

## **Greenmount March 2019**

### **Friday, 1<sup>st</sup> March**

We drove to Poulton-le-Fylde near Blackpool to attend the funeral of David Speight, with whom I used to work at the NHS Data Centre on Kingswood Road in Prestwich. David was the Operations Manager when I was the Technical Support Manager.

David's son, John also came to work at the data centre as an operator, for his dad. John was now in a responsible position in the NHS IT hierarchy, as is Matthew and he and Matthew were good friends. Matthew and Carrie could not attend the funeral, so we represented them as well as my attending as an ex-colleague of David.

The service was very good and we all went to the nearby Castle Gardens pub for a buffet lunch.

I met up with three ex-colleagues, Mike Martin who used to be a shift-leader in the computer room, Ian Jordan who was the Standards and Training Manager and Mike Houghton who used to work on the Payroll system and we all sat around the table putting the world to rights, joined by one of David's ex-colleagues from Preston Polytechnic.

We had a few words with John and his sister, Angela before we left.

Although a sad occasion, it had also been, in many respects, a pleasant one and I had learnt a lot about David that left me wishing I had known him better when I was working with him.

Back home, I nipped round to the village shop and bought the Radio Times so I could start putting in the recordings for the week.

### **Saturday, 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2019**

We spent the morning at the Old School, at the monthly drop-in and we worked on some of the electrical jumble, preparing it for the next sale on 15<sup>th</sup> April.

We came home for lunch and I updated my web site with the latest Greenpeace Unearthed issue and last month's diary of exciting events. I also commenced this recording of the beginning of March and brought the accounts up to date.

### **Sunday, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2019**

We went grocery shopping, calling first at the tip in Bury with some junk we had and some from the Old School.

It was a short drive to Home Bargains to pick up some Highland Spring bottled water before making for the M66, then the M60 to Unicorn, which was quite busy, in Chorlton.

We drove along the busy A56 to Waitrose at Broadheath for lunch and to finish our grocery shopping. The M60 on the way back was quite slow-moving over the canal bridge and so was the A56 back up to Bury.

We were back in the late afternoon, which gave me a little time to finish off putting in the TV recordings for the week. Unfortunately, I was not able to use Media Centre to scan the listings for specific programmes for which I was looking. I had to do this manually using the Radio Times and it wasn't very thorough.

### **Monday, 4<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

I worked on the computer for most of the day, researching accommodation in Sheffield for a stop-over on the 16<sup>th</sup> March amongst other things. The WD Elements discs I ordered arrived and I started reorganising the back up of my data.

The first stage took the rest of the day and I left it running overnight, expecting it to complete.

### **Tuesday, 5<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

The back-up didn't complete due to some problem with the old source disc and I had to manually resume the process after powering the faulty drive off and on again.

We left that running as we went off to Go Outdoors in Manchester on public transport to collect Jenny's lined trousers that I had ordered for collection in-store.

We collected the Craighopper Pro II Winter Lined trousers from the till point and Jenny went to try them on. They didn't fit very well at all and we looked for others. Jenny tried on a pair of Insulated Alaska trousers and they fitted perfectly and were half the price. Needless to say, we bought those.

I looked for a second pair of waterproof over-trousers, since the original pair were returned due to a fault and still with Go Outdoors and I needed a pair for the following day. I wasn't prepared to buy Berghaus again so I looked for an alternative pair but there were no 38 inch waist, short leg ones available.

We came back to Bury and tried Millets near Tesco. They didn't have any either.

After a brief visit to Tesco, we came home on the 484 bus to Longsight Road, having just missed the more direct 480 that ran hourly through the village, meaning a bit of a walk home.

At home, I finished off the first back up process and commenced a second copy on the second of the three new discs.

I also telephoned Frank and we agreed to postpone the walk we had planned the following day due to the weather. Storm Freya was expected overnight, bringing high winds and torrential rain with heavy, blustery showers to follow throughout Wednesday.

### **Wednesday, 6<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

Despite the severe weather warnings, it wasn't a bad start to the day and I was thinking it might not have been so bad to go walking after all. Around lunchtime, the heavens opened and it rained very heavily for a short while and then continued to be showery for the rest of the day.

I spent most of the day working on the computer, continuing with the back up my data, progressing onto the third of the three 2 GB discs I had purchased. The reason there was so much to do was that I had lost my desktop and all the hard drives in it so it was imperative that they be replaced by portable hard drives.

