

Greenmount January 2022

Saturday, 1st January 2022

Our New Year started early with Jenny tending to her eye at 4 a.m.

It was noon before we crawled down to breakfast and heating a large pan of water to wash the pots was the first job of the day.

My new Dell laptop crashed and failed to load and I spent about an hour on the telephone to a very helpful chap at Dell support who helped me resolve the problem, which appeared to be due to a corrupt Windows 10 file as a result of the system not being shut down properly or crashing while processing a Windows update.

Jenny and I went for a short walk in the winter sunshine up to Hollymount and back round the golf course for some long-needed exercise. We kept to made paths due to the recent, very wet weather.

I continued my reorganisation of the data on my external hard drives.

Sunday, 2nd January 2022

The plan to go for another walk was scuppered by heavy, persistent rain.

I spent most of the day finishing the reorganisation of my data, backing up my recently accessed files and finishing off with a backlog of e-mails.

Monday, 3rd January 2022

We managed another stroll round the golf course amongst the daily routine jobs, which included my emptying the recycling rubbish into the appropriate waste bins and moving the waste paper and cardboard I had accidentally dumped in the food and garden waste bin a few days ago to the bin for, you guessed it, paper and cardboard.

Tuesday, 4th January 2022

Jenny had a better night's sleep, despite being woken for her eye medication, thanks to a heated blanket throw Matthew and Carrie had bought her for Christmas. She had used the throw as an extra blanket, without being plugged in. The throw kept her warmer in bed and Jenny did not experience any pain in her left leg for the first night for some time. She looked a lot better for it.

The gas man arrived to repair the boiler earlier than expected, just before noon. He quickly located the leak, which was due to a pinhole in the plastic manifold on the right. The previous leak was due to a pinhole in the plastic manifold on the left.

Replacing the right-hand manifold was a major dismantling and reassembly job, involving the removal and refitting of the pump and it took a good couple of hours. The engineer also carried out the annual service, which was due.

Why on earth did Worcester-Bosch use plastic for such crucial parts of a boiler which took a good deal of time and effort to replace? One would have expected these to be made of copper or stainless steel. The answer was, of course cost. My guess was that the cost of replacing these things far outweighed the cost of using better materials in the first place but, then again, if bits didn't need replacing, it would be as profitable, would it? Why make products that last when you can make more money by making products that have to be frequently repaired or replaced more often?

Since the boiler was out of action for a good while and the outside temperature was hovering around 4°C, I lit the log fire to keep us warm. The lounge temperature rose to 25°C which overrode the central heating thermostat when the boiler was repaired. The result was that there was no heating in any of the other rooms and most of the house was quite cold. Normally, we would open the lounge door to the dining room to allow the hot air to warm the dining room and the rooms upstairs but that was obscured by the large Christmas tree and opening the lounge door to the hall and the hall door to the kitchen did not allow the heat to penetrate the whole house.

It was times like this I look back on my childhood in a council house with a coal fire in the living room and a back-boiler for heating the water. That meant the first person up had to clean out the ashes from the previous day, lay the fire and light it. Since it took a while to heat the water, washing in cold water was usual. In the winter we had frost on the inside of the windows, these comprising a thin wooden frame and single panes of glass. How did we ever manage without central heating and double-glazing?

I also recall visiting my father's brother and his wife and their son and his family who lived in two adjoining cottages. The cottages had stone-flagged floors and a kitchen sink with a single, cold tap. Using the toilet meant a trip down the garden to a wooden shed in which there was a seat, in which there was a hole. All deposits went down the hole onto the earth below. My mother's parents did have a flushing toilet in their rented, terrace house – at the end of the back garden. I also remember the gas mantles on the walls of their rooms, used to light the rooms before electricity was installed. By the time I had come along the latter had taken place.

We had come a long way in less than a hundred years and I couldn't help wondering whether we had not progressed too far, too quickly and in the right direction. We had certainly become more sensitive to discomfort and cold and less able to cope with harsher conditions. This did not bode well for the challenges faced by future generations as a result of climate change.

One lesson we should all have learnt by now from the recent Covid pandemic, if from nothing else, is that we have entered the beginning of the age of the survival of the fittest. That wasn't progress. It was regression.

Wednesday, 5th January 2022

We had a trip out to the Manchester Eye Hospital. Jenny had an early morning appointment for a review while I found a quiet place to park, listen to some jazz and fall asleep.

The surgeon/consultant was pleased with Jenny's progress and arranged a further review on 19th January, adding a third set of medication for her eye.

As we had lunch, I pondered a problem with my new Dell laptop yet again, which took about an hour to resolve. The network connection was showing no Internet availability. I checked that from my desktop and it was fine so the problem was with the laptop.

