

Greenmount – June 2011

My ongoing fungal infection of the rear end was getting to be a pain in the bum. It didn't stop me cutting the grass and generally tidying the garden on 1st June, though. I enjoyed the day in the fresh air, with the lovely scent of the rhododendron bush flowers, the freshly cut grass and the cat's latrine.

On 2nd June, we went to Sheffield to visit Jenny's niece, Tracey. I wasn't feeling all that well and we left for home early. I felt better after we had eaten at the Beefeater at Heaton Park on the way back.

On 3rd June we went grocery shopping as usual and I decided it was time to wage war on the fungus that had decided to make its home in my nether regions.

My initial plan of attack was with cotton-wool balls dipped in cider vinegar.

We know from experience that this clears up fungal infections, like ring worm and is also good for a variety of skin complaints, including sun-burn. I had read somewhere that it was also good for my complaint, although the article did warn that the initial application could cause some degree of stinging.

I needn't have worried because it didn't sting at all. Not the first time. Now the second time.... Well, my motto is if it hurts, it must be doing some good, so, judging by the effect, I expected to be in perfect health very soon, once they got me off the ceiling.

The second half of my strategy involved the use of natural, plain, pro-biotic yoghurt. Again, we know this is good for the internals if consumed regularly. We have also read that it can be applied directly to the affected area and has been known to be used in such a manner by women who have experienced Thrush (a fungal infection of parts we shall not mention here). How reliable this piece of folklore is, I don't know but I was willing to try anything.

On 4th June, the second day of cider vinegar proved too much and seemed to be making matters worse, not better. I washed that off and soothed the tender parts with fresh Aloe Vera gel, direct from the plant and you can't get much fresher than that. This, incidentally, is good for piles and I don't have those, not even the financial kind.

I awoke on 5th June to a much improved condition and from then on, things seemed to steadily improve, with the copious consumption of the yoghurt and garlic, complete avoidance of alcohol and a switch to Russian bread. Why Russian bread, you ask? Well, it's one of the Steppes to curing my condition. It's made from Rye with no added yeast.

This strategy of taking the holistic approach, i.e. treating the cause of the problem rather than the symptom, seems have paid dividends and I was able to sit and contemplate my next move, if you take my meaning, for a change

On 9th June, a mainly fine and sunny day, with temperatures miraculously reaching double figures, I raked, levelled and cleaned the back garden borders. The cats had

been complaining. I also decided to start weeding the back lawn the old fashioned way – by digging out the weeds. This isn't as easy as it sounds and I managed to do about half of it before I lost interest. The other half I shall leave for the next fine, sunny day, probably next year.

In the evening, the plan was to return the sink un-blocker I had borrowed from Alistair Waddell to its rightful owner while Jenny was at Beavers. Unfortunately, Rachel telephoned to say she was running late and I had to deputise for her at Beavers. I took my camera to take some pictures of the Beavers each talking about a collage they had produced and also of the District Commissioner, to whom the Beavers referred as the District Conditioner, presenting Jenny and Rachel with their Wood Beads and Certificate after completing their training as Leaders.

I eventually managed to walk round and drop off Alistair's drain unblocker the following evening while Jenny was taking her Friday Beavers, much to Alistair's relief (or, at least, his drain's relief).

From 10th to 16th June, I spent most of my spare time printing photographs of Beavers at various activities for Rachel to fix to a display board in preparation for exhibition at the Group AGM, fighting against the agony of my affliction, which seemed to vary in severity.

On 14th June, having, I thought, booked an appointment online to see my GP, I went round to the surgery only to discover no appointment had been made – something of a disappointment. The obliging receptionist arranged for me to see my GP a week hence.

On 15th June, it was time for an inspection of the opposite end with a visit to the dentist. Both our regular, six-monthly check-ups were satisfactory and I was even complimented on the fact that my teeth were in a much better condition the usual. A clean and polish made us both look good, at least from the neck up, for another six months.

