

Greenmount March 2014

On Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> March we were up relatively early and, this being the first Saturday of the month, we paid a brief visit to the village "Drop-In" at the Old School.

We managed to return home, change and arrive at the Cricket Club by 11:00 a.m., just in time for the second meeting of the new village Cycling Group and a ride down to Bury Police Station and back, the same route as last time.

I spent the afternoon finishing off setting up the TV recordings on the computer for the week, updating the village web site and listening to Jazz Record Requests on BBC Radio 3 using BBC iPlayer, having missed the programme at the earlier time of 4 p.m.

On Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> March, we were up relatively early again, this time for Church Parade with the Scouts, held on the first Sunday of the month during term-time.

After lunch, I spent the afternoon on updating the village and my web sites.

On Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> March we went off for some bits and pieces in an attempt to start work on the landing. The first stop was at Elton Electrical for some GU10 tails to convert the hall lights from 12 volt to 240 volt, removing the need for the transformer under the landing floor and thereby reducing the need for maintenance. It also meant that I would have a spare transformer if ever the one in the loft for the bathroom needed replacing. Clever, eh?

The second stop was at the timber yard to look at suitable floor-boarding.

The third stop was at Wickes to look at skirting to match that already in the lounge. Replacing the old, painted skirting on the landing and in the dining area would again reduce the level of maintenance and look nicer. While we were there, we also looked at other options for the boarding the landing floor.

We made our final stop at Tesco, where else? Jenny wanted a pump for an air bed she had acquired at the jumble sale for use when sleeping at scout events such as the Beaver Sleepover on the coming Friday night at the Old School. She also wanted a second airbed for Rachel. Those items tucked in her shopping trolley, I went off into Bury to the electronics shop for a couple of female-to-female phono connectors (it's a long story) to test a record deck for our car boot sale while Jenny continued her grocery shopping at Tesco.

On arriving back home, there was just about enough time left in the day for me to complete the aforementioned record deck test and price up the fully-working item ready for our next car boot sale.

In the evening, Jenny went off to a meeting to discuss the forthcoming Beaver Sleepover and I settled down to watch the DVD of Carry On Again Doctor.

I had planned to start work on the landing on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> March but Beaver work for the Sleepover took precedence and we prepared and E-mailed a risk assessment off to, among other people, the County Commissioner. Would you believe that took us all morning?

After lunch, we updated the Online Scout Database with new Beaver information. With all this administration work and the time it takes, it was easy to see why it was so difficult to recruit new Leaders. I could not see how anyone could hold down a full-time job and be an effective Leader because there just wasn't the time to do both properly.

We finished that about 3 p.m. and, having taken a call from Frank inviting me to join him and Mike for a short walk and lunch the following day, I thought it a good idea to clean my walking boots in readiness.

We decided it was too late in the afternoon to start on the landing floor. Instead I decided to tidy my desktop in preparation for installing Matthew's old TV as a desk-top monitor.

Frank invited me to join him and Mike on a short walk down to Bury and back followed by lunch at the Bull's Head on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> March. I had told him that the Bull's Head was closed for the refurbishment of the kitchen this week and suggested the Trackside instead. We left the Old School at 9:30 and were in Tesco for refreshments at Costa Coffee by 10:45, having averaged about 3 miles an hour.

We made our way to the Trackside about 11:30 for a pint of real ale (or Guinness in Mike's case) followed by lunch and a second pint.

The walk back was brisk and uphill, climbing some 300 feet to Greenmount. Even so, we didn't get back until 3:30. The rest of the afternoon was something of an anti-climax.

Thursday March 6<sup>th</sup> started with preparation for the evening's Beaver meeting and that, with other bits of PC administration work, kept us busy until lunchtime.

There was a sizable update to the Cycling Group and a few other updates for the village web site in the afternoon.

When I had finally finished, it was a little late to start work on the landing floor and Jenny suggested we clean and tidy my desk in the conservatory and install Matthew's old Samsung wide-screen TV as a monitor. It had been sitting around on the conservatory floor long enough. I even fitted the side to my PC case in the process. That has been off since I last rebuilt the operating system.

