

Greenmount December 2021

Wednesday, 1st December 2021

I commenced my day by starting a Chat session with British Gas to discuss the renewal of my Home Care Two maintenance agreement. That went well. I succeeded in renewing my contract for another year at a much lower cost than that quoted in the letter I received.

After breakfast, I turned my attention to varnishing the wooden frame of the cover for Jenny's and Rachel's table at Santa's Christmas Cracker.

The sun was shining so I moved the car off the drive and set up two of Jenny's car boot (paste) tables under the car port. I fetched the frame from the back bedroom (the one that is being re-decorated and is still work in progress) and put the sides and front of the frame on one and the top on the other.

The first job was to sand the frame and that went alright, except it took much longer than expected because one or two areas needed the Dremmel.

The next job was to peel back the protective covering of the plastic on both sides of each of the pieces so that it was away from the wooden frame. That was a nightmare because the plastic had been rebated into the wood with the covering still on it. There was also a cross-piece on the top section in the middle, which made peeling the cover off under it awkward.

I completed the top part of the frame, although the clouds had gathered and the rain started for a short while as I did so. I started on the main part of the frame. As the temperature dropped and the light faded, Rachel helped bring the frame inside, I packed up outside and Rachel and I resumed work on the main part of the frame on the dining-room table. That took another hour and delayed Jenny's baking because she needed the table for the mince-pies and the scones.

Having skipped lunch, I was looking forward to tea and Jenny made Spaghetti Bolognaise.

Thursday, 2nd December 2021

It was frame-varnishing day and I used the back bedroom because it was too cold outside despite the sun shining for most of the day.

Rachel and Jenny were busy in the kitchen while I was busy in the back bedroom. I did enlist help a couple of times to move the paste-tables on which I was working because there wasn't enough room to walk all the way round them due to all the furniture being piled in the middle of the room while it was being decorated.

I had the main part of the table-top-cover on one paste-table and the top part on the other paste-table, the plan being to varnish most of the frame of each, let them dry and

the turn them over to varnish the edge on which they had been sitting. Unfortunately, the frames took more than the expected two hours to become touch dry, so I had to leave them for most of the afternoon.

Meanwhile I dealt with e-mails, the accounts, the bins that needed putting out for tomorrow's collection and the TV recordings for the coming week.

The replacements for the damaged cooker-hood filters arrived and the items looked fine but I couldn't fit them because of the frenzied kitchen activity.

The frames dried well enough to be turned over and Jenny helped me do that so I could varnish the other side.

I packed up and cleaned the brushes I had been using and settled down in my armchair.

My last task of the day was to update my web site.

Friday, 3rd December 2021

I started my day with a few routine jobs and then settled down to run through the TV schedules for the coming week for episodes of series we watch so I could record them.

After lunch, I went out to buy some hinges to fix the top cover of the table-top food enclosure to the back of the vertical frame so that it could be lifted to access items inside.

I went to Ramsbottom with the intention of going into the hardware shop. It was on the way to obtain some money from the cash machine that I realised I had forgotten my face mask, compulsory in shops as from yesterday due to the new Omicron strain of the Covid-19 virus that seemed to have arrived in the UK and which was known from its presence in Africa that it spread quickly.

Having obtained my cash, I went back to the car to see if there were any spare masks tucked away in the glove-box. There weren't. I came home, collected my mask and then went back to Ramsbottom.

The chap in the hardware shop was most helpful and I came away with two packs of two small, brass hinges with small brass screws for a very reasonable £3.90.

When I arrived home, I made the car ready for loading our items for the sale at the old school tomorrow. Then I started work on fitting the hinges in the back bedroom.

That completed, I put in the TV recordings for next week and settled down to watch the UK Championship snooker on BBC 2 and then switched to the BBC Red Button channel to watch the matches to the end.

As time passed, I suggested we should retire but Jenny and Rachel still had a lot to do. They found me a job as well – producing the labels for the items they were selling. It took me ages to find the old copies of the labels from which I worked to produce the new ones using a very old version of Adobe Photoshop. I had to do that on the old

Windows 7 desktop because it would not run on the new laptop; Adobe Photoshop 7 didn't cater for storage devices above 1 TB.

