

Greenmount November 2020

Sunday, 1st November 2020

In between editing out the advertisements and topping and tailing the TV programmes that had recorded yesterday evening and overnight, I was working in the kitchen, washing and wiping pots, pans and the juicer.

I prepared my October monthly diary for publication on my web site and updated the web site, which took a little while and still left the task of applying the amendments to the revised version of the web site, which was work in progress and had been for some time.

I managed to squeeze in time to listen to Jazz Record Requests on BBC Radio 3, which was mostly not to my taste, the only one decent piece being a song by Billie Holiday from the 1930s.

Monday, 2nd November 2020

I was up early (6:30 a.m.) at the sound of Rachel's alarm and I came downstairs to put on the central heating in readiness for her shower. I went back to bed.

Rachel had showered and Jenny was up when I finally crawled out of bed for breakfast. My stomach was still giving me some discomfort.

We had breakfast, still in our dressing gowns and Rachel prepared to leave for work.

After eating, we settled in the lounge for a rest and I dealt with a few things on the laptop before tackling the pots from our evening meal last night and breakfast this morning.

That was followed by a hair cut (mine, not Jenny's) and, because I had broken the normal guide I used for my hair, I resorted to the next shorter cut, the same guide I used for my beard. That thinned things out a bit, with lots of pink shining through the grey.

As always, to remove any traces of hair, I followed Jenny into the shower, that is after she had finished, leaving me to clean up the bathroom.

Amazingly we had completed all that by 11:30 a.m. and I was starting to feel much better after the last few weeks of discomfort.

We went to pop a card in the post box for Matthew's in-law's daughter-in-law who was not very well and we went round to check on the Incredible Edible shed in the churchyard. That was alright but the lock still needed fixing properly.

Returning home via the Incredible Edible plot, I took some pictures of the road sign, near the post box, which had been damaged by a vehicle, on me telephone.

After we had lunch at home, I decided to offload the pictures of the road sign onto the laptop and send them with a note to Bury Council so that they could instigate repairs, working on the assumption that no-one had yet reported the damage.

I didn't make any progress. I spent all afternoon trying to make the Bluetooth connection between the telephone and the laptop. It finally dawned on me that the reason it didn't work was because the software from Samsung was for operating systems only up to Windows 7, the mobile telephone being a very old one. While I was running Windows 7 on the desktop, I didn't have Bluetooth on it.

It wasn't until later, I remembered I had a Bluetooth USB dongle somewhere and I located it. I decided to try that in the desktop tomorrow.

More items for my list, as if I didn't have enough, were:

1. Back up my system disc on the desktop to preserve Windows 7 using Acronis True Image.
2. Deal with the grandfather clock in the lounge that seemed to randomly miss chimes.
3. Discuss the boiler maintenance contract with British Gas.
4. Clear the moss and weeds off the drive during the next dry spell later in the week.
5. Rake up the leaves on the block paving, the lawn at the back and the public land on the side and dispose of them, which may mean a trip to the tip the trailer, again during the next dry spell.
6. Try to cut up the wood under the car port for the fire. The plan was to buy an electric chain-saw.
7. Clean the car during a dry spell.

It was a good job I was starting to feel a little better.

Tuesday 3rd November, 2020

We were up at about 9:30, breakfasted and washed the dishes as usual.

My first main job was to deal with the British Gas Home Care Agreement renewal covering the maintenance of the gas boiler and the central heating system. There was no sign of the online chat service as advertised in the renewal letter on the British Gas web site so I gave up and rang the support help line. I pointed out that I wasn't happy with the 5.7% increase in last year's cost when inflation was running at only 1.5%. A very helpful lady immediately offered to reduce the cost to less than the amount I paid last year in recognition of my longstanding custom. I was more than happy with that, having said I was prepared to pay 1.5% more.

I brought my accounts up to date, factoring in this modest saving.

I went into the garage for some tools so I could continue to work in the back bedroom and, while I was briefly outside, I brought down the bins that had been emptied earlier.

In the bedroom, I finished cleaning the paint off the window sill trim, underneath and then left off at about 2 p.m. for a quick snack.

I had a little rest after eating. I didn't want to upset my recovery from an upset stomach, which seemed to be making good progress. In any case, I was due at the health centre at 2:50 p.m. for the extraction of some blood for my annual test.

