

Greenmount – September 2011

The first couple of days of September 2011 I spent recovering from my back injury. Thanks to a couple of massage sessions using lavender oil and the lavender pillow warmed in the microwave, I was well enough to drive the car on Friday 2nd to go to the refuse recycling centre in Bury with the rubbish from The Old School and to push the trolley round the supermarkets. It's good to get out and about.

On Saturday 3rd, having had a degree of success in August with my rear end problems, they returned to add to my enjoyment. I did have some indication as to the cause. After a brief period of abstention, I started taking either sugar or honey in my tea again. I think the honey, in particular, had an adverse effect on my gut. I shall again cease to sweeten my tea to see if matters improve. It's not so much a bitter pill as a bitter drink to swallow.

My back did seem to improve, although I had some residual pain round my left hip. I was thinking of cutting some more logs but decided to give it another day or two. Thinking doesn't affect my back so much.

I spent most of the day reading through a copy of the newly printed "The Story of My Life" by Ralph Rooney before it went on sale. In so doing, I discovered more errors! Most of the errors that still existed were minor and should not have affected the reader; most people would probably not even notice them. I didn't when I read through the first draft.

Now, when I checked the second draft, I only checked that the corrections I had found in the first draft were properly applied and did not affect the page numbering.

And therein lay a problem. A-TEC in Rochdale, who printed the book, introduced errors in the second draft that were not in the first and these were quite drastic, with missing words or lines and duplicated words or lines, affecting four pages, making the print run of the book more or less useless. How or why this should have happened is beyond me, as are most things. Still, I have made all of the corrections I have found to date to the original document and it has not altered the pagination at all. Perhaps *I* should go into the printing business.

Jenny went round to The Old School to help with a sale of books, clothes and goodness knows what else and ended up working in the kitchen serving teas, coffees, scones and cakes. It's just like a home from home.

After lunch, she and Rachel spent the afternoon devising a programme for the coming school year for her two Beaver Colonies. She had already had messages and 'phone calls about starting the new term that week and was back in 'Beaver' mode. I thought that no doubt I should soon be joining her as we planed and documented the details for each of the two forthcoming sessions, including several new intakes.

The frenzied activity continued on Sunday 4th and much of the following week it was my turn to help with the preparation for the sessions on Thursday and Friday. The weather wasn't really fit to do much else, except saw and chop yet more wood for the fire. Being colder in the evenings now, we are burning it as fast as I am cutting it, so, it seems, I have a job for life.

We attended another village meeting on Wednesday 7th September, in the church, which, together with recent E-mails received, resulted in a major update to the village web site.

On Friday 9th September, we collected yet more rubbish from the Old School, destined for the local refuse recycling point. Much of this comprised LPs and VHS and audio cassettes. On the way to Bury, Jenny suggested that we should donate these items to Bury Hospice for sale in their charity shops instead of dumping them and we, taking a leaf out of our parliamentary coalition's book, performed a hasty U-turn, unloading the boxes into the garage and cream-crackering my back once again.

The grocery shopping was performed somewhat more hastily than usual, arriving back home for 1:30 p.m. and well in time for the chaps from Staywhite, scheduled for 2 p.m., to come and clean all our external UPVC. Except that they didn't.

I did eventually receive a telephone call from a man at the company who seemed somewhat puzzled that we had not been at home and became even more puzzled when I explained that I had made the arrangements for them to commence work after 2 p.m. That, he said, was not on their job sheet. It was certainly on the bit of paper the salesman had left me, so it must have lost something in translation in crossing the border from Lancashire to Yorkshire, where Staywhite is based. We eventually agreed that the chaps should come the following day at 1 p.m.

I contacted the Bury Hospice warehouse and asked them to collect the items I had for them. A man in a van was arranged for the following Monday afternoon between 1 and 4 p.m., except that they only wanted the records. I was left with several boxes of VHS and audio tapes.

Jenny said that she would have the audio tapes for her car boot, which means they stay in the garage. I thought the car was meant to go in the garage. Silly me.