Jenny went off to Beavers and I watched the remainder of Pointless and the Egghead programme, as we usually do in the early evening. I also usually watch the news after that but it had been so depressing recently that I decided to listen to a Louis Armstrong Jazz CD I had converted from cassette tape instead. That was two down and two to go for the full set.

The automatic lights came on under the car port at the front and I went to investigate. Normally I don't bother because the cats bring them on. There was nothing on the drive when I opened the door.

The automatic light at the back had also come on but didn't look right. I knew one of the three halogen bulbs had gone and had intended to replace it but it had been raining all day. When I checked the patio, a second bulb had gone. It was only about three months since I replaced all three bulbs. I could no longer get the original-shaped, 100 watt,

halogen, Edison-screw bulbs I used to use buy and had to settle for what I supposed was an EU-imposed design of a halogen bulb fitted into a conventionally-shaped glass enclosure. I didn't know why this change came about but the new bulbs were totally useless and didn't last a quarter as long. This was another change for the worse and another reason for quitting the EU and going our own way and the sooner the better.

On Friday 7<sup>th</sup> March we set off early to Unicorn in Chorlton and we were at Waitrose in Broadheath before noon, ensuring a free table in the small café for a snack before shopping there, as usual. After the drive along the long, straight A56 which most motorists seem to use as a training ground for Formula 1 events without skill enough to drive a kiddie's pedal-car, it was nice to sit and relax for half-an-hour and take in the latest news from the paper, not that there was much of it and, what there was, was all depressing.

We were home quite early and it gave me a little time to catch up on more village web site updates and a couple for Totting District Civic Society.

In the evening Jenny had a sleepover with the Beavers in the Old School. I had agreed to accompany the group on a walk and, by the time we set off, it was quite dark. We walked by torchlight down the Kirklees Trail, turning right down a narrow, muddy path just before the viaduct over Island Lodge, onto the lane. We turned right across the field, up to the road and crossed it to Old Kays Park. We took the Beavers to the playground and they had a great time by torchlight in the dark. It was surprising how much light all the torches provided. We walked back down the main road as far as Shepherd Street and cut along there back to the Kirklees Trail. Shepherd Street, being an unmade lane, was full of large puddles which proved irresistible to most of the Beavers. On returning to the Old School, I came home.

Jenny was back home about 9:30 on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> March, having had about five hours' sleep on a blow-up bed. We had breakfast and caught up on some Scout administration work. After lunch, I eventually started work on the landing floor.

The first job was to rewire the lights for the hall. These were halogen lights running at 12 volts from a transformer under the landing floor and the objective was to remove the transformer and convert them to 240 volts. The operation was successful and a point of failure removed.

I also managed to finally contact our friendly landlady in Whitby at the Landsbury. She had only just returned from a long vacation in LA, 16 hours previously. She booked us in for the week we wanted at Easter.

I relaxed after that. Two successes in a day was more than that with which I could cope.

Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> March was a nice day and the forecast for the week looked unusually and untypically good. I spent most of it under the landing floor measuring up for new boarding somewhat more accurately than I had done to date. The conclusion by the end of the day was that I needed eight 5.4 metre lengths of tongue and groove floor boarding at 13.7 cm wide not including the tongue from Howarth Timber supplies at the extortionate price of £10.62 each plus VAT and plus delivery.

I had three problems – sorry, opportunities. The first was to deal with a landing that sloped downwards towards the head of the stairs. I came to the conclusion that there was nothing I could do about this without completely relaying the whole upper floor. The second was that the run of the supporting joists at the rear of the house was at 90 degrees to the run of the joists at the front of the house and the switch between the two occurred on the landing. The third was that the stud walls on the upper floor were built after the floor had been boarded. Consequently, the joints in the existing boards (a) did not always occur at the edge of the rooms and (b) did not always occur on supporting joists.

I think the builder's name was Jack or Jerry or something along those lines. It was going to be an interesting couple of weeks, I thought.

