

Greenmount – September 2017

Friday September 1st: Having resumed the cat's absorbent gel thyroid treatment twice a day at 7 a.m. and 7 p.m., we were up early and, as a result we left early to shop at Unicorn and Waitrose, calling at the Dennis Gore Chemist shop in Prestwich for some Vogel Saw Palmetto and taking the scenic route down the A56 from Manchester to Stretford.

There wasn't much traffic, although we did encounter about half-a-dozen cases of appalling driving. We were back home for about 3:30 p.m.

I spent some time sorting out the TV recordings from the previous week we had watched and putting in the TV recordings for the coming week before going out to cut the grass on the front and back lawns.

I finished that just in time for tea and then spent a couple of hours updating the village web site.

I retired, somewhat shattered, at 10:30 p.m.

Saturday September 2nd: We dosed the cat with her thyroid gel just after 7 a.m., and had an early breakfast, which was followed by the routine chores.

We had both forgotten to collect the cat's renal tablets the day before and she had none for the week end. I telephoned the vet's practice in Bolton, the Bury one being closed and the Radcliffe one being permanently engaged. The receptionist consulted the vet and returned our call, confirming that they would dispense enough tablets to tide us over the week end and we could collect them after lunch.

We went round to the drop-in at the Old School, which was more of a Drop-out, since all the sales stalls were in the yard. The hall and the large room floors had been sanded and varnished and the rooms were not in use. Of the remaining two rooms, one was, as usual, being used by ladies to sort the clothing and such that had been donated to the jumble and the other was used as the dining room for teas, coffees and lunch.

We came home and called to see Doreen and Alex at their bungalow across the back. Doreen had some more car booty for Jenny.

We came home for lunch and then set about tidying, vacuuming, dusting and polishing to turn the absolute tip into a more acceptable tip for our antipodean guests, Lyel and Judy, who were visiting from New Zealand and were staying with us for the night.

Lyel and Judy called at Matthew and Carrie's house on their way here to see them and to drop off Lyel's daughter, Amy, who was staying with them for the night, since our small bedroom was out of commission.

They arrived at about 6 p.m., settled in, chatted and then we left for our evening meal at the Swan and Cemetery on Manchester Road, Bury. We met up with Matthew, Carrie, Amy,

Rachel, John and Jane (who had come over from Leeds) and had an excellent meal in excellent company, one of the best ways to catch up with family and friends.

John and Jane kindly gave Rachel a lift back to her flat in Manchester before heading home and we four came home, where Lyle was ready for a good night's sleep.

Sunday September 3rd: Jenny and I were up at 7 a.m. to give the cat her thyroid treatment and I went back to bed for about an hour.

I breakfasted with Lyel and Judy and Jenny joined us for a cup of tea, having eaten breakfast earlier.

Matthew arrived with Carrie and Amy and Lyel, Judy and Amy headed off to the Lake District about 11 a.m.

I settled down to deal with the recorded TV programmes on the laptop and then decided to tackle Joani's request for a CD of all the D-CaFF pictures in preparation for the village 150th anniversary celebrations that, incidentally, coincided with my birthday. That didn't go well so I abandoned it until later when Jenny asked me to light a fire because she was cold.

The weather had taken a turn for the worse and with the fire roaring and a little wood to keep Jenny comfortable, I donned my working gear and sweater, had some lunch and then went outside and cut some wood from my stockpile under the car port.

Having filled a large bag, two wooden crates and a large cardboard box with wood, I tidied up and came in for a shower and a change of clothing about 4:30 p.m.

Monday September 4th: I was up at 7 a.m., applying gel to the cat's ear and back in bed by 7:20. The next time I looked at the clock it was 11 a.m.

The most constructive piece of work upon which I embarked was to start to lay the dust covers in the dining area again, in readiness for painting the ceiling for the fourth time. I left off that task for a late lunch and never finished it.

I didn't feel at all well and just potted about for most of the day, working on the laptop occasionally.

Tuesday September 5th: The alarm woke me at 7 a.m. and I woke Jenny so we could give Toffee her treatment. Being more alert, Jenny went for a shower while I dozed off for a bit.

Breakfast was at about 8 a.m. and, by the time I had checked the weather for the following day and washed the pots it was around 9:30. I decided to start cleaning out the fire from its use a couple of days previous and I was half way through that when Joani arrived a little earlier than expected.

Joani had asked me to help with another dementia awareness presentation the following day and I said I could not because we were having a day in York, the only nice day forecast for this week. I had invited her round to take her through the technical side of the Powerpoint

presentation so she could attempt it herself. I had allowed an hour for that and it took two, which wasn't a problem.

We then had to go down to Bury to collect the cat's renal tablets we should have picked up on Friday, giving her another month's supply. We made the obligatory call at Tesco for a few grocery items and then we called at the small, local care home run by a lady called Julie to see if we could borrow a wheelchair for our neighbour, Alex. Julie had a spare, light-weight one available and we dropped that off on the way home, stopping to help Alex into it, enabling his wife, Doreen to move him around the bungalow.

