

Greenmount March 2021

Monday, 1st March 2021

Rachel had been on holiday for a couple of weeks and had been spending the last few days with us. Her car had been parked on the road and my first task of the day was to remove the ice from it and start it up to demist the interior while she prepared to go to work. The sun was up and it had melted most of the ice, so that was not a problem. Unfortunately, the battery was flat and I had to put our car on the road to jump-start it.

I redrew the new alarm wiring diagram because in doing the wiring, I had made some changes. I then finished wiring the alarm box, although the series-wired loops for the tamper circuit needed crimping together and I didn't have any crimps, so they were currently just twisted together and secured in a strip connector.

After a quick snack, I dealt with a couple of TV recordings, read through and updated February's monthly diary and started today's entry before giving our bedroom wall another coat of paint prior to fitting the new remote keypad.

I checked the weather for tomorrow. It was going to be another nice, dry, cold day so I thought I might tackle the new skirting in the back bedroom, with Jenny's help. Before I could fit the new skirting, I had to remove the old wood and I went to do that, having noticed that I could remove the skirting under the radiator without removing the radiator because it had one of those fittings that allowed the flow and return to be supplied at one end only.

Some of the nails remained in the wood and plaster and wouldn't budge so I cut them out using the Dremmel. In trying to remove the nails with nippers, I cut my right little finger and the knuckles on the little finger and third finger on my left hand, all of which were washed, treated with Savlon and protected with a plaster.

I was going to have a shower but couldn't do so with the plasters. I decided to leave the plasters overnight and then remove them and shower in the morning.

Tuesday, 2nd March 2021

I had intended working on the skirting for the back bedroom. Instead, I installed the alarm remote keypad and finished off the new alarm control box. Completing all the tests, programming, documentation and tidying up took most of the day. There were still a couple of outstanding items with which to deal but the device was operational.

I had a village committee meeting in the evening, at 7 p.m., on Zoom. This was a special meeting to discuss a single issue – that of a fence between the Cricket Club cap park and the village green, essentially to stop children from running off the green onto the car park. I didn't expect it to last long. An hour and fifty minutes of discussion later we had not reached a decision, the main point of contention being whether to install a gate or a chicane for pedestrian access and where to put it. We decided to mull over the discussion and vote on a proposal at the full meeting later this month.

Wednesday, 3rd March 2021

I was up at 6:30 a.m. to give me time to put all the rubbish in the car for the tip, on our way out grocery shopping. The wooden skirting I had removed from the back bedroom needed cutting up to fit in the boot and that took about fifteen minutes.

We left at about 8:15 and made the tip (recycling point in Bury) our first stop. We had the place to ourselves for the first ten minutes or so.

I motored on down to Heap Bridge to B&Q for some crimp connectors for the new alarm control box and I bought some more filler for the back bedroom while I was there in case I ran out.

We joined the M66 south-bound, the motorway junction being adjacent to B&Q and then headed anticlockwise down the M60 from the M60/M66/M62 interchange, a couple of junctions further on, to the Stretford turn-off, which eventually led us to Unicorn in Chorlton. I listened to a Kenny Ball (trad Jazz) CD and continued reading the last copy of Private Eye while Jenny went into the store.

We called at Sainsbury's supermarket in Sale on the way to Waitrose in Broadheath. I helped with the shopping at both, obtaining the latest copy of Private Eye in the process.

I had recently heard that the Conservative Government was scoring better than the Labour Opposition in recent polls and I couldn't believe it. There was so much misleading information in the media and the vast majority of people must have been so gullible to believe it.

The Government was, of course, looking quite good at the moment, with the seeming success in finally controlling the Covid-19 pandemic and having a "road-map" out of the present constraints.

What few people seemed to fail to grasp was that we would have been here far sooner, at much less damage to the economy and with very few deaths, had this same Government acted swiftly and decisively when the first Covid-19 case was discovered in the UK, over a year ago. Furthermore, had this action been taken, many of the people who were suffering and had died as a result of not receiving the hospital treatment they needed would, by now, have been well on the road to recovery.

