

Greenmount – April 2011

I was actually looking forward to the grocery shop on Friday 1<sup>st</sup> April. It gave me a welcome break from poking about in my drains, a fun activity for those with a strong stomach, no sense of smell and thick rubber gloves.

We took the opportunity to drop some jumble off at The Old School and recycle some old clothing and books in exchange for cash in Bury on the way. This detour helped to reduce my normal fuel consumption from the usual 50 to 60 miles per gallon to just 47, the extra cost for the day's journey being about £2. I shall issue an expense claim to the car boot fund and Jenny will, no doubt, file it in the recycling bin.

Motoring is starting to get expensive, which is why we tend to use the car only once a week now. Thank goodness for legs.

On returning, I cut up some of the logs that were stored under the car port using the electric circular saw and Jenny bagged them for storing in the garage. We had eight sacks in total and at £5 a sack, that's a fair saving. There were more logs to cut up, requiring a chain saw and I didn't have one. The plan is to purchase one once I pluck up enough courage to use it, hopefully without cutting off my leg, since that wouldn't burn. There are also more logs in the nearby woodland for collecting, providing I get to them before other owners of wood-burning stoves.

The plan on 2<sup>nd</sup> April was to join the community group to tidy up the old railway line, now a nature trail. Unfortunately, our good intentions on the previous occasion did not meet with overwhelming approval in one particular quarter and work in that area has been temporarily suspended until matters are resolved, with input from Bury Council, if that's not a contradiction in terms. Instead, the working party was redeployed to the field adjacent to the Cricket Club in anticipation of the Big Village Party on 2<sup>nd</sup> May. We would have been there had it not been for the heavy rain shower, which, we later learnt, had not deterred the more hardy members of our group. Not only did we arrive at the Old School late, but Jenny spent a good half hour rummaging in the Scout Room and by the time we did reach the field, to welcoming cries of "Good Afternoon", the work had been all but completed for the day. Nice timing I thought.

We were in time to partake of a cup of tea and a biscuit in the Scout Room and to join in the conversation afterwards. I also managed to obtain the loan of a device to unblock my drain, which Alistair later delivered to my door. Now that's what a community is all about.

The challenge for the afternoon was to queue all the radio and TV programmes I wanted to record and I was at a loss to find the online BBC Radio 7 schedule beyond 4:30 a.m. that very morning. I even sent a message to the BBC to tell them the schedule had not been updated on the BBC Radio 7 website. Then I suddenly noticed that BBC 7 has changed its name to BBC Radio 4 Extra and this has its own website. Now, I am accustomed to the many changes in digital transmissions, with new stations appearing, old stations no longer transmitting, stations changing frequencies and changing names but I am left wondering why BBC Radio 7 needed to confuse people (well, me, at any rate) by changing its name to BBC radio 4 Extra.

While on a roll of misfortune, I thought I'd take a look at the leak in my drain pipe. The look convinced me I had no idea how to fix it and I put in a second call to my plumber, leaving a message with his wife.

On Saturday evening, we walked up to the local Carmelo's Italian restaurant in Tottington for a meal to celebrate our 38<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary (on 31<sup>st</sup> March) with Mike, Lorna, Frank and Gwen. We had an enjoyable meal at a reasonable price, once we had deducted the bottle of wine and the extra coffee we didn't have from the bill. That was followed by a nightcap in the lounge and a walk home under a clear sky. We would have marvelled at the stars, had we been able to see them through the orange light pollution. Frank felt the cold more than the rest of us, having had his coat taken from the communal rack in the restaurant. In some perverted form of compensation, someone had left a rather ripe avocado in one of Lorna's coat pockets. The restaurant obviously attracts some very strange people – other than us.

We arrived home to learn that the plumber had telephoned and, having discovered we were out, said he would call again the following day.

