

Greenmount – January 2019

Tuesday, 1st January

It was, yet again, a morning of preparation for the gathering of seven for the New Year's Day dinner and we enjoyed the company of Matthew and Carrie, Carrie's parents, Bob and Marie and Rachel. This year, the house was not so much of a tip, there being a proper, wooden floor in the dining room and not a decorating cloth in sight.

I had to go down to collect Rachel from her flat at noon after her previous night out, celebrating the New Year with her friends in Manchester.

We had a lovely leg of organic lamb and a huge selection of organic vegetables, all thanks to Jenny's hard work in the kitchen, ably assisted by Matthew, who was an excellent cook.

The main course was followed by a choice of apple pie or Christmas pudding, all home-made and gluten-free. The apple pie was favourite, accompanied by ice cream or, in my case, pouring cream.

After our guests departed, we had a rather relaxing late afternoon and evening. I booked the train tickets and the hotel for the forthcoming trip to London.

Wednesday, 2nd January 2018

We spent the day working on the jumble at the Old School.

Thursday, 3rd January 2019

We went grocery shopping to Unicorn, Sainsbury's at Sale and Waitrose at Broadheath a day early this week to accommodate the preparation for the jumble sale on Saturday morning.

Friday, 4th January 2019

We spent the day at Greenmount Old School working on the electrical jumble and by the time I had put in most of the TV recordings for the coming week, I was absolutely shattered. Having 'flu didn't help.

Saturday, 5th January 2019

We were at the Old School for just after 9 a.m. and ready for the jumble sale at 10 a.m. We sold some large items very quickly, including a large, flat-screen DVB-T TV and a computer that had come in with Windows XP and which I had reloaded with Windows 7.

After lunch, we continued with the booking of the attractions in London for the following week end.

Sunday 6th January 2019

We spent the day finishing off the bookings for places of interest in London and searching for somewhere for evening meals. Friday was not a problem. We booked a table at Zi Zi's on the Strand for an Italian meal before the theatre. Sunday proved much more difficult. There were plenty of Italian restaurants that offered gluten-free meals but we wanted something different after the previous evening. While there were a handful of celiac restaurants, most of them seemed to assume that just because one was intolerant to gluten, one also wanted ultra-healthy and/or vegan meals instead of a nice, juicy steak. We did find one, with a passable menu, if somewhat expensive (Niche) but the earliest they could provide a table was 8:15 p.m., which was too late for us. We eventually settled for a meal at the Indian restaurant, Dishoom, King's Cross, for which a booking was not required.

With all the arrangements completed, I finally turned my attention to a problem with TV recording on the temporary laptop that was standing in for Jenny's laptop, still awaiting repair. Having installed a free TV application, NextPVR a few days earlier to solve what I thought was a problem with Hauppauge WinTV, that also developed the same fault in that it would not connect to the Hauppauge tuner box on one of the USB connections.

It occurred to me that the problem might be with the Hauppauge drivers even though I had reinstalled the complete Hauppauge application two or three times. I decided to go into Device Manager, located the Hauppauge device and perform a manual update on the drivers. To my surprise, the update was successful and the computer requested a reload, which I did. That fixed the problem and I reverted to using Hauppauge WinTV.

Monday 7th January 2019

We had a bit of a lie-in after the previous, long, frustrating day. We were just about to crawl out of bed when the telephone rang. Rachel had gone to work and forgotten to take something she needed so we had to nip down to Bury before breakfast with it.

While in Bury, we decided to call at the recycling centre and dump the car-load of junk from the Old School jumble. The rain started as we approached home and, after a brief natter with Lorna who was passing, we came in for breakfast.

After breakfast, it was pot-washing time, as usual, followed by a session in the garage, storing away all the Christmas items. I topped up the car with screen wash and brought in some wood to make a fire so that Jenny's bread dough would rise.

The fire-making process was interrupted by a blockage in the vacuum cleaner that needed my attention. I was working my way methodically through the various components in which such a problem might arise when Jenny suggested it might be the filter. We took the dust compartment apart and, sure enough, the filter was completely clogged. Jenny cleaned it and

we reassembled the vacuum cleaner which I then used to remove all the dust off my trousers.

I returned to the fire and after that was burning nicely, I suggested we had a mid-afternoon cup of tea. It seemed I had read Jenny's mind.

The brief break gave me an opportunity to deal with a few pressing items on the computer.

