

Greenmount – August 2017

Tuesday August 1<sup>st</sup>: The day started with more sanding on the landing. That was followed by washing the walls, coving and door jambs with sugar soap, Jenny tackling the landing and, in my case the stair case. The sugar soap residue was then removed by washing down with clean, cold water.

At last I reached the painting stage and gave the plastered ceiling and coving a thinned down coat of Crown, matt-white, vinyl emulsion, a good deal of which went on me and the cloths covering the floor.

It was 8 p.m. by the time I had finished and cleaned up and time for a well-earned beer, followed by home-made, organic, gluten-free pizza and a glass or two of chardonnay.

Wednesday August 2<sup>nd</sup>: Joani collected me at 7:15 and we arrived at Bury Police Station a little after 7:30. The doors to reception were locked and there was no-one on the front desk. That didn't open until 8 a.m. Our two-hour, Dementia-Awareness presentation was supposed to start at 8 a.m. and we had to finish by 10 a.m. because the room had to be prepared for another presentation. Joani tried using the telephone outside to summon someone, to which there was no reply. Fortunately, a chap arrived to collect something and, having telephoned his contact using his mobile telephone, a lady arrived shortly afterwards. After he had finished his business, we attracted her attention, explained who we were and why we were there and she took us into the offices where Joani's contact was summoned. She arrived soon afterwards and took us up to the room. It was going to be one of those days.

She introduced us to their computer and projector used for presentations and I decided to use that rather than set up ours. I should have known better. I had given Joani a CD containing the Powerpoint presentation and I put that into the PC's drive and loaded Powerpoint. So far so good. I opened the presentation and started it to test it. All went well until I came to the slide with the built-in movie clip with which buttons on the slide for play, stop and rewind were associated using macros. The buttons didn't work. Macros were not enabled. I went into Powerpoint to enable macros and that privilege had been denied to the user.

I gave up and resorted to our own equipment, asking Joani's contact to power down the room's PC and projector. The former she did by pressing the power button. The latter she did by standing on a swivel chair on castors (the projector was attached to the ceiling) and pressing the power button (apparently, remote controls for equipment went missing). Issues of health and safety and security sprang to mind.

I managed to set up the presentation and everything went fine from there. I had even remembered to recover the CD from the force's computer before it had been powered down.

Joani dropped me at home and Jenny and I went down to the Crown Decorating Centre for some Crown, solvent-based, gloss varnish for the new skirting. It took me a while to find the shop because I had forgotten exactly where it was.

From there we called at the vet's practice in Bury for a new batch of renal tablets for our cat, Toffee and then motored down to B&Q for some additional decorating consumables. Thus far, everything had cost us about £30 at each location.

We lunched at Summerseat Garden Centre, where Jenny discovered they had introduced a gluten-free menu, due to demand. Very nice it was, too.

After lunch, we potted round the store and I found a couple of CDs that had been reduced to £1 each. I also met a chap who was interested in 60s music and I persuaded him and his wife to come along to our next Dementia Café at the Cricket Club where we would be remembering Elvis Presley 40 years after his death with a performance by an eastern, tribute artist, "Patelvis".

Our last visit was a leisurely stroll round the charity shops in Ramsbottom, although there was nothing that took our fancy.

We came home about 3:30, much to the cat's relief, having been stuck in the entrance hall while we were out so we could set the house alarm.

I spent the rest of the afternoon listening to one of the CDs I had bought (Peter Cook and Dudley Moor) and the CD of McKinney's Cotton Pickers I had produced from a double LP album comprising Volumes 3 and 4 of their complete recordings. While listening to the latter, I scanned some documents to avoid having to retain the paper copies.

Thursday August 3<sup>rd</sup>: It was back to decorating, covering the landing and staircase ceiling and coving (and some of the floor as well as me) in Crown, white, vinyl, matt paint. That took an incredibly long time for the size of the ceiling and my dinner was served up when I had finished clearing up, at about 3:30 p.m., somewhat well cooked.

I relaxed and listened to the second CD I purchased the previous day, Harry Secombe, Peter Sellers and Spike Milligan in *How to Win and Election (or Not Lose by Much)* and very funny it was too, provided one was old enough to remember Neville Chamberlin, Alec Douglas Home, *The Profumo Affair* and Harold Wilson.

Friday August 4<sup>th</sup>: We had a reasonable journey to Unicorn in Chorlton down the M60 ring road via Dennis Gore Chemist shop in Prestwich to collect my Vogel Bronchoforce herbal remedy for my cough and another bottle of Vogel Saw Palmetto to help maintain a healthy prostate gland. From there we called at Sainsbury's supermarket in Sale for a few items we could not obtain elsewhere on the way to Waitrose at Broadheath, near Altrincham, where we lunched as usual.

The journey back along the M60 was torturous with very slow moving traffic and frequent stop-starts. It was strange to discover traffic was flowing freely as we approached our exit at Prestwich and that there was no obvious reason for the delay. The road improvements to add an extra lane in both directions and to introduce traffic monitoring and speed controls on this stretch of the M60 were ongoing and, personally, I could not see that it would make the slightest difference. Millions of pounds were being spent to turn a three-lane car park into a four-lane car park. And with more house building planned in the Greater Manchester area, matters would only worsen.

