

Greenmount – November 2017

Wednesday November 1st: I worked on the redesign of my web site before joining Joani Beale for a Dementia Awareness session at Nazir's business premises just up the road.

After a late lunch at home, I continued where I had left off with my web site.

Thursday November 2nd: I spent the morning cutting the grass on the back garden and tidying the borders. I managed to complete half the borders before I had to leave off for lunch, followed by a Dementia Awareness session with Joani Beale at Bury Police Station.

After tea, I worked on the redesign of my web site.

Friday November 3rd: For the first time for a good while, we had a trouble-free shopping trip to Unicorn and Waitrose, calling at the vet's practice in Bury on the outward journey for the cat's renal tablets.

Returning home, I had issues with Windows Media Centre when I tried to schedule the recordings for the following week and ended up having to completely reconfigure Media Centre for my TV tuner on Jenny's laptop.

I spent the rest of the day working on the revision of my web site, finishing the amendments to a Java procedure to generate HTML modules to display pages of my picture gallery.

I finished off with a late night session reconfiguring Windows Media Centre on my desktop system.

Saturday November 4th: We went to the monthly drop-in at Greenmount Old School where I fixed a Dyson vacuum cleaner for Chris, the cleaner, with the help of Andrew, our retired minister and found a spare kettle lead for the duplicator upstairs. Apparently, some idiot had taken the original lead.

I met up with our mayor, Dorothy, from whom I purchased two seats at the Speaker's Evening, this coming Thursday for Rachel and myself, the subjects being DNA and Disaster Victim Recovery.

After lunch at home, we went to Bury. It was my intention to move my "Pay As You Go" mobile 'phone from EE to the 3 network. Unfortunately, my old Nokia was unsuitable for the 3 network because it was a 2G 'phone and the 3 network only supported 3G and 4G devices. My revised plan was to return to the 3 network shop on Monday with an old iPhone 4 to see if that was not tied in to the Orange/EE network on which it was originally used.

Returning home, I proceeded to tidy up my video media on the computer.

Sunday November 5th: I started some computer work for D-CaFF, our dementia café, for Joani who runs the café, before going out for a walk, despite the recent heavy rain. It was a nice but cold sunny day and we climbed up Holcombe Hill to Peel Tower, where students and teachers from the Derby School in Bury were raising funds for a musical,

stage production of "Our House" next February. We contributed to their funds, purchasing a welcome cup of tea each.

On the way down, we met the family of one of Jenny's ex-Beavers and stopped for a chat.

The first task on returning home was to light a fire for the evening and the second was to finish the work I had started earlier.

Monday November 7th: I commenced my day with three telephone calls. One was to Simon to confirm he was coming to see us on the following day and I left a voice message for him and sent a text message to him. Another was to our builder, Steve, to remind him I still owed him some money and I left a message for him. The last one was to Richard about our wooden flooring.

Richard advised me that my new radiators would be arriving together, which meant another five or six weeks. He also advised me that he would be with me to install the flooring around the end of the month. He arranged with Howdens in Bury for me to go down and pay for the wood for the flooring, which I said I would do later in the day.

I completed more computer work for Joani and then turned my attention to glossing the door jambs on the landing. I managed to paint the small bedroom door jamb on both sides before leaving off for lunch.

After lunch, we went to Bury to pay for the wood and by the time we returned home, it was time to prepare the fire for the evening. I was down to my last lot of wood and I needed another day or two of wood cutting.

Tuesday November 8th: I spent the day cutting wood for the fire.

Wednesday November 9th: The first task of the day was to take the car to the garage. The temperature gauge had been temperamental for a couple of days and had reached the stage of not registering the water temperature at all. I thought the temperature sensor was faulty. Also, the nearside, rear tyre was still losing air and either the puncture that was repaired recently was the culprit or I had a new puncture in the same tyre. Rachel kindly followed me down to Tottington Motors and gave me a lift back to the police station in Bury, from where I walked the 2.5 miles home in 50 minutes.

