

Greenmount – July 2015

What a scorcher Wednesday 1st July was. Temperatures reached at least 31°C here in Greenmount. I spent the day gardening, when I could muster the strength in the overwhelming heat and when I couldn't, I was tampering with Jenny's laptop trying to resolve the system crash problem.

On the latter subject, I had seen a crash dump that suggested an Nvidia driver was at fault, Nvidia being the type of graphics card installed. I uninstalled the graphics card from the system hardware and its drivers and reloaded the computer without any network connection so Windows 7 would not reinstall the drivers automatically.

Running the laptop without the Nvidia drivers with the screen in default graphics mode did not solve the problem, so I reinstalled the drivers from a downloaded file I had acquired from Nvidia the previous evening. It was a case of back to square one.

It occurred to me that the problem did not arise when running in safe mode and I decided to double check that as my next step. If that were the case, then making a note of the differences between safe mode and normal mode and then removing one of the differences in normal mode at a time ought to identify the culprit – unless, of course it was a case of two or more items interacting to cause the fault. I decided on this lengthy and painstaking course of action, which would take some time.

Meanwhile, I strimmed the grass on the side garden and tended the edging along the front border, adding more top soil to build up the flower bed. I cut back the ivy along the garage wall to prevent it from growing into the garage and then we decided to prune back the shrubs that were growing apace and out of hand.

That done, we were left with a whole bunch of garden waste and we decided to take it to the tip in the trailer, having cut off any wood suitable for our log burner, before the rains came.

We called at the Incredible Edible plot to collect the large bag of rubbish and added that to our load.

We managed to arrive home and put away the trailer in the garage and the car under the car port just before it started to rain, although it turned out to be just a few spots and didn't last long. Very heavy rain was forecast for the evening and there were flood warnings out for Manchester and the north west, so we expected the worst.

In the late evening, we had one of the longest and most spectacular electrical storms I had seen for years and the rains did not come until it was just about over.

It was still quite warm and all the soaking from the heavy rain the previous evening had dried up by Thursday morning, 2nd July.

I took out the shears and cut the remaining edging on the side garden. I took out the lawnmower to cut the front lawn and it started to rain. I put the lawnmower away and it stopped raining. I took the lawnmower out again and cut the front lawn, after which I cleaned out the lawnmower from the past couple of days' activity and put it away.

I took out the strimmer and strimmed the front lawn and then I started to trim off the weeds along the footpath. The latter desperately needed relaying. Unfortunately, the council hadn't got any money to pay for it. That was because (a) the government didn't give it enough to do what needed to be done, (b) the government wouldn't let it raise the rates for it to generate more income (c) it paid its senior staff too much money and (d) it paid out too much in expenses to its councillors.

The rains came again and put a stop to my activities once more. I gave up and came in for lunch.

I had been using Jenny's laptop in what spare moments I could muster since installing the new graphics drivers and, while it suffered from the odd crash, it did not hang or crash with any frequency, enough for me to think that my efforts had not been entirely wasted. I resolved to monitor the situation.

The rain stopped long enough for me to finish strimming the weeds along the footpath and along the gutter in the road - until I ran out of line and I had to finish off with the hoe.

I came in to rewind my strimmer line and, being a job for an octopus, Jenny helped me with an extra pair of hands and we managed to complete the task after a fashion. By the time I had the line back in the strimmer, it was raining persistently, something it does a lot here. I can't help thinking that if this earth had been better designed, we would have better weather and there wouldn't be quite so many deserts. Still, at least it made the place nice and green.

The next task outside would have been to clear the weeds from the block paving but judging by the forecast, it was probably going to be necessary to start all over again and cut the grass when we did get the next couple of dry days.

By Friday morning 3rd July, Jenny's laptop was crashing big-time. When I did manage to get it to hold together for more than a few minutes, I discovered I had a problem with the software installation for my TV tuner. I decided to download and install the latest software and drivers for it and that took three attempts, after which the computer seemed to settle down.

To compound matters, my desktop lost contact with its wireless mouse and keyboard and I had to connect a USB keyboard and use that to shut it down properly and reload it. After that, it seemed to be alright and I left it to record a TV programme while we went grocery shopping, not trusting the laptop to hold itself together.

