

Greenmount April 2020

Wednesday, 1st April 2020

I had an e-mail reply from John and Jane, currently in Auckland, waiting for a flight home. They were coping well with the virus “lockdown” situation. I replied to it.

We finished off the last raised bed. It needed a new piece of wood at the top on one side but it would have to wait due to the “lockdown” restrictions. At the moment, it was empty and the plan was to plant some vegetables if we could acquire some plants. We might have to settle for seeds if it wasn't too late in the season.

We tidied up and came in for lunch.

After lunch, I spent the afternoon on the computer. First I looked for and ordered a new cover for the picnic bench, now on the patio.

I took some time to look for more LED bulbs for the chandeliers in the dining room and the lounge but that search was unsuccessful. The ones I had purchased for the landing were no longer available, although I couldn't imagine why not because they were brilliant in every sense of the word.

It was surprising how time consuming searching for items was.

Thursday, 2nd April 2020

I sorted out a few problems with my TV recording software on the lounge laptop by uninstalling NextPVR and reinstalling it. Fortunately, it remembered all my settings so I didn't have to reconfigure it.

After lunch, we potted down to the local Co-op for some exercise in the fresh air and next week's Radio Times. It had rained overnight and the morning was showery. By the afternoon it was dry but cloudy. We met a few people we knew and chatted at a distance, which made it quite a pleasant walk. The narrow aisles at the Co-op made it difficult to maintain the prescribed two-metre separation from other people and I was glad to get out quickly, having made my purchase using my contactless debit card.

When we came home, I had a session trying to resolve the problems with satellite reception on a couple of channels. Progress was slow.

Friday, 3rd April 2020

I spent all day going through the TV listings and putting in the TV recordings for the coming week.

Saturday, 4th April 2020

I spent the day tidying up the TV programmes we had watched and continuing trying to resolve the satellite reception issue which affected a couple of channels I watched. The rest were fine.

Sunday, 5th April 2020

Having satisfied myself that the TV recordings of terrestrial channels were, for the most part, alright, I left the computer and went out to tend the garden.

I cut the grass front and back, trimmed the edges and started tidying and hoeing the borders at the back. That was slow going because there was a lot of debris after the wet and windy winter.

Monday, 6th April 2020

I tied up a couple of blackberry branches that were loose and resumed the work on the borders at the back. Having finished the bottom and back borders, I marked off some of the grass at the top end to square off the lawn because the top border, where all the soft fruit was grown, was wider at the back than the front and the plan was to remove the grass to make it more or less the same width all the way along.

That was hard going, especially removing the plastic edging I had installed and which was now worse for wear.

The grass I removed I used to patch the lawn at the top, back corner and also along the bottom, where the grass had died off, mostly due to the border plants intruding onto the lawn area.

At 5 p.m., we had a Skype video call with Matt and Carrie.

Tuesday, 7th April 2020

The plan was to go grocery shopping. We had learnt the previous day that Sainsbury's store gave preference to older people on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays between 8 and 9 a.m. during the present Coronavirus pandemic, so we postponed the shopping until the following day.

After putting the car battery on charge to make sure it would start the following day, I spent the day finishing off the borders in the back garden, dealing with the top, sunny end where we grew all the soft fruit. The spreading blackcurrant bushes proved something of a challenge, with their inter-weaved branches and I removed the raspberry canes that were growing in their midst and replanted them in the part of the border I had cleared the previous day. The plan was to have separate areas for blackcurrants, raspberries and blackberries but the nature of the growth of these bushes and the birds stealing the fruit and dropping seeds made that difficult in practice.

Jenny was not feeling so good in the evening, probably because she had been working hard in the house all morning and then helping me in the garden in the afternoon.

Wednesday, 8th April 2020

I was relieved to find Jenny was feeling a little better, if somewhat tired, when we were awoken by the alarm clock at 6 a.m.

