

Greenmount – June 2013

We thought summer had arrived judging by the previous day's weather, having improved considerably after a misty start. Some hopes. We were back to a grey start to the day on Saturday 1st June. At least it was fine and clear enough to see across the street.

It seems we had a brief shower while we were preparing our attire for the day. We retraced our steps along the Cinder Track, in Whitby, as far as the viaduct to take some photos, not having taken my camera out for the past two days due to the mist and damp.

A brief visit to the Co-op for some organic apples and bananas was followed by a stroll up to Whitby Book Shop on Church Street where I purchased the map covering the coast from just past Skinningrove to beyond Middlesborough, not that we'd be walking that far this trip.

We walked back to lunch at Shylocks. Jenny asked for a sandwich with no butter and, in true modern fashion, the waitress/kitchen assistant completely ignored the request. The waitress also spilled a small amount of milk on the floor and failed to wipe it up, preferring to step over it each time she walked backwards and forwards, even though it was a health hazard to customers, any one of whom could have slipped on it and fallen, sustaining injury. This was too much for Jenny, having worked in an establishment like this and gained her health and hygiene certificate. On returning from a call of nature, she wiped up the spillage with a bit of loo roll. So my advice is that, if you do visit Shylocks, give your instructions to the waitress in a loud voice, twice for good measure and make sure you're well insured. Oh, and the food is fairly priced and isn't bad either.

After dining and leaving safely, we dropped the fruit off at the residence and went down to the beach to walk to Sandsend, dipping our feet in the freezing north sea as we went. We had tea and a scone at the café there before catching the bus back.

We had our evening meal at Luna Piena. The meal was good except that I was not served the bottle of rosé wine for which I had asked (I ordered a Chilean wine and was served a South African one), the Tiramisu dessert was heavy and bland, akin to a bread pudding instead of a light sponge and the meal was expensive. On balance, I wouldn't recommend it.

On Sunday 2nd June, we called in at the Tourist Information Office to check the times of busses from Redcar back to Loftus so we could get back to Whitby if we walked the next stretch of the coast. This just gave us time to buy two healthy sandwiches from the Co-op for lunch before catching the 10:25 Northern Rail service to Grosmont and, from there, the 11:10 diesel-hauled service to Pickering, arriving at 12:20, after lunching on the train.

We Pottered round Pickering or vice versa and decided there wasn't much to see, so we caught the 14:00 steam-hauled service back to Goathland and went in search of the house used as a residence for Claude Jeremiah Greengrass in the Heartbeat TV series. Having found it and photographed it, we came back to the village for a pot of tea and

a scone. We would have eaten at the café to the left of the row of shops but they didn't have a loo, so we went to the one at the opposite end of the village, which has not one, but two loos, one for each sex if you don't count convertibles and subsequently found a nice spot in the tea garden at the back.

Jenny bought another Heartbeat book and we caught the 16:50, hauled by none other than Sir Nigel Gresley, to Grosmont, where we awaited the arrival of the 17:35 Northern Rail service back to Whitby.

Arriving back at our residence and trying to plan the following day's walk from Skinningrove to Redcar, we tootled off to the Duke of York for a very nice tea of stuffed chicken breast in a creamy mushroom sauce. After that, it was an early night, preceded by the obligatory nice cup of tea in our room and a quick call to my sister to tell her we might drop in the following afternoon.

Monday 3rd June was our last day and we made the most of it. We caught the Arriva 9:46 5 service to Loftus, where, by a stroke of excellent planning by Arriva, we missed the X4 connection to Middlesbrough via Skinningrove by a couple of minutes and had to wait 40 minutes for the Local Link service. It was about 11:30 before we alighted at Skinningrove Square and started our eight mile walk.

We arrived in Saltburn about half an hour behind schedule, probably due to one steep climb and one very steep descent and stopped for lunch at the Surf Up café. While the tea was priced a little over the odds, the sandwiches are very reasonable and the result was a very nice lunch for two for about £8 and, what's more, Jenny's sandwich came, as requested, with no butter on the bread.

