

Greenmount May 2021

Saturday, 1st May 2021

Having received an E-mail yesterday stating that yard sales were commencing today and every Saturday morning at the old school, weather permitting, Jenny and I had arranged to manage a table of electrical goods from 9 a.m. to noon.

In the event, Matthew's mother-in-law, Marie, had arranged to call to see us at 9:30 a.m. so I went to the old school alone and Jenny joined me later. Marie also came across to see what was for sale.

We packed up early, at about 11:40 a.m. due to a lack of customers and came home for lunch.

After lunch I carried on with planning the TV recordings for the coming week and Rachel arrived for the week end.

When I had finished, Jenny and I planted our purchases from Chorlton Nursery. We put the lettuce and onion sets in the raised beds and the runner beans in a large pot on the patio.

When I came in, I finished programming the TV recordings for the week.

Sunday, 2nd May 2021

It wasn't a good day. I was aching all over, tired and feeling just a little sick.

I sat in my chair and worked on the computer for most of the day. Rachel and Jenny went down to see our friends, Lynn and John. It was their grandson's birthday tomorrow and Jenny had bought him a card and a couple of small items by way of a present. My absence was noted.

I had two brief forays outside. The first was to lower the downspout, in which I had installed the water butt collector, a little to try to prevent the water butt from overflowing. That allowed me to replace the screw in the upper fixing bracket that went into the downpipe, thereby preventing the hole from leaking water when it rained. The second was to put out the washing line for Rachel.

In one of my more lucid moments, I brought my web site up to date.

Monday, 3rd May 2021

Still feeling tired and achy, I didn't rise early.

My first practical task was to deal with the breakfast dishes and then I edited all the outstanding TV recordings and listened to a recording of Jazz Record Requests, for

which this week's theme was reminiscences of the Cheltenham Jazz Festival. All I could say was that I was pleased Cheltenham was such a long way away from me. Did people actually pay good money to listen to this rubbish? It was a good job it was a recording and I could skip through it. Nobody could pay me enough to sit through even five minutes of it.

I dealt with my E-mails, one of which was entitled "The Brexit Blog". If you read last month's diary entry, you will recall I mentioned the apparent growing popularity of the Conservative Government. Whatever your politics, you would do well to read "[Brexit & Beyond](#)"

While on the subject, did you know that in a speech at the University of East London in February 2010 David Cameron, then leader of the opposition, promised to lift the lid on 'secret corporate lobbying'? The 'far too cosy relationship between politics, government, business and money', he said, would end on his watch. Enter stage right Greensill, what the British press has called 'the biggest lobbying scandal in a generation'. Was this a clear case of "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em?"

And you STILL want another Conservative Government when the term of this one ends?

I return to the diary of today's events.

It threw it down with rain all day so this long, holiday week end had been a wash out, which was good for the garden and good for the pandemic (the latter because it would have stopped crowds gathering) but not so good for cutting wood for the skirting in the back bedroom. The best Rachel and I could manage was to measure for the cuts required.

The amount of rain wasn't good for the water butt either, which was still overflowing even after my adjustment of the downspout.

Tuesday, 4th May 2021

We were up before 6:30 a.m. because we were expecting our gas plumber at 9:00 a.m. to fit a new part to the cooker.

Jenny was first to come downstairs. When I strolled into the living room I noticed I had forgotten to put out the recycling bins for collection so I braved the elements (cold, wind and wet again) to drag the garden waste bin and the paper waste bin up the drive. The former was damn heavy.

After breakfast, I finished off the pot washing Jenny had started and had a quick look at the part I had ordered for the cooker, double-checking with the photograph of the existing one that it was the right one. I emptied the cooker of all the items Jenny stored in the drawer and spare oven when not in use in readiness for pulling it out for Peter the plumber.

Peter arrived more or less on time at 9:00 a.m. I had pulled out the cooker for him. Somehow the chain had become entangled with the mounting holding it in place on the

cooker and the chain broke as I pulled the cooker out. I removed the mounting plate and lost one of the screws in the process.