Saturday, 4th December 2021

Having printed the new labels, I then had to laminate them. By the time the laminator had cooled down enough to pack away, it was approaching 3 a.m. I was conscious (just) that we had to be at the old school for 8:30 a.m. to set up the stall.

I finally go off to bed at about 4 a.m. and I was up again at 7:30. Rachel and Jenny worked through the night.

I removed the hinged top of the frame and took the frame and the box of cake stands and other sundry items to the old school, where I re-assembled the frame on the table.

I came back and later took Jenny and most of the cakes to the old school and helped her set up the stall. Rachel walked round with the cupcakes. I left the ladies to it and came home. It was pouring down with rain.

I tidied up a few things and decided to try to get some sleep. I couldn't nod off so I had a shower and dealt with a shed-load of e-mails.

I went round to the old school at about 3 p.m. to help pack up and brought Jenny Home. Rachel decided to walk home.

I unpacked the car and we had a cup of tea and a natter before going to The Duckworth Arms for tea. The meal was somewhat disappointing in that Jenny's chips were undercooked and her cod was tasteless. We'd had better meals there. The meal was expensive for what it was too, the cost no doubt reflecting the increased prices in fuel and the general increase in the cost of food.

Sunday, 5th December 2021

We didn't get up until 11 a.m. after a tiring few days.

The first task of the day was to fetch the Christmas tree from the garage loft and assemble it so Rachel could decorate it.

I took the empty box back to the garage loft and spent a good hour tidying up the garage, storing lots of empty boxes, car booty and a few kitchen accessories in the garage loft, requiring some reorganisation of the space available, of which there was very little left.

I came in for a cup of tea and a sandwich and then dealt with another load of e-mails.

Monday, 6th December 2021

Jenny and I finished off the Christmas Tree, putting on the lights and the tinsel.

Apart from routine chores, I spent the day dealing with various items of paperwork and e-mails.

Tuesday, 7th December 2021

Janny had developed a nasty, chesty cough and, on the advice of one of our GPs, I took Jenny for a Covid PCR test in Ramsbottom.

After lunch, I continued to deal with more administrative matters.

Wednesday, 8th December 2021

We prepared the Christmas cards for posting and the local ones for hand-delivery.

I went round to the village convenience store and pharmacy to collect some items for Jenny and next week's Radio Times. It was throwing it down with rain and there was a cold wind – most unpleasant.

After removing my wet clothes, I commenced looking through the TV listings for programmes to record.

Having cancelled all her hospital appointments due to her cough, Jenny received a revised date for her left eye operation on 23rd December. A very nice Christmas present, I thought.

Thursday, 9th December 2021

We made some plans for our grocery shopping tomorrow on the basis that Jenny did not have Covid, still awaiting the result of the test.

I resumed my scanning of the TV listings for next week.

Jenny had her PCR test result – it was negative, as we all expected.

Friday, 10th December 2021

We set off grocery shopping just after 10 a.m. We took the scenic route to the M66 motorway, calling at one or two friends' houses to drop off some Christmas cards, Robin and Lindsay's house to drop off a small gift for Robin having built the frame for Jenny and Rachel's Christmas Cracker stall and Holcombe Brooke Post Office to buy stamps for the remaining cards we had to send by post.

We drove up through Summerseat to the M66, which I thought would be a quicker route than motoring down through Bury and Whitefield on the A56 to the M60. The lane up through Summerseat was a single-track road with passing places and a couple of idiots coming down didn't have a clue. The first came zooming down assuming I would continue to wait in the passing place after the previous vehicle passed me. As I set off, a

van came speeding down, drove past a passing place with no intention of stopping even though I was coming up and then had to pull in tightly to the edge and stop for me to crawl past with less than a couple of centimetres to spare at either side. How such selfish, inconsiderate morons managed to obtain licences was beyond me.

The weather was foul and there was a fair amount of surface water on the roads. We made it to the M60 at a fare pace and traffic on that seemed to be moving reasonably well. It didn't last. There were speed restrictions all the way until we passed the Trafford Centre shopping mall, a couple of junctions away from our exit point.

There was no problem parking at Unicorn even though the shop did not have a large car park and we obtained everything we wanted.

