

Greenmount – April 2015

Well March came in like a lion and went out like one, invalidating the old saying. That doesn't say much for the start of April, in myth, a month of showers and, in practice, in this part of the world, a month of persistent, thick cloud and rain, much like most other months.

I spent much of Wednesday 1st April working through a heap of computer equipment I had brought home from the jumble at the Old School to test using Matthew's old PC, having finally revived it with Windows 7. It was impossible to test the equipment at the Old School because (a) Jenny's old laptop had given up completely and (b) there still was no broadband at the Old School I could use to download software to make the hardware work (drivers).

Two Lexmark printers, in what looked like really good condition, were soon consigned to the tip. There were no Windows 7 drivers for them. In forcing people to move from Windows XP by no longer supporting it, Microsoft was forcing people world-wide to produce an awful lot of premature waste. So much for being environmentally responsible. Still, being American, what can one expect? Obama was hardly setting the trend, was he?

Only one of the heap of printers was useful and that was a two-year-old HP printer that needed a bit of TLC.

I tested most of the other bits and pieces and priced everything that worked for return to the Old School ready for the next jumble sale.

I tidied up on Thursday 2nd April, putting Matthew's old PC in a corner in the lounge for future use, tidied my media collection and tidied up my desk, dealing with a few outstanding, non-urgent items.

There was the usual grocery shopping trip on Friday 3rd April, commencing with a visit to the tip to dump all the rubbish and finishing with a brief visit to Asda at Pilsworth for a few bits and pieces, including Yellow Tail Chardonnay and Shiraz. It was very busy, being Good Friday.

Saturday 4th April was a nice, fairly sunny day and we ventured, briefly, into Ramsbottom to tour the charity shops, where I found another couple of DVDs and to avail ourselves of two packs of candles for our dining room, not that we would be burning them so much, since we were on British Summer Time as of Sunday last.

After lunch at home and a brief rest to recover from the shock of spending £5 in Ramsbottom and having to withdraw more cash, Jenny decided I was scrubbing the kitchen floor in readiness for the following day of festivities, assuming I was in any fit state to enjoy them.

A light chicken-salad tea accompanied by a glass or two of Chardonnay did much to improve my well-being.

I had a bit of a lazy day on Sunday 5th April, generally sorting out my media again and producing covers for DVDs and CDs that had been acquired in cardboard sleeves or in a

shoddy condition. Our experience at charity shops was that many people who donated such items did not take care of their possessions. I had adopted the practice of always checking the surface of DVDs and CDs for scratches as well as examining items to make sure they were not unauthorised copies before purchasing them.

I helped, in some small way, to prepare for the meal with Matt and Carrie and Rachel and Matthew. Most of the work fell on Jenny, being expert in the kitchen.

The meal went well and everyone had a good time.

We were up early on Monday 6th April for the Antiques and Collectors' Fair at the Old School. Jenny was helping out on one of the bric-a-brac stalls and I was helping Frank with the records, CDs and DVDs. The sale started at 9 a.m. and finished at 4 p.m., making it seem a long day.

We were up early on Tuesday 7th April as well. I was at the Incredible Edible plot with my trailer soon after 10 a.m., following a detour to the Old School to drop off the jumble I had been testing at home.

The plan at the plot, or vice versa, was to collect more soil from the dismantled site in Ramsbottom and spread it on Phase 3 at Greenmount. David and I made two trips and ended up with arms two inches longer than when we started.

Tracey had arrived by the time we came back with the first load and was busy putting up more of the wooden frame. Digging holes for the supporting posts was hard going, as I discovered after delivering the second load of soil, David having to leave at that point. Tracey, Donna and I continued until early afternoon and succeeded in erecting the frame along the top side and the first part of the front, along the path. It was beginning to look good, except for the quagmire in the bottom half, into which one's wellies sank and stuck. It was not surprising that the last hole we dug for the last post (and it felt like it) started to fill with water.

