

Greenmount – August 2016

Monday August 1<sup>st</sup>: Since we lost power at 11:30 a.m., we decided there was no point in staying in. We went for the usual tour of Ramsbottom, dropping off four boxes of CDs the Old School had thrown out at the Bleakholt Animal Sanctuary charity shop. We came home and discovered we were still powerless, which is what you get when you live in a pseudo-democracy.

I managed to persuade the gas cooker to light the hob using matches so we could have some lunch and then I thought I might as well have a look at the door on the right oven that had not been closing properly for quite a while.

The catch worked on the principle of two spring-loaded rollers in the door trapping a protruding, shaped piece of metal fixed to the oven body. The top roller seemed to be out of alignment with the bottom roller and separating the outer door shell from the main part of the door gave me access to the screws securing the top roller mechanism. I removed the roller assembly to discover that the roller spindle was damaged and had become dislodged from the holes in the outer casing that should have held it in place. It was a fairly simple procedure to remove the spindle and the roller. That was the easy bit.

The challenge was to reassemble it so that the roller was aligned with the bottom roller and held the door securely in place when closed. This meant replacing the spindle.

I had the idea of using a thin bolt and managed to find one long enough and thin enough from my selection of spares I had acquired over the years from taking broken items to pieces in case the bits became useful. Likewise, I found two nuts to fit the bolt, one to hold it in place in the casing, with the roller on it and the other to act as a locking nut to prevent it coming undone. With the assembly repaired, I bolted it back in place and put the oven door back together. The repair worked very well.

While I had been on my knees on the kitchen floor, our friend and neighbour, Lorna appeared for a chat with Jenny and I made it clear that I knew my place.

Although we had a working oven again, we still had no power and we went to the Bull's Head Toby Carvery for our evening meal.

Tuesday August 2<sup>nd</sup>: I was awoken about 2:30 a.m. by some unusual noise to discover the cause was that the power had finally been restored. I came downstairs to put the fridge-freezer into overdrive to make sure that it cooled back down as quickly as possible and left it until a reasonable hour at which to rise from my slumbers.

It was a day of sorting out the fridge-freezer and other equipment after the extended power cut and holiday preparation. Most of my day was spent sorting out the server and TV recordings while we were away and putting my old XP tower system back on the desk where it belonged, believing the CPU overheating problem to be fixed. How wrong can one be?

A chap from the electricity company responsible for the underground cables called to say the power was going off again between 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. The reason was that the power had been restored only because a portable generator had been deployed and now the repair had been completed, we were being switched back to the main supply. I asked why it would take two hours to switch the supply back, saying that it shouldn't take as long as that. I explained my background was in electrical and electronic engineering and he asked me if I wanted a job.

It was early evening when I went down to find out what was happening, the power not having been interrupted. It transpired that two joints close to each other, one in each of two separate cables, had exploded due to water penetration. One had been repaired the previous day and the other that day. It wasn't clear which premises were affected by each of the cables and the ones on the second cable were the ones that suffered the second outage. We were obviously on the first cable. Oh joy, I thought and returned home.

Wednesday August 3rd: A reasonably early start did not translate into an early departure to Whitby for a week's holiday, largely due to the ongoing overheating problems of my desk top system and the need to use it to record TV programmes, there being occasions when three recordings overlapped and I used Jenny's laptop, Matthew's old system and my desk top.

Queuing traffic on the A64 just past the A166 delayed us even more and it was mid-afternoon before we reached our usual accommodation with Jill at The Lansbury.

We were a little surprised to learn that she had been closed all season and had made special arrangements to accommodate us, which was very nice of her. The Lansbury was still on the market.

After settling in, we walked down to the Pavillion Theatre Complex to book tickets for the Whitby Amateur Dramatics Play the following evening and then potted around Whitby, catching a few odd spots of rain here and there in the warmish wind. It soon brightened up again and we had tea at The Duke. My meal of Dover sole followed by blackcurrant cheese cake with ice cream was nice but Jenny was disappointed with her prawn salad and her dessert, Eaton mess, was largely inedible, containing the odd piece of fruit and comprising, largely, cream. On balance, I would no longer recommend the pub and it had dropped, in my estimation from the best pub in Whitby to just below mediocre.

We stopped off at the Angel for a brandy before retiring for the evening.

Thursday August 4<sup>th</sup>: We sauntered down Skinner Street and into town, crossing the swing bridge to walk down Church Street to the 199 steps.

The plan was to reconnoitre the site for the Steam Engine Rally at the week end on the fields behind the abbey and we ascertained that if we bought a ticket for the day we could come and go as we pleased. We intended to go to the Rally on Saturday, leave it for tea and then return for the evening's firework display.

We called in at St. Mary's Church on the way to shelter from the scheduled rain shower and returned via Caedman's Trod to reach the Monks Haven café for lunch, just in time to miss the worst of the afternoon's showers. We grabbed the last free table for two and had an excellent lunch, joined by a very nice Dutch couple, who were walking the Cleveland Trail, at the next table.

