

Greenmount – January 2016

Friday, January 1<sup>st</sup>: It was a dull day with no sunshine and not very inspiring. Nonetheless, I did achieve a few useful tasks. I helped wash the pots from the previous evening and this morning, I cleaned out the fire from the previous night's use. I cleaned out the outside vent for the clothes dryer. I checked a couple of old, Christmas-Tree light sets we did not use very often, not even at Christmas. I replaced a faulty bulb in the light set round the kitchen, patio doors. I tested a DVD player and a VHS player donated to Jenny for her car boot sale. What a fantastic start to the New Year.

Saturday, January 2<sup>nd</sup>: It was another dull day with the added bonus of rain. Needless to say, we did not see the sun again. We braved the weather with a trip into Ramsbottom. Had it been fine, we would have walked. As it was, we went in the car. By the time we had parked the car, it had stopped raining and we looked a little overdressed, yet again, in our waterproofs. We toured the charity shops, found nothing we wanted and bought a few items from Lolos to tide us through the week, not having been to Unicorn or Waitrose or Asda or Tesco, not to mention the Bury Health Food Store...oops, too late. The prospect of a delivery from Abel and Cole raised its head. It was not until the late afternoon that Jenny told me one of the bulbs in the outside light at the back had gone. It was really nice timing since I had only put away the spare bulb in the garage loft the previous day. "Such is life," was one of the thoughts that went through my head.

Sunday, January 3<sup>rd</sup>: There was no change to the weather. We stayed in and kept warm and dry. I did a little pottering round and tidied up a few things. I placed a few Internet orders, one for a few grocery items from Abel and Cole, one for Rachel's birthday present and one for a few things from Amazon. I also started using the second 2 Tb USB hard drive I had purchased to create a second copy of my two 1 Tb hard drives.

Monday, January 4<sup>th</sup>: It was a dull, cold and damp day with a few showers. There was still no sign of the sun. The song about dark, satanic mills was still fairly accurate. I continued the copy of data to the new external hard drive, listened to the recording of the New Year's Day concert from Vienna, a place I would very much like to be at New Year and repaired another part of Rachel's old doll's house we were seeking to sell as a collectable item. With age, the plastic balustrades used for the roof area have become somewhat brittle. Fortunately, the application of superglue effected an almost seamless repair and provided added strength to the points under greater stress. I could have done with some. Jenny was not happy that we were indoors for two days running and we needed some fruit and vegetables. The problem was that there was not a lot of organic produce available locally and my concert recording was over two hours long.

We did eventually venture out to Prestwich, visiting the various charity shops, finding a few items, as well as Village Greens and the inevitable Tesco.

Tuesday, January 5<sup>th</sup>: There was no improvement in the weather, not that it concerned us since, being the twelfth day of Christmas, it was time to recover our living room and dismantle the Christmas tree, storing all the items in the garage loft for the best part (hopefully) of the year. I was allowed to come out of the loft, eventually.

The order from Abel and Cole had arrived before we rose from our slumbers and I was up just after 8 a.m. We did not expect it until later in the day since they changed their delivery day from Friday to Tuesday and it was fortunate I spotted the delivery note on the hall floor as I unlocked the front door in what little natural light there was. The order was sitting neatly on the drive, behind the car.

My order from Amazon arrived after lunch and Jenny had the next two series of Heartbeat on DVD to watch. I had a new toy for Jenny's laptop – a USB 3 Express card under the CSL label. It was a pity it did not work properly. The fact the instructions were in German should have given me a clue, although I generally considered German products to be somewhat superior. This was, like Hitler, obviously an exception. When I connected one of my USB 3 external drives into the right-hand port, that was fine. When I connected the second USB 3 external drive into the left-hand port, not only did that not appear on the PC but the first disc suddenly disappeared. That was not what I considered to be useful and I uninstalled the device with the intention of returning it.

Another Internet purchase issue also arose. The Chamelia Buddha charm I had ordered from Hazel and Kent in Dudley had been billed and not dispatched. I had sent an E-mail to their contact address to find out what was happening and received a delivery delay message from my server. On further investigation, I noticed the domain name was "example.com". What is more, when I looked at the E-mail I had received, the sender's domain was also "example.com". I was beginning to suspect the worst. Being a clever sort of chap who understands the niceties of the Internet, I looked at the E-mail header and discovered the sender's E-mail address bore no resemblance to that displayed. I sent an E-mail to the address in the header.

