

Greenmount – July 2009

We have, during July, experienced the Indian weather we were promised. Not so much the summer as the monsoons. As for the warmer and dryer than usual summer, the Met Office has apologised for getting it wrong yet again.

It beats me why so many people want to come to this country and why more aren't leaving it. It must have the worst and most unpredictable climate of any inhabited country on earth, it must be the most densely populated country on earth and it heading to be one of the poorest. The only part of Britain that is Great is the greed of those who lead it.

Stepping down from my soapbox to observe the lounge makes me want to crawl inside it (the soap box, not the lounge). To describe it as a tip is to malign the refuse disposal facility.

The carpet is covered with sheets, as is the furniture we have not managed to move out. This process has rendered other rooms somewhat untidy, if not cramped.

The new chimney is up and the log fire is installed, which, at least, is a major step forward, although the roofing work has left a couple of small gaps in the joints between the roof tiles through which one can see daylight (in the day time) from the loft roof. This is not letting in water and is not a problem as such. The builder advises me that it is due to the flashing. Each to his own.

The fireplace wall looked like Al-Qaida had had a go at it and had second thoughts. It, like me, got plastered.

The lounge ceiling was full of cracks where the plasterboard joins occur and I was going to tend to these myself. The builder talked me into having the ceiling re-skimmed and Jenny mentioned the word "coving" onto which the plasterer immediately bonded himself, so he has now dealt with all that as well, at extra cost.

The builder informs us that his son is hoping to study aeronautical design engineering or some similar topic at Oxford University. I now know who is funding his first year's costs.

We have not yet had the opportunity to test the fire and when we do, I am sure most of the village will know about it, since the burning of wood has a distinctive aroma. Perhaps when we've finished, we should have a lounge-warming party?

I have found enough spare time to purchase and install yet more disc space in the form of an external 1 Terabyte (that's a 1 with a lot of zeroes after it) drive and increases my total disc capacity by 50%, much of which is taken up by almost 900 films and television episodes, recorded from terrestrial television. Topping, tailing and removing the advertisements from commercial channel transmissions saves between 25% and 30% of disc space.

My original plan was to dump films and TV series I wanted to keep onto DVD but this is much cheaper, assuming, of course, the disc doesn't crash, losing everything on it.

Jenny's last Beaver session of the year was an outing to the local woods, talking the little ones pond-dipping and generally messing about in the stream. The usual one hour session was extended to over two hours and led by the countryside Ranger. I was seconded to assist with supervision and take photographs. Despite the pouring rain, Jenny had a very good attendance and several parents, who came along to help, seemed to enjoy it more than the kids. We managed to end the evening without any of the children actually falling in the water, a process with which, in some cases, I would gladly have assisted.

Jenny was looking forward to a well-earned rest and days out, perhaps even spending a few days here and there. In stead, we have the lounge to decorate, the furniture to clean and re-instate, the new stove to test and some touching up of our bedroom to undertake, having moved and replaced some wires in the lounge below.

The next project is to tackle the dining area and landing, including replacing the landing floor and removing the cork tiles from the staircase wall. We have decided to take a break after finishing the lounge since this has been quite an upheaval, a lot of work and very expensive. When finished, we are thinking of charging an entrance fee to view.

During the last week of July, I was plagued with a pain in the neck (no comments are necessary) and headaches, much like severe migraine. Since I still managed to complete the Radio Times crossword, I think my brain is functioning normally, or, at least, as normally as it ever did, so I don't think it is anything serious. I am inclined to the notion that I have over-stretched some muscles at the back of my neck lifting heavy objects, like the piano for example, or over-reaching or crawling in the loft yet again. Of course, it could be the lack of beer, aka muscle relaxant.

We shall see how things progress during August.