

Greenmount July 2020

Wednesday, 1st July 2020

It was grocery shopping day at Unicorn in Chorlton and Waitrose in Broadheath.

After lunch, the main activity was to turn the Incredible Edible raspberries we had picked into jam.

I finally succeeded in backing up my desktop Windows 7 system disc to another hard drive using a downloaded image of Acronis True Image 2015 Universal Restore, burnt to a CD, thanks to advice from the support team.

Thursday, 2nd July 2020

I tidied up the small bedroom, put the finishing touches to filling in round the new skirting and Jenny helped me put the radiator back on the wall.

We cleaned the furniture and put it all back in the bedroom, including one of the two beds from the back bedroom that formed the lower bunk. We left the other bed in the back bedroom for Rachel who was coming to stay for the week end.

Friday, 3rd July 2020

I spent the day putting in the TV recordings for the week and editing the most recent ones ready for viewing.

Rachel arrived about lunchtime for the week end.

Saturday, 4th July 2020

The plan was to go and deliver the latest issue of The Voice, the village magazine, to residents on our estate, our round having been changed from the one on the north-east side of the village. Unfortunately, the rain prevented that (the leaflets would have become quite wet). Our summer was becoming a complete wash-out, with rain, high winds and lower temperatures. We awaited a break in the weather.

I tidied up the recorded TV programmes we had watched during the week and my most productive task of the day was to print the instructions for the Bosch Tassimo coffee machine we had for sale on our car boot stall, whenever we got back to it. Rachel and Jenny needed the cleaning instructions to clean and test the machine.

After successfully backing up my Windows 7 system disc using Acronis True Image, I thought it might be a good idea to back up my Windows 10 laptop, the problem being that I could only do so to a USB hard drive and I didn't think my old version of Acronis True Image (2015) would do that. To my surprise, it did.

Or, at least, it would have done, had my Windows hard drive not had bad sectors on it. I ended up telling True Image to ignore those, not being sure what the result would be.

I decided to try to fix the hard drive and that was a job for the following day.

I helped Jenny pick some more ripe strawberries, some spinach for tea and some mint which I turned into mint sauce for the leg of lamb that Jenny had roasted.

The whole leg of organic lamb was from Waitrose and it was the nicest piece of lamb I had ever tasted.

Sunday, 5th July 2020

I started to investigate the laptop hard drive problem using Norton Utilities version 16. Matters went from bad to worse as the exercise demanded a Windows Repair USB drive. I didn't have one, so I created one on my USB stick, which, fortunately, was just the correct size, having a capacity of 16 GB, using Rachel's laptop. That took ages.

The repair process started well and then went round in a repetitive circle, so I gave up and tried rebooting back into Windows 10. There was no chance of that as the laptop went into a maze of automatic repair processes, none of which worked. The last thing I tried was an automatic restore to an earlier version of Windows from a Restore Point, which also failed. I was on the brink of reinstalling Windows, with the intention of completely reformatting the disc, when, more by luck than skill, I managed to make the machine boot into Windows and it all looked fine.

My plan, at this point, was to buy a new computer as soon as possible, configure it to mirror this one, back it up using Acronis True Image and then consider replacing the hard drive in the existing laptop.

All of the above took most of the day, which was no real problem because the weather was changeable and unpredictable, with lots of rain about. The forecast for the following day was rain until lunchtime and then a fine afternoon, so my focus would be to refill the central heating system and make sure there were no leaks and then to start preparation for decorating the back bedroom in the morning and attend to the repair of the Incredible Edible shed in the afternoon.

Monday, 6th July 2020

The first main task of the day was to move the second bed from the back bedroom to the small, front bedroom. The lack of space made it difficult to assemble this as the top bunk bed but we managed.

The second main task of the day was to start emptying and preparing the back bedroom and the adjoining closet ready for decorating.

By the end of the day we were shattered and had not quite finished the latter. It was not until then that closer inspection of the bunk beds showed that I had put the bunk beds together with the top bunk at the bottom. It was going to be interesting swapping them round. That was a job for another day.