I suggested we should dig a sump at the bottom of the plot and then have some kind of outlet for the water to flow onto the unmade road on the basis that this would help the land to drain. What it really needed was a low-level outlet into a proper drain but we didn't know where the drains were, if any, under the unmade road and there was no easy access to them.

I was home about 2:30 and Jenny had kept my lunch warm, expecting me back much earlier. After that, I did intend to clean out the old freezer in the garage. We no longer required the freezer and decided to clean it up and sell it if we could. Unfortunately, after putting away the trailer, I was too exhausted and we spent what was left of the afternoon relaxing.

I woke about 6 a.m. on Wednesday 8th April and promptly went back to sleep for an hour, woken by the alarm clock. Turning that off, I climbed out of bed at 8 a.m. That was more difficult than I had anticipated, still aching severely from the previous day's strenuous (well, for me, anyway) activity. Being a true Yorkshireman, I persevered. I was half way through breakfast when Jenny joined me.

After breakfast and washing the pots, we turned our attention to the freezer in the garage. Would you believe it took us most of the day to thoroughly clean the freezer inside and out? Having it looking almost as good as new, I contacted the makers, Whirlpool, for instructions regarding the replacement of the green LED that indicated it was switched on and working. The LED had not been working for some time, although this had not detracted from the freezer's main purpose. The eventual response was that I would have to have an engineer attend to it. My degree in Electronic Engineering was, apparently, not good enough for Whirlpool. Since we were intending to sell the Freezer anyway, I decided to ignore this minor fault.

Instead, I took a picture of the freezer and also of another item we had stored in the garage, a rowing machine, so I could produce "For Sale" notices to display at our car boot sales.

We spent the morning of Thursday 9th April at Rachel's apartment, arriving there before 9 a.m. after a comfortable 45 minute drive. Had the schools not been closed for the Easter holidays, the journey would have been a nightmare.

The plan was to meet Rachel there so she could give us her keys and so we could use her car parking space, wait in for the washer repair man to arrive and fix the washing machine and then take her keys to her at work before returning home.

All went according to plan, which made a nice change, the only issue being the wait in Rachel's apartment with nothing to do except read that riveting publication, the A to Z of Manchester. The engineer replaced the badly-soiled, rubber, door seal on the washer and unexpectedly turned his attention to the radiator in the hall that was not working. He concluded that the control mechanism was faulty and it was probably going to be simpler to replace the whole unit, something he would discuss with Rachel's landlord.

I managed to negotiate the Manchester inner ring road and made my way to the police HQ to drop off Rachel's key. Coming home was much simpler and we detoured to Tesco in Bury (now there's a surprise) for a few items on the way.

The rest of the day was spent recovering from the experience.

Our grocery shopping trip on Friday 10th April was preceded by a visit to the dentist so I could make an appointment to have my chipped front tooth fixed. Would you believe, because I was quite busy that day, my dentist had a free slot in the early afternoon due to a cancellation? I declined that invitation and settled for an appointment the following Friday on the basis that my tooth was not causing me any grief; it just felt like I had a huge cave where enamel ought to be.

The round trip to Unicorn in Chorlton and Waitrose at Broadheath, Altrincham was completed by 2 p.m., including lunch at Waitrose, averaging almost 70 m.p.g., thanks to free flowing traffic. After lunch and we sorted out who was doing what and when regarding the Car Boot Sale at the Old School the following day with Christine and then packed the car in readiness. That was easier said than done, the garage looking like a tip, with boxes stacked everywhere from the last time Jenny sorted out her goods.

Saturday 11th April saw our first Car Boot Sale of the season with a pitch at Greenmount Old School. The sale was open to the public from 8 a.m. and vendor's vehicles were allowed access from 7 a.m. so people could set out their stalls. Since Jenny had volunteered to manage the bookings, we were on site for 6:30 a.m. Unfortunately, it had started raining about 6 a.m. and was persisting down with a cold north-westerly wind to add to the misery.

