

Greenmount August 2020

Saturday, 1st August 2020

During the morning I tidied up the TV programmes we had watched the previous week.

After lunch, I went into the back bedroom and fitted the light switch in the closet. I still needed to do the wiring in the loft.

I removed the light fitting of three halogen lights and temporarily fitted a conventional bayonet socket with a 100 watt Halogen bulb to provide lighting in the room until I could refit the ceiling rose in the original position.

I scraped all the textured paint off the ceiling, leaving bare plaster.

Sunday, 2nd August 2020

We made four more jars of blackcurrant jam using the blackcurrants we had picked last week and a few more remaining ones that were ripe. This was more or less the end of this year's harvest.

After lunch, we went for a stroll round the golf course and met a few people we knew, stopping to chat.

On the way back, we went to the Incredible Edible shed. The vandals had made a real mess of the door and I needed Frank's advice (as a joiner) on how best to fix it and help to do so.

Bea dropped off the key for me, not that I needed it for the present and left a note to say the morons had been in the shed again.

Monday, 3rd August 2020

We were thinking of walking into Ramsbottom for some exercise but rain was forecast for lunchtime so we took the car. It didn't rain.

Jenny wanted some organic Dove's Farm cornflour (finely ground corn starch) from Morrison's, where we normally buy it. They didn't have any. She also wanted a roll of recycled, paper kitchen towel from Tesco. They didn't have any.

We called at the Co-op at Holcombe Brook on the way back. They didn't have any cornflour or kitchen towel either.

It was turning out to be a really good day.

I had found two DVDs in the RSPCA charity shop, the only one of the five open in Ramsbottom. The DVDs were two films I had stored on my hard drive so they would replace those, providing better quality and saving disc space.

After lunch I contemplated setting up the tables on the drive and painting the wood again but it was getting too late in the day. Friday was still looking good for painting.

I went up to the back bedroom to finish replacing the pull-cord switch in the closet with a conventional, wall-mounted switch. To do that, I had to fit a junction box in the loft and I spent the best part of a good couple of hours in the hot, cramped roof-space.

I spent another good 1½ hours looking for a dedicated satellite TV recorder. I looked at two in particular, one being the latest Humax and the other being a Technomate. The problem these days was finding a stockist capable of demonstrating them. Most trading seemed to be done on the Internet, which was no way to find out if the device would do what I wanted it to do. I sent enquiries off to both companies.

Tuesday, 4th August 2020

I met Frank at the shed at 9:30 to discuss how best to repair the damage and to draft a list of materials. We moved the benches from the shed and secured it as best we could for the present.

I came home and dug up all the remaining potatoes from the raised bed. Jenny needed some for tea and there were more than enough. It wasn't bad to say Jenny had planted ordinary potatoes that had started to grow.

I sat down to deal with the most recent TV recordings, removing the advertisements and topping and tailing – a fairly routine task I usually squeezed into my day somewhere, often after meals while digesting. Similarly my e-mails.

Most of the afternoon was taken up with the Incredible Edible shed vandalism, preparing a list of materials and pricing.

Wednesday, 5th August 2020

We went grocery shopping to Sainsbury's store at Heaton Park and Tesco at Prestwich.

After lunch, I again dealt with E-mails and more work on the Incredible Edible shed and planning its repairs.

We went for a walk with Rachel, who was visiting, round the golf course and we went into the Hollymount orchard on the way. We walked down to talk to the bees and it was nice to see so many of them flying around.

Thursday, 6th August 2020

It was a fine day with low humidity so I took the opportunity to give the five planks of new skirting its third and last coat of varnish.

After lunch, I finished off the labelling of the boxes of various items for storage in the garage. That and updating my list of what was where took me up to tea time.

Friday, 7th August 2020

I put in the TV programmes to record for the coming week and, after lunch, I cut the grass back and front and started trimming the edges at the back and tidying the borders.

Saturday, 8th August 2020

Being a nice, warm day and the start of a dry spell set to last for a few days, I decided to tackle the kitchen radiator. It had been rusting for some time and needed rubbing down and a coat of paint, which I had already bought.