Tuesday, 7th July 2020

Yesterday's forecast for a fine day with sunny periods today had changed to one of continuous heavy rain. So much for weather prediction. In the end, it turned out to be a day of showers, some more persistent than others.

My morning started with one of the latter, so I decided to put the water back into the central heating system, having drained it to remove the radiator in the small bedroom so I could fit the new, varnished skirting. Now the radiator was back on the wall and connected up, I needed to make sure there were no leaks and all the radiators heated up properly.

That went well and all but two of the radiators warmed up nicely. The one in the kitchen was isolated because I was going to repaint it, for which I needed a couple of consecutive, fine days (some hopes). The one in the back bedroom was turned off because I was going to replace it with a stainless steel one.

After that, I left the heating on while we took advantage of a dry spell to pick the rest of the ripe blackcurrants. The dry spell didn't last long but we finished the job in a light shower.

We came in for lunch and I checked the radiators again. Everything was fine and I turned off the heating.

I was about to have lunch when I received a telephone call purporting to be from Amazon, informing me there had been some fraudulent activity on my account. I rang off immediately and contacted Amazon using their on-line chat service. Everything was fine. The call, like the earlier suspicious E-mail that looked like it was from Amazon but wasn't (checking the E-mail header suggested it was bogus), was fraudulent.

After lunch and dealing with outstanding E-mails, I helped Jenny pick over and clean the blackcurrants we had picked the other day and this morning and then we made just over five jars of delicious blackcurrant jam.

It was about 7 p.m. by the time we had finished and I marked this as one of the most successful and productive days I had for some time.

Wednesday, 8th July 2020

Another grocery shopping day at Sainsbury's at Heaton Park had arrived, with a 6 a.m. start to the day.

We called at Tesco in Prestwich on the way back and I was given the task of washing, wiping and putting away the dishes from yesterday's tea and this morning's breakfast while Jenny put away the groceries and prepared lunch.

After lunch, I went outside to tidy up the blackberry bush, which looked to be bearing a good crop this year and needed some sunshine to ripen the fruit, while Jenny picked the strawberries.

We went upstairs to recommence clearing the back bedroom. That and covering the furniture in the middle of the room and the carpet ready to start took us to 5 p.m.

I also checked the small bedroom radiator for leaks. To my dismay, I found that the left valve was weeping water. To tighten it, I needed two spanners, one to hold the bottom nut while I tightened the top one and I only had one. I was undecided whether to ask British Gas, with whom we have a service contract, to have a look at it or whether to buy a second spanner and have another go myself. The problem was that to seal the joint with some jointing compound would mean undoing it again and that would require the system to be drained again. I was not best pleased because these valves should not need sealing.

Thursday, 9th July 2020

I checked the radiator in the small bedroom. It was still weeping water but only very slightly and it was, for the present, being absorbed by a length of toilet tissue.

I took most of the fittings off the back bedroom wall and started preparing the small closet, on which I proposed to work first. I measured up for the coving I needed and decided how I was going to remove the old skirting and fit the new.

It was a dull, cold day but at least it wasn't raining so we went round to the Incredible Edible plot's shed in the churchyard to repair the damage caused by the recent attempted break-in, having already done some emergency, temporary work to make it secure.

I removed the four outer pieces of wood that secured the Perspex window, the Perspex having been forced out by the vandalism, so I could refit it. In replacing the four pieces of wood on the outside, I added two screws to each piece in addition to the existing nails.

I also re-affixed the piece of wood on the inside that helped to hold the mesh in place behind the Perspex using three long screws. I had intended using five but I only had three, which Jenny

found for me in my assorted screw box while I drilled the necessary holes, so I needed to revisit that. I also planned to put more wood on the inside of the mesh, which would need more screws and I would have to purchase the wood as well, cutting it to size in situ.

It was turned 2 p.m. by the time we had finished and we came home for lunch.

After a brief rest and sorting out a few things on the computer, I went into the back bedroom and removed the carpet and underlay from the closet in the back bedroom so I could commence work on the skirting – a job for another day. I was busy looking at one of the supports for the shelving I installed years ago. The support came down to the floor and was shaped round the existing skirting so I was thinking of a way of dealing with that.

