

Greenmount – September 2015

Tuesday 1st September: The first significant task of the day was to harvest the second batch of potatoes Jenny had been growing in a bag on the patio. Having been grown in a rather confined space from ordinary potatoes that had started to sprout, they were not particularly large but they were alright and at least they were free.

The second job was to help Jenny hang out her washing on the Dearden Line, after which we decided to nip into Ramsbottom.

En route we called at the Old School to drop off a few items for the jumble sale and I left Jenny to complete that task while I popped into the chemist to check they had received my prescription for my Tamsulosin I requested the previous Thursday. They hadn't. I said I would sort it out when I visited the practice the following day.

Returning to the car, I found Jenny helping Faith to unpack the bin used to deposit items for the jumble sale and I was roped in to move the bulkier items.

The plan in Ramsbottom was to deposit the car boot cash and a cheque I had received for a small share dividend at the bank and then potter round the charity shops. On leaving the bank we met up with Jenny's friend, Karen, whom we had not seen for over a year. While chatting away, we took shelter in a shop doorway from the unscheduled rain. We reached the car just as the heavens opened and decided to return home.

After lunch, it was a case of more computer work, bringing this record of events up to date and publishing the previous month's update on my web site while the heavy hail storm passed and gave way to sunshine once again.

Wednesday 2nd September: We retraced our tyre tracks into Ramsbottom. We intended to drop off a rather heavy box of books at the Bleakholt Animal Sanctuary charity shop but after carrying them around half of Ramsbottom, I discovered they did not want them and I returned them to the car. We eventually established that the RSPCA charity shop would take them and we dropped them there on the way home.

Meanwhile, we toured the charity shops as usual. Jenny found a couple of books she wanted and I found a DVD of The Horse Soldiers.

We went into Morrisons for the odd item and then into Tesco, where both Glenfiddich and Yellow Tail Shiraz were on offer, along with Magnum ices. These were offers we could not resist.

On our way home, we called at the chemist at Ramsbottom and the one on Vernon Road, nearer home. Neither stocked the old alcohol-based, glass thermometer used for taking temperatures. Apparently, these were no longer available.

I arrived home in time to change before visiting the surgery for my ECG, blood pressure test and to have blood extracted for various tests.

The ECG was fine. My blood pressure was alright. The results of the blood tests for cholesterol, sugar, kidney function, liver function and blood count would be back in a few days. I have to record that the nurse was excellent and managed to obtain the blood required at the first attempt, with the minimum of discomfort, no bruising under the skin and the wound stopped bleeding almost immediately.

Following my recent visit to the doctor, Jenny had been putting olive oil in my left ear for a few days to loosen the wax and this had resulted in almost total loss of hearing on my left side. I should have been treating the right ear as well but I thought I'd wait and see what the effect was on the left ear first. It was a good job I had, otherwise I would have been almost completely deaf. When I explained my predicament to the nurse, she checked my ears and confirmed my left ear was showing signs of the wax softening and my right ear needed treating because the wax was very dry. She booked me in to have my ears washed out in a couple of weeks' time in case the olive oil did not improve matters.

All in all, it was a most productive visit from what I could hear of it.

After lunch, I turned my attention to PC media work, finishing off my latest Jazz compilation, commencing the preparation of a CD cover for one of the two jazz LPs I had bought the previous week and recording the second LP ready for conversion to CD.

Thursday 3rd September: The first task of the day was to collect Rachel from the garage in Tottington, where her car was being serviced and take her to work in Bury.

Returning home, it was time to clear the weeds from the block paving again. I finished off the front path and the drive. I had intended to deal with the path on the side of the house as far as the back of the chimney and I mustered up the energy to do so before packing up for the day and collecting Rachel from work so she could pick up her car.

I know how to enjoy myself.

