

Greenmount February 2021

Monday, 1st February 2021

It was a beautiful start to the day and the month with a lovely sunrise after another night of heavy frost.

I dealt with some of the TV recordings from last evening, printed Jenny a label for her sister-in-law's (Anne's) birthday cards, one from us and one from Rachel, printed Jenny a "Veg Tracker" so she could monitor which ones she was eating when, updated my web site and applied the updates to the new version of my web site, still in development.

Matt and Carrie called for a quick chat in passing. Jenny had received an invitation from the NHS to book her Covid-19 vaccination online. That would probably have meant driving into Manchester so I suggested she file the letter and wait to see if and when she was contacted by our GP, which should be soon.

Discussing it with Carrie, It seemed there was talk of a shortage of the Pfizer vaccine, which was the one I had, and I needed a second vaccination within twelve weeks. Carrie suggested that there was some medical advice that people could have a mix and match vaccination, i.e. a different one for the second vaccination. I didn't like the sound of that. It all seemed to be a bit of a cock-up – something that was routine for our current Government.

Jenny and I went for a walk up to Holcombe Brook Post Office to post Anne's cards. We took the long route, up Holcombe Road, along Bolton Road West and down Longsite Road and came back down Longsite Road and up Vernon Road. The circular route, with stops at the PO and at the Vernon Road Co-Op, took us about an hour and gave us an appetite for lunch.

After lunch, I intended going to work in the back bedroom but I ended up dealing with a backlog of old E-mails.

Tuesday, 2nd February 2021

The first task of the day was to clear the drive of snow so that I could put Rachel's car on the road for her to go to work. That wasn't difficult because the snow was quite wet and I was able to brush it to one side or the other. It did take a while because it was quite thick by the time I reached the top of the drive.

I removed the snow from our car and brought that down the drive after Rachel had left, retaining my wet weather garments to fetch the bin down after it had been emptied.

I washed the dishes as usual and then resumed plastering in the back bedroom. I filled in over the new piece of scrim and then round the window frame. There were some larger areas on the right of the window frame that needed the standard Polyfilla and they took quite a while, particularly the top right where I had to remake the internal corner. The

remaining cracks round the rest of the frame were filled with flexible filler from a tube using my gun and smoothed off with a wet cloth.

After cleaning my tools, it was time for lunch.

Back in the bedroom, I enlarged the hole to the cavity where the backing box had been for the old RJ45 sockets. I then tidied up and vacuumed the carpet.

I emptied the rubbish and the vacuum cleaner into the bin and Jenny cleaned the vacuum cleaner while I fetched my plumb bob from the garage and checked it would fit in the wall cavity. The plan was to lower it from the loft and then use the string to pull up the old cables and remove them from the cavity. We shook the cloths I had used to cover the carpet and Jenny put them in the garage to wash in the old machine.

By the time we had done all that it was 4 p.m. and going dark so I left my foray into the loft until Thursday.

Wednesday, 3rd February 2021

It was grocery shopping day at Sainsbury's store at Heaton Park and Tesco at Prestwich.

After lunch, I scrubbed the kitchen and hall floors, which took about three hours.

Thursday, 4th February 2021

After yesterday's activity, we didn't stagger downstairs very early. It was almost noon by the time we started cleaning the entrance hall. That took four hours and it wasn't a particularly large part of the house. When we had finished, it looked and smelt a lot better. We felt and smelt a lot worse.

Friday, 5th February 2021

I had a somewhat easier day, putting in the TV recording for the coming week and tidying up what we had watched during the current week.

Saturday, 6th February 2021

I started my day with some administrative work. Amongst other e-mails, I'd received this coming year's water bill and I needed to update my monthly accounts with the direct debit. I took the opportunity to reconcile my accounts with my bank.

I took some time out to give Jenny some help with cleaning the bathroom. I cleaned the stainless steel radiator and scrubbed the tiled floor. I was getting good at that sort of thing.

I backed up my media and we had a mid-afternoon snack. Afterwards, I did a little more work on my revised web site design.

Sunday, 7th February 2021

We didn't rise early. The lounge clock had stopped and I adjusted it (it had gained a minute in five days), wound it and set it to the correct time, give or take a few seconds, making a note of the date, time and adjustment for future reference.

I checked the dining room wall clock. It had gained about 70 seconds in eight days and needed adjusting slightly.