Friday, 10th July 2020

I spent most of the day putting in the TV recordings for the coming week and tidying up after last week.

I did find time to rip out the old skirting board in the small closet in the back bedroom, having secured the shelf support to the wall with another screw above the one that I had to remove because it was below the level of the new skirting and sawn off the bottom part of the support at the new skirting level. That did leave some nails sticking out of the wall which I could not remove with the nippers so I needed Matthew's Dremel to cut the nails off.

Saturday, 11th July 2020

It took me most of the day to finish tidying up and backing up my discs and to deal with E-mails, somewhat neglected of late.

A colleague came across a couple of articles that show just how corrupt our present political system was:

<https://yorkshirebylines.co.uk/ppe-procurement-the-government-responds-to-legal-action/>

<https://www.craigmurray.org.uk/archives/2020/07/banana-republic-corruption/>

and how inept the present Government was:

<https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2020/07/08/the-pro-privatization-shock-therapy-of-the-uks-covid-response/>

If people wanted a recovery from Covid-19 that would improve rather than continue to accelerate the degradation of the quality of life of their children and grandchildren, they should look at

<https://act.gp/2BCNQdt>

At the time of writing, this may well be the last opportunity to do so.

On a more constructive note, for those interested in helping with the 2021 Census, the recruitment process had commenced and the details are here:

www.censusjobs.co.uk

I was done with the IT work at about 4:30 p.m. and went upstairs to start removing the textured paint from the ceiling of the closet in the back bedroom. That was slow going and I had done about two-thirds of it by 6:30 p.m. I had reached the spot where all of the debris was falling on my head and face so I thought I really ought to be wearing a mask to keep the dust out of my lungs. I didn't have one to hand so I gave up for the day, cleaned myself up a bit and came downstairs.

Sunday, 12th July 2020

After the usual, routine, morning tasks, I measured up the back bedroom and closet for skirting and coving. I was going to need seven 3m lengths of 127mm plaster coving and four more planks of varnished skirting in addition the whole length and left-over pieces currently adorning the side of the staircase, the only practical place to store it, a full length being 4 metres. I had the unvarnished lengths in the garage loft. All I needed was three fine days to give them three coats of varnish and that was not going to be likely until next week.

Today was a nice, warm, sunny day but we had been invited down to a BBQ at Matthew and Carrie's house, with Carrie's parents, Bob and Marie. In addition, rain was forecast all day tomorrow and on and off from most of the coming week.

Also, the grass needed cutting, the ripe fruit needed picking, I needed to deploy the slug nematodes and the block paving needed clearing of weeds and moss yet again.

We arrived at Matthew and Carrie's house about 1:30 p.m. Bob and Marie were already there. We had a very nice meal Matthew and Carrie had prepared, the chicken wings having been cooked on the barbecue and the main course meat was roasted in the outdoor wood oven.

We were chatting away for quite a while and we left at about 7 p.m.

It had been a lovely, relaxing day and my planned, evening, grass-cutting session was put on hold.

Monday, 13th July 2020

After one, fine, comfortable day with long, sunny periods, the weather was back to normal. It was wet again. The rain was more or less continuous and varied in intensity from very light drizzle to heavy showers. It was not a gardening day, although I did nip out and pick the few,

ripe strawberries, having had the best of the season. There was one, lone, red raspberry too. The blackcurrants needed picking but it was too wet and we had planned to go down to the Trafford Centre, to John Lewis, which was opening today after the Covid-19 “lockdown”. We needed some bedding for the bunks in the small bedroom and I wanted to have a look at the computers.

We had to queue for a few minutes to enter John Lewis owing to the safe distancing rules, which required people not from the same household to keep 2 metres apart. We bought the bedding we wanted and Jenny bought a few kitchen items.

We came home for a late lunch and I dealt with the TV recordings from the last couple of days.

Tuesday, 14th July 2020

It was a dull, fine day, so we picked the ripe blackcurrants. There were not enough to make jam so we put them in the fridge for the time being to see if any more would ripen over the next couple of days.

