Greenmount June 2023

Thursday, 1st June 2023

I started my day by mixing more home-made weedkiller and resuming the attack on the weeds in the block paving on the patio. Going was slowed down by the mixture foaming in the sprayer due to the washing-up liquid content and tht made refilling the bottle difficult.

I stopped work and packed up for lunch and afterwards I went round to the old school to tackle more of the electrical jumble since Jenny was accompanying our neighbour, Lorna, to "Cuppa and a Chat" there from 2 to 4 p.m.

Afterwards, I drove Jenny up to Holcombe Brook so she could buy a sympathy card for Alison, the daughter of our friends, John and Lynn. Alison's cat, of which she was extremely fond, had recently died. We dropped off the card at Lynn and John's house on the way home.

With the car back on the drive after spending a couple of nights on the road, I emptied the electrical junk out of the boot and dumped it in the trailer ready for another tip run.

I went across the road to see Mike about his PC and to finish off the copying of his data from his old local user to his new Microsoft user on his old desktop. We also talked about a new laptop configuration he was considering.

I came home just in time for tea.

Friday, 2nd June 2023

We went grocery shopping to Unicorn in Chorlton and came back along the scenic route, through Manchester city centre, to Sainsbury's store at Heaton Park. Usually we would have gone to Waitrose at Broadheath but it was such a waste of time on the last occasion, we decided this would be the better option and it was, although a good source of organic meat locally was still to be found.

We called to see Matthew on the way home. Carrie was out shopping.

We did not arrive back until nearly 3:45 p.m. and we had not eaten since breakfast. After a quick snack, we made our way to the old school to set up our stall for the table-top sale tomorrow.

Saturday, 3rd June 2023

We were at the old school for 8:30 a.m. and, although the sale was not due to commence until 9 a.m., there were people already inside, looking round.

We started to pack up at about 11:30, half an hour before the sale was due to end and that took us a good hour. As a result, we were the last to leave the hall. Having sold some of the more expensive items, we did quite well.

We came home for lunch and I spent what remained of the afternoon tidying up the recorded TV programmes we had watched over the last couple of weeks. I also listened to last Sunday's Jazz record requests on which I found three tracks that I liked, something of a record, if you will pardon the pun.

Sunday, 4th June 2023

I just had time for the routine, morning tasks, to edit the TV recordings from yesterday to make them ready for viewing and scan a couple of documents than needed saving before it was time to collect Bob and Marie for lunch in Matthew and Carrie's garden.

We had a very nice meal and chatted for a good couple of hours.

We took Bob and Marie back to their house in Ramsbottom before returning home.

I reconciled our accounts over a cup of tea and then went outside to apply the slug nematodes, primarily to the raised beds, concentrating on the strawberry plants and the Hosta, which slugs have devastated in the past.

Monday, 5th June 2023

The warm, dry weather continued, with a clear, blue sky. I couldn't remember when it last rained, which is most unusual for this part of the country. I wasn't particularly upset about this prolonged dry spell except that I had to keep watering the garden, particularly the fruit bushes and, since I was on a water meter, it was costing me more money than usual.

We didn't get off to an early start. After dealing with the dirty dishes from last evening and breakfast, I decided to have a look at the catch on the door from the entrance hall to the kitchen. After removing it, I discovered it needed a new one.

We went to Bury because I needed more white vinegar to mix some more weedkiller. I took the rubbish from the trailer and put it in the back of the car. I thought I might as well do a tip run while I was going to town.

My second port of call was the scrap metal merchant to weigh in the old lamp post and also cash in the credit note for the last visit when I had forgotten to take some identification. The total amount was sent to my bank account.

I called at Wickes DIY store for a new door catch but the type I wanted was not available.

We parked at Tesco and walked across to the town centre. Jenny wanted some black sticky labels for her storage jars so she could write on them using chalk. The labels could be reused simply by rubbing off the chalk and writing on them again. Having bought those, we went into Boots for some Oral-B toothbrush heads but we could not find any.

We walked back to Tesco and Jenny went in for a few items as well as the white vinegar I wanted while I tried the Boots store next door for the toothbrush heads. I found those and they were cheaper than I expected. I joined Jenny just as she was checking out at Tesco.

