

Greenmount March 2022

Tuesday, 1st March 2022

Not having to take any more antibiotic capsules, I did not need to crawl out of bed until it was time for Jenny's eye drop at 8:30 a.m. and I promptly crawled back in again.

Jenny decided to remain up and came downstairs to wash the dishes. I couldn't get off to sleep again so I rose as well and came down just as she had finished. Nice timing, I thought!

After breakfast, we went for a stroll in the sunshine, one of those rare, nice, bright days, but cold.

We had lunch when we came back and afterwards I dealt with my e-mails, responding to one from Jenny's friend, Lynn on Jenny's behalf at her request.

I edited some TV recordings and listened to a couple of radio recordings of Michael Palin talking to Jane Milligan about her father, Spike.

Wednesday, 2nd March 2022

We went for another trip to the Manchester Royal Eye Hospital for Jenny's routine appointment. Her eyes were fine and progress was excellent.

Since our local grocery shops were on the way home, we called at Sainsbury's at Heaton Park and Tesco in Prestwich for our weekly grocery needs.

We were home for early afternoon and after lunch, I caught up with my e-mails and started thumbing through next week's Radio Times for programmes to record. I was quite tired after the 5:30 a.m. start.

Thursday, 3rd March 2022

I rose to discover the bathroom extractor fan was not working. That had decided my first job of the day, after breakfast.

A little detailed investigation revealed there was power to the fan but it refused to turn. I obviously needed a new one.

A quick search on the internet for the make and model I had led me to discover a similar device was available from B&Q and the local store had three in stock. I ordered one for collection.

After lunch, we went down to the store on the other side of Bury and I picked up the replacement fan. It occurred to me that I would probably need something to clamp the exhaust hose onto the new fan and I asked an assistant if there was anything I could use.

He found me a pack of a pair of large jubilee clips and told me to to overtighten the clip otherwise it would damage the plastic fan. I paid for those and left.

It was too late to start work on the fan that afternoon so I concentrated on listing the TV recordings for next week.

Friday, 4th March 2022

My first job of the day was the bathroom extractor fan. The old one came down very easily and, what's more, it was pushed into the exhaust vent, the latter being attached to the false, plastic ceiling, so I wasn't going to need the jubilee clip after all.

Even better, the new fitting was exactly the same as the old one so I used the same screw holes and it was up and running quite quickly, with help from Jenny to pass me items as I needed them while I straddled the bath, standing on its edges.

I spent the rest of the day sorting out problems with NextPVR, the software I used on the laptop to record TV programmes.

First, the software needed updating so I decided to completely uninstall the existing version and download the new one. That didn't go too well and I ended up searching for anything to do with NextPVR on the system drive and then deleting it.

The new version installed alright and I scanned for the channels successfully. I also mapped the channels to Schedules Direct and updated the TV guide.

It was when searching for regular series that I recorded to make sure I hadn't missed any that I discovered there was a problem with the guide mapping. Some channels had the wrong guide information.

Schedules Direct had two lists of channel guide information for the north-west of England, one being BT TV and the other YouView North West. I had bulk mapped all channels to the former, which was out of date. The only way of changing it to the latter, which was the correct one, was to manually remap each channel in turn. NextPVR had no mechanism for un-mapping or remapping all the channels at a single click (i.e. bulk re-mapping). That process took ages. Then I had to update the guide again.

Even with all the channels correctly mapped, it did not resolve the problem with the guide for the Talking Pictures channel ending at 7:30 a.m. on Tuesday. Normally, it would have had at least a week's information. I changed that channel to obtain its guide from the TV broadcast. Then I had to update the guide again. A major drawback of the broadcast guide was that it did not contain the series and sequence numbers of episodes as did the Schedules Direct guide, so I had to search for those elsewhere.

I filed an entry on the Schedules Direct web site to bring their attention to the fault with the TP guide.

No wonder it was tea-time before I had finished

I managed a shower before tea, now the extractor fan was repaired.

