

Camping? My Eye!



Gill Watson lives in Brierfield with her goldsmith husband Ged Collins and their two children Zoe and Joe. In the first instalment of her *'Life Bites'* series, she tells us of a camping trip with dire consequences.

Ged caught me looking at the TravelZoo website yesterday. "Forget it Gill, the tax man's having our annual holiday this year." "But that's not fair!" I protested. This time last year we had just booked a week in Malta. "So we can't go on holiday at all this year? Not anywhere?"

"Well, camping would have been a possibility, if only we had a tent."

A slightly sore point after I (allegedly) gave Zoe, our 11-year-old, permission to sell the trailer tent on ebay. We had only bought it the previous year although to be fair she did get more than we paid for it. We suddenly noticed it was gone when we came home and no longer had to negotiate our way around it whilst parking the Previa.

The last and only time we used the tent was on a trip combining business and pleasure to a Yorkshire seaside town. I cannot divulge the exact location for reasons which will soon become clear. The business bit was Ged giving an estimate for the restoration of the mayoral chains and mace. The 'pleasure' was three days of camping in torrential rain, culminating in the cornea being ripped from my right eye in Woolworth's.

We had packed for sunshine but

after the first day it was no longer possible to cross the quagmire to our trailer tent in sandals. We gave in and went in search of wellies at Woolies. I knelt in the footwear aisle and tried to shove a reluctant boot on to Joe's five-year-old foot. "Push!" I cried and then cried a whole lot more as he pushed, lost his balance and fell forward, his fingernail gouging my eye.

The pain was phenomenal. It was childbirth and tooth abscess and earache and toe stubbing all rolled into one. A nice lady alerted Ged to the fact that I was writhing in agony and maybe he should stop looking for socks. "There's a Specsavers next door, maybe they can take a look at it." said the lady.

The Specsavers optician had a look and said that a section of my cornea had been ripped away. "But a cornea can grow back within 24 hours so you probably don't need to go to hospital."

I found the only way to reduce the pain was to push very hard on my eyelid. The next morning, after listening to my family sleep soundly for eight hours I awoke them with the words, "Hospital. Now."

The eye surgeon poured liquid heaven into my eye then winced when he looked through his microscope. "That must really hurt."

"Not any more. I would have been here a whole lot sooner if I'd known there was something to take away the pain so effectively." I replied.

"Unfortunately it only lasts for about twenty minutes and we are no longer allowed to give out ampoules for patients to take home."

I was happy to be admitted until my cornea repaired itself. "Shall I stay here until it's grown back? I believe it doesn't take long."

"It does when it's as deep as that." Then he said something strange, "I am going to leave the room now for exactly two minutes." But before leaving, he opened the drawer containing the ampoules of pain-relieving eyewash.

For the first minute I did nothing, wondering if I had interpreted the situation correctly or if I was about to risk going to prison. Then I did it because the thought of the pain coming back was too much to bear. I stole a handful of drugs from the hospital. Now there's a thing I would never have imagined myself doing.

To be honest, I was not sorry to see the back of Woolworth's nor the trailer tent. But I will be sorry to see my sunny holiday go to the tax man. I can only hope that it rains, wherever he goes.

