

Greenmount – November 2012

Thursday 1st November was a day for celebration in as much as life was about to get back to normal, not least in the kitchen, with the return of Jenny and Rachel from York. I spent most of the day tidying up as much as possible, given my continuing and prolonged affliction, journeying to the tram station in Bury about 4 p.m. The traffic around Bury centre was, for some inexplicable reason, completely jammed up and it took me ten minutes to complete the last couple of hundred yards or so.

The girls had had a good time in York, although the Yorvik Hotel, where they had stayed previously, had gone downhill and then some and they won't be lodging there again. The bad weather had not kept them in and they had been out and about, exploring and sight-seeing, not to mention shopping, so I won't.

We ended the day with a meal at the Bull's Head, reflecting on Jenny's wise decision to extend the Beaver half-term break to a second week.

On Friday 2nd November it was, once again, time to replenish the groceries and we went to Unicorn in Chorlton and Tesco in Bury, where we lunched at Costa Coffee, having called at B&Q Heap Bridge in Bury on the way out for some environmentally-friendly wood polish, which we can't get anywhere else locally, for our environmentally-unfriendly wooden furniture.

On Saturday 3rd November I spent most of the day playing with my media again while Jenny disappeared off to the book exchange at the Old School for half an hour or so. I would have gone down to help with the Scout Bonfire but I was grounded because of my condition; the cold and damp would not have done much to improve matters. Jenny and Rachel went to manage a stall for the event in the evening while I watched another three one-hour episodes of the History of Jazz. Apparently the evening was well attended, with a crowd of over 3,000 despite the rain shower. That's the bonfire, not the Jazz.

Sunday 4th November greeted us with blue skies and sunshine. We wrapped up well, braved the cold and went for a potter, or, in my case, stagger, round Ramsbottom and the charity shops, where I managed to pick up a couple of James Bond films on DVD for £1.50 each. That perked me up a bit.

On Monday 5th November Mike collected me at 10 a.m., picked up Frank and Steve and drove down to Summerseat Garden Centre for tea/coffee, toast and a planning meeting. Steve had to return home at 11, after which the remaining three of us, accompanied by Frank's dog, Molly, walked down the Kirklees Trail to Bury and back. I must admit, I did feel better for the six mile jaunt in the sun.

I returned just as Jenny was making the pot of tea for lunch and afterwards we decided to start our tidying and cleaning programme in readiness for Christmas, not that we did a lot.

We were up late on Tuesday 6th November and set about the Beaver preparation work for this week's sessions. Jenny had to leave off to go to Yoga and I brought my web site up to date. We didn't do a lot then either.

On Wednesday 7th November I met Mike at 8:15 a.m. and we walked up to Steve's house, being caught up by Frank on the way. Steve's wife gave us a lift down to the tram station in Bury and we were sipping coffee on Piccadilly Station before 10 a.m. We caught the train down to Marple and proceeded along the Peak Forest Canal tow path for about eight miles, until we reached the junction with the Huddersfield Narrow Canal at Portland Basin. This stretch seemed quite rural to say that it passes through built-up areas, once thriving with industrial activity. There was evidence of dereliction, a testament to the decline of this once great nation, not least in that the only pub at which we intended to call for lunch, The Cheshire Ring, had closed down. We did find a recreation area with a solitary picnic bench, where we lunched. The public facilities were a little basic, being in the form of large, vertical, deciduous, wooden structures.

From Portland Basin we turned right towards Stalybridge. This was certainly in contrast to the previous stretch of canal, with litter and debris along the towpath and in the canal. It was not particularly nice and it was not surprising that in the whole of our journey we saw only one boat travelling along the canal and that was near Marple. At one point, just after leaving Portland Basin, the canal disappears underneath an Asda store with no indication regarding the route for the towpath. We did eventually find it after wandering the perimeter of Asda, viewed suspiciously by security men.

Arriving at Stalybridge, we reflected on the ten mile trek and settled in the bar on the station, an excellent establishment serving a variety of real ales, including one organic ale from Liverpool Brewery. To Mike's disappointment, there was no Guinness, so after one round, we back-tracked to The Old Fleece which did have Guinness but they were out of real ale. It seems one can't have everything in life.

We staggered back up to the station and were back in Bury for 6:45 p.m., where Steve's wife was waiting for us. All in all, it was a good day out, apart from the lack of real ale.

Jenny's day had not been so good. The Miele washer had decided it was time to stop working, having succeeded in blocking its filter.

