

Greenmount December 2023

Friday, 1st December 2023

I spent my day working on the PC, firstly, finishing off the TV recordings for next week, checking the listings for particular series and programmes in which I was interested and, secondly, typing up the Civic Society meeting minutes of the meeting last evening, which took a while, deciphering my notes of the proceedings.

Saturday, 2nd December 2023

We were at the old school for about 8:15 a.m. to prepare our stall for the monthly table-top sale.

It was not very busy and trading in our corner was very slow and takings over the whole morning were down considerably.

At the end of the sale, after we packed up and were about to leave, Christine asked whether we should be selling electrical equipment that was not PAT tested. I said, as I understood it, there was no legal obligation to PAT test but I could obtain the equipment to do so, which the Old School User's Association would fund. I said I would obtain a price for the equipment. I briefly explained that Jenny and I performed basic checks on the equipment to make sure it was safe to use.

We came home for lunch and dealt with the dirty dishes before going to Ramsbottom, primarily to collect an order of organic Mozzarella Cheese from Plentiful. We toured the charity shops first and I found a DVD and a three CDs of Louis Armstrong. Jenny bought a couple of items as well.

After collecting our cheese and buying a couple of other items from plentiful, we nipped into Tesco for a few things as well.

What a exciting day it had been!

I concluded it by tidying up all the recorded TV programmes we had watched over the last few weeks and backing up my data, which I hadn't done for a while.

Sunday, 3rd December 2023

We had the first snow covering of the winter overnight and, after I had cleared the drive, we went grocery shopping to Sainsbury's store at Heaton Park and Tesco at Prestwich.

After we had returned home and settled down, I listened to Jazz Record Requests on BBC Radio 3. There were two interesting tracks, one of The Firehouse Plus Two, plus two guests, playing High Society and an unusual track called Duninsane Blues (Shakespeare's Macbeth) from John Dankworth and Cleo Laine.

Monday, 4th December 2023

I spent the most of the day sorting out my receipt folders and shredding documents. I kept 7 years of transactions and there were three years' worth to shred. After that, I shredded a good deal of the documents Rachel had left for disposal.

After Peter had left for the day I went into the loft to sort out the power supply to the new bathroom cabinet. That was complicated because there were two cables fed into the bathroom from the loft. One was connected to a transformer in the loft and the other to the main supply. Interestingly, the transformer was not connected to any power source.

I removed the transformer and its cables and disconnected the other cable so that the fitter, Peter, could connect it to the new bathroom cabinet without electrocuting himself.

Tuesday, 5th December 2023

I had a morning of more shredding and scanning some old documents from the receipt folder I emptied yesterday which were important and which had not been previously scanned. The documents were safely filed away on my PC and would shortly be backed up to another disc. Meanwhile, I kept the original documents.

My afternoon was one of a little more shredding until I filled the shredder bin again and there was nowhere to put the contents. The two large, black sacks I had been using were full and I did not have another one.

I turned my attention to the pictures on my camera that needed downloading and processing. I used my old copy of Photoshop 7 on the desktop. I had loaded it on my laptop but it would not run because it reported the scratch disk was full and I had not solved that problem yet. It had a dedicated 1 TB drive on the desktop but I didn't have a spare one for the laptop.

I transferred the pictures to my laptop and filed them away in the appropriate places. They were pictures of Santa's Christmas Cracker at the old school and the bathroom refit, to which I later added today's photographs.

Another day had passed without any progress with the cleaning in preparation for Christmas. In fact there was a lot of dust from the bathroom work settling on what had already been cleaned, so it was a case of one step forward and two steps back.

Wednesday, 6th December 2023

I resumed the cleaning and tidying of the lounge and spent most of the day auditing and tidying the first two thirds of my DVD collection.

At the end of Peter's day, we discussed the seat Jenny had requested in the shower and we decided to dispense with it. Jenny had been using a portable seat Matthew bought her in the bath and we decided to keep using that in the shower.

I would need to telephone Bolton bathrooms tomorrow and arrange to return the set for a refund.

Thursday, 7th December 2023

The lounge cleaning and tidying continued with the DVDs and the large bookcase in which the remainder were housed. Jenny started on her books in the other half.

Unfortunately, the bathroom refit had caused an awful lot of dust and much of that had settled in the dining room so that would need cleaning again along with the stairs, landing and back bedroom. In the words of Flanders and Swann, it all makes work for the working man to do.

