

Greenmount – July 2016

Friday July 1st: This was another routine, long, shopping day to Unicorn in Chorlton and Waitrose in Broadheath. The M60 was very busy going and the road works on the A56 approaching Broadheath on the way to Waitrose still had the carriageway down to a single lane, causing long delays. Why this work requiring the road to be narrowed in this way was taking so long was unfathomable. I could only conclude that, in true British working tradition, the nominal working day was eight hours, four of which were actually productive instead of everyone working flat out round the clock.

Three major issues with this country were (1) people generally did not believe in working any harder than could be avoided (2) too many people were paid too much money to do unproductive jobs (I include here the world of finance and senior management) and (3) local councils were being starved of income to pay for essential maintenance, let alone public services and additional costs for unsociable hours working.

Back to the plot. The return journey was a drudge, particularly when we reached the M60 on which the ongoing, seemingly for ever, road works to improve traffic flow enforced an average speed limit of 50 m.p.h. and on which we achieved an average speed of around one tenth of that. It took us an hour to reach Prestwich and a further half-hour to drive home through the school rush.

That begs another question. Why, these days, did schools finish mid-afternoon? When I was at school, I had to be there for 8:50 a.m. until 4:05 p.m. There's no wonder our social and moral standards have plummeted. Even BBC presenters now end sentences with prepositions. "What's a preposition?" did you ask?

Saturday July 2nd: We went round to the Old School about 9 a.m. Jenny was helping out at the monthly drop-in on the bric-a-brac stall and I went round to test and price more electrical items for the Jumble Sale in three weeks' time.

We came home for a late lunch and I spent the afternoon scanning a couple of my old school documents for my web site. One was about a school [trip to the UK Atomic Energy Research Establishment](#) and the other an article I wrote about [Nuclear Energy](#) in the days when I was fascinated by particle physics and before I learned better sense. I hope you find these interesting, if somewhat dated.

Sunday July 3rd: The weather forecast having indicated some rain for today, we had decided not to risk the car boot sale. Given that I had started with the runs again the previous day and I was still afflicted with them when I dashed out of bed about 9:30, we had made the right choice, perhaps for the wrong reason since it did not rain as was predicted.

Rachel and Jenny went off to Tesco in Bury while I rested, updating this record of events for posterity, hoping the blueberries and yoghurt followed by toast for breakfast and several glasses of water were working to stem the flow, put some good bacteria back where it should be and rehydrate me.

When they returned, I started the long process of tidying up my storage system in the garage, largely because it was taking me ages to find bits and pieces when I wanted them. The process involved using old margarine tubs, well washed out, to store items, labelling

the tubs so I knew what was in them, keeping a computer inventory of what I had in the tubs and storing them alphabetically in the garage cupboards. That way, I could search my computer list and, theoretically, find anything on the list I wanted and, for the most part, it worked quite well so long as I put the tubs back in the right place when I had finished with them.

Unfortunately, I had been somewhat lax, putting items in tubs without labelling or cataloguing them and not putting the tubs back in their proper place after use. So I decided not only to label and catalogue all the unlabelled boxes but also to carry out a full audit against the computer list.

I finished labelling everything by mid-afternoon and went into the garage with my list. I was about half way through the audit when it was time for tea and I had to leave off. I hated leaving tasks unfinished because I had a habit of leaving them so and that would never do in this case. I would have to complete the task the following day.

After tea, while waiting for Jenny to chat to Rebecca and then to Wilf on the telephone, I decided to resume one of my other long-term projects, that of clearing out the filing cabinet. I managed to scan the documents from another two files and discard the paperwork, copies of the scanned documents safely stored on both my desktop, which, incidentally, seemed to have settled down after its recent overheating problem and Jenny's laptop, each baking up the other in case of a system failure.

Monday July 4th: I was up and about around 8 a.m., showered and prepared breakfast well before Jenny appeared. While I was waiting, I decided to tidy up the TV recordings on Jenny's laptop we had watched. Some I deleted and some I decided to keep, moving them to more permanent storage on external hard drives.

It was when I tried to create a folder on one of the external hard drives that I discovered that Windows 7 security, quite simply, sucks.