Not wanting to let the grass grow, etc. I decided to take matters a stage further and send an E-mail enquiry to Dudley police explaining my concerns about the company and a copy of the company's E-mail to me as well as information about the server used to host their web site and the company providing it. That was after I looked on Google street view of the premises where Hazel and Kent was supposed to be. There was a jeweller's shop there but under the name of T H Baker.

Wednesday January 6<sup>th</sup>: It was still cold, wet and cloudy. We decided to go to Bury. I left Jenny behind the market again and I went to the vet. I escaped with the cat's tablets for the next three months and a 4 Kg bag of special food, all to help her ageing kidneys, before the vet had the opportunity to assess my condition. I had arranged to meet Jenny in the shopping precinct and decided, wrongly, I had time to run a few errands.

I went to the car body repairer and had to wait for the chap who owned the business, Carl, to return from some errand or other to give me a price for fixing a few scratches and a dent on the car. He gave me a quote of £250 and I arranged to take it in the following Monday. I didn't ask for a quote to repair my body.

By this time, the sun had attempted to break through the cloud and the road was showing signs of drying up.

I drove up the road to the VW dealer to ask about a set of new rubber mats for the front of

the car, the driver's mat having worn a hole where the heel of the right foot sat. The car being twelve years old, the item was discontinued. There wasn't a lot of hope for me, then.

I had obtained the location of a car electrician from Carl and I headed into the centre of Bury to see if he could fix the problem with my door mirror adjustment. When I adjusted the nearside mirror, it worked fine but when I adjusted the offside mirror, it adjusted both of them. The chap there said he dealt mainly with car audio and suggested I tried another man on the way to the hospital, not that I intended to go to the hospital.

Before leaving I telephoned Jenny. She had tried to reach me earlier and I had not heard my phone ring. She had been waiting for me at the arrange spot for twenty minutes and was not happy. I said I would see her in Tesco in about twenty minutes' time.

I headed back out of town, past the VW dealership to the garage to which I had been referred and spoke to the chap there. He said it was probably the switch for the mirrors on the door and he gave me his card so I could telephone him and arrange to take the car in for him to fix a new one. If it did not work, there would be no charge. If it turned out to be the logic box, it would be several hundred pounds for a new one. "Oh, joy," I thought.

I finally arrived at Tesco and went inside. There was no sign of Jenny so I telephoned her again and she said she was on her way. When she arrived we left for home immediately and did not shop in Tesco. She was definitely not in a good mood.

After lunch, there being no sign of any communication from Hazel and Kent, I decided to telephone them, not expecting any answer. A lady did eventually answer and confirmed the item I had ordered had been shipped. She gave me the Royal Mail tracking reference and I thanked her, somewhat relieved. When I checked with Royal Mail, the parcel was in their West Midlands office, so it was looking good after all.

I spent the rest of the afternoon continuing back ups of my extensive amount of data and sorting out my external hard drives.

Thursday January 7<sup>th</sup>: The rain and wind were back, not that I noticed a great deal, falling asleep in the chair with my feet up, wrapped in a blanket with the cat laid full length on my legs. My internal aches and pains of late had overwhelmed me and I was not feeling at all well. After the briefest of lunches, Jenny went off to her yoga class and I telephoned the garage to arrange for the car's annual MOT roadworthiness test, booking it in for the 19<sup>th</sup> of January. That was enough exertion and I settled down to listen to some Jazz while a back up of the laptop Windows system to an external hard drive slowly ticked away.

The PC back up finished shortly after I had showered and, after creating a system restart point, I decided to try the USB3 Express card again, without any luck. Before retiring for the evening, I advised the supplier I needed to return it for a refund.

There was still no sign of my print cartridges or the bracelet charm I had ordered, although the latter item had made it to Manchester according to the Royal mail tracking service. This modern age never ceased to amaze me.

Friday January 8<sup>th</sup>: Rain and cloud again, with rare glimpses of the sun. Our usual forage for grocery items took us to Asda at Pilsworth, Unicorn at Chorlton and Waitrose at Broadheath, lunching at the latter.

I had earlier received a reminder form the DVLA reminding me that my car tax was due at the end of the month. That meant I needed an MOT and if you had been paying attention, you would have remembered that I booked that the previous day. I subsequently received the reminder for the MOT from the garage. The reason I raised this subject again is that my car decided it was time for a service when I went to start it up for our day's outing, so I called at the garage to book the MOT and service together, since it would save me some money to have them both done at the same time.