Friday, 8th December 2023

I had an errand in Bury in the morning so I caught the 10 a.m. bus from the village down to the town, did the deed and caught the same bus back on its return run at 10:30.

I spent the rest of my day working on my laptop while Peter finished the bathroom, working until about 7 p.m. It looked very nice indeed.

Saturday, 9th December 2023

The plan had been to go grocery shopping, except the car would not start. Oh joy.

The car obviously needed a new battery and the sooner the better. I was hoping it would hold out until the next service in January but no such luck.

I put the battery on charge and came in to wait.

It took about an hour to charge and the car started first time. Off to Sainsbury's store at Heaton Park we went, using the A roads rather than the motorway in case the car developed further problems. It didn't.

We brought home the groceries, had a latish lunch and started cleaning the display unit in the dining room, the dining room floor on which Peter had travelled to and fro to reach the stairs, the stairs and the landing.

By the time we had finished it was too late for a proper tea and I made do with two Bacardi and Colas, followed by a cheese and tomato toasty, a piece of Victoria sandwich and two cups of tea.

Sunday, 10th December 2023

We cleaned the bathroom. I did most of the work since Jenny was unable to kneel down or stand on a stool. Instead she did the fetching and carrying for me and she cleaned the worktops and the cupboards inside and out.

There was still a few things to do in there; the door frame needed some attention and repainting, the door needed another coat of varnish, which would have to wait for some nice warm weather and the new mirror cabinet still needed connecting to the lighting circuit in the loft. I had decided to fit an isolating switch in the loft and ai needed to purchase one.

I had resolved the problem of the difficulty in fitting the toilet roll holder. I had asked Matthew to order a free-standing, stainless steel, toilet roll holder from Amazon for me using his Prime account and that would be here tomorrow.

The cleaning took all day and afterwards, I relaxed with a cold beer while Jenny cooked the tea we had planned for last evening.

Monday, 11th December 2023

We started our day with a visit to Finney's Garage for a new car battery. After that, we drove the short distance to Matthew and Carrie's home to borrow a reel of 1.5mm twin and earth, blue and red to use as a switch wire for the bathroom cabinet, since I had decided to install a switch in the power supply.

From there we drove to Wickes in Bury to buy an MK switch and a backing box, which proved to be expensive.

We called at The House of Carpets in Tooting to make enquiries about a carpet for the back bedroom, landing and stairs and came away with a sample to test at home. That subsequently proved to be very nice. We arranged for someone to call tomorrow to measure up and provide us with a quotation.

After a late lunch at home, we drove to Bolton Bathrooms to return the unused items, resulting in a refund.

Tuesday, 12th December 2023

We started tidying upstairs, slowly moving items from the back bedroom to the bathroom.

It had been my intention to install the switch and backing box in the loft to power the bathroom cabinet. Then I thought it might be better to replace the switch for the bathroom lights, which was on the landing wall, outside the bathroom door, with a double-gang switch, using one switch for the bathroom lights and the other for the cupboard. That meant I didn't need the items I had purchased from Wickes but I did need a double-gang switch.

I remembered the light switch in the dining room had not worked properly on a few occasions and I decided to use the new MK switch to replace it.

In order to change the bathroom light switch, I needed to drop a single-core cable as a switch wire to the light switch backing box on the landing. I could use the existing live feed for both switches and there already was an earth wire installed.

Dropping another wire from the loft meant I needed to have access to the backing box and the existing wire was well and truly fixed in place with a considerable amount of Polyfilla. I had to hack away at that without damaging the existing cable, which was still live. That took ages but I did eventually free up the existing cable and create a hole through which I could feed my rods. I forged a path inside the partition wall to the loft, although I did not know exactly where in the loft because I did not venture up there today.

I replaced the existing switch for the present. I needed to see if I had a spare double-gang switch and some single wire. Although it ought to be blue, I decided red would suffice.

We continued sorting out the back bedroom and I fixed the curtain tie-back hooks on the wall after Jenny had cleaned them. I started ripping up the existing underlay that had perished and pulling back the old carpet.

We ceased work at about 5 p.m. and the chap from the House of Carpets came to see us to measure up for the stairs, landing and back bedroom. A quote would be with us tomorrow.

Wednesday, 13th December 2023

I put the spare tiles for the bathroom in the garage loft and found some very old 3/0.029 inch, single, red cable I could use as a switch wire for the bathroom cabinet. I could not find a double-gang switch.

