

Greenmount – June 2017

Thursday June 1<sup>st</sup>: It was a much nicer day than forecast, with lots of sunshine and it was too good an opportunity to miss to continue with the garden.

I started late morning, having dealt with a problem on Rachel's laptop and trimmed the edges of the side garden, cut back the ivy and then, after a lunch break, gave the front garden the once-over.

I decided to turn my attention to the block paving and picked up the cleaning where I left off, along the side passage. It was 6 p.m. before I left off, having reached the chimney, about a metre and a half from the front. My window of opportunity was closing fast since rain was forecast for the next few days, except for Saturday, when we would be in the Old School for the monthly drop-in and to deal with some electrical jumble ready for the next sale on 24<sup>th</sup> July.

While I was working outside, needless to say, the two books Jenny had loaned to Jill in Whitby, for which I had ordered replacements from Amazon the previous day, arrived in the post from Jill. I tried to cancel the two books from Amazon but that failed because Amazon was already processing my order.

Friday June 2<sup>nd</sup>: We had an uneventful grocery shopping trip round the M60 on the outward journey. The return trip was a little more frustrating with slow moving traffic due to a broken-down, articulated lorry.

The books from Amazon arrived while we were out and had been left under the car port.

Saturday June 3<sup>rd</sup>: We went to the monthly drop-in at the Old School. Jenny took six slices of a lemon and pepper gluten-free cake for the café. I went to deal with some of the electrical jumble and Jenny helped.

We came home for lunch and spent some time in the garden, planting out the eight lettuce plants we had bought at Unicorn the day before in one of the raised beds and planting out the rhubarb in the back garden, removing it from its pot, in which it was not doing well. That involved digging a rather large hole in the back border of the back garden, hindered by a large tree root, which I had to cut out using a keyhole saw.

We tidied up and came in just as the rain was starting.

I went to put a new bulb in one of the down-lighters in the hall for Eunice, just up the road.

Returning home, I ran through the recording of Jazz Record Requests on the computer and updated the village web site before tea.

Sunday June 4<sup>th</sup>: We did not attempt a car boot sale because the forecast was for rain showers. In the event, it did rain a little and that would have been enough to damage our stock, but nowhere near as much as forecast and it was a nice day with sunny periods for the most part. Had I known it was going to be fine for most of the day, I would have done more work outside.

I prepared the books ready for returning to Amazon.

I decided to busy myself improving the diagnostics to check the entries in my spreadsheet of DVDs and TV recordings and started writing a new macro.

Monday June 5<sup>th</sup>: We went up to the post office at Holcombe Brook to drop off the Amazon return parcel and then we came home and I started on the small bedroom at last.

The last bit of plastering needed smoothing out and I needed to tidy up the coving corners since the builders had not made a terribly good job of it. After a bit of lunch, I gave the ceiling and coving its first, watered-down coat of paint, since the plaster was bare. The paint, after diluting, was so thin it went everywhere. It took as long to tidy up as it did to paint the ceiling and coving.

As it turned out, the rough, first coat of paint made it look quite good and I was pleased with the result. That done and left to dry meant I could press on at a fair rate now.

Tuesday June 6<sup>th</sup>: It was evident that the British summer had arrived. It was teeming down with rain and very windy with very strong gusts.

I went with Joani to another Dementia Presentation at the Skipton Building Society in Bury and she gave me a list of eight potential dates for repeat performances at Bury Police Station in August.

I came home for about 1 p.m. and our visitors from Sheffield, Simon and Vicky had already arrived. It was very nice to see them again and after a brief respite, we walked across to the Bull's Head Toby Carvery for lunch and came back home for a chat. We ended up viewing some old family photos I had on my computer until about 6:45, when Simon and Vicky left for home.

Wednesday June 7<sup>th</sup>: We started the day with a trip to Bury. Jenny planned to start swimming with Rachel in Bury on Thursday evenings again and needed some shampoo from Boots the chemist that was designed to remove chlorine for people who swam in pools and salt for those of us who preferred the sea. She also returned a cookery book to the Works in Bury, having received her original copy back from Jill. We walked along the Rock to Marks and Spencer where I purchased two packs of three pairs of pure cotton socks. I could have any colour I wanted so long as it was black. Our final visit was to Tesco where Jenny filled her trolley with two yoghurts and the Radio Times for next week.

Returning to our car in the car park outside Tesco, we were approached by a young man who was in some difficulty. He claimed to have lost his bus pass and, having no money or any means of obtaining money, returning to Rochdale was somewhat problematic. He needed £3.40 for the bus fare. We gave him the benefit of the doubt and the £3.40 to get home.