On Thursday 8th November, the first job of the day was to fix the washer. It was simply a case of draining the water and removing, cleaning and replacing the filter. This was slightly easier and a lot less messy that it was with the Dyson and I thought the Dyson was good. I couldn't help reflecting that if we'd had the good sense to lose the last war, just think where *our* non-existent industry would have been today.

The next task was to prepare for the Beaver meetings this week. That, believe it or not, took us up to lunchtime.

After lunch, I decided to have another look at my desktop computer, although I did have a back-up plan to borrow one from Matthew and even a Plan C (that must be a first) to buy a new one, possibly from Scan. After removing more of its innards and fiddling, I came to the conclusion that the problem was down to a faulty power switch on the front panel. This was after I had removed the CPU cooling fan, cleaned it and replaced it, temporarily, without any new thermal cement. The plan was to obtain some isopropyl alcohol, with which to clean these bonding surfaces, some thermal cement and a new power switch the following day.

This could have been the first productive day of the week, I thought.

On Friday 9th November we planned our route for grocery shopping to allow for a detour to PC World in Bury on our return from Unicorn in Chorlton, before calling at Tesco for lunch at Costa Coffee and yet more groceries. I managed to find the thermal bonding compound I needed at PC World but they had no isopropyl alcohol. Nor did they have a power switch. I drove up to the small computer shop on Walmersley Road, where the chap was not particularly helpful, being in a hurry to depart on some sort of mission. I gave up and settled for lunch. Afterwards, I decided to try Boots Chemist for the alcohol, without success. Silly me. Fancy expecting a leading chemist to stock isopropyl alcohol.

On Saturday 10th November it was time to give the small computer shop on the way to Ramsbottom a try and I managed to obtain a second-hand switch for £1. Unfortunately, the leads were far too short and it was my intention to replace them by soldering on the longer leads from the old switch at some later juncture. Meanwhile, being half way to Ramsbottom, we decided we might as well make an afternoon of it and tour the charity shops. I found a four-cassette tape box with book covering the early years of Louis Armstrong for £2.50. "Could this be a collector's item?" I thought. It must have been because I collected it.

On Sunday 11th November we were up early for Church Parade, this being a special Remembrance Day service and, for once, the church was packed. The normal but shortened church service was followed by an outdoor one, where wreaths were laid at the village war memorial by people representing a number of different organisations, so much so that they ran out of places to hang them.

After lunch, I had a quick look at the power switch I had purchased and the idea of soldering the old wires onto the replacement switch did not particularly appeal. I then hit on the idea of removing the reset switch, which I never use and deploying this as the power switch. I decided to sleep on it – and it was damned uncomfortable.

On Monday 12th November, I had a morning planning meeting with the chaps over tea/coffee at the Summerseat Garden Centre followed by a session at the Old School with Frank measuring the Scout Room for shelving. I arrived back home just in time for lunch. I would have started work on my computer had I the dreaded isopropyl alcohol. Since I hadn't, I telephoned my local, very helpful chemist where Keith said he would have some for me by the morning and possibly later in the day. I collected it just before 6 p.m. at the extortionate price of £9 for 500 ml, which, Keith assured me was a very good bargain.

Tuesday 13th November was the day I finally rebuilt my computer and by lunchtime it was back on my desk in the conservatory, powered up and refusing to find Windows. There was a wrong configuration setting in the BIOS and I didn't know which one. After lunch and some fiddling around it finally burst into life and a brief examination of the system seemed to indicate all was well. I set about the task of moving all my data and E-mail from Jenny's laptop back to my desktop, completing the process by just after 1 a.m. the following morning.

Wednesday 14th November was the day we definitely decided to start cleaning and tidying ready for Christmas, a process we normally start at the beginning of the November. We

successfully completed work on the lounge. I successfully downed a very nice organic pale ale.

After giving my newly-restored, desktop computer some TLC to fix an obscure problem I had encountered the previous evening, or to be more precise, early this very morning, the furious activity of the previous day continued on 15th November, our attention concentrated on the dining area

I should have been walking with the chaps in the sunshine, heading for Yorkshire.

It was after lunch that Jenny's chance stray into the garage was to reveal just exactly how fortuitous my decision to forgo the pleasures of the open countryside had been. The boiler once again had decided to do its impression of a colander and the garage floor had more water on it than there probably was in the canal of which the banks I should have been enjoying. A call to British Gas resulted in an engineer arriving within an hour or so and he replaced a worn washer on a different connection to the one that caused the problem on the previous occasion. It seems our boiler is old and past its best. It's in good company. Still, at least we had hot water and heating again and Jenny could have her shower before going to Beavers. I also had a shower and contemplated the possibility of buying a new boiler.