After lunch, we walked along the busy beach westwards as far as we could and joined the walkway by the beach huts where the incoming tide denied us access to progress further on the shore. As we reached the far end of the beach huts, we sat on the edge of the walkway and watched the waves breaking on the rocks and the boats coming and going from the harbour for some time. How relaxing that was.

We returned to our accommodation to dump our rucksack and raincoats at about 4:30 p.m. with the intention of going into town for tea before the play at 7 p.m. In the event, we were still quite

full from our nourishing lunch, so we decided to eat after the play finished and went to sit on one of the benches by the whalebone, overlooking the harbour until the doors of the Pavilion Theatre opened at 7 p.m.

The play, Heat Stroke, was performed very well by the Whitby Amateur Dramatic Society and was very funny. It finished at 10:20 p.m., far too late to eat and we made do with what we had in our room, scheduling a substantial breakfast the following morning. The short walk back to our accommodation was somewhat damp, thanks to rain that was not forecast.

I have mentioned before that the government wastes huge sums of money on weather forecasting that is utterly useless and completely unreliable. It was time the meteorological office was closed down and that all the money saved was better spent by councils that needed it in order to restore public services back to the level before council tax charges were capped by central government. If the government of the day wants to delegate control to local councils, it first needs to give them the resources with which to do the work. At the same time, local councils need to start reducing their overheads and a good place to start would be to severely cut back on the high salaries paid to senior management and executive officers. I was sure there were many competent people who would happily take on those roles for far less money than the existing post-holders. Also, we must all face the fact that if we want good public services we have to pay for them and that means increased council tax. As with all taxes, it was my belief that those who take the most out of our society should put the most back into it which means that those who have the highest gross annual incomes pay the lion's share of the cost.

As regards personal taxation, it was my belief that all British Citizens, regardless where they live, should pay tax at the same rate on all income. There should be no untaxed income except the personal allowance. Failure to pay taxes would result in the loss of British Citizenship and deportation, any British-held assets held being frozen and subject to tax. Non-British citizens resident in Britain would require permits and be subject to the same tax laws. All forms of taxation except personal taxation should be abolished and a maximum gross income per person of £100,000 established, after which tax would be 99%. I would probably have only two tax bands apart from that, being 33% from £20,000 to £50,000 gross income and 50% from £50,000 to £100,000 gross income. I would also severely restrict the use of credit cards, capping total personal credit at no more than 10% of gross annual income across all credit cards held and restricting interest charged on any form of credit to no more than 5% p.a. above base rate set by the Bank of England.

So there!

Friday August 5<sup>th</sup>: We made our way down to town via the charity shops again and this time, not having the large rucksack on my back and having my list of DVDs and CDs, I went in. I found the DVD of Casino Royale starring Daniel Craig.

We walked along the beach to Sands End, Jenny almost making it without falling over. As it was, her left elbow came into contact with the new coastal defences at Sands End and they withstood the shock. Jenny's elbow was less fortunate and sustained a nasty and painful graze which was treated by the lifeguard at the first aid post.

We lunched at the Sands End Café and it was disappointing. The side salad with my crab sandwiches comprised tasteless ice berg lettuce and huge, indigestible chunks of cucumber. Not only was Jenny's the same but part of the jacket potato it accompanied was black inside. There were no table checks to ask if the meal was alright and no gluten-free sweets.

We walked back along the road (Cleveland Way) and veered off it at the golf course to walk along the promenade by the beach huts. We subsequently descended to the beach again to rest and dipped our toes in the pleasant, cooling water before returning to the path to clean our feet and put on our shoes.

A brief call of nature at the Pavilion complex was followed by a rest on a bench overlooking the harbour and then we dumped our heavy gear at the B&B before going back down to town to The Angel (a Wetherspoons pub) for tea. The meal and wine were very nice, all the more so after Jenny had chased up the side salad the waiter had forgotten to bring with our chicken skewers.

We returned to the B&B about 8:30 for an early night.

Saturday August 6<sup>th</sup>: We started our day with a visit to the Craft Fair at the Pavilion complex where we met some very nice stall-holders and Jenny bought a couple of trinkets. Lunch was again at the excellent Monks Haven, not only for their good food and service but also for their large selection of gluten-free items.

We made our way up Caedman's Trod to the Traction Engine Rally in the fields behind the Abbey. We expected the entrance fee to be £15 for two concessions and were surprised to be charged only £10. As it turned out, it was barely worth it. The show was pretty poor and there was more emphasis on the fair ground and stalls than on the main event. When it came to the arena where all the steam engines were expected to parade, only half-a-dozen or so bothered to turn up, most of them late and of those that did, only about half bothered to perform tours round the arena before parking in a line for photographers.

We wandered round taking pictures of the engines and old vehicles and motorcycles and stumbled on a tractor-pulling contest, which, after a short while, became somewhat boring.

