

Greenmount – September 2013

We were at our usual pitch at Ramsbottom Station car park by 6:30 on Sunday morning, 1st September. It was heavily overcast and quite cold but at least it stayed fine. Trading varied from slow to non-existent and it was the worst day we had ever had, our profit for the day being a miserable £14 and we packed up early, about 2 p.m. We agreed that if this was the start of a downward trend, we should stop doing car boot sales and I should have my garage back.

Again, in the afternoon, I had planned to do so much and instead fell asleep.

On Monday 2nd September, the first item of business of the day was a planning meeting with Frank and Steve, Mike not having returned from his holiday in Berlin, at Checkpoint Summerseat. We discussed the strategy for the next visit to Ofa's Dyke on the coming Wednesday.

After lunch, I helped Jenny to prepare the attendance sheets for her Thursday and Friday Beavers up to Christmas ready for the new term of sessions commencing on the 12th.

We finally managed to find time to pick the blackberries that were ripe and clear some overgrown foliage in the process, adding to our wood store for the coming winter.

On Tuesday 3rd September, we went in search of some additional clips for the hall radiator pipes and trunking, having learned that the original was obtained from B&Q. I found exactly what I wanted, except that I had to buy a length of trunking with a pack of clips because the clips were not sold separately and, as a bonus, also found some replacement blades for my heavy-duty scraper. The only drawback was that I couldn't use my discount card because it wasn't Wednesday.

After lunch, Jenny went to Yoga and I installed two additional clips and refitted and tested the hall radiator. A successful day, I thought.

I left at 5:30 a.m. on Wednesday 4th September, meeting Frank and Mike at Steve's house. Steve drove to Buttington and we were walking by about 8:30 a.m. The stretch of 12½ miles was not too bad, the weather was beautiful, the blue sky and sunshine making it just a little too hot for walking. We reached Brompton Crossroads at about 4:30 p.m. The guide book says we should have done it in six hours at the outside but this did not include stops for lunch and to admire the beautiful scenery and take pictures.

We boarded a taxi, which took us to where we had left the car at Buttington and Steve drove to our hotel, the Horse and Jockey, in Knighton, where we had a reasonable meal, a few drinks and a good night's rest.

It was 10 a.m. before we started walking from Brompton Crossroads on Thursday 5th September, having had to wait 30 minutes for a taxi at the hotel and a good 30 minute

drive. This was not good, facing a long and difficult day on what is considered to be the most arduous stretch of the Dyke, from Brompton Crossroads to Knighton. According to the guide, it is 14½ miles and should be completed in 8¼ hours at the slowest pace. This section, known as “The Switchback” because of its sequence of steep climbs and steep drops in succession, took us 9½ hours and, according to the GPS, was 16 miles, so I didn’t know where the chap, Keith Carter, who wrote the guide, got his information but it certainly was not accurate. We did stop several times, especially going up the steep inclines and also to visit the church of St. John the Baptist which we passed en-route.

We approached Knighton at dusk (one could almost say Knight) and hobbled to our hotel. Following a quick shower, we enjoyed our evening meal, a few drinks and collapsed into bed.

Friday 6th September was a much more leisurely start, which is just as well because a couple of us could hardly move. After breakfast, we crawled up to the Offa’s Dyke Visitor’s Centre in Knighton only to discover it didn’t open until 10 a.m. We decided not to hang around and made our way home. It was about 2 p.m. before I arrived, somewhat later than scheduled.

Following the briefest of lunches, we headed out for our usual grocery shop and I spent much of the evening catching up on my E-mail and such.

A late night Skype call from Edith in New Zealand kept me chatting until 12:30 a.m., at which point I retired for what was left of the night.