Peter had a good look at the cooker and ran a few tests. He said it wasn't the flame safety device, for which I had ordered a spare, which was the problem. It was the thermocouple that needed replacing. At first he wasn't sure he could do that because the thermocouple for the oven was part of the control and that was behind the faceplate on which all the controls were mounted. The question was how to dismantle the oven to replace the part. Peter had a good look at the assembly and after removing a couple of screws on the left side plate and a quick look inside, he said he'd have a go at fitting a new part for me if I wanted to buy one.

Jenny and I had discussed whether to replace the cooker or not and I had been looking at the Miele range of models. Miele was, in my opinion, the best one could buy but it was also very expensive. We already had a Miele washer and a Miele fridge/freezer.

Peter said whatever I decided was fine with him and he would not accept any fee for this morning's abortive visit, even though he fitted me a new chain (he did originally fit the chain I broke, which he admitted was quite a flimsy one).

After he left, I researched the replacement part and all my efforts pointed to the same spare for my Rangemaster Professional Plus NG FSD Black 9198 cooker: Gas Oven Thermostat 110-173 / A1 37 / 07. 1100 173/A1 21/15. So, including delivery, that was another £100 spent on this present heap of junk. I wouldn't have another new one of these cookers if it were offered to me free of charge.

I subsequently opened an online chat with Rangemaster Spares just to confirm the part I had ordered was the correct one and I was informed it was. I also made arrangements to return the part I had ordered in error, for a refund, which I expected would more than cover the cost of the thermostat.

I increased the volume on the house alarm's internal speaker to maximum. Jenny had difficulty hearing it when setting/un-setting the alarm, it was so quiet.

I went out in the drizzle to look at what I needed to install an overflow for the water butt and I came up with a shopping list for some Floplast, push-fit, black 32 mm components:

- 1 Straight tank connector
- 3 Elbows
- 1 3m pipe
- 6 Pipe clips

I spent ages searching online. Screwfix had everything except the tank connector. I found an online supplier that had everything but the delivery cost was about the same cost at the items. I made a list of the local plumber's merchants and decided to see if any of them had or could obtain what I wanted. That was a waste of time.

I decided to order the last three items from Screwfix. Before I could do that, I had to register for an account. When I eventually went to pay for "click and collect", the screen froze. The items remained in my basket so I tried again. This time it got as far as trying

to access my bank before freezing. Likewise on the third attempt. I gave up and complained.

I decided to obtain the first item from B&Q, since the store had a stock of them, even though they were grey and not black.

By the time I had sorted all that out I was totally fed up.

Wednesday, 5th May 2021

I began by hanging out Jenny's washing for her. She wasn't feeling too well.

I contacted Cocklestorm about the fencing quotation and paid the deposit over the telephone to start the process.

I packaged the cooker Flame Safety Device (FSD) ready for posting and included a letter I had written explaining the return of the item.

We walked up to the post office at Holcombe Brook and sent the package on its way.

After lunch, we spent the afternoon at the old school, tidying the electrical items in the cellar and testing quite a few items, ready for selling, discarding those that were faulty, leaving the electrical rubbish in the bottom room, the room nearest the back door.

We came home for tea at about 5:15 p.m.

I went to the old school in the very late evening to remove some rubbish from the stage in the hall to the corridor near the back door, ready for collection the following morning.

Thursday, 6th May 2021

My day started well. I was wakened in the wee small hours to a very noisy hail storm and then awoke just before the alarm went off at 5:30 a.m. to a white covering of hailstones on the grass, the raised beds and cars parked on the road. More hail fell as we breakfasted.

Notwithstanding the weather, alternating between menacing clouds and bright sunshine, I went out to prepare the car for a load of rubbish for the tip and to check the tyres.

I started with the nearside rear. I connected the compressor to the tyre and plugged it in. It registered zero pressure. I couldn't understand it. The tyre didn't look flat. I set the compressor gauge to the required pressure and started the pump. It took ages to reach the correct pressure for a full load, at which point, the pump stopped automatically. I switched off the pump and disconnected the air tube from the tyre. I then thought I'd better double-check the pressure, so I reconnected the air tube to the tyre and the gauge registered a pressure almost twice what it should have been.

It then dawned on me that I should have plugged in the compressor before connecting the air tube to the tyre.

