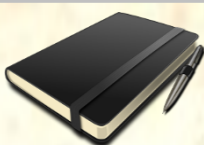


# The Aspect Xmas Diary



We have been asked if the anecdote on the front page of the last issue was true (the gentleman – & we use the term loosely – who typed the explicit email to his girlfriend while we were remotely connected to his PC). It was. *Everything* we put in the newsletter is true, even Vassilly's blog. Well OK, he's not a real employee & he doesn't go on jobs (sorry loyal fans!), but the jobs he talks about are real enough. And the Kit-Kats are always real. Albeit small.

Have you ever received an email from someone, immediately followed by another saying they want to recall it? Since they can't *literally* take it back, all it means is that we now know the sender wishes they hadn't sent it. Which just makes us all the keener to read it & see why. Bit self-defeating really, no?

Speaking of self-defeating, we were left perplexed by a user who kept all his passwords together in a desktop folder on his laptop, helpfully labelled & everything. Just .... no.

We hope this new-style (OK, small) newsletter is all right by you. We could just email you a link to the online version, but feedback we've had previously suggested you like a paper version you can pick up & put down, as & when. Granted, we asked for that feedback quite a while ago & everything is going increasingly digital these days. Maybe you don't care so much now? We really would be grateful for feedback on this one – email to [newsletter@aspectbc.co.uk](mailto:newsletter@aspectbc.co.uk) (rest assured, it's not a 'majority carry the day' thing. If you prefer paper, you can have paper).



Well that's it for this issue & indeed for 2023. We wish you & yours everything you wish for yourselves.

# The Last Laugh



Your X-ray showed a broken rib, but we fixed it with Photoshop.



"All I'm saying is we could be collecting more data than just naughty and nice."



"Username and password, please."



"I don't like these new advice cancelling headphones."

# The Aspect Newsletter

Issue 61 - Christmas 2023

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## When the red, red bauble goes bob-bob-bobbling along!

For those of you reading this online, just skip the next paragraph. It'll make no sense to you.

Yes, we've shrunk. C'mon, have you *seen* the price of postage these days? (Being as it's Christmas, you probably have). To be honest, we accidentally did our test print of the autumn issue this size, and thought, you know what, actually that's still quite readable. Plus it looks kind of cute. Don't fret, all the regular features are still here. And - major win from our point of view - it doesn't need a Large-class stamp to post. Obviously we're open to feedback, but we think this is workable, no?

This year's story is *A Book At Bedtime* and compared to last year's tale, it has a bit more of a technical bent (well OK, it mentions electrical devices). We did forget to mention last year that all the previous stories (17 years' worth now!) appear on the website for a limited time. And if you're one of those people who wish it could be Christmas every day, firstly give yourself a good slap, but yes, fine, you can read them when they're not posted on the website. Just go to hidden page [www.aspectbc.co.uk/christmas](http://www.aspectbc.co.uk/christmas) at any time.

As we always do in the Christmas edition, we thank you all for your business over the past twelve months. We never take it, or you, for granted.

## Wishing you a joyful festive season and a prosperous 2024



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# AspectBC FAQs

## We've changed broadband provider at the office, and people can't connect remotely anymore.

That would likely be the case, yes. As we've explained before, the internet doesn't care about street addresses. Everything to it is just an IP address. When your staff work from home, the instructions programmed into their remote connection say "take me to *that* IP address". When you change broadband provider, that address will change. (Of course, if you're unlucky enough to be with a provider who won't give you a fixed IP address, it'll change every time you turn around, which is a pain in the proverbial).

This isn't a difficult fix; you'd just need them all to go into their VPN settings and enter the new IP address they need to connect to. We can talk you through that.

Switching broadband provider *is* easy, as easy as any other utility, but there is this added level of annoyance that you need to factor in. Anyone who connects remotely to you, or any additional office locations you're connected to, their set up may all need to be reconfigured.



## Am I a safe site?

We have mentioned in the past that you shouldn't enter personal data / credit card data into websites that don't display the padlock sign next to the site address.

But have you noticed the padlock icon has gone altogether now? Chrome replaced it recently with a 'tune' icon, which looks like this:



(No, we don't know why they call it a tune icon either).