We parked the car and went inside to keep warm and dry. I made myself useful in helping to set up for the Collectors' Fair and started off managing the music department until Frank arrived. There was some confusion over the start time of the Fair, Frank believing the majority of the notices proclaiming 9 a.m. Christine had decided it was 8 a.m.

By 9 a.m., the rain had, for the most part, subsided and Jenny and I set out our car boot stall. We persevered in the biting cold wind until lunch time and gave up, along with the other three car-booters who had risked braving the elements, returning home for lunch. We had made about £35 on the day, which was pretty poor, attributable largely to the bad weather, particularly after a week of reasonably sunny and unusually warm weather for the time of year.

A refreshing lunch at home made us both exceedingly sleepy.

We spent Sunday 12th April tidying up the garage and trying to find room for all our car boot stock in the absence of a warehouse.

We managed a day out in the fresh air on Monday 13th April, with a trip to the tip with a trailer load of rubbish from various sources including Rachel's apartment, the Incredible Edible plot and the garage. We went on to the weigh-in at Heap Bridge in Bury to drop off some old clothes in exchange for cash and then nipped into Tesco on the way back. Jenny needed a new head for our Braun Oral B electric toothbrush and, having seen them at Waitrose for £8 a pair, we thought Tesco would be cheaper. Wrong. Tesco's price for the same item was £12. Jenny decided to wait until our weekly shop at the end of the week.

After lunch at home, we were out and about again, on foot this time, delivering the latest [village newsletter](#). We completed our round and headed back home via the Incredible Edible plot for a quick inspection of the Phase 3 development work, arriving home as it threatened to rain yet again.

I was at the Incredible Edible plot for 10 a.m. again on Tuesday 14th April, the weather much improved and forecast to stay that way for the rest of the week. David and I made two more trips to Ramsbottom with the trailer to fetch more soil from the dismantled plot there for Phase 3 at Greenmount, dropping Jenny off in Ramsbottom on the first run.

That took us to about noon and David and I started to dig a drainage ditch in the lower half of the Phase 3 raised bed, sloping down towards the unmade road, David departing after about half an hour for another appointment, leaving me to carry on with pick and spade, while Tracey and Frank continued to build the wood support along the front of the bed, by the path. With the upper part of the bed more or less completed and the top soil in place and raked level, it was starting to look pretty good.

I was home for about 1:30 p.m., Jenny arriving from Ramsbottom shortly afterwards and we had lunch. Once that had settled, I cut the grass at the back and front and also on the side we don't own. The council chap had turned up with his sit-on mower the day before and, because the ground was still wet from the recent rain, the mower performed more like a plough. I cut the grass he had missed and tidied up the grass with which he had messed. Apart from the great furrows he had made, it was starting to look reasonable.

I staggered into the house about 7 p.m., washed and changed and had a well-deserved beer with my tea.

What a difference there was in the weather on Wednesday April 15th. We, in the north west, had gone from blue skies and sunshine, working outdoors in a T-shirt and jeans the previous evening to cloud, mist and rain with a temperature of 8 degrees, while the south east was enjoying more of the same with temperatures as high as 24 degrees. Not only had they acquired most of the country's wealth but they had stolen the good weather as well.

We were at the Bull's Head car park for 9:30 a.m., meeting up with other members of the Tooting District Civic Society for the visit to the 12th century Clitheroe Castle. There was not really much to see there, although the guided tour, lunch and a potter round the museum took us to 2:30 p.m. and we were home for just after 3 p.m. Despite the bad weather, I did manage to get a couple of [photographs](#), including one of low cloud over Pendle Hill, noted for its 17th century witch trials.

I spent most of what was left of the day updating my web site with the pictures I took of [Cambridge](#) in October 2013. I like to keep things up to date. It was my plan to work my way through my collection adding more old pictures as well as new ones as time permitted.

We did what we did best on Thursday 16th April. We went out and spent some money.