It took ages to release enough air from the tyre to bring it down to the correct pressure.

The other rear tyre also needed quite a bit of air. The two front tyres only took a few minutes to bring up to the required pressure.

This had delayed me somewhat and time was now becoming critical. I had intended being at the old school to pick up the rubbish before voting started at 7 a.m., the premises being the polling station for part of the area. As it was, we didn't make it to the old school until about 7:20 a.m.

As it turned out, our presence was not a problem. I needed to access the items for the tip from the back door and that was not being used; the door was locked when we arrived.

I had prepared the back of the car by folding down the seats and Jenny helped me pack all the rubbish from the corridor and the bottom room into it.

Our next port of call was the polling station at the Cricked Club, just down the road. After registering our votes for the local councillors and for the Greater Manchester Mayor, we headed off to the tip.

We sorted the rubbish and deposited the various items in the appropriate place for recycling or in the general waste skip for items that could not be recycled.

It was about 8:30 by the time we hit the road to Unicorn in Chorlton, intending to be there by the time the store opened at 9:30 a.m. Normally, that would not be a problem.

I decided to head straight down to the M66 motorway, which would take us to the M66/M62 interchange, rather than weave our way down the A56 to Prestwich to join the M62 there. That was a bad move. Traffic heading down to the motorway from Bury was at a standstill.

I detoured round to the A56 and that wasn't much better as we crawled along for much of the way, but at least we kept moving, for the most part.

There were speed restrictions on the M60 due to traffic congestion which also slowed us down and we arrived at Unicorn just after the shop had opened. The car park was restricted due to expansion work and there were no places left so we had to queue for a few minutes until one became vacant.

We called at Sainsbury's store at sale on the way to Waitrose. We returned home the way we had come rather than take the scenic route through Manchester, which meant that, once again, I didn't call at Dennis Gore's chemist shop for my Saw Palmetto. I was hoping I had enough to last for another week.

We were home just after 1:30 p.m. and, after stashing away the groceries, we had lunch and a rest in the lounge.

I started thumbing through next week's Radio Times to see what programmes were worth recording and eventually fell asleep for a good hour.

Jenny wasn't feeling well again (she hadn't been feeling very well for about a week) with pain in her forehead and jaw and she also fell asleep.

After tea, which Jenny found difficult eating, as with all meals lately, suffering with her jaw again, I had a quick look at the symptoms on the NHS web site. I thought she might have Temporomandibular Disorders (TMD) and one of the prescribed treatments was to keep the jaw warm, so she wrapped a scarf round her neck and chin and her pain seemed to lessen a little.

Friday, 7th May 2021

Jenny was feeling a little better, thanks to sleeping with a scarf round her neck, keeping it warm and continuing to wear one.

I concentrated on listing the TV recordings for the coming week. Jenny took it easy, although her right leg hurt from time to time after sitting, due to her ongoing back problem. Thankfully, it wasn't as bad as it had been.

I submitted a request for Jenny to have a face-to-face consultation with the doctor regarding her painful jaw.

Jenny went to have her hair cut and coloured at 2 p.m. and our GP, Sanjay, telephoned while she was still there so I made her an appointment with him. Unfortunately, it wasn't until next Thursday.

Saturday, 8th May 2021

Having submitted the TV recordings for the coming week, I proceeded to tidy up what we had watched the previous week, breaking off now and again to do the odd job for Jenny.

Sunday, 9th May 2021

I finished of tidying up the watched TV programmes and backed up my files.

Again, I left off to deal with other issues as the day progressed.

Our neighbour, Dave, came across to ask for some advice about his trailer so I went back onto his drive to help him connect his trailer to his car and give him a little advice about driving a trailer, particularly regarding reversing, not that I was an expert.

While I was finishing off with Dave, Matt and Carrie arrived with a grocery item from their Ocado delivery for us and for a chat on the doorstep.

After lunch we went up to deliver Carrie's dad's (Bob's) birthday present for tomorrow and as we did so, the nice fine morning, after the terrible downpour yesterday, gave way to yet more rain.