I tried running the network trouble-shooter but that just stuck on "Starting".

A quick look at the network sharing centre told me that my home, private network was a public network and, furthermore, the network properties did not show the facility to change it, as they should. I stumbled on a procedure to reset the network adaptors and allowed the system to do that, involving a shut down and restart. I expected to have to completely reconfigure my wireless network.

When the system restarted, it connected to the network but still showed no Internet availability, so nothing appeared to have changed – except that the option to change my home network from public to private was back. I changed it and everything was back to normal.

How and why this happened I had no idea. I did find a useful web site which gave several options for recovering the Public/Private setting in the network properties and I saved that in case the problem reoccurred.

The next task was to tackle the dirty dishes from last evening, breakfast and lunch.

We then started putting away the Christmas decorations and the window display for Advent until next year.

My irritating, intermittent cough was back with a vengeance, coupled with a feeling of something stuck part-way down my trachea and a pain in the right-hand side of my chest. This was nothing new – it came and went, noticeably a little after I had stretched my right arm to reach something or lifted something heavy. My hiatus hernia playing up perhaps?

Thursday, 6th January 2022

The pain in my chest had largely subsided and my intermittent cough was now a tickly one. I ignored it.

The first job of the day was pot washing again. That was accompanied by the first snow-fall of the winter, resulting in a fairly substantial covering of the estate road, which did not bode well for motoring later and tomorrow's grocery shopping.

The main task was to put away the Christmas decorations, finishing off from yesterday. We had packed everything in boxes and stored the tree in the garage loft by late afternoon, by which time most of the snow that had settled outside had melted away. It remained to store the boxes away in the garage loft and tidy up the lounge.

Friday, 7th January 2022

I intended starting the day at 6:30 a.m. but Jenny was too tired so we didn't stagger out of bed until it was time for Jenny's eye drop at 7 a.m.

Rachel, who had been staying with us, took her car to Finney's garage, just the other side of Bury, for 8:30 a.m. so that the error displayed by the engine management system could be rectified.

We eventually managed to leave at 9 a.m. for our grocery shopping trip, after I had mixed some screen wash and filled the tank in the car. We didn't even make it up the steep drive. The front (driving) wheels just spun on the snow that had fallen overnight even though it was only a thin covering. I gently rolled the car back down and cleared the tracks for the wheels with the garden spade. Fetching that from the garage set off the house alarm so I had to unlock the front door and reset that.

It was about 9:30 before we made it to Finney's garage, with traffic queuing up the road through the village and on the road in Bury, past Holy Cross College as a result of snow on the roads.

I had expected having to collect Rachel and take her to work before travelling on to Unicorn in Chorlton. When we reached the garage, the fault with Rachel's car had been fixed and she was just about to leave for work, owing the garage for a new headlight bulb. She didn't have any cash and I didn't have any change so Jenny paid the man at the garage with a £5 note.

Rachel sped off to work and we headed down the M60 at Prestwich to Chorlton. From Unicorn, we called at Sainsbury's in Sale on the way to Waitrose at Broadheath.

The shopping trip went well and we were home for about 2 p.m.

After a late lunch, I started listing the TV recordings for the coming week and scheduled the recordings for tomorrow.

Saturday, 8th January 2022

It was 11 a.m. by the time I rose out of bed. I was completely shattered after Jenny had a restless night, getting up at 4 a.m. for an hour.

I had already informed Christine at the old school that there was no way we could help at the table-top sale this morning from 8 a.m. to noon.

It was a foul morning, with heavy rain and part of the back garden was flooded, although it usually drained away fairly quickly.

I decided it was time I cut my hair, trimmed my beard and had a shower, in that order.

I had intended to squirrel away all the Christmas items in the garage loft and clean out the fire from its use last week while our central heating and hot water boiler was being repaired and serviced. That didn't make it off the ground since I didn't elicit any assistance from Jenny or Rachel with the largest, heavy box.

Instead, I finished listing all the TV recordings for the coming week and scheduling them. That was followed by shuffling my data around on my portable hard drives, which were becoming quite full.

Sunday, 9th January 2022

A marginally early start to the day resulted in a cooked breakfast, the norm for a Sunday morning when Rachel was staying for the weekend.

Pot washing and feeding our regular, friendly, feathered visitors, a female blackbird and a couple of robins, dried mealworms, took place both before and after breakfast, followed by me single-handedly storing the large, heavy box of Christmas items in the garage loft, after tying on the top at both ends with string. It seems I was able to lift and manoeuvre the box without help.

Jenny brought the remaining boxes into the garage and I put those in the loft too.

