

Greenmount December 2018

Saturday, 1st December 2018

We went to the Old School villager's drop-in in the morning, where I worked on the electrical jumble, not that much could be achieved in a couple of hours. I did manage to sell a couple of items though.

After lunch, Jenny helped me recover the Christmas items from the garage loft and put the Christmas tree together in the lounge for Rachel, who volunteered to decorate it.

I left Rachel to it while I concentrated on an update to the village web site, which took most of the afternoon. I left the process of publishing the updates for the following day.

I listened to the day's recording of Jazz Record Requests. Out of the one hour programme, there were two tunes of interest to me, about ten minutes worth.

I completed my spell in the conservatory, having deployed the under-floor heating, by finalising the month's (November's) accounts and backing up all the changes to the desktop system.

In the lounge, I helped Rachel finish off the Christmas tree, putting on the lights and then processed the TV recordings for the day before tea.

Looking back, it was not a bad day's work.

Sunday, 2nd December 2018

It was another day of development of the new version of the village web site and it was nearing completion.

Monday, 3rd December 2018

Another day working on the village web site and I reached the last page needing modification. I left off with that partially done.

Tuesday, 4th December 2018

I helped finish off the preparations for Christmas, involving more vacuuming, dusting, polishing and general cleaning for a bit of a change.

We moved the chairs and the lamp out of the dining room and moved the remaining items around as I vacuumed the floor and then cleaned it using some Method wooden floor cleaner and a mop reserved for that purpose. Since I could not reach all of the section of floor behind the units, where I had left a good six inch (15 cm for those not familiar with the superior, British measurement system) gap, I used one of Jenny's

clothes-line props with a thick rag attached by a rubber band to the top for that bit of the floor.

We left each half to dry off before walking on it and that gave me time to place online grocery orders for Christmas, one with Abel and Cole for an organic leg of lamb for New Year's Day dinner and a few other items and one with Marks and Spencer for an organic turkey for Boxing Day. We had been invited to Matthew and Carrie's house for Christmas Day dinner.

A brief interlude after lunch gave me time to finish the Radio Times crossword for this week and then I helped revitalise and clean the dining room table, followed by the old stair carpet, which we still needed to replace. The latest idea was to clad the stairs with oak fittings and Matthew had a source for the mouldings required, having just finished his.

Wednesday, 5th December 2018

Plan A was to go walking with the lads again. The bad weather put me off.

Plan B was to take Jenny for lunch to The Crowded House, an eatery on Manchester Road near Blackford Bridge, just past Matthew and Carrie's House and for which Matthew and Carrie had bought us a voucher.

After a very late start, we adopted Plan C. We had a fairly easy day, well, afternoon. I spent the time working on proper DVD covers for DVDs we had in CD cases, mostly ones we had collected from those given away by newspapers, plus one I had produced for the Village Community from an old video-cam recording. The quality of the latter was pretty poor but it had personal appeal because Rachel was in it. That particular design proved difficult and I gave up, concentrating on DVD cover images I could easily acquire from <http://www.freecovers.net/>.

Thursday, 6th December 2018

We were up a bit earlier than yesterday and after the morning chores, I cleaned out the fire which we had used a lot over the past few days and laid a fire for Jenny who needed the heat to make her bread rise. I left her to bake her four loaves and went out to cut some wood since we were running out.

I tackled one large piece of tree trunk and filled a box, most of which Jenny needed to replenish the bag of logs in the lounge. I filled another two boxes with bits and pieces. Unfortunately, although seasoned wood, these had been wet by the rain and mist that had descended under the car port, so they needed to dry out in the garage before use.

I tidied up and came in for a shower. The water in the bath was not draining as well as it should and after my bath, I unclogged the drain with a plunger, which seemed to improve matters. I did the same to the bathroom sink, since that had not been draining too well either.

I finally settled down in the lounge at about 4:30 p.m.

Friday, 7th December 2018

All I could say about our usual grocery shopping trip to Unicorn and Waitrose was that the standard of driving was not improving and the money spent on the “smart M60 motorway” would have been better spent by a smart person on something much more constructive and in the public interest.

Saturday, 8th December 2018

I gave Jenny a lift to the tram station in Bury so she could meet up with Rachel in Manchester and spend the day at the Christmas Markets. I went on to see Matthew to return his Dremmel toolkit.

I came back to Greenmount Old School to look for a monitor for the church. Alistair had telephoned me the previous evening to ask if I had one in the jumble. Apparently, the one in church had stopped working properly and it was needed so that people on the stage, facing the audience/congregation, could see on the monitor mounted on the balcony what they could see on the big screen to the right and rear of the stage. A fix was needed for Sunday, 16th December for the Christingle Service.

