

Greenmount – May 2008

We are already well into the second week of May as I commence this month's update. I have to say that I have not been in the best of health for some time.

My digestive problem has been causing considerable discomfort and concern despite the reassurance of the GP last month. I have persevered with the Losec tablets and, finally, there is, I am pleased to say, quite a bit of improvement. I have no idea what brought on the prolonged attack of reflux but I am glad it has gone.

The warm, fine weather has prompted me to tackle the garden and the back is now looking half decent as the plants start to grow and flower. The fruit is looking good and I have, at last, managed to obtain some compost from my own bin, as can be verified by the neighbours within a considerable radius.

Unfortunately, my back has suffered in the process. It seems that no sooner do I get rid of one complaint, another follows in its wake. And this time, it seems to be impinging on the sciatic nerve on both sides with pain in both legs. The occasional lavender massage and heat treatment seem to alleviate the worst of it and I am still hobbling about.

More car boot sales have depleted the stock of ~~junk~~ surplus items of value in the garage but it remains a tip until I can plumb in the old kitchen sink and re-arrange the old kitchen units for storage.

During my period of enforced rest, I have been working on the family history and I could do with some help to trace descendants in Australia and NZ from people there, so volunteers are sought. Meanwhile I continue to unravel the mysteries of Jenny's mother's side of the family. There is much to do and the more I do, the more I find needs to be done.

We have made contact with some of Jenny's relatives she has not seen since she was a young girl and we hope to visit them soon to learn more about their side of the family.

We went to the first (and, judging by the weather since, possibly last) barbecue of the season on 10th May at Matthew's house to celebrate Carrie's father's birthday, the day before. He is 67 and I feel his age.

I have been helping Matthew at week ends (back permitting) to plumb in his new bathroom sink (in the bathroom) and his old bathroom sink in the garage, tiling the bathroom wall at the same time.

The car, serviced a year ago, said it was due for a service again, which is a bit odd because it is supposed to calculate when a service is due based on both time since the last service and the distance it travels and we do not use it much. It is just over four years old now and VW has written to me to advise that the timing belt is replaced every four years, reducing the previous interval in the manual, otherwise engine damage could occur if it snaps, so I decided to have the service done at the same time.

While in the process of replacing the timing belt, the garage telephoned to say that the water pump had been leaking coolant and was corroded at the bottom, so they advised replacement, to which I agreed. The whole bill came to £600 plus smelling salts.

The abolition of the lowest tax band from April this year has resulted in the poorest and lowest paid people (pensioners, like me) seeing a reduction in their take-home pay and consequently an electoral revolt against the Labour Party. Their days are numbered, I think.

Since Matthew and Carrie have postponed their wedding due to Carrie's illness, we have booked two weeks' holiday in St Ives in Cornwall. It's two years since we were last there and, for those of you who remember, the Café Pasta that burnt down while we were there has since been completely refurbished, reopened and burnt down again.

The new hall radiator is installed and working, or would be if we could afford to pay for the gas to run the central heating system. I have removed the old radiator and I am now in a position to fill up the remaining holes, sand the remaining rough bits and finish painting the walls. I am also pressing on at home with fitting new skirting board to the hall walls. Does anybody know a good joiner?

The rising cost of oil has pushed up the running costs of the car. If matters do not improve, the next trade-in will be for a horse and cart. At least it will do the rhubarb good.

Our beloved PM and full-time idiot, Gordon Brown, seems to think that the solution to the rising cost of oil is to build more nuclear power stations. So, presumably, he has a design that will fit into the space occupied by a vehicle's fuel tank. Quite what he proposes to do with the waste for the several hundred thousand years it remains toxic and how this is going to address the issue in the short-term when it takes ten years to build one are minor details he has not yet shared with the populous.

On a more practical, not to say realistic, front, we (or rather I) have been thinking about going to live abroad. It's a question of finding somewhere warmer with no nuclear industry (and as far away from it as possible) and with an economy based on a non-rip-off system. Could this be anywhere we know?

Meanwhile, back on the sinking ship, the recent high winds seem to have upset our TV aerial, so, this time, I decided to seek professional help. A chap from the local TV aerial company (Tower Aerials) arrived early on 30th May and took a look at my installation, not something I allow just anyone to do. After commenting on the fact that we have a good aerial and that it is pointing in the right direction, he said he thought we had two main problems. First, the aerial is not high enough. Second, there are too many leaves on the trees. He disappeared into the loft and fitted a new booster and said if that didn't solve the poor picture quality, he would need a long pole. These foreigners will do anything for a crust. Anyway, the TV is now working normally and he gave me a bill for £75, which is a bit steep, considering the cost of the booster is £25 max and he was only here about an hour. The name of the company obviously reflects his towering charges.

The last day of May saw us walking into Ramsbottom. Now we usually go in the car but being such a nice day and having nothing better to do (well, nothing else we wanted to do, anyway), we decided to take the round-trip stroll of about 4 miles (6 Km). We usually do the tour of the charity shops, find nothing we want and come back. On this occasion, because we didn't have the car, Jenny found two books, a spaghetti jar and two planters to match her Marks and Spencer Harvest set and half a dozen DVDs for £1 each. We had lunch at Bailey's Tea Rooms in Bridge Street and I bought a new globe for one of the oil lamps from the antique shop, Memories. We then faced the walk back loaded with carriers. All in all it was a very pleasant and productive day.

On returning, just to show we are still going strong, I cut the back lawn and Jenny tended her plants.

We are planning yet another car boot sale at Bury Football Club on 1st June but the weather forecast has changed from several fine, dry, sunny days to several wet or very wet days within the last few hours. I just love this English weather. Global warming? Rubbish! We had hotter and dryer summers when I was a kid – min you, that WAS in Yorkshire.