

Greenmount July 2023

Saturday, 1st July 2023

We started our day early.

I was still battling with the reinstallation of Windows and the accompanying applications. The big pressing issue was I could not record TV programmes on the laptop because the old Hauppauge receiver refused to work after I reinstalled Windows. I tried it on the old school laptop but it didn't work on that anymore either.

I managed to use the good old Windows 7 desktop to put in the TV recordings for the coming week. Microsoft should have stopped when they were onto a good thing instead of the current pile of junk that has been forced upon us all.

As soon as Jenny was ready, we made our way to the old school and we started working on testing and pricing some of the newer donations before the jumble sale started at 9 a.m.

We had quite a successful three hours, with lots of sales and it was quite busy for most of the time.

We started packing up at about 11:30, as trading faded and we were there until about 1:30 p.m., putting the items we were keeping in boxes and storing them on the stage in the hall. The rest, we boxed up and left in the old scout room for collection by Father Wyatt's assistants for transporting to Salford.

After lunch, we went to Bury and parked at Tesco.

I went to Wickes to return the flexible pipe cutter I had not needed for a refund. Unfortunately, I only took the print of the bank transaction and not the purchase receipt so I could not obtain the credit to my account. I gave up on that one for the present.

Jenny went into Tesco for a couple of items she wanted and I joined her after my fruitless trip to Wickes, just up the road from Tesco.

Yellowtail wine was still on offer at £6.25 with our Tesco Club-card and there was 25% off six or more bottles so we bought six assorted bottles. We would have purchased a couple of bottles of the rosé sparkling wine but it was out of stock. The next delivery was on Monday, when the offer ended.

Fortunately we had a bottle or two at home and one was opened for tea to accompany our Gressingham duck from Waitrose.

On returning from Bury, I discovered that one of the wires I had strung from the garage wall to the oak tree at the back of the garden to support the blackberry bush runners had snapped and I repaired it temporarily.

Sunday 2nd July 2023

I started off by tidying up my e-mails after reinstating them on the laptop and installing my account on my iPhone. That was taking for ever and I gave up to go out and fix the support for the blackberry bushes.

After that, I tidied up the garage a little and returned to my earlier task. I made some progress and decided to enter all my events in outlook 365. I managed three before I discovered that reminders were not working. I spent ages trying to fix that problem and I found that there was no entry for Outlook in the list of programs (I hated the abbreviation Apps) that were permitted to issue notifications. In searching for a solution, one similar incident mentioned reinstalling Windows. I put in some feedback to Microsoft which I doubted would result in any progress.

What a shambles Windows 10 and Office 365 were. I was spending too much time just firefighting and I was getting fed up with it all.

Monday, 3rd July, 2023

It was not a particularly productive day. It was mostly a case of fiddling about with the laptop, largely unsuccessfully.

Tuesday, 4th July 2023

We went to Bury.

I returned the flexible pipe-cutter to Wickes, this time taking the correct receipt, while Jenny went to Boots for some tablets she wanted but she discovered they did not stock them.

We went to the Cats Protection League shop where I found a double CD of Chris Barber, Kenny Ball and Acker Bilk.

Our last port of call, was of course, Tesco. I waited in the car, listening to a Jazz CD.

Returning home, I asked Matt to order Jenny's tablets from Amazon using his Prime account and I added some plumbers silicon grease to the order.

After lunch, I worked in the back bedroom. The first job was to have another attempt to sort out the coving corner over the door and I made some progress using Polyfilla.

The excess mixture I used to patch up the ceiling where it had been damaged by scraping off the textured paint. That was a long, slow process and there was still a lot of it left to do.

Wednesday, 5th July 2023

I dodged the rain showers to pick the ripe fruit in the back garden. There were some strawberries, although some had been attacked by snails and some by what I thought were mealworms. It had occurred that, this year, I had forgotten to put straw in the strawberry beds which would have deterred snails and raised the strawberries off the soil.

Meanwhile, my latest batch of catheters arrived after I had made some enquiries to find out where they were, because I had started my last box from the previous shipment.

Jenny's tablets from Amazon arrived. My plumber's silicon grease as not expected until the 7th.

