

Greenmount – November 2015

Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> November: I spent the day raking up the leaves on the patio, back garden, path, front garden and drive and then I tackled the side garden. I filled the garden-waste bin, the old, small bin we had before wheelie bins became fashionable and several sacks. Jenny came out to give me a hand towards the end of the day. Unfortunately, I ran out of light, storage capacity and time and had to leave a long pile of leaves on the grass.

I was feeling much better for being out in the sun and had a quick shower to freshen up before tea.

Given my recent nasal congestion and cough, I was still having second thoughts about going for my operation the following day and decided to see how I was the following morning, not wishing to prolong the discomfort unless it was absolutely necessary.

Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> November: I spent the morning updating the village web site and such trying to keep my mind occupied rather than dwell on the forthcoming experience.

We were at the hospital before the noon appointment and I checked in. I was shown to my cubicle on the ward and sat down. A nurse came to take some details and fill in a rather long form, which I subsequently signed. It was a couple of hours before I was asked to undress and to put on my gown. Not having been told to bring a dressing gown, I was given two gowns, one to wear back to front over the top of the first one for the sake of modesty. The anaesthetist eventually arrived and I told him about my cough, cold and congestion, which he said did make a difference to the anaesthetic. As it was, I didn't get as far as to find out what the difference was.

After hanging around the ward for about three hours, the sister had a quiet word with me to say the surgeon who was going to perform my operation was new to the Trust and was on a compulsory training day. There was no-one else to take his place so my operation was postponed. I was given a glass of iced water, a cup of tea and an acceptable salmon salad sandwich on brown bread before leaving and Jenny collected me at the car park. It was, essentially a wasted day when I could have been out in the sunshine, finishing off the garden.

So what is it with the medical profession? Are they not taught how to manage their time and about communication and the importance of keeping other people informed of their movements? Since the training course was arranged by the Trust did the person who arranged it and booked the surgeon on it not think to inform the operation booking team? It's not a question about apportioning blame or seeking penalties; it's about making people aware of the need to talk to other people around them about what is happening, when and how it affects them.

In the evening, I decided to start rewriting the Tottington web site I run in XHTML and CSS to make it easier to maintain.

Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> November: I decided to go out in the early-morning mist to finish tidying the leaves I had left in a heap on Sunday. First, I needed somewhere to put them and I took my trusty wheelbarrow round to the church to fetch one of the large, builder's sacks. In the event, I borrowed the two of them. The plan was to fill them with leaves, put them in the trailer and take them to the tip.

Jenny came out to help as I had part-filled the first sack and managed to haul it into the trailer. The first snag was that both sacks would not fit properly into the trailer so I decided to squeeze in the second sack empty and tip the leaves into the sacks to fill them. So far, so good.

As we were preparing to take them to the tip in Bury, a neighbour at the top of the cul-de-sac drew up and said we could tip the sacks of leaves down the banking near her house because she wanted some natural leaf-mould and the leaves would cover her hedgehog boxes and encourage the creatures. That saved us a lot of time and we tipped six sack-loads plus all the leaves I had bagged and those in the black bin. We had finished clearing the leaves by lunchtime, not that there weren't more to come.

After lunch, I decided to start cutting down the old crab-apple tree at the top of the drive and, again, Jenny came out to help. Her main job was to pick up all the apples and they went in the empty black bin. I cut off all the branches and the main trunk about head height, leaving all the off-cuts on the grass at the side of the house. The plan was to process those and cut down the rest of the trunk the following day if it didn't rain.

To finish off the day, I started to clean the gutter along the roof of the garage and reached the point where I couldn't reach, if you see what I mean. The ladders I had been using to cut down the tree were too long, even when contracted to their minimum height and I needed the old step-stool that was in our bedroom, so I decided to call it a day and came in for a shower.

That was what I called a productive day.

There was no word from the hospital about rescheduling my operation.

Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> November: After taking Jenny down to Bury to catch the tram into Manchester to meet Rachel, I thought it might be a good idea to remove the branches I had cut off the tree the day before from the grassy area I didn't own. I had allowed myself half a day or so to cut up the branches, binning the bits I didn't want and bagging the smaller sticks and larger logs for the stove. In the event, I took all day to cut up about half of the branches, breaking my secateurs in the process.

During my lunch break, I opened the mail to find a letter from the hospital rescheduling my operation for 16<sup>th</sup> November.

