

Greenmount – April 2010

The 1st is a good day with which to commence and an early start ensured our arrival in Sheffield before lunch. Jenny spent the day wandering round the city centre with her niece, Tracey and I spent the afternoon researching the Dearden family at the Archives, only to discover there were a lot of them living (is that a contradiction in terms?) in the Ecclesfield area around 1800. The amount of time I need to spend at the archives can be estimated in weeks rather than hours.

We rounded off the day with a meal at the most convenient Meadow Farm pub in Ecclesfield on the way home.

Easter week end was rather non-eventful, except for the Monday, when Jenny was helping on a stall at the Antique and Collector's Fair at the Old School, leaving me free to listen to my Jazz and continue the family research. We managed to acquire a few odds and ends from the Fair, including more (yes, you guessed it) Jazz recordings and an early 20th century oil lamp that had been very badly converted to electricity (it is in a shocking state) but which had a rather nice globe, to replace the one I broke on one of my other oil lamps. The rest of the lamp I purchased I plan to try to restore to its original means of illumination, clean and polish and, if successful, sell on. This could be one of my shining successes.

On the 6th we departed for the Lake District, having booked two nights' stay in Ambleside. We left in reasonable, fine weather and arrived, not entirely unexpectedly, in light rain. Our accommodation was a guest house called Far Nook on the far side (obviously aptly named) of Ambleside, about five minutes' walk from the town. We took our luggage to our room, donned our waterproof over-garments and went for a paddle round the town.

As the evening approached, the Italian restaurant at which we had decided to eat was not due to open for an hour or so and being somewhat damp on the outside, we thought we might as well have insides that matched. We approached a local, asking for directions to a pub that served decent ale and were directed to the White Lion. It wasn't until we were inside that it became apparent it was a Thwaites house and as such not particularly noted for its fine brews.

I found the hand-pulled pint of Nutty Black mild, pleasant and refreshing. Having settled in the nice warm, comfortable pub and inspected the menu, we decided not to venture out in the now poring rain and to eat there instead. We had a good meal at a reasonable price in a pleasant atmosphere and I can certainly recommend the White Lion in Ambleside. If you do decide to eat there, ignore the notice on the menu about placing your order at the bar and observe the conflicting notice at the bar which says that your order will be taken at your table, which seems a better arrangement since none of the tables are numbered.

The following day, we woke to a misty start. After a rather generous helping of bacon, egg, tomatoes and mushrooms (I passed on the sausage, hash brown, black pudding, etc.) and Jenny's choice of continental breakfast, we availed ourselves of the services of the Tourist Information office and found a walk via Loughrigg Terrace to Grasmere, by which time the sun was shining. My original plan was to make for the top of the fell but Jenny did not fancy the short but steep climb so we took the gentler ascent up to the Terrace, giving magnificent

views of Rydal Water and Grasmere lake.

Six miles or so found us in Grasmere village, eating the sandwiches we had purchased in Ambleside before starting the walk. We would have bought a pot of tea from the little refreshment kiosk, where the gentleman also rents out rowing boats, at the top of Grasmere Lake but we were refused permission to eat our own sandwiches at the benches in the garden there on the grounds that if that were allowed, it would simply become a picnic area. How original. So the gentleman in question not only lost the opportunity of a sale of a pot of tea for two but a couple of cakes and ice creams to follow. He is obviously so well off after claiming on his flooding insurance, he doesn't need the custom. Future tourists and insurance investigators please note.

After a short rest, wandering lonely, as a cloud, round the church yard, we found William Wordsworth's grave, complete with daffodils. We also went inside the well-kept and very beautiful church. No doubt it owes its condition to the donations it receives from the many tourists.

Our route back to Ambleside (another six miles or so) took us past Dove Cottage and Rydal Mount, both homes of William Wordsworth, the latter still owned by his descendants, along the Coffin Route. I can only surmise it is so-called because the dead were carried along it to be buried in the churchyard at Grasmere. The walk is not so challenging as to require one at the end of it.

The first priority after our twelve mile stroll up hill and down dale was a badly needed shower, on which subject I shall not dwell further. Feeling and, more importantly, smelling, fresher, we made for the Italian Tarentella restaurant in Ambleside, which had been recommended to us by our hosts, only to find it was fully booked.