I decided to invest in a couple of new power tools and I had taken the decision to purchase the Bosch Professional range. First, there was a handy little tool called a Professional Multi-cutter and this allowed, amongst other things, the user to cut edges in line with existing edges, so I thought it should be possible to use this to cut the existing boards along the landing wall edges. Second, I needed a new mitre saw to replace the cheap one I bought a couple of years ago that fell apart because it was made of cheap metal. The Bosch version was about ten times as much as I paid for that.

I also placed an order for 3 pairs of CD rack inserts for my media storage cabinet so I could change the use of one of the compartments from VHS tape storage to CD storage. I had been searching for these for ages on the Internet and managed to find some at Rutlands. If anyone needs the details, send me an E-mail.

On Monday 10<sup>th</sup> March we sped off to K Supplies to order a Bosch Professional Multicutter tool, on special offer in a nice box with lots of accessories for about £230. I needed this to cut the edges of the chipboard flooring at the appropriate points on the landing. What the Bosch web site didn't make clear was that the price did not include the dreaded 20% VAT.

Our second stop was at Morrisons in Ramsbottom for a few groceries, including three six-packs of Highland Spring still water on offer at £2.49, some 60p cheaper than the usual price. I've got to save as much as I can to pay for my new toy.

By then it was lunchtime and we stopped off at Summerseat Garden Centre on our way to Howarth's timber yard in Bury to order the new flooring wood at just over £100 including delivery.

We passed Tesco without calling in (that must have been a first) on the way home, calling at Tottington to survey two locations to which Jenny was taking the Beavers in the next week or two so we could submit Risk Assessments for the visits.

By the time we finally arrived home, it was a bit late in the day to start anything really constructive, so we relaxed so Jenny could prepare herself for the Old School Users' A.G.M that evening.

The gas engineer woke us at about 8:30 on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> March. I had requested the visit so he could show me how to use the filling system for the new boiler. I couldn't figure out how to make it work and the manual wasn't very clear. I needed to know this

because when I removed the gas (it wasn't air, it was hydrogen generated by some chemical reaction between the copper piping, steel radiators and water) that built up in the system and rose to the highest point, the bathroom radiator, so it failed to warm up at the top and this cool area grew progressively if it was not cleared occasionally. Removing this gas reduced the pressure of the water in the system and if this fell too low, the boiler ceased to operate. Putting more water in the system brought the pressure back up to the required level.

After breakfast, we decided it was such a nice day that we would tackle the back garden. I tidied up and hoed the borders while Jenny tidied up the patio pot plants. We were interrupted by the chap from Howarth's delivering the wood I had ordered and several times by Rachel who had started two weeks' leave and was washing her car. A late lunch followed by a rest took us to turned 3 p.m. by which time the outside temperature had dropped considerably and we decided to tidy up and call it a day.

On Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> March we went into Bolton by car to Hobbycraft. They were out of stock of what we wanted and, from the state of the shelves, I formed the impression they were short of funds and probably in the process of running the store down for closure.

We drove the short distance up to B&Q and I purchased a few tools I needed, followed by a slightly longer drive to another retail park to purchase a new stainless steel pedal bin for the bathroom. Although the Internet had shown this store as having one in stock, I could not find it on their in-store computer system and a helpful assistant managed to locate it on the computer for me. Unfortunately, while it existed in cyberspace, they had none in the physical world. He did tell me there were some in their other Bolton store, more or less on the way home and he reserved one for me to collect by the coming Friday. The bad news was that they did not have a car park and there was no free parking nearby. We came back home for lunch, resolving to go in on the bus for free and fetch the bin the following day.

After lunch, I used two of my new tools to fit the new CD storage racks in the media cabinet on the pull-out shelf previously used to store VHS tapes. By the end of the afternoon another 75 CDs were neatly racked. That left a handful for which I still had to find room and, by the time I finished converting all my records and cassette tapes to CD, I would need a lot more storage.

On Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> March, K Supplies telephoned to say my new Bosch multi-cutter had arrived and was awaiting collection. We decided to take the bus into Bolton to collect the pedal bin from Argos and just managed to catch the 11:33. That dropped us across the road from the shop and we returned, with our purchase, some ten minutes later, to the bus stop for the return journey to check the bus times. The bus stop was minus a timetable so we decided we had time to walk to the next one along the homeward route. By the time we reached that, the bus was due within five minutes and we were back home by 1 p.m., in time for lunch.