We came home for lunch. After lunch and a brief rest, we went outside to tie up the comfrey that the wind had blown over onto the rhubarb. Jenny had tried to do something temporary while I was with Joani the previous day but the wind was too much

for it and I put in two long canes and tied them up to the fence and to the oak tree, having secured the comfrey to them. I had to cut off two stems that had broken.

Jenny had already removed the damaged rhubarb and, having tidied that up, she fed it.

As a precaution, we scattered a few more of the slug pellets (permitted for use by organic growers) around the hosta and the lettuce plants in the raised bed.

I came in and painted the small bedroom ceiling. I managed to complete half the coving as well before I had to leave off to prepare for the village committee meeting. I did not have time for any tea.

The meeting ended about 9:30 and I had my organic, home-made, chicken and vegetable pizza about 10 p.m., followed by cherries and cream, washed down with two very welcome cups of tea.

It was midnight by the time I hit the sack and my catarrh and cough was back.

Thursday June 8<sup>th</sup>: I didn't feel well. My head felt like it was full of cotton wool and my neck and arms ached. I was still tired when I crawled out of bed and the cool shower didn't help much.

After breakfast, I printed off some gluten-free recipes from the Asda web site for Jenny. Asda did not present them in a printer-friendly format and I had to compile copies in Word using the Windows 7 Snipping Tool.

By the time I had done that and spent some time on the telephone chatting with my sister, Barbara, it was approaching lunchtime and we decided to go and vote.

The following is an extract from a letter I was compiling with the intention of publishing it before the big day but I did not manage to find the time to do so.

*“The burning question of the month of June 2017 is for which political part does one vote.*

*Without doubt, the best prime minister of my lifetime (I was born in 1947) was Harold Wilson and his Labour Government did more for the British people than they realised.*

*When he was voted out of office in 1976, the rot started to set in and Margaret Thatcher, who became Prime Minister in 1979 and her Conservative Government set about destroying the British way of life, creating a divisive culture of greed and selfishness which has been perpetuated by successive governments ever since.*

*The bandwagon of privatisation was supposed to create competition and give consumers a choice. What political leaders do not understand is that the majority of people don't want choice. It makes life too complicated. Most people want a simple, straight-forward life with security and a sense of permanence. Most people want a fair society where they receive good value for money and care when they need it and they rely on politicians to provide it.*

*What privatisation has actually achieved is expensive, counter-productive and to make a minority of people very rich at the expense of those who can least afford it.*

*Theresa May talks a lot of sense but her party's policies for 2017 do nothing to redress the anxieties of the majority of British people. Putting people's homes at risk, homes they have worked long and hard to acquire, should they need professional care, is a worry for the less affluent of our society. The proposal to hold a free vote on fox-hunting simply reflects the viciousness and cruelty of the policies of her party.*

*Jeremy Corbyn, given his past record, as portrayed by the media, can hardly be taken seriously. A major concern has to be his party's views on foreign policy and immigration. His timing in blaming terrorist activity on our role in overseas conflict, in respect of the Manchester affair, could hardly have been worse.*

*Immigration needs to be stringently controlled. This country is bursting at the seams as it is and we need to develop a plan not to manage our influx of foreigners but to reduce our population over the coming years.*

*As for the Liberal Democrats, will anyone trust that party again after their coalition with the Conservatives in 2010? The Liberal Democrats did so many U-turns on their policies, the party is still reeling from the effect.*

*So where does that leave us?*

*Can UKIP be taken seriously and what relevance does the party have now that we, as a nation, have voted to leave the European Parliament? What's more, where will the party hold its sparring matches after we leave?*

*There are other, minority parties and the question is, are any of them worth considering?*

*Well, the first point is that we all have a democratic right to vote and we should use that right and not sit at home, just letting things happen either because we are too lazy to go to the polling station or because we think our vote will make no difference. Admittedly, our system is not as democratic as it should be (in a truly democratic system, every single vote would count, not just the one that puts the candidate first) but it's all we have, for the present.*

*The second point is that if you don't like any of the major parties and, let's face it, none of them is really up to the job, pick one of the minority ones. The chances are that party you pick will not win an overall majority so your vote might not do any good but it won't do any harm either.*

*Personally, I think voting should be compulsory and there should be an abstention box on the ballot form. If more than 25% of people abstained, the election would be null and void and the parties would have to redress their manifestoes before holding another election. It might even be helpful if abstainers could say why they abstained to give the political parties some idea of how to amend their policies to win more votes. Better still, use the votes cast to create a government based on proportional representation.*

*I have no qualms in revealing that I shall be voting for the Green Party, as always. Why? Quite simply because I believe in protecting the environment and putting the welfare of future generations before profit."*

That having been written, when we arrived at the polling station (aka Greenmount Cricket Club), there were only three candidates on the voting paper, Conservative, Labour and Lib Dem. It was a case of damage limitation and I, somewhat reluctantly, voted for the latter.