Bolton Road West in Ramsbottom beyond the traffic lights at the crossroads, where we turned left to go to Bob and Marie's house, was closed due to road works and the junction was controlled by temporary traffic lights. We avoided the area on the return journey.

I had just missed the start of Jazz Record Requests, which wasn't a problem, since I had recorded it.

Monday, 10th May 2021

I finished off backing up my documents, dealt with a few E-mails and then we went into Ramsbottom for a potter round, mainly because Jenny needed some exercise for her leg and back. In the charity shops, Jenny found some books she wanted and I found Series 3 and Series 4 of Waking the Dead on DVD, already having Series 1 and 2 on DVD. There were still a few series to collect.

We came home for lunch and came indoors just before a brief but heavy thunderstorm. It was just what we needed after several days of rain, some of it heavy. The sun was trying to get out and it had been quite pleasant in Ramsbottom but still fairly cold.

Jenny said she would like a new slow cooker so I spent the rest of the day researching those, discovering there were very few available on the high street. Our retail system seemed to be worse than the reports I heard of the availability of goods during the second world-war.

Tuesday, 11th May 2021

Jenny was suffering with a lot of pain in her leg again due to her back problem. I put an electric under-blanket on her side of the bed and set the timer so that it warmed up before she went to bed and she could keep it on a low setting all night if she wanted to do so. We were hoping that the heat would do her back good and stop or, at least reduce, her right leg pain.

I spent a fair amount of the day trying to solve a problem with a DLL that failed to load on the laptop. The error message was truncated so it was difficult to work out exactly what the problem was but I had a hunch it was to do with my request for the Canon i990 printer status monitor to load when I started Windows. The printer was attached to my desktop and I spent ages looking for what and how the DLL was started and why it could not be found.

I got as far as examining the registry for known DLLs but it wasn't there so my guess was that it was a dependency of another process, probably another DLL and finding that wasn't going to be easy. If only the error message were more meaningful. That's Microsoft for you.

It then occurred to me that if I loaded the laptop and the desktop was not loaded, the printer would not be available anyway, so I was probably wasting my time. I gave up and cancelled the request for the process to start when I loaded Windows, solving the problem.

I started looking at Jenny's crock-pot requirement again, only to discover that nobody had anything we wanted to view in stock.

Wednesday, 12th May 2021

Jenny seemed much better this morning after a good night's painless rest on the heated under-blanket.

We were up for a reasonably early breakfast, needing to wash the dishes and tidy up ready for Peter, our plumber and gas appliance repair man, to arrive and mend our cooker. He was due at 9:30 and arrived at 9:15. We were ready for him, having removed all the bits and pieces from the cooker and the cupboard where the power socket was located and pulled the cooker out. We left Peter to it.



I was becoming annoyed with the bombardment of notifications from Norton and it took me ages to find out how to stop them. In the end, I resorted to the classic view of the Norton interface, left-clicked on Settings, left-clicked on Advanced and scrolled to the bottom where I turned off "Special Offer Notification".

When Peter had finished, I renewed the aluminium foil on the hob. We did that to keep the hob clean, any spillage being caught by the foil cover. This being a range cooker, there were four sections to the hob and each required an individual piece of foil with the appropriate cut-outs for the gas burners. Fortunately, I had all the measurements for the cuts and a template for the complicated shape of the large burner used for the wok.

After lunch, Jenny was going to clean the left oven for which Peter had replaced the thermocouple. Given her present problems, I did that for her, letting Jenny do the removable liners and the shelves at the sink. That took some doing and I ended up on my back with my head in the oven to clean the top inside. For all my efforts, it could have done with a lot more but it was much better that when I started and time was pressing. I left the oven on for a short while to dry it out.

Jenny then wanted to tackle the second oven and I cleaned the glass door inside and Jenny cleaned the shelves and the liners. I was going to tackle the inside but we had run out of Brillo pads. Jenny went across to the local shop but there were none there.

I gave up and came into the lounge to thumb through next week's TV listings since it was late in the afternoon.

Thursday, 13th May 2020

Jenny had a doctor's appointment at 10:00 a.m. and she went off to see one of our new GPs, Sanjay, with whom I had dealt for myself and for Jenny online and over the telephone and of whom I had heard very favourable reports.