The reason behind the change is that phishing sites can also carry the padlock symbol, so it turns out it's not the safe indicator you thought it was. With the new tune icon, you have to click on it to get more information about the site's security status, meaning you have to make the effort to check, not just assume at a glance.



We'd love to hear your comments and feedback.  
Just email:  
[newsletter@aspectbc.co.uk](mailto:newsletter@aspectbc.co.uk)

(Recent issues are on the website if you missed them).

## All I Want For Christmas Is All Your Money

It being the season of giving and of parcels flying to and fro, that also sadly makes it high season for scamming.

You may receive a text message saying you need to pay a surcharge to have a parcel delivered. It'll be a tiddly amount that won't necessarily concern you. But don't go following any links in the message to make card payment. Because that's when the real scammer will strike, with a very convincing tale of you being defrauded, but - hey, lucky for you - it's been detected, and they can help you recover your money! Except they're actually getting down to the serious business of stealing as much of your money as they can. Be aware, these are not your *"good-afternoon-madam-I-am-calling-you-from-Microsoft-Tech-Support-how-are-you-today?"* scammers that we've all learned to spot within ten seconds of picking up the phone. These people are practised, very well spoken and plausible. So be on the alert.

If you receive a text like this, you can report it as spam by forwarding it to 7726 (which spells out SPAM on the keypad).

## Restart vs. Shutdown

A little bit of information for you:

It's worth doing a weekly restart on your machine to free up resources. And we do stress - **Restart**, not Shutdown. Windows being Windows, it doesn't actually shutdown when you tell it to shutdown; it just puts some things in abeyance to be able to bring them back to life faster, which it seems to believe is doing you a favour.

So Shutdown doesn't shutdown, while Restart shuts everything down. Simples, right?

# The Helpdesk of HORROR ...

Ho-ho-ho-holy moley!



"Your external hard disk looks like it's going to fail soon. I think you should get it backed up as a priority."

"Do I have to do it now, or can I wait till the hard drive dies?"

"Uh, no, you need to do it as soon as possible. Once it dies, we won't be able to get anything off it."

"OK, fine, do the backup."

"Do you have another hard disk we can use?"

"Can't you back it up on the same drive?"

"The same old drive that's at risk of failing any minute? No."

"You mean the backup doesn't fix it?"

"Sir, what do you think a backup is?"

"You're ... like ... fixing it back up?"

"I'm having issues with my wireless signal."

"Have you tried a direct connection to your router with a cable?"

"... "

"Sir?"

"I'm going to ignore that because we live in a wireless age, so I should be able to use my wireless wherever I am. Find another solution."

"But sir, in troubleshooting, most issues like yours are resolved by connecting -"

"Find. Another. Solution."

"My computer is frozen. How do I fix it?"

"Have you restarted it?"

"No, and none of the buttons work."

"OK, you'll need to hold the power button for about eight seconds."

"Can't you do it remotely for me?"

"No, I'm afraid not. You'll have to do it."

"..... OK, it's working now."

"That's great! Any signs of it freezing now?"

"No, my problem is fixed. But you didn't do anything. Do not feel proud of yourself."

"I need help with my Mac!"

"What seems to be the problem?"

"I can't open up my mail! It's my husband's fault!"

"Why do you say that?"

"The batteries were running low in the mouse, and he put new ones in. Since then, my email has stopped working!"

"I really don't think the two are related."

"Then you're incompetent! They shouldn't let you work with computers! It happened around the same time as he changed the batteries, so it *has* to be that!"

"All my emails are gone! You have to help me!"

"Let me have a look .... No, they're all there."

"What did you just do?"

"I un-minimised the window."

"I can't connect to the WiFi."

"Can you check your WiFi connection?"

"I don't know the passwords to any of the networks in the area."

"Oh, you're using public WiFi?"

"I don't know what you call it, but I don't have the passwords. Can you just give me a universal password?"

"I'm not sure what you mean."

"A universal password! One that works everywhere!"

"That's not how the internet works."

"But my friend has a key that'll connect to any WiFi!"

"Is that like a portable WiFi? Is it on a USB stick?"