The other fatal mistake this Government made was to try to manage the pandemic centrally instead of supporting local centres of expertise, which subsequently proved to be much more successful, particularly in testing and tracing people with the virus.

A quote from Private Eye, issue no 1541, dated 19th February to 4th March 2021 commenting on the Government's current quarantine strategy reads as follows:

"The Institute for Government believes what the government is about to deliver 'is characteristic of much of its pandemic response: an uneasy compromise between ministers prioritising health outcomes and others concerned about the impact on the economy, but which risks achieving the objectives of neither'".

Back to the plot.

We called at Matthew and Carrie's house on the way back. They were busy in the garden. I was hoping to collect a few items but Matthew had not had the time to gather them together.

It was mid-afternoon when we came home and after a late lunch, I started to work through the TV listings for next week, picking out items to record.

Thursday, 4th March 2021

After tidying up after a later-than-planned breakfast, I went out, suitably attired, to wash the car. That took a good couple of hours.

A glance at the clock after an extended break for a late lunch indicated it was 15:45. Where had the day gone?

Friday, 5th March 2021

I finished scanning the TV listings for programmes worth recording for the coming week and programmed the recordings. I tidied up what we had watched the previous week.

Saturday, 6th March 2021

My back was hurting a little, probably following the activity on Thursday and then sitting all day yesterday. I decided to soldier on and started putting the raised bed Matthew had given me together. It took me a while to find the box containing the screws that accompanied the wood and a quick inspection of those proved them to be too corroded for re-use.

I started work using what stainless steel screws I had in stock and then, after a quick lunch, we nipped down to B&Q for more screws, having first checked the web site which showed the two sizes I wanted were in stock at the local store. I tanked up the car with diesel on the way.

It was starting to turn cold by the time we came home, having spent some time trying to find some of the screws on the shelf at B&Q, which I did with the aid of a very helpful assistant. We finished off putting the raised bed together and then packed up for the day. The bench on which the bed sat was tomorrow's task.

Sunday, 7th March 2021

I was outside for 11:30 putting together the table for our new raised bed. I had managed to complete most of the frame, with Jenny's help, by 4:30 p.m., having ignored the attempt at a rain shower around lunchtime. Jenny came in about 4 p.m. because she was cold and she couldn't feel her feet. Washing her feet in warm water and a dash of Glenfiddich in a cup of tea revived her.

After giving up for the day and tidying up, I came in at 4:40, had a glass of water and then a shot of Ardbeg 10-year-old malt, which warmed the cockles.

I listened to most of the recording of Jazz Record Requests while lasagne was being prepared for tea, with which I enjoyed a couple of glasses of Yellowtail Rosé. Another glass of the Ardbeg afterwards went down well, too.

Monday, 8th March 2021

I was awakened at dawn by the birds singing away, dozed off again and woke at about 7:30 a.m. Jenny was still aching from yesterday's activity and I was up and out by 8 a.m.

I had forgotten to bring Jenny's washing line in last evening and there was a heavy mist which had dampened everything. I brought the line in and covered the bench we had erected yesterday since heavy rain was expected later.

I washed the pots from last evening and, since Jenny was up and about, laid the table for breakfast. Her aches and pains had subsided somewhat, thanks to a good night's rest and a hot water bottle.

The expected rain came early and with a grey, overcast sky, it was pretty miserable.

I finished off listening to the recording of Jazz Record Requests after breakfast. Alyn Shipton broadcast the sad news of the death of Chris Barber last Tuesday after living with dementia for some time, just short of his 91st birthday. Chris Barber's band played all kinds of jazz and I remember him best for his traditional jazz numbers, having had the good fortune to see him play with Kenny Ball and Acker Bilk live in Cornwall at an open-air performance during one of our holidays there. There weren't many professional trad jazz bands around these days, Tuba Skinny being one of them.

I decided to tidy up a few loose ends on the computer, feeling a little shattered after yesterday and one thing led to another. That kept me occupied until tea time.

Tuesday, 9th March 2021

For most of the day I was tidying up the conservatory, or, in other words, my desk in the conservatory.

