

Greenmount April 2021

Thursday, 1st April 2021

I was up before 8 a.m. and I had done most of last evenings dishes by the time Jenny joined me. The reason for the early start was that we were expecting the man from British Gas at any time between 8 a.m. and 1 p.m. to service our boiler and look at the problem of gas accumulating in the bathroom radiator.

Meanwhile, after breakfast, I finished off reviewing my diary entry for March and had a brief look at the Radio Times Crossword, which I had started a couple of days ago.

We had a message at about 10 a.m. to say the BG engineer was on his way and he arrived shortly afterwards.

The pressure gauge on the boiler was stuck and the engineer repaired that, gave its internals a good clean, fitted all new seals and cleaned the magnetic filter. He also inserted a load of inhibitor. As far as the accumulation of gas was concerned, he thought it was probably the lack of inhibitor that was causing the problem so he should have solved that problem and time would tell whether that was the case. He bled the radiator and then had a look at the slight leak on the back bedroom radiator. He tightened the valves with spanners to see if he could stop the leak. It was hard to tell whether he had or not since the leak was an extremely small one, so again time would tell. If he hadn't solved the problem, I could live with it until the radiator was replaced with a new stainless steel one.

He was here two hours. Apparently, the allotted time for a boiler service by BG was twenty minutes, which was ridiculous.

Meanwhile I nipped round to the convenience store/pharmacy in the village to collect my monthly supply of tablets and next week's Radio Times. Returning home, I started to thumb through the RT for next week's programmes that were worth watching and, therefore, recording.

After lunch, I went outside to finish tying up the blackberry bushes, with Rachel's help. That took the rest of the afternoon.

Friday, 2nd April 2021

We went grocery shopping to Unicorn in Chorlton and Waitrose in Broadheath. We left quite late and I couldn't work out why there was hardly any traffic on the roads until we reached the far side of Bury, when it dawned on me that it was Good Friday. There was no school traffic and nobody was going to work. As a result, we reached Unicorn in a record 40 minutes.

The shops were quite busy and we had to join a small queue due to social distancing at Waitrose.

We didn't get home until about 1 p.m. and it was turned 2 p.m. by the time we joined Matthew and Carrie for lunch in their garden with Carrie's parents, Bob and Marie. It was nice to be able to meet up again after so long, now that the pandemic regulations had relaxed a little, hopefully the start of our long path to normality. Unfortunately, we were restricted to a group of six people, outside, socially distanced, so Rachel could not join us. It was a reasonable day, with sunshine and a cool wind. We came home at about 4:30 p.m., as the sun disappeared behind clouds and it started to turn really cold.

Back home, I finished off scanning the coming week's TV programmes for items worth recording and subsequent viewing.

Saturday, 3rd April 2021

We had a leisurely, cooked breakfast for a nice change.

After entering the TV programmes for recording this week, we walked down to the garden centre in Summerseat, potted round and strolled back with a few goodies.

It was then time for a late afternoon cup of tea and a biscuit or two before our delicious evening meal of grilled fish skewers with rice and asparagus.

Sunday, 4th April 2021

A late start again meant that it took me all day to tidy up the TV programmes we had watched and deal with some paperwork.

While our evening was being prepared, I watched a recording of the BBC Panorama programme about the undercover filming in a Covid-19 testing facility. The programme showed the lack of adherence to and supervision of procedures led to inaccurate and inconclusive results, rendering the whole process, costing billions of pounds, unreliable. This is what happened when health care was put in the hands of bean-counters instead of letting the established NHS facilities handle the process, with the necessary expansion and training where necessary, which would have cost a lot less and been far more accurate.

The programme left no doubt in my mind that our Government had been responsible for a large number of unnecessary deaths during the past year or so. When the German administration was responsible for the large number of deaths in the concentration camps, the leaders faced trials in Nuremberg. It was now time for an independent enquiry into the handling of the whole Covid-19 pandemic in the UK and those responsible for any unnecessary deaths should be held to account in a similar fashion.

Monday, 5th April 2021

We were up early to a lovely sunny morning with blue skies and snow on the ground. It looked lovely from inside with the central heating on but it was damn cold outside as I found out when I went to remove the windscreen protector from Rachel's car before

breakfast. The strong, overnight winds had ripped it and it was only just hanging on to the car.

After breakfast, Jenny wanted a short rest so I took the opportunity to update this diary entry.

I subsequently washed the dishes, put Jenny's washing line out and started tidying a few things away in the garage. While I was up in the loft, I brought down a replacement bulb for the kitchen down-light nearest the back door, which had needed changing for some days.

It was at that point I started to feel unwell and I sat in my chair for a while. I did change the bulb later but I didn't do much else.

Tuesday, 6th April 2021

The first job of the day was to organise a physiotherapy appointment for Jenny to try to sort out her aches and pains in her right leg. Two sessions on the back stretcher yesterday didn't seem to help a lot.

When Jenny telephoned the local Physiotherapy clinic in Tottington, she managed to slot into a cancellation at 10 a.m. tomorrow.