We finally went grocery shopping. In order to take advantage of the slot between 8 a.m. and 9 a.m. for “vulnerable” people (or, in our case, “oldies”) in the present pandemic, we arrived at Sainsbury’s supermarket at Heaton Park at about 7:45 a.m., a little later than planned, to find a substantial queue. Jenny joined the queue while I parked the car and then I took the shopping bags to her and waited with her. A Sainsbury’s Colleague (employee) came along the queue and asked if only one of us would go into the store to limit the number of people inside so they could maintain a safe distance (2 metres) between shoppers.

Jenny was allowed into the store just after 8 a.m. and I went and waited in the car for about an hour before going outside to watch for Jenny coming out, which she did about half an hour later. She looked exhausted, pushing the heavy trolley. I took the trolley to the, put the groceries in the back and then took the trolley to an assistant outside the store entrance.

The journey through town to Unicorn was nice and quiet with little traffic on the roads. I expected to have to wait for the store to open. When we arrived, Unicorn was open for business, there was plenty of room in the car park and, being between 9:30 and 10:00 a.m., Jenny was allowed straight in, this being their “vulnerable persons” slot, bypassing the long queue, while I waited outside in the sunshine.

Afterwards, we motored on to Waitrose on virtually empty roads. There we had the longest wait, almost an hour, before we entered the store together. There were times when it was difficult to maintain the recommended separation of two metres due to the width of the aisles.

The journey home, again, was in very light traffic but some of the driving left a good deal to be desired. My youthful sessions on the dodgem cars at the local, travelling fair came in very useful. We were home just after 1 p.m. I brought in the groceries, as usual and Jenny put away the frozen and chilled items before preparing lunch while I laid the table.

It made a nice change to complete the grocery shopping by lunchtime, even if it did mean a 6 a.m. start and we had a brief rest afterwards while I brought the accounts up to date.

Thursday, 9th April 2020

I fed the borders and the grassy areas (I hesitate to call them lawns since they contained more moss and weeds than grass) and then dealt with the weeds in the block paving and the path along the front of the house. The stubborn weeds, particularly those in the block paving I cleaned before winter and the pavement, I sprayed with weed killer. I

didn't like using it but there was no other practical way of dealing with really deep-rooted weeds that continued to grow even when only a small part of the root remained. The block paving I had not managed to finish before winter, I cleared in the traditional way – on my knees.

Friday, 10th April 2020

I spent the morning and the early part of the afternoon putting in the TV recordings for the coming week. When I had finished that, I went outside for a couple of hours or so and sorted out the block paving that had sunk at the front. There was a small section between the house wall and the drive that was uneven and needed relaying. I was on my knees again. No-one could accuse me of not knowing my station in life.

Saturday, 11th April 2020

We spent the day tidying up the plants in the conservatory. I had to order some more potting compost and I asked for another five bags of the organic, peat-free compost from Leabrook Garden Centre in Rawtenstall as well as some grass seed for the bare areas of the lawn. Since they couldn't deliver until Tuesday or Wednesday next week and I needed some for the plants, I went to fetch it. That was a trouble-free run in light traffic. There were more vehicles on the road than I expected under the present "lockdown".

The collection was straightforward. The lady was at the gate as I arrived. I waited in the car while she pushed the trolley outside the gate and went back in and then collected the trolley, loaded the car, put the trolley back outside the gate, did a U-turn and came home.

Sunday, 12th April 2020

We went for a walk round the golf course after breakfast and tidying up. At Hollymount, on the way up, we detoured to the community orchard and had a wander round. We sat on a bench overlooking Two Brooks Valley for quite a while, listening to the birds. There was little traffic noise from the distant, top road and the bird calls were much louder and clearer than usual. It was very pleasant to be out in the fresh air, with the country smells, the birds, the animals and no-one else in view. I couldn't help thinking what a beautiful world this was without people.

We wandered down to look at the bee hives in the orchard, keeping our distance for obvious reasons and then climbed back up to the top, where the greenhouse showed more evidence of mindless vandalism, to rejoin our route round the golf course.

We encountered a few more people as we crossed the golf course and took care to keep our distance.

We had lunch when we returned and afterwards, I dealt with my E-mails from the past few days. I was feeling quite tired and decided to rest a while.

