

Greenmount – October 2013

I managed to force myself out of bed about 8 a.m. on Tuesday 1st October, intent on tackling a couple of long-standing jobs.

Jenny wanted some help to finish unpacking the car from the previous Sunday's car boot sale, having left a couple of heavy boxes in it and the garage needed tidying up. While I was waiting for her to do whatever women do in the bathroom for what seems like hours on end, I decided to commence the assault on the fire place in the lounge. I had just about removed all the ash from the fire as Jenny arrived on the scene, raring to go. I took the ash to the bin and then we started tidying up and putting up the back seats in the car so she could take a couple of friends to The Red Hall for lunch. One of her friends, Lynn, had just reached 60 and was treating Jenny and Sheila to lunch, although Jenny was the only one of the three who could drive.

While Jenny was out, I cleaned and tidied the fire, the hearth, the mantle shelf and the mirror. This feverish activity was punctuated by a visit from Tracey Hayhoe to collect some weed killer for and the means of deploying it on the Incredible Edible plot extension, designated to become a wild-flower garden.

I had the pleasure of Tracey's company again when she returned my bits and pieces and stayed for a coffee while I had lunch. Afterwards I installed the new fan in the bathroom, put the cable-ties round the exhaust ducting in the loft, put the insulation back in place in the loft and, what must be a first for me, put away all my tools.

That left me with just enough time to wash the few pots from lunch time and empty the rubbish into the various bins outside before Jenny returned at about 4 p.m. after a most enjoyable and very leisurely lunch.

It was almost time for a beer. I decided to update my web site, check my E-mail and record this account of the day's events before grabbing the trusty old beer pot Matthew brought me back from Prague on one of his school trips many years ago. Unfortunately there was no beer in the fridge because I had not replenished the supply from the back-up store – the cupboard in the dining room. My thirst was to continue for another thirty minutes or so.

What a contrast on Wednesday 2nd October, when I did very little indeed, except nurse my aching limbs from the contortions of the previous day.

On Thursday 3rd October I was up at 8:15 a.m., some 15 minutes later than planned due to the alarm clock-radio having been moved off-station, no doubt in one of Jenny's dusting frenzies.

I just about managed to be ready for Tracey when she called at 9 a.m. We had planned to canvass all the local shops and businesses to find out if they would welcome Christmas trees with lights on the outsides of their buildings to brighten up the village. The plan was for the Village Community to fund and organise everything except the electricity to power the lights and all the shop owner would have to do is switch them on and off. This strategy depended somewhat on the availability of grants, which were not maturing as rapidly as we had hoped.

Nevertheless, enthusiasm abounded and Tracey and I resolved to try to make the arrangements for the coming festive season.

A quick trip to Tesco in Bury for something for tea, some bottled water, some bananas and any other items on offer of which we could make use, was followed by an even quicker lunch and a trip to the nurse for the completion of my annual check-up. While there were some good things in my favour, I am still too short for my weight and my cholesterol is a little on the high side, though no higher than it has been for some time. The result was that I needed to lose some weight and I had six months in which to do it, at which point I was to be summoned for a fasting blood test. The incentive was to avoid medication, such as Statins.

Needless to say, I spent the rest of the day sat at my computer. Jenny went off to take the Beavers selling bonfire tickets in the torrential rain. I was left to put the finishing touches to tea.

On Friday 4th October we embarked on our usual shopping trip to Unicorn and Waitrose, lunching at the latter – or at least I did, eating a reasonably healthy chicken pesto salad sandwich on tomato bread, instead of the peppery Cornish pasty I like and usually have. Jenny could not find anything in the limited choice to suit and she settled on just a cup of tea.

Over lunch I managed to glance at the Daily Telegraph and a couple of articles caught my eye.

The first had encouraging words about the upturn in the economy with growth in the services sector and the rise in house prices. Growth in the services sector is absolutely pointless and does not advance our society one iota. To use that as a measure of our economic success is ludicrous. The rise in house prices benefits only those who have them and not those who need them. How is this good news?

The second was a prediction from Bob Geldorf that the human race is facing extinction and I seem to recall that he gave us all ten years. Now I have held the opinion for some time that we are facing a crisis of biblical proportions and, while I do not agree with Bob Geldorf's timescale, I firmly believe that the population of the human race will be reduced to between 15 and 20% by the end of this century and that it will be lucky to survive the next century. I also believe that we can prevent this catastrophe provided we take decisive action within the next nine years. After that, we shall have passed the point of no return and our fate will be inevitable no matter what we do.

