

Greenmount October 2020

Thursday, 1st October 2020

For most of the day we were preparing the Fisher Price Offshore Cargo Base for posting, having sold it from my web site.

Hunting through the garage to find some bubble-wrap from Jenny's car booty created another job of tidying parts of the garage yet again. Having found the bubble-wrap, we left off for lunch.

We wrapped each of the component items in bubble-wrap separately and then placed them in their original box. We put the box in bubble-wrap bag and put another piece of bubble-wrap over the top of the box because the bag was not quite large enough. Then we needed some brown paper with which to wrap the whole parcel.

We walked up to the post office at Holcombe Brook for the exercise as much as anything and purchased two rolls of brown paper.

Wrapping the parcel soon proved one roll of paper would have been enough. The remainder of that roll and the second roll would no doubt come in handy.

I drove up to the post office to send the parcel in the 17:10 collection.

I called at the old school on the way back to collect a vacuum cleaner that had been reported as faulty. I found two vacuum cleaners, tested them both and they both seemed to be working fine. I let Christine Taylor, the old-school manager, know the result of my visit.

I sent the purchaser of the item I had sold the posting details.

I amended the advertisement for my web site to show that the item had been sold.

Friday, 2nd October 2020

I wasn't feeling well. My hiatus hernia was giving me something to think about and I was in some considerable discomfort with a nasty catarrh cough. I managed to settle things down a little by asking Jenny to apply witch hazel to the painful areas and by drinking copious amounts of water.

I managed to put in the TV recordings for the coming week.

Saturday, 3rd October 2020

I was not much better, although the condition did improve towards the end of the day. Drinking lots of water helped.

I tidied up the TV recordings we had watched throughout the week and dealt with my E-mails.

I also managed to test another couple of items for the old school electrical jumble.

It was a miserable, wet day and Jenny was fed up, not being able to go out.

I made an attempt to do some more preparation work on the back bedroom but Jenny didn't think I was well enough and suggested we tackle some of the car boot items that I had brought into the lounge to photograph for my web site and which had been cluttering up the place for a while. We made a start on those.

Sunday, 4th October 2020

I tackled some more of the old school electrical jumble and managed to almost complete the two boxes I had brought home, condensing it down to a single box of items for sale and a large carrier bag of junk.

Rachel came for tea and we had a good natter. I took an hour out to listen to Jazz Record Requests as usual. It was another week of absolute rubbish, apart from one, short track.

Monday, 5th October 2020

We walked down to Bury along cycle route 6, a shared pathway also used by horse-riders.

I essentially wanted a large pack of rubber bands and the only place I could find them was Ryman's stationery shop in Bury.

We first went to the café in Marks and Spencer for lunch.

Tuesday, 6th October 2020

I spent the day pottering round and doing the odd job here and there, not that it made much of an impact. The place was still untidy and full of car booty with piles of pending, time-consuming jobs. There was no shortage of work. The dilemma was what to tackle next.

Wednesday, 7th October 2020

I still not feeling well, various aches, pains and soreness coming and going and I put it all down to my hiatus hernia playing up. I was convinced that some of the generic Omeprazole tablets were not working properly.

We had a reasonably pleasant trip to Unicorn in Chorlton and Waitrose in Broadheath for our weekly groceries, calling at Matthew and Carrie's house on the way home to

collect a few items they had ordered from Ocado on our behalf, organic items we could not easily obtain anywhere else.

After we had returned home and had lunch I worked through next week's TV listings up to and including Tuesday, planning what to record. I couldn't go any further because the electronic listings were only available for a week in advance and I relied on these for more detailed information.

It was dish-washing time.

After that, I settled down to update this month's diary, only to find I had lost the original document for last month. I spent the rest of the afternoon reconstructing it from the diary on the web site.

Thursday, 8th October 2020

It was turned 11 a.m. before I was firing on half my cylinders, which reminded me of a mechanical engineering experiment we undertook at university. We were working on a bus engine. The experiment was to take various measurements of the engine's performance as we cut off the fuel supply to each cylinder in turn. To my amazement, the engine still ticked over on a single cylinder. I now knew how it managed such a feat.