My next job was to clean out the fire, followed by scrubbing the tiled hearth, polishing the stove and cleaning the various accessories that sat on the hearth. I also cleaned the lower part of the wooden fire surround, leaving the mantelpiece and ornaments on it for another day.

I finished off by vacuuming the lounge carpet, as far as possible without moving the furniture around.

Rachel needed some help in planning a journey across Manchester tomorrow and then I listened to a recording of Jazz Record Requests on BBC Radio 3.

The new laptop needed to do an update, instigated by Dell SupportAssist, requiring a restart. I finished that just before tea.

Monday, 10th January 2022

I spent my day trying to tidy up some paperwork, which involved scanning and saving some items.

Tuesday, 11th January 2022

I was up early, for a change, to take the car to Finney's garage, just the other side of Bury, for its annual service, which also included the overdue replacement of the timing belt. I didn't make it until 9:45, partly due to a traffic jam on Manchester Road. There were

roadworks on the opposite side of the road that had reduced the road to a single lane with traffic-light control. The queue into Bury, in the opposite direction, was horrendous.

I went into the office to drop off the car and collect the key to the courtesy car, suddenly realising I had forgotten to put on my Covid mask.

Having dropped off my car, and collected the courtesy car. I started to drive out of the garage. The petrol warning light was on and I planned to drive further down the road to the nearest garage to obtain some petrol. It was then I realised I had left home without my wallet. I returned to the garage, intending to return the car and walk home. The very nice chap behind the counter gave me £5 out of the till and told me to put in some petrol and let him have the receipt.

With £5 worth of petrol in the car, to avoid the roadworks, I decided to drive further down the road, take the turning up to Pilsforth and return home using the M66. The queue to leave that at the junction for Summerseat was over a mile long and the fuel warning light was on again. It was one of those no-win days.

When I finally made it to the slip-road, the queue on the slip-road was for traffic turning right, the way I needed to go to reach Bass Lane. I took the empty, left lane, turned left down Walmersley Road for a short distance, performed a U-turn and made it home with a little fuel to spare.

While I was en-route, a chap from the garage telephoned Jenny and told her that the car had failed its MOT because one or both of the front wheel bearings were worn. I had suspected as much because the wheels had started to hum a little. Jenny told the chap to carry out the work. As a result the car would not be ready on the day.

I telephoned the garage, confirmed the planned work and explained I had the courtesy car. Keeping it for another day was not a problem.

We later went out for a potter round Ramsbottom, calling at the filling station near home, on Longsight Road, for another £10-worth of petrol for the courtesy car. I had my wallet with me this time!

I found a DVD and four CDs, all for £2 in the charity shops. Jenny couldn't find what she wanted in either Morrison's or Tesco's small supermarkets, so we came home briefly and then drove down to Tesco in Bury for the few additional grocery items.

And so ended my eventful day.

Wednesday, 12th January 2022

It was Rachel's birthday and she had the day off so we planned to go out for a meal to the Duckworth Arms, booking a table for 4:30 p.m. I know I said we wouldn't go back there again after the last miserable experience but we decided to give it another try. It was better than last time but not brilliant.

Jenny had a restless night with pain in her left leg again, probably due to a trapped nerve in her back and we were not up early.

I dealt with a few e-mails and tackled the mound of dishes from last evening and this morning.

By the time I had showered and changed it was time to go out for our meal. I had telephoned the garage to enquire about the progress with the car and decided that it would best be collected in the morning, so Rachel drove her car to the pub and I drove it back.

I thumbed through next weeks' Radio Times for programmes to record while watching the evening's films on TV.

Thursday, 13th January 2022

My first duty was to wind up the clocks and adjust them.

I dealt with the chap from Costello and Son who arrived to clean out the gutters for me and then sped off to return the courtesy car to the garage and collect my VW Golf.

The car had gone through the mill this time. It failed its MOT almost immediately, with a faulty, front, off-side wheel-bearing and a suspect tyre. Both were replaced as well as the car undergoing the MOT, a full service and having the timing belt replaced, overdue by a year, according to the VW manual. Replacing the timing belt also required a new water pump. All that came to almost £800!

On top of that, having returned home, I discovered I had forgotten to leave the key for the courtesy car and I was reminded of the fact by a telephone call from the garage. I went back down to return it and apologised, making me about fifteen minutes late for Jenny's eye drop, due at 11:30.

After administering the medication, I emptied some rubbish, put the bins out for emptying tomorrow and fed the birds.

I came in and started on the paperwork.

First, I needed to update the receipt folders, scanning through those of eight years ago and shredding them, having made sure there were none I needed to retain that were not scanned and stored on my hard drive. That took some time.