I rodged up from the bathroom light switch on the landing again and went into the loft. I secured some string to the rod and pulled it down. Fastening the string to the wire I had found, I pulled it up into the loft and fed it across to the junction box I had already installed.

I commenced wiring the cable from the bathroom cabinet into the small junction box. I had already fed a twin and earth wire from the upstairs lighting circuit into the junction box. That meant one of the terminals was live, so it was important not to catch it. This was not good practice but it saved me having to switch off the power to the upstairs light circuit which would also have stopped the loft lighting from working and I would then have to rig an extension light. I had worked on live wires before so this was nothing new – it just required extra caution.

I successfully wired in the neutral and earth to those from the lighting circuit and the live wire from the bathroom cabinet to a spare terminal, to which I also attached the single wire I had fed up from the switch.

That was the loft work completed and I replaced all the insulation, put out the lights and came back down to the landing.

I cut off enough of the new wire to connect it up to the double-gang switch when I had one and secured it in the backing box behind the existing switch.

All I needed to do was to install the new switch and, hopefully, the bathroom cabinet would be fully operational.

I tidied up for the day.

Thursday, 14th December 2023

It was not a productive day in a practical sense. The one physical activity was to put out the bins for collection tomorrow.

The garden waste bin was the first I took up the drive and I picked up all the apples that had fallen on the floor yet again and put them in the bin.

The bottle and can bin was next. Before I took that up, I rummaged in the paper waste bin to try to find the brochures of the bathroom furniture but they were nowhere to be seen. I did find some blue-bin and general waste bin items in the paper waste and everything found itself in the correct bins before the bottle and can bin joined the garden waste bin.

One might be thinking “what a load of rubbish”. One would be right.

Apart from that, we spent the day preparing Christmas cards for posting/hand delivery. It was the first Christmas task we had performed.

Friday, 15th December 2023

We dropped a Christmas card off for some friends as we made our way to Holcombe Brook post office for some stamps to send the Christmas cards that went winging their way around the country.

We called at Screwfix in Bury to pick up the double-gang switch I had ordered for the bathroom and then made our way down to Unicorn for the first batch of groceries.

The second batch, we obtained from Sainsbury’s at Heaton Park, on the way home.

Saturday, 16th December 2023

I spent quite a bit of time on administrative work, the most important being the registration of the guarantee for the new, fitted furniture in the bathroom.

I did eventually manage to install the double-gang switch for the bathroom lighting and the bathroom mirror cabinet lit up when I waved my hand under the sensor. I moved the electric toothbrush from its long-standing position on top of the chest of drawers on the landing to inside the cabinet and plugged it in.

I was quite happy with the day’s progress.

Sunday, 17th December 2023

We spent most of the day finishing the cleaning in the dining room.

I finished all the outstanding shredding. Jenny had found me two more empty bags for the shredded paper and I put two lots into one of them.

I also managed to back up my PC data during lunchtime, not having done so for about a fortnight.

Monday, 18th December 2023

This was the start of a very busy week.

We had a full schedule planned for today, around lunch with Frank and Gwen at Owens restaurant in Ramsbottom.

We stopped off at the old school so that I could leave some jumble while Jenny walked round to the Pharmacy for our medication.

In Ramsbottom, Jenny called at the hair salon to arrange a cut for tomorrow at 10:00 a.m. while I delivered a donation of books to the Bleakholt animal sanctuary charity shop.

Jenny joined me for a tour of the charity shops, with a modest degree of success. We also called at Plentiful to place an order for a few items but the gentleman behind the counter did not yet know how to do so. We said we would call in tomorrow.

We had finished our business somewhat earlier than anticipated and, since it had started to rain, we decided to come home for about twenty minutes before returning to Ramsbottom for lunch with our friends, Gwen and Frank. Had it been a nice day, we would have potted down to the river to see the ducks.

We set off again at about 12:50 and made our way to Owens restaurant in Ramsbottom, where Gwen and Frank were already seated.

The meal was passable but not outstanding and my first gluten-free main-dish choice was unavailable. The service was slow and the restaurant was very noisy, making conversation difficult. Nevertheless, it was nice to meet up with our friends and we enjoyed their company.

We came home, had a cup of tea and settled down for the evening.

Tuesday, 19th December 2023

We made it into Ramsbottom just in time for Jenny's hair appointment at 10:00 and I waited in the car, listening to my Trad Jazz music.

Afterwards, we returned Jenny's books to the library. We purchased more charity Christmas cards from the Bleakholt Animal Sanctuary charity shop and went to Tesco for the Christmas edition of the Radio Times.