By this time, I was thinking of calling in an exorcist.

Our first stop was at Asda Pilsworth, where Yellow Tail Chardonnay and Shiraz was still on offer at two bottles for £10. We purchased another six of each on the basis that we might as well stock up before it went back up to its normal price of between £7 and £8 a bottle. We bought another few items before making our way to Unicorn in Chorlton and then to Waitrose in Broadheath, near Altrincham, where we lunched as usual. The café still had no gluten-free food for Jenny.

We returned home to a very warm house and my desktop computer had been overcome by the heat to the extent it had given up on the TV recording. It was not that important, so I didn't really care too much about missing it.

I rebooted the desktop and it was fine.

The laptop also seemed to be working alright and it struck me that it only really got upset when the TV HDMI cable was plugged in and the TV was switched off. I decided to experiment with this scenario and all the tests to date indicated that loading the computer with the HDMI cable unplugged or loading it with the cable plugged in and the TV switched on did not cause the computer to crash. Where this was leading, I wasn't sure.

I finally managed to find the time and the effort to wash the car on Saturday 4th July, after visiting the village drop-in and lunch at home.

The highlight of the afternoon was dropping the cap of the old, plastic Coca-Cola bottle I use to hold excess, made-up, screen-wash solution down inside the engine compartment and having to fish for it with a flexible grabber. Jenny tried to reach it for me, having thinner arms than me and succeeded only in covering herself in grease and grime. Perseverance and determination together with a little bit of patience yielded success, not something with which I had been familiar of late.

I tidied up, put the car back under the car port, resolved to polish it under cover the following day, came in and fell asleep for about an hour.

I woke up about half way through Jazz Record Requests on BBC Radio 3 and Jenny's laptop was still running well and recording the programme for me. Unfortunately, that didn't last as the PC crashed a few minutes later.

Now I had started the machine with the HDMI cable unplugged and subsequently plugged it in. I unplugged it again to restart the computer and it automatically continued recording. The bit I had missed didn't matter as all the tunes played, except the last one, were not to my liking. The benefit of recording was that I could easily skip the bits I didn't like and listen only to the really good Jazz, which holds true to its origins in New Orleans.

I left the cable unplugged until the evening when we wanted to watch some recorded programmes and switched on the TV. So far, so good.

We should have been at our car boot pitch on Sunday 5th July but retiring late the night before, Jenny not feeling 100% and the forecast for rain in the early afternoon, the time of which kept changing, led us to the decision to postpone it for yet another week.

Instead, I polished the car and Jenny helped by cleaning the windows inside and out.

I had started Jenny's laptop, with the HDMI cable unplugged when we rose from our slumbers and it was still chugging away nicely by the time we broke off for lunch. This is looking fairly conclusive. The next step, when I had time, was to determine what driver(s) and/or other software was loaded when the HDMI cable was connected. It seemed it was that which is causing the problem.

After a short rest, with the RT crossword, after lunch, I went back out and started on the inside of the car. That was short-lived. A telephone call from Christine necessitated me driving round to her house to fix a problem with her E-mail. That took about two minutes and my reward was a whole load of freshly-picked strawberries for tea, which was very nice of Christine.

I came home and decided not to go back to work on the car. It had started to rain and turned quite cold as I was at Christine's house and that had developed into a very heavy downpour. The sun came out later but it didn't persuade me to resume work.

Monday 6th July was a cool, grey start, so it was back to normal. I finished off the last crossword clue, having to seek Internet assistance because I found the clue too vague. While loading Jenny's laptop, it occurred to me that the problem with the HDMI connection might be something to do with the TV trying to communicate in some way with the computer, since HDMI can work both ways.

I checked the TV settings and discovered that something called HDMI Control was enabled. This allowed the TV to communicate with connected devices so that if turned on or off, it could activate or deactivate connected devices left in standby. Deactivating the graphics card would not be a good idea so I disabled this functionality. Unfortunately, it was a global setting for all TV HDMI ports so I could not select just to turn it off for the laptop. This was not really a problem though.

