

News



A tale of two relatives

Oliver Dickens, aged nine, at the unveiling of the first statue in the UK of his great-great-great-grandfather Charles Dickens in Portsmouth, Hampshire.

BEN MITCHELL/PA

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'Strange' canapés dismay House of Lords diner

TOM PAYNE AND ALISHA ROUSE

The cheese is tasteless, the selection of yoghurts is lacking and sweet coconut canapés are a "strange" starter – these are among yet more complaints lodged by members of the House of Lords over their subsidised dining rooms.

The suggestions box at the Lords restaurant is full of notes from peers complaining about the food and service – a perk which costs taxpayers £1.3m a year.

Following another trawl through the slips by *The Independent* following Freedom of Information requests, one picky peer was found to have requested a toast machine, insisting: "I like to have fresh toast to my personal preference of toastiness."

Another demanded a "variation" of flavoured Müller Lite, rather than "just the old standard" version of the yoghurt. The box was also full of picky requests for lemon and ginger herbal teas (for "warding off a cold"), "fresh tuna in containers" and "cheddar with some taste" to go with jacket potatoes.

In November 2012 one member complained to the Lords catering department that staff were not on-hand to pour wine for guests at an event. The peer said a friend was forced to "fetch three bottles of wine from somewhere and start going round the table".

In February last year, another wrote that it was "a little strange to be served some sweet coconut items at the beginning" of an event.

Earlier this week, *The Independent* revealed the bulk of the complaints made by Lords members, who receive £300 a day for turning up at the House.

They included moaning over a controversial new coffee machine producing "inferior coffee", and one Lord who said he was left "scarred" after a reservation was cancelled, leaving his wife with nowhere else to eat because she was wearing a tiara.

Labour's Maria Eagle told *The Independent* that the complaints were "completely out of touch" as families struggle to cope with the government's cost-of-living crisis.

She said the Lords "should be grateful not to be one of the half a million Britons forced to rely on help from food banks."

'Glee' faces UK TV ban after Briton beats Murdoch 'giant' in High Court

Judge rules against media baron's Twentieth Century Fox in David and Goliath trademark battle

CHLOE HAMILTON

Glee, the popular US television series, could be banned from UK screens following a "David and Goliath" legal battle which saw a British businessman successfully sue Rupert Murdoch's Twentieth Century Fox for infringing his UK trademark.

Mark Tughan, who runs a chain of The Glee Club comedy and music venues, registered the name as a UK trademark in 1999, 10 years before the TV show arrived on our screens.

He argued that potential customers were now staying away from the venues because they assume they are related to the television series about US

high-school students who put on musical shows.

A five-day High Court trial in the summer saw senior network executives from Twentieth Century Fox TV contest the claims, saying they had no prior knowledge of the comedy clubs or their UK trademark.

The corporation also sent a letter to Mr Tughan threatening to seize his personal assets if he lost the case.

Yesterday, however, after a bitter three-year legal battle, the High Court ruled in Mr Tughan's favour, arguing that Twentieth Century Fox had infringed the businessman's UK trademark.

Mr Tughan said he was "relieved" following the verdict, adding: "I'm not sure you can experience jubilation if you've been proved right on something that you've always believed to be the case."

The club founder said he hoped other small businesses would take heart from the outcome. "Whilst it's hard, it's not impossible to take on a global giant if you're in the right," he said. "The law doesn't change



The cast of 'Glee': Even DVDs of the TV show could be banned
GETTY

depending on how much money you've got."

The Glee Club was established in Birmingham in 1994 as the first dedicated comedy venue outside London. It has since opened venues in Cardiff, Nottingham and Oxford.

Mr Tughan accused Twentieth Century Fox of tarnishing the brand he had built up. "In the world of entertainment your name, brand, and reputation is everything," he said. "We built up a reputation carefully over a really long period of time and I found it was being utterly compromised."

Deputy Judge Roger Wyand QC held that Fox had infringed The Glee Club's registered trade mark, stating: "I have

found that there is a likelihood of confusion. Continued use is not in accordance with honest practices." The Deputy Judge also agreed that some potential customers might have been discouraged from visiting Glee Club venues.

However, he ruled that Twentieth Century Fox had not "passed off" *Glee* as being associated with Glee Club venues, and as such was not convinced that "such confusion is likely to be said to cause damage" to the venues.

A spokeswoman for Twentieth Century Fox said the company planned to appeal the decision. She said: "We intend to appeal and are confident that, as the case plays out, we will ultimately prevail."

The final decision, however, remains with the court. An unsuccessful appeal could mean the removal of the programme from UK TV schedules, or even a rebranding of the show itself.

CDs, DVDs and music downloads from the show could also be banned from sale in the UK.