Backing up the last 2 GB of data proved time consuming.

### **Thursday, 7<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

It was another very wet day and I was not inspired to do much so I finished off the Radio Times crossword for the week while continuing the marathon back up.

The crossword finished, I decided to try to resurrect the old XP desktop tower system. It wouldn't boot. It wouldn't even beep at me, which resulted in my beeping at it.

It struck me that the power supply might be faulty, so I replaced it with the one I had taken out of Matthew's old PC. That didn't fix the problem.

The next step was to remove the CMOS battery and leave the system with no power and no battery for an hour to drain it of any residual power. Before replacing the CMOS battery, which was flat anyway, I held in the power button for 15 seconds to ensure the power drain was complete and then released it.

With the new CMOS battery fitted, I reconnected the main power supply and tried again.

### **Friday, 8<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

It was D-CaFF (the village dementia café) day and the theme this month was Memorabilia with a visit from the Merry Trotter Mobile Museum, bringing old artefacts for people to examine and identify.

As usual, I took a few pictures for the village web site.

### **Saturday, 9<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

We went grocery shopping to Asda at Pilsworth, Unicorn in Chorlton and Waitrose in Broadheath, not forgetting Bargain Booze in Tottington on the way home. The weather was wintry and the standard of driving varied from bad to appalling.

## **Sunday, 10<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

With no sign of my Berghaus waterproof over-trousers I had returned to Go Outdoors with a faulty zip, or a refund for them and the prospect of walking with the chaps on Wednesday in rather wet conditions, we headed up to Winfields near Haslingden. Although the store had a large outdoor selection of various items, it didn't have any 38 inch waist (I was working on it) with a short (29 inch) inside leg (not much I could do about that).

## **Monday, 11<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

I started the day by taking the cover off the garden bench. The cover had blown off one corner the previous day and the bench had been partially exposed to the rain, along with the underside of the cover. We had chosen a break between the showers to recover the bench with the intention of uncovering it as soon as we had a decent day and this was it.

After the wintery showers overnight, we were treated to a rare, fine day with sunny periods and I exposed the bench so it would dry and hung the cover on the washing line to do likewise.

We put the cover back on about 5 p.m. since more rain was forecast.

I put all the items I had salvaged from the two tower computers in Jenny's car booty stock in the spare bedroom and added all the new CDs to which I had listened to my CD collection.

I dealt with my E-mails, one of which was my BT bill with an additional charge of £14 which turned out to be a 45-minute call to an 0845 number. Further investigation revealed this was a BT account support number and it was one I had called about a query of a previous bill. Since 0845 numbers were not included in my call allowance, I was charged by BT for the call. Naughty or what? Guess with whom I did not intend to renew my contract when it finishes.

Frank telephoned to ask if I was joining the chaps for the walk on Wednesday and I said I would, although the weather forecast was not good and I didn't have any waterproof trousers. Frank said he would lend me a pair and drop them in for me about 4 p.m., which he did. When he telephoned, he said that the chaps had gone walking last week and done another leg of the walk round Burnley.

When Frank called round, I said I wouldn't be going this week either, since I had missed a leg of the walk and it was going to rain. Had Frank contacted me last week to say the walk was still on, I would have gone last week but since he didn't and I missed out, I wasn't really inclined to go this week either.

## **Tuesday, 12<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

It wasn't a bad day and we managed to dodge the showers for a short walk up to Tottington. Jenny took her books back to the Tottington Centre (the old library) and we

stayed for a very nice, gluten-free, poached salmon salad for lunch.

On the way back we called at Cobwebs, which incorporated the post office, where Jenny bought a birthday card for Wilf and a small gift for Rachel for Easter and I refuelled my wallet, being able to withdraw cash from my bank account at the post office, something I didn't know I could do. Apparently, this was a wise move as, I was told, use of the local cash machine had been cloned on a couple of occasions.

After all my recent computer problems, would you believe the Lenovo laptop I was using temporarily also threw a wobbler in the evening while I was watching a TV recording from my portable hard drive? Fortunately, I was able to recover the situation by plugging the hard drive directly into my DVD player while I fiddled with the laptop.

I updated McAfee, rebooted and then ran a full scan which I left to finish overnight.

### **Wednesday, 13<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

The scan had finished having examined over 1 million files and I didn't even keep any personal data on the laptop, being a temporary deployment while I found a replacement.