One of our GPs, Dr. Patel, had sent us a message on AskmyGP to say that he would telephone Jenny about the pain in her left leg and foot. He didn't.

The service from the Greenmount practice had been somewhat hit and miss ever since it merged with a number of other practices to become Tower Family Health and the Covid pandemic had not helped matters.

One major failing seemed to be the belief that IT systems, such as the AskMyGP application, were a replacement for the personal touch and not just tools to assist with the demands placed upon the practice.

I was beginning to consider the possibility that we might obtain a better service from a different practice not in the Tower Family Health consortium.

Saturday, 5th March 2022

We were round at the old school for the table-top sale, dealing with the electrical items.

My system of storing tested items and new, non-tested items separately had all disintegrated in our period of absence and even worse, my box of test equipment had been decimated. I was not best pleased.

I could understand the need to move items donated during my absence and the desire to sell untested items to people willing to buy them but to dispose of items from my testing box, clearly marked "Not for Sale", was inexcusable.

Nevertheless, we managed to sell quite a few items and our takings on the day were quite good. I managed to bring some semblance of order to the items that remained at the end of the sale. Alas, I was still missing the electrical multi-meter and the indoor TV aerial with signal amplifier I used for testing TVs.

We came home and changed to attend the celebration lunch for the D-CaFF (the village dementia café) Queen's Award for Voluntary Service at the local Bistro. That was excellent.

Joani Beale, the organiser, announced that she and her assistant and deputy, Laura, would be attending Buckingham Palace in the near future, an event postponed due to the Covid pandemic.

We were back home at about 4:30 p.m. but didn't need an evening meal after the lovely lunch.

I put in the TV recordings for the coming week and backed up my media before relaxing for the evening.

Sunday, 6th March 2022

We didn't rise early.

I spent the afternoon wood cutting and trying to tidy up the drive, where we stored our piles of wood for cutting and our logs and twigs for burning, under the car port, to keep them dry.

Jenny's left foot was giving her some pain and her tooth that she had broken and which had recently been treated disintegrated further at tea-time, possibly losing the temporary filling. It was not a good day for her.

I updated my web site.

Monday, 7th March 2022

Jobs completed after breakfast:

1. Clocks wound and set to correct time. The two clocks were keeping good time and if wound before they ran down only small adjustment was necessary.
2. I edited a couple of TV recordings, ready for viewing without interruption by advertisements and announcements.
3. I dealt with my e-mails, which took a while.
4. I had made some minor corrections to the first two, early diary entries and I uploaded those to my web site.
5. I finally managed to test the carbon monoxide alarm, which I should have done weekly but ended up doing every few months. It was still working. The only reason we had it was because we had the log fire and we only used that occasionally.
6. I checked the bulb in Jenny's table-lamp. It was an old, spiral fluorescent bulb and needed changing to an LED bulb, partly to save on power consumption and partly to give out more light. I fetched the ladders from the back bedroom and went into the garage loft to see if we had a spare. We didn't.
7. One of the bulbs in the outside lamp at the back was flickering again last night so I took the LED bulb out and cleaned the contacts, having first isolated the electrical supply using the double-pole switch that supplied power to both the patio lamp and the downlights under the car port. The cleaning process involved wire wool, after which I had to dig out the bits from the socket using long-nosed pliers and a small wire brush, for which I had to search. After rummaging through my old computer bag I used for the old school jumble and the toolboxes in the garage, I finally found the brush in a box in the back bedroom. Using that also left strands of wire in the bottom of the fitting, again removed using the long-nosed pliers.

At the first attempt, the bulb would not light and I had to reseal it. That worked and I tidied up and put the light fitting back together before lunch. I forgot to put away the ladders though.

