

Greenmount March 2020

Sunday, 1st March 2020

I thought I'd better tackle the old school jumble items I brought home.

Progress was rather slow.

I glued together an in-line switch that had broken apart in the flex to a lamp to render it safe for selling. I left that to set overnight.

I put a satellite navigator on charge so I could test it ... eventually.

I looked at a Panasonic digital camera. It needed a battery, which I didn't have and an SD card so I needed to look for a spare one. I discovered it would accept an external power supply but all my spares were stored at the old school.

I left a second satellite navigation system in the box of bits until I had dealt with the first one.

The item that took most of the afternoon was a very nice pot lamp, except that the wooden base had disintegrated and it was a case of gluing it together. The first challenge was to work out which bits went where; it was a little like tackling a jig saw puzzle in three dimensions. With a few choice words and a little patience, I eventually managed to start gluing the bits together and left what little I had achieved to set until another day.

After tidying up, I settled down to listen to Jazz Record Requests on BBC Radio 3. It started rather promisingly with a request from a lady commenting that she, like me, preferred traditional Jazz and asking for something by Henry Red Allen. So what was chosen for our delight? A 1957 track called Bluebird featuring Coleman Hawkins on tenor sax. That didn't fall into my category of traditional and I couldn't help feeling that the lady who requested the track must have been somewhat disappointed. Had it been me, I not only wouldn't have bothered requesting anything ever again, I wouldn't have listened to the programme ever again.

As it was, the programme redeemed itself almost immediately with a repeat of Bad Penny Blues by Humphrey Lyttelton and a couple of interesting tunes towards the end, one being The Eyes of Texas by the West London Rhythm Kings and the other 2.19 Blues by the City Ramblers Skiffle Group, the latter being passable but not as good as the version I heard by Louis Armstrong.

Monday, 2nd March 2020

We had another bread-making morning. Unfortunately, between us, we forgot to add the yeast to the second loaf, so it came out almost as flat as a pancake. Whether it was edible was something we would discover later.

After lunch, I left Jenny to work in the kitchen.

I planned our journey to the Manchester Royal Infirmary tomorrow and Jenny's eye drop schedule for the day, working round our travel arrangements.

I spent some time recovering pictures I took for the village web site while I was webmaster and which contained a personal element, with the objective of publishing them on my web site. When I passed on maintenance of the web site, I deleted my copy of it, including all the pictures I took for it.

I did find time to deal with a couple of the jumble items I had brought home to repair, finishing off two of them, gluing another bit of the lamp base and putting a second satellite navigation system on charge.

Tuesday, 3rd March 2020

We had a grand day out at the MRI again. Jenny's eye appointment was at 2:45 p.m. so we set off to catch the 13:12 474 bus to Bury. That came 14 minutes late, closely followed by the 13:17. It was not a good start to the journey.

When we arrived in Bury, the bus interchange had been turned into a building site and all the busses were channelled into the middle set of boarding points. It was a nightmare for passengers and drivers alike. Of course, there was no mention of these remedial/improvement works on the TFGM web site when I used it to plan our journey.

Alighting from the bus, we discovered we could not use the crossing to go directly to the Metrolink station to catch the tram into Manchester. We had to walk to the end of the bus station, cross there and then walk all the way down the other side. By the time we reached the platform, the tram I planned to catch was just leaving and we had to settle for the next one, which departed six minutes later.

Our luck changed as we reached Manchester. We left the tram at Market Street and rushed over to the 142 bus that was standing at stop J in Piccadilly Gardens. That took us to the stop outside the MRI in about ten minutes.

We reached the clinic with about seven minutes to spare and, by the time the chap on the desk had dealt with the couple of people in front of us, we were two minutes early.

We needn't have rushed. The consultant was running 45 minutes late when we arrived and that was amended to 60 minutes while we were waiting.

The result of the consultation was excellent. Jenny was doing really well and we had a schedule for phasing out the drops in her right eye altogether.

As for the consultant, he was brilliant. In fact, I understood him to be the surgeon who performed the operation.

The journey home was not bad, given it was the tail end of the rush-hour. We did have quite a long wait for the 474 bus back to Longsight Road, once we found the departure stand amid all the rubble at the bus interchange in Bury, with the help of an official. From there it was a ten-minute stroll home in the twilight and the cold. At least it was dry for a change.

Wednesday, 4th March 2020

We paid a visit to Sainsbury's store at Heaton Park for a few grocery items and came back for lunch.

