



SOMETHING ABOUT BRITAIN

The changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace is as much a modern-day spectacle as it is an ancient tradition that remains unchanged to this day. A growing Filipino population in Britain is soaking up the country's rich history and culture. Britain is now home to more than 150,000 Filipinos, mostly working in the healthcare sector. Fewer than 20,000 were in Britain 20 years ago.

Rat! Oops, sorry, I mean Mr Commissioner

I'm staring at my computer table, where I made the mistake of leaving a packet of peanuts overnight. Now the bag has a hole, and tiny scraps of foil and bits of nuts are scattered nearby. I immediately know what it means: mice. (Unless I were the government, in which case I'd shout, "aha! Communists!")

At this point, some Filipinos would probably rush in to prevent my saying the furry culprit's name aloud in Tagalog. You see, in this country it's a belief that you should always refer to household mice – daga – as mabait, kind ones.

This probably goes back to our ancient reverence for animals, our oneness with nature, and our firm conviction that the dirty little sneabags are listening, will take offense at being blamed, and will retaliate by munching our clothes, ripping up the plants, spray-painting the walls and for all I know emailing us tons of viagra spam ("pleasure her tonight, squeak").

The persistence of this practice of being vocally respectful to mice

LIGHTERSIDE
view from home

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and their rodent cousins – the rat, the big rat, the really big rat, the election commissioner – is something I've never understood. Perhaps it's been helped into the 21st century by modern, credible TV shows (Disney Channel) which

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teach that mice are cute creatures, wear shorts, stand upright on their hind legs, drive cars and sing. Some of the critters apparently even do French cuisine, putting a twist to the hygiene assurance "your food

is untouched by human hands." And which kid doesn't know that mice are heroes who, issuing from their secret hideout (the Rat Cave), protect us all from giant, vicious but stupid cat monsters? This has been conclusively proven by scientific programs (cf. "Tom and Jerry").

Having said all that, I should explain that I have mixed feelings about mice in my house: I can't decide whether I prefer to drown or pound the little beasts. Call it a deep loathing coupled with a desire to eradicate the pests ... in other words, something like the government's attitude towards journalists, though

not quite as extreme. Recently, an animal rights group sent me a press release saying that, in the Year of the Rat, people shouldn't inflict pain and suffering on rodents by using glue traps (I wonder what they'll do

in the Year of the Dragon? Lobby to ban mounted knights?). The press release noted that rats are actually intelligent, sensitive and playful creatures who only ever want to gnaw at your furnishings and spread the Bubonic Plague. All right, I admit I added the last part. But I get the impression the activists have a fondness for rats I don't share ("so what if they scuttle around ripping up your papers and clothes and treat your kitchen as a lavatory, what did rats ever do to you, huh? Huh?")

Granted that rodents are social creatures who want nothing more than to raise families, work at decent jobs and bring up their kids to the point when they're old enough to run for office. Not that I'm being disrespectful or anything, but I still think the best house rat is one that isn't in my house.

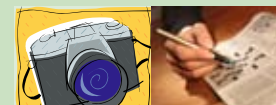
I'd say the activists probably haven't had mice scampering about their bedrooms, and I doubt they've spent too much time looking closely at a fully grown, fat and ugly sewer rat. But then, how often do they visit Congress?

PHOTOESSAY

Show us your flash for photography by giving us the big picture of the Filipino expat's life.

Photos must be accompanied by a caption of not more than 100 words, describing the event or circumstances behind them.

Or tell us an interesting anecdote or observation in not more than 500 words and share them with the world.



Each published photo or essay entitles its owner to a HK\$200 prize and becomes the property of Filipino Globe.

Photos should have a minimum file size of three megapixels. Color photos should have a minimum resolution of 300 dpi.

We reserve the right to make changes in line with house style.

Entries should be sent to info@filglobe.com