I left off that task to commence the detailed itinerary for our trip to London at the week end and completed the list for Friday.

Tuesday, 8th January 2019

We decided to go down to Manchester to collect the train tickets for the trip to London and it is just as well we did.

We started with a trip to Home Bargains in Bury for a few items on offer. While Jenny was in there, I called in at Halfords to ask if the chap there would check the battery from Rachel's car. He said he would if I called in with it.

We parked the car near the tram station at Heaton Park, paying a visit to Dennis Gore, the chemist shop for a pack of Jenny's Omega 7 tablets and a bottle of my Saw Palmetto tincture. We left the car there while we caught the tram to Manchester.

We alighted at Victoria station and went to a ticket kiosk to ask where we could collect our pre-paid tickets. The helpful chap there said he could give them to us so I gave him the paper containing the purchase details and the code he needed to access the tickets. He then asked for my credit card to confirm the purchase and I put it in the machine. It asked me for my PIN and that's where it all went pear-shaped. I forgot my PIN. I put in what I thought it was and it didn't work. I tried again and it didn't work again. Since a third failed attempt would have locked the card, I gave up and decided to seek help from my bank.

We walked the length of Market Street looking for the bank and finally found it. We had about a half-hour wait before a very helpful chap asked me to try my card in his machine and my PIN worked. I thanked him and we returned to the same kiosk at Victoria Station where I acquired the tickets. I must have mistyped my PIN earlier.

We took the tram back to Heaton Park and came home for a cup of tea and a snack, having gone most of the day without lunch.

Wednesday, 9th January 2019

I had decided to go walking with Frank and Steve with the planned route being up Holcombe Hill and Bull Hill, onto the West Pennine Moors.

Frank telephoned to say Steve couldn't make it and, since Jenny and Gwen had planned to

go our as well, Jenny and I decided to make up a foursome with Frank and Gwen and walk down to Burrs Country Park, just outside Bury and then walk from there along the track by the River Irwell to Summerseat and on to Ramsbottom. When we met up at 10:15 a.m., Gwen wanted to take the bus to the top of the road leading down to Burrs so we started our walk there.

It took us a couple of hours to reach Summerseat, covering just over five miles in the lovely winter sunshine and we saw a couple of herons on the far bank of the river.

We had a lovely lunch at Owens before catching the bus back to the bottom of Vernon Road and making the ten-minute walk home from there.

After settling down, I found that neither computer had recorded the afternoon broadcast of Father Brown. The laptop seemed to have been affected by an automatic Windows update and the desktop just crashed and reloaded. I did suspect we might have had a power glitch but no other equipment seemed to have been affected.

I spent ages looking for a mechanism for stopping Windows 10 from applying updates automatically. With the Home (basic) version of Windows 10, there was no built-in option to control updates. I eventually found instructions for manually configuring the registry to do what I wanted and implemented it. It was then I noticed the small print at the bottom of the web page saying that the basic version of Windows 10 wouldn't check the registry so all my work seemed to have been a waste of time. Thank you, Microsoft.

I reloaded the desktop and that wanted to apply some updates even though Windows 7 was no longer supported! I rebooted the machine as requested and it seemed to be alright again.

Thursday, 10th January 2019

I spent the day finalising the schedule for our London week end.

Friday, 11th January 2019

Frank arrived at 9:15 a.m. to give us a lift to Bury where we caught the 9:42 a.m. tram to Manchester Piccadilly station, arriving in good time for our 10:55 Virgin train to London Euston. We boarded early and had a first class table to ourselves. The service was very good, with complimentary, cold, bottled water, tea/coffee and, for Rachel and me, a gluten-free bacon bun.

We arrived on time at 1:02 p.m. and walked the short distance down Euston Road to our Premier Inn, where we booked in early (the rooms were not officially available until 2 p.m.) with the assistance of a very helpful member of the team there. We had two very nice rooms on the fourth floor.

Our first scheduled event was an evening meal at Zizzi on The Strand, so we had plenty of time to master the intricacies of the tube and explore Covent Garden.

Rachel suggested we buy an Oyster card for the tube and, with the assistance of a very helpful employee, I bought three Oyster cards, each requiring a £5 deposit and credited each of them with £20. The advantage of the Oyster card was that the cost of the journeys was about half what it would have been purchasing individual tickets and, within Zone 1 (central London), the expenditure on the card was capped at £7 each day, journeys costing in excess of this being free. (I understood the same was true if a contactless bank card is used but Rachel did not have one). The £5 deposit was refundable and any excess left on the card was refundable.

