

Greenmount July 2021

Thursday, 1st July 2021

It was time to go home. We packed the car and tidied up. The journey home was uneventful and took just over an hour.

Rachel was at the house to welcome us home, having taken the day off work.

After unpacking the car, we had a late lunch.

My main task was to deal with all the TV recordings I had scheduled for the week we were away and to plan those for the coming week.

Friday, 2nd July 2021

We went grocery shopping to Unicorn in Chorlton and Waitrose in Broadheath.

After another late lunch at home, I resumed my latter task of yesterday.

Saturday, 3rd July 2021

I wasn't sure whether the yard sale, planned for the morning at the old school was on or not, the weather being uncertain, so I was up at 6:30 a.m.

The rain scheduled for 7 a.m. didn't really mature, although it had a bit of a try and I washed the dinner pots from last night and started to lay the table for breakfast, at which point Jenny joined me.

I checked my e-mails and discovered the yard sale had been postponed because of the forecast of heavy and possibly thundery rain.

I also telephoned Matthew's mother-in-law, Marie, who was planning on coming to the yard sale, to inform her it was off.

As we breakfasted, the rain did indeed start. The garden needed it.

Marie called round for a chat while she was out and about.

I finished off the TV recordings for the coming week and dealt with a few E-mails.

Sunday, 4th July 2021

We had a lazy day, not rising until nearly lunchtime and it was raining again.

I dealt with the TV recordings from yesterday and did some more administrative work, breaking off to listen to Jazz Record Requests. Louis Armstrong always told everyone he was born on 4th July 1900, so there were several tracks played featuring him. When he died, on 6th July 1971, his death certificate revealed he was born on 4th August 1901 but, as Alyn Shipman said, who's counting? I didn't mind. He's my favourite jazz musician by far.

Monday, 5th July 2021

More rain and more administrative work was the order of the day until mid-afternoon, when the rain stopped and the sun made an appearance, warming and drying outside.

I went out and tied up the blackberry runners that had emerged since I last did so and a raspberry cane. I also gave the runner beans somewhere to go, having reached the top of the canes I put in the pot for them. The blackberries were progressing nicely. The runner beans were in flower and the raspberries were showing their fruit, still green.

I picked the ripe blackcurrants from the early bush, a time-consuming and tiring job. There were not that many. The ones on the late bush tended to be larger and better and they were mostly still green.

I picked another batch of strawberries and those that were not quite ripe went into the conservatory to complete the process, which we expected to take a day or two. It was better to pick them early to remove the risk of them being eaten by pests even though I had treated the raised bed with slug nematodes and put netting over it.

While I was doing all this, Jenny was baking some bread and she came out to gather some lettuce for tea and helped me with the strawberries. She also put out the washing now it was drying up.

We tidied up and came in for a cup of tea and a rest before our evening meal.

My last task of the day was to fetch the frozen blackberries out of the garage freezer.

Tuesday, 6th July 2021

The main task of the morning was to use the 6 lbs of blackberries that had defrosted to make 11½ jars of jam. Rather than add the recommended amount of sugar (one pound of sugar for each pound of fruit), we sampled the mixture as we went along, adding the sugar in pounds. After three pounds it was almost there and we added the fourth pound in two halves so as not to over-sweeten the mixture. Four pounds of sugar seemed to be about right and the mixture reached its setting point after ten minutes of rapid boiling, which was quite quick.

After lunch, we went for a stroll up to Hollymount and back round the golf course.

We called at the Incredible Edible plot to see what was ready and to take a look at a piece of wood that needed replacing at the request of Bea, one of our neighbours who looks after the plot and whom we met on the way out.

We also dropped in at our local convenience store and pharmacist for the next week's Radio Times.

Wednesday, 7th July 2021

We walked into Ramsbottom, toured the charity shops and Jenny popped into Tesco for something they didn't have.

When we were setting off to come home, Jenny didn't feel well, with aching thighs, pain in her abdomen and legs and struggled a little on the way home. We were not sure what had caused the problem; she had been fine while walking in The Lake District, even up the steep hills.

Jenny's condition improved slightly in the evening.

Thursday, 8th July 2021

Jenny was feeling a lot better but I seemed to be suffering with similar symptoms this morning.