That involved attempting to back up my hard drive running Windows 7 so I could restore it if it crashed and scanning a couple of Datanews issues from when I worked at the data centre in Prestwich. I later published those on my development web site, ready for uploading to the operational web site at the beginning of next month.

It also involved testing and pricing some jumble for the old school.

Wednesday, 10th March 2021

I was expecting the man from British Gas to service my boiler and take a look at the problem with gas accumulating in the bathroom radiator, requiring it to be bled fairly frequently, thus reducing the pressure in the closed system, which then had to be topped up. That prevented us from grocery shopping as we would normally do on a Wednesday morning.

I had heard nothing from the engineer by late morning. Having busied myself with the usual routine morning jobs and mixing some screen wash for the car and filling up the screen wash tank, I decided to check the British Gas web site to double-check the appointment.

The appointment was for between 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. on 1st April. I was pretty sure it had been rescheduled and without notification. I couldn't find any evidence of that so I moved the appointment in my diary and made a note that I had checked it with the BG web site in case it was moved again.

I was not particularly happy as we could have gone grocery shopping after all.

After lunch, I braved the torrential rain to take the few steps to the back of the garage to dry-mix some sand and cement to fill the gaping holes where the joists went through the wall in the back bedroom that were exposed after removing the old skirting. I added the water and mixed that in the bedroom where it was nice and dry and a bit warmer.

It took two lots of mixture to roughly fill all the holes and I had just enough building sand. I worked on the basis that I could always smooth off the filling with some Polyfilla if necessary once the sand and cement mixture had set. That didn't matter too much since it would all be hidden behind the new skirting anyway.

I cleaned my tools and the bucket I had been using, leaving the latter full of dirty water by the back door until the rain eased off.

Thursday, 11th March 2021

It was grocery shopping day. We went to Sainsbury's store at Heaton Park and Tesco at Prestwich, calling at Dennis Gore's Chemist for my Saw Palmetto between the two.

The alarm went off at 7 a.m. I switched it off and went back to sleep. It was about 10:30 a.m. by the time we were underway and we didn't get back until about 12:15 p.m.

Our next-door neighbours, John and Jill were passing as we alighted and we stopped to chat with them. Apparently there had been a power cut during the morning and the power was restored as we spoke, setting off our house alarm, so we had to come in and sort that out.

After lunch, I prepared for the village meeting in the evening. There were actually three meetings, the village committee meeting, the village AGM, followed by the village meeting.

By the onset of the evening I was feeling somewhat fatigued and not really sufficiently alert for a Zoom meeting so I sent my apologies for the meetings and rested.

Friday, 12th March 2021

The first task of the day was to scan the TV listings for the coming week to record what we wanted to watch. We had a late lunch and I proceeded to tidy up the programmes we had watched during the week.

By the time I had done all that and put in the TV recordings for the coming week, it was time for tea.

Saturday, 13 March 2021

Matt and Carrie called round with our grocery items just after we had finished breakfast, at about 10:15 a.m. and we had a brief chat, then it was pot washing time.

The pressing task for today was to start to clear access to the water stop tap in the garage in readiness for the installation of our new water meter on Tuesday. I already had an outline plan on how I was going to move our car booty around and the whole process went a lot smoother and quicker than I expected.

We actually completed the task, which I had anticipated would take a couple of days in less than three hours. All I had to do on Tuesday was to move the car off the drive and pull out the trailer, which was, after we had finished, full of junk for the tip.

We came in for lunch.

I dealt with my backlog of E-mails. One was from my old school friend, Terry Hanstock with a link to a blog about the Government's plan to gradually open up our present pandemic "lockdown". The blog criticised the move, warning of another surge of Covid-19 cases and subsequent deaths, which would have to be followed by a third "lockdown". My reply was as follows:

The fact that we shall have to live with Covid-19 is, I would have thought, fairly obvious. It is here to stay. Worse still, it probably isn't the last highly infectious and fatal new virus that will appear. These things evolve naturally, just as all life on earth evolves even without our meddling and who knows what our probes sent out to explore other planets and beyond bring back with them.

The burning question is "Has the Government relaxed the rules too soon?" The answer to that is somewhat subjective and not an absolute, unequivocal "Yes" or "No".