Jenny walked round with me for the exercise and collected my monthly supply of tablets from the pharmacy for me. When I opened them, my Omeprazole were missing and I only had two of my old pack left. The last thing I needed after my recent stomach upset was to run out of those. Nobody could be trusted to do anything right these days.

I contacted my GP using the Ask My GP service and left a message for somebody to get back to me as soon as possible. Meanwhile, Jenny went back to check with the pharmacist that the Omeprazole was not on a separate prescription.

While she was out, I had a withheld call and I thought it was from the GP. It wasn't. Some idiot rang me to tell me he was calling because my washing machine maintenance cover had expired and I asked him from what company he was calling. When I discovered it wasn't the one that manufactured the washing machine, I said I wasn't interested and disconnected the call. On checking my records, I discovered that my warranty, which was for ten years parts and labour when I bought the machine did not expire until the end of March 2022.

When Jenny returned, she had the medication. The people in the pharmacy had blundered. This wouldn't have happened when Keith Lemon had his pharmacy in the village.

On a more uplifting front, the lounge clock seemed to be bellowing out the Westminster chimes again. All I did was to look at the mechanical working through the glass at the side.

Wednesday, 4th November 2020

I woke at 6 a.m. and couldn't settle back down again. The alarm was set for 6:30, so I decided to rise just before and reset the alarm for Jenny for an hour later.

I came downstairs and dealt with the dishes from yesterday evening. I also edited a couple of TV recordings, preparing them for watching later.

At the sound of Jenny pottering around upstairs, I prepared breakfast, well within my culinary ability since it comprised cereal followed by toast and a refreshing cup of tea.

Despite my efforts to be on the road by 8:30 at the latest to make our way to Unicorn in Chorlton, it was 8:45 by the time we left. Traffic was backed up to Bury from the junction with Dumers Lane due to some work on the footpath, resulting in the nearside lane being closed. Traffic on the M60 was also heavy and there were speed restrictions down to 40 m.p.h. on one section. It took us an hour to reach Unicorn.

I sat in the car, listening to Jazz while Jenny went in for the groceries as usual, still only one person per household being admitted.

The A56 on to Waitrose was not too bad and the shopping there was straightforward. I pushed the trolley round while reading the latest issue of Private Eye and Jenny filled it.

The A56 back to the M60, the motorway itself and the A56 up to Bury on the return journey were all like a dodgem track, very busy with vehicles all over the place.

We were home for about 1:45 and it was 2:30 before we managed lunch.

I allowed my lunch to settle, edited a couple more TV recordings and then plugged my spare, Logitech, USB, Bluetooth device into my Windows 7 system. Miraculously, Windows 7 found the drivers by searching Windows Update.

I used the installation file for Samsung New PC Studio I downloaded onto the laptop to install the package on the desktop. When I started it, it seemed to hog the system and just sit there doing nothing. I had to force the system to restart.

The system restarted alright but I discovered one of the Canon DLL files was corrupt. I had seen this before and I think the solution was to reinstall the Canon i990 driver. I decided to leave it for another day.

PC Studio ran for a while and then disappeared. I tried it a second time and it did the same thing. I came to the conclusion that it was a load of absolute excreta and uninstalled it.

The phone would not connect (now there was a surprise) with or without the software.

I gave up on that one.

Thursday, 5th November 2020

Thanks to Covid-19, we would not be enjoying the usual Guy Fawkes evening and there was no traditional Scout bonfire and firework display on Saturday. It wasn't a good time to resurrect Guy Fawkes anyway. The Government front benches were largely empty at present.

The weather was not as good as predicted and the very fine, light rain started as I was tidying up two of the four raised beds. The ground became quite wet but I didn't really notice the precipitation on my woolly hat or fleece as I cut back the herbs, removed the dead leaves from the trees and applied more compost round them, topping up the soil level in the bed. I moved on to the strawberry bed and clearing the dead bits, dead leaves from the trees and, again, applying more manure.

Having put out Jenny's washing line earlier, she had fetched in her clothes and asked me to bring in her line as I finished for lunch. I was surprised how wet the line was.

After a late lunch, I dealt with a little administration work on the PC and then retuned NextPVR, not that I currently used it to watch or record TV programmes. I had received an E-mail from Freeview telling me that some channel numbers had changed and I had already retuned the TV yesterday evening and WinTV earlier this morning.