We came home for lunch and I felt terrible. The fresh air and mild, damp and dull weather did nothing to improve my lethargy.

Jenny talked me into adding some organic wheatgrass powder to my soup and that, followed by an apple, did help somewhat, wheatgrass being a kind of energy booster. I relaxed in the chair to see if it took more effect as my digestive system absorbed its goodness.

I perked up enough to start work on the lamps for the Old School that needed repairing for the jumble sale when the Heavens opened. The only time I saw rain like it was when the chaps and I were caught in it walking down into Thixendale on the Yorkshire Wolds way and we were soaked to the skin even through our so-called waterproofs. The main road through Greenmount was flooded. Our drive was flooded because the drains couldn't cope and water went under the garage door and into the garage so we had to move Jenny's car boot stock around. That took ages. The road here was like a river. Goodness only knows what it was like further down the road where it dips down to the stream.

I finished off examining the lamps, all of which needed spare parts.

Friday June 9<sup>th</sup>: Over breakfast, we listened to the news about the election. The result was a small Conservative majority with no overall control. That just about said it all.

Great Britain must have been the laughing stock of Europe. David Cameron, instead of taking on the challenge of negotiating Britain's exit from Europe following the referendum he instigated, threw his toys out of the pram when the vote didn't go his way and the majority, albeit a slight one, voted to leave Europe. He resigned and Theresa May took over the leadership. Now she had called this election weeks before the exit talks were due to commence hoping to win a decisive majority, having inflamed much of the voting public by threatening to take away their homes to pay for their care in the later stages of life (perhaps a slight exaggeration but close enough) and offered a free House of Commons vote on fox-hunting

I formed the opinion that she was deliberately trying to lose the election to avoid having to take on the responsibility for leaving the EU.

Meanwhile, no doubt, our European colleagues were rolling about in laughter in Brussels. We were now left in the position of having no clear leadership and the likelihood was that whatever we did have was too inexperienced to undertake favourable negotiations. Which, in my book, made the Conservatives look like a complete bunch of idiots.

Matthew and Carrie paid us a brief visit and then I went to paint the rest of the coving and touch up the ceiling in the small bedroom while Jenny baked a cake for the D-CaFF.

We had a brief lunch and then headed off to the D-CaFF, collecting Doreen and Alex on the way. The theme this month was "Reminiscences of Coronation Street".

Saturday June 10<sup>th</sup>: We took some old car boot stock to the "Cash for Clothes" collection point at Crosstones in Bury and then went on to Prestwich for a small weekly shop at Village Greens and then Tesco.

After storing our shopping away and a quick cup of tea, we went to Matthew and Carrie's house for tea with Carrie's mum, Marie, it being Marie's birthday. Carrie's dad, Bob, could not come because he was not very well.

Matthew and Carrie had given us two tickets to a military concert at the Drill Hall in Bury for Father's Day and we went with Marie and met up with Marie's son, Stewart, his wife, Susanne and their son, Joseph.

The concert, in aid of the Bury Fusiliers Museum, was well attended and, I have to say, brilliant. Not only did we have music from the military band from Bury but also from the pipes and drums band from Accrington and a marching drum band. The finale had all three bands performing together.

During the interval, we saw two people we knew, Pat, the former local WI chairperson and Dawn, the daughter of Jenny's friend, June. Dorothy Gunther, our former local councillor and now Mayor, who we know from various village events, gave us a wave in a free moment she had during the interval and I nipped round to congratulate her on her new appointment.

We dropped Marie off at home in Ramsbottom and managed to dive into bed about midnight.

Sunday June 11<sup>th</sup>: Needless to say we had not packed the car for the car boot sale in Ramsbottom, having arrived home late the previous evening. We had decided not to go anyway because the weather forecast was not good.

Instead, I continued work on the small bedroom. I sanded down the walls ready for painting when I spotted a small indentation in the plaster where the door knob had hit it. It was too small to mix some plaster just to fix that and my small tub of instant plaster had dried up so I consigned it to the bin. I decided to fit the double electrical socket to replace the single one. That went reasonable well, although, having removed the old backing box and made the hole bigger for the new one, there was nothing to which I could secure the box, the wall being an interior partition wall. I decided to glue it in place to the back of the wall on the other side of the partition using my stock of "No More Nails". That had dried up as well, so I used Evostick wood glue. I held the socket in place with one of Jenny's clothes props wedged against the opposite wall in the small bedroom until the glue set.