Monday, 13th April 2020

I started my day outside by re-fitting the leg on the old patio table, after gluing the bits that had broken off it back in place with superglue over the past few days. The broken area was one of the fixing holes for a bolt that held the leg in place.

We finished off re-potting the conservatory plants.

After tidying up, I dealt with some outstanding items on the computer.

Tuesday, 14th April 2020

I spent all day dealing with various bits and pieces on the computer. What should have been various items of outstanding work did not go exactly according to plan and consumed much more time than I had anticipated.

Wednesday, 15th April 2020

We were up at 6 a.m. and left at about 7:20 a.m. to grocery shop at Sainsbury's store at Heaton Park. We arrived 20 minutes later and Jenny joined the queue of oldies, given preferential access between 8 a.m. and 9 a.m. I joined her a short while later until she went into the store and then I came back to the car and listened to a Jazz CD. Only one person per household was allowed in.

We were home for about 9:30 a.m. and I dealt with a few items on the computer. Just before our early lunch, Jenny helped me lift the old patio table I had repaired from its upturned position on the wooden picnic bench, turn it the right way up and stand it on the patio. We moved the picnic bench slightly so that Jenny had access to her washing line.

I carried on outside, re-spraying all the persistent weeds in the block paving I had cleared and finished just before lunch.

After lunch, I went outside to start tidying up the drive and that meant tackling the pile of wood that needed cutting for the stove. I left off just before 5 p.m., just in time to wash and change before the evening TV quiz shows we watched. Jenny had been helping me outside and tidying the front border. Afterwards, as usual, Jenny prepared tea, managing to snatch a few minutes to join me in the lounge.

During the day, I had found some time here and there to work on the computer and by the end of the day the problems of the last couple of days seemed to be diminishing.

Thursday, 16th April 2020

Following our early morning and long day yesterday, we didn't stir until 11 a.m.

I spent the afternoon wood cutting again.

Friday, 17th April 2020

The first job of the day was to remove the ice from the bottom of the old Boisch fridge-freezer again. The drain, used by the automatic defrost system became blocked with ice from time to time and the overflow drained into the bottom of the freezer, where it quite naturally froze, making it difficult to remove and refit the pull-out drawers. The only way of quickly removing it was to chip it away with a wooden mallet and an old wooden spatula.

That left the fridge-freezer bleeping away to itself with the alarm light flashing.

We went for a stroll round to the pharmacy for my monthly supply of dope, as Jenny put it and then dropped off the memory stick Marcus had lent me, which contained a copy of the original village web site I designed. Marcus, our new village webmaster, had changed the design and some of the original information I needed to access has been discarded.

We had planned on a longer walk but we came home to check on the fridge-freezer, which was now silent.

After lunch, I put in the TV programmes to record for the coming week.

Saturday, 18th April 2020

I spent the day tidying up the TV recordings we had watched the previous week, dealing with my backlog of E-mails and updating my web site, not having done so for about a month.

That led me on to bringing my revision of the web site up to date as well, since this was still under construction, awaiting the development of a Java procedure when I could find the time.

Sunday, 19th April 2020

The morning was quite bitty with lots of distractions, dealing with yet more E-mails, updating this diary, looking at the prolonged delivery of an item from Holland and Barrett, discussing Jenny's hospital appointment on Tuesday and a mask for the occasion and a telephone call from Bob and Marie.

All of that and not rising until 9:30, took us to noon.

We had planned on journeying down to Matthew and Carrie's house to collect a mask for Jenny's hospital appointment until Matthew suggested we pick it up on the way on Tuesday, which was a better idea. That meant we could implement Plan A, which made a change from Plan B.

The original suggestion was that we went for a walk in the sunshine. Given the interruptions, that had to wait until the afternoon.

We walked up to Roger Worthington's Grave and back via a circular route. This was one of the walks originally devised by our local Scout Leader and Village Historian, Christine Taylor. Roger Worthington was a local Baptist preacher in the local area in the 1700s.

The walk was approximately 6½ miles and took us about 2½ hours including a brief rest on a bench at the grave.

