

# AN EMI UNIT

**'MOST OF THE INTERNET, I HAVE DECIDED, IS 24 CARAT DROSS. ONE PRAISEWORTHY EXCEPTION IS WWW.ACRONYMFINDER.COM, AN AMAZING SITE, WHOSE ECONOMICS BAFFLE ME'**

**E**very so often over the years, I have mentioned my mother-in-law, Brenda, (usually adding the description "who is now ... *enter current age...* and living happily in her Old Folks' Home"). I have been less than honest. For several years, she seemed to be getting more and more sandwiches short of a picnic but, no matter, we thought, for her life in her Home is not what one might call intellectually challenging. The first warning came when we were told how all the old dears had been taken in a mini-bus to do their Christmas shopping at the local branch of Woolworths, how Brenda had filled her wire-basket to overflowing, but how she refused to pay for all of her goodies when they were led to the check-out. The signals first started flashing for us when she stopped recognising me when we visited. "Who is that man?", she would shriek. A few more brain cells kept dropping out. She forgot the names of her grand-children, although she kept their photographs on her bed-side table. She still recognised my wife, but, seeing a wedding ring on her finger, complained that she had not been told that my wife had married. My wife, helpfully, brought along on our next visit a yellowing photograph album, and pointed to a trim figure in a new outfit. "That's not me. And who are you? I have never seen you before in my life," Brenda screamed. The nursing staff led her off to calm her down, and we tip-toed quietly away.

From then on, things have gone downhill. She never has seemed to sleep at night, and took to walking around naked at three in the morning, often tripping down stairs; and, during the day, wrestling with other residents. Despite all this, Brenda has proved indestructible physically. I have lost count of the times when the Home has phoned during the night to say that she has had a serious stroke, but they have phoned back in the morning to say that she had got dressed, was having a full breakfast and had asked for extra toast. The Home got tired of having to call a doctor out in the middle of the night, and arranged for her to be transferred to a NHS Assessment Centre. The Assessment Centre put her on stronger medication, and transferred her back to the Home. Once back in the Home, she continued to wander about at night, and to wrestle other residents to the ground. Back to the Assessment Centre. This time, they decided that she should go into an EMI unit.

We were too polite to ask what the initials EMI stood for. E might, I guessed, stand for Emergency, M for Mental, and I, probably, for Institution. Certainly, I was sure that in this context the initials EMI would have nothing to do with the company that used to be known as Something and Musical Industries, the ones that sell Britney Spears CDs in the High Street. Most of the internet, I have decided, is 24-carat dross.

One praiseworthy exception is **www.acronymfinder.com**, an amazing site, whose economics baffle me but which lists in alphabetical order every acronymyn imaginable. I turned to this site for the true meaning of EMI. This stood for, it told me, Elderly Mentally Ill. Gibbon, I think, once claimed that the Holy Roman Empire was neither Holy nor Roman nor an Empire, and, in my younger days, I used to have similar doubts about the Christian Caledonian Club, but I could not reasonably argue with this definition. Brenda, after all, is Elderly and Mentally Ill.

Stuck in my mind is the sad image of Ronnie Reagan, now struck down by Alzheimer's, and whose main enjoyment nowadays is scooping out from his swimming pool the leaves which have secretly been thrown in by his Secret Service team. However, the medical people reckoned that Brenda was simply suffering from a form of dementia, not from Alzheimer's Disease. What is the difference, you may ask? Well, as far as I can work out from Encarta, Alzheimer's is just one - though the main - cause of dementia, and is not age-related. So there.

The transfer to the EMI unit caused me so much hard work. Travelling down to visit EMI units - all of which looked like three star hotels, with not a hint of brutality towards the Elderly Mentally Ill residents. Stopping the Standing Order in favour of the Home, from which Brenda had been expelled. Telling the authorities that she was currently in a NHS unit so that they would stop her Attendance Allowance and reduce her Old Age Pension. (Memo to the government: There must be massive wastage in relying on the honesty of law-abiding son-in-laws to advise when payments should be stopped/reduced when a NHS bed is occupied. Keep the payments as they are, I would advise, but, on admission to a NHS unit, have the payments automatically made to the NHS). Then, when we had found a new EMI unit, re-starting her pension and Attendance Allowance. And starting a new standing order. And having to revise my spread-sheets. So much work. Hard, grinding work.

So, why, you ask, am I telling you all this? After all, it has nothing to do with financial matters in general, or treasury in particular. I am simply giving a warning that to my readers that they might end up being sent to an EMI unit, and telling of the hard work it will give to their relations. **JF**