After tidying up outside, another shower was called for and I settled down for an evening of watching a DVD while continuing to rewrite the Tottington and District Civic Society's web site in XHTML and CSS.

Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> November: A wet day kept me in and since Jenny was busy in the kitchen and then off to Yoga in the afternoon and Rachel was here making herself some fancy dress for a forthcoming event, I decided to keep well out of harms way. I updated the village web site on my PC and dealt with my E-mails.

That was followed by a long session continuing the rewrite of the Tottington web site and struggling with a mechanism for playing media. I had previously used You-Tube to host unlisted videos for the Greenmount web site because they would download quicker

from there. Unlisted videos could not be seen by anyone else and the only means of accessing them was via the web link provided.

I uploaded one of the two videos for the Tottington web site and it was immediately blocked because You-Tube said it had detected some copyrighted material in the video. The video had been produced by children at the Tottington High School and was a valuable part of the village's local history. The bit to which an objection had been raised was the short WWII video clip at the beginning.

I decided to host the video on the Tottington web site and deleted it from You-Tube. The problem was that I not could make Windows Media Player scale the video to fit the media Player window in Firefox. Apparently, it was a known problem. I decided to recreate the Windows Media Video at the size I needed rather than scale it and that worked in both Internet Explorer and in Firefox. Success!

I did the same with the second video and moved on the work on the Picture Gallery, giving up for the evening after creating the first Thumbnail page. The next step was to produce the pages to display the pictures and I intended to modify the Java procedure I had written to generate these pages on my personal web site to suit the Tottington web site. That was a task for another day.

Friday 6<sup>th</sup> November: It was a routine Friday shopping trip to Unicorn and Waitrose, making reasonable progress on a congested motorway in both directions.

On returning I faced the chore of washing the pots from the previous day's evening meal and breakfast and then settled down to log all the TV recordings for the following week, not that there was much on worth recording.

Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> November: We spent the morning at the Drop-In at the Old School, being the first Saturday of the month. Jenny was on the bric-a-brac stall. I just pottered round, chatting and wading through the DVDs and CDs. I did help tidy away the left-over sale items towards the end of the morning before we came home for lunch.

The rest of my day was taken up with finishing the rewrite of the [Tottington District Civic Society web site](#) and that finally went live at about 9:30 p.m. Jenny was on a stall at the Scout Bonfire and Rachel went down as a visitor, having acquired a ticket. I was going down to help out with the electrics but Jenny said I wouldn't get in without a ticket despite being in the Scout Active Support and since it had been a very wet day, I decided to stay put.

Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> November: We made a brief trip in the incessant rain to Summerseat Garden Centre in search of a decent pair of secateurs to replace the ones that disintegrated as I was trimming twigs off the tree branches I had cut down.

On the way, we called at Sue Glover's house to collect a lovely, knitted poppy for Remembrance Day. Jenny had already bought one and I wanted one. Sue had none left when I asked her for one at the Drop-In the previous day and she offered to knit me one that evening. All the proceeds she was giving to the British Legion.

Our trip to the garden centre was a waste of time. There was a choice of secateurs but none of them were made from stainless steel.

We came home and searched the Internet for a number of items. I found a decent pair of secateurs at John Lewis and they wanted an extra £2 for their “Click and Collect” service. I found the same item cheaper on Amazon and with free delivery. That was a no-brainer.

I also ordered a couple of items for Jenny from Amazon – some more dark, organic sugar and some organic, gluten-free lasagne sheets. I found some Biona, organic, sweet cherries on another web site and ordered those too.

Monday 9<sup>th</sup> November: I was put to some serious work as it was time to scrub the kitchen and hall floors again. As it turned out, I was allowed a lunch break between the two so I wasn't too stretched.

I spent the rest of the afternoon updating the [village](#) and [civic society](#)'s web sites.

Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> November: More serious work resulted in the landing being tidied, all the items for the jumble sale being temporarily stored in the small bedroom that still needed decorating. The landing and stairs had a good vacuuming while Jenny dusted and polished here and there.

After lunch we tackled the dining room.

Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> November: We went to the Remembrance Day service outside the church and, miraculously, the rain held off until after it finished. I took some pictures and subsequently posted them on the village web site, along with the service booklet. Amazingly, for a small village, we laid eleven wreathes and our local MP, David Nuttall and our local councillors were present. Had our local constabulary been present, as they usually were, we would have had an even dozen wreathes.

After the service, the congregation assembled in the Bull's Head Toby Carvery for tea and biscuits.