In the afternoon, I had a support call from Dell to try to fix Outlook 365 so that it produced reminders. I thought we had done so but after the call ended, I discovered that my recurring events were still not sending out reminders. Office 365 and Windows 10/11 were absolute garbage. Life was much simpler with Windows 7 and Office 97.

Thursday, 6th July 2023

I started my day with a hair-cut, beard trim and a shower – still using cold water.

What else could go wrong? Answer, there was no EE mobile phone signal to the house. None of our mobile phones had a signal and the BT broadband back-up was flashing red.

We did have mobile phone connections over broadband though (I wasn't sure how that worked, but it did). I managed to report the fault to EE by text and received a call back from a gentleman who was as helpful as he could be, confirming that two of our local masts were out of action and had the highest priority for a repair. He added me to the list of people to receive progress updates by text and arranged to call me back next week to check everything was working. I subsequently received a text message to say the fault on the nearest mast would be repaired within 14 hours.

The rest of my morning was fairly routine and I updated this diary.

After lunch, I started painting the walls in the small cupboard in the back bedroom. I had to leave off at tea time.

Friday, 7th July 2023

We went grocery shopping to Sainsbury's store at Heaton Park. After a late lunch, I tidied up the recorded TV programmes we had watched and scheduled the recordings for next week.

Saturday, 8th July 2023

I was intending to go to deal with the electrical jumble at the old school but since thunderstorms were forecast for the afternoon, Jenny suggested we concentrated on picking the ripe fruit and we started at the Incredible Edible plot by the church.

Jenny had spotted some raspberries there as she returned with Lorna from Cuppa and a Chat on Thursday but, unfortunately, it seemed someone else had beaten us to it. We did manage to harvest a few, along with some blackcurrants.

Back home, I harvested some ripe raspberries from the odd bush we had mixed in with our blackberry bushes and more ripe strawberries from our raised beds. I finished off with our blackcurrants, finishing just in time for lunch and just as it started to rain.

The afternoon was mostly taken up with a jam-making session using the blackcurrants we had gathered, resulting in four jars of preserve plus a “taster” jar with the small amount of excess.

I found a plumber to fit the new shower mixer. He was scheduled for Monday.

I had a quick look at the small toilet and I think I fixed it. I left it with the covers off to monitor the situation.

I resumed the painting of the small cupboard in the back bedroom. Being in a confined space didn't do my long-standing cough any good, just as it seemed to be improving. I broke off for lunch after finishing the last fiddly bit on the inside of the shelving. I decided to have a bit of a rest after performing the contortions required to reach the difficult bits.

I discovered I hadn't fixed the small toilet.

Sunday, 9th July 2023

I finished off the cupboard walls. After just two of the remaining three fiddly bits, it was time for lunch. With those completed after lunch, I used a small roller on the last two large areas and then cleaned up. I finished at about 7 p.m.

Monday, 10th July 2023

I started my day with a cold shower, having forgotten the plumber was due and he arrived just as I was drying off.

After two and a half hours, we had reached something of an impasse. The plumber, Stephen Lees, had fitted the new Mira Excel EV but the thread on the connections seemed slightly less than the old unit and the cold connection leaked when the supply was turned on. We didn't reach the point of turning on the hot supply.

We ended up removing the mixer altogether since the O-ring seals on the pipework were too far back and the pipework was inaccessible because it was behind the tiled, plasterboard wall. We decided the best course of action for the present was to leave the pipes with shut-

off valves on them, so, in effect we had taken a step backwards in that we didn't even have a cold shower now. This made the refurbishment, with a walk-in shower, even more urgent. I was not happy and I was pleased that I had not tackled the job myself after all.

I decided to think about the best way forward and I thought removing the tiles might be a smart move to get at the plasterboard and subsequently, the pipework. What a job that was going to be.

I sprayed the inlet valve of the cistern in the small toilet with a generous amount of WD40 in the hope that would prevent it from allowing water to trickle in. If that failed, it might need a new valve.

This was turning out to be quite a bad year.

After lunch I resumed work on the cupboard in the back bedroom, painting the walls. I was hoping the second coat would finish it but I found it would require a third coat. I plodded on until tea-time (7 p.m.) having painted the top part above the large shelf and all the fiddly bits round the small shelving but the bottom bit. That left the rest of the left-hand side, the rest of the right-hand side and the rest of the back to do, all of which, apart from the cutting-in round the shelving and the skirting, could be done with the small roller.