Monday, 20th April 2020

I started my morning by listening to the recording of Jazz Record Requests from yesterday. The list of tracks looked rather disappointing and I didn't expect to find much I liked (recording allowed me to skip the tracks I disliked). I was pleasantly surprised when I found three nice tunes I had not heard before.

Following the routine jobs, I cut the grass back and front and trimmed the edges.

The old, battered lawn mower needed some repairs after I had used it and that took about an hour out of my working day. I kept meaning to buy a new one but hadn't got round to it.

I also took the opportunity of that interlude to chop up the logs I had brought in to burn a couple of days ago and which struggled somewhat to ignite. I thought the wood was well dried out, the tree from which it came having been dead for some time before it was uprooted and dumped on my drive. Obviously I was wrong in expecting it to burn easily.

I finished my day's activity about 4 p.m., just in time for a shower before the evening quiz shows on TV.

Tuesday, 21st April 2020

The morning was spent dealing with outstanding items on the computer until it was time to leave for Jenny's rearranged eye appointment at the MRI.

I had established that Jenny's appointment, scheduled for 1:30 p.m., was a 20 minute session and that there was no waiting time. I would not be allowed in. My strategy was to arrive ten minutes early, drop Jenny off and then park the car in the drop-off zone, for which 30 minutes' free parking was allowed, to wait for her.

On the way down, we called at Matthew and Carrie's house to collect a face mask for Jenny to wear inside the hospital. She subsequently discovered she was the envy of some of the nursing staff, their Personal Protection Equipment being considered somewhat inferior to Jenny's washable, reusable cotton mask with replaceable carbon filter. It seemed that, for all their talking, our government was not on the ball when it came to protecting our excellent, overburdened, dedicated NHS medical staff from the nasty, infectious and potentially lethal Coronavirus, not to mention any other transmittable diseases. Which begged the question, if they couldn't handle this critical situation, of what else were they making a complete and utter mess?

As regards our hospital visit, the first bit went well; I timed our arrival perfectly. Having dropped Jenny off, I looked for a parking spot and this is where the whole plan started to fall apart. There weren't any free. I reversed the car to the end of one of the parking bays and sat in it waiting for a place to become free. Twenty minutes later, I parked in a spot that had just been vacated and went to obtain a free half-hour ticket from the machine. The first machine I tried wasn't working. The second one issued me with a ticket for thirty minutes but the machine clock was still on GMT so, according to the ticket I should have vacated my parking place thirty minutes prior to the ticket being issued.

I didn't expect any parking official not to be able to work that one out, so I put the ticket on the windscreen anyway and sat in the car.

As the ticket was nearing its expiry time (in GMT), I had actually been in the bay about 50 minutes and I was starting to wonder what had happened to Jenny. I telephoned her mobile to find out. Her mobile rang – in the car. She had forgotten to take it with her. I rang the hospital appointments line and asked to be put through to the clinic Jenny was attending. I was told there was no point in trying to contact the clinic reception because no-one there was answering the telephones. The advice was to go in to the lobby and consult the clinic reception from a safe distance.

Since my parking ticket was about to expire, I thought I had better replace it while I went in so I put another one on the windscreen in place of the old one and tootled off to reception. No-one there had a clue where Jenny was. Their best guess was that she was in a consulting room somewhere. The lady on the desk asked me if I was in the car park outside. I said I was. She asked me if Jenny had a mobile telephone. I said she had but she had left it in the car. The lady kindly took my mobile number and said she would allow Jenny to call me when she was ready for collection.

I went back to the car. I thought it was a shame to waste the ticket on the car so I remained where I was until that expired, continuing to listen to my Jazz CDs to pass the time.

I thought going for a third ticket might be pushing my luck, even though none of the other cars in the parking places in the bay had moved since I arrived. So much for the thirty-minute limit.

I did think of parking in the nearby, multi-storey, hospital car park but it was too nice a day not to have a view so I went down the road a little and parked on some waste ground, continuing to listen to my Jazz. When I had listened to all of the tracks on the two CDs, I started to think Jenny's appointment was a long twenty minutes.

While wondering what to do, my mobile phone rang. Jenny was on someone's mobile phone, outside, looking for me. It took me two minutes to go back and collect her.