We had porridge for brunch followed by a brief rest, giving me time to catch up of the latest TV recordings from last evening and overnight.

A pot washing session was followed by dumping the sorted rubbish into the various bins. Jenny suggested going for a walk, so we toggled up to face the icy wind and headed off up the edge of the golf course, turning right and then left, up the edge of the field to Bolton Road West.

We crossed the main road and walked up Redisher Lane and into Redisher Wood. Crossing the brook by the second bridge, we followed the brook along the path, up, past Simon's Lodge. We followed the stream and crossed it again to join a path that ran left and right.

Turning left took us up to Simon's Farm, where the lane started, leading us back down to Redisher Lane. We came home along Bolton Road West and down Holcombe Road rather than retrace our steps along the muddy paths we took earlier.

The walk, at a leisurely pace, took us about two hours and it was actually quite pleasant, with plenty of people out walking, biking and horse-riding, despite the cold wind and the overcast sky. The hills in the distance were topped with snow, as though to present a challenge to the more serious walker.

We had a welcome cup of tea and I listened to Jazz Record Requests on BBC radio 3, which was not bad this week, with three decent traditional jazz tracks and most of the rest being tolerable.

Monday, 8th February 2021

I felt dreadful when I woke up at about 10 a.m. after a restless night. It was as though I were coming round from an anaesthetic – like having been in a very deep sleep and still feeling very tired. It took me an hour to make it out of bed to the shower. I couldn't decide whether my head was full of concrete or cotton wool but it hurt, mostly at the front, centre. I had stiffness in my neck and an ache across my shoulders as well as some nasal congestion. A touch of 'flu, perhaps? I'd had my 'flu jab and my first Covid-19 vaccination should have kicked in by now, so if it was either of those it shouldn't last long, I thought.

The warm shower helped a little and I made it down for breakfast with Jenny, who had been up for over an hour and she seemed fine.

After breakfast, I sat in my chair, still feeling quite drowsy, tackling a few bits and pieces on the computer. I then had a sudden spell of feeling very cold and shivering. Jenny made me put on my fleece over my jumper, even though the central heating was on and I felt better for that. My head was quite warm and I think I was a little pale. My pulse seemed alright.

Outside, it had been snowing and the sun managed to break through now and again, melting most of the thin ground covering. I just felt like sleeping but I resisted the urge to do so.

I had a look at the letter Jenny had received from the NHS about her Covid-19 vaccination and accessed the NHS web site. The nearest vaccination centre was about 8 miles away. I abandoned that approach and logged on to AskMyGP, then mechanism preferred by our local village practice for communicating with them. Come back Doctor Finlay, all is forgiven. It was actually easier to get an appointment with the vet for the cat.

Since Jenny didn't use a PC or use her mobile 'phone very much, there was no way she could contact the surgery this way, so I did so on her behalf. I was able to register Jenny for AskMyGP using my account by listing myself as her "Carer". I sent a non-urgent message to anyone who cared to deal with it saying Jenny had received the NHS invitation but she preferred to go to the local clinic in Ramsbottom at the GP's invitation and she just wanted to make sure she had not been overlooked, having turned 70 only recently.

Shortly afterwards, I received a call on my mobile telephone from Katy at the practice and I gave the 'phone to Jenny. The result of the brief conversation was a vaccination appointment in Ramsbottom on Thursday morning.

I spent some time working on the next Datacare document for my web site. My very old version of Adobe Photoshop was being somewhat awkward and I ended up reinstalling it on the laptop, not that the old laptop was really powerful enough.

That was interspersed with helping Jenny do some cleaning in the dining room. I tackled the top of the units that were too high for Jenny, even standing on the step stool – the one I kept falling off. I managed to stay upright on this occasion.

I can't say I was firing on all cylinders throughout the day, just the odd spark here and there. I dragged myself off to bed, hoping that the morning would bring some improvement.

Tuesday, 9th February 2021

I felt a little better this morning, although my thinking was still a bit woolly and still felt a little tired and achy in my joints. My guess was that I had a touch of 'flu or 'flu-like symptoms, possibly following the Covid-19 vaccination on 21st January but it did seem a little late for that.

We had another covering of snow overnight and it was disappearing rapidly in the sunshine that was managing to break through the clouds again.

I eventually found enough energy to help tidy up in the dining room and then clean the stainless steel radiator. The latter task took ages, the radiator being the biggest one available. It was very efficient but it was very heavy and a challenge to install. It was even more of a challenge to clean. I started to wonder why people needed to go to the gym when there was all this cleaning and decorating to do and all the gardening to do come spring.