The laptop seemed fine so, for the present, I left well alone.

I responded to a message from Mike from NZ. I had dealt with his earlier message yesterday. That contained a picture of my elder sister, Edith, in her care home and I forwarded it to my younger sister, Barbara in Redcar.

The weather was terrible. The overnight gale had turned into blustery gusts with heavy rain showers, becoming more persistent. I was glad I wasn't out walking.

As the day wore on, the weather did improve, which didn't matter to me as I was in the conservatory stripping down Jenny's old laptop to try to fix it. My theory was that the cooling system was clogged.

I used a PDF copy of the maintenance manual to take it to bits, which was very useful because I wouldn't have had a clue otherwise. The cooling system was attached to the underside of the main board and comprised a fan and a solid copper heat sink going round the fan. It was a bit grubby inside but it was not too bad and, assuming the fan was working properly, cooling didn't seem to be the problem.

I started putting it back together, cleaning the dirty bits using a small, USB-powered vacuum cleaner. I left off about 5:15 p.m.

In parallel with my feverish activity in the conservatory, I recorded an old VHS tape of 21 years of snooker at The Crucible in Sheffield on the lounge laptop. That wasn't exactly straightforward, giving up after about 45 minutes and I had to record it in two parts and piece it together. The end had a lot of interference and I thought about trying that bit again to see if it improved – a task for another day.

My day wasn't over though. I was due round at the Old School at 7 p.m. to set up the village projector, which I kept on behalf of the village community, for a slide

presentation at the horticultural society talk, which commenced at 8 p.m. Then I had to recover it afterwards.

### **Thursday, 14<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

I felt sick and ached all over when I woke up and stayed put for a while. By the time I had showered and made it downstairs for breakfast, it was going on for lunchtime.

I felt a bit better after breakfast and, as usual, washed the pots and backed up my documents I had modified on the computer the previous day.

The routine jobs done, I carried on putting the old HP laptop back together. The last piece, a cosmetic cover that went along the back, behind the keyboard I couldn't fit because a couple of screw fixings had broken off. Fortunately, I had recovered the bits, not knowing until now from whence they came and I was able to glue them back onto back of the cover.

Since I didn't need to fit the cover to test the laptop, I plugged it in. Not only would it not power on but the power indicator by the plug didn't light and the power supply made a soft clicking noise. I surmised either the power supply was faulty or there was a short circuit somewhere. Either way, it was somewhat disappointing.

After pondering the problem for a short while, I prised off the keyboard surround which had the power switch on it at the back, left-hand end and various touch sensitive controls and indicators. This was fed by a ribbon cable at the back and I jiggled that about and tried again. Sure enough the computer burst into life.

I refitted the keyboard surround and installed the cover at the back that I had glued together. The first attempts to resume the previous installation of windows failed miserably, with the screen going blank again.

I decided to bring the laptop into the lounge because the sunlight in the conservatory was too bright to see the screen and to try reinstalling Windows 7 from scratch using the recovery discs, taking the machine back to its factory configuration. That worked a treat and I started updating Windows, taking care not to update any drivers from Microsoft Update. I had previously read somewhere that driver updates should only be obtained through HP, presumably because, in putting the configuration together, it was designed to work with a specific set of drivers and previous updates from Microsoft and/or the manufacturer of the graphics chip in particular might have accounted for the screen blanking out. Thus far, the screen had behaved itself.

The only outstanding issues seemed to be that it wouldn't charge the battery, which wasn't really a problem because I didn't cart the heavy laptop around much anyway and Windows was only seeing 4 GB of the 8 GB of RAM.

### **Friday, 15<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

We went grocery shopping, being back to our usual Friday slot.

Our first call was just round the corner at the Chemist for my tablets. I needed some Tamsulosin. Since it was simpler to do so, I collected my Omeprazole as well.

Before I received my prescribed medication, I was told the pharmacist wanted to discuss my medication with me and we went into his little consulting room where I was asked and answered a few questions and then signed and dated his form. I told him my GP normally did this but he said he had been asked by the NHS to do so as well and I thought nothing more of it until I discovered later that pharmacists receive a payment from the NHS for each consultation. On the basis that my GP had been satisfied enough with my health to prescribe the medication, I didn't really see the need for the pharmacist to question it and had I known his motive was probably more financially driven than concern for my well-being, I would not have agreed to the consultation.

This procedure led me to ask how many unnecessary consultations pharmacists in the country were undertaking and at what unnecessary cost to the NHS?