Removing it was fairly straightforward and with Jenny's help, I managed to get it outside on the drive. First, though, I had to drain the small amount of water still inside it even though I had not refilled it after draining the system weeks ago. That seemed to go reasonably well, except it took ages. Unfortunately, when we took the radiator off and started to move it, horrible, dark-brown sludge poured out in pools as we took the radiator outside onto the drive. Jenny cleaned up inside while I dealt with the two large pools on the drive, swilling them away down the drain.

With the radiator now horizontal on Jenny's third car boot table (the other two being in the garage with my five planks of varnished skirting on them), I was able to commence sanding it to remove all the loose paint, the rust and the dirt.

It took me until lunchtime to complete all the cross-tubes.

After lunch, we nipped down to Matthew and Carrie's house to collect some grocery items they had ordered for us on their Ocado delivery, items we could not find anywhere else.

When we came back, I finished sanding the radiator, cleaned it with some white spirit and Jenny helped me move it back inside. Guess what happened as we stood it up against the kitchen wall on which it normally resides. More of the filthy sludge came out of one of the holes at the bottom. We quickly tilted it back on its side and took it back outside to allow it to drain down one of the surface-water grates on the drive. We then put it back on the table and, after helping to clean up the mess again in the kitchen, I cleaned the radiator unions and stuffed some kitchen roll into both holes.

We finally brought the radiator in and rested it on two blocks of wood, on some plastic sheeting, leaning against the wall until morning. It was nearly six o' clock.

Sunday, 9th August 2020

I had fun painting the kitchen radiator, or rather, part of it, in the morning. Jenny helped me carry it outside and position it between two tables. Before I could do that, I had to push the skirting onto a single table with the ends overhanging so I could use the second table along with the spare one.

Each side of the radiator rested on one of the tables so could paint the cross-tubes, one by one, tackling the underside of the tubes by lying down on the floor. Painting one tube at a time meant that I was up and down like a yo-yo.

I finished off by painting the ends of each side, raising the sides on the tables using four blocks of wood, one at each end on each side. I did this because the ends, particularly at the bottom, had rusted badly and the paint had completely flaked off one side, so I was guessing it would need three coats of paint instead of the recommended two.

In fact, I was toying with giving the whole radiator three coats.

Lying down and getting up and down had made me feel quite sick. Two very strong mints had helped while I was working and I was glad to have finished and have a salad lunch.

After lunch, I felt quite tired and fell asleep briefly.

I didn't fancy tackling anything too heavy so I found a lamp from the old school jumble that needed repairing. I found all the bits I needed and successfully completed that task in the conservatory using my desk as a workbench in about half an hour. I was just about finished in time to edit a TV recording from lunchtime and then listen to Jazz Record Requests. Jenny had other ideas.

I went out into the back garden and we removed all the netting from the raised beds now the strawberries had finished for the season and the vegetables were well established.

I helped Jenny feed the vegetables and herbs and watered the rest of the pots and beds since it hadn't rained for a few days.

By the time we had finished, it was ten minutes to five and I just caught the last couple of tunes on Jazz Record Requests, which were not at all to my taste. I checked the playlist and it looked promising so it was a good job I had recorded it.

I picked up where I left off earlier.

Monday, 10th August 2020

The radiator cross-tubes received their second coat of paint after a sanding with fine paper to remove the roughness and a cleaning with white spirit. I finished by about 2 p.m. and left the radiator to dry outside. I tidied up and came in for a late, quick snack and a cup of tea.

Meanwhile, Jenny had been baking bread and was on her last loaf so I had to wait a short while. A banana filled a small gap.

After my snack, I thought it might be a good idea to follow up on my message to the AA about renewing the contract at the end of September, along with my motor insurance with the AA. I had not had a reply so I thought a reminder would be appropriate.

I also had a look at my broadband contract with BT, due to end in October. I had already had a letter from BT about it and I rang them, after looking at an alternative company, which was a lot cheaper than my existing contract with BT for a very similar service.

Cutting a long story short (not usually like me), I managed to speak to a very helpful gentleman with whom I negotiated an even better deal for my existing services, together with some extras. I was left wondering where the catch was. I couldn't find one. I documented our discussion just in case!