Having cut what passed for the lawns on Tuesday, we thought it was time we smartened up the boring border at the back, the challenge being that it didn't get a lot of sun. Come to think of it, in this part of the world, nowhere got a lot of sun but the back border got less than most places because the garden faced east(ish) and there was a rather large sycamore tree in the middle of it, so when the sun was on the back in the morning, the tree provided a good deal of shade.

We went in search of some suitable plants as well as some more frost-tolerant pots for the patio to replace those that had disintegrated during the last winter and more organic top soil and organic plant food for potting, etc. A trip to Newbank Garden Centre before lunch and a further outing to Summerseat Garden centre after lunch cost us over £100 for just about everything on our list and a couple of items that weren't. Unfortunately, we did not have enough time to use what we had bought and left that for early the following morning, hoping that the sun that had managed to show itself by the afternoon would appear early the next day. It would make a nice change if it did.

I had planned to dig up the rhubarb and plant it in a huge pot on the patio on the morning of Friday 17th April before my dental appointment at 11:15. Unfortunately, a later than planned awakening prevented that particular piece of feverish activity.

It took my nice dentist about twenty minutes to rebuild my chipped front, lower-right tooth and, after a brief stop at the post office to send of a demand to the tax man for a refund of Jenny's tax for last year, we were off to Unicorn and Waitrose at Broadheath, somewhat later than usual. We took in the delights of Asda at Pilsworth on the way back, the store still being very competitive on some items, including Yellow Tail wine.

It was Saturday 18th April before we were back in the garden moving, potting and planting. That was followed by preparation for the following day's car boot sale in Ramsbottom, lifting boxes and packing the car. It sounds much easier than it was.

A 5 a.m. start on Sunday 19th April did nowhere near as much for my advanced years as a glass of Chardonnay did. We were at our car boot pitch before 7 a.m. and it was very cold, even with four layers of clothing. I could have done with my toolbox because the only way to get people to part with money seemed to be to prise open their wallets with a crow bar and extract cash with a pair of long-nosed pliers. If the economy was picking up and people were beginning to feel good about it, it didn't show. Even the weather was miserable with a cold north-easterly wind and a heavily overcast sky. The sun did make a brief appearance. Just after lunch, it threatened to rain and we gave up, having made a very small profit on the day.

I was so tired by the time I got home I just potted about for the rest of the day. I did manage to test a flat-screen monitor that has been lying around for a while and which was intended for the car boot stock if it worked, which it did. I also managed to hook up Rachel's laptop to the TV and get that working, so I then had two mechanisms for recording catch-up TV, like BBC iPlayer.

The first was a screen recorder that recorded a designated screen window or the whole screen, including sound if required. That was a free tool from Microsoft Technet I had installed on Jenny's laptop. The second was to play the item required on Rachel's laptop and then record it on Jenny's laptop by feeding the audio and video output from Rachel's laptop into the input on the Hauppauge TV box with built-in Mpeg 2 hardware encoder, which is connected to Jenny's laptop using a long USB cable. I know it sounds complicated but at least one o' t'other ought to work, although I needed to test it at some point.

Monday 20th April was another early start. I was up at 6 a.m. and at the Incredible Edible plot for just after 7 a.m., making sure there was room for the lorry due around 8 a.m. to have access to deliver four tonnes of top soil for Phase 3. The problem was that people tended to park their cars on the access road and it was a case of persuading them not to do so. As it turned out, one chap who lives in the houses at the back arrived and parked his car out of the way and a couple of other people just turned in to drop off children on their way to school. We had to ask one of the local residents to move his car and, although we knocked him out of bed, he was nice enough to give the keys to Tracey so she could move it, saving him the trouble of dressing for the occasion.

The soil arrived and four of us, Donna, Tracey, Dave and I, worked on the plot, barrowing two tonnes of soil from the bags to the plot, digging more of the drainage ditch, breaking up rubble to go in the ditch, digging over more of the plot so we could dump soil on it and raking it level. We finished at 10 a.m., leaving two more bags to empty and the drainage ditch

to finish the following morning, commencing at 10 a.m.