Friday 4th September: Another Friday and another grocery shopping day saw us motoring round the M60 yet again and, surprisingly, with very little delay, despite the volume of traffic, drivers generally observing the speed limit and driving with a reasonable amount of good sense. (I use the term "good sense" rather than "common sense" since there is an awful lot of "common sense" about but it is not all good.) Had they been reading my monthly blog?

Saturday 5th September: We wandered across to the Old School Drop-In, being the first Saturday of the month. Jenny found a DVD of Prime Suspect Inner Circles, which I had just recorded from the TV and a book.

After a quick stop at home, we walked the 3½ miles down the Kirklees Trail to Bury and had a bit of lunch in Costa Coffee at Tesco, where the gluten-free, coronation-chicken wraps were back on the shelf.

We met up with Rachel outside Tesco and walked back across to the town centre where I went with Rachel to help her at her bank with changes to her account while Jenny wandered

off to do some shopping. Jenny joined us as we were finishing, some two hours later and Rachel gave us a lift home.

Following a brief rest and a welcome cup of tea, Jenny and I packed the car for the following day's car boot sale.

I had hoped to finish cleaning the block paving along the side of the house and on the patio but one can only do so much and I had done it for the day.

Sunday 6th September: After a 5 a.m. start, we arrived at our car boot pitch before 7 a.m. and didn't get back home until about 4 p.m. It was a nice sunny day with a cool wind and there were more stalls that I had seen for some time. Despite all that, business was very slow and, for the most part, there were more traders than customers. We cleared less than half what we normally make on the day and it was quite disappointing.

Monday 7th September: The day was divided between unpacking the car, sorting out the stock in the garage and updating the village web site. The latter took much more time than anticipated and I decided to finish off after tea about 8 p.m., leaving a small amount to complete the following day.

Tuesday 8th September: I was due at the Incredible Edible plot for 10 a.m. with the trailer I had managed to remove from the garage the previous day. Donna and I filled the trailer with rubbish and we took it to the tip in Bury. That finished off the morning and I came home for lunch to discover Jenny had gone to Ramsbottom. I went to fetch her in the car minus trailer.

I had agreed with Donna that I could have the surplus soil from the last development at the Incredible Edible plot and Jenny and I fetched it, with the aid of the trailer, after lunch, depositing it all in the first of the two raised beds on the patio. We just had enough.

I finished off the day with a few more updates to the village web site. Variety is the spice of life, so they say.

Wednesday 9th September: Having put the soil in the first of the two raised beds, it would have been a waste of time were we not to make use of it. Jenny's argument went something like that after breakfast and the usual routine morning chores. We spent three hours taking the herbs out of the pots on the patio and a few out of the garden to plant them in the raised bed.

After a leisurely lunch break, we were back on the patio. I spent the afternoon removing the weeds from the path at the side of the house.

Thursday 10th September: I spent the day cutting the grass yet again and removing the weeds from the side path.

Friday 11th September: The day brought yet another foray to Unicorn and Waitrose, returning just as the schools were turning out. Considering the time, the journey home was much better than expected.

After tidying away the groceries, we took the trailer to the church and collected another batch of rubbish from the Incredible Edible plot, which we took to the tip.

Saturday 12th September: Virtually the whole day was taken up with a mammoth update to the village web site and, of course, packing the car for the following day's car boot sale.

Sunday 13th September: After the usual 5 a.m. start, we were at our car boot pitch about 6:45 a.m. and we had another fine day of trading. Customers came to our stall in one's and two's and, to say most of our sales were a pound here and a couple of pounds there, we made a reasonable profit on the day.

Ramsbottom was holding the annual black pudding hurling contest (I kid you not) and that, together with the farmer's market and craft fair, helped to boost the number of visitors.