My last few pieces of useful work were to fetch in Jenny's washing lines before it rained, pick the ripe fruit Jenny couldn't reach and put out the refuse bins for collection tomorrow morning.

Tuesday, 11th August 2020

I gave the kitchen radiator cross-tubes a third coat of paint, finishing, again, at about 2 p.m.

I spent the next couple of hours sorting out my mobile contract with BT. BT had shipped me a new SIM card and a new number. I didn't want a new number and it would have been straightforward to transfer my existing number to BT, although it would have required a little effort to do so. That wasn't really the problem.

The new SIM card was a 4G card and my old Samsung mobile was not 4G compatible. I did think about using Rachel's old Apple iPhone 4 but that wasn't 4G compatible either. In the end, I decided to cancel the mobile contract and finding the right person to do that was not exactly easy.

BT really needed to get its business support act up to speed. As is stood, it was departmentalised and disjointed. What it needed was consolidating with a single telephone number, a single chat service and a single E-mail address for all business enquiries and a software system that gave each and every support person access to whatever they needed to deal with any query and intelligent enough to ensure they found the right information. The organisation was too big and unwieldy to have different groups of support staff, each dealing with a specific part of the business.

BT also needed to educate its sales staff to ensure customers were asked the right questions, like, if selling a mobile service to someone with an existing phone, "What make and model is the existing phone?" so its compatibility with the SIM card can be checked before the contract is finalised and "Do you want to keep your existing number?" so they can advise how to go about transferring that to BT.

I'm sure I could improve productivity and cut costs in BT, given half the chance and the authority to do so, not that I had the time to do so.

Wednesday, 12th August 2020

I called at Wickes DIY store in Bury on our trip out grocery shopping to Unicorn in Chorlton and Waitrose in Broadheath.

I wanted some more of the Hammerite Gloss White radiator paint I purchased from Wickes in May so I could finish the kitchen radiator. Unfortunately, it was out of stock and they didn't know when it would be back in stock due to delays in manufacture caused by Covid-19, so I was told. There was some in their Pontefract store but no chance of them getting any for me via their distribution network. At the moment, it was like trying to find rocking-horse droppings.

It's amazing. A little bug and the country fell apart.

At least the grocery shopping trip went well.

We were home before 1 p.m., which was just as well, because we were expecting Faith from the old school to pop round with a boxed afternoon tea. Normally, about this time of year, all of the old school volunteers and villagers who came to the monthly drop-in there would gather together for afternoon tea and be entertained by the Greenmount Strummers. Due to Covid-19, it was not possible to have the gathering this year so the ladies who prepared it went into the old school this morning, prepared the individual boxes of sandwiches and cakes and delivered it door to door to those who wanted it.

Faith delivered our boxes and we gave her a jar of the blackcurrant jam we had made.

We had the very nice variety of sandwiches and a couple of the cakes, with a couple of glasses of our own wine, followed by cups of tea, for lunch while listening to a CD of Sidney Bechet.

After lunch, we relaxed in the lounge.

Thursday, 13th August 2020

By 10:30 Jenny had been at the hair salon for half an hour and I had given the sides of the kitchen radiator their first coat of paint.

It was another lovely, warm, dry day after a scattering of rain overnight to keep the plants happy. One could get used to this weather.

After lunch, we went into Ramsbottom. I needed some white spirit and Jenny bought some organic caster sugar from Plentiful, an excellent, if somewhat small, shop for organic and environmentally-friendly products.

I found a DVD trilogy of The Mummy (Brendan Fraser) and Jenny purchased a book and a plaque in one of the charity shops.

We called in Morrisons but that was a waste of time. Although their Yellowtail Chardonnay was on offer at £6 a bottle, it was out of stock and the Rose was £7. Jenny bought three bottles of Yellowtail Chardonnay and a bottle of Rose from Bargain Booze, all still at £12 for two, on the way back.

Friday 14th August 2020

The radiator received its second coat of paint on the sides after a gentle sanding and a quick rub down with white spirit to remove the dust. I also gave the fittings a coat of paint, which was a fiddly job and I soon learnt that it was not possible to paint those on all sides.