"No! You're just trying to sell me something! Just give me a password that works with any WiFi!"

"What ... like a skeleton key?"

"Ugh. You're useless!" [\[Click\]](#)

"My computer is broken! It's an emergency! I can't do my work till you fix it!"

"What's the problem?"

"Can't you see? The scroll bar on my Inbox is gone! It's *gone*!"

"Well obviously. You've only got three items in there."

"Well, fix it!"

"There's nothing to fix. Once there's enough emails to scroll through, it'll come back."

"No, you need to fix it now!"

"Fine .... there, I've sent you ten emails. It's back."

We just got a fax. At work. We didn't know we had a fax machine. The entire department just stared at it. I poked it with a stick.

My computer said my password was insecure. Well maybe if it wasn't forced to have such strict requirements, it would be more confident.

I've got a meeting with the guy who invented the progress bar. He'll be here in 2 hours and 13 minutes.

.... Apparently he's stuck in traffic and he'll be here in 6 hours and 54 minutes.

.... He's making better progress than he thought, be here in 12 minutes.

.... Apparently it will now take him 5 days.

When the person who invented the USB drive dies, they'll lower the coffin into the grave, realise they put it in the wrong way, and have to do it again.

You worry that your PC, laptop and phone are spying on you? Listen, your vacuum's been gathering dirt on you for years.

What I need is a search engine that, no matter what I type in, comes back with "GO BACK TO WORK!"

## Vassilly's Xmas Blog

I am resigned to silly Santa suit. When I was young 'kat, I am get angry if peoples say is cute. But now I am mature 'kat ... meh, is worse things than being cute.

### Thurs 2 Nov

OK, so is November already and I am admit to small panic that I am not manage to fill Blog before Christmas. Aspects is need to step up game on things that is full of excites. I am suggest this to Payrolls lady, but she is give me look that is wither whiskers. Okaaaaay then. But in good news, we are have Kit-Kats peoples! *KIT-KATS!!* Except they is smaller than I am remember. (Oh, and here is how I know I am share office with old peoples. They is spend TWO HOURS comparing size of crisp bags and chocolate bars when they is young).

### Thurs 9 Nov

Christmas party is all booked, peoples, and is Las Vegas-themed! I am ready to be high-roller and win a bundle. Payrolls lady say is for sure I am lucky 'kat. I say really? She say yes - I have not been sacked by Aspects yet.

### Tues 14 Nov

It is rain. A lot.

### Wed 22 Nov

Is all go peoples! Some customers is want new machines and some is want RAMS. Now this is give me confusings. There is RAMS that is mean memory, and there is RAMS that is mean Risk Assessments. Apparently I am Aspects go-to person on Risk Assessments! Payrolls lady say if I am on job, risk curve is grow expotentially! Ha! Mama 'kat is always tell me I am have potentials, but see? I am have *extra* potentials!

### Tues 28 Nov

IT Boss Man is build big file server and it is make noise like take-off of jumbo jet. I am ask for ear defenders as part of Aspects PPE. Payrolls lady is hand me two little plugs. What is these? She say they is ear plugs. Huh. They is maybe ear plugs for human peoples, but they is not ear plugs for 'kats. They is just fall out. She is look at ears for a minute and disappear. I am little bit worried, peoples, as she is cut holes in Tesco Christmas Bag For Life one time when is no proper PPE, and I am end up clinging to top of ladder in pouring rain like depressed tree bauble. Oh no! Nonononono!!! Peoples, she is come at me with two scouring pads and pair of elastic bands. (Interesting point - when you is run and hide in tiny space at end of kitchen, you is not able to hear server anymore).

### Thurs 30 Nov

Early start to go to Brum with Telecommmmms Boss Man and engineer Gareth. But am I complain? No! Because I am literally kiddie in chocolate factory!! Whoo-hoo! Telecommmmms Boss Man is have rules though. Touch nothing. Do not wander off. Nothing is to accidentally (air quotes) *fall* into pockets. Bah humbug.

