

Greenmount January 2021

Friday, 1st January 2021

Most of my day was spent thumbing through the TV listings for the coming week and cataloguing the programmes for recording.

Saturday, 2nd January 2021

My task list for the day was

- Put in the TV recordings for next week
- Renew the house insurance
- Contact my GP for my test results
- Check my e-mails
- Edit the recorded TV programmes
- Download the remaining pictures of the village advent windows

I started by renewing my subscription to Norton (now Norton Lifelock) for another year. That resulted in the need to update Norton Security to the new 360 Premium version and to make sure that was done on Rachel's laptop as well.

With that came a free Norton Utilities Premium licence so long as my subscription was renewable, the catch being that the price doubled on renewal in January next year. I did have the option to cancel that before renewal, though.

I unloaded Norton Utilities version 16, for which I had a perpetual licence, restarted the PC and downloaded the new version of Utilities. I ran that and it tidied up my PC and improved the performance. Interestingly, it did not have the option to spruce up my registry, as did the earlier version 16.

All of that led me to my E-mails so I dealt with them as well, including replies as necessary. Norton threw up an interesting reference to my E-mail address on the "Dark Web". I followed the evidence to the web site responsible with the intention of deleting my account, except my account did not exist. I gave up on that one.

I also logged on to leave a message for my GP to contact me by telephone. The facility to leave a message was unavailable, presumably because the surgery was closed for the week end. The GP with whom I had been discussing my reflux problem was not in at all during the coming week. I decided to leave a message for another GP I knew at the practice on Monday.

Believe it or not, all of this activity took me to 2:30 p.m.; admittedly, we didn't breakfast until 10:30 a.m. and I did take time out to do the dishes, etc.

Jenny had wanted to go out for a walk but the lovely, blue sky and sunshine had given way to clouds and very heavy snow. That didn't last and Jenny disappeared on her own while I was typing away.

I put in the TV programmes for the coming week and decided to review my house insurance renewal. That didn't go well. I couldn't get into the web site to check my policy.

By this time Jenny and Rachel, who went to look for her, were back and I decided to watch the rest of the Hercule Poirot DVD with Rachel while Jenny prepared tea.

After tea we played Categorically Speaking, a word game, for a couple of hours.

Sunday, 3rd January 2021

The forecast for the week was reasonable, overcast with the odd sunny period, dry and cold. We didn't wake until around 10 a.m. and by the time we had showered and dressed, it was going on for 11:30 a.m. Still, it didn't matter. There was nothing that required immediate attention, particularly with everything locked down due to the pandemic.

I kept a low profile while Jenny prepared our porridge for breakfast.

The recording of Entebbe from BBC 2 yesterday stopped short on the desktop because WinTV failed to extend the file to which it was writing. This happened occasionally for some inexplicable reason and I decided to try to resurrect Windows Media Centre. That was well and truly trashed and even the reinstallation procedure in Windows 7 didn't work.

I tried the back up system disc. That wouldn't boot so I put in the Windows 7 issue disc and let it load up to the point where it asked me if I wanted to repair the installation. I shut down at that point and rebooted. The back up disc seemed to reboot alright so I assumed that the issue disc had repaired to boot sector on it.

Having loaded the back-up system, I had a look at EPG123 and I was messing around with that when Norton wanted to do an update so I concentrated on that, which took ages. It was, of course, installing the new Norton 360 for which I had recently renewed the licence. Since time was pressing for a scheduled recording using WinTV, I thought it best to close down the back up disc and revert to the original disc to allow the recording to proceed and come back to the back-up disc later.

Meanwhile, I went outside to shuffle the cars around so that if it froze overnight, Rachel wouldn't have to waste time in the morning defrosting the car, since it would be protected under the car port, while mine was on the road.

While outside, I picked up a drinks can some moron had thrown on the common land at the side of the drive and put it in the recycle bin. While I was toggled up, Jenny asked me to fetch a couple of blackberry crumbles for tea from the garage freezer, which I did after giving my hands a good wash.

Back at the desktop, I let Norton complete its scan to bring it up to date and then reverted to the original system disc just in time to record a TV programme.

Monday, 4th January 2021

I had to get up early (well, about 8:30 a.m.) to put Rachel's car on the road so she could go to work. Neither Rachel nor Jenny liked taking the car up the steep drive.

Our day was taken up with dismantling the Christmas tree and tidying up afterwards. We had boxed everything up by 4 p.m. but decided to leave piling the boxes back up in the garage loft until tomorrow since it was starting to go dark, it was very cold outside and the stepladders I needed in the garage were in the back bedroom.

I hadn't had time to either contact my GP or renew the house insurance and I still had to go outside to put out the recycling bin for collection in the morning.