After lunch I posted a birthday card to my Sister, Barbara and dropped off some medicines for disposal at the chemist.

It was quite cold and I decided to warm up by cutting the grass at the back. Having trimmed the edges, hoed the borders and removed the ivy from my side of the fence, it was time to pack up for the day and I was somewhat tired.

Wednesday, 15th July 2020

The grocery shopping trip to Unicorn in Chorlton and Waitrose at Broadheath started reasonably well until we reached Whitefield, some fifteen minutes after leaving home.

The plan had been to take the M60 motorway ring road, anticlockwise, round the city centre to reach the A56 south-west of the city. Unfortunately, as we approached the roundabout at Prestwich, there was an accident ahead that blocked the road. With the prospect of being stuck there for a little while, I was able to take advantage of a gap in the central reservation to perform a U-turn, back to the traffic lights and turn right to go down through the city centre via Cheetham Hill. So we took the scenic route to Chorlton, the journey being plagued by red traffic lights.

We reached Unicorn at about 9:45, about half way through the “oldies” half-hour and Jenny went straight in to commence shopping while I sat in the car, as usual, listening to my Jazz CDs.

On leaving, driving through Chorlton, we discovered the reason for all of the police activity we had observed on the way down and while we had been there. There had been a major collision on the main road in the shopping area and the deployment of the police helicopter suggested they were searching for someone who had fled the scene. Three police vehicles were still in attendance.

The Waitrose part of the journey was uneventful and we headed home via the M60 to Prestwich and the A56 up to Bury, as usual. We made it home for just after 1 p.m. for lunch.

After dealing with the dishes from last night, this morning and lunch, my afternoon was one of dealing with the TV recordings from overnight and this morning. The laptop had failed to record properly a programme overnight and this morning, both recordings terminating prematurely.

Investigation of the problem with Hauppauge's WinTV8 (yet again) highlighted an ongoing issue with the scheduler and I enlisted help from Hauppauge support (yet again). Meanwhile, I abandoned attempts to use WinTV8 and reverted to NextPVR for the rest of this week.

Meanwhile, the programmes that had failed on the laptop had been recorded on the desktop using Windows Media Centre and I processed those.

That took the rest of the afternoon.

I also looked at ordering three more 1 Kg bags of Cornflour from Doves Farm for Jenny but it was out of stock, so she would have to make do with the small tubs from the supermarket for the present.

With all the queuing and shortages of items, anybody would think we were back in the 1940s with rationing.

Thursday, 16th July 2020

The first main task of the day was to clear a path through the garage wide enough to shunt a bed-settee through from front to back. The reason becomes clear tomorrow.

I started by emptying the trailer of the wood I had cut for the fire and stacked it outside under the car port by the house wall. I hooked up the trailer to the car and we subsequently filled it with rubbish for the tip.

That enabled us to move all the car booty to one side and tidy away the non-car booty to give the garage a more roomy appearance.

With the rubbish moved off the drive into the trailer, I was able to shuffle the wood that still needed cutting around to tidy that up as well and bring more of it under cover.

I finished off my long and tiring day by cutting some wood off one of the heavier tree trunks that was still in the open.

Friday, 17th July 2020

A 6:30 start saw us at the tip for 8 a.m., in time for the daily opening. Jenny remained in the car in accordance with the Cpv19 rules while I dumped the rubbish, which we took down in the trailer, in the various recycling containers.

I called at Wickes DIY store to see if I could find another 30/32mm open-ended, AF spanner but I was out of luck. I needed a second one to hold the bottom nut while I tightened the top one on the radiator in the small bedroom to stop the left connection weeping water after refitting the radiator.

We returned home briefly before making our way down to Matthew and Carrie's house, with the trailer, to collect the bed-settee Matthew had offered me. Matthew followed us home and helped me store the settee temporarily in the space we had cleared in the dining room, bringing the settee through the garage by way of the patio doors at the back of the garage, in through the kitchen patio doors, through the kitchen door into the conservatory and into the dining room through the sliding door. That all went well.

I had a short break and put in the TV recordings for next week, breaking off for lunch.

