

Greenmount – July 2012

Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> July was the last Church Parade of the academic year and Jenny made it just in time to escort her four Beavers from the Thursday Colony to Church. This is the worst attendance she has ever had and, quite frankly, if parents can't be bothered to make the effort to bring their children to what is an integral part of the Scout movement, I don't see why she should waste her time and effort running two Colonies and why both of us should continue to invest time and resources doing all of the preparation work. I know there are some genuine good reasons why some Beavers could not attend but as for the others....

Normally I would go to the service as well but having risen later than planned and suffering from a touch of Montezuma's Revenge, I decided to not to attend. Instead, I fed the cats, washed the pots from the previous evening's meal and breakfast and listened to BBC Radio 3's Jazz Record Requests I missed the previous evening.

Jenny and I went to lunch at Summerseat Garden Centre for a change, not that the weather was conducive to gardening unless you're into hydroponics.

Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> July was another very wet day and not worth mentioning, so I won't.

On Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> July, I went to lunch in the Bull's Head with Mike, Frank and Steve to discuss our next long-distance walk. We were joined by Alistair and Martin for the lunch but not the subsequent discussion, which lasted until turned 4 p.m. I did intend having Turkey Jalfrezi for lunch until the waitress told me there was no sign of the rice Will said he had secured for me so I resorted to a turkey sandwich as usual.

We seemed to be undecided about the next walk, opinion being split between Hadrian's Wall and Offer's Dyke. A further meeting was planned after more research and beer.

I had a very pleasant, unexpected Skype video call from Lyel in NZ in the evening. He had been trying to persuade us to go to NZ for Edith and Terry's 60<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary surprise party on 28<sup>th</sup> July, the anniversary actually being on the 31<sup>st</sup>. I said I would give it more thought, although the logistics might be difficult to arrange at such short notice.

On Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> July, we had intended to walk into Ramsbottom but, not surprisingly, it rained and, having just missed the bus, we resorted to taking the car.

Touring the charity shops, Jenny bought some books and spotted a Witner Metronome with bell and a mahogany finish for £18 that seemed to be in good working order. The cost of these new used to be very high when they made them and this was a bargain. I also managed to find an LP of Bunk Johnson's old recordings for £1.

We then went to the herbalist shop and bought the items that were the purpose of our visit, two bottles of organic cranberry juice and a jar of organic virgin coconut oil.

After we had come back home and had lunch, the sun did eventually try to break through the clouds but it seemed that it was too much effort and the damp and grey prevailed.

On Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> July it was the turn of the Thursday Beavers to go to Nuttall Park. The weather forecast was not particularly favourable but it was not supposed to be that bad and we risked it. The Beavers had about ten minutes looking at the different kinds of trees before the Heavens opened with a vengeance and, would you believe, some of them had not even brought coats! We sheltered as best we could under the trees and passed the time talking until the parents arrived to collect their children. On the whole, the Beavers were very well behaved under the circumstances. Of course, just after they had all gone, it stopped raining.

Friday 6<sup>th</sup> July was our usual shopping day so we didn't care whether it rained or not.

Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> July was fine for a change, even if somewhat dull and Jenny joined two other locals to help spruce up the village. I intended starting to check out and price electrical items for the jumble sale the following month. Instead, I was talked into fetching my trailer to collect some stone from an old wall for reuse on the Incredible Edible plot in the village. Alistair, who organised the endeavour (he's good at organising things) arranged a free lunch of pie and peas for me at the Old School in return.

On Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> July we were all helping with the Scout Group Activity Day, meeting at the Old School at 9:15 a.m. The Scouts and Cubs were divided into teams and tasked with walking the 3 or so miles to Burrs Country Park down the Kirklees Trail, performing a challenge on the way. Rachel was leading one of the teams.

Jenny was in charge of the events and challenges at Burrs, where Beavers joined the teams, before they walked on to the Ashworth Valley Scout Camp Site, with further challenges along the way. Jenny followed the last team.