Our neighbour, Jill, came round to discuss the planned wall between our two lawns. She was keen to press on with the project so it was ready in time for spring and I needed to source the stone rubble for the wall, something that had been on my list for a few weeks and which I hadn't got round to doing.

I caught up with my E-mails, downloaded more photos I took from the old village web site and created two new picture galleries for my web site.

Thursday, 5th March 2020

It was another decent day. That was two in a row, unprecedented in recent times.

I put out Jenny's washing lines and then we made sure I had the dates of all the forthcoming events in my Outlook diary, one of which was Jenny's next appointment at the eye clinic.

Jenny reminded me that, before the upcoming Horticultural Society's Spring Show, the trophy Rachel won last year needed repairing. It had a faulty stand when Rachel collected it. I spent the rest of the morning searching for a trophy shop and then part of the afternoon documenting the route as a diversion in our usual Friday shopping trip so I could call with the damaged trophy tomorrow. I later learnt the shop didn't carry spares.

By the time I had finished that, it wasn't worth starting anything major so I finished off repairing the lamp for the jumble. That involved going in the garage for some spare screws and a spanner and I took that opportunity to fetch in Jenny's washing line. I also nipped across to have a chat with Billy who was supposed to be building the wall at the front between our garden and the one next door because I needed to know how much stone to purchase. He didn't seem that keen on doing the job.

In the evening, I attended a village management team meeting at the old school, mainly to discuss plans for this year's village party.

Friday, 6th March 2020

Our usual grocery shopping trip to Unicorn and Waitrose went well enough, except we had to return to Unicorn after visiting Waitrose because their delivery of Sojade organic soya 'milk' was late and they had none in stock when we first called.

I took the scenic route back home, which was fine until we reached the roundabout on Chester Road. That was jammed with traffic and it took a while to cross onto the ring road, which involved joining the dual carriageway and then crossing two lanes of traffic to reach the immediate right turn the ring road made at that point.

The ring road, by this time, was very busy but we made reasonable progress until we hit another tailback on the A56 just before Sedgley Park. It was also busy through Whitefield and approaching Bury, which was to be expected in the late afternoon.

Saturday, 7th March 2020

We went round to the old school for the village drop-in and we worked on the electrical jumble, making quite a few sales. The old-style bulbs seemed to go well.

We came home for lunch. I updated my web site with the latest Greenpeace Unearthed issue, ready for publishing and my monthly diary. I also finished downloading all the information regarding the maintenance manual for the Dell XPS M170 laptop that needs repairing (if possible) and some more of the pictures I wanted from the old village web site.

Sunday, 8th March 2020

After a late start and a cooked breakfast for a change, I went out and cut up two fair-sized tree trunks for logs for the fire. I stored them in the garage to dry out ready for use, probably late this year, since they had been stood outside for a while already.

Monday, 9th March 2020

After the routine morning tasks, I quickly measured up for the stone I needed for the boundary wall at the front and we went up to a local yard at Old Holts Farm, Tottington. They did have some useful bits of stone but it was all in a pile of rubble and it would be a case of picking out what I could with no guarantee of finding enough for my purpose. The chap there was very helpful and gave me details of a supplier in Accrington who was more likely to have what I needed.

After lunch I telephoned the yard and a chap there called me back. He said they probably had what I wanted and I would be best going to see for myself, taking some wellingtons. I said I would go as soon as we had a decent day.

I also telephoned my builder, Steve, to see if he was interested in the work. It was possible he might be able to source the stone for me. I left a message on his mobile phone. Steve had been seriously ill and I didn't know how well he was, although the last time I saw him, before Christmas, he said he was recovering and hoped to be back at work in the New Year.

I had called my sister, Barbara, earlier and left a message. She rang me back and we chatted for nearly an hour.

By that time, it wasn't worth starting anything major so I had a look at writing a Java routine to generate family tree web pages in my web site format rather than use the ones generated by Family Historian.

The first step was to make sure I had the latest version of software so I downloaded and installed the latest version of the Java development kit and then the latest version of Apache Netbeans. I decided to make sure these worked with my existing Java modules, which meant processing one of the sets of pictures I had recovered from the village web site and generating the pages for my web site to display them. All that went well but it took the rest of the afternoon.