We returned to our accommodation, calling at Moutreys Italian restaurant on the way to book a table for the following evening, to dump the rucksack and went for tea at the Magpie Café, where we had to queue. Afterwards. It was too late to return to the Rally site for the firework display, of which we saw a little from the café. We came back to retire for the evening.

Sunday August 7<sup>th</sup>: An early start at 7 a.m. and breakfast at 8 a.m. allowed us to walk the considerable distance up to the car boot sale near the Park and Ride car park on the Guisborough road. I bought a DVD and Jenny bought some books and some ear rings.

We walked back to town for lunch at Monk's Haven and then toured the charity shops along Baxtergate. It was then that I succumbed to an abdominal pain necessitating my proximity to a convenience for a short while. My guess is that it was due to the apricot crumble I had as a dessert the previous evening.

Notwithstanding my predicament, we walked up the 199 steps to the Abbey shop. There was nothing of interest. The people who manage the shop had not taken up Jenny's suggestion when we last visited that they should sell some T-shirts.

We sat near the café, which had a nice toilet, for a while just in case I needed it. It was very windy and so was the weather. It became too cold for Jenny, so we came back to town and sat near harbour, opposite The Angel for obvious reasons. We eventually came back to our lodgings for a rest and a cuppa while I dealt with my E-mail.

We went for tea to Moutreys Italian restaurant. It was very nice but somewhat expensive and their choice of gluten-free items was limited.

We retired about 9:15 p.m.

Monday August 8<sup>th</sup>: We caught the 10 a.m. train to Goathland and met Frank and Gwen at the station. We pottered around Goathland and lunched at Goathland tea Rooms, on the lawn at the back.

Gwen found a round walk starting down the Rail Trail and then back on the footpath to Mallyan Spout. That involved a few ups and downs with lots of steps followed by a scramble across rocks to reach the base of the waterfall itself. We had a further climb up to the Mallyan Spout Hotel and we parted company, Frank and Gwen heading off to their parked vehicle just down the road and we walking back up the road, through the village and down to the station for our 4:50 p.m. train back to Whitby.

We sat by the harbour for a while to relax and then strolled round to the other side of the river to investigate a pub called The Fleece. We needn't have bothered. It did not look very inviting.

We retraced our steps to The Angel for tea, where there was a 45-minute wait for food. When our chicken tikka skewers with pilau rice did arrive it was not very warm. I was not best pleased. It seemed that the Wetherspoon pub had reverted to its very poor performance and the experienced served to illustrate that you get what you pay for. If you want cheap food and beer it's fine but it's very hit and miss. If you want good food you have to be prepared to pay for it and avoid places like this.

We retired about 10 p.m., preparing for another early start with provisional plans to travel up to Middlesboro.

Tuesday August 9<sup>th</sup>: The weather outside bore little resemblance to the forecast so we decided to stay in Whitby and started our day with a stroll down to town via Baxtergate, checking out all the charity shops for a second time. We did not find anything of interest. A couple of the charity shops (British Heart Foundation and Scope) were expensive.

We made our way down Church Street, calling at the Monk's Haven for lunch and went down to the east pier, going down the ramp onto the shore below the east cliff, which was very rocky. If the weather had been better (it was quite cold and the clouds were gathering) and I had been wearing my trunks, I would have wandered down the coast, around the rocks to see if we could reach Saltwick Bay, since the tide was right out. The tide would only have given us about half an hour to investigate though. It would be very dangerous to be caught out by the tide on that stretch of water.

We came back up the ramp and sat down on the east pier for a while watching the boats milling about in the harbour. It was too rough for the pleasure cruises to go out to sea. We moved on to the end of the pier for a better view and were told there was a seal about but we did not see it. I did catch a few glimpses of a cormorant though.

We came back up to Church Street via the east harbour beach and strolled back over the bridge and up to our accommodation to dump the rucksack and leave the items of clothing we no longer needed, having needed four layers, including waterproofs, on the pier because of the cold and the odd light shower.

The plan was to return to The Angel for our evening meal, Tuesdays being Steak Night and to give them a chance to redeem themselves from the previous evening's abysmal performance. Unfortunately (or, possibly, otherwise), the place was packed and there were no free tables. We wandered across the bridge and down Church Street looking for a decent place to eat and decided to try the Board Inn next to the Duke of York.

The Board Inn had a very nice dining room downstairs, overlooking the harbour and it wasn't very busy. I enquired if they catered for people with a gluten allergy and was presented with a list of main courses that qualified. Jenny chose one and later noticed some better options on the specials board that had not been pointed out to us.

Jenny's meal of vegetable curry was disappointingly bland because the spices had not been prepared correctly. My minted lamb shank with potatoes and garden peas was very nice. When it came to dessert, the young ladies in the restaurant did not know which desserts were gluten-free and what's more, did not understand what a gluten allergy was, even though I was told the lady who managed the pub had a gluten allergy. When I explained it, they were very helpful and offered to check the labelling of the desserts we chose. In the event, Jenny settled for two scoops of ice cream and received three! I had the apple pie with ice cream, which was also very nice.