After lunch, I decided to trim back the ivy along the garage wall, not an easy task, having to push my way along it through the undergrowth. I started by trimming round the outside light fitting on the corner at the front end, as it turned out, a little too vigorously. The ivy started to peel off the wall.

Having started, I decided to remove the ivy altogether, which took the rest of the afternoon. I became closely acquainted with several small, crawling creatures.

I quickly filled the garden waste bin and had to pile the bulk of the ivy on the side of the drive for the present.

All this feverish activity resulted in a shower to remove all the dirt, dust and any residual creatures that had taken up residence on my person.

After that, I managed to put in the TV recordings for the first half of the coming week.

Saturday, 15th August 2020

My knees had been aching a little in the night, having been fine for a good few weeks. When I rose from my slumbers, I quickly discovered that the rest of me seemed to have been deprived of the organic equivalent of WD 40.

The agony subsided over breakfast and, having freed up access to the trailer at the end of the previous day's work, I pulled it up the drive and attached it to the car. The ivy was the first item to go into the trailer. I was surprised how much of it there was. It filled my small trailer.

I had been wondering how to stop bits of the ivy from flying out of the trailer as I drove down to the recycling centre in Bury. I had the brilliant idea of weighting it down with the sacks of garden rubbish (mostly soil) that were on the patio at the back. I had put them there when the centre was closed due to Covid-19.

I covered the top of the ivy with sacks, which left a good few more of which I still had to dispose.

On the way to the recycling centre, I called for some diesel at Tesco. I was fortunate to be able to find a pump at the back with the hose on the correct side without waiting too long.

Arriving at the recycling centre, I was surprised not to find a queue and even more surprised to be able to drive adjacent to the garden-waste skip almost immediately. I dumped the soil and the ivy and tidied up the sacks while Jenny waited in the car. Jenny then took the other couple of items she had brought to the appropriate recycling points.

After lunch at home, we picked the few bits of ripe fruit and I tidied up the fruit bushes a little yet again (they were growing so fast). I put the trailer in the garage and we tidied up the drive, stacking all of the cut firewood neatly on the far side of the drive, next to the garage wall, under the car port.

I managed to squeeze in enough time to finish off the TV recordings for the coming week.

Sunday, 16th August 2020

Carrie called with some grocery items we had asked Matthew to add to his order to Occado for us.

We made three jars of blackberry jam, again using slightly less sugar than was usual, having picked the latest handful of fruit that had ripened since yesterday to add to what we already had. The jam reached its setting point in under five minutes and, as usual, I ignored the instruction not to stir the mixture when boiling rapidly after dissolving the sugar. I had found that the jam caught on the bottom of the pan if I did not do so and stirring did not seem to affect the setting point.

I took some time to start tidying up the TV programmes we had watched and to speed read the rest of the latest copy of Private Eye.

Rachel arrived at about 3 p.m. and stayed for tea.

I chatted on the phone to my sister, Barbara and, later her son, John returned my call from earlier in the week.

As Rachel left, there was some very heavy rain and I noticed that the garage guttering was overflowing. That was a job for the morning.

Monday, 17th August 2020

I started by painting the fittings for the kitchen radiator again, using a more relaxed and structured approach than before. I painted only the underside of each of the eight fittings and

left them on my desk in the conservatory to dry. The plan was to paint each side, give them a light sanding and then paint each side a second time. It would be at least another four days before I could refit the radiator since each coat of paint took up to 16 hours to dry.

While washing the very tiny paintbrush, the metal part that held the brush came unstuck from the wooden shaft so I glued it back together with Superglue. While I had the Superglue out, I decided to repair the porcelain dolphin on the pull-cord for the bathroom fan. It had broken in two near the tail-end and had wanted repairing for a long time.

The repair necessitated threading a rubber band through the hole for the pull-cord and securing that when stretched such that it held the two pieces tightly together. The threading was achieved by first threading a piece of cotton and then pulling the rubber band through. The back of the band was secured with a few knots in the tail-end recess and the front by stretching it over an old, empty, margarine tub. The tricky part was applying the glue to the break, requiring the tail end to be stretched away from the body, without gluing my fingers or the rubber band inside. I left the assembled dolphin to set. As for the rubber band, time would tell.