I was up at 7 a.m. on Saturday 7th September, still suffering from the effects of the assault on Offa’s Dyke. I had planned to be round at the Old School by 8:30 to take pictures of the day’s events. The recent development to improve the old railway line at Greenmount, known as Greenmount Sidings, for recreational purposes was being formally recognised in an opening ceremony and I was designated official photographer. Unfortunately, I was slightly delayed by a troublesome Hauppauge USB HVR 1900, a device used to receive and record TV programmes to Jenny’s laptop. The device seemed to have turned up its toes and I had to resort to rescheduling my recordings for the day to my desktop.

The day went well and we were blessed with the presence of all three of our local councillors and our Member of Parliament, David Nuttall MP, all congratulating us on our community efforts.

Back home, after a quick lunch, I processed all the photographs I had taken, resolving to put them on the village web site as soon as time permitted. That and packing the car for the following day’s car boot sale, took us up to 8 p.m., time for tea and recorded TV programmes, before bed.

Not that we were in bed long. The alarm woke us at 5 a.m. on Sunday 8th September and every inch of my body wanted to go back to sleep, particularly since it was still dark

outside. It was car boot day and I rose to the occasion in every sense of the word, being at our pitch in Ramsbottom for about 6:45.

Trading was better than the previous week. To be fair, it could hardly have been worse. We managed to sell some of the more costly items as well as a steady stream of the odd 50p and £1, leaving us with a respectable profit before deciding to pack up about 2 p.m. as the clouds gathered and there was a hint of rain. We could have stayed a little longer, as the rain never really matured, but we were tired anyway.

I spent the rest of the afternoon on the computer, sorting out a few things and we had a leisurely evening, after tea, watching some old recorded episodes of Heartbeat. We had a relatively early night, retiring before 11 p.m.

It was 9:30 on Monday morning before I was up and about and we had an interesting morning delivering photographic prints and CDs to a number of people who had requested them, including Paul Rogers at Marshalls Aggregates who had kindly donated the large stone for our new village sign on Brandlesholme Road and Chris Wilkinson at Bury MBC who had managed the landscaping work on Greenmount Sidings. I would have dropped off a CD at the Bury Times but their offices had disappeared. Apparently they had moved – to Bolton???

After lunch I contacted the Bury Times and arranged to deliver a CD the following morning. I also put them in touch with Alistair, the chairman of our village community and Chris Wilkinson who was organising a press release for the council.

I was up at 8 a.m. on Tuesday 10th September, preparing to go into Bolton on the bus to deliver the CD to the Bury Times. Their reporter/photographer had covered the event on Saturday but had not arrived until everyone was packing up, so they missed the main events. I hadn't and I thought they would like some additional pictures. A telephone call just as we were leaving informed me that they didn't want the additional pictures and they were going to print with what they had. How any newspaper can publish an article after missing the main aspects of the story beats me. Then again, most published articles are inaccurate, full of opinion and stock photographs rather than fact, which is why I don't buy newspapers.

Jenny suggested we contact the publication Lancashire Living and I thought that was a brilliant idea. Their local offices were just along the road into Ramsbottom and we decided to call in and go for a potter round the shops as soon as Jenny had hung out her washing on the Dearden line to dry.

I called in at Lancashire Living and spoke with Martine who said she would consider including something in their October issue, currently in progress. I left her with a copy of the pictures on CD and Alistair's contact details.

The potter round Ramsbottom was relatively fruitless except for a few items from Morrisons, where we managed to snatch their last pack of dinner candles. Unfortunately, we wanted two packs.

On returning, we picked the ripe blackberries. In the afternoon, Jenny went to Yoga while I cut the grass on the back lawn. It's much the same thing, really.

I was up later than planned on Wednesday 11th September and spent the morning helping Jenny with some Beaver administration work in readiness for the new academic year, for Jenny, starting the following day, with a Leaders' meeting that evening.

After lunch at Summerseat Garden Centre, we came back to pick any ripe blackberries we had missed the previous day and made four jars of delicious jam.

After breakfast on Thursday 12th September we walked up to the post office to send off a CD of the photographs I took at the Greenmount Sidings opening to the lady who helped provide the funding from the National Lottery. On the return journey, we called at the Old School to do some photocopying and then came home for lunch.