I subsequently managed to fit the new socket on the end of the wires so I could turn the power back on. I mixed some Polyfilla to make an external corner on the coving that the plasterers had not fitted properly, using a minute amount to smooth the dent in the plaster left by the door knob and the remainder to fill in part of the hole round the new backing box as the glue seemed to have taken hold. To be on the safe side, I left it for another day.

Having had the power off and put it back on, the lights under the car port operated by a sensor would not switch off and I had to adjust the settings on the sensor.

The last tasks of the day were to power up the server for my web site and the Tottington District Civic Society web site and for E-mail and then shower.

Monday June 12<sup>th</sup>: Having chipped one of my lower, front teeth on the previous Saturday evening, I had a dental appointment at 10:10 a.m. to have it fixed. This was the third time over a couple of years the same tooth had chipped and been repaired and, being used primarily for biting, it would more than likely happen again.

I spent the afternoon removing the radiator in the small bedroom, revealing more cracks in the wall, which I plastered. I also sanded the other three walls ready for painting and, after the plaster had set sufficiently, the window wall from which I had removed the radiator.

Tuesday June 13<sup>th</sup>: Jenny helped me wipe down the walls in the small bedroom and then I spent the afternoon painting them and finished about 7 p.m. The first coat of paint looked pretty shabby, not having covered the previous, darker paint properly and a second coat was required, a job for another day.

Wednesday June 14<sup>th</sup>: The day didn't start well when Jenny's lap top exhibited strange behaviour, firstly causing problems with Skype which failed to connect to a 3-way call from my two sisters, Barbara in Redcar and Edith in Christchurch, N.Z., initiated by the former and secondly refusing to load Internet Explorer 11 properly and finally crashing.

On reloading, it immediately insisted on installing a number of important updates to Windows 7, the last five of which failed. A restart and a follow-up installation of updates resolved that problem, followed by a request to install further updates. So what had Microsoft been doing to Windows 7 that they didn't get right first time?

We went to Bury to collect the cat's renal food from the vet, calling to drop off some jumble at the Old School on the way.

We came home for lunch and I performed a large update on the village web site on which I had been working over the last few days.

After that, we sped off to take some shredded paper to Bleakholt Animal Sanctuary, where our donation would be used as bedding for some of the animals. We had a quick look in the shop and at the DVDs and books before heading back home.

I spent a little while testing the new E-mail address for our new village project, the Greenmount Helpers, where volunteers would be available on request to assist those who needed help or simply company in the village. I set the address up on the laptop I use for testing jumble IT equipment using the newer method of access, IMAP. The advantage of IMP over the older and more common POP3 was that any number of different computers could access the same E-mail account at different times and see the same information (i.e. inbox, sent items, deleted items, junk mail and so on). It was useful for people who wanted to access their E-mail from different devices (e.g. laptop, mobile phone) or for the same account to be accessed by different people sharing a responsibility.

That worked first time, although the E-mail account did exhibit some peculiar behaviour. I needed to test it because our village chairman, Alistair, was coming round the following morning to discuss it and test it on his laptop.

After tea, we went to a meeting of the residents of the estate, Hunt Fold, known as The Friends of Hunt Fold, at the church. The meeting was to discuss the plan to take over responsibility for maintenance five of the green areas on the estate from the council and the costs involved. The proposed, voluntary contribution per household for the first year (2018) due later this year was £80, which seemed like a reasonable sum, considering that it would prevent the land being sold, with the possibility of future development, instead of being retained as recreational areas, as was the intention when the estate was built.

Thursday June 15<sup>th</sup>: Alistair, our village Chairman, came round at 10:00 a.m. to discuss the configuration of Microsoft Outlook on his laptop to access the mailbox for our village dementia café, D-CaFF. It was necessary to provide access from his computer so that he and I could see the same information in the mailbox on each of our computers. In order to do this we used the newer method of access known as IMAP.

After Alistair left, Jenny and I went to lunch at Summerseat Garden Centre for lunch.

I spent the afternoon cutting the grass on the side of the house and then trimming the edges.

All that took me up to about 5 p.m. and I was feeling quite tired so I packed up for the day.

Friday June 16<sup>th</sup>: Our usual grocery shopping day went without a hitch.

We called at The Lighthouse lighting shop in Bury for part to repair four lamps that came into the jumble at The Old School at a cost of £11, which I thought was a bit steep.

From there it was a short haul of one junction down the M66 to Asda at Pilsworth, followed by a comfortable journey to Unicorn in Chorlton and on to Waitrose at Broadheath where we lunched as usual before shopping.