I left off for some lunch, finished the radiator and then helped to clean the glass we have covering the oak table top, followed by the table top. The plan was to clean all of the table and all the eight chairs and then the floor but we ran out of time, so they were jobs for tomorrow, after grocery shopping.

As the evening approached, I started to feel unwell. I had a lot of catarrh and my throat started to hurt severely when I swallowed, particularly on the right side, also affecting the back of my tongue and, to a lesser extent, my right ear. Jenny said my lymph nodes were swollen and they were very tender, especially on the right.

Wednesday, 10th February 2021

I did not sleep well and I felt terrible when I finally got out of bed at about 7:30 a.m. Apart from my earlier symptoms, I was shivering and could not warm up, despite the heating having been on all night.

I dressed in warm clothing which included my thermally insulated trousers, an Arran wool polo-neck sweater and my Berghaus fleece. I still wasn't warm. I just rinsed my face and ate very little breakfast.

I drove Jenny to Unicorn in Chorlton. Fortunately, traffic on the motorway was light and the concentration seemed to do me good. I slept in the car while Jenny shopped, the sunshine warming the inside of the car and I was, at last, comfortable.

I did the same at Waitrose in Broadheath before driving home, traffic again being light.

I had a pear and a banana for lunch and a glass of an organic ginger drink.

I spent the afternoon dozing in my chair, still in my warm clothing. By evening, I was starting to feel a little better and managed my tea of Seabass fillets, cooked in Soy sauce and garlic, with mashed potatoes and peas and another glass of the ginger drink, eventually followed by a tepid cup of tea. The meal was easy to swallow but still provided a challenge and my throat became more painful again as night approached.

Some herbal lozenges for coughs and catarrh helped and I had a better night's sleep.

Thursday, 11th February 2021

I felt a little better again and managed my usual breakfast of cereal and toast before taking Jenny into Ramsbottom for her Covid-19 vaccination. I waited in the car and listened to a Kenny Ball CD. My throat was hurting again.

We called at Morrison's small supermarket for a few items and I remained in the car again, listening to the CD.

Returning home, it was pot-washing time as usual. After that, I brought the accounts up to date and started to deal with the TV recordings from yesterday, leaving off for a turkey salad lunch.

Friday, 12th February, 2021

I was feeling somewhat better, although I still had some catarrh, with some residue of the glandular pain and a nose-bleed added to my affliction.

I spent the day, dealing with the latest TV recordings, putting in the TV recordings for the coming week.

I spent some time trying to get Windows Media Centre to work on the old Windows 7 desktop but it still kept telling me it had encountered a problem and had to close. Unhelpfully, it didn't actually tell me what the problem was and since support for it had long-since stopped, I couldn't really ask anyone for assistance.

I tried shutting down the Media Centre feature in Windows, rebooting and then reactivating the feature but that didn't work and I ran an SFC scan which found no problem.

My next option would possibly be to try repairing Windows7 without performing a full re-installation but I didn't want to risk damaging my existing environment which worked well, apart from Media Centre. The alternative would be to completely reinstall Windows 7 on a new drive but I was sure I had done that once before to resolve this problem and it had re-occurred. Had Microsoft spiked Media Centre to stop it working? Surely Microsoft wouldn't stoop so low....

Saturday, 13th February, 2021

I dealt with the latest TV recordings and backed up my data. My health was continuing to improve, although there were lingering traces of my nose-bleed and I still felt tired.

I did the usual (late) morning jobs as usual and emptied the recycling rubbish. It was very windy and below freezing. I nipped into the garage to top up the central heating system with water again. The bathroom radiator needed bleeding regularly to remove the gas accumulated in the system and this reduced the pressure of the water. If it dropped too low, the heating failed to work. I thought I might log a call for an engineer under our service agreement since British Gas hadn't serviced my boiler last year. They had refunded me a cash sum instead.

Jenny asked me if I thought she should hang out some washing but I said it would only freeze it.

I dealt with a backlog of E-mails, one of which was about my income-tax for 2021-22 so I spent some time checking the figures and concluded they were more or less right.

Sunday, 14th February 2021

I guess you know the old saying “One step forward and two steps backward”.