On Saturday 10th, we awoke to find the boiler was not working and we had no hot water. Rather than telephone British Gas on the 0845 number that would have cost me money, I decided to book an engineer online, over the Internet. This was easier said than done. First I had to register for an account. Registration required my customer number and it took me five minutes to find it in the file. It then took me another three goes to enter it in the correct format, without the leading zeroes and without the space between the two sets of numbers. When I finally reached the stage of selecting a time for the engineer to call, the earliest slot available was Monday morning between 8 a.m. and 1 p.m. So until then, it was cold showers all-round.

Having washed in cold water (by gum, that takes me back), breakfasted and booked the British Gas engineer, Jenny and I went to Ramsbottom, primarily to bank a couple of cheques and potter round the charity shops. The local animal sanctuary shop said they would be happy to take the VHS tapes, so we might gain back a little garage floor space in the very near future.

It was our intention to be back to check on the UPVC cleaning progress, having left Rachel in charge. Rachel telephoned me about noon to say the chaps had arrived an hour early or, alternatively, 22 hours late. We drew up just as the guys were packing up to find they had jet-washed the garage door and car-port ceiling, the former scheduled for a “wipe-down” and the latter, being new, not scheduled for anything. It was nice of them to clean it, just the same and it would have been even nicer if they had wiped it down afterwards, rather than having left it covered in droplets of water. I ended up wiping the car-port ceiling.

One disadvantage of the jet washing was that the water had penetrated into the garage, under the door and had wet the bottom of one of the boxes holding records destined for the Hospice. Fortunately, all of Jenny’s car boot stock was nice and dry.

On Sunday 11th September, I made a concerted and relatively successful effort to tidy my desk and the pile of items on top of the filing cabinet in the conservatory.

Not only that but I received a call from British Gas. They had an engineer working in Bury and asked if he could come to look at my boiler that afternoon. I had visions of hot, running water before the week-end was over. These visions were short-lived. A lengthy investigation concluded that the exhaust fan in the boiler was short-circuiting and needed replacing. He had to order a new fan and then book an engineer to fit it the following day, so we were more or less back where we started.

On Monday morning, 12th September, we were up early, in anticipation of the British Gas engineer’s arrival. He came sooner rather than later, complete with new fan and we had hot running water once more. It was good to be back in the 20th century. We’d be back in the 21st if Bosch hadn’t stopped manufacturing our boiler and spare parts a few years after we installed it.

I had to fight my way through the piles of car boot stock, logs for the fire and rubbish for the tip, in the garage, to get to the loft access. Up in the garage loft is where I keep all my electrical items and I needed a reel of network cable for the afternoon’s adventure.

At 1 p.m. I met with Frank at the Old School to run a network cable from the front porch to the room upstairs, the object being to install a surveillance camera to monitor people in the porch. This is in an attempt to prevent, or at least, identify the person responsible for, the theft of jumble left in the porch for the Old School. The plan was simply to install the wire from A to B and then to put wall-mounted network sockets on the end of it and install the camera at a later date. Our efforts met with a reasonable degree of success, having left loose ends of both a network cable and an extension telephone cable in the

room upstairs, the other loose end of the telephone cable in the kitchen, next to the primary telephone socket and the other loose end of the network cable in the hall on the inside of the door to the porch.

We decided to resume our labours on Thursday, when the next task was to find a route for the network cable from the main hall through the half-metre, stone wall, to the porch. Frank said he would bring a blooming great drill. I was of the opinion nitro-glycerine would be more practical.

In the mean time, I needed to acquire a couple of network sockets and a Krone tool for punching the wire connections onto the data sockets and the telephone sockets. A further challenge was to find a way of delivering power to the camera over the Ethernet cable, by using either a Power-over-Ethernet switch or a Power-over-Ethernet injector. Who said retirement was boring?

My timing was excellent as Bury Hospice were due to collect their items between 1 and 4 p.m. and I left Jenny to handle that, not that she could lift the heavy boxes.

On Tuesday 13th September I took my chipped tooth to see the dentist. I never did like dentists but I do have to say that Gail Carmichael at Holcombe Brook is one of the best and, like all good women, she doesn't come cheap, our subscription to the private practice being on Denplan. I don't suppose I can complain. At least I get my money's worth, although this is one instance when I wish I didn't.

We took advantage of our trip out to deposit the VHS videos with Bleakholt Animal Sanctuary's shop in Ramsbottom and we subsequently had a car with an empty boot and at least one square metre of garage floor space visible.