Monday 14th September: The morning was a bit of a rush, emptying the car from the previous day's car boot sale before driving into Ramsbottom for our 9:30 eye test appointment at the new opticians, Yates and Suddell, our old opticians, the Spectacle Studio, having closed their Ramsbottom branch and sent all our records to an opticians in Rwatanstall, a few miles up the valley. The examination was efficient and thorough and it seemed, while my left eye was much the same as the last time it was tested, my right eye had actually improved and I needed to change my glasses. I decided to leave that decision until I compared my results with the previous documentation. Meanwhile, Jenny was being referred to her GP again because the pressure in her right eye was slightly on the high side. This happened once before and resulted in her being monitored by the local clinic in Tottington for a year before being signed off. The reason for the precautionary referral was that there was a history of glaucoma in her family.

While in Ramsbottom, we took the opportunity to tour the charity shops. I found a jazz CD and Jenny found a DVD and several books. The day was beginning to improve.

We came home for lunch and I spent the afternoon updating the village web site for the second time in three days.

Tuesday 15th September: I was round at the Incredible Edible shed for 10:30 where I met up with Donna. The plan for the morning was to install some adjustable shelving and, for once, everything went according to plan.

I spent most of the afternoon improving some Excel spreadsheet macros that automate certain functions for me. These gave me an opportunity to dabble in visual basic, not that most people will have a clue about this whole subject matter. I was so engrossed that I was nearly late for my appointment with the nurse at the village medical practice to have my ears washed out.

As it turned out, she only cleaned out my left ear because that was the only ear in which I had been putting olive oil on a daily basis for the past two weeks. It seems that the procedure is only carried out on the ear when the wax, that was causing my problem and needed to be removed, had been softened with olive oil on a daily basis for at least ten days.

The reason I had not been softening the wax in my right ear was because the oil had expanded the wax, as it does during the softening process, in my left ear, severely impairing my hearing and I did not want to be deaf in both ears. I had a further appointment made for the right ear.

The difference the five-minute procedure made to my left ear was incredible. I could hear perfectly again and it occurred to me, not for the first time, how much we all take for granted; that when we awake in the morning, most of us can see, smell, hear and so on. I cannot imagine how I would manage if I lost any of my senses (did someone think “Too late”?) and yet so many people do and do so very well.

Wednesday 16th September: I recognised the date immediately I woke. It was my birthday. I had been on this fragile planet for 68 years. I celebrated it by a bit of a lie-in followed by a day’s feverish activity clearing the weeds from the rest of the patio.

Thursday 17th September: I spent most of the day on the computer, working on a branch of the family tree concerning one of Jenny’s sisters and her marriage. The husband’s family had, until this point, been a bit of a mystery and, prompted by a recent visit from Jenny’s brother and his wife, his wife having a similar interest, I opened up this new line of enquiry. As a result, I had received the marriage certificate and I was tracing the chap’s ancestry.

I requested a search for his birth from the Rotherham Registrar by E-mail, there being no facility to pay for the certificate online. I received an E-mail back asking me to telephone to make payment, which I did and ended up listening to a recording of obnoxious music interspersed with a message telling me all the operatives were busy and I was in a queue. I rang off after about five minutes and sent an E-mail back. The reply I received explained that they used a call-centre and gave me the option of attending the office in person to pay for the certificate. Nice one. I decided to ask Jenny’s sister-in-law in Sheffield to deal with it for me.

Friday 18th September: The usual shopping trip to Unicorn and Waitrose was an unusually pleasant one, most drivers on the M60 being very well behaved and driving sensibly yet again.

Saturday 19th September: After an uncomfortable night with my expanded delicate parts, a problem first identified in December 2014, two separate GPs having told me, one in [December 2014](#) and one in [April 2015](#), there was nothing to worry about and no action was required unless it became a hindrance to normal functionality, I almost made a bee-line for A&E. Since it was a week-end and, these days, the NHS had become a Mon-Fri 9-5 service, I didn’t see much point, particularly since I had an appointment with the doctor early on Monday morning.

We had an early breakfast and I mulled over my medical options, still being plagued by my personal problem. I decided to telephone my local surgery to see if it was open on a Saturday morning. My call was immediately transferred to Bardoc. Someone there told me my surgery was open and could be contacted on an 0300 number. I walked round.

