

Greenmount – August 2012

The unsettled weather continued into August and we dodged the showers, for the most part, on the 1st, when we decided to take a bus trip to Bury.

Jenny visited Pets at Home to arrange a visit for her Beavers in the autumn term and we called in at the world-famous Bury market (what do you mean, you've never heard of it?) for some Buckwheat cereal flakes we can't get elsewhere. Both Asda and Tesco used to stock them but seem to have stopped doing so, probably because they're too healthy. While at the health shop we also bought two bottles of the organic cranberry juice we like at 20p less each than the shop in Ramsbottom, which is a little strange because the health food shop in Bury is usually quite expensive.

I went searching round the market for a stall that prints T-shirts. I have some of my own T-shirt designs I would like printed and it's a question of finding someone who can make a decent job of it on a one-off basis. I arranged to E-mail them a picture of one of the designs with a few details to see if they could do what I wanted.

A trip to Bury would never be complete without visiting Tesco, where we had a cup of tea and a bun at Costa Coffee. Not only was our bus fare free, thanks to our travel pass, but this refreshing break was free as well, using our points on our Costa Coffee card. The day was looking up.

A few groceries later, we returned to the bus station just in time to catch the bus back to Greenmount and arrived home just as it started to rain.

It was one of those rare days when most things seemed to be in our favour.

More rain was forecast on 2nd August and we decided to tidy up the lounge and clean the dining area, after picking a few raspberries that were ripe. The rain held off until late afternoon, by which time Jenny had a line full of washing out. It came in wetter than it went out.

Matthew dropped in on his bike on his way to see the doctor and left his bike at our house while he did so. His recent holiday in France had not got off to a good start. His friend's bike broke down at Dover and they had to hire a car to drive down to the south of France. They arrived at their villa in a small, remote village, close to where his friend's mum lives, about 45 minutes before the girls, who had flown over. Apart from that, it all went well and he picked up his bike from Oswestry (it's a long story) on the return journey.

The 3rd August, being a Friday, was our usual grocery shopping day with a trip down to Unicorn at Chorlton and calling at Asda Pillsworth and Bury Tesco, where we had a late lunch at Costa Coffee, on the return journey. The vegetables at Unicorn seemed to be of a much lower standard than we have come to expect and I guess this is due to the very wet summer (in name only) we have experienced.

We have been discussing buying a caravan but under the circumstances, a boat might be better.

We also managed to pick more ripe raspberries and another large crop of blackcurrants before the rain was due. In fact, it didn't rain until much later than forecast. Somebody up there must be slipping.

Saturday 4th August was another unsettled but mainly dry day. At least we were dry, spending most of it in the Old School helping to sort, test and price the electrical items for the jumble sale later in the month. We had the pie and pea lunch with most of the others there to save time.

Before tea we packed the car ready for a car boot sale the following morning. The weather forecast was quite good, with heavy rain not expected for at least 24 hours, something of a record of late.

Before retiring, I checked the weather forecast again. Our hopes and efforts were in vain. Showers were now expected from 10 a.m. onwards the following day. At this rate, the garage stock will be antiques before we manage another car boot sale.

We didn't bother to crawl out of bed at 5 a.m. on Sunday 5th August, as we would have done had the previous night's forecast had been better. What a mistake that was. There was no rain in sight and when I checked the forecast again after breakfast, the Met Office had changed their minds yet again.

Of course, what we should have done the previous evening is wander down to the local farm to see what the cows were doing. If they are all stood up, it's a sign of fine weather to come. If they're all lying down, it's a sign of rain within the next 24 hours. That's a damn sight more reliable than the Met Office and it's a lot cheaper.

So instead of making a few bob at the car boot sale, we saved a few bob by making our own jam from the blackcurrants we had picked a couple of days before. The crop was about finished and had yielded just over twelve jars of jam in total, plus a couple of fruit crumbles. Not bad for nowt, except the cost of the sugar, gas and bottled spring water we used. And it's all organic – no herbicides, pesticides, chemical fertilizers, made with organic, unrefined sugar and even the Highland Spring water is filtered through organic land.

After lunch, I decided to plan some walks for Jenny and me along the Yorkshire coast. The plan was to start with Spurn Point and work northwards to see how far we got. We intended to walk in stages and the first opportunity to spend a couple of nights away looked like being the end of the week, according to the forecast.

The outline planning done, I decided to have a go at mending my probe. Not an easy task at the best of times. The black lead to my multi-meter had become detached from the probe and needed re-soldering. That bit was easy. The difficult part was extracting the pin from the moulded plastic holder and putting it back again.