I found the energy from somewhere to go outside and tackle the corner of the block paving where the front path met the side passage. The edge on the side had slipped down towards our neighbour's lower front path.

I finished that at 5 p.m. and it looked pretty good. In an attempt to prevent the edge of the path slipping again, I had relayed all of the edge bricks on dry cement. That allowed me to pack them down since the fine, cement powder was quite fluid and I knew it would set hard after a day or two, especially with rain forecast. Meanwhile I had left a plank of wood along the edge to hold the blocks in position.

Friday, 9th October 2020

It took all day to program the TV recordings for the coming week.

Saturday, 10th October 2020

I didn't really achieve much and it was amazing how quickly time went. I tidied up the TV recordings we had watched throughout the week.

We went out for a walk round the golf course for some fresh air.

Sunday, 11th October 2020

The front path block paving was cleared of weeds and moss by 4 p.m. It was rather cold as I occupied my kneeling pad at about 11 a.m. but the work soon warmed me up and as the sun moved round to the front it was most pleasant on my back.

Monday, 12th October 2020

It wasn't a very productive day. I managed to deal with a few e-mails and the highlight of the day was arranging for my wall clock to be returned after being repaired.

Tuesday, 13th October 2020

We (Jenny and I) spent most of the day preparing more of our car booty for sale on my web site.

Wednesday, 14th October 2020

We weren't up that early and, as a result, we didn't return home from our grocery shopping trip the Sainsbury's store and Home Bargains at Heaton Park and Tesco in Prestwich, where I also tanked up with diesel, at, as it turned out, 2p per litre more expensive than Sainsbury's garage, until about 2 p.m. Lunch took us to past 3 p.m.

My first task after lunch was to download the Zoom client software for a test conference with a member of our village committee, Joan Waddell, at 7:45 p.m. This was a dry run for the virtual village meeting tomorrow evening.

The next problem that needed addressing was scanning documents on the desktop in the conservatory. I used an old version of Adobe Photoshop for scanning and manipulating images and it transpired that Adobe Photoshop had not been installed on that machine.

The installation of Adobe Photoshop worked but the program wouldn't initialise because it said the Scratch Disc was full. The scratch disc was the system drive and it was nowhere near full. It was a 2 TB drive and my guess was that the old software would not recognise a disc of that size. Using the Ctrl and Alt keys, I was able to force the initialisation process to be interrupted and to enter the preferences dialogue box allowing me to change the scratch disc. I changed it to a USB 1 TB drive and that worked.

The next problem was the scanner interface in Photoshop. It was different to my installation in Windows 10 on the laptop, which used the Scangear utility, included with the printer installation package. I decided to reinstall the printer package from the Canon web site.

That didn't go well. In fact, it didn't go at all. Canon no longer supported Windows 7 and I couldn't find the Windows 7 software from a reliable source on the Internet. I decided to see if I had saved the software installation file on my PC.

I found the installation file I wanted and ran it on the desktop. It went well, successfully downloading the software it needed from the Canon web site. What's more, Adobe Photoshop now had the Scangear interface for importing documents.

All I needed to do after that was to scan the documents I needed to process.

It also left outstanding two of the four documented tasks on my list.

Thursday, 15th October 2020

Between various bits of clerical work on the computers (I only used one at a time), I managed to do a fair amount of pot washing, put Jenny's washing line out and fetch it back in at the end of the day.

The village committee meeting in the evening, using Zoom, lasted about 2½ hours!

Friday, 16th October 2020

My day was one of programming the TV recordings for the coming week, dealing with those we had watched during the week and backing up my data.

Before retiring for the evening, I managed to break my glasses frame. It took me a good half hour, with Jenny's help, to effect a temporary repair and I subsequently had to apply more superglue before going to bed and leave the frames to set overnight.