Tuesday, 11th July 2023

I finished giving the back bedroom cupboard walls their second coat of paint. It was late afternoon before I had finished cleaning up.

I had a quick look at Ann's DAB/FM radio again. The on/off button was temperamental and I was thinking of trying to free it up with a WD40 spray. I discovered I didn't need to do that. I powered it on and off several times and it worked perfectly. I suspected the high heat in the conservatory, where it had been sitting for the past few weeks, had something to do with it and I wondered whether the problem was due to condensation or damp of some sort. I reassembled it and discovered I was missing a screw. So was the radio.

I spent a good hour searching for the missing item but there was no sign of it, which was strange because I was sure I had put all the bits in a plastic box. I would now have to see if I could find one to match the others in my extensive store of odds and ends.

I prepared our itinerary for tomorrow. Read on to discover more about our exciting lives.

Wednesday, 12th July 2023

The itinerary I had prepared fell apart at the first hurdle.

I woke up feeling absolutely terrible.

I woke in the wee small hours just for that and subsequently had a coughing fit. My long-standing, intermittent affliction was back with a vengeance; it was something I attributed to inhaling paint fumes, working in a small cupboard with insufficient ventilation or protection. I resolved to root out my breathing mask.

It took me ages to get back to sleep and resulted in me aching all over when I did finally manage to rise from my bed.

The result was that we set off at about 9:45 a.m., with just enough time for Jenny to attend her podiatry appointment. I had planned to take some rubbish to the recycling centre in Bury but I hadn't the time to pack the car with the junk and I was glad I didn't, because we had a very heavy shower on the way down with more to come.

I waited in the car for Jenny, listening to a jazz CD. After she joined me, we back-tracked to Lancashire Home Interiors to ask if they would be interested in our bathroom refurbishment. The initial response was that they only supplied fitted bedrooms and kitchens and not bathrooms but subsequently the lady with whom we spoke was advised that they would consider sending someone to look at our requirements. I left her with a list of what we would like.

We drove back to the town centre and parked so we could walk into the Millgate shopping precinct. We had to wait for the heavy rain shower to stop first.

We bought a birthday card for Carrie. The hair salon from which I purchased my last supply of Wahl hair clipper lubricating oil had disappeared so I could not buy another bottle. I did manage to obtain the shrink-wrap I needed to insulate an outdoor electrical connection I intended to make. I purchased a metre of it from Victor Wright.

The next stop was the Crown Decorating Centre on Dumer's Lane to purchase a tin of Crown Brilliant White Gloss paint for the door jambs in the back bedroom.

We drove just round the corner from there to Matthew and Carrie's house to drop off Carrie's card and birthday present. There was no reply at the door, so Jenny pushed the card through the letter box and we went on our way to join the M60 at Prestwich, bound for John Lewis in the Trafford Centre. We almost didn't make it.

I was driving along at around 65 m.p.h. in the right-hand lane on a four-lane section when a lorry in the second lane from the left indicated to move to the third lane from the left. The problem was that there was a car where the lorry wanted to go. The driver of the car obviously thought the lorry was going to move so the driver swerved the car towards fourth lane not very far in front of my car and it was travelling much slower than me.

I jammed on the brakes and I was amazed how quickly my car slowed right down. Fortunately, whatever was behind me managed not to make contact with my rear end and I managed not to collide with the car that was half in my lane and half in the lane to the left of me. By this time, I had lost interest in the lorry, which, seemingly had not moved as the driver of the car with which I nearly collided decided perhaps it was not a good idea to make the manoeuvre he had intended and settled back into his lane. In fact, I think he went off to the left somewhere, probably onto the hard shoulder to overcome the shock of what nearly happened.

I was grateful that we were able to continue our journey in one piece. Jenny was really shaken, since it was her side of the car that the swerving vehicle was heading, although my collision avoidance tactic seemed to have averted a disaster and I was extremely thankful we had ABS.

On reaching John Lewis we went to the café for lunch and found the last two gluten-free, chicken-salad sandwiches, which we had with a pot of tea each.