We left the Cleveland Way, which turns inland on reaching Saltburn, behind to walk on the coast path to Marske-by-the-Sea, which I can only describe as insignificant, having nothing to suggest it is a seaside town, unlike its near neighbour, Saltburn, with a pier, busy promenade, with shacks, shops and cafés and an old, fully-functional, funicular tram lift to the cliff top.

We passed by Marske-by-the-Sea to reach Redcar with its rows of off-shore wind-turbines and heavy industry of Teesside in the distance. We left the coast path just before the foreshore cycle track and turned left to cut inland, past the rugby club, along a bridleway, across the railway line and onto the estate where my sister, Barbara, lives. We arrived there at about 4:15.

After chatting over a cup of tea, my niece, Julie arrived and very kindly offered us a lift back to Whitby which we gratefully accepted, particularly since Jenny had damaged her bus pass and it no longer worked using the built-in chip.

After decamping, it was time for tea at the Duke of York again and, this time, good old Fish and Chips was the order of the day.

We decided to tell the lady behind the bar that this was the best pub in Whitby. The worst, in my opinion, is Wetherspoons and I vowed never to set foot in a Wetherspoons pub ever again.

Before leaving Whitby on Tuesday 4th June, we drove up to take a look at a bungalow that was for sale. Having seen it, we decided it was too small and the garden at the back needed quite a lot of work, including the removal of two rows of Leylandii along the sides. I hate the things.

Our trip back was punctuated by a desire to call at Grosmont North York Moors Railway station to acquire one or both of the first two Heartbeat TV series on DVD. Since it would have cost us a small fortune to park the car, we kept going and rejoined the main road back towards Pickering.

We stopped at some tea rooms along the A169, advertised on a board as “Luxury Tea Rooms”. I normally equate “luxury” with “expensive” but, in this case it wasn’t. We sat on the decking at the back, in the sunshine, enjoying the freshly-made sandwiches and a cup of tea at a reasonable price. Unfortunately, I cannot remember the name of the place and it is not on the Internet because the lady who runs it told us she had only just started the business a week or two before.

Having arrived home safely, unpacked and found nothing in the fridge, we went to tea at the Beefeater at Heaton Park. I had always associated Beefeater with decent food, good service and reasonable prices. What a change and not for the better. The starters came without the usual salad garnish, they had no jacket potatoes, some of Jenny’s boiled potatoes were undercooked and inedible, the side dish of fresh vegetables had disappeared off the menu and they had no Black Forest Gateau for dessert. The ladies who served us were pleasant enough but had lost their usual smiles, being understaffed and rushed off their feet. And the bill for the three of us, including a bottle of wine, came to over £70. I was on the brink of tearing up my Beefeater loyalty card, it was that poor.

We were in desperate need of a grocery shop on Wednesday 5th June and, after I spent over an hour on the telephone with HP trying, unsuccessfully, to resolve Jenny’s laptop problem of not playing some blu-ray DVDs, and after Frank popped in for a quick chat, we whizzed off to Unicorn in Chorlton and Waitrose in Broadheath, lunching at the latter.

I spent Thursday 6th June catching up on various bits of IT work, including Beaver preparation.

I had an appointment at the eye clinic on Friday 7th June at 9:20 and we arrived there at 9:00 a.m. The whole process of a quick eye test, putting drops in my eyes to enlarge the pupils, a five-minute session with the consultant and booking my next appointment in six months’ time took about an hour and a quarter. The result was that my recovery is progressing very well and my eye is almost back to normal. My body appears to have repaired itself quite well, according to the consultant. I was going to tell him that’s what it was designed to do but didn’t get the chance.

I couldn’t see very well for much of the rest of the day, so I kept up the work on the IT front.

We spend most of Saturday 8th June at the Old School preparing the electrical department for the shock of the coming jumble sale.

Sunday 9th June was a car boot sale opportunity and we were back in Ramsbottom at the railway car park, Grabbing one of the remaining few pitches at 06:30. Trading was steady and we had one customer who spent £4 with us. I thought at the time, another 250,000 of those and we've cracked it.

On Monday 10th June, we were back at the Old School and Christine, who manages the building on behalf of the church, decided that the electrical equipment was going outside in the yard to give the ladies with whom we normally share a room more space to spread out their nearly new items of clothing and footwear. The strategy was that Jenny and I would cordon off a small part of the yard with chairs and sell the electrical goods there.