### Fri 1 Dec

Payrolls lady is ask if I am do New Year Resolutionings. I am ask her what this is about, as I am never really understand. She say tradition is you make list of things to change to make you better person. *B-e-t-t-e-r*....? No-oooo, I am still not understanding. She say some peoples give up smoking. But I am not smoke. She say some is go on diet. Pfft! I am lean like racing weasel. She say maybe I can exercise more? Hmm. 'More' is redundant, but still no. Is maybe good idea for her though? She is give me hard stare and say that *some* peoples is simply resolve to be nicer. Oh, well now she is just being silly.

Merry Chrismassabobs loyal fans!



# Christmas Songs Bonanza!

♪ It's the most wonderful time of the year! ♪ Fa-la-la-la-la! ♪ Etc, etc, etc.

Listed below are the initial letters of the titles of lots of Christmas songs and carols / traditional songs, with the number of letters in each word provided. You just have to guess them. Well not guess. We have more faith in you than that. If we can make a couple of suggestions - a 9-letter word beginning with C is almost certainly *Christmas*. Also, it's possibly easier to think of songs you already know and then see if they fit anywhere.

Answers, as ever, are on the web page - follow the link from the newsletter page.

## Popular

1. LC (4,9)
2. ISMKSC (1,3,5,7,5,5)
3. WC (5,9)
4. JBR (6,4,4)
5. FTS (6,3,7)
6. HYAMLC (4,8,1,5,6,9)
7. SCICTT (5,5,2,6,2,4)
8. STC (4,3,7)
9. MAW (9,3,4)
10. DTKIC (2,4,4,3,9)
11. IWICBCED (1,4,2,5,2,9,5,3)
12. MXE (5,4,9)
13. LTC (6,4,9)
14. AIWFCIY (3,1,4,3,9,2,3)
15. IBIFC (1,7,2,6,9)
16. DHFC (7,4,3,9)
17. WIAWW (7,2,1,6,10)
18. TCS (3,9,4)
19. LISLISLIS (3,2,4,3,2,4,3,2,4)
20. WITA (7,2,3,3)
21. RATCT (6,6,3,9,4)
22. ASCT (1,8,4,10)
23. SB (5,4)
24. FONY (9,2,3,4)
25. MCE (5,9,8)
26. WACIB (4,1,5,2,4)
27. MBC (5,3,5)
28. HC(WIO) (5,9,3,2,4)
29. SIC (4,4,9)
30. WC (9,13)

## Traditional

1. OLTOB (1,6,4,2,9)
2. AIAM (4,2,1,6)
3. WTKOOA (2,5,5,2,6,3)
4. GKW (4,4,9)
5. ICUAMC (2,4,4,1,8,5)
6. HTHAS (4,3,6,6,4)
7. SN (6,5)
8. TFN (3,5,4)
9. JB (6,5)
10. GRYMG (3,4,2,5,9)
11. DTH (4,3,5)
12. ISTSCSI (1,3,5,5,4,7,2)
13. COTB (5,2,3,5)
14. JTTW (3,2,3,5)
15. WWYAMC (2,4,3,1,5,9)
16. DDMOH (4,4,7,2,4)
17. OCAYF (1,4,3,2,8)
18. RTRNR (7,3,3,5,7)
19. TLDB (3,6,7,3)
20. OCT (1,9,4)
21. AWHHOH (6,2,4,5,2,4)
22. THATI (3,5,3,3,3)
23. OIRDC (4,2,5,6,4)
24. WSWTF (5,9,7,5,6)
25. ITBM (2,3,5,9)
26. TTDOC (3,6,4,2,9)
27. DYHWIH (2,3,4,4,1,4)
28. LD (6,6)
29. OHN (1,4,5)
30. GTIOTM (2,4,2,2,3,8)



# A Book at Bedtime

Tom tucked his grand-daughter Cassie into bed on Christmas night, pressed a kiss to her forehead and reached to turn out the light.

"No grandpa! I want a story!"  
"Okay," he smiled, "but just one. I need to get home to bed as well."

"Three!"  
He sighed and sat down on the bed.

"Maybe if they're short, we'll see."

He plucked a book from the shelf by her bed and opened it.

"Oh, *Sleeping Beauty*. Do you like that one?"

Cassie pursed her lips in thought.