Part of the route was across a motorway bridge and Steve and I had been allocated the supervision of a challenge on the bridge. While waiting for the first team to arrive, we had dumped our rucksacks at the north side of the centre of the bridge and walked back to the trail to see if anyone was coming. We did not realise the implications of seemingly abandoned bags on a motorway bridge until a police helicopter flew over a short time later.

After the last team had passed, Steve and I walked back to our cars we had parked at Chesham and drove to Ashworth Valley to await the arrival of the teams at the camp site.

Rachel's team arrived joint first with another team and came second overall, losing out on the tug-of-war decider after a round of further challenges on the field. Her team would have won had it not been for a "ringer" in the form of our Group Scout Leader's husband, Paul, on the other team. Rachel had to be satisfied with her Cubs team winning the Duncan Lamb Trophy the week before.

There was the usual barbecue for all and the rain held off until the very last moment. Everyone had a most enjoyable day and to see so many kids having such a good time makes it all worthwhile.

Monday 9<sup>th</sup> July was another of those days when I got lost in the mists of virtual reality. I was on my computer for most of the day.

On Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> July I had another planning meeting with Frank, Steve and Mike and, normally, this would have been in the Bull's Head. Instead I had to wait in for the gas man to come and service our boiler, so the chaps came round to our place and had tea/coffee and biscuits. However good the beverage, it was no substitute for a pint of Wainwrights.

On Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> July, being a fine day for a change, I would have cut the grass but Frank, Steve and I had planned to go walking. Mike couldn't make it because of a back injury sustained the previous day while mowing the lawn. I obviously made the right decision. Frank's wife, Gwen, gave us a lift to Bolton Station and we caught an early morning train to Lancaster.

We followed the route of the coast path, along the south bank of the River Lune estuary, deviating inland slightly to cut off a corner where the river bends to the left, to reach Glasson Dock, a marina at the end of a branch of the Lancaster Canal with lock-controlled access to the sea at high tide. On the way we called at a very nice café, cleverly named Café d'Lune.

The return to Lancaster was via the canal towpath, very muddy in parts after the very wet weather, with a stop at the Calgate Café and craft shop by the canal for lunch. The highlight of this stretch was negotiating our way past a herd of cattle, a mixture of mature cows and young heifers and bullocks, that had found its way onto the towpath. With the nervous herd moving ahead of us and running out of space as it approached a bridge over the canal, we side-stepped through a stile into the adjacent field while the cattle retreated back down the towpath to the encouraging bellows from a young bull, one of several, in the field across the canal. We reflected on the modern-day usefulness of a canal.

We were back in Lancaster in time for a swift pint before catching the train back to Bolton. Arriving some 15 minutes late due to a preceding late-running service (shades of the good old BR days), Franks' daughter, Emma, picked us up and brought us back to Greenmount with the satisfaction of knowing we had walked about fourteen miles, albeit on the flat.

Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> July was another fine day and I managed to cut all the grass, including the front bed of moss with grass in it that was about eighteen inches long, despite the heavy shower the previous evening. Needless to say it was hard going and very wet.

Friday 13<sup>th</sup> July was the usual shopping day, calling in at Matthew's house to drop off Carrie's birthday card. After visiting Unicorn at Chorlton, we came back to Bury Tesco and lunched at the new Costa Coffee Café there before completing our grocery shop.

On Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> July we drove into Ramsbottom for the usual tour of the charity shops and to purchase some more of the delicious Cranberry drink infused with Birch leaf. Yum.

In the evening we had booked a table for two at the Metro Fish Bar at Blackford Bridge between Bury and Whitefield, for which Matthew and Carrie had sent us an electronic copy of a voucher for the meal for Father's Day. The voucher entitled us to a two-course meal (starter or desert with main course) plus a glass of wine each.

We did call in at Matthew and Carrie's house on the way to the restaurant to drop off some flowers for Carrie's birthday and a bottle of brandy for both of them to share, Matthew's birthday being on 19<sup>th</sup> July.