I spent the rest of the afternoon scheduling the TV recordings for the coming week.

Saturday August 5<sup>th</sup>: We spent the morning at the village drop-in, testing and pricing electrical equipment ready for the next jumble sale. What we had tested and priced was available for sale but we had no customers at the drop-in. We did manage to sell two tickets for the Mayor's fashion show in September though.

We came home for lunch, after tidying up and we decided to pack the car for the following day's car boot sale, the weather forecast predicting somewhat unsettled conditions later in the day. That involved moving the skirting wood we had delivered recently from the floor of the garage

to the garage loft, out of harm's way before Jenny and Rachel could access the car boot stock to pack the car.

That done, I pumped up the tyres to carry the full load. I suspected I had a slow puncture in the nearside rear tyre and it needed attention.

This frenzied activity was interspersed with an update to the village web site, completed around 9 p.m.

Sunday August 6<sup>th</sup>: We were up at 5 a.m. and ready for our day's trading before 6:30. I checked the weather forecast and the rain previously scheduled for between 2 and 3 p.m. in Ramsbottom was now scheduled to arrive at least an hour earlier. The weather had been unsettled for most of July and August was no better. I was growing sick and tired of our appalling climate, with rain forecast for every day in the coming week except Thursday. It was certainly not conducive for outdoor trading. My advice to anyone living in England east of the Pennines is not to come west.

Jenny went back to bed. I cut the grass on the side of the house, picked the ripe fruit, tidied up the blackberry bush and cut all the new growth off the sycamore stump in the back garden.

By the time I had finished, Jenny was up and we had a bit of lunch.

It was threatening to rain, as forecast but it didn't amount to anything until much later. I applied myself indoors to repairing a record player/radio that we had sold at the jumble sale before last and which had been returned at the last sale for a refund because the record player would not work.

The problem was that the belt drive on the turntable had, somehow, come adrift from the capstan on the motor and it took me ages, with some help from Jenny, to mend it. The big problem was fitting the belt over the capstan that was hidden by the turntable. With a suggestion from Jenny and a slight amendment to the procedure, with Jenny's help, I was able to fix it, ready for selling at the next jumble sale.

I then started work on some equipment our neighbour, Doreen, had given Jenny for her car boot stock.

First up was a Humax HD TV Freeview recorder. I spent some time exploring its capabilities and it worked fine. I was surprised she had given it away and decided to check she really did not want it. In any case, it was too good not to keep.

Second was a Freeview Panasonic DVD player/recorder. The DVD player worked alright but the remote control for it was missing so there was no way I could retune the TV programmes to test that aspect of it. It wasn't much good without the remote control and I needed to ask Doreen if she could find it.

By the time I had finished, tea was ready and we had a relaxing evening watching recorded TV programmes off Jenny's laptop.

Monday August 7<sup>th</sup>: It was a slow start since I was feeling somewhat dazed and confused (so what's new?) when I rose from my slumbers. It was a bit like being jet-lagged (I should be so lucky). I decided to tackle the dangling internal alarm box, removed from the landing wall for the plasterers. Since I could not free up the excess wire to push it back into the loft void, I decided to shorten it and I remounted the box on the wall just below the coving. I would have to remove it again later when I painted the walls but at least I had the position fixed.

Likewise the PIR sensor in the dining area, which I re-affixed to the ceiling. I would have completed that had the fixing not broken off the back of the unit. It had, seemingly, worked loose before (it should be a push-fit) and it looked like I had fixed it with superglue, which obviously was not as super as the manufacturers would have us believe. I tried sticking it again and left it with an elastic band to hold it together until the glue set. At least I had the mount screwed to the ceiling.

I started making a list of what needed plastering in the dining area, the plan being to fill and sand, then paint the coving and ceiling before tackling the walls on the landing and staircase. That way, all the dust would be out of the way before painting.

I left off at 5:30 p.m. with the intention of attacking the single sockets in the dining area the following day and then filling in with plaster. With any luck I could be plastered by tea time.

Tuesday August 8<sup>th</sup>: There was a change of plan. Instead of the electrical work and plastering, I decided to paint the walls on the landing and deal with the sockets later in the day. Since it was almost 5 p.m. by the time I had finished painting, having taken an hour's lunch break, it was too late to start messing with the power.

Jenny and I devised a plan for the following day:

- 07:30 Breakfast and routine chores.
- 09:00 Depart for Tesco in Bury and drop Jenny off. Proceed to B&Q at Heap Bridge.
- 10:30 Arrive home just in time to collect the cat.
- 11:00 Arrive at the vet's practice in Bury for the cat's annual check-up and injections.
- 12:00 Arrive home, release the cat, have lunch and so that Jenny could bake a cake for the next event, not necessarily in that order.
- 14:30 Arrive at the Old School for afternoon tea and cakes for the annual gathering of Wednesday afternoon church attendees and village drop-in helpers.
- 16:30 Approximately, return home for a free evening and evening meal.

