

Greenmount – September 2008

September started as yet another very wet month and, since Tesco had an offer on Jacob's Creek wine, this applies internally as well as externally.

I finally completed and filed my 2007-8 tax return to discover that the tax man actually owed me a tidy sum of money. What came as an even bigger surprise was that he paid it into my bank account within days of my online submission. It's not true what they say about tax men. Their parents are married.

I helped out at the local community centre (the Old School in the village, now owned by the church), testing and pricing electrical equipment for the jumble sale. I then stayed on for the sale itself and was nearly trampled in the rush. Apparently, the sale raised just over £2,000 towards the upkeep of the building and this is the best total for some time. I have been invited to attend the next one in October.

Jenny also came to help on the afternoon prior to the evening sale and, while sorting out various items of hardware, managed to acquire a car full of junk on which she said she could make a profit at the car boot sale, assuming it ever stopped raining. It did and she was right.

For ourselves, we obtained a Black and Decker garden vacuum for a couple of quid (a water pump would have been more useful), and a PVC reclining patio chair for 40 pence. We were going to buy a new patio set for about £2,500 but it seemed a lot for furniture we sit in the conservatory to watch floating round the garden.

My birthday was on the 16th and I have now reached the physical age of 61. Mentally, it is anybody's guess.

The local NHS Primary Care Trust is sending me a present. As part of their over sixties policy, all local residents of that age and above are to receive a do-it-yourself, bowel-cancer screening kit. I can't wait. I just thought I'd let you know in case you were thinking of buying me one.

Unfortunately, I developed a problem with my right ear and I became almost deaf on that side. This is the one I use when people tell me I owe them money. I had an appointment with the doctor on Monday 22nd to discover my right ear was completely blocked by wax and my left ear was catching it up rapidly, with only 10% of the way to go.

During the week between booking my appointment and the actual visit (one has to know one is going to be ill a week in advance at our surgery) I applied some liquid, recommended by the pharmacist, in an attempt to remove any excess wax. I also put the battery for the cordless drill on charge.

My doctor recommended I have my ears washed out. He told me that this treatment is no longer available at my surgery and I had to make an appointment to be seen at one of the

treatment rooms at a larger practice through a central booking system at the Primary Care Trust in Bury. Meanwhile, I was to continue using the ear drops to soften the wax. Oh, and I need not have purchased any special medication; I could simply have used olive oil. It didn't even need to be extra virgin olive oil, which is good news for all the extra virgins out there picking olives.

Making the appointment required a telephone call and I managed to obtain a free slot on the 26th at Tottington Health Centre, once I had explained to the young lady where Greenmount was.

The process is much more "hi-tech" than the last time the GP performed it. Gone is the warm tap water in a bowl, syringe and thorough soaking one received. I was kitted out with a bib, given some cloth to wipe my ears after the treatment and a metal bowl, shaped to the contours of my cheek and neck, to hold under my ear. The nurse fired a jet of water into my ear from some machine which heated it as it came through to just the right temperature. The effect sounded and felt like the tip of a hot pneumatic drill attempting to gain access to my brain.

The right ear took two attempts to clear the wax, which I had unwittingly compacted by trying to poke it out with cotton wool buds, an action not recommended. Once the wax had been removed, it was like an instant cure and, with the left ear cleared as well, I could, once more, listen to my jazz CDs in stereo.

Being deaf for two weeks in one ear certainly focuses the mind on what one takes for granted.

I have completed a State Pension forecast for Jenny and me and the good news is that we both qualify for the full amount. Jenny receives her pension first in November 2011 and mine arrives in September 2012. By then, the combined state pension, once the tax man has taken his slice of mine, should just about cover our fuel bill. That is assuming, of course, that the banks have any money left with which to pay us.