The early part of the afternoon was spent in more Beaver preparation work and generally messing about on the computer, as some people would say.

We went shopping as usual on Friday 13th September and, after a brief rest, I went to help Jenny with her Beavers.

Saturday 14th September was not a good day, at least initially, following some disagreement, much of which was my fault, not that I'd admit it. Oh, what a giveaway! Never mind. It was resolved after a couple of hours and I made a mental note to try harder. At what, I'm not sure.

I potted round, tidying up and in the process managed to fit the new trunking to the hall radiator pipes. That was another nudge towards the completion of the hall decoration project.

In the evening, we went out for a meal with Rachel, Matthew, Carrie and Carrie's parents, Bob and Marie to the Fisherman's Retreat. The meal was very good, although Jenny prefers plain food and had difficulty finding some on the menu. The tuna salad she ordered, requesting that the tuna be well cooked, came with the tuna still slightly pink and she was not impressed. The prices were a little high and Jenny and I were of the opinion that the restaurant is not as good as it used to be. I thought the awards it had won had somewhat spoilt it and I was not so sure I would recommend it, although it was quite busy.

I came home for a small 40-year-old brandy and a cup of tea.

On Sunday 15th September, we went to Asda at Pilsworth for a few groceries and filled up our trolley with wine while we were there, Yellowtail being on offer at £6 a bottle. We called at Matthew and Carrie's house on the way to pick up a copy of a TV programme Matthew had recorded for me and drop off some blu-ray DVDs he had lent me and some post for him that was still being delivered to our house.

I rose on Monday 16th September to discover I was another year older. Yes, folks, 66 years ago I was delivered by Amazon. Sorry, I'll rephrase that. I was delivered by an amazing stroke of good fortune, a midwife and a doctor. And look where it got them.

I have worked out that I was 1.54% older this year and the following year I expected to be 1.52% older. Did this mean I was growing older slower? Or perhaps I was getting slower as I got older.

A big thank you to all those of you who read this and who sent me cards or sent me electronic greetings. You know who you are.

The replacement Hauppauge HVR-1900 arrived two days ahead of schedule and I thought things were looking up. I was wrong.

I installed the new unit and the software using the 2.8a version I had previously downloaded from the Hauppauge web site on Jenny's HP, Windows 7, 64-bit laptop. It didn't work. I then removed that and used the 2.6D version on the CD that came with the new box. That didn't work either. I hit on the idea of trying to load the CD version of software on Jenny's old XP laptop. Guess what. It worked, except that the application, WinTV wouldn't play the TV channel because the graphics card is faulty. I decided to see if the old HVR-1900 device Hauppauge support had diagnosed as faulty worked on the old laptop. Yep, it did. So there was no need for me to have ordered a new one at nearly £85.

Finally, I cleared out everything to do with Hauppauge and WinTV (the application) from Jenny's new HP laptop and decided to try using the old HVR-1900 hardware with the original issue CD (1.1F). No problem. It burst into life and subsequently recorded a scheduled program using Windows Media Centre.

By this time I was somewhat annoyed with Hauppauge and sent them several E-mails relating to the incident I had first raised.

I packaged up the new HVR-1900 and arranged with Amazon to have it collected for a full refund, less nearly £4 for handling.

And so ended a most frustrating and unproductive day. Not something my mother would have said 66 years previously.

On Tuesday 17th December, I should have gone to the dentist with Jenny for a check-up. First, I was suffering with a bit of a sore throat and a slight cough, probably due to the

smoke from the fire I eventually managed to get going the previous night, the nights having turned quite cold of late. Second, I had to wait in for the parcel to be collected, not that anyone came while Jenny was out.

Jenny came back with a rescheduled appointment for me on 5th November. Very appropriate, I thought.

