

**BBC RADIO ULSTER
THOUGHT FOR THE DAY
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Did you know that The Beano is 72 years old this year?

The popular children's comic is getting on a bit but your favourite characters are still looking pretty good for their age. Maybe Minnie the Minx is on botox.

Children today are still enjoying The Beano as much as I did when I was a wee boy. In fact if you're a real Billy the Whiz you can even enjoy it online now.

The most popular character has always been Dennis the Menace. I used to read about his jolly japes every week when I was running around the streets of Belfast like a Bash Street Kid. Now Dennis always used to pick on another character in the comic strip. He was a skinny boy with glasses called Walter. It would never be allowed in the modern version of the comic, but I think you could say back then, that Dennis bullied Walter.

And I have to confess I was just as bad. I remember picking on a wee ginger boy with National Health glasses. On several occasions I refused to grant him safe passage up our street unless he handed over a conker, a catapult or a Curlywurly.

There's been a lot of talk about bullying in recent weeks and of course, it is not a comical matter. However in the public debates that have followed allegations of bullying in Downing Street, I've been shocked at some of the attitudes.

I've heard various people say that if you work under stress then it's ok to shout and swear at your subordinates because that's what it takes to get things done.

Of course there's no evidence whatsoever to back this up. On the contrary, unhappy and harassed workers usually perform badly and employees who are supported and valued usually perform well.

All the research shows that badly behaved managers contribute to stress in the workplace.

People who try to justify this old fashioned style of macho management seem to model themselves on another comic strip hero I used to read about, in The Dandy. They sound like Desperate Dan. He eats cow pies and shaves with a blowtorch.

Most children know that if you are being bullied at school you should tell a responsible adult who will believe you and the bully will be confronted. But bullying doesn't end after childhood.

If you're being bullied in your workplace or community or at home, tell a responsible adult who will believe you and get support to stand up to the bully. Bullying is always wrong. No excuses. And you deserve better.

And by the way, if the wee ginger boy with the National Health glasses is listening this morning, I owe you an apology, a conker, a catapult and a Curlywurly.

Tony Macaulay

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