I found a monitor in working order left over from the last jumble sale, let Alistair know and came home to find my long VGA cable. Having previously tidied up at home, I could not locate it.

I went back to the Old School to meet up with Alistair who had looked at the monitor and decided it was too small. Plan B was to try his son's remote control with the existing monitor to see if that revived it the following day. If not, plan C was to rig up a projector and screen for the people on stage as a temporary measure until the broken monitor could be replaced. Being hung on the front of the balcony and being quite heavy, that was not going to be easy.

I spent the afternoon updating the village web site and dealing with one or two other items on the desktop computer in the conservatory.

I eventually retired to the lounge where it was much warmer even without the heating on and tidied up a few other things using a temporary laptop replacement for Jenny's laptop still awaiting attention.

I broke off to fetch Jenny from the tram station in Bury on the, windy and very wet evening.

Sunday, 9th December 2018

We caught the bus into Ramsbottom and pottered round the farmer's market and the craft stalls in the civic hall. Not surprisingly, there was no organic produce at the market and nothing in the hall took our fancy so we went on to the charity shops. I didn't find any DVDs but Jenny did purchase three books.

We caught the bus back home for lunch and I spent the remainder of the afternoon working on the revision of the village web site.

Monday, 10th December 2018

After a few routine chores, I spent the day finishing off the village web site redesign and started updating the documentation.

Tuesday, 11th December 2018

The big day had arrived! I updated the village web site on the server. That took much longer than I had anticipated, the major aspect being the picture gallery, which required all of the web pages for the pictures (one page per picture) to be uploaded.

Success was not instantaneous either, creating a tense fifteen minutes or so. The layout of the home page was all over the place and the navigation menu was nowhere to be seen. Examination of the source code downloaded showed it to be the old version, so I uploaded it again. I also had to upload the file containing the layout instructions (the CSS file), which corrected the layout issues but not the menu. I had to upload the menu script file (a Java script) again as well.

After that, it seemed to be alright and I updated the Latest Changes to reflect the new version.

Later in the evening, I found a couple of errors and corrected them. I had checked the development version using a link checker and corrected all the link errors before uploading it but there was one link it had not spotted affecting two pages and that was a folder name which was referenced on the two pages using a lower-case name and the folder began with an upper-case letter. This was not a problem in a Windows system but the web site was hosted on a Linux server and Linux was very strict in such matters. I simply changed the server folder name to lower case.

The second error was simply a typographical mistake.

I still needed to thoroughly examine the new web site to see if there were any more mistakes and I also needed to complete the documentation for our new Webmaster, Marcus.

Wednesday, 12th December 2018

It was a day out with the lads, Mike, Frank and Steve. We started with a three-bus journey, Greenmount to Bury, Bury to Rawtenstall and Rawtenstall to Loveclough with a break in Rawtenstall for tea/coffee.

We were not exactly sure where to alight in Loveclough and we did so a stop too early, so we walked along the road to take the track up the west side of the valley to join the Rossendale Way, with an initial, steep climb to the top of the ridge.

The Way was not particularly well marked and we followed what way markers we found, I suspected straying from the path and then back onto it on several occasions on the open moorland and in the bleak and windswept fields on the hill top.

It was a cold and dull day but not unpleasant and, most importantly, dry. Although there were one or two pieces of wet and soft, peaty ground, we managed to negotiate those without too much effort and kept our feet dry too.

We eventually reached a point where the path seemed to have been blocked. There was what looked like the remains of a stile over the wall and electrified fence before it, the latter being partially covered with insulating material at that point but on the other side was a deep gully and a stream. There was what looked like a very narrow path between that and the wall but Frank, the tallest member of our ensemble, who went over the wall said not and came back.

By this time, we were well off our planned route, having intended to turn left off the Rossendale Way, following the ridge to meet a road taking us down into Rawtenstall and it was getting late, with the sun, what little we could see of it, heading all too swiftly towards the western horizon.

Being in a corner with a high wall to our left and this apology for a stile in front, we decided to follow the wall down the field to the right and in the bottom corner of the field we found another way marker for the Rossendale Way and a stile, the only problem being a stream immediately in front of it.

We found ourselves on a lane and followed that downwards, eventually arriving at the outskirts of Haslingden yet again.

