

Greenmount – May 2017

If you have not read April's diary, the first few paragraphs might not make much sense to you. That's assuming any of it makes any sense. For your peace of mind and sanity, we were staying in Whitby, North Yorkshire for the week from Wednesday 26th April to Wednesday 3rd May. Now read on.

Monday May 1st: We boarded the 10:00 a.m. steam train to Goathland and spent the day pottering around Heartbeat country, visiting the various shops and the church. We lunched at the excellent Goathland Tea Rooms and Gift Shop, in the garden at the back.

We caught the 15:50 steam train back to Whitby, after purchasing a couple of items from the station gift shop, arriving back in Whitby just after 5 p.m. We decided to head back to our room for a quick cup of tea before venturing out for our evening meal.

We ate, again, at The Angel, having the lamb shank and it was alright.

Tuesday May 2nd: It was our last day in Whitby and we decided to potter round town, particularly since it was overcast, misty and very cold again. We visited the charity shops again on the way into town and we waked round to Superdrug for some more had wipes, having washed the seagull droppings off the car for the second time with an old rag and some water and used up our in-car wipes on my hands afterwards.

We strolled along Church Street and up the 199 steps to visit the very old and very quaint St. Mary's Church again before returning to the Monks Haven for our lunch.

After lunch, we walked up the left bank of the Esk to the main road, across the new bridge and picked up the track on the other side that brought us back to the marina on the opposite bank. We could, of course, have come across the swing bridge in town but that was too easy.

We sat and watched the antics of a diving cormorant and the seagulls on the river for an hour or so before the cold became too much for comfort and came back to our room about 4:45 for a cup of tea and to start packing, ready for our early departure the following day.

We took about 40 minutes to put the bulk of our luggage in the car and pump up the tyres. The offside rear seemed to have sprung a slow leak and needed either repairing if possible or replacing at the earliest opportunity.

We ate at The Angel again. Jenny had the gluten-free version of the chickpea curry and I had the half roast piri-piri chicken. I did not detect much of a piri-piri flavour with the chicken and assumed that it was a plain roast chicken. A pot of the sauce was provided. I had asked for piri-piri chicken when we first ate there and, being told they had run out of it, the substitute being the dish I received on this occasion, I chose something else. I was not told piri-piri chicken was unavailable this time.

Having made that pedantic point, I must say that we both enjoyed our meals.

We retired to our room early, about 9 p.m., for a cup of tea and an early night.

Wednesday May 3rd: It was the day of our departure. We set off early for Redcar to visit my sister Barbara and arrived just as she had answered a Skype call from Edith in New Zealand. I spent most of the time there talking to Edith instead of Barbara, while Barbara chatted to Jenny.

We departed more or less on schedule, just after noon, for Shipley, Jenny reading out the instructions for the route. It was our intention to visit the health store there for a few items we could not purchase elsewhere.

With one stop at a garage to ask directions, we arrived at our destination without too much difficulty, parking the car on the road very near to the shop. Unfortunately, the store did not have any organic white rice flour or any organic caster sugar, our main reasons for calling. We did find a few other groceries we needed and departed for home, having no difficulty in finding the route to the M606 and M62, which was well signed.

We arrived home about 3 p.m., unpacked and spent the rest of the day sorting ourselves out.

We went to the Swan and Cemetery for tea, which was very nice, as always. It was a nice way to finish off our holiday week.

Thursday May 4th: I spent the day gardening. I cut the grass, strimmed the edges and tidied up the borders in the back garden and then cut the grass and strimmed the edges of the side garden. This frenzied activity was punctuated by lunch on the picnic bench on the back lawn in the bright sunshine and very strong northerly wind.

I packed up about 4:30 p.m. and we walked down to the cricket club to vote in the Manchester Mayoral elections.

A quick shower was followed by tea and a nice end to a very productive day.

Friday May 5th: The trip to Unicorn took an unscheduled detour when I forgot we were calling at the recycling centre (or tip) in Bury and I took the scenic route down Manchester road, past the town hall and then immediately doubled back to town behind the town hall, thus viewing the magnificent building from all sides and, coincidentally passing through just about every set of traffic lights in Bury, all of which were at red.