From the chemist in Greenmount, we went to Prestwich where I waited in the car while Jenny nipped to Village Greens. The community-run co-operative did not seem to be doing so well and Jenny reported that there was not as much stock on the shelves, which was a great pity.

It was a short hop from there to Dennis Gore' chemist shop at Heaton Park where I again waited in the car for Jenny to obtain a couple of bottles of Saw Palmetto for me and her oily capsules.

At last, we made our way to Unicorn in Chorlton, along the city route, where, for once, there was plenty of car-parking space.

The drive to Waitrose in Broadheath was a steady one and lunch was, as usual, uninspiring with no significant gluten-free offerings.

Our journey back along the A56 was interesting, being steady with the odd idiot driver providing amusement and what appeared to be a minor shunt, which we circumnavigated. The M60 motorway was painfully slow from where we joined it to the M62 junction, with, once again, some interesting driving displays, not least being a chap in front who constantly changed lanes in an attempt to progress more quickly, only to be passed by me a short distance further on.

It took us about an hour and a quarter to reach home, half an hour longer than it should have taken.

### **Saturday, 16<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

We left for Sheffield at about 2 p.m. in heavy rain. The journey was horrendous. Visibility on the motorway was limited by the spray and rain and many drivers did not even put on their headlights. I was driving with both headlights and fog lights on.

Travelling over the Woodhead Pass was worst of all with lots of water flowing along and across the road. At one point the spray from the road rose up and hit the windscreen like a wave and my view was obliterated for about fifteen seconds. Fortunately, the road was

straight at this point and I was able to keep going without incident. There were subsequent, similar incidents that lasted only for a couple of seconds and were not so shocking.

We arrived at the Travelodge at Meadowhall in Sheffield where there was ample parking, dumped our bags and went up to see Jenny's brother, Wilf and his wife, Anne, who lived a short distance from the hotel.

We stayed with Wilf and Anne until it was time to go for our meal at Le Bistro in Wentworth. We had an excellent meal with good service at a very reasonable price and then gave Anne and Wilf a lift home before returning to our Hotel for the night.

### **Sunday, 17<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

We slept in longer than planned, checked out and went up to Anne and Wilf's house again for breakfast. We had brought our own breakfast food because the Travelodge was expensive and did not cater for people requiring a gluten-free diet. Unfortunately, we were too late to see Anne before she left for work at the Meadowhall shopping centre.

We stayed chatting to Wilf and Wilf and Anne's son, Adam, for a while before packing the car with some car booty and heading home. Although the journey was not as bad as the previous day, it was still very wet.

At home, I resumed work on the HP laptop, which I had left running and installed the Canon network printer. Installing the Canon printer that was shared from the old Dell XPS laptop USB port, running Windows 7, was more of a challenge and I was up until half past midnight doing that.

### **Monday, 18<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

The late finish the previous evening meant a late start and after the usual morning chores, it was time to give Jenny a lift up to the dentist at Hoccombe Brook for her check-up. It was a good job I did because they had me down for a check-up as well.

Jenny received the thumbs up and a polish. I had chipped a lower front tooth again and also had a small cavity in another one, near the gum so I had another visit scheduled in May for further treatment.

We came home for lunch and I spent most of the afternoon planning a route to the Hat Works Museum in Stockport and where to park in preparation for our museum tour on Thursday.

### **Tuesday, 19<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

I continued planning the route to the Hat Museum in Stockport in preparation for the journey on Thursday. The RAC web site route planner recommended the A roads rather than the motorway and documenting that and working out where to park and how to get into the car park in Stockport took me most of the morning.

I spent the rest of the day working on Jenny's HP laptop, reinstalling software. That was marred by a couple of crashes and the machine seemed to be misbehaving again.

### **Wednesday, 20<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

I resumed work on the laptop only to discover that the screen froze. That was enough for me to give up and consign it to the tip. I removed the hard drives and the memory before putting it on one side for recycling. I didn't think I'd be buying another HP laptop.

I tidied up and the lounge was looking less like PC World.

An E-mail from Faith regarding the route to Stockport said she favoured the motorway so I rechecked it with the RAC web site and guess what. The RAC web site had changed its mind and directed me down the M60. I spend a little time modifying the documentation, although most of the work regarding the car park was not wasted.