I also edited a couple more recordings before we walked up to Holcombe Brook for a dental appointment that had been arranged for 4:20 p.m. earlier today and confirmed by E-mail.

The chip in my lower-left, front tooth sorted out, we were back just in time for our usual, early-evening, quiz programmes on TV and the evening news. That was followed by tea and our usual evening viewing of recorded TV programmes.

Friday, 6th November 2020

We were not up that early, the sun beating us to it. The blue sky that had been forecast a couple of days ago finally arrived.

At breakfast, I started my new Esomeprazole tablets. I needed a short rest after that and took the opportunity to continue planning the coming week's TV recordings.

Jenny's washing line put out and the recycling rubbish emptied into the appropriate bins, it was noon and time to start scanning the coming week's TV listings for episodes of series we were currently watching.

I left off after about an hour to take the Dyson vacuum cleaner upstairs for Jenny. I ended up cleaning the bathroom radiator and the bathroom floor. After that I was ready for lunch.

Putting in the TV recordings for the coming week took up the rest of my day.

Saturday, 7th November 2020

Much of my day was focussed on tidying up the TV programmes we had watched during the previous week.

Sunday, 8th November 2020

I spent a most of time, again, tidying up items on my computer and I started to back up my files for the week.

I nipped round to the old school to store a box of electrical jumble I had tested and priced for the next jumble sale, whenever that would be and brought another box of goodies back on which I could work in my spare time (what spare time would that be I wondered).

Monday, 9th November 2020

We saw Rachel off to work at 9 a.m. and I listened to a recording of last night's Jazz Record Requests.

I had a telephone call from the Medical Centre to submit an “Ask My GP” request regarding my recent blood test. This I did.

The usual routine morning activities, the above and dealing quickly with my E-mails took me to noon.

I had a bit of a go at tidying up my rubbish in the lounge and conservatory, preparing a list of items I wanted from the garage and piling up the items to go into the garage, the plan being to do some tidying in the garage tomorrow.

Tuesday, 10th November 2020

We spent much of the day tidying up in the garage, starting with the lengths of skirting I varnished a while ago. We moved those off Jenny’s car boot tables and onto our stairs in the house. That would enable them to acclimatise in readiness for the back bedroom.

I thought the plan was to move Jenny’s car booty off the tables so we could collapse the tables to create more room but Jenny didn’t want cardboard boxes on the floor and I didn’t really blame her.

I spent some time crawling round the garage loft.

In the evening, my stomach started to give me some trouble again and I was feeling rather uncomfortable, even with a hot-water bottle clutched to my right chest.

Wednesday, 11th November 2020

After a decent night’s sleep, clutching the hot water bottle, I was feeling more like I was in the land of the living.

We made it to Sainsbury’s store at Heaton Park in a leisurely fashion before 8:30 and started our grocery shopping.

We left off before starting on the fresh produce to go into Specsavers franchise store to collect Jenny’s new glasses. Mine were not ready, being a special order, with glass lenses.

Our second shop was at Tesco’s store in Prestwich and we stopped for two minutes’ silence at 11 a.m., the time and date when the Armistice was signed in 1945 at the end of the second world-war, in remembrance of all those who died in that and other conflicts.

On our way home, we called at Matthew and Carrie’s house for a couple of grocery items they had ordered for us Ocado.

Before lunch, I tested a soundbar, which had been awaiting a phono cable, for the old school jumble.

After lunch, I put a plug on a TV aerial-signal amplifier, destined for Jenny’s car booty, along with a four-way splitter.

I also looked at a USB turntable for the old school jumble and had that working, connected to my desktop. It was quite an old one and one of the lid hinges was broken, so it wasn't worth much. I did think of using it to convert my records to MP3 and subsequently to CD but, looking at the reviews of USB turntables, I decided I might be better off, quality-wise, using my hi-fi equipment and recording using my Hauppauge TV receiver, which had external audio-video inputs.

I dealt with my E-mails and then settled down to watch the evening quiz shows on TV.

Thursday, 12th November 2020

Our day started with a trip to Ramsbottom, transformed by Covid-19 from an old market town into a ghost town. We obtained another jar of delicious, organic, sweet-chilli sauce from Plentiful, a box of organic cornflakes, two packs of dinner candles and a pack of Moroccan falafel (for Jenny) from Morrison's supermarket and half-a-dozen organic eggs, which Morrison's supermarket did not stock, from Tesco.