I was denied access to create the folder. It turned out that the root folder was owned by some non-existent user, that access to its security was denied and that all of these properties had been propagated to the subordinate folders and files.

It took me a while to figure out how to work my way round the security system of Windows 7 that had tied itself in knots and even then I had to deal with each folder and sub-folder in turn. I would have progressed to the individual files but I ran out of time and decided to leave those for another day since I had achieved what I needed in order to create the folder and move files to it.

I left off for breakfast and, following the usual morning chores, I recommenced the task of yesterday, sorting my storage system in the garage.

After lunch, I pottered round generally tidying and sorting out a few loose ends here and there which kept me busy until tea time. I would have cut the grass but it clouded over, turned cold and we had a bit of an unscheduled downpour late in the afternoon.

One of my more useful activities was to order some Nemaslug slug killer from Amazon.

Tuesday July 5th: I started fairly early with good intentions. Unfortunately, I was at the laptop keyboard for most of the morning while Jenny whizzed off for an outing to Bury with Gwen.

It was mid afternoon before I made a proper effort and went out to wash the car, just as Jenny arrived home. That took me a couple of hours and I came in for an early tea, changed and went off to the village meeting in the church at 7:30.

The meeting was unusually well attended, items on the agenda being the Greater Manchester Strategic Plan for additional housing, in which several sites on green-belt land in Greenmount had been earmarked and the village green improvement plan.

The last housing development in Greenmount was in the late 1970s and, I am now ashamed to say, we bought one of the new houses on what was a green-field site. Needless to say I was totally opposed to building on green-field sites and to the proposed sprawl of bricks and mortar in the village, not that there was, at this time, anything concrete (pardon the pun) to oppose. I have made this point before and I make it again. What we needed was not more housing; it was fewer people. If any new dwellings were built in Greenmount, it would be a certainty that first-time buyers would be unable to afford them. They would be luxury four or more bedroom houses, the only motivation to build them being greed, something for which divine retribution was long overdue.

As for the village green, the proposal to move the children's play area was approved and the proposed drainage system was also approved with some caveats. It was decided to retain the hedge along the roadway for safety reasons.

Ron Schwartz told us that the Rosso bus company was planning to withdraw the 481 service which is Greenmount's only link with Ramsbottom and it would also mean that Greenmount busses to Bury would then only be every hour instead of every half-hour.

Could this be a good time to contemplate leaving Greenmount?

I was home for 9:30 and, since Jenny and Rachel were watching a Catherine Cookson DVD, I tackled the conversion of more of my filing cabinet documents to electronic storage until bed time.

Wednesday July 6th: After completing the usual morning chores, we headed to the vet in Bury to collect another three months' supply of renal tablets for the cat. She had consumed the last of the previous batch last evening and needed the new pack, which I had ordered a couple of days earlier, for this evening.

Being a fine, warmish, if somewhat overcast, day, I could not afford to miss the opportunity to tackle the long, wet grass on the side of the house, which took me to lunchtime. A couple of people passing by commented on what a good job I made of it, making the council chap who cut the grass on other half of the piece of land look like an amateur. The difference was that he did it for money; I did it to make it look nice.

After lunch I strimmed the edges of the grass I had cut and used the strimmer to remove the weeds growing on the footpath. I used the shears to cut the long grass at the edge of the border, near the plants, tidied up the border and finished off by cutting back the ivy along the garage wall. It was while tidying up the border that I found several ripe, golden

raspberries growing wild on the outside of our garden fence and I picked those to have with the red one Jenny had found from our garden for tea.

I started on the front garden, cut the grass, strimmed the edges and used the hedge trimmer to, you guessed it, trim the hedge between our garden and the one next door.

It was well past tea time and after Jenny helped me tidy up, I had a quick shower and we finished our main course at the dining room table a little after 8 p.m. It had been a long, busy day, finishing off our tea in the lounge, watching the third and fourth episodes of *The Night Manager*, which I recorded when it was on TV a week or two earlier.

I had hoped to cut the back lawn before the rains came the following day but I had simply run out of time.

Thursday July 7th: We spent the morning tidying up and I sorted out and audited my collection of bits and pieces neatly stored in old margarine tubs in the garage.