Since it was still a fine, sunny and warm afternoon, I turned my attention to the back lawn. I had just finished cutting the grass when the thunder commenced. The skies darkened a little but there was no rain or lightning, so I began to strim the edges. The thunder increased in frequency and the dark clouds drew nearer. I put the electrical gear away and resorted to the shears on the basis I could clear up quicker if the rain

suddenly started. As it was, I just finished the back lawn when it finally got wet and the first flashes of lightning showed themselves. Was this forecast? What a silly question.

On Monday 6th August Mike popped round for a chat and a coffee. That delayed our start on tidying the small bedroom in readiness for our overseas visitors in September. He should pop round more often.

On Tuesday 7th August we were going to catch the bus into Ramsbottom. We both had eye tests booked at the opticians, me for 10 a.m. and Jenny for 10:30. Since time was pressing and the bus through the village to Ramsbottom only runs at 3 minutes past the hour, we took the car instead.

The readings for my right eye had changed slightly but not enough to need new lenses, which was good for me and not so good for the optician. Jenny on the other hand (or eye) needed slightly stronger reading glasses. It must be all those heavy books she reads. Jenny opted for new lenses in the existing frames. So we left Aunty Wainwright rubbing her hands with a degree of satisfaction.

A quick tour of the charity shops resulted in two more DVDs, "I, Monster" with Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee and a two "Dr Who and the Daleks" films with Peter Cushing.

In the evening there was a brief meeting at the Incredible Edible plot to discuss who does what next. I suggested that, although I am not in favour of herbicides, there was no other practical way of tackling the weeds that had shot up during the recent wet weather than to use weed killer before laying down the membrane on which the raised beds would be placed. I did feel somewhat guilty in that I expressed a clear view of what needed doing but wouldn't be around to do it. Frank volunteered to kill off the weeds and his reward was a few pints in the Bull's Head. Mike, not present at the plot, joined us for chapter two.

On Wednesday 8th August Jenny and I set off for a three day excursion to Hornsea on the Yorkshire Coast and you can read about this in more detail in "One Foot in the Sand", in the Walks section of my web site.

Back on Friday evening, we ate at the Bull's Head to round off three good days.

Saturday 11th August was our revised grocery shopping day and, not leaving until late morning, I found the roads less congested than usual on our outward journey to Unicorn and on the return trip to Tesco in Bury. I was despatched to the market in Bury to buy some Cranberry juice, of which the health food store had only one bottle. I called in at Waterstones to see if I could buy the OS Explorer map for Spurn Point but they didn't have it in stock. Now there's a surprise.

In the end, I ordered the map from the OS website with free delivery in 3 to 5 days by Royal Mail at the same price as in the shop. I think there is a lesson to be learned here.

In the evening, we packed the car for the Ramsbottom Station Car Park car boot sale the following day. Oh joy.

I rose early, at 5 a.m. on Sunday 12th August, closely followed by Jenny and checked the weather forecast. It was still going to be fine all day – or so the Met Office led us to believe.

We were at our pitch before 7 a.m. and, as on previous car boot sales, trading was slow. Fortunately, a couple next to us provided some amusement with their banter, putting mine to shame.

By 1:30 p.m., we were debating whether to pack up, although it was a bit early and we had not had a hugely successful morning. A few spots of rain should have pushed us to the right decision but I was adamant it wasn't going to rain - not properly – the Met Office had said so.

About half an hour later, we got soaking wet packing our unsold goods, which also had a good soaking. Of course, no sooner had we put everything in the car and set off home did it stop raining and the sun came out again. By this time I was contemplating euthanasia. Having second thoughts, I decided if I'm going, I'm taking the Met Office staff with me. What an utterly expensive, useless luxury they are.

When we got home, we put all the car boot stock in the garage and Jenny sorted it out, dried it and put it away. I spent a good few hours trying to fix an HP Pavillion M1190 Windows XP Media Center Desktop PC that would not load and which was brought into the Old School jumble. In desperation I tried the HP web site, which was about as much use as a chocolate teapot. I was invited to complete a questionnaire of my experience, which I did, giving HP a zero rating because, not only did I not find the technical information I needed, but they wouldn't let me E-mail them without a warranty contract. What an unhelpful bunch they are. I've added them to my list (see end of previous paragraph).

On Monday 13th August, Mike called in for a chat and a coffee. That delayed my start on trying to discover why the old dehumidifier didn't work. Good old Mike. After lunch, there was no escaping the task before me and I finally managed to strip the thing down to its bare essentials. Lucky me. I ascertained that the compressor was receiving the full thrust of 240 volts but wasn't doing much with it. I knew how it felt. I E-mailed a chap Matthew uses at work to maintain his air conditioning for the computers to ask about the feasibility and cost of repair. I also E-mailed Tatung in Taiwan who made the offending component.

