

Greenmount – January 2018

Monday, 1st January

It was a morning of preparation for the gathering of seven for the New Year's Day dinner and we enjoyed the company of Matthew and Carrie, Carrie's parents, Bob and Marie and Rachel. The dining room did not look bad after the previous day's efforts.

We had a lovely leg of organic lamb and a huge selection of organic vegetables, all thanks to Jenny's hard work in the kitchen while I kept a low profile in the lounge, tidying up.

The main course was followed by a choice of apple pie or Christmas pudding, all home-made and gluten-free. The apple pie was favorite, accompanied by ice cream or, in my case, pouring cream.

After our guests departed, we had a rather relaxing late afternoon and evening.

Tuesday, 2nd January

We started our day giving Rachel a lift home to collect her car to go to work. She had come on the tram to Bury the previous day, following her New Year celebrations the night before and had stayed overnight.

I spent the rest of the day on the computer dealing with E-mail, TV recordings and updating my web site and the village web site. I broke off briefly to light the fire early because it was cold and to help Jenny unpack her new Kenwood processor.

Wednesday, 3rd January

Being another miserable, dull, cold and very windy day, we didn't exactly rush out of our nice, warm bed. Following the usual morning chores, we went into Ramsbottom, where we bought birthday cards and a "new home" card from the excellent Card Talk shop, toured the charity shops, Jenny purchasing a couple of books and paid the inevitable visit to Tesco.

We lunched on returning home and I lit the fire, although not quite early enough to stop the central heating switching on at 5 p.m. because the thermostat did not register the cut off temperature. I could, of course, have switched it off but I forgot to do so.

I spent what was left of the afternoon updating and reconciling the accounts and dealing with E-mails, resulting in the second update to the village web site in two days.

My last useful act of the day was to update this blog.

Thursday, 4th January

We spent all day at the Old School working on the electrical jumble ready for the sale on Saturday.

Friday, 5th January

We dropped the Old School rubbish at the tip in Bury and went grocery shopping to Unicorn in Chorlton and Waitrose at Broadheath, near Altrincham. The journey down was pleasant enough, managing the permitted speed limit of 50 m.p.h. most of the way. Not so returning, where the traffic was extremely slow moving with frequent halts as we approached the bridge over the Manchester Ship Canal, all due to traffic joining from the M62 and the fact that the majority of drivers had never learned to “zip merge” at speed. In fact, allowing a vehicle to move in front of your vehicle seemed to be an alien concept to most drivers and leaving a gap for them to do so a mortal sin. How I wish drivers had to take an advanced test, including a skid pan and driving at the maximum permitted speed of 70 m.p.h. in order to pass their test and be allowed on the roads, with a requirement to retake the test every five years in order to continue to drive. I reckon that would reduce the traffic on the roads by around 80%.

While lunching at Waitrose, I read in the paper that Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, had been saying that the way forward was for genetically modified animals to produce meat. In my opinion, the man was a complete imbecile and should join Donald Trump in a secure institution for the mentally challenged.

Another main article concerned the current NHS crisis and the fact that it was struggling to cope with demand. So I wondered why our politicians didn't see this coming years ago and prepare for it. For what were we paying them? These people and, particularly those who sit in the Cabinet, were supposed to serve us, the public. So why weren't they doing so? Was our government fit for purpose? Was there a legal opportunity to have the present Conservative government thrown out of office for failing the general public that elected them? Wouldn't that be interesting – and a warning to anyone else trying to form a government!

Saturday, 6th January

For anyone who regularly reads this diary of non-events, you will probably have deduced that this, being the first Saturday of the month, should have been the regular, villager's drop-in. Just to confuse you and several people in the village who attend this monthly gathering, the drop-in was moved to the following week in order to accommodate a sort of intermediate jumble sale and we were selling the electrical equipment, as usual. What was unusual was that we were allocated a corner of the main hall, which was far less claustrophobic than our normal corner in the large room next to the hall, called the middle room, probably because it was in the middle of the building. Since we had not had much time to test and price a great deal of jumble, we had a lot of free table space and it was suggested that we use that to sell some DVDs, which went quite well and boosted our

takings.