We turned left towards Haslingden, soon realising we were well below the town itself and that we were facing a long walk to Rawtenstall. Fortunately we were on a bus route and examination of a time table in a bus shelter indicated that a bus bound for Ramsbottom was due in a few minutes.

In Ramsbottom we went into a pub for a beer and a rest and then we caught the bus to Holcombe Brook where Frank, Steve and I had a meal and another drink or two at the Hare and Hounds. Mike decided to go straight home.

We three eventually staggered home.

Thursday, 13th December 2018

We went out to Christmas lunch with Frank and Gwen at the Duckworth Arms. Mike and Lorna should have joined us but Lorna telephoned to say she was unwell.

We spent all afternoon in the pub, chatting over our very nice, leisurely meal and the service was excellent.

Friday, 14th December 2018

It was D-CaFF day and by the time we had breakfasted and Jenny had cut my hair and I had trimmed my beard, it was time to start preparing for our afternoon at the dementia café.

It took me a little while to dress in my Santa outfit and we drove down early so that I could meet and greet our visitors as they came in.

The Cricket Club was packed for the Christmas meal of turkey sandwiches and cakes and, apart from the quiz and the raffle, we were treated to some excellent carol singing by the children from Greenmount Primary School. That was followed by the traditional Twelve Days of Christmas, with actions and a sing-along of Christmas songs led by Don and Rita.

Back home, I put in the TV recordings for the coming week.

Saturday, 15th December 2018

We went grocery shopping a day late this week, taking the scenic route out to Unicorn in Chorlton because we were calling at Rachel's flat en route to drop off a few items.

It was a very cold day and by the time we reached Sainsbury's supermarket in Sale it was just starting to rain. By the time we had finished there, it was very cold and very wet.

We lunched at Waitrose in Broadheath as usual and our grocery bill there must have been the lowest ever.

When we left it was raining quite fast and as we drove home, the rain was hitting the windscreen as ice. Visibility on the motorway was poor, requiring fog lights, although I seemed to be the only driver using them.

Although it was Saturday, the standard of driving was not, generally, bad, except for the odd idiot. My childhood skills learnt on the fairground dodgems came in useful on a couple of occasions.

We called at Bargain Booze at Tottington for some wine on the way home and I was back in time to actually listen to Jazz Record Requests on BBC Radio 3, not that it was worth the effort, being full of modern, contemporary rubbish.

Sunday, 16th December 2018

I spent the day preparing for a session with Marcus to hand over the maintenance of the village web site. The plan was to take him through a typical weekly update and the day's preparation work was to bring the documentation up to date.

Marcus couldn't meet up with me until the evening and we arranged 7 p.m. I sent him a list of the tasks and estimated it would take three hours.

Marcus sent me an E-mail just after 5 p.m. saying he would prefer to leave our session until after Christmas since the evening's update would take so long. I didn't pick it up until just after 7 p.m., when he hadn't arrived.

I sent him a reply with my availability between Christmas and New Year and then proceeded with the update, which took three hours. That wasn't a bad bit of estimating, I thought. It did make it a late finish to the day though and if I had known Marcus was going to change his plans earlier in the day, I could have swapped my priorities and updated the web site earlier in the day, leaving the documentation for another day.

As it was, it had been a productive, if a somewhat long, day.

Monday, 17th December 2018

We went into Ramsbottom to buy some stamps, some Christmas cards and post some Christmas cards.

A couple of years ago, we sent everyone a message to say we weren't sending Christmas cards. We would be donating to charity instead. The flaw in this strategy was first that many people ignored it and thus we felt obliged to reciprocate and secondly I discovered that a portion of the money we donated to charity ended up funding a rather luxurious lifestyle of a handful of overpaid, greedy executives, so we no longer donate to charity unless we know no-one working for the charity benefits financially from our contribution. Instead, we give much of our time to charitable and community projects. We could ensure our time was not misappropriated.

If we didn't send you a card this year, it doesn't mean we are not thinking of you and not just at Christmas time.

Tuesday, 18th December 2018

We posted the rest of our cards, or at least Jenny did. I carried on with the web site documentation for Marcus.

Wednesday, 19th December 2018

I met with Frank and Steve at 10 a.m. and we strolled down to Bury where we had a tea/coffee in Costa Coffee in Tesco.

From there we walked on to the Picture House for lunch and sat and chatted, putting the world to rights.

We caught the bus home, or at least, to within ten minutes' walking distance of home.

Thursday, 20th December 2018

I finished off the web site revision while Jenny went for a walk with Gwen up to the Tottington Centre, the old Library now being run by a group of volunteers.