Incidentally, this is how one little job (i.e. painting the radiator fixings) turned into several.

Here's another one.

I went out to inspect the problem with the garage guttering and the first step was to check the downspout at the back. Unfortunately, the back, far corner of the garage was obstructed by several, heavy bags of garden rubbish and an old, empty rubbish bin in the corner of the patio, the blackberry bush intruding onto the latter.

I started moving the bags out of the way and found one of the biggest spiders I had ever seen. Jenny was not impressed.

I then moved the bin, first lifting it with a cane that had been supporting some of the blackberry runners and which had collapsed. I had placed it temporarily on the bin until I had time to tie up the runners more securely.

Before tackling the blackberry runners, I picked the blackberries that had ripened since yesterday. While I was doing that, Frank returned the call I had made after breakfast and we arranged to tackle the repairs to the Incredible Edible shed on Thursday, being, according to the weather forecast today, the only decent day this week.

The next job was to tie up the blackberry runners and having done the two attached to the cane, I found three more that needed support.

It was time for lunch.

After lunch, I grabbed the stool from the garage to inspect the downspout. It wasn't high enough. I had to fetch the step-ladders from the back bedroom, which I was supposed to be decorating. I manoeuvred those into position and climbed up with the blackberry bush on my

back. Fortunately it was thorn-less. The down-spout was blocked with leaves and I scraped as much out as I could reach. Applying a hose on full blast soon cleared the rest.

I squirted the water jet along the guttering to clear as much of the debris as I could and then took the steps round to the front and, with Jenny's help and great difficulty (due to the sloping terrain and the various trees and bushes) managed to clear the rest of the guttering.

All that was left to do was to tidy up and put a couple of buckets of water down the grate at the back of the garage to make sure it was not blocked. Jenny also put a bucket of water down the grate on the side of the house.

I finally sat down, after removing my overalls, at about 5 p.m. It had been quite a productive day even though I had not progressed that back-bedroom decorating.

Tuesday, 18th August 2020

We didn't get up early. We were both shattered after all of the recent feverish activity.

I sorted out my E-mails and read the renewal letter from The AA. My subsidised subscription last year, as a new member, was £65. The renewal had gone up to just over £230, so that was a no-no. There was no way I was going to pay that kind of money for a breakdown service while the executive staff were paid extortionate amounts of money.

Yesterday evening, I had discovered that the LED corn bulbs I had put in the landing light fitting were back in stock at Amazon and I ordered two packs of three for the dining area, which gave me one spare bulb and I also ordered a copy of Jamie Oliver's book, 5 Ingredients. I also discovered that there was a three pack of similar Edison Screw bulbs available, which would be ideal for the Tiffany standard lamp in the dining room. That would be on my next order.

My first main task was to give the radiator fittings another coat of paint on the underside and clean the brush. There wasn't a lot of enamel paint left in the tin and it was quite thick so I decided to call for some Hammerite brush cleaner and thinner from the local Wickes store on the way out shopping tomorrow. I had checked the store and they had 2 1 litre cans in stock.

My second main task was to put the porcelain dolphin back on the bathroom fan cord pull. That took some time because the rubber band I had used to hold it together while the glue set had become stuck inside the hole through which the cord needed to be threaded. I cleared that using, firstly, a small pair of small, long-nosed pliers and then a very small drill bit, turning it by hand and with the pliers. Threading the cord was not easy and I had to stitch a piece of cotton to it, drop the needle down the hole and then pull the cotton and cord through. I cut the cotton and knotted the cord a little further up than before, cutting off the excess at the bottom, which was quite worn.

We had a quick, late lunch. Afterwards, I recommenced work in the back bedroom. I located the original position of the ceiling light in the loft and found the junction box for the drop wire to the ceiling rose. When I moved the position of the light, I had extended the drop wire towards

the internal wall adjacent to the stairs and this is what was currently terminated on a strip connector to which the temporary light was connected.

I removed the strip connector from the drop wire, cut off the bare wires and pushed it up through the ceiling so I could pull it back to the junction box and feed it down at the original location. This latter piece of work I left for another day as it was time for my end of day shower.