Unfortunately, while our great leaders and governments are driven by greed and selfishness, there is little hope of any change for the better in time to do any good. So, I fear, whether you're on an income in seven figures or approaching zero, while you may take great pleasure from your grandchildren, they are unlikely to do so from theirs.

Back to the plot.

We diverted to the Trafford Centre on the return journey to collect the new De'Longhi

dehumidifier I had ordered the previous week and, on returning home, I installed it in the conservatory to acclimatise while I went to help Jenny with her Beavers.

On this particular evening, we went selling tickets for the Scout bonfire on 2nd November. I had two very good young Scout helpers with my group of five Beavers and I split them into two to go knocking on doors on our designated route. All went extremely well, the Beavers being very keen and well behaved and my two assistants providing supervision and encouragement, requiring minimal input from me. All I did was to manage the money, the volume of which, I have to say, was a little disappointing, although not for the lack of trying. It was frustrating to find that some people didn't even bother to answer the door even though it was obvious they were in and many were not at home. We were grateful to those who bought tickets or gave us donations, supporting the annual event, the proceeds of which help to fund Scouting activities in Greenmount.

On returning to the Old School, I found Jenny and her group was already there. The third group was missing and we were already fifteen minutes late finishing the session. I retraced my steps back to our round and found the third group that had just started heading back. It was about 7 p.m. before we got back home for tea, which Jenny had to cook and I still had the pots to wash from the previous evening's meal and breakfast.

It was 9 p.m. before we had finished tea, a fresh tuna salad (more healthy eating) and a bottle of Yellow Tail Chardonnay (not so healthy drinking) – that was following a Baccardi and Coke in my case and a Vodka and tonic for Jenny.

Not surprising, then, that Jenny managed to fall over on the drive on the way to the Saturday morning “drop-in” at the Old School on 5th October, this event (the “drop-in”, not Jenny's trip) being held on the first Saturday of every month, with bits and pieces on sale and a very reasonably-priced pea and pie lunch for those who want it. Actually, she missed her footing and tripped, partly because she was hurrying and, I thought, partly because she was looking through the wrong part of her varifocal glasses. Fortunately, there was no real harm done except for a few grazes and bruises.

We returned home for lunch, since I am off pies.

After lunch we went for a stroll down the Kirklees Trail as far as the new bridge over the valley and then retraced our steps for some much needed exercise, especially on my part. It was sunny and unusually warm for this time of year and very pleasant.

It was the first Church Parade of the school year on Sunday 6th October, this being a special service for the harvest festival and everyone had been asked to bring along donations of food, this year intended for Father Wyatt in Salford. While much of Salford has been redeveloped and has attracted the more prosperous dweller, particularly along the waterfront, there is still a large amount of poverty and homelessness and while this glorious government of ours can find millions of pounds for the poor and starving in far off lands, it does little or nothing for its own people, except, of course, to destroy their jobs in manufacturing and create utterly pointless, highly-paid ones in the finance sector. Thankfully, there are a dedicated few who do their best to ease the suffering and we all do well to remember a good old Yorkshire saying: “There are no pockets in shrouds”.

I spent the afternoon cutting the grass, pruning back the trees and fruit bushes and hoeing the borders in the back garden. The result was a recycling bin full of garden waste and an aching body.

On Monday 7th October I had an early morning (well, 9 o'clock) breakfast meeting with Mike and Steve, Frank being on holiday. That took me up to nearly lunch time, after which Jenny and I brought out and dusted down the bikes for a ride down the Kirklees Trail as far as Brandlesholme Road and back, about four miles in all. The return journey is a long slow climb and, for the first time, Jenny managed it without having to stop. Roaming dogs, which Jenny managed to avoid, interrupted my efforts. At least, that's my excuse.

On Tuesday 8th October we had a day out at the Black Country Living Museum in Dudley. Jenny had been wanting to go there for a long time, particularly since we discovered her mother's family came from that area. It was well worth the visit, more so because the tickets are valid for a year and we can go back as many times as we like. It just means tackling the M6, which, on this occasion, was not too bad. The fact that we left it at junction 10, before Birmingham, might have had something to do with that.

As far as the museum is concerned, we did not have time to see everything or to spend as much time as we would have liked to talk to the various people who took on character roles from the early 20th century as part of the museum, hence the "Living" in the title.

For those seeking a little nostalgia, or simply curious about life a hundred years ago, it is well worth a visit. We shall certainly return, M6 permitting.