Saturday, 17th October 2020

The first task of the day was to find a local, independent, family-run, optician business. We both needed an eye test and new glasses. I came across J H Fisher in Tottington and sent an enquiry, summarising my requirements and providing a little background. I awaited an E-mail response.

My second task was to check on the Coronavirus situation in Bury. Apparently, from the introduction of the three-tier system by the Government (i.e. Boris Johnson and his close allies, who always said they were led by the science), as opposed to the total lockdown favoured by the scientific advisors, the whole of Greater Manchester was in the second tier. This was one time I was grateful for being in Greater Manchester rather than Lancashire, which was in the highest tier. The Government wanted to push us up into Tier 3 and our GM Mayor, Andy Burnham was opposing that unless there was more financial support for businesses and employees who would have to be furloughed again.

Now I could see both sides of the argument, finding ourselves in the position we were (the virus spreading almost out of control and the country almost bankrupt) thanks to the Government's (i.e. Boris Johnson and his pals') slowness to clamp down when the first cases in the UK came to light in December 2019/January 2020.

On the one hand, if we didn't act quickly and decisively we were putting lives at risk. Those most at risk were the elderly, the disadvantaged, people with underlying illnesses

and people requiring hospital treatment who couldn't receive it because the NHS was swamped with Covid-19 cases.

On the other hand, closing down businesses for an indefinite period meant many businesses would not be able to meet their overheads and would close, putting more people out of work. The job market was contracting rapidly already and the number of unemployed growing. That meant hardship for many more people, some at risk of losing their homes. With increasing poverty comes increasing risk of illness and death.

So we had reached the stage of having to settle for a balance between the two and I didn't envy those having to decide how to do that. I had a great deal of sympathy for Andy Burnham in attempting to strike that balance.

After breakfast there was more pot washing and the washing line went out again, with my help.

More administration work occupied most of the morning with a brief trip out to the post box and to hand deliver a letter to the health centre, except it was closed with the shutters in place and there was no receptacle for post.

I strolled back for lunch.

After lunch, I tidied up my E-mails, deleting a whole bunch of obsolete items occupying valuable disc space and added a couple of items to my next web site update, which I scheduled for 1st November.

I spent some time trying to work out how to get the cash out of my Paypal account into our bank account. Giving Paypal access to our main bank account didn't seem to be a good idea, so I looked into setting up a new bank account for Internet purchases/expenditure. My conclusion was that I needed to speak to someone.

I received an e-mail to say that a Clock Repair operative was scheduled to install our clock in the dining room on the 22nd October and I confirmed that was satisfactory, Covid-19 notwithstanding.

Sunday, 18th October 2020

It was a dull but reasonable day – not too cold and no wind – so I went outside, cleared the patio, side passage and back lawn of leaves, swept the patio and side passage and put some more dry cement in the groove left by the wooden plank I removed from when I relayed the bricks at the front.

I finished off the morning by emptying the recycling rubbish into the appropriate bins.

I came in and tidied up some files on the PCs and prepared more updates for my web site.

Monday, 19th October 2020

We walked into Ramsbottom and back, leaving at about 10:15 a.m. and returning at about 2 p.m., having covered between five and six miles.

We started off with a visit to the charity shops. Of the five, three were now open.

I found a DVD of the excellent film “Blow Up” from 1966 about a professional photographer who captures a murder on film, the only potential draw-back being that the DVD was five minutes shorter than the recording I had made some time ago from a TV broadcast of the film. It was not uncommon to find DVDs that had bits cut out of the original cinema release and it was most annoying. This required further examination to find out if anything had been cut and, if so, what.

I also found a DVD of MacArthur, which was more or less the same length as the recording I had made from TV. This DVD would replace the recording once I had watched it to ensure it was alright.

Jenny found four or five books

We moved on to Morrisons for some dinner candles and Jenny also wanted some gluten-free, vegetable suet with which to make her mince pies for Christmas but they didn't have any.

