

Greenmount February 2023

Wednesday, 1st February 2023

Welcome to the shortest month of the year. It started dull, wet and windy – a sort of normal day for this part of the world.

My first depressing task of the day was the month end accounts and budget planning for the coming month. Fortunately, unlike many, we were managing to keep our necks above the water level. We discussed the rising cost of living and the future for many people was bleak, so much so that we expected our society to soon become unstable, resulting in civil unrest and looting, requiring armed policing. It was saddening to contemplate that the intelligence of humans was so badly applied that it would result in self-destruction, one way or another.

The new dehumidifier arrived and I spent the rest of the morning and the early part of the afternoon dealing with that and my backlog of e-mails.

I needed to unpack the dehumidifier for it to rest for six hours before use. I also needed to file all the paperwork, register the guarantee and read the manual.

My next unscheduled task was to ensure Rachel's laptop was patched up to date so she could use it later, after finishing her day working on her organisation's laptop in our dining room.

I scanned the manual for the energy monitor since there wasn't a PDF to be found on the Internet. I left off to fit the HEPA filter in the dehumidifier and power on the device, leaving it at the default target humidity setting of 55%.

Thursday, 2nd February 2023

After breakfast I decided to have a look at the documentation for the toilet that was fitted by Bolton Bathrooms to see if I could glean any information regarding the make of the cistern that was not working again. There was no mention of the manufacturer.

I checked my e-mails and noted that the Dyson HEPA filter for the fan was due to be delivered today by Royal Mail.

There was also a reminder about the village committee meeting tonight and I printed off the minutes of the last meeting, for which I gave my apologies and the agenda for tonight's meeting.

The Dyson fan filter arrived. I removed the old one, cleaned the fan and put in the new one. That was now working again.

The HEPA filters were important because they removed bacteria as well as dust and dirt from the air.

After lunch, I decided to have a look at the toilet cistern, not that I was an expert in these fiddly, push-button gadgets. My experience of them was that they were a waste of space. I much preferred the old pull-chain system, which was far more reliable and extremely low maintenance.

My plans were dashed when Jenny reminded me I had said I would apply the update on Rachel's laptop to install Windows 11, which I did.

By the time I had finished that, it was time to prepare for my evening meeting, which involved a hair trim, a shower and a change of clothes before tea.

The meeting lasted a good couple of hours.

Friday, 3rd February 2022

We were up early and left for Unicorn in Chorlton for our week's grocery shopping at 9:15 a.m., reaching our destination by about 10 a.m., somewhat quicker than usual. Traffic was heavy on the M60 Manchester ring road but not as congested as we usually experienced.

The onward journey to Waitrose at Broadheath was also quicker than usual. Again, the A56 road was busy but not enough to cause significant delays.

Jenny found two gluten-free sandwiches in the food-to-go section and we took them to the café, intending to buy them together with tea for two as usual. All the tables were occupied and I looked around, intending to ask if we could share a table with someone. We were approached by a member of staff who said the café was full and told us to come back later. The words were delivered more like an order than a request.

We turned around and left. I took the sandwiches back to the food-to-go section and we carried on with our grocery shopping. We resolved in future to make our own luncheon arrangements before entering the store.

The journey home was also quicker than usual, taking about an hour.

We had a late lunch and I prepared the list of TV recordings for the coming week.

Saturday, 4th February 2023

We were up at about 6:30 a.m. and at the old school for about 8:15 a.m. to prepare for the table-top sale which started at 9 a.m.

Although the sale was well attended, trading on our electrical stall was vary slow, probably, we surmised, to the soaring, extortionate price of electricity. Matters improved when we sold an LG TV we'd had for a few months and a little later, a Kenwood food processor for half the marked price but still a reasonable amount.

We came home at about 12:30 p.m. I brought back a Panasonic radio/CD/Tape device a lady and gentleman had brought in for me to repair if I could. The CD tray was protruding

a little and would not move in or out. I did manage to release the CD that was in the tray but that was as much as I could do at the old school.

At home, I managed to open the CD tray but it would not then respond to the open/close mechanism. Nor would it slide all the way in manually. I was going to have to dismantle the case and I had already pointed out that if I did, I may not be able to put it back together again. In my experience, these things were not manufactured to be repaired.

Lunch beckoned.

I intended spending my afternoon looking at the Panasonic music centre I had brought home and the best place to do that was on my desk in the conservatory. That was full of all sorts of items that had been dumped on it and it needed tidying up before I could use it.

My attempt to do that was interrupted several times.