Meanwhile, my ink cartridges I had ordered from Just Ink and paper had arrived, all except one of them. I was hoping it would be in the following day's post but I seem to recall I've had issued like this with this company before and swore I'd never use them again. I would have placed my order with Inkmasters as usual but couldn't find the red ink for my printer on their revised web site, something they tell me they are going to rectify.

I thought I'd finish off the entrance hall and I remembered that the cat flap in the front door needed replacing. Jenny had recalled we had a spare one in the loft and I found it. All I needed to do was to clean it, to remove the old one and to fit the new one.

Before I got started, Jenny arrived back and I helped her with some Scouting administration work and then she wanted an early light lunch before going to Yoga.

I had received an E-mail from Hauppauge suggesting their support engineers log on to the computer remotely to find out what is going on. I replied enthusiastically to their suggestion and awaited their response.

My parcel being returned to Amazon was collected about 6 p.m. Better late than never.

On Wednesday 18th September, I went walking with Mike and Frank, Steve being on holiday in sunnier climes. We walked the first two sections of the West Pennine way, a circular walk devised by Christine and which she hopes to publish and for which she hopes to obtain funding to improve the route with signposts, way markers and the like.

The route took us from Greenmount, past the Golf Club, to Hollymount, down Two Brooks Valley, up to Affetside, down to Jumbles Reservoir, up to Turton Tower, down past Delph reservoir, along Longworth Clough and up to Belmont Village, where we waited 45 minutes for a bus to take us to Bolton. Fortunately, the showers had become less frequent by then and we managed to dry out a little in the cold wind. Amazingly, my feet were still dry after walking over some very wet and waterlogged moorland. It's a pity the rest of me wasn't. Another 30 minute wait in Bolton saw us on the bus to Holcombe Brook and we walked down to the Bull's Head in Greenmount from there for a well deserved pint or three.

I arrived home to find that, while I had been out, Jenny had washed the kitchen and hall floors, cleaned the wood, glass and PVC in the hall and put the dresser back in the hall and found time to make another two jars of blackberry jam.

So we had both been enjoying ourselves.

Not only that but my remaining ink cartridge had arrived.

I awoke on Thursday 19th September with something of a head cold and a bit of a cough. I was aching all over and I wasn't sure whether this was as a result of the previous day's excursion, due to the inhalation of smoke from the fire I had attempted to light on the previous couple of nights or the start of 'flu.

We spent the morning on Beaver preparation work for this week's sessions and after lunch, I went to see Eunice about her Dell laptop problem. She was unable to log on because Vista could not load her user profile. Knowing I was dealing with Microsoft's Vista operating system, I went prepared for a full afternoon's session.

Surprisingly, I managed to fix the log on problem quite easily by editing the Registry, following instructions from the Microsoft web site, one of the rare occasions when it has actually been really helpful. The real problems started after that.

The operating system had not been performing automatic updates and there were a lot of them in Vista. I decided to bring the system up to date.

All went well until the update mechanism refused to download Service Pack 2. Not intending to be beaten by this, I downloaded it manually and started to install it. The installation gave me an error and I checked this out on the Internet, finding a hot fix for Windows from Microsoft. I downloaded and ran the hot fix installation. At about 85% complete, the installation stuck and a further check on the Internet suggested the system had been hacked and the only solution was to rebuild Vista from scratch.

Since I didn't have a week to spare, I aborted the hot fix, forced a shutdown and reloaded the system. I tried the hot fix again and it didn't work again. What a surprise. I rebooted again and was about to try a manual update to Service Pack 2 again when the automatic update came up checking for updates. Allowing that to continue resulted not only in a successful download of SP 2 but a successful installation as well. This must have been a first for Vista.

A reboot of the system and a further check for updates revealed an additional 97 were required and I left Eunice with the installation of those, satisfied that the system was working satisfactorily after four hours of outwitting the worst computer operating system of all time.

On Friday 20th September, despite my continuing heavy head cold and a night of interrupted sleep, due to my cold I hasten to add, we went grocery shopping as usual, foregoing lunch at Waitrose due to their limited choice, settling for a banana just purchased from Unicorn as we walked from the car to their door.