We came home for lunch with a few more items for our car booty.

After lunch, I went through the Radio Times for the following week picking out TV programmes of interest of which there were few.

I finally resumed cleaning the stove and was almost finished when we were summoned to assist one of our neighbours. I finished off the stove and we hurried round. We did what we could to help and had to call an ambulance for assistance, although it was not an emergency as such. Under the circumstances, it was understandable that the ambulance did not arrive as speedily as one might expect. That resolved the situation and after making sure everything was alright, we came home some two hours later.

Jenny prepared tea while I went down to Matthew and Carrie's house to collect an iPhone 4 charger I needed to borrow for a few days.

We had tea on my return and finished off the open bottles of Shiraz and Chardonnay between us to round off a rather unusual and hectic day.

Wednesday September 6th: We were up as usual at about 7 a.m. to tend the cat. The plan was for a day out in York. For various reasons, we were not ready to leave early enough to make the journey worthwhile.

Instead, I went to help Joani with her dementia awareness Powerpoint presentation, much to her relief. I had a late lunch on my return and then we went to the Trafford Centre where Rachel bought a new iPhone SE from John Lewis.

The journey back was, as expected, slow. I chose to use the main roads via Manchester rather than try the M60 and we cut across through Salford and up the A6 to Broughton Road (A576), following the signs for Bury. This part of the journey I should have known quite well from my working days but that was a long time ago and there had been some development which was unfamiliar so I missed the turning to cut over to Agecroft and joined the A56 a little further south than planned.

The queue heading up through Prestwich was, again, stationary so I cut across to Manchester Old Road, which was only marginally better and came out at Whitefield to rejoin the A56 to Bury.

With the roads round Manchester like car parks and people packed on public transport like cattle at peak times, what kind of mindless insanity was it that wanted to expand the population of the conurbation?

I spend some of the early evening helping Rachel transfer her applications, data and settings from her old iPhone 4 to her new iPhone SE and then settled down to watch a couple of episodes of the Sweeney on DVD. What an excellent actor John Thaw was.

I rounded off the evening with an update to the village web site.

My tickly cough had been plaguing me for the past couple of days and seemed to be getting worse. Sleeping was impossible, particularly with the difficulty breathing in a horizontal position. I placed a cool wheat pad on my chest and that seemed to have a positive effect so I thought I would try some fresh Aloe Vera gel. The effect that had was unbelievable and it was so rapid. Within minutes of smearing the right-hand side of my chest and side, I could breathe much more easily and I felt far more relaxed. My coughing eased and very soon stopped altogether. I was soon asleep and had a very restful night.

Thursday September 7th: I awoke with only the occasional cough. The tickling sensation that was the root of the trouble seemed to have moved upwards internally and my chest felt much better, although I still had some aches and pains on my right side and I suspected the recent falls had something to do with it.

Not feeling my best, I didn't do a lot and most of it was on the computer.

Jenny and Rachel went off to Bury, dropping off a booking form and payment for a table at Santa's Christmas Cracker to sell gluten-free produce on their way.

A lady called round for a third ticket for the Mayor's Fashion Show.

Friday September 8th: My tickly cough was more or less constant and I was becoming rather annoyed with it, contemplating a trip to the doctor. It did seem much worse after handling the cat, leading me to continue to surmise it was an allergy.

We went grocery shopping to Village Greens and Tesco in Prestwich, returning just in time for lunch before helping out at D-CaFF. In simple terms, this is best described as the village dementia café, although it is much more than that.

Apart from all that, I managed to sort out all the TV programme recordings for the coming week, to update my web site and to update the village web site.

Saturday September 9th: After going round to the Old School to pick up all the rubbish in the kitchen that was destined for the tip, at Christine's request, we finished off the decorating preparations in the dining room and on the staircase, relaying all the dust-sheets so I could paint the dining-room ceiling yet again (was this the fifth time?).

After that, Jenny suggested we had a bite to eat. While she was preparing lunch, looking at the dining room ceiling, I noticed that the cracks had appeared again. I decided to brush

some Evo-stick wood adhesive into the cracks to see if that made any difference. I had found this to be an excellent, general-purpose glue for plasterboard and the tape used at their joints.

Before starting painting, I went outside between the heavy rain showers to pick the blackberries that were so ripe, they were falling off the branches.

I used a roller to paint the ceiling this time to try to obtain a better finish. The problem was that this used a lot more paint than a brush. Having bought only a 2.5 litre tub on the last occasion, thinking I would not use a lot on the dining room ceiling and not having any more ceilings to paint for a while, the inevitable happened. I ran out of paint.

It was at this stage that I concluded my whole decorating project had been jinxed from start to finish.

I finished off with the remainder of the paint in the large tub I had originally purchased, hoping that there was no significant difference in shade, both being Crown matt white. At least the cracks seemed to have disappeared.

After washing out my tools in the kitchen sink, the rain preventing me from doing so outside, I decided to take advantage of a break between the prolonged, heavy showers to see if there were any more blackberries. Jenny had picked over the ones already in the kitchen and had weighed them.