When we arrived home, Jenny struggled to open the door for the mail, most of which was junk. Happily, the charm I had ordered for Rachel's birthday had arrived. There was still no sign of my ink cartridges though and I thought I should find another source for them. This was the second time Inkmasters had not been at their usual best.

Saturday January 9<sup>th</sup>: More rain and cloud. We were supposed to have been up at 7 a.m. to be at the Old School early to sort and test some electrical jumble for the sale in February. The alarm went off but I didn't, being quite tired and it was 8:30 when I next looked at the clock. Jenny was just stirring and it was about 9:15 before she managed to slide out of bed. I decided it was too late to contemplate going to the Old School, showered, breakfasted and set about various odd jobs that needed doing before placing myself in front of the computer for the inevitable web site updates, account updates and so on. Reluctantly, Jenny decided she might as well do some ironing, a job she hated.

Sunday January 10<sup>th</sup>: I awoke about 7:30 a.m. The rain was pelting the window and it was still dark. I went back to sleep.

It was turned 11:30 a.m. before I woke again, by which time there was some evidence the sun was still burning in the heavens and the rain appeared to have subsided. After breakfast, the pots washed, I contemplated washing the car before taking it to have its bodywork improved the following day. If only.

I spent a good couple of hours in the sunshine giving the car a long-needed wash, topping up the washer fluid and pumping up the tyres, putting it safely back on the drive as the light was fading. It needed a good polish but that would have to wait. According to the car, the temperature was 3°C.

I tidied up, locked the garage came in, removed my wet clothing, put on a pair of dry trousers and settled down in the chair with a mug of Jenny's freshly-made, vegetable soup. And very nice it was too.

Refreshed with that and a cup of tea, I published my web site update for December and updated this one.

Monday January 11<sup>th</sup>: It was still dark when the alarm woke u at 7 a.m. After breakfast, we took the car to BM Autobodies in Bury, calling at Tesco for some diesel on the way. I had

intended dropping off the car for about 8:30 but it was 9:15 by the time we had battled through the early-morning traffic.

We walked back to Tesco as the sun was struggling to impact on the overnight freezing temperatures and we noticed a definite odour in the air. It might have been mild recently but it certainly was not the sweet smell of spring. In fact, it was not a sweet smell at all. The local refuse transfer station, aka rubbish tip, was reeking all over the centre of Bury and my nostrils detected smoke from a fire as we approached Tesco which I assumed was from the East Lancs Railway (ELR), currently hosting the newly-refurbished Flying Scotsman. That brought back some memories.

We spent all of 60p in Tesco on some sticky tape refills for our dispenser and, on the way back to the city centre to catch the bus home, £2.99 on a pack of three Pritt Sticks on offer at the stationers, Rymnans.

We caught the bus outside the entrance to Bolton Street Station on the ELR line but there was no sign of our celebrity engine from the bridge.

A brief spell at home, performing a couple of chores, saw us walking up to Holcombe Brook Post Office to send the CSL USB3 Express Card that did not work in Jenny's laptop back to Amazon for a refund. That cost me another whopping 60p for a Jiffy bag.

We walked back in the morning sunshine, catching some vitamin D on the way and lunched on Jenny's home-made vegetable soup.

The afternoon was a case of pottering and tidying up loose ends, of which I had many.

Tuesday January 12<sup>th</sup>: I did intend to clean out the garage guttering but more rain put a stop to that. Jenny and Rachel went off for a day in Bury and to see the latest Star Wars film, it being Rachel's birthday. I stayed in and did yet more pottering and loose end tidying. It's amazing how many loose ends one finds and if there are not enough, more are easily created.

About 2:30, I decided to telephone BM Autobodies to see if the car was ready for collection and as I spoke to Carl, he said he was about to telephone me. I dashed out and caught the bus to Bury, where I obtained the necessary cash to pay for the repairs and walked at a fair pace to the body shop. Perhaps I should have mentioned that the rain had subsided and it was not an unpleasant day by this time.

They had made good job of the car and had unintentionally sprayed more of the bodywork than required, for which they had not charged me.

I settled down to more loose end tidying and pottering until Rachel and Jenny arrived back from Bury about 6 p.m.

Wednesday January 13<sup>th</sup>: The forecast for Bury was rain and lots of it. Fortunately, we were heading north east to the WW II museum, Eden Camp, just past York, near Malton, (on the way to Pickering, the North York Moors and Whitby), where the forecast was for a reasonably nice, cold day with a sunny morning.