Matthew and Carrie dropped in on the way to the dentist to lend me their mitre saw and came in for a chat. We discussed the eyesore on the end of the road – the large, detached, two-storey house where Eunice's bungalow, the one we would have bought had we known she was ready to sell it, used to be before the present owner knocked it all down to build his monstrosity. Since it was finished in grey block, we presumed it was going to be rendered and painted, probably white, which would be most appropriate for the biggest white elephant in Greenmount.

Jenny and I spent the afternoon on the patio tidying up the strawberries ready for this year. The garden needed a lot of work and for that we needed some fine weather. The next few days didn't look too bad, although it wasn't going to be that warm and would remain dull with the odd shower. Our next opportunity to work on the garden was likely to be Sunday.

Julie rang from Redcar to say her mum (my sister), Barbara had been taken into hospital. It didn't sound too serious but I said we would make an effort to travel up to see Barbara either in hospital or at home.

### **Thursday, 21<sup>st</sup> March 2019**

We went on the outing to The Hat Works Museum in Stockport, giving Gwen a lift. On arriving at Stockport, the route from the M60 to the car park I had so carefully planned was of no use whatsoever due to major road works. Fortunately, there was a diversion route to the car park that was well signed.

The tour round the museum was most interesting, Stockport having once been the hat-making centre of the country where a lot of well-known London firms' manufacturing premises were based. It was once a booming industry. The process was quite complicated and not a particularly healthy one due to the environment and the chemicals used.

We went for lunch at the Plaza before returning to the display of hats in the museum and

then the museum shop.

We left the car park in good time before our ticket expired. The fact that we could not turn right on exit to go back the way we came was the beginning of a complicated route back to the M60.

We motored along the road to the roundabout round which we would have come on the inward journey but for the road works. That enabled me to perform a U-turn heading back the way we came. That went well for about 30 seconds, when we reached the next roundabout to find that the exit we wanted only went to a car park and not back up to the A6. I continued to perform a 360 round the roundabout and then took the next exit, effectively going straight on, parallel to the M60.

We followed that road and took a left turn, expecting it to lead us to a motorway access eventually. On reflection, we should probably have carried straight on.

We did eventually find a motorway access, via a convoluted route and after taking a wrong turn up what I thought was the slip road to the left of the M60 only to discover it was a one-way loop back onto the road off which I had just turned.

Even more confusing was that the access road to the M60 was long and eventually joined the M60 on the right of the left-hand carriageway rather than the left, which meant that joining traffic was dealing with motorway traffic rushing up from behind on the passenger side at 70 m.p.h. (or, often faster because a lot of drivers completely ignored the speed limit).

After that episode of excitement, I settled down to normal motorway driving and we arrived home about 4:30 p.m.

I walked down the Kirklees Trail (aka The Lines), at dusk, to an inaugural meeting in the clubhouse of St. John's Cricket Club of the Friends of Kirklees and The Lines. The newly formed group intended to improve and maintain the Kirklees Valley, one of our local nature reserves and deserved all the support they could muster. Unfortunately, only a handful of people turned up to the meeting. Happily this did not affect the enthusiasm and determination of those present, including one of our North Manor councillors.

When the meeting finished, I was going to walk back home along the Trail in the dark with Christine Taylor until Alistair and Joan offered us a lift, which was very nice of them.

### **Friday, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2019**

On this particular grocery shopping day, we visited Bargain Booze in Bury, Unicorn in Chorlton and Waitrose in Broadheath where we also lunched, as usual, for which the choice of gluten-free options was, as usual, limited.

The outward journey was alright with speed restrictions on part of the M60 which the vast majority of motorists observed.

The return journey was agonisingly painful for most of the way, the M60 congestion

being due to some problem on M61 exit heading towards Bolton and the congestion on the A56 from the M60 to Bury being due to us hitting the school run, which we would have avoided had we not been held up on the M60.

We took the route home through Tottington to call at Bargain Booze for some wine.

### **Saturday, 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2019**

We nipped into Ramsbottom for some flowers for Faith, on behalf of those of us from the Civic Society who go on visits like the one last Thursday, to show our appreciation for her work in making all the arrangements and then we came back to the Old School to present them to her.

We stayed at the Old School dealing with the electrical jumble until about 3 p.m., leaving off briefly for a packed lunch Jenny had prepared.