We ended up with 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ lbs of fruit and we cooked the blackberries with a tablespoon of water, half the recommended amount because the fruit was quite ripe and wet from washing, until soft, then adding 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ lbs of sugar instead of the equal amount recommended by the recipe. We preferred a low-sugar preserve and, tasting the mixture after dissolving the sugar over a low heat suggested the mixture was more than sweet enough. I brought it to the boil and it reached the setting point in about five minutes. We bottled just over three jars of jam.

I washed up and left Jenny to cook tea.

Sunday September 10th: The dining room ceiling seemed to have dried reasonably well. I was beginning to suspect my expensive set of Ronseal brushes from B&Q were not as good as one might expect for the price.

We settled down to breakfast with our newly bottled jam, using the last, partially-filled jar. It was very nice and fruity but a little on the sweet side and it could have done with at least $\frac{1}{4}$ lb less sugar. The problem with reduced sugar was that the jam might not set as well and it might not keep, sugar being a preservative, up to a point.

I started painting the long staircase wall, hopefully for the last time and touching up the landing ceiling as I went. It seemed to cover reasonably well, although it did look a little streaky when the light was in a certain direction. I decided to buy a new, large brush before painting another wall. I didn't like using a roller because it was difficult to manage on a high ladder and it used (wasted?) an awful lot of paint.

We had organic sirloin steak from Village Greens in Prestwich for tea and it was not as good as I expected. Although I preferred fillet (and who doesn't?), sirloin was a reasonable substitute when it was not available – but not in this case.

I finished off the day with a rather large update to the village web site.

Monday September 11th: I was right about the staircase wall being streaky. At this stage, I was going to concentrate on the remaining staircase walls with a new brush and see how they went.

I had an appointment with the Phlebotomist at 9 a.m. and she took a phial of blood to test it for diabetes. It seems that if the medics couldn't get me for cholesterol, they'd try something else.

Actually, I didn't mind because it's always good to get a diagnosis of a problem, if there is one, before it becomes serious. How one treats it is down to the individual. It is not always necessary to accept prescribed medication and it is a great pity that doctors are not trained in both conventional and alternative or natural medicinal remedies. Very often the latter are better because they have no or very few side effects and they generally treat the whole body and the underlying cause of the problem, the major drawback being that they take much longer to work their magic. As I once heard someone say, "If I have a headache, I don't take Aspirin. I just chew Willow-Tree bark!" Presumably he obtained whatever it was from his herbalist. If I have a headache, a rare occasion these days, I simply rest and drink lots of water, since dehydration is a major cause of headaches. That's not an alternative to seeking medical help if it persists, though.

After my appointment I hung around working on the computer while Jenny had a shower and I forgot to feed the cat! Jenny did that.

We eventually tootled off for a scenic tour of Bury and Ramsbottom.

I went to the Crown Decorating Centre for my third 5 litre tub of paint for the walls and I intended buying a better and wider brush. Unfortunately, I was told they didn't make brushes larger than three inches anymore because they did not sell. Professional decorators used rollers. I bought a medium length pile roller since my existing ones were long pile. The advice was to use a short pile one but they were out of stock.

We dumped the Old School rubbish at the tip and we would have dropped off Jenny's bags of weigh-in clothes had the clothes-for-cash office been open. Instead, they had a free ride to Ramsbottom and back.

Jenny deposited more of her car booty cash at the bank and we toured the charity shops, which was a waste of time. Jenny called at the card shop for, you guessed it, a card for a friend's birthday the day after mine.

Jenny also dropped off a dress for cleaning, the price in Ramsbottom being more realistic than elsewhere.

We were home for about 2 p.m. and, having had breakfast at about 8 a.m., I was just a tad hungry.

I updated the accounts from the morning's transactions and searched for the paintbrush I wanted while Jenny prepared lunch.

After lunch, having given up on the paintbrush search, I finished off this week's Radio Times crossword that I started the previous evening in bed while my late lunch settled. It was too late to start painting and I had a leisurely evening.

Tuesday September 12th: The bulk of my day was spent painting the two remaining staircase walls using a rather small brush, followed by touching up the remaining bits on the landing ceiling with an even smaller brush, subsequently cleaning my brushes in the bathroom, because the rain forecast for the whole day had finally arrived in the form of a brief shower and then the bathroom basin.

I also managed to clean the light switch at the bottom of the stairs and chase up my Anglian Home Improvements order for the conservatory roof repair for which I paid almost two months ago.

Wednesday September 13th: I seemed to be developing some sort of routine. This time it was the dining-room walls that had a second coat of paint and I used my new medium-pile roller from Crown. It worked very well. I covered the walls in a fraction of the time it took with a brush and I achieved a better finish. I then spent a good hour cutting in the edges, etc. with a brush. That was the first boring bit. The second was washing out the roller and my brush, which I started while my lunch was warming in the oven, Jenny having gone out for a couple of hours with Gwen and finished off after dinner.