The second-hand box set of the Marx Brothers films I had ordered from We Buy Books through Amazon Marketplace arrived while we were contemplating lunch. The DVDs looked in reasonable condition. The box had a little wear and tear. If the six films played alright, it wasn't a bad purchase at the price.

Tuesday, 5th January 2021

I started my day by reviewing the house insurance policy.

I left off to fetch the bin down after it had been emptied, bring the car down the drive so it wouldn't need defrosting before use in the morning if it froze overnight, light a fire, do the dishes and to fetch the step-ladders downstairs to put the Christmas items back in the garage loft for another year. The latter also led to a little tidying in the loft and when I was finishing, the tough, plastic/rubber support on the right-hand top of the first step-ladder extension broke off and needed fixing. Since it was approaching 2 p.m., I decided it was time for lunch.

After lunch, I had another bash at my house insurance and the problem I had logging on to the web site. When I clicked on the Log In button nothing happened. I tracked that problem down to an issue with using Google Chrome and, eventually, seemingly, to a problem with the Norton Safe Web extension. I contacted Norton support and a very helpful lady connected to my computer and fixed the problem. When I asked what caused the problem, she said there was nothing wrong and all she had done was a Norton update, which installed one item. I was at a loss for words (not like me at all).

I went back to the insurer's web site and tried logging on. It wouldn't recognise my password. It took two attempts to reset it before I could log on. I went to the live chat to sort out my renewal. Live chat was unavailable. It was getting on to 5 p.m. and I gave up for the day. I had all the information I needed, including a telephone number for the call centre, so a quick telephone call tomorrow was all that was needed, I hoped.

Wednesday, 6th January 2021

Our first grocery-shopping outing of the New Year and under the new, nation-wide lockdown was completed without a hitch. We arrived at Sainsbury's store at Heaton Park for about 7:45 a.m. and the place was almost deserted. It did become a little busier as we progressed through the aisles.

We stopped off at Denis Gore's Chemist shop at Heaton Park on the way up to the Prestwich branch of Tesco, where we bought a few extra items.

Organic vegetables seemed to be in short supply and there were no organic blueberries to be seen. We thought this might be due to the disruption of traffic between England and France as a result of leaving the EU. Most of the Yellowtail wine was £7 a bottle, the one exception, thankfully, being Chardonnay, which was at the more reasonable price of £6 a bottle at Sainsbury's.

We were home for about 11:15, with sunshine, lots of blue sky and the outside temperature hovering around 2°C. The temperature inside was about 16°C, cold enough to turn the central heating on even though the timer was off.

Apart from lighting a fire, lunch and tackling the dishes, I spent most of the afternoon arranging the house insurance renewal and thumbing through the TV listings to select recordings for next week. I took an hour out of the latter to chat with my sister Barbara on the telephone.

Thursday, 7th January 2021

After a late breakfast, I relaxed for about half an hour, listening to a recording of Beyond Our Ken from BBC Radio 4 Extra earlier this morning, originally broadcast in 1961. The recording was not of the usual quality because it had been made from the original radio broadcast, which suggests it had been obtained from a listener, the original having been lost by the BBC. Still, it was perfectly acceptable and it was nice to hear it again after 60 years, when I was 13 years old. What was probably unique about this broadcast of the last show in the fourth series was that, firstly, there was a one-liner from the writer, Eric Merriman, in the closing piece and, secondly, the signature tune was played in full at the end, making the running time 31 minutes.

With the dishes washed, Jenny threw me out of the kitchen to keep it warm and sealed so she could bake some bread.

Jenny's documents we had sent off to renew her driving licence had been returned from the DVLA and I filed those away.

I did some more hole-filling in the back bedroom. Since my step-ladders were temporarily out of action, I borrowed Jenny's step-stool from the kitchen, despite having fallen off them when decorating a few times before, because the legs were not set at the extremities or pointed radially outwards, thereby allowing one to put one's weight outside the centre of gravity of the base. Knowing this, I still managed to crash to the floor once again while holding my float and trowel.

I banged the outside of my right arm just above the wrist and scraped my left shin just above the ankle on my left leg against the furniture that was stacked in the middle of the room. Fortunately, the injuries were minor and not overly painful.

The noise prompted a shout from Jenny asking if I was alright, to which I replied in the negative. Fortunately, she was at a point in her bread-baking where she could leave off and she came to my assistance.

I managed to pick myself up of the floor, slowly, with Jenny's help and finished off using the filler I had mixed. She then tended my wounds, applying Aloe Vera gel from one of our plants to my arm to calm the bruising. It was not possible to use it on my leg because it was grazed and bleeding slightly, so that was dealt with in the bathroom, washed using Dettol, dried with a tissue, treated with Savlon and covered with a plaster.