Meanwhile, just before lunch, Jenny, who was suffering with severe pain in her left foot since she woke up this morning, telephoned the Greenmount Tower Family Health surgery to find out why Dr Patel had not telephoned her, as the message on AskMyGP had said he would, last Friday and whether he would telephone today. Apparently he was busy last Friday. Jenny was offered no apology. Furthermore, she was told he only worked on Thursdays and Fridays and would telephone her on Friday of this week. We

both considered that to be an appalling service. I realised that there was a shortage of GPs and that demand for their services was very high but to arrange an appointment with someone and not keep it without informing them was, in my opinion, bad mannered, particularly when there was no subsequent apology. When I think of the extra, unpaid hours I worked for the NHS to make sure jobs were done properly and on schedule and the number of days I and my team were on call 24 hours a day over weekends and Bank Holidays, including Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day, not to mention working a 27 hour shift on one occasion, this level of service today appalled me. All the time I did the work, I kept thinking that it was for the benefit of the patients. Goodness knows what GPs thought today.

After lunch, I updated my diary entry.

I had earlier looked up Jenny's symptoms and it seemed that she might have something called plantar fasciitis so I spent the rest of the afternoon finding her some exercises to do that would ease the pain in her calf muscle and also help to heal the plantar fascia in her foot, if that's what was causing the pain. If it wasn't, the exercises would do no harm, so in the absence of any professional medical advice it was worth trying.

Tuesday, 8th March 2022

It was 12:30 by the time we had showered, we had breakfasted, I had almost finished this week's Radio Times Crossword, I had administered Jenny's eye drop, which was required every six hours to keep her left eye lubricated and I had put out the washing lines.

Following another hour of pot washing, waste disposal and other routine jobs, I went outside to cut more wood for the fire, packing up and bringing in the washing line at about 4 p.m.

My day ended with half an hour's rest, a cup of tea and my supervision of Jenny's foot exercises, looking forward to sweet and sour chicken (Mary Berry's recipe) for tea.

Wednesday, 9th March 2022

We were up at 5:30 a.m. to make sure we reached the Manchester Royal Eye Hospital for Jenny's weekly review, her appointment scheduled for 8:40 a.m.

Having set off at about 7:15 a.m., we arrived at 8:10 a.m. and parked up for the free half hour in a drop-off bay. Jenny went in at 8:30 a.m. for her 8:40 appointment, having forgotten her mobile phone.

I went and parked in my usual spot on a side road near the hospital and waited, listening to Jazz CDs. I had suggested Jenny find someone to call my mobile and this she did, as well as sending three text messages. All of them received a message saying that my mobile phone was not receiving any calls or messages despite it having a good signal.

Having heard nothing by 10:45 a.m., I decided to set off to see what was happening and, picking up my mobile phone there were the texts from Jenny saying she was ready about 20 or 30 minutes earlier.

I collected Jenny and apologised, explaining that my phone had not responded to any calls or messages.

I'd had this problem before with the EE network and I was not happy with it. I thought it was something to do with me not using my phone for a while and the network thinking it was no longer in use, putting it "to sleep". I was thinking of changing my phone and the network to a more reliable one.

We continued on to Unicorn in Chorlton and Waitrose in Broadheath for our weekly shop, returning home in the early afternoon. The M60 Manchester outer-ring road was surprisingly free-flowing for much of the journey.

I spent the rest of the afternoon compiling a schedule of Jenny's eye medication. Apparently, her left eye was now not healing fast enough and she was back on three lots of medication for one week and the remaining two for a further three weeks, until her next review, administered, once again, round the clock.

I did manage to start scheduling TV recordings for the coming week.

Thursday, 10th March 2022

Due to various interruptions to sleep for medication and due to Jenny's ongoing leg and foot pain, we did not put in an appearance until about 11 a.m.

After breakfast, I managed another couple of days' thumbing through the TV listings for next before tackling the dishes, feeding our pair of blackbirds, emptying the compost waste and emptying the conservatory dehumidifier tank.

I continued going through the next week's TV listings and then turned my attention to the problem of designing DVD covers on the new laptop. I decided to use the old Windows 10 Lenovo laptop and/or the old Windows 7 desktop, the latter needing the Nero software installing.

All that work was interrupted by a telephone call informing us that some of the people with whom we had recently been in contact had tested positive for Covid. I rushed round to the village chemist for a testing kit, receiving a box of seven, free of charge.