After dumping our rubbish, all of which had been pre-sorted into non-recyclable, paper and cardboard and electrical items, we called at the vet's practice to collect the cat's renal tablets. There, the small car park was full and I managed to squeeze into a parking spot along the narrow, cobbled, dead-end street that runs down by the side of the premises. Parking was not too difficult. The hard bit was driving out, a manoeuvre that required me to reverse onto the wrong side of the main road about 20 metres away from a busy, traffic-light controlled junction. I managed that with the aid and patience of two drivers, one on each side of the road, who stopped to allow me to complete this exercise and to obtain poll position at the traffic lights on the opposite side of the road. Whoever they were, I would like to thank them for their patience, unlike the lady in the vehicle who had earlier driven into the vet's car park, blocking everyone in while she took her animal inside and then came out to take the spot I vacated, trying to drive into it while I was in the process of slowly reversing out.

The traffic outbound on the M60 was heavy but moved reasonably freely and, for once, almost all drivers seemed to be adhering to the average speed limit of 50 m.p.h. and, what's more, several drivers, I noticed, were keeping a fair distance between their vehicle and the one in front, to whom I say well done and keep it up.

We had no difficulty in parking at Unicorn and, after spending a record amount there, we headed off to Waitrose for lunch and another large bill. The journey was painful due to road works at the main junction at Stretford, not that much was happening on the road we were using and there seemed no justification for closing two of the three lanes, channelling all traffic into the centre lane.

The journey home took 1½ hours instead of 40 to 45 minutes due to heavy traffic on the M60 and the inability of motorists to cope with the situation. By the time we reached our exit, the A56 from Prestwich to Bury was also very busy and slow going.

Since we arrived home later than expected, it was a case of a relaxing evening, except for Jenny who prepared tea.

Saturday May 6th: Another 7:30 start put us at the Old School villager's drop-in for about 9 a.m. and we spent the morning testing and pricing electrical equipment for the jumble sale in just over three weeks' time. We managed to sell £3 worth of goods too.

We came home for lunch and Jenny went round to our neighbour at the back, Doreen, to collect some car booty. When she returned with the car, I washed it to remove all the seagull droppings from our holiday. I had rinsed them off a couple of times with water and a cloth while we were on holiday but that had left lots of smears and it looked a mess. Meanwhile, Jenny and Rachel sorted the car boot stock ready for packing the car.

After drying off the car and pumping up the tyres, I reversed it down the drive ready for packing, which Rachel and Jenny did while I came in to change my wet clothes and settle down with a beer.

Sunday May 7th: We crawled out of bed at 5 a.m. and made it to the railway station car park in Ramsbottom for 6:45 a.m. It was a nice day and the cloud soon disappeared to leave a clear blue sky with lots of sunshine. The northerly wind kept the temperature down until lunchtime and I was glad to have the benefit of thermal undergarments round the nether regions for most of the day. It did turn a trifle warm after lunch, though.

Trading was slow and steady and we did reasonably well, arriving home about 3:30 p.m.

I tidied up my DVD collection, inserting the DVDs we had recently watched into the library and discovered I was rapidly running out of storage space. I reflected on how much more compact it was to store movies on hard drives rather than collect DVDs.

We had an early, light tea comprising a prawn salad followed by fresh fruit and ice cream, relaxing afterwards to watch a Midsomer Murders DVD and a Hetty Wainthrop recorded episode before retiring earlier than usual at 10 p.m.

Monday May 8th: My nose had been bleeding on and off for a good few days and Jenny persuaded me to go and see the doctor so I made an appointment for 11:30, after normal surgery had finished.

I saw a young lady who was in her final stages of training and I discussed my symptoms with her, these being a prolonged bout of catarrh, a nose bleed from the left nostril when I blew my nose and a cough. After a quick examination, she concluded I had a burst blood vessel in my nose and it was not serious unless the bleeding became persistent and unstoppable. She could find nothing seriously wrong and concluded I might have some sort of allergy. She confirmed her diagnosis with another doctor and I told her I was of the same opinion, though what was causing the allergic reaction was a mystery. I had thought it was the cat but having been away for a week and the symptoms not having abated, I now thought that unlikely. I agreed to self-administer something to alleviate the symptoms.

We had arranged to go and see our minister, Andrew, not in his official capacity but to look round his camper van and top talk to him about his experiences in using it and we walked round after lunch.