I tidied up and then sanded down the layers of plaster I had applied over the two vertical pieces of scrim, with which I had covered plasterboard joints where the original plaster had cracked. I finished off by wiping the area down with a damp cloth and tidied up again.

After lunch, I edited the TV recordings from last evening and this morning, nursing my wounds. I also tidied up some of the programmes we had watched over the past week.

Friday, 8th January 2021

I started searching the coming week's TV listings on the PC for series I recorded and for items of special interest, as usual.

That was interrupted by a telephone call from the dentist for Jenny at 10:00 a.m. asking her if she could attend at 10:30 for a check-up. I said I would drive her up to Holcombe Brook (about ten minutes by car) and we hurriedly dressed for the near-freezing conditions outside.

I waited in the car while Jenny went into the surgery, where she had her teeth cleaned. They were otherwise alright even though it was a year since her last appointment.

I continued with my original task and put in the TV programmes for recording. That was interspersed with the odd job, helping Jenny in the kitchen.

One task was to check the left oven in the kitchen range cooker. The items baked of late seemed to be rather well done. We used an oven thermometer to check the temperature of the oven against the gas mark selected. The oven was overheating considerably and the conclusion was that the thermocouple was not working properly. From past experience, I knew that the thermocouple was an integral part of the gas valve, bolted onto the oven at the back. Furthermore, I knew that the design of the gas valve for the left oven was different to that of the right oven and they were not interchangeable so it was important, when replacing a gas valve, to purchase the correct one.

This would be the third time I had to have a gas valve replaced on this Rangemaster Professional Plus, the first being the same oven very soon after installation and the second the other oven just after the warranty ran out. I had never known a gas oven to

need a gas valve or thermocouple replacing in all my 65 years before I bought this one in 2012. It is the worst cooker I had ever known and I didn't intend to touch another one of the same make with a barge pole.

I checked some of my outstanding E-mails and in reply to an article on Squawkbox about the Covid-19 pandemic, I posted the following comment:

“The fact that we have an incompetent and indecisive Government has been clear from the start of the pandemic. Our Government failed to lock down the whole of the UK when the first case was identified here, including a ban on people entering and leaving the UK. The internal lockdown should have been kept in place until all cases and contacts had been located and isolated. The international travel ban should have been kept in place except for essential travel and we should have adopted similar procedures to those still in place in New Zealand and Australia. At the time of the first case, there was enough evidence from China of the behaviour of the virus to take these measures.

From the outset, this Government has been putting its own interests and those of its close friends first, before those of the general public. Until now, infections and deaths have been treated as though they were collateral damage.

Watching the behaviour of our Prime Minister and his colleagues at the press conference on Thursday, 7th January 2021, I was forming the impression that the Government was, at last, becoming somewhat worried about the situation, hence the present restrictions. I noticed that Boris Johnson dodged the question put to him asking if he regretted his decision to relax the regulations for Christmas Day.

During the pandemic, it has been clear that the Government, while verbally supporting the NHS, was very keen to try to manage the pandemic centrally using people with no health care experience. Was this because there was (and maybe still is) a plan to privatise healthcare in the UK? What other reason could there be for not putting the matter in the hands of the experienced NHS people?

There has certainly been a lot of dodgy dealing in respect of PPE and a good few of the Governments 'friends' seem to have made a lot of money out of the public's misery.

One useful law the Government could introduce would be for landlords not to be allowed to charge rent for commercial properties forced to close during lockdowns and to have to refund any rent so paid since the pandemic started. It is time greedy landlords suffered like the rest of us instead of forcing businesses into bankruptcy, which is to no-one's advantage.

Thankfully, we now have two vaccines which are being deployed and, at last, GPs are being given the opportunity to immunise patients with it – provided they receive the supplies they need. The distribution logistics is in the hands of the military. The question is whether the military is competent enough to undertake the task. Do we have the kind of military leadership that used infantry to attack machine guns and heavy artillery head-on or the kind that led the troops at the Battle of Imphal/Kohima, when British troops fighting in horrendous jungle conditions turned the tide against the Japanese army in World War II?”

Saturday, 9th January 2021

I started my day reasonably productively, if somewhat late, by pot-washing, cleaning and bleeding the bathroom radiator, emptying the vacuum cleaner, taking the sorted rubbish to the various bins (we had four), cleaning the filters in the two dehumidifiers and vacuuming up the dust I created in the back bedroom from sanding the plaster the other day. I also retrieved a tube of hand-cream that had disappeared on the floor behind my bedside cabinet for Jenny.

I edited a few TV recordings from last evening and this morning and dealt with a few E-mails and found a few moments to spend last week's Radio Times crossword, which I had started before going to bed last evening.