The A56 on to Waitrose at Broadheath was fine until the last stretch where the traffic lights were causing a long tailback.

It was around 4 p.m. by the time we left Waitrose and the M60 was very busy most of the way home, over half of the journey being at a crawl.

We called at Matthew and Carrie's house for a brief chat and then came home for a very late, light snack and a welcome cup of tea.

I finished off scanning the TV listings for series we watched to make sure I had those in my recording list for the coming week but I didn't have time to programme the recordings.

Saturday, 11th December 2021

I was up at 6:40, the plan being to programme all the TV recordings before the first one of the week at 7:45 a.m. and then arrive at the old school early to set up the tables for the electrical goods at the three-hour, table-top sale, which commenced at 9 a.m.

I managed to arrive at the old school at 8:45 a.m. The tables for electrical goods were in position and there was a load of donated, untested electrical items on and under two of the tables and none of the tested and priced boxes in sight.

I had the offer of help to bring the tested items up from the cellar and went down to arrange which boxes needed to be brought up.

I set out the tables and started testing the newly donated items, making sales at the same time. A couple of people asked for specific items and I had to fetch those up from the cellar while someone I knew looked after the stall. I also had to ask someone to mind the stall while I nipped home to dispense Jenny's eye drop at 10 a.m. As the morning wore on, I managed to test and price most of the newly donated items and to make £30 worth of sales.

I started to tidy up around noon. Some of the new items went on the pile for Father Wyatt in Salford, some went to the rubbish and a couple came home with me for testing because it was not easy to test them at the old school. All the tested equipment was put

back in the cellar except for the lamps, which I left on a table for Christine, who said they could go upstairs after lunch.

I came home for lunch.

After lunch, I installed the DVD writer Matthew had lent me. It was a large LG drive and it worked a treat.

I spent some time designing a CD cover for a CD I had cut. That involved downloading a later version of Nero Cover Designer, which was free.

I also started looking through the Christmas edition of the Radio Times for programmes to record next week.

Sunday, 12th December 2021

After a few routine jobs, I folded and collated the three sets of leaflets from the village community management team ready for delivery to people round about our home.

Jenny came out with me to deliver them, together with a few Christmas cards to close neighbours.

After lunch, I resumed looking through the TV listings as far as I could reconcile with the guide on the computer, using the latter for more information about programmes in which I was interested.

Monday, 13th December 2021

Our friendly, female blackbird was back and my first task of the day was to go out with some dried meal worms for her. She was joined briefly by the robin that frequents the garden and it was a joy to watch them for a few minutes.

Matthew's mother-in-law, Marie, telephoned, requesting the telephone number of our excellent, gas-certified plumber.

I had planned on walking down to Bury to fetch Jenny some more Bronchostop syrup for her cough, she having used the bottle Carrie left for her on Saturday. Marie's telephone call had delayed me sufficiently for the rain to start, which was fortunate, because had I started walking I would have been dampened somewhat. I took the car down to Boots chemist shop in the retail park.

As I was turning into the retail park, I saw a vehicle in the outside lane of the dual carriageway go straight on and weave in and out of the outside lane between moving vehicles at some speed within the narrowest of gaps. How the vehicle avoided colliding with any other was beyond me.

The retail park was very busy. I bought a large bottle of the syrup from Boots and came home again, having queued for some little time to leave the retail park.

One selfish, inconsiderate driver in a small, red car ignored a “No Entry” sign, drove on the wrong side of the parking bay road, ploughed straight across the incoming traffic lane on the exit road and pushed in the queue of traffic leaving the retail park.

It must have been the time of year that brought out all the idiots.

Safely back at home, I brought in the jumble from the old school that was still in the car from Saturday and which needed my attention at home.

I put the Christmas boxes that we had temporarily stored in the dining room out of the way in the garage.

I dealt with the jumble from the old school as far as I could, taking the bits off a rusty lamp that I could use for spares and consigning the rest to the rubbish. The vehicle battery charger needed to be tested in the garage and the large PC display in the conservatory, using the desktop computer, so I left those for later.

After lunch, I contacted Costello and Son Cleaning Services, recommended by Matthew, about a price for cleaning my gutters and Misty Glass Limited in Bolton, recommended by Marie, via their web site (<https://www.mistyglasslimited.co.uk/>) for a quotation for replacing a sealed unit in the conservatory that had failed.