I resumed my car cleaning, working on the inside, under the car port since rain was forecast. I managed to clean the dashboard and the very bottom of the back end, if you will pardon the expression, where the spare wheel resided, before lunch, leaving the spare wheel to be pumped up to pressure while eating. One of the reasons it had taken me so long to achieve so little was that I had been trying to remove a non-slip pad that Jenny had stuck onto the dashboard a good while ago. It's non-slip coating had slipped away. Unfortunately, the glue was not giving in so easily. It had, in fact, melted into the vinyl coating of the dashboard covering, so I did what I could with it.

After lunch, work resumed and I managed to finish off the boot, the offside doors and interior and the engine compartment (i.e. the underside edges of the bonnet).

That left the nearside interior and doors to do.

Jenny's laptop was still running and it was beginning to look like my diagnosis of the long-standing problem of the laptop crashing unpredictably due to the TV doing something along the HDMI cable that the graphics card did not like was correct. If only it had said something.

I was at the Incredible Edible plot for 9:45 on Tuesday 7th July for a meeting with Joe Goldstone from Bury Council to discuss the issue of vehicles being parked on the Holcombe Road end of the unmade road leading to the footpath past the IE plot. Vehicles were often parked face-on to the wall of the church grounds and, on the very end, obstructed the footpath along Holcombe Road to the extent the passers-by had to walk out into the busy road, often with young children, to pass them. The plan was to introduce double-yellow lines on that corner of the road up to the point at which the council ceased to have responsibility. Villagers would then police illegal parking and report offenders.

There was a further issue of vehicles parking facing the bench, on the corner, by the war memorial, overlapping the footpath and pushing planted tubs back from the edge of the footpath. This was past the building line along Holcombe Road and thus outside the council's remit, so we were free to erect bollards if we wished, to stop inconsiderate drivers from disturbing the tubs we had planted, so long as we did not disturb underground services.

After that meeting, which was also attended by Donna who does all the planting and weeding and by one of our councillors, Dorothy, I discussed the shed project with Donna. The plan was to have a shed in the church grounds in which we could store bits and pieces for the IE plot. Alistair had sent out an E-mail to say he had a reasonable price for the provision for a shed, complete with groundwork and installation and the only major question remaining was where to put it, the proposed shed being too tall for the location suggested by the Church Elders. I said I would talk to our Minister, Andrew about it.

I was going to help Donna put up some canes for the beans but we were rained off and I was soaked by the time I arrived home.

I spent the rest of Tuesday, the whole of Wednesday and most of Thursday trying to fix Jenny's laptop and, to cut a long story short, I decided that the problem might be more to do with a corrupt Windows 7 installation than anything else, having run various diagnostics. I did think at one stage that the new memory was suspect and I sent an E-mail telling Offtek I needed to return it because it was faulty until the damn thing lost half of the new 2 x 4GB modules I had installed to overcome a similar problem with the 2 x 2 GB modules. Further investigation revealed that one of the memory slots or the motherboard might be at fault and causing all the aggravation.

Before I discovered the potential memory/memory slot/motherboard problem, I took the plunge and decided to completely reinstall Windows 7 – again. Recovery from the hard disc recovery partition failed and I suspected that the recovery partition itself might be corrupt. I made some progress installing Windows 7 Ultimate from the issue discs for Matthew's old PC, during which I discovered the loss of half of the computer's memory. Since that was the cause of all the trouble and the offending memory slot was no longer operable, on Thursday morning, 9th July, I started the recovery from the back up DVDs.

That was something of a disaster. There were four DVDs to work through and the process kept failing at various points, one of which was a tantalizing 70% complete, on disc 3 of 4.

I decided to re-master the DVDs. The HP software only allowed one copy of the recovery DVDs to be produced, so when I made them originally, I cleverly created image copies of the four DVDs on an external hard drive.

I hooked the hard drive up to my desktop and tried to regenerate the DVDs. The first problem was that my desktop was misbehaving. At this point I was thinking of taking a long run off a high cliff. It turned out that the problem was due to the installation of a virtual DVD drive using free software from Slysoft the previous day. After I uninstalled that, things settled down, including my blood pressure.

The next challenge was to find software that would read the image files and write them to a series of DVDs. I had to use Alcohol 120%, the software with which I had created them. That was not installed on the desktop, the only licence being allocated to the laptop. I installed it and transferred the licence to the desktop.