We did have doubts about the Fish Bar, having passed it on a weekly basis for months and it not looking particularly impressive from the outside. We also imagined it to be a glorified fish and chip café. How wrong can one be and what a contrast on the inside.

The restaurant is bright, clean and very nice and the menu is quite varied, including some non-fish dishes. We chose starters of garlic mushrooms and prawn cocktail and two glasses of white wine. The garlic mushrooms were very nice and the prawn cocktail, presented on a dish, was large and full of delicious prawns. The wine was pleasantly acceptable. For a main course we both chose sea bass from the "Specials Board" and Jenny asked for one without the accompanying sauce. Both arrived with sauce. The waitress apologised and took Jenny's away, saying she would get her another one. Meanwhile, I started on my meal. The waitress then returned, said the chef was cooking her another one and offered her a second glass of wine while she waited. The meal was excellent. Afterwards, we ordered a sweet, Jenny asking for chocolate pudding with ice cream and me for jam sponge pudding with custard. Again, we were offered these free of charge for the mistake with the sea bass. The waitress again apologised for having no custard and I settled for pouring cream instead. The sponges were very nice and light. Jenny ordered a Cappuccino coffee and when we were ready to leave, I offered to settle up for the coffee, which, I was told by the owner/chef that this was also with his compliments, apologising once more for the mix up.

It is rare indeed that one receives this kind of excellent service and, coupled with the quality of the food, I have no hesitation in recommending the Metro Fish Bar to those in the vicinity.

On Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> July, I potted around in the garden, the main task being to pick the fruit that was ripe. Jenny and Rachel went round to the Old School where Pets in need was hosting a day and Jenny came back with some plants which I subsequently re-potted. We then used the fresh blackcurrants to make our first batch (a couple of pounds) of delicious jam.

We had a telephone call to say Jenny had won a prize in the Pets in Need raffle and arranged to pick it up the following day.

On Monday 16<sup>th</sup> July, we went round to collect our raffle prize about 9 a.m. and chose a bottle of red wine.

I was back in time to meet Frank at 9:30 a.m., intending to go walking, but, given the poor weather, after a quick discussion about progress with the village Incredible Edible plot, we decided to meet up again at noon for lunch in the Bull's Head

I came home and watched the live webcast from Greenpeace about the campaign to lock up Shell petrol stations in London and Edinburgh as a protest against their plans to start drilling for oil off the Alaskan coast, in the Arctic, where an oil spill would be devastating to the world's environment. This is a good time to boycott Shell products and sell any shares you hold in the company.

Jenny went out to lunch with her friend, Karen. I joined Mike, Frank, Steve and Steve's son, Marcus, in the Bull's Head as planned and we discussed our next walk together over lunch, which lasted until just after 4 p.m.

On Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> July I spent the day archiving more paperwork onto my computer, not that you'd notice from the state of my desk.

On Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> July we finally managed to deliver the latest village newsletter (Greenmount Voice) to the houses on our allocated round in one of the rare dry spells since the end of May. The fresh air made a nice change and spurred us on to think about tidying and cleaning the lounge. Would you believe the first job was to clean the vacuum cleaner? This absorbing task was interrupted by lunch and was followed by an afternoon of dusting, vacuuming and polishing, for which the lounge looked much better. It even made the sun shine when heavy rain had been forecast. We resolved to clean the rest of the house.

In the evening, Jenny went out for a meal with the girls, which left me to watch one of the videos I like and which Jenny doesn't.

On Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> July, Steve picked me up at 8:30 and Frank joined us on the excursion to Belmont. We left the car in a car park just up the turning to Tockholes and walked up the road to pick up the Weavers trail. Then we turned left down a concessionary bridleway to emerge at the main road. Crossing the road and turning right, we shortly found a path on the left heading up to High Hill and, after struggling up the long climb over peat bogs, we reached the summit, from which we had a clear view of the Fylde coast, the fells beyond Lancaster, Blackpool Tower and the sea down to Formby Point. We dropped down the other side, heading for White Coppice, a small, beautiful village tucked away amongst the hills. There we turned left and walked past the reservoir to climb back up over the moors, over more peat bogs, into one of which Steve accidentally placed a leg. After that, things went downhill, literally and on reaching Belmont Village, we headed up the main road instead of crossing the reservoir and picking up the Weavers trail again. It took over an hour to reach the car from this point and we were all fairly tired even though we had not walked particularly far in the seven or eight hours we had been out.