We travelled from Kings Cross station to Covent Garden on the Piccadilly line using the newly-purchased, contactless, Oyster card and went into the old market, now full of stalls and shops. There we discovered a stall where a gentleman made up people's names using photographs of scenes resembling letters and sold these, optionally in frames. I thought this was both innovative and extremely clever. Although we did not buy one of his compilations, we did take his card for future reference and I did wish him the success I believe he deserved.

We wandered down to The Strand and Trafalgar Square exploring and taking pictures until 5 p.m., when we made our way to *Zizzi*.

The meal at the restaurant was very good and we finished in good time for the theatre, arriving there about fifteen minutes before the doors opened at 7 p.m. We were not alone as the crowd gathered.

The play, "The Mousetrap", was an adaption of an Agatha Christie novel and a "whodunit" with a hint of humour. It was well performed in traditional style in the old St. Martin's theatre and the audience was asked at the end not to reveal the outcome to people who had not seen the play; to do so would spoil the suspense.

Our most enjoyable, long day finished with a return tube journey to Euston from Leicester Square on the Northern line.

Saturday, 12th January 2019

We started with a walk down Euston Road to Euston Square to take the Metropolitan line to Baker Street, the nearest tube station to Madame Tussauds. Arriving too early for our scheduled entry at 10 a.m., we went for an exploratory stroll and discovered Regents Park, where we sauntered and for which we could have done with more time.

Returning to Madame Tussauds, we went in. Although it was very busy, it was quite disappointing and I cannot honestly say I would recommend it. The emphasis was on more modern figures and there was no section of infamous villains and murderers. Access to the Star Wars and Sherlock Holmes sections were £5 each extra.

Our wander round took just under two hours and we headed for Baker Street tube station for the Circle line to Tower Hill where we made for the Tower of London. Allowing just the afternoon for that and taking time out for lunch in the café there (for those with a gluten

intolerance, this is not brilliant), did not give us enough time to explore the whole of the site; in particular, we did not make the walk round the tower walls. On reflection, this needed a full day to leisurely explore and take in all the information.

This was well worth the visit and we did see the crown jewels, which, for me, was the highlight of the visit.

We left at closing time and returned to Euston Square via the Circle line, from which we walked to the hotel for a brief rest.

We had intended to eat at the Dishoom Indian restaurant at Kings Cross and made our way there. It wasn't that easy to find and when we did there was a long queue. We would have booked a table in advance but the restaurant did not take bookings for less than eight people. When we were informed that we would have to wait for an hour and a half for a table at 7 p.m. we decided to look for somewhere else. Finding a restaurant that served gluten-free food was not easy – until we came across Pizza Express on Euston Road, a short distance from our hotel. We had a very nice, gluten-free pizza and a sweet there.

The moral of eating in London seemed to be stick to Italian if you're gluten-free.

Sunday, 13th January 2019

After checking out of our hotel and leaving our luggage, we caught the Northern line from Euston to Waterloo and headed for the London Dungeon. It was not well signposted from Waterloo station and I had to ask someone directions. It is situated in the County Hall building close to the London Eye (closed for maintenance during our visit) and we arrived before it opened at 10:00 a.m. Our entry was not scheduled until 10:30 but we managed to go in and start our tour.

The Dungeon was a “living” museum, with members of the team acting various roles throughout the ages covering Henry VIII, the great fire of London, the Plague and much more. This is a must for any visitor to London and excellent entertainment and value for money. It is not for the faint-hearted and expect an amount of audience participation.

We left the Dungeon and walked to Westminster, across Westminster Bridge. From there we made our way to Trafalgar Square via St. James' Park and Admiralty Arch. We headed down The Strand and lunched at Pret a Manger.

Continuing down the Strand to Aldwych and up Kingsway, Southampton Row, Woburn Place and Upper Woburn Place, we reached Euston Road. We collected our luggage from the hotel and retraced our steps down Euston Road to the station to await our train at 16:17.

We were joined at our table on the train by a very quiet young lady. The service on the return journey was not as good as the outward journey and there was no gluten-free option for the late afternoon snack.