I also worked out my itinerary for the rest of the month and, if I worked flat out, gained a couple of days and everything went like clockwork, I might just get all the painting done and the new skirting installed before Lyel and Judy who were visiting from New Zealand arrived for a one-night flying visit on 2<sup>nd</sup> September. It was then that a sounder of swine passed overhead.

Wednesday August 9<sup>th</sup>: This was one of those rare occasions when everything went according to plan.

I had a £5 voucher for B&Q if I spent over £50 so purchased three more 64 litre storage boxes for Jenny as well as the trunking for the dining area central heating pipes.

The vet was concerned that our cat had lost some weight and that her heart rate was very fast, putting her in danger of a fatal heart attack. She suspected that her thyroid problem had worsened and suggested a blood test, to which we agreed. If that came back positive in a couple of days, it would mean a daily thyroid tablet as well as a daily renal tablet. Otherwise, she was fine.

Jenny called to see Doreen and Alex across the back on our way home from the afternoon tea to drop off some sandwiches, etc. for them.

Thursday August 10<sup>th</sup>: I had an afternoon dementia awareness presentation at Bury police station with Joani and she had arranged to collect me at 12:15 p.m. I decided to give the landing walls a

second coat of paint and I had set the alarm for 7 a.m. so I could do as much as possible before the presentation and finish off afterwards. The painting was completed at about 5 p.m. and I gave Rachel a lift down to the garage to collect her car after its MOT while Jenny volunteered to wash out my brushes and finish preparing tea.

Jenny had given Rachel lift back from the garage in the morning after dropping off her car. While I was painting, she and Rachel responded to a call from Doreen across the back, for assistance to capture a mouse her cat had brought in. They succeeded in their task, releasing the poor creature back into the wild for which Doreen was very grateful and the cat was most displeased.

Half way through tea, between courses, we had yet another task. We had agreed to collect some flowers and some food from Greenmount Old School and take these to Joani at the Cricket Club at 7 p.m. for the D-CaFF dementia café the following day. Of course, one job always becomes two or three and we first called at Faith's home to collect some crayons and colouring books for Joani. When we arrived at the Cricket Club, we helped set up the tables for the following day.

We made our excuses, leaving the ladies to carry on and we came home to finish our tea.

Friday August 11<sup>th</sup>: We rose later than intended. The vet called to say that Toffee's blood test results were back and that she did have a thyroid problem which needed treating with tablets. The good news was that her kidneys were no worse than the last test she had so the medication and renal diet were working and had stabilised the situation. I said we would probably call to collect the thyroid tablets in the afternoon. The only concern was that the thyroid treatment might affect the kidney function and a repeat blood test would be required in two month's time, first to check the thyroid problem was under control and second to confirm that the treatment had not adversely affected her kidneys.

A short visit from Donald, our friendly Jehovah's Witness, filled what little time we had before the afternoon D-CaFF session, remembering Elvis 40 years after his death with a tribute artist, at the Cricket Club. The entertainment was very good and the show was well attended with at least 100 people there, including dignitaries from Bury Council and local police officers.

The session ran on well past the usual finishing time and we left as soon as we were able to do our short weekly grocery shop at Prestwich, calling at Village Greens and Tesco, leaving there at just after six p.m., remembering that we should have called at the vet's practice to collect some thyroid tablets for Toffee. Fortunately, the practice was still open when we called on the way home.

Saturday August 12<sup>th</sup>: The original plan had been to go grocery shopping but since we had already done that, I had a day in hand. That was just as well, since the landing walls needed a third coat of paint. I had allowed one more day for painting them, giving them a second coat of paint but since I had now finished, I was still a day in hand.

By the time I had finished and tidied up, it wasn't really worth starting a new decorating task so I left the electrical work and fitting the new casing over the radiator pipes in the dining room until Monday, as scheduled.

I dealt with my E-mail, started an update to the village web site and listened to some of the recorded Jazz Record Requests.

Sunday August 13<sup>th</sup>: We were in Ramsbottom before 6:30 a.m., expecting to find it very busy, this being the Farmer's Market week end. There were only about half a dozen vehicles on the Station Car Park and we picked our spot. There was plenty of time to set up our stall before customers started to arrive and I was quite pleased that we had made our £11 pitch fee much earlier than usual. After that we were able to relax and trade was steady, picking up towards lunch time as usual. We did reasonably well and we were home for about 4 p.m.

I finished off the village web site update and listening to this week's Jazz Record Requests.

Monday August 14<sup>th</sup>: I had intended to start the electrical work, fix the new cladding on the heating pipes and fill all the holes and cracks with plaster.

It took me a while to work out where to place the fixings for the heating pipe cladding and I think my brain was a little muddled because of the long, previous day. Having removed the old fixings and marked the new fixing positions on the wall, it was necessary to fill all the holes before fitting the new cladding. The wall also needed cleaning.