We had a quick look for a new carpet for the back bedroom and found one made from 100% wool. The pattern was Kingston Loop and the colour was Foal, a sort of fawn, which I thought would go nicely with the soft-linen coloured walls (a shade of pale yellow) and white ceiling.

Jenny bought a new grill-pan, a new steamer and a new poaching pan, since her existing ones did not work with the new induction hob and she had been managing the best way she could.

We could not find any nice lamp shades for our bedroom or for the back bedroom and we would have to look elsewhere for those.

I enquired about our bathroom refurbishment and I was told this branch of John Lewis did not do that kind of work.

We headed back to Prestwich and called at Tesco for a few top-up groceries.

On the way home, we called at Matthew and Carrie's and they were both in, so we gave Carrie her present and stayed for a chat. They were in when we called earlier but they were both working. Their door-bell was not working properly and they did not hear it until we were leaving.

We arrived home at about 6:00 p.m. It had been a long day.

Thursday, 13th July 2023

My cough was a little better and I did intend masking up and giving the back bedroom cupboard walls another coat of paint.

After breakfast, I went out to pick some strawberries since it was fine for a change and ended up also picking some red raspberries and then tidying up the strawberry beds, since they had yielded their best. We had a lot of bad ones and ones the slugs had munched in the large bed so this year's crop was not so good.

I broke off for lunch and finished off afterwards.

Rachel wanted a lift down to her flat to collect her mail so that took care of a couple of hours and I spent the rest of the afternoon thumbing through the TV listings for next week for programmes worth recording.

Friday, 14th July 2023

I had a decent night's sleep, thanks to smothering my chest and neck in Vic vapour rub and sucking a very nice and effective cough sweet before falling asleep. Nevertheless, I was still coughing and felt rough.

Since the shower was broken, there was no alternative but to have a bath before considering going to D-Caff. In the event I decided not to inflict my cough on everyone and Jenny took Lorna while I stayed at home.

The most pressing task was to check for any recordings of the various TV series we watched that I had missed by performing a search of the computerised listings and then to schedule all the recordings for next week.

Afterwards, when Jeny came home, we went grocery shopping to Sainsbury's store at Heaton Park, resulting in a late tea.

While Jenny was preparing the light meal, I discovered that my laptop was no longer exchanging files with my desktop yet again. It had been working quite well, surprisingly, after I recently reinstalled Windows 11 on the laptop but it had now suddenly stopped for some inexplicable reason. I was absolutely fed up with the instability of modern Microsoft software. The biggest mistake Microsoft made was to ditch Windows 7. Now, with Windows 11 following hot on the heels of Windows 10, finding bits to configure it to do what I wanted was so difficult and seemingly so random. Windows 7 was neat and tidy. Windows 10 and 11 were just a lot of indiscriminate bits just thrown together with no logic whatsoever.

Saturday, 15th July 2023

We went to Cosa Lea at Brandlesholme for lunch with Marie, Bob, Matthew and Carrie. They had a reasonable selection of Gluten-free food and it was very nice. Unfortunately, the GF sweet menu was limited to carrot cake, not one of my favourites and we all just settled for the very filling main course.

The rest of my day was spent sorting out the inability, once again, of my laptop Windows 11 PC to access shared folders on my desktop Windows 7 PC.

First, I enabled NetBIOS over TCP/IP on my laptop. It was already enabled on my desktop but the recent recovery, reinstalling Windows 11, on the laptop had lost this setting. That didn't work. I was able to access the shared folders on the laptop from the desktop though.

I disabled the firewall on the desktop. That didn't work either.

I then had a bit of a brainwave. Instead of relying on the Windows 7 setting to share public folders, I went in and applied sharing directly to the Public user.

I deleted the present network shortcut to the desktop I had configured on the laptop and recreated it. I was suddenly able to see all the shares on the desktop from the laptop. Amazing.

Sunday, 16th July 2023

The mild, showery weather continued. I dodged the showers to pick raspberries, blackcurrants and strawberries. I also tidied up the blackberry runners, attaching them

using string to the wire supports strung across the garden. For much of the time I was accompanied by our friendly robin and I had the odd visit from the blackbird as well. Both were quite used to us now and often came for the dried mealworms we served up.