The sale started at 10 a.m. and was over by noon. We spent a good half hour tidying up, particularly in the cellar, where our electrical jumble was stored.

We came home for lunch, which Jenny prepared while I washed all the pots from the previous day. That was followed by a brief rest, giving me the opportunity to switch on the computers so that they would record the TV programmes for the day, then we went to see Matthew and Carrie and returned home for tea about 5:30 p.m.

Jenny had to cook the pork that had been marinating in a home-made barbecue sauce, so I had the opportunity to listen to the recording of Jazz Record Requests.

It had been a nice day outside, giving us the first glimpses of the sun this year, if somewhat cold.

Sunday, 7th January

Following a late night the previous evening, it was around 10:30 before we prised ourselves out of bed and noon before we had finished breakfast and the routine, morning chores.

The sun was shining out of a bright, blue sky with not a cloud in sight and, following a very cold night, the frost was melting where the ground was not in the shade.

The first job of the day was to put away the Christmas tree and the various boxes of Christmas items in the garage loft. While up there, I brought down the box of old cork tiles.

The second job of the day was to see if I could resolve the problem of the wooden floor, or, at least, the first three rows of it, which was all that had been laid so far, from bouncing up and down on the approach to the lounge door due to the floor being not being level even after the application of self-levelling compound. I ascertained where the largest dip under the wooden floor was and pushed a cork tile under it. Walking on the wooden floor seemed to have removed the bounce from it. I left a message for Richard telling him that I thought I had solved the problem.

I was about to tackle the compost bin, which had fallen apart, in the back garden when we had two simultaneous gremlin attacks.

First, Jenny's laptop black-screened and when I powered it off and on again to reload it and logged in, it just sat there waiting to load Windows 7. Another hard boot took me into Windows and it spent the rest of the day running a full system scan, which only found 44 tracking cookies.

Second, the Miele washer displayed an error. The filter was blocked in the drain and I had to manually empty it and we cleaned the filter.

While I was waiting for the laptop scan to finish, I tried version 16 of Norton Utilities on the

Old School Windows 10 laptop I kept for testing computer items we were given in the jumble. Surprisingly, that seemed to work a treat and I decided I would give Jenny's Windows 7 laptop the performance treatment, once I had found a way of backing up the Windows drive.

We had an early tea about 5:30 p.m. and settled down for our evening's entertainment.

It was late in the evening when I remembered I needed to update both the village web site and that for Tottington and District Civic Society. I finally finished that just after midnight.

While in the process of the updates we had two brief power dips, enough to take down my server and interrupt my TV recording of "And Now for Something Completely Different". I was most annoyed. Fortunately, it didn't affect the work I was doing on the laptop, thanks to the battery back-up.

Monday, 8th January

I spent the lovely, sunny, freezing-cold day on administration work in the nice warm lounge with the heating on.

Firstly I looked for a birthday present for Rachel and found exactly what she wanted.

I turned my attention to the car, which needed servicing and its MOT test and certificate before the end of the month so I could tax it. I would normally have booked it in at Tottington Motors but their service quality seemed to have taken something of a dive since they moved to their new premises so I decided to look elsewhere and Carrie had recommended Finney's Garage. I booked it in for Monday 15th January and took some time to prepare the paperwork, documenting the service history and a list of work, since this particular garage had not previously seen my fourteen-year-old car.

I took a little time out to help Jenny with putting her new Kenwood mixer back together after dismantling it to wash it before use, with making our bed, she having changed the bed-linen and to put out the bin for the morning collection.

I finished off scanning in the manual for the new Dyson Cool fan, producing the PDF and backed up my laptop user files to my desktop.

Tuesday, 9th January

It was a cold, dull day and another day of administration work. I lit the fire early, about 3 p.m. and it didn't raise the house temperature sufficiently to prevent the thermostat from switching on the heating at 5 p.m.

My work included placing an order for a new laptop for Rachel's birthday. She had wanted one for a long time, her old Dell XPS Windows XP system being somewhat slow and old for her needs. I knew the feeling.