Wednesday 9th October saw the start of the work on the kitchen – eventually. It was simply a case of painting and cleaning to brighten it up and what I expected to be a fairly quick task turned into yet another major project.

The first challenge was to tidy away all the bits and pieces that Jenny has acquired littered around the kitchen work surfaces and cupboard tops. The second was to cover everything – and I mean everything – up so that nothing was splashed with the sugar soap solution I used to wash down the ceiling.

Washing the ceiling seemed to take hours, probably because it did, and five or six buckets of water. You wouldn't believe the dirt that came off the ceiling. It was 8:30 p.m. before we sat down to tea, after clearing up and removing all the covers.

On top of that, Rachel was out and telephoned for a lift up from Bury at about 11 p.m., so we didn't get to bed before midnight.

I had been invited to join Frank and Steve for a ramble along the Gritstone Trail in Derbyshire, commencing at 8:15 on Thursday 10th October. Following the previous day's exercise, I was aching all over and still in bed at 9 a.m., so the walk was out of the question.

I did intend to cover everything up again in the kitchen and wash the ceiling with clean water to remove the sugar soap residue prior to painting but Jenny wanted to prepare some dishes

in there so I settled down to spend a relaxing day on the branch of my family tree researching the Allinson family, courtesy of information received from a member of the family.

Friday 11th October saw us at Unicorn and Waitrose on the south west side of Manchester gathering groceries for the week ahead.

On Saturday 12th October, we walked down to post Sheila's birthday card through her letter box, called at the Co-op on Vernon Road on the way back to withdraw some cash and, on arriving home, started to pick up the crab apples that had fallen off the tree at the front of the house.

Some of the branches were overhanging the garage roof and the apples were falling into the gutter. I had decided some time ago to remove this tree and this seemed like a good opportunity, so out came the bow saw. A couple of hours later undid all the effects of the shower I had taken that morning.

In the evening, following another good sponge down, we went to Mary Seddon's 60th birthday bash at the church hall in Tottington. We walked up with Frank and Gwen and collected Martin and Jean on the way. Mary had organised a Ceilidh and a pea and pie supper and we all had a thoroughly good time despite my two left feet. It was one a.m. before we hit the sack.

Needless to say, we didn't rise until after 11 a.m. on Sunday 13th October and I had a lazy but very frustrating day. I updated the village web site with some pictures of the Greenmount Sidings Opening only to discover that Microsoft Publisher did not generate the HTML code properly and many of the links to open up the pictures were missing. I spent ages looking at the HTML code to find out why and eventually managed to edit the code to make it work. This was very time consuming and was not a long-term solution since Publisher regenerated the code for every page each time changes were made.

I continued my attempts to sort out the web pages on Monday 14th October and eventually gave up, resolving to put time and effort into completely rewriting the web site in XHTML and CSS, something I started a while ago and which I had not had time to continue. It seemed I didn't have much alternative at this juncture, thanks to yet more of Microsoft's badly developed software which has not been maintained in keeping with developments in browser technology.

After lunch, we went to deliver the latest issue of the local newsletter, Greenmount Voice, to residents on our round. We returned home just as the rains came. Not bad timing, really.

On Tuesday 15th October, I went to help prepare the wild flower bed at the Incredible Edible plot with Frank and Tracey and we succeeded in constructing the raised beds at the back for the fruit bushes and marking out the bed for the wild flowers, followed by tea and coffee and a chat in the Bull's Head.

In the afternoon, I resumed the rewrite of the village web site in XHTML and CSS with a bit of Java script thrown in for good measure. It was about six months since I last looked at it

and it took me a few minutes to get back into the swing, as it were.

When Jenny returned from Yoga, we went to Asda at Pilsworth for a few bits and pieces, as one does.

On Wednesday 16th October, Rachel gave us a lift to Bury on her way to work. Jenny wanted to deposit some of her Car Boot cash in the bank before her handbag got too heavy and she needed some woggles to invest some new Beavers later in the week. New Beavers don't just get a woggle. They get a neckerchief as well. We caught the bus back and, once again, just got in as it started to pour down.

We went to lunch at the Red Hall (3 courses for £9.99) with Frank and Gwen. As it turned out, it was their wedding anniversary, so I offered to pay but Gwen was having none of it and insisted on going halves.

After lunch, I couldn't resist the intricacies of XHTML.

On Thursday 17th October, I decided it was time I tackled the kitchen again and it took a good hour and a half to cover everything up before starting to wash the ceiling with clean water to remove the sugar soap residue from the previous session. It took me ages and I was absolutely shattered afterwards, so we tidied up and Jenny prepared herself for Beavers.