I also applied the amendments to the village web site received so far this week and dealt with my E-mail. As a result of the latter, I submitted my latest electric and gas meter readings.

Friday, 21st December 2018

The weekly grocery shop commenced at Asda Pilsworth before a brief visit to John Lewis for a Christmas present for Rachel and some bake-ware for Jenny. Unicorn in Chorlton was busy, as was the M60 on the way out.

The A56 to Broadheath was just horrendous. It took at least an hour to make what should have been a fifteen-minute journey and by the time we arrived at the Waitrose café there was no gluten-free food available apart from a single mince-pie and a piece of Christmas cake.

The trip back would have been better if all motorists stuck to the speed limits, particularly on the M60 and if those who wanted to move slowly did so in the slower-moving lanes. If the average speed detectors were working, there should have been an abundance of fines in the Christmas post for a lot of drivers.

We called at Bargain Booze in Tottington for the weekly wine allowance.

Saturday, 22nd December 2018

We went down to see Matthew and collect a small amount of car booty. After lunch at home, I spent the afternoon putting in the rest of the TC recordings for the week and dealing with E-mail while Jenny did some baking.

Sunday, 23rd December 2018

I was up at 7 a.m. to fetch in the Abel and Cole order and Jenny joined me to place the whole organic leg of lamb in the freezer so we could keep it until New Year's Day. We both went back to bed.

It was mid-morning before we were mobile again. Jenny spent the day washing, ironing and baking. I dealt with my E-mails, sent season's greetings by Skype to our NZ family, dealt with the TV recordings and tidied up the programmes we had watched. I also updated the village web site.

Monday, 24th December 2018

We went down to Bury on the bus to collect our turkey for Christmas, the strategy being that parking the car and driving in and out of the town centre would have been manic, which, from observation, proved to be the case.

I went to fetch the organic turkey from Marks and Spencer while Jenny went into the pound shop before making for Tesco where I caught up with her.

We had travelled down to Bury on the 474, for which we had to make the ten-minute walk down to Longsight Road. We managed to time our return journey so we could hop onto the hourly 480 which actually runs through our village.

After lunch, I put Rachel's old car battery on charge in the conservatory. When she came, late the previous evening, she did so after calling out the RAC to start her car. It had been stood for a couple of weeks under cover at her flat in Manchester and the battery was flat. The RAC man also said that the battery needed replacing and fitted a new one at some considerable cost. She brought the old battery with her because it was only fitted by the garage in March of this year and should not have failed so quickly. My attempt to revive it was to see if it was actually faulty.

I powered on both computers, made sure they would record the scheduled TV programmes and dealt with my E-mail.

I spent some time looking at the set of Christmas lights with which I had a lot of trouble a week or two earlier and eventually repaired them. I was rapidly running out of replacement E5 (small ES) 12v bulbs for this old set of lights and, after searching the Internet for them, decided to try a stall in Bury market first.

With this set of lights repaired, at least for the present, we hung them round the back door in the kitchen with the aid of sellotape to fix them to the tiled walls.

Jenny and I went down to Ramsbottom for a Chinese take-away meal for the two of us and Rachel from the China Cottage, which had become a tradition over the past few years on Christmas Eve. We had to wait in the car for about half an hour in freezing conditions while the meal was ready.

Back in the cosy warmth of our home, we had a lovely tea, washed down with a bottle of Prosecco and finished that off with a cup of tea (coffee for Rachel), a home-made mince pie with brandy cream and a glass of Armagnac.

Our late evening's entertainment was provided by the excellent Will Hay in one of his best films, *The Goose Steps Out*, an uncut, original version that appeared to have been digitally re-mastered, thanks to the BFI, screened recently by one of the best old film and UK TV series channels, Talking Pictures. I recorded it on the PC, edited the transmission to remove the advertisements and saved the result as a mpg movie so I could play it back on the TV, effectively using the computer as a video recorder. I did have the DVD but six minutes of footage had been cut from that version, which really annoyed me. What made this Talking Pictures transmission so special was that I had requested it as a direct result of the DVD cuts and the people at Talking Pictures had obliged me. So thanks to

all at Talking Pictures and long may the channel continue to broadcast the old, very good films, mostly in black and white, that were made with skill and dedication rather than the modern computer-generated sensationalism that fills our screens on the majority of other channels.

I retired shortly after midnight with no sign of Santa.

Tuesday, 25th December 2018

After breakfast, washing the pots and taking the rubbish to the various recycling bins, the three of us opened our Christmas presents.