We went out in the sunshine, not that it was at all warm, with the northerly wind bringing very cold air down from the arctic, to deliver some leaflets for the village community, advertising drop-in sessions at the old school for those who wanted a cup of tea or coffee and a chat.

With the outside temperature being in single figures, we had put on our thermal garments and I couldn't find my gloves anywhere, so, on returning home, after changing back into our indoor apparel, we spent some time glove-hunting. I eventually found them in one of the pockets of the large rucksack. I had put them in there when we walked down to Bury, a few days ago and forgotten they were there. Jenny had put the rucksack away without checking all the pockets. So it was all her fault!

I put out Jenny's washing line and tied up a blackberry bush runner that had unattached itself from the supporting wire while Jenny hung out the washing. A few minutes later, we brought the washing in again when the snow and hail showers started.

Meanwhile, my leek and mushroom pie had been cooking and it was ready, so we sat down to lunch.

After lunch, I continued work I had commenced yesterday evening designing a DVD cover for a very old film called "The Halfway House". I had purchased a DVD of the film but it was in a CD-sized case and I wanted to put it in a proper DVD case.

The work went reasonably well but the old version of Nero Cover designer made a mess of the printing and to complicate matters, the printer ran out of some of the ink after printing.

In an attempt to overcome the problem with Nero Cover Designer I managed to download a free copy of a much later version and that seemed to work properly.

I left off that to cut my hair, trim my beard and have a shower in preparation for tomorrow's outings to accompany Jenny to the Physiotherapist and to go for my second Covid-19 vaccination.

We normally watched the quiz shows "Pointless" on BBC 1 and "House of Games" on BBC 2, followed by the news on ITV in the early evening. A topic covered by the latter was the ongoing saga of the need of some sort of Covid-19 "passport" for some public gatherings (e.g. theatres and sporting events) and the testing of foreign travel passengers.

The logic behind these attempts to ensure individuals were "safe" to mingle and travel abroad was flawed and rendered the proposed measures useless; in effect, such measures were a complete waste of time and money.

Firstly, proof of vaccinations only served to show the individual had a degree of immunity to Covid-19. It did not serve as a guarantee that the individual could not carry and spread the virus.

Secondly, any test to show that an individual did not have the Covid-19 virus was only valid at the time the swab sample was taken. It did not guarantee that the individual had not subsequently contracted the disease and could not infect others. Even if an individual did not have the virus themselves, it did not prove they were not a carrier of the disease.

Thirdly, the analysis of test samples, as seen on the BBC Panorama programme that was secretly filmed inside a testing laboratory, was unreliable due to cross-contamination and the labelling of some samples was inconsistent or non-existent. Also, some of the sample tubes leaked. The failure to follow recognised procedures in such a laboratory resulted in false positive results, false negative results and inconclusive results.

The suggestion that any kind of documentation could prevent individuals from spreading a disease was absurd. The only way to prevent a pandemic was to ensure that the vast majority of people were given a vaccine that counteracted the virus concerned. Opening up international travel and mass gatherings before vaccination of almost everyone in the country was simply asking for trouble.

It was high time our Government did what it was elected to do – put people before profit, bearing in mind that not all people knew or liked what was in the best interests of everyone.

Wednesday, 7th April 2021

We were up early and preparing for Jenny's visit to the physiotherapist when the telephone rang. The receptionist for the physiotherapist telephoned to say that the gentleman who was to treat her had been ill during the night and had to cancel his appointments for today. Jenny would be contacted to rearrange her appointment.

It was just another of life's little challenges.

My first job of the day was to put Jenny's washing line out and then I dealt with the breakfast dishes as usual, except this time I wiped them and put them away while Jenny hung out her washing. It was still damn cold outside but there was a breeze and some sunshine.

I then removed all the ice that had accumulated at the bottom of the old Bosch fridge-freezer and that was hard on my back, legs and knees, a lot more so than previously. It seemed like I had suddenly started to seize up.

It was definitely time for a session on the back-stretcher. I lay on the lounge floor for the best part of fifteen minutes. Anyone passing-by and looking in could well have mistaken me for a corpse. I felt reasonably close to it.

I staggered to my feet and the pain in my knees and legs had gone. It had moved upwards into my back. I had a feeling that was a reasonably good sign. Time would tell.

I searched for some ink for my Canon i990 printer and decided to order from Cartridge People since their prices for original Canon cartridges seemed reasonable. I had ordered from the company before and their service was good. That led me to bring my accounts up to date, followed by lunch.

Lunch was followed by more administrative work before preparing to go for my second Covid-19 vaccination.

The journey to the Civic Hall in Ramsbottom, which should have taken all of ten minutes, came to an abrupt halt as we travelled down the hill into the old market town due to single-lane, four-way traffic-control for the crossroads in the old marketplace. This was due to ongoing electrical cable-laying.

Fortunately, there was ample room to park the car on the kerbside on the opposite side of the road and we walked into the centre of Ramsbottom from there. I went up to the Civic Hall and Jenny went down to the organic shop, Plentiful.