First Jenny started looking at an air fryer she had brought home to test. For that she needed a manual and it took me ages to find one. I finally found a good copy, downloaded it and printed it out for her. We put some water in it and it seemed to be working alright. I looked up a price for it and it was selling on Amazon for over £200. I had a quick chat with Matthew, who had just bought a new air fryer and he told me the one I had was an old model. For an old model, it wasn't cheap. I decided to return it to the old school with a price tag of £50.

I finally got to tidy my desk and in so doing came across a Microsoft Sidewinder gamepad that I had brought home to test, not having had much success of doing so at the old school.

It didn't take me long to find an excellent online test site, [Gamepad & Controller Tester | DeviceTests](#). The gamepad worked fine.

It was now early evening. My offer of help to prepare tea was declined so I updated the antivirus software on the old school laptop I used for testing and then performed a quick scan since it was complaining it needed one.

I decided to look for some grocery items Jenny had asked me about and I updated her over our evening meal.

Sunday, 5th February 2023

I tidied a few things away in the garage and tested a battery charger I had brought home from the old school. That didn't work when I tested it on Rachel's old car battery so I put it in the junk. Then I had a thought. I tried my battery charger on Rachel's old battery and that didn't work either. I ruled out the electrical supply by plugging an inspection lamp into the socket, which lit up.

Just to make sure my charger was working properly, I connected it to my car battery. The charger burst into life. It now occurred to me that, since Rachel's car battery had reached end of life, the charger from the old school might be alright, so I fished it out of the rubbish box and added the battery to the items in my trailer that were destined for the tip.

Testing the old school charger on my battery confirmed I was right first time. It didn't work and it went back from whence it came.

I finished off the tidying and came in for lunch, after which I turned my attention to the Panasonic portable music centre I had offered to try to repair.

I gathered my tools together and started dismantling the casing. That was surprisingly easy. So was taking the casing apart, requiring the speaker connection to the circuit board to be unplugged and two ribbon cables to be disconnected. Freeing the CD player was a little more tricky because, while the ribbon cable was straightforward, the power connection was fiddly.

I managed to dismantle the tray compartment and position it where it should be, allowing it to open and close properly.

After reassembling the whole device, without putting in any of the screws, I gave it a test run. The CD motor worked alright but it didn't move the tray. At least the radio worked and since Jazz Record Requests had started, I switched it off, unplugged it and left it for another day, coming into the lounge to listen to the programme.

A call of nature resulted in me missing a couple of tracks so it was fortunate I was recording it. I came down to an excellent track featuring Sidney Bechet ("Blues my Naughty Sweetie Gives to Me"). It wasn't long before the programme (in my experience) hit an all-time low, with an overwhelming pile of garbage from someone named Norma Winstone, called "Shadows". My guess was that someone requested it for a bet to see if the BBC was stupid enough to play it. Thank goodness my TV had a mute button and the display told me when it was over.

Monday, 6th February 2023

I couldn't really start anything major because I had to take Jenny for a hospital appointment just after lunch.

I undertook a few, routine, household jobs before preparing for the afternoon out.

The routine check-up went well and Jenny would be called back for another routine check-up in a year's time.

When we returned home, I had another look at the music centre I was trying to repair. Dismantling it again, I eventually managed to repair the CD player. It was a question of reseating the tray properly but that in itself did not resolve the problem. I had to take the CD player apart again to find out why the tray was not being operated by the motor. A cog had been displaced and I put it back where it should have been. I had to take it apart a third time to reposition the tray correctly and it took some time to work out how to do that.

Finally, the CD player worked. I tested the cassette player and radio as well to make sure all the ribbon cables had been reconnected properly.

All that remained was to put in the screws that held the case together. Having goofed with the first two screws, putting the two short ones in the wrong place, it took me ages to recover one of the screws and finally put the two short ones in the correct holes. I followed that with the two bottom screws, leaving me with six more longer screws to refit. These were in holes that were deeply set and difficult locate. That was a job for tomorrow as time was pressing.

Tuesday, 7th February 2023

I finished off the radio/cd/cassette player and gave it a thorough test. It was fully operational. I telephoned Val to let her know and told her when I would be in the old school for her to collect it.

I had a look on the computer for some grocery items and a gluten-free lasagne pasta menu for Jenny.

I also dealt with e-mails and other bits and pieces.

Wednesday, 8th February 2023

We had a morning out in Ramsbottom, touring the charity shops, where, in one, Jenny bought some warm socks.

We called in Plentiful for a couple of organic grocery items and the hardware shop for some candles for the dining room. The previous owners of the hardware business had retired and a new chap had taken over. We were pleased to see that it was still a hardware shop.