I thought I was on the mend until I woke up this morning after a restless night. I was sneezing and coughing and my nasal passages were full of concrete – at least, that’s what it felt like.

I was first up and laid the table for breakfast. After eating, I settled down for a short while to edit the TV recordings for yesterday, leaving off to wash the pots.

I suggested, rather than do nothing useful, that we finished cleaning the dining room and we moved items around so I could vacuum and then clean the wood flooring. That wasn’t as energetic as it sounds since the cleaning part involved squirting the wood cleaner on the floor and then using a mop to spread it and work it into the wood, the process lifting out the dirt at the same time. Cleaning the whole floor was completed in two stages, moving the large, oak dining table to one side and then the other.

I also cleaned the central, ceiling light fitting, since it was dusty and had a few cobwebs and the wooden curtain rail.

We left off for lunch at about 1 p.m., having put all the furniture back in its proper place.

After lunch, I photographed the Kenwood Chef and its attachments and some other kitchen items we had for sale and which were stored in a large box in the dining room.

We brought a large box of car booty downstairs from our bedroom to stack on top of the Kenwood Chef box. Examination of the contents showed that most of them had already been catalogued for sale and put on my web site. I photographed one with which I had not deal.

We stacked the rest of the car booty we had removed from the dining room to clean it back in there, much of it still to be catalogued.

I started to reconcile the folder of car boot items for sale, which Jenny took to car boot sales for people to browse so they could see some of the items Jenny hadn’t taken or couldn’t take to the sale, with both the current and revised versions of my web site.

Monday, 15th February 2021

I was fed up with the bathroom radiator accumulating gas at the top so I decided to log a call with British Gas. When I logged on it told me my boiler service was due so I booked a slot for that and the radiator problem.

Prompted by a conversation with my sister, Barbara, I looked at the option of installing a water meter and decided to give it a try, so I logged a request for one.

Much of my day was used to finish the reconciliation task I started yesterday, leaving off for a 2½ walk round the Kirkless Valley.

Kirklees Valley is a wooded area and valley lying between the two main roads linking Greenmount and Bury. Much of the valley is a nature reserve, formerly having been an industrial area with several mills and a railway line running between Bury and Hocombe Brook, the line between Greenmount and Bury having been developed as a cycle route and walkway.

We joined the cycle route from Station Road in Greenmount and turned right and, then left to head down towards Tower Farm. We turned right by the farm, walking down to the stream and crossed it. We followed the muddy track and crossed the stream again to walk up to the old road, passing the bird sanctuary on the right.

We followed the old road, passing the modern housing estate on the right and turned right along the new footpath through Kingsbury wood. That eventually led down to the new road to the housing estate.

We turned left along the road and walked gently uphill to where the road bends to the left, by the garage, taking a footpath off to the right. From this point onwards, the route was not particularly well signposted.

As we passed through the gate, the path forked. One path went down the steep hill and the other went along the edge of the wooded area, more or less level. The latter was the proper path according to the map and the way marker.

We walked along the path, which turned right, downhill. It was very wet and the downhill section was quite muddy and slippery, particularly at the top. At the bottom, we met the alternative path.

We crossed the stream. On the other side, there were no way markers. There was the semblance of a path that went straight on, up the hill. A well-trodden, muddy path led off to the left, following the stream. I assumed this was the path we were meant to follow. I was subsequently proved to be wrong.

The path we took followed the stream. It was very muddy, and narrow in parts with sections near to the stream proving difficult to navigate. We eventually reached the point where we had no alternative than to find a path up the hill to join the cycle route, which we did just before the high bridge that took the cycle route over the stream.

We followed the cycle route/walkway back towards Greenmount, turning left where we had originally turned right, to walk along to Holcombe Road.

We crossed Holcombe Road, turning left and then turned right up Brookside Crescent, leading to Greenheys Crescent and home.

I subsequently learnt we had walked part of the new History Trail, devised by the Sunnywood Project.

Tuesday, 16th February 2021

It wasn't a particularly productive day. It was a case of doing a bit of this and a bit of that.

I took the recycling rubbish to the bins and cleaned the fire from its last use.

I ordered Jenny's eye drops, the current medication expiring next week.

I bled the bathroom radiator yet again.

I dealt with my E-mails and updated the accounts.

I started work on the new items for the car boot sales but gave up when we realised we were missing the centre dish from the Lazy Susan and I had difficulty pricing some items.

