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Rhian Williams: Secrets, truths and some little white lies

by Our Correspondent, Wales On Sunday

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DURING the past few weeks several awards have been dished out – the Academy Awards and before that Catherine Zeta-Jones was awarded a CBE as recognition for her services to transatlantic accents.

I am therefore taking this opportunity to hand out my own award, which is for time wastage. The first nomination is for the cook on last week's MasterChef who put cling film around a poached egg. Life really is too short.

The second is to a joint venture between the Russian Science Institute and the European Space Agency. It might surprise you to learn that last week a Russian Space Mission landed on Mars. Well, when I say Mars I don't mean the Red Planet located about 50m miles from Earth, but then again I do. Let me explain.

In June 2010 six astronauts entered a simulated space capsule in Russia. The plan was for them to imitate a flight to Mars and back. Last week they even had a landing in a sand pit in a shed outside Moscow. They put down flags and everything. Everybody was dead excited.

Vitaly Davydov, deputy head of the Russian Federal Space Agency declared "We have made progress today." Of course you did love. He added the astronauts were "doing fine". That'll be because they were in a sand pit in a shed outside Moscow.

It didn't bode well that the Project was named Mars 500, the 500 being a reference to the number of days the mission was supposed to take. It will actually last 520 days. I don't know much about space travel but I watched that film with Tom Hanks and they were running out of air so I assume that if the Russian mission went 20 days over they'd be dead.

Fair play though, apart from avoiding weightless-ness, deadly space radiation, and extreme heat they've been enduring exactly the same conditions as if they were going to the real Mars. Honest.

The scientists also study psychological effects. The last time they tried was in 1999. Someone tried to kiss a Canadian female astronaut who wasn't happy and two grown men punched six bells out of each other. And what did they learn from this? Don't give astronauts vodka. See? Where would we be without scientific exploration?

Times are hard so if they want a study in behavioural patterns of people kept in a confined space for a long time they're welcome to come to my house next Christmas. And all it'll cost them is a Chocolate Orange and a bottle of Cava.

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