On the way home, we diverted down to Summerseat, to the garden centre. Jenny and Rachel were planning on a window display in our lounge windows for Christmas as part of a village theme, their choice being The Nativity with the tag line Away in a Manger and we needed some items to use. Unfortunately, the nativity figures they had were not large enough, so I said I would see what I could find online.

We did purchase a rather nice basket for our logs for the fire though.

After lunch at home, the café at the garden centre being closed, we started tidying up the garage to create more space. We left off at 5 p.m., utterly shattered after lifting lots of heavy boxes, with much more to do.

Friday, 13th November 2020

I helped Jenny a little in the kitchen, where she spent all day, baking bread, making scones and making her vegetable juice, as well as helping outside, putting out her washing line and some of the clothes to dry, working around putting in the TV recordings for the coming week, tidying up what we had watched during the week and performing my weekly data back-up.

Saturday, 14th November 2020

We weren't up that early on this miserable, dull, damp day and it was turned 11 a.m. before we tackled the dishes from last night and this morning's breakfast.

Jenny went to clean the bathroom and I did some more preparation work in the back bedroom, still working on exposing all the cracks in the plaster, ready for filling.

After a late lunch, I finished off the bathroom by cleaning the radiator and then settled down to listen to some old recordings of Beyond Our Ken. Jenny suggested I write a

note to my cousin, Ann and her husband, Trevor, in Sheffield, to put in Trevor's birthday card, ready for posting to catch the 9 a.m. collection on Monday.

After that, I searched again, fruitlessly, for a proper DVD of the Marx Brother's film "A Day at the Races". I gave up on that and searched for a set of DVDs covering all the Kenny Everett TV shows, again to no avail. I gave up on that as well. It was tea time.

Sunday, 15th November 2020

After a late breakfast, we strolled round to the post box to send off Trevor's card and returned via a circular route for a bit of exercise in the cold, fresh air.

I resumed the preparation work in the back bedroom before a late lunch.

Since time was moving on faster than was I, I decided not to go back upstairs and instead converted three VHS tapes to movie (mpeg) files. One of those was a potted history of Ramsbottom and to accompany the recording there was an A3 historic map of the area, which I scanned and stored on the computer. I added this to the old Greenmount Village web site, resolving to put aspects of the latter on my web site, as if I didn't have enough to do.

Rachel came for tea and stayed overnight.

Monday, 16th November 2020

I was up at about 7:45 after a somewhat restless night and felt terrible. Breakfast helped a little and I spent the day finishing off the preparation work in the back bedroom. Jenny helped me tidy up most of the mess.

Tuesday, 17th November 2020

My morning was occupied by looking for baking items for Jenny and ordering them followed by bringing my accounts up to date, paying for the TV licence for another year and helping Jenny in the kitchen with the dishes, washing the juicer and the preparation for tea. The latter dragged on into the early afternoon.

I had a quick look at removing the network cabling from the conservatory to the back bedroom which Matthew and I installed many years ago. The cabling ran inside the wall cavity and I had removed the RJ45 double socket in the bedroom yesterday. Having gained access to the socket in the conservatory by moving the heavy, solid-oak filing-cabinet, I removed the socket and attempted to pull the cables out. They were snagged on something. I tried pulling from the bedroom end to no avail. The removal would require another visit to the loft, which I didn't cherish.

After lunch, we finished off tidying the back bedroom in preparation for plastering.

Wednesday, 18th November 2020

We had breakfasted and washed the dishes from last evening and this morning by 7:30 a.m. and well on target for an 8:30 departure.

Our outing to Unicorn in Chorlton and Waitrose in Broadheath was routine. There was a lot of traffic about for people restricted to essential travel only and a broken-down vehicle on Manchester Road (A56 from Bury) adjacent to a traffic island on the outward journey cause some delays, reducing the road to a single lane. The queue inbound to Bury must have been a good half-mile long and I was thankful we were travelling in the opposite direction.

We reached Unicorn just after 9 a.m. and had to wait until they opened at 9:30. Had we set off later, I suspect the traffic would have been much worse and our journey would have taken much longer and used much more diesel. As it was, our round trip averaged over 60 miles to the gallon.

We were home for about 1 p.m., had lunch and I spent the afternoon looking through the programme listings for next week, after Jenny had done so, picking out what to record to watch.