I had a late night chat on Skype with Edith in NZ just before retiring. She said she would like to visit England once more but she didn't think it would happen. She asked if we would make it to NZ again and I said it was unlikely.

Wednesday, 10th January

Richard responded to my telephone message just as I was finishing the routine morning chores and he and his mate, Jim, would be with us at 8 a.m. on Monday morning to deal with the dining room floor. I had forgotten I had to take the car in for 8:30 that morning for its service and MOT. Jenny said she would stay here while I took the car down to the garage.

I spent the rest of the morning cleaning the fire and the hearth.

We had a snack lunch and, after checking my E-mail to confirm Rachel's laptop was ready for collection and we whizzed off to John Lewis in the Trafford Centre. The round trip was amazingly trouble-free, apart from a bit of a crawl as we approached the M62/M60 junction on the return trip. It was the old story of the vast majority of drivers not having a clue how to merge and understanding the need to leave a gap for other vehicles to manoeuvre.

We called at the Breandlesholme post office on the way out to drop some cards into the post box and send Edith's 90th birthday card by air mail to NZ.

We also stopped at Finney's garage to clarify some points regarding the car service and MOT on the coming Monday.

We had three near-misses on the return journey. The first was on a roundabout when a small vehicle in the left lane veered toward our near-side going round the roundabout as we joined the M60. The second was when a white van swerved in front of us as we left the motorway at Prestwich when the driver realised he or she had almost missed the exit. The closest call was at Whitefield when a small white van swerved out of the slower-moving, right-hand lane in front of us in the left-hand lane just as the front of our vehicle was drawing level with his or her rear end and I had to jam on the breaks. I made the driver of that vehicle and those of all surrounding vehicles aware of my displeasure. The vehicle sped off, well in excess of the speed limit, in the distance and veered left at the next junction, towards Radcliffe.

Safely home, I tended to yet more paperwork and then we had an early tea so we could go to an evening talk on the history of the Manchester Ship Canal by a gentleman I had met at one of the Dementia Awareness Sessions, organised by the Tottington and District Horticultural Society and to which I had introduced him. The talk was excellent and inspired us to take the six-hour cruise along the canal from Manchester to Liverpool, something I had considered before.

Thursday, 11th January

It was a long day. Joani collected me at 9:15 a.m. for two Dementia Awareness presentations in the management suite of the Rock shopping precinct in Bury, one in the morning and one

in the afternoon. We both took packed lunches.

I was home just after 3 p.m., caught up on yet more computer-work, had tea and went off again for a 7 p.m. meeting of the Tottington District Civic Society at Tottington Health Centre. I came up under Any Other Business to discuss the future of the web site, since I was planning to decommission my server. There was agreement that everyone should go way and take a good look at the web site.

I returned home just after 8 p.m. and finished off a large update to the village web site on which I had been working for the previous few days.

Friday, 12th January

I spent the morning sorting out the compost bin and muck spreading.

The front of the compost bin had been forced off by the sheer weight and volume of the rotted matter at the bottom of the pile inside, new additions to the waste having spilled out onto the garden. I completely removed the front panel and with the aid of the wheelbarrow, shovelled up the spillage and also some of the new material into temporary storage while I dug out much of the dark, rotted matter and spread it under the blackcurrant bushes.

I had never seen so many young worms. There were hundreds of them, obviously doing a grand job, helping to turn our fruit and vegetable waste into fertiliser.

I was then able to replace the front panel and snap it into place, opening the lid so I could put the load from the wheelbarrow back inside.

That was a good morning's work and I came in for lunch, unknowingly bringing a small worm with me that Jenny found wriggling about on a piece of matting on the kitchen floor. That went in one of the raised beds.

Rachel arrived in the afternoon and we gave her a birthday present.

I gave Jenny and Rachel a lift to Bury to watch the latest Star Wars film and collected them later, tidying up my media on the computer in the mean time.

I later stored the TV recordings for the week, once I had completely reconfigured the TV tuner on the laptop. Windows Media Centre had been a little temperamental of late and that seemed the best way to fix it.

Saturday, 13th January

We spent the morning at the Old School Drop In, working on electrical jumble that had recently been donated. We did not have enough time to deal with any of the jumble in the cellar that needed testing.