Wednesday, 19th August 2020

We were not up as early as usual for our grocery shopping trip to Sainsbury's store at Heaton Park and Tesco at Prestwich.

We had a late lunch at home and a lazy, late afternoon. I caught up with some routine administrative work, including a paper bill from BT for £0.00 for the new mobile contract I had to cancel because the 4G SIM card I had been sent would not work in my old mobile phone. I needed to politely tell them not to send me any more bills, although why their system allowed a bill for nothing to be produced, let alone mailed, beat me.

Thursday, 20th August 2020

I met up with Frank at 9:30 as arranged and we went down to B&Q at Heap Bridge to buy the materials to repair the Incredible Edible shed. We bought one piece of plywood and had that cut to size so that one piece would fit the door and so that it would all fit in my car. We decided to buy the hasps and staples and the bolts we needed at Wickes on the way back. That was a mistake. The lovely choice of hasps and staples that were there last week had disappeared and there was nothing suitable. We managed to find the bolts we needed, though.

We came back and dumped the materials at the shed while Frank went home to fetch his cordless drill and I came home to fetch my workbench and some tools.

Back at the shed, Frank had started putting the upright support in place to strengthen the broken door frame. We fitted the piece of plywood to the door and started work on the piece to cover the windows, except that it was just a little short. Frank said we could make it do and we started bolting that on. We had to leave off about lunchtime, temporarily securing the door with a long screw, since we needed some more bolts, not to mention hasps and staples and locks and Frank had something arranged for the afternoon. I came home for lunch.

Much of my afternoon was spent in the kitchen with Jenny making more blackberry jam after picking the remainder of the ripe fruit together.

Friday, 21st August 2020

I started my day by dealing with the TV recordings for the coming week. That was interrupted by a telephone call from Frank to say he had taken an early morning look at the Incredible

Edible shed to find two of the benches in the churchyard had been moved next to the shed and clearly occupied by the youths using the concealed area. To their credit, there was no evidence they had attempted to access the Incredible Edible shed.

Frank was free to continue the work and I collected him half an hour later to go down to Wickes for more bolts and then on to B&Q for the hasps and staples and the locks.

We found the bolts we needed and we also found a heavy-duty hasp and staple and a stainless steel lock at Wickes, so there was no need to look further for what we required.

I dropped Frank at the church with the bits and pieces and came home to collect my tools and workbench, joining Frank a short while later, by which time he had made a fair amount of progress. We finished off securing the window area of the shed and fitted the hasp and staple. Unfortunately, that did not make the door close tightly enough and I suggested we should refit the original lock. We did not have a suitable drill for the keyhole so Frank said he would finish that off tomorrow and drop off the keys for me. Meanwhile, Frank secured the door with the screw again, as well as the new padlock.

I came home to find that the wire that ran from above the garage door at the back to the oak tree and which I used to support the blackberry bush runners had collapsed. A joint part-way along had broken apart.

I attempted to mend the broken connection but the wire still sagged too much. It was difficult with the blackberry bush still tied to the wire and I toyed with the idea of untying it all, mending the wire and then tying everything back up again. With the bush heavy in fruit, I really didn't want to do this. Jenny and I talked around the problem and I came up with the idea of installing a second wire. I just had enough wire to do that.

I put the second wire in place, borrowing one of the turnbuckle hooks from Jenny's washing line and tensioned it by tightening the hook. Jenny helped me to tie the original wire to the new wire using short lengths of the same garden wire, having discovered that the garden twine was not strong enough. I worked from the centre outwards, securing the two wires together where there were the largest gaps.

I finished off by tensioning the original wire.

We picked the fruit that had ripened since yesterday.

We came in for a cup of tea and a snack; it was too late for a proper lunch. I had that while finishing off the TV programmes for the coming week.

Saturday, 22nd August 2020

We decided to nip into Ramsbottom. The plan was to walk there and back but the weather forecast was for rain and some particularly heavy rain in Ramsbottom, so we decided to take the car. That was a wise decision as the rain started before I had even switched on the ignition.

We had a fair soaking as we walked up to the RSPCA charity shop from the railway station car park, partly due to the rain and partly due to passing vehicles splashing us as they sped through the pools of water near the curb-side and in the gutter.

