Off With Their Heads! by Peter Fenner

1 N	2 O	W	3 T	4 D	5 B	6 P	7 E	T	8 T	E	9 D
I	A	10 H	E	E	L	E	D	11 R	A	12 R	E
13 G	R	14 I	E	V	E	15 P	I	16 G	O	U	T
H	17 T	O	D	O	D	O	T	O	18 N	E	E
19 T	I	T	S	L	20 M	21 U	G	L	Y	F	R
D	22 F	23 A	24 D	V	A	N	25 C	E	26 H	U	M
27 R	A	T	28 W	E	L	C	O	M	29 E	L	I
E	T	30 M	A	X	I	E	U	31 D	A	W	N
32 S	T	Y	R	33 L	C	34 D	35 L	36 I	S	T	A
37 S	E	38 L	F	I	E	39 A	D	V	E	40 R	B
41 E	R	I	E	42 V	E	R	N	A	L	O	L
43 S	K	E	W	E	R	K	T	44 N	O	T	E

This is the filled grid before applying the preamble. The circled letters are those which should be beheaded.

1 N	2 O	W	3 T	4 R	5 B	6 N	7 E	T	8 T	E	9 D
I	A	10 P	E	E	L	E	D	11 H	A	12 R	E
13 G	R	14 I	E	V	E	15 P	I	16 G	O	U	T
H	17 D	O	D	O	D	O	T	O	18 D	E	E
19 T	I	T	S	L	20	21 U	G	L	Y	F	R
D	22 H	23 A	24 D	V	A	N	25 C	E	26 D	U	M
27 R	A	T	28 W	E	L	C	O	M	29 E	L	I
E	T	30 T	A	X	I	E	U	31 L	A	W	N
32 S	T	Y	R	33 F	C	34 M	35 L	36 I	S	T	A
37 S	E	38 L	F	I	E	39 A	D	V	E	40 R	B
41 E	R	I	E	42 V	E	R	N	A	L	O	L
43 S	K	E	W	E	R	K	T	44 N	O	T	E

The letters removed from the clues spell HEADS WILL ROLL, so 12 of the heads should roll around the other one, then be returned to the grid. A bit of experimentation will find that only one rotation leaves the grid in a state where every entry is a real word, and this reveals several thematic characters, highlighted.

Across

1. NOWT (nothing) = N (new) OWT (Off With Their heads)

6. extra letter: H (hedges → edges)

   PETTED (indulged) = DEEP (profound) → PEED (reflection) about TT (edges in TibeT)

10. extra letter: E (events → vents)

   HEELED (closely followed) = WHEELED (circled) vents W (close to revieW)

11. extra letter: A (around → round)
    Robots Are Round Everywhere initially = RARE (uncommon)
13. GRIEVE (distress) = EVE (first lady) with RIG (outfit) → GRI (cycling)
15. PIG OUT (a stomachache might follow this) = PI (constant) GOUT (disease)
17. extra letter: D (din → in)
    TO-DO (commotion) = OD (too much) in [TWO (2) → TO (on radio)]
18. extra letter: S (slacking → lacking)
    NEE (previously) = NEED (require) lacking D (daughter)
19. TITS (boobies) (birds)
21. UGLY (unattractive) = [GUY L (50) gets makeover]
23. ADVANCE (forward) = ADVICE (suggestion) trade I (one) for AN (one)
26. extra letter: W (who → ho)
    HUM (ho makes this boring [HO HUM]) (sound)
27. RAT (rogue) = (abstract ART)
28. LC (drained LethargiC) O (old) M (man) overwhelmed by WEE (small) = WELCOME (greeting)
30. extra letter: I (image → mage)
    MAXIM (magazine) suppresses M (source of mage) = MAXI (dress)
31. extra letter: L (lad → ad)
    NW (north-western) AD comes back = DAWN (sunrise)
32. STY (dump) = in weST Yorkshire
35. LIST (bank) (index)
37. FIE (i am outraged) after [SELL (trade) → SEL (reported)] = SELFIE (social media content)
39. VERY BAD (really awful) → ADVERYB (cycling) loses Y (last place in derby) = ADVERB (qualifier)
41. ERNIE (bert's friend) drop N (name) = ERIE (one of the greats)
42. wyVERN ALways hiding = VERNAL (in spring)
43. SKEWER (deride) = SR (senior) over EWER (disorganised WEEK)
44. ETON (school) turning over = NOTE (£50, say)

   Down
1. NIGH (close) TRESSES (locks) taking D (tip to don) = NIGHTDRESSES (clothes for bed)
2. OAR (paddle) = regularly in hOt wAteR
3. TEED (prepared a ball) = Do/EvEnT - oddly uplifting
4. extra letter: L (learned → earned)
    DEVOLVE (delegate) = EV (Earned Veterans initially) LOVED (admired) backsliding
5. BLED (was visibly injured) = DISABLED (paralysed) from the waist down [bottom half]
7. EDIT (polish) = ET (and french) entertaining DI (princess)
8. TAO (the way) = TO holding A (area)
9. (animated MERLIN DEBATE) = DETERMINABLE (is not impossible to decide)
12. RUEFUL (with regret) = UR (you're on the internet) → RU (upset) over EFUL (dodgy FUEL)
14. I (one) O (zero) T (scrap of Titbit) A = IOTA (small amount)
15. POUNCE (bound) = drop D (dead) in [CE (church) after POUND (hit)]
16. GOLEM (man made from brick material) = GOLE (a sort of LEGO) M (man)
20. extra letter: R (randy → andy)
    MA (Mandy and Andy's heads) have LICE (nits) = MALICE (ill intent)
22. extra letter: O (oman → man)
    FATTER (more portly) = H (Historic leader) replaced with T (Thin leader) in FATHER (old man)
24. Fantasy Race Associated With Digging - primarily withdrawn = DWARF (&lit)
25. COULDN'T (was unable to) = twist COLD NUT
29. EASE (comfort) = CEASED (stopped) when undressed
33. extra letter: L (lair → air)
    DEVIL (satan) → EVIL (losing head) falls back = LIVE (on air)
34. extra letter: L (lover → over)
    DK (donkey kong) over A R (first in Romancing) = DARK (evil)
36. I (one) VAN (vehicle) = IVAN (historically terrible man)
38. LIE (lay down) = DIE (perish); L (left) for D (dead)
40. jabbeRwocky, balOney, praTtle essentially = ROT (&lit)