I was more or less on time for my second Pfizer vaccination and I went straight in. I was processed and vaccinated immediately and took my seat in the recovery area for the compulsory fifteen minutes. Very efficient, I thought.

I walked back up to the car, where Jenny was waiting and waited until the traffic queue was moving before starting the engine and pulling out. A very kind motorist let me into the queue and I took the first right, before the temporary traffic lights, right again along a bumpy, cobbled lane and right again up to the main road, where I turned left and headed for home.

We called at the old school to drop off some electrical jumble I had dealt with at home. The cellar where it was stored was a complete tip and I needed to get round there and start sorting it all out.

At home, I had another go at attempting to construct a cross-reference table for my revised web site.

Thursday, 8th April 2021

We were up at about 8 a.m. Jenny's physiotherapist had telephoned her yesterday afternoon to rearrange her appointment for 10 a.m. today.

I drove Jenny up to the physiotherapist and waited for her in the car, listening to a CD I had cut from a record of classical music I had.

The ink cartridges I had ordered from Cartridge People yesterday arrived and I was able to print off the DVD cover for "The Halfway House".

I also started the design of the CD cover for the classical music recording, using scans of the LP cover.

Friday, 9th April 2021

Grocery shopping this week took us to Sainsbury's store at Heaton Park and Tesco at Prestwich.

Jenny had an appointment at Specsavers inside Sainsbury's store for an eye test, requested by the DVLA following the declaration on her driving licence renewal form that she had been treated for glaucoma. Her licence was due to be renewed in January. While the renewal application from the DVLA had said she could continue to drive while the renewal was being processed, she had not done so. In fact, she had not driven since her glaucoma was diagnosed in 2019.

We called at Matthew and Carrie's house on the way home to collect a grocery item they had ordered for us from Ocado. Carrie came to the door, Matthew being on a call to someone at work. Carrie informed us of the announcement of the death of the Duke of Edinburgh.

When we arrived home, I turned on the television to see what was being said about the sad event. The BBC 1, BBC 2 and ITV channels were full of it. Not satisfied with announcing the event on the news, they dedicated all afternoon and evening to it, rooting out everyone of whom they could to interview.

Now, while I was as sorry for the Royal Family as I would be for anyone I knew who suffered such a loss, I can't say I knew the Duke of Edinburgh personally or very much about him. Nor was I that interested in what was being said and if I were, I wouldn't want to listen to hours of different people saying the same things over and over again. It was all too much.

After a late lunch at home, I spent the afternoon planning the TV recordings for the coming week, assuming there would be no further disruption to the planned schedules.

Saturday, 10th April 2021

We weren't up that early and Jenny's leg was still painful.

Although there was a good deal of sunshine, it was still very cold and there was a slight hail shower while we had breakfast.

My back joined in sympathy with Jenny's and I had two sessions on the back stretcher during the day which seemed to help temporarily.

Jenny wanted to nip down to the garden centre but we weren't in any fit state to walk and we didn't even manage to hobble to the car.

Apart from the odd domestic duty, I did a little work on the computer, scanning some post documents that needed to be retained and then I decided to try to repair an old pair of working trousers.

Jenny fished out the sewing machine for me and it took me a good hour or so to get it working. It hadn't been used for ages but the main problem was that the needle kept sticking in the shuttle. A little investigation revealed that the needle was bent and I removed it. Jenny found she had one spare needle but I had a go at straightening the existing one, which I managed to do. Putting it back in took ages.

The needle then kept losing the thread from the shuttle. It took me a while to realise I had the needle threaded from the wrong side.

With the machine working on a piece of test cloth, I started work on the trousers.

I had already cut six centimetres off the legs that were too long, turned the trimmed edge inside and pinned it, ready for stitching.

The sewing was actually quite easy and I double-hemmed each leg.

The next challenge was to unpick one of the pieces I had cut off and use it to patch a hole in the right knee. Having done that and cut a piece I needed, I started to pin it. Since I had to shape it round a pocket in the front of the leg, I decided to stitch two sides of the patch in place before shaping it and then stitching the other two sides. That was the tricky bit. I couldn't do that on the machine. It had to be hand-stitched.

That's when I left off for a late lunch, which was actually just a snack and continued with a bit of PC work until tea time.

Sunday, 11th April, 2021

With both of us in intermittent agony from pain in backs and legs, the blue skies, sunshine, fair covering of snow and cold did little to bring good cheer.

It was impossible to do anything outside and I was in no fit state to attempt work on the back bedroom even if I could have managed single-handed. I needed someone to help me measure for the new skirting and Jenny wasn't up to crawling on the floor.

I had a go at cleaning out the fire and tidying up the hearth. I got as far as emptying all the ash in the bin outside and cleaning the glass and that was it. My back was giving me

some discomfort and two sessions on the back stretcher only served to temporarily ease the pain.

I spent the rest of the day working on the computer, moving about occasionally to keep my back working but it was not easy.