The grey squirrel put in an appearance but I didn't like to encourage it since it had a taste for my strawberries and it was very clever at finding ways into the strawberry beds even though they were covered in netting to prevent the birds eating them. I had enough problems with slugs and needed to apply more nematodes.

Monday, 17th July 2023

After a very wet start to the day, it turned sunny and warmer.

We caught the 11 a.m. bus from Greenmount to Bury and, after updating my travel card for the Metrolink, we took the tram to Manchester Victoria station, where we changed to travel the one stop on the East Didsbury tram to reach Exchange Square.

Selfridges was a short walk from the tram stop and we made our way to the wine shop where I bought a bottle of Baron de Sigognac Armagnac. It wasn't the one I wanted but it was the only Armagnac they had and, when I paid for it, I discovered it was on special offer. This was Matthew's birthday present.

We returned to Bury and had lunch at Leckenby's Tea Rooms in the Millgate shopping precinct. I would have liked the Chicken Tikka but they had stopped selling it. We settled for a chicken salad and a pot of tea each. The salad was very nice and filling.

Our next port of call was Wickes to ask about the bathroom refurbishment. There were a few elements about which I was not too happy. I had to provide them with measurements of the room and some pictures, we had to choose what we wanted from a brochure and then we had to go down to discuss the details before a plan was drawn up and we had a visit to check everything was correct. I decided to play along for the present and we made the review appointment for next week.

We walked along to Tesco for a few odds and ends and then went to the bus station to catch the 4:25 p.m. bus back to Greenmount. That left at 4:21 p.m. so it was a good job we were early. The bus was occupied by several school children, some of whom were extremely noisy and a few were gathered in the doorway, forward of the sign that requested passengers to be behind it so as not to distract the driver. Personally, if I had been driving, the bus would not have moved until they all sat down and were less vocal.

We called at the village chemist for my new bottle of drugs and we strolled home in the sunshine.

Back home, I dealt with my e-mails from the past few days and other bits of administration before tea.

Tuesday, 18th July 2023

I was feeling a little better and my cough seemed to have waned somewhat. The tickling sensation the caused me to cough seemed to have moved from the right-hand side of my chest upwards into my trachea. I assumed this was a good sign.

I had slept all night with the bedroom window wide open, so I was thinking I may have a dust allergy. The Dyson fan in the dining room had not been on for a while either and that certainly made a big difference to the air quality. I was thinking of buying another one for our bedroom.

I was going to resume painting in the back bedroom but I decided I needed a face mask and I couldn't find one.

I suggested we go down to Wickes in Bury to buy one and that we dropped off Matthew's birthday present while we were out.

Matthew's house was our first port of call, followed by Wickes. Jenny called at Cosa Lea on Brandleshome Road to book her car boot stall for 30th July and at Julie Southworth's house to drop off a tablecloth she had borrowed on the way home.

We arrived home just in time for lunch!

In the wet afternoon, I gave the walls of the small cupboard in the back bedroom their third coat of paint.

Wednesday, 19th July 2023

I started my day by wishing Matthew a happy birthday, as did Jenny.

After breakfast, I went out fruit picking and that was interrupted by a hedgehog that was pottering about the back garden. I stopped to watch it as it walked round the edges, presumably looking for food. It eventually left, managing to pass under the gate on the side passage and I went out on the front to see where it was headed. My plan was to protect it if it tried to cross the road. The creature, which occasionally moved quite fast, stayed on our side of the road and headed down the front gardens. I followed on the footpath for a couple of houses, keeping an eye on it and then came back to resume my task, leaving the hedgehog to go on its way, hoping it would be safe.

After lunch, Jenny went out for a walk with Gwen and her dog, Ruby. Being the first fine day for a while, I applied the pack of slug nematodes to the raised beds, pots, compost bin and I finished the solution off on the first few fruit bushes. The nematodes had a use by date of today, so I was fortunate the rain had stopped for a couple of days.

The next job was to paint the door jamb of the small cupboard in the back bedroom, which would finish off that small, awkward bit of decorating and leave it ready to have the old carpet relayed and the door refitted, a job for tomorrow.

Jenny came back as I was painting the door jamb and started to prepare tea. When I had finished, I did some PC work until tea was ready.