We lunched at Summerseat Garden Centre and, after a brief rest, I went to help out at the Incredible Edible Plot for an hour or so.

Friday July 8th: We went grocery shopping to Tesco at Prestwich early because I had to be back to have lunch before Alistair, our village chairman, collected me at 12:45 to attend a meeting with representatives from Bury Council to discuss plans for the village community to undertake more tasks currently managed by the council as part of a cost-saving exercise.

We had an interesting meeting in Ramsbottom, joined by colleagues from the local community in Summerseat, at which we learned that the council had to become self-funding by 2020. Alistair and I made the point that our issue in the community was the lack of interest, particularly from younger members of the community, to become involved in ongoing projects. I left the meeting feeling that we had not made any concrete progress.

Meanwhile, Jenny gave our neighbours a lift to the D-CaFF session at the Cricket Club and spent a couple of hours there helping out.

Saturday July 9th: We spent most of the day at the Old School working on more electrical items for the coming jumble sale.

Sunday July 10th: I was round at the church for 9 a.m. to meet Andrew, our minister, and give him a 2 metre female to male VGA/SVGA extension cable I had purchased for him from Amazon to give more flexibility to the connection of the laptop to the overhead projector in church.

After returning home to finish breakfast, we headed off to Sheffield to see Tracey, Jenny's niece, in the Northern General Hospital. We arrived about 11 a.m. and went to the Huntsmen suite canteen for lunch. That was an experience I did not wish to repeat and, afterwards, I could well understand Tracey's criticism of the food she received for her meals. To describe the quality of the food as appalling would be an understatement; it was so bad, it even made the Toby Carvery in Greenmount, at which the quality of the

meals was best described as variable, sometimes good and sometimes bad, look like a five star restaurant when it was at its worst.

Nevertheless, we survived the ordeal and returned to chat with Tracey until about 4 p.m. when we decided to go and see Jenny's brother, Wilf. That was a flying visit for two reasons. First, we gave Anne a lift to the Meadowhall Centre where she was meeting some friends from work for a birthday celebration. Second, we wanted to return home to have some tea.

Our last experience at the Heaton Park Beefeater, on the way home, was disappointing and we decided not to call there. Neither did we fancy the carvery in Greenmount. We hit on the idea of trying the Swan and Cemetary, on the road approaching Bury, on the off-chance they had a table free. Not only were we in luck but we had an excellent meal there and, with new items on the menu, including a large selection of gluten-free items, we were spoilt for choice.

Monday 11th July: It was another day of tidying up, updating the village web site and dealing with E-mails, not that we were up particularly early.

The highlight of the day was a mid-afternoon trip into Ramsbottom to buy birthday cards for Carrie and Matthew. A visit to Ramsbottom would not be the same without a tour of the charity shops and I found two DVDs I did not own, one of which was scratched, so I purchased just the one, Quantum of Solace. A brief visit to Tesco and Morrisons was unproductive.

While dealing with more E-mails, Jenny stormed in looking very angry. She had just removed a large slug from one of her lettuces, the plant being, as a result of its munching, a shadow of its former self. I went out, mixed up the Nemaslug with water and deployed it on the raised beds, the potted plants and the borders, front and rear.

Nemaslug, being a natural and organic slug-killer, did take a little hard work. After removing it from the fridge, the whole pack was dissolved in water to provide a stock solution of 4 litres. This was removed in half-litre portions and each diluted to a total of five litres in a watering can. Each can was designed to treat five square metres and then each application had to be watered in. The idea was that the nematodes would penetrate the soil and invade the slugs under the soil, killing them from the inside out. This would also allow the nematodes to breed so they could seek out more slugs.

Unfortunately, it rained quite heavily after the application and I was concerned that it might have washed the nematodes out of the raised beds, although those in the ground should be alright and active. The drainage from the beds soaked into the ground under the block paving so any nematodes washed down the cracks would act on slugs there.

A late-night inspection found five slugs on the raised bed, slowly making their way towards the lettuce and I removed them to the compost bin. If they were infected with nematodes, that would also kill off the slugs in there and I wasn't sure whether that would be an advantage or not, since slugs did help the decaying process. Still, no doubt they would soon regenerate once the nematodes had died off, in about six weeks' time.

