

Greenmount – May 2010

Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> May was a grocery shopping day and we sped off to Unicorn in Chorlton, the workers' co-operative where all the fruit and vegetables and many of the other items are organic. This takes us on a stretch of the M60 motorway in an anti-clockwise direction from Prestwich and the journey from home normally takes us about 45 minutes.

On this particular morning we arrived at the motorway roundabout just in time to watch a slow-moving procession of vehicles, horns sounding, escorted by police vehicles, pass by at low speed in all four lanes, heading in our direction. Access to the motorway was blocked for about ten minutes as we sat in the car with our engine switched off, watching from above.

It seems that this was a protest against the high price of fuel. How wasting fuel in such an event is going to persuade oil companies to reduce their prices or the chancellor to reduce duty on fuel beats me.

I wonder how many people know that fuel for the infernal combustion engine is actually a waste product of the oil distillation process? Without the motorist, oil companies that refine oil to make products for the vast chemical industry would be left with a huge problem of what to do with these residues.

If you really want to strike a blow for freedom, the answer is very simple. Stop using any form of transport and stop supporting any sport that relies on fuel produced by oil companies. Six months of no trade at the pumps, no flights and no spectators at Formula One racing would bring fuel prices crashing down.

If you want a practical solution, here are some options: walk, ride a bicycle, buy a horse and learn to ride it or buy a buggy as well or invest in an electrically-driven vehicle. Better still, invent a practical traction mechanism that does not rely on carbon fuel or heavy batteries.

While on the subject of oil companies, it was about this time that I heard of the huge oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. I am pleased to say that the shares of The British Petroleum Company (BP) have slumped as a result. No doubt those responsible will receive a huge financial bonus for their part in cleaning up the mess they created.

There is, in all this, a strong and serious warning. Life on this planet depends on water. The seas are our reservoir and source of water and of life. Destroy the seas and the life in them and everything else will perish. It's your grandchildren of whom I am thinking.

Stepping down from my soapbox, the 2<sup>nd</sup> May saw us spending not an inconsiderable sum at the local Summerseat Garden Centre and we now have three very large and heavy pots in the conservatory-cum-greenhouse. Unfortunately, none of the plants produce anything edible or capable of being smoked. We have also re-potted most of the outdoor plants on the patio and I have finished the lawn edging and removed all of the weeds from it – the hard way.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> May was supposed to be a day of seeding the bald areas of the lawn and more weeding of the block paving but, being a typical bank holiday, it turned rather cold and, more significantly, wet, with the odd shower, so we made some soup instead and I spent most of the day on my computer. I have acquired a middle name of Davros.

On 4<sup>th</sup> May, the Greenmount Village Community Committee swung into serious action with lunch at the Bull's Head. For the benefit of those who think we are budding members of parliament, let me make it quite clear that we each funded our own food and drink out of our own pockets.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> May, we cast our votes in both the local and general elections, still being naive enough to believe voting is worthwhile. Unfortunately, despite my support, the Liberal Democrats did not gain as many seats in Parliament as I would have liked and the Conservative Party has now formed a coalition government with the Lib Dems. My hopes for a democracy, in which every vote counts, are rapidly diminishing.

Another disappointment awaited us on the 8<sup>th</sup> May at the Scout AGM. Having gone to considerable trouble to present a display of the Thursday Beaver Colony activities, only three out of the twenty Beavers in Jenny's Colony and their parents were present. To those who supported us, we are very grateful, particularly since none of the Beavers from the Monday or Friday Colonies arrived, even though their leaders were there. One would have thought parents would take more of an interest in their children's activities. Being involved with the Scout movement is very educational. Looking after twenty Beavers for an hour a week has certainly taught Jenny a lesson.

We have been looking for a mirror to place above the mantle shelf since we had the wood-burning stove installed last July. Having seen one that we liked in the house of one of our neighbours we ascertained the source and sped off to Gregory Pine at Helmshore on 13<sup>th</sup> May, only to discover they had moved. We eventually found their new premises in Haslingden, still called Gregory's of Helmshore.