Thursday 20th July 2023

It was another bad day, although, not weatherwise. I had planned on cutting the grass after breakfast but it was not to be.

The bathroom sink was completely blocked and water would not drain. The room was becoming a nightmare. First no shower and now no sink - and the small toilet out of commission.

I emptied the cupboard under the bathroom sink before breakfast. After breakfast, I placed a bowl under the drain pipe and removed the cap on the bottom of the outlet pipe. All the water gushed into the bowl, together with a shed load of black sludge. I poked around with a small wooden stick and more thick black masses fell into the bowl. I was careful enough to wear rubber gloves and my face mask and Jenny brought me a spare bucket of clean water and some Dettol for both containers. When I had removed all the sludge, I placed one hand under the drain hole and ran some water into the sink. It went nowhere.

I removed the water trap completely. The outlet pipe was also thick with the black, slimy mess and I poked that out into the bowl as well. Since it was also now open to the main drains, I was thankful I was wearing my mask. Even so, it did smell a bit.

With everything cleaned out, I replaced the trap and ran some water into the sink. It was still going nowhere and it leaked a bit. Tightening up the connections stopped the leak.

I took the drain cap off again and emptied the water from the sink into the bowl and all over the floor. That mopped up, I replaced the drain cap and poured some sink un-blocker into the plughole. That actually started to move a little and gradually dropped right down.

My plan at this stage was to leave it and pour one or two more bottles of drain cleaner down the plughole, leaving the sink out of commission for a couple of days and see if that solved the problem.

On emptying the bucket and bowl down the drain outside, Jenny came across a rubber washer. I think it was from the connection from the trap to the sink. I decided to leave that for the present.

Since it was heading towards lunchtime, I decided it wasn't worth starting outside so I refitted the carpet in the back bedroom closet and started putting on the door, which first needed cleaning. That was a longer job than I anticipated and it was interrupted by lunch.

After lunch and a bit of a rest, I finished hanging and cleaning the cupboard door. It went on with a bit of a struggle but the bottom three centimetres or so of the edge of the door were catching on the jamb and I was going to have to shave a bit off the jamb, which meant a paint touch-up job, which I could do when I tackled the main door jamb.

Meanwhile I felt like hanging myself; things were going that well today.

On a more cheery note, the hedgehog came back for a brief visit around lunchtime.

I gave up on the bedroom and decided to cut the grass. That went well and I trimmed the edges. Having finished both front and back gardens, I cleaned my apparatus, stored it away

in the garage (I was too tired to put the mower and strimmer away properly), tidied up and came in for tea.

It was too late for my planned body wash in the bath so that would have to wait until tomorrow morning.

Friday, 21st July 2023

We went to Unicorn in Chorlton and then to Sainsbury's store at Heaton Park for another week's supply of groceries. It all went smoothly enough but it did take a fair amount of time and we came home for a late lunch.

I finished off the TV recordings for next week.

Saturday, 22nd July 2023

It was another shopping day, this time, more locally based, at the Pilsworth industrial estate, a short journey down the M66 from Bury.

We sauntered round Home Bargains, picking up a few...er...bargains, before going across the road to Asda, a store we had not visited for years. Our main purpose was to buy two more bottles of drain un-blocker, which was advertised on the Asda web site for £1 less than anywhere else. Unfortunately, there was none actually on the shelf in the store.

We had a quick look round. There was no Armagnac (which wasn't a surprise since it was as difficult to find as rocking-horse dung), not even any decent Cognac. There was no organic meat. We did find a couple of items on the gluten-free shelves.

We called at Tesco in Bury on the way home for two bottles of drain un-blocker at the same price as Sainsbury's store and a couple of other items.

Another late lunch was followed by a tidy up of the TV programmes we had watched over the last week or so, with a short break to put the two bottles of un-blocker down the bathroom wash-basin plug-hole, making three in all.

The first of the two bottles took a little time to find its way down but eventually disappeared and the second bottle went down straight away. The plan was to leave the sink overnight and then pour some very hot water down it to flush all the un-blocker and whatever it removed down the drain. Once clear, the plan was to flush the drain regularly on a weekly basis, requiring one-third of a bottle of un-blocker each week.