I couldn't fault the service, even if the girls were slightly inexperienced and the maître d'hôtel was absent. The menu could be improved to offer a few more choices and to specify which dishes were gluten-free and the choices of vegetables could be widened to include items like broccoli and spinach. Sirloin or, preferably, fillet steaks and a wider choice of desserts would be nice. Also, the chef needed a few lessons. The restaurant certainly had a lot of potential and the people we met were very nice and helpful. Better management and better planning, organisation and training, with a larger menu would make this one of the best pubs in Whitby.

We returned to our accommodation for the last of our nights here on this occasion for a cup of tea and to retire for the evening.

Wednesday August 10<sup>th</sup>: We were up about 7:15 a.m. on a nice sunny morning which was possibly too bright to last. By 8 a.m. we had packed in the car what we could ready for our journey home and settled down for half an hour before breakfast at 8:30.

It was about 11:30 by the time we hit the road and, with no reply to my calls to my sister Barbara in Redcar, we headed directly home rather than calling in to see her.

We made good time, despite heavy traffic on the M62 and arrived home about 2 p.m. It was a case of sorting out what we could in the afternoon, after a quick, make-do lunch and before an excellent evening meal at the Swan and Cemetery in Bury to round off our week of relaxation.

Matthew's old system had missed one TV recording for some inexplicable reason and Jenny's laptop had missed two because the cursor and keyboard had frozen and Rachel had given it a hard reboot (holding down the power button until it gave in and switched off and then powering it back on) but did not realise the recordings would not be actioned until it was logged in to a user.

Thursday August 11<sup>th</sup>: It was a case of catching up on all the IT work – accounts, e-mails, web site updates and so on. My old XP desktop still refused to run for any length of time due to the CPU overheating problem. The rain since we had returned prevented any outdoor work and, according to the forecast, the earliest opportunity to cut the grass etc. was going to be Monday.

Friday August 12<sup>th</sup>: Our usual shopping trip to Unicorn and Waitrose meant that we were too late returning for the monthly D-CaFF (Dementia Café) at the Cricket Club, where Jenny usually helped out and I took pictures. The theme this month was “*All aboard the Blackpool Belle*”, a name for holiday trains from northern stations to Blackpool, popularised by The Houghton Weavers. This being the holiday season meant that the traffic congestion on the M60 was not as bad as usual, although the A56 near Broadheath was restricted to a single lane in both directions by traffic cones. There was no sign of anyone working and no visible reason for the obstruction. I supposed traffic cones had to be put somewhere.

Saturday August 13<sup>th</sup>: It was a trifle damp outside so I decided to play with the drains inside. The bathroom sink had been draining increasingly slowly for some time and I had been thinking of how best to tackle it.

The ecological way was to sprinkle sodium bicarbonate down the plughole and then pour vinegar on it. One was supposed to leave this overnight but I was too impatient for that and, once the effervescence had ceased, I poured a couple of kettle-fulls of boiling water down the drain. That didn't seem to make much difference.

The next step was to remove and thoroughly clean the trap, taking care to wear gloves and use disinfectant. The trap was full of grey-black, slimy sludge, which I poked out with an old toothbrush into a bucket containing said disinfectant.

With the pipe leading from the trap also being coated in the same obnoxious substance, I scraped that out, as far as I could reach with the toothbrush, into a bucket strategically placed under where the trap should have been. Carefully placing a quantity of sodium bicarbonate in the pipe and then using a funnel on the end of some rubber tubing to add vinegar, produced a violent frothing in the pipe itself.

Replacing the trap and pouring down yet more hot water seemed to improve matters a little and I decided to check the path of the waste pipe in the loft above the kitchen extension, which was accessed from the garage loft. That seemed alright and I was thinking that the only way to really improve matters would be to rearrange the drainage for both the bidet and the sink, which runs into the bidet drain, so that they came out to the main waste pipe separately and I could then increase the fall on the sink waste pipe. I decided to sleep on it. Not the drain, the idea.

By the time we retired for the evening, I was surprised to witness that the bathroom sink was draining pretty well. Things were looking up (or flowing down, as the case may be).

Sunday August 14<sup>th</sup>: We were up at 5:30 a.m. for our car boot session at the new location of Winfields, Haslingden. This was a slightly longer journey than the ten minute ride to Ramsbottom but, being a later start (gates open at 7:45), it meant we did not have to leave too early.

We set off just before 7 a.m. and we were at Winfields for 7:15, in a queue of cars waiting for entry. We were at the pitch before 8 a.m. and members of the public (potential customers) were already waiting to pounce.

Now, we had been told that Winfields was very good and usually very busy and we had high expectations, even though the sale finished earlier than Ramsbottom, at about noon. As it turned out, it was no better than Ramsbottom. There were more cars than customers and most of them were lookers, not buyers. Of those who did want to buy, almost all of them wanted to haggle. Since most of our prices hover between fair and low, we were not amused. I formed the

impression that if we advertised everything was free, people would expect us to pay them to take our goods away.