Having emptied the old folder, I needed to produce a new label for it for the current year.

I had a word template for the sheets of labels I had purchased but I had never managed to establish its presence within the innards of Word 365. That took ages to work out and I produced a step-by-step technical tip to which I could refer in the future and which may find its way onto my web site when I had a spare moment. I also had trouble discovering how to display the table-cell outlines on the screen and I produced a technical tip for that as well.

With the label printed, I was able to start putting the receipts I had collected so far this year in the folder and I filed it away.

Next up was the update to my record of the car's history to add the recent bit of T.L.C. I put the documents on my desk for scanning later to add to the comprehensive documentation of the car's major events.

I had received a letter in the post about my house insurance payment not being processed by the bank and I telephoned Esure's customer service again. The letter had been sent the day before I had made the payment and all was well. I put the letter on the shredding pile.

The car's road tax expired at the end of January and I had already received the reminder for the coming year. I went online and disposed of another £170.

It was time to review the finances, which had already taken a bit of a battering this month, with the gutter-cleaning and conservatory glass replacement yet to be accounted, not to mention three weeks of grocery shopping before the end of the month.

That was more or less the end of my working day, apart from finishing off the TV programme scanning.

Friday, 14th January 2022

It was grocery shopping day.

We went to Sainsbury's store in Heaton Park and Tesco at Prestwich.

After a late snack at home, I finished off compiling the list of TV recordings for next week and I managed to schedule them all.

Saturday, 15th January 2022

Jenny and I went for a stroll round the village to exercise her left leg that had been giving her some problems of late. She found that hard going and very painful at times.

When she came home, a warm, mustard soak in her foot spa seemed to help. While she was doing that, I tidied up the programmes we had watched during the past couple of weeks.

Sunday, 16th January 2022

The main task of the day was to wash the car. That could have gone better in as much as the Hozelock Deluxe Hose Nozzle I bought from B&Q on the 23rd May 2018 burst apart. I tried putting it back together but it didn't hold. So I had to manage with the hose as it was and keep walking back to the tap on the wall at the back of the garage to turn the water on and off as I needed it.

After I had finished, I sorted out the payment for the gutter cleaning last Tuesday.

I listened to Jazz Record Requests before taking a long-needed shower before tea.

Monday, 17th January 2022

We went for a stroll to the local co-op store. We had planned on walking up to the post office to look for and send a card to my sister, Edith, in New Zealand for her birthday on 1st February but Jenny was still walking slowly and stopping occasionally so we had a quick look at the cards in the co-op and the adjacent chemist's shop before returning home.

I had a look for a means of converting a VGA PC video output to composite video. That required a box of tricks costing £130. I decided not to bother and to try to repair the old Dell XPS Windows 7 laptop instead, which had an s-video output which would do just as well. That had given up the ghost a long time ago and wouldn't even power on.

Meanwhile, I turned my attention to the old school Lenovo laptop that would no longer update Windows 10. I still couldn't fix that problem so I decided to install a fresh copy of Windows 10.

I followed the instructions on the Microsoft website and downloaded the refresh tool. That ran for a short while and then came up with the very helpful message saying that the PC could not run Windows 10, even though it already was running Windows 10. Microsoft had surpassed themselves, rising to an even greater level of stupidity than ever before.

The error message was accompanied by a minimum configuration that was required, which, as far as I could ascertain, was met. I would grant that the PC was a tad slow, which is one of the reasons I shelled out for a new one, but it was still functional, like my desktop Windows 7 system.

Was this a ploy to force people to ditch perfectly good hardware and spend their hard-earned cash on new PCs, like, for example, Microsoft surface laptops?

Despite attempts to force people off Windows 7, I still preferred it, still used it and, thanks to EPG123 and Schedules Direct, I not only still had Windows Media Centre but an enhanced Windows Media Centre.

Incidentally, for the benefit of our American friends, I still prefer the English spelling of Centre. That reminded me of the Flanders and Swann song, "The English Are Best".

Tuesday, 18th January 2022

We rose just in time for Jenny's eye drop at 11:30 a.m.

After feeding the birds, a pair of robins and a pair of blackbirds, regular visitors to our garden for the dried mealworms I put out, breakfast and washing the dishes, Jenny decided to have a session on the Chinese back-stretcher.

We went for a walk round Old Kays Park in the afternoon sunshine, well wrapped up against the biting cold breeze.

Afterwards, I dealt with my e-mails and, in particular, one from Christine Taylor who had asked for any pictures of Faith Greenhalgh who was a major influence on village matters. I had found sixteen yesterday and Christine suggested dropping off a memory stick so I could put them on it. I decided to try setting up an FTP service on one of my PCs and spent a good while looking into it but I was a bit too tired to make any real progress today.