Christine informed me that the telephone was not working and I contacted BT. It turned out that the bills for the telephone service had not been paid, although the broadband, being on direct debit, was still operational. Some time previously I had contacted BT, telling them not to send the bills to me because I had no authority to pay them. I told BT to send them to our treasurer, Mike. It appeared that BT had been sending the bills to the Old School, which was about as effective as dropping them into a bottomless pit.

I explained this to BT and gave them Mike's home address for a second time. I also telephoned Mike and left a message asking him to contact BT, as BT had requested.

I told Christine I would look into obtaining the Old School a better deal for both broadband and telephone services if I could find time.

The telephone was working again by the time I left the Old School.

Back home, I listened to Jazz Record Requests. That was about as entertaining as counting the grains of sand on the beach.

While suffering that cacophonous row, hoping something remotely resembling actual Jazz would find its way into the programme, I put in the TV recordings for the week then updated this diary entry.

I dealt with my E-nail and updated my web site with the latest Greenpeace newsletter.

### **Sunday, 24<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

I spent the day finishing last week's Radio Times crossword and working on the computer, downloading the pictures from last Thursday's outing to The Hat Works Museum in Stockport, processing them and generating the elements for Marcus to add to the village web site.

During the process, I discovered some minor issues with the web site picture gallery and I was able to save the web page code for the relevant pages so I could amend it.

It was around tea time when Jenny discovered a water leak in the garage and that turned out to be from inside the boiler. I tidied it up as best I could and placed rags and a large tub under the boiler with the objective of catching the vast majority of the water in the tub. Any drops on the rags would soak into the rags and I left a trailing end of one of the rags in the opening of the drain for the washer, hoping the water collected in the rags would drip down that.

I reported the fault to British Gas and said we had no hot water or heating. The earliest service appointment was Tuesday morning between 8 a.m. and 1 p.m.

Sylvia telephoned to say she had no power. The power had failed on a number of properties across the back and Sylvia asked if we had any candles. We always had candles and she came round with her dog to borrow some.

We also had a power dip during the evening which had affected the time and date on the telephone system, which we did not discover until the following morning, as everything else was unaffected.

Before retiring, I turned off all of the gate valves to the boiler and emptied the tub before putting it back under the boiler. I switched off the boiler as a precaution. All that meant we would have no heating and no hot water the following morning.

### **Monday, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

It was 8:30 a.m. when we awoke, due to the telephone alarm not going off at 7 a.m. Not that we get up at 7 a.m.

We could not shower due to having no heating and no hot water so my first job was to turn the boiler back on and open the gate valves on the boiler water supply and the central heating circuit.

The tub was almost full, so I emptied it and put it back in place. The garage floor was drying nicely and the rags were soaking wet.

The boiler pressure was low so I put some more water into the boiler.

We showered and as I finished, being second in, Mike arrived to discuss the Old School's telephone bill. Apparently, noting had gone out of the Old School's account to BT for ages. Mike had discussed it with BT and BT could not tell Mike who cancelled the direct debit. Neither had BT taken any notice of the note on the direct debit Mike had originally submitted, which clearly told them to send all paper bills to his home address.

With all the fiasco regarding my Business Broadband and now this blunder with the Old School's Business account, both Mike and I were fed up with BT. What an absolute shambles they were. Not only that, but the chap with whom I had spoken and the chap with whom Mike had discussed the account did not speak clear English and, at times, they were difficult to understand. I had no objection to dealing with people from other than a British background so long as whoever it was, British or otherwise, spoke clearly.

I told Mike I was thinking of looking into the service offered by Zen.

I finished off the web site updates and amendments I had started the previous day and sent Marcus an E-mail explaining what I had done before a late lunch.

After lunch, I updated this blog and dealt with the TV recordings from yesterday.

I turned my attention to producing some CD labels, one for a couple of CDs that had come in a cardboard sleeve and which I had put in a proper jewel case and one for a collection of Jazz tunes I had recently compiled. Converting LPs and old cassette tapes to CD, purely for personal use, was a hobby of mine. That took me the rest of my afternoon.

I finished off my late evening uploading the documents for the village web site to a cloud share for our new village webmaster, Marcus.

## **Tuesday, 26<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

We were up early to a cold house with no hot water, having turned off all the gate valves to the boiler again and emptied the tub collecting the leaking water from it before retiring the previous evening.

We were expecting a delivery from Abel and Cole early in the day and the gas man soon after 8 a.m. The gas man turned up as expected and quickly found the fault on the boiler. The left-hand manifold, a plastic arrangement, had sprung a pin-hole leak and was spraying a thin jet of water onto the left-hand side of the boiler as viewed from the front. Fortunately he had a spare part on his van.