The present risk is that opening up the schools will result in children contracting the virus and, while it may not put them at serious risk, they will pass it on to others who are at greater risk. The vaccination programme will have gone some way to reduce the level of that risk, both in terms of the number of infections and the seriousness of those infections. No doubt some people will die from those infections but the number will be low and, let's face it, we all face risks of injury and death one way or another each day from a variety of actions and activities.

The risk of not opening up the schools is the damage that is doing to children, not only to their education but physically and mentally.

It is easy to criticise this Government. Let's face it, their performance throughout and reaction to the pandemic has been nothing short of criminal and their miserly financial increase of nurses' pay is diabolical. Whether or not they have got something right at last, only time will tell.

Personally, I would not have opened up the schools until after the summer break and the opening up of other facilities would be staged after that. So I think the action this Governemnt is taking is too much, too soon and their quarantine programme is about as useful of trying to store water in a colander. Still, I may be wrong about opening things up and I shall certainly welcome some semblance of normality sooner rather than later providing we don't end up in another "lockdown" or face another overwhelming surge of cases with which our over-worked, under-funded and tired NHS workers have to deal.

I started to complete the 2021 census online and then realised that I could not do so until the deadline date of 21st March because I did not know whether or not Rachel would be staying here overnight.

Sunday, 14th March 2021

I was up late. My nose felt like it was full of concrete again and I was no nearer working out why.

After my morning shower, breakfast and a bit of pot washing, Jenny having been up well before me and tackled all of the dishes from last evening, I was feeling a little better.

Jenny decided to clean the bathroom. It made a change from the elevator. (If you haven't seen the film "Dark Star" you won't appreciate the last sentence). I mucked in and cleaned the fan, which had a fair coating of fluff. While I was straddled across the top of the bath, I cleaned the bits of rust of the so-called stainless-steel down-lights and polished those up.

I cleaned the glass shower screen and had a look at the scruffy pull-cord for the ceiling-mounted fan switch. That needed replacing and it meant replacing the switch itself. I put it on my list of things to do.

I cleaned the bathroom radiator and then decided to tackle the window in the toilet. It was really grimy and I thoroughly cleaned the glass and the PVC frame.

With one foot on the stool and the other on the back of the toilet, I cleaned the stainless-steel down-light as well.

My last couple of jobs were to replace the plastic guard on the bottom of the shower screen after Jenny had cleaned it and to bleed the bathroom radiator to remove the accumulated gas (Hydrogen).

A good 2½ hours after starting the cleaning, we came downstairs for a cup of tea and a snack. Since it was mid-afternoon, there was no point in having a large lunch since we were having a nice, organic, fillet-steak with jacket potato for tea.

I was busy backing up my data on the computer when Rachel arrived.

Monday, 15th March 2021

I was up somewhat earlier than usual and feeling better than yesterday morning.

After breakfast, I read more of the latest issue of Private Eye before tackling the breakfast pots. Jenny and Rachel were both up before me. Rachel was preparing to leave for work and Jenny had washed all the dishes from last evening.

I put out the bin for the waste collection tomorrow and, being a nice sunny day, I decided to finish erecting the table for the new raised bed.

We left off for a snack about 2:30 p.m., after briefly chatting with passers-by.

I resumed work at about 3:30 p.m. and finished off the raised bed. The next task was to level it and I gave up on that at about 4:45 as the sun was heading towards the horizon and it was turning cold. Weather permitting, it was a job for tomorrow and the plan was to move the bed altogether and then level the bricks on which it stood before putting it back in position. I also needed some liner for the bed and some organic compost for it.

Tuesday, 16th March 2021

We were up early because we were expecting the chap from United Utilities to come and fit our water meter between 8 a.m. and 1 p.m. He arrived at about 11:00 a.m.

Meanwhile, I had started this week's Radio Times crossword. I progressed to dealing with my E-mails and scanning some documents that had been sitting around for ages, some of which resulted in updates to my web site, while waiting for him. I carried on with that while he fitted the water meter.

When he left, we had some lunch and I was going to level the new raised bed but it was quite wet after last night's rain and I decided to leave it to dry out a little (some hopes).