The first two copies went well and I started the recovery process with them. While on the second disc, I thought we'd have a bit of a break and we went into Ramsbottom. I thought it might shake off the head cold with which I had been suffering for a few days. Besides, having been treating it with raw garlic, Jenny needed a breath of fresh air.

The laptop was asking for the second disc when we returned and, having left that in production when we went out, I inserted the disc immediately on return and started copying the third one.

Two attempts to copy the third disc failed the verification. So much for the quality of Asda's DVD-R discs. I tried a third using a different DVD writer; having used a Sony for the first two, I switched to a faster Plextor and a Logic DVD+R blank disc. The Plextor drive, in the recent past, had not been totally reliable. It wasn't this time either. While attempting a fourth copy using the Sony DVD drive and another Asda DVD-R blank disc, I decided to risk trying the laptop with the original recovery disc number 3. That was a failure and it was back to square 1.

There was success at last, with four new recovery discs and the process of applying Microsoft updates commenced.

Friday 10th July brought a welcome change as we went shopping to Unicorn and Waitrose. We should have been with the Dentist for a check-up but my head cold was causing me too much grief to contemplate laying back in the chair so we postponed that pleasure until September.

The update process continued on our return, interrupted by the faulty memory slot working intermittently and causing the dreaded blue screen of death. I ended up removing the memory card from the bottom slot, leaving the PC running on a single 4 GB module.

The next challenge was the failure of Windows 7 Service Pack 1 to download. I had to find that online, download it and install it manually. That caused all the previous update history to disappear, which worried me for a while until I discovered a note tucked away on one of the Microsoft support pages stating that this is what was supposed to happen.

From there, everything went smoothly. About time, I thought. By the morning of Saturday 11th July, the laptop was well on the way to recovery and I left it restoring my documents as we went off to Bygone Times at Ecclestone, near Chorley, in search of a new Marks and Spencer Harvest tea-pot after Jenny dropped the lid of ours and broke it, leaving us with three tea pots without lids in the cupboard. We came back with said tea-pot, a book for Jenny and a three CD set of Louis Armstrong for me, all for £7.70. We were also looking for a new pitcher and bowl for the bathroom but we did not find one we liked. I did see a clock for the dining room for £65, which I thought about buying and there was a very nice floor-standing oil lamp and a Tilly lamp I liked. I didn't like the prices though.

We returned just in time to miss the first few minutes of Jazz Record Requests which I was recording on my desktop PC, except that I had not left it switched on. I rushed in and switched it on.

I continued installing software on the laptop while Jenny prepared tea and helped pack the car for the car boot sale the following day after tea.

I had not felt too well during the day, feeling the effects of my head cold, although it did seem to be getting better as the raw garlic I had been eating seemed to be having an effect, especially on other people with whom I came in close contact.

We rose at 5 a.m. on Sunday 12th July to a wet morning and a very doubtful weather forecast. Jenny went back to bed. I stayed up, working on the computer until 9:30, when Jenny came downstairs and I dressed and we breakfasted.

As it turned out, the weather had improved and we could have gone to the car boot sale after all. Of course, if we had gone, the weather would have been terrible and it would probably have rained. Such was our good fortune.

We took the opportunity to tidy up the garage a little and unpack the car.

On Monday 13th July, Matthew and Carrie had invited us to lunch with them and Carrie's parents, Bob and Marie, at The Swan and Cemetery to celebrate Carrie's birthday. The last time we had eaten there, we were not impressed at all. Whether someone had read my comments and reported back, I do not know but we were pleasantly surprised by the improvement. The menu had lots of gluten-free choices and the meal and the service was very good indeed.

We gave Matthew and Carrie a lift home, Carrie still hobbling on crutches with her leg strapped up.

It was well into the afternoon before we returned home, so there was not much point in starting anything else, especially after a big lunch and still not feeling too well.

After an update to the [village web site](#), it was back to the plot, quite literally, on Tuesday 14th July. I met Andrew, our minister, at 10:00 to discuss the placement of the shed to house the Incredible Edible plot's equipment. While we were there, Donna arrived and, as we completed our discussion, Andy from Cocklestorm joined us to discuss delivery and installation details. Nice timing, I thought.