Jenny went off to lunch with Gwen at Summerseat Garden Centre and I came home to listen to some Jazz and start work on tidying up the village web site, making cosmetic changes to many pages and making it easier to maintain.

Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> November: I continued my work on the web site. We did not start any strenuous work because Jenny went off to Yoga in the afternoon.

Friday 13<sup>th</sup> November: A marathon grocery shopping day started at 9:30 a.m. and finished at 4:30 p.m.

The first stop was at Asda, Pilsworth for a few items, including Yellowtail Chardonnay and Shiraz that was on offer at the irresistible price of £5 a bottle.

I waited in the car at Prestwich while Jenny nipped into the new Community Co-op, Village Greens for a few bits and pieces.

We battled through the slow-moving traffic on the M60 to Unicorn at Chorlton as usual and then on the A56 to Waitrose at Broadheath before struggling through the heavy traffic once more on the way home.

Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> November: We went into Ramsbottom. The primary objective was to take in the power board I had extracted from the TV I was mending for Jenny's niece, Tracey. The TV repair man had offered to replace faulty components on it and on inspection identified at least two and possibly three capacitors that had gone. I arranged to collect the repaired board the following Monday morning.

Needless to say, we took the opportunity to tour the charity shops and I found yet another Trad Jazz CD. Jenny managed to find a couple of books to add to her unread collection.

Matthew called round in the afternoon and gave me a hand to retrieve the Christmas items from the garage loft. These were temporarily stored in the small bedroom in readiness for the end of the month.

Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> November: This was my last chance to do those jobs that needed doing before my rescheduled operation the following day, after which I would be of little use for some time. Did the thought occur to someone out there "No change there, then"?

After the usual pot-washing session, I cleaned out the fire from the previous night's use and then, in a brief dry spell, tackled the outside lamp at the back. One of the three bulbs was not working and I assumed it had gone. Closer examination revealed water inside the connection and why this had not blown the fuse I did not know. Neither did I know how the water got in there. I cleaned the bulb and the fitting, taking care to turn off the power first. A wise precaution, I thought, particularly since water and electricity do not mix too well and I was standing on metal step-ladders. It started to rain just as I was reassembling the lamp and I could have done with another five minutes of fine weather. I was not best pleased. Fortunately, when I restored power to the outside lights, they all worked, so my efforts were successful despite the weather.

Back inside, I was given the task of cleaning the large glass jars on the mantle piece that held the candles since the last time Jenny cleaned them, she chipped one and we had to replace it. That took much longer than expected. Candle wax is not easy to remove from glass. That task completed successfully, I was given the snuffer and a scented wax burner to clean since I had made such a good job of it.

After lunch it was time to vacuum the lounge carpet. That was followed by a DIY hair cut and shower in readiness for the following day.

I did notice that the outside light I thought I had fixed was flickering and then went out again. I couldn't help thinking life was much simpler when we lived in caves.

Monday 16<sup>th</sup> November: I was up at 6 a.m. for an early breakfast, which I thought had to be consumed by 7 a.m. After breakfast, on reading the letter from the hospital again, I rediscovered it said 7:30 a.m.

After an early-morning, pot-washing session, I busied myself with updates to the village and Tottington web sites yet again, prompted by a new issue of the village newsletter, The Greenmount Voice, which contained a number of events of which I had not previously been made aware.

I finished that about 9:15 and we went into Ramsbottom to collect the TV power board I had left for repair. We were outside the shop at 9:40 reading the “Closed” notice stating that the proprietor’s working day did not start until 10:30. Since I had to leave for the hospital before 11 a.m. to call for some diesel on the way and arrive by noon, that wasn’t much good to me. We came home.

As if the impending operation was not causing me enough stress, the car decided its alternator needed some workshop attention, flagging up a message to that effect on the dashboard. It was nice of it to tell me but it could have picked a better time.

I was beginning to hope that these events were not setting a trend for the rest of the day.

We arrived at the hospital about 11:30 and Jenny waited with me after I had been checked in until I was escorted onto the ward. The procedure was much the same as last time and a very helpful Staff Nurse gave me a lot more information, particularly with respect to after-care. I was in my gown, ready to go by 1:30 and a kind, reassuring, male nurse, Mick, eventually escorted me down to the theatre suite at 4:10. I was booked in and asked to wait in the male waiting room (where else?). Mick joined me for a brief chat and a few minutes after he left, the anaesthetist’s assistant chap came to fetch me. I was asked to lie down on the trolley in the small preparation room. The chap who fetched me held my left arm down so the anaesthetist could stick a canula in the back of my hand while a nurse stuck a blood-pressure monitor on my right arm, some other sensors on my chest and a mask exuding anaesthetic gas in the vicinity of my nose and mouth.