The snag was that I had not finished testing everything inside and Jenny was one of the few people available to unpack and price the bric-a-brac ready for the indoor sale at 4 p.m., while trading in the yard started about 11 a.m.

We left others to take the equipment I had tested outside and sell it, in some cases, unfortunately, at prices below what I considered to be their market value.

Jenny came home about 1:30 and I joined her for lunch about 2:30 p.m., after I had finished testing the last of the telephones and tidying up. We did not go back for the sale at 4 p.m. as we normally would have done. We turned up about 6 p.m., just as the sale was ending, to collect all the rubbish for the tip and then came home again, leaving other volunteers to pack everything up.

We were up reasonably early again on Tuesday 11th June for a visit to the dentist for a clean and polish. Being somewhat pushed for time and the rains having started earlier than expected, we drove the short distance to Holcombe Brook and parked the car in the precinct opposite the dentist's surgery. We discovered the precinct had some new parking restrictions which limited parking to 3 hours, which is fair enough because I can't imagine anyone wanting to spend more than three hours in the shops there. What wasn't clear was that when the notice referred to the car park's use for customers of the precinct shops, whether this included the dentist's surgery on the opposite side of the road.

We returned home for a short while, giving me an opportunity to finally install the network camera I borrowed from Matthew, thanks to software and manuals provided by Vivotek and a spare power supply I liberated from the jumble sale, before driving down to the garden centre at Summerseat for lunch. That was followed by a quick dash to Tesco's car park in Bury. I was due at the Townside Primary Care Centre at 1:45 p.m. for an Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm (triple-A) scan and Jenny disappeared off into Bury to do a little grocery shopping. I think I preferred the scan.

After a brief wait, I had jelly on my belly and a man pressing the ultrasound probe rather forcefully on my abdomen. Apparently I was full of wind. Nothing new there, then. I was beginning to form some idea of what it must be like for a woman to be pregnant. What's more, I even got to see the pictures on the screen afterwards.

Now I thought the aorta was just the large pipe carrying blood from the heart, which, as everyone knows, is in the thorax. Apparently, it goes up and then curls back round

to head straight down the middle of the body towards the naval, where it divides into two to feed each leg. A very cunning design, if you ask me. Anyway, the bit being scanned was the length between the bottom of the rib cage and the belly button and, it seems, mine is just under 2 cm in diameter, which is well within safety limits.

I was back at the car in Tesco's car park in about forty minutes, waiting for Jenny, who had taken my car keys. After another twenty minutes, I called her on her mobile phone to discover she had been pottering around Tesco and I went in to find her. I bumped into Sylvia who lives across the back and she asked me if it was a girl or a boy. News travels fast in Greenmount.

After gathering what few organic groceries we could at Tesco, we dumped the rubbish from the jumble sale at the tip and came home to relax and, in so doing, discovered that Amazon had delivered "The Ghost of St. Michaels" and "The Goose Steps Out" DVDs, starring Will Hay, I had recently ordered.

I spent Wednesday 12th and Thursday 13th June in the company of Mike and Frank, staying overnight in Frank's caravan near Llannerch-y-medd on the Isle of Anglesey and exploring parts of the island in that vicinity. It took me back a bit. I hadn't been to Anglesey for over fifty years and visiting and seeing some locations brought back some fond memories. Unfortunately, the weather was not good and we had to seek shelter in various hostelrys with a good degree of regularity. Not that we wouldn't have done so anyway.

Friday 14th June was a grocery shopping day at Unicorn and Waitrose. Note that I did not mention Tesco.

I spent most of Saturday 15th and Sunday 16th June working on my computer, the main result of which was an update to the village web site and an update to my own web site, adding pictures of the first few days of our last holiday in Whitby. The problem with digital photography is that it makes it easy to take a lot of pictures, the problem then being to decide which ones to retain and publish, which can be a time-consuming process.

Rachel treated us to a Chinese take-away meal for Father's Day. We would have gone to the restaurant but they were booked up. Matthew sent me a card and telephoned for a brief chat. He hadn't been able to arrange anything because they had just come back off holiday and needed to do some grocery shopping before going back to work the following day. Work? Oh yes, I remember that.

