

Greenmount – January 2007

I eventually went back to see my GP on 2nd January. You may recall that my tests results were normal. While my condition has improved somewhat, thanks, I believe, to a daily dose of Saw Palmetto and copious amounts of Cranberry juice, I still have some discomfort. My GP has diagnosed Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia (or BPH). This means that my prostate, normally about the size of a walnut, has delusions of becoming coconut-sized. My GP informed me that surgery in such cases is not recommended because it can cause more problems than it solves. Instead, he recommended a three month course of pills to be taken once a day upon retiring. Unfortunately, the pills take about a month to work so I shall not know if this treatment is successful for a while yet.

The major side-effect of the medication is that it lowers the blood pressure and I said I thought this might be a good thing because the last time it was checked, it was a little high. On this occasion it turned out to be 124/76, which is pretty good for my age. I was advised not to get up too quickly if I had to get out of bed in the night. I told the GP I never get up quickly.

If I haven't mentioned it before (or even if I have) Matthew and Carrie have set a date and venue for their wedding. They plan to marry on Matthew's birthday, 19th July, in 2008.

Matthew is now managing the IT engineering team and reports to the head of department.

The kitchen refurbishment hit a couple of tiny snags. First, I could not find a company prepared to supply cabinets with solid wood carcasses. It seems everyone wants to provide laminated chipboard units and charge for solid wood. Second, cash, or the lack of it, is a significant factor. I was hoping for some work to help pay for it but, alas, there is little or no such prospect. I was contemplating doing most of the work myself.

We finally decided to go and see the people who made our lounge and bedroom furniture and, to our amazement, the company is still flourishing. Simpsons is a small family business operating out of Greenfield Mill in Colne and Philip, one of the two brothers running the business, remembered us. I obviously created a lasting impression. He should be back to us with a rough price in a couple of weeks, which we expect to be enough to warrant a bank robbery.

For the latter part of the month, I have been suffering from a bout of influenza. It has not been severe enough to drive me to the doctor but it is annoying and inconvenient. This is the first infection I have had since I finished working full-time and I attribute it to the poor supply of raw garlic over recent weeks. Jenny likes to roast her garlic to remove the harshness but I think this removes some of the active chemical properties and I prefer mine raw, even if it is a little harsh. Modern thinking is that, for good health, an adult should eat four raw cloves of garlic a day. If we all did so, not only would we all be healthier but also no-one would notice the pungent side-effect because we would all smell the same.

Unfortunately, my illness prevented us from celebrating Jenny's birthday on the 27th so that has had to be postponed.

The car was due for its first MOT at the end of January and needs taxing for another year.

My new Skype Internet telephone is now up and running, giving me free calls across the Internet, anywhere in the world. All I need now is someone to talk to. Those of you who want to call me for free can find me by installing Skype software free of charge and entering me in your contact list as ken.dearden@btinternet.com or ken.dearden@networking-consultancy.com. One or both should work. Matthew has also installed a Skype phone, so that's one down, several million to go.

I have also signed up with credit for Skype-out, allowing me to use my Skype phone to call conventional land-lines around the world and the rates to other countries seem to be a lot cheaper than other carriers. Matthew has signed up for Skype-in and Skype-out so he can also receive calls from conventional land lines on his Skype phone, provided people know the Skype land-line number. I'm not sure what the advantage of that is if you have a conventional telephone, except that it does mean he has two lines.

Matthew has made a lot of new friends around the world from playing interactive games across the Internet on his X-box. The problem with this is that some of these people are awake when he should be asleep and he sometimes ends up on the system until 3 or 4 a.m. our time.

Matt has also acquired a fully-licensed and what I understand to be, a personal copy of Vista (Microsoft's new operating system) from somewhere and the source is reported to be close to Mr Gates himself, so it could be direct from Microsoft. Perhaps all this game-playing does have its advantages.

I have acquired some unique pictures from Antarctica, courtesy of a friend who works there, of Sir Edmund Hillary's visit to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Scott Base.

That's about all for this month. I was going to finish with a reasonably up to date picture of Jenny, Rachel and myself but my mail gateway (Matthew's server) restricts my messages to 1 Mb.