The visit proved to be very helpful and we had some ideas about the kind of motor home and features we should be seeking.

Jenny unpacked the car and sorted her car boot stock ready for the coming Sunday. Meanwhile, I dealt with a few outstanding computer-related tasks, lending the odd piece of assistance when it was needed to lift heavy items.

Tuesday May 9th: Joani collected me at 9:50 for another Dementia Awareness session at the Skipton Building Society in Bury while Jenny waited in for the Abel and Cole grocery delivery and then went to Bury.

I was home before Jenny and arranged to collect her from Tesco when she was ready. Meanwhile I started work on the computer..

After collecting Jenny, we had a late lunch and I finished off adding my holiday photographs to my web site.

Wednesday May 10th: I spent the day in the garden, removing the dandelion heads that had appeared since the last mowing, picking up the dog dung that had been deposited since the last mowing of the side garden and clearing the weeds from the footpath and gutter of the road outside our property, the latter being a task that should be performed by the council and which they, apparently, can't afford to do.

Thursday May 11th: Jenny and I went to the Paul Davies kitchen design centre in Bolton to purchase a replacement cutlery drawer insert and a new filter for our kitchen mixer tap. We scored a 50% success, acquiring the former at the exorbitant cost of £40 for a piece of moulded plastic. The latter we were advised to seek a plumber's merchant, the very type of shop that advised us to consult the original supplier.

We called at the Old School before returning home to pick up some serving trays for the D-CaFF dementia café the following day.

After lunch, I finished off clearing the weeds from the gutter at the front of the house on the small part of the road on which the car was parked the previous day and then I cut and trimmed the front lawn.

I rounded off the afternoon by cutting some wood for the log fire and covering the garden bench in anticipation of the rain due the following day.

Friday May 12th: I spent the morning working on the computer while Jenny prepared for the afternoon's D-CaFF dementia café.

We took the food down to the café about 12:45 and I came back to collect Doreen and Alex from their bungalow at the back of our house.

The first anniversary celebration of the café with the band and dancing was well attended and the pictures are on the village web site (www.greenmountvillage.org.uk). Four police officers dropped in and Jenny persuaded one of them to dance!

We came home for tea and then went to the Bull's Head Toby Carvery for a social evening with the D-CaFF volunteers.

Saturday May 13th: We went down to Tottington Motors to look at their sister company that hired and sold second-hand camper-vans. We did not find one that we thought was as nice as Andrew's Swift van.

We called in on Matthew on our way to do a top-up grocery shop at Prestwich. Carrie was out and our stay was brief because Matthew was expecting a conference call to discuss the local impact of the computer ransom virus that had infected a large number of computers world-wide and a good few in the NHS, closing down A&E departments and postponing operations. Fortunately, the impact in the Manchester area did not seem to be so severe. Those responsible put lives at risk and, in my opinion, if found, deserved to be publically hung, drawn and quartered. No doubt we shall have to make do with the satisfaction that they shall have to answer to a higher authority in the afterlife, facing all those souls who suffered as a result of their selfish and reckless actions.

We purchased some items from Village Greens, the Prestwich equivalent of Unicorn in Chorlton, albeit on a smaller scale. Sadly, their fruit and vegetables left much to be desired on this occasion.

Our final destination was Tesco where all the organic produce seemed to be offered at 20% discount and we managed to obtain what we needed there, along with other groceries. We lunched at Costa Coffee before shopping there and Jenny's gluten-free, chicken sandwich was very nice, she said. The food counter was not particularly well stocked and I settled for a fajita chicken wrap, which turned out to be quite enjoyable, exceeding my expectations. Needless to say a food delivery arrived while we were eating.

Another good aspect of Costa Coffee was that they served a very nice and refreshing pot of tea.

I spent much of the evening working on a large update to the Greenmount village web site.

Sunday May 14th: Jenny and I spent the day at Greenmount Old School, working on the electrical jumble. The weather forecast was for showers around 10 and 11 a.m., with nice sunshine for the rest of the day. We did not risk a car boot sale since rain and our stock

do not mix well.

Monday May 15th: I put on my Mr Fixit hat and tackled the broken, wooden laundry bag stand. One of the top rails comprising 2 cm diameter dowelling had broken at one end. My strategy was to glue it back together and to replace the screw holding the dowelling to the upright frame with a longer one to pull the two pieces together.