We came home for lunch and then went grocery shopping to Tesco at Prestwich – a quick shop this week due to lack of time.

In the evening, we took Rachel out for a birthday meal to the Swan and Cemetery.

Sunday, 14th January

We didn't see the light of day until nearly noon. After brunch, we went off to deliver the latest issue of the Greenmount Newsletter in the bitter cold, dull day.

We lit a fire on returning home to thaw out. Tea was an unusual one in that it was left-over of cold chicken and roasted vegetables pizza with salad. Just what one needed on a cold, winter's evening. Still, it was very tasty and we didn't really need a big tea after the previous evening's meal.

It wasn't until we were about to retire for the night that I remembered I needed to update the village web site and that took me an hour and a half, crawling into bed about fifteen minutes after midnight.

Monday, 15th January

I was out of bed as the alarm sounded at 7 a.m. The first task of the day was to take down the dining-room curtains in anticipation of Richard and his mate, Jimmy, arriving at 8 a.m. to deal with the floor. Remember that? The ongoing floor saga?

I had to take the car into Finney's garage for a service and MOT. I had planned to be away by 7:15 and I was running ten minutes late. The journey to the garage was not too bad. There was a lot of traffic and that was hampered by two large articulated lorries which I eventually managed to overtake (I am of the opinion that large commercial vehicles should be banned from the roads from 7 a.m. to 10 a.m. and from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. on weekdays) and a driver in front of me who slowed down, eventually put on his left indicator when I flashed my headlights to tell he or she to speed up and tried to nudge into the lane to the left. He or she didn't make it by the time we approached the traffic lights so he or she sped off through the lights at red.

I had just finished handing over the car at the garage when I received a text from Carrie to say she was leaving to pick me up. I replied by text and then tried to call her when I received a second, identical text. She didn't answer because she was on her way.

I was home for 8:15 and there was no sign of Richard or Jimmy, who were due at 8 a.m. Jenny said she had seen a black van but it had gone away again. Meanwhile Jenny had moved the chairs out of the dining room and I helped to cover up the table before we breakfasted in the lounge on a small, fold-up table, using two of the chairs.

I received a call on my mobile from Richard asking if Jimmy was here. I told him there was no sign of him. Richard said he had been but there was no answer so he went away again. I

told him we had been up since 7 a.m. He said Jimmy told him there was no car on the drive. I explained that was because I had taken it to the garage and that Jenny had been in. The living-room lights were on and the curtains were drawn back. Richard said he would contact Jimmy.

I had a day on the computer again. I updated the village web site to correct minor errors Alistair had found following my request for him to check it after the recent major updates. I searched for a couple of items Joani needed for her laptop for the dementia awareness presentations and, at her request, ordered them from Amazon on my account, for which she would reimburse me. I looked at upgrading my single PC Acronis 2015 licence to a 3-PC Acronis 2018 licence for about £42. I still hadn't made up my mind about a licence for Office 365 to cover our two PCs, the village laptop and Rachel's new laptop.

I telephoned the garage and ascertained that the car was ready. Matthew arranged with Carrie to take me down to the garage about 4:45 p.m.

I telephoned Richard, not having heard from him. He said he was waiting to hear from Jimmy about rescheduling the work this week and would let me know.

Finney's seemed to have done a good job. They had to fit a new off-side, rear, brake calliper, the same one for which Tottington Motors billed me in June of last year. They also repaired my temperature gauge that was not working after Tottington Motors said they had fixed the problem by replacing the thermostat, despite me suggesting that I thought it was the temperature sensor that was at fault. Guess what the fault was. Yes, the temperature sensor.

Having received a letter from Tottington Motors reminding me that the service and MOT was due, I decided to reply, mentioning my dissatisfaction with their work including the aforementioned brake calliper and temperature sensor, together with them having to replace the alternator three times, twice under warranty, because two of the replacements almost fell apart.

Tuesday, 16th January

I had a morning dementia awareness session with Joani at Skipton Building Society in Bury. This was different to previous sessions in that all of the attendees had practical experience of caring for or dealing with people living with dementia and wanted to learn more about it and there was a great deal of audience participation, which was most welcome.