Rachel replied to her mum's text message to say she would not be coming today.

I fetched in the tools I needed to repair the step ladders. It was too cold to work outside and going dark so I decided to repair the ladders tomorrow in the bedroom I am decorating. I still needed a small nut, bolt and washer from the garage.

Jenny asked me to peel some potatoes for tea and I thought I would have a look for a new gas valve for the existing range cooker to see how much it would cost to repair it. The good news was that my favourite plumber was still in business and would be available to fit a new gas valve once the pandemic restrictions were lifted, assuming I could find a spare part and he gave me a ball-park cost.

Sunday, 10th January 2021

We didn't seem to be rising too early these dark, miserable, wet, winter mornings and it was about noon by the time we had finished the dishes from last evening and this morning.

Carrie called to drop off a birthday card for Rachel and a small tub in which Jenny had supplied apple sauce to Bob and Marie on Christmas Day. We took the opportunity to have a quick chat. Matt was supposed to have let me know, on Skype, before he went bike riding, Carrie was calling but he later told me he had forgotten to do so, not that it mattered, because I hadn't looked at Skype, thus far, today, anyway.

With a break for lunch at about 1:30, I spent most of my day tidying up the programmes we had watched for the past week and backing up my media.

I had finished that by about 4 p.m. and settled down to listen to Jazz Record Requests. As usual, most of the Jazz played was not particularly to my taste. Worthy of note were "The Blue Room" with Joe Venuti and Cole Porter's "You're the Top" sung by Stacey Kent.

Monday, 11th January 2021

I finally managed to book a slot with my GP for a telephone consultation regarding my reflux problem. The Esomeprazole tablets didn't seem to be completely resolving the problem. The odd glass of Tonic Water helped quite a bit.

After pot washing, I braved the foul, dark, wet weather to put out the refuse bins for collection tomorrow and to fetch the step-ladders in from the garage to repair in the back bedroom.

Stage one of the repair was to remove the rivet that had been holding the rubber guard in place at the top right of the first extension. That went according to plan using a thin, straight-bladed hand saw, a punch and a small hammer.

The second stage was to glue the rubber guard where it had cracked. I applied super-glue and clamped it, leaving it to set.

I measured the diameter of the hole and the length of the bolt or rivet I would require to reattach the rubber guard and then left off for a refreshment break.

I took the rest period to deal with some e-mails and to check a few items for Jenny on the PC.

Earlier, John Lewis had e-mailed me to say the item I wanted to supplement Rachel's Christmas present was back in stock. It wasn't. Either they had lied or all the new stock had been snaffled up, in which case they obviously didn't order enough of the item.

I checked my inventory and located some pop rivets that would fix the rubber guard in place. I fetched those from the garage. I still needed to locate the pop rivet gun.

I could still use the step-ladders in the normal way without the missing piece so I used the remainder of my Polyfilla in the large hole above the right-hand side of the window. It wasn't enough to finish it off though and the rest of the filling work would have to wait until I had bought some more filler on our way out grocery shopping on Wednesday.

I tidied up and took a call from my GP. The good news was that my sample had tested negative for any stomach bug so that wasn't the cause of my problem. The plan was to continue my Esomeprazole for the rest of my existing pack and then stop the medication to see what happened. If the symptoms recurred, as I expected them to do, I would be treated to yet another gastroscopy. I couldn't wait.

I topped up Jenny's mobile telephone for her after she had been exchanging texts with Rachel, the result of which was that Rachel would be with us tomorrow.

Tuesday, 12th January 2021

It was Rachel's birthday.

The forecast was for a lovely, sunny day and we planned to go for a walk. We went out about 11:30 a.m. and stopped to talk to a couple of neighbours for a few minutes before heading off to Holcombe Brook along the main road. We took the bridal path round behind the Hare and Hounds public house and took the cobbled track along the bottom of Holcombe Hill, making for Peel Tower on the top. Keeping to hard-surfaced tracks avoided the soggy, muddy ground after days of very wet weather.

There were stunning, clear views from the top of the hill, although there was some cloud over Manchester to the south. While it was warm climbing the steep path to the top, it was quite cool, even in the sun, with the northerly breeze in our faces, as we continued along the track, past the tower. Where the track met the one coming up from Holcombe village, we turned right and followed the track downhill, heading back towards home, eventually joining the route along which we came.

We were home for about 2:30 p.m. to find a present for Rachel from my sister, Barbara and had a nice cup of tea and a small snack in lieu of lunch.

Rachel arrived shortly afterwards.