The second task of the day was to take a shower.

I had passed the chaps from Clearview on the way home and they had just cleaned our windows, so I paid their bill online and reconciled the accounts.

Jenny went out with Gwen to Bury and I busied myself repairing the cord-pull for the fan in the bathroom which Rachel had broken that morning. As always, one job led to several and I decided to glue the broken, porcelain dolphin on the end of the cord back together and then clean the cord pull switch and the extractor fan grille.

The last task before lunch was to put the door back on the small bedroom jamb, not an easy job single-handed.

After lunch, I finally managed to start painting again and glossed the door jamb to the front bedroom and the architrave to the loft access, while listening to a couple of Jazz albums, playing rather loudly in the lounge so I could hear them upstairs. Jenny came back while I was painting the loft access and wondered where the party was. I left off to turn down the volume and as I did so, the last track on the second album finished.

I finished off the loft access and packed up for the day, expecting the garage to telephone to say the car was ready. By 4:30, not having heard from the garage, I telephoned to find out what was happening and they needed to hang on to the car until the following morning, which wasn't a problem.

By this time, the cat was demanding that the fire be lit. She liked to lie in front of the fire and often had to be prevented from walking onto the hearth, close to the fire. Strangely, she did not show any significant fear of the fire, probably because I was there and the glass door was closed.

Thursday November 9th: I was very tired and did not feel well so I slept in until about 10 a.m, having briefly woken at 7 a.m. to treat the cat.

After a leisurely breakfast, I telephoned the garage to see if the car was ready and it was so Jenny and I walked down to the garage, following cycle route 6 (off road) for most of the way. There were a couple of points where the sign-posting of the route was unclear, one in Bury where some idiot had swung round the directions on a post and one down the trail from Bury Grammar School where the route turns sharp left over a bridge and then sharp right along a track to Elton Reservoir. A large sign on the bridge stating "End of Route" didn't help.

The five or six mile walk took us 2 hours and twenty minutes, which wasn't bad.

The mechanic who repaired the temperature problem had traced the problem to the thermostat and replaced it at a total cost of just under £100, which I thought was a bit expensive and at which I was surprised because I had suspected the temperature sensor (thermistor) was faulty.

I drove home and guess what. The temperature gauge didn't move – not until we reached Greenmount, when it suddenly shot up about a third of the way and then quickly dropped back down to zero, until we reached home and then went back up again. Clearly, the mechanic at the garage (Tottington Motor Company) had not traced the problem to its source and had unnecessarily replaced the thermostat.

I popped round to John and Jill's house next door to collect a parcel of organic groceries we had delivered from Health Supplies.

We had a late lunch and I telephoned the garage. I was advised that the Service Manager would call me back.

While I was waiting for the call, I traced the cause of and corrected a discrepancy in the pages of my redesigned web site with more success than had the mechanic at the garage with my car, the web site still being work in progress, like the car.

With no word from the garage, I prepared for the night out with Rachel at the Mayor's Speakers Evening at Bury Fusilier's Museum where two female ex-detectives were talking about DNA and Disaster Victim Recovery. The first talk on DNA was interesting and covered a few cases using DNA profiling to identify murderers, including a couple that had been on television, one of which occurred in Bury. The second talk covered the procedures and techniques used to identify dead bodies and body parts following a major disaster, often involving international co-operation and was fascinating, even though the slides came with a warning that some people might find them upsetting.

A pie and pea supper was served before the talks and Dorothy, our Mayor, had arranged gluten-free pie for those who needed or wanted it, including one of the speakers, Rachel and myself and she also introduced Rachel, who worked for Greater Manchester Police, to the speakers during the interval.

It was a very interesting evening and it raised about £1,000 for the Mayor's charities (Bleakholt Animal Sanctuary, Bury Hospice and the RLNI).

