

Greenmount – April 2013

On Monday 1st April, we walked from Whitby, along the Cleveland Way, north to Runswick Bay, covering some 7 miles in four and a half hours. The pace was somewhat slow because we kept pausing to take pictures and admire the views, as one does.

As we left Sandsend, the first village after Whitby, at the end of the sandy beach on the north/west side (hence the name Sandsend – damned clever, these Yorkshire folk), we gained access to the old coastal railway line, one of many so cunningly axed by Beaching, forcing people and freight onto the roads so the oil companies could control the economy, while most of Europe invested in their railways. The positive side of the closure is that the old railway track north is now a footpath and the track south to Scarborough a cinder-based footpath and cycle track.

This path was short-lived, as the long tunnel we reached has been closed and we had a steep climb onto the top of the cliff. Once there, the path was relatively level along the cliff edge. We managed not to fall off, as we were battered by a strong northerly wind off the sea, so cold that it froze the spray blown back onto the land from streams flowing over the cliff edge, the droplets falling as ice and hitting us with some force.

We reached Runswick Bay, with a steep descent into a gulley on the south side of the bay. Due to land slips, the last part of this was a bit of a scramble over slippery rocks at the side of or protruding from the stream, which we crossed to end up on the beach. I'm not sure what walkers do when the tide is in, though. We had lunch at the café before hurrying up the very steep road to the top of the village where we caught the bus back to Whitby.

We managed to book a table at Cosa Nostra for our evening meal and I started with a mediocre bruschetta while Jenny had a garlic bread topped with mozzarella. Jenny's starter was huge – far too big a helping for a first course. My main course was a sea food risotto and was absolutely delicious. Jenny struggled with her main course after the large starter and did not enjoy the evening very much. It was quite expensive, too. On balance, the Cosa Nostra is probably best avoided.

Tuesday 2nd April was a pottering about and shopping day in preparation for our return. We had lunch at the Monk's Haven café. The food and service were good, although we had the same problem with the door we experienced in Scarborough earlier in the week – people going out kept leaving it open, resulting in an icy draft. The lunch was more expensive than most places and I would not eat there regularly because of the cost.

Disaster struck at Wetherspoons, where we had our evening meal. My jacket potato was stone cold and inedible and the vegetables were barely warm. On top of that, I was not offered the free drink that came with my meal. Enough was enough and I asked to speak to the duty manager. I explained our three visits to the establishment and our experiences. I was offered a free drink and another bottle of wine in compensation and we told her that we had not complained for free drinks but to make sure she understood she had a serious problem that needed to be addressed. She explained that Wetherspoons had opened up three new pubs in the area in recent months with inexperienced and inadequately trained staff and that the managers at head office had no idea of the problems faced by pub managers. My

conclusion is that if this is a Wetherspoons trend, the chain is best avoided, at least until they sort out their staffing and training issues. The evening culminated in free sweets for us, which we gratefully accepted, resolving to write to Wetherspoons as soon as time permitted.

We had an uneventful and relatively quick journey home in under 2½ hours on Wednesday 3rd April, having said our goodbyes to Jill at The Lansbury and resolving to come back soon. Arriving back to an empty fridge, we made a bee-line for Tesco. Well, this was an emergency, even though we had bought a few items from an excellent shop, Whitby Whole Foods, tucked away in a corner of St. Anne's Lane.

On Thursday 4th April we decided to do our weekly grocery shopping a day early, lunching at Costa Coffee in Bury Tesco and leave Friday 5th free for car boot sale preparation.

We were up at 5:30 a.m. on Saturday 6th April and sped off to Greenmount Old School for 6:40 a.m. where I had two jobs, the first being to direct cars to their allocated pitches and the second to help Jenny set up her stall, having piked our spot next to the railings, in the sun, not that it made much difference in the 3 degrees below freezing. Trade was slow and steady, making a modest sum before packing up about 2 p.m.

After a bit of a rest, we repacked the car for the following day's trading in Ramsbottom.

Sunday 7th April was almost a repeat of the previous day except that the alarm clock didn't go off at 5 a.m. and I woke at 5:40 a.m. After a somewhat hurried start to the day, we arrived at Ramsbottom Station car park about 6:45, picked one of the few remaining spaces available and set out our stall, again in freezing conditions. It was another nice but cold day and trading was again slow. There was a lot of interest but not so much spending and our profit on the day was poor. Judging by takings at the recent jumble sale and the Easter sales at the Old School and the first two car boot sales of the season, people were definitely not as free with their cash as they had been in the past and even then they were careful. Anybody would think we were in Yorkshire. The recession was very much in evidence.