Having tidied up a little, I chased up my Anglian order again. This time I was advised to contact my local branch in Stockport and a lady there told me another lady had received an E-mail from their customer services as a result of my call yesterday and was contacting head office to find out where my parts were. I often wondered where my parts were. I was told she would contact me soon and, as any good manager knows, "soon" is not a timescale. I said I would give them a couple of days and I was told it shouldn't take that long, still not a timescale.

Jenny came back as I was drinking my cup of tea, while deciding what to do next.

We decided to put up the landing ceiling light. I didn't expect it to be easy but there was a limit.

I removed the bayonet socket and strip connector that had been providing temporary illumination for what seemed like years. In so doing, I inadvertently disassembled the bayonet socket and the bits went flying in all directions. I didn't manage to find all the bits and put it back together until I had finished the job in hand.

The next step was to position the ceiling mount in the right place and make the screw holes for it. To make this job easier, I removed it from the light fitting. It was fortunate that I did because it was difficult enough as it was.

The attempt to make the first screw hole resulted in chunks of plaster breaking off. The idiots who had skimmed the ceiling had not backfilled the skim round the light position. Fortunately, the large hole it left was covered by the ceiling mount.

I had planned to use my gimlet to make the screw holes but I couldn't find it. I resorted to using my drill. All that achieved was the drill falling off my stepladders, bouncing the drill bit against one of the landing walls, damaging the newly-painted finish and breaking the bit.

Having screwed in the first side the hard way, I tackled the second and that seemed to take hold quite well, the only problem being that I wasn't happy with the alignment and I set about repositioning the side I had first secured.

I removed the screws and reattached the ceiling mount to the light fitting. So far, so good.

I remade the wire ends of both the light fitting and the ceiling cable ready for joining them with the strip connector, which we couldn't find anywhere. Jenny eventually found the 5-amp, three-way strip-connector in a box of miscellaneous bits destined for the garage after I had cut a connector from my 10-amp stock.

Having fitted the connector to the light fitting, Jenny held it up for me while I attempted to connect the ceiling cable. That was a little fiddly, as always, but I eventually managed it even though the light was fading just when I needed it.

I put in the screw on the side I had previously prepared second and then attempted to screw in the side that had no backing plaster. I eventually found what I thought was the screw hole and discovered the screw would not hold. I adjusted the position of the fitting and found a more secure fixing.

Fixing the three glass globes could have been easier, resulting in a very sore left thumb and forefinger from holding the spring-loaded clamps in place while sliding on the globes.

The final step was to insert the bulbs. I tackled the awkward one first, the one facing the staircase, bearing in mind that the fitting was immediately at the top of the stairs. With all three bulbs in place we switched on and behold, there was light. Then one of the bulbs went out. Guess which one. Yes, the bulb facing the stairs had gone and removing it showed the spiral glass fluorescent tube had broken and we did not have a spare.

It was 7:20 p.m. by the time we had finished, tidied up and fruitlessly checked the garage bulb stock for a spare.

I cheered myself up by listening to my latest Jazz compilation and Jenny poured me a lovely 75cl bottle of organic, gluten-free pale ale that Matthew had given me. Life wasn't all bad.

Thursday September 14th: My cough was back after easing off for the last few days and I had a bit of a restless night. I was not totally compos mentis when the alarm went off at 7 a.m. to squirt gel on the inside surface of the cat's ear to treat her thyroid problem and that done, Jenny and I went back to bed and slept through the morning.

We breakfasted at noon, thus saving on food by cutting out lunch.

It was 3 p.m. by the time I had finished the routine morning chores and, updated the accounts and researched some salad dressing recipes for Jenny.

I had planned on finishing off the dining-room walls with another coat of paint but I couldn't do that in any case because my roller was not dry from the previous day's washing out.

I thought I would put up the curtain rail over the landing window. This involved drilling holes for the fixing plates because the old fixings had been obscured by the new coving. Since the supports were not attached to the rail and I could not find the instructions, I was not sure of the exact position so I thought I would wait until I had refitted the dining-room rail, which was of the same type and then I could take the fixing positions from that. The dining-room fixing positions were intact. However, I needed to know the fixing positions relative to the end of the pole and I would not know that exactly until the pole was in place. Isn't life complicated?

I looked for something else to occupy what was left of the day and I decided to clean the window on the landing. The UPVC frame was quite dirty and it cleaned up nicely with some Stay Clean fluid, obtained some time ago from Betterware and now difficult to obtain. Fortunately, I had enough.

I also cleaned the glass with some eco-friendly cleaner in a refillable spray bottle. The last job was to oil the moving parts with the spray can I had purchased for the purpose.

All that took about two hours, packing up at about 5 p.m.

Friday September 15th: It was D-Day minus one, the "D" standing for "Dearden", as I reached the three score years and ten (Psalm 90, Verse 10) tomorrow and hoped to live on to make the four score years as observed by Moses in his prayer (and beyond). I needed that time to finish the decorating.

We started our eventful day with a volunteers' lunch meeting to discuss D-CaFF, our village community dementia café, at 11:30 a.m. That finished at 1:30 p.m. and we headed off to Bury.