After breakfast, my niece, Julie telephoned with the sad news that her mum and my younger sister, Barbara, had died the previous night, just short of her 85th birthday.

I spent some time working through the TV listings for the coming week, looking for programmes to record and we went round to the Incredible Edible plot to see if there were any raspberries. There were and we picked nearly 1 lb.

I went out to tackle the weeds that had re-grown in the patio block paving and stopped work at about 6 p.m., with a good part of it still to do.

Friday, 9th July 2021

We were grocery shopping in Sainsbury's store at Heaton Park and then Tesco at Preswich, calling briefly at Dennis Gore's chemist shop for Jenny's Omega 7 capsules.

I finished off the TV listings and programmed the recordings for the week and dealt with some other administrative matters, including starting an order to Abel and Cole for a few odd items. I was fortunate in that I had received a special offer, valid until 27th July, that gave me £10 off each of three weekly orders.

Saturday, 10th July 2021

It was a day of bits.

I dealt with the TV programmes we had watched during the previous week.

I dealt with my E-mails and prepared a sympathy card for my niece, Julie and two nephews, John and Andrew and Jenny posted it to Julie on her way round to the Chemist for her monthly supply of eye drops.

I finished off the Abel and Cole order and submitted it for delivery on Tuesday.

The old Bosch fridge-freezer was sounding its alarm and wouldn't stop so I helped Jenny to transfer the large frozen items to the old chest freezer in the garage and the smaller frozen items to the newer Miele fridge-freezer, along with the fridge contents. The latter was a bit of a squeeze.

I left the Bosch fridge-freezer to see what happened and the alarm did eventually stop. Since it was iced up (it was supposed to be frost-free), I switched it off to let it thaw out completely with the intention of thoroughly cleaning it and giving it the once-over tomorrow.

I arranged with Matthew to book a table for 19th July at the Duckworth Arms for lunch in the open air to celebrate his and Carrie's birthdays. Speaking with Rachel on the telephone, she had decided not to come this weekend and would see us next week and she declined the invitation to the meal on the 19th.

I went round to the Incredible Edible plot with Jenny to see if there were any more raspberries. We picked another 5 ounces and came back to make two and a half jars of raspberry jam.

I went out to pick the ripe strawberries. There were some nice, large ones but a few had gone mouldy because they had not been picked and I consigned those to the compost bin. A couple had been attacked by a slug but there was no sign of it and they, too, went in the compost bin. One, on the edge next to the adjacent raised bed, had been savaged by what I thought must have been a bird and had to be discarded as well. Nevertheless, there was a good haul and there was a possibility of another jam-making session tomorrow.

Sunday, 11th July 2021

We had a fun day thoroughly cleaning the inside of the old Bosch fridge-freezer, including all the fittings and drawers.

We left off for lunch and to talk to Matt and Carrie, who popped in on their way home from Bob and Marie's house.

About 3 p.m. we went down to Summerseat Garden Centre. I wanted some kiln-dried sand and Jenny wanted a Venus Fly-Trap plant in the hope that it would attract and devour the fruit flies that invaded us from the compost bin from time to time. The garden centre had neither. We also wanted some more dried mealworms for our feathered visitors but they were too expensive.

I listened to Jazz record requests, which yielded one reasonable track, while Jenny prepared tea.

Monday, 12th July 2021

I spent all day on the Bosch fridge freezer looking for the cause of the build-up of ice in the freezer. I eventually found it.

When I finally prised it out, I found the flimsy, plastic cover that supported the defrost heater was broken into three pieces and had a crack at the back where the drain hole was. The purpose of this cover was two-fold. First it supported the defrost unit and second it captured any water and channelled it down the drain pipe at the back into the receptacle on top of the compressor, which evaporated it.

The top cover was also slightly damaged and needed replacing.

I searched the Bosch web site for spare parts. The bottom cover was £100.97 and the top cover £24.37. That was £125 for two bits of flimsy plastic.

I decided to look for a new fridge freezer and spent some time looking at the latest Miele 50/50 offerings, already having a 70/30 Miele fridge freezer. Unfortunately, I couldn't find a stockist for the model in which I was interested so I ended up sending an enquiry to Miele.