That strategy only succeeded in splitting the piece of dowelling further. I removed the screw altogether and glued it, tying it up with string while it set. What it really needed was a new piece of dowelling but I thought I'd try the quick method first.

That done and left to set, I turned my attention to the bathroom toilet. Having removed the panels and disconnected the two air pressure pipes from the push button assembly on the front panel, the first task was to turn off the water supply using the isolation valve at the bottom and then empty the cistern, for which I had to momentarily reconnect the pressure pipes. Before I could actually see the operating parts, I had to clean as much of the thick, black mould from the cistern as I could reach. This involved the use of several rags, lots of disinfectant and a bag of antibacterial wipes.

I decided to remove the water inlet valve, which was not one of my better ideas because replacing it later proved to be a time-consuming and fiddly operation. It did allow me to give it a thorough clean in disinfectant using an old, plastic tub. In removing the valve, I accidentally dislodged another piece of plastic that formed a guide for the vertical siphon and that underwent the same cleaning operation, for which an old toothbrush came in handy.

Removing the water inlet valve allowed the cistern float to drop to the bottom and, at first, I thought that was going to be difficult, if not impossible to recover. As luck would have it, I managed to reach the upright tab to which the valve connected, though, as I mentioned, putting the two back together proved to be difficult.

All this dismantling did allow me to clean most of the inside of the cistern and the bits I couldn't reach I sprayed with some rather unpleasant, mould remover, which I left to work over lunch.

After reassembling the cistern, the next task was to level it. The left hand side had slipped down and I had to lift it up and then tighten the fixing screw at the back. Not satisfied with that, I cut two pieces of wood to support the cistern at the two front corners to stop it sliding down again when it was full of water.

Before positioning the supports, I cleaned all the inside of the enclosure.

Turning the water back on and reassembling the push-button pipes proved my efforts to be successful. The cistern filled to the appropriate level, did not overflow into the pan and, what's more, flushed properly.

All that was left to do was to clean and replace the panels and then to glue the large push button back on to the small plunger at its rear. Unfortunately, I had run out of superglue so that would have to wait.

I congratulated myself on a job well done and a catastrophe averted. I have to say I could

not have done it without Jenny's invaluable help, providing the wipes, the bucket of water with disinfectant, the rags, fetching and carrying and holding bits out of the way while I manoeuvred various parts, not to mention cleaning the bathroom afterwards.

I still had to tackle the separate toilet, though and that was a job for another day.

In all this excitement I managed to pinch half an hour after lunch to listen to Saturday's recording of Jazz Record requests.

Tuesday May 16th: After the feverish activity over the past few days, we were very tired and, having been woken by the cat at least twice in the wee small hours, we did not rise from our slumbers until 10:30.

I spent a while dealing with E-mails and generally looking into the performance of Jenny's laptop and the reason why it invariably crashed with a blank screen after being powered up for the first time each day for an hour or so. I didn't make much progress and decided it was time to do some proper work.

I gave Jenny her laundry bag holder back and she put the bag back on it after ironing it. I put the holder back in place in our bedroom.

I finished removing the plaster from the wooden staircase, left over from when the wall was re-plastered, which took me up to almost tea-time.

I had a quick look at the small bedroom, intending to start work on decorating it at the next opportunity and planned what to do in what order.

I finally made contact with our builder, Steve, regarding the replacement roof and he said he would get back to me to arrange a date, probably in August.

Wednesday May 17th: The plan was to go to Bury and buy a whole load of items on my DIY list.

In the event, our first stop was, as usual, at the tip to dump some rubbish that has been laying around on our drive for a good few days, making it look more like Steptoe's Yard than a des res in one of the better parts of Bury. That just left a pile of wood to cut up for the fire.

Our second port of call was The Lighthouse on Rochdale Old Road to pick up a spare socket for a standard lamp I was repairing for the Old School Jumble. That cost me £1, which I intended to recover in goods from the jumble, by arrangement.

We headed on out to B&Q at Heap Bridge for some paint to decorate the small bedroom, landing, staircase and lounge. In that we were unsuccessful since they no longer stocked Crown paint. We did buy a whole load of other items, two of which, the MK, double, switched, electrical sockets and backing boxes, were on my list. The three storage boxes for car booty, hanging basket for the trailing tomato plants, organic lawn food and candles for one of our floor-standing candle-holders were not on my list.