I had a quick telephone conversation with my sister, Barbara and then went out to cut the grass on the front garden. I trimmed the edges and tidied up before coming in at about 3:30 p.m., feeling somewhat tired.

I had another brief rest, dealt with the TV recordings of the day and settled down to listen to another recording of Beyond Our Ken from 1959.

Saturday, 18th July 2020

We were up later than intended due to the long day yesterday. After breakfast and washing the dishes, I just made it to the chemist for my monthly supply of tablets before the pharmacy closed for the day. We took the car because it was raining profusely and Jenny wanted to nip down to the local co-op.

I tidied up the TV recordings we had watched recently and backed up my files.

I had been having some problems with the Hauppauge WinTV scheduler, which was now refusing to work and Hauppauge support was not much help, suggesting I pay for an upgrade to the latest version of WinTV, which ships for free with the newer range of products. I wanted to move to recording from Satellite and I was looking for a box to allow me to do so. Unfortunately, Hauppauge had stopped making their satellite stand-alone box that fed a USB Mpeg 2 stream to the PC and I needed to buy a new PC before that anyway.

I decided to reinstall WinTV8 for the umpteenth time, after uninstalling it, shutting down the PC and starting the PC again.

That caused a problem with the NextPVR scheduler, which I had been using instead of WinTV. The problem with NextPVR was that the recordings seemed to have a lot of transmission errors and I thought it was because the PC was too slow – hence the search for a new one.

The reinstallation of WinTV version 8 was successful, except that updating the TV guide took two attempts to obtain all of the current information. All that remained was to make sure the scheduler worked again.

All of this feverish activity was put on a back-burner in mid-afternoon, as I went round to see Sylvia in the bungalow at the back of our house to have a look at a telephone problem for her, which was sorted out quite quickly.

Sunday, 19th July 2020

We were awakened rather abruptly by the house alarm at about 7:45 a.m. and came down in our dressing gowns to investigate. The alarm indicated a disturbance in either the conservatory or garage.

The former was fine. The wheelbarrow in the garage that had been propped up at the back of the trailer had fallen over. The garage doors were secure and that in itself should not have triggered the alarm and the deduction was that some creature must have pushed the wheelbarrow over and triggered the alarm. No animal was visible and we left the back door to the garage open so whatever it was could escape.

After breakfast and washing the dishes, I solved the problem with the NextPVR TV recording scheduler – the scheduler service had not started when Windows was loaded. I checked the settings in Services and it was set to start automatically so I didn't know why it hadn't. It was something I would have to keep an eye on for the present.

That wasn't a major issue as Hauppauge's WinTV was back up and running and it was scheduled to record Jazz Record Requests later today.

With all that done and dusted, I put the washing line out for Jenny, picked some fruit that was ripe and went upstairs to work on the back bedroom closet for a short while, until lunch.

After lunch, I picked some more ripe fruit (mostly raspberries) Jenny had spotted amongst the leaves and then decided to tackle the bunk beds in the small bedroom.

When I had put them together, I had put the top bed head on the bottom bunk and vice versa by mistake. The top bed head had holes in it for the rail supports to stop the sleeper from rolling off and without those I couldn't fit the ladder to the top bunk. (Since the bunk beds were against an internal wall, the other side did not pose a problem.)

We jacked up the head of the top bunk with makeshift supports on the bottom bunk and the head of the bottom bunk with makeshift supports as well. That enabled me to remove the heads and swap them round without too much difficulty, except for the cramped conditions. We had

to move some things around and remove and replace all the bedding as well, so it was quite a tiring task.

We finished just in time for me to relax and listen to Jazz Record Requests.

Monday, 20th July 2020

Despite our aches and pains from yesterday's lifting and manoeuvring, we were up reasonably early.

Following the routine jobs, we went outside to pick the ripe blackcurrants and that took us up to lunchtime.

After lunch, we had a short break, during which I telephoned the Glaucoma Clinic at Manchester Royal Infirmary to find out why Jenny had not had her appointment letter for her three-month follow up consultation, which was due the following day. A very helpful lady explained that Jenny's appointment was pending and the delay was due to the arrangements at the hospital regarding Covid-19.