On Monday 17th June, I was eventually prized out of my comfy seat to do some gardening and I cut all three grassy areas (I refrain from using the term "lawn", given the state of them), which didn't do my right shoulder much good. It had been quite painful for a couple of days and I didn't know what I had done to make it so. An early morning rub with organic ointment containing ginger helped a little at the time but moving boxes of car boot stock in the garage to reach the lawn mower and the effort in cutting the grass, particularly the uneven and sloping side of the house, had more than negated that treatment.

Before that I had been quite happy to undertake some Beaver work on Jenny's computer for her, book the car in for a service on the coming Thursday and send a moderately-worded (most unlike me) message of complaint to Bury Council on behalf of the Village Community, regarding an outstanding order I had placed with them in January of this year. I had planned on telephoning the manager of the Highways department but Bury Council isn't daft enough to put any really useful telephone numbers on its web site, or, if it is, they're well hidden.

On Tuesday 18th June, Tracey Hayhoe and I had a meeting with Chris Wilkinson and colleagues from Bury Council at 9:45 a.m. on another piece of Greenmount Community business. This was to discuss the finished state of the redevelopment of the start of the Kirklees Trail at Greenmount, also known as "The Lines" or "Greenmount Sidings". It's where the station used to be and, if anyone had any sense, would be again.

The area was supposed to have been tidied up, landscaped and drained, with a pond and wild-flower area. It had been left in an untidy state with old logs lying around, bare soil at the top in which weeds were, by this time, abundant, a muddy, wet area with a water level that varied considerably, depending on the rainfall and no sign of wild flowers. The meeting was to assess the situation and to decide what is to be done to put it right and find out if any money is left to do it.

Immediately afterwards, Jenny and I went on a risk assessment survey down the Kirklees Trail in preparation for the Beavers on the following Thursday and Friday, following a laid trail and fire lighting and also for the following week when the Beavers were due to cycle to Tottington and back.

After a busy morning, we thought we deserved lunch at Summerseat Garden Centre.

I spent the afternoon updating my web site, adding more photos to my picture gallery.

Wednesday 19th June was patio cleaning day. I spent most of it on my hands and knees in the lovely warm sunshine scrubbing the patio bricks with a wire brush and completed about a tenth of what needs to be done, punctuated by a brief lunch.

I would have done more on Thursday 20th June but we had a lot of work to do for Beavers, preparing the risk assessment for the laid trail and fire lighting and other bits and pieces of documentation. On top of all that, I had to take the car in for its annual service at 8:30 a.m., collecting it at about 4:30 p.m., just in time to pack the boot with everything we needed for Beavers.

We drove to the Old School about 5 p.m. and set off on foot to lay the trail for the Beavers to follow to the location of the fire and then back, forming a circular route. The last part was along the same path and it gave us an opportunity to check the markers were still intact. Not surprisingly, they weren't and we had to reconstruct them.

Back at the Old School, Jenny took charge of her Beavers as they arrived and I went off back down the Trail to set up the markers to the location of the fire for a third time.

Christine, who was one of the founders of the Greenmount Scout Group and our ex-Group Scout Leader, came along with the Beavers to light the fire for us and all the Beavers enjoyed marshmallows, toasted (cremated would be more accurate) in the flames, before following the laid trail back to base.

My reward for this day's activity was a cold beer and a few glasses of red wine with the Co-op pizza Jenny fetched and cooked.

On Friday 21st June, we went grocery shopping to Unicorn and Waitrose, with lunch at the latter and were just back in time to repeat the previous evening's exercise with one minor alteration. I was the chief arsonist. Unfortunately, I could not stay for the whole of the proceedings because one of the Scout leaders telephoned to say he needed my car moving from the front of the garages where they store the canoes and I had to rush back.

The other modification to the evening's events was that the evening meal comprised tuna and vegetables and the bottle of wine was white.