The next task was to fix some canes in place for the beans and such and do a little weeding, with Dave, Frank and Tracey. Frank, Donna and I had a brief discussion about the next phase of development, the border along the church wall leading from the plot to the main road. We decided the best approach was to clear it completely and start afresh and that was best left until the autumn. The issue of cars being parked too close to the planted edge arose and I suggested we could erect some bollards to prevent that since the road was unadopted and the ownership of the land was unclear.

We were rained off and I came home to change, not wanting any more cold on top of what I had.

After lunch, Jenny and I picked the blackcurrants that were ripe, about 1½ lbs and we decided to leave the jam making until the following day. I collected some Ransoms (wild garlic) seeds from the plant at the front and potted them to see if they would germinate the following year. The plan was to grow them in the back border since the plant loves shade and the leaves and flowers have some excellent health properties, anti-septic, anti-inflammatory, in fact just about anti-everything. I tidied up the garden border along the side of the drive and put in a couple more plants, not that there was much room for them.

Matthew arrived in his new car on Wednesday 15th July at 9:30 a.m. as arranged. He was leaving his car with us for a couple of days because he did not have room for it, Carrie's car and the large skip he had ordered for tidying out his garage.

I took Matthew home, dropping Jenny off in Bury on the way and he collected his motorcycle. I followed him down to the BMW dealer in Manchester where he sold his bike and I brought him back home, collected a few items for our car boot sale, picked Jenny up at Asda in Bury and called at the vet to collect Toffee's renal biscuits. It was all in a day's work – and it wasn't over.

It was 4:30 by the time we arrived home, just in time to make the jam. Jenny started off the process while I cut the grass on the side garden before the council chap had chance to make his usual mess of it. I helped put the sugar in the fruit that had warmed up and softened nicely and brought it to the boil. The blackcurrants only take about seven minutes to reach their setting point and we bottled three and a half jars from the 1½ lbs of fruit we had picked the previous day.

I finished off the side garden, strimming and trimming, cut and strimmed the front, and cut the back on Thursday 16th July. I was in the process of strimming the back when the strimmer reel I had threaded disintegrated. I needed a new reel and decided to give up for the day.

After lunch, we went down to Matthew's to see what he was throwing out and whether any of it could be reused or put on the car boot sale. We came back with a trailer and boot load of potential cash. The trouble was, we had nowhere to put it. By the time we had finished moving things around and putting the new stock in the garage, the garage was absolutely full.

It was another long day.

Friday 17th July was our usual shopping day with a quick detour to Matthew's house on the way to drop off the hedge trimmer for him to tackle his bamboo that was just a little out of hand. Several drivers on the M60 seemed not to have grasped the concept of average speed cameras, hopefully to their displeasure.

We spent much of Saturday 18th July fetching wood that was surplus to requirements from Matthew's house with the trailer. It included some self-assembly raised beds the consequences of which would soon become apparent.

Another wet start on Sunday 19th July prevented yet another car boot sale. Instead, I was talked into constructing a bench using the wood we had collected from Matthew. The plan was to place the bench on the patio and then use this for the raised beds in which

Jenny would grow vegetables and herbs, freeing up the various pots of herbs on the patio. I managed to cut all wood to make the bench. Unfortunately, I ran out of screws, so I could not finish the assembly and all the pieces under construction were left under the car port to avoid the rain forecast for most of the week.

In the evening I discovered my left big toe was becoming quite painful and on further examination, it was quite red and swollen and walking on it proved just a trifle difficult. I was not sure whether I had banged it, dropped something on it or some little, nasty creature had bit or stung it. I spent the evening with my leg raised and my toe covered in aloe-vera gel.

To add to my discomfort, I chipped a piece off one of my front teeth again. It was, thankfully, not the same one as before. It was not painful, just rough and felt like I had a huge cave in it.

The main task on Monday 20th July was to turn the blackcurrants we had picked in Matthew's garden and the few I had added to them from our second crop on Saturday into jam. This involved painstakingly sifting through them and cleaning them of all the bits we did not want before washing them and boiling them up ready for the sugar.