We continued our afternoon by picking over the blackcurrants and prepared them for a jam-making session. That didn't go well. Having softened the fruit in the water and added the sugar, I boiled up the fruit as usual. After 25 minutes and regular testing, the jam had not reached its setting point. Jenny added the juice of half a lemon and while she boiled up the fruit, I added the juice from the other half of the lemon. I took over the boiling for about another five minutes or so and the jam showed some signs of setting so I turned off the heat and let the mixture rest for a short while. We decided to bottle it. It made the prescribed amount of jam according to the recipe and we ended up with ten jars plus a small amount in a dish for testing, although I didn't expect it to set as hard as the previous bottling, which wasn't a bad thing and it tasted very nice.

We planned to use the test sample later in the evening on some scones.

I washed up while Jenny started the preparation of a lasagne for a late tea. That wasn't ready until nearly 8 p.m.

It had been a long day.

Tuesday, 21st July 2020

It was not a good day and I did nothing that I had planned. For one thing, it started with a fair bit of heavy cloud floating by and some spots of fine rain when a fine day with some sunshine had been forecast, so, Jenny having helped me bring five long lengths of wood skirting down from the garage loft, I decided not to bring the wood out onto the drive to varnish it under the car port. Instead we had fun arranging two of Jenny's car boot tables inside the garage on which to store the wood for the present.

As we were finishing off outside, Mike and Lorna came past with their grandson, Jacob and we chatted for a while.

When we came in, I helped Jenny a little in the kitchen by washing up as she made two loaves of bread and tidied up a few bits and pieces.

I was not that pleased that I couldn't work outside because of the damp weather.

I made some labels for the jam we had made the previous day and a couple of small storage boxes, destined for the garage. It took me three attempts to print them properly, by which time my blood pressure was well up.

I thought it might be a good idea to get some fresh air after lunch and we went for a walk up to the post office at Holcombe Brook for some packaging for Mike's items he had ordered for delivery to me and which needed sending on to New Zealand.

That was quite pleasant and I felt a little better when we came back. It didn't last.

We had met Bea and Dave, who lived down the road, on the way back. Bea had taken over the management of the Incredible Edible plot and she had encountered three local youths who were occupying the IE shed, where we keep our tools and such for the plot and which should have been locked. They were smoking weed and gave Bea and Dave a mouthful of colourful language when they were challenged. They did move on, though and Bea and Dave went back up to lock up the shed. I subsequently asked out community police to deal with the matter.

I decided to produce some labels for the parcel for Mike and, having done one for the front and one for the back, both in A5 landscape format, I decided to print them. The plan was to print them in A4 portrait format using a facility on the printer to print both A5 pages on one page of A4. That didn't work, even when I tried it the second time. My blood pressure had gone through the roof.

To make matters worse, the TV recording for the afternoon had not worked properly on the laptop. Fortunately, I had a back up recording on the desktop that subsequently proved to be fine.

I gave up for the day before it got any worse.

Wednesday, 22nd July 2020

We went grocery shopping to Sainsbury's at Heaton Park and Tesco at Prestwich. That went well and there was no queuing. I went in with Jenny to push the shopping trolley, as I used to do before the Covid-19 restrictions.

We were home for about 11 a.m., having left at about 8 a.m.

I brought the accounts up to day and updated this diary before nipping back down to Matthew and Carrie's house to pick up a box in which to put the parcel for NZ. I thought a box might be much more robust than the large padded envelope I had bought from the post office.

After lunch, I finally succeeded in printing off the labels and I laminated them ready for sticking on the parcel and I e-mailed Mike with a copy of the labels. I also caught up with the rest of my e-mails.

Thursday, 23rd July 2020

Mike had replied to my E-mail and I took his reply to confirm the labels for the parcel were correct. I prepared the parcel for posting and Jenny and I walked up to the post office to send it.

We came back past the church and I called to check on the Incredible Edible shed. There had been a further attempt to break-in and more repairs would be necessary.