We stopped off at the Cash for Clothes weigh-in to drop off two bags of items and then called at Tesco, essentially for six bottles of Yellowtail Chardonnay on offer at £6 a bottle with 25% discount for six or more bottles, an offer not to be missed.

Our next stop was at Asda, Pilsworth for a new bulb for the light on the landing and I also picked up a spare while Jenny went in search of a few items she wanted.

We joined the busy M60 and made our way to Unicorn in Chorlton, as usual.

From there it was a short haul to Sainsburys in Sale, delayed by single-file, queuing traffic to the junction at Stretford, due to the prolonged improvements to the cross-roads.

There we purchased six bottles of Yellowtail Shiraz, on offer at £6 a bottle as well as some other items we could not find elsewhere.

We finally made it to Waitrose in Broadheath and finished there about 5:40 p.m., giving us about 50 minutes to reach the vet's practice in Bury to pick up Toffee's renal biscuits. Normally, that would be just about enough time except, on this occasion, we face queuing traffic on the M60 at the point where we joined it for the return journey.

Once on the motorway, I crossed to the fast (that's a laugh) lane and, for the most part, managed an average of about ten miles per hour until we had crossed the bridge over the Manchester Ship Canal. After that, traffic eased and we managed to maintain the temporary speed limit of 50 m.p.h. for most of the way to our exit at Prestwich. The result was that we reached the practice with literally a couple of minutes to spare.

It was going on 7 p.m. by the time we were home and I was shattered. I sipped a beer while Jenny packed away the groceries and prepared tea. She was shattered too.

We had a bottle of Chardonnay with our fish tea and I had a rather large brandy afterwards.

I slept pretty well.

Saturday September 16th: I didn't feel so good when I awoke. After breakfast and washing the pots, we walked round to the Old School. The village was celebrating the 150th anniversary of building the church and the Old School and the Church were decked out with displays of the various groups and activities in the village, together with a good deal of historical information.

I met a visitor to the village, Michael Knowles, whose great-grandfather, Samuel Knowles was instrumental in the building of the church, his partner Sylvia and his adopted son, Tim. I took several pictures of the displays and one of Michael and his family with Christine Taylor, our village historian and our lady mayor, Dorothy Gunther.

We went across to the church and I started taking pictures there, listened to Michael's and Dorothy's speeches and then ran out of time and had to come home in time for Matthew's visit.

Matthew came around noon with his new motorbike and to wish me a happy birthday.

After that, we had some lunch and went to visit one of Jenny's friends, June and her husband Ray. It was June's birthday the following day and we took her card and present. We chatted for a while before going down to Summerseat to drop off a package for Dorothy.

I spent a little while documenting the TV recordings for the week and so on before preparing for a surprise evening.

Jenny, Rachel and I went round to what used to be the Bull's Head pub, latterly the Greenmount Toby Carvery and now a Miller and Carter Steak House. We met up with Matt and Carrie and Carrie's parents, Bob and Marie, for a nice meal in good company. The table was decked out with little 70 shapes, small stars and a large balloon with 70 on it. I was instructed to wear a badge with 70 on it.

It was a nice end to another busy day, if not another busy year.

Sunday September 17th: I caught up with some work on the laptop after breakfast until just after 11 a.m. and then we went round to the church, after the morning service had ended, to finish taking pictures of the various 150th anniversary displays.

We came home for lunch and I downloaded the pictures I had taken over the week end, all 120 of them and started processing them, making them ready for the web site while my lunch settled.

The weather forecast was reasonable so I went out to cut the grass on the side of the house. I had not cut it for a while because it had rained so much, just about every day in fact, this month. Yesterday was not too bad and the grass had a chance to dry out a little but it was still quite wet and much longer than usual, which made it hard going. That took me a good couple of hours, during which it had threatened to rain and, after tidying up, the sun now shining, I decided to strim the edges and the long bits I could not tackle with the mower.

I had started on the edge near the footpath at the farthest point, which is under a rather large tree. As I was moving gradually down towards the house, I felt a couple of spots of rain. I thought nothing of it and continued for a short while. When I stopped the strimmer, I heard the sound of pouring rain and looked up. Sure enough, it was raining heavily and I immediately packed up and moved all my electrical equipment and the open, garden-waste bin under cover. I was not best pleased.

I tidied up and came in for a shower before tea.

Monday September 18th: We were up late and it was turned noon before I was functioning on all cylinders.

I started my half day by picking up where I left off the previous day and finished strimming the grass edges on the side garden. Then I cut back the ivy on the garage wall to prevent it intruding into the garage through the eaves. As I was finishing off and tidying up, it started to rain and I came in for a cup of tea.

The rain didn't last and I went out to pick the blackberries that had ripened in the last week or so and to clean the cat's latrine. I also tidied up the blackberry bush, tying up some branches that had grown quite a bit and which, hopefully, would bear next year's fruit.

It was trying to rain again and I put away my tools and came in to do some work on the photographs I had taken over the week end, preparing them for the web sites before tea.