Tuesday 12th July: An early start and a good dousing in cold water, not to mention breakfast and pot washing, saw me at the Incredible Edible plot at 10:00 where Frank

was pottering around. We were joined by Dave and Tracey and we assessed the work we had done thus far against the list Donna had provided. The only major outstanding job was to clear the wild flower bed, most of the wild growth being weeds. Frank did most of that work, placing the uprooted plants in my wheel barrow, no-one having brought any sacks.

Dave went off to pick up the petrol strimmer to cut the grass round the base of the rockery and some sacks for the weeds. Tracey cleared the path of weeds. I weeded the beds again and tidied up the top metre or so of the wild flower bed.

We left (as opposed to losing) the plot about lunchtime with most of the wild flower bed still to clear and we agreed to meet up the following week at the same time.

Meanwhile, I agreed to ask Alistair if the planned work on the path could be extended to cover the grassy areas round the rockery to save having to cut the grass.

I spent the afternoon sorting out my E-mail and tidying up my DVDs for which I was rapidly running out of storage space.

Wednesday July 13th: We ignored the alarm clock at 7 a.m. and slept in for a further three hours. The first meal of the day was more like brunch, although it comprised nothing special.

A telephone call from my sister Barbara, who was having some problems with Internet Explorer (didn't we all?) on her Windows 8 (no surprise there, then) laptop delayed our outing to Asda. Of the two, I found Barbara's problem more interesting.

According to Task Manager, Barbara's laptop had two images of Internet Explorer running. One she managed to kill off but the other refused to curl up and die. I really needed to get my hands on her laptop and suggested it should wait until I see her for her birthday this coming Saturday.

According to the weather forecast, it was supposed to be a fine day and I went out in my tea shirt and long trousers, covered with overalls for our first stop at the incredible edible plot to bag up all the garden waste from the previous day. I loaded that into the car and we sped off to the refuse point in Bury to dump it, together with a load of electrical rubbish, mostly from the Old School jumble.

By the time we reached the Tesco car park, it had started to rain lightly in the wind and, after removing my overalls and changing into my decent shoes, we made our way to the health food shop in the market in Bury. It was still persisting down as we came back and we sheltered in the car in Asda's car park at Pilsworth waiting for the heavy shower there to cease.

Needless to say, by the time we were home, the rain had stopped and I was wondering when this heat wave we had been promised in the press at the week end was going to arrive. Jenny's first task was to fetch in the washing she had put out to dry, which was, thankfully, not as wet as she had expected. That went in the dryer.

We settled down with a nice cup of tea before Jenny was back in the kitchen, as usual, preparing the fish we had purchased from Asda for our evening meal.

Thursday July 14th: Following the usual morning chores, we tended to the tomato plants in the conservatory, securing the higher branches bearing fruit. Jenny mixed some feed and applied it. I went out to pick the ripe fruit on the outside of our garden fence.

After lunch Jenny went to her yoga class and I decided to revise a Microsoft Excel macro I had written to list my DVDs. That did not go well and I went outside to cut the grass on the back lawn to think about the logic I needed to apply to achieve what I wanted.

I came back to the problem for a short while until Jenny was back and had rested a little before going out to pick the blackcurrants in the back garden. That took us a couple of hours. Then it was back to my technical work until tea.

Jenny went swimming with Rachel, as they usually did on Thursday evenings and I settled down to watch the DVD of Gandhi.

Friday July 15th: A long shopping trip to Unicorn with the painfully slow journey along the A56 to Waitrose (no, they hadn't finished the road works near Broadheath) saw us heading back in the middle of the school run. Previous experience of using the M60 suggested it might be better to return along the A56 which, apart from the detour round the Manchester ring road, ran all the way to Bury. All went quite well until we reached Sedgley Park, where there was a long queue of traffic all the way to the M60 junction in Prestwich, at which point much of the traffic seemed to disappear into thin air. I didn't think the journey was any quicker but it was much less boring and far less frustrating than the stop-start on the motorway.