It was about 2 p.m. by the time we came home and nearly 4 p.m. after we had finished our late lunch and rested after it. I wondered why time seemed to fly by.

I had updated the accounts with our earlier transactions and dealt with my e-mails, one of which informed me that the dehumidifier HEPA filters were back in stock, so I ordered a pack of three.

I made some progress with the migration of my web site to version 4.

Tuesday, 6th June 2023

I spent the day outside mixing weedkiller and applying it to the block paving, mostly on the drive where I had missed bits or the weeds had not been satisfied with just one dose and on the front path.

Wednesday, 7th June 2023

We went out for lunch to Owen's restaurant in Ramsbottom with Bob and Marie to celebrate Marie's birthday, which was in a few day's time. Afterwards, we had a nice cup of tea in their back garden and spent a lovely afternoon chatting.

Thursday, 8th June 2023

I helped clean the bathroom during the morning and, while Jenny went to Cuppa and a Chat at the old school with Lorna, I put the chicken in to roast for tea and then went out to mix and apply yet more weed killer, this time finishing off the patio, in the company of our friendly robin, his (or her) chick and a friendly blackbird. I had put dried mealworms out for both in separate locations to prevent the blackbird chasing off the robin. He, in turn, was threatened by a magpie which I chased off to protect him.

Jenny came home at about 2 p.m. and I left her to take care of the chicken and the rest of the preparation for tea while I carried on outside, packing up at about 5 p.m. with aching knees and an aching back.

I grabbed a glass of ice-cold water and settled down in my armchair in the lounge.

Friday, 9th June 2023

The plan was to rise early and complete our grocery shopping before a quick lunch at home, followed by the monthly D-CaFF session, which started at 1:15 p.m., although I needed to be there by 1 p.m. This would leave Saturday free for me to work on the electrical jumble at the old school.

The day unfolded more or less according to plan. We left for Sainsbury's at Heaton Park at 8:30, expecting heavy traffic. In the event, we made it in half an hour, which wasn't bad going at all.

We had time to call at Prestwich for a few other items but there were still some products we could not obtain and that resulted in an online order to Abel and Cole after lunch.

The gentleman I was supposed to be partnered with at D-CaFF was not there when I arrived and he telephoned me to say his taxi had not turned up. This was supposed to have been arranged by our local MPs office but I discovered my e-mail request from Monday had not been processed, for which I received an apology and I subsequently telephoned my gentleman to explain what had happened and offer my apologies. I later sent an e-mail to the office, attaching the original request from Monday, as requested, so that the correct procedures could be implemented to avoid similar incidents in the future.

Later in the day, I finished off the TV listings for the recording schedule for next week and my last job of the evening was to water the back garden again, concentrating on the raised beds, the pots and the fruit bushes.

Saturday, 10th June 2023

My day was not as free as I had anticipated.

Rachel had a problem with her near, off-side tyre losing air and I suggested that since the chaps at Finney's garage had failed to identify the problem, I should accompany her to Quick Fit in Bury this morning and she had made an appointment for 11 a.m.

The chap at Quick Fit was most helpful and said it would take an hour or so to identify the problem and we went for a stroll round Bury.

The diagnosis was that it needed a new tyre and since they did not have one in stock, they would have to order one. The car was booked in for Monday and we came home.

After lunch, Rachel helped me put up the two long lengths of coving in the back bedroom, leaving only the last short length to do tomorrow.

The first long length went on a treat and I was quite pleased with the result. Not so the second one. There was a gap and misalignment at the corner above the door and the coving kept pulling off the ceiling to the left of centre, so much so that I put a plank of wood to the floor to wedge it in place. As far as I could ascertain, the walls and the ceiling were both well out of true, born out by the fact that the long interior wall was 3 cm longer than the long exterior wall. The guys who built this house back in 1978/79 must have been a bunch of amateurs. I could have done better myself.

Rachel and I finished at about 5:30 p.m. while Jenny cooked tea.