When I spoke to the receptionist, she said the surgery was only open on Saturday mornings for flu jabs and the only staff in were nurses. How much use was that? Here we have GPs earning six-figure sums and not available at week ends when I and my team used to be on 24 x 7 call out for far less than half that. I grant you we were IT staff but it was the time of introduction of IT to the NHS and once they had it, they couldn't manage without it. Loss of service did put people's lives at risk and we were there to maintain and fix issues 24 x 7. It was high time all NHS doctors were obliged to do the same and without any extra cash.

I spoke briefly to Matt and he suggested we try the Walk-in centre in Bury rather than A&E.

We arrived at the Walk-in centre at 12:30 and, put a ticket on the car in the car park for one hour plus the concessionary 15 minutes at the princely sum of £1.50. On approaching reception at, would you believe, Bardoc, I was told there were 15 people in front of us and three nurses available to see patients. I explained I needed to see a doctor and was told I had to see a nurse first.

It was ten minutes to three when I was called in to see the nurse, having put two concessionary one-hour extensions to the parking of the car, at hourly intervals, on its dashboard and she gave my nether regions a pretty thorough examination, remarking she hadn't seen one as big as that before. Unfortunately, she was referring to one of the two veg. and not the meat. Being the cool, calm person I was, I just relaxed, although I couldn't help feeling like the man from Devizes. Then she said she needed to speak to one of her colleagues about it. When she returned, she had made me an appointment at 3:30 with one of the doctors. I told them so.

I saw the very nice chap at 3:40 and he repeated the examination, adding a few extra tests and diagnosed my original condition, [hydrocele](#), together with a bacterial infection causing the stiffness and discomfort, [epididymo-orchitis](#), for which he prescribed antibiotics, two 500 mg of Ciprofloxacin tablets a day for 14 days. This came as something of a relief, having considered some possible alternatives. At least I got to keep all my bits.

The down side was that the antibiotic could cause severe diarrhoea and, if it did, I had stop taking it and ask my GP for a less-effective alternative.

I also needed to ask my GP for a referral to have the excess fluid drained and there was an option to have a small, day-case, operation to do that and to seal the tube through which this fluid is supplied to stop the problem recurring.

We called to have the prescription filled at Tesco and took the opportunity to acquire three bottles of Yellow Tail Chardonnay for £5.75 a bottle, not that I would be able to drink any of it for a couple of weeks.

We were home for about 4:30 and settled down to a nice cup of tea, having taken butties and water for a picnic at the Walk-in centre.

After that, based on the principle that I was more comfortable standing than sitting, we packed the car for the following day's car boot sale.

The meal I had arranged with Matt, Carrie, Rachel and Matthew at the Waggon and Horses, Hawkshaw, to celebrate my birthday, was put on hold.

Sunday 20th September: We were up at 5 a.m. and at our pitch for 7 a.m. on a damp and misty morning and we unpacked the car and set up our stall at a leisurely pace, the mist, not so bad in the valley, eventually lifting about 9 a.m.

Trading was again painfully slow and it took us about an hour and a half to make our stall money of £11. The sale of Matthew's unwanted strimmer boosted the coffers somewhat and we ended up with about half what we were used to taking. It was a lot of work for very little and if we didn't enjoy doing it we wouldn't bother.

We packed up early since trade was virtually non-existent after 2 p.m.

I relaxed for the rest of the day.

Monday 21st September: We were up about 7 a.m. because I had an appointment with my GP at 8:50. The topic of the conversation was not, as I expected, my recent illness and the results of the tests I had, all of which were alright. It was my visit to the Walk-in centre the previous day and the diagnosis and treatment, which I was going to discuss anyway.

