

Greenmount – June 2012

Friday 1st June was a normal shopping day, with lunch at Costa Coffee in Tesco Prestwich, followed by an excursion round the Jumbles Reservoir with the Friday Beaver Colony, during which the Beavers had to find something beginning with each letter of the alphabet. Even I found “X” a challenge.

Saturday 2nd June gave me an opportunity to catch up on some administration work (that’s tech-speak for messing about on the computer) and, after lunch, I joined my son, Matthew, for a few beers in the Bull’s Head. The rest of the day was a bit of a blur.

On Sunday 3rd June we went to Sheffield to see Jenny’s niece, Tracey and to collect some more car boot stock.

We had heard from Tracey the previous evening that Brian Brooks, a distant relative of Jenny (he was married to Iris Smith who was the sister of James Leslie Smith, the husband of Jenny’s sister, Pamela) had been taken into hospital and was not very well at all. I had spoken with his son, Carl and ascertained Brian was in Doncaster Royal Infirmary.

Brian and I had formed a relationship based on our common interest in the family history and we decided to go and see him after lunch.

We returned to Tracey’s house to find her brother, Simon, waiting for us and, being time for tea, the four of us went to the Meadow Farm pub in Ecclesfield, where I admired the decent ales on view from afar and stuck to soft drinks, having to face the long drive back to Manchester.

We called at my sister’s (Barbara’s) house on the way home for a couple of minutes and took the scenic route back along the Snake Pass, not that we could see much of it in the dark and pouring rain. Had the temperature been much lower, we would have been driving in snow. And this is supposed to be the sunniest month of the year.

On Monday 4th June, we nipped round to the church with a few items for the Jubilee display the following day and found some pictures of Rachel and Matthew when they were in the local play group.

The next task was to unpack the car and I left that to Jenny while I pursued more administration work.

On Tuesday 5th June, by good fortune, the rain held off for our village Jubilee celebrations and I spent most of the day taking photographs for the web site. The day was a great success and another village party is likely to be held again next year by popular demand.

Jenny and I decided to go to the Bull’s Head for tea, except that they had very little choice left for meat at the carvery, so we gave it a miss.

On Wednesday 6th June we took a trip to Asda at Pillsworth for essential supplies of water, beer and wine, not necessarily in that order. I had been asked to call at B&Q at Crosstones on the way back to purchase some large Gazebos that were on special offer for Greenmount Community. No mention was made of their weight and it took Jenny all her time to help me manoeuvre them into the car and, once back at the Old School, down into the cellar for temporary storage.

On Thursday 7th June, the weather not being good (something of an understatement for mid-summer), I spent most of the day on my Computer.

Friday 8th June was our usual shopping day at Unicorn and Tesco Prestwich, with lunch, once again, at Costa Coffee in the latter establishment.

On Saturday 9th June we went into Ramsbottom to collect a bottle of organic cranberry juice, sweetened with agave syrup and infused with birch leaf from the herbalist shop, where the lady had been kind enough to obtain it for us on request. We first bought a bottle in the Bury indoor market a few weeks previously to try it and it is very nice, but it doesn't last long, particularly if two of you drink the recommended glass before every meal. On this occasion, being about £1 cheaper, we bought two bottles to last us through the week at the rate of one glass each before breakfast. Even at £4.45 a bottle, this could prove to be expensive.

I spent the later part of the afternoon cutting wood for the fire, the evenings proving to be quite cold. With daytime temperatures only in the early teens and torrential rain and high winds resulting in flooding in many parts of the country, we are left wondering what happened to our summer.

On Sunday 10th June we went over to Sheffield to collect Tracey and then on to Doncaster Royal Infirmary to see Brian again. We thought he was looking better and he was out of bed.

On the return trip, we dined at the Beefeater at Heaton Park where the lady under-manager took our order. Our waitress, Jackie, who we have known for some time from frequent visits there, was occupied elsewhere. Our main course arrived with no sign of our starters, which the under-manager had forgotten to order. "Was this an example of the less competent being promoted out of harm's way?" I mused. If so, it didn't work on this occasion. As it turned out, we did have an enjoyable meal and Jackie sorted out some complementary desserts by way of an apology. This one minor miss-hap does not deter us from visiting the place again, nor from recommending it to others.