On our return journey, we called at Wickes DIY store in Bury for the paint. There was no Crown pain there either.

As it was raining and we were feeling a need to eat lunch, we decided against pottering round Bury and made do with the inevitable call at Tesco for more groceries and some fish for tea.

After lunch, I managed to contact Richard Greenwood to arrange for him to fit a new water heater in the Old School toilets on Tuesday May 30th and I informed Christine Taylor who managed the building.

I checked the web site for the opening times for Kings in Rawtenstall, where I had bought my crown paint on several previous occasions and, establishing they were open until 5 p.m., we headed off there, through the school run traffic. We arrived at the shop at 4 p.m. It was locked up and there was no sign of life, even though the light was on. We gave up and came home.

I checked out an alternative supplier for the paint I needed and found a Crown decorating centre just off Durers Lane, near where Matthew and Carrie lived. I planned to go there the following morning.

Thursday May 18th: I was up at 8:30 a.m. It took me while 11 a.m. to wash, dress, have breakfast, take Jenny a cup of tea in bed and wash and wipe the pots, by which time Jenny had showered and breakfasted. How time flies when you're having fun.

We sped off to the Crown decorating centre just off Durers Lane and purchased two large cans of paint, white matt for the ceilings and soft linen vinyl silk for the walls.

We called at the card shop at Brandlesholme on the return journey because Jenny wanted a birthday card for her brother, Wilf. She didn't find one she liked.

We made a detour up to the Holcombe Brook Post Office on Longsight Road where Jenny did find a nice card and we came home, ready to start decorating.

Jenny had decided to sort her car booty after lunch and concentrated on preparing lunch while I inspected the small bed room to make sure it was ready for a coat of paint. It wasn't.

A couple of cracks had appeared in the plaster and needed scraping out and filling. Also, the coving left something to be desired and the corners needed some attention. On reflection, I think I could have done a better job myself.

I made a start hand-sanding the door frame and the coving where bits had adhered to it as well as the plaster below it where the adhesive had run down. I then tackled one of the cracks and was half way through chiselling out that when lunch was ready.

After lunch, I helped Jenny pot her tomato plants and then left her to her car booty while I finished off dealing with the cracks and touching up the coving in the small bedroom. I left the plaster to set and came down to help Jenny tidy up before tea, lighting a fire to stave off the cool of the evening.

Friday May 19th: We had the usual and uneventful shopping trip to Unicorn and Waitrose. The journey down took only half an hour, which must have been something of

a record and the journey back was not too bad considering we hit Bury during the school run. As usual, Audi drivers seemed to be the most inconsiderate and impatient breed of motorists. The road works at Stretford, set to last for six months, did not cause any significant delay, unlike the journey two weeks previously.

Saturday May 20th: We spent the whole day dealing with the electrical jumble for the Old School again, trying to return some semblance of order to the cellar storage in the process, where the separation between what had been tested and priced and the new donations seemed to be a little frayed at the edges.

We were home for about 5 p.m. After a brief rest and a cup of tea, we packed the car ready for the following day's trading at our usual Car Boot sale in Ramsbottom.

Sunday May 21st: It was another 5 a.m. start and we arrived at Ramsbottom by 6:45 to find most of the car boot pitches already taken even though the weather forecast, although fine and warming up in the afternoon, was for overcast skies for much of the day. As it turned out, we did see some sunshine, and a southerly wind with gusts strong enough to blow over our clothes rack onto the car several times, dislodging the trim above the off-side rear window on one occasion and decorating the off-side of the rear door with a couple of small scratches near the bottom. It could have been worse. I resolved to make some sturdy supports to prevent a recurrence before the following Sunday, for which the weather forecast was quite good.

We had a steady day's trading and made enough to satisfy us by 2 p.m., packing up earlier than had become the norm as customers faded away.

We were home for about 3 p.m. and, although very tired, I updated the village web site. After tea, both Jenny and I fell asleep in our chairs while watching a DVD. Jenny woke before me and went to bed, leaving me to stagger upstairs somewhat later.