Another examination of my vital parts seemed to raise the stakes somewhat. The doctor was not happy he could not locate my left testis nor that my scrotum did not light up like a Christmas tree when he shone his light at it. I was fast-tracked to see the urologist, which means I was eligible for an appointment within ten days and, meanwhile, it was a case of keep taking the tablets. The thinking was that I still did not have a serious problem and that the original diagnosis was correct, but, to be on the safe side, it was best dealt with quickly just in case it turned out to be something sinister. The accompanying information sheet, which mentioned cancer three times, was not quite so reassuring but, for the present, I was backing the odds which were in keeping with the doctor's thinking. Unfortunately, I was not normally a gambling man because I rarely won.

I left feeling just a little dismayed, although the fast-track approach suited and I expected fairly swift treatment whatever the cause. At the time of writing, I was hoping that I would have the opportunity to continue this ongoing saga for many years to come. Time would tell.

I called at the chemist to collect my next and last of the current batch of Omeprazole to control my stomach acid, being down to my last week's supply at home.

Once at home, I changed my wet clothes, having walked back in some fairly heavy rain and eventually fell asleep in the chair for the rest of the morning.

After lunch, I applied my brain (one bit that seems to be working fine) power to the week's Radio Times crossword (no 39) and eventually finished it, with a little help from Internet research, apart from one terrible clue: "In theory, mush in US city is over (2,5)". I had the letters "-N -A-E-" and I knew it meant "in theory". I gave up and looked up the answer on the Internet. Would you believe the answer was "ON PAPER"? How was that obtained from the clue? I eventually worked it out. One of the meanings of "mush" is "PAP",

originating as a term for a kind of porridge in Africa and now used for a preparation of baby food. The US city was RENO. Reverse RENO (“over” in the clue) and put PAP in it, you get the answer, which, sort of loosely, means “in theory”. What a devious, twisted mind some people have.

After that, I brought this document up to date and contemplated tea, eating it, that is, not preparing it, followed by the usual evening’s entertainment of recorded TV programmes or DVDs.

Tuesday 22nd September: Having set three alarms on my mobile telephone to remind me when to take my medication, it woke me at midnight to take my antibiotic and then again at 8 a.m. to take my Omeprazole. The third alarm was set for midday for the next antibiotic.

Having stirred, there was little point in going back to sleep so I rose and laid the table for breakfast while Jenny stirred from her slumbers.

After the usual routine chores like washing the pots and taking the various piles of rubbish to the appropriate bin for recycling and the vegetable waste to the compost bin, we settled down to prepare for our trip to the dentist for our check up.

We decided to walk to the dentist and, given my encumbrance, decided to allow a little extra time to take in some fresh air. It was a lovely autumn day, sunny, cool and damp.

I was actually better walking than sitting and we arrived at Holcombe Brook about half an hour early so we took the opportunity to browse the shops and withdraw some money from the cash point.

We both had a clean bill of health from the dentist and our teeth cleaned, Jenny making another appointment to have her teeth cleaned again in three months’ time.

We had a pleasant walk back, followed by lunch and I worked through my tax return, owing the tax man a shed load of money because he had failed to realise I had two private pensions, only one of which he was taxing. He requested payment of the first half of the tax by 31st January 2016 and the second half by 31st July 2016, just like last year. I asked him to collect it through my 2016-17 tax code, just like last year and told him I would not make any payment in January unless he wrote to me and asked for it. I made the mistake of paying it last year and then I had to claim it all back because he was using my tax code for this year to reap it in.

Meanwhile, Jenny was unpacking the car from Sunday. I finished my task just as Jenny came in to request some help to store away the heavier boxes.

Wednesday 23rd September: I spent the day performing yet another large update to the village web site and filing my online tax return for 2014-15.

Thursday 24th September: Not feeling particularly mobile, I concentrated on yet more IT work, performing some long-needed cosmetic updates to the village web site and catching up on my E-mails. One E-mail in particular was a follow up from a chap at Bury Council

regarding my request for parking restrictions at the entrance of the unmade road, by the side of the church, leading to the Incredible Edible plot a few months earlier. The suggestion was to paint a white "H" on the entrance to draw driver's attention to the fact that it was used for access. Unfortunately, it is not an offence to park on such a road marking and this would not necessarily deter those inconsiderate drivers who blocked the footway along Holcombe Road, forcing pedestrians, often with children, to walk in the main road through the village at one of its narrowest points, opposite a busy junction, the road being used by frequent articulated vehicles ferrying products between the two, local, Cormar Carpet manufacturing plants, one in Greenmount and one in Ramsbottom.