Jenny left me to wash the dishes and put out her washing lines. She returned just as I had finished. Apart from diagnosing sciatica (of which, I learned, there were different types), he wasn't sure what was causing the pain in her jaw, so he was arranging for various tests and an MRI scan.

I decided to make the supporting frame for the strawberry raised bed and gathered all my bits together, except the screws. I couldn't get into the cupboard in the garage where I kept my screws because the pallets I had stored were preventing the doors from opening fully.

I started looking for an alternative storage area for them and, having moved a lot of items off the garage floor to the patio at the back, I started to lay them on the floor at the back of the garage with the intention of putting the items back on top of them. The first pallet looked out of place in its new position and I decided to consign it to the rubbish so I put it in the trailer along with the second one.

By the time I had done that, Jenny had baked two loaves and prepared lunch.

As I finished my cup of tea in the lounge, the scheduled heavy showers started. The rain was light at first and we rushed outside. I started putting away the bikes that were on the patio and Jenny helped. Jenny brought my tools I had outside, ready to start work on the raised bed frame, into the kitchen and fetched in her washing. My final task outside as the rain started in earnest was to bring in the washing lines.

One day without rain would have been nice, but no.

I had earlier found my box of small wedges and packing and I went into the back bedroom to sort out the first corner where the two pieces of skirting I had cut and loosely fitted came together. The small piece between the cupboard and the side wall needed some packing behind it at the bottom near both ends to make the corner neat. The long piece on the side wall, apart from being slightly warped, had a tendency to drop down a gap between the floor boarding and the wall at the end near the back wall. I placed some packing on the last joist to prop it up to floor level. That sorted the first corner out, although there was a fair gap between the top of the small length of skirting and the wall. I decided to think about that one.

Friday, 14th May 2021

Grocery shopping day was upon us once more and we went to Sainsbury's at Heaton Park and Tesco at Prestwich this week.

I stopped off at B&Q at Heap Bridge to look for some bits to fit the overflow outlet to the water butt and after quite a bit of searching came up with some push-fit fittings that I thought would do the trick. These comprised a tank connector, a pack of three 90° elbows, a long length of piping and two bags of clips to hold the piping in place on the back wall.

We also called at Dennis Gore's chemist shop at Prestwich for some more Saw Palmetto for me. The cost of this had gone up again, from £9.75 to £10.50 and I wasn't at all happy about that.

After a late lunch, I spent what was left of the afternoon updating the accounts and continuing the process of picking out TV and radio programmes to record for the coming week.

Saturday, 15th May 2021

I helped Jenny clean the bathroom and the toilet and performed the usual domestic duties before finishing off scheduling all the TV recordings for the coming week.

I continued the design of a CD cover for a CD I had cut from an old LP I had.

Matthew called round on his Ducati motorcycle, taking it for a test run before his few days' holiday with his friends on their bikes later this week. They had planned to stay at a campsite at Portree on the Isle of Skye for two nights of their holiday.

Rachel arrived late afternoon for the weekend.

Sunday, 16th May 2021

When Rachel was here, we usually had a cooked breakfast on Sundays so I sat down to relax afterwards to let it settle and worked through my backlog of E-mails.

It was a better day than forecast, with some decent sunshine, so I went outside and put together the overflow for the water butt. I could have done with an extra 90° bend to fit at the end near the grate to the drain and I had a packet of clips left over.

I turned my attention to the frame for the netting to cover the raised bed containing the strawberries and managed to cut all the pieces of wood. As I started to put it together at about 4:30, it threatened to rain so I packed up and came in.

I dealt with some TV recordings and listened to the recording of Jazz Record Requests.

My last task of the day, before retiring, was to wind up the clocks. The wall clock in the dining room seemed to be keeping the right time, now, after weeks of fiddling with the length of the pendulum. The lounge grandfather clock was still running a tad slow so I shortened the pendulum a fraction.

Monday, 17th May 2021

I had to be up early to book Jenny a follow-up appointment with her GP using the online AskMyGP service. She was feeling much better. The pain in her leg had subsided somewhat and her jaw was far less painful, enabling her to eat more. Her headaches were less severe and came and went.