After tea, Jenny and Rachel went to badminton at the Old School so I settled down to watch Monty Python's Life of Brian on DVD.

Tuesday September 19th: After dealing with a pile of administrative issues like the RAC car insurance, the Anglian conservatory repair ordered and paid for two months ago and so on, I painted the dining room walls for the third and last time. I cut in round the edges and painted the awkward parts with a brush, broke off for lunch and then used the roller to cover all the large, flat areas, which took me about half the time it had before lunch.

I then spent another good hour washing everything out and since it was a reasonable day, I did so outside, using the hose pipe over the drain. That was a huge mistake. The spray comprising paint and water went everywhere and I had the additional task of cleaning up the patio, the PVC and the glass outside.

Enough was enough.

Wednesday September 20th: My first appointment of the day was with the dentist to fix my damaged, front tooth at 10 a.m.

That done, we made for Ramsbottom.

Jenny dropped off the dining-room curtains for cleaning and we headed for the hardware store to purchase a bradawl since I couldn't find mine. The shop was closed.

We tootled round the charity shops until it was time for my eye examination. That went well, my eyesight having slightly improved and I needed new lenses. Since my frame was quite old, I decided on a new frame as well. I insisted on glass lenses as opposed to the usual plastic (I hated plastic), so the assistant had to obtain some prices and contact me after lunch at home, which she did and I agreed to proceed with the purchase.

I started work, with Jenny's help, putting up the curtain rail in the dining room and then fitting the tie-back hooks.

I left off to prepare some information on the new radiators for Richard Greenwood (Newcombe Trader Services) who I had asked to call round to discuss fitting the radiators and some wooden flooring in the dining area.

Richard arrived a just before tea and took away enough information, together with an E-mail I subsequently sent to him, to provide me with some prices. He was also going to come back with some wooden floor samples.

Thursday September 21st: As far as decorating was concerned, I did nothing. After a late start, I ended up dealing with a load of administrative work, which included an hour spent helping someone else to find a telephone number of a relative in Dorset. The closest I came

was to obtaining the telephone number of the village rectory, hoping that the local clergy would be able to assist.

Life used to be so much simpler before privatisation.

Friday September 22nd: The trip down to Unicorn in Chorlton took the scenic route down the A56 after calling at Asda, Pilsworth and the Dennis Gore chemist shop for some Vogel saw Palmeto, which was out of stock.

I had intended calling at the Lighthouse for an inline switch for a table lamp I was repairing and also at B&Q, Heapbridge for a new bradawl, being unable to find mine but I skipped that part of the journey and went directly to Asda.

The run down to Waitrose was also fine. Lunch was another matter entirely. First, Waitrose never had anything substantial and gluten-free in their café. Recently, we established that Jenny could choose a ready-made sandwich from the in-store shelf and pay for it and consume it in the café, so we headed off to find one. There was nothing gluten-free there either. We decided to skip lunch, do the shopping and make for home via the M60 before the school run started.

It was a good plan. Unfortunately, it did not allow for an accident on the M60 on the approach to the canal bridge that had closed the two outer lanes and funnelled all the traffic into the one remaining inside lane. A journey that should have taken no more than twenty minutes took an hour. One of the biggest problems was that the majority of drivers simply did not understand the principle of merging.

For anyone who would like to improve their driving technique (and, let's face it, there is always room for improvement), there are four very simple rules for merging.

1. Leave a gap between your vehicle and the one in front large enough for the vehicle at the side of you to merge without either of you having to stop.
2. Merge alternately, like a zip.
3. Do not merge until you reach the obstacle.
4. Do not be impatient. If you are in the lane into which the vehicle is merging, do not prevent the vehicle at your side from merging by driving past the obstacle as close to the vehicle in front as possible. If you are driving the vehicle that is merging, do not try to sneak into the next lane by tailgating the merging vehicle in front.

This set of rules applies equally to lane closures, joining a main road from a slip road or just simply changing lanes. The key elements are:

1. Leave a gap between you and the vehicle in front.
2. Do not be impatient.

You will find that observing these rules will get everyone where they want to go quicker, less tired and in a much better frame of mind. It will also avoid accidents.

Of course, by the time we reached our exit at Prestwich, we were in the middle of the school run and traffic was horrendous all the way into Bury. The last straw was a driver in the right-hand lane (a right-turn only lane) putting on the vehicle's left indicator and then pulling out in front of me without waiting to see if I would give way. As it was, I did not have a choice and a blast on my horn was called for.

Saturday September 23rd: We went to B&Q in Bury to buy a gimlet. I had learnt the difference between a bradawl and a gimlet, the former being a straight tool and the latter a T-shaped tool. While I was there I also purchased a packet of 3 amp fuses, essentially for the Old School electrical jumble and an inline switch.

On returning, either side of lunch, I used the switch and one of the fuses to finish off the repair to the lamp for a friend and subsequently telephoned her to inform her it was ready for collection. She came down as I was helping Jenny set up her table to organise her car booty for the following day.