We spent the afternoon, would you believe, preparing for the Beaver session the following day. Jenny was in the process of handing over the Thursday Colony to a new leader and he was in charge of the administration work for that, halving Jenny's workload.

On Friday morning 14<sup>th</sup> March we went grocery shopping as usual with a detour to K Supplies at Rawtenstall to collect my new Bosch multi-cutting tool followed by a visit to Tesco at Rawtenstall to refuel the car.

We were back home in the early afternoon. I inspected my new toy to discover that the additional attachments that were bundled with the special offer did not match the list on the Bosch web site. I put it on the landing where I was going to use it to think about it. Meanwhile, I decided to put in the TV recordings on Jenny's laptop for the week and I was still doing that as she headed off to help the new leader with his Beavers.

We were out on the village cycle ride at 11 a.m. on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> March, down to Bury Police Station and back. That prompted a shower, followed by lunch.

In the afternoon, we nipped up to Asda at Pilsworth for a few groceries and odds and ends, including a new set of bathroom scales – the old fashioned mechanical kind that don't need batteries, not these new fangled things that tell you how much fat you've got and the weather forecast for the next six months. I complained about the halogen light bulbs and received a £3 voucher which Jenny stored in her handbag for a rainy day.

Most of Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> March was spent cutting the wood we had stored under the car port and Jenny helped by bagging it for me. We finished about 5 p.m., both shattered and Jenny still had tea to cook. I was going to help with the vegetables but was talked out of it, which took at least two seconds and she brought me a Bacardi and Coke to help me relax.

On Monday 17<sup>th</sup> March, I started work on the landing floor, taking up the old chipboard flooring and cutting round the edges with my new toy. I started towards the front of the house and removed a stubborn piece of board at the entrance to the front bedroom and our bedroom, the edge of which went underneath the partition wall to the front bedroom. By late afternoon, I had removed the board, cut at the entrance to our bedroom, only to discover that the joist placed across the top of the stairs only went half way across the doorway and there was nothing to support the edge on right-hand side of the doorway. The next full length joist was eight inches or so inside our bedroom.

I decided to tidy up, strategically place the old boards loosely on the joists on the landing so we could walk on them and leave that problem for another day.

In the evening, the problem I had been having for some weeks with my stomach worsened and I was in considerable discomfort, enough to take a second Losec tablet before I went to bed. That helped me have a decent night's rest.

I awoke on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> March still feeling poorly and Jenny suggested I should rest. I didn't like leaving the landing floor in a complete mess but I had no alternative.

Frank telephoned inviting me to join the gang on a walk the following day and I said I would if I felt better later.

Jenny went out to lunch with her friend, Karen, to Summerseat Garden Centre.

We went into Ramsbottom to the craft shop in the afternoon but they didn't have what we wanted. We didn't linger because I was feeling worse and decided to go and see the

doctor when we returned. There were no free appointments so I was slotted in after surgery and returned at 5:20 for a consultation, after a short wait, with a very nice lady I have never seen before. The result of the examination was that I should continue with the double dose of Losec for a month, for which I was given an additional prescription and I was to be referred for the dreaded Gastroscopy yet again and expected to be seen within two weeks.

On Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> March, despite still feeling unwell, we walked into Bury for a few groceries and I volunteered to carry the large rucksack in which to put them. The walk did me good and we caught the bus back.

On Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> March I awoke with a tight chest, which is unusual because I don't sleep with my wallet. Swallowing was also a little constricted and the most concerning aspect of the illness.

Nonetheless, we walked down the Kirklees trail again and cut up to Tottington Road to go to the hardware shop so Jenny could have some keys cut for the Old School to give to the new Beaver Leader that evening. On this occasion we walked back. The weather was a stark contrast to the sunshine of the previous day, being overcast, requiring an additional layer of clothing and it started to rain on the way back. Fortunately, we were home before the heavy rain started.