Wednesday, 19th January 2022

We were up at 6:30 a.m., planning to leave about 7:15 for Jenny's eye appointment at the Manchester Royal Eye Hospital at 9:40. That didn't happen.

First, we didn't get away until 7:30, so I thought it would be better to cut across to the M66, through Summerseat and up Bass Lane, the single-track road with passing places and leave the motorway at the junction just past Heaton Park to head up to Cheetham Hill. That would avoid the road works on the A56 on the other side of Bury.

The fact that traffic was queuing to go down the slip road to the motorway should have been warning enough but there was a sign saying there were road works on the slip road and I thought it was a short queue. It wasn't. The traffic on the two-lane motorway section was nose-to-tail and crawling when it did move, all the way down to just past the next junction in Bury. It took a good 45 minutes to travel a distance we would normally have covered in about 5 minutes.

The traffic between the motorway and Cheetham Hill was almost as bad, the consequence being that we were about 45 minutes late for the appointment. Jenny had telephoned to say we were stuck in traffic and would be late, so, fortunately, it wasn't a problem.

If people drove properly, according to the conditions and left adequate gaps for others to manoeuvre, instead of driving as close as possible to the vehicle in front, this sort of thing wouldn't happen. The guy in the van behind me was a typical example, flashing his headlights less than a metre from my car's rear end because there was a gap between my vehicle and the one in front of me to allow vehicles in the other lane to drive into my lane if necessary. Besides, the vehicle in front of me stopped in the queue and I had to slow down and stop as well so the chap behind me couldn't go anywhere anyway. Idiot.

One of the biggest problems was that many drivers did not seem to be able to merge at speed even if a gap presented itself; several drivers were hesitant, which was a danger in itself, not being sure whether they were going to move or not and impatient ones just sped into gaps from any and every direction given half a chance with total disregard for vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians around them.

If the driving test were toughened and people had to retake it to renew their licence every five years, say, about 75% of the vehicles on the road would disappear overnight and leave the roads clear for those of us who could drive properly, with due respect for others.

I parked up and sat listening to a Jazz CD of Stephan Grapelli while Jenny was in the hospital. We were home for about 1 p.m.

After lunch, it was pot washing time and then I read the meters, updated the accounts and submitted the meter readings to our energy supplier, Bulb and our water supplier, United Utilities.

I dealt with my e-mails, updated my calendar with Jenny's next appointment and turned my attention to giving Christine access to the pictures of Faith I had found for her.

I had intended setting up an FTP server but, for various technical reasons, not least that Microsoft Edge no longer supported it and other browsers were shying away from it as well. Instead I created a folder on my web site and put the original photos into it. I then sent Christine a link to the folder so that it would bring up the list of files in the folder in a web page. From there she could view the pictures and, by left clicking on the pictures, she had the option of saving them to her hard drive.

That was the last job of the day done as we settled down to watch some recorded TV programmes.

Thursday, 20th January 2022

We decided to walk up to the post office again. Jenny kept stopping because her leg was quite painful but we made it by 12:30. The post office was closed. Not that it was supposed to be. A helpful notice on the door said it would reopen at 1:15 p.m., which wasn't much good to us because Jenny was due for her next eye drop at 1 p.m.

We hobbled back home.

After lunch, I settled down to deal with the letter from James Daily M.P. in response to my comments about the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill. That took most of the afternoon.

Friday, 21st January 2022

We went grocery shopping to Unicorn in Chorlton, Sainsbury's store in Sale and Waitrose in Broadheath. It was not a pleasant drive. The ongoing roadworks just the other side of Bury held us up in both directions. The M60 had speed restrictions and was heavily congested both going and coming back. There were roadworks on the way to Unicorn through which we had to pass going and returning and more roadworks on Washway Road as we headed to Waitrose.

We set off at about 9:30 a.m. and did not get back until 3:30 p.m., having taken Jenny's medication with us and having missed lunch.

We had a quick snack and I set about dealing with the TV recordings for the coming week, doing enough to schedule the recordings for tomorrow. The rest of the week's scheduling would have to wait since I was too tired to do any more.

Saturday, 22nd January 2022

We took the car into Ramsbottom, calling at the post office in Holcombe Brook on the way to post a couple of items. The first was a reply to the letter from James Daly, our MP and an acquaintance, regarding my objection to the erosion of civil liberties in the proposed Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill. The second was a birthday card for my sister, Edith, in New Zealand.

We parked in the station car park in Ramsbottom and walked up Bridge Street, visiting all the charity shops. I found two Louis Armstrong CDs in one of them at the high price of £1 each.