When we came home, I found that Mike, a neighbour across the road who had some trees in his back garden cut down, had brought the wood for me, as he said he would yesterday.

I checked the tracking on the parcel, which was fine and E-mailed Mike the tracking details so he could do the same.

I e-mailed Neil, our church leader, about the shed incidents and passed on Bea's suggestion to consider implementing some surveillance cameras.

After lunch, I spoke with our community police officer and he said he would investigate the incidents at the shed.

I also informed Bea of the latest break-in attempt and she furnished me with some further, useful details to pass on to the police.

After that bit of excitement, I went to work on the back bedroom closet. The first task was to prepare the walls for the new skirting. The walls not being flat, the corners not being square and the floor not being level required a little bit of work to make the corners and to make the new skirting fit as snugly to the wall as possible. This preparation was performed using some sample pieces of skirting. No doubt when the actual pieces were cut, more work will be required before sticking it to the wall. Hopefully, that would not take too long.

The next job was to finish removing the textured paint from the ceiling with the large scraper I had fetched in from the garage and to which I had fitted a new, very sharp blade. I removed all but the textured paint under the pull cord switch for the light and the light itself. To finish I needed to remove those and that was a job for another day.

The pull cord switch was too close to the wall for the coving I was going to fit, so it would have to be moved, adding a little challenge. While I was going into the loft, the bedroom light needed reinstalling and the strip of halogen lights that had replaced it and installed near to the staircase

wall needed removing. For that I would need a ceiling rose so I was hoping I still had one in my electrical box in the garage loft.

Friday, 24th July 2020

I put in the TV recordings for the coming week, tidied up what we had watched throughout the previous week, dealt with my E-mails and backed up my data.

Saturday, 25th July 2020

The overnight and early morning torrential rain didn't last long and it turned out to be a reasonable day with warm, sunny periods. More rain was on its way, though.

I decided the five long planks of new skirting, sitting in the garage on two of Jenny's car-boot tables needed to be moved because they were obstructing access to the garage. They were only stored there short-term, until I had some fine, warm weather so I could varnish them outside, under the car port. Since the weather had not obliged and was unlikely to do so any time soon, Jenny helped me bring them inside and store them on the stairs, under the one varnished length, which was ready for deployment. At least inside, they would acclimatise.

That piece of exercise warmed us up somewhat, as did the following preserving session, when we made eight jars of lime and ginger marmalade. The limes had been hanging around in the fridge for some time and I had sliced them and put them into soak yesterday morning before commencing my IT work.

The limes had to simmer for an hour before making the marmalade and we left them to do that while we moved the wood.

It was our practice to taste the mixture before boiling up to make the preserve to determine the sweetness and flavour since we did not use as much sugar as the recipe suggested and we tended to adopt a more taste it and see approach.

In this case, it resulted in a murky yellowish mixture with lots of long pieces of peel which gave it a somewhat rustic appearance. Fortunately, appearance was not everything and it tasted awesome, with the intense, tangy flavour of the limes, just a hint of sweetness and a lingering, warm aftertaste of the spicy ginger. It would be interesting to see what it was like when properly set and cold, on toast. And it was all organic, with none of the food colouring put in commercial lime marmalade to make it look green and no chemical preservatives.

Sunday, 26th July 2020

I spent a good deal of the day tidying up my drawers in the garage. This was something that had needed doing for a long time. The drawers were full of bits and pieces and needed sorting into separate storage boxes, labelling, entering into my equipment inventory and then storing in my

stock of items in the garage. With this system, I was able to locate small items quickly instead of spending hours searching through box after box of odds and ends. Some of the items I had saved were rubbish and some were destined for Jenny's car booty.

I managed to sort all but the top drawer and that was going to be a nightmare.

Rachel came for tea and it was really nice to see her again.

Monday, 27th July 2020

My morning and early afternoon were taken up with routine jobs and helping my sister, Barbara, with choosing a new hand-held vacuum cleaner.