We left about 9:15 and it took us almost half an hour to fight our way through the traffic in Bury, a journey normally taking ten minutes or so. After that, we made good time and easily found the camp.

The camp is an old WW II POW camp, used to house Italian prisoners and the original huts are used to house exhibits and displays, one being used as toilets, one as a gift shop and a couple as cafés. There was a lot to see and much to read, a full day being hardly long enough. The only drawback was the cold and, given that it was barely above freezing and the huts had concrete floors, it would have been wiser to have donned a thermal insulating layer of clothing.

The return journey in the dark was alright until we started our climb onto the Pennines, when the heavy rain made driving conditions difficult. We arrived home safely about 7 p.m. and immediately made for the Bull's Head for a carvery evening meal.

It was when I settled down for the night that matters took a turn for the worse. I had a terrible pain just under my rib cage on the right which kept waking me and I found it difficult to find a comfortable position. I managed about five hours' sleep and it was no better the following morning.

Thursday January 14<sup>th</sup>: The day started wet and cleared up quickly to remain dry and very old. Had I felt well, I would have cleaned out the gutter along the garage roof. As it was, with pains in my upper torso feeling like it had been battered with a baseball bat, I spent the day tidying up my media files on the PC and resting during the latter part of the day with a hot water bottle clutched to various parts.

Friday January 15<sup>th</sup>: Still aching a little after a better night's sleep, I woke to discover yet another affliction. I had several spots of varying size and redness on my back and left side. I had scratched an itchy one before I realised it was not a solitary one and it had burst to discharge a watery-type substance. I was rapidly falling apart.

Jenny washed my back with water containing some Dettol, bursting a second spot in the process and smeared the area with Savlon. That did not stop the irritation but at least it didn't make matters any worse.

We went on a brief grocery shopping trip to Tesco at Prestwich and feeling somewhat itchy all over, I had a hot shower, followed by the application of more Savlon.

Saturday January 16<sup>th</sup>: My concentration of thought as to the possible cause of my rash following another, somewhat uncomfortable night, seemed to cure my internal aches and pains. To keep my mind occupied, we spent the day at the Old School working on the electrical items donated for the jumble sale in February. On the way we had called at the Chemist for some Calamine lotion which we thought might be more effective against the dreaded scourge and the plan was to wash my back again and apply the lotion on returning home. The cat, having been on her own all day and being quite old, put a stop to that, settling down on my knee and refusing to move, even when tempted with food.

Sunday January 17<sup>th</sup>: We awoke to a decent covering of snow, it having been snowing all the

previous afternoon and overnight, although it was melting quickly and rain was forecast for later in the day.

The application of more Calamine lotion to my affliction the previous night on retiring and this morning seemed to be having a reducing effect on the spots that appeared to be more like blisters of varying sizes and it occurred to me that they may have been caused by a water bottle that had been too hot, which I had been using to ease my internal aches and pains. I had placed the bottle on various parts of my upper torso over a couple of nights and it seemed strange that the rash was confined to a couple of small areas. My body's like that – strange.

Later in the day, I discovered that the Calamine lotion was not that effective and switched to using Aloe Vera gel from the leaves of the plant we have. That is good for most skin problems, including burns. I also decided to have a look online for a diagnosis and the conclusion was that I had Shingles. Oh joy! There was no cure and it took about three weeks to heal up. I considered going to see my GP the following day for confirmation. Meanwhile, I tried to work out how I had acquired the damn virus.

Monday January 18<sup>th</sup>: The snow had almost gone and it remained dry, dull and cold. Not that the weather bothered me much; I had my own troubles.

I was up soon after 8 a.m. having more Aloe Vera applied to my torso, or what was left of it. I telephoned the surgery and arranged an initial telephone consultation with a doctor. It was one of the practice nurses who called me and I arranged an appointment with her for 2:15. Meanwhile, I idled my time away with the Radio Times crossword and adding more pictures of New Zealand to my web site.

The nurse took one glimpse at my rash, crossed herself and took three steps backwards. She said I had a big one. I asked “What about the rash?”

Yes, I had Shingles and more than my fair share of it. I said I didn't do things by halves. She was non-committal about my use of Aloe Vera but I knew what I was doing. She prescribed a course of anti-viral tablets, one every five hours for a week, which should shorten the time the infection was rife. Meanwhile I was infectious and had to keep clear of vulnerable people. The good news was that once it had gone, it was unlikely to recur and once I turned 70 in just over a year's time, I was eligible for the vaccination anyway. The bad news was that it could get extremely painful and the pain could linger well after the rash had gone. Who said life was uneventful?