Tuesday, 13th July 2021

I was up at 6 a.m. in readiness for the delivery of our grocery order from Abel and Cole.

Having washed, dried and tidied away the dishes from last evening, I laid the table for breakfast and then went out to pick the fruit. I was greeted by our friendly, female blackbird who wanted her breakfast of dried mealworms, so I obliged her and, while I was picking the ripe strawberries, I was joined by our other frequent visitor, a robin.

I also found a few ripe raspberries and went on to pick the ripe blackcurrants. There didn't seem to be a large crop on the early bushes and the fruit on the late bushes wasn't quite ready.

All that and taking in the grocery delivery took me to just after 9 a.m., by which time, Jenny was stirring.

After breakfast I looked again at the fridge freezer and I had a discussion with the chap at Belloc in Bury about repairing the old Bosch fridge freezer. He advised that it wasn't worth repairing the appliance if it was more than ten years old, which it was.

I decided to purchase a new fridge freezer, leaving off to nip down to drop off Carrie's birthday card. Carrie was busy with work but Matthew was on a break and we chatted for a while, collecting a nice terracotta pot containing some of my organic compost and some organic Bay seeds Matthew had obtained from China for his mum, so she could have an organic Bay tree.

After lunch, I looked again at the Miele KFN29243D ED/CS fridge freezer and then helped Jenny prepare the blackcurrants I had picked for cooking. Jenny made two crumbles, one large enough for two helpings and one for three.

I finally ordered the Miele fridge freezer.

Wednesday, 14th July 2021

We went to Bury in the car. Our first port of call was Marks and Spencer where I made the thrilling purchase of a pack of boxer shorts.

We called at the new Cats Protection charity shop, where Jenny bought a waistcoat with cats on it and I bought a Blue-ray DVD. After a fruitless foray into Poundland, we ended up at Tesco, primarily for some fish for tea.

We called at Matthew and Carrie's house to collect some organic Shitake mushrooms from their Ocado order and I cut down the rhubarb Matthew said we could have, for Jenny to stew and freeze.

Thursday, 15th July 2021

I cut the grass front and back, trimmed the edges and tidied up the borders. I cleaned the lawnmower and strimmer before putting them away.

I put the bins out for collection tomorrow morning and tied up the raspberry cane that was entangled in the blackberry runners.

The last job of the day before collapsing in the lounge was to wash my feet and legs, having been working in shorts.

Friday, 16th July 2021

We were grocery shopping at Unicorn in Chorlton and Waitrose in Broadheath. All that went well, especially with a gluten-free lunch at Waitrose in the recently re-opened café before shopping there.

I picked the ripe strawberries for the umpteenth time. We had a bumper crop this year.

Saturday, 17th July 2021

Our morning was taken up with the yard sale at the old school and we took £20 for electrical items we sold, which was pretty good since it wasn't that busy and the last time we only took about £1 for electrical items, the rest being for jigsaws and books since we were looking after those stalls as well. I was particularly pleased with my repair of a Sondstrom DAB radio/CD player/iPad or iPod player with a USB input as well. The problem was that the sliding case would not work properly.

Jenny found me a T-shirt at the sale and I found a CD cleaner, a pack of Tom Lehrer CDs and the DVD, Selma.

After lunch, I put the bathroom back together after Jenny had cleaned it while I was gardening yesterday, re-attaching the flexible shower hose and the shower head and refitting the flexible water shield on the bottom of the curved bath screen. I finished off by cleaning the stainless steel radiator.

Sunday, 18th July 2021

I tidied up the TV programmes we had watched the previous week and then prepared the Bosch fridge-freezer for transporting to the Bury recycling centre.

Rachel helped me carry it outside the back and through the garage into the trailer, which I had attached to the car. We laid it on its back in the trailer with the back down and I tied it up well with rope. Most of the rest of the rubbish went to the back of the car with a bag of rubble either side of the fridge-freezer.

After pumping up the tyres of the trailer and the car, the off-side rear tyre seeming to have a slow puncture, Rachel and I headed for the Bury recycling centre, where we carried the fridge freezer into the appropriate cage and dumped the rest of the rubbish in the appropriate skips.