Again the walk did me good and seemed to help clear whatever was giving my oesophagus trouble.

After lunch, I rested, feeling a little tired and pretty useless.

I had an appointment for blood tests on Friday 21<sup>st</sup> March at 9:25 which delayed our departure to Unicorn and Waitrose for our weekly grocery shop.

Waitrose didn't have much in their small café and there were no free tables, so we skipped our usual lunch and carried on shopping, lunching when we returned home.

I spent the rest of the day scheduling the TV programme recordings for the week, interrupted by a requirement for my photographic talents at the Beavers' visit to St. Hilda's Church in Tottington as part of their Faith Activity Badge.

We didn't do much on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> March owing to the fact that Jenny joined the ranks of the infirm by damaging her back shortly after rising from her bed. We spent the morning on Beaver administration work and lunchtime was unusual in that all three of us were in the kitchen at once, Jenny being unable to do a great deal. I even managed to make my own sandwich.

After lunch, it was a case of relaxing. My appointment for my Gastroscopy had arrived and I was booked in for the 27<sup>th</sup> at 9:30. I couldn't wait. What made the event even more interesting was that a leaflet entitled Oesophageal Dilation had been included with the letter. This was not something to which I was looking forward. The letter only talked about the Gastroscopy, which was bad enough, this being my fourth.

Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> March was effectively struck off the calendar as far as we were concerned.

On Monday 24<sup>th</sup> March we went with Rachel to look at a flat in Manchester she was thinking of renting. I stayed with the car, parked in a permit-only area while Jenny hobbled to join Rachel and the letting agent who was showing her round. According to reports, the flat was not particularly clean, although that was going to be dealt with. Rachel came home to work out whether she could afford it or not.

On Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> March I asked a local builder who was doing some work for Mike down the road to come up and look at my landing floor. He said he would be here between 12 and 1 and arrived about 2. He looked at the floor and said "Very nice". I asked him if he could finish off ripping the old flooring out and fit the new tongue and groove boards I had in the garage. He said it was no problem except that he was not available until May 12<sup>th</sup>. We pencilled in that date.

At 4 p.m. we both battled our pain and discomfort to go on a two hour tour of the local carpet manufacturing plant, Cormar Carpets. We had been round the factories, one in Ramsbottom and one in Greenmount, before, about six years previous and it was no less impressive on the second viewing, the two hour tour taking our minds off our ailments.

I spent most of Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> March cutting out the circles for the door handles in the 108 door hangers for the Beaver Fun Day on the coming Saturday using a new compass cutter that arrived from Amazon. It's a good job I was feeling a little better.

I was up early on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> March for my Gastroscopy and I drove to the hospital, arriving in good time, just before 9 a.m. Jenny brought the car home while I waited to be seen. Following the preliminaries and a further short wait, I was taken to have a line inserted into a vein through which the sedation could be administered. That took two nurses and a failed attempt in the back of my left hand before a vein was finally tapped in my right arm. The nurse quickly sealed in the line before she lost the vein. They obviously need to employ more vampires.

There was another short wait before a doctor came in to complete the consent form and then escort me to the room where he would subsequently pump me full of sedatives and perform the procedure. It did go reasonably well from my relaxed point of view and I did catch snippets of my internals on the screen. I didn't request a copy of the video though.

The result of the examination was that I had a hiatus hernia, which I already knew. What I didn't know was that this was in the oesophagus and not the stomach. You learn something new every day. I also had some polyps in the stomach from which the doctor took samples for pathology testing. I was reassured in that I was told these are quite common and nothing to worry about. The final discovery was an area of inflammation in the stomach that tested positive for *Helicobacter Pylori*, an infection that can be controlled and eradicated with antibiotics.

In short, the plan was to sort it with medication.

I was treated to tea and toast afterwards and Matthew and Carrie came to fetch me home about noon.

Matthew and Carrie gave mum her Mother's Day presents and our anniversary card and I gave Matthew a guided tour of the landing floor before they left.

I followed the advice and rested for the remainder of the day.