"Is that the one where the princess goes to sleep for years'n'years'n'years, and the prince cuts through the forest and wakes her with a kiss?"

"Somebody knows it well! Shall we read that one?"

Cassie looked at him pityingly. "Oh no grandpa, we can't read that one."

"Oh? Why not?"

"Mummy says the prince shouldn't kiss her when she's sleeping. She says it's set school salt."

"Set school... ah, I see."

"Yes. Mummy says *Sleeping Beauty* should jump up and shout 'No!' and push him away. And if he tries it on again, she should kick him inna fork."

Tom winced and reflexively crossed his legs. That'd certainly be a pointed lesson to the prince not to go kissing strange women without their permission.

"Okaaaaay ... no *Sleeping Beauty*." He flipped over a few pages. "What about *Snow White*?"

"Oh, *grandpa*," said Cassie accusingly. "Mummy says that's worse than *Sleeping Beauty*. She says the prince

kisses *Snow White* when she's *dead*! Mummy says that's necker filly." Cassie leaned over and confided, "I thought that was one of the girl horses from *My Little Pony*, but Mummy says no, it's a Very Bad Thing."

Tom tried to come up with a response to that. *Nope, got nothing*. He flipped more pages.

"What about *Little Red Riding Hood*? Do we like that one?"

Cassie brightened. "I don't think I know that one, grandpa. Yes, let's read that one!"

Tom breathed a sigh of relief and began. About five minutes in, and *Red Riding Hood* was lost in the forest,

Cassie looked confused.

"Why didn't she use Google maps, grandpa?"

"Well she didn't have a phone, sweetheart."

"Ohhhh. Had she been naughty? Mummy always says she'll take away my phone if I'm naughty."

"No Cassie, she'd *never* had a phone."

"Oh wow! She must've been *really* naughty growing up!"

"Um, no, nobody had phones then. They hadn't been invented. All they had were paper maps."

Cassie gave this some thought.

"So why didn't her mummy give her a paper map before she sent her into the forest?"

"Well .... I don't know."

Cassie frowned. "She sounds like a bad mummy. I think somebody should report her."

"Ye-e-es, maybe we'll forget about *Red Riding Hood* till you're a little bit older."

He opened the book at random farther on. *Rumpelstiltskin*? He ran

through it in his head ... seemed safe enough. Well, he'd give it a go.



"... and the Queen had to guess *Rumpelstiltskin*'s name, so what do you think she did?"

"Ask Alexa!"

"I'm sorry, I didn't understand that question."

Tom rolled his eyes as the Amazon speaker chimed in.

"Cassie, sweetheart, they didn't have an Alexa."

"I'm sorry, I didn't understand that question."

Tom gritted his teeth.

"They didn't have ... one of *those* things."

"What, an Alexa?" asked Cassie mischievously.

"I'm sorry, I didn't understand that question."

"Cassie!" he scolded.

"Sorry grandpa," she grinned, clearly not in the least sorry.

"Okay, then why didn't she try *Wikipedia*?"

"Because they didn't have that back then either."

"So how did she find out his name, grandpa?"

"Well, she followed him into the forest one night, and found him singing a song about his name."

"No." Cassie shook her head emphatically.

"What do you mean, no?"

"Rumpel-whatsit doesn't rhyme with anything. He couldn't have been singing it. Unless he was rapping?"

"No, see the song went 'the queen will never win the game, for *Rumpelstiltskin* is my name'."

"Ohhhh. Then it was a bit silly of him to go singing it like that,

wasn't it?"

"Well he thought no-one would be listening."

"I'm not surprised. It's a pretty awful song. But can we listen to it anyway, grandpa? Is it on Spotify?"

"Erm, no."

"Huh. I told you it was really bad."



Tom continued flipping through the story book. *The Red Shoes* ...uh-huh. Cuts off her own feet because they won't stop dancing. Never see that on *Strictly*, do you? *Hansel and Gretel*, cannibalism and murder ...., *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*, mass murder ...., *The Tinder Box*, murder, kidnap ... he turned some more pages ... oh, and more murder, hurrah ....., *The Little Match Girl*, frozen to death in an alley ....

"What's wrong, grandpa? Why aren't you reading?"