We lunched on returning home and Jenny went off to Beavers, expecting to have more help than she needed only to discover two of her helpers were unavailable. Still, she managed with the help of the Assistant District Commissioner for Beavers, Janice, who had volunteered to assist when she could. Janice complimented Jenny on the good behaviour of her Beavers. It was fortunate she hadn't attended the Thursday session.

Meanwhile, I watched an old recording of "To Kill a Mocking Bird", an excellent film in every respect. It would be nice if they made films of that quality today – or even since the turn of the century. It is unfortunate that film makers are so unoriginal and unimaginative that they have to resort to remakes of excellent, old films for which there is no real margin for improvement, obscene language and special effects that leave nothing to the imagination.

There are a couple of notable exceptions, about one of which, "Chasing Ice", I received an E-mail. If you have the opportunity to see this film, do so. It's about global warming and, in my view, the beginning of the decline of the human race globally, courtesy of the greedy few and the apathetic majority.

I also received several messages from Greenpeace informing me that the Arctic Sunrise, while protesting in international waters against the Russian Gazprom oil rig the Prirazlomnaya, which intends to commence drilling for oil in Arctic waters, was boarded by Russian, armed commandos and the crew and vessel illegally seized. In effect, the Russian authorities have committed an act of piracy. I E-mailed the British Foreign Office asking them to take action to recover the vessel and to free the crew and I urge anyone reading this to do the same. See also my Facebook blog; this is one of the few occasions I have used it to broadcast a message to as many people as possible.

On a lighter note, I received a message from Amazon confirming my refund for the Hauppauge box I no longer needed and had returned to them.

Still suffering with my head cold on Saturday 21st September, I remained at home in the warmth while Jenny went off to Edenfield, just a little way up the Rossendale valley from here, with a select few of her Beavers for a District-wide Beaver afternoon of fun in the damp. For this occasion, we had earlier visited Summerseat Garden Centre where Jenny purchased a brand new pair of wellies.

On Sunday 22nd September, we were up late and didn't even consider doing the car boot sale because of my cold. Jenny and Rachel planned their Beaver programme up to Christmas and I listened to my Jazz using ear phones.

I managed to drag myself round to the local surgery to see the nurse on Monday 23rd September. I had been called in for my annual check up and this was the first of two appointments when I was called upon to give blood for analysis. It took the nurse a good few minutes to find a vein to tap and she finally managed to fill two or three phials. I didn't watch. Instead, we chatted about my walking and got onto the subject of her elder

son starting Beavers. I came away with a slightly sore arm and the details of her son for Jenny to put on the Beaver waiting list.

I fell asleep in the chair, nursing my cold and after a quick tea, we went to the village meeting in the Old School to discuss the maintenance of the Greenmount Sidings.

On Tuesday 24th September, we went to Asda for a few groceries and called at Tesco in Bury on the way back. I spent the afternoon updating my and the village web sites.

On Wednesday 25th September, Jenny went off to have her hair cut and coloured. I decided I should make an effort and tackle the highest priority job, since they were piling up. I went up into the loft to try to fix the bathroom extractor fan.

The first challenge was to find the fan. Since the loft had been covered in extra insulation, the floor was completely covered with a thick layer of yellow, thermal material and so was all the wiring, ducting and fan, not to mention the boards to support my weight and prevent me from putting my feet through the ceiling. After rolling back several rows of the insulation, I found what I was looking for.

The second challenge was to reach the fan. With the aid of a strategically-laid board, I was able to contort myself into a position, I suspect, only previously rarely seen at Yoga sessions. Getting back to the ladder was the third challenge and these to and fro motions were to be repeated several times until I managed to find a suitable strategy for removing the fan, screwed to a roof joist with about enough clearance for an amoeba. This entailed using my electric drill in screwdriver mode with a long, PZ2, cross-head bit. It's easy when you know how, I thought.