The chap from Costello and Son was supposed to return my call with a date and time for cleaning the gutters but didn't so my assumption was that he didn't want the job.

Meanwhile, I continued to thumb through the Christmas edition of the Radio Times for programmes to record over Christmas.

Tuesday, 14th December 2021

I started working on the jumble I had brought home to test and repair again.

First up was an Altec Lansing sub-woofer. It was working but the two left plastic pegs that held the cover in place had broken off and needed fixing back onto the main frame. I eventually managed to superglue them in place and replace the cover. That was now ready for sale.

Next there was an old Tom Tom sat-nav that needed testing in the car. That worked fine.

An old car battery charger didn't fare so well and I confined it to the trailer-load of rubbish for the recycling centre.

I found a Kenwood FP560 mixer complete with accessories that needed a new flex. The original flex had a cut in it that exposed the live wire. I set about dismantling the plastic case but couldn't find a way in despite removing screws from the underside and from the top. There were no other visible signs of fixings, so the assumption was that the casing was held in place with plastic lugs and it was a case of knowing where and how to prise it apart without damaging it. Finding no instructions on the Internet, I decided to contact Kenwood.

There was no E-mail service so I resorted to a Chat session. To do that, I had to log in to my account, except the account I had created in January 2018 to register Jenny's new mixer, purchased in December 2017 had disappeared. I created a new account and re-registered the mixer before starting my chat session.

The chap with whom I communicated was unable to help me due to company policy in not releasing repair information or service manuals, although he did not exactly say that. I made the point that I was not happy about consigning a perfectly good product to the waste bin when it could so easily be repaired and that I would mention Kenwood's lack of assistance to my MP the next time I saw him.

I left that on a back burner for now.

I dealt with a few e-mails and reconciled the accounts.

Wednesday, 15th December 2021

I started the day with a few routine jobs, the last one being to empty the rubbish into the appropriate recycling bins.

It was a nice, sunny morning and I remained outside, suitably clad for the cold and for tackling the holly tree that had branches over the garage roof.

On close inspection, I found I needed to remove quite a few of the low branches, using a combination of the secateurs and the bowsaw. That didn't take too long and I was happy with the result, the garage roof being clear of overhanging branches and the tree still looking nice, if not better for the pruning.

I had fetched the garden waste bin round to the front and I used the secateurs to trim the thinner and green parts sufficiently to fit into the bin. The larger, woodier twigs I cut up with the bowsaw and stored them in a crate for future burning on my log fire as kindling.

While I was tidying up, Jenny said we'd had three Christmas cards, one from an old school chum in Sheffield, Ian Canning, one from my nephew, John and his wife Jane who had moved down to Devon, not far from Plymouth and one from Jenny's niece's daughter, Rebecca and her husband Graham who had also moved to Devon and were now living in Plymouth.

I vacuumed the lounge carpet for Jenny while she finished her ironing. Just before lunch, I had a call from Misty Glass to arrange an appointment to inspect the double glazed unit in the conservatory that had failed.

After lunch, we dealt with the cards we had received.

The card from Ian was in effect from his brother, David, on his behalf, since Ian was not very well and I telephoned David for a quick chat. I had already sent Ian a card but David informed me he had not yet received it.

John and Jane sent us their new address so I was able to send them a card in return. When I went to update their address in my records, I found I did already have it!

Rebecca and Graham also sent us their new address and I was able to send them a card as well.

I updated both on recent events and went round to put the cards at the village post box, outside what used to be the very useful and well-frequented village post office.

It was, by this time, 4 p.m. and going dark quickly.

Thursday, 16th December 2021

I was plagued with gremlins.

First, NextPVR, which I used to record TV programmes on the laptop, had lost sight of the Hauppauge tuner device and I ended up reinstalling the NextPVR software. That seemed to sort things out but I later discovered, while the web application worked, the desktop application didn't even though the tuner was visible and I subsequently discovered that the BBC 2 channel was mapped onto the BBC 1 channel at Schedules Direct, to which I subscribed in order to download the electronic TV guide.