After lunch, I developed the nasty, irritating cough and chest pains again which I had a short while back. I came to the conclusion that it was probably caused by one of three things. First, I had some dairy ice cream with my tea yesterday; I had avoided dairy produce for a while until recently. Second, I had rather a lot of garlic last evening and with my lunch. This had not affected me in the past but maybe I had overdone it. Third, I had noticed that the complaint normally followed recent heavy and sustained use of my right arm. I was cutting wood and lifting heavy boxes of cut logs into my trailer in the garage yesterday.

Once I recovered, which I expected to do in a day or two, my plan was to introduce each of the stimulants in turn, at intervals, to see if any of them caused the problem again.

Since I had this on and off for the best part of a year, I did not associate it with the present Coronavirus epidemic.

Tuesday, 10th March 2020

It wasn't a good day.

We set out to turn the Seville oranges into marmalade and the damn stuff would not set even after 30 minutes boiling and adding the juice of a lemon. We left it to cool down until after lunch. It still showed no signs of setting in the pan.

I left Jenny to it and came into the lounge to work on my Java routine. That didn't go well either and I didn't really make a lot of progress, being stuck on the procedure to define a separate Class in the project in Netbeans to act as a general purpose file reader, putting the contents of the file (lines of text) into an array and passing back the array and the number of lines in the array to the main Class.

Jenny did manage to rescue the marmalade and we ended up with six jars with just the right balance between the bitterness of the oranges and the reduced amount of sugar we used.

By the evening I was feeling a lot worse as my affliction took hold and I had a very restless night.

Wednesday, 11th March 2020

I was good for nothing and the few people who have said that in the past would be right on this occasion. If someone dug a hole, I wouldn't have had the strength to fall into it.

All I could do was to sit in the lounge and listen to a couple of episodes of Beyond Our Ken (rather appropriate for the occasion, I thought) followed by a couple of Jazz CDs I had purchased from the charity shops in Ramsbottom.

I notified those who needed to know I was out of circulation for at least the next couple of days. First, I didn't feel like doing anything and second I didn't want to pass whatever it was on to someone else. Fortunately, Jenny and Rachel were both alright thus far.

Thursday, 12th March 2020

After a very restless night with only a few hours' sleep, I felt dreadful. My tickly cough was persistent, resulting in a bad throat and an aching diaphragm. I was getting through handkerchiefs faster than Jenny could wash them. Everything I tried had little or no effect on my cough.

I had an early morning message from our village chairperson, Julie, to say that Rob at the cricket club had responded and wanted to arrange a meeting about the vandalism in the afternoon. I told her I was in no fit state to attend and she took her husband John along. The plan was to let me know what was discussed and whether another meeting with our GMP colleague would be required.

We were running low on food and water so I drove down to Sainsbury's store at Heaton Park. I have to say they had a fair amount of organic produce. The trick was finding it. Very little of the gluten-free section was organic though, something a lot of supermarkets had in common. It would seem those who were celiac were not discerning enough to warrant gluten-free produce. I would have thought the opposite were true.

Friday, 13th March 2020

Another bad night did not bode well for a better day. We had already given our apologies for D-Caff and when Dave sent a text message to say he would be dropping off some scones for D-CaFF, I suggested he take them directly to D-CaFF as we would not be there.

Julie was also going to meet the leader of Bury Council there, something I would have liked not to have missed.

I was also conscious (just) that I was not well enough to deal with two urgent matters. First, my TV recording system in the lounge had started throwing up a lot of transmission errors with the result of break-up in the recordings and I needed to source some stone for the wall at the front.

This was not a good time to be ill.

I felt a little better for a brief spell so I checked to see if there was any DC voltage on the aerial lead in the lounge. The booster in the loft provided power down the cable to a second booster in the lounge. There was no voltage present. That meant, as I suspected, the booster in the loft had probably failed and the signal in the lounge was not being amplified. That is what was causing the transmission errors.

My sister Barbara telephoned. She had sent me a couple of pictures of John and Jane with Sue, Wills and Edith in New Zealand. I told her I was ill and she thought it might be Coronavirus but I said I didn't have all the symptoms listed on the NHS web site.

I double checked the NHS web site again for peace of mind and it had changed since last night. There was a questionnaire about symptoms and, after a couple of questions, it referred me to telephone 111, a free call from landlines and mobile phones, so I did.

After a menu system and pressing numbers, I waited – for 57 minutes. Then there was another set of questions. I pressed what I thought were the right choices and ended up with recorded advice about winter 'flu. I hung up. What a waste of time that was.