Sunday, 11th June 2023

Jenny and I went down to Wickes in Bury to purchase another No More Nails 3-pack and then Rachel and I put up the last piece of coving over the window in the back bedroom. I put a couple of nails under it to hold it in place because the wall and ceiling were, once again, well out of true and the coving needed a little encouragement to stick to the ceiling in the middle. This took most of the day, with a break for lunch and it was well worth the time and care we took; I was quite pleased with the result, the corners requiring the minimum of attention. The only corner that was going to need a lot of work was the one over the door.

Now the coving was up, I could make rapid progress with the decorating.

I came downstairs to relax for a while before tidying up a little and as I was doing so, we had some very heavy rain with some thunder for a short while. No need to water the garden tonight, I thought.

I finished off my day with a hair and beard trim followed by cooling down in the current hot spell in the shower.

Monday, 12th June 2023

I started with a quick look at the catch for the kitchen door before breakfast and managed to fix it with a pair of pliers, although I didn't exactly know how! Still, the latch sprung back when fully retracted so I didn't really care. I thought I'd refit it, since it would only take a couple of minutes. Wrong!

I gave up on it and had breakfast.

I had another quick look at the latch and discovered what the problem was. I needed to remove the knobs again and one of the grub screws was giving me some difficulty. Having sorted that out and dismantled the whole thin, I had to leave off to take Rachel down to the Bury office.

When I came back, I started on filling in between the coving and the wall and ceiling on the first piece Rachel and I fixed in place. I managed about half a metre before lunch, after which I took Rachel's car to collect her and drive to Kwick Fit for a new nearside rear tyre. We waited for that and came home.

It was getting late in the day and Jenny wanted to tidy up the pot plants in the conservatory so we tackled that job on the patio. I also planted a sunflower seedling Jenny had brought home from D-CaFF on Friday.

It was nearing 6 p.m. by the time we had finished and tidied up. It was still really warm even though there was some cloud around after another hot, sunny day. More rain and thunder storms were expected this evening.

Tuesday, 13th June 2023

I was up at about 8 a.m. and the first task was to search for the delivery from Abel and Cole. There was no sign of it.

I put a reminder into my e-mail for the D-CaFF outing to see the Blonde Bombshells of 1943 at the Octagon Theatre on the 22nd June.

I was about to contact Abel and Cole, to see where my delivery was, since it normally came around 4:30 a.m., when it arrived. One item had been automatically marked up for a fortnightly delivery and I would not have known unless the web site had flagged it up as too small an order for delivery. I deleted it.

I worked all day in the back bedroom filling in between the coving and the wall and the ceiling with No More Nails. Three of the corners seemed to be fine. The fourth corner over the door was going to need some work. That was a job for tomorrow.

Wednesday, 14th June 2023

We went to Ramsbottom for a few bits and pieces and toured the charity shops while we were there. We also dropped off some books for the Bleakholt Animal Sanctuary shop.

After a leisurely lunch, I put out the second washing line for Jenny and helped her set up a table under the car port to sort her car booty. That didn't last long because Jenny was not feeling well so I helped her pack up and she came in to rest.

Meanwhile I had put four new coach bolts and nuts on the wheelbarrow handle, replacing the old rusty ones. One of the welds on the frame underneath had come undone but that was not causing any problem. There were two more coach bolds in the base of the barrow that needed replacing and it needed a new tyre.

I went to have a look at the awkward coving corner and I tried Rachel's suggestion of cutting a small piece to fit into the gap but the offcut just simply crumbled so that was not going to work. I decided to fill it with Polyfilla and to slope the bottom upwards along the shorter wall to align it with the bottom of the long piece of coving. The challenge was to make the sloping piece look like the bottom of the coving and to obtain a square edge, I needed a guide on the wall. I concluded there was nothing for it but to screw a small piece of wood to the wall underneath and then fill the holes that made later. This needed some work and it was getting late in the afternoon so I decided to leave it until I was somewhat fresher, tomorrow.

So, no progress with the decorating project today.

Thursday, 15th June 2023

After the lack of progress yesterday there came another obstacle. The Mira shower would not let any hot water through so that was now priority number one.

I took the front of the bath to look for the isolation valves for the shower. There weren't any so I decided to fit some before taking the thermostatic cartridge out to inspect the inlet filters. I found some at Wickes in Bury and planned to call in tomorrow morning on our way out grocery shopping.