I took the opportunity to fill some other holes I had noted and then left off for a late lunch.

After lunch, Jenny needed some help lifting her car boot boxes before I could return to my decorating work.

I was not able to turn off the power because Jenny was roasting a chicken in the oven and, although it was a gas oven, it needed electricity to operate the gas valve and sensors for safety reasons.

I decided to remove the old, single, 13 amp socket nearest the lounge from the wall and chisel out a hole in the brickwork large enough for the double socket backing box, ready for fitting, with the power on, taking care not to catch the live wire. I unscrewed the socket from the backing box and there was enough cable to move it to one side while I dislodged the existing backing box and made the hole deeper and larger. I also managed to manoeuvre the new backing box into the hole to make sure it fitted and was level. I still needed to disconnect the power to remove the old socket, dangling on the end of the wire and the old backing box, through which the wire passed and on which it was also dangling. That was a job for the morning. Did somebody mention health and safety?

After tidying up it was 5:30 p.m. and I decided it was too late to start work on the second socket that needed replacing.

Tuesday August 15<sup>th</sup>: This was scheduled to be a sanding and cleaning day, having fitted the new central heating pipe trunking, completed all the filling and fitted the two double electrical sockets. Although this work was taking me longer than expected, I still had a day in hand because I had painted the landing walls, something I had scheduled for Thursday of this week.

So it was a case of completing the ongoing tasks and preparing the dining room for sanding and cleaning, prior to painting.

I had to wait for a load of washing to finish before I could take off the power to work on the sockets in the dining area so I undertook a couple of other filler tasks first. I cleaned and refitted the internal alarm bell on the landing and, after Jenny had cleaned them, replaced the curtain tie-back hooks for the window at the top of the stairs. I also measured up for refitting the curtain rail.

With the power off on the main ring, I removed the single socket near the bottom of the stairs in the dining area and, with a little more chiselling, fitted the backing box into the wall. Plastering that in was a little more problematic than I expected and it took a while to level the box while also making it flush with the surface plaster. As the filler started to harden, I was able to put the new double, switched power socket on the end of the wires and leave it dangling until I had smoothed down the filler and, if necessary, applied more filler to smooth it off level with the existing finishing plaster. I restored power in time to record a TV episode of Quincy and while that was ongoing, we had lunch and Jenny sneaked in another load of washing.

After lunch, I started sanding down the bits I had already filled while waiting for the opportunity to turn off the power again to deal with the second socket in the dining area.

An interruption from Joani and Laura with a D-CaFF E-mail problem gave Jenny an opportunity to sneak in another load of washing, which delayed my work on the second socket even more. While I was dealing with the D-CaFF problem, Susan arrived with a broken power supply for her audio gadget and asked me if I could fix it. The answer to that was it needed a spare power supply and all my power supplies were at the Old School so I would see if I had a suitable one on Saturday morning.

I carried on sanding until I could start work on the second socket and finished that at about 7:30 p.m., although I wasn't happy that the earth connection was secured by the socket screw so I would check that as soon as I could.

Having restored the power for the second time in the day, I went for a quick shower before a late tea, contemplating my 6 a.m. start the following morning.

Wednesday August 16<sup>th</sup>: The 6 a.m. start became a 6:20 start because, having had the power off the previous day, I had reset the clocks, set the alarm for 6 a.m. and forgotten to switch the alarm on. Luckily I awoke in time to have breakfast, only because Jenny put it all out for me while I was washing and dressing, before Joani arrived to collect me for the early morning dementia awareness presentation at Bury police station.

I was home before 11 a.m. and updated the village web site before lunch at noon. After lunch, I fell asleep in the chair and it was turned 2 p.m. before I started more filling in the dining area and turned 7 p.m. before I finished.

Thursday August 17<sup>th</sup>: I had scheduled today for painting the landing walls but since I had finished that little task, I sanded the walls and door frames in the dining area and then Jenny and I cleaned the walls and door frames with sugar soap and washed them down with clear, cold water ready for painting. We were back on track – almost. There were a few places that needed a little more filling and sanding.

Friday August 18<sup>th</sup>: It was grocery shopping day again. Our early morning trip to Unicorn in Chorlton was not as early as we had planned. This time, I had set the alarm and it did go off at the appropriate time but the bedside radio had lost its memory and failed to tune in to the expected station, deciding on a low level hiss instead. We had a lot in common.

Not only was it a late start but it was also a late arrival at Unicorn in Chorlton, thanks to an incident on the anticlockwise M60 just before junction 16, resulting in queuing traffic on the slip-road from junction 17, where we joined it. It was a slow crawl to the flashing blue and red lights of the emergency vehicles, not helped by a wide load straggling the outer two lanes on the way, since everyone was slowing down to observe the show. Once past that, of course, there was very

little traffic and we made good time to the road-works at Stretford, where one lane (our right-turn lane) was partially closed off, causing yet further delay.