On arrival at Manchester Piccadilly, believing the Metrolink to be suspended due to

engineering works at Victoria, we braved the rain and made for a bus at Piccadilly Gardens. The one failing of Manchester Piccadilly station was that the bus interchange was a fair distance away.

On arrival at the interchange, we spotted a Bury Tram and just missed it. We caught the next one.

In Bury, we had a twenty-minute wait for a 474 bus, which only ran each hour at this time of night.

We alighted on Longsight Road and had the ten-minute walk up to Greenmount in the driving rain, dragging our luggage behind us. Fortunately it was on wheels!

We made it home, changed into dry clothes and had a make-do supper.

Monday, 14th January 2019

I started catching up with the TV recordings before breakfast. After breakfast, I washed up and then took a look at the alarm. The 3, 6 and 9 numbers on the key pad were not working and the unit needed replacing. That being the case, I decided to consider replacing the upstairs window sensors with PIRs and giving each room its own zone. That would involve some considerable rewiring. Meanwhile, I reduced the sensitivity on the window sensors a little to try to stop the false alarms and ascertained that the alarm still functioned and that the remote keypad was still working correctly.

I dealt with some E-mails and we went down to Bury for a few groceries. I took the opportunity to have Rachel's old car battery tested at Halfords and it was fine. The RAC seemed to have misdiagnosed the problem with her vehicle and wrongly advised her that she needed a new battery. This was rather worrying since the RAC was supposed to assist motorists, particularly vulnerable ones.

After lunch, I finished off the TV recordings, updated and checked the finances, destroyed the unneeded financial documents from over seven years ago (2011) and filed all the recent documents in a 2019 folder.

I also lit and maintained a fire a Jenny's request after she pre-warmed the stove using candles.

My last task of the day was to update this blog.

Tuesday, 15th January 2019

I had to take the car to Finney's Garage for 8:30 a.m. for its annual service and MOT. Fortunately, I had arranged a courtesy car and I was back for breakfast within half an hour.

After breakfast and washing up, Jenny suggested I put together the tower system we have for

sale on our car boot stall, take a picture of it and send it to the lady who enquired about a computer at the last jumble sale. This turned out to be more complicated than it sounded because I had to borrow the plug that provided a network connection for my desktop over the internal power circuit for this computer so it could connect to the network to validate its copy of Windows 7. I shut down the desktop to do this, which, on reflection, I didn't really need to do, the consequence of which was that it was not back up and running in time to record the episode of Father Brown on the BBC One TV channel. That in itself should not have been a problem, since my primary recording device was the laptop. Unfortunately, I later discovered the recording on the laptop was ten minutes short due to my error with the timings. On the laptop, I adjusted the automatic programme start and end times to allow a five minute preamble and a five minute overrun in case the programme started early or finished late. In this case, I must have made an error. In Windows 7, I had configured Media Centre to do this automatically.

Back to the item for sale. Once connected to the network, I checked for updates and the installation of these took a while and required three restarts despite the fact that Microsoft no longer supported Windows 7.

While all that was in progress, we had lunch.

I took the picture of the computer and sent the lady in question an E-mail.

After that, I taxed the car online for another year and dealt with the accounts, updating the expenditure with receipts from our London trip and the car's service, MOT and tax.

I dealt with a few other items in my pending pile and most of my E-mails. I also downloaded all my pictures from our London trip and started processing them, preparing them for my web site. I forgot I needed to also download the pictures Rachel took to include some of those.

Frank telephoned to inform me that our usual foursome was gathering the following day, provided the weather was not as bad as forecast, at 9:30. Since it was going to rain, the plan was to stroll down to Bury for a coffee and then lunch. I said I would think about it since I didn't fancy walking in the rain and my left knee was quite painful following all the walking in London.

Wednesday, 16th January 2019

I was up before 8 a.m. and washed the pots, after which I updated this diary while Jenny slept on.

It was very wet outside, although not raining as hard as forecast. I decided against going out with the chaps. My knee was still hurting despite a copious covering of witch-hazel the previous night and this morning and there was plenty to do at home. If it had been a nice day and we had been walking off the beaten track (which was usually the case, given past experience of our navigation and map reading) I might have gone and risked the effect on my knee.

I started cleaning out the fire with the intention of washing the tiled hearth. I broke off when Jenny came downstairs and joined her for breakfast. I had, by that time, a bucket half full of ash and I left it by the back door, not wishing to potter round to the bin in the pouring rain.