We walked up the road to Plentiful, the organic shop in Bridge Street, for some organic caster sugar, a bottle of the delicious Biona sweet chilli sauce and some organic vegetables. We ventured across to Morrisons for some dinner candles and to Tesco for some of their recycled toilet rolls, which they didn't have. As we headed back to the car, the rain had eased off a little.

We came home for lunch, after which we spent most of the afternoon, between rain showers, planting out some lettuce, spring onion and carrot seedlings Jenny had grown from seed in the conservatory.

Between all these feverish activities, I managed to tidy up the TV recordings we had watched and back up my data.

Sunday, 23rd August 2020

We didn't get up early. It was pouring down. I dealt with some TV recordings and when the rain stopped, I went out to tidy up the raised beds outside, removing the straw from the strawberry beds now the strawberries had finished, since, when wet and rotting, it provided a haven for slugs. Jenny had found one nibbling her seedlings we had put out yesterday. I ordered some more Nemaslug.

I prepared the "No Trespassing" notices for the Incredible Edible shed and we went up to put one inside and one outside. The morons had been back and tried to prize open a gap in the tongue and groove front of the shed, below the window Frank and I had boarded up.

After putting up the notices, we walked up to Frank and Gwen's house to tell them about the shed and stayed to chat for a while.

When we returned, I dropped the keys for the shed off with Dave, Bea's husband and we agreed that the youths should be hung, drawn and quartered.

I came home and spoke to our policing team about the shed, telling them that we had made the shed more secure, the vandals had been back and tried to break into the shed again, resulting in criminal damage. That, together with the notices would give the police all they needed to press charges.

I spoke with Julie and we agreed we should escalate the offensive by contacting our MP, James Dailey, who I knew reasonable well from his earlier councillor days and Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester, whom I had not yet met but who had met with our former village chairman, Alistair.

Monday, 24th August 2020

I dealt with the TV programmes that had been recorded and needed editing to remove advertisements, etc. before watching.

I went up to the back bedroom and resumed the decorating preparation. The task in hand was moving the ceiling light fitting back to its original position and I finished that. The light switch was currently a dimmer switch and if I was going to replace it, I needed to buy a switch.

I removed the curtain rail and started work on the cracks in the plaster on the window wall. I was still working on the wall when lunch was ready.

After lunch, I thought I would deal with the zero-cost, paper bill I had received for the mobile account I had cancelled from my paperless billing contract. I started by looking online at my account. There was no sign of the mobile bill and the information regarding my telephone/broadband account was a little misleading. I decided to make use of the chat option, of which the bill made no mention on its contact details.

The chat option asked me for a number of details, including the account number, so I put in the numeric digits. It definitely didn't like that. It was expecting a number of six to eight digits, prefixed by two letters. So much for the chat option.

I declined the telephone contact number given on the bill and used the only other option – a letter. What else would one expect from a leading telecommunications company?

That took me the rest of the afternoon. I walked round to the post box, having used the last stamp we had and then went up to the churchyard to inspect the Incredible Edible shed, which was in the same state as we left it.

I put the bins out when I came back and chatted to Bea, who was passing in the car, on the way to work at the Incredible Edible plot.

While dealing with a few items on the laptop, I had problems accessing my portable hard drive on which I keep all my documents. That was a potential disaster, since I could have lost all the work I had done since the last back up at the week end.

I ended up moving the hard drive to a USB port on the laptop instead of using the external USB hub. That solved my problem. So the hub was now suspect.

Before retiring, I updated the documentation for my new version of my web site, not that I had done much with it recently.

Tuesday, 25th August 2020

The TV recording on the laptop was playing up again after a fairly stable period. I still wasn't sure what was causing the problem and I sent off the log files of WinTV to my support person at Hauppauge, Elton.

Meanwhile I decided to switch to using NextPVR again. That crashed Windows 10 – twice.

I powered off the Hauppauge HVR-9000 box and then powered it on again and launched WinTV. That worked. I returned to using it to see how it went.

Meanwhile I started a full scan for viruses on my PC. That took forever. What did it find? Two tracking cookies, which it deleted.