On Monday 11th June, I spent the day pottering about, despite good intentions to wash the car and chop more wood.

On Tuesday 12th June, I was up early to take the car into the garage for its annual service and a few other expensive bits and pieces that need doing every four years, it being now eight years old. I wish they could replace some of my bits and pieces.

It was also the day for the cooker repair man from Rangemaster to fit a new Flame Failure Device (or FFD) to the right-hand oven, the first one having lasted all of three

weeks and two cooking sessions. He was earlier than expected but we didn't mind that and his job was completed in less than an hour. We are now cooking with gas, as they say and two ovens are better than one, especially for a woman, because they keep telling me they can multitask.

I collected the car about 5 p.m. The garage didn't have time to replace the camshaft drive belt, which needs doing every four years to prevent the possibility of the engine mangling itself. That can be very painful in the wallet area. So I scheduled the car for another visit a week hence.

Jenny and Rachel went to a Scout Leaders meeting in the evening, leaving me to my own devices.

On Wednesday 13th June, I arranged for Frank to call round about 11:30 to drop off some pictures of the village Incredible Edible plot for the village web site. That was a pre-cursor to a planning meeting for the last part of Wolds Way Walk in the Bull's Head, over lunch.

I took the opportunity to take an A4 poster round for the acting manager, Will, advertising a car boot sale. He is keen to hold car boot sales in the pub car park, which is not a bad idea, since it might entice more customers through his door and this is what we need to see in the village – good use made of the pub, otherwise it will go the way of other local businesses and that's the last thing we want. I do my best to support it but there is a limit, even when supping decent ale.

On Thursday 14th June, I helped Jenny with some Beaver work, something I do more often than I put into words, punctuated by a visit from Mike for a chat and to give me a cheque from Greenmount Community for the Gazebos I had purchased.

Most of Friday 15th June was spent, as usual, grocery shopping at Unicorn, followed by Tesco in Bury, just for a change.

I took the opportunity to deposit the cheque for the Gazebos in the bank in Bury. I did my best to escape but I was cornered by a financial adviser who insisted on extolling the virtues of a new cheque account which, although costs a fixed monthly fee to operate, pays rewards for using direct debits and, provided a substantial balance is maintained, a decent rate of interest.

The calculations seemed to suggest the net result was that the bank would be paying me a few quid a month if I transferred to this account. The only catch, as far as I could see, was that there was no going back to my present account that costs me nothing to operate and pays me a pittance in interest, not that I keep a lot of cash in it anyway. I started to fill in the transfer application form but felt a sigh of relief when I couldn't complete it because it is a joint account and required Jenny's signature. Free at last, I thought.

No, the conversation passed on to the accompanying credit card which also pays dividends on sums accrued for groceries, petrol and so on. When I pointed out I rarely use my credit card, being reserved mainly for Internet purchases, a minor victory was

conceded and I was on my way back to Tesco. I never thought I'd be glad to put that into words.

After a a brief stop at home, we went down to Summerseat Garden Centre for lunch and I purchased some more organic top soil and some organic lawn food, the latter items being for use at home, not for lunch.

Saturday 16th June was another wet day and we took the car into Ramsbottom for another two bottles of organic Cranberry juice. The lady in the shop said she would see if she could obtain bigger bottles.

We had intended being in Ramsbottom for another car boot sale on Sunday 17th June but the weather forecast didn't look good, so we stayed at home. As it turned out, it wasn't a bad day.

After morning service, we went round to the Old School to drop off some jumble and then called at the church to collect the items that had been borrowed for the Jubilee day display.

On Sunday evening, Rachel treated us to a most enjoyable Chinese meal at the China Cottage in Ramsbottom for Father's Day.

Matthew had sent me a custom-designed card with "Ken's Bar" in large letters on the front. This took pride of place on the mantle shelf in the lounge. He had also sent me a voucher for a meal at a fish restaurant near where he lives and I booked a table for two in July.