Sunday, 23rd July 2023

The first job of the day was to pour hot water down the bathroom sink to clear the drain un-blocker liquid. The first kettle-full struggled a little at first and then went on its way. A second kettle-full, a short while later went down as fast as I poured it and subsequent use of the sink resulted in waste water disappearing faster than it had done so for ages.

After ensuring there were no leaks, even though one of the seals in the trap still needed inserting, I cleaned the inside of the cupboard and put all the cleaning items back in their place. I saw no point in dismantling the trap to insert the washer if it was not leaking.

The next major task was to place an order for some items from Abel and Cole. I gave up when two items we wanted were unavailable for delivery this week. What a waste of time that was.

I dealt with my e-mails, one of which was from Octopus. Having read my smart meter, I received a bill for this month's energy use. It was in two parts since there was an energy price reduction from 1st July and the bill spanned the month end. It took me a little while to document all that and to check the bill. I didn't trust energy companies.

After lunch, Jenny wanted a couple of sheets printing to record her food and drink consumption, which she did regularly to monitor her diet. I then went to put the carpet gripper back on the back bedroom cupboard entrance. After that, I continued patching up the ceiling. Another few days should see it ready for painting.

Monday, 24th July 2023

We decided to ask Bolton Bathrooms to look at refurbishing our bathroom since they did the original refit back in 2005. The result was that we had the same chap, Gary Wild, with whom we dealt then, coming to see us on Wednesday afternoon. While we were there we had a look round the showroom. Nothing really jumped out at us so we would need to go and have another look once Gary had been and had devised some sort of up-to-date plan.

We came home for lunch, after which I had a problem with NetPVR (the TV software) on the laptop and it took me while to resolve that. The web version worked fine but the Windows version didn't even though the status monitor said it was working. Further investigation revealed I'd had this problem before and I had logged it with the NextPVR support people. The response was to download and install the LAV drivers to decode the TV signal, something I had overlooked when I recently reinstalled Windows. Once I had done this, it all worked as it should.

The rest of the afternoon was taken up with making some more plum jam and scanning some of the documents of the original bathroom refit, which we started planning in late 2002 and implemented in 2005.

During a brief interlude in the evening, while Jenny fetched in her washing that had been drying all afternoon on the line across the back garden, I renewed my driving licence online for another three years.

Tuesday, 25th July 2023

What an interesting day we had. I tidied up the raised beds since the strawberry crop was at an end while Jenny tidied up the conservatory and the plants we kept in there.

That was followed by some fruit picking, resulting in the last of the blackcurrants and more raspberries. The blackcurrants joined the ones already in the fridge.

After lunch, we made three jars of plum jam using the organic plums Jenny had purchased from Unicorn. Then we picked over the blackcurrants and made three more jars of blackcurrant jam. Finally, we used the organic apricots, again from Unicorn to make three jars of apricot jam.

Jenny then made a lovely tea of bolognaise with fusilli, followed by upside-down pineapple cake with our own raspberries and soya cream, all washed down with a couple of glasses of Yellowtail Rosé. Tea and biscuits followed.

Wednesday, 26th Jul 2023

I tidied the lounge and gave it a quick going over with the vacuum cleaner and a duster in readiness for the visit from Gary Wild, the surveyor for Bolton Bathrooms.

Gary arrived at 1 p.m. and he remembered me from 2005, when, I learned, he owned the business. I didn't know that at the time.

He surveyed the bathroom and said we could keep our existing units, the plan being to dispense with the bidet altogether and replace the space bath with a walk-in shower. It would mean a complete retile of the walls and floor though. I also mentioned we needed to replace the sink, which was cracked and the mirror which was losing its silvering round the edges. The ceiling would stay as it was. I also asked about a shaver socket and he suggested I fit one before or during the refit. The same applied to a heated towel rail.

I forgot to mention the fold-down seat Jenny wanted and the slow running of the washbasin waste. Since this was the initial survey, I could discuss those details later.

I also mentioned the small toilet and Gary suggested it be left as it was since it looked so nice. I still needed to fix the inlet valve though.

After he had measured everything, he left and said someone would be in touch within the next couple of weeks.

We had a quick snack and then nipped into Ramsbottom for a potter round. I found several Jazz CDs in one charity shop – someone must have been offloading their collection!