Wednesday, 17th February 2021

Our grocery shopping to Sainsbury's store at Heaton ark and Tesco at Prestwich went well enough and we called at Matthew and Carrie's house on the way back just to say hello. Our grocery order for a couple of items which they placed with their Ocado order hadn't arrived yet. Apparently, Ocado deliveries were struggling to keep pace with demand and had become unreliable. There was a lot to be said for doing your own shopping.

After lunch, I started looking for an updated burglar alarm system, which was both time-consuming and unsuccessful in that I couldn't get exactly what I wanted. Most systems seemed to be focussing on wireless technology, which was easy to install because it didn't need any wiring. The problem with that was that one had to remember to keep renewing the batteries in the sensors and that meant the sensors had to be easily accessible and robust enough for regular handling. My experience was that PIR sensors in particular were quite delicate and were best left alone once installed correctly.

Thursday, 18th February 2021

I ordered a new flame sensing device for the cooker since Jenny kept reminding me she was sometimes struggling to work her kitchen magic with only one oven. Fitting the device was slightly problematic given that my gas fitter was not making non-urgent house calls in the present Covid-19 lock-down. I did have a Plan B though. Having logged a possible problem with my central heating and booked a gas boiler service under my British Gas contract, I thought I might tempt the engineer to undertake the task at some time convenient to him. I could tackle the job but I preferred it to be done by a certified professional.

I also fixed the bathroom door. It had been catching the door jamb at the top when it closed. I'd had this problem before and I had shaved some wood off the jamb. It needed a little more taking off at the top.

Our burglar alarm system had been a little temperamental of late in that some of the numbers on the keypad didn't work. It had recently reached the stage where we could not use the number pad on the control panel to set the alarm and we had resorted to using the remote keypad, which was not very convenient. I found a new burglar alarm that went some way to what I wanted and sent an enquiry to the supplier in Bolton. It was in stock and available for click and collect provided I pre-ordered it.

I spent the rest of my day finishing off working through the TV listings for next week and deciding what to record.

Friday, 19th February 2021

I decided to replace the burglar alarm control panel and ordered a new one

I was helping Jenny in the kitchen for most of the day, washing up for her while she was making bread and other goodies.

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

Saturday, 20th February 2021

We went to collect the burglar alarm control panel from the supplier in Bolton. Navigating through the streets there was a nightmare. A lot of roads seemed to be missing street name plates, rendering the A to Z somewhat useless.

After collecting the alarm, Jenny wanted some more vegetables and we made our way to Sainsbury's store in Bolton. That was a waste of time. The store had very few organic vegetables.

I suggested making our way to the Heaton Park Store and we took the most direct route from Bolton to Bury. I then had the inspiration of turning right to take the road through Radcliffe to join the A56 at Whitefield, south of Bury, which was a more direct route to Heaton Park. There we had much more choice of organic produce and came home via the M66 with what we needed.

I made a start on removing the old alarm control panel, leaving off for lunch. It took the rest of the afternoon to sort out and label all the wiring, remove the wiring from the old control unit, remove the old box, work out where the wires needed to be for the new box, cut the holes in the plaster and cut back the channelling on the wiring and, finally, plaster up, leaving the plaster to dry overnight.

Sunday, 21st February 2021

I started off by removing the central heating control unit from the entrance hall. It was sited under the burglar alarm control unit and removing it would prevent it being covered in dust when I sanded down the filler I had put in yesterday. The plan was to move it into the lounge anyway.

I sanded down the plaster to level and smooth it off. I was going to do that by hand but that was too slow so I used my Bosch Multi-tool. That made something of a mess of the entrance hall. Fortunately, Jenny had moved out the ornaments, etc. so giving it a quick clean afterwards was not too much of a chore. On Jenny's suggestion, I had worked with the front door open, which helped to dissipate some of the dust.

I mixed another, small amount of plaster just to fill in here and there and, having removed the central heating thermostat, I filled in the holes where that had been as well.

It was a case of leaving that to set again and then sanding it by hand once more before painting it.

I positioned the central heating control unit in the lounge. The reason for moving it was that I thought it was affected by the kitchen radiator which was fixed to the opposite side of the single-brick wall. As a result, I was convinced it did not give a true reading of the room temperature and the effect was that both the lounge and the dining room could become quite cool even though the reading was a comfortable 21°C.

After that frenzied activity it was time to catch up with my e-mails and then more DIY – trimming Jenny's hair and cutting mine followed by the dust removal process, AKA a shower.