After breakfast, I thought I'd sort out my E-mail from BT about my next bill, which was a lot more than I expected. I was bogged down dealing with E-mails, some of which were requests for feedback about our London trip and one was about the Manchester Spatial Framework, which was essentially a plan for expanding the population and providing more housing, jobs and infrastructure. That required a comprehensive reply and I had to leave off, saving my input thus far, to resume it later, so I could deal with other E-mails. I was there until lunchtime while Jenny took care of finishing off the fire and other jobs around the hose.

She asked me to make a fire because she was cold so I did so after chatting with a helpful lady at BT about my bill. It transpired that they had forgotten to credit me with my monthly discount of £17 and she was putting this right for me. I shudder to think how many people are overcharged because they fail to check their bills.

After the fire was going, using the last of our chopped wood, I discovered that the Windows 10 laptop would no longer access shared folders and files on my Windows 7 desktop and I spent the rest of the day and evening, apart from a break for our evening meal, trying to resolve the matter.

I followed the instructions in a web article,

https://answers.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/forum/windows_10-networking/connecting-pcs-and-users-for-sharing/fb92e439-5dbc-4367-9857-1ef360e9ffdf

but it didn't solve the problem and, on Windows 7, I had to use command prompt instructions to check and configure SMB 1.0 CIFS File Sharing Support – see

<https://support.microsoft.com/en-gb/help/2696547/how-to-detect-enable-and-disable-smbv1-smbv2-and-smbv3-in-windows-and>

That didn't solve the problem. Neither did adding the target computer name to the host file with its corresponding network address and making sure both computers were in the same workgroup.

What clinched it was deleting the account and password from the Credentials list.

Then I came across another problem in Windows 10. Holding down the Ctrl key and left clicking gave me an error when I tried to test the above links in this document. The error was "This operation has been cancelled due to restrictions on this computer. Please contact your system administrator." Very helpful since I was the system administrator.

I followed the instructions on a web site regarding resetting Internet Explorer but to no avail. I found some additional instructions which I decided to leave until morning, the time

being just turned half past midnight.

All I had to say to Microsoft was scrap Windows 10 and bring back Windows 7. It was far superior in every respect.

Thursday, 17th January 2019

It was wood-cutting day. I cut a large bag full of wood which should be enough to last two days and two and a bit vegetable boxes of wood which was stored in the trailer in the garage and should be enough for a further couple of days.

I still had some wood to cut and I was considering a further session on Sunday. My bow-saw was showing signs of requiring a new blade and I had at least one in stock.

I finished cutting as the sun started to go down about 4:30 and came in to try to resolve the outstanding problem with Windows 10.

There was a very helpful Microsoft web site:

<https://support.microsoft.com/en-gb/help/310049/hyperlinks-are-not-working-in-outlook>

which provided an automatic, easy fix for every operating system except Windows 10. It did give other methods of fixing the problem. Resetting the browser (Internet Explorer) configuration did not fix the problem. I checked the first registry key and it looked alright. I checked the second registry key and it referenced Firefox. I tried changing it to the recommended value both with and without the quotes and neither worked.

So the web site was pretty useless.

I did find another web site that suggested resetting the default browser in Windows 10 settings. The recommendation was to set the default browser to something else (I set it to the Windows 10 default, Microsoft Edge) and then set it back to my chosen browser, Internet Explorer. Miraculously, that worked. I hasten to add the advice did not come from a Microsoft web site.

My comments of yesterday regarding Windows 10 still stood.

Later in the evening, I discovered that Hauppauge WinTV8 had stopped working in the middle of recording Father Brown on BBC 1 in the afternoon. Fortunately, I had a back up recording on my Desktop using Windows 7 Media Center. (Remember that, Microsoft?)

I queued the recording for Friday on NextPVR with the intention of sorting things out later.

Friday, 18th January 2019

The grocery shopping trip was a nightmare. There were road works on the A56 as we left Bury, reducing this busy road to single track with traffic lights. After queuing to pass through that, we were doing really well until we left the M60 to join the main road into Stretford, where three lanes of the A56 were down to one and queuing traffic was blocking the path of vehicles trying to leave the motorway and join the flow (or lack of it). There was a third set of road works as we made our way to Chrolton, although this did not slow us down too much.