Monday May 22nd: A Bacardi and Coke, a lovely tea of sea food risotto with asparagus and broccoli accompanied by a couple of glasses of Chardonnay followed by raspberries and ice-cream and a brandy the previous evening, together with frequent overnight visits from the cat did not induce me to leave my bed early. I went into the shower after Jenny and noticed she had turned the thermostat one notch towards the cold side. I found that too hot and turned it down another couple of notches. The cool shower helped to wake me up somewhat.

After breakfast and the usual pot-washing session, I helped Jenny to start sorting her car booty and empty the car from the previous day's trading and then I went to cut the grass. I cut and strimmed the side, then the front and finally cut the grass at the back. I also pulled out the larger weeds from the block paving. I did not have time to deal with the borders, the cat's latrine or to strim the grass edges at the back because Jenny needed some help to tidy up.

It had been a nice day and we had lunched on the bench on the back lawn. We were both pretty shattered and Jenny still had tea to prepare. I helped by gathering the mint for the sauce to accompany the lamb.

Tuesday May 23rd: It was a lovely, warm, sunny day and it was too nice to be inside decorating! We started the day with a delivery of a flyer advertising the Jumble Sale on

the coming Monday to the houses on our usual village round, taking in a view of the Incredible Edible plot on the way.

Returning home, I resumed work on the back garden, trimming the lawn edges, cleaning the cat's latrine, hoeing the borders and clearing the ivy off the fence on the bottom side of the garden. After lunch on the bench again, I finished off clearing the ivy and then started clearing the weeds and moss from the block paving at the back.

I managed to clear about one tenth of the patio before knocking off at 5 p.m., having spent a little while helping Jenny store her car-booty books and a couple of other items.

We finished off the day with our usual viewing of DVDs and recorded TV programmes and then a live update on the suicide bombing at the stadium opposite Victoria Station in Manchester the previous evening, killing 22 people and injuring 59, many of who were children. It was wonderful the way people rallied round to help.

An eastern, terrorist organisation did claim responsibility, although that was unconfirmed. What is evident is that such a callous and cowardly act, whether by an individual or on behalf of an organisation has nothing to do with any religious belief; it is exactly the opposite, being a manifestation of evil and all those responsible, whether directly involved or not will face divine judgement and punishment for their crimes.

Wednesday May 24th: After a late start, a shower and a visit from Lorna to bring news of her first grandchild, Jenny turned her attention to sorting her car booty again and I continued clearing the weeds and moss from the patio block paving.

We lunched on the bench in the warm sunshine yet again and I decided I had done enough by 5:30 p.m., which was excellent timing as Jenny needed some muscle to lift heavy boxes and tidy away. I finished the back, leaving the side, front and drive to do. Unfortunately, time was running out as I only had one more day this week, Friday being our weekly grocery shop, Saturday and Monday being Jumble days and Sunday another car boot day.

Thursday May 25th: After observing the one minute's silence at 11 a.m. for those killed in the Manchester bombing three days ago, we carried on where we left off yesterday, Jenny dealing with her car booty and me clearing the weeds from the block paving along the side passage. The really hot day was not ideal for manual work and how those chaps who worked on the Burma railway as prisoners of war coped I would never know. Progress was slow due to the heat, the stubbornness of the weeds and moss and the cramped working conditions. After lunch on the bench again and leaving off to assemble the new parasol base and put up the parasol beforehand, by 3 p.m. I had completed about one third of the passage. My intention had been to at least complete it all and possibly complete the front path as well.

I left off because my patio brush had worn out and to help Jenny lift down four, heavy sewing machines that needed testing and pricing for her car boot sale. It was necessary to search the Internet for prices. Since two of the machines were quite old and all of them were coming up at about £50, I took photos of all of them to produce leaflets for our folder of larger items.

We tidied up and came in about 5 p.m.

Friday May 26th: We intended to leave on our weekly grocery shopping spree early and I set the alarm, intending to dive out of bed at 7:30 a.m. In the event, I forgot the alarm was set for car-boot time, 5 a.m. and when it woke me, I turned it off and went back to sleep.

I did wake at 7:30 a.m., showered and dressed. I washed the pots from the previous evening while Jenny showered and we had breakfast. It was 10:00 a.m. before we were ready to leave and I suggested we should have taken notice of the alarm at 5 a.m.