After breakfast, we saw Rachel off to work. A very heavy downpour started just before she went out to the car and she must have been soaked before she managed to get into the car, poor lass. It stopped soon after she had gone and by 10:00 a.m., there were signs of bits of blue sky developing and some sunshine trying to peep through. It didn't last.

I was on pot washing duties and then updated this diary entry and went on to deal with the recorded TV programmes we had watched over the past week or so.

In the late afternoon, we went for a stroll down cycle route 6 as far as Tottington and then walked back along the road for an hour or so to take in some fresh air. It was cold and overcast but at least it didn't rain. There were mallard, Canada geese, a pair of swans and a coot on Island Lodge but there was no sign of any young.

On returning, I put out the garden and general waste bins ready for collection in the morning.

I started to experience some heartburn (indigestion) after lunch and it gradually became worse as the day wore on. Walking didn't improve matters and I had a can of cold Whole Earth sparkling ginger when I came in to try to settle my stomach, which helped a little.

Tuesday, 18th May 2021

It was 10 a.m. before we surfaced and we were both aching a little. I fetched the empty recycling bins down, the rubbish having been collected and emptied the vegetable waste in the compost bin, consigning several slugs to the garden waste bin. While I was outside, I performed a quick slug check on the raised beds but I didn't see any. That was all before breakfast.

It was a nice day with warm, sunny periods and I took the opportunity to finish the frame for the strawberry raised bed so that we could drape a net over it to prevent the birds from eating the strawberries. That took me up to lunch time, not so much lunch as an early afternoon snack, on the bench outside.

I tidied up the patio a little and put away my tools before dragging out the old hover-mower to cut the grass at the back and the front. I had just finished when I managed to drag the hover mower over the power cable and it cut that as well. Normally, I would use a surge protector but I hadn't bothered on this occasion.

An examination of the fuse in the main distribution unit for the sockets in the garage, into one of which the extension cable for the lawn mower had been plugged, revealed that it was intact. I plugged a lamp into one of the garage sockets to make sure and it lit up.

I checked the fuse in the plug of the extension cable and that was alright as well. So was the fuse in the lawn mower cable plug. I couldn't believe that none of the fuses had blown.

After cleaning the lawn mower ready for storage, I sat down on the bench on the patio with the severed cable and repaired it. There was an in-line plug and socket in the cable near the connection to the lawn mower and it was just a case of removing the socket from the end of the short piece of severed cable and attaching it to the other severed end. It had shortened the lawn mower cable by a couple of metres but that didn't matter too much. First, I had a spare cable anyway, from a previous, identical mower, if I needed it and, second, I had a new lawn mower being delivered tomorrow.

I put everything away and came in at about 5:30 p.m. for a shower and tea, somewhat shattered.

Wednesday, 19th May 2021

A reasonable day with sunny periods and less than a 5% chance of rain had been forecast so, after another late breakfast and washing the dishes, my plan was to send in the gas, electricity and water meter readings and then trim the grass edges and tidy up the borders before lunch and then cut some wood for the fire under the car port in the afternoon, while waiting for the delivery of my new lawn mower.

It started to rain while we were having breakfast. It was just a short shower and I expected the bits of blue sky to prevail. More showers followed, turning to persistent rain.

Naturally, the forecast had suddenly changed to continuous rain and showers until noon, followed by the previous prediction of sunny periods in the afternoon. I gave up and stayed in to finish a CD cover design on the PC, after reading the meters and submitting the readings.

One day in the garden in a month was obviously all I was permitted.

When I had finished the CD cover, I had a look at my water charges and it took me a good couple of hours to make sense of the billing from United Utilities. I eventually managed to reconcile the payments I had made, the scheduled payments for the rest of the financial year and my account statement.

After a late lunch, my new lawnmower had arrived from John Lewis. I had received a telephone call at about 8 a.m., while I was still in bed, recovering from yesterday's activity, to say that my mower would be delivered between 2:45 p.m. and 3:45 p.m. and that the delivery driver would telephone 30 minutes before he arrived. He didn't and the mower arrived at just before 2:45 p.m.

On the order, John Lewis had generously included a two-year guarantee. On the box, Bosch offered me a three-year guarantee.

