

Greenmount – February 2014

Saturday 1st February was “drop-in” day. So we dropped in at the Old School and had a browse round the books, CDs and DVDs on sale and a chat with a lot of folks there. I had a long discussion with Frank about my dropping out of our small walking group, at least for the present.

We returned home and contemplated going for a walk until it clouded over and the rains came yet again. I spent most of the afternoon updating the village web site and scanning a tea towel of the Greenmount Primary School class of 1990, on which Matthew is prominent, so that I could return it to its rightful owner who cornered me yet again at the drop-in. I didn't blame her because I had borrowed it months earlier to scan and I just kept forgetting about it, probably because I knew it wasn't going to be easy.

On Sunday 2nd February, it was Church Parade and that resulted in two subsequent tasks. The first was to deliver the latest issue of the Greenmount Voice to residents on our patch and the second was to perform yet more updates of the village web site from information in the Voice, not having attended the village meeting the previous Thursday because I was late back from Beavers and wanted my tea.

That and updating my own web site with the previous month's update, took most of the afternoon.

The chaps still met on Monday mornings and Frank had reminded me of that at the drop-in the previous Saturday. I decided to try to start the jobs that needed doing round the house on Monday 3rd February, not having got to grips with them in January.

I didn't get very far. We spent most of the day on yet more Beaver work, would you believe, looking for, printing and cutting out paper wings for egg box dragons.

On Tuesday 4th, Jenny went out for lunch with Karen and I rubbed down and undercoated the two door frames in the kitchen, interrupted by a visit from Mike. The chaps were concerned that I had not been out walking with them and wanted to make sure I was alright, which was very nice of them. Mike tried to persuade me to join them on the last few legs of Offa's Dyke in May but I still didn't feel as though I could manage to walk four days in succession despite my previous performance on the first half of the route.

I did finish the door frames, though and settled down to yet more dragon wing production.

I had considered joining the chaps for another stretch of the Leeds to Liverpool Canal on Wednesday 5th February because I did need to get back into walking again, not to mention the banter, the beer and the pub grub. As it happened, I had arranged to walk down to Bury with Jenny and to go for lunch at the Trackside with panoramic views of Bolton Street Station. We didn't expect to see any trains, since they did not run in the week but one steam-hauled train did arrive, having been chartered for the occasion by a group of photographers.

We had a very nice lunch and I passed (yes, passed) on the large selection of real ales, settling for tea instead.

We had, in the end, caught the bus down and back because, once again, it started to rain before we left home. We pottered around Bury, taking care of some business and doing a little grocery shopping with the inevitable visit to Tesco, in our waterproof gear, my trousers still coated in Welsh mud from the previous September. Diolch a nos da.

It was back to painting (glossing) on Thursday 6th February, after helping Jenny fill in a couple of forms for this and that and, yes, you guessed it, more Beaver work. This time, Jenny wanted some activity sheets for the Fitness Challenge Badge. She also wanted a labelled diagram of the heart and I couldn't find a decent one on the Internet, so she had to manage without. We had requested an activity booklet from the British Heart Foundation with all the required sheets on the previous Monday, expecting it to have arrived in time for the evening's session but it had not. I couldn't help thinking that I hoped whoever dealt with these requests didn't have to do anything of a practical nature.

While nipping into the garage to wash out my brush, I noticed that the wall at the back of the garage underneath the new boiler was very wet. Either we had a leak or the heavy rain had penetrated the brickwork. I decided to ignore it, at least for the present and see what happened. There was no water on the floor, so if there was a leak, it wasn't a big one. I left the paintbrush to soak in white spirit.

Jenny reminded me I had not put the new tax disc on the car and she needed it that evening to take a boot-load of half-constructed egg-box dragons round to Beavers. I hadn't bothered before because we hadn't used the car this month thus far.

Returning to the garage later to finish off the paintbrush, I decided the leak was from the hot connection to the back-up washing machine in the garage and I turned the tap off to see if it made a difference.