I rounded off the afternoon with a visit to the local medical centre to have my right ear washed out to remove the excess wax. I thought it was not bad but the difference this ten-minute procedure made was incredible.

Over the past few days, it had turned quite cold in the evenings and one of the daily chores was to clean out the fire in the morning, lay it for the evening and light it about 4 p.m. We had used two bags of logs by the end of today, leaving another six in the garage and it occurred to me it was time to cut some more wood from the stock of logs under the car port.

Friday 25th September: We got off to a late start on our anything but usual shopping trip.

Our first stop was at B&Q at Heap Bridge, the smaller one at Crosstones, nearer home, having recently closed. We went in search of another, excellent-value, bumper-pack of Nouvelle recycled toilet tissues, only to find they had sold out.

The only other local stockist was Asda and it was fortunate that this was at the next exit of the M66, en-route to the M60, which took us down to the main A56 on the south-west side of Manchester, about half way between Unicorn at Chorlton and Waitrose at Broadheath, near Altrincham. Jenny spotted what appeared to be the last small pack on the shelf and we could not reach it, even with the aid of one of those foot-stools these places use. A very tall chap came to our assistance just as I saw a whole shelf-full of packs next to the all-but empty one, the packaging having changed from a striking blue to a very missable, but appropriate, green. We bought one of each, along with a few other items before trekking down to Unicorn.

The journey was not bad, considering the volume of traffic and drivers who didn't have a clue. I didn't really blame the drivers themselves; it was the poor test standard, lack of good training, which was non-existent when it came to motorways and, very importantly, the lack of law enforcement and very low penalties.

We didn't get to Waitrose much before 2 p.m. and leaving at 3:30 p.m. meant that we hit the busiest time on the M60 as the schools turned out. The journey home was, in a word, slow. We made better time once we came off the M60 on the A56 up to Bury. Unfortunately, a large articulated lorry and road works at Tottington foiled my strategy of a speedier route home to the usual Brandleholme road, both roads leading to Greenmount from Bury.

Saturday 26th September: I decided, given the government's plans to consider allowing a new nuclear power station to be built at Hinkley Point, to put the finishing touches to my new web site section on [Nuclear Power](#). If this went ahead, the approval must qualify as one of the most stupid decisions ever made by any British Government. We already have more plutonium than we know with what to do, that will remain lethally radioactive for just about ever and here we are, about to build another nuclear power station on the coast that will, in all probability, be under water by the end of this century due to global warming.

Did I not mention global warming? My guess is that it will become irreversible in less than ten years with the inevitable melting of both polar ice caps by the end of the century, resulting in a rise in sea levels of several metres. Nuclear power stations take at least ten years to build and commission so any new one started now will be too late to stop a global catastrophe anyway. So why bother?

Our only hope now is a massive and rapid investment in Green Energy world-wide and that isn't about to happen because our world leaders simply haven't got a clue. All that matters to them is that they remain in power. What a beautiful world your grandchildren might never see.

As I have said before, I think, if greed and selfishness prevail, my one remaining wish is to live long enough to be able to say I told you so.

A bi-product of my feverish activity was the development of a new piece of Java software, which allows the same edit to be performed on all files with the extension "htm" in any given folder.

After that, I went out and cut and strimmed the back lawn, tidied up the cat's latrine and tied up my raspberry canes ready for next season, removing the deadwood from this season.

Sunday 27th September: The morning gave way to yet another, if somewhat brief, update to the village web site followed by the delivery of the latest copy of the newsletter to the unsuspecting residents on our round, taking advantage of the lovely, warm autumn sunshine to acquire some vitamin D and some green beans for tea from the Incredible Edible plot on our return.