During lunch at home, we had a telephone call from Carolyn Tickle, who organised the Santa's Christmas Cracker “market” at the Old School. Due to Covid-19, we couldn't have one this year and the idea was to encourage village people to take part in a similar event by having their stalls at their homes and publishing a map of the village showing people where there were stalls and what they were selling. Some people had already considered having their stall in their garage and we could have our stall under our car port. We thought it was a good idea and that it would cheer people up a bit since it otherwise looked like being the most miserable Christmas ever.

I started to supply our energy company with meter readings, as I normally did at this time of the month. On this occasion, what normally takes a few minutes took most of the rest of the afternoon. Google Chrome told me a shed-load of my stored passwords had been compromised and it strongly recommended I change them, which meant logging into each site in turn. Later in the evening I overhauled Chrome by deleting all my stored passwords (having changed them) and also blocking all cookies. I thought I'd see what effect that had.

I received confirmation from the clock repair people that the installation of my clock on Thursday was included in the price I had paid.

Tuesday, 20th October 2020

We spent most of the day cleaning the dining room in preparation for the clock installation on Thursday. We ran out of time and left the rest of it until the following day.

We might have made more of an impact if I hadn't needed to sort out Hauppauge WinTV version 8 yet again. Over the last couple of days it had started to generate a few errors in the TV recordings, although time would tell if these actually affected the video when we watched it. One recording was totally corrupted and I couldn't edit it or view it.

I uninstalled WinTV, restarted the computer and installed it again. As a backup I also installed it on Rachel's laptop as a temporary measure until I acquired a new one. The reinstallation did not solve the corrupted file problem. It happened again on the second episode of the programme. I decided to see if the programme failed to record properly a third time later today and I also scheduled the same recording on the desktop to try to help to isolate the problem if it reoccurred.

A new, faster laptop and/or desktop would allow me to give NextPVR another try and I could then ditch the Hauppauge software for good.

Wednesday, 21st October 2020

We went grocery shopping to Unicorn in Chorlton and Waitrose in Broadheath. All was going well until we were on the M60 uphill stretch, approaching the M61 exit on the return journey.

A blue car (I couldn't remember what make) came up behind me in the fast lane and we were driving through some rather heavy showers. Since I was travelling at around the speed limit of 70 m.p.h. and there was a gap in the middle lane, I moved over to the left to allow the car behind me to pass. The driver drew alongside and continued to drive in the position for some distance. I decided it was becoming quite dangerous and slowed a little to allow the other vehicle to surge ahead, which it did and then it pulled into my lane in front of me and slowed a little. I moved back into the fast lane and overtook the other vehicle.

I forged ahead and as I approached the downhill stretch where the M61 joined the M60, traffic was quite heavy. I was keeping an eye on the situation because I needed to move over to the nearside lane in readiness for my exit at junction 17.

What I thought was the blue car behind me in the lane to my left seemed to speed up and I didn't want the idiot complicating matters so I put my foot down to get out of the way.

As I eased off and went down the hill, I was looking for a gap to manoeuvre across two lanes to reach the left one. Time was running out and the only decent gap I spotted was approaching the bottom of the hill, so I made for it at some speed and managed to reach the left lane in good time for my junction, enabling me to slow down to a reasonable speed.

This last few minutes of driving had been somewhat more of a challenge than I liked and required more than the usual amount of concentration.

On reflection, it would have been better to have made the nearside lane much earlier and travelled more slowly towards my exit. The main problem was the volume of traffic and

the fact that I thought it was all moving too fast, too closely, with little opportunity to manoeuvre.

We called to collect a couple of grocery items Matthew and Carrie had ordered from Ocado for us on the way home.

On a more comforting note, my letter from the bowel screening programme advised me that no further tests were required, which was a guarded way of saying that it was unlikely I had cancer of the bowel, not that I thought I had, but it was nice to be reassured.

After lunch, it was pot washing time and then we resumed our dining-room cleaning. We finished most of it, leaving the doors, the curtain rail and the patio door into the conservatory to do. It looked like an early start in the morning to finish all that by 9 a.m.