Meanwhile, I cleaned the floor under the bath while Jenny cleaned the bath front outside. I took the control assembly apart and cleaned it. It was covered inside with black mould and that took quite a while to remove because there were some awkward, small places inside the parts.

I stored the cleaned bath front in the back bedroom for the present and refitted the control assembly until I could tackle the removal of the thermostatic cartridge.

I found a video on Youtube which took me through the process of replacing the cartridge, which was very useful.

I also found a bathroom remoddling business in Bury and we planned to go and see about replacing the bath with a walk-in shower.

So it was another day with no back bedroom progress.

Friday, 16th June 2023

We went grocery shopping to Unicorn in Chorlton and Sainsbury's store at Heaton Park. That took most of our day and a fair chunk of our grocery budget.

Saturday, 17th June 2023

I was at the old school for most of the day, dealing with the electrical jumble. Jenny remained at home, primarily to replenish our stock of home-made, gluten-free bread, the only non-organic ingredient being sorghum flour, since that was unavailable in the organic variety.

After returning home, I went out to pick a few strawberries that were almost ripe and Jenny put then in the conservatory to turn red. The crop this year looked pretty good, assuming they ripened and I picked them before the slugs and birds got at them.

It was much cooler and more bearable than of late. The forecast for the coming week was pretty wet and it seemed we had come to the end of our prolonged extremely hot, dry spell.

Sunday, 18th June 2023

We didn't rise particularly early. I hadn't been feeling all that well for the last few days and I was still a bit groggy and tired this morning.

It didn't help that the door handle to the bathroom came away in my hands, reminding me of a Jake Thackery song. I replaced it and tightened it up and then the glass knob fell off the brass fitting.

I left the door with the inside door knob firmly attached so the door could be closed and opened from the inside and brought the outside knob and fitting downstairs to fix with superglue. While I had the glue out, I also glued down the end of my belt which was starting to come undone.

As I subsequently took advantage of the loo in the bathroom, I heard the small loo toilet hissing away, with a slow trickle of water entering the cistern, the one I fixed a couple of months ago. I removed the cover, stuck my hand inside and lifted the cylinder in the syphon to flush it. That seemed to fix the problem, at least for the present.

I finished my breakfast and put the fitting on the outside of the bathroom door.

Meanwhile, I had been testing the wireless network extender from the old school that seemed to have given up the ghost. That wasn't working here either. I managed to sort it out later, though.

We spent ages trying to order groceries online. Waitrose was useless. Some products came up as available until I tried to order them. Some were available online but not for collection at our usual store in Altrincham. We eventually settled on another order to Abel and Cole but they didn't do any frozen items. Sainsbury's no longer stocked their excellent Armagnac. The consumer world was falling apart.

I couldn't start work on the bathroom even though I had bought the isolation valves. I needed a flexible pipe cutter and I forgot all about the inserts required to strengthen the pipe to be pushed into the fitting.

So all in all, it was not a very successful day.

Monday, 19th June 2023

I went outside to pick the ripened strawberries. I emptied the food waste into the compost bin and removed five slugs from the compost bin lid in the process. I decided to start cutting back the foliage on the strawberries to allow more light to penetrate to the fruit but it started to rain.

I read the meters for the first time for a few months since I was not receiving bills on a regular basis from Octopus. While the company was widely acclaimed, it seemed to have a scatterbrained way of working and not a patch on Bulb, which Octopus consumed after it ran into financial difficulties. United Utilities seemed to be happy with taking a regular monthly payment without worrying about my water consumption. After watering my fruit regularly during the long dry spell, that had shot up.

I brought all the accounts up today and looked at the prospect for next month, which was not good, since I had to pay for the kitchen refurbishment.

After lunch, we set off for the Toolstation shop at Bury South Business Park for four JG Speedfit Superseal Pipe Insert 15mm. From there we drove back to the north side of Bury, to Wickes for a John Guest Speedfit JG-TS Plastic Pipe Cutter. We moved on from there, just across the Walmersley Road junction, to Boro Bathrooms, a family-run business, to discuss changes to our bathroom. Jenny wanted a walk-in shower with a seat, to make bathing more comfortable for her left leg, into which she had the bypass inserted.