We were up at 7 a.m. on Friday 18th October and out of the house before 9 a.m. Jenny went with Rachel to the craft shop in Ramsbottom for some bits for the Cubs and I followed on in our car, collecting Jenny afterwards to go to Unicorn and then Waitrose for groceries. We were back home by 1 p.m. and, after lunch, I was back on my PC.

On Saturday 19th October, we went round to the Old School to start sorting out the electrical items for the coming jumble sale. We had the delightful company of small children at a birthday party for which the school had been booked and we were ushered into the bottom room, the only vacant one, where we could work. Fortunately, it was the farthest one from the DJ. We did receive visits from some of the children who seemed to be more interested in what we were doing than the music. I can't say I blamed them.

It was late in the evening when Rachel announced that the bathroom lights had failed. They had been flickering intermittently for a while and my deduction was that the low voltage transformer had given up the ghost.

I was back in the loft on Sunday 20th October, shifting the huge wads of insulation to try to find the transformer for the bathroom lights. I finally located it, buried under heaps of insulation and promptly removed it with some difficulty whilst impersonating the hunchback of Notre Dame.

Back on the kitchen worktop, I connected up the transformer to test it and, sure enough, the output registered no voltage whatsoever, which, quite frankly, was something of a relief because I didn't want to have to go rummaging in the loft for a fault elsewhere. I had intended to replace it with a transformer the kitchen extension lights which I thought were still 12 volt. I was wrong and I must have thrown that one away when we had a leak from

the bathroom waste pipe some time ago, the connection between the leak and the lights being that while I was in the loft fixing the leak, I thought I'd remove the transformer and convert the lights to mains voltage. In fact, I think the leak may have damaged the transformer at the time, which would have been a good reason for discarding it.

After that, a brief respite and lunch was followed by a trip to Matthew's house, calling at B&Q to see if they had a replacement transformer, which they didn't. Matthew was in the process of preparing for a Cisco IP Telephony implementation across the new Manchester NHS Purchasing Consortium network which took me back a bit and made me quite envious.

I spent an hour on the morning of Monday, 21st October, trying to locate a new transformer for the bathroom lights and Guild Electrical Supplies in Bury said they did not have one in stock but would try to obtain one for me and called back to say they would have one by 4 p.m.

We went off to Winfields at Haslingden to see if their outdoor shop had any gaiters for my walk in Wales over the next couple of days. I wasn't hopeful. I had not been to Winfields for a good few years and their outdoor shop was not particularly well stocked in those days.

What a change we found and, this was one of those rare occasions when it was a change for the better. The new (to me) outdoor department was better than Blacks, being much nearer, and with free car parking. I found some good Gortex (waterproof) gaiters and ended up purchasing a new 60 litre rucksack and a waterproof rucksack cover. Jenny found a pair of thermal, waterproof gloves, similar to mine, which she has been wanting for months. It was an expensive outing.

We lunched at Summerseat Garden centre and came back home to await the call from Guild Electrical Supplies. When it didn't mature, I checked my mobile 'phone just after 4 p.m. and noticed a missed call. I telephoned Guild Electrical Supplies to discover the transformer was there waiting for me. I rushed down for it and, on returning, spent about an hour in the loft installing it.

I had suspected that the reason the old one had failed was because it had been buried under the new, thick loft insulation and had overheated so I screwed the new one to a sloping roof support well above the insulation.

After packing up, I glanced at the installation instructions and it said that the transformer should be mounted horizontally. I was not best pleased and resolved to leave it until I had more time.

I was up at 4:30 a.m. on Tuesday 22nd October and ready for the taxi that arrived at 6 a.m. to take Mike, Frank, Steve and me to Piccadilly Station in Manchester to catch the train to Shrewsbury. So far so good.

It was over a quick tea/coffee prior to boarding the train that I realised I had picked up Jenny's size 14 waterproof coat instead of my large one. "Oh dear!" (or words to that effect) I thought.

We caught the train to Shrewsbury and the change there to another train to take us to Knighton, where we finished our last day on Offa's Dyke and where we were starting this day's walk, also went smoothly enough.

Arriving at Knighton, it started to rain and we put on our waterproof jackets. It was too warm for a fleece, which is just as well because Jenny's size 14 was just a little tight for me.

By the time we had walked to the bottom of the climb, leaving the village of Knighton, the rain had become quite heavy and it was time to take shelter close to some public toilets to put on our waterproof trousers. Picture, if you will, four chaps hanging about outside a public loo, putting on their trousers.