The next thing I remembered was being wheeled back onto the ward at about 6:10. I came round sufficiently in about half an hour to eat a sandwich and drink water and a cup of tea, feeling better than I had expected with very little pain.

I was off the trolley and dressed, sitting in a chair before 7 p.m. and being ushered off the ward and into the waiting room by 7:15 with a bag full of various pain killing tablets to be taken as required but not exceeding the maximum dose specified for each, a large box of antibiotic capsules to be started the following day and a spare surgical support.

Jenny had already telephoned twice to see if I was ready and she was on her way with Rachel to collect me.

On the way home, Jenny told me the garage had diagnosed the fault with our car and it needed a new battery. In the mean time, we were not to use it for any lengthy or important journeys and specifically not on motorways.

I spent the evening resting and took an Ibuprofen tablet at bedtime just in case my wound became painful in the night. As it turned out, I had a reasonably comfortable night.

Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> November to Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> November: I stayed in, rested, watched DVDs and listened to Jazz CDs. I managed a shower on Thursday afternoon, after checking it was alright to do so with a nurse on the day unit ward, removing my surgical support and dressing. I had to cut the strap on the support since the buckle was of a kind that could not be undone. The dressing came off easily to reveal a designer scrotum.

After the shower, I thoroughly dried my sensitive parts with a tissue before fitting the back-up support. The wound was, not unsurprisingly, still weeping some blood but, thankfully, it was not painful.

Friday 20<sup>th</sup> November: I did have a rather uncomfortable night, due to my recurring cough and catarrh and took some medication for the cough at about 6:30 a.m. after about an hour and a half of intermittent coughing. I decided I needed some fresh air.

With no let-up in the weather and much lower temperatures than of late, we set off for Prestwich at 12:30 with Jenny driving. The late start was partly due to me renewing the TV license online.

I accompanied Jenny to Village Greens, the community co-operative, where we bought our organic vegetables and a few other items before driving a short distance back up the A56 to the large Tesco store. There was a much better selection of organic vegetables than at the Bury Tesco and they even had some organic chickens and some organic sirloin steak. It was not as good as Waitrose, though and they had no MSC fish. We found some organically farmed salmon in the fridge.

We made our way home at about 3 p.m., the time I should have been taking my antibiotic pill and it took us 40 minutes or so to fight our way through the heavy traffic, partly due to the bad weather and partly due to hitting the school run. In my school days, children had legs.

By this time I was not feeling good and after taking my pill, I had an apple which started to improve matters. A welcome cup of tea and a cheese, tomato and garlic sandwich had a nice warming effect and I began to relax after a somewhat short, but uncomfortable, day as the light started to fade and the rain persisted down for the fourth consecutive day with more to come.

Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> November: I had a better night than I anticipated, thanks to a small dish of crushed garlic by my bedside, Vic vapour rub on my chest, throat and nose, a glass of lemon and honey and a glass of water.

It was a nice sunny day and very cold, all thanks to strong, northerly winds from the arctic. We ventured into Ramsbottom and I recovered the repaired TV power board from our local repair shop for £10 and found a couple of CDs in the charity shops, one of which later turned out to house the wrong disc, which I thought I had checked.

After lunch at home, I fitted the board in Tracey's TV, put it back together and tested it. Lo and behold, it worked. A replacement board would have cost around £50 and the quote Tracey had for someone to repair it in Sheffield was £150. Jenny telephoned her to let her know it was fixed and she was very pleased.

Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> November: Following another restless night and ongoing irritating cough, I continued a large update to the village web site I had started the previous evening. That was interrupted by Jenny, suggesting we went out to deliver the latest village newsletter to residents on our round. A close encounter with a large, enthusiastic dog with lots of big teeth did not deter me, although a Magnum 45 would have come in useful, for its owner, if not for the dog.

After lunch, I finished off the web site update and also updated the Tottington web site, taking all afternoon. I enjoyed my tea, more for consuming two glasses of red wine with the roast beef, having finished my antibiotics the previous evening.

Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> November: I spent the morning dealing with the backlog snail mail and scanning the important documents. After lunch, I helped Jenny with the pricing of some toys left over from Rachel's childhood days and I discovered that her Sindy Star Home was worth about £150 on the open market and that didn't include any of the furniture. The plan was to package a good few of the collectable items for sale at the collector's fair at Easter in the Old School and have a stall there to see if we could sell any of them.

Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> November: I spent the day most productively, continuing the improvements to my web site. Jenny had a long-needed appointment at the hair dresser.

Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> November: We went to Bury on the bus to purchase some items from the Health Food shop in the market. For once, we did not deviate from our plan, except to potter round T J Hughes, Jenny resisting the urge to visit Tesco for no apparent reason.

Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> November: We spent the morning preparing the lounge to house the Christmas tree. After lunch, Jenny went to her Yoga class while I tried, unsuccessfully, to fix a fault on a 20 odd year old Fisher Price tape recorder so we could sell it as a collectable item.

Friday 27<sup>th</sup> November: We made our usual brief grocery shopping excursion to Village Greens and Tesco at Prestwich. It was no real substitute for Unicorn and Waitrose, although Village Greens did stock some items we could not obtain elsewhere, so it would remain on our route. After returning home, Jenny went to the Old School to help prepare for Santa's Christmas Cracker the following day and I remained at home, updating the village web site.

Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> November: We spent much of the day at the Old School where there was the usual sale of Christmas items and commercial stalls in the main hall on a Christmas theme, the event being called Santa's Christmas Cracker. Jenny was minding a stall selling Christmas items and I was taking photographs for the [village web site](#), which I updated that evening.

Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> November was such a foul day that we decided against going out to the brass band concert in Ramsbottom at 2 p.m. in the heavy, driving rain. Instead, I continued my onslaught on the revamp of my personal web site while half-watching several episodes of Miss Marple starring Joan Hickson on DVD, keeping Rachel, who was decorating our Christmas Tree, company.

Monday 30<sup>th</sup> November: Another very wet and windy day prompted us to remain indoors and I undertook the usual morning chores, following a late start, before commencing on an update to the village web site. I interrupted that to put the lights on the Christmas Tree with Jenny's help and then position it in front of the lounge door nearest the stairs such that our access to the dining room and stairs was then via the hall and kitchen.

After lunch, the rain having abated somewhat, we made our way into Ramsbottom in search of a few grocery items we needed. A drain along Bolton Road West, the main road into Ramsbottom, had overflowed and the road was flooded. Nevertheless, traffic was managing to negotiate the affected stretch of road, slowly and, not surprisingly, we found plenty of space in the car park by the station.

We performed our usual tour of the charity shops before they closed and then headed for Lolo's where Jenny hoped to acquire some of the same organic soya milk we buy at Unicorn, some yeast and some vegetable suet (if that is not a contradiction in terms). Lolo's was closed, so even if it were, it didn't matter.

We headed for Tesco. I needed an organic, wholemeal loaf and the back up plan was to eek out our stock of soya milk by my purchasing some organic, semi-skimmed, non-homogenised, cow's milk for me to use. Jenny also wanted a gluten-free loaf. That was a total waste of time.

Fortunately, Morrison's was next door and at least they had the bread each of us wanted. As for the rest of the items, Jenny decided to come back the following day when Lolo's would, hopefully, be open.

I drove back and the ten minute journey took over half an hour due to somebody having erected traffic lights along the flooded stretch of the main road to restrict traffic to single-file. We couldn't make out anyone actually trying to fix the problem with the drain and this wasn't the first time it had spilled out onto the main road.

The problem seemed to be that Bury council, like most other councils, was strapped for cash and could no longer afford to routinely clean out the drains. With more cuts to be imposed by David Cameron's government in 2016, matters were not likely to improve. There was no doubt that councils could manage their finances better and one of my first tasks would be to crop the salaries of the higher paid officials but even that would not make a tremendous difference and councils needed the freedom to raise more income to pay for a better quality of services that benefitted local residents.

The present government was in favour of devolving power and responsibility to the local level when it suited but when it came to giving them the freedom to act in the best interests of the local community, the government stepped in with the handcuffs. The plan to override the wishes of Lancashire County Council not to grant licences for fracking in Lancashire was a case in point.

No sooner does November end than December starts with annual regularity. What would December 2015 bring to the Deaden family in Greenmount? Will the weeping of my delicate parts dry up? Will I dry up? Will the weather ever dry up? These and other important issues vital to the nation's security may or may not be discussed in next month's exciting instalment. Miss it and risk being disappointed. Read it ... and risk being disappointed.