I obtained my prescription from the chemist, took a tablet immediately on returning home and set alarms on my mobile telephone to remind me when my tablets were due. The nurse told me I had to drink a great deal with these tablets. Unfortunately, she meant water.

I resumed my web site picture work, being unable to do much else because moving about was quite painful while sitting still was just about bearable.

Tuesday January 19<sup>th</sup>: Having been woken by my mobile telephone alarm twice in the night to take my anti-viral tablet, I was not best pleased when the clock alarm woke me at 7 a.m.

so I could take the car in to the garage for its annual roadworthiness check and an annual service. Not only was I tired but my rash was more painful than it had been thus far.

The original plan had been for us to have breakfast and for both of us to go up to Tottington in the car, drop it off at the garage for 8:30 and then catch the bus from there into Bury. There were three snags with this strategy. First, we lingered in bed longer than expected, trying to wake up to reality (some would say an impossible feat in my case). Second, our bus passes did not become operational until 9:30. Third, we didn't really need anything from Bury.

It was Jenny's turn to invoke Plan B. We would catch the bus into Ramsbottom for a potter round in the fresh air, after I had delivered the car to the garage, walked back and we had breakfasted. That worked well enough and, apart from the cold, northerly wind, it was a pleasant day, the sun almost making it through the cloud cover, not that it made much difference to the temperature. I felt sure I was feeling the cold this year more than ever before and Jenny suggested that might be due to my affliction, being, essentially, an infection of the nerves.

We found a couple of DVDs and a box set of the BBC TV series, I, Claudius in a couple of the charity shops, so our trip was worthwhile.

We came home on the bus for lunch and I put on the heating. I did not do an awful lot in the afternoon, just tidied up my media on the PC again and such.

Wednesday January 20<sup>th</sup>: It was, for a change, a lovely sunny day with a blue sky and very cold.

I was in no position to appreciate it though. My rash seemed to be improving and the spots were scabbing over, which, although grossly unsightly, is what they were supposed to do as part of the healing process. A wash down with water and Dettol, followed by the application of more Aloe Vera gel from our trusty plant, the latter being a regular process at least twice a day, together with the anti-viral tablets seemed to be having the desired effect.

Despite that, I did not feel well at all and lingered in bed for some time before being disturbed by my mobile telephone alarm just before 10 a.m. to take another tablet. At least I was up, dressed and had breakfast before Jenny went off to meet Gwen for lunch.

My day did not improve. I managed some PC work and then took to the settee and watched a video of New Zealand until tea was ready.

Thursday January 21<sup>st</sup>: The sun had not lasted long and we were back to the usual dull, overcast and damp weather. Thankfully, it was slightly warmer and I did feel a little better – well enough for a shower.

My spots treated and breakfast and the dirty dishes out of the way, I settled down to yet more administration work, scanning and filing the details of the car's MOT and service and publishing the recent additions to the New Zealand pictures to my web site while Jenny nipped off to her yoga class in the afternoon.

Friday January 22<sup>nd</sup>: Our weekly grocery shop took us first to Asda at Pilsworth. We had purchased a Russell Hobbs electric kettle and matching toaster from the Heritage range in Country Cream almost a year earlier and the paint finish had started to detach itself from the kettle's metal surface in small, random spots, so we had decided to return it for either a replacement or a refund. Since there were no more on the shelf, we settled for a refund, making our net grocery bill, including a 70 cl bottle of Champaign at £10, reduced to less than half price, just under £3.

We had a reasonable journey round the M60 to Unicorn in Chorlton for what had become our fortnightly and hence rather larger than usual shop there before heading to Waitrose at Boradheath. Due, I thought, to road works at Broadheath on the main A56, the last mile or so was painfully slow.

We lunched at the café as usual and it was not at its best. There were no pasties – again – and there were no trays at the end of the self-service counter. The café seemed to be short of staff, although those who were there were pleasant and helpful, as usual. There were no spoons in the cutlery dispenser either. It was very busy and they almost ran out of tables soon after we had settled down to our lunch. People who had bought a snack and obtained a free hot drink with their Waitrose card and who occupied tables for ages, either reading the free newspapers or fiddling with their mobile devices, did not help matters. We had better things to do.