I met Jenny and Rachel at the Old School after Beavers and we walked down to the Cricket Club where we cast our votes for the local council elections and the new police commissioner, much good may it do. As far as political democracy is concerned, it would be nice if we had one. That is to say one in which every vote counted. As for the police commissioner, I'd be happy to do the job for less than half the six figure salary on offer. What a complete waste of public money.

Our usual Friday grocery shop on Friday 16th November resulted in a detour to Asda at Pilsworth on our return trip from Unicorn in Chrolton. We decided to bring these groceries home to unload before returning to Tesco in Bury for the remaining items we needed, enabling us to lunch at Summerseat Garden Centre on the way.

Not satisfied with having spent far more than usual the previous day, we were back at the Garden Centre on 17th November for some Christmas shopping and, yes, you've guessed it, lunch.

Sunday 18th was another unproductive day but at least we didn't spend anything. We were at the Lumb Carr car park at the base of Holcombe Hill before 10 a.m., where the Beavers were gathering for a Remembrance Day walk to Pilgrim's Cross. We set off about 10:30, walking up past Harcles Quarry and over Harcles Hill to the Cross, where we met up with Cubs and Scouts, each group having followed a different route up the hill from different starting points. We ate a packed lunch in the sunshine and about 5°C. A brief service was held round the Cross before returning to the car park via Peel Tower on Holcombe Hill, Jenny managing to disappear up to her ankles in a deep gulley full of water over which she was supposed to have jumped. Her bog-leaping skills obviously need some development.

On Monday 19th November we continued our cleaning, continuing in the dining area. It took us all morning to tidy, sort out and clean the book case. Needless to say we didn't get very

far.

On Tuesday 20th November we managed to finish the dining area before Jenny went off to Yoga, as if she hadn't had enough exercise over the past couple of days.

On Wednesday 21st November, Jenny gave the intrepid four (Mike, Frank, Steve and me) a lift to Bury and we made our way to Huddersfield on the train, where we walked back along the canal tow-path to Marsden, some 8 miles, the first half-hour or so being just a tad damp. I was impressed by the Huddersfield station building and by the large statue of the best prime-minister in my lifetime, Harold Wilson, in the square outside and it was at this juncture that I regretted not having brought my camera, a decision imposed by the early-morning, pouring rain. I persuaded the chaps to continue on to the Standedge Tunnel, this being the opposite end to that we visited a few weeks previously, before returning to the pub by the station at Marsden for a pint or two. By the time we got the train back, it was dark and very cold. Jenny picked us up from the Bury tram station just before we froze to the spot.

On Thursday 22nd November we deployed our cleaning skills in the toilet and bathroom, Jenny having started the previous day. I did the bits she had not, like the ceiling and the tiles. The bathroom was in need of some remedial work and I resolved to start by buying a new bracket for the shower-head to replace the broken one and a new seal for the bottom of the glass bath screen. I also needed to remove and replace some of the silicone round the bath because mould has started to grow in it. This I left for another day.

Friday 23rd November was the usual grocery shop with a few detours and it didn't get off to a good start. I had prepared a list of what we needed to do and the order in which we needed to do it so that we didn't forget anything.

I dropped Mike's birthday card off and then headed to Elton Electrical to place an order for some stainless steel eyeball spots to replace the cheap and nasty brass-effect ones we had purchased from B&Q a few years ago for the kitchen and entrance hall and which had started to rust quite badly. I had, of course, completely forgotten to call at Frank's house to drop off his birthday card.

I took the shortest route to Elton, through Tottington, thinking it would be quicker. It wasn't. We hit two lots of signal-controlled road works.

Having established the spots I wanted would be in on the coming Wednesday, we headed for Unicorn at Chorlton. The motorway traffic was horrendous, all thanks to queuing traffic trying to get to the Trafford Centre. We did manage to make significant progress by making room for an emergency ambulance to pass us and then slipping in the fast lane behind it. It's amazing what flashing blue lights and a siren can do. I must get some.

We had scheduled to call at B&Q to buy some paint for the entrance hall ceiling and walls and for the kitchen ceiling to spruce them up before Christmas but we didn't have time after all the delays.

