

Greenmount – May 2013

On Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> May, we resumed the cleaning of the conservatory and completed everything except the corner I use as an office, having moved and repositioned the filing cabinet and all of Jenny's Beaver bits and pieces.

On Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> May, I had a breakfast meeting with Mike, Steve and Frank to discuss our forthcoming boat trip. I managed to prise them out of their comfy chairs before 11 a.m. so I could return home to resume the attack on the conservatory. This was the day I had to dismantle my computer and all its attachments, which I placed in a heap on the dining room table. I also had to move my desk, made of solid oak and which took four strong chaps to deliver when I first bought it. It wasn't easy.

We finally managed to finish cleaning and left everything as it was for the floor I had scrubbed to dry before pushing my desk back into position. We had a late tea in the lounge.

On Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> May, after having breakfasted in the nice, clean conservatory, which could once more be used for such pleasures, we went grocery shopping to Tesco in Bury, giving Unicorn a miss since I was going to be away all week, before putting everything back together and clearing the dining room table.

I finished checking out my computer (amazingly, almost everything worked first time) and tidying my desk on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> May before going off to the Scout Group Camp at Bowley, Blackburn. Rachel and Jenny followed in Rachel's car, since I was only going for the afternoon to help out with the Beavers' 2-mile walk, or, in my case, 2-mile limp. Jenny and Rachel were staying overnight under canvas. I had a nice, warm, comfortable, king-sized bed all to myself.

It was about 7:30 p.m. on Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> May before Jenny and Rachel returned home. I prepared for my week away on the canal barge with Mike, Frank and Steve.

From Monday 6<sup>th</sup> May to Friday 10<sup>th</sup> May I was cruising (in the boating sense, I wish to make clear) around the Worcester and Birmingham Canal, the River Severn and the Droitwich Canal. You can read a more full account of my exploits afloat in the separate document, [Carry on Barging](#) if you feel so inclined.

On Friday 10<sup>th</sup> May, a courier from HP had been and collected the laptop for repair. A lady who telephoned to speak to me told Jenny that it should be back in seven to ten days, hopefully fully restored, playing Blue-ray DVDs, not overheating, with the hard drive and my data intact, delivered by a flying pig.

On Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> May, we attempted another marathon grocery shop in record time. I had to be back by 4 p.m. to copy a couple of photographs and a DVD for Christine on my PC.

We made it to Unicorn, where the small car park was about 50% oversubscribed and I eventually managed to squeeze the car into a proper space, having kindly allowed Jenny to start the shopping without me. We lunched at Asda Pilsworth, for a change, where the food was just about edible, before picking up a few items. The wine we wanted was not on offer at a reasonable price so we didn't buy any. We finished up at Tesco in Bury

(where else?), where Rawnsley Estate Chardonnay was on offer at just over £5 a bottle, marked at half price, which is probably more than its worth anyway. Still, with the 5% discount for a box of six bottles, it was about the best value for money we could find.

We would have gone for a short walk on Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> May had the rains not come for the fourth day in a row, temperatures hovering just below double figures. The weather was atrocious for the time of year and it is ironic that, as the world warms up, this country seems to be getting colder – and a hell of a lot wetter.

I spent the day doing general admin work on the PC and updating my web site, putting on the photos from the first day of my barge trip and the monthly update for the previous month.

Jenny and I spent Monday 13<sup>th</sup> May catching up on Beaver documentation, after which I turned my attention to updating my web site.

On Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> May, Jenny and I dusted the cobwebs off our travel passes and caught the bus down to Bury, hopping straight onto a tram to Altrincham. An hour and twenty minutes later we were on the other side of Manchester, looking for the Waitrose supermarket, in search of organic groceries not stocked by Unicorn and a far more diverse range than available at either Asda or Tesco. It took us twenty minutes and a visit to the local library to discover that the Altrincham branch of Waitrose isn't in Altrincham. It's in Broadheath and nearer the previous tram stop than the terminus where we alighted.

We were advised to take a bus from Altrincham out to the retail park at Broadheath, heading back towards Manchester. We decided to walk the mile or two instead.

Lunch at Waitrose followed by a quick reconnaissance of the shelves raised our spirits and we decided to shop there instead of Tesco or Asda (or both) on the coming Friday. We were so decisive that we applied for a Waitrose loyalty card.

It took us a good couple of hours to get back home, mainly because we had to wait ten minutes or so for a tram and then another twenty minutes for a bus connection in Bury. Still, we timed it well, arriving indoors just before the rain started, yet again.