We were up reasonably early on Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> May as Jenny went to Church parade with her Beavers. Twelve turned up for the ceremony, which wasn't too bad, considering it was Mother's Day. Meanwhile, I spent my time wisely, updating the village web site and scanning more documents to free up space in my filing cabinet for Jenny to fill with her Beaver work.

I telephoned my plumber on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> May. The bad news was that, in his opinion, I need a new soil stack. The even worse news was that he doesn't do drains. I can't say I blame him. He did give me the name of a chap who might. Unfortunately he didn't have any contact details for him. He did know where his dad, also a plumber, now retired, lives though. I tracked him down to our very own road at number 18. So far so good.

I also sent a message to my insurance company to claim for the repair.

We took a trip to Bury and, since it was raining, we took the car. Had it been fine, we would have walked. As it was, the trip was largely a waste of time, since we forgot half the things we wanted anyway. It seems it's not only our drains that are in need of attention.

On Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> May I managed to track down the elusive plumber and he called round about lunchtime. He said he would try to repair the leak on my soil stack in a week or so by removing the old collar and fitting a new one. If that failed, it was on to good old Plan B.

Meanwhile, my insurance company telephoned and gave me a contact number to initiate a claim if I need to do so. Things are looking up (but not up the drains).

Jenny went to the Scout Leaders' meeting in the evening and came back with a task to compile a booklet of contacts for Beaver visits associated with badge work. Guess who's going to be doing that. She was also rash enough, when a sailing activity was mentioned, to point out that we both have RYA 1 and RYA 2 Dinghy certificates. It looks like DIB DIB DIB is going to become GLUG GLUG GLUG.

On Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> May we wandered round to The Old School to photocopy some letters for the Beavers' parents and Jenny went to lunch with Karen while I lunched at home and then tidied the back garden borders, aka the cat's latrine. Guess who enjoyed the day most.

Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> May was our shopping day for the week and, since we had to rush back to prepare for the Beaver meeting at 6 p.m., we didn't lunch out.

The outward journey was punctuated by a visit to Halfords (Car Spares Shop) in Bury to buy a 10 amp fuse to replace the one in my tyre inflator that had blown the previous evening while trying to ensure all the tyres were at the correct pressure. I soon discovered that you can't buy just one fuse. They come in packs of three. Remember this, it's important.

I replaced the fuse and tried the tyre inflator. It didn't work and it had blown the new fuse. My conclusion was that the tyre inflator was broken. I'm not just a pretty face.

I wandered back into the store to "Hello, back again?" I asked if they had any tyre inflators for sale and was directed to a shelf with about five different models. It took me a good fifteen minutes to work out which one to buy and, having paid for it on my Mastercard, getting the PIN correct on the third and last try (I tend not to use it a lot), proceeded to pump up my tyres, which is just as well because two of them were nearly flat. I must remember to check them more often, I thought.

We shopped at Unicorn in Chorlton and then Tesco at Prestwich as usual. Many of the items in Tesco were three for the price of two and the (non-organic) Pizzas we bought were three for the price of one. I told you it was important to remember things come in threes.

We hadn't been back long when Mike arrived to discuss an apologetic letter the Village Community was drafting to send to some local residents with whom our attempts to improve a local amenity had not met with overwhelming approval. That's quite a concise and restrained statement for me.

My drains took a turn for the worse as the drain pipe from the bathroom sink and the bidet came apart outside and cascaded waste water all over the patio. I fixed the pipe back together but it still dripped and I resolved to sort it out once my soil stack leak was fixed, the following week. At least the patio looked a bit cleaner even if it didn't smell quite so fresh.

After that, I cut the grass to the side of the house again and if I find out whose dog is dumping its do dos on it, I'll rub their noses in it (the owner's, not the dog's).

Jenny made some biscuits, covered with white icing and red, "shoe lace" liquorice in a cross formation, for the Beavers, to commemorate St. George's Day. I know this was not until 23<sup>rd</sup> April but the Beavers would be on their Easter holiday then and the St. George's Day Parade was on 10<sup>th</sup> April this year.