On Monday 18th June, I cut the grass on the back lawn and tidied up the borders while trying not to dirty Jenny's washing on the line. Meanwhile, Jenny tidied up her pot plants.

On Tuesday 19th June, it was the turn of the grass at the side of the house, although I was too shattered after cutting the long, wet grass to go round with the strimmer. I wasn't too tired for a beer, though.

I was up early on Wednesday 20th June for a 5 or 6 mile stroll with Frank and Steve, down the Kirklees Trail to Burrs Country Park, returning to Summerseat by the river Irwell, where we had a coffee/tea at the garden centre, before climbing the hill back up to Greenmount, past the Footballers' Inn and through the fields. We were back at the Bull's Head Toby Carvery for lunch at noon, where we met up with Mike.

I usually order a snack rather than having a large carvery lunch. For the second week running I asked for a Turkey Jalfrezi and for the second week running I couldn't have one because they had no rice. I was told that a delivery of rice had not been requested because there was no other demand for the dish. The reason there was no demand for the dish was because most customers were not aware there was an alternative menu to the carvery. This is because the brewery only provides large posters of the alternative Bar Menu that are placed on the wall and which nobody notices. They don't provide Bar Menu sheets for the tables and they don't even have the Bar Menu PDF on their web site.

As a very regular customer (Jenny thinks it's my second home), I sent a message to the brewery, via their web site, telling them it's time we had the pub's name back on the outside, that they should consider serving better lettuce than the harsh Iceberg variety, suggesting the softer and more palatable Oakleaf as an alternative (a colourful alternative if you include the red variety) and asking for a PDF copy of the Bar Menu.

Frank came round in the morning of Thursday 21st June and we sorted out our second night's accommodation for 27th June in Filey.

I then spent some time trying to locate a new waterproof jacket, the old one having failed to live up to its description on our previous visit to Yorkshire. Frank had recommended a new shop in Manchester called Go Outdoors and I found the Berghaus Aura II Men's Waterproof Jacket on the shop's web site for £179.99. I telephoned the shop (an 0845 number which cost me money rather than an 0161 number which would have been free) and confirmed they had one in stock, which they were prepared to reserve for me to collect on the coming Sunday. Had I ordered online, I would not have received the item before our departure early on the coming Tuesday. I asked the chap to confirm the price and he told me it was £220. I told him it wasn't and he said he would check and call me back.

The good news is that he did call me back and quite quickly. The bad news is that the price in store was £220 unless I had a discount card, in which case it would be £179.99. The discount card would cost me £5 for a year. He said that was the same price as the web page delivery charge, except that there was a current offer of free delivery for goods over £70.

By this time, I'd had enough and resolved to see what Blacks had available. My experience in dealing with Blacks is that it is much more straightforward.

I first checked the Berghaus web site to see what waterproof jackets there were and, to my surprise, or perhaps not, there was no trace of the one Go Outdoors were selling. I did find an updated version of the Cornice jacket I currently have and I ordered that from Blacks with free, next-day delivery for £180. What's more, if it isn't right, I can return it to my local store for a refund rather than mess about with any returns procedure.

As a back-up, I decided to wash and reproof my old jacket, just in case...

Friday 22nd June was an eventful day. Abel and Cole arrived with a grocery delivery and the driver had gone by the time I had got out of bed, put on my dressing gown, dashed down stairs and opened the door. The two boxes were neatly stacked, with two bags of croissants on top, on the drive just outside the door

Despite the rain, the refuse bin, put out the night before, had been emptied before I had chance to blink.

We finally got off to Unicorn about 11 o'clock, there being no sign of the delivery from Blacks and I arranged for Mike, just down the road, to take this in while we were out. Travelling in the heavy rain was slow and hard work, visibility on the

motorway being considerably reduced by the spray, requiring front and rear fogs as well as dipped headlights. Some drivers seemed to be using sonar, deeming lights to be unnecessary.

We stopped on the return journey at Tesco Prestwich and lunched at Costa Coffee before calling at Asda Pillsworth and our final stop at the herbalists in Ramsbottom.

No sooner had we returned than Mike rang to say he had my coat and I went down to collect it.