Jazz Record Requests this week was a celebration of the life of Chris Barber who died on 2nd March this year, playing his recordings for which people had asked. This made a nice change and I thoroughly enjoyed it, having grown up with the traditional jazz revival in the 1950s.

Monday, 12th April 2021

I didn't really attempt to do a lot of physical activity. My back was again too painful.

I emptied the paper for recycling and took the bin up the drive for emptying tomorrow and, again, that was it. I was back on the computer, moving about regularly to stop my back seizing up completely and when it became extremely painful, I had another session on the back stretcher.

Tuesday, 13th April 2021

Was this going to be my lucky day? No.

I was fine when I woke up and after I had done a few exercises on the bed – nothing too strenuous, I might add. It wasn't until I put my feet to the floor and stood up that the excruciating, sharp pains at the bottom of my back and round my left hip started.

I shuffled to the bathroom in considerable discomfort and just about managed to wash. As I did so, I could feel the muscles at the bottom of my back stiffening.

I shuffled back to the bedroom, dressed with some difficulty and slowly came downstairs, step by step, leading with my left leg and clinging onto the handrail.

I made it into the lounge and immediately, but slowly, manoeuvred myself onto the back stretcher. Jenny covered me with a blanket on the cold living room floor (the central heating had been on for two hours and the temperature had only risen to 17°C) and set the timer for ten minutes.

That seemed to help a little and I was able to walk to the dining room table for breakfast, although movement of my left leg sent the odd short, sharp pain, like an electric shock, round my left thigh and into my lower, left spine.

After breakfast, I took the last of the used crockery into the kitchen and waved to Sylvia, who was at her back door, across the back. I opened the door and called across to her, subsequently going across the garden for a quick chat over the fence about the survey from Cacklestorm tomorrow for new fencing. Sylvia gave me a card she had been given for a chap called Nick who did fencing and I said I would check if it was the same Nick who had already been and declined the work. It was.

Still suffering, I sat in the lounge and worked on the laptop. I started by painstakingly researching lawn mowers again and settled on a Bosch Advanced Rotak 750 Electric Lawn Mower. It took me some time to find a supplier that had one in stock, confirming this with Just Lawnmowers using their online chat service. While it was a good price, there was a delivery charge, which wasn't unreasonable but which I could have avoided had John Lewis had one in their Trafford Centre store. Delivery was supposed to take three days so it should arrive on Friday.

I then turned my attention to a new PC and took some time to settle on the new Dell XPS 17 based both on reviews and its specification. The problem was that for all the inputs and outputs I needed, I would have to purchase a separate box called a docking station. I compiled a shopping list for Dell and decided to mull it over overnight since the outlay was considerable.

I did the odd job for Jenny, who had to rest part way through her day and suffered the odd twinge but nothing like this morning.

I received an E-mail from Just Lawnmowers apologising for not being able to supply my lawnmower within the three days specified because the last one had been sold. I also received an E-mail and text message from my bank informing me that my credit card had been charged for the purchase. A tad naughty, I thought, charging for an item not available for shipping.

Wednesday, 14th April 2021

My back felt much better when I rose from my bed at just after 6:30 a.m. and the agony did not commence until I was brushing my teeth some 1³/₄ hours later, just prior to driving Jenny up to Tottington for another physiotherapy session.

I waited in the car, listening to a CD of the music from the film "A Clockwork Orange" I had cut from the LP and reading the latest issue of Private Eye.

Jenny felt a lot better after her treatment and she seemed a lot happier, so it was money well spent.

We were home for about 9:25 and I had ten minutes on the back stretcher, after which I felt a little better for about 30 seconds.

I managed to place myself in a relatively comfortable position in my chair.

I compiled a discussion document for the Cocklestorm survey for new fencing between 1 p.m. and 2 p.m.

I spent most of the rest of the day researching components for a new desktop computer. Matthew knew someone could build one for me.

My day was interrupted twice, once to take delivery of the order from Dove's Farm for Jenny and then, after lunch, to discuss the new fencing requirement with the chap from Cocklestorm.

My back seemed to settle down somewhat.

Thursday, 15th April 2021

It was a beautiful, sunny day and quite pleasant in the sunshine during my brief spell outside to put out the washing line for Jenny.

I would like to have mown the lawn but I didn't want to risk any further injury to my back.

I decided to deal with Just Lawnmowers and sent the company an ultimatum via their online ticketing service and received a confirmation E-mail of my complaint. Essentially, having been told they would not be able to ship my lawnmower for 3 to 5 working days, I would expect delivery within 8 working days. Generously, I gave them 14 days from the date of my order to deliver the machine. If not, I intended to cancel my order and demand a full refund to my credit card.

A lady from Just Lawnmowers responded saying that the delivery they were expecting in 3 to 5 working days had been delayed until May 10th and as a result my order had been cancelled and a full refund arranged. I guessed this was all down to Covid-19.

I decided to leave ordering a new lawnmower until the refund had been confirmed.