The route to Sainsbury's in Sale and on to Waitrose was not too bad and I devised a return route to avoid both of the main obstacles on the way there.

We left Waitrose much later than usual, joining the back end of the school run and the start of the main rush for people to go home from work. We detoured to a junction on the M60 that was one further south than our usual one to avoid the second set roadworks we had encountered on our outward journey only to join queuing traffic travelling at between 5 and 10 miles an hour in the fast(?) lane until we had passed the M62 junction on the far side of the canal bridge. I moved over to the far left lane to take the M61 and then to the right for the fast road to Bolton to come home using the scenic route, thus avoiding the first set of road works. We did find a couple of queues at traffic lights but I doubt they were as bad as those we would have encountered using our usual route. It was 5 p.m. by the time we arrived home.

Now we should have been going out to an evening with the rest of the D-Caff dementia café volunteers at the Cricket Club that evening but Jenny had the following date for that event in her diary. We didn't recognise the mobile number on the telephone call we received from Joani to ask us where we were so we didn't answer it and she did not leave any message. Neither did I hear my mobile telephone, which was in the lounge, which she contacted while we were having tea in the dining room. As a result, we missed what was later described as a good, well-attended evening with entertainment from the Greenmount Strummers and with a Beatles sing-along. Just my kind of entertainment.

Instead we watched a couple of horror films I had recorded.

The only real good point of the day was that I discovered that Hauppauge WinTV8 was working again. I was up until 1 a.m. putting in the routine recordings for the coming week.

Saturday, 19th January 2019

I tidied up my media and put in the remaining recordings for the coming week. In fact, I spent most of the day on the computer, sorting things out, doing the accounts and tidying up.

I also finally managed to complete the previous week's Radio Times crossword, which I found quite hard.

Sunday, 20th January 2019

My first job of the day was to peel the eight oranges I had bought the previous day and use our juicer for the first time for ages to make my week's supply of orange juice.

My second task was to wash up afterwards and after breakfast. I had a cooked breakfast this morning for a change; this used to be something of a Sunday tradition when I was growing up at home.

I dealt with my E-mail, booked a table for lunch for Jenny's birthday next Sunday and updated this diary. I also updated my web site and I was in fairly regular contact with Mike in New Zealand again on Skype.

I tidied up the TV recordings we had watched and prepared the new recordings for watching. By the time I had listened to the recording of Jazz Record Requests from Saturday, it was almost tea time. How time flies.

Monday, 21st January 2019

Before breakfast and while waiting for Jenny to finish her shower, I dealt with the TV recordings we had watched the previous evening.

After breakfast we went out to deliver the latest issue of The Voice. Our round was the Tor Avenue area, just up from and on the opposite side of the main road to the church.

It was time for a quick lunch when we came back and I lit a fire for Jenny's bread to rise while Jenny set about mixing four batches of organic, gluten-free dough. The fire proved difficult to start and needed a fair amount of attention until it was really hot enough to deal with the logs I cut recently. Most of the wood I thought had been around for the best part of a year but judging by the hissing it made and its reluctance to burn, it did not seem to have dried out enough. A bit of friendly persuasion using a load of old sticks and a full air draught finally had the stove roaring and the temperature up enough to tackle the logs. It was then a question of putting on more logs while there was still enough heat to ignite them.

I had put the central heating on in the morning, as we tended to do during the cold spells but the fire soon overrode the thermostat, taking the temperature up to 22.5°C. I was expecting it to go higher.

Having to keep an eye on the fire meant staying in the lounge, so I decided to bring this diary up to date and tackle this week's Radio Times Crossword.

We seemed to be plagued with unsolicited telephone calls on this particular day. It started about 8 a.m. with an international call and we received four or five more calls from either international, unspecified or unrecognised numbers, all of which we ignored and we let the answering machine deal with them. None of the callers left any message. It was their time and money they were wasting, not mine.

Tuesday, 22nd January 2019

I spent much of the day downloading the Pictures of London from Rachel's camera and improving some of them to produce clearer and brighter images because it had been such a dull week end.

That process was interrupted by a trip into Ramsbottom because Jenny wanted some birthday cards from the very good card shop there. We toured the charity shops and I found eight DVDs in the last one we visited, priced at £1.50 each or two for the price of one. In effect, each one cost me 75p. Unfortunately, I bought one I already had and which, due to an oversight, was not on my list so that was destined for our car booty. I also found a Stephane Grappelli CD for 49p.