Our shopping completed, we headed back up the M60, much of the journey being in second gear at 10 m.p.h. At Prestwich, we diverted to Tesco for some wine, Yellowtail Chardonnay being on offer at £5.50. We would have bought some Merlot at the same price but they had run out and I was not paying £6.75 for the Shiraz.

It was dark by the time we arrived home and I concentrated on putting in the TV recordings for the week and drinking beer while Jenny put away the groceries and cooked tea.

Saturday January 23<sup>rd</sup>: We eventually got off to the Old School to test and price more electrical equipment for the jumble sale. We were delayed by unexpected but very welcome visitors, Ray and June. Jenny used to work with June when she supervised schoolchildren over lunchtime at Hollymount School many years ago and they had remained friends ever since.

The fetching and carrying of boxes up and down the cellar stairs took its toll on my infliction even though my shingles rash seemed to be improving and I had a fair amount of pain and discomfort, due to the infection in the nerves. I was too tired to carry on past 4 p.m. and we packed up and came home for a rest, or, at least, I did.

Jenny had prepared tea before we went, although it still needed cooking and we eventually settled down to a very nice meal of Italian meatballs with spaghetti, broccoli and tomato sauce.

Sunday January 24<sup>th</sup>: My suffering was bearable if I sat and did very little and being something of an expert in this field, I continued with updates to my web site, adding more photographs from our New Zealand trip over a year ago.

Monday, January 25<sup>th</sup>: I managed an excursion to Bury for a few odds and ends I the grocery line and a new pair of shoes for Jenny. I also acquired some cream to aid my rash and the subsequent application of this had some aesthetic benefit.

Tuesday January 26<sup>th</sup>: Once again, the activity of the previous day had aggravated the infected nerves in my upper torso. Unfortunately, I had not been prescribed intravenous morphine.

We were up reasonably early to take in a grocery delivery from Abel and Cole.

Jenny had booked a hair appointment and I took the opportunity to drive into Ramsbottom to purchase a birthday card for her and also for my sister, Edith in New Zealand, calling at the post office on the way back to have the envelope stamped.

Back home, I found the energy to address Edith's card and walk round to the post box to send it before Jenny returned.

Lorna called round with a card and present for Jenny's birthday.

Wednesday January 27<sup>th</sup>: I had a painful and restless night and we slept in quite late. Jenny opened her cards at breakfast and I produced mine, like magic, to her surprise.

Gwen called round with a card and a small present for Jenny. Apparently the chaps had gone walking in the rain, finishing off the Rossendale Way, another walk I had missed due to illness.

I spent the day yet again adding more New Zealand pictures to my web site, trying to ignore the pain.

Thursday January 28<sup>th</sup>: After a fairly restless night due more to my back itching rather than pain, I decided it might be time for another shower, having been careful to avoid antagonising my rash of late.

My back felt like it belonged to some scaly creature and, after drying off, a lot of the scales seemed to have flaked off into the bath, leaving patches of reddish, new skin. While it looked a bit of a mess and sounds worse, it was on the mend and the application of more cream helped it on its way. Thankfully, much of the agonising, internal pain of the last few days had gone and I was left with the odd itch and twinge (it sounds like a good name for a medical partnership).

What's more, the sun was back in a blue sky early on but hazy clouds soon gathered overhead and darker ones loomed to the west. The latter soon brought the rain.

Meanwhile, I continued to convalesce in the lounge with the aid of Jenny's laptop.

Friday January 29<sup>th</sup>: Our grocery shop took us to Prestwich with a brief visit to Village Greens before descending on the aisles of Tesco. My rash, well on the mend, was, by now,

itching incessantly. I managed to focus long enough to publish the pictures of New Zealand up to the beginning of November 2014, about half way through our holiday, on my web site.

Saturday January 30<sup>th</sup>: We spent most of the day at the Old School again. Testing and pricing electrical equipment for the jumble sale in February. At least it kept us nice and warm and dry while the latest trans-Atlantic storm raged outside.

Sunday January 31<sup>st</sup>: We had a leisurely, lunch-time meal at the Swan and Cemetary to celebrate Jenny's birthday with Rachel, Matthew, Carrie, Bob, Marie, Gwen, Frank, Mike and Lorna and what's more I had the photographic evidence to prove it.

Will my rash have gone by the end of the week? Will life ever get back to normal? Will I ever discover what normality is? These and other philosophically pointless questions are just a few of the many that are likely to remain unanswered in next months gripping episode in this seemingly never-ending saga. I was becoming more like a politician every day.