Second, Nero Cover Designer did not align the graphic covers with the stationery correctly on the new laptop. It had worked perfectly well on the old laptop. The older version of the software did not scale properly on the new, high-resolution screen so I had downloaded the latest (free) version. I wasn't sure how I was going to resolve that problem.

It was not a good day.

Friday, 17th December 2021

I went grocery shopping with a list to Sainsbury's in Heaton Park and Tesco at Prestwich. Jenny remained at home. The new Omicron variant of Covid was spreading like wildfire and Jenny didn't want to take any risks before her glaucoma hospital visit next week, having postponed the visits arranged for this week.

My first port of call was at Boots in the retail park in Bury for some more Bronchostop for Jenny. Her cough was subsiding and the herbal medicine really did seem to be doing her good.

I called at B&Q on my way to the M66 motorway for an in-line coupler to repair the flex on the mixer for which the chap at Kenwood could not provide me with maintenance instructions, the original plan being to dismantle it and replace the flex completely. The coupler would allow me to cut the flex where it was damaged and extend it.

I also bought some white silicon sealant for the sink in the kitchen.

The shopping trip went well enough and I managed to purchase almost all the items on the list I had been given.

Traffic was heavy on the way home, due, I thought, to schools finishing early.

Having unpacked the car and had a late lunch, I nipped round to the chemist for my repeat prescription, since I was going to run out of tablets over Christmas. It appeared that the pharmacist had not renewed my tablets for another year at my last visit and on that occasion, the dispensing of the tablets was a “one-off” affair. I came away empty-handed and would now have to submit a request using the “Ask My GP” application, which would be a straight-forward affair if it were available 24/7. Unfortunately, it came online at 8 a.m., Monday to Friday and was unavailable shortly afterwards because it was overwhelmed with requests.

Where the problem with demand for GP services lay was difficult to say. It was clear there were insufficient resources to meet demand. Was that because people were using GPs unnecessarily? Were GPs simply not working hard or long enough? They certainly were not poorly paid. Was there a shortage of GPs?

With high demand on hospital services, largely due to the Covid epidemic, the delays in routine treatment and in treating referrals from GPs, sometimes resulting in unnecessary deaths, it was clear we had too few hospitals and insufficient numbers of medical staff, so it was reasonable to deduce this was also the case with GPs.

It was clear that successive Governments over a number of decades had been useless at forward planning and the present Government showed no signs of trying to rectify the situation. Removing the free training for medical staff was not exactly helping the situation and a system of reinstating free medical training coupled with a binding NHS contract requiring all qualified medical staff to spend at least 50% of their working life in the NHS spread over their working life would help. So would increasing the pay of nurses and that of newly-qualified, poorly-paid doctors by a considerable amount.

A similar argument could be made for social care and it was time we had a government in charge of this country that put people before profit, regardless of political affiliations or beliefs. Those of us who were comfortable financially and were healthy (or reasonably so) needed to stop being greedy and selfish.

I finished off my day by finalising the list of TV programmes to record for the coming week, having looked through most of the listings at odd moments throughout the week and I managed to schedule the recordings for tomorrow.

Saturday, 18th December 2021

I spent some time repairing the food mixer for the old school jumble sale and we started tidying the conservatory in readiness for the chap from Misty Glass to examine the double-glazed unit that had failed.

Sunday, 19th December 2021

The tidying continued.

The conservatory was almost useable as a room again!

Monday, 20th December 2021

I was up at 8 a.m. to log on to Ask My GP and request a renewal of my annual tablet supply.

I dealt with a few E-mails until Jenny rose from her slumbers and we had breakfast.

Jenny asked me to look on the Internet for a particular present for Rachel.

Jenny received a telephone call from the Manchester Royal Eye Hospital. She was required to attend for an appointment at 1 p.m. instead of the appointment arranged for Wednesday. That took care of our day.

Before we set off I had to let Matthew know we would not be in later in the day when he had planned to call in.

On the way home, we dropped in to see Rachel at her place of work near the hospital.

We were back just in time to receive a parcel from Amazon. I rearranged the Misty Glass man for January, booked the car in for its annual service and MOT in January, arranged for the gutters to be cleaned on Friday morning and Matthew rearranged his visit for tomorrow afternoon.