While in the last charity shop, I received a call on my mobile telephone from BT. Apparently, BT could not honour the contract I had been offered for my telephone and broadband in that the monthly £17 discount could not be applied to my bill. One of the options I was offered was for BT to credit me with a one-off lump-sum equal to the monthly discount for the life of the contract, which meant I would then be billed each month for the full amount. The end result would be the same cost over the life of the contract, which I thought was somewhat perverse but perfectly acceptable. BT departments really ought to talk to each other and sort out their pricing and invoicing structure.

I wish I ran BT. I would soon sort it out and a few heads would roll. What's more, I would take on the job for a hell of a lot less than the chap who does it now and everyone else who wanted to work for me would do the same. I'd make it quite clear that the customer came first and my priority would be to make sure my customers stayed with me and that all of them paid a fair and the same price for any given service, thus streamlining and simplifying the pricing structure.

My last productive task of the day was to clean my walking boots and make sure they were waterproofed for the following morning.

Wednesday, 23rd January 2019

I was up early and out in the snow just in time to meet Mike walking up to join Steve and Frank. We walked up Holcombe Road to Bolton Road West, crossed over and walked up Redisher Lane. It was a very cold, winter's day with bright sunshine and a blue sky, producing a lovely photographic opportunity.

We entered Redisher Wood and followed the main track, crossing the second bridge and turning left up the track to Simon's Lodge. We took the second path up the hillside onto the ridge and turned left. Not unexpectedly, the higher we went, the deeper the snow became. We followed the track along the ridge to join Moor Bottom Road, the rough track along the base of Holcombe Hill. We walked along the road until we came to the track that climbed the hill gently. On the top, we crossed the moor to Pilgrim's Cross. Normally, this area was quite difficult to navigate, the ground being mostly peat and very wet but in this cold spell it was quite firm and covered in snow by about four or five inches.

There was some discussion about the route at this point. The plan had been to make our way over to Bull Hill but a passer-by informed us that the paths around that area were very boggy. The suggestion was to head straight down to Ramsbottom by the quickest route but since we had not walked very far up to this point, I suggested we made our way to Buckden Wood and follow that path down to Stubbins, giving us a choice of either walking along the road or along the path by the River Irwell into Ramsbottom.

In the end we did head straight down, across rough and difficult land to reach the main track along the side of Holcombe Hill, where we stopped briefly for the lunch. Since Buckden Wood was in sight, we followed my suggestion, although it would have been much easier going if we had followed the proper path from Pilgrim's Cross.

We decided the path by the river would be too muddy and walked along the road into Ramsbottom where we had a coffee and chatted for a couple of hours or so.

By the time we left, it had turned misty and dull and the suggestion was to catch the bus back towards home. Since I hadn't brought my buss pass because the original plan had been to come down to the Hare and Hounds at Holcombe Brook for tea before walking home, I suggested walking home.

Rather than take the road, we walked through the park and along by the river, following the track into Summerseat and we walked home from there.

We met Christine with a few walkers who had been out for a day's hike while walking by the river and they left us to take the track to Holcombe Brook.

Since I was back earlier than expected and had not had any tea, Jenny had to alter her meal plans and made what was going to be the following day's tea for this evening while I had a quick shower.

It had been a pleasant day but disappointing in that we had not walked faster and further, having covered only about four to five miles. This wasn't going to get me back up to 20 miles a day.

Thursday, 24th January 2019

Jenny went for lunch with Gwen. I spent the morning and early part of the afternoon tidying up the recorded TV programmes we had watched, listening to this week's episode of Beyond Our Ken from 1959, showing Jenny, when she returned home, the photos I took of the previous day's walk and updating this diary of fascinating events.

I took time out around lunchtime to nip into Ramsbottom for a card for Jenny's birthday, which was on the coming Sunday.

Friday, 25th January 2019

This was the usual grocery shopping day.

We started with a visit to our nearest Aldi at Crosstones on our way into Bury to see if they had any windscreen covers for Rachel's car to stop the screen freezing in winter and the interior overheating in summer. There were several in stock and we bought two.

We went next door to Home Bargains where Highland Spring bottled water was much cheaper than anywhere else. We purchased three six-packs of 1.5 litre bottles and one twelve-pack of handy-sized 0.5 litre bottles.