Given the later than planned start, we skipped dropping off some jumble at the Old School and calling for a new fitting for a lamp I was repairing for the Old School jumble. We went straight to Asda at Pilsworth before rejoining the motorway and driving down to Unicorn in Chorlton. Despite the heavy traffic, we made good time and reached Unicorn for about 11:45. It was almost 1 p.m. before we arrived at Waitrose in Broadheath, near Altrimcham. I thought there was no way we would be home for 3 p.m., in time to help with the jumble at the Old School to prepare for the sale on Monday.

I was right. It was 2:45 p.m. by the time we had lunched and shopped at Waitrose. We joined the motorway at about 3 p.m. and, again, despite heavy traffic, we made reasonable time to our exit at Prestwich.

We paid a final visit to Bargain Booze in Tottington, on the way home, where Jenny purchased a couple of bottles of Yellow Tail Chardonnay and Shiraz and a four-pack of Estrella Galicia gluten-free larger, for which Jenny had developed a liking while we were on holiday in Whitby, courtesy of J D Wetherspoon.

By the time we had unpacked the groceries and sorted ourselves out it was nearly 6 p.m., too late to do anything productive at the Old School. Saturday was going to be a long day.

To make matters worse, the lovely, hot, dry spell was coming to a close, with rain, some of it heavy with a risk of local flooding, due the following day and a somewhat cooler and unsettled Bank Holiday week end.

Saturday May 27th: What can one say except that we had a long day putting out all the electrical jumble we had priced in readiness for the sale on the coming Monday and then we continued work testing and pricing new items and those we had in store and with which we had not had time to deal previously.

A major problem was that we did not have enough space for all the items we had to display.

Sunday May 28th: The testing and pricing of jumble continued and as if that were not enough, we took a car boot load of rubbish to the recycling centre in Bury at about 5 p.m. before coming home.

Monday May 29th: I was awoken at 2:30 a.m. by a house alarm. Further investigation identified the house as Dave and Carole's across the road. I dressed quickly and went across to check the premises were secure, which they were, with no sign of a break-in.

I came back and tried to telephone Dave. His mobile was switched off, so I sent him a text message. Fearing that, although I saw no-one lurking about, a break-in might be attempted after I had been observed checking the house and within the twenty minutes the alarm continued to sound, before it reset itself, on the basis that it had been assumed to be falsely activated. I decided to report the incident to the police non-emergency number 101. That was a waste of time and after hanging on waiting for a response for over thirty minutes, I went online and completed a Crime-Stoppers submission to report the incident, much good that would do since any thief would be well clear by the time anyone investigated the incident, assuming they could be bothered to do so. I did leave my name and number on the anonymous report so that someone could let me know the outcome, not that I was holding my breath.

It was 3:30 a.m. before I was back in bed and I awoke again at 7:30 and decided I needed to wash and dress, since the jumble sale started at 11 a.m. and I had quite a bit still to do.

After breakfast, I was ready to leave for the Old School at 9 a.m., when I discovered our set of keys for the building was missing. I thought I must have left the keys at the Old School. I was wrong. They were nowhere to be seen and I telephoned Jenny to ask her to have a good look for them at home. Meanwhile, I continued work on the electrical equipment until 10 a.m. and then tidied up, leaving our untested stock in the cellar nice and tidy.

Jenny joined me and we were ready for the sale at 11 a.m. in good time. The initial rush had us feeling like sardines in a tin, there were so many people in the tiny space and many remarked that we needed more room. The sale petered out about 1 p.m. and we packed up, keeping back the best of the unsold stock for next time and piling all the rest in the hall ready for collection by Wendy and her chums for father Wyatt in Salford.

We were home for about 2:30 p.m., after bumping into Dave who had driven down from the Lake District to check his house over after receiving my text message. He was most grateful for my early morning inspection, which was only fair, since he checks our house over when our alarm goes off if he is in.

We had a good but unsuccessful search for the missing keys again and I decided to telephone the recycling centre in Bury to see if anyone there had found them after our trip there the previous day. They had and the keys were waiting for me to collect them. We put a few remaining items of junk in the car and headed off to the tip, calling on the way at Tesco for a six-pack of beer for the chaps there to thank them for finding our keys.

It had been a long and tiring day and we were, at last, able to relax, except that Jenny still had to prepare tea.