We were home in the late afternoon after passing through Bury as school finishing time.

Saturday June 17<sup>th</sup>: It was a nice day but we didn't see much of the sun, working on the electrical jumble at The Old School.

We came home about 4 p.m., having spent almost an hour tidying up and I was going to help Jenny pack the car for the following day until Rachel offered to do so. I busied myself repairing the four lamps, of which three were completed successfully. There was a technical problem with the fourth one and I needed to think about it.

Sunday June 18<sup>th</sup>: because it was a very nice day, we decided we ought to be at Ramsbottom Station car park to pick our car boot slot early. We arrived there at 5:45 a.m., having been up to the dawn chorus at 4 a.m., to discover the place was deserted except for three regular chaps at the end nearest the station entrance. We picked a spot I thought would be in the shade under a tree most of the day and, as it turned out, missed it by one. Trading was slow and I was amazed that we made as much as we did, given that most sales were under £1.

Matthew called me on my mobile to wish me a happy father's day and we chatted for a short while.

We called for some wine from bargain Booze on the way home, the shop offering the best price for Yellow Tail Shiraz and Chardonnay at the current time.

Rachel cooked a very nice tea of meat balls and pasta followed by a blueberry cheesecake for father's day and, while she was preparing that, I completed another update to the village web site.

Monday June 19<sup>th</sup>: My day comprised the task of painting the walls in the small bedroom again. The first coat had resulted in a patchy finish. I was hoping that the second coat would finish that particular element of decoration in the room but, unfortunately, the second coat did not quite cover properly either and I contemplated a third coat, possibly the following day.

I also remembered to paint the small, triangular piece of wall between the stairs and the landing floor on the basis that, once painted, I could put back the staircase rails. The first coat seemed to cover quite well, although I did intend to give it a second coat when I finished off the small bedroom walls.

Meanwhile, Jenny was tending her car booty in the shade, under the car port, avoiding the scorching sunshine as the outside temperature soared to 29°C, making three very warm days in a row.

I finished about 7 p.m., helped Jenny tidy up and put out the bins for the collection the following day, the latter being my usual routine on Monday evenings.

Tuesday June 20<sup>th</sup>: It was another very nice day and, since the brief summary spell was not set to last (so what's new?) I decided to cut the grass and started with the back, trimming the edges, cleaning the cat's latrine and hoeing the borders.

I started to sweep up and noticed a few bits of the block paving were starting to show some growth again between the bricks, so I cleaned those, starting at the garage end and reaching the conservatory.

Then I remembered I needed to trim a bush that was growing on the other side of the fence and which was overhanging the garage roof. I tackled that as far as I could reach, intending to finish off the other bits from the side garden.

Then I remembered I needed to clean out the garage gutter. I managed the back half of that by crawling along the garage roof, the section obscured from the side garden by bushes; the other half I could reach using ladders from the side garden.

Then I remembered I needed to clean the conservatory gutters. The section most in need of cleaning and the most difficult to access was the box gutter between the garage and the conservatory, I managed to clean that by crawling on the garage roof again and, having removed a couple of bucket loads of grime, dead leaves and such, including two young trees and some ivy that was growing in the gutter, I managed to push the remaining rubbish towards the patio sufficiently to reach it without the need to continue to crawl around like a contortionist on the roof.

The last task while on the roof was to replace three plastic ends that had been dislodged from the ends of three polycarbonate conservatory roof panels. I managed the one nearest the house wall with some difficulty. After several attempts, I gave up on the next one along towards the patio and the third I managed to replace from the step-ladder, having removed myself from the roof.

I finished it off by using the hose pipe to wash the guttering and flush the remaining detritus down the drain, which subsequently blocked the grate and overflowed onto the patio.

Enough was enough and I came in to wash and change.

Worst was still to come. The water from the hose pipe in the box gutter penetrated into the conservatory near the entrance from the kitchen and was dripping enthusiastically from the PVC above the door. We mopped up using a towel that was to hand and a large quantity of kitchen roll. I assumed the water intrusion was due to me spraying water at pressure in all directions in the gutter and that, when it rained it would only come downwards and be contained. Time would tell.

I also turned off the water supply to the toilet in the bathroom because the cistern was overflowing. The excess water ran into the toilet bowl and it was only a trickle so it was not a major problem but it did need a good seeing to.

Wednesday June 21<sup>st</sup>: I awoke in the early hours with severe cramp in my upper left leg and it took several minutes for the excruciating pain to subside after walking around, stretching and massaging the affected part. I eventually managed to drop off again.