We arrived at Bob and Marie's house on schedule at 12:10 and we all went up to Oscar's Restaurant at The Red Hall Hotel for lunch.

We had an excellent meal from the Festive Menu, offering two or three courses, each at a fixed price, with three choices for each course, at least two of which had gluten-free options. The restaurant was relatively quiet, so we could chat easily and the service was good. Added to that, we discovered from Marie that Matthew and Carrie had given her the money for the lunch for four, which was extremely nice of them.

We dropped Marie and Bob off at home and spent the rest of the afternoon with them chatting in their living room.

Wednesday, 20th December 2023

We went to Holcombe Brook post office for some stamps for the last-minute posting of a batch of Christmas cards and then I dropped Jenny off at Lynn and John's house.

Jenny went for lunch with her friends, Lynn and Sheila to le Bistro on Vernon Road. I came home and dealt with another load of administration work before starting on the landing and back bedroom walls that had been slightly damaged during the bathroom refit.

Jenny returned home, having spent the rest of the afternoon with Lynn.

Rachel arrived in the evening and was not impressed with the bathroom. Jenny decided it wasn't exactly what she wanted either.

I was losing the will to live.

Thursday, 21st December 2023

I gave the bathroom a rub down after Rachel's shower.

I spent most of my day filling in the cracks in the back bedroom and on the landing caused by the bathroom refit.

Jenny went to Cuppa and a Chat with Lorna.

Friday, 22nd December 2023

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

Saturday, 23rd December 2023

We caught the 11 a.m. bus to Bury, primarily to collect our Christmas turkey from Marks and Spencer.

We had a potter round one or two shops and Jenny bought some socks from the Cat's Protection League shop.

We had a snack lunch at Marks and Spencer and I bought a couple of items for myself Jenny said she thought I needed. I could not find any nice pure cotton trousers though.

We collected the turkey and went to wait for the bus home for what we expected to be about 35 minutes. The bus was ten minutes late. The drive home was fast and shaky as, presumably, the driver was trying to make up time.

Fortunately, the heavy rain forecast did not mature but we did have to cope with fine rain and mist. We were suitably clad in waterproof outer garments and I deployed the waterproof cover on the rucksack in which I carried our purchases.

Sunday, 24th December 2023

It didn't seem like Christmas at all.

The first task was to look for some Christmas items with which Rachel could make a table decoration for the festive event. According to Jenny, this was in the garage loft. That required some tidying in the garage and in the loft, the latter after the bathroom refit.

I eventually made it into the loft space and spent some time crawling round, from end to end, looking for the required item. I found something resembling what was requested but it was not the specific item requested. Nevertheless, Rachel made a very nice display for the dinner table.

I finally managed to paint the cracks I had filled round the coving on the landing and in the back bedroom and left it to see how it dried.

After that, somewhat exhausted, I settled down to a little administrative work.

Monday, 25th December 2023

I was very tired and it was an effort to rise from my slumbers. I eventually made it down to breakfast in my pyjamas and dressing-gown at about 9 a.m.

Apart from washing the dishes, still in my nightwear, I didn't really feel like doing much so it was mostly a day on the laptop.

We opened our presents after a quick snack for lunch; the turkey just having made it into the oven would not be ready until about 6 p.m., so our Christmas feast was going to be an early evening dinner, which is when we normally had our main meal anyway.

I decided to do something useful and went to paint over the cracks on the walls in the back bedroom and on the landing again.

Our evening meal, prepared by Rachel and Jenny with a little assistance from me, was superb.

I started with a sherry. The first course was prawn cocktail prepared by Rachel.

The main course was the traditional roast turkey with roast, fennel potatoes, steamed vegetables (sprouts, green beans, broccoli and carrots) and roast garlic, with gravy, accompanied by a bottle of Yellowtail Bubbles.

Rachel had helped her mum make some profiteroles, served with whipped cream and Green and Blacks melted chocolate.

I finished off with a Janneau Armagnac.

Jenny and I had some tea and Rachel had a coffee. The chocolates came out too, as we played Agatha Christie Bingo, followed by Death on the Cards, a complicated card game inspired by Agatha Christie. Rachel was not unmasked as the murderer.

And so to bed after a most enjoyable evening on this special day.

Tuesday, 26th December 2023

My morning was one of pot washing and oven cleaning. The large bag in which we had roasted the turkey had burst towards the end of cooking and grease had gone everywhere so we knew cleaning it would be a mammoth task.