Friday 8<sup>th</sup> May was a sad occasion as we attended the funeral service and burial of Carrie's grandmother. Matthew had volunteered to help carry the coffin. It was a Catholic service, so it was somewhat lengthy and full of exercise (stand, sit, kneel, etc.). It all went as well as these events can go and the service was very good indeed. It was no less than Phyllis

deserved. Following the service, we attended the interment at Bury Cemetery, declining to sprinkle Holy Water or soil onto the coffin in the grave, believing this to be the privilege of relatives and close friends.

The buffet lunch back at the church community centre was provided by Slattery's restaurant. It was so nice and there was so much left over that most people ended up taking some home. We gave Carrie's parents, Bob and Marie, a lift back home to Ramsbottom.

The evening of the 8<sup>th</sup> was spent in preparation for the following day's car boot sale at St. Andrew's School on the way to Ramsbottom. My task was to scour the Internet for the pricing of items we thought were collectable. That probably explains why we have collected so much.

We were up at 6:30 on the 9<sup>th</sup> and at the school by 8 a.m., by which time the gates were already open and a couple of vehicles were already unpacking. This is the first car boot sale we have done there, probably because it's the first one they've had. Trading was very slow and by noon, we were packing up ready for home and a long-needed lunch. We made a modest profit on the day but only about half of the amount to which we have become accustomed, so it's a good job we had another car boot sale arranged for the following day.

The afternoon was spent recovering from the early morning start and in preparation for yet another day of banter and bargaining.

We did much better at the car boot sale on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> at Greenmount Cricket Club. That was an even earlier start and was followed by a quick shower, quick lunch and, not having time to unload the unsold stock from our car, a quick drive in Rachel's car to the St. George's Day Service and Parade at Edenfield. It was a lovely, sunny day and would have been perfect had Greenmount primary school not arranged an Egg Hunt in the afternoon. Since most of Jenny's Beavers attend Greenmount School, the attraction of that event seemed to be greater than the one at Edenfield with the result that Jenny had only a handful of Beavers in attendance. Nice timing, Greenmount PTA.

Most of Monday and Tuesday morning we spent unpacking the car, sorting out our stock and tidying the garage so that the gas man could get to the boiler to service it. Actually being able to see it was a marked step in the process. The gas man came on Tuesday afternoon while Jenny was at Yoga. I imagine both attained similar positions in their respective practices.

By Wednesday morning Jenny was suffering from Supermarket Withdrawal Symptoms and we had planned to go to Asda at Pillsworth. This excursion was delayed until the afternoon by the plumber who came to fix our leaking soil stack. He did an excellent job at a fair price and we can now go to the loo knowing that the filter bed receives one hundred percent of our deposit.

After a spot of lunch, we planned a multi-stop outing, calling at the Old School to drop off some jumble, at a Beaver's residence on the way to Ramsbottom to deliver a letter, at Bleakholt Animal Sanctuary to drop off some bedding for the animals, at Asda to do some shopping, at Newton's furniture shop in Bury to leave a couple of dining room chairs for re-

upholstering, at B&Q in Bury to buy some protective goggles for the Beavers and finally at another Beaver's residence in Tottington to deliver a letter. We were going to call at the refuse dump in Bury but decided against it in case we dropped off the wrong item.

While at Asda, I actually talked Jenny into buying a summer dress and a top, both 100% cotton. The wine was also on offer and too good to pass up (that's an "a", not an "i").

Thursday was an equally hectic day. Most of the time was spent preparing for the evening's Beaver meeting, where the little darlings were going to use litmus paper to test a range of substances for acidity or alkalinity. Jenny had discovered that one of the parents is a chemistry teacher and he kindly offered his services. When I think that my great grandfather used to make his own fireworks! Now there's an idea....

After lunch, we took an hour out (literally) to deliver some leaflets concerning forthcoming events to houses around the village. Presumably these are for those people who do not have access to the Internet and the village web site. They don't know what they're missing!