I came back and took the test. While waiting for the result, I telephoned Rachel to delay her visit until we knew the outcome of both our tests.

My test was negative and Jenny started her test. That was negative as well, so I informed Rachel and she arrived somewhat later than originally planned. As a result of all this, we had a late evening meal.

Rachel had bought mum a foot massager from Boots for Mother's Day and Jenny had a session with it after eating. It seemed to do her good.

Friday, 11th March 2022

I put the finishing touches to the TV recordings for the coming week by searching the electronic TV listings for episodes of series we watched and items of special interest and adding the ones being broadcast to the list of recordings.

I tidied up the programmes we had watched during the previous week.

Lastly, I resurrected the work I had been doing on some CD covers. The production using the new laptop did not print the covers properly and I decided to use the old Lenovo laptop instead. I also loaded the software onto the old Windows 7 desktop in case I needed to use that.

Saturday, 12th March 2022

We spent the morning at the old school, working on the electrical jumble. Life had been made much easier by storing the electrical items on the stage in the hall rather than in the cellar.

After lunch, I edited the TV recordings from last evening.

Sunday, 13th March 2022

I worked on the computer all day, scanning documents and editing TV recordings ready for watching in between the usual routine jobs.

Monday, 14th March 2022

I was up at 8:30 a.m. for a change and the first job of the day after breakfast was to deal with the dirty dishes and then I gave the sink a good clean while Jenny had a lie-in after another restless night.

Jenny came down for breakfast and, since it was a nice day, I put out the washing lines at her request and loaded the washer for her before going out to wash the car.

That done, I checked the oil and water levels, filled up the screen wash tank and checked the tyre pressures, including the spare. Time for lunch, I thought.

For most of the afternoon, I looked into the plan to replace the kitchen sink and tap. Jenny wanted a stainless steel sink and drainer and I did have one in mind but it was no longer available. I found a suitable replacement, Kohler Ease Inset Stainless Steel Kitchen Sink - 1.5 Bowl with Waste 1000 x 500mm. I also established that the worktop cut-out for the existing sink was more or less suitable for this new sink.

The next step was to find a decent mixer, swivel tap, preferably with a stainless-steel finish. The major problem here seemed to be the ability of modern taps to handle constant-stream, hot water temperatures above 65°C. Then again, there was no reason to

produce hot water above 60°C, since that was the limit people could bear. Still, I needed to look at this in more detail.

Tuesday, 15th March 2022

I scanned more documents for electronic storage while waiting for Matthew and Carrie to arrive for a visit, which they did late morning. It was nice to chat and catch up on the latest news.

We had lunch and then went into Ramsbottom for a potter round the charity shops, where Jenny found a book and I found two CDs for myself and a DVD for Rachel. We called at Tesco and then went up to see Carrie's parents, Bob and Marie.

Wednesday, 16th March 2022

Apart from the routine awakenings during the night to apply Jenny's eye medication, Jenny woke me at about 3:30 a.m. after hearing a noise on the landing. Jenny had put on the house alarm just in case there was an intruder. I took it off again, put on the lights and checked all the rooms upstairs before repeating the exercise downstairs. I also went out to check the garage was secure at the back, activating the sensor switch for the patio lights and I put on the lights on either side of the garage door at the front. All was well and there was no indication of what caused the noise. I left the front lights on and reactivated the house alarm before climbing back into bed.

Despite being utterly shattered, we went grocery shopping to Sainsbury's store in Heaton Park and Tesco at Prestwich.

We called at the recycling centre in Bury to drop off mostly electrical rubbish and B&Q to return the large hose clips I purchased for the new bathroom fan installation and did not need, on the way to the M66 motorway.

We didn't return home until late afternoon and we retired a little earlier than usual.

Thursday, 17th March 2022

We slept on a little after the previous restless night and tiring day.

I went outside to tackle a few maintenance jobs. The weather was nowhere near as nice as forecast until late afternoon, by which time I had finished outside anyway.