On Friday 7th February, we went grocery shopping as usual, following a pleasant, surprise visit from Tracey who brought me the bits to finish off the external wiring at the Old School, which remained functional but in a temporary state, partly due to the play group piling all their equipment on the stage, blocking access to the distribution box.

Jenny came back from Beavers with the British Heart Foundation book, kindly donated by one of the Beaver Parents in the medical profession. On seeing it, I could understand why the one I requested had not arrived. It was huge and made of sturdy material, designed to be placed on a table or desk as a teaching aid.

I checked the garage and the wall was drying out! A measure of success in one venture at last.

I was out taking pictures of the village tidy up on Saturday 8th February at 10:30 a.m., followed by a stint of litter-picking up and down Holcombe Road, followed by a foray

into the undergrowth around the Bull's Head car park.

It was to the credit of Greenmount residents that there was very little litter along the main road and I suspected that much of what I did collect was from passing vehicles. The Bull's Head car park was a different matter and the pub obviously attracted a good few individuals with a dominant Neanderthal personality.

In the afternoon, Jenny and Rachel went off to supervise their Beavers at Ramsbottom pool for their staged swimming badge. I remained at home working on the computer.

On Sunday 9th February, I started to migrate a 4-cassette tape set of the early Louis Armstrong to CD and managed to finish the first one.

Monday 10th February being the first decent day for some time, we took advantage of the fine, sunny weather to go and collect some wood from a friend of a friend. Two trailers full later, we decided to break for lunch and an expected visit from John Bachelor who was collecting Jenny's CRB renewal form for Ramsbottom Scout District.

John arrived and turned out to be the same John Bachelor who was Treasurer of the North Western Regional Health Authority when I worked there back in the early 1970s and we chatted briefly about old times.

After lunch we made our third trip to collect the last lot of wood and ended up with a stockpile of work for any free days I had in the near future.

On Tuesday 11th February we went over to Sheffield for the funeral of one of Jenny's cousins, Melvin Shaw, who had died the previous week, calling to pick up Jenny's brother, Wilf, on the way. It seemed that the only time Jenny's family gathered together was on such sad occasions and it would have been nice to have had an opportunity to talk to so many of the family members under more pleasant circumstances. My family research was lacking so much background information in that area. Those able to supply it were rapidly diminishing in number and those still capable of doing so seemed reluctant to discuss it.

We called to pick up Jenny's brother, Wilf and drove across Sheffield to Hutcliffe Wood Crematorium attempting to use the directions I had downloaded from Google, the road system and landscape having changed so much that it was largely unrecognisable after having left the city 35 years ago. The directions failed at the third step when the indicated right turn was not allowed and at the following step when the road names were non-existent. Miraculously, we found ourselves on Queen's Road and subsequently Abbeydale Road and arrived at the crematorium in good time.

The service went as well as these things can and it was nice to meet up with people we did not often see. It was a pity we only saw them on such sad occasions.

The journey back was a complete disaster, taking a somewhat longer route but at least it

was one I recognised.

Anne arrived home from work about 6 p.m. and we all went for a meal at the Acorn in Burn Cross. I dropped Anne and Wilf at home and we came back across the snowy Woodhead Pass, chased for a good part of the way by some insane lorry driver who had no respect for the weather conditions, speed limits or a safe distance from my rear end. I suspected he had been watching the early Spielberg film, *Duel*.

Wednesday 12th February just seemed to come and go without much to show for it except I managed to finish the work on the first Louis Armstrong tape. That much I remembered.

Thursday 13th February was another fairly unproductive day (so what's new?). After a late start, we spent most of the morning on Beaver administration and preparation work. I updated the village web site and later in the afternoon decided to tackle the conversion of second of the four Louis Armstrong tapes to CD, with limited success due to some inexplicable loss of data by the audio editor, Audacity.

On Friday 14th December we went grocery shopping.