Wednesday, 13th January 2021

Jenny and I left to go grocery shopping at about 8:15 a.m. We called at B&Q, just off the motorway in Bury, for some Polyfilla before heading down the M66 to take the M60 westbound, heading for Unicorn in Chorlton. We arrived early and waited in the car until almost opening time, when Jenny went to join the small queue. I remained in the car, listening to a CD of Kenny Ball and reading the current issue of Private Eye.

We both went into Waitrose at Broadheath for the second round of groceries and then made our way home, calling at Matthew and Carrie's house to drop off a stand, which Jenny had taken from her car boot, for one of Carrie's mum's dolls. We took the opportunity to have a quick look at their new Jacuzzi, which was very impressive.

After lunch, we had a relaxing afternoon. We had been up since 6 a.m. and I was quite tired, the motorway driving having demanded a good deal of concentration as a result of the reduced visibility due to the very wet weather producing lots of spray. Vehicles being driven without fog lights, particularly at the rear, didn't help, not to mention those driven with no lights at all.

I made a start on next week's TV listings.

Thursday, 14th January 2021

It was a day of odd jobs here and there and continuing to thumb through the TV listings.

Friday, 15th January 2021

We had intended to walk down to Summerseat Garden Centre. Jenny wanted a birthday card for a friend and I wanted one for my sister Edith in New Zealand. We called briefly

at Lynn and John's, two good friends of ours, on the way to catch up on events and it was fortunate we did so. Lynn informed us that the garden centre was not open.

Instead, we headed up to Holcombe Brook Post Office and obtained the cards we wanted from there.

After lunch at home, I finished off planning what TV programmes to record for the coming week and put in the recordings for tomorrow.

Saturday, 16th January 2021

In between a few odd jobs here and there for Jenny and lighting and tending the fire, I finished putting in the TV programmes to record for the coming week, tidied up the TV programmes we had watched the previous week and performed the weekly back-up my documents as usual. I dealt with my backlog of E-mails and continued scanning the next Datacare document for my web site.

Sunday, 17th January 2021

We walked into Ramsbottom for a few grocery items from Plentiful, nipped into Morrison's small supermarket for some dinner candles they didn't have and then walked home again.

Shortly after returning home, my sister Barbara rang and we chatted for about an hour.

Monday, 18th January 2021

It was the day for the car's annual service and MOT. I was up just after 6 a.m. and I was at Finney's Garage, just the other side of Bury, for about 8:15 a.m.

I had a chat with the chap on reception about the timing belt, which I had listed as scheduled to be changed according to manufacturer's (V.W.'s) instructions. Due to the low annual mileage, he recommended not changing it this year so I took his advice.

I walked back to Bury up Manchester Road and then took Cycle Route 6, using the old Bury to Holcombe Brook railway branch line route, back to Greenmount, about four and a half miles, all up-hill. That took me about an hour and a half in the rain. My so-called waterproof Berghaus jacket was wet on the inside so I didn't intend to buy another one of those, this second one replacing the first for the same reason. In contrast, my thermal, shower-proof, Craighopper trousers were completely dry on the inside. I had been wearing my Clarks, leather, hiking boots and they kept my feet nice and dry, helped, I suspected, by giving them a good clean and a couple of coats of Dubbin. My walking socks had rubbed my feet a little, which were a touch on the tender side underneath, at the front. I obviously needed to do some more walking to toughen up my feet.

Matthew telephoned to say he would collect the car for me and bring it home to save me walking down again, which was just as well because it started to throw it down again. The plan was for Carrie to follow him up in their car and then take Matthew home.

The chap from the garage telephoned to let me know the car needed a new fuel pump and checked with me that it was alright to fit one. I said it was. I told him about Matthew collecting the car and I said I could pay him over the telephone when he rang to tell me the car was ready. He said that wasn't a problem and I could call in to pay him when I was passing, so I decided to do that on Wednesday when we went grocery shopping.

Matt brought the car back at about 4:30 p.m.

Meanwhile, Jenny and I spent the afternoon taking the range cooker out and cleaning behind it. The main reason I moved the cooker was to have a look at the gas control mechanism to make sure I ordered the correct part to repair the left oven.

There was a sticker displaying what I took to be a part number on the component that regulated the flame on the left oven and a search for that identified a flame failure device from Rangemaster that looked like the part I needed. I sent an online enquiry asking for confirmation that this was the part that would fix my problem.

The part that 4ourhouse.co.uk had earlier identified when I sent them my cooker model and serial numbers was the wrong one.

I took a picture of the back of the range, having removed the cover over the gas control mechanisms for both ovens and saved that for future reference.

The one outstanding job for tomorrow was to raise the front of the oven to level it.

The dentist's receptionist rang to confirm my appointment for tomorrow.

