

A rubbish gift

Matthew Huish
May 6, 2015



I hate litterbugs. It's worth bearing in mind that I don't use the word 'hate' lightly; I frequently encourage my children to find another word to express their feelings, explaining that 'hate' is an awfully strong word. But I must admit I burn inside with indignant rage whenever I see someone littering. I've previously posted about this topic on this blog. But someone's mindless littering offered me an unusual service today.

I was at the post office purchasing some euros in preparation for my trip to Vienna this weekend. The cash is primarily for purchasing diesel whenever I need to refuel the van as I drive to Austria and back with a group of young men who are attending some events there this Sunday. The post office clerk was unusually friendly, a young man similar in age to myself of south Asian descent but having grown up in London all his life. We were chatting about exchange rates and how best to purchase the currency I required. He encouraged me to visit my bank to get out enough cash for the conversion, which resulted in a conversation about differences of customer service in different bank branches. It was a mutually energising conversation as we both went about our momentary duties.



As I was bidding farewell to the helpful and likeable assistant, I caught in the corner of my eye a used booklet that had contained 6 first class stamps, discarded on the counter of the post office. This suddenly reminded me that I had run out of stamps and that I needed to purchase some of my own.

I spontaneously asked if it was possible to purchase stamps from the bureau de change and the clerk proceeded to help me buy 24 first class stamps. At the end of the transaction he quipped, 'One person's rubbish is another person's gift.' I was stunned by his clarity of observation and agreed that, unusually, this was indeed

the case. While someone had carelessly littered the post office with their rubbish, I had benefited from the act by being reminded to purchase stamps.



Perhaps post offices should deliberately leave such used booklets lying on their counters to remind and encourage folks to buy more stamps. As long, of course, that they get discarded by the end of the day.

Image Credits

http://www.ebay.co.uk/itm/KEEP-BRITAIN-TIDY-1-inch-25mm-Button-Badge-Tidy-Man-Novelty-Logo-/320975103650?pt=LH_DefaultDomain_3&hash=item4abb9b66a2

<http://www.discountedstamps.co.uk/product-category/1st-class-stamps>

<http://blog.norphil.co.uk/2012/11/changes-to-machin-definitive-stamps.html>