Our last visit was to Plentiful, Ramsbottom's answer to Unicorn, in Chorlton, except that it was much smaller and not a workers co-operative. It was the only local shop from which we could obtain our organic brown sauce and organic sweet chilli sauce.

We drove up the hill to see Bob and Marie, Matthew's in-laws and spent a good couple of hours chatting before returning home for a late afternoon snack.

I brought in some wood and lit the fire while Jenny mixed the dough for two loaves of bread, placing it in front of the fire to rise before baking it.

In between tending the fire, I fixed a problem with EPG123, the software I used to download the electronic TV schedules from Schedules Direct for Windows Media Centre on my old Windows 7 desktop. EPG had encountered an error downloading the schedules and the log file showed a mismatch between the stations in Windows Media Centre and those in the listings at Schedules Direct. The solution was to completely refresh the stations listed in the EPG123 Client, which, in turn, required Windows Media Centre to retune all the stations.

Meanwhile, I was using the desktop to scan some documents using Adobe Photoshop, since I had not yet managed to make my very old copy of Adobe Photoshop 7 work on the new laptop.

Once all that was done, I finished off compiling a list of the TV recordings for the coming week while watching a couple of recorded programmes.

Who said men couldn't multitask?

Sunday, 23rd January 2022

Jobs for today (not necessarily in the order listed):

1. Have a look at the outside-light sensor at the back of the house and obtain a replacement if necessary.
2. Schedule the TV recordings for the week.
3. Order Jenny some organic cornflour from Doves Farm.
4. Order Jenny some organic caster sugar.
5. Arrange Rachel's afternoon-tea treat for her mum's birthday at Falshaw's Tea Rooms.

6. Test the PC monitor and check the food-mixer I had repaired for the old school jumble-sale.
7. Tidy the paperwork on my table in the lounge.
8. Save the scans I did yesterday to my documents.

A late breakfast finished at about noon and item two was completed by 12:30.

Not scheduled were my sous-chef role, bread-slicing, my kitchen-assistant role, pot-washing and my nursing role, administering medication. Another unplanned task was that of waste disposal operative, all taking a good 45 minutes.

My new laptop decided it needed to install some updates from Dell, three of which were classified as critical, for the second time in a week. I left it to do its thing, going outside, suitably attired for the cold, to take a look at the patio lamp.

The sensor was not operating correctly in that the lamp would not turn off. I thought the sensor might be being influenced by the Chinese-made LED corn-bulbs I had recently installed. I had read that some of these could emit some sort of interference that affected electronic equipment. How true that was I had no idea but I removed them and installed a single halogen bulb instead. That wouldn't turn off either.

I disconnected the sensor, after isolating the electrical supply of course, gave it a bit of a clean, tested it to see if there was a short that would override the sensor, which I did not detect and put it back together. I tested it again and it worked. What I had done to repair it, I had no idea. I removed the halogen bulb, reinstalled the corn bulbs and tested it again. It worked.

I adjusted the light sensor so that any motion did not activate it during the current, dull daylight and left the step-ladders in place so I could adjust the light level again at dusk.

Whether this was a permanent fix or not, time would tell.

I sat down and reloaded my PC as requested by Dell SupportAssist while having a welcome cup of tea and a quick snack, taking me nicely to 3 p.m.

Ordering Jenny's cornflour from Doves Farm took me a good 40 minutes, firstly because I couldn't find their new gluten-free web site, www.freee-foods.co.uk and second because I couldn't read my credit card number properly and I had to ask Jenny to check it. She soon spotted the deliberate mistake, even with her left eye still receiving medication, which was my next task.

I spent another good half hour looking for supplies of organic caster sugar and organic sorghum flour, which I found but shipping was exp[ensive, particularly for the latter.

Looking down my list, Jenny had booked the afternoon tea at Falshaw's Tea Rooms earlier, before she telephoned Rachel, while I was playing with the outside light sensor.

I tidied up my table in the lounge. I couldn't test the PC monitor because the desktop computer was recording Jazz Record Requests between 4 and 5 p.m. so I turned my attention to an item not on the list, resolving the problem of Adobe Photoshop 7 not working on the new Dell laptop.

I reformatted the Maxwell USB stick to try to use that as a scratch drive but Photoshop didn't give me that option. I did manage to get it to load by using the C drive and the portable hard drive, E but it wouldn't save anything to either drive because it said the discs were full.