Tuesday, 19th January 2021

After washing the dishes, levelling the cooker, would you believe, took the rest of the morning. There was no easy way to adjust the front feet. It was a case of lifting the front, using wooden wedges to obtain the level and then screwing the front feet down by hand from the top. One would have thought the feet would have been better designed so one could use a spanner under the cooker, just above the foot or an Allen Key inserted in the screw shaft at the top. Adjusting the rear feet (rollers) was easy enough using a 13 mm spanner on a bolt on each side at the front. It was surprising how difficult it was to level the appliance. If British builders could lay level floors, it wouldn't be a problem but when they can't even make wooden floors supported by joists level, what hope was there for solid floors?

I spent most of the afternoon compiling a letter to include with my elder sister's (Edith's) birthday card for 1st February. I also intended to include some pictures for her to remind her of our visit to New Zealand and I searched for some appropriate ones that I thought would jog her memory. I needed to do all this as soon as possible because it would take at least a week for the card to reach NZ by air-mail.

Wednesday, 20th January 2021

Jenny had intended to be at Sainsbury's store in Heaton Park for this week's grocery shopping by 7:30 a.m. but my feeble attempt to set the alarm failed miserably and I didn't wake until 7:30, so it was almost 9:30 by the time we reached our destination.

Fortunately, the store wasn't very busy and we went straight in rather than having to wait in a queue, as we did when the pandemic first reared its ugly head. I suspected the very heavy rain had deterred a lot of people from coming out.

We called at Tesco in Prestwich, as usual, on the way home to top up with items not available at Sainsbury's store. I also stopped at Finney's garage to pay for the car service and MOT which they did on Monday.

My afternoon at home was one of various bits of administration like taxing the car, submitting meter readings for the gas and electricity consumption, reconciling the accounts and such.

Thursday, 21st January 2021

I left at about 8:15 a.m. for my Covid-19 jab at Ramsbottom Civic Hall, scheduled for 8:40 a.m. The journey in only took about ten minutes and I parked up in the Civic Centre car park after confirming my appointment with a chap outside.

I passed two chaps at the entrance to the passage, signed as the entrance, who directed me to the back of the building, where I was shown inside by a lady, to a queuing system with social distancing. I was at the front of the queue.

I was called quite quickly to one of three ladies, seated at desks, who confirmed my details and I was given some paperwork to take into the front hall, where I was directed to one of three queuing systems for inoculations. I was again at the front of the queue, for room 2, where I stood for about ten minutes while the previous couple were processed.

A young gentleman invited me into the cubicle, where I prepared for my vaccination in my left arm and sat down. He asked me for my paperwork and also verified my details before injecting the Pfizer vaccine into the muscle at the top of my left arm. The injection was fairly painless.

Putting on my fleece and coat, I left with my documentation and a sticker to say I had been vaccinated, to take a seat in the main hall, where I had to wait approximately fifteen minutes before leaving, presumably to make sure I did not have an immediate and bad reaction to the vaccine.

I had no difficulty driving home, apart from a bit of a delay at the main crossroads at Dundee Lane, where there were long traffic queues in both directions due to road-works for laying new electricity cables.

I called at the Holcombe Brook Post Office on the way home to post Edith's birthday card to New Zealand, to buy a nice birthday card for Jenny and to replenish my wallet with ready cash, not that I used much of it.

Although I had some cereal earlier, before leaving, I came home to a proper English Breakfast. After that I finished this week's Radio Times crossword and Jenny, Rachel and I were chatting in the lounge.

Friday, 22nd January 2021

It took me all day to go through the TV listings and put in the recordings for the coming week.

Saturday, 23rd January 2021

We didn't get up very early so breakfast became lunch.

Matthew and Carrie called round with a grocery item they had ordered for us with their recent Ocado delivery and we had a chat at a safe distance.

Shortly after that, Jenny's friend, Lynn and her husband, John, called round with a present for Jenny's 70th birthday on Wednesday. They also chatted with us at a safe distance.

For the rest of the afternoon, I was tidying up the programmes we had watched during the previous week and performing my weekly data back-up.

Sunday, 24th January 2021

I continued the hole-filling in the back bedroom while Jenny made some bread. Some cracks had appeared in and around the large hole that I had partially filled already on the top, right of the window and I enlarged those cracks to fill the whole of it (no pun intended).

Satisfied with that, I left it to set and started work on the crack between the back wall and the internal wall, to the left of the window. Making an internal corner was not easy.

All of that took me until lunchtime and I had a short rest afterwards before tackling the hole to the under of the windowsill on the left. After that, I finished off the bottom of the scrim to the right of the door, filled in a few odd bits in the walls here and there, the holes in the ceiling where the halogen spotlights had been and a few of the chips in the ceiling caused by removing the textured paint.