The fan in my grubby hands, I descended to ground level, dismantled it, cleaned it and put it back together. This always worked before. Not this time. The fan had extracted its last and gone to that great scrap-heap in the sky.

I'd had enough of crawling about in confined spaces and decided to replace the fan with a ceiling-mounted model.

We went down to B&Q at Crosstones in Bury, not expecting to find much. For one thing, I couldn't find my B&Q discount card. At B&Q, I obtained a new discount card and went in search of the bits I needed. I found both a fan and a connector to join the two sections of flexible hose in the loft where the old fan had been.

Back at home, I installed the connector in the loft. I could not fit any clips to hold the hoses in place because I didn't have any. The joint seemed tight enough for the time being. A reasonably successful day, I thought.

On Thursday 26th September, we went into Ramsbottom. I wanted to see if I could buy some clips for the flexible hose for the extractor fan and I purchased four long cable ties from the hardware shop. A tour of the charity shops furnished me with three CDs, one of

Louis Armstrong, one of Bix Beiderbecke and one of Spike Jones and His City Slickers at £1 each.

Back home, after lunch, I contemplated fitting the new extractor fan. Since Jenny needed some help with her Beaver administration and time was getting on, I shelved that project for the day and listened to my new Jazz CDs instead. A much more productive afternoon.

Jenny and Rachel took the Beavers posting Scout Bonfire leaflets through local letterboxes while I updated this rubbish, put out the garden waste bin for the following day's collection and fetched in the washing as it started to go dark, around 7 p.m. I lead an exciting life.

On Friday 27th September, Jenny went to a neighbour's MacMillan Nurse's coffee morning before we embarked on our usual grocery shop, somewhat later than usual, to Unicorn and Waitrose, lunching at the latter. For lunch, I thought I'd try something different. Waitrose serve up a nice, but somewhat dry, bacon sandwich. They also offer an optional bit of salad, comprising lettuce and tomato, with hot dishes. I asked if they could do me a BLT. The answer was in the negative. Apparently, placing a bit of lettuce and a sliced tomato on a bacon sandwich is beyond the capabilities of the café staff and it seems that the customer is no longer always right. How standards have fallen.

On returning, following a brief respite, I went to help Jenny with her Beaver Colony, delivering Scout bonfire leaflets, advertising the forthcoming event, to houses in the village. Needless to say we had a late evening meal.

Saturday 28th September was a very relaxing day, the three of us lunching at Summerseat Garden Centre and not doing much else. I seem to recall spending quite some time queuing the TV programmes for recording for the week and packing the car for the following day's car boot sale. We did not attend the quiz night at the Old School because we had to be up early the following morning.

We managed to squeeze in yet another car boot sale on Sunday 29th September, being at our pitch at Ramsbottom Station car park just after 6:30 a.m., before sunrise and while the street lamps were still lit. The day started off quite cool and overcast but the sun was high in the blue sky by lunchtime and it warmed up to around 17°C by early afternoon, somewhat warm for this time of year, not that I complained.

We remarked on how lucky we had been with the weather this year and that we had done more sales this year than for a long time.

I was out at 9 a.m. on Monday 30th September for a breakfast meeting at Summerseat Garden centre with Mike and Steve, Frank being on holiday, leaving Jenny to deal with the chaps who I had arranged to come and clean the PVC and gutters outside. Jenny telephoned me at about 10:45 to say they had finished and wanted paying. I had planned on collecting some cash on the way back but, as it turned out, she said I could pay over the telephone using my debit card later in the day.

I was back by 11 a.m. to find the car unpacked from the previous day's car boot sale and on the road, Jenny having moved it for the chaps to clean the PVC. She had also washed the pots and done most of her ironing. I was thinking of renaming her Cinderella.

As for the rest of the day, I was on the computer, starting with some Beaver Scout work and then generally updating information. It's amazing what you can find to do on a computer.

I decided I would actually do some real work the following day.