I decided to use my new gimlet to make the holes in the ceiling in the dining area for the screws to hold up the light fitting. That was a minor disaster as I made the initial holes in the wrong place, leaving a small area that needed some filler, rubbing down and then painting before putting up the light fitting.

During all this process, I discovered my original 'lost' gimlet in my toolbox, the same toolbox I had previously searched thoroughly for it and not found it.

I helped Jenny tidy up and pack the car for the car boot sale.

Sunday September 24th: We were (or, rather, I was) up at 5 a.m. and we left at about 6:40 a.m., a little later than I would have liked. Fortunately, there was still plenty of space at Ramsbottom Station car park and we pulled into a suitable spot.

Trading was steady and we did rather well, helped by some sizeable sales, packing up about 3 p.m.

I didn't do much for the rest of the day, feeling somewhat tired.

Monday September 25th: It was not a good start to the day. I awoke in the wee small hours with cramp in my right leg, at the very top, on the inside. It was very painful and took a good few minutes for it to ease. Having fallen asleep again, the cat decided to pay us a visit and woke me about 4 a.m. My sudden movement knocked over a glass of water on my bedside table. Most of the water went inside the table drawer, which I had unintentionally left open slightly. I got out of bed to wipe up the water and remove the wet table cover, etc., drying the items that had been wetted at the front of the drawer. In so doing, some water found its way onto my pyjama trousers, subsequently dumped in the dirty linen basket.

I resumed my slumbers briefly, after a short coughing session, until a call of nature disturbed me, due, I assumed, to all the unscheduled, nocturnal activity thus far.

I finally dozed off again, to be awoken by the alarm at 7 a.m. to give the cat her dose of thyroid gel in one of her ears. I switched off the alarm, ignoring it and the cat and dozed on for another 40 minutes or so before treating the cat and then went back to bed.

I finally found the energy to crawl downstairs for breakfast about 10 a.m. on hearing the chink of pottery and the table being laid.

After the morning chores and cleaning out the fire, we headed off into Ramsbottom to collect the dining room and landing curtains from the cleaners, taking a brief look in a couple of the charity shops beforehand and picking up two DVDs.

We arrived for our dental appointment at our dentist's practice in Holcombe Brook ten minutes late because I had made a mistake with the time. We should have been there at 2:20 p.m. and we walked in at the appropriate time of exactly 2:30 p.m. The result of the examination was that Jenny needed no treatment and had her teeth cleaned. I needed a filling to replace one that was starting to break up and made an appointment for that and a clean in November.

We were home in good time for the chap we expected at 3:30 p.m. who was going to sweep our chimney and service the fire. He hadn't arrived by 4:30 so I telephoned him and it appears his assistant had put the appointment in his diary for the following day. Since he was nearby, he came round and completed the work, advising me that we should have had a carbon monoxide alarm fitted when the fire was installed. He gave me one to fit and added it to the bill, which was not unreasonable. He gave me a lot of information about current regulations and advice regarding wood-burning stoves, which I found very useful.

I finished off my day with a major update to my website, adding a lot of older photographs that I had not, to date, published. There were many still to do.

Tuesday September 26th: The main task of the day was to put up the curtain rail on the landing. The original fixings had been obscured by the new coving so it was a case of measuring and marking, which took much of the time. To avoid marking the newly painted walls, I used masking tape, placing strips on the wall in strategic positions and then marking positions and centres on that in pencil.

All of the painstaking measuring and marking paid off in that the fixings went almost exactly to the millimetre where I wanted them. The only decision I had to make was whether to ensure the curtain pole was perfectly horizontal or whether it looked to be in the correct position relative to the coving and the window. In the end, I chose the latter and the end result, with the curtains up, did look very nice. The pictures are on the web site under this year's [Decorating](#).

My other useful input to the household was helping Jenny with her batch of home-made chutney. Despite a very painful right hip, with which she had been suffering for a few days

and continued to do so, due, we think, to trauma following a small accident, Jenny managed her usual, busy day very well.

Needless to say, I forgot to put up the carbon monoxide detector left by the chap who serviced the stove.

Wednesday September 27th: With Jenny suffering from a painful right hip and me suffering from a painful left hip, it was surprising that we were up before 9 a.m.

It was not a particularly productive day. The first task was to put up the carbon monoxide detector in the lounge. The position I agreed with Daryl who serviced the stove and sold me the alarm proved to be too far away from the fire and I eventually located it in centre of the wall that adjoins the staircase.

Drilling the holes for the rawl plugs was more difficult than one would expect, firstly due to there being a gap under the skimming plaster and secondly due to blunt, masonry, drill bits. Fortunately, I had a new drill bit, consigning the blunt ones to the bin.

Even so, it made larger holes than required and needed a small amount of filler in which to seat the plugs, which was a job for after lunch, the moving of furniture and such, locating, measuring, marking and making a mess having taken up most of the morning.

I also took the opportunity to use the plaster to fill in the holes in the dining room ceiling near the light fitting position which I had made by mistake. I also made the hole in the ceiling through which the wire ran large enough to push the connecting strip through into the ceiling void to avoid any problem with the lack of room under the ceiling fixing.