Jenny explained that she had come out looking for me in the car park outside and borrowed a chap's mobile telephone to call me. (If you're the chap in question and you're reading this, many thanks.) I gave Jenny the short version of my afternoon thus far.

The good news was that everything was fine and Jenny had to keep up the drops in her left eye (the one not operated upon).

We headed home. We took an unintended circular tour of Manchester's southern city centre thanks to a "Road Closed – Access Only" sign on Plymouth Grove West. Instead of carrying straight on to reach the city ring road east, I turned left on Upper Brook Street, noticing that Plymouth Grove West was not closed off as I did so.

Being too late to abort my manoeuvre, I headed up to the city centre intending to turn right along Portland Street, straight across to the ring road. Unfortunately, the critical part of Portland Street was marked "busses only".

By sheer luck, I found the slip road to the Mancunian Way heading east. Following that, I located the A6 and, with a bit of intuition, I managed to reach the ring road.

My day wasn't going thwt well, I thought.

We called at Dennis Gore's Chemist near Heaton Park Station on the way home. Jenny's Omega 7 capsules I had ordered three weeks or so earlier from Holland and Barrett had not arrived despite the rocket I sent them so Jenny bought a pack from this chemist's shop. We left the Holland and Barrett order in place to see how many months it would take them to deliver, having taken my payment fast enough. It was not a shop I would be visiting again.

I did also want some more Vogel Bronchoforce herbal medicine but the chemist's shop didn't have any.

We came home for tea.

Wednesday, 22nd April 2020

This was more or less a repeat of the 8th April as regarded shopping. The queue at Sainsbury's supermarket was not as long as previously and neither was the queue at Waitrose. There was less traffic on the road, too, which made driving much more pleasant and, what's more, several drivers we encountered actually stuck to the speed limit, which was something of a novelty. For the journey home along the M60, I had the fast lane all to myself for most of the way.

Thursday, 23rd April 2020

I washed and polished the car. The only part I didn't polish was the wheels, a job for tomorrow.

Since we hadn't had any rain for a while, I put the sprinkler on the back garden for 45 minutes in the evening.

Friday, 24th April 2020

It took me all morning to put in the TV series we record for the coming week and the other odd programme for the week end. That was interrupted by Jenny requiring a letter to our GP to accompany her prescription from the hospital, which she put in an

envelope and posted through the door of the surgery, the door being locked.

After lunch outside on the picnic bench, I cleaned the car windows inside and out and then the wheels.

Saturday, 25th April 2020

I couldn't believe we were approaching the end of another month. Time seemed to fly by.

It was another lovely, warm, sunny day and this had been the driest April on record.

I spent the morning sorting out the TV recordings from last week and finishing putting in the recordings for the coming week.

The BBC had been messing about with its schedules for some weeks now, due to the daily Coronavirus news updates from the Government and some of the recordings were not exactly what I had expected them to be. It took me a while to work out what was what and then recover from the situation.

After lunch, I went out to clean the car interior and fit the new, rubber, floor mats I ordered earlier in the year and which had been on the conservatory floor for a couple of months or so. The old driver's mat had worn a hole where the driver's left heel rested and the old rear mats were made of fabric.

I finished just before 6 p.m., with the hatch well still to clean and hadn't yet polished any of the interior metalwork. The interior roof fabric was also looking grimy and needed a shampoo but I wasn't sure what to use yet.

Sunday, 26th April 2020

Right. To start with, we weren't up that early.

I began by dealing with the TV recordings from yesterday. That took longer than expected because one of the recordings on the lounge laptop had some glitches in it so I resorted to the back up recording on the conservatory computer, which was alright.

In an effort to resolve the problem, I powered off the computer and switched the USB port for the connection to the tuner, working on the basis that there was an issue with the USB port I was originally using. I had a reason for suspecting this.

Then I noticed that the guide was not being updated properly from Schedules Direct so I investigated that problem, logged the fault with Schedules Direct and temporarily switched the guide source for the channel in question to a terrestrial download.