It seemed that a persistent cough was enough to suspect the virus, so I searched online how and where I could be tested for the virus. There was nothing on the NHS web pages. The only information appeared to be on the Sun and the Times newspaper web sites and that was as much use as a chocolate radiator.

I let Matthew know and he contacted Carrie. A few questions and answers later, I was assured I didn't have the Coronavirus.

I managed to put in the TV recordings of various series we liked for the coming week on the laptop in the lounge, much good would it do.

I then hit on the idea of recording the two outstanding programmes for the evening on the computer in the conservatory. The first recorded with no errors. The second, I would deal with in the morning.

Saturday, 14th March 2020

I had a slightly better night, the tickly cough seeming to be less severe and less frequent. I could have stayed in bed a little longer but I had to put the drops in Jenny's eye. When I came downstairs, I discovered Rachel had already done it and had found it difficult, which was understandable when she hadn't done it before and had not had instruction from a nurse.

I dozed in the chair after breakfast and woke for a brief coughing session before going upstairs to wash and dress.

The second TV recording from the conservatory had a couple of transmission errors but nothing like as many as I was receiving in the lounge. This was a re-recording of a previous programme which had a lot of errors and breakup. I decided to watch the repeat recording and, if there were any issues with it, patch it using the first recording, assuming that the errors were not in the same place.

Until I could sort out my reception problems, I decided to record programmes on both computers, using the one in the conservatory as the most reliable source.

I worked through Saturday and Sunday's listings and put in the odd recording. That exhausted me. Not only was I tired and achy, I was off my food as well. I couldn't remember when I last felt this ill.

Sunday, 15th March 2020

I managed to make it out of bed and downstairs by 9:30 in time to give Jenny her first eye drop of the day.

After breakfast, I fell asleep in the chair in the lounge until 12:45. I rushed in the kitchen to give Jenny her second eye drop, which was overdue. Rachel had done it.

I felt like getting some fresh air and we went for a walk round the golf course, taking advantage of an overcast, dry spell. I didn't recall ever having seen so much surface water. The ground was soaking wet and any additional rainfall in the near future would simply just run off.

We had lunch. Being off my food, I settled for a pear. Apparently, pears were good for coughs. This was also my second day on the Benelyn.

I fell asleep in the chair again after lunch.

When I awoke, I decided to process the TV recordings, only to find the computer in the conservatory had crashed and failed to record anything. I restarted it and it commenced recording Jazz Record Requests which was half way through.

By this time I had had enough. I went into the garage loft for a spare TV aerial lead and my plan was to bypass the terrestrial cable splitter in the lounge to see if that solved my poor signal problem temporarily, until I could have the whole reception system overhauled.

I couldn't install it immediately because the laptop was recording Jazz Record Requests.

When I did install it, the reception to my recording device was as clear as a bell, so laptop recording was back in business. What's more, the early morning recording on the laptop, which I expected to be full of transmission errors, was fine when I edited it.

Monday, 16th March 2020

It was a nice sunny day and quite warm out. Unfortunately, I was in no fit state to take advantage of the nice weather, which was a pity because there was a lot to do in the garden, not to mention inside the house.

I put in the TV recordings for the rest of the week and tidied up those we had watched during the last couple of weeks.

I had a brief spell outside to put out the bin for emptying tomorrow and the clothes lines for the washing. I had a quick chat with Billy, the landscape gardener who is turfing the front lawn next door. I told him I had found a source for the stone and intended to sort some out for walling as soon as I felt better.

The evening news regarding the Coronavirus (Covid 19) virus pandemic wasn't good. People over 70 had been advised not to go out for at least two months except when

absolutely necessary. The voluntary curfew included a ban on trips to the shops for groceries. How practical was that? People were also advised to avoid crowds and not to go to pubs, restaurants, cinemas and such.

Tuesday, 17th March 2020

Despite the advice, we needed some groceries and off we went, despite my bad cold.

We called at Home Bargains at Heaton Park where we gave up. The shelves of the items we wanted were bare.

We went next door to Sainsbury's where we bought quite a bit, including the last two four-packs of recycled toilet tissue. The rest had all gone. We missed out on a few items due to panic-buying but nothing major.

We headed off to Unicorn in Chorlton, taking the route through town. They had restricted access to ten people at a time to avoid congestion inside, which didn't delay us much. We bought most of what we wanted. Tinned tomatoes had all gone so we bought fresh ones to cook. The major missing items were the gluten-free flours. They did have some in stock but no-one had the time to bag it and put it on the shelves, which was annoying.