Our last visit was to Morrisons mini-supermarket (if that is not a contradiction in terms) for a packet of Schar, gluten-free, rich-tea biscuits. It was the only shopping chain that sold them. Others stocked Schar products but not these, for some strange reason.

After lunch, I prepared for my ordeal at Fairfield General Hospital in Bury. We arrived in good time and immediately found a free disabled-person's parking place. I was early for my appointment at 3 p.m. so we had a bit of a wait.

I was gowned up and walked to the theatre. The internal examination of my urethra and bladder was not at all painful and I was able to see the same screen as the consultant who performed the examination. He explained what I was seeing, too. I found it quite interesting.

My obstruction was due to a small protrusion of my prostate that was compressing my urethra. Unfortunately, I had been living with this condition as it grew steadily worse for some years and as a result my bladder had been retaining more and more urine, causing it to extend to such an extent that it had lost its ability to contract. That meant it would be unable to expel its contents even if the obstruction was removed.

The resultant advice was to continue using the disposable catheters, since this offered a work-around to the problem, even if it was somewhat inconvenient.

It wasn't the outcome for which I was hoping and contemplating using disposable catheters for the rest of my life was not a pleasant prospect but at least it was better than a more dire prognosis. I guess it was just a different way of life.

I was able to drive home afterwards, too.

Thursday, 9th February 2023

I started my day with some routine domestic and computer administrative work while Rachel prepared to return home after work today, having been with us for some time.

I put out the bins for collection tomorrow and swept up the dead leaves on the patio again, putting the leaves in the compost bin, which was being collected tomorrow, rather than the garden compost bin.

I thought I might have another look at the toilet that was leaking water into the pan and which had been out of order for some time. I spent most of the rest of the day removing and replacing the syphon several times and testing it. I came to the conclusion that it needed a new syphon and managed to find one online at a price of £75. That was a lot to pay if it did not solve the problem. I thought it might be better to install a completely new cistern.

I put the siphon back in place for the last time, using the original seal at the bottom rather than the new one our plumber, Peter, had tried. I filled the cistern again and left it with the water supply isolated. There was a very slow trickle into the pan that was hardly noticeable. I thought that may be from the previous flush and I left it to settle down, hoping that I had, somehow, repaired it.

If it still leaked and emptied the tank, my plan would be to replace the cistern and to do that and alter the bathroom to install a walk-in shower instead of retaining the bath at the same time. It was my intention to approach the original fitters, Bolton Bathrooms, to undertake the work. I really wanted to sort out the kitchen first, though and we were still waiting for a delivery date for the new cooker.

Friday, 10th February 2023

The main activity of the day was the village dementia café, D-CaFF. The theme was Valentine's Day and we had a hot-pot lunch, Joani having arranged gluten-free dishes for Jenny and I, followed by a Beetle Drive. I took the pictures for the village web site as usual.

Saturday, 11th February 2023

Most of our day was taken up with grocery shopping. We started off at Sainsbury's supermarket at Heaton Park and afterwards, Jenny popped into Home Bargains which was next door while I sat in the car and listened to a couple of Trad Jazz tracks.

We motored on to Tesco in Prestwich for a few more items and where Yellowtail wine was on offer at £6 a bottle with the Tesco Club Card, so I bought two Chardonnay and two Pinot Grigio, the former for me and the latter for Jenny.

I was anxious to drive home as quickly as possible because we had some frozen items in the car and, fortunately, all the traffic lights were green until we had travelled about half way. There, we were held up for a short while by road works. That in itself wasn't so bad but from there, for the next mile or so, there was heavy traffic and some really idiotic, selfish drivers, cutting in and out of lanes and overtaking on the left just to be one car in front. It's a wonder there wasn't an accident. Thankfully, I had a collision avoidance system. It's called a brain.

Everyone makes the odd mistake and has lapses of concentration from time to time but the driving I saw today was plain stupidity, putting lives at risk. As I have said before, it was high time drivers had to renew their licences every five years and had to take a practical test to do so and I would like to see the test include skid control.

As far as observing the speed limit was concerned, the odd lapse of concentration could be forgiven. I'm sure we had all done it from time to time. To blatantly ignore the speed limit with regularity and for long periods was a different matter and should, in my opinion, result in immediate disqualification and confiscation of the vehicle, regardless to who it belonged, unless it was stolen, of course. People who drove vehicles without a licence or while disqualified should be publicly hung, drawn and quartered!

While on the subject of dismemberment, I recently saw a news report of fox hunters deliberately forcing foxes out of their lair so their dogs could chase them, catch them and rip them apart. I would like to see open season on fox hunters and we should be permitted to shoot them on sight. If they want to hunt challenging prey, why don't they form a club where they can hunt each other? It would be far more challenging for groups of people to be pitched against each other than to hunt an animal that had no means of defending itself. I had no objection to the hunting fraternity killing each other.