After a brief rest at home, I started trimming back the ivy on the side of the garage to prevent it invading the roof void and I managed to do about half of it when I was interrupted by Steve who lives just down the road and was passing. We chatted for about twenty minutes and as he left, Jenny called me in for lunch. Nice timing, I thought.

After lunch, I finished off the ivy, trimmed and strimmed the edges of the grass on the side of the house and the front lawn, helping Jenny with her car boot stock, lifting boxes, from time to time and packed up for the day about 4:15. Surprisingly, after about half an hour's rest in the chair, I was still able to move about. My muscles ached a bit but had not seized up completely.

We had a bit of a lie-in on Tuesday 21st April, rising at 8 a.m. for a 10 a.m. start at the Incredible Edible plot with Donna, Frank, David and Tracey. Between us, we finished off the drainage ditch, finished off laying the top soil on Phase 3, which was to be the wild flower garden, started the rockery at the top end of Phase 3 and weeded the other beds.

Donna decided we would not be meeting at the plot again for a week or two. There would be enough to do over the next couple of weeks in preparation for the village party on May 4th.

I was home before 1 p.m. and Tracey joined Jenny and I on the patio for a coffee and a chat, after which, Jenny and I had lunch.

I spent what was left of the afternoon tidying up the border at the front of the house, along the side next to the drive. I didn't get very far.

My day ended just after the sun had disappeared off the back garden, watering the borders and the pots. The final task was to water the front border before collapsing in a heap in front of the TV. What a daft place to leave a heap, I thought. (The old jokes are the best!)

Wednesday 22nd April turned out to be more or less a day of rest for me. A leisurely 8:30 a.m. start saw us in Bury for just before noon and home for a late lunch in the warm sunshine on the patio. The rest of my afternoon was spent on a mammoth update of the village web site following the meeting on the previous Monday which we had missed.

The evening demanded another watering session after another pleasant, warm day.

Another early start on Thursday 23rd April found me at Steve's house for 8:15 a.m., where we met up with Mike and Frank and Steve's wife, Lavinia, gave us all a lift to the bust station in Bury.

We caught the bus to Rochdale train station for £3.80 each, being before 9:30 a.m. and thus unable to use our free senior travel passes and boarded the next train to Brighouse. Guess which idiot had forgotten his Senior Rail Card and had to pay full fare?

Steve had planned a walk along the Calderdale Way from Brighouse to Cragg Vale and the

plan was to walk the further two miles from there to Mythemroyd to catch the train back to Rochdale. Needless to say, things did not go exactly to plan.

The walk, estimated at about 10 to 12 miles was more like 15 to 17 miles and most of that was uphill and, in Yorkshire, some of the hill climbs are quite steep. We did not make the progress we expected and, not having walked any longish distances since I fell on my ankle in September 2013 on Offa's Dyke, I was, for the most part, bringing up the rear, although Steve and I were, at times, competing for that position.

It was around 4 p.m. before we reached the Fleece Countryside Inn at Ripponden, where we stopped for a rest and a pint of refreshing shandy. We contemplated Plan B, which was to have another round of drinks and a meal at the very nice pub, terminating the walk at Ripponden but Frank and Mike wanted to press on, with the prospect of another good 3 hours of walking to do.

And so we did, Frank voicing some regrets at not having agreed with the sensible suggestion Steve and I made some one hour later at the top of yet another climb.

It was a relief when we reach the last high point and started the descent, steep in parts, into Cragg Vale, the sun, as we were, about to give up on the day. We reached the Hinchliffe Arms in Cragg Vale at about 7 p.m., where we quenched our thirst with appropriate anaesthetic for our aching muscles and had a very nice, if somewhat expensive, meal.

There had still been talk of walking the last couple of miles into Mythemroyd in order to catch the train back to Rochdale but good sense prevailed and we ordered a taxi.

We caught the train back to Rochdale, just in time to catch the bus back to Bury and availed ourselves of another taxi to Greenmount, which, according to the local bus operators, does not exist after tea time and on Sundays.