The next notable event was my birthday on Friday 16th September, celebrated by the usual trip to Unicorn, Tesco at Prestwich and, after returning home for lunch, a session cleaning the household waste bin that had been emptied that morning, using the power washer and, while the power washer was out, emptying and cleaning the kitchen waste recycling bins for good measure. I managed to complete this stage of the day's challenge just as it came on to rain and, as luck would have it, just in time to go with Jenny and help run the Beaver session.

On Saturday 17th September, I thought it was time to tidy up the garage a bit, bit being the operative work. At least I can find things now – it just takes a week or two.

Sunday 18th September was the date of the postponed village fun run and, for once, the weather forecast was for a day of sunny periods, with the unpredicted shower around lunchtime. Jenny and I went round to The Old School for about 11 a.m. to help prepare for the day's event and came back home for lunch about 1 p.m. Jenny stayed at home with Rachel doing yet more preparation for the Beavers this coming week while I returned to the Old School to take pictures of the crowds that did not put in an appearance. Unlike last year, the fun run itself was performed by only a handful of

children and there was a slow trickle of visitors to the stalls and displays in the Old School. Those who did attend had a good time and enjoyed themselves. As for those who didn't, I'd call them apathetic if I could be bothered.

On Monday 19th September, we rose early – well, earlier than usual – to discover the weather forecast was right for once. It wasn't raining. I managed to cut the grass on the back lawn, pick what soft fruit hadn't gone rotten in the recent deluge or blown off in the high winds, tidy up the borders, pick up the apple windfalls at the front and unblock the downpipe on the garage guttering, all before lunch.

After lunch, I met up with Frank at the Old School and, after two and a half hours wrestling with crumbling plaster, botched electric light fittings and stone walls so hard my drill doesn't even leave an impact on them, we managed to feed the network cable we installed the previous week through an existing hole for the electrical wiring, from the main hall to the front porch. The light in the porch was left hanging by a single screw and we noted the need to return at some stage to do some plastering and refit the light properly. We didn't bother with the huge chunk of missing plaster in the hall wall because it was hidden by the light fitting there and, by good fortune, the light was also holding on the large piece of loose plaster below it.

My plan on Tuesday 20th September was to cut some more logs and Jenny's plan was to do some more washing and ironing. Neither of us achieved our objectives, rising somewhat later than anticipated to un-forecast rain and my having lots of computer work to do. Jenny did manage to fit in her ironing, much to her enjoyment.

On Wednesday 21st September, I started the day with some Beaver preparation work, followed, after lunch, by yet more log-cutting and, by special request, the construction of an octave of musical chimes using some old copper tubing I had lying around. This was for the Beavers, who are constructing their own musical instruments and playing them. Jenny and Rachel have constructed ear-muffs.

Thursday 22nd September started early. At least, it did for me. I was awake by 7 a.m. and up before 8. Mike phoned about 8:30 to confirm I was joining him and Frank for a short walk, commencing at 9:30.

The short walk turned out to be just a little more than that, with a jaunt up through Redisher Wood, following the track up past Lower Ridge Farm (long since a ruin), onto Moorbottom Road. We headed westward to the bottom of Redbrook and proceeded to scramble up it, for which ropes and pitons would have been useful. We eventually reached the top and John Turner's Cave, not that John was in. After a brief rest, we crossed the wet moor, aptly named Black Moss, to the Trig Point on Bull Hill, along no discernable path, during which I was forced to attend to an urgent and serious call of nature. If it's good enough for the sheep, it's good enough for me.

There we did find a wide track and followed this down to Pilgrim's Cross and then on to Peel Tower by way of the Cairn on Harcles Hill. From there it was a reasonably

comfortable, down-hill journey, back through Redisher Wood to the Bull's Head at Greenmount, lunch and a couple of pints of refreshing fluid.

I arrived back home about 3 p.m. and launched into Beaver mode, completing the preparation work for this week and the musical chimes I had started the day before.

Friday was the usual shopping day and, just for the fun of it, on Saturday we took a trip in the opposite direction to Ramsbottom.