Jenny found a cookery book in another charity shop and we bought a few groceries from Plentiful. What's more, we discovered Plentiful stocked organic Mozzarella cheese. Unfortunately, they had sold out but expected a new delivery tomorrow and we asked if two could be put on one side for us to collect on Friday as part of our main weekly grocery shopping trip. We finished off with a quick visit to Tesco where I acquired next week's Radio Times.

Thursday, 27th July 2023

It was not what I would have called a productive day. I seemed to have been bogged down by trivia – a bit of this and a bit of that. Not so much of the other, though.

Friday, 28th July 2023

Much of the day was taken up with grocery shopping. There was a bit of a change to our routine in that we started at Plentiful in Ramsbottom. It was not a large shop – yet - but it was very busy, selling organic produce, some of which was hard to find elsewhere, like Raynor's organic golden syrup and Raynor's black treacle and we bought a jar of each. We had nipped in to collect some organic mozzarella but it had not arrived in this week's delivery, yesterday. However, we did learn that the lady in the store could order items in small quantities from their supplier and we asked her to order two for next week. We also asked if she could obtain some Biona organic sunflower spread and she said she would look into it for us. The only other sources were Waitrose in Altrincham or Abel & Cole online, when they had it in stock. If we could obtain it locally, it would be much better.

I had intended taking the scenic route to Sainsbury's store at Heaton Park, calling to drop off a screwdriver I had borrowed from Matthew but he was busy all morning so we headed down the M66 instead.

From there we crossed over to Tesco at Prestwich and called at Matthew and Carrie's house on the way home. Matthew was still busy and Jenny talked to Carrie. I stayed in the car with my persistent cough.

Saturday 29th July 2023

My morning was largely taken up with daily household tasks, bringing my accounts up to date and planning the expenditure for the next couple of months so there were no surprises. I could not factor in the bathroom refurbishment costs yet because I only had a ball-park figure, which was likely to be a sizeable sum.

We had planned to have a pitch at a car boot sale tomorrow morning but the weather did not look good so Jenny telephoned to say we may not be there and asked for our booking to be rolled over to the next one, in a month's time.

I spent a little time in the back bedroom, tidying up the coving corner over the door. It was starting to look good but needed a little more Polyfilla. It was late afternoon so I decided it wasn't worth mixing any filler.

I tidied up the recorded TV programmes we had watched during the last few days.

Sunday, 30th July 2023

I wasn't feeling so good and I was still coughing. Not going to the car boot sale had been the correct decision. It had been raining heavily around the time we would have set out our stall and continued to be showery. In fact there was no indication of the rain ceasing over the next week and it had been like that for the past few weeks, with just the odd fine day.

After breakfast and tidying up, I had a few minutes in my comfy chair before tackling the back bedroom again.

Monday, 31st July 2023

It was the last day for exchanging our old first class stamps for the new, bar-coded ones so we decided to walk up to the post office when the rain subsided.

We first called at the Greenmount Medical Centre. I asked if I could resume my daily dose of omeprazole, believing the leakage of stomach acid into my oesophagus due to a floppy sphincter valve was the cause of my dry, tickly and persistent cough. The receptionist made a note of my symptoms and my request. Jenny handed in her request for items on a repeat prescription for which the present batch had expired. Why it was necessary to keep asking a GP for medicine that had been prescribed for life by the surgeon was beyond my comprehension. Could it be that the GP was paid for every prescription issued? I knew from working in the NHS that the way a GPs pay was calculated was complex and based on all sorts of factors. Whether the system had changed since those days I did not know.

When we arrived at the post office, Jenny went in and came out again quite quickly. Apparently we had to send off the stamps to the Post Office, which, you guessed it, required a stamp. Since we only had a few stamps it wasn't worth the effort.

We came home for lunch.

I received a call from one of the GPs about my request and, after a brief discussion, he issued my prescription for the omeprazole and said it would be sent to the pharmacist immediately.

I struggled with adding a template to Microsoft Word 365 and failed. No surprise there, then. Neither could I get Outlook 2007 IMAP mail to work on my desktop. That was strange because it worked first time on the GVC laptop.

Jenny went round to the chemist later in the afternoon to collect my tablets and I took one. I had a much better evening and a good night's rest. Things were looking up – or were they? To be continued....