We came away with a profit of about £40 at about 1 p.m., slightly up on our last outing to Ramsbottom and in less time. The present trend did raise the questions of whether it was worth continuing to trade in this way and if we did, whether we should return to Ramsbottom, where the fee is £1 dearer than Winfields. At £10 a pitch and at least a couple of hundred cars there, it seemed that the only real winners were the organisers.

I was of the opinion that the best use of a piece of land these days was either to use it for a car boot sale, a car park or develop it as a caravan park. Those who did were guaranteed a tidy income on a regular basis.

In the afternoon, I decided to look into the CPU overheating problem on my desktop system. Examination suggested that it was probably a problem with the fan itself and the best course of action was to replace it. That was easier said than done, since the processor was an old one (socket 478 for the technical folks out there in cyberspace) and coolers for it were few and far between. I managed to find one at Misco, one of the more reputable technical suppliers and I ordered it, delivery being one third of the total cost. I awaited the box of tricks with anticipation.

Monday August 15<sup>th</sup>: The fine, warm weather that was expected arrived and provided the opportunity to tidy up the garden. I cut and strimmed the grass on the side, tidied up the borders, cut back the ivy and clipped a few branches off the bushes by the garage that were overhanging the garage roof. With the side done and looking good, I cut and strimmed the front garden.

The grass was quite long and damp which made the going rather hard, although my old Flymo Compact 380 coped very well.

My labours were punctuated by requests from Jenny to lift her car boot boxes around the garage and store away our stock after yesterday's sale.

My final task of the day was to sort out the freezer. Our Bosch fridge-freezer has a habit of allowing water to dribble down inside the freezer and then freeze solid, locking the drawers of frozen food in place and preventing access to the food inside. We tackled this problem by using a wooden spatula and wooden mallet to chip away the ice to free up the drawers, remove them and then remove the ice completely.

On this occasion, the ice had wedged the middle drawer and invaded it. Clearing it took some time and when we put it all back together, after a short while, the freezer alarm was activated to inform us that the temperature inside was too high. I responded by putting it into fast freeze mode and waiting for the alarm to subside.

This was really a work-around and I needed to bottom the problem and fix it permanently.

Tuesday August 16<sup>th</sup>: My working day started with the application of the lawn mower, followed by the strimmer to the back lawn. I hoed and weeded the borders and ended up with a bucket full of rubbish for the brown bin.

Since the garden waste bin had just been emptied, along with the paper bin, Jenny suggested I should clean them before using them since the brown bin was rather smelly. I donned my waterproof gear, visor helmet breathing mask and rubber gloves and used the power washer. The

obnoxious spray went everywhere, so I was thankful for all the protection even if it did look ridiculous and felt uncomfortable in the scorching heat.

I left the bins to dry on the drive, removed my protective gear, packed away the Karcher power washer and decided to pick the remaining blackcurrants, breaking off for a cup of tea when Jenny returned from yoga. Jenny helped me finish off and I put the bins back at the side of the house to finish off a busy day.

Wednesday August 17<sup>th</sup>: It was another fine, warm day, giving Jenny and me the opportunity to assemble the [new garden bench](#) and position it on the lawn.

The next job was to put all of the raspberry canes I had cut down and left on the old patio table into the garden waste bin. Having just been emptied, the bin was almost full again.

At Jenny's suggestion, I turned over the raspberry patch and removed all of the bushes and roots. The position of the bushes was not ideal since they were preventing the sunlight from reaching the blackberries and I left the decision on where to put new raspberry canes until next season. The digging took most of the rest of the day and filled the garden waste bin.

We broke for lunch on the new picnic bench. Very nice and comfortable it was too.

I cut back the blackcurrant bushes that were overhanging the lawn and Jenny put the cuttings into sacks to take to the tip while I continued with the raspberry patch.

It had been another busy day.

Thursday August 18<sup>th</sup>: It was not a productive day.

We took the cat to the vet for her annual examination and vaccination. The vet could not believe how well she was considering she was 18 years old.

We had lunch and I tackled the old XP desktop that was complaining the CPU was overheating. The new cooling fan had made matters worse and I decided to remove it and put the old one back. I completed 50% of this task in the lounge when the time arrived for us to walk down to see John and Lynn for afternoon tea and a chat, something Jenny had been meaning to arrange for some time, ever since they moved into their new house and had done that morning, before lunch.

We spent a most pleasant afternoon with good, long-standing friends, chatting, drinking tea, wine, whiskey and mead and eating cakes and biscuits (not necessarily in that order) and arrived home some five hours later.

Jenny decided against going swimming with Rachel and we settled down to our usual evening of entertainment, watching DVDs and recorded TV programmes.

The last important task of the day was to cover up the new picnic table before the rains arrived the following day, scheduled to persist until the coming Tuesday.

Friday August 19<sup>th</sup>: Yes, it was another excursion to Chorlton and Broadheath, the latter still down to one lane in each direction, providing a rest home for traffic cones, with precious little activity other than passing vehicles. The food safely stowed in the back of the car, we tackled the M60 back to Prestwich with no danger of exceeding the temporary 50 m.p.h. average speed limit while the extensive road improvement scheme is implemented. Judging by the amount of traffic, by the time it was finished, it would need improving again.