We lunched at Costa Coffee in Tesco, Bury and I walked over to the plumbers, Alan Garvey

while Jenny bought the groceries. On my list was a new, Mira, shower-head bracket and a new seal for the bottom of the Ideal Standard curved bath screen in the bathroom. I achieved a 50% success rating in that, not only did the chap have the bracket in stock, but he took the old one off the rail I had conveniently brought with me and slid the new one on for me. The bad news was that I had to obtain the seal directly from Ideal Standard and the chap identified the model number of the screen and wrote it down for me so I could buy the correct item. What a helpful chap.

I arrived back at Tesco just in time to take the trolley to the till and pay for the groceries. It's one of the things I do well.

I remembered to call at Frank's house with his card on the way back home and we had just about an hour to spare before we were off out again to Ramsbottom Fire Station, where the Beavers were visiting as part of the Friendship Challenge Badge. My job was to take pictures.

Afterwards, I had less than an hour at home before I was off again to a meeting of the Scout Fellowship, or, to give it its proper title, the S.A.S. (I kid you not.)

Rachel had been up Holcombe Hill with the Cubs in the dark and we arrived back home together. It was 9 p.m. before we managed to sit down to tea.

On Saturday 24th November, our services were in demand at the annual Christmas fair, Santa's Christmas Cracker, at the Old School. Jenny was on a stall and I wandered round taking photographs, destined, eventually, for the village web site.

We had a brief rest for a couple of hours at home before all three of us made our way to an evening at the Cricket Club, where John Gibson, a Scout of long-standing and Jenny's and Rachel's training assessor, was presented with the Silver Acorn, a very high award, for services rendered. I took the opportunity to sample the guest real ale and we had a pea and pie supper, decidedly and sadly not of the organic variety.

The 25th November, being a Sunday should have been a day of rest. No such luck. Jenny and Rachel went off on a shopping spree to Asda at Pilsworth while I finally got round to cutting some logs for the fire the hard way – using the bow saw. I would have deployed my electric bench saw for the more manageable branches I had stashed on my drive but on removing it from the box, I discovered the metal casing had broken. Time to buy a decent one, I thought.

We had planned to visit Sheffield on Monday 26th November but owing to circumstances beyond my control (my bad memory), I had double-booked myself and, good as I am, I have not yet perfected the art of being in two places at once. Being able to multi-task would be a good start.

I postponed my trip to Sheffield for a week in favour of a meeting with Bury Council Highways Department regarding the placing of a village sign, mounted on a large rock, on the grass verge, approaching the village along Brandlesholme Road. I realised too late that the meeting was a week hence and now clashed with my revised visit to Sheffield. Jenny's comment in respect of this element of confusion on my part was that I was trying to do too

much. It's a pity I didn't do more in the scheduling department.

On Tuesday 27th November, Jenny went off to a charity morning, came home briefly for lunch and then disappeared off to Yoga. I took on the male equivalent of the role of Cinderella, washed the pots, emptied and cleaned the recycling bins, cleaned out and re-laid the fire and cut some logs.

On Wednesday 28th November, I should have been enjoying the cold winter sunshine, walking 15 miles with the chaps in the wilds of Yorkshire. As it was, I had rearranged my schedule so we could go to Sheffield, my objective being to help my sister, Barbara, with some small jobs prior to her move to Redcar a couple of weeks hence. Jenny's objective was to pack the car full of more car boot stock. We called at the Beefeater at Heaton Park on the way home for an excellent meal.

On Thursday 29th November, we unpacked the car, sorted the previous day's booty and continued our attempts to tidy the garage so that we could put one of the cars in it (now there's a novelty), leaving the other under the car port to protect it from the overnight frost. I also started to clear the gutters of leaves and gave up because it was too cold, the leaves being frozen to the gutter.

On the last day of the month, we went grocery shopping as usual, this being a Friday, to Unicorn and Tesco in Bury, where we, once again, lunched at Costa Coffee.

Our outward journey commenced with a trip to Elton Electrical to purchase the new steel spots for the kitchen and entrance hall. These turned out not to be the pressed-steel, stainless-steel spots I had purchased previously for the garage, car port and bathroom but cheaper, die-cast, metal fittings with a brushed-steel finish. As to their durability, only time will tell. I was not impressed.

A second stop at the clothes weigh-in in Bury netted us some ready cash, destined for the car-boot fund, as opposed to my beer fund.

And so ends another somewhat sober, fun-packed month.