While the formatting of the USB stick was in progress, I started producing a CD cover on the old Lenovo laptop since I was having trouble with it on the new laptop. I had to leave off that to cut up some beef for Jenny for the Stroganov we were having for tea and then one of the LED bulbs in the outside lamp at the back started flickering. I had to go outside again anyway to put away the steps, so I had a look at the bulb and the problem seemed to be a bad connection. I screwed the bulb in a bit tighter and that seemed to fix the problem, so I put away the steps and came back in to continue with Photoshop.

Later, the bulb was still flickering a little. I went out and turned the whole thing off again and left it until morning.

I gave up on Photoshop and the CD cover for now and had a listen to the recording of Jazz record Requests.

The last jobs before retiring at about 11:30, just in time for Jenny's last eye drop of the day, were to print off a food diary sheet for Jenny and to copy the scans I had completed to my documents.

Monday, 24th January 2022

Jobs for today:

1. Try to fix the flickering (that's one word for it) outside light.
2. Find Matthew some plasterboard.
3. Check with Jenny if she needed some caster sugar, whether she still wanted some sorghum flour and place orders as necessary.
4. Test the PC monitor and check the food-mixer I had repaired for the old school jumble-sale.
5. Tidy up the programmes we had watched over the past week or so and back up my documents.

Jenny had a bad night with pain in her leg and foot due to her back problem. As a result, I didn't get much sleep either. So it should come as no surprise that we didn't finish breakfast until noon.

Matthew had telephoned at about 10:30 a.m., while I was still in bed, to say that Bob wasn't very well and the meal he had planned for 4 p.m. today to celebrate his mum's birthday was cancelled. I telephoned Bob and had a chat.

I now had all day to tackle the jobs listed. I wasn't about to rush outside in the cold, having showered before breakfast. A Skype message from Matthew informed me he had found some plasterboard so that was one job less.

It was straight on to tidying up my recorded TV programmes, which took a good 4 hours. I did leave off for about fifteen minutes to fix the flickering outside light. The problem seemed to be dirty contacts.

I succeeded in using my very old copy of Adobe Photoshop 7 on the new laptop by using a spare 1 TB portable hard drive as the scratch disc.

Tuesday, 25th January 2022

Jobs not necessarily for today:

1. Deal with a letter from the MRI
2. Look into the vandalism of the IE shed
3. My web site
 - a) Photos
 - b) Version 4 development (long-term project)
 - c) Technical tip to identify contents of a disc sector in Windows
 - d) Technical tip on how to clear a Windows disc
4. Clean up my desk in the conservatory
5. New kitchen sink and tap – previous looked at Kohler stainless-steel Ease 1,000 mm, 1.5 bowl inset sink with draining board H 200/112 mm W 1000 mm D 500 mm RRP £279
6. Produce the CD cover I started on the old laptop yesterday and find a way of producing CD covers on the new laptop.
7. New outside patio lamp model YL960106

First, the outside light sensor at the back was not working after all. I had come to the conclusion that the relay, which I could hear clicking on and off when it worked, was stuck in the on position because neither the light level nor the motion sensor switched the light off. As a result, I was up at 8 a.m. to manually switch off the outside light until I could acquire a new sensor.

Having washed the few dishes from last night and set the table for breakfast I waited for Jenny to surface. With her heated underblanket back on the bed, she had slept better and her leg and foot had not troubled her in the night.

Meanwhile I dealt with the letter from the MRI, removing item 1 from my list for today.

I dealt with some e-mails, including an excellent one from an old school chum, Terry Hanstock, which contained a brilliant spoof interview with the PM, Boris Johnson about the breach of Covid rules.

We toyed with the idea of nipping into Bury but it was too cold. Jenny had trouble walking to the village pharmacy and back.

I started clearing my desk in the conservatory of documents that needed scanning.

Wednesday, 26th January 2022

Our friend Gwen called in as she was walking her dog with some flowers and a birthday card for Jenny, who was indisposed at the time, so I chatted with Gwen and stroked her dog, Ruby.

Gwen's husband, Frank, was one of the key initiators of the village Incredible Edible project and I took the opportunity to ask Gwen if she would pass on the key to the IE shed so that he could take a look at the damage caused by vandals since I had not had time to do so.

We went down to Bury for a potter round. Jenny was struggling somewhat with pain in her leg.

I went to four electrical suppliers to see if I could obtain a new PIR sensor for the patio lights. No-one had anything similar to the existing, faulty one.

We visited Marks and Spencer but most of the clothing Jenny viewed did not appeal to us and very little of it was made from natural fibres.

Holland and Barrett had no lecithin powder in stock.

We found nothing of interest in the Cat's Protection League charity shop.

The only items we bought from Tesco were two pairs of thermal socks for Jenny, a birthday card and a copy of the Radio Times. There was not the choice of food to be found in Sainsbury's store or in Waitrose and none of the items we saw were organic.