It was a short journey to Tesco in Bury for some Diesel before driving down to the M60 junction in Prestwich. The M60 was flowing unusually well and we reached Unicorn in Chorlton in close to record time.

After that, we had another short hop to Morrison's supermarket in Chorlton before moving on to Waitrose at Broadheath.

I would say we had lunch there but the only gluten-free option was either a piece of polenta cake or a muffin so we had the former with a pot of tea each.

We left Waitrose at 3 p.m. and made our way back to the M60. No sooner had we joined the motorway then we had to slow down from 70 m.p.h to 60, then 50, then 40, then 5 and we crawled at that speed until we had passed the M62 junction, when everything speeded up again. I just couldn't get my head round why the vast majority of drivers could not leave gaps and merge at speed instead of having to slow down. Perhaps speed merging at 60 to 70 m.p.h. should be introduced into the test.

It took an hour to reach Bury and we called at Bargain Booze in Tottington on the way home for some wine. Bargain Booze was the only high-street store where we found prices consistently reasonable.

Saturday, 26th January 2019

We decided to tackle some electrical jumble at the Old School and spent most of the day there along with a large number of volunteers preparing for the evening's Burn's Night.

Sunday, 27th January 2019

After a lazy start, we went out for lunch at the Duckworth Arms for Jenny's birthday with Matthew, Carrie, Rachel and Carrie's parents, Bob and Marie. We gave Bob and Marie a lift since their house was more or less on the way and stopped off there on the way back for a cup of tea/coffee and a chat.

Monday, 28th January 2019

Jenny went out for a birthday lunch with Lynn and Sheila at the Summerseat Garden Centre. I tidied up the recorded TV programmes we had watched and spent most of the day working on the photographs of our London week end, putting them on the web site.

Tuesday, 29th January 2019

We spent most of the day tidying up the conservatory and lounge and putting the grandfather clock back between the two lounge windows.

I managed time out to finish the Radio Times crossword and to deal with my E-mails.

Wednesday, 30th January 2019

I went walking with the chaps again. The original plan was to meet at Frank's house at 9:15 so that Gwen could give us a lift to Bury to catch the bus to Burnley where we were starting to walk the Burnley Way.

The overnight snow resulted in a change of plan and the Burnley Way was put on hold. Instead, we met at the Old School at 9:30 to walk to Turton via Jumbles Country Park and head back to Holcombe Brook via a circular route.

I was first at the Old School, joined by Mike, then Steve and Frank and we had a quick chat with one of our neighbours, Dave before heading off past the church to the golf course. At the back of the church, Mike decided he didn't want to come after all and went home.

The three of us continued across the golf course, up to Hollymount and took the path by the side of the orchard down to Two Brooks Valley. We crossed the stream and went up the opposite side to join the track to Bottoms Hall Cottages. From there, we took the gentler track up the hillside to eventually emerge on Turton Road, after going a little off-piste in the snow, which deepened as we climbed, making the going hard.

We crossed Turton Road and climbed again, going even more off-piste, emerging at Affetside by the Pack Horse Inn. We ignored the pub, crossed over and descended, following the West Pennine Way, a circular route devised by one of our local celebrities, local historian and church elder, Christine Taylor. We crossed Bradshaw Road and took the track by Bradshaw Hall Fisheries and then the path to the right up to the Jumbles café, which was closed. We sat at the picnic tables for lunch. Unfortunately, while we could clear the covering of snow off the benches, they had a good coating of ice so it was somewhat uncomfortable, even through the waterproof over-trousers and thermal underwear.

After lunch, we continued along the track by the reservoir and the stream to Turton Bottoms, where we turned right, facing a steep climb up a path through the fields. We followed paths and tracks on which I had never been before to eventually drop down into Hawkshaw, not far from the Red Lion pub.

We stopped there for a tea/coffee, followed by a pint of beer before walking along the road through Hawkshaw to pick up a track to the right across the fields back to Hollymount, from where we retraced our outward route across the golf course and home.

As you can see, our intended route had been somewhat modified and we had covered some 7 or 8 miles, which had been hard going.

Thursday, 31st January 2019

I spent some time generating the web pages for the London pictures on my web site. I took time out to walk up to the Tottington Centre, the former Library, with Jenny to return some books she had borrowed. While we were there, we had a nice, gluten-free lunch in the tea rooms and Jenny and I found some new books to borrow.