Tuesday May 30th: We paid a short visit to Summerseat Garden Centre in the morning. I needed a new head for my patio brush and a pair of decent gardening gloves and Jenny wanted some organic plant food and a birthday card. I couldn't find the replacement head I wanted (they had them last year) so I purchased a completely new wooden patio brush. Jenny couldn't find the organic Miracle Grow plant food (they had that last year as well) and we settled for an alternative organic plant food. I couldn't find a decent pair of gardening gloves at a reasonable price. We did qualify for a free pair of gloves with our purchases as a special offer though. They would do for the present. I also purchased a

pack of three cane hoops to tie up my blackberries to keep them off the ground, which saved me making something for which I would have had to purchase some wood and on which I would have to spend time.

After lunch at home, we commenced a jam-making process using the apricots we had bought from Unicorn the week before. While they were cooking, I started to tie up my blackberries using the cane hoops, having to leave off to make the jam.

The jam bottled and left to cool, Jenny helped me with the blackberries and then cleaned the cat's latrine while I finished off.

By the time we had done all that, it was 5 p.m. and Jenny came in to tend to the duck she was cooking for tea while I worked on organising my pictures on the computer and publishing them on my web site.

After tea, I updated the village web site, including some older pictures of a village walk that were in my personal folder.

Wednesday May 31st: We went to Bury, mainly to see if Jenny could replace the gluten-free cookery books she had lent to our landlady, Jill, in Whitby while we were there and which she had forgotten to bring back home. I had asked Jill to post them back to us, offering to refund her the postage and sent her a reminder but they had not arrived so we had decided to buy new copies. Jenny did find one of them and one she did not have in The Works.

We called in Tesco for some organic onions which they did not have. According to one of the assistants, organic onions had not been available since they had started to source their summer range. That seemed strange since we had no difficulty in obtaining them at Prestwich and they were in abundance at Unicorn. Jenny decided to make do with some salad onions she had.

Back home, I ordered the remaining two replacement books from Amazon, together with another book that Jenny wanted. Lending books was proving to be expensive.

I had a telephone call from Richard Greenwood, the plumber who should have replaced the water heater in the Old School ladies toilet the previous day and could not do so due to an emergency call-out. He was on his way and would be there in about fifteen minutes. I arranged to meet him and arrived just before him.

The Old School was open so I left him to it and asked him to telephone me when he had finished so I could make sure the building was secure.

On my way home for lunch, I met one of the regular jumbler, Maureen and we chatted for a good while. Jenny was wondering where I was by the time I arrived home for lunch.

After lunch, I cut the grass at the back, trimmed the edges, planted a flowering plant that had been sitting in a pot by one of the raised beds for ages, removed all the new growth from the sycamore stump and dug up some new trees that had seeded themselves in the back borders.

My gardening was interrupted by Richard, who arrived to tell me he had finished the

work at the Old School. I had intended to ask him about there being no hot water in the sink in the disabled toilet and we went back to look at it, not that it was on the agenda. The problem turned out to be a tap that was turned off on a mixer valve in the kitchen, the idea being that the valve controlled the temperature of the hot water to the sink such that it prevented anyone scalding themselves. The hot feed to the valve was turned off. I couldn't believe I had missed that when I looked at it!

I walked back and carried on where I had left off. Since it was only 3:30 p.m. by the time I had finished, I decided to cut the grass on the side. The recent rain had produced some considerable growth and it needed a bit of a tidy. That took me to 5 p.m. and I cleaned the lawn mower, packed up and came in for a shower.

My day wasn't over. I decided to have a look at one of the lamps I had brought from the Old School for repair. It was a halogen desk lamp and it was operated by a micro-switch at the back of the head. The micro-switch had broken and needed replacing. Spending some time taking the lamp apart made it apparent that it was of a cheap and nasty construction and repair was farthest from the mind of the designer. I decided to consign it to the scrap heap and I think it only fair to advise all those reading this that I strongly recommend giving anything from Paget Trading Limited or Paget Services of 65-66, Woodrow, London, SE18 5DH, if the companies still exist, a wide berth. Personally, I would like to see all those connected with this trashy item publically hung, drawn and quartered.

And on that cheery note, so endeth another month in this captivating saga of life at the end of the universe, aka Greenmount.