The short haul from Unicorn to Waitrose in Broadheath, calling at Sainbussy's store in Sale on the way, where Yellow Tail Chardonnay was on offer at £6 a bottle, was uneventful, which made a nice change. Not only was the Chardonnay on offer but there was a further reduction of 25% on six or more bottles of wine, which was too good to miss, so I filled a six-pack container with four bottles of said Chardonnay and two bottles of Prosecco, also reduced from £10 to £7.50.

We lunched at Waitrose as usual and eventually made our way home. The A56 to the motorway was a little slow going but once we reached the motorway slip road, we were able to speed up for at least 100 metres before we saw the three lanes of stationary traffic queuing on the M60, clockwise this time.

Fortunately, the slip road split and the left lane took us to a roundabout where we were able to effectively perform a U-turn back to the A56 and we took the A-road into Manchester, picked up the ring road and then the A56 again to Bury. That was quite busy until we reached the stretch that led through Prestwich, where, once again, we joined two lanes of stationery, queuing traffic. This was getting silly.

I gave up after a couple of hundred metres and, with the aid of a right turn into a cul-de-sac, performed yet another U-turn. "I'd make a good politician," I thought.

Travelling the short distance to the traffic lights, I took a left turn and another left turn onto Bury Old Road to by-pass Prestwich and emerge back onto the A56 to Bury at Whitefield. That was much better, although a lane closure at the traffic lights by Sainbury's store in Whitefield didn't help matters.

We were home for 5 p.m., much later than expected and too late to commence the finishing touches to the dining room preparation work.

Saturday August 19<sup>th</sup>: I had planned to paint the dining room ceiling and coving. Instead we went round to the Old School to work on the electrical jumble. A change is as good as a rest.

Rachel helped her mum pack the car for the following day's excitement.

Sunday August 20<sup>th</sup>: We arrived at Ramsbottom Station car park at about 6:40 a.m. to find many of the car boot places taken. There was a gap of two spaces opposite Bev's butty van, which was parked alongside the curb and not across two car boot spaces as it normally was, so we took one of those and set out our stall. Trading was, as usual, slow to start and steady throughout the day, our takings boosted by the sale of two significant electrical items and a large sale of jewellery to one chap who was obviously buying to sell on, which was fine by us.

It was a most successful and well-spent day. We arrived home a little before 4 p.m.

Monday August 21<sup>st</sup>: I should have been painting dining room ceiling and coving with a second and final coat of paint. Unfortunately, I needed to do some more filling and sanding before even applying the first, watered-down coat on bare plaster and, secondly, my tickly cough had flared up with a vengeance the previous evening and I had a somewhat restless night. I had given up taking my Vogel Bronchoforce because it seemed to be causing more problems than it was solving, since it was for chesty coughs and mine was more an irritable one. The previous night, I

had taken a dose of Bronchosan, for tickly coughs, instead and I took another one this morning. That did seem to improve matters today.

What had caused the cough to flare up again was a mystery and I suspected it may have something to do with lifting heavy loads, my right side having been weakened in the past by the removal of my gall bladder by keyhole surgery many years ago, although the accompanying chest pain seemed to be at the front and up towards my neck.

Apart from that. some aches in my left hip and feeling tired, I was fine. Incidentally, I did mention to people around me that if any bits flew out while I was coughing, they should return them. I was good at puzzles.

The cat had not been well in the night, throwing up frequently. We suspected it was the thyroid tablets the vet had prescribed so we omitted the morning dose to see how she fared and Jenny cleaned up the resultant mess, leaving the cat to catch up on her sleep.

I thought I had made progress with Zen in completing arrangements to move the remaining two web sites I ran on my Windows 2003 server at home to their hosting service. Unfortunately, this had come to a halt due to a technical problem and I suspected that was because the hosting team at Zen had misunderstood my requirements. I needed to telephone them to resolve the matter, if possible.

Also, we had leaflets to deliver for the coming jumble sale and the grass needed cutting.

By the time we had breakfasted, washed the dishes, put out the bin for the rubbish collection the next day, called at the Old School and delivered our leaflets, it was 1 p.m. It was amazing how quickly time passed.

We had lunch and I went to cut the grass on the side before the rain started, due about 4 p.m. Jenny telephoned the vet about the cat being ill and they had another cat that had the same problem – a bad reaction to the thyroid tablets. She recommended a gel that was rubbed on the inside of the ear and adsorbed by the skin, which we could collect later in the day. While emptying the car of the car boot stock after the previous day's trading, the vet telephoned Jenny. She was worried about the cat not eating and wanted Jenny to bring her down later in the afternoon.

While I was cutting the grass, Christine Taylor telephoned to say she was having problems with her E-mail and I said I would go round later to take a look at it. I managed to finish the grass on the side and clean out the lawn mower before the odd few spots of rain that had been falling turned into a heavy shower.

I came in for a quick wash and change before going to see Christine. Jenny told me the cat had eaten some food and managed to keep it down.

All that was wrong with Christine's mail was that the stored password for one of her IMAP accounts seemed to have been corrupted and was not being recognised. Christine had entered the password in the appropriate box that had appeared with the error message but had failed to realise that she needed to clear the box first so the correct password was tagged onto the unrecognised password. That was sorted out in a few minutes and I closed the Windows 10 mail program down and reloaded it to make sure the password had been reset.