Saturday July 16th: We went to Redcar for the day. It was my sister's (Barbara's) 80th birthday and her daughter, Julie and her son, John, had organised a family gathering at Julie and Keith's house. It was a very pleasant, sunny day and it was very nice to meet up with Barbara's family, some of whom had travelled some considerable distance for the day. Sadly, we did not make it to the promenade and the sea shore.

Sunday July 17th: I was too tired after the previous day's driving to pack the car for the car boot sale so we had a lie-in. It was another nice day and we spent it pottering in the garden, picking fruit and making jam, the result being 9 jars of blackcurrant and 5 jars of raspberry jam.

Monday July 18th: It was another late start and Mike arrived while we were preparing breakfast so he joined us for a coffee and aired his strong views on the E.U. referendum result. After breakfast and putting our opposing views on the E.U. to one side, we settled down to tackle the issue he had come to discuss, that of the BT bills for the Old School broadband. I ended up E-mailing him the latest, new bills so he could set up direct debits for them, being the Treasurer of the Old School Users Association.

After that, Jenny and I went to drop off a present for Matthew and Carrie's birthdays, expecting to find Carrie working from home, awaiting a furniture delivery. Carrie was at work waiting for a call from the delivery chaps to say they were on their way so we deposited the present on the hall floor, through the cat flap.

We made our way back towards Bury, calling at Newbank Garden Centre for some more organic potting compost to create another raised bed for more vegetables Jenny had

bought in pots from Unicorn to grow at home. I also decided to purchase one of those raised beds that slot together, like the two Matthew gave me and when we came home, I set about building a second stand for the raised bed some 2½ metres long, 1¼ metres wide and just under ½ metre high, to be placed on the patio. I was using the wood Matthew had given me, stored under the car port. After cutting the bits I needed to assemble the stand, I discovered I did not have any wood left for the top surface and packed up for the day, storing the parts in the garage overnight. My plan was to acquire some more surplus wood from Matthew the following day.

Tuesday July 19th: Breaking the run of late starts, I was up at 7:30 a.m. and at the Incredible Edible plot for 10 a.m. Dave Archer had already sent me a message to say he could not make it and Frank and Tracy didn't turn up either, so I spent two hours working on my own on the wild flower bed, turning over the patch we had cleared the previous week and removing weeds and then pulling out weeds from amongst the flowers in the rest of the bed. The forecast was for this to be the hottest day of the year so far and it was right for once.

After lunch at home we went down to Matthew's house to collect some wood he had spare so I could construct the second raised bed table. I took the trailer but, unfortunately, it was too small for the long lengths and since I needed several 1.2 metre lengths, I adopted plan B. That was to come back home, collect my tools to cut the wood to the required lengths at Matthew's house and bring back the cut lengths, which fitted neatly in the trailer.

After a tiring day in the scorching heat with temperatures hitting 33°C it was time for a cold shower, a rest and tea, comprising home-made, gluten-free, organic lasagne.

Wednesday July 20th: First I made an enquiry to see if our usual landlady in Whitby could provide us with accommodation in August. Second, I ordered a new picnic bench (FSC wood, of course), weatherproof cover, parasol, parasol base and parasol cover from Amazon. Third, we went down to B&Q in Bury to purchase some heavy duty polythene for the new raised bed I was about to construct. Jenny took the opportunity to nip into Tesco, naturally.

After lunch, I commenced the construction of the table to support the raised bed and by 6:30 p.m. I had managed to make one side.

Thursday July 21st: By lunchtime I had finished the second side of the raised bed table, having taken the time to painstakingly mark out all of the positions for the uprights and pre-drill all the holes for them, unlike my more impatient approach the previous day.

I was interrupted only once, by the delivery of my garden picnic bench which Jenny and I struggled to store in the garage where it awaited assembly.

While I was busy with my construction, mad Max the mower man from the council arrived to cut the grass on the side of the house and, again, fortunately left the bit I cut alone. I was hoping to get out and cut it this week but other priorities had prevented me from doing so.

After lunch, I commenced fitting the cross pieces to form the table top and managed to screw in the first piece at one end before the darkening skies gave way to some

unscheduled and somewhat persistent spots of rain. I decided it was unwise to continue using the electrical extension cable and drill under the circumstances and gave up, waiting for the rain to pass.