The first task was to stop the leaks in the garden hose couplings. I fixed the one at the spout end by removing the coupler, cutting back the hose and reaffixing the coupler. I did the same to the coupling on the short hose from the tap where it attached to the reel.

The next job was to stop the outside tap leaking when under back-pressure from the hose, when the nozzle and the tap were both turned off with water in the hose still under mains pressure.

Having isolated the water supply to the outside tap, the first stumbling block was that the screw in the top of the tap had rusted in and would not budge, which meant dismantling the tap to replace seals was not an option. The simplest solution would be to replace the tap. Meanwhile, I decided to have a look inside the tap and undid the nut holding in the top. I decided to try to seal the joint with some jointing compound. I spent ages looking for it and couldn't find it. I decided to try using PTFE tape instead and put the tap back together. That stopped the leak but made the turning of the tap on and off quite stiff. Still, it solved the problem for the present.

After lunch, I went back outside to mend the clothes line props. The pegs that went through the holes to keep the props extended had broken on two of the three props. I had previously fixed one of them by replacing the metal peg with a small, long bolt and nut, attached to the small chain that, in turn, was secured to the wooden prop. The problem was that the nut kept coming loose. I fixed that by tightening up the nut and then placing and tightening a second, locking nut behind it.

The second prop, having lost its metal peg recently, was fixed in the same way, except that the whole process did not go well. First I dropped one of the nuts on the garage floor and finding it took ages. Next, I had to prise open the end link in the securing chain to push the bolt through it and in so doing the link opened and flew off at a rate of knots. I searched all over for it for several minutes, not being best pleased and then I spotted it sitting on top of the washer in the garage close to where I had been working.

I had to leave off to attend to Jenny's medication and having difficulty resetting the alarm on my mobile phone for the next scheduled treatment was the last straw. I flung my phone down on the worktop, the back flew off and the battery fell out.

From then on, things seemed to improve. I fixed the phone, finished off the repair to the prop and tidied up without incident. Not only that but the sun was shining.

At least I'd had the pleasure of the company of our pair of friendly blackbirds and a couple of robins for most of the day. Maybe that was something to do with the dried mealworms I kept putting out for them.

Friday, 18th March 2022

The plan had been to spend most of the day in the garage tidying up the temporary wiring for the patio lamp. Another restless night with Jenny's foot pain and an 8:00 a.m. start to submit an AskMyGP request for another appointment to discuss the problem left me somewhat shattered yet again. We weren't holding our breath, since there was no sign of the prescription request I submitted a couple of days ago for more of Jenny's eye ointment being completed.

I spent the morning doing usual odd jobs, dealing with e-mails, scheduling the TV recordings for next week and finally getting round to ordering ink cartridges for my old Canon i990 printer.

Jenny went to have her hair cut at noon and we had lunch on her return, after which I was ready to fall asleep in the chair. The cloudless sunshine that had been forecast was anything but, the fair amount of cloud creating cooler and duller periods.

I went into the garage to start tidying up the wiring for the outside lights.

Before that, there were two clips for the central heating pipes that had come adrift from the ceiling beams to which they were attached and which needed securing. I undid the clips and removed them from the pipes. I managed to screw them back into the beam to which they were attached and they seemed quite secure so I could not understand why they had come away – until I tried to resecure the pipes in the clips. There was not enough flexibility in the pipes to allow them to be forced into the clips and the conclusion was that the clips were not secured to the beams properly in the first place. Furthermore, in undoing the clips, they had broken and would not clip back together. I decided I needed some new clips and gave up on that for the present.

I started to attach the junction box to the beam. That didn't go well. I dropped the junction box and it disappeared behind the old washing machine in the garage. I had to move the washing machine to retrieve it, that made difficult because the power lead was trapped behind the old sink unit that is not yet plumbed in (more work in progress). I unplugged the power lead and managed to drag it free.