On Tuesday 14th August I met Frank at the village church to start work on building the raised beds for the incredible edible plot. Tracey joined us a little later and since she took over the role of joiner's mate, I turned my attention to killing the weeds on the site of the four raised beds and then cut the grass at the far end on which it is proposed to place a bench. I also strimmed the overgrown grass on the opposite side of the path and bagged up the rubbish.

Needless to say we all ended up in the Bull's Head for a couple of well-earned drinks before I returned home and cut the grass on the back, front and side of the house. I just had enough strength left to pour myself a beer – and drink it.

On Wednesday 15th August we took the cats to the vet for their annual check-up and vaccination. They were well impressed. Frank had organised a walk around Chorley and I couldn't go. I was also well impressed.

After lunch, we took the car into Ramsbottom, the nice warm sunny morning having turned into a warm, wet, grey afternoon. The plan was to pay Jenny's Car Boot money into the bank, purchase some fish for tea and, of course, tour the charity shops, not necessarily in that order. Jenny found a book she fancied. We didn't find the fish we wanted and, rather than eat the book (after all, it wasn't a digest), we decided to go to Tesco in Bury where we found some nice line-caught Tuna and one or two other items we didn't know we needed.

On returning, I set about updating my monthly update for July, somewhat late, and putting it on my web site.

On Thursday 16th August, the Tax Man saw fit to badger me for yet more information, most of which he/she/it could have obtained from my Tax Return. Since I am about to reach the ripe old age of 65, another milestone in my life, having survived the millennium and the 2012 Olympics, the Tax Man wants to make sure I'm paying my fair whack and has asked me to confirm my expected income for this tax year.

I wrote out the details on the form and then discovered there was an online service, so I thought I would use that. I found the web page alright. It very helpfully said the service had been withdrawn. I put the reply in an envelope to go by snail mail.

You can tell the Tax Man is as mean as they come by the fact that there was no return envelope or reuse label in the letter with the postage pre-paid.

Matthew dropped in again. The last time he came, there was some mistake with his doctor's appointment and he had re-booked it. It's always good to see him, even if somewhat briefly.

On Friday 17th August, we had decided to visit Tracey in Sheffield. She needed her washer repairing and we needed some more car boot stock. Since Rachel was going to Harrogate for the day, as one does, we left early to give her a lift to the Tram station in Bury and we were knocking at Tracey's door just after 9 a.m.

It turned out that the door catch for Tracey's washer I had ordered from Ransom Spares on the Internet did not fit the door properly and with it in place, the door trim would not go back on. I resolved to look into the problem.

I spent the rest of the day researching Andy's (Tracey's partner's) family tree using the laptop there with Andy's help.

We dined at the Beefeater at Heaton Park on the way home and, on this occasion, as we normally expect there, the meal and service were both very good, confirming my supposition that our previous experience was an isolated case of misfortune.

We collected Rachel at Heaton Park tram station on our way home.

Saturday 18th August was the later-than-usual grocery shopping day with an uneventful trip down to Unicorn at Chorlton, calling at Asda Pillsworth and Bury Tesco, with a fleeting visit by yours truly to the Health Food Shop in Bury Market for a box of Doves Farm Buckwheat Cereal, two bottles of the Cranberry Juice to which we have become addicted and a jar of organic Tika Masala Curry paste to keep us going. One bottle of Cranberry juice and a jar of curry later, I was back at Tesco in time to read the usual depressing headlines in the daily papers before helping Jenny to finish her shopping and make our way home for a late lunch.

On Sunday 19th August, the forecast not being good, we finished sorting the new batch of car boot stock in the garage in readiness for the next fine day, whenever that was expected.

On Monday 20th August, we had our six-monthly dental appointment. Normally this is just for a check-up and polish. In my case, it should have been an opportunity for my dentist to finish her lifetime project on my upper-left molar root canal. Unfortunately, the tooth was somewhat sensitive and she discovered a crack in the dressing (temporary filling) which she thought might be causing the problem. She drilled it, without anaesthetic and patched it up, making me an appointment for two weeks later. It's a bit like the Forth Bridge.

Returning home, I settled down to give my mouth an opportunity to regain its natural shape. Mike popped round for a quick chat and a coffee or two, by which time I was able to mumble a few cohesive sentences without dribbling on the carpet.

On Tuesday 21st August, I was back at the Incredible Edible plot helping Frank and Tracey (not the one from Sheffield) to make the raised beds for the four plots. We managed to complete three of them, leaving some work for the following week.