Back home, I contacted Zen about the web site hosting. They had recommended the wrong product and I was not best pleased. I sent an E-mail to our village chairman to advise him that he may need to take some steps to reverse the account upgrade he had arranged with Zen. Meanwhile, I needed to arrange for my web site to be hosted.

Jenny telephoned the vet to see whether she still wanted to see Toffee since she was now starting to eat and had stopped being sick. The vet said no but to keep an eye on her (the cat, not the vet).

We went down to the vet's practice to collect the thyroid gel treatment. The journey was a nightmare. There were roadwork traffic lights on the way down to Bury. A set of traffic lights on the approach to Bury had stuck on red and it was necessary to drive through them on red to move the traffic along. I decided to come back the long way round, up the east side of the valley to Ramsbottom, through Ramsbottom and then back to Greenmount. That was just as bad, with two sets of road-work traffic lights between Ramsbottom and Holcombe Brook. They were not there the previous day and I could have avoided them and the long tail-back if I had known they were there, going up the steep hill to the top road, through Holcombe Village and coming back down to Holcombe Brook.

Toffee was munching a few more biscuits as we returned and she seemed a little better.

I finished off my productive day by fitting a plug to a kettle lead for Jenny. It was an item in her car booty and she had been trying to sell it for some time with the lead tucked away inside the kettle, not realising it didn't have a plug on the end. So how did she check it was working? Mmmm.

After tea, Jenny did check it was working.

Tuesday August 22<sup>nd</sup>: My decorating schedule was, by now, in tatters. That was nothing new, considering it had been ongoing since January.

The cat had been sick again in the night, although she did seem to be a little better and was drinking water, grazing on her biscuits, going to her latrine and, for the most part, sleeping. Not a bad, simple existence, I thought.

My tickly cough was still somewhat irritating, although I did have a better night's sleep thanks to three doses of Vogel Bronchosan the previous day and chewing a clove of raw garlic before I went to bed. Another dose after breakfast seemed like a good idea.

I managed to do what I hoped would be the final touch-up plastering in the dining area before we sped off to the hospital so Jenny could have her rather painful foot X-rayed. That took about 45 minutes. We came back to Bury to the Crown Decorating Centre to buy some more paint for the walls and then called at the tip to drop off some rubbish that had been accumulating under the car port and in the conservatory before our final halt at Tesco for a few groceries, including some fish for tea. We were back about 2:15 p.m. The cat was pleased to see us, having spent about three hours in the entrance hall because the house alarm was on.

We had a late lunch and I undertook some repairs to some of Jenny's car booty and tested some additional items.

Wednesday August 23<sup>rd</sup>: We were up early (about 7:30 a.m.) because my car was being collected by someone from Tottington Motor Company and the chap arrived about 8:30 a.m., while we

were finishing breakfast. It had a slow puncture in the nearside rear tyre, a broken brake light and the service interval needed resetting because the service it indicated was not due until January. The alternator had also begun to “squeak” again, particularly when turning on full lock.

We managed our early morning start despite getting up in the wee small hours to tend the cat. She was sick again. I decided not to give her any more of the thyroid gel for a little while to see if she improved and she did eat and drink a little during the morning and, what was more, she managed to keep it down.

After breakfast, a good three days behind schedule, I painted a watered-down, first coat on the dining room ceiling, having sanded down the bits I touched up the previous day. During this feverish activity, I managed to fall off the stool again, ricocheting off the dining room table, the bottom staircase post and the wooden stool. Luckily the ground broke my fall. Despite the resultant aches and pains, mainly in my chest on the right side (that was my weak side) and some dizziness, due, I thought, to shock, aided by a fizzy, ginger drink, I managed to complete the ceiling by about 1 p.m. and spent a good half-hour washing out my brushes, etc. Jenny had been very helpful, wiping paint splashes off the walls and anything else they caught, picking me up off the floor and holding the bucket of paint to save me coming down off the stool.

After a break for lunch, I painted the staircase wall that had been re-plastered with a watered-down, first coat and finished tidying up at about 7:30 p.m.

During my afternoon painting session, the garage telephoned to say that they could not return the car that evening because the alternator was faulty and the replacement, the second replacement under warranty, did not arrive soon enough for them to fit it that afternoon. I said that was not a problem.

I gave Jenny a hand with a couple of pineapples for the sweet and sour chicken for tea and then re-packaged a dehumidifier we had been testing for the Old School jumble and priced that plus three other items we had been testing at home, ready for the jumble sale on the coming Monday.

I sat down at about 8 p.m., leaving Jenny to finish off preparing tea since she said she did not require any further assistance.

My chest was hurting and I still had a bit of a cough, which was absolute agony. The application of fresh Aloe Vera gel at lunch-time had taken out the bruising but not the pain. Perhaps a beer would help....