I listened to Jazz Record Requests, which was rubbish this week then gathered some mint for Jenny to make the mint sauce for tea and picked more ripe fruit – strawberries, raspberries and a few blackcurrants until tea was ready.

Monday, 19th July 2021

Today was the day Boris the Butcher of Downing Street gave all known variants of the Covid-19 virus carte blanche. Adolf Hitler would have been proud.

It was also Matthew's birthday and, thankfully, the two events were not linked. Matthew had booked a table for six at the Duckworth Arms for lunch in the Beer Garden and Jenny and I were picking up Carrie's parents, Bob and Marie, at about noon.

We had a very nice, gluten-free meal and the overall cost for six, including drinks was most reasonable. A few dishes were not available due to demand, which meant not all of us had our first choices but it wasn't a problem for us.

We took Bob and Marie home and sat in their garden, chatting over a cup of tea.

It was a pleasant, relaxing and very warm day.

I dealt with my backlog of E-mails, read the metres and submitted the readings for this month.

My last task of the evening was to water the back garden, particularly the fruit bushes, the pots and the raised beds.

Tuesday, 20th July 2021

We didn't rise very early. It had been a stifling night and the hot, dry weather continued.

I spent the latter part of the morning and the early afternoon fruit picking while Jenny was making bread.

The blackcurrants had not done well this year and there were still quite a few on the late bush to ripen.

The few rogue raspberry bushes had produced quite a bit of fruit but at least half of it was affected by some sort of pest or disease. I left what few nice ones there were for Jenny, since she liked raspberries.

The strawberries were still doing well but reaching the end of the season. We'd had a lot off them and they were mostly really big ones.

The blackberries would not be ready for another month or two.

I washed up the bowls and utensils Jenny had used before lunch and dealt with my e-mails afterwards, checking my accounts, having viewed my latest water bill.

I went out and cut back the lilac tree at the front at our next door neighbours' request because it was overhanging the border in which they had planted flowering shrubs and their lawn, not that it shaded it in any significant way, their property being slightly west of south of ours. I didn't mind. The tree was more of a large bush and getting out of hand and it did not seem to keep its flowers very long. If and when I decided to do something with the front garden, it could disappear altogether.

The heat was overwhelming and that brief interlude in full sun, even late in the afternoon, was too much. Having put all the cuttings in the bin, I came inside again.

I ordered 2 x 2Kg packs of dried mealworms for the robin and the blackbirds from the RSPB site. The quantity was not so much because the birds needed that amount but to qualify for free delivery and ordering in bulk was cheaper.

Wednesday, 21st July 2021

The first task of the day was a DIY haircut and beard trim, with Jenny tidying up the back and a few loose ends, followed by a cold, refreshing shower in this present heat-wave.

After breakfast, dealing with E-mails and checking my gas and electricity usage for the month, I prepared the route down the drive, through the garage, onto the patio and into the back of the kitchen in readiness for our new Miele fridge-freezer delivery, due between 13:09 and 15:09.

I checked on the progress of my fridge-freezer delivery using the tracking link I had received by text message. The two-man delivery team were in Stalybridge en route to delivery number 11.

I sliced the four gluten-free loaves Jenny had baked yesterday, ready for freezing in packs of about six slices. We took out one pack at a time and lightly toasted what we needed it so that it was fresh.

I updated the progress of my fridge-freezer delivery again. The two-man team were in Todmorden, still with delivery number 11 and my ETA had now changed to the window 14:09 to 16:09.

Having updated this diary entry and replied to a Skype message from Matt, a further delivery check had the chaps still in Todmorden but on delivery number 13 and my window had advanced another 10 minutes.

It took me about twenty minutes to glue the leg on the old, white, plastic patio table that had broken near one of the fixing points yet again, by which time the crew was just south of Rochdale on delivery 14.

Following a late lunch, a further tracking update showed the vehicle had progressed to Pilsworth, just south of Bury, still on delivery 14.

I put the mended leg back on the table. Our fridge-freezer was somewhere near Higher Blackley, still on delivery 14, seemingly heading away from us. Our delivery was still scheduled to be before 16:19. They were cutting it fine.

I dealt with more E-mails and afterwards our delivery had made it to Heywood Business Park, just to the east of Bury with less than thirty minutes to go.