I must say that I felt utterly sick of the weather in this country. We had a couple of fine, hot, sunny days and it was back to grey skies and rain yet again. Why the rain couldn't go and fall where it was needed, like Ethiopia, for example and leave us with a decent, relatively dry and warm summer was beyond my understanding.

And what's more, the rain kept coming and going and persisted until the early evening. On the positive side, the met office did update their web site to say it was raining.

Friday July 22ⁿ: Some entity must have detected my annoyance at the weather because the forecast rain did not mature and it was another nice, warm day. We had a pleasant day grocery shopping in Chorlton and Broadheath, except that the road works approaching the latter still had the outbound carriageway reduced to a single lane. Fortunately, the schools having closed for the summer and we being earlier than usual, the delay was not as long as in previous weeks.

We were home for 2:30 p.m. and round at the Old School for about 4 p.m. to prepare our electrical equipment for the jumble sale. Our first surprise was that we had been moved and had a room all to ourselves. Our second surprise was that we had been lumbered with toys, games and jigsaws as well as electrical goods, as if we didn't have enough to do. I was rapidly coming to the conclusion that enough was enough and maybe we should give up altogether, since we spent far more time there than most of the other jumbblers.

On the way back, we called at the church to collect a redundant piece of decking I needed to finish the raised beds I was constructing and which I was told I could have. We had been in the house only a couple of minutes before the heavens opened, so we had timed it quite well.

Saturday July 23rd: It was a long day at Greenmount Old School testing and pricing electrical equipment for the jumble sale.

Sunday July 24th: With the weather looking uncertain and rain forecast by 2 p.m. in Ramsbottom, we decided we would be better under cover at the Old School than standing at our car boot stall in the open. Hence, another long day loomed.

Monday July 25th: This was the climax to our exciting week end; it was the day of the Grand Jumble Sale. We broke our routine of the previous two days and came home for lunch, following a later start at the Old School because I was testing a couple of items at home that could not be tested at the Old School for technical reasons. I tested a couple more over lunch.

The sale inside started at 4 p.m. and it was busy for the first hour or so.

We were home for about 6:30 p.m. after squirreling away the better remaining items for the next sale and helping to pack up the rest for Father Wyatt's van to go on for sale in Salford to help his cause there.

Tuesday July 26th: The plan was to spend a couple of hours tending the Incredible Edible plot, cut the grass and finish off the raised bed. I was at the plot for 10 a.m. where I met up with Frank and Dave. We had not been working long before the clouds started to precipitate and I walked home in the pouring rain about 10:30, absolutely fuming. I changed out of my wet clothes and spent the day scanning documents from the filing cabinet, continuing the work to convert all the documents to electronic storage.

Wednesday July 27th: I was still annoyed about the miserable weather of yesterday. The sunny periods tempted me outside and I decided to have a go at cutting the very long grass on the side of the house even though it was still soaking wet, the previous day's rain having persisted overnight. It was heavy going and the wet grass clogged my mower several times but the old Flymo Compact 380 coped very well and I finished the job before lunch. I could really have done with a new mower, as mine was falling to pieces, although it still worked and was the best mower I had ever had. Unfortunately, my model was obsolete and had been replaced with an over-engineered, modern-looking design that was neither use nor ornament, according to the reviews I had read. Why Flymo had to change a winning design beats me.

After lunch, I started on the raised bed, the intention being to finish it, after the sunny morning had dried out the wood, before the rain returned the following day. Had I not been three screws short (that should come as no surprise), I would have done so without a trip to B&Q. As it was, we took the opportunity to take all the rubbish from the Old School jumble to the tip on the way.

I finally downed tools about 5:30 p.m. with the raised bed table ready for the bed itself. That, finishing the side garden and tending the front and back gardens would have to wait until the week end, for which the weather forecast looked promising.

Thursday July 28th: The rain returned with a vengeance. This really was a terrible climate in which to live. Instead of finishing off the new raised bed and picking the rest of the ripe blackcurrants, I spent the day scanning and shredding more documents from the filing cabinet and trying to discover the cause of Matthew's old tower system randomly displaying the Windows BSOD (blue screen of death) or, in other words crashing big-time.