The problem with recession is that it makes people miserable. Long term misery breeds unrest and unrest eventually breeds revolt, which, if not tempered, breeds growing violence. I can see the future turning very bleak, particularly if the gap between the extremely wealthy and the poor is not dramatically reduced. Successive governments since the 60s have fuelled the greed that has led to our present situation and what's more, today's government continues to do so, apparently with no gift of foresight, no compassion and total apathy for the future.

Back to the plot. As we packed up to leave for the day the car wouldn't start. Just what we needed after two long, tiring days. Now we had been chatting most of the day with the chap next to us and it turned out that he and his wife ran a café with a difference in Ramsbottom, not five minutes' walk away, the difference being that they also sold old curios in the shop, the chap having some of his stock on his stall. His wife had come down to help him pack up and, hearing of our plight, said she had some jump leads in the shop and would fetch them so her husband could give us the power we needed from his van. We thanked her and about fifteen minutes later, she arrived with the leads. The chap moved his van in front of our car and I connected up the leads. We were off and running.

Back home, I telephoned Matt and he offered to lend me his battery charger so we dashed down to collect it.

On Monday 8th April we spent most of the day emptying the car and sorting out the car boot stock. Not that we made a lot of progress and when we finished for the day the garage was even more untidy than it was when we started. The car's battery spent most of the day on charge and, I decided, the following day it was my turn.

On Tuesday 9th April we went off to a very good hardware store at Waterfoot hoping to purchase two old-fashioned wooden clothes props, having recently bought a new, 30-metre, rope clothes-line from the hardware store in Ramsbottom. This was disappointment number one.

On the way back, we called at the Bleakholt animal sanctuary to drop off some shredded paper for use as bedding for the ferrets and some food for the cats. We dropped back down into Ramsbottom, parked up and went to the café with a difference for lunch. It was very nice. We decided to tour the charity shops and Jenny found some books. There's a surprise. I called at the hardware store to see if the chap had the clothes props I wanted. He said he hadn't been able to source any for over five years. Neither did he have any halogen bulbs for our outside lamp. We bought some cranberry juice from the herbalist's shop and a few groceries from Morrisons.

On Wednesday 10th April I met up with the two merry lads (Mike was on holiday) and we went for a 12-mile stroll over Holcombe Hill to the Rossendale Way, via Ellen Strange, making our way back towards Edgeworth and picking up Moorbottom Road as far as Redisher Wood, where we dropped down to the bottom, down Redisher Lane and through the fields to Greenmount School. At this point we rejoined the main road and I left Frank and Steve to enjoy a pint in the Bull's Head, coming back home to give the girls a lift to Bury. They went off to watch the stage play of *The Lion King* at the Palace Theatre in Manchester while I cooked my own tea and settled down to watch a couple of videos.

On Thursday 11th April we had the first rain for a few weeks, the weather having been very dry and very cold, even when the sun shone. The dampness did nothing to raise the temperature much, though and we remained indoors, pottering about, with the heating on. I helped Jenny do some Beaver administration and preparation for this week's meetings and I managed to get the pictures of the first day of our recent holiday ready for the web site.

It was Friday 12th before the web site was updated, just before we set off on a mammoth grocery spending spree. With the Abel and Cole grocery delivery and the six bottles of Yellow Tail Shiraz on offer at Tesco for £5 a bottle, we spent a small fortune this week, more or less evenly distributed between A&C, Unicorn and Tesco. I couldn't believe it.

On Saturday 13th I spent the day on my PC, adding more of my holiday pictures to my web site.

On Sunday 14th April we should have been at the Cricket Club for the car boot sale. We had cancelled our booking the previous evening because the weather forecast had predicted

heavy rain. The weather, like the forecast, was full of wind. The rains didn't start until after lunch, although the windy conditions would have made keeping our wares on the stall difficult. We went down to see Matthew and Carrie to return the battery charger I had borrowed the previous week end.

Monday the 15th April was the most energetic by far for some time. We cycled all the way to Elton and back, about five miles or so, although the aches, pains and bruises indicated that it was more like fifty. We went to Elton Electrical to try to obtain some replacement, halogen, Edison-screw bulbs for our outside light at the back. Light is something of a misnomer since the last of the three bulbs went. It turned out that the chap didn't have any and could no longer get the ones I wanted, thanks to our friendly, European legislators who have decided these bulbs are not sufficiently energy-efficient and had them discontinued without thinking of a suitable substitute first. It occurred to me that their bulbs had gone out as well.

My quest for replacement bulbs continued, but not on the bike.