Jenny made some Easter buns for the Beavers and finished just in time to have a quick shower, put on her uniform and dash off to the meeting.

Friday 15<sup>th</sup> April was our usual shopping day. For those of you following the plot, you may recall we shopped last Thursday and, being eight days ago, we were out of fruit and vegetables by the previous day and would have been chicken-less had it not been for our trip to Asda. Later in the season and we might have raided Matthew's greenhouse. As it was, Thursday tea had consisted of roast chicken and what was left of the salad from our last trip to Unicorn. I need to diet, anyway.

Most of Saturday, Sunday and Monday were spent preparing for the jumble sale at the Old School and Monday afternoon, between four and six, with the sale itself. Jenny did manage to fit in a few other chores, like washing the laundry and cooking and I helped with the eating and drinking. As far as the jumble sale was concerned, there was not the usual abundance of goods we have come to expect, although we still had a car full of rubbish for the tip, which just goes to show, on occasions, you can't have quality or quantity.

On Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> April, I spent the day gardening, with local passing residents remarking how much better the council-owned land on the side of our house looks when I cut the grass, as opposed to the rare occasions on which the council-paid chap ploughs it up. One gentleman even went so far as to remark how professional my handy-work looked. That, the beautiful, warm weather and subsequent cool beer left me feeling extremely pleased as I relaxed at the end of the day.

On Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> April, we walked into Ramsbottom and back, mainly to do some banking and potter round the charity shops. Jenny found a bra and we thanked them for their support.

Later that evening, I discovered that my online statement was not only showing the cheque I deposited but also a £50 cash withdrawal I had not made. I telephoned the bank and was told I would have to return to the branch in Ramsbottom to resolve the matter.

On Thursday morning, I christened my bus pass in Greater Manchester on the 10:03 481 service into Ramsbottom. I had planned to catch the 9:46 476 but the first I saw of that was when alighting from the 481 in Ramsbottom, behind it. Nothing much changes except the cost of the fares (to those who have to pay).

The lady at the bank checked her withdrawal receipts from the previous day, looked at her screen and told me that the transaction for the customer after me had picked up my account details, so he had withdrawn £50 from my account. Obviously, to the bank, Data Protection Act is some sort of android security company from StarTrek. Anyway, I was assured all would be well and, having arrived later than planned, left the bank four minutes after the bus left the terminus.

Facing the best part of a thirty minute wait, I decided to walk back. About fifteen minutes into my walk, I was hailed by a passing motorist, except he was heading in the opposite direction. It was Mike, with Frank as a passenger, heading to the (a different) bank in Ramsbottom to withdraw the cash for the float for the Antique and Collector's Fair at the Old School the following Monday. He offered me a lift home – after calling at the bank.

Mike parked the car and we headed for the bank, Frank and I acting as the heavies. After collecting the cash, Mike had omitted to tell me he was calling at the car wash on the way home and after another fifteen minute delay and Mike being £7.50 of his own money lighter, we were on our way back to the Old School, where I met up with Jenny.

Jenny was helping unpack and sort bric-a-brac and I helped Frank and Mike to sort the LPs, CDs and cassette tapes.

After lunch at home, I finished off the gardening jobs left over from Tuesday while Jenny lunched with the girls at the Bull's Head. As she returned, she remarked that I was doing an excellent job. I doffed my cap and replied "Yes, ma'am, thank you ma'am".

Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> April was again a grocery shopping day, even though it was Good Friday. That seems like a contradiction in terms to me. After returning home for lunch, Mike came round to return my hover lawn mower he had borrowed earlier that morning, since his cylinder mower would not cope with the long grass on his back lawn. A chat and a coffee later saw Mike depart and Jenny and I walked the route she is planning for the Beavers outing on the sleepover at the Old School on 6<sup>th</sup> May so she can produce the risk assessment. I finished the working day by giving the lawn its third feed this year and, after a beer, tea and wine, I would have given it its third soaking this week (so that's the lawn and me both) had a few heavy showers not done the job for me.