Having done all that, I left off to help Jenny with making her Christmas chutney for sale at Santa's Christmas Cracker in the Old School in November.

Thursday September 28th: I managed to fit the carbon monoxide alarm, moving and replacing the furniture once more.

I also managed to reinstate the light fitting in the dining room and touch up the ceiling in there and also on the landing. There was a mark on one of the dining room walls that also needed touching up.

We hung the curtains in the small bedroom and I tidied away my tools for the day.

I spent much of the afternoon updating the house inventory on the computer, intending to thoroughly review it room by room as we decorated. It was surprising how much work was involved documenting the house contents and fixtures and fittings, including improvements and renovations. It was all necessary for insurance purposes and also in the event we decided to move home.

I also tidied up my media on the computer and managed updates to the village web site and the local civic society web site, the former being the third update this week.

I rang John, my nephew, to wish him a happy birthday.

Friday September 29th: We set off on our usual shopping spree despite Jenny's right hip being very painful.

Dennis Gore, the chemist at Prestwich, had restocked their Vogel range and I bought two bottles of Saw Palmetto, the plan being to always purchase a replacement when I ran out of the first bottle, thus never running out again. We also bought a large pack of Jenny's Omega 7 capsules.

We took the A56 to Stretford and turned down to Chorlton, not risking the unfamiliar, probably more direct, signposted route to Chorlton in case I lost my way. The way one knows is often the quickest.

Shopping at Unicorn was fairly routine and we headed off to Waitrose near Altrincham, calling at Sainsbury's Store in Sale on the way. We lunched at Waitrose, Jenny settling for a banana, having eaten her home-made, gluten-free sandwich en route.

After we had finished shopping, we collected some new kitchen scales, for Jenny, to help with her cooking, I had ordered from John Lewis using their free "click and collect" service.

Our journey was fairly comfortable until we joined the M60 on the return trip, right in the middle of the school run. Merging onto the M60 was not too bad, although moving across to the centre lane to reach the outside lane proved a trifle problematic when a lorry driver in the middle lane would not leave enough room for me to do so. How such an ignorant peasant could achieve the status of a Class 1 HGV driver was totally beyond my comprehension. Despite his efforts to pen me in the nearside lane, I did make it across behind him, thanks to some kind motorists who did leave me room to manoeuvre.

The journey to the canal bridge was, once again, a slow one. After that, it was more or less easy running until we approached stationary traffic just before our exit at junction 17. That didn't last long and we left the M60 for the A56 to Bury as usual, making use of the bus lane at Whitefield two minutes before it came into force at 4 p.m.

It was pretty busy all the way home but at least we made reasonable time.

Back at home, I spent some time putting the TV recordings for the week into the computer as well as dealing with a few routine chores left over from the morning.

Saturday September 30th: A restless night and forgetting to set the alarm meant that the cat had her trans-dermal gel on the skin on the inside of her ear to treat her thyroid problem half an hour late, at 7:30 a.m.

We had to get up shortly after that because Jenny had a doctor's appointment for her flu jab at 10:00 a.m. and I joined her at the Old School after taking care of the morning chores at about 10:30 for a day of testing and pricing electrical jumble for the sale on 23rd October.

We were home for 4 p.m., just in time for me to listen to Jazz Record Requests while fixing a problem with Norton Security, which failed to update itself, on the Lenovo Windows 10 laptop I used for local community work. In the end, I had to uninstall and reinstall the product, which was not as straight forward as Norton made one believe, with their RnR (remove and replace) downloadable software.

After I had done that, I ran the live update process to make sure the laptop was fully up to date and then ran a quick scan, which was clear. To be on the safe side, I also ran a full system scan and that was still going when we went to bed.

While the scan was running and before tea, I decided to clean the glass knob that had come adrift from the inside of the bathroom door mechanism. In fact, it came away in Jenny's hand the day before, trapping her in the bathroom for a few minutes until released her. It was a case of "Oh dear, what can the matter be?" Cleaning Superglue from items was not the easiest task in the world and, after researching the subject on the Internet, I had some success with nail varnish remover (Acetone), although it was hard work.

I also cleaned the fitting onto which it was glued, ready to reattach it. I had planned on gluing it back on but to do so I needed to remove the fitting from the door and that would not budge. I decided to leave it for another day. In the meantime, the bathroom was only available for those with a good singing voice. Fortunately, we had the separate toilet and that was still fully functional.

And so we ended the month with the dining room and small bedroom still not finished, the house still untidy and furniture everywhere, the conservatory a complete nightmare and two radiators still off the system. On top of that, the bathroom was starting to fall apart, what with the knob missing from the inside of the door, black mould starting to spread round the bath and in the tile grout and one of the pipe seals on the shower fitting having worked loose from the tiles, which was more a cosmetic problem than a major disaster.

The vision of being straight for Christmas was fading rapidly. And I needed a couple of fine days (some hope) in the garden and to cut lots of wood, since that was our only source of heating for the present.