With the washer out, I could reach the junction box and, fortunately, it was not damaged. I left the washer where it was while I fixed the junction box to the beam, another difficult job because I had to kneel on the old sink unit drainer to reach the beam and the position of the box was somewhat obscured by existing wiring and pipework, around and between which I had to work. It was good practice for a contortionist.

Having fixed the junction box to the beam, I tidied up a little and packed up for the day, coming in for a shower before tea.

Saturday, 19th March, 2022

Jenny had another bad night with pain in her left foot. Nevertheless, I was up at 8 a.m. and Jenny joined me for breakfast.

I went round to the old school to have another go at the electrical jumble and Jenny came to help me later. Jenny had called at the chemist's shop on the off-chance that her eye ointment was ready for collection and it was.

We came home for lunch at about 1 p.m. Checking my e-mails, I found that there were two from the AskMyGP system, timed just after 7 p.m. yesterday. Not checking my e-mails in the evening or having time to do so earlier this morning was the reason I hadn't seen them earlier. The first was a response to a request for a further consultation regarding Jenny's ongoing foot pain, resulting in Jenny needing to book a blood test. The second I could not access but my guess was that it was in response to Jenny's eye medication request, advising that it was ready for collection.

After lunch, Jenny received a call from a lady who was trying to gain access to the old school. She had opened the front door with a key she had been given but could not open the door into the hall because I had locked it before we had left as a security precaution following recent break-ins and she did not have a key to that. I went round with my keys to give her access.

When I returned, I read the meters in the garage and submitted the gas, electricity and water meter readings to our service providers. I performed a rough calculation of the costs for each utility as usual. The water cost was ready immediately and trying to make sense of it took some time until I realised that, although I had read the meter last month, I never submitted the reading to our provider. Once I had sorted that out, which took me about an hour, my account balanced.

Meanwhile, Jenny had fallen asleep in her armchair, so I dealt with the chicken that was cooking for tea and extracted it from the oven when it was done, by which time, I felt like sleeping as well.

Sunday, 20th March 2022

I tackled the wiring to the patio lamp, removing the temporary connecting strip that was dangling in front of the boiler and wiring the connections using the junction box I had already attached to a beam.

Access was awkward and I had to kneel on the old sink drainer to reroute the wires and connect them up so I took my time and my patience paid off. The whole job took about 5½ hours but it didn't matter. As a precaution, I left plenty of slack on all three wires, which would be hidden once I boxed in the ceiling along the house wall – another job in progress.

I listened to the recording of Jazz Record Requests before and after tea. Two decent traditional jazz tracks made that worth while, the advantage of a recording being that I could skip the tracks in which I wasn't interested, reducing the listening time to a fraction of the hour-long programme.

Monday, 21st March 2022

Jenny rang our GP's surgery before breakfast to book a blood test in response to a request on AskMyGP about her left foot problem. She waited for almost an hour on the telephone to progress from patient number 17 in the queue to reach number 1 and finally speak to a real, live person. She booked you appointment, not at our local surgery, because that was fully booked, but at the one in the next village, in four day's time.

We had breakfast, somewhat later than planned.

During breakfast, Jenny took delivery of a parcel for me and I unwrapped it when I had finished my meal. The despatch note indicated the enclosed, large print cartridges were destined for a school some 300 miles away instead of the small ones I was expecting from www.cartridgepeople.com. I spent another half an hour trying to sort out somebody else's mistake.

I dealt with my e-mails and reconciled the domestic accounts following messages from our utility provider and our bank.

We had a welcome visit from a neighbour and spent an enjoyable hour and a half or so chatting.

I put on the central heating because the promised sunny day was dull, cloudy and cold, then we had a late (i.e. mid-afternoon), snack in lieu of lunch.

Tuesday, 22nd March 2022

We didn't get up that early and most of my day was concerned with routine jobs.

My ink cartridges arrived.

After a late lunch, I tidied up some of the TV programmes we had watched over the past week and a half and then I went outside and tidied up the four, small raised beds, one with herbs, one with strawberry plants and two currently unused. That left the large raised bed, which was also full of strawberry plants, to do. Since we were experiencing unusually warm, dry weather for the time of year, I also watered the raised beds.

