

Greenmount – August 2007

Continuing where I left off last month, my stomach troubles continued to worsen and cause me considerable discomfort. I attempted to rebook my hospital appointment, so far without success.

The blackcurrant harvest has been rather poor this year, resulting in only three jars of jam. What we lack in quantity, quality compensates. I wish that were true in other cases.

The purchase of a dozen organic limes (if we lived in NZ – or Aussie - we could grow our own) and a good helping of organic ginger have yielded nine jars of excellent lime and ginger marmalade and the home grown rhubarb and even more ginger have produced four jars of jam.

Alas, the blackberries are too few to produce any jam at all.

Rachel passed her driving test at the first attempt on 1st August and is now driving to and from work, avoiding the motorways for the present.

The Greenmount Taxi Service has, I am pleased to say, gone into liquidation. This has been superseded by the Greenmount Breakdown Service, following the acquisition of a large screw in the off-side rear tyre of Rachel's car, resulting in a flat tyre on Ashton Road, on the way home. We rushed out to change the wheel for her and helped her purchase a new tyre from Kwik-Fit the following day since the damaged tyre was not repairable.

We have missed three car boot sales this month due to bad weather. The mounting pile of junk at the back of the garage is now supporting the ceiling.

I have, at last, re-plumbed the cold water supply in the garage in preparation for the kitchen renovation. The old garage tap has been removed and a cold water feed now protrudes some 16 centimetres into the kitchen ready for the repositioning of the sink. At this rate, the kitchen should be finished by the end of this century.

Jenny was becoming increasingly concerned about the obnoxious black mould that has taken root on one of the walls in our bedroom. She thought the spores might be contributing to our health problems so we decided to divert our attention from the kitchen and tackle it.

The mould has, we think, been around for some time and formed on the outside wall, behind the wardrobes, before we fitted an extractor fan in the bathroom and a dehumidifier in the conservatory. We suspect that the warm, damp air, mainly from the bathroom, has kindly been depositing its moisture in this dark, confined space, creating the ideal conditions for this annoying fungus. We only found the problem when we moved the wardrobes onto the internal wall, somewhat recently.

Having stripped off the wallpaper on the infected wall, we discovered the mould was firmly rooted in the plaster. The first attempt at removal was to wash the walls with green fairy soap, having had a fair amount of success with this in the bathroom on the

odd mould patch that has appeared since it was refitted. Several buckets of black soup later, much of the mould had, indeed, gone.

I then checked on the Internet for advice. Apparently, black mould is or can be toxic. I also discovered that bleach does not kill mould. It simply makes a mess of everything else. Someone has had success with Ecover washing up liquid and since that is environmentally-friendly, we thought we'd try that on the environmentally-unfriendly mould. There was some improvement but the mould was still evident, so the next plan of attack was to use Polycell 3-in-1 mould fungicide. The recommended method of application using a brush and then sponging off had no effect whatsoever, so we ended up as a pair of scrubbers. That finally removed the remains of the fungus and we now have a large butt full of water contaminated with fungicide on the patio which, according to the bottle, cannot be disposed of down drains.

We removed the paper from the other three walls and the cork tiles from the fourth wall, which had more pot marks than the surface of the moon had to be re-skimmed.

On attempting to remove the textured paint on the ceiling, I suddenly found that this, together with several layers of underlying paint, peeled off the ceiling with surprising ease, to leave bare plaster. The whole ceiling was reduced to its virginal state in less than an hour, obviating the need for plastering.

I repaired the cracks in the ceiling and in the outside wall, where the plasterboard joins are evident. This involved removing the plaster from an inch either side of the join, applying Evostick Resin W wood glue into the joins, then sticking plasterboard jointing tape over the crack and finally filling with Polyfilla and sanding.

The plan is to paint the walls and to have the whole room redecorated and finished before my birthday on 16th September. Otherwise, all of our guests for the occasion will need to tackle the obstacle course on the landing to reach the loo.

So, just to recap, the kitchen, entrance hall, landing, small bedroom and main bedroom are now complete tips. The conservatory has been commandeered by the stray cat and our cats have, for the most part, taken up residence in the lounge. Rachel's room is a no-go area, which, ignoring the toilet and bathroom, only leaves the dining room and garage, both of which are relatively tidy if you ignore the cardboard boxes full of junk.

On a more positive note, the removal of the fungus on the bedroom wall seems to have resolved my health problems. Whether this is a lasting improvement remains to be seen.

We seem to have taken up temporary residence at the veterinary clinic in Bury. Our two cats have been for their annual check up and vaccination.

Toffee is 1 Kg overweight and has been put on a weight-loss diet, otherwise she is in danger of developing diabetes. Treacle has ear mites and has been prescribed ear drops. Neither cat seems best pleased.

Our stray cat has had blood and urine tests. Guess who ended up extracting the latter. Which begs the question, “How do you take the p*** out of a cat?” It isn’t easy. She had an intestinal tract problem and was on a high protein diet, which seems to have made her somewhat constipated. An enema soon sorted that – on the way home, in the car. She also has some laxative ointment, to be smeared on her paw daily, which she promptly licks off.

More seriously, her blood and urine tests reveal that she has a kidney problem and there is nothing that can be done to prevent her kidneys failing. For the present, it is a case of managing the problem and her diet has been changed to one which minimises the level of toxins in the blood. It is really quite sad because she is an affectionate cat and we are at a loss to understand how she became a stray.

The good news is that she has no contagious diseases, like feline leukaemia or feline aids, so she poses no threat to our two cats.

It may have escaped your notice that I shall be acquiring my free bus pass in a couple of weeks or so and anyone who is in receipt of this circular is invited to attend a small family gathering at our home on Sunday, 16th September. Jenny will be providing a buffet about tea-time and I am sure there will be a reasonable supply of intoxicating beverage for those fortunate enough not to have to drive. If you do intend to join us, please let us know in advance, unless you have already done so.

That’s about all for this month. Next month’s exciting episode should contain details of events on the 16th September amongst the other trivia.