We called at Asda on the way back for a few items and returned home about 5 p.m.

Saturday August 20<sup>th</sup>: With the jumble sale on the coming Bank Holiday Monday, 29<sup>th</sup> August, we thought it might be a good idea to commence work on the electrical equipment at the Old School. This we did after I had followed Rachel down to Tottington Motors and brought her home, having left her car for its annual MOT.

The journey was somewhat longer than on previous occasions on account of Tottington Motors having moved from Tottington, a few minutes up the road, to a location that was half way to Radcliffe. The new premises looked impressive from the mechanics aspect with much better and roomier bays in which to work but in other respects seemed more cramped. I did not visit the showroom and I could not help thinking that moving from a busy thoroughfare and community to a business park in a rural setting may not do anything to boost sales. The new web site looked impressive though and it was still a family-run business with good, old-fashioned values like customer satisfaction.

Apart from a short diversion to help Rachel collect her car at 12:30, we spent all day, until 4:30, trying not to electrocute ourselves or start any fires.

Sunday August 21<sup>st</sup>: Another wet day, as forecast, saw us working on the electrical jumble at the Old School. We had intended to visit Jenny's niece, Tracey, in hospital in Sheffield and, given the amount of work outstanding, we decided to postpone that until the following day so we could try to work through as much of the jumble as we could before the sale in a week's time.

Monday August 22<sup>nd</sup>: We finally made it to Sheffield, stopping for lunch as usual on the back road on the hilltops, this time a little further on, with views to the east, over towards Thurgoland and, on the horizon, Barnsley was just visible in the brief sunny spell.

We went straight to the Northern General Hospital, where Tracey was looking and sounding much better, currently being fed partly intravenously and partly on soft food, which she seemed to be able to retain and digest. The longer-term strategy was, as yet, unclear, although there was talk of an operation to try to fix her problem.

We stayed and chatted for the four hours allotted on our parking ticket and left about 5:30, just as her partner, Andy and her son, Daniel and his partner, Vicky, were arriving.

The Woodhead road was very busy in both directions going, with an unusually long tail-back into Mottram on the opposite carriageway. The majority of drivers on the M60 had absolutely no idea how dangerous the very heavy rain and waterlogged surface were, driving at speeds well over the limit of 70 m.p.h., without lights and often within a car length or less of the vehicle in front. I would estimate that around 60% of drivers should simply not be allowed a licence to drive and I include those who drive for a living. I stuck to 50 m.p.h. in the left-hand lane until we reached better conditions on the M67.

The return journey was much better, although there were a few impatient drivers who thought driving on my rear end would in some way help them reach their destination quicker. When the odd vehicle did manage to find a spot to overtake me, it gained about 100 yards before it had to slow down for a heavy vehicle in front, achieving nothing significant. For the most part, overtaking on the Woodhead road was simply not worth the risk and think of the inconvenience a head-on collision between two vehicles would cause to other road users.

On arriving home, I discovered the rear floor mat on the driver's side was soaking wet and I was left wondering how that had come about.

Tuesday August 23<sup>rd</sup>: An early start revealed several slugs had emerged during the recent rain and one was actually on one of the raised beds. Fortunately, it didn't seem to have done any damage so whether the Nemaslug was still working or not, I wasn't sure. I decided it was time to order some more and the applicator.

I removed the cover from the new picnic bench and put it on the clothes line to dry as a couple of fine days were forecast.

I also put out the blue bin (cans, glass and plastic) I had forgotten about the previous evening in time for the collection.

Jenny needed a couple of special wedding anniversary cards and hadn't found any really nice ones thus far on our travels so we decided to nip into Ramsbottom to the card shop. While there we took the opportunity to purchase a third ticket for a charity evening play at the local theatre from the newsagent's shop for Rachel and to tour the charity shops, not forgetting the obligatory visit to Morrisons small supermarket.

I found a Midsomer Murders DVD I did not have in the RSPCA charity shop, Jenny found one of the cards she wanted in the card shop, we purchased the groceries we wanted and then we returned to the Newsagent's shop for the second anniversary card on the way back to the car.

We lunched on the new picnic bench in the garden, the grass having dried out quickly in the warm sunshine.

Jenny went off to Yoga as usual. I commenced cleaning and tidying the lounge and Jenny pitched in when she returned. We completed everything except the window farthest from the fire, the grandfather clock, the door to the entrance hall and the light fittings. They would have to wait until the morning.

Wednesday August 24<sup>th</sup>: The living room clean-up was completed as planned, although it seemed a shame to be indoors on such a nice, warm day, again.

I completed the morning's work by changing one of the two bulbs that had ceased to illuminate my life in the three-headed lamp on the patio. I had forgotten to purchase a second new bulb so the other one would have to wait.