Wednesday, 23rd March 2022

We went grocery shopping to Unicorn in Chorlton and Waitrose in Broadheath, calling at the recycling centre in Bury to drop off the electrical rubbish from the old school, still in the car from Saturday.

We'd had our packed lunch in the car park at Waitrose before shopping there, so, after unpacking the car and tidying up a little, I started looking through the Radio Times programme listing for next week to decide what to record for subsequent watching.

Thursday, 24th March 2022

I started my working day with a meeting of the Tottington District Civic Society, the first since the Covid-19 pandemic started, at Greenmount old school and the first item on the agenda was a short silence to remember those committee members who had passed on, not from Covid, during the past couple of years and who would be greatly missed, not just for the key roles they played.

I went and came back with Mike, our neighbour from down the road, who was also a member of the committee, forgetting to call at the chemist's shop for some eye medication for Jenny on my return. Jenny promptly sent me back to collect her prescription.

After lunch, I had a look at a document regarding proposed changes to Jenny's life insurance policy and concluded no financial organisation would go to the trouble of making changes if it was not going to benefit from them so I decided to vote against the changes on the basis that if the company was going to benefit, its customers would lose out in some way no matter how attractive the offer looked in the short term.

Jenny and Rachel went for a potter round Bury and I finished off making a list of the TV programmes to record for next week. I also resumed work restoring some documents I had previously accidentally erased from a portable hard drive. Fortunately, I had a copy of everything on my desktop hard drive.

Meanwhile, the order from Healthy Supplies for Jenny arrived and I received instructions for returning the print cartridges delivered to me in error.

Friday, 25th March 2022

Before driving Jenny up to the Tottington Health Centre for her blood test at 10:45 a.m., I continued working on restoring the data I had deleted off the portable hard drive in error and started searching the electronic TV listings for episodes of series we watched to be recorded next week.

I finished the data recovery process afterwards, just before Bob and Marie gave us a lift down to Matthew and Carrie's house for lunch in their garden. It was a little on the cool side until the sun moved round and as the afternoon progressed, after eating, we moved into the sunken garden where the outdoor wood-burner provided added warmth.

We came home just after 6 p.m. I finished off dealing with the TV listings and dealt with some e-mails, while watching some live TV followed by a recording.

I made it to bed at about 11 p.m.

Saturday, 26th March 2022

Jenny woke me at 12:30 for her eye medication, which should have been at midnight but the alarm in my mobile phone did not go off for some reason. It worked at 4 a.m. for the next eye drop though and it woke me at 6:30 so I could be round at the old school for about 8 a.m., after another brief nursing role, for the table-top sale.

My plan was to arrive in time to set out the electrical equipment we had tested and priced before the doors opened at 9 a.m. Unfortunately, people were admitted early, at about 8:45 a.m., before I was quite ready and before Jenny had joined me.

The sale went well and we came home for lunch, after tidying away, at about noon, just in time to give Jenny her next treatment. After lunch, I sat in the chair feeling completely shattered and it was all I could do to avoid nodding off.

I had work planned for the afternoon. The last raised bed and pots needed tidying up and watering, the grass needed cutting, the borders needed tidying up and I needed to douse the stubborn weeds in the block paving with weed killer while the weather remained fine. I got as far as tidying the large raised bed and watering the beds and pots, which took a good 3 hours. After tidying the raised bed, it needed some more compost – another job to add to the list.

Sunday, 27th March 2022

It was going on for 1 p.m. by the time we were active after rising late, putting the clocks forward an hour, having a cooked breakfast and taking delivery of Matthew's chop-saw from Carrie as she called in on her way back from visiting her parents for mother's day.

After a pot-washing session, Rachel and I recommenced work on the back bedroom skirting and we finished cutting and fitting all the skirting in the bedroom itself, subject to gluing to the walls before, tidying up at about 6 p.m.