It only remained to work out how to get from Unicorn in Chorlton to Waitrose at Broadheath. It turned out to be surprisingly easy. As we leave the M60 motorway, to go to Unicorn we turn left. All we had to do to go to Waitrose was to turn right. Life can't get much simpler, I thought.

On Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> May, we finished off the Beaver work and I finished off putting the boat trip photos on my web site.

On Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> May I was up at 4:30 a.m. and in a taxi with Mike, Steve and Frank, heading for Manchester Piccadilly at 5:45 a.m. We were in Prestatyn by about 9 a.m. and, shortly afterwards, starting the first section of Offa's Dyke. The Dyke is a trail that runs from Prestatyn in North Wales to Chepstow in South Wales, approximately 180 miles. On this occasion, we were walking just 13 miles and, at the time of writing, it is my intention to document the whole of the walk, assuming we finish it, in a similar manner to that in which I wrote about our [Wolds Way](#) journey.

On Friday 17<sup>th</sup> May, I was awake at 7 a.m. and staggered out of bed about 7:30 a.m., trying to ignore the muscle pain from the previous day's exploits. How I managed to negotiate the stairs in an upright position I shall never know. I fetched in the Abel and Cole grocery delivery before anyone had the opportunity to pinch the two packs of croissants lying on top of the boxes. After breakfast, we tootled down the M60 at a comfortable 70 m.p.h. to Unicorn for our weekly grocery shop in record time, there being surprisingly little traffic. They must have heard I was coming.

That completed, we headed back up to the A56, past the M60 junction and on to Broadheath, to Waitrose. There we purchased just about all the remaining items we needed for the week and we came straight back home. No Tesco. No Asda. All we needed was a decent-sized Waitrose in Bury.

Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> May was another very cold, wet day with temperatures in single figures. We braved the elements with three layers of clothing and waterproofs on top as we toured the charity shops in Ramsbottom. I found some blank CDs in jewel cases and Jenny bought a book. We purchased a couple of bottles of the organic, wild, cranberry juice we like from the herbalist and some charcoal sticks for the Beavers which we hoped they would use for rubbings in Nuttall Park on their exploratory trip next week and not on each other.

I spent the late afternoon compiling the documentation for my recent barge trip and then helped Jenny pack the car ready for the car boot sale.

Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> May was a 5 a.m. start and we were on our pitch at the East Lancashire Railway Ramsbottom Station car Park before 7 a.m. Trade was slow and steady and we made half as much again more than I thought we had, if that makes sense. Nothing much else did.

I spent Monday 20<sup>th</sup> May outside, the weather having hit one of those rare dry spells. The first job was to empty and clean the indoor recycling bins, this process being punctuated by the need to clean the real general waste and paper recycling bins before decanting the rubbish from indoors. The latter process required the donning of head to foot wet gear and the use of the pressure washer. A mask would have been good as well.

Having completed that task and removed my dripping wet outer garments, I discovered, to my amazement, I was actually dry underneath. No comments, please. I decided to cut the grass and, to tackle the back lawn, I decided to try out the village community petrol mower that resides in my garage. It took me an hour to discover how to turn on the fuel tap. That done, it started almost immediately and the first pass was somewhat disappointing, in that it left some of the longer pieces of grass uncut. I manage to adjust the cutting height quite easily and that did improve matters on ascend pass but I concluded that the blades needed adjustment.

The front and side areas are too uneven, with slopes, for the petrol mower and I resorted to the electric hover mower, which did a fine job, as it always does, thanks to my skilful handling, naturally.

Enough was enough and I finished, washed and changed just in time for a cold beer before tea. Unfortunately, the kitchen staff had forgotten to put any beer in the fridge, so I had to do it myself and wait for it to cool.

On Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> May, we walked up to Holcombe Brook post office for a stamp, calling at Alistair Waddell's on the way to drop off the subscriptions for the Thursday and Friday Beaver Colonies. When we returned, we decided to go to Summerseat Garden Centre for lunch, taking a trailer load of rubbish that had been sitting on our drive under the car port since last autumn with us, destined for the tip.

Lunch would have been good if the Garden Centre had not run out of Tandoori Chicken for Jenny's salad and rice to go with my Chicken Tikka. Jenny settled for plain chicken with her salad and I had a turkey sandwich instead.

We took the opportunity to acquire three more bags of organic top soil, on offer at 3 for £9.99, a nice-looking, flowery plant for the shaded area in the back garden, four more flowery plants (on offer at four for £10) for the front side garden where one of our cats digs for England and six free bedding plants that came with any purchase at this time.