Yesterday John Lewis sent me an E-mail advising me that the product I had ordered was out of stock and they didn't know when it would be back in stock, if at all. That was after confirming delivery.

I went out and trimmed the lawn edges at the back and tidied up the borders.

I made a start on the front garden and I was interrupted by a good friend of ours, Mike, who lived a few doors down the road and who was just returning from a walk with Frank and Steve. We chatted for a while and then I had to pack up to drive Jenny to the dentist at Holcombe Brook to have her teeth cleaned, the appointment being for 6 p.m.

It was a lovely sunny evening, if somewhat cool, masking the forthcoming effect of a deep low pressure system due to swirl across the country over the next couple of days bringing very wet and very windy weather.

Thursday, 20th May 2021

The most productive piece of work was to complete this week's Radio Times crossword. I also started to list the TV recordings for the coming week.

Friday, 21st May 2021

Grocery shopping was confined to Unicorn in Chorlton and Waitrose in Broadheath this week.

The expansion work at Unicorn was progressing slowly and the temporary arrangements were not particularly satisfactory so we were looking forward to completion. The car park was considerably smaller as a result of the ongoing work so I had to queue for a parking space for about ten minutes or so. Jenny started her shopping while I parked the car.

At Waitrose, we had some vouchers and, coupled with the "Fish Friday" incentive, our bill was reduced by a tidy sum. Even so, our weekly shopping bill had increased of late.

After lunch at home, I finished off listing the TV recordings for the next day and managed to programme those before retiring for the night.

Saturday, 22nd May 2021

I went round to the old school for about 8:40 a.m. I had seen an E-mail yesterday from Christine (the manager of the old school) that the yard sale would be on as the weather forecast was favourable. When I arrived, Christine informed me that the forecast had changed and rain was expected, which wouldn't be good for the electrical goods so I didn't put any out. I worked in the cellar, tidying up as much as I could instead.

Jenny joined me and helped where she could. There were some spots of rain but not much. Jenny managed to sell a handful of light bulbs for 50p each.

After lunch, I finished off entering the TV programmes for the coming week and edited those that had been recorded, ready for viewing. I also sorted out the recordings for two different series which I had incorrectly combined, one being "(The) World's Most Scenic Railways" and the other being "Scotland's Scenic Railway Journeys". It didn't help that the latter had originally been entitled "The World's Most Beautiful Railway". The fact that the World series was originally broadcast on Channel 5 and the Scotland series on Channel 4 should have made me realise the two series were completely different.

Sunday, 23rd May 2021

It was 10:00 a.m. when we surfaced. We were both absolutely shattered after a couple of recent early mornings. The sun was trying to shine and *it wasn't raining* even though the forecast from the met office said it was. I didn't expect it to last, though and it was damn cold.

Jenny was first up and the lovely smell of bacon coking flooded the house, as was usual on Sunday mornings when Rachel came to stay for the weekend.

I didn't do much, just a little bit of tidying here and there, document scanning and filing.

I listened to Jazz Record Requests as usual.

I finished off my day by tidying up the recorded TV programmes we had watched during the week.

Monday, 24th May 2021

I went down to see Eunice, one of the ladies who helped out at the old school, who was having trouble with her TV and her VHS/DVD player/recorder. It was a case of becoming familiar with her new TV, a rather smart-looking Panasonic, which had built-in programme catch-up from the full range of free and subscription services and the facility to record to and play from a USB device, having USB 3.0 and USB 2.0 connections. No wonder she was having some difficulty! The only service it didn't have was Freesat reception but it did receive the Freeview HD channels.

I came home for lunch, having explained all her options and going through the old method of recording on her DVD player.

I spent the afternoon trying to back up the laptop Windows 10 system with Acronis. That failed again trying to copy part of the hard drive and I told it to ignore all the errors. The resultant back up would not boot.

I decided to load the Windows 10 disc I had created to try to repair the back up copy of Windows. The disc would not load.

I downloaded the latest copy of the Windows 10 ISO image. The plan was to burn that to a new disc. The burn process failed to start, coming up with some error relating to the disc's compatibility.

