

Everyone I knew thought I was a saint for coping with my husband Stan's obsession. But truth be known, it could have been worse.

His vice wasn't women or booze.

It was lawnmowers. His fascination with them had begun many years earlier, when he'd brought home a broken one from his job as a green keeper at a golf club.

After he'd fixed it, he'd brought back another, then another.

Soon our back garden

was filled with the things.

And I said to Stan: 'There's an awful lot of mowers outside now.'

'I know,' he replied. 'Isn't it great?'

I gave a weak smile. I couldn't understand what Stan saw in them.

But over time, as I listened to Stan talk about their history, and how he wanted to preserve it for future generations, I began to warm to them.

I thought: *At least he's passionate about something.*

After a while, my grown-up son Jonathon became interested in them too.

Then Stan

I fought the
LAWN and the
lawn WON

We're partial to a red-blooded fellow
But who needs George Clooney
Daniel Craig when you've got this

made an announcement.

'We've found a lawnmower museum!' he said.

'And that's not all,' Jonathon said.

'There's also a lawnmower club nearby.'

Together, they began going to shows to exhibit the mowers they'd fixed, and we had

to build a conservatory to house them all.

'They can stay there,' I told Stan. 'But they're never coming in the house.'

'You've got a lot of patience'

'OK, love,' he said.

But a few months later, he asked: 'Can I just put a little one in the living room?'

I rolled my

eyes and said: 'Go on then.'

Of course, now the room is full of them.

Over the last 30 years, Stan has brought 400 lawnmowers home and, each Saturday, we check if there are new ones on eBay.

I joke that if the house

caught fire I'd have to because Stan and Jon would be too busy saving the mowers to bother me. Actually, I'm not sure it really is a joke!

From Margaret Hooper, 75, of Padbury Drive



Martyn and Claire

I said: 'It's for your benefit'

I clicked on a picture and a dark-haired stranger with nice teeth appeared on my computer screen.

I thought to myself: *He's a bit of all right.*

I was on a dating website and had come across Martyn's profile. I was intrigued to find out more about

him so we started talking. He then typed: *I love golf balls.*

It wasn't very romantic but Martyn was kind and funny, and as we talked more, I began to find him endearing.

We then met up, and soon became a couple. It also wasn't long



Stan

Photos: Caters/Iceland Carlsson

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From Margaret Hardwick,
75, of Padbury Drive, Filey,
N Yorks



Archie
at work



With Beth



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He then typed: *I collect
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We then met up, and
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It also wasn't long before

he began to tell me more
about his golf balls.

When Martyn was small,
his uncle had given him a
bag of them, and he'd
become interested in the
various logos on them.

'But isn't a ball
just a ball?' I said.

He looked at me
as though I had
gone insane.

'That's the
worst question
you could ask,'
he said.

Martyn was usually quiet,
but if anyone asked about
his balls he wouldn't stop
talking. He spent hours
cleaning and sorting them.

Despite his obsession,
our relationship thrived and
Martyn asked me to move
in with him.

'I have one stipulation,'
I told him. 'Your golf balls
have to stay at your
mum's house.'

He looked crestfallen.
But she only lived two
streets away, so he did as
he was told.

Then one day I was
cleaning, when I spotted a
basket of golf balls in the

kitchen cupboard.

I took them out and
asked him straight: 'What
are these?'

He turned red and said:
'They're just my favourites.
There's no more, honestly.'

Over the next
few months,
Martyn scoured
car boot sales and
golf courses for
different balls.
Then he got a job
as a green keeper,
and began finding

new ones at work.

Most days, he'd come
home in a state of
excitement, and tell me:
'I found a really rare
one today.'

And I'd think:
Here we go.

In time I fell
pregnant and
had a daughter,
Chloe. As she
grew up, Martyn
got her to help
him clean and sort
his golf balls.

Then one evening,
when she was four, we
were putting her to bed
when she said: 'Daddy,

please don't bring any more
golf balls home.'

'See,' I said. 'Even she's
tired of them.'

But Martyn thought that
it was funny.

Now he owns more than
70,000 golf balls. He says
our next house has to have
a garage so we can open a
golf ball museum.

I say that if he brings any
more home, that's where
he'll be sleeping.

From Claire Vallance, 37, of
Hobbacott Close,
Bude, Cornwall

**'I found
a really
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today'**



Martyn

e come... MEN!

Unearthing
a new drain



From the gutter to the stars

My husband Archie walked in, beaming and rubbing his hands together as though he'd won the lottery.

I handed him a cup of tea and said: 'Good day, then?'

'The best,' he said. 'I found a brilliant drain today.'

I rolled my eyes and thought: *Oh no, not again.*

Archie worked for the council and was responsible for keeping the roads in order. But he'd been getting rather excited about the drains he'd found.

'You should have seen it,' he continued. 'It was covered in grass. I bet it's been hidden for years.'

As I let him talk, I thought Archie would get bored with drains eventually.

I was wrong. In fact as time went by, he only became more thrilled by them. He loved unearthing new ones, getting rid of all the weeds and spraying them with WD40. He'd even take pictures of them when he was done.

One evening as I was watching the news, he started showing me the photos.

'There's such a history behind each one,' he went on. 'It's like there's a world below us that we

know nothing about.'

I stifled a yawn.

One day, Archie had an idea. He made all his photos of drains into a calendar for people to buy.

'I'll use the profits to buy new tools,' he said.

I was concerned there'd be no profits at all, but I'd seriously underestimated

how many like-minded souls were out there.

After Archie went on the radio to talk drains, sales sky-rocketed.

Archie's media career took off. He appeared in the newspaper and gave talks called *My Life in the Gutter*.

Whenever we went out, strangers stopped Archie for a chat.

'Are you the drain man?' they'd say. 'Can I have a picture with you?'

Archie would grin as they snapped away.

Out shopping on my own, people would rush over and ask: 'Are you Archie's wife?'

They always wanted to know what he was up to.

'It's like being married to Brad Pitt,' I joked.

Archie's calendar sold so well that he made another the next year. Who would have guessed his obsession would take him from the gutter to celebrity!

From Beth Workman, 47, of Penny Bridge, Cumbria



With Beth

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Martyn

● *Dull Men of Great Britain: Celebrating the Ordinary* is available on Amazon, RRP £8.99. Visit the Dull Men's Club website at dullmensclub.com

ills and Sian Gregory. Email tab.sian@bauer.co.uk

Take a Break 15