

Greenmount – November 2011

I was up early on 1st November. I had a lot of tidying to do before I collected Jenny and Rachel from the station in Manchester after their long week end in York and my even longer one at home. Their return was most welcome, although the house did seem to be a lot noisier.

Wednesday 2nd November was such a nice day, I decided to work outside and swept the leaves up off the lawn at the back for the third time this autumn. I discovered a couple of years ago that if I left the leaves where they fell, they killed off the grass and I was left with large bald patches the following spring, especially on the lawn, a fact I am sure any gardener would know.

I then turned my attention to the crab-apple tree at the front and picked up all the apples that had fallen off it. Some of these and the associated leaves were in the gutter on the side of the garage roof and I cleaned that out as well. Fortunately, I had some suitable gloves for this purpose. I could also have done with a peg for my nose.

A couple of the branches of this tree overhung the garage roof and I thought I had better remove them (a) before they damage the roof tiles and (b) before they drop any more apples on the roof or in the gutter. While I managed to saw off the offending branches, it was too late to stop them shedding their fruit in the process. Strike (b) above.

I trimmed and cut up as many of the branches for which I had time for burning on the stove in the lounge once they have dried out. The rest joined the wood for processing under the car port.

Following lunch, we went shopping to Bury for a few groceries and called at Matthew's home (a) to drop off some post and (b) to collect some network sockets he had for me for use in the Old School. Since no-one was back from work when we arrived, strike (b) again.

On Thursday 3rd November I was back in the Old School cellar, paintbrush in hand and paint on hand. I gave the skirting a coat of white gloss while Brian painted the door to the boiler room and its frame. Frank gave the staircase walls another coat of white emulsion. The place is looking a lot brighter.

In the afternoon, I took Jenny to the health centre in Tottington to have her eyes examined following a concern about the internal pressure from the optician, since Glaucoma runs in her family. The service, organised by Bury Primary Care Trust, was excellent and the examination, which I observed in almost total silence (that must be a first), thorough. The outcome was that there is no indication of any problem. Playing safe, Jenny will be recalled for a further test in about a year's time, just to be absolutely sure.

Jenny recovered sufficiently to run the Beaver session in the evening.

While on the subject of health, a few days previously I received a letter advising me to expect my second bowel testing kit, not that I have a second bowel. One's enough. It seems it is two years since my last voyage of discovery into the proverbial and it is time to repeat the

experience, the object being the early detection of bowel cancer by the search for occult blood. It sounds like something Count Dracula dreamed up.

It was another week before my fingers managed to reach the keyboard, on Thursday 10th November. In the intervening period, we managed to fit in more autumnal tasks in the garden, to the extent that the garden waste wheelie bin, due to be emptied the following day, was defying its description, being too heavy to move. We have also started our pre-Christmas cleaning, the yearly event when the house is tidied and thoroughly scrubbed from top to bottom, provided we have time. And I've received, processed and returned my bowel testing kit. I'm glad I'm not a postman.

The morning was occupied with a most interesting visit to the Bury Fusilier Museum, including lunch, arranged by the Tottington and District Civic Society, where we learnt something of Lancashire's regimental history. We kept quiet about coming from Yorkshire.

What was left of the afternoon I spent cutting up logs for the fire, being down to our last sack. Unfortunately, I seem to have stumbled on a most resistant piece of tree trunk which, I think, is birch and the pieces I have cut seem to have branches coming out of all sides, making them extremely difficult to cut with the hand-saw. It took me a good couple of hours to yield enough logs to last about as long. By this calculation, burning the fire about six hours in an evening this time of year means that I need to spend all day cutting the logs. Since both activities keep me extremely warm, winter holds no fears for me.

On Friday 11th November we went grocery shopping as usual and returned to find that Donald, one of our regular, Friday, religious visitors had left me two Jazz CDs to listen to. What a nice chap. Even better was the result from my recent exhaust test, giving my bowel the all-clear for another two years. All they need to do now is test the rest of me.