Between 16th June and 22nd June, much of my spare time was spend scanning in pages of Ralph Rooney's book "The Story of My Life", converting the print to text using electronic character reading software and formatting the result into a Word document, suitable for re-publishing by September to coincide with the opening of the Kirklees Trail between Greenmount and Bury for walkers and cyclists. The new bridge over the Kirklees Valley will carry a likeness of Ralph Rooney on its side and this seems like an excellent opportunity to raise interest in his exploits, if not someone's bank balance.

For those of you who have never heard of Ralph Rooney, he was born in what is now Greenmount in 1862 and went to work in a local mill at the age of 7. He became well known for his long walks, from Tottington to Land's End and to John o' Groats being amongst them and covering over forty miles a day. He was also a naturalist, entertainer (concertina), bell ringer and life-long member of Greenmount Church. He used to say that if you keep walking, you never die. He stopped walking in 1949.

On 17th June, the local Scout Group held it's AGM at the Old School and my duty was to take round and set up the display board Rachel has been preparing. It contained a pictorial review of the various Beaver activities throughout the year and was of considerable interest to Beavers, Cubs, Scouts, and parents attending the AGM. I didn't stay for the whole meeting, having much more important matters to attend to at home such as watching the original series of Star Trek on DVD.

On 20th June, Jenny and I set off on a six-mile, three-hour, local, circular walk, taking us up Holcombe Hill by the most direct and, hence, the steepest, route, to Peel Tower. Being inspired by Ralph Rooney's book, I took this in my stride. Jenny hasn't read the book and found the climb exhausting.

From Peel Tower, we crossed the peat moor behind it to descend, once more, onto Moorbottom Road, with, for a change, Jenny in the lead. The views as we did so were magnificent, with the taller buildings in Manchester on the Cheshire Plain visible in its valley and the Derbyshire Hills beyond. We crossed the valley to Higher Ridge Farm, now a ruin and took the bridle path up past Simon's Sundial cottage, before turning right along an overgrown wooded path, crossing a field and turning left down the road leading from the Army Training Camp, of Crypton Factor fame. Crossing the road to Hawkshaw, we took a track opposite which is the rough, unmade end of Whipney Lane and emerged back at Greenmount Golf Club.

This is a very pleasant walk if you like steep climbs, stiles and peat bogs, with good views on a clear day and is now published on the village web site.

The remaining walk in this series is 14½ miles, lasting about six hours and we plan to tackle this as soon as the weather permits, taking a packed lunch, water and my bus pass just in case.

On 21st June, I finally saw my GP again. After a brief discussion about my perplexing problem, he decided to run some blood tests. His first obstacle was to find a vein and when the right arm failed to respond to the encouragement to pulsate, he tried the left. This is a usual routine when the nurse has taken blood in the past. The fact that he couldn't find a pulsating vein in the left arm either was somewhat worrying. On a "third time lucky" principal and me only having two arms, he returned his attentions to his first choice. This eventually met with success and he, or, rather, I, filled three phials. He also prescribed some Daktarin cream, which is a slight variation on the previous theme, to be applied three times a day. Oh joy.

After the consultation, I started to feel a little better and resolved not to use the cream unless matters took a further turn for the worse.

On 23rd June, I rose earlier than of late (if that makes sense) in anticipation of the arrival of the Anglian installers to clad the car port ceiling with UPVC. They arrived about 10 a.m. and, I have to say, made good progress.

I took an electronic copy of the completed Ralph Rooney book round to Christine Taylor at the Old School only to discover that neither she nor Mike Woolford had their computers with them. We had a brief discussion about the republication of the book before I returned home and this continued with Mike when he called later.