Friday November 10th: We rushed off early to do our grocery shop at Tesco, Prestwich, stopping off at Bury Police Station to drop off Rachel's ID tags she had forgotten to take with her. We were home before noon, giving us time to have lunch and me time to open, read and reply to a letter from my bank asking me for further evidence to support my credit card dispute with Anglian Home Improvements. Primarily they wanted proof that Anglian had agreed that I was entitled to a refund.

So how stupid could the people dealing with my claim have been? If Anglian had agreed that I was due for a refund, there wouldn't be any dispute, would there? I compiled a short, polite reply, explaining the situation – essentially that Anglian Home Improvements was in breach of contract for failing to supply the goods and services for which I had paid, in full, in advance, in a timely manner and that transaction amounted to fraud and I requested the protection offered by payment by credit card.

We headed off to D-CaFF, this month's theme being Remembrance Day and entertainment from a regular lady attendee who played the flute and the delightful Tottington Primary School Choir. We collected Doreen, our neighbour on the way and gave her a lift there and back, calling in to see Alec, who was not able to attend and to collect a few items for our car booty Doreen was clearing out before their move to Cornwall in December. On the way back, I dropped Jenny off to put my letter in the post box.

At home, it was time to catch up on the chores, washing the pots, emptying the rubbish into the recycling bins and laying the fire.

Saturday November 11th: We went to the Remembrance service outside the church and then I took pictures of the wreaths being laid. We did not join those who went down to the Cricket Club afterwards to lay a wreath there for the cricketers and then had refreshments inside, a new element to the service since the old Bull's Head pub, now a Miller and Carter steakhouse, no longer had a bar area, which was previously used for refreshments following the service.

Instead, we came home and I spent the rest of the day updating the village web site, since there were three batches of photographs and the November Digest to add as well as the usual event changes.

Sunday November 12th: We went to the car boot sale in Ramsbottom, arriving about an hour later than usual since we did not expect there to be a lot of stalls. In fact, it was quite full. The weather forecast was for a very sunny day, but a cold, north-west wind with some significant gusts. Despite the cold conditions, we expected to be quite busy with the added bonus of the Farmer's Market and a Remembrance Day parade to attract the crowds.

How wrong could we have been? Our profit on the day was extremely disappointing, a little over £5 and we decided we would not do any more car boot sales until next spring, even though the season had been extended from the end of October up to Christmas. Other stall-holders were in a similar frame of mind, not having had a very successful day.

We came home in the early afternoon and had a bit of a rest before heading off to the Italian restaurant, Casalingo at Ainsworth for a meal with Matt, Carrie, Amy and Rachel, the last time we would see Amy in England as she was returning to New Zealand in December to live and work in Christchurch.

The meal was good, with a fair selection of gluten-free options for Rachel and Jenny, although not so when it came to the desserts and we all gave that course a miss. We also discovered that the restaurant had no car park, so it was a case of parking on the street and finding a spot not occupied by residents. Fortunately, we found a spot close by. Wisely, Matt, Carrie and Amy had come up in a taxi!

Monday November 13th: I spent much of the day in the back garden, cleaning the cat's latrine, tidying up the borders and finishing off the borders I did not complete the last time. I also cut off the growth on the lower part of the hawthorn tree trunk and cleared most of the ivy from our side of the fence. I had to leave off to give Jenny a hand with her car booty and I finished early to prepare the fire for the evening, for which I had to chop a small amount of wood.

Steve, our builder, called round to discuss payment for the roof and we agreed a final figure, taking account of the additional work involved.

Tuesday November 14th: I had been invited to a morning session at the Incredible Edible plot but I had a previous engagement with Joani at a Dementia Awareness session at the Skipton Building Society in Bury.

Joani collected me at 9:45 for a Dementia Awareness presentation at Skipton Building Society in Bury and dropped me back home at about 1 p.m.

