

## The Unscripted Carer – 27<sup>th</sup> March 2009

It is nice to see that the long dark nights are being replaced by longer days and (slightly) warmer temperatures – spring has arrived!

I must be getting a little older and more practical, as I now take the wonderful spring bulbs nearly for granted, but I am still delighted when the rhubarb magically re-appears. This is a relatively new addition to our garden, and has survived being buried under the detritus of the recent extension; enthusiastic over cropping and general poor husbandry – but still it comes back for more!

As Nicola's mobility issues have got worse, we made the decision to convert our bathroom to a "wet room". We were very lucky that our various sitters were able to offer advice, and suggested a wet room rather than a shower (i.e. shower cubicle) – the wet room allows easier access for sitters to wash Nicola, and keep dry themselves – and of course for her carer (me)! We searched the internet for information and got horribly confused and found a number of expensive "tailor made solutions", that were merely standard showers, etc with a careful wrapping of "spin". In the end sanity set in, and we did what we should have done to start with, and contacted our "family plumber" – a local firm with a really good reputation. We were offered a genuinely tailor made solution, with them sorting everything out – and now we have a fully fledged wet room.

Max, our oldest dog, loves showers / water / baths and nearly was the first "customer" when Dan was testing out the shower – which would have proved a nuisance as Max wears a baby grow to protect his skin (from himself). On Sunday all four of us christened the shower – it proved to be a total success, even for Bijou who hates being washed – we were expecting him to dash out of the room, but he seemed to quite enjoy himself – even when I picked him up and turned him upside down to wash his tummy. I think I am forgiven now! During the conversion process, we had decided to have the loo cistern (flush) and wash basin higher than normal – to save Nicola having to reach down to flush the loo, and wash in the basin. This proved to be an immediate win for her, and led to an unexpected bonus, in that the wash basin is mounted on the wall and is high enough for Nicola to get her walking frame under the basin, something that we had not even thought about. So almost from "day 1" Nicola was gaining benefits from the ongoing changes.

The wet room is now fully tiled so that there are no "warm spots under the shower" followed by a cold spot once out of the shower – a potential trigger for Nicola's Raynaud's condition, we had been advised that this was an advantage of the wet room – and it has proven to be a bigger bonus than we expected. We also added a bit more loft insulation over the wet room (still buy one get one free) to keep the temperature stable. I am loath to drill tiles (I fear them splitting), and so we have chosen to not put the bathroom cabinets back, but have found other ways to hold the essential clutter of the bathroom. We have re-cycled them by making a strange "Welsh Dresser" in a recess behind the train set – so I now have some unexpected storage and mirrors to make it look bigger.

We were really lucky with the weather during the conversion period – it was dry the whole time. We are a bit paranoid about our parquet floor (it got badly damaged when we moved in by the outgoing removal firm) and so we had acquired cardboard to put over it. I am sure it helped keep it clean, but the lack of rain was an even bigger contribution.

Like the rest of Rugby, we are getting a new refuse / recycling system, and we think we will be allowed to keep the old red bins. I have plans for these to use as small raised beds to plant some more herbs in. I currently have a number of Rosemary cuttings that seem to have rooted, and need planting out – just for once, the council seems to have timed things in a way that helps me!

A friend has recently introduced me to e-bay, which is nearly as addictive as the rest of the internet! As with any auction, prices vary for no apparent reason, but I have been able to add quite a few bits to our “Z gauge” train at very good prices. It also opens up a new way for Nicola to window shop, and she has been the driving force in finding the containers that we needed for the bathroom to store our bits and pieces in, instead of the old bathroom cabinets. However, I cannot really claim it is less exhausting shopping on e-bay than it used to be going round real shops! However, it is a lot easier to get drinks of tea & coffee (and a seat) than in many of the shops we used to visit.

Our “younger” dog (still over 70 in our years) has just had his yearly “MoT”, and passed with flying colours – after a rigorous check of all of him. The lady vet described him as 1 in a thousand, and the best Westie she had seen for his age. This was very pleasing as Max, our older dog, was not this good at the same age. I have been speculating about Carers week, and the theme “Carers – the UK’s secret service”. We are considering our two Westies as our own secret service, with “M” (Max) and 001 (Bijou is 1 in a thousand, i.e. .001). This seems especially good, as Bijou is definitely “licensed to eat”.

Bye for now

Graham