Thursday 19th November 2020

I was first up, for a change, at about 9:15, after the long day yesterday and I had done the dishes from last evening and taken delivery of our order of 3 x 1Kg bags of cornflour from Doves Farm. Jenny's gluten-free baking used a lot of it and the 100g tubs stocked by stores were woefully inadequate, not to mention around ten times the cost for the same quantity and that was including delivery costs for the bulk item. Unfortunately, we had to manage with the small tubs for most of the year because the larger item had been out of stock on the Doves Farm web site.

I continued to buy Private Eye regularly and read as much of it for which I found time, more often than not at breakfast. I found it far better than any newspaper and one of the few sources of fact with a fair amount of humour thrown in. The huge Covid-19 PPE contracts that had been awarded to private companies, many associated with friends of those in Government and on which Private Eye had commented several times and about which I wrote to my MP, former Councillor and acquaintance James Daley, received a mention on the BBC TV news last night. I was hopeful this was the start of a serious enquiry into fraudulent activity by members of the Government and civil servants.

After breakfast, I needed to submit my gas and electricity readings in readiness for my next bill, as I did about this time each month. I could have arranged for a "smart meter" to be installed that would send usage information to some computer somewhere on a regular basis and that would avoid me having to read the meters and send the information each month but I didn't like the "Big Brother" aspect of it. There was enough information gathering as it was.

Some would think that this diary gave a lot of information away. Maybe it did and maybe it didn't. I doubted there was nothing in this that was not already known by those who were determined to watch and wait.

I dealt with my E-mails, updated my accounts with recent transactions and then spent most of the afternoon looking for a large-scale nativity set for our window display. I found two possibilities, one around £80 with 10 figures about 20 cm high and a stable and the other for just over £500 with 12 figures 52 cm high and no stable. A third option was a set of figures at the local garden centre and we planned to take another look at those. The larger set above looked very nice but it was really quite expensive.

Friday, 20th November 2020

Having done most of the preparation work for putting in the TV recordings for the coming week, I didn't expect the task to take most of the day, which it did.

I plodded on, tidying up what we had watched the previous week, as usual and then delved back into an Excel macro to correct some errors in the code. The latter task took me a while. I knew what the problem was but not what was causing it and I had to insert a little extra code to do some debugging, which I subsequently removed, having resolved the problem, just before midnight.

Saturday, 21st November 2020

We weren't up too early.

After washing the dishes while my weekly, PC back-up was running, I applied lengths of scrim (a kind of webbing tape for covering the joints in plasterboard) to the plasterboard joints I had exposed where the walls had cracked in the back bedroom. I brushed the plasterboard with Evostick wood-glue first and then brushed the scrim after applying it. I had found this technique worked well on ceiling cracks in the past, the cracks not having reappeared after plastering over.

The two joints that needed treating were around the door casing, near the side opposite the hinges, one running the full height of the wall a little way from the jamb and the other just above the top, cross piece, a little way along. Obviously, the building of the door casing had not been rigid enough to prevent the door closing from creating the cracks. Hopefully, this repair would prevent the vibration from creating the cracks in the future.

I ran out of wood glue and needed some more before I started to fill the cracks. I brushed the glue onto the surfaces of the holes and allowed it to go off (i.e. become sticky but not set hard) before plastering to provide better bonding for the filling. I guessed this was what PVA did and I thought about using this but since the Evostick had worked well in the past, I thought it best to use that. As the old saying went, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it".

I came downstairs for some lunch and Jenny asked me to cut up her fruit cake for her so she could freeze the portions. Gluten-free baked items did not keep well unless frozen.

I was also greeted with the news that the clothes dryer was not working properly. Since we had had it for 17 years, I couldn't grumble. I said I would take a look at it as soon as I could. Meanwhile, I suggested Jenny use the heated airing rack she bought, which was in

the conservatory, to dry the clothes. The dehumidifier would take care of the generated moisture in the air.

After lunch, I went down to B&Q at Heapbridge for some wood glue.

When I returned, I started to work on the dryer. I got as far as disconnecting the vent and pulling the dryer out of its hole under the worktop.

Sunday, 22nd November 2020

I examined the operation of the dryer and deduced the drum was not turning.