I ended up doing the odd job for Jenny in between other bits and pieces, like compiling a list of what I needed from B&Q tomorrow and complaining to Ocado that they had substituted a non-organic item for an organic one in the list I had given to Matthew to include in his weekly delivery.

Friday, 16th April 2021

It was grocery shopping day, preceded by a visit to B&Q at Heap Bridge in Bury for a water butt, a plastic grate cover to prevent leaves gathering in the grid and a stainless-steel turnbuckle for tensioning the second clothes line. I also wanted some stainless-steel cup hooks but there were none. Jenny picked up a box of disposable gloves for domestic use.

With our purchases in the car, the water butt laid horizontally on the back seat, we sped off to Sainsbury's store at Heaton park. Having started the journey, I realised there was some water in the water butt and it was sloshing around. I was hoping there wasn't enough to spill out of the top. On arriving at the store, I checked the back seat and, to my relief, it was dry.

We also called at Denis Gore's chemist shop for Jenny's monthly supply of capsules and the Tesco store in Prestwich. We stopped off briefly at Matthew and Carrie's house on the way home for our few items from their Ocado delivery.

At home, I started putting in the TV recordings for the coming week.

Saturday, 17th April 2021

We were up and showered early and I started by looking at the plastic cover I had purchased from B&Q for the grate to stop leaves accumulating in it. That didn't really fit any of the grates and it wasn't that easy to modify. I gave up on that for the present.

I turned my attention to the water butt. The first challenge was to drill the hole for the water inlet. The instructions said I needed a 27mm diameter hole and I didn't have a 27mm diameter drill bit. I had 25mm and 32mm drill bits. I decided to mark the hole circumference using the circle cutter and then use the 25mm bit to drill a hole using the hand drill and see where that got me. The hand drill didn't make much of an impact so I use the electric drill on the lowest speed with short bursts and that worked a treat. Not only that but I managed to get the inlet connection through the hole. Things were looking up.

I put on the pipe and had a go at working out where to cut the downpipe to install the collector. This had to be on a level with or slightly above the inlet hole to ensure the butt filled with water but didn't overflow.

That led to another challenge. The base was not on a level. That is to say, the block paving on which the base stood was not level.

I decided to level the block paving, which meant taking it up brick by brick and relaying it. The difficult part was finding the level along the garage wall and I eventually managed to do that, by one o'clock, breaking off for lunch.

I didn't have time to watch the Duke of Edinburgh's funeral and, as I have already stated, I didn't know the man. I doubted that any member of the royal family would take any interest in my funeral when the time came so I guessed we were quits.

After my lunch hour, I was back outside, on my knees until about 4 p.m., when I decided to pack up for the day, covering the work I had done with plastic sheeting to protect it from the overnight frost.

While Jenny was preparing tea, I tidied up the TV programmes we had watched throughout the week and backed up my files before retiring at about 11:45 p.m.

Sunday, 18th April 2021

It was noon before I was up and crawling after yesterday's frenzied activity. To be more accurate, we did rise earlier and I had tackled most of the dishes from the previous evening while Jenny cooked the full English breakfast as a treat because Rachel was staying the week end.

After breakfast, I tackled my backlog of E-mails while my breakfast settled and then recommended work, levelling the block paving for the water butt. That didn't go well.

Getting the bricks level in every direction was night on impossible so I settled for nearly level. The biggest snag was that several bricks would not fit back in the gaps after levelling and it became apparent that I should have started from the area farthest from

the fence at the end of the path rather than from the fence, working down. A couple of bricks broke in half as I was forcing them into the gaps and I had to cut one brick to make it fit. I wasn't that happy with the result, although it didn't look too bad after I had filled all the cracks with kiln-dried sand. Still, the whole block paving needed renewing or replacing so I wasn't about to start all over again.

In the process of cutting the brick, I managed to gouge a small piece of flesh off my lower, left, index finger when swapping cutting discs after wearing one out. That bled profusely and stopped work for a good half hour while I tended to the wound.

Jenny and Rachel had walked down to the garden centre in Summerseat so trying to put on a plaster with one hand wasn't easy and I left that for a while, sitting in the chair with a tissue on the wound and applying pressure to it to stop the bleeding. Rachel and Jenny returned before I had done so and Jenny advised me to swap the tissue for a clean handkerchief since it was less likely to stick to my finger. It took about ten minutes for the flow of blood to slow down enough to apply the plaster, covered with Savlon anti-septic cream.

That didn't stop me working and I finished the job, placing the water butt where I wanted it, tidying up and knocking off at 5 p.m.

Monday, 19th April 2021

After breakfast and seeing Rachel off to work, I dealt with my E-mails and submitted the monthly readings of gas, electricity and water, the latter being something new, having recently had the water meter installed.

It was then time to work on installing the water butt collector. To do that I had to dismantle and remove the downspout from the garage roof, after marking the position for the collector.