While that was running, I went outside in the rain showers to pick the rest of the ripe blackberries, Jenny having picked the ones that were easy to reach over the last couple of days. While I was outside getting wet, Jenny was in the kitchen, picking over the blackberries she already had. We ended up with 3 lb of blackberries.

We had a late lunch and then commenced another jam-making session.

Rachel had come to visit us for a few days, having been to the hair salon first and it was nice to see her again.

Wednesday, 26th August 2020

We had survived the torrential rain of yesterday and the overnight high winds that accompanied it, departing for another shopping trip to Unicorn in Chorlton and Waitrose at Broadheath and returning home at 1:30 for lunch, after tidying up, at about 2:45 p.m.

Having picked Rachel up from the garage after leaving her car for its MOT and brought her home before our day out, it was now time to take her down to the garage to collect her car.

My last task of the day was to give the kitchen radiator fittings a final coat of white enamel paint so that the radiator could be reinstalled tomorrow, hopefully, with Rachel's help.

Thursday, 27th August 2020

Rachel offered to help me put the kitchen radiator back on the tiled wall so I started by moving the radiator that was propped against the tiled wall into the dining room while I cleaned the tiles.

I decided to try to insert supports under the radiator to position it in order to insert the fixings, which wasn't as easy as it sounds because it had to be at exactly the correct height and be aligned with the pipe connections at the bottom. After several attempts I managed it with Rachel and

Jenny's help, plus two stacks of four house bricks, two blocks of wood and some corked tile bits for packing.

I managed to screw on the fixings and then connect the pipes, having wrapped PTFE tape round the threads after cleaning the tiles and before starting to play with the radiator. With a little tightening, all seemed to be fine after I had filled the radiator with water, requiring more water to be let into the boiler to boost the pressure of the system.

Fitting the radiator had made a couple of scratches in the paintwork and that would need touching up.

We had a very late lunch and I had a look at the TV listings for next week.

Friday, 28th August 2020

I started off by putting in the TV recordings for the coming week. After lunch, I tidied up after refitting the kitchen radiator, putting away all of the tools, etc. I had used and then stashed away the newly-labelled, small, storage boxes (old spread tubs) in my cupboard in the garage, all sorted into alphabetical order so that I could find things easily when I wanted them. That took me into the late afternoon.

It was time for a cup of tea and to tidy up the recorded TV programmes we had watched throughout the week.

Saturday, 29th August 2020

We didn't get up that early. We set off to walk to Ramsbottom just before noon and toured the two charity shops that were open but didn't find anything of interest. We walked back and were home for about 2:30 p.m. for a late lunch.

On the way out, I went to inspect the Incredible Edible shed. The vandals had been back. The No Trespassing notice I stuck on the outside with superglue had gone and so had the stainless steel lock and the loop in the hasp and staple that fastened the door. How they had broken off the loop without damaging the backing plate was a mystery. As luck would have it, Jenny saw the lock on top of a post by the church on the way back and I picked it up and brought it home. It was scratched here and there but otherwise looked alright. It was still locked and my assumption was that Bea still had the key.

I later discovered she did. She dropped off the key and I eventually managed to operate the lock, although it was very stiff.

I discussed the state of play with Frank. He had already been to inspect the shed and discovered the damage. He had met Alistair and Joan who were on their way home from the village tidy up and the general opinion seemed to be to leave things as they were. I still intended to take the matter further with Martin, our local policeman.

Sunday, 30th August 2020

I spent most of the day in the garden, cutting the grass, trimming the edges and I started work on the borders at the back, digging out more of the bush we no longer wanted at the back and planting more herbs in the cleared area to supplement those in the raised bed.

Monday, 31st August 2020

I was back in the garden, finishing off the turning over of the old bush area, planting more herbs in the cleared area, hoeing the rest of the back borders and hoeing the border at the front. That was followed by spraying all of the persistent weeds in the block paving with weed killer, not that I liked using it.

I started tidying up the border on the far side of the drive and left off to go up to see Bob Judge, another member of our village committee about village business.

Rachel arrived for a surprise visit as I was returning, so I came in and left the gardening for another month.