Sunday, 12th February 2023

We had a very nice lunch with Matthew, Carrie, Bob and Marie at Falshaw's Tea Rooms.

Monday, 13th February 2023

I started my day cutting wood under the car port for the lounge stove, working on the old logs stored there. It was slow-going.

As lunch-time approached, we had a telephone call from Sylvia, across the back, to say she had a chap there who was cutting the branches that overshadowed her garden off a couple of my trees and asked if I wanted them, since they were my property and I had a wood-burning stove. I said I did want them and arranged with the chap for him to pass them over the fence. I collected them and piled them up on the patio, then I tidied up at the front and came in for lunch.

I spent the afternoon making a start on the branches, working on the patio. That was also slow-going. I packed up as the light started to fade and it started to turn quite cool.

Tuesday, 14th February 2023

We had a trip out on Manchester's public transport to the Manchester Royal Eye Hospital for Jenny's check-up. The outward journey took about 1½ hours. The return journey lasted over two hours, largely due to missing a bus connection in Bury. We had a long wait for an alternative bus, for which the stop closest to home and at which we alighted, left us with a good ten-minute walk.

Jenny's eyes were healthy following the treatment for glaucoma and her only problem was the development of cataracts, which, at present, were not causing any significant difficulty, although they would need treatment at some future time. That would not be as straightforward as it would for most people due to the operation for glaucoma performed on each eye.

Jenny's next review would be in nine months' time.

Wednesday, 15th February 2023

We resumed trimming and cutting up the branches from the trees at the back and had to pack up at lunchtime because it started to rain. We stored the uncut branches under the car port at the front of the house.

After lunch, we went into Ramsbottom for a few items. I bought some bow-saw blades and a new brush head for the yard-brush. I also found a couple of DVDs in the charity shops and Jenny bought a couple of second-hand books.

Thursday, 16th February 2023

I finished off cutting the branches from the trees at the back of the house, working under the car port since it was raining.

Friday, 17th February 2023

Grocery shopping at Unicorn and Waitrose south of Manchester went well enough, the outward journey taking about 45 minutes and the return journey about an hour due to the dummies who drove on motorways without leaving enough of a gap between vehicles for others to manoeuvre and who ignored the variable speed limit signs. The latter didn't help when the signs were active without any indication of congestion, presumably because someone in the control centre had forgotten to switch them off.

We were not back until the late afternoon, having found the last gluten-free sandwich in Waitrose to share over lunch just after mid-day.

I spent the rest of my day finishing off the recording schedule for TV programmes for the coming week, not that there was a lot to record. Most of it was rubbish. It was fortunate that we had a lot of unwatched videos, some of which we had been watching over the past few weeks.

Saturday, 18th February 2023

I had a long and tiring day at the old school laying out the electrical stall and testing a load of items. Jenny joined me later in the morning after she had done a few jobs at home.

After putting out everything and filling our table space, I found another box of items that had been tested and priced, ready for sale, as we were packing up for the day. We would have to find room for those tomorrow as well as all the items we had not yet tested.

Amongst the items still to test was a microwave oven which I needed to check for leakage and a vacuum cleaner that needed a power supply. There was also a Sony Discman to test and if it worked, I had a customer lined up for it.

Sunday, 19th March 2023

We spent another long day at the old school working on the electrical jumble and came home for 5 p.m.

I started to listen to the recording of today's Jazz Record Requests and quickly turned it off and deleted all traces of it. It was dedicated to Nina Simone who, had she still been around, would have been 90 today. Unfortunately, to say I was not one of her fans was an understatement.

I turned my attention to some items of jumble I had brought home to test because I did not have all the facilities required at the old school.

Monday, 20th February 2023

We didn't get off to an early start today. After a later-than-usual breakfast, Jenny popped down the road to see Lorna on her birthday. I dealt with a few TV recordings and then went round to the old school to test some more equipment for the jumble sale.

Jenny joined me at the old school and we had lunch. I continued to work on the jumble until it was time for the sale to start at 3 p.m.

We had a couple of good sales and a steady stream of small sales. Jenny seemed to think we had done quite well and the old school manager, Christine, told us to keep any unsold items for the next table-top sale on 4th March and the next jumble sale, which would be in about six weeks' time.

We packed up and stored the unsold items and brought home the rubbish, planning a tip run with the trailer later in the week, when the weather was fine.