We had taken the precaution of confining the cat to the entrance hall and setting the alarm, even though we were only out for a short time, in view of the recent burglaries in the area during the day. If I had my way, since we were about to put up a sign claiming the Nailer's (or Naylor's) Green as the Greenmount Village Green, we would bring back the stocks and the gibbet as well.

After lunch, I prepared a documented history of my medical condition for the following day and then finished off the back garden, including removing the ivy that had grown on our side of the fence from next door. The positioning of the large compost bin in the bottom, left-hand corner of the garden gave that particular task added interest.

Needless to say, I rounded off the day with a shower.

Monday 28th September: We were up at 7 a.m. and Rachel gave us a lift to Fairfield General Hospital, arriving in good time for my appointment at 9:35. I was weighed and handed in my urine sample before seeing the doctor.

The doctor's examination of my predicament was one of the briefest I had ever experienced. He confirmed the diagnosis and said he would arrange another ultrasound scan. He gave me the option of an operation to fix the problem but he did not seem to be too keen to pursue that and suggested I might want to consider living with the condition. There were potential complications with the operation. I could not help thinking his reluctance to deal with the matter was an NHS cost-saving exercise, not wanting to perform procedures unless the condition was life-threatening. Did he perhaps think I was past my sell-by date?

Not deterred, I asked to be put on the operating list and would probably be dealt with in three or four weeks. A bed was also booked for me in case I needed to stay overnight afterwards, although it was essentially a day-case operation.

I was not allowed to escape without having yet another blood sample taken. The nurse in question did not seem to have much of a sense of humour when I started chatting about the bat pictures adorning the walls of the blood room and she made a bit of a mess of my arm. Although she managed to find the vein first time, for which all credit was due because my veins didn't exactly jump out at anyone, there was some after-bleeding under the skin resulting in a little bruising, so, unlike the nurse at the local practice who scored 9.5 out of 10, this one only got 7.5.

We reached the main road just as the 468 bus arrived and hopped on that to Bury, that being the terminus. There we had a ten minute wait for the 480 to Greenmount.

In the afternoon we took Rachel up to Helmshore Textile museum for lunch, the café having a good choice of gluten-free menu options and we paid a visit to Mulberry Fabrics and Albert Mill Antiques.

Tuesday 29th September: We took Rachel to York for the day, using the Park and Ride at Askham Bar and potted round the shops, taking both lunch and afternoon tea at Bailey's Tea Rooms, again having good choice of gluten-free food. It was a most pleasant day and we ventured into York Minster but came out again when we found the fee to go round the Minster was £9 each for Jenny and me and £10 for Rachel.

We had an evening meal at the Beefeater at Heaton Park on the way back. That turned out to be a rather later than usual due to an accident causing delays on the M62.

Wednesday 30th September: We all went to Chester for the day and, again, potted round the shops. We ventured into the rather large and very nice cathedral for which entry was free, although they did suggest a voluntary contribution of £3 each. Jenny and I walked round while Rachel waited outside. I contributed £1 to the project to build a Lego model of the cathedral, for which I was entitled to add a single Lego brick to the model and I gave a donation of £5 on the way out.

We lunched at Starbucks (not my idea) and eventually made for the castle, to which we could not gain access, followed by a short walk down to the river. We walked along the river bank and up through the park in the lovely, warm, autumn sunshine, where the grey squirrels were so tame they were taking food out of the hand and one actually ran up Rachel's leg, clinging to her jeans.

We came home through the busy tea-time traffic and the standard of driving could only be described as appalling.

Nonetheless, we were home in good time and ate at the Bull's Head Toby Carvery, just across the road.

Summary: The month ended on a bit of a low for me, quite literally and I was looking forward, with a little trepidation, to having my delicate bits restored to more-or-less normal by this time next month. Read the vivid detail of all the gore in next month's gripping instalment, assuming I am in any position to write it.