I was home a little before 10 a.m. and, after a brief rest, managed to crawl into the shower and bed.

The alarm clock stirred us at 8 a.m. on Friday 24th April and after thinking about it, I jumped out of bed as well as any geriatric and we were on our way to Unicorn in Chorlton by about 10:15 a.m., wearing my shorts for the first time in the year, much to the amusement of the receptionist at the surgery, where I called to arrange a chat with a GP later in the day, the topic of conversation being the renewal of my prescription for tablets to ease my passing, of water, that is.

There was also a brief stop at Brandlesholme Post Office for a stamp so that Jenny could post a card to Tracey for her birthday. Despite the need for one stamp, the chap tried to sell Jenny a book of six. He obviously didn't know she was from Yorkshire.

We were home for about 3 p.m., which is exactly the time I had given the doctor's receptionist, booking a call from the GP for 3:20. Nice planning, I thought.

I had left my desktop computer to back up my document files and, surprisingly, that had

finished without a hitch.

I rounded off my day with a visit to the doctor following the scheduled telephone conversation. He checked my swollen sensitive bits again and confirmed it wasn't a serious problem, putting my tablet on a repeat prescription without the need for a monthly review.

We spent much of Saturday 25th April at the Old School sorting through and testing the electrical jumble in readiness for the next sale in a few weeks' time. Back home, we packed the car ready for the following day's car boot trading. Life seemed to be dogged by the unending need to lift and carry heavy boxes.

Sunday 26th April was no exception as I unloaded the car at our usual venue, the station car park in Ramsbottom, just before 7 a.m. Trading was very slow to commence and, once it had, it was fairly steady until the early afternoon. Our takings were more in keeping with what we had come to expect, for which the nice blue skies and sunshine had helped, despite the very cold north-westerly wind.

We were home for about 3:30 p.m. and spent the rest of the day relaxing, or at least I did. Jenny cooked tea as usual.

Monday 27th April was more of a relaxed day with nothing planned until Jenny's dental appointment in the afternoon. We walked up to Holcombe Brook and back in the lovely sunshine and very cold wind.

I went to the dentist at 9:30 on Tuesday 28th April to have my broken front tooth repaired for the second time in just over a week. Since I was in a bit of a hurry, being due at the Incredible Edible plot for 11:15 and it was very cold and we were suffering from hail showers, I took the car. I returned just as Jenny was about to leave with Gwen to go down to the coffee morning in aid of Christie Hospital at the local canon Lewis Hall.

I changed and took the car round to the plot on the basis that I could shelter in it if it rained. I was soon joined by Donna and Dave and we placed netting over the new beds to deter birds and cats from destroying the newly-planted seeds. Dave and I also dumped some compost on a couple of the other beds and dug it in. It didn't rain; it hailed. At least we didn't get wet, as the hail stones just bounced off us.

It was in the afternoon that I discovered that my computer was failing to recognise one of its discs. I had been having trouble with it and I thought it was the system disc. It turned out to be one on which I had saved a number of films I had recorded from TV. I thought there was a hardware problem with the PC or an issue with the BIOS and I spent the rest of the afternoon trying to fix it. By about 4 p.m., I had concluded the disc was on its last revolutions and I rushed down to PC World to buy a 2 TB external hard drive. I had decided to back up all my hard discs just in case any others decided to give up.

Luckily, I managed to coax the faulty drive back into existence long enough to back up most of the recordings on it, leaving it overnight to finish off.

I discovered on Wednesday morning, 29th April, that all but four recordings had been saved

from the faulty drive, which was no longer visible to the computer.

I spent the day backing up the rest of the hard disc drives and tidying out my desk.

The last of the 250 GB discs was finished off on Thursday 30th April, leaving just the 500 GB IDE drive to do. I started on that in the afternoon and finished it off overnight and after our usual shopping trip the following day.

What a month it had been, full of diversity and challenge, not to mention colourful language. Judging by the way it ended, all May had to offer was lower temperatures than February and rain.