We sped off to Unicorn and Waitrose as usual on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> March, forgoing lunch at Waitrose because they had nothing Jenny fancied, which left me somewhat peckish.

The standard of driving on the M60 on the return journey was appalling and it is high time our police officers enforced the speed limit and that our judicial system supported them. What's the point of putting all the time, effort and expense in enforcing the law if the consequences of transgressing are so insignificant? It is high time bad and speeding drivers lost their licences for at least five years at the first offence, having to take their test again to regain it and had their vehicle confiscated. The police force could then sell confiscated vehicles to fund their increased activity.

Having managed to survive several near-misses, we called at Asda at Pilsworth, encountering a Formula 1 articulated lorry driver on the way. We skilfully avoided him as well.

We had a late lunch on returning and relaxed before Jenny went off to Beavers.

On Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> March, breakfast was followed by the routine chores of pot washing and rubbish emptying and I had just finished that while Jenny was preparing the food for our evening meal when my electrical expertise was called upon at the Old School.

Apparently, a kettle connected in the kitchen had tripped the circuit breaker on the distribution board. It had also taken out all the supplies from that board, so they had lost lights, heating, the cooker and power to the sockets in the kitchen and several other rooms. This was a particularly bad time because the monthly drop-in had been brought forward a week because of the Horticultural Show the following week.

It didn't take long to establish that the supply to the distribution board had tripped and I went in search of the master board that provides power to each of the distribution boards. I found that in a cobweb-filled cupboard in the hall, disturbing Gary's golf lesson. The circuit breaker to Distribution Board 1, the board in the kitchen, had tripped. We turned off all the supplies from DB 1 and I switched it back on. Success.

That was probably the most productive task I performed that day.

Jenny went off to a Beaver Fun Day at Shuttleworth and Rachel and I went for a walk to Holcombe Brook and then down to Summerseat Garden Centre in search of a Mother's Day card, a Mother's Day present and an Anniversary Card. I found the latter and Rachel found her card at Holcombe Brook. The selection of gifts at Summerseat Garden Centre was not inspiring so we decided to forgo that element of our quest.

Jenny returned rather the worse for wear and went to lie down for three hours. Rachel finished off cooking the lasagne for tea, Jenny having prepared the roast vegetables to go in the sauce and cooked the mince earlier in the day.

We forgot to put the clocks forward for British Summer time and we didn't realise we were an hour behind everyone else until 1:30 p.m. on Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> March, by which time we were 30 minutes late for an appointment with the Scout Treasurer. Jenny had telephoned earlier so we could go to see him to sort out our Beaver finances and put us

back in credit for the incidental expenses for the Friday Beaver Colony and to create an account for the new Thursday Beaver Leader to whom Jenny is handing over that Colony. Fortunately, being late was not a problem. His large, playful, four-year-old Labrador, on the other hand....

On the return trip we diverted up to Holcombe Brook to the cycle shop to see if they could obtain a couple of old-fashioned cycle bells, made of stainless steel by Wild and Wolf, I had seen on the Internet at around £10 each. The chap said he would call me the following morning and I left him my number.

On Monday 31<sup>st</sup> March, I was up early to follow Rachel up to Tottington Motors to take her car in for its annual service and then give her a lift to work in Bury. I had breakfast on returning and we tidied up a bit, bit being the operative word, as we were expecting a visitor about 1 p.m. While we were waiting for that event, we printed off the Beaver Friday Colony subscription letters to hand out later in the week. All the other leaders had opted to E-mail the subscription letters. We decided to personalise them and hand them out to the parents personally. You can't beat the personal touch.

The chap from the cycle shop telephoned after our visitor had left and said he could not obtain the bells we wanted and that we should order them from the Internet. I said I had considered that option but preferred to support local shops if I could.

I collected Rachel from work and gave her a lift to the garage to pick up her car. Apparently that's what dads are for.

This being our 41<sup>st</sup> wedding anniversary, we all went out for a meal at the Heaton Park Beefeater in the early evening and thoroughly enjoyed it. I picked up the bill. It seems that's something else dads do.

Find out what else dads do in the next month's enthralling episode of life in this ever-expanding universe.