We lunched on the bench again after I had ordered a new batch of Nemaslug and searched around for an applicator I could use with the hose. I had come to the conclusion that the Miracle Grow Applicator was the one I needed and my best option was to purchase one from a local store.

After lunch I decided to tackle the side garden again. The grass had grown and I thought I should take the opportunity to cut it before the rains came again, due the following day. I struggled through that, my back hurting, I thought, as a result of lifting heavy boxes at awkward angles while sorting out the electrical jumble at the Old School at the week end.

Finding four loads of dog droppings didn't help and I ended up cleaning and disinfecting the hoe, which I used to pick up the offending piles of dung, placing it in a bucket and subsequently the general waste bin. I cleaned the lawn mower, put the grass cuttings in a sack, the garden

waste recycling bin being full, and shoved everything back in the garage. If I ever found out who owned the dog that did it, I intended to shove the hoe somewhere else.

I came in, washed my hands well, even though I had been wearing disposable, plastic gloves, slumped down on the settee and fell asleep for three hours.

Thursday August 25<sup>th</sup>: After moving Matthew's old Windows 7 system back into position in the back bedroom, we headed to Tesco in Bury for a few items and then to Manchester Piccadilly to collect Wilf and Anne at the station. Due to a late start, heavy traffic, road works and idiot drivers, we arrived some thirty minutes late, by which time it was pouring down.

We returned with our guests, had lunch and went down to Summerseat garden centre for a potter round. We didn't find anything we really wanted and decided to go and take a look at Newbank Garden Centre. That session was a little rushed as we were ushered out after about 30 minutes because the place was closing for the day. We didn't find anything there either.

So it was home for a cup of tea, an evening meal and relaxation.

Friday August 26<sup>th</sup>: We spent the day at St Annes. I decided to drive there on the back country roads and the A roads rather than use the motorway. All went well until I had to negotiate Preston.

According to the road signs, approaching Preston from the south on the A6 (which, incidentally, becomes the A59 without any warning), there are only three destinations; Liverpool and Southport, Lancaster and Blackpool or the M6. Apparently, the part of Preston Council responsible for traffic management has never heard of St Annes. I eventually found myself heading for the first of these destinations, having ignored a sign for the road I wanted (the A583) because it was signposted Blackpool. A U-turn at an appropriate point and heading back into Preston on this particular branch of the A59, I luckily found the A583 and, eventually, a sign that actually said St Annes.

Coming back was even worse. There was no road sign anywhere that mentioned the A6 southbound or Chorley. I ended up at the Tickled Trout roundabout, heading for Blackburn and found my way home from there.

I subsequently sent a rather poignant E-mail to Preston Council, having first used Google maps to trace the route I should have taken in both directions. I have written down the route and I can't wait to have another go at it. There must be some parts of Preston I hadn't seen yet.

St Annes was very nice, being at the mouth of the River Ribble on the north bank, Southport being visible in the distance on the south side. There were some very nice gardens in which we found the Pavilion Theatre and several up-coming productions, presentations and events of interest. Being very flat, St Annes was excellent for cycling and I intended to return with our bikes at some stage.

We had an evening meal at Owens restaurant in Ramsbottom. The meal was better than last time but not as good as the first time we ate there and I formed the opinion, rightly or wrongly, that it was not the same chef. The Thai, salmon rosti (fish cakes?) were on the bland side and contained very little salmon. They were not a patch on those I had previously sampled at the Waggon and Horses in Hawkshaw (now under new management, with a new chef). The peppercorn sauce that accompanied my fillet steak was also a little on the thin side. Jenny and Rachel's main course, the gluten-free chicken and vegetable stroganoff, was overdosed in paprika which had

not been cooked off properly, rendering the dish a little on the powdery side. We were seated upstairs, next to a large party comprising a few very loud people making it almost impossible for us to have a conversation. The bill, including a bottle of red wine and a large glass of white wine averaged out at about £30 each, which was not unreasonable, although not everyone had three courses. On balance, after three visits, I withdraw my recommendation based on my first visit and I doubt we shall be going there again.

Saturday August 27<sup>th</sup>: We dropped Anne and Wilf off at the tram station in Bury after calling briefly at the Old School to let them know we would be in the following day to deal with the electrical jumble in time for the sale on Monday. We introduced Anne and Wilf and showed them round.

Jenny and I headed off to undertake our usual weekly grocery shop a day later than usual and I found the motorway traffic much lighter. What's more, the road works near Broadheath had been completed and there was not a traffic cone in sight, with two lanes of traffic flowing freely in both directions.

We arrived home just after the rain had started earlier than expected and I rushed out to dry off and cover up the picnic bench. It then stopped raining. More rain was expected in the early hours until about 10 a.m. the following day so I left the cover in place.

It was then a case of Jenny putting away the shopping and preparing tea and I lit the log fire because it was turning cold in the evening for the first time for weeks.