Monday, 22nd February 2021

While Jenny was preparing the breakfast porridge, I inspected the plastering and discovered I had put the cable entry holes in the wrong place. I would have to remove some of the filler. Even more annoying was that the hole in the alarm box for the power supply needed drilling out. A case of one step forward and two steps backwards yet again, I thought.

I undertook the above work using the Dremel to carefully cut into the plaster where it needed to be removed and then chiselling out the plaster.

I tidied up and we had lunch. It was a nice sunny afternoon so we went for a walk round Island Lodge, where we saw some coot amongst the mallard and gulls (the swans that were there the other day had gone). We walked up the track behind the Cormar Carpet factory, across the field of sheep to the top of Stormer Hill, across the road and up through Old Kays park, with views at the top across Two Brooks Valley to Holcombe Hill and the West Pennine Moors beyond. We dropped down the steep path by the stream to the bottom of the lane up to Hollymount, where Jenny decided we should return home rather than go up the lane and round the golf course. She had left some washing on the line in the afternoon sunshine and wanted to fetch it in before the warmth of the winter sun waned.

Tuesday, 23rd February 2021

We were not up very early and I wasn't feeling too well. It was also a lot cooler than yesterday, with an overcast sky and a blustery, cold wind. We put the heating on.

I finished touching up the plastering for the new alarm box and left that to set.

Rachel and I went into the loft to remove some old RJ45 cables that ran down the wall cavity from the back bedroom to the conservatory which Matthew and I installed many years ago. Rachel did most of the work, moving the loft insulation and crawling into awkward corners while I helped move the crawl boards around and handed her tools.

The cables between the back bedroom and the conservatory ran along the loft floor underneath the insulation so pulling them out from the bedroom was fairly straight forward once Rachel had found the wires where the roof met the side wall.

Pulling the wires from underneath the insulation was a process of working along the loft towards the back wall, lifting the insulation, which was far more difficult than it sounds. Fortunately, Rachel was fairly agile and a lot slimmer than me. There was one worrying point when the crawl board Rachel was using snapped in the middle and hit the ceiling plasterboard. Fortunately, she reacted quickly and put the bulk of her weight on the beams, so there was no damage to the ceiling. Unfortunately, it later transpired that Rachel had suffered some internal soft-tissue damage to her arm as a result of her quick reaction and grabbing the beams, which was quite painful.

Pulling the wires out from the conservatory was a little more challenging. First I had to move the filing cabinet to access the socket in the conservatory and disconnect the wires. The first wire came out with some aggressive pulling. The second one snagged and when it was pulled hard it started to rip the outer sheathing. Rachel said it had snagged on the hole and suggested making the hole bigger. I fetched the hammer and chisel and Rachel worked on the hole.

Unfortunately, she had her back to the light and it was difficult for her to see what she was doing so I started to rig more light for her. Before I had made much progress, she said she had freed up enough room to pull the wire out. With the second wire out, she pushed the pieces she had chiselled out back into the hole, we tidied up and Rachel put back all of the insulation as she made her way back to the loft access.

After a good couple of hours, we had put everything away and we could relax for the evening.

Wednesday, 24th February 2021

Grocery shopping took us to Unicorn in Chorlton, Sainsbury's store in Sale and Waitrose in Broadheath.

All went reasonably well, except that the LED 75 watt equivalent bulbs advertised on the Sainsbury's web site, being my purpose for stopping there, were not on the shelf. We did buy a good few other items we had not intended buying though.

We called briefly at Matthew and Carrie's house in passing just to say hello and then came home for lunch, somewhat later than usual after grocery shopping.

The late lunch didn't leave a lot of time to do much so I started thumbing through the TV listings for next week.

Thursday, 25th February 2021

We were up earlier for a change and started our productive day shortly after breakfast by washing the dishes as usual. I put Jenny's washing line out for the second time this year on the cool but dry day with sunny periods.

I tidied up the plastering in the hall, sanded it down, cleaned up and cleaned the wall with sugar-soap solution, ready for painting. That dried quickly and I gave the wall where the new alarm was to be fitted a coat of paint to match the rest of the hall. That would be ready for re-coating by about 4 p.m.

Meanwhile, I started preparation work on the hole in the back bedroom from which Rachel and I removed the wires on Tuesday. The first task was to put a backing into the hole to stop the filler from disappearing down the cavity. I used a piece of card from some old packaging and glued it in place using the flexible filler I had bought.