Our intention was to rise early on Saturday. We crawled out of bed at 10:15 a.m. By that time, it was just about warm enough to breakfast outside on the patio. We left Rachel washing and valeting her car as we disappeared off to the local garden centre for some organic manure, organic potting compost and some herb plants to replace the ones that the harsh winter seems to have killed off. We paid Matthew and Carrie a visit, the first time Jenny has been down since Matthew and I erected his greenhouse, now full of edible plants in various stages of growth.

We found them on the patio and we chatted briefly about the Mediterranean cruise they have booked for the summer. Guess who has the job of looking after the greenhouse.

Sunday was so nice, I decided to wash and polish the car. It's not often we get nice days like that and so it's not often I clean the car. Not satisfied with a clean exterior, I started on the interior and managed to finish the rear half before crawling over the threshold for tea.

On Monday we were on duty at The Old School from 08:30 for the Antique and Collector's Fair. I was helping out with the sale of music and films and Jenny was on kitchenware (where else would she be?) We had given notice that we would be clocking off early, since Matthew had invited us down for a Barbecue. Bob and Marie (Carrie's parents) had already arrived when we got there, just as the food was being dished up. We managed to finish eating as it turned cloudy and rain threatened to dampen more than our spirits (well, beers). We retired indoors for warmth and a cup of tea.

On Tuesday, I turned my attention to the garden again. There were a few quick jobs, like extracting the Bay tree that had not survived the harsh winter from its very large pot and cleaning the cat's latrine yet again. After lunch, I decided to have another go at the car valeting, only to be interrupted by the salesman from Anglian. To be fair, I was expecting him. I just didn't realise how late it was, being so engrossed in vacuuming, polishing and generally dislocating joints.

The chap who came is the same one with whom we have done all the business over the years and it's really nice when you see the same salesperson from a reliable company over such a long period. This time, I wanted a quotation for UPVC cladding on the ceiling of the car port, which has needed doing now for about seven years. The original plan was for Matthew and I to do the work when we built the loft over the car port/garage but we never got round to it. The price, with the inevitable discounts, was a little on the high side and I said I would think about it. We chatted for a while over a cup of tea and the price came down a bit. I checked with Jenny that the car boot fund would cover the cost and signed on the dotted line. Then it was back to the car cleaning for another half hour until tea was ready and I was ready for it.

On Wednesday, we started more pricing of the car boot stock in preparation for the coming Saturday. We need to make a few bob to pay for the car port ceiling now. After lunch, I finished off the car at last. The inside was almost like new. The outside had acquired a layer of dust and cat paw prints. In the evening, Jenny went off to a two hour meeting to discuss her participation in the Big Village Party on 2<sup>nd</sup> May while I tried to catch up on my media editing of recorded programmes on my PC.

On Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> April we spent yet another small fortune on diesel, visiting relatives in Sheffield.

Friday 29<sup>th</sup> was our usual grocery shopping day and, thanks to the Royal Wedding, the roads and shops were unusually quiet, which just goes to show that the Royal Family does have its uses. We managed to avoid all but the odd fleeting glimpse of all of the publicity surrounding the Royal event. Had we been invited to the wedding, we would have gone. Since we were not, I certainly was not going to watch it on TV. Phil and Liz please note.

After returning home for a late lunch, a very nice neighbour called to ask if we wanted the wood from a couple of trees he had cut down for my stove and I went round to select the bits I wanted and he delivered them in his van. This has now increased my need for a chain saw and an even greater need to learn how to use it.

On Saturday 30<sup>th</sup>, we picked our spot at the car boot sale at The Old School. It was a lovely, sunny day with blue skies. The accompanying strong, cold, easterly wind with strong gusts made it difficult to keep things on an even keel and my feet firmly on the ground (I have difficulty with that at the best of times). Nevertheless, the takings made crawling out of bed at 5:30 worthwhile and spending all day on my feet made the beer at the end of the day taste even better than usual.