I cut the downspout in the place marked. Inserting the collector proved a bit of a challenge. It was a tight fit. The same could not be said of the collector cover, which came designed for a circular pipe and mine was square. I cut out the square along the lines marked and the fit in the pipe was then quite loose. The instructions could have been better.

I had naturally assumed that the connection on the collector was at right angles to the pipe. Wrong. To fit the top part of the pipe into the collector, the connection had to be on a corner of the pipe. I twisted it through 45 degrees and fitted the top of the pipe.

I refitted the pipe and the connection to the gutter and then tested it by pouring water down the pipe from the gutter. That worked a treat, except that water came out of the top of the collector and wet the outside of the bottom half of the downspout and the garage wall. My assumption was that it was due to the volume of water and that amount would not be experienced under normal operation. My only concern was that the overflow in the collector may be too high to prevent the butt from overflowing. There was enough play in the pipe to allow it to be dropped slightly if necessary.

We had lunch outside on the bench in the sunshine watching and listening to the wildlife.

After a late lunch, I put up a second washing line for Jenny and then tidied up outside. My last job of the day was to wash up the dishes from lunch.

Tuesday, 20th April

I cut the grass at the front, trimmed the edges, which took a while, being the first cut of the season and tidied up before having a late lunch.

Matthew and Carrie had invited us to join them and Bob and Marie for lunch outdoors at the Duckworth Arms but food was not served outside on Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday so that was not an option and we could not think of anywhere else that was open which had a gluten-free menu. Although the Covid-19 restrictions had been relaxed a little, pubs and restaurants were only allowed to serve people outside.

After a brief rest I cut the grass at the back and trimmed the edge along the patio before packing up for the day. While tidying things away, the wound on my finger started to bleed again. It stopped quickly and I finished off before coming in, washing my hands and putting more anti-septic cream on the wound just in case it had been infected.

Wednesday, 21st April 2021

We had an early start for Jenny's physiotherapy appointment at 8:30 a.m.

That was followed by a bit of administrative work at home, chasing up the quotation from Cacklestorm for the fencing. My share of the work came to just over £3k, which I thought was a trifle expensive, even though Cacklestorm were good.

I talked to Sylvia across the back and after some discussion, she contacted another company, Dircet Fencing, which would send someone round to do a survey within a week or so.

Jenny and I whizzed off to Ramsbottom for a tour of the charity shops, where I bought a 3-CD set of 1940s hits, we visited the card shop, where Jenny bought two birthday cards and there was a foray into Morrison's supermarket for a few items. I also nipped into the hardware shop but the lady said she didn't have what I wanted, suggesting I try a trader in Bury.

We came home for lunch. While my leek and mushroom pie was warming in the oven, I had another look at Windows Media Centre on the Windows 7 desktop. I couldn't get it to reconfigure the tuner from scratch so I looked up the problem on the internet and came up with a command-line command to reset the application to its basic installation state. That worked a treat and I managed to get it to tune in all the terrestrial TV and radio Freeview stations. Needless to say, with it no longer being supported by Microsoft, it did not download any guide information.

I downloaded the latest version of EPG123 and ran that to download the guide from Schedules Direct, for which I had an account.

I then scheduled a recording to test it during the afternoon and decided to start looking through the schedules for next week since it was overcast and quite cool outside. While I was doing that, I had a message from Matthew to say I could book mum's second Pfizer vaccination for next Thursday and I did so using the online link he sent. Unfortunately, I misspelt my E-mail address on the submission form so I did not receive confirmation. I knew it was booked though.

Thursday 22nd April 2021

It was a lovely sunny day and reasonably warm. All this dry weather in April really wasn't helping the garden and farmers were starting to voice some concern.

I went out and finished trimming the grass at the back and then I started hoeing the borders to tidy them up. I also fed the borders with organic chicken manure pellets and I intended to water them in later.

I had about an hour's break for lunch mid afternoon, finished off the borders and then came in for a shower about 4 p.m.

I went out again at about 6:45 p.m. to water the garden at the back. My main concern was that the fruit bushes were not getting enough water as they were growing and leafing, which didn't bode well for flowering later on and subsequent fruiting.

For the last few weeks, we had been asking Matthew to order the odd item from Ocado for us with their regular delivery. Until recently, this had been going well, Matthew and Carrie storing the items for us until we were passing, when we would call and collect them. On the last order but one, Ocado had substituted non-organic peppers for the organic ones we ordered. Matthew and Carrie used those. On the most recent order, Ocado had supplied a pack of organic shitake mushrooms with a "best before" date which was the date of delivery.

I had complained to Ocado about the substitution of the peppers and suggested they should put a stop to the practice of supplying something other than what was specifically ordered. The response from the customer-services team was that they would pass on my comment for serious consideration.

I also complained about supplying produce that had no shelf-life. The response from the customer-services team was that they would refund the cost of the mushrooms if the order number was supplied to them. To be honest, it wasn't worth the effort of asking Matthew for the order number and then sending it for the amount involved. Because it was a "best before" date, we asked Matthew and Carrie to keep the mushrooms in the fridge and we would collect them tomorrow and use them tomorrow night. Our experience of "best before" dates was that the items were still fit for use two or three days after the date specified. That, though, was no excuse for supplying the item on the date it was expected to be past its best.

