

Greenmount – April 2008

The 1st April saw us climbing up to the locale known as Scout Moor, a peat-covered hill on which a large wind farm is being constructed, with a contingent from the Greenmount Scout Group, for a guided tour of the work in progress. The recent heavy rain made the climb more of the usual challenge, as those of you familiar with walking on waterlogged peat will know. There were not so much defined paths as defined streams. This is not an exercise for those wearing white trousers. Especially when the wind is so strong that it is impossible to stand still or walk in a straight line. It is times like these one appreciates the wisdom of investing in windproof and waterproof clothing and even more in having the wisdom to wear it.

The wander round the construction site was interesting and impressive and I am now even more convinced this is the way forward for power generation. Unfortunately, there was no major construction in progress. The wind was too strong! The guide was unable to answer any of my technical questions and, fortunately, I managed to find a couple of engineers, commissioning one of the turbines, who told me what I wanted to know.

The ramble back down to the parked car was easier than the ascent and, even though we had only been out for about four hours, we were please to be back in shelter from the wind and occasional heavy shower.

The car boot season has started in earnest, in spite of the unpredictable weather and Jenny attended one at The Old School on 29th March and one at The Cricket Club on 6th April, which makes enough to keep us in booze.

On the first couple of week ends of April, I helped Matthew with his bathroom development, fitting a new radiator and tiling the walls.

My stomach continued to be troublesome and I resorted to taking Gaviscon after meals and at bedtime as well as the 20 mg of Losec daily. The doctor did recommend this medication some time ago for times when the condition worsens. As a precaution, I booked an appointment to see the GP on 8th April. After a thorough examination, he said he didn't think it was anything more serious than my old reflux problem and told me to keep taking the tablets. And so I battle gallantly on.

The entrance hall is finally receiving the much needed attention. I unscrewed the existing single power socket, with the intention of pulling back the wires from underneath the landing floor and fitting a new double socket at the same height as those in the kitchen. There were two major flaws in this plan. One, the idiot electrician who wired the house back in 1978 cabled this socket as a spur off the one in the lounge and ran the wire horizontally along the wall. Two, the access from above is NOT under the landing floor, but under the floor in the front small bedroom.

It was now a case of completely removing the existing socket and fitting a new one. In order to disconnect the wiring to the hall socket, I needed to gain access to the socket in the lounge from which it was wired. In order to do that, I had to move the solid-oak, 3-drawer filing cabinet. In order to do that, I had to empty it.

With the lounge floor suitably decorated in reams of paperwork, I managed to nudge the heavy cabinet out of the corner and achieve my original objective.

Having isolated the power, I removed the old socket and cut off the wires at both ends. I knocked out the hole for the new double backing box and for the wires and trunking in the hall wall.

It was then time to take up the floor in the small bedroom to lay the cables. In order to do that, I had to dismantled the bunk beds and lift the carpet. A couple of the boards have been up before and, being somewhat more professional than your average joiner employed by house builders, I had previously relayed these using screws, so taking them up was easy. Except that the carpet underlay, after 30 odd years of wear and tear has a tendency to disintegrate.

Leaving the underlay problem for another day, I set about cutting through the piece of board that I needed to remove and which had not been up before. Unfortunately, the edge of this disappeared under a partition wall, the floor having been laid before the wall was erected. The so-called joiner had struck again. The board came out with a bit of tugging but one cannot in all fairness say that the edge that was under the partition wall is in good condition.

The good news is that I had access to the wiring and was able to lay the wires and connect the socket into the ring main circuit using two junction boxes I had previously installed under the landing floor. I even restored the filing cabinet and tidied up the lounge.

Three of the hall walls are now all filled in, sanded and painted. Well, almost three.

We are replacing and moving the radiator in the hall. I can't finish painting the third wall right into the corner or any of the fourth wall until the old radiator has been removed and the new one fitted. The new one is going on part of the wall I have painted.

I made tentative arrangements with my plumber to remove the old radiator and fit the new one when it arrived. I told the plumber that there was no problem gaining access to the pipes under the landing floor. Wrong again. The pipes are also under the front bedroom floor. Fortunately, the access he needs is under the boards I have already lifted.

The plumber asked me to telephone him to book a date when the new radiator arrived. This I did at the end of April, only to find he has several boiler installations booked and is not available until 26th May.

And so ends yet another month of upset and turmoil. When will it all end? Will the holes in the front bedroom and landing floors be covered? Will the bunk beds be reassembled? Will the underlay be laid to rest? Read next month's exciting episode to discover the answers to none of these questions.

And now for something completely different. This might explain why parents drink.

The boss wondered why one of his most valued employees had phoned in sick one day.

Having an urgent problem with one of the main computers, he dialed the employee's home phone number and was greeted with a child's whisper. ' Hello ? '

'Is your daddy home?' he asked.

' Yes ,' whispered the small voice.

May I talk with him?'

The child whispered, ' No .'

Surprised and wanting to talk with an adult, the boss asked, 'Is your Mommy there?' ' Yes .'

'May I talk with her?' Again the small voice whispered, ' No .'

Hoping there was somebody with whom he could leave a message, the boss asked, 'Is anybody else there?'

' Yes ,' whispered the child, ' a policeman '.

Wondering what a cop would be doing at his employee's home, the boss asked, 'May I speak with the policeman?'

' No, he's busy ', whispered the child.

'Busy doing what?'

' Talking to Daddy and Mommy and the Fireman ,' came the whispered answer.

Growing more worried as he heard a loud noise in the background through the earpiece on the phone, the boss asked, 'What is that noise?'

' A helicopter ' answered the whispering voice.

'What is going on there?' demanded the boss, now truly apprehensive.

Again, whispering, the child answered, ' The search team just landed a helicopter .'

Alarmed, concerned and a little frustrated the boss asked, 'What are they searching for?'

Still whispering, the young voice replied with a muffled giggle... 'ME!'