I noticed another crack in the wall to the right of the cupboard door, from the ceiling to the top of the door frame, probably caused by another badly applied strip of scrim. That was another bit of wall that needed chiselling out, some new scrim applying and plastering up again.

At that point, having used up the filler I had mixed, I cleaned my tools and packed up for the day, since it was about 4:30 p.m.

Monday, 25th January 2021

We had another lie-in and it was hair trimming day. That, followed by a shower, breakfast, the dishes, dealing with my E-mails and putting the bins out for collection tomorrow took me until 2:15 p.m. It was amazing how quickly time went.

It was, for the most part, a nice, sunny day and, with the central heating on, it was nice and warm inside, even in the conservatory, which was warmed by the sun. Outside was literally freezing, even though the sun had melted some of the overnight snow earlier.

I did a little sanding of the plastering I had done in the back bedroom and then came downstairs to help Jenny by vacuuming the lounge carpet and the hall and the kitchen floors.

After that, it was too late to start anything else so I dealt with my E-mails.

Tuesday, 26th January 2021

Despite a later start than planned, we arrived at Unicorn in Chorlton just after the shop had opened. Traffic had been very light.

We were grocery shopping on Tuesday this week to give Jenny a day off on Wednesday, being her 70th birthday.

The journey on to Waitrose in Broadheath was fine too and, coming back to the M60 along the A56 I was able to make good time by dodging the slow-moving traffic, for which there was plenty of room on the road.

It was just after joining the M60 that the day went pear-shaped. A serious accident on the north side of the Manchester Ship Canal bridge had resulted in the closure of two of the three lanes and, with traffic joining the already busy M60 northbound from the south side of the canal, there was a considerable delay, largely because drivers had no concept of how to merge. Merging two lanes into one was a challenge from the majority of drivers. Merging three into one was a nightmare.

For those drivers reading this, the way to merge is simple. If you are in the lane into which traffic wishes to merge, you leave a gap so that one vehicle from the other lane can slot in. You do not drive so close to the vehicle in front as to prevent the merging vehicle from joining your lane. If you are in the lane that is merging into the other lane, you do not merge until you reach the merging point (i.e. where your lane is closed off) and you slot into the gap between the two vehicles. You do not merge early. You do not merge immediately behind another merging vehicle. In other words, you merge like a zip – alternately. Anything else is inconsiderate and causes significant and unnecessary delays for other drivers. If you cannot understand and follow this advice or you are too impatient to do so, you should not be driving. You are a danger to yourself and others, including your passengers.

Approaching the incident, before merging, drivers in the outside lane had to steer as close as possible to the central reservation and drives in the next lane, on the left, had to steer to their left to create a pathway for an ambulance to squeeze through. As we passed the incident, it seemed that, for at least one person, the ambulance was too late.

Having picked up speed, on reaching the M61 junction, a chap in a black vehicle joining the M60 came steaming onto the motorway, across three lanes and nearly swiped the nearside of our car before swerving back into the lane to the left. The driver's obvious intention was to manoeuvre into my lane in front of me. A larger vehicle moved into the lane in front of the black vehicle, forcing the driver, who, according to my wife, was using his mobile telephone at the time, had to slow down. I started my move towards the nearside lane to be in good time to leave at the next exit and Jenny pointed out the vehicle in question as it passed us on the right.

The drive back up to Bury was not bad and we took the route up through Tottington to call at Bargain Booze for some wine. The shop was closed.

We unpacked the car and Jenny stored away the groceries and prepared lunch, after which we washed the dishes and sped off to Bargain Booze in Ramsbottom. I had checked the price of Yellowtail Chardonnay and it was £7 a bottle everywhere, except BB, where the two bottles for £12 deal was still on. This was a mix and match offer, applying to the Rosé and the Shiraz. Perfect!

It was refreshing to observe two kind, thoughtful drivers on this short journey.

As we halted at the traffic lights at the Hare and Hounds pub, the chap behind us, coming down Bolton Road West, stopped and left a gap behind my car so as not to block a driveway on the left. Not many people did that.

As we left BB, I had to pull out into a queue of traffic at the road works and the driver behind me in the queue flashed his headlights to let me out. I was so pre-occupied with turning round to come back, which I did down a side road to the right, that I forgot to thank the driver.

Listening to the evening news, the latest number of deaths attributed to Coronavirus had topped 100,000. When our Prime Minister, Boris Johnson was asked about that figure he quite clearly said that he and his Government had done everything it could to deal with the pandemic.

That was simply not the case. If swift and decisive action had been taken early in 2020 to control our borders and to ensure all arrivals in the UK were quarantined, like the NZ model and like the proposals currently under consideration, we would not have been where we were today.