We dumped the rubbish at the tip and, on our way back, exchanged some bags of clothes Jenny had sorted out after the last car boot sale at the weigh-in in Bury for cash.

Back home, we put the new plants in the garden and threatened to starve the cat if she went near them again. We also stuck in dozens of sharp pointed sticks around the planted area so that, if she does try to settle her bum there, she will get more than she bargained for.

I was back in the garden on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> May, strimming the edges of the back lawn, hoeing the borders and raking the moss out of the grass, or as much of it as I could. I turned my attention to the common land on the side of the house after lunch, strimming the edges and clipping the grass with the shears around the shrubs. By 5 p.m. I decided I'd had enough for the day, packed up and had an early tea.

I had a meeting with a lady called Jo who is keen to become involved with village affairs at 8 p.m. in the Bull's Head. She has offered to manage a Facebook account for the village and we also discussed the possibility of a Twitter facility. I'm not particularly au fait with either, so it's just as well we have a new volunteer.

We crawled out of bed later than usual on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> May, although, since we were back to rain showers, with no possibility of continuing the gardening work, it didn't really matter much.

I spent the first hour or so after breakfast continuing the documentation of the barge trip and then the courier from HP arrived with Jenny's computer. My next task was to unpack that and check that it was working properly after the repair. HP had refitted the CPU heat sink, replaced the cooling fan, given it a good clean and replaced the keyboard. The paperwork also suggested they had thoroughly checked all the parts and orifices to make sure they were working correctly and there was a statement to the effect that they had checked it would play at least five different blu-ray DVDs.

They obviously hadn't checked it would play two of the ones I have because it didn't. Still, it did play the first one I tried, so that's a 30% success rate. I downloaded Cyberlink PowerDVD Ultra 13 on a 30 day trial, which, of course, had no difficulty whatsoever in playing all three DVDs. So HP MediaSmart isn't so smart after all. Perhaps MediaSelective would be more appropriate. Anyway, I e-mailed HP to tell them they had

30 days to sort it out, before my trial license for the Cyberlink product expired and the cost of it was about £80, the implication being that I shall expect them to pay for it if they can't fix their own product in that time.

This was turning out to be something less than a good day.

I received a Skype call from Edith in New Zealand on the laptop while I was testing it to say that her husband, Terry, had died that morning. This was not unexpected, because he had been seriously ill for the past couple of years and, after struggling with this, I think the news came as something of a relief to us all, albeit very distressing. We chatted for about an hour.

I was right about the day.

Jenny's Beaver session in Nuttall Park in Ramsbottom was rained off and I sent an E-mail to all the parents for her to inform them it was cancelled, which would have been a good idea had they read their E-mails. Unfortunately, some of them tootled off to Nuttall Park in the pouring rain and had to come back again.

Boy, was I right about the day. It's days like this one reaches for the bottle.

Friday 24<sup>th</sup> May was the usual grocery shopping day with a trip to Unicorn and Waitrose, lunching at the latter.

The Beaver session in Nuttall Park was again rained off and the rest of the day was almost a repeat of the previous one, a bit like 12:01, or, for those who haven't seen that excellent film, Groundhog Day. If you haven't seen either film, it doesn't matter because you're probably not reading this anyway.

Jenny and Rachel went to Bury on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> May, leaving me to clean my walking boots, clean out the fire and clean the hearth and fire surround. I think Rachel had the most fun, buying a new iPhone and her mum's enjoyment came a close second, shopping for a few odds and ends at Tesco.

I spent the whole of Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> May washing and polishing the car in preparation for our coming week in Whitby.

I was hoping to get down to see Matt and Carrie during the long week end but a pile of the local village newsletter, the Greenmount Voice, arrived on our doormat for delivery to unsuspecting residents on Monday morning, 27<sup>th</sup> May and we had to deal with that because we were off to Whitby for a week the following day. That done, I spent a few hours updating the village web site so that it and the newsletter were speaking with one voice, as one might say.

I did manage to find time to re-pot the very nice Ruby rose bush Matthew and Carrie had bought us for our 40<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary and I am looking forward to its blooms.

Before departing for Whitby on Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> May, I emptied and cleaned all the domestic recycling bins we keep in the kitchen. They were quite full and a touch over-ripe. We knew Rachel wouldn't go near them.