We made seven jars of jam, although it did not set as readily as the previous batch and we wondered whether this was a result of the reduced amount of sugar we had added or whether I had miscalculated the amount of water we needed. Time would tell.

I spent the afternoon resting my painful toe after bathing it in Epsom Salts and covering it with aloe-vera again. I tackled the Radio Times Crossword and fell asleep in the process. On waking, I continued where I had left off and finished the crossword. It was a question of finishing one task before starting another.

Jenny suggested I apply some Witch Hazel to my toe but the bottle said not to use that if the skin was compromised or inflamed, which it was. Instead, she suggested some raw garlic so I tried that. Something was bound to work!

Meanwhile, Mike, Frank and Steve had gone on a long-distance walk and I had been offered the opportunity to join them but I had declined because I was unsure of our family plans for the time of year. Sitting with my sore toe made me somewhat pleased with my decision since I could not possibly have walked any distance with the infliction.

And then there was my chipped tooth, about which I had forgotten to telephone the dentist.

On Tuesday 21st July, I started work on the boxes of goodies Matthew had given me for the car boot sale, pricing and testing items for sale. That left the living-room looking like an obstacle course. I did manage to remember to telephone the dentist and I had an appointment for Thursday morning.

On Wednesday 22nd July, we went to Bury, leaving the house in a complete tip, for some additional groceries and then on to B&Q at Heapbridge for a few items, including the screws I needed to make the frames for the supports of the raised beds.

While there, we had to update our B&Q discount cards and in return were told to look out for a £5 voucher in our E-mails. What we weren't told is that in order to redeem the voucher, we would have to spend at least £50 first.

We made a slight detour to Asda at Pilsworth for more wine, Yellow Tail being on offer at two bottles for £10. Unfortunately, they only had three bottles of Shiraz left so we settled for five bottles of Chardonnay and those instead of six of each.

I arrived at the dentist at 9 a.m. on Thursday 23rd July and my tooth was repaired by about 9:30.

On returning home, I finished off the bench supports for the raised beds and then discovered I did not have the screws I needed to fix the cross-pieces to form the bench itself. Nor did I have any visqueen to use as a lining.

In the afternoon, I resumed the testing and pricing of the box of items Matthew had given me for the car boot sale. Of the four X-Box 360s, one worked and the remaining three, along with the HP mini-notebook, needed repairing. I also needed a battery charger for the X-Box controller battery pack. The other controllers came without battery packs and I could have done with a couple more.

Friday 24th July was our usual, uneventful shopping trip to Unicorn and Waitrose. We started early and were home for 2 p.m., expecting Matthew and Amy, who was back from Monaco and had been staying with friends in London, for lunch. There was a change in plan and Matthew and Amy were calling the following day. We simply relaxed for the rest of the day.

Saturday 25th July was a bit of a lazy day. The fairly sunny day was welcome and the grass needed cutting again but since I had cut my hair and showered early in the day I saw no point in doing anything physical since we were expecting Matthew and Amy and then in the evening Carrie's mum and dad, Marie and Bob kindly gave us a lift up to The Bolholt Hotel where there was a surprise 40th birthday party for Carrie. A surprise to Carrie, that is. Rash, being Mr. Sneaky, also arranged a small surprise for Matt in the guise of a birthday cake topped with a cake car, Matthew's birthday being on the 19th July and Carrie's on 13th July. The significance of the car was that Matthew had recently acquired a very nice new car.

The party was well attended by family and Carrie's friends, the entertainment being in the form of a disco, which most people seemed to enjoy. We sat as far away from the disco as possible, with Carrie's parents. The DJ did play some decent music and I would have risked a dance or two had it not been so loud. I was firmly convinced that all DJs received commission from hearing-aid manufacturers and were of the opinion that quantity was an excellent substitute for quality.

A lift at the end of the evening brought us home for about half past midnight and it was approaching two before we finally went to bed.

Following the previous evening's entertainment and given the weather forecast for yet another wet Sunday, 26th July, we decided against a five o'clock start for the open-air car boot sale in Ramsbottom, which meant we had another week to suffer car boot items

stashed in just about every spare bit of space available. Surely it couldn't rain every Sunday in the car boot season, could it?