The first job back home was to order a new PIR sensor for the patio light from an on-line company, based in Preston. That didn't go as smoothly as it might have but at least a new sensor would be in the post at the end of the day.

I brought the accounts up to date and then continued with my document scanning from where I left off yesterday.

Thursday, 27th January 2022

The early part of the day was taken up with more document scanning and I started looking through the TV listings for the coming week and left off to prepare for our afternoon outing and to put out the rubbish bins for this week's collection.

Rachel arrived at about 1 p.m. and we made our way to Falshaw's Farm Tea Rooms, just across the valley, for an early afternoon tea to celebrate Jenny's birthday.

My evening was taken up with a village meeting, primarily to discuss plans for the forthcoming Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

Friday, 28th January 2022

It was another day of grocery shopping at Sainsbury's store at Heaton Park and Tesco at Prestwich. A few items were out of stock at both stores and what we did buy seemed to cost quite a bit.

We were home for about 1:30 p.m. and, having brought in the groceries, I brought down the refuse bins that had been emptied and washed the dishes while Jenny stored away the groceries and prepared lunch.

We retired to the lounge, somewhat shattered. I updated the accounts with our morning's expenditure, brought my diary entry up to date and finished off last week's Radio Times crossword before resuming my thumbing through next weeks TV listings.

Saturday, 29th January 2022

I was first up at about 8:30 a.m. I telephoned Frank to say that we wouldn't be at the table-top sale at the old school this morning and I telephoned Marie to let her know that the table-top sale was on. She said she thought I had already told her the sale was on the first Saturday of the month, which it usually was and it was at that point that I realised this Saturday was not the first Saturday of the month!

When Frank had asked at the village meeting if we would be at the sale on Saturday, I obviously wasn't concentrating because it never occurred to me it wasn't today. I was tired due to lack of sleep and more concerned about getting back in time for Jenny's next medication at 10 p.m.

Marie did come down but there was no sale so she went home again.

Meanwhile, I was washing the dishes from last night and Jenny joined me later and she, too, said the sale was next week.

The new sensor for the lights at the back arrived and, reading the installation instructions, it should be positioned away from the gas boiler vent, which mean moving the wiring as the existing sensor was almost directly above the vent, which did activate it.

I went into the garage loft to work out how to move the wiring and decided on a plan which involved pulling the existing wires back, installing a junction box and then running a three-core plus earth lead to a new sensor location above the centre of the kitchen patio doors. This meant that the new wiring would need to be in the small loft space above the kitchen extension, which was rather awkward to negotiate.

I tidied up the TV programmes we had watched during the previous week and then looked for the items I needed for the new sensor, namely a short length of 1.5 mm² three-core and earth cable and a junction box.

I eventually settled on a Knightsbridge SN8420 20 amp, 4-terminal, 4-access-points junction box, which was overkill for the 5 amp lighting circuit but gave me more room and flexibility for the three wires leading to it, from Amazon, asking Matthew to order

for me using his Prime account and a 7.5 metre length of three-core and earth wire from Wickes, ordered using the click-and-collect service at the Bury store.

I had another telephone conversation with Marie about the table top sale fiasco. I said she should have dropped in for a chat since she was in the vicinity.

Rachel arrived for tea.

Rachel told me that the TV channel numbers had changed and the TV needed to be retuned so I told her how to do that. She retuned the terrestrial channels for me.

I retuned the channels on the laptop for both NextPVR and WinTV before retiring.

Sunday 30th January 2022

I retuned the satellite TV channels. I was still getting interference on ITV HD and I decided to have another look at the problem, although I suspected it was a fault with the Sony Bravia TV firmware which Sony refused to recognise or fix.

I had to leave off to go down to fetch the cable I had ordered from Wickes in Bury.

When I came back, I started work on the patio-light sensor. I removed the old one and pulled back the wires into the garage. I put some sand and cement mortar in all the holes and then enclosed the wire from the outside lamp that run up the wall inside the garage in white, plastic channelling. I terminated the wiring on a connecting strip for the present, until the junction box arrived. All that took most of the afternoon.

I listened to a recording of Jazz Record Requests, which wasn't that good this week

Monday 31st January 2022

I dealt with a few e-mails and went to look at drilling the holes for the new outside sensor at the back, which is about as far as that went.

I left off to put out Jenny's washing line in the winter sunshine and then we prepared the Seville oranges for making marmalade.

Rachel had asked me to make sure her laptop was up to date as regards the anti-virus software and Windows updates, so I dealt with that, slightly hampered because the batteries were flat. It had not been used for a while.