I had lunch and sat down to let that rest, working on the computer.

Not having heard from Richard (Newcombe Trade Services), the prime contact, or Jimmy, Richard's mate, about our dining-room floor, we agreed that if it was not completed this week, we should give these chaps the heave-ho and either tackle the job ourselves or find someone else. While Richard was a nice bloke and meant well, his communication skills were virtually non-existent and good intentions didn't get the job done, a job that should have been completed before Christmas last year.

I spent some time in the afternoon cleaning Jenny's old Kenwood mixer which involved removing the plastic cover plate underneath the tilting head to reveal a black velvet-type cover over the workings that was soaked in oil. I left that well alone and cleaned round the edges, leaving Jenny to wash and wipe the plastic bit I had removed. I put it all back together and Jenny tested it by making some scones. Very nice they were too.

Richard telephoned to say that Jimmy would be dropping off some items for the floor the following day and both of them would be here to do the work on Saturday. That was fine by me.

Wednesday, 17th January

I had an invitation to go walking with Frank, Mike and Steve, something I had not done for a long time. I didn't go. First, there was a lot of snow about and it had been very wet recently, with showers forecast for the day so the ground across country would be very soggy and, in this area, waterlogged in parts. Second, I didn't have any waterproof over-trousers and my waterproof jacket was past its best. Third, it was damn cold. Fourth, I was expecting Jimmy to drop off some items for the flooring and Jenny had arranged to go out for lunch with Gwen so I needed to ait in for him.

I spent much of the day cutting wood for the fire, breaking off for about an hour for lunch and when Jimmy arrived.

I knocked off late afternoon as the light started to fade and the weather worsened, lighting the fire. By 5 p.m. it was so cold, I switched the heating on as well as having the fire and within an hour or so the temperature was up to 21.5°C so the heating cut out and the fire continued to raise the temperature to a more than comfortable level.

I managed to squeeze in a little more work on my web site redesign too.

Thursday, 18th January

After a very restless night, awoken in the wee small hours and kept awake by the strong winds rattling around outside, it was going on for lunchtime before we were up and about.

I didn't do much apart from work on my web site redesign.

Friday, 19th January

We set off later than planned for Unicorn. We didn't have time to call at Asda, which wasn't a problem because we didn't want much from Asda anyway.

We called at the Dennis Gore Chemist shop in Prestwich for some Saw Palmetto. That was out of stock – again – and would be in on Tuesday. I said I would call next Friday.

I managed to take the correct, back roads to Unicorn this time.

We called at Sainsbury's supermarket on the way to Waitrose and traffic was heavy as we approached Broadheath.

Lunch at Waitrose was alright this week, Jenny having the soup that contained no gluten. I chose a nice, chicken and chorizo roll, subsequently discovering that the nutritional information on the packet suggested it wasn't exactly a healthy choice and I should have had the plain chicken salad sandwich instead.

The journey back was alright until we reached the approach to the M60 Ship Canal bridge and from there it was a steady crawl almost all the way to our exit at Prestwich.

Once home, I used the evening to put the TV programme recordings for the week ahead into the computers.

The desktop proved somewhat problematic and I ended up completely retuning the channels in Windows Media Centre, finally retiring around midnight.

Saturday, 20th January

Two power outages in the early hours woke us as they affected the remote keypad in our bedroom.

The laptop was alright because it had its battery back up.

It wasn't until the early afternoon I discovered the problem with the desktop. The power failure had not only switched off the computer but it had lost its BIOS settings and I had to default those on powering up. Then the wrong time and date threw Media Centre into total confusion and I had to resynchronise the settings with the Internet manually. Media Centre subsequently crashed the computer when I tried testing the tuners to make sure they would pick up a station and record. With the computer reloaded again, it took some fiddling to make Media Centre recognise both tuners, which it finally did.

Meanwhile, Rick and Jimmy had arrived at 8 a.m. to start work on the dining room floor and that went well. The wood was down by 2 p.m., the dips being packed underneath with old cork tiles as I had suggested. That just left the skirting to fit.