These two incidents showed a lack of consideration for customers. When we had used Ocado in the distant past, during the early days when they were partnered with Waitrose, the service was excellent. Today, Ocado was partnered with Marks and Spencer and

standards seemed to have slipped somewhat. In all honesty, I could no longer recommend Ocado to anyone who was discerning about their food.

There was no doubt that you are what you eat and, more importantly, what young people eat as they are growing and maturing has a significant bearing on their later life and longevity. Good quality food is important for a good quality of life and you can't get better than food that is certified as organically grown and produced. It is better for you and infinitely better for the environment.

Friday, 23rd April 2021

We were up early and on our way to Unicorn in Chorlton by 8:30 a.m., expecting to have plenty of time to reach our destination by opening time at 9:30.

There was a lot of traffic between Bury and the M60 at Prestwich, doubling the travelling time for the first seven miles. Thankfully, the M60 was flowing reasonably well with speed restrictions of 60 m.p.h. and then 40 m.p.h. for the first few miles. The usual 45 minute journey took about an hour and ten minutes.

Unicorn was in the process of some refurbishment and expansion and Jenny said that shopping there was a nightmare. I had waited in the car, as usual, following the store's guidance during the Covid-19 pandemic, allowing one customer per household.

There was a fair amount of traffic on the A56 between Unicorn and Waitrose at Broadheath.

Returning home was a little better and we made good time to Matthew and Carrie's house.

Matthew had asked us to buy a few grocery items for him and Carrie had ordered an item for us from Ocado. Matthew was out when we called so we chatted with Carrie on the doorstep.

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

Saturday, 24th April 2021

We had another fairly early start. I was working on the drive, under the car port for most of the day, cutting the wood for the fire, not that we needed one for the present. It was more a case of trying to tidy up the drive so that I could access the border on the side of the house.

Sunday, 25th April 2021

We were again up for about 9 a.m. Jenny's leg was still quite painful despite having had three sessions of physiotherapy on her back. She had another session booked for Wednesday.

The morning was taken up with trying to find some organic garden manure/compost and some organic red raspberry plants, without a lot of success. Wickes had none of the garden manure I previously purchased from them in stock.

I hit on the idea of contacting Chorlton Nursery, from which we had previously bought organic lettuce and vegetables in the past. They had sold out of their raspberry canes and did not sell organic manure. They suggested I tried Hulme Garden Centre.

I telephoned the garden centre and they had sold out of their organic raspberry canes as well. They did stock organic manure, though.

If we were going to purchase any raspberry canes, they would have to be from the local garden centre in Summerseat so we decided to nip down after lunch. From what I had read, they did not need to be planted very deeply and I did have a few bags of organic manure with which to put in a bed in the garden, which I would have to dig out of the grassy area at the back.

The garden centre didn't have a variety of raspberries I wanted. They did have the organic compost I last bought from Wickes though and it was priced at 3 bags for £12, 70p per bag cheaper than Wickes. I also bought a large tub of organic chicken manure pellets.

We went down to Newbank garden centre for some raspberry canes. They didn't have any either. They did have the large tub of chicken manure pellets and it was £2 cheaper than at Summerseat. It was a case of swings and roundabouts.

Since we were in the vicinity, we popped in to see Matt and Carrie before returning home.

I had also been looking for a new compost bin. The one I had kept falling apart at the seams. Matthew said I could have his if I wanted it so I said yes to that.

Monday, 26th April 2021

We went down to Matthew and Carrie's house with the trailer to collect his compost bin. It had a few items inside it which Jenny and I disposed of in his domestic waste and garden recycling bins. That was fairly easy to do because the compost bin was simply resting on its base, making it easy to lift off. Digging out the base, which had buried itself into the soil, took a little while.

Returning home, we cleaned up the compost bin and I levelled part of the garden under the blackberry bushes, opposite the new water butt, allowing me to place the compost bin at the top end of the garden near the patio, the opposite corner to the existing compost bin. This made it easier to access for dumping organic waste and for obtaining the rotted material for the garden. It also meant that any liquid run-off underneath would feed the fruit bushes.

The next job, after lunch outside, on the bench, was to empty the existing compost bin, dismantle it and make that corner of the garden suitable for planting, requiring plants that thrived in shaded areas.

That took all afternoon and was hard work. Some of the top layer of waste that was partially composted and the fresh material, together with a load of worms, was dumped in the new bin as a starter. The rest of the top layer went in the waste recycling bin, salvaging as many worms as possible for the new bin.

The composted material was used on the raised beds, fruit bushes and the borders. The timing was good as rain was forecast for the next few days, the first we had seen for a few weeks.

We finished by about 5 p.m.

Tuesday, 27th April 2021

We were aching all over when we finally crawled out of bed at about 9 a.m. and we didn't exactly rush around after a leisurely breakfast.

