

Greenmount – December 2007

Development work on the kitchen has come to a grinding halt at the beginning of the month due to a delay in the arrival of the wall tiles, being hand-made in Devon and, it seems, delivered on foot. The only work now remaining is the wall tiling and the fitting of the radiator.

The central heating controller in the kitchen was cleverly positioned above the sink, not to be adjusted whilst washing the pots. This, of course, contravenes the regulations and it needed to be moved. I purchased a new, combined, wireless thermostat and controller and I have wired the base station to the boiler. This I managed without blowing up the house and the new controller is now operational.

My research for this, seemingly minor development has uncovered yet another European plot to undermine the British way of life. The three cores of wire required used to be brightly coloured red, blue and yellow, to correspond to the three electricity phases. The new standard colours (no doubt of French origin) are a somewhat dull, being brown, black and grey. At least they match the winter weather.

I have also purchased four sets of glass crystal door knobs with brass fittings, matching those upstairs, to replace the old, B&Q, pot ones which have cracked and crumbled. I also need to replace the latches because the springs in the old ones (you guessed it, from B&Q) are not strong enough for the new door knobs. This means more chiselling, since the new fittings are slightly different to the old ones. Unfortunately, the bolts to hold the new knob backing plates together are too long for my doors and, what is more, they cannot be cut down to size because the thread on the bolts does not go all the way to the head. I contacted the manufacturer (Carlisle Brass) asking for the correctly sized bolts. I was somewhat brassed off, until, to my surprise, new bolts arrived in the post.

It has been too cold to attend to the garden on a regular basis. The fruit bushes have been secured after being blown down by the wind and the cats' latrine has been serviced. Thank goodness for gardening gloves.

Jenny has given up her job as a lunch-time supervisor at the local school and is now back working on the school crossing patrol morning and afternoon. She is working on supply, covering for vacancies, leave and sickness and only when she wants to do so. For the past few weeks, she has been at Hawkshaw and has become so popular that several of the mothers there want her to become permanent and want to petition her supervisor to make a formal request. While there, she has met up with the wife of an old colleague of mine, Sue Wardle, who teaches at the school.

Christmas shopping was becoming something of a chore until we found a present (a Tangine) for Matthew and Carrie in a local shop in Ramsbottom. Rachel's present was ordered online from Amazon. That just left me to buy something for Jenny and this presented the greatest challenge. We finally found a black scarf, made in Scotland, from real wool, so, it seems, there are still sheep in this country and a pair of black leather gloves. We are still searching for a black, woollen hat.

It is no exaggeration to say that almost all of the clothing at which we have looked in the shops, including Marks and Spencer, is made in China and from or containing artificial fibres. One wouldn't believe this country once had a thriving wool and cotton industry. How times have changed and standards fallen.

The house cleaning made slow progress, mainly due to Jenny's work and other things I find to do, like editing movies, converting LPs and tapes to CD and writing this rubbish.

Christmas was a quiet family affair this year. Jenny's brother and his wife (Anne and Wilf) could not have the time off work so they were unable to come as planned. And there was no Sue and Wills this year either! So take note, you Kiwis, we are lacking an NZ contingent.

We had a most enjoyable meal on Christmas Eve with Rachel, Matt and Carrie at the China Lounge in Whitefield. Jenny and I met up with Carrie's parents, Bob and Marie and Marie's mother, Phyllis, at Matt and Carrie's home on Boxing Day for a buffet of Lasagne, Moroccan Meatballs (cooked in the Tangine) and Seafood Piella. Matt and Carrie also invited their neighbours, Zack and Janna and their young son, Adam. Our hosts organised a quiz for entertainment and we divided into our natural three teams, the winning team (Marie, Bob and Phyllis), by seven points, taking home the prize of a chocolate orange.

We spent New Year's Eve at some friends down the road, John and Lynne, with our neighbours, Mike and Lorna, returning home to bed, somewhat noisily, at about 2 am.