We called in Bury on the way. Jenny wanted some woggles (not to eat, for the new Beaver Scouts she was investing that evening) from the Scout shop and some Tom's toothpaste from the health food shop, both in the world-famous Bury market. Jenny achieved 50% success in that there was no Tom's toothpaste.

The next stop was on the way to the motorway, at the vets, to pick up a bag of biscuits for one of our cats which is on a low-fat diet.

Our route took us past Matthew's house so we dropped in a letter for him that had been delivered to our house some weeks earlier.

Unicorn was much busier than usual and I had to wait for a large lorry that had been making a delivery to move off the car park before I could access one of the free parking spots. This did not deter a couple of impatient, 4x4 drivers from passing me, making their way into the front part of the car park, only to find there was nowhere for their vehicles. By the time I did get into my spot, they had managed to park in places vacated by customers leaving, one of the places which I could have taken had they not queue-jumped.

Waitrose was busy too. We managed to find a table for lunch and had to make do with a toasted teacake each, there being no decent sandwiches or Cornish steak pasties available. I had looked for the café's copy of *The Guardian* to glance through while lunching and found it on the chair next to mine, not in the rack in which customers are supposed to place it after use.

The Guardian seemed to be the only paper that headlined with news about the storm-

damaged south of the country and I was pleased to note that I was in much agreement with the content.

I had been voicing my opinion for some years that there would be widespread flooding in this country as a result of global warming, not only from rising sea levels but also from swollen rivers due to increased rainfall. In short, I had seen this coming for a good few years. Not only that but I had been saying it would get much worse and that I expected London to be permanently under water by the middle of the 21st century, if not before.

It was my contention that global warming was due to our insatiable appetite for energy and that the effect we were experiencing was lagging behind the cause by some 50 years or more. Since the Industrial Revolution, certainly in the Western world, had accelerated at an exponential rate, we could expect the same from the worsening weather patterns and the effects of today would get much worse this century before they got better. Again, in short, my opinion is that the human race globally is facing, to coin a phrase, an extinction level event.

I also have believed for some time that we were approaching a point of no return regarding global warming, around 2022, after which whatever we did would not allow us to recover from our mistakes. Neither, in the seven or eight years left for us to mitigate the effects of global warming to some degree, was it sufficient to reduce our carbon emissions. To stand any chance of survival, it was necessary to negate them. That would mean an end to the burning of fossil fuels and measures to adsorb as much of the greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere as possible as quickly as possible. That meant a tree-planting programme on a world-wide basis.

Could you imagine any politician anywhere in the world accepting such a premise? Even if he or she did, can you imagine there being the financial backing for such a project?

The future is no place for your grandchildren. A French Statesman once said “War is too important to be left to the generals”. The future is too important to be left to the politicians.

Here endeth the lesson for today – and, perhaps, for ever.

Most of the week end of Saturday 15th and Sunday 16th February were spent sorting and testing electrical equipment at the Old School for the jumble sale.

Similarly, Monday 17th February, the testing being followed by the sale itself and packing unsold items away, saving a few of the better items for the next sale and sending off the rest to Father Wyatt in Salford for the benefit of his community.

We had a lye-in on Tuesday 18th February and, after a late start, I took Jenny to lunch at Summerseat Garden Centre followed by a sight-seeing tour of the local refuse dump, where we dropped off all of the rubbish from the Old School. We ended our excursion with the inevitable visit to Tesco for a few groceries. The operative word here is “few”

since Tesco's range of organic and ecological produce had diminished somewhat over the past year or two.

On Wednesday 19th February, Jenny had a lunch appointment with Gwen, Frank's wife and was out most of the day, while I pottered around the old keyboard.

We had another day out on Thursday 20th February, visiting Helmshore Mills Textile Museum, about 15 minutes' drive from home, with the Toddington District Civic Society and I took the photographs, which can be seen on the village web site, www.greenmountvillage.org.uk. The guided tour was excellent and we had lunch in the café there before returning home.