On Saturday 23rd June we stayed in and watched the rain. Jenny was supposed to have gone to the Beavers Jubilee camp but that had been postponed due to the bad weather.

On Sunday 24th June, Jenny went shopping to Bury with Rachel and I was left to my own devices.

On Monday 25th June, I helped Jenny with some Beaver preparation for the week and, after lunch, we went for a stroll up to the post office at Holcombe Brook.

We also decided to clean some of the mould off the bathroom fittings, this being more difficult than you could imagine. Jenny had pointed out that we need a new flexible plastic bit at the bottom of the curved, glass, bath screen and I had sent an E-mail to Ideal Standard enquiring about a replacement. I had received a reply this very day, quoting the part number I required and a web site from which I could order it. So far, so good.

I immediately linked to the web site, only to discover they had no such part number. Not deterred, I searched the web for an alternative supplier only to discover that the part number quoted only refers to one of the bits I need instead of the complete fitting.

I sent the lady a polite E-mail, highlighting the errors and suggested she might want to supply the parts directly to me, something she would have done had the screen still been under warranty. I offered to pay for them, obviously. I thought the reply might be interesting.

I also cut my hair and showered (just because I don't mention these items very often, it doesn't mean to say that I don't do this sort of thing regularly) in preparation for my early morning start the following day.

On Tuesday 26th June, I was up early and set off with Mike, Frank and Steve, with Jenny driving us as far as Bury, at 5:30 destined for three days in Yorkshire, to finish the Wolds Way. You can read about our exploits and see the pictures in the separate document, The Yorkshire Wolds Way, in the Long Distance Walks section of the web site.

We were back in Bury about teatime on 28th June, having finished the walk and just in time for Jenny to collect us from the tram station before she went off to Beavers. I spent the evening relaxing and nursing my blisters.

I had received a reply from Ideal Standard telling me that the item I wanted was not on the web site because they were out of stock and they would have some in again soon. So why didn't the web site say that?

Jenny also told me that the gas maintenance appointment for the boiler, due while I was wandering around the Yorkshire countryside, had been cancelled and rearranged for July owing to the engineer's workload.

On Friday 29th June we were back into the old routine, not that Jenny had any opportunity to escape it, grocery shopping at Unicorn and Tesco Bury. Frank and I helped Jenny with her Beavers in Nuttall Park, Ramsbottom, exploring trees, litter-picking and playing on the various obstacles around the park and in the well-equipped playground.

On Saturday 30th June, Frank called round with some flowers for Jenny for providing the four of us with a taxi service to and from Bury. He stayed for a coffee and a chat.

I received a reply from my MP with whom I have been conversing about open-air GM Crop trials. To paraphrase his previous reply, the GM Crop trials are posing no risk because the whole thing is being managed by DEFRA (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs). I sent him another letter pointing out that I had no faith whatsoever in DEFRA, this being the organisation that has never classified Plutonium from nuclear reactors as a waste product, presumably because it can be redeployed to make bombs and also that DEFRA has repeatedly failed to protect fish stocks with the consequent decline of fish to such a level that, within a few generations, there may well be no fish worth catching.

This latest response informed me that my letter has been forwarded to Richard Benyon MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Natural Environment and Fisheries and to Lord Taylor of Holbeach CBE, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for DEFRA. No doubt MI6 also has a copy.

I didn't mention my list of nuclear installations in the UK with a summary of their accidents and status at the time I compiled it. Oops! What a give-away!

About lunchtime, we ventured out to give Rachel a lift to the Lowrie at Salford Keys where she was meeting some friends for the matinee performance of Starlight Express. The return journey through Bury was executed in one of the worst heavy showers, with hail and lightning, I have experienced for some time. The dual carriageway in Bury at Crosstones was covered in at least two inches of water as we drove along it and visibility was so poor I had dipped headlights and front and rear fog lights on.

The recent rain has flooded out the Ranger's hut in Nuttall Park, Ramsbottom and further up the Irwell Valley, our other beaver Leader has been flooded out for several weeks, spending time in temporary accommodation.

So we say goodbye to yet another soggy June and hope for better weather in the coming month.