We had a pleasant run to Whitby, the weather improving as we crossed the Pennines, as it usually does. On arriving, we had to double-park on the wide street to unpack the car before driving off to find a parking space. The car ended up two streets away from where we were staying. After settling in, we wandered down to town and had tea at The Duke of York pub, at the bottom of the 199 steps. That the meal was good, the pub is nice and the bar staff friendly. We were back at our lodgings for 8:30 to plan the following day's outing and to enjoy a cup of tea before turning in for an early night.

We awoke on Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> May to a misty, rainy day and immediately invoked good old Plan B. We caught the bus to Scarborough, where the weather wasn't much better and pottered round the shops. We lunched at the Nomad Café in Eastborough. The café is very good indeed, fairly priced and to be recommended. Just about all their food is fair trade and some of it is organic.

We were back in Whitby for 5:40 p.m. and it was still wet. We went back to our digs, changed shoes and made for a pub just down the road, the Elsinore, for tea. It was surprisingly good. They had no full bottles of wine, only small ones of 185 ml. Still, it was a decent French Chardonnay and a couple of bottles each washed down the garlic mushrooms followed by battered monkfish tails, chips and side-salad.

It was misty again and cold on Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> May. We managed to find a parking space on the street, opposite our lodgings and Jenny guarded the space while I went to fetch the car.

We had decided to walk the Cinder Track (the old railway line) from Whitby to Robin Hood's Bay (it goes all the way to Scarborough but we didn't). We lunched in the café on the left, at the top of the hill leading down to the beach, Candy's Café and Tea Room. My sandwich was fine but Jenny's jacket potato was so laced with butter that she could not eat it. We walked down towards the beach, perusing the shops as we went, there seeming to be more of them than I remember from our last visit many years earlier. The tide was well out and we went for a stroll on the beach.

We caught the bus back to Whitby and had tea at The Duke of York again. This time we had the Sea Bass with potatoes. It was alright but Jenny's potatoes were, once again, laced with butter and, while people ordering pies had three vegetables (and left most of them), we had to make do with just garden peas, which didn't seem quite fair.

By Friday 31<sup>st</sup> May, the weather was improving and we caught the bus to Runswick Bay. We walked along the coast path (or Cleveland Way) to Staithes and lunched at the Cod and Lobster there. I ordered a Crab Salad and Jenny had a Tuna Salad. Both came with bread and butter and we had an option of chips or new potatoes. Jenny settled for a single bowl of new potatoes to share and these came with, yes, you've guessed it, butter. This time, the butter was separate for us to apply as we felt fit. We didn't. We could have had peas as well. With a salad? The two salads, together with tea for two, came to £20, which we thought was a little pricey, although there was plenty of crab and tuna and it was very nice, especially sitting outside in the sunshine, overlooking the harbour.

We left Staithes and followed the coast path/Cleveland Way to Skinningrove, a coastal mining and fishing village that has obviously seen more prosperous years. This stretch of the path involved a very steep 200 feet climb, to which Jenny didn't take too well,

especially just after lunch. From Skinningrove, we caught the Local Link bus to Loftus and the Arriva 5 service from there back to Whitby.

The Explorer map I had only went about a mile past Skinningrove and for the next section of the walk, I needed the next map north. I soon discovered that the Tourist Information office in Whitby didn't have it but they did suggest I try to Whitby Bookshop in Church Street.

It had been such a nice sunny day that my arms had suffered from sunburn and they needed treatment with After Sun cream.

For our evening meal, Jenny fancied some chicken, so we though, against my better judgement, we would try Wetherspoons on the basis that the Chicken Pepper Skewers Jenny had on a couple of occasions the last time we were in Whitby, a few weeks earlier, were fine. I went to order two of the Chicken Pepper Skewers, which come with a side-salad and Pirri-Pirri Sauce and an option of rice for a small extra charge. The first stumbling block was that the chap behind the bar did not have a clue how to add the rice option to the order and it took him several minutes to realise he couldn't do this because they had run out of rice. I was not at all impressed.

We walked out and went to The Duke of York, where we had a rather nice chicken pie with potatoes, without butter by request and vegetables, a nice dessert and a reasonable bottle of South African Semillion-Chardonnay (they didn't have a Chardonnay).

We thought we might be back there on the coming Sunday and, meanwhile, on the way back to the lodgings, we booked a table at the local Italian Restaurant, Luna Piena (that's Full Moon for those who need a translation) for the following evening.

So, did we make it back to the Duke of York? Was the Full Moon full and, if so, of what? Did we make it past Skinningrove? Find out in next month's exciting episode.