Our last call was at Waitrose. They had been worst hit, with rows of empty shelves. We didn't get any of the cleaning disinfectant or the baked beans we wanted there either.

Apart from that, from the various sources, we managed to stock up our fridge, freezer and fruit and vegetables to last us at least one, if not two weeks.

There was, of course, no need for all this panic buying and I was of the opinion that a lot of it would end up surplus to requirements and in the rubbish, having deprived others of essential supplies. This selfish, greedy attitude was not that which helped to win the last war and was not one that would sustain communities in the future when a real disaster strikes, as it inevitably would. Individuals could not survive. Communities working together may.

Wednesday, 18th March 2020

I was still feeling rough.

While tidying up after breakfast, some thoughts about the Covid 19 virus struck me.

The present thinking was to manage the peak of the virus such that it did not overwhelm the NHS. The thinking was that the disease would peak over the summer, with a death toll of around 20,000 in the UK, those most at risk being the elderly and particularly those with underlying cardiovascular and/or respiratory conditions. The virus was reported to have little or no effect on healthy children.

What an interesting way of ridding the population of a good proportion of high-maintenance, unproductive individuals, I thought. That would save the government a

tidy sum in state pensions and NHS costs and it would be a year-on-year saving, not a one-off occurrence. Since this was a pandemic, other countries must benefit economically in a similar way in the long-term.

So, I wondered whether there was more to this pandemic that we were being told. The origin was reported to have been in China. As far as I knew, the actual source had not been positively identified, or if it had, had not been made public. Was it an engineered virus and, if so, to what end and how and why did it end up in the public domain? Was it a forerunner to determine how the world coped with such a pandemic and how effective a more virulent strain could be? Was worse to come?

Putting such dire thoughts to one side, I continued with downloading pictures from the village web site I wanted and putting them on my web site.

Thursday, 19th March 2020

It was a reasonable day, if a bit chilly. We took advantage of the fine, sunny periods to work outside. Jenny tidied up the raised beds and pots and I tidied up the blackberry bush.

Friday, 20th March 2020

I started putting in the TV recordings for the coming week and then went outside to continue tidying up the blackberry bush. That extended to tending the shoots on the other side of the fence, on the common land and, while I was there, I picked up all of the bits twigs and branches that had blown off the trees, just to tidy up the area.

I gave up working outside about 4 p.m. and came in from the cold for a warm shower. It was a nice sunny day but the bitterly cold, strong wind was from the east.

I put some more programmes in for recording and settled down for the evening.

The virus outbreak had become more serious and all pubs, restaurants, cinemas, etc had been ordered to close until further notice. Schools were also closing, except for taking in children of essential workers.

Saturday, 21st March 2020

The spring equinox was upon us and next week would see the start of British Summer Time or daylight saving. Unfortunately, it wasn't going to be a very pleasant summer with the coronavirus controlling matters.

Matt and Carrie called round, but didn't come in and kept a safe distance. They dropped off Jenny's mother's day card and a bottle of wine. They were heading up to see Carrie's mum and dad.

I didn't feel that well, still coughing and spluttering and very tired, so I stayed in and just worked on the computer. Topping up my mobile phone with EE proved to be quite a

challenge. I tried to do it as usual, by phone, using the automated service, but I was transferred to an operator and ended up in a queue, so I gave up. I tried to do it online – twice and both times it seemed to take my payment and then said it had failed to do so. A further attempt to top up using the phone worked. I checked my account to make sure the payment had only been made once but there was no sign of it.

Sunday, 22nd March 2020

It was a beautiful sunny day and very cold. I was still feeling unwell and I was undecided what to do.

I decided to use my brain power and work on a Java procedure to reformat the web pages produced by Family Historian so that they looked like my web site.

That involved reading the generated pages and rewriting the HTML code. I resumed work on the name index page.

Monday, 23rd March 2020

Rachel had asked if I would bring her lap top up to date with anti-virus software, which I did and that resulted in a Microosft update as well.

I discovered that the laptop I used was having difficulty obtaining a TV signal for recording again. Powering off and on the tuner box a couple of times seemed to fix the problem and I suspected it was not performing as well as it might.

I decided to try to find someone to relocate my TV aerial and to make sure the signal was as good as it could be, upgrading the satellite dish and running extra cables at the same time. I used the Local Heroes facility, courtesy of British Gas. That was a complete waste of time.