Simon and Vicky came over from Sheffield to visit us and had arrived shortly before I returned home. We went to the Toby Carvery at Ainsworth for lunch and it was very nice, much better than the Bull's head at Greenmount used to be.

Our visitors left about 5 p.m. and we had a late, light tea.

Wednesday November 15th: Following a late start, we dropped some rubbish off at the tip in Bury and made our way to Ramsbottom for a tour of the charity shops and to collect a Christmas meal menu from Owen's restaurant. I had more success than of late in that I found a DVD of "The African Queen". Jenny made a purchase of three books.

I wasn't feeling well, my tickly cough having erupted and being quite persistent, so I didn't do much.

Thursday November 16th: Having retired for the night, I had to get up again about 1 a.m. to take some herbal cough medicine. Although it was intended for chesty coughs, it did ease my affliction and I managed to sleep until about 5 a.m., when I took another dose and dozed until it was time to treat the cat at 7 a.m. I dozed on again and eventually made it downstairs about 9 a.m., having spent some time trying to unblock the drain on the bathroom sink.

We had breakfast and the gas man arrived to service the boiler. Jenny showed him into the garage and found the spanner for the central heating filter for him. We finished breakfast and, after the usual chores, I took my usual medication, including another dose of cough medicine and proceeded to update the accounts.

To my pleasant surprise, I found a credit on my credit card for the payment to Anglian Home Improvements. That was quite a relief. My plan was to ask Steve, my builder, to repair the conservatory for me if he could.

I spent most of the day cutting wood for the fire.

Friday November 17th: We went shopping to Unicorn, Sainsbury's and Waitrose as usual. The journey in both directions was not unpleasant, which made a nice change.

My late afternoon I used to put in the TV recordings for the following week.

Saturday November 18th: We went to York for the day, purchasing items from York Glass, The Cat Gallery and Tullivers (organic and health food shop). The M62 was not as busy as I expected, making driving not unpleasant. The most annoying aspect was the number of drivers exceeding the speed limit, zooming past me and one being so incredibly stupid as to pass me on the left.

The worst incident occurred as we drove through Bury towards the motorway. A lady driver in a blue Honda Civic zoomed past me in the right lane and cut in front of me as I was approaching stationary traffic in both lanes. I jammed on the brakes and came to a rapid, juddering halt as the anti-lock system kicked in. How our vehicles missed each other I do not know and it certainly couldn't have been by much. We took a note of her registration number, the time and the location so we could report the driver to the local constabulary.

Sunday November 19th: I spent the day updating the village web site, my web site and the Tottington and District Civic Society's web site, paying the TV Licence and generally sorting out my E-mail while Jenny and Rachel went in search of items for their gluten-free baking for the local Christmas Fair.

I finished off by tidying up my media on the laptop.

Monday November 20th: The morning chores included cleaning the fire ready for the evening, following the previous day's smoking experience. I also went out in the rain to put the bins up for collection the following morning and in doing so, I noticed the down-spout on the conservatory-side of the house, near the back, had come adrift from the gutter and rain-water was pouring out of it. It was too wet and windy to deal with it so I left it for the present.

Richard arrived with the wood flooring and I tidied up the dining room so we could unwrap it and store it there for a couple of weeks to acclimatise before laying.

After a brief lunch, we nipped into Ramsbottom on business and returned to finish off unwrapping the wooden flooring before tootling off again to the dentist for a filling and a clean.

I called at Doreen's house at the back on the way home to check she was alright after we saw the ambulance there this morning. Jenny had already telephoned her.

After laying out the wood, it was fire-lighting time and we had a smoke-free burn, thank goodness.

Tuesday November 21st: We spent most of the day chasing round for items Jenny needed for her stall at Santa's Christmas Cracker, the Greenmount Christmas Fair, this coming Saturday. We started with a trip to Ramsbottom where Jenny was hoping to discuss her needs with the lady who owned the cake shop. The lady was not in and her husband said she would be in the following day. While we were there, we popped into Morrisons for some dinner candles. They didn't have any.