Thursday, 22nd October 2020

We were well prepared for our clock repair man, due between 9 a.m. and noon. He arrived at about 11:50 a.m.

I showed him where the clock was to be installed, across the corner of the dining room between the rear and kitchen walls. Clock Repair's interpretation of installation and mine were somewhat different. Although I had explained that this was a new installation with no existing fittings and I was told the company's policy was one of making sure the clock was hung and working properly, the gentleman who came said he did not put up fixings, which is why I suggested I installed it in the first place. All he could offer was to put it on the hook which wasn't there.

The installer suggested that I put up the fixings, hang the clock and then contact the company for a visit if the clock was not working properly. He explained there was a difference between the clock being straight according to a spirit level and an even swing in the pendulum, which affected the timing. I had never thought of that before but it made sense. The tick needed to be the same time interval as the tock. I jesteth not.

Following a late lunch, I started to work out how I was going to hand the clock and took some measurements. The plan was to place a piece of wood across the corner at 45° to the wall at each side at a height that would make the top of the clock level with the top of the conservatory, sliding-door recess and with a length equal to the width of the clock such that the wood would not be visible.

To cut the wood to size at the correct angle, I would need Matthew's mitre saw and I arranged to go down on Sunday to collect it. The job was on hold until then.

Friday, 23rd October 2020

Normally I would have spent the day putting in the TV recordings for the coming week. Unfortunately, the desktop computer wouldn't boot into BIOS.

The BIOS (Basic Input Output System) is the bit that bridges the physical hardware to the operating system as opposed to the drivers, which bridge the BIOS to the specific type and version of operating system in use. Drivers may differ as the operating system changes whereas the BIOS remains the same for any given hardware (i.e. motherboard and CPU).

I spent some time trying to find the details of my old Foxconn motherboard to find out what type of BIOS I had and what the possible problem might be, often indicated by the beep sequence when the computer is loaded. The beep sequence is unique to the type of BIOS chip used. Unfortunately, my search was unsuccessful.

I eventually decided to have a good look at the innards of the machine.

Behind the large cooling fan on the CPU heat dissipater, I could see a layer of clogged dust covering the fins and preventing airflow. Could it be that my CPU was running too hot?

Fortunately, with a vacuum cleaner and a thin, wooden skewer with a sharp, pointed end, I was able to painstakingly poke between the fan blades and scrape away all the congealed mess and the vacuum cleaner devoured it. I was surprised how thick the dirt was. I was also relieved that I didn't have to remove the fan to clean it.

I put the PC back into position and reconnected all the cables. Sure enough, to my relief, it burst into life.

That had taken me into the mid-afternoon and I started putting in the TV recordings as originally intended, finishing off the last few as I watched some pre-recorded programmes in the evening.

Saturday, 24th October 2020

It was yet another late start and I made the fatal error of glancing at the Radio Times crossword over breakfast. That occupied me for a good hour afterwards and I had two remaining clues outstanding as I went to help Jenny with the dishes from yesterday evening and breakfast.

After that, I settled down to edit three recordings from earlier this morning, breaking off briefly to wash more pans and such after Jenny had put her home-made soup she had made yesterday and left overnight to cool, into cartons, for the fridge and freezer.

The next task was to remove the ice from the old Bosch fridge-freezer. The ice periodically set down the right-hand side of the freezer compartment and on the floor at the bottom because the water from the automatic defrost cycle froze in the waste pipe and it overflowed inside the fridge. The design was for the water to be deposited in a container on top of the compressor in the bottom of the unit which, being warm, would evaporate it. Unfortunately, the design was flawed in as much as it didn't work, which is why we bought a Miele fridge-freezer. The Bosch fridge-freezer was used as an overflow, as was the chest-freezer in the garage.

I came back to update this blog and deal with my E-mails.

Sunday, 25th October 2020

I went down to Matthew and Carrie's house to pick up the mitre saw and, after lunch, started the task of putting up the wall clock in the dining room.