The Abel and Cole delivery arrived about 9:30 a.m. and the chap thought I was a new customer until he saw the pile of four empty boxes for return. I explained we were occasional customers. We used to be regular customers until we could not obtain what we wanted from the online store and we now found Unicorn in Chorlton excellent for fruit and vegetables (all organic) and for several other organic items, including most of the gluten-free flour Jenny uses in her baking.

What we couldn't get there, particularly organic meat, MSC or organically farmed fish plus a few other organic items, we buy from Waitrose, which wasn't as expensive as people might think, although one has to be alert to prices elsewhere. We did buy the odd few items from Asda, Tesco, Sainsbury's, Morrisons and Home Bargains.

The main problem with shopping organically and buying environmentally-friendly products was that most stores did not have a wide range of such items, thus contributing to environmental pollution and the loss of biodiversity, which would, in the long run, result in food shortages and starvation.

It wasn't a bad day, just cold, so I toggled up and went out to cut the grass on the back lawn before lunch. After lunch, I tidied up the blackberry bushes and hoed round the garden under them. That kept me busy until around 4 p.m., when I came in for a rest and a nice prawn salad tea.

It was around 10:30 when Jenny discovered a leak in the bathroom, which just about made my day.

We traced the leak to the bathroom radiator, which was a Heritage Bathrooms Cabot radiator, installed by Bolton Bathrooms as part of the bathroom refit in 2005. The radiator comprised an outer, chrome-plated, mild-steel, tubular section, with an inner cast-iron section, painted white.

The inner section had rusted badly underneath and I had contemplated replacing the whole radiator with a stainless steel one. The problem was finding one of a similar design and the same fixings, since it was screwed to the tiled wall and floor. I did contemplate having one made to the same specification, which I subsequently downloaded from the Heritage Bathrooms web site.

The water was coming from the upper-left connection to the inner section and I cobbled together an empty, plastic, ice-cream tub fixed to the rail leading to the leaking union with string. This I had to keep emptying into a large bucket.

### **Wednesday, 27<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

The emptying sessions became less frequent as the night wore on, the flow slowing down and by 2 a.m. it seemed to have stopped, so I left the empty tub in place and went to sleep.

I awoke about 8 a.m., by which time the tub had overflowed and the water had spread out of the bathroom onto the landing carpet, which was soaking wet by the bathroom door. Fortunately, the carpet was still the old one and I lifted it up and folded it over to dry. The wooden floor underneath was also wet and that dried out pretty quickly. Fortunately, there was no sign of water penetration downstairs.

We had breakfast after tidying up and leaving the empty collecting tub in place again.

After breakfast, I undid the nut on the leaking connection slowly and water poured out. I managed to catch most of it and it soon stopped.

I cleaned up again and then set about cleaning the fixing, removing the old sealing compound. The old washer that had come off into the tub had perished.

I ferreted around for a spare washer. I didn't have one. Then I remembered I had thrown out my old jointing compound because it was no longer fit for use.

I contemplated what to do next, a major issue being a 5 mm gap between the end of the pipe and the centre section. I was doubtful about the ability of the union to be able to reseal the joint.

I considered replacing the radiator and contacted Heritage Bathrooms to see if they could supply a stainless steel version. They couldn't.

I left a message for Tracey Hayhoe, she and her husband owning a metal factors specialising in stainless steel, to ask about the possibility of having a new radiator made.

Then, I thought, the best course of action was to get someone to repair the radiator, if possible, in the short term and I was wondering who to call when I remembered my gas maintenance contract included my central heating system, so I logged a call for an engineer for the following morning. If he couldn't fix it, at least he could suggest the best way forward.

As Jenny went off to have her hair done, I decided to update this series of disasters.

I spent much of the afternoon looking into a problem with a picture gallery on the village web site and eventually discovered that the page in question was encoded as ANSI instead of UTF-8. I suspect that may have been my fault; I think I created the picture gallery for Marcus to put on the web site and, not being the webmaster any more, I had deleted all of the village web site from my system, so I had no means of testing the page I had compiled. Marcus had kindly sent me enough information for me to create a test environment which helped me identify the problem.