I went out and tied up a few more trailing blackberry runners before we had a stroll round to the pharmacy for Jenny's eye drops for her left eye and my monthly supply of tablets.

We met Frank on the way back and stopped for a chat in the warm sunshine.

After lunch, I resumed work on the web page I was generating using Java for a short while and then tidied up my corner of the lounge, moving and cleaning the laptop so Jenny could access her stash of books in the poof on which the laptop sat.

A brief sortie outside to put out the bins for collection the following morning and to fetch in Jenny's clothes line was more or less it for the day.

Tuesday, 24th March 2020

Jenny had decided to go grocery shopping. We had tried to do an online shop but there were no delivery slots available at all.

We started at Sainsbury's at Heaton Park. It was quiet and not at all difficult to maintain the recommended two metre separation between us and anyone else. The shelves were not too badly stocked. We couldn't get any recycled toilet paper, any organic baked beans, any purple Dettol or any yeast. We did have enough of the latter three items to last us another couple of weeks, so it wasn't a problem.

We motored on to Unicorn through town. There wasn't much traffic, which made the journey quite pleasant in the early spring sunshine.

We arrived at Unicorn before the shop opened. The oldies were allowed in half an hour before the younger people and the number allowed in at any one time was managed so that there was space between shoppers, particularly in the fresh produce area. We bought some Teff flour for bread-making but the Tapioca flour and the Maizemeal had not been bagged up so there was none on the shelf. Again, we had enough for the next week or two.

We had to queue at Waitrose where the number of people in the store at any one time was being managed. The biggest disappointment was that they had no organic chickens left, so we bought a whole duck and some venison instead. The fresh fish counter was up and running so we bought some organically-farmed Scottish salmon tails for a salad tea and an MSC cod loin to share for home-made fish and chips (baked, not fried) for tomorrow's tea.

We were home around lunchtime, just in time for a visit from a chap at Walshaw Aerial Services. He came to give me a quote for revamping my TV aerial and my satellite dish connections, which I later accepted. He was due to do the job on Friday.

I spent the afternoon finishing my Java application to generate the Family Tree name index page for my revised web site.

Wednesday, 25th March 2020

We started our day by delivering the leaflets about the village help line to residents on our designated round. The service was aimed at people who needed assistance while self-isolating, following the official advice about the present Coronavirus pandemic.

I had decided to move the raised beds onto the lawn, freeing up the patio so we could move our picnic bench onto it from the lawn, making it easier to eat outside.

I started by clearing the first bench, which had only one raised bed on it. That meant relocating the strawberry plants, some into one of the raised beds on the second bench and some into pots. That enabled Jenny to help me empty the first raised bed of soil, some used in the pots and most into large, empty plastic bags. We also removed all of the items stored under the bench so that we could dismantle it enough to be able to move it the following day.

Before helping me, Jenny had made some bread and after we had finished outside, I helped with a little of the preparation for tea.

This had been one of the most productive days for some time.

Thursday, 26th March 2020

Another productive day saw the first bench dismantled and moved onto the lawn. Jenny helped me put the empty raised bed on the bench and I relined it ready for the soil tomorrow.

Jenny also helped me to move the picnic bench onto the patio. That was heavy.

We were getting there, slowly.

I was going to complain to Bury council about the garden waste (brown bin) not being emptied on Tuesday as listed in the schedule. Our bin was full and we had enough garden waste in bags to fill it again. I found a notice on the web site stating that brown bin collections had been disrupted by the Coronavirus. Furthermore, all of the recycling centres in Bury had been closed so we couldn't take the excess waste to the tip.

Friday, 27th March 2020

Another day in the garden spent riddling the soil we had removed from the first raised bed back into it in its new position ended with us running short of the quantity required to fill the bed and two large bags of rubbish soil destined for the tip. That was after dumping in the last bag of organic compost we had.

I quickly tidied up and came in towards the end of the day and searched on the Internet for more organic manure, not very successfully.

Matt had called early in the day to pick up the beer brewing kit and drop off a couple of items for us after calling at Bob and Marie's house with some groceries.

The chap from Walshaw Aerial Services had arrived about 11 a.m. to install a new TV aerial and booster, relocating the aerial to the chimney stack and a new Freesat Satellite dish, upgrading it to a quad LNB and running in three extra feeds. That all seemed to go well but I still could not tune anything into the terrestrial digital HD channels and I still had breakup on Freesat ITV HD. I concluded the problem was my old equipment – and possibly the TV.