After breakfast, another disaster with water in the conservatory occurred. This time Jenny had watered her hanging tomato plant and it had overflowed all over the floor. Being tightly packed with car booty and furniture from the dining room, this was not good news. She managed to mop up the water with a large sheet and, still being very warm and with a dehumidifier in the conservatory, it would soon dry out.

I re-enabled the toilet in the bathroom, not turning the water on full and I thought the leak had stopped. I was wrong. I left it for the present.

We headed off to Bury. It was B&Q discount day and I had received an additional £2 off voucher if I spent more than £10. I bought a tube of No More Nails, which I used to affix the varnished, wooden skirting to the wall, a pack of five new paint brushes, some Loctite glue remover and a 4-pack of Ogee wooden skirting for the small bedroom to replace the original painted skirting when I got round to removing it and purchase a mitre saw to cut it. Jenny also added two more 64-litre storage boxes to the purchases.

When I arrived back at the car, I checked the skirting I had purchased against an old piece of Ogee which was an off-cut from when I replaced the skirting in the lounge. The B&Q profile was totally different. I went straight back to return it and received a refund. Strangely, they also docked me 61p off my £2 voucher, which I thought was a bit off.

We headed up to Wickes, where I think I purchased the skirting originally. Their Ogee skirting profile was similar but slightly different to what I had and it was double-sided, with a different design on the back, unlike the original, which was flat wood on the back.

We tried Jewsons. Their Ogee was the same as Wickes, except they had longer lengths. It was still useless for my needs and longer with it.

The chap there suggested trying Howarths, which I made a note to do.

Our last port of call was, needless to say, Tesco and then we came home for lunch.

I still needed my mitre saw and I intended to purchase a Bosch Professional GCM 8 SJL, which Bosch priced at about £380, the skirting and a tin of McPhearson's high gloss varnish, not to mention a longer working day and the energy to take advantage of it.

I spent the afternoon updating things on the computer, including the village and Tottington District Civic Society's web sites.

Thursday June 22<sup>nd</sup>: It was my intention to give the walls in the small bedroom another and final coat of paint. Unfortunately, I didn't feel well, suffering from tiredness, muscular aches and pains, a little sickness, and a little dizziness. I put it down to the weather, being hot and sunny one day and dull and miserable the next, although it was mostly fine and still quite warm. That and my roof acrobatics. Oh, and the hassle of having to cope with changes to products in DIY stores such that it was impossible to match up items that had been purchased a few years ago. What is the point in changing something that cannot be improved upon? A piece of shaped wood is a piece of shaped wood. Changing the shape of it was not going to improve it in any way.

We decided to go out for some fresh air and deliver the latest issue of the village newsletter, Greenmount Voice, together with a couple of flyers, one for the new Greenmount Helpers service and one for a couple of up-coming Cricket Club events.

I spent the best part of an hour folding the Voice and inserting the flyers beforehand and we called at the chemist for my monthly supply of tablets and at the Old School for a bulb to test one of the lamps I repaired on the return journey.

We had lunch when we came home and I spent the afternoon updating the village web site again.

Friday June 23<sup>rd</sup>: We set off reasonably early for our day's outing. We had intended to call at the chemist and the Old School before leaving the village but having done so the previous day meant that we could skip those items on our list.

Our first stop was at the home of our church treasurer to drop off a copy of the invoice for the installation of the Old School water heater so it could be paid before the end of the month and Margaret said she would kindly drop off a cheque at the plumber's home when she came to church on Sunday.

From there, we headed up to Asda at Pilsworth. One item we wanted was a bottle of Janneau Armagnac brandy. Actually, we wanted two, one for Matthew's birthday. There were none on the shelves and a very helpful gentleman took some time to check there

was none in stock and to find out for me that a delivery was due that afternoon. What's more, he offered to telephone me on my mobile telephone to let me know when it arrived and to leave two bottles at customer services for me to collect as we passed on our way home.

From there it was a leisurely run down to Unicorn on the M60 except for one stupid woman who insisted on ignoring my left indicator and passed me on the inside rather than wait for me to move over and pass me in the right-hand lane. What's more, she gave me some horn as she went by so I returned the favour and she sped off into the distance shaking her fist, blissfully unaware she was exceeding the average 50 m.p.h. speed limit. I hoped she received a suitable fine.

The journey on to Waitrose was more like a dodgem track and by weaving between the two lanes, we managed to avoid most of the slower drivers for much of the journey.

On the journey home, which was a little slower due to congestion and drivers not leaving gaps for traffic to merge and swap lanes as the fancy took them, we received a telephone call from the chap at Asda to let us know our brandy was awaiting collection as promised.

