

Why it is important not to trust the signposts in Woking

While taking my regular afternoon brain-restoring power-tea of champagne and coconut muffins at the Toppled Bollard last week I was thrilled to catch sight of my old chum and celebrated Bolshevik, Syd Braithwaite-Cynchronize-Swymm

Syd's translation of the poetry of Laura Riding into Old Norse remains to this day one of the masterpieces of the genre, and it was as a direct result that he earned his position as Scrabble Correspondent of the Daily Prod.

He is, however, even more famous for his work with the "Friends of Fate" – a group of itinerant web bloggers who were the first into Dorking after its liberation last Thursday. The "Friends" – with their distinctive uniform of bright yellow blazer, green yachting cap, white jeans and perfectly shined shoes – famously made a triumphal entrance ahead of a division of Royal Navy Engineers who had taken a wrong turn on the M23. The locals responded with wild delight, waving buckets and projecting paper aeroplanes emblazoned with their email addresses on the side.

In recent years Syd has spent much of his life on Salisbury Plain undertaking experiments in time travel on behalf of the Ministry for Transport. "In the Ministry," he told me as we settled down to an afternoon's light repast, "we have five divisions. Big signs, medium-sized signs, little signs, traffic lights and counter-terrorism.

"The Minister's view is that if you want to bring Britain to a stop you simply disrupt our highways. Within three days there will be no petrol at the pumps and no booze in the supermarkets. This will lead to widespread civil unrest and the end of etiquette as we know it."

As part of his work to stop this eventuality, Syd is employed undercover as a front of house manager for the Palais de Jive in Woking where he keeps an eye on the notorious "End of the Wedge" gang, known for rotating signposts and distributing copies of "The Complete Hooligan" – a pamphlet that advocates the hunting to extinction of all Ministry staff on the grounds that they are collectively responsible for the failure of our railways and chaos on the M25.

Syd has also worked as War Correspondent of Exchange and Mart, spending much time on the south coast where he is known as the only man who can wear a beret north of the 50th parallel without a sense of post-modernist irony.



Tony Attwood

PS: Syd tells me there are only six ways of writing an advert. Five work, one doesn't. Email Syd at Syd@toppled.info and he'll send you the details of all six approaches, explaining why the most common way fails. No jellyfish will call.