

Greenmount – February 2009

The first major event of the month was a telephone call from Burning Desires to provide the costs for the new stove in the lounge, having received the building estimate and visited the showrooms again at the very end of January. Knowing the total cost is one thing. Being able to afford it is another. Since the development will add nothing to the house value, particularly in the present economic climate, the really important question is whether we shall remain here (or even remain) long enough to reap the benefit.

On 4th February, I went back to see the doctor to report no significant improvement in my stomach condition. Again, he could find no serious problem and advised me, like Moses, to keep taking the tablets. He also asked me to go for a blood test on 6th February and booked me an initial telephone consultation at the hospital for a third (going for the hat-trick) upper endoscopy on the 11th February.

The gas man arrived to fit the new part to the cooker. I had identified the damaged part with Gas-On spares in Birmingham by E-mailing them a photograph of the original and subsequently ordered one by telephone, which arrived two days later. I persuaded our gas fitter to come along and install it for me, assuring him I had the correct part. I would have fitted it myself but I do not have the required test equipment and not being CORGI registered, it would have been against current regulations. Jenny once again has two working ovens. What more could a woman want?

The gas man finished just in time for us to disappear to yet another funeral, this time at Greenmount Church, for Nancy Herbert. Nancy (known to most as Mrs) Herbert was a teacher at Greenmount School and taught Matthew for a whole year and Rachel for a while. She was also involved heavily with the local Scout Group and was Christine Taylor's sister. She was and Christine is a key figure in village activities and the running of the Old School, now owned by the church, as a local facility. Nancy was also a keen off-roader and owned a Land Rover. Fittingly, her husband had arranged for a cream, Land Rover hearse. The church was crowded and the local school closed, both as a mark of respect and to allow staff there to attend the service. Jenny, known to the staff at the local school, was invited back to the school for drinks, etc. She had to decline because she had not booked any time off from her crossing patrol duties in Ramsbottom and being drunk in charge of a lollipop is frowned upon.

On the 6th I went to have my blood samples taken for analysis. As the lady Phlebotomist reeled off the list of tests ordered, I was wondering just how much blood would be left in circulation. In the event, she filled four phials and told me to allow ten days for the results. I went back home to have breakfast, the doctor having specifically asked me to refrain from eating or drinking on the morning prior to the appointment. I don't normally drink until after 5 (that's p.m., not a.m.).

Rachel came home from work on 9th with the news that her car's windscreen wipers were not working. On closer examination, I added the indicators, heated rear window and interior lights to the list of faults and advised Rachel to call out the VW Assistance service she decided to renew at the last minute during 2008.

The RAC man arrived and, after trying to replace a few electrical components I never knew existed, he announced it was a job for the VW agents.

The following morning, Rachel was reduced to public transport. I telephoned VW Assistance again to report that the nearside dipped headlight no longer worked and that I thought the electrical fault was spreading. A VW Assistance engineer arrived and investigated further. After about half an hour, he had found a faulty component of which not only I had no knowledge but it seems the RAC man also knew not of its crucial role in the management of the electrical systems.

The engineer wrote out a report form, identifying the problem, followed me in Rachel's car down to the local VW agents, gave them a copy of the form and gave me a lift back home. He also arranged for a hire vehicle for Rachel while her car was in the garage.

Our good friend and neighbour, Mike, offered to fetch Rachel from work that evening and the courtesy car, from Europcar, arrived about 8 pm. Later in the evening, I went out to put the courtesy car on the drive, only to discover that both rear tyres were almost flat.

Rachel and I spent about half an hour in the freezing cold administering to the hire car and pumping up its tyres prior to eventually manoeuvring it onto the drive for the night. I discovered the handbrake needed some adjustment, being almost vertical when fully applied. At least the tyres remained inflated.

The garage telephoned late the following day to say that Rachel's car was ready for collection and I asked if they had fixed all of the faults, including the headlight. The reply was yes, except for the headlight, which was due to a faulty bulb. I asked them to replace that as well. Just as we were about to leave, the telephone rang. The mechanic had replaced the headlight bulb and it did not work. There was apparently a further fault and the garage needed to keep the car for another night.

On the next day, the garage telephoned again to say the car was ready. Apparently, the replacement headlight bulb was also faulty and a second bulb had fixed the problem. Jenny drove me down to the garage and I brought Rachel's car, restored to full working order, back home. Since it was still under warranty, all it had cost was the £10 for the replacement bulb (just the one).

That evening, Rachel arrived home in her hire vehicle, glad to be rid of it. I asked Europcar when they would collect it and was told by lunchtime the following day. Five days later, two, shifty-looking chaps turned up for the car. Two days later, Rachel received a charge of £207 for five days' car hire. The following day, she telephoned Europcar to ask why she had been charged for the vehicle that had been provided free of charge under her breakdown assistance scheme. The chap at Europcar, which has a bad reputation for this sort of thing, explained it had been a mistake and the money would be refunded, which it has been.

All things considered, the service from VW Assistance was very good and the VW dealership in Bury, Smith Knight Fay, was very helpful, only being slightly marked down for lack of attention to the detail of the headlight bulb. Europcar I wouldn't touch with a bargepole, a bargefrenchman, etc., etc.

As the month draws to a close, I have decided to progress our log-burning stove project and I have asked for formal quotations from the stove company and the builder. The former has been received and I am waiting for a letter from the latter.

Having spoken to the hospital on 11th, as arranged, I was told the consultant had requested I attend for the internal examination before I see him. I have heard nothing since. I do believe the symptoms might be waning once again. Could this be connected with my recent abstinence from Seville orange marmalade? Breakfast isn't the same with Blueberry jam but at least it's better for me, even if it has increased our consumption of toilet tissue.

Rachel and Jenny have both been invested in the local Scout Group as Beaver Leader and Assistant Beaver Leader and Jenny has invested seven new Beavers, complete with woggles. I have photographs to prove it.