We called at Tesco on the way home but that was fruitless because they had not received any deliveries for some inexplicable reason. I later read on the Internet that the store had a "technical issue".

Not long after we had returned home, Matt, the chap from Boro Bathrooms, called to make an appointment to view our bathroom and discuss the work we wanted done. That was quick!

I listened to the latest Jazz Record Requests recording from Sunday. I found all but the last two tracks to be rubbish. The rendering of "Tea for Two" by Blossom Dearie was, I thought, brilliant and well worth the wait. That was followed by an entertaining "Jubilee Stomp" by a band I did not recall having heard before, Hot Antic Jazz Band. One of the performers. Jean-François Bonnel, played cornet, clarinet and alto sax, not all at the same time, obviously, but by no mean feat even so.

Tuesday, 20th June 2023

The torrential rain continued. It was obviously payback time for all the recent, ver hot, sunny weather.

We didn't rush to rise from our comfortable bed, that is, not until the doorbell rang at about 8:30. Our Abel & Cole delivery chap had arrived earlier than last week and I greeted him in my pyjamas. We hadn't ordered a lot but it cost a fair bit and they were items we could no longer obtain elsewhere. Supplies of good organic produce at supermarkets seemed to have been curtailed somewhat and the most noticeable of these was the Waitrose meat department, with no organic fillet steak and no venison haunch steaks (not available in an organic variety anywhere).

I tackled the Mira shower. I had a bit of luck. I found the isolation valves in the bathroom, tucked away under the far corner of the bath, where it was adjacent to the small cupboard by the toilet. That made them difficult to access but I managed to turn off the hot and cold supplies.

I finished dismantling the shower control, cleaning the various parts and I discovered that the filters were worn out, the hot one having disintegrated altogether. I removed both.

I then realised that I needed some silicon grease for the supply inlets and the seal for the thermostatic unit when I reassembled the pieces. Fortunately, in my garage store and found it straight away. There was enough to smear on the seals and I reassembled the shower. I turned on the hot and cold supplies. The shower still wasn't delivering any hot water and I concluded that the thermostatic unit had failed. I thought things were going too well.

Time for a new shower I thought.

I packed up, tidied up a little and then prepared for our evening meal at The Rose and Crown on Ainsworth Road, about fifteen minutes' drive away. This was Rachel's treat for Father's Day at a Greene King Pub with a decent Non-Gluten Containing Ingredients menu (not all Greene King Pubs had the same menu, which is why we didn't go to the Robin Hood in Tottington or the Hare and Hounds at Holcombe Brook, both of which were nearer).

My meal of Prawn Cocktail followed by Hunter's Chicken with baked potato and a side dish of seasonal vegetables was fine. Rachel had the same and the centre of her potato was cold. Jenny had a main course of Chicken Tika, which she said was quite powdery to the taste. Jenny and I would have had a mini Victoria Sandwich and a cup of tea afterwards but there was none available. Rachel had a chocolate brownie which was fine.

It was not up to the standard of the Greene King pub in Burn Cross, Sheffield.

Wednesday, 21st June 2023

The chap from Boro Bathrooms came to look at our bathroom requirements and said he would draw up some plans but he would not be able to do the work until September. Meanwhile, he said if I ordered a new shower mixer tap, he would fit it for me.

Jenny went to see Gwen. It was her birthday.

Thursday, 22nd June 2023

There wasn't time to do much. We had to be at the Cricket Club for 12:30 for the D-CaFF coach trip to the Octagon Theatre, Bolton. We watched the "Blond Bombshells of 1943". The play was set in 1943, about an all-girl band that ended up with a male drummer in a dress and a wig. It was an interesting musical, well performed and very funny.

We didn't get back until tea-time.

Friday, 23rd June 2023

We grocery shopped at Sainsbury's Heaton Park store and Tesco at Prestwich, stopping off at Matthew and Carrie's house to make sure it was safe and secure, they being on holiday in France. Matthew spotted me on his security cameras!

Saturday, 24th June 2023

We spent the day at the old school, working on the electrical jumble.

Sunday, 25th June 2023

We had a jam-making session. Using our own, organically home-grown strawberries and some organic plums, we made four jars of each.