We headed down to Home Bargains in Bury for some boxes in which Jenny could put the cakes she sold. They did not have any left.

We came home for lunch and I spent the rest of the afternoon working on the revision of my web site.

In the evening, I started updating the village web site as part of a process to tidy up my E-mail.

Wednesday November 22nd: Jenny went into Ramsbottom to speak with the lady in the cake shop and obtained the items she wanted from there.

I spent the morning cutting wood for the fire.

When Jenny returned, we had lunch. I tidied up outside before lunch and resumed work on the Christmas music for the Christmas D-CaFF afterwards, in between lighting and tending the fire. I gave up on that because Jenny was finding it monotonous and it was interfering with her baking for the Fair on Saturday. I turned my attention to completing the village web site update.

A lady from Anglian telephoned to arrange for the fitters to install the finial on the conservatory roof. She said someone had been trying to reach me and I said I was not aware of that and that no-one had left any messages. I also asked her if she was aware that two gentlemen had already been to try to install the finial and that they needed an

additional part. She was aware that the finial they brought was the wrong size but did not seem to know about the missing part. I explained it was called “a spoon”. She said she would call back.

Thursday November 23rd: I spent the whole day working on a Christmas sing-along DVD for D-CaFF.

Friday November 24th: I was going to give the landing and dining-room door jambs their coat of gloss paint but Jenny said since she and Rachel were preparing food for sale at Santa’s Christmas Cracker the following day, she couldn’t cope with the smell so I went outside in the freezing cold and cut some wood. Once I had started sawing the logs, I didn’t feel the cold at all.

I finished off after lunch, went to post a letter and then did a little administrative work until it was time to light a fire, which Jenny had found time to clean out and pre-heat in readiness.

I carried on with the administrative work, putting in the TV recordings for the week, dealing with my E-mails and updating my web site, completely ignoring Black Friday.

Saturday November 25th: Rising before the sun at 6 a.m., it took us 2¾ hours to prepare ourselves for a day at Greenmount Old School where Jenny and Rachel had a stall selling gluten-free produce (or, to be more precise, produce with no gluten-containing ingredients, since it was not certified as gluten-free). I pottered around taking pictures for the village web site as usual and mingling. Thanks to a large sale to the lady who had the stall next to them, Jenny and Rachel made a satisfactory profit on the day and more than last year. The one item that did not sell and did quite well last year was the Dover House Chutney (Mary Berry’s recipe, slightly tweaked) and Jenny thought it was because there was no taster for people to try.

The plan was to go out for tea and we tried the Swan and Cemetery. That was fully booked. So was Owen’s restaurant in Ramsbottom. We settled on a take-away from the Chinese restaurant in Ramsbottom.

Sunday November 26th: After a lie-in and brunch, followed by the usual daily chores, I commenced an update to the village web site. There was such a lot of information to add that I dealt with it in three stages, the last update being timed at just before midnight.

Monday November 27th: We were up earlier than the previous morning but I don’t think we beat the sun. It was hard to tell. It was another dull, grey, wet morning.

The usual chores were followed by some administrative work, including placing an order for an organic lamb leg for New Year’s Day dinner for seven. That took me up to lunchtime.

We headed off to Ramsbottom, where Jenny returned some food colouring she had bought from the cook shop. She had intended to purchase some natural food colouring for the icing for the cakes Rachel made for the Christmas Fair but what she bought contained a load of E numbers. I later discovered I could obtain the natural colouring from our usual, online, organic supplier, Healthy Supplies.

Our next stop was at the vet's practice in Bury to collect the cat's monthly medication. At £75 a month not including food, she was proving expensive. Still, at 19 years, her quality of life was very good. I hope somebody looks after me as well when I need it.