On Sunday Jenny expressed a desire to go walking, so we set off heading up towards Bolton Road West and turned along it towards Hawkshaw. Jenny was thinking of walking to Jumbles Country Park. I suggested we head up through Redisher Wood and I took her to the bottom of Redbrook, retracing my steps from Thursday. Jenny took one look at Redbrook and made it quite clear she had no intention of going up it. We continued along Moorbottom Road simply because I wanted to know where it went, not having brought the map. It soon became clear it was going well away from where we wanted to be and on examining the map, later, discovered it went towards Edgeworth, the opposite direction to home. Fortunately, Jenny spotted a footpath down to the left which seemed to head towards Hawkshaw. We followed this path with some difficulty, initially, since it was not clearly defined and then Jenny spotted the way markers. We ended up on the lane leading to Roger Worthington's Grave and it was fortunate that I remembered the way back from there, since Roger wouldn't have been much help. I think it's a case of Roger and out.

On returning home, we had been walking for about three hours and covered about six miles.

On Monday 26th September, we had another relaxing day, shopping. On this occasion, it was a trip to Asda at Pillsworth (I needed some organic beer) via B&Q at Heap Bridge for a new hose pipe, since my old one had sprung a second leak. Here I had a pleasant surprise. It wasn't Wednesday and I was able to use my discount card so the 10% off more than covered the cost of the diesel for the trip out.

In the afternoon, having wound the new hose onto my existing reel and connected it up, I was allowed to play with it. I got to wash out the bins that had been emptied the previous Friday before dumping more rubbish in them from the recycling bins in the kitchen. I then got to wash those out too.

Taking advantage of the continuing fine weather, on Tuesday, after spending the morning on yet more Beaver preparation for this week's sessions, I put the afternoon to good use, cutting and feeding the back lawn and cutting the grass on the common land on the side of the house before the idiot from the council got his infernal machine on it, leaving grass cuttings everywhere. Talking of leaving things everywhere, if I get my hands on the moron who lets their dog go muck-spreading on the grass at the side of the house, I shall rub their noses in it. I gathered up half a bucket full of the stinking stuff. Whoever it is obviously has no consideration for the children who play and roll about on the grass.

On Wednesday 28th September, I went walking with Mike and Frank again. Mike, leading the expedition, lost the path from Greenmount Golf Club to Two Brooks Valley, taking us on a slight detour. I should have realised this was something of an omen. He also managed to lose the path up through the thick undergrowth of the wood that should have led up to Turton Road. We did eventually end up at the right place, after climbing over a couple of barbed-wire fences, which is a pastime I do not recommend for gentlemen with short legs.

From here we headed up to Affetside, losing the path again. Fortunately, this did not involve any fences, just some very thick, deep, slimy mud, passing a farm. At least, I think it was mud. After a brief rest and drink by the cross on Watling Street, we headed downhill, a direction in which I have been going for years, to Jumbles Country Park and a welcome cup of tea. It was then on towards Turton Bottoms and a quick right, uphill, along the Witton Weavers' Way for a short distance before heading off on a more direct route to the Edgeworth road.

Crossing the Edgeworth road, we took a cart track, past a farm and a dead cow, not shown on the OS map, before losing the path again. On this occasion, we had to make our way as best we could along the edge of a brook before scrambling across it and down a very boggy field to find the path once more. This led us along the valley behind Hawkshaw and we followed the stream to reach the road opposite the Red Lion.

We crossed the main road and went down past the Tennis Club, along Two Brooks Valley and up the short, steep climb to Croitch Hey, then across the field to the Golf Club and back to the Bull's Head for a welcome, two-hour lunch, from which I staggered home. We had covered about eight miles in about four hours, which is not really a very fast pace, although it felt like we had covered twice the distance. Obviously wishful thinking on my part.

On Thursday 29th September, I met up with Frank and Brian at the Old School to paint the cellar walls and ceiling with white emulsion. This was the first coat of paint on the new plaster, prior to fitting some kind of storage shelving for jumble. Unfortunately, the room is quite damp and needs a dehumidifier to remove much of the moisture. Being well below ground, it does tend to be a focal point for a certain amount of drainage, although the main drains must be even deeper because it does have a grate, which is just as well, otherwise it would be more of an indoor pool than a cellar.

Friday 30th September was the usual shopping day and, having risen at about 7 a.m., we were back home shortly after noon. I took out the jet washer to clean the patio furniture, splashing my nice, clean trousers that Jenny had just ironed in the process. We had lunch outside in the nice warm sunshine and silence.

And on that quiet note, I end another month's output.