Friday 20<sup>th</sup> July was a most eventful day. Having completed the usual shopping trip and stocked all the perishable food in the fridge/freezer in the kitchen, the freezer

decided to stop working. Fortunately, we have a back-up chest freezer in the garage and the contents from the kitchen freezer were transferred to the garage in record time. I then investigated the problem.

There were large chunks of ice in the bottom of the freezer that prevented the drawers from being pushed all the way in. This in turn had stopped the door closing properly and the freezer had started to warm up.

Using a blunt, tapered instrument and a rolling pin as a hammer, I chipped away the ice. Fortunately it came off in chunks and was soon removed, although where it came from is a mystery. Global warming? Anyway, I managed to get the drawers in and close the door. We left the freezer alone for the night.

On the morning of Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> July, the freezer was working again and the essential items were moved back into it. The, in the evening, we had a five-hour power cut. What a good job we had candles and oil lamps, by the light of which we played "I Spy".

On Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> July we had planned to go to the car boot sale in Ramsbottom but the forecast before we went to bed the previous night was not good so we abandoned the idea, having already packed the car. It was a lovely day and I was not the most popular person on the planet. What we (I) should have done is check the weather forecast again at 5 a.m.

Instead, I took Jenny to the tip, or, to be more precise, I took a car load of rubbish to the tip and Jenny accompanied me. We then went down to Matthew's house to plaster up a hole in the wall where the fixing for a window blind used to be, until Rachel demolished it. Rachel was looking after the house and the cat while Matthew and Carrie were on holiday and, to be fair, the fixing was already loose when Rachel tried to close the blind, having failed to read the notes Carrie had left for her, one of which said not to touch the blinds as the fixings were not secure.

On Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> July we went to Bygone Times, a large antiques warehouse at Eccleston, near Chorley. Jenny found a Harvest Cheese Dish for £12. They refused to accept me in part exchange on the grounds I was too old.

On Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> July, I finally got round to taking Jenny to Holmfirth, the area in which *Last of the Summer Wine* was filmed. I decided to take the scenic route along the A-roads rather than use the motorway. My research of the route did not take into account the confusion around Oldham with all the new road development and complete lack of road signs. Needless to say we ended up at Holmfirth but not using the intended route.

We parked in the Long Stay car park I had found on Google Earth and walked the short distance back into the town centre to find Sid's Café. The bus tour of the film locations started from the lay-by near the Café and we took the 11:15 bus with excellent running commentary from the operator, Colin.

On returning, we had our packed lunch in the town gardens and then went back to the car to put on our boots for an 8-mile circular walk amongst the hills surrounding

Holmfirth and the initial long, steep climb came as something as a challenge to Jenny. I'm getting more used to these things.

The walk completed in about 3½ hours, which wasn't bad going considering the terrain, we had tea and scones at Sid's Café before making our way back to the car.

On the journey home, we took a slight detour up to St John's Church at Upperthong, where we stopped to visit Bill Owen's (Compo's) grave. We were told that Peter Sallis (Clegg) had reserved the plot next to it. We followed the intended route back to Oldham and home.

The day would not have been complete without tea at the Bull's Head.

On Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup>, I met up with Frank, Mike and Steve for a 6-mile walk. We went down the "Lines" to where the new extension starts and then cut left, down into the valley, across the stream by the bridge, up the other side, straight across the field, through the housing estate and emerged on Brandlesholme Road opposite where the Rising Sun used to be, now waste land waiting to be built on. We turned down the road to the right of this and took the footpath on the right down to Burrs, following the canal and the river back to Summerseat and elevenses at the garden centre.