My initial thoughts were that the old system had some Windows corruption and I switched it to the back up hard drive with a mirror copy of Windows 7, albeit a bit out of date. That loaded successfully, eventually, after a few inexplicable issues of not finding the hard drive, etc. and I managed to update the antivirus software, the clock and the TV settings in Windows Media Centre. It was when tuning in to TV programmes I started to experience issues and – yes – the BSOD.

I switched it back to the main hard drive and decided to ponder the problem further after loading it up and then powering it down. My second guess was that there was a problem with one of the memory modules and the power up was to check on what memory was installed. It had 4 x 1 Gb modules. Now I thought I had 4 x 2 Gb modules spare somewhere and I decided to check whether these were the same type and voltage before swapping them.

Friday July 29th: It was the day of the week when we tackled the M60 and, after calling at Tesco, Prestwich for some diesel, we joined the motorway there as usual. The journey to

Unicorn and back from Waitrose was not too bad despite the motorway being very busy. School holidays helped to alleviate congestion considerably.

The only real delay was on the A56, approaching Broadheath, yet again where the road works still had the junction down to a single lane heading towards Waitrose.

The groceries safely dumped in the kitchen for Jenny to store away, I turned my attention to Matthew's old tower system.

I loaded Windows and checked the make and model of the motherboard. It was an ASUSTek Commando Revision 1 with a bus clock of 266 MHz. I needed to know this to determine the type of memory it needed. That turned out to be DDR2 800/667/533.

I also checked on the graphics card, which can require some main memory for its own, exclusive use, depending on the type of card. It was an NVIDIA GeForce 7600GT.

The memory installed was 4 x 1 Gb modules of Corsair CM2X1024-6400C4 2.10v ver 6.2 4-4-4-12 800 MHz 1024 MB 000038 08175057-0 XMS2-6400C4.

I checked the BIOS and that was only seeing 3 MB of installed memory. I wondered whether the version of the BIOS was too old to cope with 4 GB memory (MMI BIOS V0601 12/22/06). Windows was seeing 4 GB of which only 2.94 GB was useable.

The processor was an Intel Core 2 Duo E6600 (2.4 GHz, 2.4 GHz) 1066FSB L2 4MB REV B2).

The first suggestion I found on the Internet to try to persuade Windows to use all 4 GB of memory was to use the Microsoft utility msconfig using the Advanced setting on the Boot tab. The suggestion was to tick the box that said "Select maximum memory". Applying that setting and reloading Windows did not resolve the problem.

The second suggestion was to use the BIOS Advanced Chipset settings to enable the memory ramp feature. That succeeded in persuading the BIOS that the machine did indeed have 4 GB of memory but reduced the amount available to Windows to 2 GB.

At this point I gave up for the evening.

Saturday July 30th: I was not feeling well. My bad throat and catarrh, which I had experienced for a couple of weeks was now complicated with a sharp pain in the left of my neck when I swallowed and the tiredness and inability to concentrate, making everything seem unreal and dream-like for occasional periods, persisted from the previous day.

Nonetheless, I finished the raised bed and, after a trip to Newbank Garden Centre for more organic potting compost and taking the opportunity to call at Matthew's house, there being no-one in, we returned home to fill the bed with soil and plant out the cauliflowers and courgette we had purchased in small pots from Unicorn the previous week.

After lunch, we picked the few remaining raspberries and all the ripe blackcurrants, which took all afternoon.

Sunday July 31st: Despite it being a nice day, neither of us had the energy to go to the car boot sale. We spent most of the morning preparing the blackcurrants for the next batch of jam and the afternoon making it.

I managed to find time to persuade Windows 7 on Matthew's old tower system to recognise it had 4 GB RAM by leaving the changes I made to the BIOS and removing the Select maximum memory setting using msconfig.

The next challenge was to get Windows Media Centre to work properly. It kept losing the channels, even after completely retuning. Unplugging the aerial cable to the tuner and then reconnecting it seemed to solve that problem. How or why is anybody's guess.

The only remaining issues were to identify the pop up window that appeared and then rapidly disappeared when starting Windows and to find out why, when loading Windows, the PC uttered a couple of grunts suggesting it had disconnected something.

I also found time to update the village web site.

That concluded another eventful month in my busy retirement.