Meanwhile, we turned our attention to a little gardening, since standing was preferable to sitting. Much of this entailed clearing up the debris from last year, not to mention two bucket-fulls of cat dung kindly deposited by our two feline inmates over the winter months. One of the many joys of spring.

On Tuesday 16th April, I did intend continuing my onslaught on the garden but Jenny roped me in to help her with some Beaver work and, afterwards, I decided I ought to try to resurrect the work to resolve some problems with Jenny's laptop, which I reported to HP some weeks ago, indicating the machine was "not fit for purpose" when they sold it to me. HP had sent me some instructions to follow and I had neglected to do so due to other more interesting tasks. I was being chased by HP for a result.

The first step was to install the latest HP Media Smart DVD player and to see if it would play Blue-Ray DVDs. I did and it didn't. Me 1, HP 0.

The next step was to run HP Support Assistant to see if there were any updates to the system in an attempt to resolve the CPU overheating problem. Out of the five steps to check for, download and install updates, the first and last worked and the middle three failed. Me 2, HP 0.

I thought it best to check if there were any updates to the Support Assistant software. There were and I applied them. Me 3, HP 0.

This time the support assistant worked until it had to prepare the action list. This proved too much for it and it gave up big time. Me 4, HP 0.

I replied to the message from HP, documenting the failures and awaiting further advice. Replacing the laptop with one that did what it was supposed to do would be good.

Wednesday 17th April was another jolly jaunt with Steve and Frank, Mike still being away Stateside. He didn't know what he'd missed. We left the Old School at about 9 a.m. and made our way down the old railway line to Burrs Country Park and from there to

Summerseat, following the river Irwell. The intention was to walk into Ramsbottom for lunch but we couldn't pass the garden centre without stopping for a coffee/tea.

On reaching Ramsbottom, we made for the Railway Hotel where we had an excellent lunch and two pints of very nice ale, having had some discussion about catching the bus back beforehand. After the two pints, we had a change of mind, not to mention plan and decided to walk back to Greenmount, having covered about eleven miles in four hours of walking, allowing two hours for the two stops.

I was home for about 3 p.m. and in the shower ten minutes later, followed by a complete change of clothes and an hour's kip on the settee.

I awoke as one of our neighbours called to enlist my help with a TV/DVD recording problem and I went back with her to fix it. I was back home in about twenty minutes and resumed my relaxing posture until tea time.

I spent Thursday 18th April continuing my efforts to rewrite the village web site in XHTML, CSS and Java and later finishing off the first copy of the Jazz at Storyville CD, the second copy, when completed, being for the chap who lent me the LP.

Friday 19th April was productive in a different sense as we completed yet another marathon grocery shop, starting with Unicorn in Chorlton, then, on the way back, Asda at Pilsforth. We brought those groceries home, went for lunch at Summerseat Garden centre and then continued with our shopping, Jenny enjoying the delights of Tesco in Bury while I popped across to the health food shop in Bury.

Surprises of the day were that, firstly, on our way out, we called at a hardware store in Tottington and managed to find two old-fashioned, wooden clothes props; secondly, at Asda, I managed to find the bulbs I wanted for the outside lamp.

Two disappointments of the day came, once more, from the health food shop in Bury, where they had no Twinings Organic English Breakfast Tea and no Nature's Path Mesa Sunrise cereal. The lady in the shop did say she would order some for us. Meanwhile, Jenny did manage to find some of the cereal at Tesco. As luck would have it, our bill there came to £4 less than the amount we needed to spend to use a £12 off coupon which expired a couple of days later. Some you win....

The third disappointment was that Unicorn, surprisingly, had no lettuce. Apparently, it was stuck on a palette on a lorry somewhere and wouldn't be in the shop until the following day.

On Saturday 20th April, after cleaning out the recycling bins that had developed a microcosmic world of their own with an odour to match, we decided fresh air would be a welcome treat. We set forth on our Greenmount Voice round, delivering the local village newsletter. Following a quick lunch, we potted round Ramsbottom and the charity shops. I managed to find an LP set of Ragtime music.

On Sunday 21st April we decided to visit Jenny's niece, Tracey, in Sheffield. We took Tracey to the Meadow Farm pub in Ecclesfield for a birthday meal. It was Jenny who came back

with a boot-full of goodies, though, for the car boot sales.

Jenny spent most of Monday 22nd and Tuesday 23rd April sorting out the car boot stock and filling the garage to capacity. I spent most of the time in the garden, tidying up the ravages of winter.