I removed a panel at the back to reveal the thermostat and the fan. It did not reveal any aspect of the drum. I decided to remove one side but that would not budge until I removed the top. The screws holding on the top, at the back, required a star drive bit and I had to fetch my security bit set, which I kept in my drill case.

That exposed the drum, the motor and the tensioning pulley, the latter at the bottom of the dryer, under the drum. The drive belt was badly worn, which was not surprising after nearly seventeen years' use and it had slipped off the motor and the tensioning pulley. It seemed to be too stretched and worn to be of use and I ordered another one from AEG.

The challenge would be to fit the belt once it arrived. Since it went round the drum, it obviously had to slide over the drum, which meant taking the drum out of its mounting, probably at the back. I didn't really fancy that challenge. My back up plan was to contact a local repair man once the new belt arrived.

We walked down to the garden centre at Summerseat with Rachel and ended up buying a few items for our window display. I hurried back home for the car since I didn't fancy carrying everything back up the hill, especially since there was some rain about. As it turned out, it was a good job I did.

Monday, 23rd November 2020

We started to clean the lounge, ready for our Christmas tree at the week end and window display the following week end.

We didn't get very far, having started late.

Tuesday, 24th November 2020

Our cleaning of the lounge continued. We had done most of it after working flat out for most of the day. The remaining items were one of the windows and our two arm chairs.

As part of this exercise, I had taken some pictures of our piano so I could advertise it for sale.

Wednesday, 25th November 2020

The grocery shopping trip went well enough and we called to see on the way home Matthew and Carrie to discuss a little business.

Lunch and routine chores took until late afternoon so there wasn't much point in starting anything major and I started to look through next week's TV and radio listings.

Thursday, 26th November 2020

Windows Media Centre was freezing while recording yet again, despite removing it and reinstalling it from the Windows 7 options. I was beginning to wonder whether Microsoft had sabotaged it to prevent people continuing to use Windows 7 now it was no longer supported.

I cleaned the remaining lounge window.

Having used Hauppauge's WinTV instead of Media Center to record a couple of items on the desktop and found that to be more than satisfactory as far as quality was concerned, although not as convenient to schedule programmes, I decided to push the filing cabinet back into its position and tidy the conservatory. That turned out to be more of a challenge than expected. The automatic locking mechanism that prevented more than one drawer being open at a time was preventing all the drawers from opening.

I gave up and went back to looking at the TV and radio schedules for the coming week.

Friday, 27th November 2020

Nothing went right.

We were up later than planned and drove into Ramsbottom. Jenny needed some vegetable suet for her Christmas cake; that she had bought from Unicorn and put in her mincemeat (for the mince pies) had set like rock and she wanted some of the Morrison's variety. Jenny also wanted an organic swede to make some good, old-fashioned hash. I needed an A3 print of a picture for our window display.

We made our way to the printer, recommended to us by some friends in the village. The shop was closed due to the Covid-19 "lockdown".

We moved on to Plentiful, where Jenny bought some organic caster sugar and a bottle of organic brown sauce, of which we were running low. There was no organic swede.

Our last visit to Morrison's mini-supermarket was a waste of time.

After lunch, I made a list of the TV and radio recordings for the coming week and then entered the ones for the following day. There wasn't time to do more.

I had printed off a DVD cover for a DVD we had watched that came in one of those cardboard cases, issued free with some publication or other, intending to put it in a

proper case. I discovered that the printer had cropped the print due to its imposed margins, so I would have to reprint it.

To do that I had to move the filing cabinet, so I decided to tackle the locked drawer problem. I removed the back of the filing cabinet, held in place by several screws. I could just about see the mechanism on the right, at the front, as I looked from the back but I couldn't reach it because there was not enough room for my arm. Even more annoying, was that there was no obvious way of doing so.

I gave up and made a list of tasks for the following day.

Saturday, 28th November 2020

Number one on my list was to enter the rest of the TV and radio recordings for the coming week. I did that before breakfast.

Number two on the list was to put the clocks right and adjust their timing. I reset and wound the dining-room clock during breakfast and the lounge clock after washing the dishes, following breakfast.

Number five on my list was to update my list of audio media to reflect the last CD to which I listened yesterday was fine, which I did next.

The filing cabinet was number three on the list. It took me five minutes to go into the garage, search through my toolbox for my mother's father's old, thin, metal, two-foot rule, insert it from the front, between the top-drawer, left side and the casing, engage the underside of the locking mechanism and lift it. It clicked into position and I was able to open the top drawer.