Thursday August 24<sup>th</sup>: I thought about rising early to give the ceiling in the dining area a second and, hopefully, final, coat of paint before preparing for the afternoon dementia awareness presentation at Bury police station.

The alarm sounded at 7 a.m. and, not firing on all cylinders, I immediately switched it off and went back to sleep until 9:30 a.m. It was too late to commence work, so I showered and we had breakfast, after which Lorna called round and I left Jenny to chat with her while I washed the pots.

The garage had called during breakfast to say that they would be returning the car that morning. The cost was £35, the puncture having been repaired. There was no charge for the alternator.

The car arrived and the chaps who brought it told me whoever collected my car had left me a courtesy car. That was news to me, since I did not ask for one and they had not left me any keys

for it. It turned out that the keys were at the garage and, in any case, the two chaps who arrived could not take it back because they were off to Preston.

Joani arrived to collect me for the afternoon presentation, which went really well. On the way home, we called at Argos to collect a new projector Joani had ordered and Joani left that with me to check over and she also left me a memory stick containing a dementia awareness presentation for children which she wanted me to further develop.

I loaded the memory stick contents onto Jenny's laptop, with some difficulty, due to an intermittent fault on the device and dealt with my E-mails and the recorded TV programmes.

During this time, the courtesy car had gone, which was just as well, because the gentleman who lived next door was all for having the police tow it away, it being parked in front of their house. Fortunately, his wife had been round to ask Jenny about it and she explained it belonged to the garage and they would be collecting it, which seemed to be something of a relief, the suspicion being that it had been stolen and dumped there.

Friday August 25<sup>th</sup>: The usual grocery shopping day went quite well with visits to four shops, Unicorn and Morrisons in Chorlton, Sainsbury's in Sale and Watrose at Broadheath and with the minimum of motorway congestion, thanks to an early start.

We were home for 3 p.m. and, after a refreshing cup of tea, we headed off to the Old School to check on the electrical jumble. Our colleague, Dave Archer, was filling in for us at the sale on the coming Monday since we were at the car boot sale in Ramsbottom. All but a few of the priced and tested items had been put out and I fetched the remainder up from the cellar. There was some new jumble to test and still a lot in the cellar. I said I would be in the following day to deal with that and Jenny said she would join me.

Saturday August 26<sup>th</sup>: My decorating was on hold as we went to the Old School as planned to test and price more electrical jumble. We came home about 4:30 p.m. after tidying up. I rushed down to Halfords in Bury to buy a replacement tyre pump since my old one had expired the previous week. Jenny and Rachel packed the car ready for the morning while I checked the tyres, which were fine.

Sunday August 27<sup>th</sup>: We reached the car boot venue in Ramsbottom at 6:30 a.m. The station car park was already packed, most vehicles taking up at least two parking spaces and we just managed to squeeze into a slot. When Bury Council collected the pitch fees, it was understood that a car owner would pay the pitch fee for each parking slot they occupied, people taking up two slots paying double and so on. Now the franchise had been let to the same people who ran the Farmer's Market each month, the pitch fee demanded was fixed at the cost of a single slot regardless of how much room each person took. This situation was running out of control and, with most people taking up two slots and some, more. A lot of people complained to the chap who collected the rent.

Fortunately, the lady next to us who was occupying two slots moved up a little and we had enough room for our two tables, the clothes rack and some boxes by encroaching slightly on the pitches on either side of us.

Trading was, as usual, slow and, having no really expensive items to sell, our takings were less than half what they were the previous week.

We came home for about 4 p.m. and I spent some time familiarising myself with the new projector for D-CaFF, our village dementia café. In effect, it was to help Joani, who ran the café, continue her Dementia Awareness presentations and to recruit more Dementia Friends whenever and wherever the opportunity arose in the Bury area and with which I assisted her.

After that, I dealt with some outstanding items on the PC, all while Jenny prepared tea for the following day and for this evening.

Monday August 28<sup>th</sup>: According to Plan A, I should have finished painting the ceilings and walls and I should have been undercoating the door frames and the loft access frame today.

That was superseded by Plan B (remember that?), a car boot sale again.

Instead, we devised an even more cunning plan, Plan C.

Jenny was rather tired and, given that there was a 10% chance of rain over a four hour period in the middle of the day and, despite a precipitation probability of less than 5% the previous day, it had done its best to produce a shower, although the few drops did not amount to much, we decided to give the car boot sale a miss and have a lie-in.

Jenny, helped by Rachel, emptied the car and sorted out her car booty in the garage, emptying the trailer in the process so I could help Matthew take some rubbish to the tip the following day.

Meanwhile, I splashed paint all over the dining room. Fortunately, enough of it went on the ceiling and coving to cover it, although given the poor lighting, I did miss a few bits and I went back to patch those up where I could spot them after I had finished at around 4 p.m. I decided to leave the ceiling to dry properly before looking for more bits to touch up (I should be so lucky).