Still in Italian mood, we headed for Mathew's Bistro, the restaurant we had considered the previous night. The meal was very good but I have to say that I have three major criticisms which prevent me from returning to it or recommending it to others. First, Jenny did not want the prawns and salmon that came with her melon starter and asked if she could have some fruit instead. The melon arrived with a salad garnish. Obviously, "fruit" lost something in the translation. Second there was no Tiramisu on the sweet menu and for an Italian restaurant, I regard that as odd. When asked, the waiter said the chef was too lazy to provide it. I suggested he should sack the chef. He said the chef was the owner. Third, it is on the expensive side, although that did not seem to deter custom. Ambleside must see a lot of tourists from the south of England.

On Thursday, we had a last walk round Ambleside before reluctantly returning home, calling at Kendal for lunch on the way back. The accommodation at far Nook is excellent in every respect and is most certainly recommended. We shall definitely return for future visits.

The centre of Kendal has changed a great deal since we were last there and, in my opinion, not for the better. I seem to remember, on my last visit, I drove straight into the large car park outside Marks and Spencer, parked the car and left it there at no charge while we wandered round the town and shopped in the store. Now I find the one-way street system is a nightmare, the signs for car parks are misleading and everywhere there is a charge for

parking. The charity shops (on which we are becoming expert) are asking far too much for books, CDs and DVDs, in many cases double that of similar shops elsewhere. So if you intend to visit Kendal town centre to shop, my advice is to go by bus, taxi or bicycle or walk there. Better still, go somewhere else.

If you do go by car and are prepared to walk into the centre, you can park in a side street out by the river on the south side of Kendal for free and stroll in alongside the river, assuming it isn't raining.

The two plus points were that I managed to find the last two packs of pure cotton socks in M&S and we found some excellent tea rooms in the Shambles. And that just about describes the Kendal of today.

On Saturday 10th April, we were up before the sun, at about 5 a.m., to prepare for the car boot sale at the Old School, having packed the car the afternoon before. The car was so full that I had to drive it round while Jenny walked there, carrying yet more booty. The recent investment in a second sturdy table and the loan of a robust clothes rack from the Old School certainly paid dividends. We had a most successful day and made the highest profit to date, much of which will no doubt end up in the Chancellor's purse as alcohol duty.

The following morning was another early start. At least, it was for Jenny and Rachel. They went off to Scout training for the day in preparation for the following camping week end. I had a day of peace and quiet and was able to listen to my Jazz without interruption.

On Wednesday 14th April, I decided to tackle the grass at the side of the house before the council so-called gardener has an opportunity to devastate it with his tractor. I managed to cut most of it until the hover mower defied its description over a rather large tree root and came to rest in every sense of the word.

Inspection of the underside revealed a rotary blade bent out of all recognition and a more detailed analysis on the bench confirmed my suspicions that the obstruction had tightened the retaining bolt to such a degree that it seemed the only way of removing the blade was to hacksaw off the head of the bolt and then attempt to remove the bolt shaft with a pair of mole grips. After about half an hour of little progress in that direction, I decided to abandon the attempt for the day, expending what remaining energy I had on a few expletives.

The following day I had another of my rare flashes of inspiration. I have a socket that fits the bolt head perfectly, a torque wrench and a large, wooden wedge. Using these tools and a bit of intelligence (emphasis here on the bit), I was able prevent the blade from rotating as I removed the bolt. The old bolt and blade were consigned to the bin and I resolved to obtain a new blade before the fine, sunny weather gave way to the more usual April showers.

Saturday 17th saw Jenny and Rachel off to Scout camp for the week end. I was supposed to be helping Matthew take some rubble to the local tip but he was playing golf in the morning and doing quite well, I am told, until he damaged his wrist. I told him he should try using a club.

I gainfully employed my time by removing the weeds from between the block paving along

the side of the house. This is an exercise I started last year and is akin to painting the Forth Bridge.

By Sunday, Matthew had recovered sufficiently to take his trip to the tip. He arrived as I was washing the pots after breakfast and proceeded to de-clutter the trailer so it could be removed from the garage. On the way to his house, we called at B&Q to collect six bags of chipped bark he wanted and a blade for my lawn mower. We divided the labour between us. I carried the lawn mower blade and Matthew carried the chipped bark.