"Just trying to find a nice story, sweetheart," he said brightly, flipping pages like mad. "Here we are! What about *Cinderella*?" He watched her face fall. *Oh for pity's sake, what now?*

"No, grandpa," said Cassie firmly. "Mummy says that's modern slaving."

*Of course she does*. Tom often wondered what his daughter-in-law's childhood had been like. He envisaged her father perched on her bed, reading aloud from a self-penned treatise on *An Analysis of 18th and 19th Century Folklore As Viewed Through the Lens of Modern Societal Norms*. Well it probably sent her to sleep, so there was that.

He closed the book.

"No Grandpa!!" wailed Cassie. "Not yet! I'm not sleepy yet!"

"It's okay, sweetie. I'm going to make up a special story instead, just for you."

"Yaaaay!!" Cassie nestled into the pillows and gazed up at him with rapt attention.



"Once upon a time, there was a princess called Cassandra."

"That's my name!" Cassie looked thrilled for a moment, and then paused. "Oh. I s'pose she

had 'long golden hair and skin as white as snow'," she quoted witheringly.

"Not at all. *This* Cassandra had beautiful brown curls the colour of milk chocolate, and —" he tapped her nose, "— freckles all over her charming little nose."

"Hmmm." Cassie was mollified up to a point, but having heard too many tales of golden-haired princesses who largely lived in jeopardy and waited passively for rescue ... "And was she scared of her own shadow, grandpa?"

"Nope, only of spiders."

Cassie nodded happily. That was a thoroughly sensible thing to be scared of.

"Now Cassandra's kingdom was quite poor, and her people didn't have all the necessities of life."

"Like broadband?" asked Cassie.

"Not *quite* where I was going with it, but yes, that too. And this made Cassandra sad, because she didn't know how to help them. But one day, it was announced that a very rich man was coming to visit the kingdom, and if he was impressed with them all, he might give them bucketfuls of money."

"Ooooh, I bet they were all on their very best behaviour!"

"They were. Everybody lined up in their best clothes, with their hair brushed, and cheered when he arrived."

"Did he give them the money?"

"Patience, Cassie, let me tell the story."

"Sorry grandpa."

"So the man and all his hangers-on made their way to the palace gates where Cassandra and her parents were waiting. And there was an old lady by the gates, who stepped forward."

"'Please sir', she said. 'Could you spare some coins? My children are starving'."

"Oh, that's sad," said Cassie.

"Yes, it was, but the man just pushed her to the ground and said, 'Get out of my way!'"

"What a mean man!"

"Cassandra thought so too, because she walked straight past the man and went to help the old lady. The man was furious that Cassandra was ignoring him, and he said none of them

deserved a penny of his money, and he turned around and went away."

"No!"

"Ah, but wait. The old lady smiled at Cassandra and said, 'Thank you, my dear. Always remember that it's nice to be important, but it's much more important to be nice'. And with that, she transformed into a fairy godmother!"

"No!"

"Yes she did. And she bestowed all kinds of riches on Cassandra and her people."

"Like broadband?"

"Yes Cassie, like broadband. Everybody got a fibre connection and free WiFi," he joked.

"Oh good," she said seriously.

"And did they all live happily ever after?"

"All except the rich man."

While he was on his way home, a rabbit ran out and scared his horse, and it bolted into the forest, where he bumped into a wasp's nest, and they swarmed all over him, so he jumped in a lake to make them go away and stop stinging him, and a big fish bit his bottom."

Cassie laughed and clapped her hands.



Tom tucked the covers around her again and kissed her cheek.

"There we are then, time for you to go to sleep. So did you have a lovely Christmas Day, Cassie? I'm sorry I missed dinner with the rest of the family."

"Oh yes, grandpa. I had some t'rifric presents, and dinner was really good." She chewed her lip. "But Mummy gave me a bit of a telling off after everybody went home."

Tom sighed. "What did you do, Cassie?"

"It wasn't my fault, grandpa!" she protested. "I was watching Auntie Mary really, really carefully when we had dinner, and she got annoyed and she asked me why I was staring at her so much, and I said Mummy said she drinks like a fish, and I wanted to see how she did it."

**The End**