We started the climb to the top of the hill, about 1,000 feet, at about 10:15 a.m., after which the walk was across undulating ground soaked with days of heavy rain, although the rain had turned to lighter showers by then.

We reached Dolly Green by about 1 p.m., about half an hour behind the slowest schedule in the book and decided to stop for lunch in a field, under some trees, sitting on some damp logs on a bit of a slope. I stepped over a log to sit on it and my right foot slipped on the bare, sodden, clay soil. As it did so, my right leg folded under me and I, complete with full rucksack, went down with a thud and a crack on my right ankle to further exclamations of phrases like "Oh dear, I've hurt my ankle!" and further comments like "I could do with a break," to which Frank said at least I hadn't lost my sense of humour.

After composing myself for a couple of minutes, I managed to free my leg and eat a sandwich. When it was time to leave, I stood up and tried a few steps. It soon became clear I would be unable to continue walking and I was left opposite Yew Tree Farm, Discoed with some Ibuprofen gel for my ankle to await a taxi to take me to our hotel for the night at The Royal Oak, Kington while Mike, Frank and Steve continued their walk.

Once settled in the hotel room and in some discomfort, I showered, changed, massaged my ankle, which by then resembled the Hindenburg, with the gel and slept for most of the afternoon.

The following morning, Wednesday 23rd October, while my three colleagues set off to walk to Hay-on-Wye, I hobbled down to the bus stop to catch the 9:50 bus to Hereford, where we were staying at The Green Dragon on Broad Street. At least the bus ride was free, thanks to my senior citizen's pass.

That took about an hour and a quarter, during which I was able to rest my ankle, which is just as well, because I had to walk about half a mile from the bus stop to the hotel and, just to add a little interest, I had no idea where Broad Street was, other than it was near the cathedral.

Fortunately, I headed in the right direction and stumbled on, or, to be more precise, stumbled into, The Green Dragon at about 11:20 a.m. Unfortunately, I was told my room would not be ready until 2 p.m. I was allowed to place my rucksack in the cloakroom, which resembled a broom cupboard and that was a weight off my shoulders, not to mention my

ankle. I took up residence in a comfy arm chair in the hotel lobby until about 1 p.m., watching the comings and goings and marvelling at the beautiful, old-fashioned interior; the hotel was like something out of an Agatha Christie novel and I expected Miss Marple to turn up any minute.

I hobbled back into the town and found a Costa Coffee shop for lunch, which killed another hour as well as my right leg. My room was ready and the afternoon was a repeat of the previous one without the shower, not that the facilities were lacking, just my will.

Needless to say, as with the previous evening, we dined in.

And so Thursday 24th October arrived and the prospect of returning home came ever closer. We spent the morning touring the cathedral, which was most impressive and is well worth a visit. We returned to the hotel where we had arranged a taxi to take us to the station and boarded the train to Manchester Piccadilly at 13:08. That journey, followed by yet another pit stop for tea/coffee (or in my case, an orange juice), a tram ride to Bury and a taxi to Greenmount, got me home for about 16:15, before Jenny went to Beavers.

I washed off the Ibuprofen gel and covered my ankle, which did seem to have reduced in size a little and was, by then, exhibiting all the colours of the rainbow, with Arnica cream before retiring for the night.

Friday 25th October showed no real improvement and the Arnica cream went, to be replaced by Aloe Vera directly from the leaf off the plant in the conservatory. This did seem to provide some relief, enough for me to drive the car to Unicorn and to Waitrose for our weekly shop and back.

Despite my continuing discomfort, we spent three productive days on Saturday 26th, Sunday 27th and Monday 28th October at The Old School preparing for the jumble sale and at the sale itself, netting a tidy sum in the electrical department, from which, every October, the church benefits. A slight deviation to the tip with rubbish from The Old School, to Tracey's to weigh in some old clothes in exchange for cash, to Asda for a few groceries and to Vets4Pets to buy some more diet biscuits for one of our fat cats, Toffee, on the morning of Monday 28th October provided some light relief.

We were off to St. Neots in Cambridgeshire, a little later than planned, on Tuesday 29th October. The intention was to visit the area from which Jenny's ancestors came, Great Staughton and the surrounding area and to take a look at Cambridge. The journey went without a hitch and with a brief stop for our packed lunch. We found our accommodation, The Nags Head, in St. Neots, settled in and went for a stroll round the small market town before returning for an excellent evening meal and bed. My ankle was still quite swollen and painful and, by this time, being treated overnight with a cotton-wool bandage soaked in Witch Hazel.