The forecast had been good and did not take into account the rain that seems to appear as if by magic as soon as we sit down for a coffee there. To make matters worse, only Frank had brought a coat and it wasn't big enough for the four of us. It was still trying hard to wet us when we left and we only escaped a soaking by good fortune. As we climbed up from Summerseat to Holcombe Brook, it was fine again and we decided it was time to get wet inside. We lunched at the Hare and Hounds where I enjoyed a Chicken Tandoori sandwich and three Dizzy Blonds, the latter being courtesy of Robinson's Brewery.

Needless to say, the rain was trying again as we made our way home about 4ish and started in earnest once I was safely home and dry.

While I was out, a chap from Anglian came to fix the patio doors at the back of the kitchen and the garage. He replaced the same broken part on each door, this being more cosmetic than functional.

On Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> July, Jenny and I walked the 3 or so miles into Ramsbottom for the usual tour of the charity shops and to purchase more organic cranberry juice infused with birch leaf. After returning home by bus, using our treasured passes, we picked the ripe soft fruit.

Friday 27<sup>th</sup> July was the usual grocery shopping day, delayed only by our late rising and a visit from Donald, a jazz fan and religious enthusiast. Needless to say we had an interesting discussion and exchanged CDs etc. The shop took us to Unicorn in Chorlton where, unusually, the vegetables were a little below their normal standard, probably due to the very wet summer and then on to Asda at Pillsworth. We had intended calling at Tesco Bury but Jenny wanted to get back because we had to go down to Matthew's house to finish repairing the blind before he came back from holiday. So we had a quick tea there.

On Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> July I had arranged to link up with Edith, Terry and family in NZ on Skype. Lyel, Edith's son-in-law, was throwing a surprise party for their 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary at his place in Nelson. He had been trying to persuade us to go out there but for various reasons we didn't go. The call was arranged for 8:30 a.m. B.S.T., being 7 p.m. in Nelson and I spoke to Edith and Terry as well as Lyel, Amy, Mel and Josh. Amy and Mel seem to think I have a funny accent. They should try understanding Yorkshire.

We spent most of the morning making jam from the blackcurrants we had picked the previous day.

I spent the afternoon on my computer, which was throwing wobblers in all directions, with blue screens when loading Windows XP, a Creative Audigy ZS 2 Platinum Pro Soundblaster that was doing anything but blasting sound, a CPU that was beeping useless (literally) and Microsoft Office 2003 feeling lonely without its installation disc. I finally got it sorted (I hope) by vacuuming all the dust and fluff from the internals, completely uninstalling my sound card and reinstalling it, disabling my motherboard sound device in the BIOS and putting the Microsoft Office 2003 disc in the CD drive, but not all at the same time.

On Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> July, I was still messing with my PC. Jenny went to Bury with Rachel and got very wet. I know when I'm onto a good thing.

On Monday 30<sup>th</sup> July, a new bus service through the village, 478, commenced and villagers were being encouraged to take a trip to Bury on it. Not only did I use it to go to Bury, but I took a photo of it. While in Bury, I nipped into Tesco for some organic bacon. They didn't have any, so I came back empty-handed and just managed to catch the old 481 from the bus station. If you're wondering why I didn't return on the 478, first it only runs every hour, second it goes through the bottom end of the village and the 481 goes past the church, nearer home and thirdly it only runs part-time, from about 8:20 to 14:20.

Oddly enough, the 481 also runs hourly, being complemented by the 480, also hourly, there being a bus every half hour between Greenmount and Bury during the day. In slipping in the new 478 service, it is surprising that it runs at about the same time as one of the others. One would have thought that those who plan these things could have arranged it better and spaced out the times a little.

After swallowing all that, you will be pleased to hear we walked to Summerseat Garden Centre and swallowed lunch there.

Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> I was finally persuaded to use Jenny's sewing machine to finish turning up the shortened legs of a pair of overalls and mend a pair of trousers that had split up the bum. Obviously they must have shrunk a little in the wash. Anyway, you might say that I was well stitched up.