On Saturday 12th November, I decided it was time to buy a new axe and we went down to K-Supplies at Rawtenstall and, not wishing to brag, I am now in possession of a rather large chopper. While this is intended to produce logs for the fire, early attempts to swing it about on the patio, notwithstanding comments from onlookers, was to shatter three plant pots. Just imaging what I could do with a chain saw.

Sunday 13th November was Church Parade as well as the Remembrance Service and I went along to provide moral support. After lunch we took a trip to the local garden centre, mainly to find a Christmas tree for Rachel. Since her taste in decorations is somewhat different to ours, she is thinking of having her own small tree in her room. Unfortunately, she could not find one she liked and we are resolved to look elsewhere.

Monday 14th November saw the cremation of one of Jenny's cousins, Neville Shaw, at Grenoside, Sheffield and we decided to attend to pay our respects and to renew our acquaintances with other members of her family we rarely see. Having to be there by 10 a.m., we were up at 5 a.m. and on our way by 7 a.m. We called at the home of another of Jenny's cousins, Reuben Adams, at Penistone on the way. The service went as well as these things can and we all met up for refreshments in the tea rooms afterwards, where I had the opportunity to talk to several of Jenny's relatives about the family tree. One of the gathering remarked that it takes a sad occasion like this to bring us all together and the even more sad

aspect is that the next time we all meet, one of us will not be there. A somewhat sober reflection, I thought.

Reuben, Wilf (Jenny's brother), Jenny and I went to the Meadow Farm at Ecclesfield for lunch, after which Reuben went home and we gave Wilf a lift back home, meeting up with Anne for a chat, returning home for about 7 p.m., somewhat weary.

On Tuesday, Jenny and I delivered the latest village newsletter to the houses on our round and proceeded up to the post office at Holcombe Brook to return a parcel of Neckerchiefs to the Scout Shop, these being the wrong shade of gold.

I have, by invitation, secured a position on the Documented History sub-group of the Holcombe Moor Heritage Group, which I consider to be quite a coup for someone considered unworthy of being entered for a History GCE O-Level, back in the mists of time. After lunch, I went to a meeting at Ramsbottom Library of the sub-group which is researching the history of the area. It was thought that my experience of family research might prove useful. I managed to escape without volunteering for anything, my intention being to think about the work in hand. Who said history is a thing of the past?

Thursday 17th was another opportunity to brighten up the cellar staircase at the Old School and Friday 18th one to grocery shop. I declined lunch with the lads on Thursday, having logs to chop for the fire.

On Saturday 19th we celebrated another first in as much as we travelled to Ramsbottom together on the bus using our passes. The village having lost one of its services, we travelled in on the 481, only to discover we were the only two passengers on the bus. No doubt the village will lose that one as well. The closest we could get to the village on the return journey was Longsite Road, leaving us with a ten minute walk back to the village, the 481 service only running hourly. Still, since it's free to us and it was a nice day, I guess we can't grumble too much. The alternative was to walk in, which would have taken another couple of hours.

On Sunday 20th, we started cleaning the lounge, a task that lasted until the following Wednesday. Since it only gets a thorough clean once a year, I guess four days isn't bad. It just seemed it.

I didn't get chance to add to this update until after the end of the month. In the intervening period, we completed the cleaning of the lounge and most of the dining room. I successfully cut and chopped more wood for the fire, resulting in some depression of the patio block paving at the back. Most of the wood was burnt, the weather having turned rather cold. The depression in the patio remained.

Jenny started piano lessons in Ramsbottom, with a regular half-hour slot each Monday. Rachel, who reached Grade 4 and I, with a GCE O-Level in music, from pre-historic times, when the purpose of education was to teach people a lesson, provided additional tuition during the week.

The village maintenance group, of which I am a working member, continued to make progress with the decoration of the Old School cellar. It times get hard, we could move in

there.

As the month draws to a close, it only remains to wish you all a very merry Christmas and, since the next update may not be posted until the New Year, as the Chinese say, Xin Nian Kuai Le.