Sunday August 28<sup>th</sup>: We spent all day at the Old School preparing for the jumble sale the following day. I did not have enough time to work through all of the electrical jumble so there were half a dozen boxes left over for the next jumble sale, including a box full of Wii equipment and a box full of X-box and PlayStation equipment. I had started about 10:30 a.m. and finished about 6:30 p.m. with a short lunch break so I was a touch on the tired side.

Monday August 29<sup>th</sup>: It was Bank Holiday Monday and the day of the jumble sale. Whoopee. We were at the Old School for just after 10 a.m., the sale started at 11 a.m. and we were home for about 2 p.m. after helping to tidy up.

We were greeted by a hot and humid atmosphere in the kitchen and the temperature in the conservatory had reached 40°C, evaporating all the water in the cat's dish and from the plants. It was like a sauna. Opening the back door in the kitchen and the windows in the lounge soon cooled things down a little and dispelled the moist air. Both dehumidifiers were working overtime.

We had lunch outside in bright sunshine under a clear blue sky and afterwards I decided to start work on the equipment cluttering up the conservatory.

The first item was a Dymo labeller from the Old School jumble. I thought I had tested it before on batteries and I thought it worked. When I found a power supply for it and used that to test it again, it refused to power up. My conclusion was, quite simply, it didn't work and it was consigned to the rubbish.

The second item was the Toshiba laptop from the Old School jumble and I decided to have another go at breaking through the BIOS password barrier. That took up the rest of the afternoon and was totally unproductive. I ended up contacting a local PC repair man and his response sounded hopeful – until I learned that he was going to try the same procedure I had

followed and which hadn't worked. Had he been successful, it would have cost £50. It took me about ten minutes to attempt the repair and I thought £50 for ten minutes' work, if successful, was just a little on the high side. He referred me to a chap in Horwich, not far away and I sent the company an enquiry. The company web site indicated that the fee could be as high as £99, which was really too much.

One option was for me to purchase a new BIOS chip for about £12 and replace the old one on the motherboard, assuming I could disassemble the laptop and then reassemble it. There was no guarantee that would work, though.

Tuesday August 30<sup>th</sup>: I had placed an order with Abel and Cole for a few items late on Sunday evening and this was the day of delivery. We were up somewhat later than planned to find the grocery boxes on the drive, behind the car. A couple of household chores and an update to the village web site took me to 1 p.m.

While Jenny went off to yoga, I cleaned out the fire from a couple of nights earlier and replanted a pot of basil in the herb raised bed.

I spent the rest of the afternoon testing electrical items. The first was another device for the Old School jumble I had brought home. It was a Humax PVR with no remote and a password for which I needed the remote. I had looked at this before and I put it and the Toshiba laptop to one side while I looked at two other items for Jenny's car boot sale.

The first was a DVD player donated by Anne, her sister-in-law. The sound output was very low and it wouldn't play some DVDs so I consigned it to the rubbish collection. The second, also donated by Anne, was a Bush VHS recorder with no remote control. That worked reasonably well and I put that, together with the remote control for the Philips DVD player, on one side for Jenny's car boot stock.

Wednesday August 31<sup>st</sup> We awoke to rain that had not been forecast the last time I looked the previous day and rushed out to wipe down the picnic bench and cover it. The rain was due to cease between 10 and 11 a.m. so I intended to remove the cover later to let the table dry out properly.

We went shopping to Bury. I bought the Miracle Grow applicator I wanted for the Nemaslug from B&Q, which, with my 10% discount, turned out to be cheaper than anywhere else. I bought some new thermal paste to use to try to repair my old desktop system from PC World, which, incidentally, was closing in the near future and would then be trading in the same store as Currys, next to Tesco. Jenny nipped into Asda to buy some Nouvelle recycled toilet rolls (that is toilet rolls manufactured from recycled paper, not...well, I'll leave the alternative to you). Asda didn't have any. We made our way to the Health Food Store in the market and bought a few items including more Saw Palmetto for me and my prostate (sounds like a catchy title for a tune) and a bottle of organic Gusto energy drink with that get up and go and sit down and pass wind, also for me. Our final destination (a good title for a film) was Tesco in Bury before heading home via Tottington to call at Bargain Booze for more essential supplies.

My first job at home was to remove the bench cover. Jenny decided we would eat in the dining room (that showed a certain amount of logic) instead of outdoors.

After a late lunch, I decided to refit the original cooling fan to the processor in my old desktop XP system. After doing so, it refused to load. Not only that, but there was no beep from the motherboard as it attempted to do so. I tried everything I could think of without success and,

after the motherboard made no sound at all when I tried to load the system with no memory modules installed, I came to the conclusion it was one of three things: a faulty power supply, a faulty motherboard or a faulty CPU. In any of these cases, it was not worth spending any more effort or money on it and I consigned it to the car boot stock for sale as spares or whatever.

On the sad note of the demise of my trusty XP system, we not only say goodbye to another month of 2016 but also to an era in which the best piece of software to come out of Microsoft finally turned up its noughts and ones. (In actual fact, Rachel's old Dell XPS laptop was still around, running XP, albeit a trifle slowly and, in all probability, not for much longer).