On Monday evening, Jenny had a Beaver session doing flag practice for the coming St. George's Day on the Sunday. On Tuesday evening, she and Rachel were at a Scout Leaders' Meeting. I got to watch what I wanted on TV for two nights in a row!

Wednesday 24th April was something of a fateful day. I had to go down to the Post Office in Bury to collect a parcel the postman had tried to deliver the previous Saturday while we were out. Rachel was in when the postman rang the doorbell but he didn't hang around long enough for her to answer the door. So if postmen can move so fleetingly, why does it take so long to deliver letters?

Back to the plot. We decided to walk to Bury. About half way, my Achilles tendon in my right leg started to hurt. By the time I reached Bury, I was limping badly. Actually, I was limping quite well, since the pain had become unbearable. By some quirk of fate, Jenny's shoes had started to hurt her feet and she developed huge, painful blisters on the soles of both feet.

So, both of us having limped into the PO building, I collected my package. This was a memory stick from Maxell. The old 2 Gb memory stick I had acquired, from the Old School Jumble Sale, I think, had failed and refused to allow me to write to it. Having queried the problem with Maxell, a lady in customer services offered to replace it if I sent her the old one, so I did. In return, I received a 12 Gb, more up-to-date device, for which I was very grateful. What excellent customer service this was.

Our next port of call was Clarks shoe shop in Bury to buy Jenny a new pair of shoes. We found a decent pair almost immediately, paid for them and Jenny walked out in them. That must have been the quickest and easiest sale they had that day.

To recover from our soreness, we decided to lunch in the Trackside at the East Lancs Railway. Being lunchtime, I refrained from sampling any of the several real ales they had on tap and settled for a BLT and a cup of tea. Jenny had a jacket potato with tuna and a cup of tea. Very nice it was too. And it wasn't very busy. And there wasn't any annoying piped music. And there wasn't a big TV screen in sight. And we could sit there and watch the steam trains come and go. It was a bit like Brief Encounter. This place must be one of Bury's best kept secrets.

I limped on to Computer World where I bought a WD Elements USB 3/USB 2 (a USB 3 plug fits and works with a USB 2 port, it's just that the rate of transfer is slower) 1Tb hard drive to back up all the contents of the hard drive on Jenny's laptop. The result of my pestering HP about it's inability to play Blue Ray DVDs resulted in an instruction to return it to HP for repair (under warranty) and it was being collected on 10th May.

Meanwhile, Jenny went into Pound World, which was a waste of time. She thought it was

full of more rubbish than our garage, which must be something of a record.

Thursday 25th April was Beaver day and we spent most of the day doing Beaver admin work.

Friday 26th April was our usual shopping trip to Unicorn and Tesco Bury. We didn't lunch at Costa Coffee as we normally did because Jenny was a little tired of their limited and unchanging selection of sandwiches.

We missed the village tidy-up on Saturday 27th April, concentrating on Beaver work for the St. George's Day Service and Parade on the following day and the Scout Group AGM on 10th May. I had the enviable task of printing photos for the Thursday and Friday Beaver Colonies' display board. You may recall that when Jenny was asked to become involved with Beavers, somebody, who shall remain nameless, told her it only required an hour a week. Their nose ought to be 5 metres long by now.

On Sunday 28th April, we went to the St. George's Day Service in the local church and the Parade, in the rain, round Greenmount. My task was to take photos. The ones in the church seemed to have come out alright. The ones outside were all marred by spots of rain on the lens and, in rushing about to try to keep ahead of the procession, the tendon at the back of my right leg suddenly fired about 30,000 volts into my calf muscle and the whole thing just about locked up. That was then end of the photography and almost the end of me. I limped home slowly, every step being agony.

On Monday 29th April, we decided to start cleaning the conservatory. It hasn't been thoroughly cleaned for over two years and it was being used more or less as a junk room. We didn't make a lot of progress. We spent much of the time moving things out of the way so we could get into it.

Tuesday 30th April would have seen a good proportion of the work done, had Mike not popped in for a chat, talking about his recent holiday in the States (LA, San Francisco and Las Vegas). That was followed by a call from Barbara telling me her printer wouldn't print and we spent quite a while trying to sort that out. In the end, I left her with some web troubleshooting links giving her procedures to follow. In the evening, Edith called from NZ on Skype and we chatted for about an hour and a half. Jenny and Rachel went into the lounge to write a few pages of notes about the Beavers' exploits during the past year for the Scout AGM booklet.

And so ends another month of the Beaver Scout log book. Next month's gripping episode should cover the completion of the conservatory cleaning, the progress with the HP laptop and my canal barge trip with the three marry lads.