The work was completed and the chaps went on their merry way having done an excellent job.

Sunday, 21st January

We started to move the furniture back into the dining room from the conservatory, piece by piece. Jenny cleaned and polished it and, in between fetching pieces in, I filled in a few gaps between the skirting and the wall, as I had to do in the lounge when I installed the skirting

there, because the walls were not exactly flat and the corners not exactly at 90 degrees.

Having filled in and touched up the paintwork on the walls here on there, apart from the radiator wall, we assembled the large unit in situ. The floor was not level enough to avoid having to pack the unit with pieces of cork tile, although it required far less than it did before.

We finished off the day by bringing in the dining chairs.

Monday, 22nd January

We took a late morning trip into Ramsbottom and, apart from touring the charity shops, we acquired a few items from the hardware shop. Jenny wanted some lining paper for the dining-room unit cupboard shelves and drawers and a proper, traditional mop with a wooden handle for cleaning and polishing the new dining-room floor. I also picked up a pointing trowel for those awkward bits of work that were hard or awkward to reach with some gaps round the pipe-work to the dining-room radiator in mind.

After lunch at home, we resumed work in the dining-room, bringing in the drawers for the unit. Jenny cleaned them and sorted out and reorganised their contents while I cut lining paper for them and also for the cupboard shelves. By tea-time, we had the four drawers back in the unit and the left-hand cupboards reorganised.

I even managed to squeeze in a little work on my web site redesign while my lunch settled.

After tea, we went off to the church for a meeting of the Friends of Hunt Fold where we were informed of the developments relating to our group of neighbours taking over the maintenance of our green areas. It was all looking quite good with the backing of our local councillors and the support of the local council.

Tuesday, 23rd January

It was more of the same in that we were still lining the dining-room unit shelves, unpacking the items from the storage boxes, deciding which to keep and which to consign to the car booty and organising the shelves and cupboards. I also put up four pictures in the dining room, all with a Parisian theme and hung the bat on the curtain rail, upside down, as one does.

Jenny took some time out for a hair-cut and I ended my day peeling spuds for tea while Jenny's Windows 7 laptop recovered from a Blue Screen Of Death due to a missing clock interrupt on a secondary processor (I didn't have a clue what that meant either) and a subsequent refusal to scan for Windows Updates. The latter issue was resolved by renaming the Software Distribution folder in the Windows directory (thanks to advice from Microsoft after the Microsoft "fix it" software didn't solve the problem automatically, although Microsoft did not explain why the problem occurred), resulting in the loss of my update history in Windows Update.

Wednesday, 24th January

My drawer-lining skills extended to the kitchen pan-drawers and I removed the bottom drawer so Jenny could retrieve some items that had dropped down the back and clean inside the drawer-housing unit for the first time since the kitchen was refurbished in 2007. It wasn't easy to remove the drawers.

The unpacking, sorting and positioning of items in the dining room continued.

As we left off for lunch, I de-iced the old fridge, the bottom of which was caked in ice again. I resolved to clean out the drain pipe as soon as I could. Meanwhile it was back to the unpacking and sorting.

Thursday, 25th January

We had an early morning trip to Radcliffe for Jenny's routine medical appointment and on the return journey we called at the tip in Bury to dump the rubbish from the dining-room floor fitting. We called at Tesco for a few items and I left Jenny browsing the shelves while I nipped into Bury on a little bit of business, returning to find Jenny still browsing the shelves.

The first task at home was to wash the pots from the previous evening and breakfast and the second was lunch.

Afterwards, we resumed the sorting and tidying, making some progress in the conservatory, including my desk, at long last. Part of that procedure was to shred all my old receipts and financial paperwork from 2010, reusing the folder for 2018, having thus far filed all the paperwork in the 2017 folder. I kept a folder for each year and seven complete years plus the current year. Before shredding old paperwork, I went through it to make sure I had electronic copies of any crucial documents. A good friend of mine who shall remain nameless considered me to be too well organised. He had all his old paperwork, all mixed up in boxes and all in storage. It must have been a nightmare trying to find any important documentation.