While I was waiting for that to sort itself out, I scanned a document that had been hanging around for a while.

I had a quick look at my E-mails, always a fatal mistake.

It took me a few minutes to do a brief reply to an old school chum, Terry Hanstock and then I noticed one from Abel and Cole. They invited me back. Delivery slots were now available.

I decided to log in and have a look for some groceries for delivery on Tuesday. That was my second big mistake of the day.

Of the items I ordered, the Mascarpone Cheese couldn't be delivered until May and the Billingtons Organic Sugar which I was allowed to put in my basket was removed after I submitted my order because it was no longer available. Those were the two main items we wanted. Other items, like yeast, were not even on the web site and the placing of the order was made more difficult by the useless search engine Abel and Cole used to be such a good supplier and the organisation was now an utter waste of time. For the most part, their products were not even reasonably priced. No wonder they had slots available.

I tidied up the recorded TV programmes we had watched the previous week.

Monday, 27th April 2020

I popped out to give a neighbour a hand to move some 3 x 2 concrete flagstones.

We went for a stroll up the road to drop off a memory stick containing all the photographs I took for the village web site, at our village accountant's house.

We continued for a short walk round the golf course and then up and round Old Kay's Park before returning home. At the top of the hill at Old Kay's was a bench on which we sat for a short while, admiring the views across the valley of the hills on the other side that marked the start of the West Pennine Moors.

After lunch, I worked on the computer, mainly backing up my data.

Tuesday, 28th April 2020

The day dragged a bit.

The most useful things I did were to put the bin out for emptying and bring it back down again afterwards, bring in and unpack the Abel and Cole order and help Jenny put up the curtains in our bedroom. She had taken them down to wash them.

I dealt with the TV recordings from yesterday and listened to Jazz Record Requests from Sunday's recording.

The plan was to put some car booty back on top of the wardrobes in our bedroom. We had removed them to clean.

I suggested we photograph the items before returning them to storage so I could put them on my web site and print off copies for our folder of items for when we did our next car boot sale, whenever that would be. I managed to process one item and while I

was producing the documentation, Jenny cleaned it before we put it back in its box.

In producing the documentation I discovered an inconsistency between the name of the item and the title of the PDF document in the PDF properties. I tried amending the title but could not do so without the PDF editor, which was expensive.

I decided to see if I could amend the title in the Word properties before exporting it as a PDF document. I eventually managed to do that. All that remained was to check all the other PDF documents on my web site!

I also managed to catalogue a storage box for the garage containing ½ inch tacks.

Wednesday, 29th April 2020

I decided it was time I organised myself somewhat. I started working down a list of things I needed to do and succeeded in using over half the day to find and order items I needed from the Internet, needless to say from different sources.

Jenny's Omega 7 SBD capsules from Holland and Barrett finally arrived some 12 days after the deadline. We shan't be shopping there again.

I turned my attention briefly to my web site. I decided there was no point in continuing to reproduce Greenpeace information on my web site so I modified the development version to remove it all and amended the menu item "Greenpeace" to link to the Greenpeace web site.

For the rest of the afternoon, I worked on a new label for the Fisher Price Lift and Load toy we intended to sell. The original label had been torn and needed replacing. I thought I was making good progress using Microsoft Powerpoint but it would not let me introduce some of the design effects, so I gave up for the present.

I did manage to process the TV recordings to date while watching some recordings in the evening.

Thursday, 30th April 2020

I was back outside putting the finishing touches to the car, cleaning the hatch well, making sure the spare tyre pressure was adequate and the vinyl and rubber inside the hatch itself. I also cleaned the inside of the fuel filler compartment before lunch, leaving the metal inside the hatch to clean afterwards.

I had about an hour's break and went back out to finish the hatch. The weather took a turn for the worse, not that the rain bothered me under the car port. The heavy cloud was a problem, though. I had to put the outside lights on to see what I was doing.

I managed to clean the inside of the rear, offside door before giving up. The outside lights did not provide enough work for me to see to clean the inside of the nearside, rear door and there wasn't enough room under the car port to open the front doors wide enough to clean them, so I gave up and came in about 4 p.m.