From there, we went to Asda to return a Russell Hobbs Legacy kettle we had purchased at the beginning of the year. The lid had fallen apart and it was still under guarantee. It was the second Russell Hobbs kettle we had to return and both were made in China. I obtained a refund and decided to look for a kettle of much better quality. My thoughts turned to one made in Germany. Miele did not make kettles so I decided to look at the Bosch range. Meanwhile, we decided to use one from our car boot stock.

While at Asda I saw a headline in one of the papers suggesting that Vladimir Putin was making attempts to undermine the public's confidence in the US and UK governments. It occurred to me that if the article was true, he was a little behind the times.

We went grocery shopping to Tesco for a top-up shop, not having had the time to do a full shop this week. While there, I drooled over the range of excellent Scottish single malts they had in stock and also discovered that six or more bottles of wine attracted a discount of 25% until 4th December.

The intention back home, after dumping the groceries, was to light a fire. Jenny went into the garage for something and I followed her out to obtain some wood for the fire. In closing the front door, I had forgotten to put the latch into the open position and, as it closed, I realised I did not have the key to open it from the outside. So, there we were, in the open garage, stuck in the cold, damp, dusk.

Now one of our neighbours had a spare key. Unfortunately, they were away. We had no mobile phones, so we couldn't telephone Matt or Rachel from any other telephone because their numbers were in our phones and we did not know them. We didn't have any car keys either.

It took a little lateral thinking and some trickery to open the front door and, for security reasons, I shall not explain how. Suffice it to say, were I not an honest person, I could well have been a real-life Moriarty.

Once settled, I updated the Civic Society's web site, which really needed more time and attention. Maybe when I had finished rewriting mine and then the village web site, I might turn my attention to it.

I then turned my attention to my web site re-design and made a little more progress.

Tuesday November 28th: We went to John Lewis in the Trafford Centre and bought a Bosch kettle that was made in Germany and which came with a two-year guarantee. No more of this Chinese-made rubbish for me.

Come to think of it, isn't the new nuclear reactor planned for Hinkley Point based on Chinese technology? Doesn't that worry anyone just a little? It scares the hell out of me!

We had a look round John Lewis while we were there and they had some nice items for Christmas. They didn't have a decent tray for baking pizzas though and neither did Lakeland. We gave up hunting for the Debenhams cookware department.

Jenny wanted some trousers from M&S but the only ones we could find were designed to fit ladies with a figure that made them invisible when they turned sideways.

All this fruitless tramping round made me realise why so many people hop online. It's easier to find what you want. It also made us hungry and we decided to go to the M&S café since we knew they had gluten-free sandwiches. The queue was so long we gave that a miss and headed for the John Lewis café instead. They had sold out of their gluten-free sandwiches so Jenny settled for a gluten-free scone with jam and I had an ordinary sandwich.

After that we headed home and I continued with my web site re-design.

Wednesday November 29th: We didn't stir from our nice, warm bed until 11 a.m. and, since it was very cold, the first task was to put on the central heating.

After the usual pot-washing, I was on my knees in the kitchen chiselling out the ice from the bottom of the old fridge-freezer. This formed when the damn thing self-defrosted because it didn't defrost the ice in the drain tube first. The water overflowed into the bottom of the freezer and then froze, preventing the drawers from being opened. Not one of Bosch's better designs, which is why our new one was a Miele.

After that, I commenced glossing the remaining door jambs on the landing and finished about 4 p.m., packing up for the day. That left the two in the dining room to do the following day.

Thursday November 30th: I decided to add three Greenpeace videos to my web site. I had already included them in the redesigned version and I decided to publish them on my existing web site. I discovered that this was much easier using HTML5, which meant I could publish the original *mp4* version using a `<video>content</video>` block rather than the old clumsy method using an `<object>content</object>` block. Unfortunately, my old server did not support HTML5 so I had to convert the videos to *wmv* format and resort to the old method for the existing web site version.

I managed to find time to finish off the door jambs by painting the two in the dining room as intended.

As another month ended, we were still in a mess and our expectation of being straight for Christmas was rapidly fading.