I loaded up the computers and checked they would record the day's TV programmes as usual. The laptop, running Windows 10, failed to load Hauppauge WinTV 8, which I used because Microsoft Media Centre was no longer officially available. After three attempts, I decided to reinstall it and, fortunately, I had kept the installation file I had previously downloaded from Hauppauge. I finished installing and testing that just as Marie arrived to give us a lift to Matthew and Carrie's house for a turkey dinner.

The dinner was plentiful and very nice indeed and it was unfortunate Marie's husband, Bob, couldn't come.

Marie dropped us off and we had a leisurely evening, watching recorded TV programmes and a couple of Last of the Summer Wine episodes on DVD.

Wednesday, 26th December 2018

I spent most of the day checking and correcting the revision of the documentation of the village web site in preparation for the handover to our new webmaster, Maurice Evans on Saturday.

After our evening meal, Jenny, Rachel and I played a game called Categorically Speaking, which was most entertaining.

Thursday, 27th December 2018

In the morning, Jenny and I went on the traditional, post-Christmas, village walk.

We all met at the Old School at 10:00 a.m. and set off past the church, across the golf course, past the golf club, turning left up the lane to Hollymount. From there, we took the path down by the side of the orchard to Two Brooks Valley and followed the path across the stream and up the other side of the valley to the track, where we turned right. We veered right, off the track to follow the path across the fields and stream up to Hawkshaw Tennis Club car park. There we were met by Faith with her car boot full of mulled wine and mince pies.

Following this refreshment break, we walked up to Bolton Road West, crossed it, turned right and walked along the footpath until we came to a public footpath on the left. This

took us across fields to the road to the army training camp on Holcombe Moor. We turned right, back down to the main road, crossed it and headed across the fields to the golf club, retracing our steps from there back towards the Old School, people leaving the group and making their own way back to their homes for lunch. The scheduled, two-hour walk had taken over 2½ hours, not that it mattered and it had been cut short of the four-or-so miles, the original plan being to return via Redisher Wood. The extended time and shortened walk was due to the delays in the large group of walkers negotiating the various styles and, at one point, a swollen stream into which stepping stones had to be placed before we could cross. Despite all this and the misty start to the walk, it was a most enjoyable morning with very pleasant company.

The afternoon was more or less a repeat of the previous day – a little like 12:01, an excellent film. If you haven't seen it, it is most entertaining.

Friday, 28th December 2018

We broke free of the time-loop (see 12:01) and went grocery shopping to Unicorn and Waitrose. Although the schools were on holiday, traffic was heavy in parts and I had seen a better of standard of driving on other, rare occasions.

Saturday, 29th December 2018

Marcus Evans and I worked together for a good four hours, discussing the web site configuration and performing a typical update, this one involving the addition of a picture gallery of 61 photographs of the village walk on Thursday. This session resulted in my handing over the web site maintenance to Marcus as from today and the end of an era.

Meanwhile, Jenny and Rachel went to Bury for a potter round. When they returned, we all took a stab at deciphering the operating instructions for Rachel's Christmas present, a Nespresso coffee machine and Rachel was eventually rewarded with a really nice cup of coffee, not that I was any sort of connoisseur; my forte was single-malt Scottish whisky.

Sunday 30th December 2018

We spent the day at the Old School working on the backlog of electrical items in preparation for the Jumble Sale on the 5th January 2019.

The plan for the rest of the week ahead was

New Year's Eve: nothing definite planned except giving Rachel a lift to catch the tram to Manchester about 6 p.m.

New Year's Day: Collecting Rachel from her flat followed by a meal with Matthew, Carrie, Bob and Marie at home.

Wednesday: Walking with Mike, Frank and Steve if the weather is reasonable, otherwise electrical jumble at Greenmount Old School.

Thursday: Jumble at Greenmount Old School.

Friday: Jumble at Grenmount Old School and preparation for the sale.

Saturday: Jumble Sale

Sunday: Grocery shopping.

Monday, 31st December 2018

Being at a loose end, I went round to the Old School again, leaving Jenny at home to dust, polish, vacuum and tidy.

Frank popped in at the Old School and informed me that we were not walking on Wednesday, so I was free to work on the jumble. That extra day meant we could grocery shop on either Thursday or Friday.

After returning and a brief rest, we took Rachel down to the tram station in Bury so she could make her way to the New Year's celebration with her friends in the city.

Jenny and I welcomed in the New Year quietly, on our own.

And so a Happy New Year to all our readers and particularly to family members and friends.