On Wednesday 30th October, the bright, sunny, but cold, day tempted us to visit Cambridge and we caught the X5 bus from St. Neots somewhat later than planned. We had intended to board the 9:50 but it was a good twenty minutes late and full. We waited for the next one, supposedly due at 9:20 and only about fifteen minutes late and managed to find a seat on

that. The bus, more like a coach, was very comfortable and the journey time just over 30 minutes.

Cambridge itself, we thought, was not as impressive as Oxford and if I had to sum it up in one word, that word would be claustrophobic. It is not a place in which I would want to stay or even visit a second time and, quite frankly, I cannot see the attraction as an academic centre apart from its reputation, which, again in my opinion, is over-rated.

We lunched at the café in the Tourist Information office and then followed the city tour, outlined on the Tourist Information map of the city. As a guide, it was most helpful and I did manage to take some pictures of most of the places it mentioned, including most of the colleges from the outside.

We caught the 16:01 bus back to St. Neots just before it left, grabbing the last couple of available seats.

After returning to our room for a brief rest, we found a pub called the Weeping Ash at which to eat. Now this is a Wetherspoon pub and I know I said some months previous that I would never set foot in one again, but we thought they can't all be bad.

How wrong can you be? It was a "chicken" night and we each ordered a dish even Wetherspools have never managed to foul (or should that be fowl?) up – thus far. We ordered Chicken Pepper Skewers with Piri Piri sauce and a side salad, not chips or rice. We also ordered a garlic chibatta to share. The meal came with a free drink so we each ordered a glass of Chardonnay.

The wine was fine and the meal came promptly. Unfortunately, it came with rice and no salad. When we pointed this out to the waiter, he offered to leave the dishes he had brought and bring us a side salad as well. Great, we thought. He arrived with one small bowl of salad in which all the lettuce had brown bits on it from being washed and left too long. It was inedible.

Not being deterred, we ate the meal and picked out the best bits from the salad and it wasn't bad – except for the lettuce.

We decided to order a greek-style yoghurt and tropical fruit for a sweet and have another glass of Chardonnay each. The meal had a deal for a sweet at a low price but since the cost of our chosen sweet was less than the deal price (??), we decided to forgo the deal. That was all a bit academic, really, since they had none of that particular dish left.

Our second choice was an apple crumble. They didn't have any of that either. At this point we gave up and left, resurrecting our initial vow never to set foot in a Wetherspools pub again.

On the walk back to our hotel, I contemplated the fate of the owners/board of directors of Wetherspools and considered that they should be nailed to a cross, doused in combustible fuel and set alight. I had second thoughts. That would be a complete waste of valuable wood, nails and fuel, not to mention matches.

On Thursday 31st October, we had a look round the market, this being market day in St. Neots, while killing time, waiting for the bus to Huntingdon. In the process, we found a nice little Italian restaurant for our evening meal.

On arriving in Huntingdon, we headed for the library, next to the bus station, and to the local archives, our intention being to try to discover more about Jenny's ancestors. We didn't get very far. The archives were closed on Thursdays. Amazing, I thought. Useful places like mobile 'phone shops and tanning parlours are open all hours, six days a week but when it comes to important, historical records, these are hidden away and are only available on a part-time basis. What a selfish, superficial society we have created for ourselves, where everything that matters has such a low priority and all that is insignificant and meaningless has assumed giant proportions.

A second best was the discovery of the Cromwell museum and we toured that. What a fascinating archive and collection it is, the connection being that Cromwell was born in Huntingdon.

We also visited the parish church which, alas, has lost its pews in an attempt to make it more appealing and multi-functional. Alas, it has lost much of its charm and character and it is no longer a place in which I would want to attend a service.

A potter round the town brought back dim and distant memories of an earlier visit when I was working with British Medical Data Systems, which was the UK arm of the American company, Shared Medical Data Systems, that acquired the NHS Data Centre at which I worked when it was privatised and which had offices in Huntingdon.

Lunch at Costa Coffee (where else?) was followed by the bus back to St. Neots and a walk round the shops there before returning to our hotel for a rest.

We ate at the Italian restaurant, Il Girasole and the meal was quite good, if a trifle expensive, particularly the wine.

That ended another month, this one leaving me in some discomfort, as my ankle continued to be a pain in every sense of the word. Thanks to copious applications of Witch Hazel overnight and Aloe Vera in the mornings, I was able to carry on hobbling. That seems like a good title for a film.