I was busy scanning some documents when a further check revealed that the van was only about ten minutes away so I went outside to prepare for the delivery. Jenny came dashing out with my mobile telephone. A lady was calling to say that the two chaps on the vehicle had suddenly realised that my fridge-freezer was not inside. She was making enquiries at the depot in Bury to find out where it was and would call me back. She didn't.

What appalling organisation and total waste of a day. I had expected better from Miele.

Thursday, 22 July 2021

We had been invited down to Matthew and Carrie's House for lunch with Bob and Marie.

I tidied away some items in the garage loft that had been hanging about in the garage for ages and brought down the parasol for our picnic bench and Jenny's foot spa, which she had rarely used.

Jenny cleaned up the foot spa and tested it. The bubbles only came out of one side. She emptied it and I started to undo the screws to take it apart to investigate the problem. Two screws at each side were security screws, requiring two different driver bits to remove them. That just left a single fixing in the handle to remove and it looked like it was a plastic screw. I couldn't budge it and I left it until we returned from our lunch.

We set off to pick up Marie, Bob having decided not to come because he was feeling unwell. On the way, Jenny took a call on my mobile telephone to say the fridge-freezer would be here tomorrow. I told her to make sure it did not arrive before 3 p.m. since we would be grocery shopping, which she did. I wasn't holding my breath.

We had a very nice lunch, the meat cooked by Matthew on the barbecue and the jacket potatoes by Carrie in the conventional oven. Carrie had also prepared some salad and we had also taken some using the salad leaves in our garden.

We dropped off Marie and came home, where I resumed work on the foot spa. The plastic screw in the handle turned out to be a plug, which I prised out to discover it was covering a screw, which I also removed. That separated the top from the base.

Loosening the power cable connections allowed me to put the base on the floor while I turned the upper part upside down to examine the air pump. There were two plastic hoses that connected to the pump, one for each side of the spa. One of the connections on the pump had broken and it was a case of gluing it back on using superglue while holding the connection in place using rubber bands until the glue had set.

I later put the foot spa back together and it seemed to be working perfectly. No doubt Jenny would test it over the next few days.

I received a text message from DX Delivery informing me that my fridge-freezer would be delivered between 07:00 and 08:50 tomorrow despite Jenny telling them that it would need to be after 3 p.m. three times. What a bunch of idiots they were.

Friday, 23rd July 2021

Changing our schedule to accommodate the fridge-freezer delivery was not too much of a problem since it was arranged for early morning.

I was up at 6 a.m. and the route through the garage and into the kitchen at the back was prepared by 06:55 hours. I had not been provided with a tracking reference for this delivery so I tried using the old one. It looked promising, the crew being located at the Pilsworth industrial estate just south of Bury but the delivery time had not been changed from Wednesday and still showed late afternoon although the text had said between 07:00 and 08:50.

At 07:25, I received a text message with a new tracking number. That had the correct delivery slot on it. The vehicle was still at the Pilsworth industrial estate.

The fridge-freezer arrived at about 8 a.m. I removed the packaging to discover a dent in the freezer door. I sent two messages to Miele, one via the web site form and one directly by E-mail. I did try telephoning but the lines were not open.

I then discovered three dents in the fridge door. Exchanges of e-mails and sending pictures of the damage to Miele resulted in a lady from customer services saying she would make arrangements for an engineer to fit new doors.

Meanwhile, we went grocery shopping to Tesco in Bury and Sainsbury's store at Heaton Park.

I also decided what TV programmes to record for the coming week using the electronic programme guide. I had not bought a Radio Timed because the price had gone up to £4 and it wasn't worth it.

Saturday, 24th July 2021

We spent all day at the old school, helping to prepare for the coming week-long antiques and collector's fair.

Sunday, 25th July 2021

The first job of the day was to arrange the funeral flowers for my younger sister's (Barbara's) funeral on the coming Wednesday. We eventually settled on a wreath from Sarah's Florist on Middlewood Road in Sheffield and I sent an E-mail to the shop with all the details.

My next job was to remove the packaging from underneath the new fridge freezer, place it in position, level it and then prepare it for use with Rachel's and Jenny's assistance.