Tuesday, 21st February 2023

Rachel and Jenny went to Bury. I dealt with a few routine, domestic jobs and then resumed work on the on the coving in the back bedroom cupboard, which I wanted to complete before tackling the bedroom itself to gain some practice in fitting coving.

Wednesday, 22nd February 2023

I eventually resumed work on the coving in the back bedroom cupboard.

Meanwhile, Rachel and Jenny went up to the Red Hall to discuss the possibility of hiring a room and catering for our 50th wedding anniversary on 31st March.

Thursday, 23rd February 2023

We spent the day in York. During the morning, I left Rachel and Jenny to potter round while I went to the Railway Museum and we met up again at Bailey's Tea Rooms for lunch. After lunch we strolled round the shops on the way to The Shambles and called at Tulley's store for a couple of organic items.

We had a horrendous journey home, with very heavy traffic, from the M1, all the way down the M62, until we had passed Leeds. We averaged 5 m.p.h.

The outward journey hadn't been brilliant, either, due to road works and a broken-down van in the outer lane but we did reach the park-and-ride for around 10 a.m.

We made it home with about twenty minutes to spare before our very nice evening meal at the Miller and Carter in Greenmount.

Friday, 24th February 2023

Jenny and I had intended to call to see Matthew and Carrie, do our grocery shopping at Sainsbury's store in Heaton Park and Tesco at Prestwich and then go to the Red hall to discuss our celebration plans in more detail.

We spent so much time chatting with Matthew and Carrie that we came back home for lunch and rearranged our appointment at The Red Hall for later in the day, after grocery shopping.

In the event, with road works on two of the major roads out of the far side of Bury, it took ages to reach Sainsbury's store and I telephoned the Red Hall to change our appointment to tomorrow.

It was 5 p.m. before we made it home.

Saturday, 25th February 2023

Having the appointment to discuss our celebration arrangements at 11:00 a.m. today meant that Rachel could be present, which was important because she and Jenny were doing most of the work. We sorted out a few details with more information to come and paid our room deposit.

After lunch, I produced a menu list and e-mailed all the guests to request their choices while Rachel and Jenny prepared a seating plan. So far, so good.

I spent the afternoon catching up on a few outstanding items on the PC.

Sunday, 26th February 2023

After the usual routine, morning tasks, my first job of the day was to put out the lines for Jenny's washing to dry and then I prepared the trailer of rubbish for hitching to the car and Jenny helped me drag it up the drive.

We tootled off to the tip in Bury, dumped our rubbish and I called at Wicks on the way back for a fine-toothed saw for cutting the coving.

After putting away the trailer, before lunch, I repaired a reading lamp for Val and Alan.

After lunch, I turned my attention to some jumble items I had brought home to test. First on the list was what I thought was a powered USB hub and which turned out to be a five port USB charger, in good working order.

The second item was a Lifetab tablet with no cables and which was as dead as a dodo. I managed to find some information on the Internet that said I could charge it using the micro-USB port. I found a USB A to micro-USB cable and a spare mains USB plug into which I could connect the cable. I plugged in the tablet and left it to charge. After a short while, the tablet showed no signs of life, so I left it to charge.

Meanwhile, I had a look at the third item, a Humax TV recorder with only SCART connectivity. I left that until tomorrow because there was no free TV aerial with which to test it.

I checked the Lifetab tablet again and it now showed it was charging but refused to do anything more – yet. I left it charging.

I updated the anniversary food plan with Anne and Wilf's requirements following a call from them to Jenny earlier.

I turned my attention to other administrative work including a huge backlog of e-mails that needed tidying up. I made a start on them.

Monday 27th February 2023

After a morning of routine jobs, dealing with the remaining old school jumble items I had brought home and a visit from Val to collect the lamp I had repaired for her, after lunch, I finished cutting the lengths of coving for the small cupboard in the back bedroom.

I marked up where I was going to put the coving on the walls and all that remained was to stick them on the walls and make sure they stayed where I put them. That was a job for tomorrow morning. It wasn't going to be easy. One of the walls was a good way out of true and the ceiling was uneven.

I came down to relax and deal with the TV programmes I had recorded over the last few days, including Jazz Record Requests from BBC radio 3.

Tuesday, 28th February 2023

I did not manage to get back to the coving. I was occupied most of the day with plans for our 50th wedding anniversary.

We had all the meal requirements from the guests and I updated the spreadsheet.

I took Rachel's seating plan, which had been revised following our decision not to book any external entertainment and drew it up on Powerpoint.

I printed off the two documents for Rachel to check and then sent PDF copies to the Events people at the Red Hall.

The pressure was now on to complete the back bedroom before the end of March – 30 days and counting.