Instead we took the opportunity of the dry start to the day to pick the fruit that was ripe and we ended up with another load of blackcurrants and a fair amount of raspberries. The pickings were not as good as the previous year and it was evident that the fruit, like us, needed more sun. The rain, scheduled initially for 9 a.m. and revised to 11 a.m. started about 11:30, just about as we were finishing picking the blackcurrants. The dampening of my upper torso and processing compartment did little to assist the head cold and catarrh which I thought I had shrugged off and which had returned with a vengeance.

Shortly after that Rachel and Matthew arrived, having stayed at the Bolholt overnight. Both of them were feeling a little unwell and thought they had eaten something the previous day that had disagreed with them. They rested with us until late afternoon, when they departed for Manchester and home.

It turned so cold, I lit the fire. The weather for summer was unbelievably ridiculous.

My head cold/cough worsened towards the evening and the bulb (yes, bulb) of raw (yes, raw) garlic I consumed with my tea did nothing to help as my breathing became more difficult, accompanied by a very tight chest.

The garlic must have kicked in overnight as I had one of the best night's sleep I had experienced for a while.

Monday 27th July was essentially a jam-making day, producing seven more jars of blackcurrant jam and, for the first time, two jars of raspberry jam, from the fruit we had managed to find the odd hour to pick over the previous few days and during the brief dry spell in the afternoon. We supplemented our raspberries with a few from the Incredible Edible plot to make up the 1 lb of fruit.

On Tuesday 28th July I was expecting to be in the churchyard sometime during the morning to supervise a shed delivery for the Incredible Edible plot. Unfortunately, the delivery was unavoidably delayed and my presence was not required until about 1:30 p.m.

As fortune would have it, walking up the church drive, squeezing past the van belonging to the chap who cuts the grass, I tripped over some growth that was extending from the small wall on the right-hand side and my torso hurtled forward at a rate of knots. I was fortunate in as much as the ground broke my fall, taking most of the blow on my hands and badly grazing my right palm. The main injury was to the large toe on my left foot, the one that was giving me some trouble only a few days previous and which suffered a considerable trauma during my trip. That was not evident at the time as I limped on to supervise the erection of the shed in the designated location.

It was on returning home that the extent of the damage to my toe became clear and soaking it in Epsom Salts and then applying Witch Hazel seemed to help a little. Unfortunately, it prevented my presence at the first of the evening classes in Scottish Dancing at The Old School and Jenny had to go without me, leaving me to watch films I had recorded that Jenny would not like.

Wednesday 29th July was rest my foot day, not having much sleep the previous night due to the pain, mainly in my left big toe, which was swollen, stiff and all colours of the rainbow.

I ventured to drive to Sheffield on Thursday 30th July to see Jenny's niece, Tracey, who had been taken into hospital. It was at times like these that I would have welcomed an automatic. Using the clutch was extremely painful and the Woodhead Pass over the Pennines is one of those roads requiring a considerable amount of clutch work.

We had a few hours with Tracey before leaving for a brief visit to and a welcome cup of tea with Wilf and Anne.

We rounded off the day with an evening meal with Rachel at the Heaton Park Beefeater.

Surprisingly, my left foot was much better on Friday 31st July, as we set off for Unicorn and Waitrose. I deduced that, although painful, the exercise of the previous day had, in some way, helped to dissipate the swelling and pain.

Driving round the Manchester Outer Ring Road (M60) over the past two days made me wonder whether Traffic Officers actually bothered about speeding drivers anymore. While bordering on the speed limit, I must have been passed by several cars, at least a couple of which must have been travelling at close to, if not over, 100 m.p.h. It was high time we had automatic average speed cameras on our motorways and that fines were raised to cover the cost. Better still, how about legislation to force car manufacturers to build speed governors coupled with satellite technology into engine management systems to prevent vehicles exceeding the speed limit? Or would that upset the oil companies too much?

And on that subject, if you feel like protecting this unique and beautiful planet so that your grandchildren have a chance of survival, take a look at:

https://secure.greenpeace.org.uk/page/content/icebreaker-portland/?source=em&subsource=20150729staem01&utm_source=gpeace&utm_medium=em&utm_campaign=20150729staem01