Friday, 26th January

Our weekly grocery shopping spree took in Greenmount Old School to drop off some empty containers we had borrowed to store items from the dining room while it was being decorated, the vet's practice in Bury to collect the cat's medication for another month, Asda at Pilsworth, the Dennis Gore Chemist shop in Prestwich for some Saw Palmetto that should have been put on one side for me and had which been sold to someone else, there being no more in stock, Unicorn in Chorlton, Sainsbury's supermarket in Sale to return some gluten-free pitta bread that turned out to be mouldy when we unpacked our shopping the previous week, for which we obtained a refund, Waitrose in Broadheath for lunch and groceries and, finally, Bargain Booze in Tottington to top up our stock of wine.

I spent the evening putting in the television programmes for recording for the coming week

and tidying up my media on the computers, finally making it to bed about 1:30 a.m.

Saturday, 27th January

Most of Jenny's birthday we spent at Greenmount Old School, testing and pricing electrical jumble.

We had an early evening meal at the Miller and Carter restaurant in the village to celebrate with Matthew, Carrie, Carrie's parents, Bob and Marie and Rachel. It was very nice.

Sunday, 28th January

It was 10 a.m. before I saw the light of day and I spent much of it updating the three web sites I managed, some more than once, dealing with my media and my E-mails and updating this blog, during which my lunch came in on a plate as Jenny and Rachel were busy baking in the kitchen.

I managed to break off briefly around 3 p.m. to pre-heat the fire flue so that it did not blow back smoke and to fetch in a large bag of wood for burning.

Monday, 29th January

I seemed to be struggling to rise early these days and it was another late start, spending most of the day tidying up my desk in the conservatory. During the decorating period, akin to the dark ages, the mound of documents and bits of hardware grew day by day and now my desk was accessible again, it was a case of sorting it all and putting everything where it should be so we could actually find it when we wanted it. That proved to be a slow process, particularly since I had shelved some rather lengthy administrative tasks on the desk, my excuse for not dealing with them before now being that I could not reach them. Fortunately, none of them was urgent.

I did start my day by replacing the light bulb in the bathroom that had not been working for several days. Since it was one of three, it was not so much of a problem, although this really constructive and productive act did give me a sense of achievement even if it only took ten minutes.

I performed a couple of other brief, constructive tasks. I emptied the rubbish into the appropriate recycling bins and put out the food waste bin and the glass/plastic/tin bin for the collection the following day. I also helped Jenny bring in a large box of apples from the garage so she could start peeling and processing them in readiness for the apple crumble she was making for the [D-CaFF](#) in February. That took care of her day.

Tuesday, 30th January

It was a case of finishing off tidying my desk.

Relieving the monotony, Jimmy called to collect his money for the dining-room floor as I was lighting the fire

Wednesday, 31st January

Jenny decided we were going to tackle the bookcases that had taken up temporary residence in the lounge and which we intended relocating in the dining room.

Since moving both of the bookcases back into the dining room would obscure the new double socket I had installed (I had replaced the single socket with a double-switched socket and the bookcases obscured the original single socket), we decided we would only move one bookcase back and we would populate that with Jenny's cookery books which she would thin down and concentrate the gluten-free books on the upper shelves.

Needless to say, all did not go according to plan. Having emptied the bookcase in question, removed the screws that secured it to its partner and carefully manoeuvred it into position on the wooden floor, we decided it did not look very nice, spoiling the appearance of the dining-room.

We decided to have some lunch and discuss the situation. We agreed to put the bookcase back in the lounge, Plan B being to dispose of the piano as soon as possible so we could then move the bookcases into that gap.

Putting the bookcase back was not as easy as removing it and we had to half-empty the second bookcase in order to line up the screws to secure the two together. That gave us the incentive to discard the items we no longer wanted from the second bookcase as well as the first and the opportunity to dust both.

It was approaching 5 p.m. by the time the lounge was back in any sort of order and the cat had been complaining that there was no fire in front of which she could lay and warm her ageing joints.

I managed to squeeze in a little more administrative work, dealing with the folder of pending work, compiled when tidying my desk. And I wound up the lounge grandfather clock.