### **Thursday, 28<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

The gas engineer arrived and had a go at fixing the radiator in the bathroom. It turned out that there was a hairline crack in the left tube leading to the centre section just under the back of the union and the stress of tightening the nut made the leak worse. We needed a new radiator and the engineer said if I purchased one, British Gas would fit it free of charge, under my maintenance contract.

I finished off the last couple of clues in the Radio Times crossword and then confirmed my solution to the web site problem before E-mailing Marcus.

Barbara's neighbour when she lived in Sheffield telephoned me to ask if Barbara was alright because she had not heard from her recently. I explained Barbara had been admitted to hospital in Middlesbrough. We chatted for a while.

I tidied a few things away in the garage and we had some lunch.

After lunch, Tracey Hayhoe telephoned me, returning my call of yesterday and we discussed the possibility of one of her employees making me a stainless steel radiator like the one I had to replace.

I went out to do some gardening at the back. I finished off hoeing the borders and then applied some organic chicken manure pellets to the borders, the raised beds and the pots.

I cleaned the garden bench and left it to bask in the sun while I first planted the blueberry bush in a sunny spot on the back lawn, removing it from its pot, hoping that it would fare better. The part of the lawn I dug up was mostly moss anyway. A second hole I dug in the border at the back made room for me to remove the Ruby Rose that Matthew and Carrie had given us for our 40<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary from its pot, again, hoping that it would do better.

As I was tidying up, Tracey telephoned again confirming that one of her employees would look into my stainless steel radiator and asked me to send her the technical

drawing and a picture of the radiator.

My last job was to put the cover back on the bench, with a 20% chance of rain forecast for early the following morning.

### **Friday, 29<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

The grocery shopping day was a nightmare, or at least the motorway journey in both directions was. The M60 outbound was slow going with the variable speed limit living up to its description with speed changes at virtually every gantry.

The return journey was more consistent, with an optimistic 40 m.p.h. at most of the gantries. 5 m.p.h. would have been more appropriate.

My driving technique on very busy motorways was to leave a sufficient gap between my vehicle and the one in front so that I could keep moving if the traffic in front stopped, albeit at a slow speed, my speed being judged by the traffic as far as I could see in the distance ahead in my lane.

This wasn't good enough for an impatient taxi driver behind me who gave me some horn for leaving a gap and then pulled out to the left, passed me and then cut in abruptly in front of me, nearly taking my front, near-side wing with him, sped up to the stationary vehicle in front and then stopped. I would have caught him up had not the drivers of a couple of other vehicles in front of me in the lane to my left decided they could make more progress in my lane and occupied some of the gap I had left. That was fine, because another reason for leaving a gap was to allow drivers to change lanes easily without me having to slow down.

### **Saturday, 30<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

The morning was somewhat mixed in that I completed some administrative work, replaced a failed halogen bulb in the bathroom, checked the specification of the bathroom radiator I had E-mailed to Tracey to find out if her chap could make me a stainless steel replacement for the current, leaking one and helped Jenny and Rachel with the preparation for their exhibits at the local Horticultural Society's Spring Show.

After a spot of lunch, I looked again at the Dell XPS 13 and 15 laptops with the intention of trying to find one of each I could examine more closely in a shop (preferably John Lewis, I thought). I left off to go round to the Old School to see how the judging of the exhibits had gone.

Jenny won first prize for her chocolate cake and first prize for her fruit cake. She also won second prize for our jam. Unfortunately, our delicious marmalade and our Doverhouse chutney were not placed.

There were only two entries in the miniature floral arrangement and no first prize was awarded. Rachel's entry came second and the other third. As a result, Rachel was awarded the coincidentally-named Dearden Trophy for this category.

This was the first year we had submitted any entries and, what's more, all our produce was both gluten-free and organic.

It was turned five p.m. by the time we were home where I started listening to the recording of Jazz Record Requests. It was then I discovered that my Excel file of audio media was corrupt. So was the back-up copy. I had no alternative than to commence its reconstruction and given the size of my collection, that was going to take days if not weeks.

### **Sunday, 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019**

Apart from continuing to reconstruct my file of audio media, we went for a meal to the Swan and Cemetary, courtesy of Rachel, for Mother's Day. It was also our wedding anniversary.

We met up with Matthew and Carrie in the bar for a pre-meal drink and a chat.

The meal was alright but not, I thought, up to the Swan's usual standard and certainly nowhere near as good as the one we had at Le Bistro in Wentworth. But then, that's in Yorkshire so it was bound to be better.