While I was out, I had received a mobile telephone message from the doctor's surgery to contact them. Having left my not-so-mobile telephone at home, I telephoned on my return, receiving the news that my blood tests indicated everything was normal. As my condition continues to improve gradually, I decided to continue to rely on my change in diet, based largely on probiotic yoghurt, which has resulted in the loss in weight of 8 lbs. in spite of the large Baccardi and Coke and crisps I had while Rachel and Jenny were at the District Scout AGM the previous evening.

I thought it was too good to last. My problem was back and by the end of the week, I was on the Dreaded Daktarin. It sounds like an episode of Star Trek.

Two Anglian installers arrived mid-Thursday morning to start cladding the Car Port ceiling in nice white UPVC. They finished the following day about lunch-time, too late for us to do the weekly shop.

On Saturday 25th and Sunday 26th June there were a heap of activities in the village and we were unable to attend any of them, having to grocery shop on Saturday and doing a Car Boot sale at Ramsbottom on Sunday.

Driving at week ends is like playing Russian Roulette. At least, in the week, most drivers seem to have an IQ in three figures...just. Saturdays and Sundays is when they stay at home and, seemingly, all the idiots come out. We hadn't been on the road for more than a couple of minutes when some lunatic decided to squeeze his oncoming car through a gap that was barely wide enough, the result being that he just clipped our off-side wing mirror with his. Fortunately there was no damage to our vehicle.

On Sunday, trade was very slow. There were a lot of people looking but not so many buying and we had no really big sales despite having some bargain items. As a result we made less than £50 for about seven hours work. We are not going to get rich this way. The coming and going of the steam trains and the lovely sunshine made the day worthwhile.

On Monday 27th June, I spent the day gardening and helping Jenny tidy the garage, into which we still cannot squeeze the car, mainly because we have two single, adjustable beds stored in there. It's not that we're looking to supplement our income by letting the garage out, it's just that the beds are our old ones and we need to dispose of them, preferably for money. Some hopes in this economic climate.

I was so engrossed in my gardening that I forgot all about my health check appointment at the doctor's surgery. I suppose it might have helped had I switched on my computer and checked my calendar.

On Tuesday 28th June, we went out for a few essential supplies, like new blades for my bow-saw, so I can cut some more logs for the winter and a hook to fix up Jenny's three washing lines to keep her busy. Having done the latter, she promptly went off to Yoga class. I followed a few minutes later in the car, not that I do Yoga. I went to set up and test a wireless router connection in the Old School and to pick up a couple of push bikes Jenny's friend had bought in the jumble sale. My afternoon met with partial success in that I put the bikes in the back of the car. The wireless router's

signal would not reach to the porch, where I want to set up a surveillance camera and it looks like it will have to be a wired connection. This will also solve the power supply problem in that I can provide power over the data cable, known as Power Over Ethernet, or PoE, not to be confused with “Purity of Essence”. (If you don’t understand that, you need to see the Doctor. Which doctor? Possibly, but try Strangelove.)

I also went round to my doctor’s surgery, to apologise for missing my appointment for my health check the previous day and to rebook it. I made yet another appointment to see my GP about my ongoing affliction.

Most of Wednesday 29th and Thursday 30th June were spent on preparation work for the Thursday Beaver meeting. Some of the parents have come to realise how much effort goes into planning the hourly session, much to their amazement. Still, it’s worth it if the kids have a good time and they do; that’s what it’s all about.

By Thursday 30th, it was apparent that the Daktarin cream was not working, so I ceased using it. This means that the root of the trouble is probably not fungal at all. If it isn’t, then it must be something else. There’s logic for you. Since all my tests to date, including my bowel screening, have shown that there is no problem, it is unlikely to be anything serious – it’s just damn painful. The next step has to be a visit to a chap with better equipment, medically speaking. Some lucky trainee doctor is going to have the pleasure of seeing a side of me not many people see – the inside of my rear end. Isn’t he the lucky one?

Things are looking up.

And on that note of optimism, I shall close this month’s update, knowing full well that next month’s will start where this one left off.