I decided, wrongly as it turned out, to stay on the motorway, past our usual exit at Prestwich, to take the next one and return up the M66, a more direct route to Asda – or it would have been if we had not had to halt due to stationary traffic immediately past the exit we normally took. That was, again, due to drivers not leaving enough of a gap for traffic joining the motorway from the A56 to merge into the nearside lane and also due to there being the M66/M60/M62 junction very shortly afterwards.

Still, we eventually made it to Asda for the second time that day, collected our brandy and came home up the A56 rather than use the M66 motorway that was already heavily congested when we left it.

I was feeling very tired.

Saturday June 24<sup>th</sup>: I did not sleep well and woke early. We were at the Old School for 9:45, working on the electrical jumble again and by 2:30, having had lunch there, we had just about completed all of it, which made a change. Normally there was always a pile to do.

We came home and, feeling absolutely terrible, with a head ache, aching limbs, feeling tired and a little sick, I lay down on the bed and fell asleep for two hours. I didn't feel much better when I woke up and the lethargy continued.

We did not prepare for a car boot sale because the weather forecast was for rain the following day. It was also for rain that afternoon, but it didn't.

Sunday June 25<sup>th</sup>: Rain was forecast so instead of car-booting, I spent most of the day giving the walls in the small bedroom a third and final coat of paint. That seemed to be drying well when I noticed a couple of patchy spots on the ceiling and on the coving so I touched those up as well.

Monday June 26<sup>th</sup>: I awoke with a pain in my right, front rib cage and the more I moved and coughed, the worse it became. I assumed I had pulled something and Jenny treated the skin with Aloe Vera. That seemed to ease the situation.

It was not a bad day. I started off pottering round in the back garden, putting Jenny's dwarf bean plants into pots and planting out a carnation cutting that had taken root in the back border. I also tidied up the blackberry bush, securing two branches that were trailing on the garden.

We decided to move Jenny's hanging tomato plant outside. Moving it from the conservatory was a job and a half because it was swimming in water and much of that went on the conservatory floor, creating yet another job for Jenny. We eventually hung it on the clothes line in the sunniest corner of the garden but I thought it was too far gone to recover.

I removed the heads of the early blackcurrant bushes that were turning white and dying. I don't know whether that was a disease or just natural decay. The blackcurrants seemed alright and some were ripe for picking, so I collected them for Jenny to make a crumble for tea.

I potted around, tidying up a few outstanding things, like putting away some items in the garage and testing bits and pieces for both the Old School jumble and the car boot sale.

More Aloe Vera was applied to my painful area, which worsened when I went to bed.

Tuesday June 27<sup>th</sup>: My aches and pains were still prevalent when I awoke and more Aloe Vera was smeared on the affected area. It did not seem as bad as the previous day, so the treatment did seem to be working.

About 11:15, I noticed that the heavy rain had subsided, so I thought it rather strange that water should still be running down the road like a fast-flowing stream. Further investigation through the window suggested it might be another burst water main, the fifth in two years and the second within a month on the estate and I went out to investigate further. Dave from across the road was already on his way up and he said that the lady across the road from the escape had reported the incident at 8:00 a.m. this morning. As I came back in, the United Utilities van arrived to inspect the burst.

In the absence of an E-mail address to contact United Utilities, I filled in a form to re-report the leak and suggest all the mains on the estate be replaced or relined to prevent further leaks.

Wednesday June 28<sup>th</sup>: We took the car in to Tottington Motors. The hand brake was not holding on steep hills, the off-side headlight bulb had gone and the alternator was starting to squeak again. Rachel gave us a lift from the garage into Bury since the British summer weather of heavy cloud, wind and heavy rain had returned to normal, with temperatures colder than in February. We potted round Bury and caught the bus home for lunch.

Almost immediately after we had finished our meal, Ian from the garage telephoned to say the car needed a new brake calliper on one of the rear wheels and asked if it was

alright to proceed since the cost was just under £170 in total. I told him yes and he said he thought I would, so he had already ordered the parts and the car would be ready shortly.

We caught the 2:50 bus to Bury, arriving at the Interchange about five minutes after our connecting bus had left and waited almost half an hour for the next one, by which time it was packed with children leaving school, who, I have to say, were very well behaved.

We alighted at the stop just a little way before Tottington Motors and collected the car. They had not charged me for the headlight bulb, which, although not a substantial amount, was very nice of them and is the kind of gesture that encourages one to continue trading with them.

From there we made our way to Matthew and Carrie's house to drop off their anniversary card and, unexpectedly, we found Matthew at home, so we went in for a chat and waited until Carrie came home from work.

