

My family have done a house swop this week. My sister and family have gone on holiday to the Hebrides and we are minding their house in Mull, while my dad is looking after our home (and bunny). No-one has volunteered to spend a fortnight in his house in Glasgow, funnily enough.

So my dad has been golfing with my husband's buddies, he's been drinking in our local and for all I know finding out all our darkest secrets from our neighbours. I'm hoping he will take the minutes for the committee I sit on. They put the pet rabbit in the hen run while they had a day in out in Gairloch and she managed to burrow out and spent the day in the greenhouse eating all our tomato plants. It could have happened to anyone.

Of course he has it easy; our holiday in Mull is much harder work. For a start, being on an island isn't remote enough for my sister; they have to live in an isolated part with not a shop for miles. I'm surprised to find how much I miss my newspaper and spend each morning scouring the internet for news of the outside world. You can stock up on everything else, but news has to be fresh.

There are many reasons I am happy to be married to Mr Ray, but I've just added the fact that he isn't a shepherd. Now my brother-in-law is a lovely man, but nothing in the world would induce me to be a shepherd's wife. This week we have the dogs to look after, but it's a whole different job to our pampered pet pooch. The two adult dogs fight if they are left alone, so I need to let them out separately. The two puppies are just crazy, but at least they tire easily, and the bitch is on heat and is locked up on a run at the other end of the garden (which doesn't however stop the dogs from finding her). She has dug her way out twice already but please don't tell my brother-in-law.

In the morning I have to let the dogs out for a run around the garden which involves a great deal of barking and howling. Our own dog just looks stunned by the whole process, although she seems to be getting the hang of the 'racing around in circles' game. Putting them all back in the right kennels is a nightmare, but easier at night as they are being put away with their meals. They don't get the

gourmet cuisine lovingly prepared by Mr Chum that my dog benefits from, but a sort of muesli mixed up in a bucket and measured out in children's spade shovels.

And then there are the tourists. My sister lives on the corner of a badly signposted junction, and every second car stops outside the house, reverses back a bit and spends several minutes inspecting a map. I have learned to dive for cover as I have so far failed to provide any useful information to those travellers desperate enough to ask for help. I have a vague idea of where Tobermory is but have no idea about Sea Eagles, highland games and Josie Jump.

There are cattle that wander down the road in the mornings and back again at night. I have to confess to photographing them on our first day here, but it has only taken a few days for me to begin to sneer at the visitors stopping to do exactly the same outside our front door.

What is it about tourists that makes us look down our noses? The other day at home, I was walking down the road eating an ice cream but my friend refused to join me as she claims it makes her look like a tourist. I pointed out that the people who know her, know that she is local, and those that don't are probably tourists in any case, but nothing could change her mind. What is so bad about being a tourist anyway? I can ask stupid questions whether I am on holiday or at home.