We went into the garage after lunch. Jenny was tidying her car booty and I continued the task of tidying up my drawers full of odds and ends. I had this habit of saving bits and pieces by shoving them in a drawer, which was fine until I wanted something and it took me ages to sift through everything to find it. This was really contrary to my nature and I was determined to put things where I could find them easily and quickly. Having such a bad memory of where I put various items, I kept a record of what was where on the computer where I could easily search for what I wanted and locate it. While all this took time and effort, it meant that I saved much more time afterwards.

Tuesday, 28th July 2020

It was yet another wet day so again I didn't go walking with Frank and we weren't up early. My brief constructive periods were spent in the kitchen helping Jenny with the dishes and the preparation for tea.

Wednesday, 29th July 202

I called at B&Q on the way to buy our week's groceries for a second 30/32 mm double-open-ended AF spanner so I could tighten the nut on the small bedroom radiator that was weeping a very small amount of water while holding the nut at the bottom of the valve in place with my existing spanner. As it later turned out, the nut had stopped weeping and was dry. I also bought an electrical 4-terminal junction box for the light in the back bedroom closet.

With the new Covid-19 legislation, face masks were compulsory in shops, so, reluctantly, I wore one of the two a friend of ours had made and given to us.

I waited in the car, listening to yet another Louis Armstrong CD while Jenny shopped at Unicorn in Chrolton and I went into Waitrose at Broadheath with her as usual, wearing my mask. It made my beard itch and I was glad to get out and remove it.

The M60 was busy going down but traffic was flowing reasonably well and there were no speed restrictions. Coming back, we managed to travel at the 70 m.p.h. speed limit almost all the way to Prestwich. Even the journey up the A56 from there was not too bad.

After lunch at home, we went out and picked most of the rest of the blackcurrants and the raspberries that were ripe, taking advantage of the dry day before the rains came overnight. The blackcurrants went in the fridge for later and the raspberries we had after our Sea Bass at tea time.

Thursday, 30th July 2020

The rain had stopped by the time we were up and about, just before 9 a.m. By the time we had finished breakfast, it was drying up nicely and turning warmer. I moved the car onto the road and we set up two of Jenny's car boot tables on the drive, under the car port. Jenny helped me to carry out the five pieces of skirting wood that needed varnishing. By the time I had finished sanding and cleaning them, ready for varnishing, it was lunchtime.

After lunch, I varnished the five lengths of wood and left them on the tables to dry. That took me to nearly 4 p.m. I came in, washed the dinner dishes and then went back outside to help Jenny, who was sorting her car booty, not that there was much prospect of any sales this year, thanks to Covid-19, not to mention the wet summer.

We had finished all that by 5 p.m., the wood still drying nicely and the sun actually threatening to shine.

The plan was to leave the wood outside until it was touch dry (four to six hours, so around 10 p.m.) and then store it overnight in the kitchen and then put it outside on the tables again tomorrow to give it a second coat. Unfortunately, the dry spell was only set to last two days and the wood needed three layers of varnish, so I wasn't expecting it to be ready any time soon.

Friday, 31st July 2020

Jenny helped me set up the tables under the car port again and to move the planks of wood out of the kitchen and onto the tables, ready for painting, all before breakfast.

With the dishes washed, I checked my mail and had a message from NZ post to say the parcel had been delivered to Mike.

I went out to give the wood a second coat of varnish while Jenny washed some clothes, put them out on the line to dry and made two loaves of bread. I finished at about 1:30 and went to pick the fruit that was ripe – a few blackcurrants, a few raspberries and a few blackberries, the first of the season.

We had lunch at about 2 p.m.

After lunch, I put in the TV recordings for the coming week and finished just in time for tea at about 7 p.m.

I had a brief break to move the wood that was drying into the garage when rain threatened at about 5 p.m. Jenny helped before making the Pizza for tea. Unfortunately, the wood was too long to allow the garage door to be closed, so we had to leave it open which also meant keeping the front door open as well so we could listen for anyone sneaking into the garage, not that it was likely. Fortunately, it remained reasonably warm and the rain didn't last long.

The wood was touch dry by about 8 p.m. and we eventually moved it into the kitchen again so it would finish drying overnight.

And so we came to the end of a somewhat soggy month and started another one.