I ended up putting the bootable Windows 10 image onto my USB stick using a free utility called Rufus.

By this time, it was approaching tea-time and I gave up for the day.

I later discovered that the TV recordings to the laptop using NextPVR had resulted in a few frame errors which would undoubtedly result in some break-up in the programmes. This had not happened for a while.

It wasn't really my day.

Tuesday, 25th May 2021

I had an exciting start to my day, washing the dishes, emptying the tank from the dehumidifier in the conservatory and pouring a kettle of boiling water down the bathroom sink to activate the sodium bicarbonate and vinegar mixture Jenny had put down the plughole the previous evening to unblock the drain. This technique did work but it usually took two or three attempts and a few days.

After lunch, I went out to cut some wood in an attempt to tidy up a little under the car port. There was still a lot left to do when I finished work at about 4:45 p.m.

Wednesday, 26th May 2021

I was up at about 7:15 a.m. so that I could take Rachel to work. She had arrived the previous evening so she could take her car into Finney's garage on Manchester Road, where we both have our cars maintained, for its annual service. Jenny came with me and we collected her from the garage and took her to the office near the Manchester Royal Infirmary.

We dealt with the dishes from last night when we returned home and then had some lunch.

I tightened up the connections in the lounge TV aerial socket to try to eradicate the recording errors on the laptop. I subsequently found that didn't work so I decided to revert to using WinTV instead of NextPVR to see if that resolved the problem.

I went to fetch Rachel from work at 3:40 p.m. so she could collect her car from the garage before 5:30 p.m.. The journey down and back was horrendous.

Bury was jammed with traffic on the outward journey and passing through took me twenty minutes, a stretch normally traversed in less than five minutes. Almost every single traffic light and pedestrian crossing light seemed to be at red or changed to red as I approached it and when I did manage to find a road that was not congested, leading the column of vehicles was either a learner driver or someone content to travel at 20 m.p.h. in a 30 m.p.h. limit with no opportunity to overtake.

It took me an hour to reach my destination, normally a 40 to 45 minute journey and, after waiting for Rachel to pack up for about ten minutes, I didn't reach the garage until 5:35, when I should have been able to make it within about 30 minutes. Fortunately, the chap from the garage telephoned Rachel to confirm she was on her way about five minutes before we arrived. Normally the garage would have closed at 5:30.

When we arrived home, Jenny was wondering where we were and thought we had been involved in an accident because we were so late. She had tried telephoning me but I couldn't answer my mobile telephone because I was driving.

Thursday, 27th May 2021

I went down to help Matthew start building a shelter in the garden for his wood oven.

Friday, 28th May 2021

Grocery shopping took us to Sainsbury's store at Heaton Park (it was bigger and better than the one at Sale), Unicorn in Chorlton and Waitrose in Broadheath. To our surprise and delight, the Waitrose café was open and we had a cup of tea and a gluten-free snack.

After a late lunch at home, I put in the TV recordings for the coming week.

Saturday, 29th May 2021

We went into Ramsbottom, toured the charity shops and then paid a visit to Plentiful for some more organic supplies, items we could not obtain easily elsewhere. We were pleasantly surprised to find a supply of organic Demerara sugar as well as the usual organic caster sugar.

We had a leisurely lunch on our patio bench and spent the rest of the afternoon enjoying the warm sunshine and watching birds in the garden, a couple of which had become quite used to us.

Sunday, 30th May 2021

Matthew and Carrie had invited us down to a meal with them and Carrie's parents, Bob and Marie, in the garden. Matthew cooked meat and baked potatoes in his wood oven and on the barbecue and Carrie provided the salad and accompaniments.

I knew I would miss Jazz Record Requests so I set it to record so I could to it later in the evening. On returning home, I discovered there had been a power cut and it had not recorded. Fortunately, I was able to listen to it using the catch-up service. One of the tunes played featured Tuba Skinny, a modern-day band, based in New Orleans, playing tunes in the traditional style and I was mentioned by Alyn Shipton as being one of the people who had requested more tracks from Tuba Skinny.

Monday, 31st May 2021

I started my day by tidying up the TV programmes we had watched for the past week or so and then turned my attention to odd jobs and more administration work.