One trailer load of rubbish tipped later, I dropped Matthew off at his house, came home, put away the trailer and tidied the garage. I fixed the lawn mower, finished cutting the grass on the side of the house, cut the back lawn, cut the front lawn, put everything away and collapsed in a heap. Whoever left it there should have more sense.

Fortunately, Jenny and Rachel came home and Jenny eventually revived me with a juicy fillet steak and a bottle of red wine.

Monday morning was yet another early start, Jenny going to work for 8 am. I walked the two miles to meet her as she finished at 9 am in exactly 30 minutes and collapsed, in the car this time, once more. We did a little shopping in Ramsbottom, came home and my most productive achievements for the rest of the day were finishing the weekly Radio Times crossword and making the fire, the weather having turned cold and damp.

The rest of the week was fairly uneventful, except for a spot of cleaning and gardening here and there, until Saturday 24th.

The plan was to give the potted plants in the conservatory and on the patio some badly needed TLC. The morning was scheduled for listing what we needed from Summerseat Garden Centre, followed by a trip there to purchase the necessary items and lunch. The afternoon was set aside for the actual work. The day started well. Then Jenny decided to start cleaning (as in from top to bottom, literally) the conservatory, having moved all the plants outside. The last time we did this (about two years ago), it took the best part of a week (which is why we don't do it very often – cleaning the conservatory, that is).

We managed to complete about two-thirds of it before we both collapsed into soft, comfortable chairs at about 5 p.m.

My Demon Internet connection was unavailable for most of the day, not that I was in a position to use it, poised, as I was, on the top of the steps. By the time we came to rest, Matthew contacted me on Skype to say he was just lighting the BBQ. Swine!

On Sunday 25th the Scouts held the St. George's Day Parade and Jenny and Rachel went up to Holcombe Church for the service with the Beavers at 2 p.m. while I wandered round the churchyard with my camera looking, as one does, for headstones of interest. It seems some far-flung, distant relatives of a distant relative lived in this area a few hundred years ago and may have been buried there. I could find no trace of them (not surprising after two hundred years) and resolved to investigate the documentation further.

I joined the parade, for which the rain had ceased and walked down the very steep, long hill to Ramsbottom, taking pictures, the procession finishing on the field by the swimming baths. The number of people in the parade seemed to be greater than ever and several spectators threw open doors and windows as the band, leading the way passed by. I am pleased to say that the rain held off for the event. The vicar of Holcombe Church obviously has a degree of influence.

As the parade dismissed, Jenny asked how we were going back to the car, perched some three hundred feet or so above us. I just smiled. Half an hour later, we had retraced our steps and collapsed in a heap for the fourth time this month. This is getting to be a habit.

By Tuesday 27th, we had recovered sufficiently to start work on the back lawn (or, more aptly, large bald patch with a good sprinkling of weeds and the odd blade of grass). I decided to straighten up the edges and install some lawn edging, so off to Summerseat Garden Centre we went. By the end of the following day, I had the edging in place round half of the lawn, having miscalculated the amount I needed and run out. I had dug out the rest of the edges ready for the edging and intended to go down to the garden centre for more supplies. It was six o'clock, I had been on my knees all day, my hand was hurting from all the digging with the trowel, I was dirty and smelly and shattered. I collapsed in a heap again. I'm getting to like it.

A good shower and a beer revived me sufficiently to eat my tea, watch a film and crawl into bed.

The weather turned damp for the rest of April, so the garden work has come to a halt. That is just as well because I have been involved with a couple of local IT projects and my server (or, more accurately, my son's server that lives here) has become host to the Greenmount Village Community's and the Tottington District Civic Society's E-mail and web pages as well as the Networking Consultancy ones. I have configured the web pages and Matthew has configured the E-mail because I am not sufficiently familiar with Windows Active Directory. In return, I have offered Matthew 50% of my financial reward, which is only fair. I get nowt and he gets half of it.

On 30th April we had to wait in for a parcel from Dell. Rachel's laptop power supply went toes-up at the beginning of the week and I ordered a new one. I received an E-mail message to say it was being delivered between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. on 30th April. Very helpful. Sure enough, it arrived about 2 p.m. Not only that but it's the right one and it works. Well done Dell. Needless to say it was made in China so the poor chap that put it together probably sees about 50p of the £55 I paid to Dell.

This month has been quite busy, as this five-page, five-heap update shows. Can it be beaten? Next month, it may.