The chap there was quite happy to quote for making a mirror to our specification and we left him the details and my E-mail address. He said he would contact me later that day. Three days later, he telephoned with a ludicrous price and, on reflection, we have decided to look elsewhere.

On the way back, we called to browse round Holden Wood Antiques, housed, appropriately, in an old church, since the prices are sky high. We might have eaten in the new restaurant there had the charges been more reasonable. Instead, we lunched at Summerseat Garden Centre. At least they have lots of greens.

Friday the 14<sup>th</sup> was our normal shopping day and on this occasion we actually spent more at Unicorn than we did at Tesco. We lunched at Tesco, but that doesn't count because they have leased the franchise to Costa Coffee (as opposed to Costa Plenty).

So that's two days running I've treated Jenny to lunch out. Who's a lucky lass?

A spell of unusually hot weather and blue skies tempted me out into the garden and I have been grass cutting and general tidying. After 30 years, the back garden is starting

to look half decent, the trees giving it a sort of woodland look and attracting lots of birds, making lunch on the patio very pleasant, if, occasionally, somewhat messy.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> May we went to the open day at the new police station in Bury. It was mostly aimed at children, who were allowed to sit inside police cars with sirens wailing (the cars, not the children) and lights flashing. Children were also allowed astride a police motorcycle and Jenny, being just a big kid, joined the queue. I have the picture to prove it. I also took some good telephoto shots of the police helicopter as it made a couple of circles overhead. The police horses were in attendance, as were two fire tenders, the fire search and rescue team with their dogs and the local mountain rescue team. At the end of the day, I was released without charge.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> May, we were up at 4:30 and driving into the car park adjacent to the East Lancashire Railway in Ramsbottom at 6:00 in readiness for the weekly car boot sale. We had to be there early to be sure of a pitch, which is on a first come, first served basis, at £11 for the day. We made some decent sales, including one fairly expensive item and several items kindly donated by our neighbour, Mike. By about 2:30 in the afternoon, we were feeling tired and, like most other people, started to pack up. During the half hour it took us to put everything back in the car, we sold another £5 worth of goods!

Unfortunately, the hot spell was short-lived and we are now back to the norm – grey skies, rain and cooler temperatures.

I have managed to find a replacement graphics card for Jenny's laptop on E-bay. I have won the bidding and paid for it so it should be here in a couple of weeks or so.

Much of the last week of May was spent cleaning, polishing and tidying the house in readiness for the Spring Bank Holiday week end. Jenny's brother, Wilf, who has just celebrated his 65<sup>th</sup> birthday and is now officially retired, and his wife, Anne, came to stay and we fetched them in the evening of the 28<sup>th</sup>. They had planned to come over from Sheffield by train to Manchester, where we were going to collect them, but Anne had to work all day Friday and the public transport journey would have meant a very late night. As it was, we arrived back with them about 10 p.m., had a few beers and a very late night.

On Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> May it poured with rain and we all decided it was better to be inside than out, so we went to Bygone Times at Ecclestone, where I acquired yet two more Jazz CDs of Louis Armstrong. Now there's a man noted for blowing his own trumpet.

Sunday was a better day and stayed dry. That being the case, we went into Ramsbottom for the day's events at the East Lancashire Railway war-time week end. The place was packed and the number of people in 1940s dress and military uniform seems to increase with every year. The planning of the whole event, I have to say, is meticulous and must involve a tremendous amount of hard work. Those who visited were not disappointed, with one exception. The planned flypast of the Dakota did not happen. There was a very well stage-managed skirmish with live weapons and blank rounds between German and American troops at Ramsbottom station and, for once, the German team won. So that's England two, Germany one.

The end of the month closed with a trip to Sheffield to return our guests until the next time, probably in July. Being a Bank Holiday, the Sheffield Archives were closed, so there was no opportunity to do any further research of the Dearden family.

Matthew is also back from his six-day trip with friends on their motorcycles touring Spain and France, somewhat tired. Having ridden down to Portsmouth, they took the twenty-four hour ferry crossing to Santander and then rode up to catch the ferry back to England, passing through such fine places as Biarritz and La Rochelle. C'est la vie.