I dealt with more E-mails and we had an early tea, relaxing in the lounge afterwards, as usual. I felt quite tired.

Tuesday, 21st December 2021

I installed the new LED bulbs in the outside light at the back and I had to wait until dusk to adjust the sensor, by which time it had turned even colder than it had been all day.

I took all the dead bits off the catmint in Rachel's planter in the conservatory, turned over the soil in the planter and topped it up with some of the soil in an unused pot in the conservatory. That created a bit of a mess so I gave the conservatory a quick going-over with the vacuum cleaner.

We had a bit of lunch. As we finished, Matt and Carrie dropped by with some Christmas gifts and stayed for a chat.

I mixed a small amount of pot plant feed and fed all the house plants.

Jenny asked me to vacuum the stair and landing carpet. That done, I adjusted the outside light sensor, locked up and settled down to look into my NextPVR problem.

In the end, I decided to follow the advice from the post on the NextPVR forum in response to me logging the issue. That was to install a series of codecs called LAV filters, following the link provided. That worked and I saw in the settings that all the decoders that were previously Disabled now had the appropriate LAV decoder assigned. Further examination of the options for specifying decoders where they were previously Disabled showed that I could have used a decoder that was already on my system for all but two. Whether that would have solved my problem without downloading the LAV filters, I didn't know. Neither did I understand why, if NextPVR needed those filters, it hadn't found appropriate ones on my system.

Anyway, it all worked.

Wednesday, 22nd December 2021

We had a fun day.

I started off by bringing the tyres on the car up to maximum pressure for a full load in anticipation of pulling the trailer.

Moving the car up the drive a little left me room to manoeuvre the trailer out of the garage and hook it up. I brought the trailer's tyres up to pressure as well, since it had been stood in the garage for ages, full of rubbish for the recycling centre in Bury.

I repacked the trailer to make sure its load was safe and we headed for Bury. Jenny remained in the car while I placed the rubbish in the appropriate skips. That took a while because there was a lot of it and it needed sorting as I worked through it all.

I called at Wickes for an in-line switch to mend the Christmas candle arch I had looked at a day or two ago which Jenny was donating to the jumble. The existing switch was not gripping the flex and I had removed it. I couldn't find one and the assistance I asked about it wasn't much help. It would have to wait until I was passing B&Q again.

We moved on to the retail park where I went into Boots to see if they had the new Babybliss 9000 Cordless Waving Wand in stock for Rachel's Christmas present. They hadn't.

I went to Tesco for a couple of organic Salmon tails for tea and a copy of Mary Berry's Love to Cook book. They had neither. I came out with some farmed salmon trout carrying the RSPCA sticker for tea. It was the best I could find.

I walked across to Boots in Bury. They didn't have the waving wand either. A very helpful young lady looked online for the item and told me it wasn't in any of the stores; it was only available online and it was too late to order it for collection in-store before Christmas. She looked at alternatives online and John Lewis looked favourite. I said I'd look into it at home.

On the way home we called at the old school to drop off a few items, including some jumble and the electrical items I had tested and/or repaired at home.

Safely home, I put the trailer away and brought the car down the drive. In tidying up the car boot, I discovered I had forgotten to drop off an item at the old school which I had repaired. That was quite fortunate because it was the mixer, the interior of which I had tried to gain access to replace the flex. Having reassembled it and joined the flex instead, I had checked the main mixer worked but not the one the fitted on the top.

We had a very late afternoon snack and I brought this thrilling episodic saga up to date.

Thursday, 23rd December 2021

We were up before 6 a.m. so Jenny could be at the Manchester Royal Eye Hospital by 7:30 a.m. for the operation on her left eye to treat her glaucoma.

I went across Manchester to Unicorn in Chorlton to do the weekly grocery shop using a list Jenny had prepared for me. I parked up before 8 a.m. and waited until 9:15 a.m., listening to a Jazz CD and reading the latest copy of Private Eye, before joining the growing queue at the door for the opening at 9:30 a.m.

From there I moved on to Waitrose at Broadheath and returned home for around 1 p.m.

I had a snack lunch, put away the shopping and generally tidied up. Jenny rang at about 5 p.m. and I went down to Manchester to fetch her home.