Monday, 26th June 2023

More fruit picking was followed by grass cutting, edge trimming, hoeing the borders and cleaning the mower and trimmer before putting them away.

The hoeing was frequently interrupted as I was visited by two robins looking for insects, worms, snails and grubs I had disturbed. They were often within inches of me and perched on my tools. It was a pleasure just to stand still, watch them and, of course, talk to them, as they followed me round the garden.

I managed to squeeze in an order for a new shower and asked for a wireless access point to be installed at the old school to provide better wireless coverage in the hall and old staff room.

So it was a reasonably productive day even if I still hadn't progressed the back bedroom decorating.

Tuesday, 27th June 2023

We went for a walk round Ramsbottom and called at the charity shops. Jeny found a cookery book and I purchased a DVD of 2001, A Space Odyssey.

I was working on the PC in the afternoon when it crashed big-time while performing a Windows Update – my thanks to Microsoft for that. I tried to fix it but nothing worked and ir seemed I had no alternative than to reinstall Windows.

Thankfully, the vast majority of my files were on an external hard drive and I managed to get into a command prompt window, using that to try to back up the rest. I gave up on that because it was taking ages and I was rather tired, it being about 1 a.m. the following morning.

Wednesday, 28th June 2023

I enlisted the help of Dell using my support contract and a very helpful gentleman talked me through trying to recover my system by telephone. He eventually arrived at the same conclusion I had reached earlier and I had an option to reinstall Windows while protecting my files. What I omitted to save was my file of e-mails held on the system, since I used the older POP3 protocol and I had not configured it to leave a copy of my e-mail on the server. Needless to say, I lost all that, including al my contacts and diary with reminders.

While the system was reloading Windows, I set up my e-mail on my mobile phone using the modern, accepted protocol, IMAP. The advantage of that was that I could use it on my phone and on my laptop and it would all be kept in synchronisation by the server. At least I had access to my e-mail while my PC was out of action.

I spent the rest of the day trying to reload all the applications on my laptop and I had done most of them by the end of the day.

Meanwhile, Jenny telephoned the bathroom showroom in Bury, Boro to ask someone to contact the chap, Matt, who came to measure up our bathroom, to let him know the shower had arrived, since he said he would try to find a slot in his busy schedule to come and fit the new mixer tap.

Thursday, 29th June 2023

We went for a walk round the golf course and back through Hollymount, calling to have a look at the Incredible Edible orchard. It was so peaceful up there, with lovely views over Two Brooks Valley.

We met a friend of Gwen, Gwen and Frank being friends of ours who lived nearby, up Holcombe Road. Jenny knew her quite well and we chatted for a while at Hollymount. That delayed our return home and by the time we had finished lunch, it was too late for Jenny to ask Lorna if she wanted to go to Cuppa and a Chat at the old school.

I thumbed through the TV listings and documented all the recordings for the coming week. Then I turned my attention to finishing off the PC reconfiguration and managed to reinstall the printer, sort out the settings for power saving and adjust the settings for the screen extension onto the TV.

Friday, 30th June 2023

We set off at about 9 a.m. to shop for groceries at Unicorn in Chrolton and Waitrose near Altrincham. Traffic was heavy in both directions on the motorway but not as bad as usual, having left and returned earlier allowing us to miss the higher degree of congestion. We skipped lunch, Waitrose having nothing to offer by way of a gluten-free sandwich, so no change there. Several of our regular grocery items were dearer than at Sainsbury's store and, fortunately, we didn't need them. Most of what we did need was on offer, thankfully.

The price rise of a lot of the food items was running at around 14% to 15% and more at Waitrose, way above inflation and with the cost of energy coming down, there was no excuse for it. There must have been a lot of profiteering going on and it was time our politicians stepped in and stopped it.

After returning home, unpacking the car and a quick snack, we went round to the old school to set out our goods for the jumble sale tomorrow morning at 9 a.m. We had been put in the old scout room and all our stock had been brought in, including the untested items and items set aside for repair. A lot of it had been unpacked and displayed (I use the term loosely) randomly.

We spent about three hours tidying it all up and separating the untested from the tested and priced items, the former being stacked behind our "counter".