Wednesday, 27th January 2021

It was a morning of telephone calls and people calling round in person with cards and gifts, this being Jenny's 70th birthday. The living room benefitted from three lovely bunches of flowers, two from Gwen and a beautiful, boxed arrangement sent by Marie

and Bob. There were presents from Sylvia, Gwen and Lynn and seven cards, including one from me!

During the morning, I had managed to squeeze in a retunes of WinTV, which I used for TV and radio recordings on both the desktop and the laptop.

We had planned to walk down to Bury so I could buy some flexible filler from Wickes and so Jenny could pop into Tesco but that would be roughly a 2½ round trip and it was approaching 1 p.m. Although the afternoon was forecast to be fine with sunny periods, it was very damp and Jenny wanted to make a cake.

We decided on a short walk, up to Hollymount and then back across the golf course. I then thought we might extend that a little to take in Old Kays Park and a little of Two Brooks Valley rather than the more direct route to Hollymount, up the lane.

As we walked down from our house, we saw Dave Wainwright on his drive and stopped for a chat for about twenty minutes. As we continued down, along Brookside Close, we met a lady we knew from our village walks and her companion and stopped to talk for a short while.

After those diversions, we decided to do the shorter walk after all and returned home for a quick snack, during which Rachel arrived.

Rachel and Jenny spent what was left of the afternoon in the kitchen while I carried on thumbing through next week's TV listings to mark up what to record.

Thursday, 28th January 2021

Jenny and I went down to Bury in the car, rather than walking since it was dull and raining and I took the opportunity to take some rubbish to the recycling centre.

We called to drop off a few items at Val's (a friend of ours from the old school) home on the outward journey and I dropped off Jenny at Tesco while I dumped the rubbish, went to Halfords for some Glym screen-wash (obtaining a 10% discount through my AA membership) and called at Wickes for a tube of flexible filler for the cracks round the window in the back bedroom.

I joined Jenny in Tesco where we noticed a shelf of Yellowtail Bubbly, so we thought we'd give it a try.

After a late lunch at home, I finished off the TV listings for next week.

Friday, 29th January 2021

I put in the TV recordings for the coming week and brought the accounts up to date, which were in a better state than I expected after a month of heavy expenditure.

I also tidied up the programmes we had watched throughout the week and backed up my data.

Saturday, 30th January 2021

Our day started early. I was up, showered and dressed for just after 9 a.m. Jenny went into the shower after me and I caught up with a few E-mails while she finished and prepared our full English breakfast, which we had occasionally.

After breakfast, I walked round to the pharmacy for my monthly supply of tablets. It was bitter cold outside. There was a strong easterly wind.

When I returned, Jenny asked me to swap the cars round, putting Rachel's car on the drive, under the car port so that it didn't freeze up. She needed it for work on Monday morning.

Before I moved our car, I wiped the windscreen and front wipers with neat Glym screen wash. The screen had been smearing when it was wet and I hoped this would clear it.

My next job outside was to wash the rubber gloves I had used on the car and then I removed those and put on my gardening gloves to stand up the spare fence panels that were stored down the side passage. They had blown over and were leaning against the fence post again.

Back inside the nice, warm house, it was time to attend to the clocks. Both had stopped and needed adjusting, setting and winding.

I tidied up some paperwork and mended a small tear on the Marx Brothers Collection DVD box, the set I had bought second-hand. We had watched all but one of the films and they played well. I had forgotten how clever and funny the dialogue was, not to mention the unusual and entertaining music and the slapstick humour. I resolved to try to obtain the other box set of the remaining films.

In the evening we watched the remaining Marx Brothers film and it was fine, so my purchase was indeed a good one.

Sunday, 31st January 2021

I was editing the TV recordings from yesterday evening and overnight to remove the advertisements and to top and tail them for viewing for most of the morning. There were a lot of them.

Carrie called round with our organic Shitake mushrooms she and Matthew had ordered as part of their Ocado delivery, yesterday.

Jenny and I went for a short walk down to the Co-operative store at Vernon Road. Rachel needed an ingredient for her baking later today. We needed the fresh air and exercise. It was bitterly cold in the easterly wind and our car, parked on the road, had been covered in a heavy frost overnight. The sun was doing its best to break through the clouds, so it was reasonably bright and crystal clear, with excellent views of the distant hills in all directions.

We had a quick snack for lunch and I continued to update this narrative and read through it before publication tomorrow.

I finished off my afternoon with a spell in the back bedroom, first sanding down the cracks I had filled to smooth them off and then chiselling out the plaster round the latest crack I had found above the cupboard door where the plasterboard joined and sticking some new scrim across the joint ready for refilling.