I helped Jenny cook tea and we settled down to relax for the rest of the evening before retiring.

Friday, 24th December 2021

Jenny had to return to the hospital for 9 a.m. for a review with the surgeon. On the return journey, we called at Tesco in Prestwich for a few more grocery items and came home for lunch.

I spent the afternoon finishing off the TV recording list for next week and I programmed most of the recordings.

Rachel arrived for Christmas and we had a lovely Chinese take-away evening meal which Rachel and I fetched from The China Cottage in Ramsbottom.

Saturday, 25th December 2021

I helped in the kitchen with the preparations for Christmas dinner, although Rachel did most of the work under her mother's supervision and we had a very nice meal. We had a whole leg of lamb, roasted with rosemary from the garden and served with mint sauce I made from fresh mint from the garden, instead of the traditional turkey. The lamb was accompanied by lots of fresh organic vegetables, all followed by a Christmas pudding Jenny made last year, with white sauce Rachel made.

I had time before the meal to produce a printed timetable for Jenny's eye drops, putting alarms in my mobile phone as reminders.

Afterwards we opened our Christmas presents and settled down to watch "Q The Winged Serpent" followed by "Quatermass and the Pit".

Sunday, 26th December 2021

We were up very late, due mainly to the lack of sleep, having to administer Jenny's eye drops round the clock.

I finished tidying up the recorded programmes we had watched during the last week or so, having started while watching the films last night.

Jenny asked me to fetch some sticky toffee pudding for tea from the garage freezer. That turned out to be in one of the kitchen freezers. It was fortunate I did go into the garage. The boiler had sprung a leak and water was running down the garage floor, having dripped on the old washer we used for dusters and such that was sited underneath it. It appeared that the leak was from the hot water supply so I turned off the gate valve on the cold water inlet and that seemed to stop the leak. That meant we had no hot water on tap.

I logged a fault with British Gas, the earliest available engineering slot being on 4th January. With Jenny recovering from an operation at home, that was a long way off and I wasn't sure how we were going to manage.

This was, I thought, the third time the Worcester-Bosch boiler had leaked and I was not impressed. On one occasion the manifold, which was made of plastic, had to be replaced. The boiler, handling water, ought to be made of stainless steel with copper pipework. In addition, it ought to have a sump to collect leaking water with a leak detection system linked to an alarm and, ideally, an automatic valve closure mechanism to prevent water entering the appliance. If Miele could make washers with leak containment and warning, I didn't see why Worcester-Bosch couldn't do the same with boilers.

Monday, 27th January 2021

On top of the boiler leaking and the sensor for the outside light at the back not working properly, I was starting to face some problems with Microsoft Windows 10. I had lost access to the Canon MG2950 printer/scanner on the new laptop and I deleted it and tried, in vain, to reinstall it.

I finished off the letter to accompany the copy of Jenny's hospital discharge sheet for our GP and Rachel and Jenny walked round to the surgery to drop off the communication. That was a waste of time. The surgery was closed as tight as Fort Knox with no facility for posting letters, not even a box outside on the wall. I could understand the need for security, presumably with drugs and medicines kept on site but not to have any way of dropping off letters and such did seem to be just a tad over the top.

It wasn't a good day.

Tuesday, 28th December 2021

Worse was to come. The old Lenovo laptop I used for working on jumble at the old school was stuck trying to update Windows 10. It scanned for updates but did nothing except continue to say it needed updating. Well done Microsoft.

I spent ages trying to solve the problem, following various steps posted by Microsoft on the internet but to no avail. It seemed that the only course of action was to reinstall Windows 10. I gave up on that.

Meanwhile, I had discovered the problem with the printer on the new Dell laptop was due to interference of the network extender in the kitchen. Jenny had placed her large, steam iron in front of it and it seemed that was blocking the signal. When it was removed, I discovered the printer in the conservatory could, once more, be seen on the network and I was able to reinstall it.

I also managed to access files on the Lenovo laptop from the new Dell laptop, the first time I had managed to make one Windows 10 system access another. (I had no problem whatsoever with Windows 7).