On Wednesday 22nd August, Jenny was fed up with staying in so much and we would have walked into Ramsbottom had it not rained. Instead, we took the car and potted round the charity shops. Of course, the rain stopped and the sun came out. We returned with two cans of organic beans from Morrison's, the store not being big on organic produce, making a slight deviation to Summerseat for lunch at the garden centre.

I had spent much of any spare time in the recent days cataloguing all my audio media (MP3, LPs, Cassette Tapes and CDs) into a single list so that I knew what I'd got and where it was. The aim was to convert all the tapes and LPs to CD and as I was working through the list of recordings, I found recordings I had forgotten about.

On Thursday 23rd August, I had the privilege of taking Rachel's car for its annual M.O.T. test, Rachel having come home from work ill the previous day and unable to leave her bed.

Jenny and I spent the day at the Old School, sorting jumble and on returning home, I was despatched to collect Rachel's car from the garage.

Friday 24th saw us shopping as usual, punctuated with lunch at Costa Coffee, Tesco. We were so fortified by this day out with luncheon that, on returning home, we had the irresistible urge to sort yet more jumble.

We had a change on Saturday 25th, or, at least Jenny did. She was managing a stall at the Table Top sale at the Old School. As for me – more jumble. I spend so much time sorting jumble that I'm beginning to feel like an antique. Comments on this subject are not necessary.

On Sunday 26th August, we were back at our second home, sorting jumble.

And on Monday 27th August there was yet more of the stuff to deal with. We managed to finish all the electrical items by early afternoon and came home for a quick sandwich before returning for the two-hour sale.

On Tuesday 28th August, we were roused from our beds by the door bell. I answered the door in my dressing gown, reminiscent of one, Arthur Dent. No, it wasn't Ford Prefect and our house is still standing. Our plumber, Peter had arrived to fit a filter to our central heating system and I had completely forgotten our arrangement.

The filter is designed to trap particles of iron oxide (rust to you and me) that form inside the radiators and which circulate round the system, their sole purpose in life being to block and damage the pump and heat exchanger in the boiler. The filter has to be cleaned out once a year, assuming I don't forget that.

After Peter had gone, with my cheque in his hand, I went round to the Incredible Edible plot to meet up with Tracey and Frank. Tracey and I laid the membrane on the bed locations while Frank finished off the fourth raised bed and we placed all four beds in their intended positions, one short of a plank. That's one of the beds, not one of us.

When I finally arrived back home, Jenny told me one of our cats, Treacle (that's the one that is always in trouble) had been hurt in a fight with a black, stray cat we have been feeding. We resolved not to feed the stray any more and discourage it from coming.

I was quite worried about Treacle's front leg, which she seemed to be holding at a funny angle and I was on the brink of taking her to the emergency vet (it's like a 24 x 7 A&E for animals) when we decided to have a go at treating her ourselves.

There were two major factors leading to this decision. An examination of Treacle's injury, of which she was not a willing participant, revealed a nasty gash on the rear pad of her paw and we treated this with a salt-water wash to clean it and Aloe Vera gel from the plant in the conservatory to help it heal, which the cat promptly started licking off. The second factor was the cost of the emergency vet at £98 for a consultation plus any fees for treatment.

We kept the cat in for the night and made her a bed in the conservatory. We provided her with a litter tray, food and water and left her for the night.

We spent most of Wednesday 29th August nursing Treacle. She did seem a little better and we continued the same treatment. She was still a little shocked and we kept her in for a second night, which did nothing to enhance the atmospheric aroma.

By Thursday 30th August, the improvement in Treacle's paw was unbelievable. The Aloe Vera had certainly made a huge difference and she was walking almost normally again.

I was also walking normally again, out with Frank and Steve on a round trip along the old railway track, now a cycle route and walkway, Middlewood Way, from the railway terminus at Rose Hill, Marple to Higher Poynton, where we left the trail to join the Macclesfield Canal back to Marple. After a brief detour down the flight of 16 locks on the Peak Forest Canal to walk onto the Goyt Valley Aquaduct and back, we were back at Rose Hill in good time for our train and, these being frequent, we nipped into the pub for a pint or two while a couple came and went.

Jenny also had an exciting day, attending the local clinic for her regular eye check up, having previously had high pressure in her eyes. This time, the pressure was normal and the test went sufficiently well for her to be completely discharged. The improvement in her condition she allots to her Yoga exercises. Believe it or not, there are Yoga exercises specifically designed for the eyes and, as they say, seeing is believing.

On Friday 31st August we had an uneventful and expensive day, grocery shopping at Unicorn, Tesco Prestwich, where we had lunch at Costa Coffee and Asda Pilsworth.