I checked all the other drawers were operating correctly. When I was satisfied that the mechanism was working correctly, I sprayed the locking parts at the side of each drawer with 3-in-1 oil using a spray can fitted with a thin plastic tube.

After pushing the filing cabinet back into its normal position, the drawers would not operate again so I repeated the unlocking procedure with the rule, after which, everything was fine again.

Overwhelmed with success, we stopped for lunch, during which, it occurred to me that maybe the filing-cabinet locking mechanism automatically locked all the drawers when the cabinet was moved to prevent the drawers from opening while in transit. If so, why didn't I have an unlocking tool and instructions? Or was I given them when I had the cabinet made and delivered and had I forgotten and mislaid them? Anyway, the problem was resolved.

Number four on my list was to print the picture I wanted on A3 on A4, at least for the time being. I did that after lunch.

My sixth task was to reprint the DVD cover I needed, crop it, put the DVD in a proper case and put it with the other DVDs we had recently watched and which needed fitting into our collection. That took all of ten minutes.

The seventh item on my list was to fit the new belt on the dryer. I skipped that one and went on to number eight, which was to tidy the back of the garage and put boxes that needed to go into the garage loft up there. I decided not to bring down the Christmas items until tomorrow.

After that, I deviated from my list and tidied up the DVD library, slotting in the ones we had recently watched into their appropriate places.

I also performed the odd task for Jenny in the kitchen and then turned my attention to this week's Radio Times crossword until tea time.

Rachel arrived for a late tea to stay the week end.

Sunday, 29th November 2020

We spent the day preparing for the festive season, not that it was going to be that festive given that we were in a part of the country with the severest restrictions with regard to Covid-19, unlike some countries, like New Zealand, for example, where the Government had the good sense to lock everything down and close its borders at the first sign of the infection and was now more or less back to normal, with the minimum damage to its economy, although strict border measures were still in place to minimise the risk of a resurgence of the virus.

We fetched down our tree and decorations from the garage loft (completing task 8 on my list) and commenced work on the window display for the village project.

The latter didn't go well. The lettered lights Rachel prepared and which we intended to put up needed securing to a board of some kind and I quickly put one together, using two, ideal lengths of oak flooring left over from the dining room. I glued them together and left them to set until tomorrow. Unfortunately, we couldn't stick the lights down directly on the wood because they needed air circulation. The plan was to fix them to the wood using some kind of support at each corner so there was a gap for ventilation. The problem was what to use for supports and a trip to B&Q didn't produce a solution. It did provide hooks and some medium-strength wire with which to hang the board. I decided to sleep on the problem. I had another day to finish the window.

Meanwhile, Rachel dressed our tree I had erected in its usual spot, blocking off the door between the lounge and the dining room. Jenny and I planned to finish off the tree tomorrow.

Monday, 30th November 2020

Jenny and I put the lights and the tinsel on the tree and the skirt round the base to finish it off.

I found some double-sided, sticky pads I had tucked away in the garage and these were about 1 mm thick. They were also quite large and I cut five of them into four to give me twenty small pieces. I placed one of these in the middle of the back of each of the 20 illuminated letters and stuck them onto the board, carefully positioned to give me two

level rows of equidistant lettering, the depth of the pad ensuring there was an air gap between the letter and the board.

I screwed two hooks into the board and fixed two hooks to the top of the left lounge window. I used the wire I had purchased to provide two equal lengths with a loop at each end to hang the board and ran the power cable to a spare socket in the four-way board, used for my laptop and accessories, by my chair.

We covered a large box with green material and used that to mount the nativity set we had purchased so that it was visible through the main, large window, having removed the vertical blind completely.

We positioned the knitted angel, which was part of our display identification on a smaller box, again covered with green material, on the windowsill and stuck the picture of the knitted bible nativity on the small window.

We used the right fixing for the vertical blind to insert a third hook, from which we hung a rustic-type star and that just nestled on the right of the message board.

From a hook in the left vertical blind fixing, we hung a white, metal lantern with a star on each of the four glass sides. The lantern was designed to host a tea-light.

Having finished all that, we were exhausted and it was time for tea. Rachel joined us a little later and stayed overnight again.

For once, we were ready for the festive season for the beginning of December.