Friday 21st February was our usual shopping day. We called in at Matthew's house on the way to drop off my toolbox. He wanted to borrow my socket set. Then it was down to Unicorn in Chorlton and on to Waitrose at Broadheath for lunch and the rest of our shopping. A brief detour to Asda at Pilsworth on the return journey furnished us with some wine but no water before calling back at Matthew's house to collect my tool box and some other items he didn't want. It was fortunate this was half-term because we didn't get back until around 5 p.m. and Jenny would have been too late for Beavers.

The highlight of Saturday 22nd February was a cycle ride down to Bury Police Station and back, the destination having no significance other than the point of return, with the newly-formed Greenmount Cycling Group, part of the "I Will if You Will" campaign. Alistair, our village chairman and member of Sustrans, led the ride and his wife, Joan, brought up the rear to make sure we didn't lose anybody on the way. I, of course, managed to fall off once and slightly graze my knee, an injury I discovered much later when I noticed blood on my hand whilst undressing for bed.

Sunday 23rd February was a day of rest following the previous day's activity. It gave me an opportunity to catch up on some computer administration work, including web site updates. We did manage a brief trip into Ramsbottom in the car, this being necessary because our main objective was to buy two six-packs of Highland Spring still water. We should have bought these with the grocery shopping on the previous Friday but they were back up at their extortionate price of £3.09 everywhere except Asda, which didn't have any and we thought we'd shop around a little more. It was a brief trip out in the fresh air, even if it did start to rain as we had finished and it did give us an opportunity to go round the charity shops.

Monday 24th February was the day on which we decided to finish off the kitchen by cleaning the wall behind the radiator, the radiator itself and scrubbing the floor. It took us seven months to complete it and, by a strange coincidence, it was about seven months since the floor was last scrubbed. More bits fell off the radiator, which was rusting quite badly and it was obviously made of poor quality steel. It needed replacing with a stainless steel one if I could find one that used the same wall mounting points and pipe work since the whole of the wall behind it was covered with very expensive tiles and the pipes were buried in the wall.

Most of Tuesday 25th February was spent updating the Beaver Scout records using Online Scout Manager (OSM). As I have said before, whoever designed this system either had no experience of keeping such records, had an IQ in single figures or had an extremely perverse sense of humour. It wasn't the most unfriendly user system I had ever seen but it came damn close.

Wednesday 26th February saw no significant improvement in my health which had been poor for the past three weeks or so. My stomach, which suffered from a hiatus hernia, seemed to have been producing concentrated hydrochloric acid for England and the daily dose of 20mg of Losec had, it seemed, done little to control the flow.

The first task of the day was to update the village web site with a WI coffee morning in aid of the local children's hospice, the notice of which was delivered in person by Eunice the previous evening. This led on to further updates and also a rare update to the Tottington District Civic Society web site, something which had been neglected of late due to my rewrite of the village web site and I could not help thinking that I should rewrite the Civic Society web site as well as soon as I had a few weeks to spare.

That turned out to be the only major task of the day.

On Thursday 27th February we started the Beaver preparation work for that and the following evening. The strategy was to hand over the running of Thursdays to Harry, a new leader Jenny had recruited and the parent of our only female Beaver. Jenny was gradually giving Harry more to do each week, easing him into the position and planned to continue as his assistant for a while, until he had settled in.

After lunch we decided to start tackling the garage and tidied up most of it.

Friday 28th February was a straight trip to Unicorn and Waitrose for groceries, with lunch at the latter, since Jenny had to be back in time for Beavers. Waitrose had finally stocked organic lamb leg and we grabbed two of the larger ones, one for this week and one for freezing. This purchase, together with a large organic chicken and the other groceries pushed up our bill quite a bit and it was money that would have gone into Tesco's coffers had their food quality not dropped sharply over the last year or more, with the phasing out of organic products and the adoption of cheaper, less healthy lines.

For the most part, February was a drab, damp and uneventful month. Even so, it seemed to pass quickly and it was hard to believe we were about to enter the third month of 2014. Find out what that had in store in next month's episode of this masterpiece of mundane monotony.