I checked that I had registered the fridge-freezer for its two-year guarantee and then went out to pick the ripe fruit. Rachel had earlier picked the ripe strawberries and she and Jenny had been out to deliver the leaflets for the forthcoming antiques and collector's sale.

I finished off by tying up the blackberry runners that had grown over the block paving towards the garage rear doors.

Monday, 26th July 2021

We were back at the old school, not that there was a great deal of work for me, so I had a rummage through the CDs and DVDs for items of interest for which I would pay Frank, who managed that aspect of the sale, later.

Jenny was helping to unpack boxes and place items on the tables, ready for the sale.

I decided to have a look at the Dyson vacuum cleaner in the cellar that had been donated to the jumble. Christine, who was temporarily cleaning the old school until a new cleaner could be found, had mentioned to me that the existing vacuum cleaners in the kitchen store room did not pick up the dirt.

The Dyson needed a damn good clean, being full of dust and dirt and the filter being clogged. I took it apart and gave it a good going over using tools from the cellar. After reassembling it, I cleaned my hands and arms thoroughly with soap and water and then hand-sanitizing gel. One could not be too careful.

I tested it and it seemed to be working fine. I took the existing three cleaners out of the store room, put them outside for collection and replaced them with this one.

By this time, Jenny had gone home because she was not feeling well and I came home too.

Jenny took to her bed with a hot-water bottle for a couple of hours. I sorted and documented my latest CD and DVD acquisitions and designed some arrows for Christine so she could put them up for the forthcoming sale to designate the one-way system that was in place.

Tuesday, 27th July 2021

We went round to the old school with the trailer and I picked up the faulty vacuum cleaners to take them to the recycling centre in Bury.

Jenny nipped round to Cream, the hair salon, to cancel her appointment, made by Rachel at the weekend, for a hair cut because it could not be done in time for my sister's funeral tomorrow. Jenny rescheduled her appointment for a full wash, cut and colour in August.

Jenny also called at the chemist for my monthly supply of tablets.

We went to the recycling centre to dump the vacuum cleaners and a few bits of other rubbish and then we called at Home Bargains for some Highland Spring water. It was still out of stock.

We called at Tesco and Jenny bought the water there, along with a few other items and we came home for lunch.

Matthew's mother-in-law, Marie, called just after lunch, having dropped her husband, Bob, off at the doctor's surgery. She had brought Jenny a present of a Marks and Spencer Harvest tea-pot she had purchased for her on E-bay.

I started looking at next week's TV listings for programmes to record.

My final late evening task was to plan our route to Abbey Lane Cemetery in Sheffield for my sister's (Barbara's) funeral, with the service being held in the cemetery chapel. Locating the chapel was not as easy as one might have thought. It was not identified on any maps for which I searched on the internet and I finally stumbled on its location from a satellite image of the cemetery. It was not clear how to reach it by car.

Wednesday, 28th July 2021

We went to Sheffield for my sister's (Barbara's) funeral. The service was held in the chapel in Abbey Lane Cemetery and finished at the graveside.

We arrived early, entering the cemetery using the Hutcliffe Wood Road entrance only to discover that access to the chapel was from the Abbey Lane entrance, which we subsequently found and used, parking at the back of the chapel.

The service was well attended by family and friends. It was very well prepared and very good.

We all went back to the Kenwood Hotel for refreshments and to talk.

We left at about 4 p.m. and headed home. Jenny reminded me I had suggested calling for an evening meal and we made for the Duckworth Arms near Ramsbottom but, unfortunately, the tables were fully booked for the evening so we came home.

Thursday, 29th July 2021

We were up later than planned and didn't make it to the old school until about 11 a.m., having arranged to help with the preparations for the coming sale. We were there until nearly 5 p.m.

Friday, 30th July 2021

We went grocery shopping to Unicorn in Chorlton and Waitrose in Broadheath. We set off late so it was around 3 p.m. by the time we returned home.

After performing a few household duties, I turned my attention to a little PC work.

Saturday, 31st July 2021

We were at the old school for 8 a.m. to assist with the collector's fair which was running all the coming week.

Our duties finished at 4 p.m. and we came home, where more routine chores awaited me.

After that I tidied up the TV programmes we had watched during the previous week and backed up my media.

I finished my exciting month by scanning a few documents for storage.