We then went off to the local Sainsbury's mini-shop to see if they had anything we wanted. They did not and we decided we needed a proper Sainsbury's supermarket.

We came home for tea and then settled down to our usual evening's entertainment.

Thursday June 29<sup>th</sup>: The first job of the day after the routine chores was to deal with Jenny's tomato plant. Hanging it outside in the lowering temperatures in the rain after being in the conservatory did not do it a lot of good and we consigned it to the garden waste bin.

I compiled a short letter for the Driver and vehicle Licensing Centre to accompany the return of my old driving licence, having received my renewed licence the previous day following my online application, necessary because my old licence expired on my 70<sup>th</sup> birthday in September. That prompted Jenny to produce her driving licence, which was falling apart and I said I would fix it later.

The plan was to go to a timber yard in Middleton where skirting could be made to order if one took a sample of the original, which meant I could replicate the skirting I had in the lounge. Since it was going to be produced to order, I set about measuring up all three bedrooms, the landing and the dining room, with Jenny's help and then working out what lengths of manufactured skirting would give me the pieces I needed to fit. By the time I had done that, had a cup of tea and stuck Jenny's driving licence back together, not having risen from our slumbers particularly early, it was too late to go to Middleton.

We went into Ramsbottom instead, because I needed some Vogel Bronchoforce to deal with my catarrh and intermittent cough, some more Vogel Saw Palmetto which helped maintain a healthy prostate gland and Jenny needed some more Vogel eye drops. Unfortunately, the shop in Ramsbottom from which we normally purchased these items still did not have them in stock and the lady there took our telephone number so she could call us when they came in.

We toured the charity shops. Jenny found a Midsomer Murders DVD we did not have and I purchased an oil lamp that had been converted to electricity for £7.50 because I needed the globe for a proper oil lamp I had, to replace one I broke some time ago and

the chimney would come in useful as a spare. It was a bargain because it would have cost me more to purchase a spare globe and the spare chimney was a bonus. The plan was to obtain an enclosed globe from the Old School jumble and resell the lamp on our car boot sale, since I didn't really like oil lamps that had been electrified.

Friday June 30<sup>th</sup>: I was supposed to call at the vet's surgery in Bury to collect the cat's renal tablets on the way to Unicorn in Chorlton for our weekly grocery shop but I forgot and drove straight down to the M60.

The journey down was alright even though there was heavy congestion and going was slow until we reached the point at which the M60 and M62 divided.

On our way to Waitrose, we called at a rather large Sainsbury Supermarket in Sale for some cereals we could not obtain elsewhere, except for the health food shop in Bury market and we no longer traded there because of the rather unpleasant chap who was often behind the counter. We also bought some Yellowtail Chardonnay that was on offer at the supermarket, the price having hiked somewhat over recent weeks, as well as a few other items that were not on our list.

It was a surprise to find that the car park was pay and display with a £1 charge for up to 2 hours, refundable against any purchase of £5 or more in store.

From there we resumed our journey along the A56 to Waitrose in Broadheath, where we lunched as usual.

The return journey along the A56 was somewhat sluggish and the M60 was nothing short of horrendous. The journey back to Prestwich took about 45 minutes, more than twice what would be the norm.

We called at Matthew and Carrie's house to drop off their birthday cards and presents before they shot off on holiday to Spain and France for three weeks. Matthew had finished work early so we chatted briefly before going to see the vet about the cat's renal tablets.

We were home for about 4 p.m. and somewhat shattered. The cat was relieved though.

As the end of another month is reached, you may have noticed that I did not comment about the Grenfell Tower Block fire in Kensington, London which started just after midnight on 15<sup>th</sup> June. Well, here is my two-penneth.

At the time of writing, the death toll was around 80; as investigations proceeded, the true figure would not be known for some time. The people housed in the block of flats were, shall we say, meaning no disrespect, from the lower echelon of our society.

At the time of the fire, I recall someone asking the question "How could such a tragedy occur in one of the richest countries of the world?"

My answer to that is quite simple. This might be one of the richest countries of the world but the wealth is not fairly distributed. If those responsible for the tower block in question (and, since the fire countless others have been identified as fire risks) had not

penny-pinched when renovating and improving them and had installed proper fire safety mechanisms, this fire would not have spread so rapidly and would not have killed so many, if any, people. But then, the poorer people in our society are expendable aren't they?

We think we are so clever and we have made such progress and gained so much knowledge, particularly in the last two hundred years and yet we still have the instincts and trappings of the cave-man (or woman). We are selfish, greedy and inconsiderate. And the vast majority of those in power, our politicians and leaders, are the worst of all.