Despite having the ceiling skimmed, three cracks had re-appeared, which I managed to hide with paint, at least, for the present and the uneven plaster, which I had applied to the long crack that ran from side to side of the dining-room ceiling and which I had repaired prior to skimming, was visible through the paint. The chaps who had done the plastering and coving were really cowboys. When I had difficulty getting a plasterer, I should have done the job myself. I'm sure I could have made a better job of it.

I washed out my brushes and moved the chairs I had divided between the kitchen and the lounge back into the dining room so we could eat tea, having left off for a sandwich at about 3 p.m.

Incidentally, while painting, I almost managed to fall off the stool again.

I went out, put out the bins for collection the next day and pulled up all of the weeds I could from the block paving to tidy it up a little.

I finished my working day by helping Jenny and Rachel tidy up the car booty and I pulled the empty trailer out of the garage and hitched it to the car on the drive ready for Matthew's tip run the following day,

It was just turned 7 p.m. when I sat down to await tea, Hunter's Chicken casserole, which Jenny had already prepared and just had to warm through and cook the veg.

Tuesday August 29<sup>th</sup>: What an interesting day. Jenny and Rachel spent the day in the garage again sorting and tidying the car booty.

After extracting the trailer and hitching it to the car, I did some more prep work in the dining area, work I had previously missed.

I went down to help Matthew take two trailer-loads of garden rubbish to the tip about 11:30 and then came home for lunch.

After lunch, I rewired a lamp for a friend and tested that. So far, so good. It needed some more work, though. I needed to fit an in-line switch, a 3 amp fuse in the plug (I didn't have any so I was temporarily using a 5 amp fuse) and some green baize to the base.

I then started painting the dining room walls with their first coat of paint, completing the long, external wall and the adjacent wall with the sliding, glass door, leading to the conservatory.

While I was with Matthew, we called at Tesco in Bury and Matthew went in to buy me a 100-watt, halogen bulb for the dining room instead of the low-light, eco-bulb, so I could see to work properly. I would have made the purchase but I had forgotten to bring my money! He came back with a twin-pack.

When I inserted the new bulb, it highlighted the patchy ceiling, which would need another coat of paint, a job I had not planned.

My day ended with cleaning out my brush, finishing at about 8 p.m., just in time for a beer before a make-do tea. Had the Bulls Head been open, we would have gone there but it was closed for refurbishment and was due to re-open the coming week-end as a steak-house restaurant.

Wednesday August 30<sup>th</sup>: After the regular morning chores, I whizzed off to Bury while Jenny spruced up the lounge. I needed some more paint for the dining-room ceiling and I used the opportunity to drop off some items at the Old School for the jumble sale and some rubbish at the tip.

I gave the dining-room ceiling a third coat of Crown vinyl matt white paint while Jenny went to the hair salon. It was strange that the landing ceiling covered with the second coat, apart from the bits I missed and needed to touch up. I finished about 5 p.m. after washing out my brushes.

While Jenny prepared tea, I gave the last wall in the dining room its first coat of paint. The ceiling was looking good and I needed to decide whether to give the coving another coat of paint as well. That was just one of the jobs for the following day.

After tea it was time to clean the paintbrush, my final job of the day.

Thursday August 31<sup>st</sup>: Well the good news was that I managed to paint all three of the staircase walls.

The bad news was that I had almost finished when, for some reason, I missed my footing on the ladders and went flying on the staircase. Fortunately, I was on the bottom rung so there wasn't far to fall. The even worse news was that the ladders bounced off the long wall I had just painted and gouged out a small but significant hole in the new plaster and then, thanks to the effect of gravity, headed directly for me, sprawled on the stairs. I fended them off and kicked them down stairs to the bottom, about four or five steps.

I had been working off the ladders all day and I had been using an S-hook to hold my half-full, 6-litre paint-pot in place, hanging from one of the rungs. Being near the finish, I had unhooked it and it sat, safely, on the stairs, so matters could have been worse.

Having said that, apart from grazing my elbows, which was somewhat insignificant, I had a cut on the back of my left hand at the base of my middle finger which I did not notice until I used my knuckle to brace myself against the bottom of the wall over the staircase while I finished painting it. That wouldn't have been too bad had I been using red paint.

I tended my cut in the bathroom before wiping off as much of the blood as I could before finishing the painting. What few spots remained seemed to cover quite well.

It was evident when I had finished that the walls would need another coat of paint. I patched up the hole I had made and another small piece of uneven plaster over by the side of and over our bedroom door I had forgotten about, a small area that still needed a first proper coat of paint.

I still wasn't happy with the dining room ceiling either.

It seemed my refurbishment plans were in tatters and I wasn't happy as I washed out my brushes before an early tea, necessitated by a village committee meeting at 8 p.m. to discuss the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of Greenmount, a celebration that was being held on the week-end on my birthday.

As another month in this (like Coronation Street) seemingly-never-ending, time-consuming-when I-could-be-doing-better-things, decorating programme comes to an end, two significant questions spring to mind. Will I survive long enough to finish it? Can Crown paint production keep pace with the rate at which I consume it?

These and other pointless observations may possibly be answered in next month's thrilling instalment. Then again....