It was a case of pottering round and doing the odd job here and there.

It rained at long last and I went out to check the water butt was filling alright.

Wednesday, 28th April 2021

Jenny had her physiotherapy appointment in Tottington at 9:15 a.m. while I waited in the car, trailer attached, listening to a jazz CD and reading more of Private Eye.

We headed down to the waste recycling station in Bury to drop off some rubbish and then down to Matthew and Carrie's house to collect two large wooden crates in which Matthew had some decorative stone delivered for the garden. I wanted to use the empty crates for storing logs for the fire. I also managed to fit one of the two wooden pallets on which the crates had been standing in the trailer, although I didn't really need it and it wasn't suitable for burning.

When we arrived home, I went out to check the water butt. It had filled and overflowed from the overnight rain, which meant that the collector was too high. I filled the watering can from the butt.

I started making room under the car port for the crates. That involved cutting up some wood.

I left off for lunch and carried on until 4 p.m. The drive was starting to look a little tidier and the plan was to carry on tomorrow.

Thursday, 29th April 2021

Jenny and I went down to collect the second pallet from Matthew and Carrie's house, after Jenny had put out her washing on two lines to dry.

On the way, Jenny spotted the rope I had lost off the back of the trailer, on my last journey with the trailer, in the grass on the edge of the road, not far from home, on the way down.

As we approached what Jenny thought was the location of the rope, on the return journey, I stopped the car and Jenny went to look for it. It had just started to rain.

Jenny came back to the car empty-handed and we drove home as the rain became quite persistent. I spotted the rope on the way but we did not stop a second time. As we approached our house, the rain eased off again. I unhooked the trailer and left it and the pallet to dry on the drive under the car port. I was not best pleased they were wet.

Meanwhile, Jenny went to fetch in her washing, which was wetter then when she put it out. I brought in the washing lines. Jenny was not best pleased either.

I checked the weather and the forecast had changed from earlier this morning. Heavy rain or showers were forecast for the whole day now. Before, the showers were not due until this afternoon.

I brought my accounts up to date and dealt with my mail, of both the electronic and snail varieties.

Friday, 30th April 2021

A six o'clock start saw us at B&Q at Heap Bridge just after it opened at 8 a.m. I needed two 2.4m x 38mm x 19mm pieces of treated, rough-cut wood to make a frame for the large raised bed, over which I could drape netting to prevent birds attacking my strawberries.

The wood was in large packs, tied together with pieces of tough, plastic strips and I had to ask a lady assistant to cut them. She came with some scissors but couldn't cut the binding material with them. She went back for a knife tool but she wasn't strong enough to cut the ties, so she asked me if I was any good with the cutter. I certainly was.

The wood would only fit in the car by resting on the dashboard and the top of the rear seat and I didn't fancy driving all the way to Unicorn and Waitrose for our grocery shopping with it in that position. I suggested returning home with it and then had the idea of dropping it off at Matthew and Carrie's house, which was on our way to our intended destination and collecting it on the way back.

We arrived at Unicorn just as they had opened at 9:30 a.m. and I went in with Jenny for the first time for ages. She was not feeling well and needed some help.

When we had finished there, I drove down to Chorlton Nursery for some vegetable plants for the garden and then on to Sainsbury's store in Sale, followed by Waitrose near Altrincham, at Broadheath.

So far, we had followed our schedule for the day fairly closely, arriving at Waitrose at about 12:15 p.m., some 15 minutes earlier than planned.

After that, our timetable became somewhat academic.

We returned via the motorway rather than the scenic route. The latter would have enabled us to call at Dennis Gore's chemist shop in Prestwich for my Saw Palmetto. Fortunately, my existing supply had not been exhausted.

Owing to my miscalculation of timing on the schedule from this point on, we arrived at Matthew and Carrie's house a little later than planned to collect my wood and the groceries ordered from Ocado.

I drove to Cocklestorm, a slight diversion from our direct route home, to pay the deposit on the fencing rather than wait for someone to contact me. That was not exactly straightforward.

First, the chap on the till had difficulty finding the quotation and seemed somewhat confused by my wanting to pay the deposit. After a few questions, he found the quote and said the chap called Paul who did the survey was on his lunch break and would telephone me later at home. I thought he must have had a late lunch break, the time being early afternoon.

I drove home. I hadn't been home long before the telephone rang. It was Paul from Cocklestorm, but it wasn't the Paul who had done the survey. It was a different Paul who gave me the telephone number of the installation department where the Paul I wanted worked. I would have to contact that part of the company to pay my deposit.

I decided to leave that until Monday. After all, I had sent an E-mail accepting the quotation asking someone to contact me and they had not done so yet. They were obviously really keen to undertake the work.

I had also omitted to call at the Chemist in Greenmount for my one and only daily tablet prescription to be filled for another month and I had run out of them, having taken the last one this morning.

The rest of my day was spent frantically scanning the TV listings for recordings for the next week. I got as far as completing the next two days and scheduling the recordings for tomorrow.