On Saturday 22nd June, Jenny and Rachel were with the Beavers at the John Gibson Challenge day on the field at the Canon Lewis Hall and, in her true competitive spirit, Rachel led her team (Jenny's Friday Beaver Colony) to victory over teams from throughout the Ramsbottom District and Jenny, as Beaver Leader, was presented with the trophy.

Meanwhile, I put in all the television programmes for recording for the week – about three or four in all – and updated various bits and pieces on my computer. In so doing, I discovered that JLT had not paid my SMS pension this month and I sent them a polite reminder.

On Sunday 23rd June, Carrie called round to drop of a Father's Day present for me, Matthew busy working at home. Jenny would have done some ironing but the ironing board refused to rise to the occasion, having a bent rod (I knew how it must have felt) for the umpteenth time and, having repaired it up to this point, I refused to do so again because those who used it (I shall not name names) didn't take care of it.

On Monday 24th June I rose first, having a breakfast meeting with Mike, Frank and Steve to discuss our coming excursion to Offa's Dyke. The first challenge of the day was a wash in cold water, followed by a quick fix to the water pressure on the boiler, which had fallen below the critical level.

The result of our meeting was that Steve would drive us to Wales the following day for two days of walking and two nights of sleeping in strange beds.

I arrived back home to find Jenny ironing, having repaired the ironing board. I felt redundant for the second time. It did not, though, diminish my resolve to replace the old, metal ironing board with a sturdy wooden one that was not so easily wrecked, assuming I can find one.

I decided to telephone JLT rather than wait for a response to my E-mail and was told someone would look into the matter and telephone me.

On Tuesday 25th June, I headed for Wales with Mike, Frank and Steve and the second leg of Offa's Dyke from Bodfari to Clwyd Gate. Steve parked up at The Griffin at Llanbedr Dyffryn Clwyd (I defy you to pronounce it, unless you're Welsh, of course) and hailed a taxi back to The Downing Arms at Bodfari, where we ended our last excursion and commenced walking from there. Our total ascent for the day was around 3,500 feet and my two knew about it. On reaching The Griffin, we then had a 30 minute drive back to Northop, where we stayed overnight in the Travel Lodge, just managing to reach the Red Lion in Northop in time for an excellent evening meal before retiring.

It was back to The Griffin for breakfast on Wednesday 26th June before our host gave us a lift, up the hill we had descended the previous evening on foot, to Clwyd Gate, to start our walk to Llangollen. The going was somewhat easier than the previous day, although, initially, we were a little worried about the weather. Fortunately, the rain stopped within about five minutes of commencing our walk and the cloud lifted soon afterwards to reveal stunning views. We reached Llangollen not without incident as Steve managed to slip at the very end of the scree section and twist his ankle. A taxi took us from Llangollen back to The Griffin where we had a very nice evening meal and a pleasant night before returning home the following day.

The Beaver bike ride on Thursday 27th June was cancelled due to rain, for which I was very grateful and I spent the day putting things in order after my brief absence and resting.

Friday 28th June was our usual shopping day, skipping luncheon at Waitrose because of the lack of free tables in the café and the fact there were no pasties available. Again, the planned Beaver bike ride was cancelled due to the bad weather and I attended the session only to take a picture of the John Gibson Challenge winning team (Jenny's Friday Beaver Colony). I came back home, printed off a dozen copies and took them round for the parents to collect at the end of the session. Some were very pleased with the quick turn-round. Am I good or just amazingly brilliant?

We toured Newbank Garden Centre on Saturday 29th July, hoping to find some decent, outdoor, patio, wooden furniture that would fold up for storage in the garage until we had fine weather, bearing in mind it would probably only be used a couple of days a year. All they had were some reduced remnants from last year that had seen better days. Instead, I bought a wire brush on a long handle for cleaning the block paving without having to bend down. All I needed was a free, fine day on which to use it.

We called in to see Matthew and Carrie and lunched there before returning home for a lazy afternoon.

The weather forecast on Sunday 30th June was not too bad; that is to say rain was not forecast until the evening. We decided to take up position at Ramsbottom Station car Park at about 06:40 a.m. for another day's trading and haggling. What a waste of time

that was. Our profit for the day was down to almost a third of what we had come to expect and that for about nine hours of effort. Still, at least we didn't make a loss.