The first step was to measure the back of the clock to work out the width of the piece of wood to fit across the corner. I cut the ends at 45 degrees and drilled the holes in the ends for the screws to fix it to the wall.

I had already worked out the horizontal position of the wood such that the top of the clock would be level with the top of the conservatory-door recess.

The next step was to position the wood with its top on the above horizontal line such that its ends were equidistant from the corner and that it was horizontal. Holding the wood in position, I marked the position of the screws on the walls.

I drilled the holes, put in the plastic plugs and screwed the wood to the wall.

I had to work out the position of the screw in the wood on which the clock would be hung. Locating the centre of the wood was a simple matter and I drew a vertical line using a T-square. The vertical position was critical and obtained by measuring the distance from the top of the back of the clock to the top of the inside of the metal ring support on the clock. That gave me the vertical point below the top of the wood. I used a dome-head, brass screw.

All my measurement, checking and double checking paid off when I put the clock in position and it fitted on the first attempt.

The final task was to hang the pendulum, stop the clock and set the time.

The clock was subsequently keeping good time and chiming the hour. It also gave a single chime on the half-hour.



It looked really nice across the corner too.

Monday, 26th October 2020

I spent most of the day helping to finish cleaning the dining room.

I wasn't feeling too well as the evening approached. My right side and chest were aching. I cuddled up with a hot water bottle.

Tuesday, 27th October 2020

I was still feeling rough.

I decided to start tidying up the recorded TV programmes we had watched over the past week or so.

We had a quick snack for lunch and braved the rain to drive into Ramsbottom and potter round the charity shops, walking up and down Bridge Street to take in some fresh air.

We were only out for about an hour and I listened to a couple of episodes of Round the Horne from 1960 before resuming work on tidying up the TV programmes.

Wednesday, 28th October 2020

We went grocery shopping to Sainsbury's store at Heaton Park and Tesco at Prestwich.

We set off early because we both had eye tests booked at Specsavers opticians inside the store at Heaton Park, Jenny being first at 9:25.

All that went well and Jenny chose two new frames, one for vary-focal lenses and one for reading lenses. I chose two new frames, both for vary-focal lenses. I insisted on glass (as opposed to plastic) lenses, which were far more expensive. The whole bundle, even with two frames for the price of one (the cheapest frame for each of us being free), came to a tidy sum, although considering it was for four pairs of glasses, the average cost per pair wasn't that bad.

Our glasses were scheduled for collection in two weeks' time.

The cost of the rest of the shopping was a drop in the ocean in comparison.

We didn't get back home until about 1:30 and we had a late lunch. Afterwards, I finished tidying up the programmes we had watched and backed up my files.

Thursday, 29 October 2020

We weren't up early and it was a miserable day. We braved the rain and went into Ramsbottom again, touring the charity shops as usual. Jenny found a couple of books.

Jenny went into the organic shop, Plentiful for some organic caster sugar and found some organic brown sauce as well.

We finished up at Tesco where I bought some Fever Tree tonic water to help my upset stomach and we bought some pink gin and two bottles of Yellow Tail Chardonnay, the alcoholic beverage all being on offer.

On the way to the car, with about ten metres to go, the two bottles of wine slipped out of my rucksack and smashed on the tarmac in the car park. I was not best pleased.

We came home for a late, snack lunch and I dealt with some E-mails and worked through the TV listings for the early part of the coming week to pick out programmes worth recording, including the ones Jenny had already marked.

Friday, 30th October 2020

I put in the TV recordings for the coming week.

I spent a little time on the decorating preparation in the back bedroom and then dealt with a backlog of E-mails.

Saturday, 31st October 2020

It was a day of routine chores and yet more PC work.

Rachel came to stay for the week end.

We put four Halloween pot lanterns with tea-lights lit inside them in the front windows for the evening, although it wasn't a normal festive Halloween due to the Covid-19 restrictions.

We ended the month with an announcement from the Prime Minister that England would be going into a full, Covid-19 lockdown again for a month commencing on 6th November.