Saturday, 28th March 2020

The weather was taking a turn for the worse, with more cloud, a strong northerly wind and much lower temperatures.

I had another look for some organic compost and potentially found a stockist in the Rawtenstall area. I sent them an E-mail enquiry regarding price and delivery.

Shortly afterwards, I decided to telephone the garden suppliers. As luck would have it, the chap was loading up the van for a delivery to Ramsbottom as we spoke and he asked

me to text him the order, which I did. One of the girls would telephone me later to take payment, which she did.

We spent the morning tidying up and the compost arrived as we broke off for lunch.

After lunch, I stored four of the five bags of compost in the garage, moving them off the drive where the chap had left them. The fifth bag was emptied into the first raised bed we had moved on Thursday and that enabled us to move all of the strawberry plants from the second raised bed to the first raised bed.

We emptied the second raised bed of soil. The soil was very poor quality and most of it would have to be dumped. I was thinking that I might need some more compost.

We moved the second raised bed to join the first on the bench I had moved on Thursday. The plastic lining had disintegrated and we threw what was left of it in the bin.

We tidied up and left the filling of the second raised bed until the following day, assuming the weather held, we could find a new lining and we had enough soil/compost. Shortly after we came in, we had a brief, unscheduled shower but it didn't last long.

Deaths in the UK from Coronavirus had topped the 1,000 mark and the trend was still upwards.

On another cheery note, I discovered that moving the terrestrial TV aerial and replacing the booster had not made much difference to the signal and we were still getting break-up in recordings. I wondered whether the Hauppauge box that provided the transmission stream for recording was not working properly. I looked for a replacement box that would record Freesat satellite channels but I could not find one to suit.

Further, none of the equipment detected the HD terrestrial channels. I was not terribly happy.

On the satellite front, the new dish and quad LNB had not fixed the breakup on the ITV HD channel (111). In fact it was worse than before. Nor was there any signal on the Freesat Talking Pictures channel (306). I could only conclude, at this stage, that there was a fault on my TV with the ITV signal and that Talking Pictures was not transmitting on Freesat.

Sunday, 29th March 2020

The clocks went forward an hour this morning, marking the beginning of British Summer Time, not that it was particularly warm or bright.

Despite the odd, brief, hail shower, after relining the second raised bed we moved yesterday, we managed to salvage enough of the soil from it to provide a base layer, not that it was of particular good quality. That took us all day, following a late start due to the loss of an hour and taking time out for a comfortable, late lunch break.

Monday, 30th March 2020

More depressing news about the Covid-19 Coronavirus emerged. The present “lockdown”, resulting in all but essential businesses and services to be closed and people being told to stay in except for a few essential reasons like shopping for food and travelling to and from work where it wasn’t practical or possible to work from home, was likely to last for six months. Food producers and suppliers were talking about the difficulty in keeping up with demand as people rushed to buy more than they needed. Access to supermarkets for food was by queuing as a limited number of people were admitted at any one time to ensure they could keep the recommended two metres apart while shopping. There were no online delivery slots available due to the huge demand for deliveries.

It struck me that we had seen raging fires last year as a result of global warming. We saw floods due to intense and prolonged rainfall due to global warming. We now had a pandemic disease spreading rapidly, resulting in a high mortality rate. Now there was the prospect of famine due to a lack of food supplies.

Were we seeing the beginning of the end of the human race? If so, it was nothing more than we deserved for our greed, selfishness and stupidity.

Meanwhile, back at the plot, we emptied the last raised bed of soil, riddling it, bagging the good ready for redeployment and bagging the bad for the tip.

Tuesday, 31st March 2020

We spent our wedding anniversary dismantling the second bench, moving it onto the lawn in parallel to the first bench, reassembling it and placing the empty third raised bed on it. The reason that took most of the day was that the dismantling process was hampered by the fact that several of the screws had rusted and broke in the removal process and some would not unscrew at all. A couple had to be drilled out.

We were up later than planned and I spent the first part of the day bringing Rachel’s lap top up to date again, at her request and e-mailing my cousin Ann and her husband, Trevor, to thank them for our anniversary card, the only one we received, not that we expected any at all owing to the present “lockdown”.

We celebrated our anniversary with a bottle of organic Prosecco to accompany our roast duck evening meal.

What a nice way to end the month.