It seemed that it was impossible to supply the correct credentials to access files on another Windows 10 system that had only a user with a Microsoft account. Having created a user with a local account, I could access the system using the local username and password. Well done again, Microsoft – making life more difficult than it needed to be.

I managed to put the hot water back on long enough for Rachel to shower. Meanwhile, the wet floor in the garage due to the boiler leak was drying up nicely.

Wednesday, 29th December 2021

My first job was to check on the boiler. What a mess. The various tubs and trays I had put in place to catch the leaking water had collapsed and all the contents had spilled out onto the old washer and run down the garage floor which looked like a small stream. I tidied that up as best I could.

Apart from dealing with routine jobs like pot washing, having boiled a large pan of water on the hob and administering Jenny's medication, we found time to pop round to the surgery again with Jenny's letter and handed it to a young lady at the door who had just dealt with another caller.

I nipped in to the village store and purchased the Radio Times, which had gone up yet again from £3.50 to £3.80, almost a 10% increase with inflation currently running at 5.1%.

I managed to put the hot water supply back on again so we could both shower and then turned it off again. I had found that if I turned off the water supply to the boiler and opened up the kitchen hot tap to drain the hot water pipes, the boiler did not leak so much. The trays and tubs I had left in place were, once more, containing the leaking

water. I checked them before and after our showers and before retiring for the night. The garage floor was also showing signs of drying out again.

Meanwhile, I started putting in the TV recordings for next week.

Thursday, 30th December 2021

I was up early to put in a request for Jenny to see the doctor using the AskMyGP service. It wasn't worth going back to bed even though I was quite tired after administering Jenny's eye drops during the night.

I finished off putting in the TV recordings from the listings and all that remained was to scan for any regular series I might have missed tomorrow and then schedule the recordings.

I checked on the boiler leak in the garage and everything seemed to be alright, the tubs and trays I had put in place catching what little water there was. Turning off the water supply to the boiler and leaving the hot tap in the kitchen open to allow any drips of water in the pipework to escape seemed to have stopped the leak until the fault could be repaired. Meanwhile we had to manage by heating a large pan of water on the hob.

I started to tidy up some of the TV programmes we had watched and I started shuffling some of my data around on my portable hard drives since one or two of them were becoming quite full. That meant updating my index to the data so I could find things easily.

While that process was running, I turned my attention to the old Lenovo laptop and restored Windows 10 from an image back up. That threw up a few problems but they were easily solved; they just took time. When that was finished, I ran Windows Update and it installed a couple of updates, after which I was back to square one, with Windows update saying there were more updates to come but none were downloaded. The major update applied messed about with Windows Update and obviously rendered it utterly useless. I would have billed Microsoft for wasting my time but they couldn't afford me.

Putting the laptop on one side, I continued reorganising my discs using the new laptop until one of the attempts to move files from one disc to another just stopped dead in the middle of transferring a file.

I gave up and went to bed.

Friday 31st December 2021

It was grocery shopping day and I was not doing it on my own this week, thank goodness.

Unfortunately, it didn't get off to a good start, the plan being to leave early after Jenny's eye drop at 7 a.m. I discovered my ancient, dumb, mobile phone was not receiving text messages. I switched it off, removed the battery and sim card, wiped the latter, put it back together, all to no avail.

I looked on the web for a possible solution. That was to contact my service provider, EE, that company having swallowed up Orange. The people at EE could not have been more helpful. To cut a long story short, after about 45 minutes discussing the problem and trying various solutions, I discovered my shed-load of pending texts arrived on my phone after I had put the sim in Jenny's phone and then swapped it back again. How or why this should have fixed the problem I had no idea and nor had the technical support chap at EE, who I thanked for his support and patience.

We sped off to Sainsbury's at Heaton Park, during which I had to administer another eye drop to Jenny's eye. It wasn't that busy for New Year's Eve, although the shelves were bare in one or two spots, presumably due to the shortage of deliveries.

We made Tesco at Prestwich with no time to spare, trying to ensure we were back for Jenny's next eye drop at 1 p.m., this being from the bottle in the fridge. We were about five minutes late, which, in the overall scheme of things, was not that significant.

Rachel arrived early for tea and we had a restful late afternoon and evening, staying up to see in the New Year with Jules Holland on BBC 2.