It was time for lunch.

There wasn't much more I could do until the paint dried in the hall and the filler set in the hole.

I spent the afternoon drawing the wiring diagram for the new alarm control box. Having done so, it seemed it was going to be more straightforward than I had anticipated, the only problem being that the existing remote key pad did not seem to be compatible with the new, more modern control unit. That was not so much of a problem because Matthew was in the process of upgrading his system, which was identical to my new one and he had a spare remote key pad.

I finished off scanning next week's TV listings during our evening's viewing.

Friday, 26th February 2021

The first challenge of the day was that when the laptop booted up, the screen was blank. The screen had been going blank every time I loaded my old copy of Adobe Photoshop and I overcame it temporarily by pressing the power button to put the system to sleep and then pressing it again to wake it up. I thought I had fixed the problem permanently by removing and reinstalling Adobe Photoshop, restarting the system after uninstalling and reinstalling.

I checked the graphics driver to make sure it was up to date. To my surprise, it wasn't. I updated the driver.

I went outside to empty the rubbish and had a chat with Sylvia, our neighbour across the back. She was anxious to have the fence replaced, since it had been up more or less since we moved in, in 1979.

I checked I had some sand and cement in the garage to fill the hole in the back bedroom. That would save me buying more filler, at least for the present.

We went off to Sainsbury's store at Heaton Park in search of the LED 75 watt equivalent bulbs I was going to buy for Rachel. They didn't have any on the shelf. We bought a couple of items and called at Matthew and Carrie's house on the way home to pick up the groceries they had ordered for us. I also collected the remote alarm key pad Matthew had spare.

When we came home, I checked the Sainsbury's web site for the bulbs I wanted, intending to see if I could order them for click and collect next Wednesday when we would be doing our main grocery shopping. There was no sign of them on the web site. I gave up.

What was going on with LED bulbs?

I bought the Lohas LED corn-stick bulbs for the landing and the dining room from Amazon and then couldn't buy any more for the lounge. When I finally managed to contact the Chinese manufacturer, I was told they were not supplying any more. There was not a UK market for them. Unbelievable.

They were the best, brightest, compact, B22 bulbs I had come across and they looked good as well. Then I found twin packs of ES LED filament bulbs in plain glass in the style of traditional tungsten filament bulbs that were equivalent to 75 watts and I bought two packs to replace three ES fluorescent bulbs in my floor-standing lamp from Sainsbury's at Heaton Park a couple of weeks ago. They had disappeared off the shelves.

How am I expected to become more environmentally friendly when manufacturers are not supplying what I want and shops aren't stocking them. The whole LED bulb market was a complete shambles.

After lunch, I put in the TV programmes for the coming week and started scanning another Datacare document for my web site.

I tidied up some of the TV programmes we had watched over the past couple of weeks after tea, during our evening's viewing of a DVD and some recorded programmes.

Saturday, 27th February 2021

It was early afternoon before I managed to start work on the installation of the new alarm system and it was simply a case of giving the wall another coat of paint before installing the backing of the box.

After that, I mixed some sand and cement to fill the hole in the wall in the back bedroom from which I had removed the backing box for a dual RJ45 outlet. I thought I had mixed too much of the filler but as it turned out, it wasn't enough. I decided to let the substantial amount of compound set before putting in more of the same.

The next job was to remove the old remote keypad in the front bedroom and install the one Matthew gave me yesterday which was compatible with the new alarm control unit. After removing the old keypad, the wall needed sanding and the old screw holes needed a small amount of filler. I used the flexible filler from the tube in my gun. I left that to set, too. The wall would need painting before fitting the new keypad.

I updated my wiring diagram to incorporate the new keypad and made some improvements to the diagram by adding colour to the lines representing wires to match the cable I was using. I also double checked the wiring for the external siren and strobe.

That took me to late afternoon and I finished off tidying up the TV programmes we had watched the pervious couple of weeks during the evening, finishing off by backing up my data.

I also managed to squeeze in a quick check of my e-mails and dealt with a couple that were reasonably urgent.

Sunday, 28th February 2021

I was wiring the new alarm box for most of the day. I also put some more filler in the hole in the back bedroom and gave part of the wall in our bedroom its first coat of paint to prepare it for fitting the new remote keypad for the alarm.

One could say it had been an alarming month!!