At least the sun was trying to shine. I couldn't remember when we last saw it. It wasn't going to last though, with a met office weather warning of heavy rain yet again tomorrow.

After lunch and a rest, my oven cleaning was resumed. By 5 p.m., I decided I'd been on my knees long enough and rose slowly to a vertical position. I had barely scratched the surface, in the metaphorical sense, since I could not use anything harsh on the oven surface. At this rate, it was going to take a month at least.

My last task prior to relaxing was to empty the dehumidifier tank. As I opened the door, I was treated to the call of an owl, not far away. It was very nice indeed.

Wednesday, 27th December 2023

The morning comprised mostly routine household tasks such as raking up all the leaves on the patio and putting them in the garden waste bin before it started to rain, feeding dried mealworms to our friendly robin and washing the dishes from yesterday's evening meal.

Matthew dropped in to look at our new bathroom.

The afternoon was more challenging. In dealing with the TV recordings for this week, I discovered that the 1990 Christmas Special of the original "All Creatures Great and Small" was, in fact episode 12 of series 6. Both the TV listings in the Radio Times and those from Schedules Direct were wrong at the time I scheduled the recordings and the latter had since been updated.

I managed to find a copy of the 1990 Christmas Special on the Daily Motion web site and I was able to download it. The quality wasn't brilliant but it was better than nothing. Unfortunately, what I had downloaded was only the first part of a two-part recording. I eventually managed to find the second part and to piece them together. That resulted in some frames being repeated at the join and it took a while to eliminate the overlap.

Late in the afternoon, I had a look for a replacement filling valve for the separate toilet cistern. The original one had not been shutting off properly, wasting water. I had replaced it with the one salvaged from the old bathroom cistern but that was taking ages to fill the cistern. Rather than mess about with it, I decided to fit a new one.

I found a WRAS approved one for £13 from B&Q but it was only available to order and since I could ask Matthew to order one for me using his Amazon Prime account with next day, free delivery for a pound less, I thought I might as well do that. A Grohe valve would have cost me about four times as much.

Thursday, 28th December 2023

I had a look at the work still needed to cover the cracks in the back bedroom and on the landing. Yesterday we had also noticed some damage to the wall on the stairs as well so I intended going out to the garage to fetch the ladders to have a closer look at it. It had been raining heavily yet again but it had stopped – until I set foot outside, then it started again.

I wasn't about to cart the ladders from the garage door, along the patio, to the kitchen door, in the rain that was bucketing down. I decided it was time I cut my hair and trimmed my beard.

Once I had started, it soon stopped raining again. After I had finished, Jenny asked me to tidy up the items in the kitchen that needed to go into the garage, so I set about that task and started tidying up inside the garage as well.

I left off for lunch and resumed the work afterwards.

Friday, 29th December 2023

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

We called at Matthew and Carrie's House to drop off the reel of cable I had borrowed. I had planned to use it to connect the new bathroom cabinet to the upstairs lighting circuit in the loft but I did not need to use it.

We had a look at the office Matthew was building in the garden. He explained the problem he had been having with the bi-fold doors and his plan to overcome it. It was a case of waiting for some better weather.

My afternoon was spent planning the TV recordings for next week, tidying up the programmes we had watched and backing up my data.

Saturday, 30th December 2023

The plan was to spend the day working on the electrical jumble at the old school, since next week end was the table-top sale.

We were at the old school for about 10:45 a.m. and we worked until about 4 p.m. with a short break for lunch. The heating was not on and it was very cold in the large hall.

I brought a Sony Vaio laptop home to examine. It booted up straight away into Windows 7. Unfortunately, it wanted to download some updates and was unable to do so. It also needed a card reader driver that seemed to be unavailable. The machine was not capable of running Windows 10, let alone 11, so Microsoft would seem to have consigned the laptop unnecessarily to the rubbish dump, like so many others.

Sunday, 31st December 2023

My morning was one of washing the dishes, putting the rubbish in the various bins and having second attempt to clean the oven.

The video from Smeg, showing how it was done, did not work for me and I considered inviting the young lady who appeared in the demonstration to come and try cleaning my oven.

I had a rest after lunch and resumed scrubbing away for another two hours, giving up through exhaustion, having successfully cleaned about two-thirds of the bottom of the oven, which left the other third, both sides, the back and the roof to do.

What a lovely way to end the year.