Monday, 28th March 2022

It was another fine, sunny day of wood cutting with Rachel's help, to put new, varnished skirting in the built-in cupboard in the back bedroom and we completed that task and had tidied up by 5 p.m. The cupboard took so long because the walls were miles out of true, the plastering being uneven and most unprofessional. We made the best of it.

The next stage would be to glue the skirting in place, followed by an attempt at putting up plaster (Artex 127) coving, which I had yet to purchase and work out how to cut the corners. I couldn't make a worse job of it than the chaps who did the landing, small bedroom and dining room, which had put me right off professional plasterers.

Jenny's podiatrist came for her first evening visit to look at her foot problem and treated it, intending to return the following evening. The result was the Jenny had her first, comfortable night for a long time.

Tuesday, 29th March 2022

I took some time to look at the coving for the back bedroom and I had planned on doing it myself, with Rachel's help. I looked at the coving I needed and priced it up from Travis Perkins.

I did have some offcuts from when the cowboys made a mess of the landing, small bedroom and landing and one of them would do perfectly for one of the walls in the cupboard. When I started to look at making the corners, it did not seem to be easy.

The more I looked at it the more it seemed a job for someone with more experience and given that it would take me ages to prepare the ceiling, filling in all the uneven bits, left after removing the textured coating and sanding them down, I decided it might be better to entrust the job to a professional plasterer after all. I decided to look on the "Trust a Trader" web site and the two closest businesses were MGJ Decorating Ltd in Heywood and Anthony Hacking Plastering & Building Ltd in Blackburn. I e-mailed both of them outlining the work and insisting on experience in fitting coving.

Jenny's podiatrist rang to say she had been delayed and arranged her visit for tomorrow instead of this evening.

Wednesday, 30th March 2022

Jenny had some foot pain again in the night after a fairly active day yesterday.

We eventually went grocery shopping. Jenny having been down to Tesco in Bury with Rachel yesterday, we only needed to go to Sainsbury's store at Heaton Park today.

On the way down, I called at the Community Centre at Brandlesholme, which was a food distribution centre, to drop off some empty egg boxes for which they had asked.

Rachel and Jenny were a good two hours in the supermarket, while I stayed in the car, listening to Jazz CDs.

On leaving, the plan was to tank up with diesel, the warning of a low tank reminding me to do so as we left. Unfortunately, the filling station had run out of diesel.

We detoured to Tesco at Prestwich, where the filling station there had also run out of diesel.

We made our way home up the A56 towards Bury, calling at the Morrison's filling station at Whitefield, where I was able to fill the tank at a cost which was a good 25% more than usual. At least I had enough to last me another couple of months.

Travelling home through the end of the school day did not improve my fuel consumption and I was not happy. My thoughts were elsewhere as we drove through Tottington, forgetting I had come that way to drop off some used printer ink cartridges at the Tottington Centre (the old library, now run by volunteers as a library and community centre). I could do so the next time I was passing, I thought.

After tidying away the groceries and a late afternoon snack, I updated the accounts.

Jenny's podiatrist came again to tend her foot.

Thursday, 31st March 2022

Forty-nine years ago today I was preparing to marry Jennifer on a fine, cold morning, not unlike today.

We awoke today to the sound of a diesel engine chugging away outside, the bedroom window having been open all night despite the very cold overnight temperature to let in fresh air because I had developed a very nasty cough. A quick peek outside revealed a torrent of running water down the road and a large water tanker from United Utilities outside. We obviously had a major water leak in the road.

That was fixed before lunchtime, the leak being in the same place as the last two.

Our podiatrist's husband, also a podiatrist, came to carry out more tests on Jenny's foot.

Jenny, Rachel and I went for a meal at the Bull's Head, better known today as the Miller and Carter, Greenmount, to celebrate our wedding anniversary. It was supposed to be a family gathering with Matthew and Carrie and Carrie's parents, Bob and Marie but they were not available. The meal was nice enough and better than our last experience there, due, I suspected, to the fact that we were the only people in the restaurant when we arrived.