Instead, after putting out Jenny's washing line in the late afternoon sun, I put some finishing filler over the large holes in the back bedroom I had filled with a sand and cement mix.

After that, I did a little more work on my web site.

Wednesday, 17th March 2021

The first important task of the day was to finish this week's Radio Times crossword.

That was followed by a bit of administrative work, dealing with E-mails and such, including one important message from Greenpeace about a new law and order bill being rushed through parliament that reportedly affected people's right to protest and to which I objected. It seemed that the influences of Russia and China were becoming stronger.

After that, it was time to tackle more mundane tasks like pot washing and raised bed levelling.

The levelling of the raised bed took a while. I used six spare house bricks, one in each corner and one in the middle of each side, bedded into the ground for supports and a long length of wood and my long spirit level.

Jenny helped me position the table for the raised bed and suffered with her neck and shoulders afterwards. It was really heavy to move with the decking screwed in place to form the top surface. Jenny also helped me move the raised bed frame onto the table.

After lunch, I brought the car down the drive, it having been parked on the road while the water meter had been fitted and we filled the boot with the junk from the trailer, ready for the tip on Friday, as we went grocery shopping.

That enabled us to recover the plastic sheeting that had been in the trailer so we could use it to line the bed. The plastic was a large bag that has previously been the cover of a mattress we bought. It was long enough for the raised bed but not quite wide enough so we would have to open it up into a single sheet and then cut it to size.

We decided to leave that job until tomorrow and left the sheet in the bed with two spare house bricks on top to prevent it blowing away.

During all this feverish activity, my Marx Brothers eight DVD box set arrived. Quite appropriate, I thought.

Thursday, 18th March 2020

Following the usual morning routine, Jenny started the preparation for our evening meal while I checked the weather forecast, dealt with my E-mails and replied to a couple of Skype messages.

We set off for a walk at noon. We walked up the road to Tottington and then up the narrow lane to Four Lane Ends, turning right and then right again along Watling Street to Affetside. I had intended walking all the way down Watling Street and then double back along Turton Road but it was quite dull and cold along Watling Street and I didn't like the look of the clouds, so we cut down the footpath by the Pack Horse Inn, straight down to Turton Road and then down a path opposite, a little way to the right, to two Brooks Valley. We turned right and followed the stream. As we approached Bottoms Hall Cottages, there was a sign at the kissing gate informing us that the footpath was closed at the Cottages due to a collapse.

We pondered a little, discussing what to do. Jenny was a little tired and didn't fancy taking a long detour. We decided to take a look at the problem and followed the path. The old stone tunnels where two streams joined, just before the cottages and, more importantly, immediately before the bridge carrying the path to the left we wanted to take up to Hollymount, had collapsed and it was fenced off with the red, plastic barriers.

We needed to move forward no more than three or four metres at most. We decided to risk it and worked our way round the back of the barriers as far away from the collapse

as possible. The danger was that the tunnel would collapse completely as we walked over it. Fortunately, it did not.

We came up the other side to Hollymount from Bottoms Hall Cottages and then back home round the golf course.

I reckon we had covered between five and six miles (or, in foreign measurements, about 8 Km).

We had a welcome cup of tea and relaxed until tea time.

Friday, 19th March 2021

We set off for the waste recycling centre in Bury at about 7:45 a.m. and reached Unicorn in Chorlton to commence our weekly grocery shopping at about 9:20 a.m. Traffic through Bury and Whitefield as we approached the M60 was very heavy but traffic on the motorway itself was surprisingly light.

Traffic was again heavy on the A56 to Waitrose in Broadheath but we made good time on the return trip home.

Matthew called round with a couple of grocery items for us from his Ocado order but I had to dash off rather urgently from chatting with him to talk on the telephone to one of our councillors about the repairs to the footpath along Two Brooks Valley.

After that, I started scheduling the TV recordings for the coming week.

Saturday, 20th March 2021

The first job of the day was to line the new raised bed, with Jenny's help. The second was to source the compost to fill it. I found some at Wickes and was about to go and fetch the eight bags I needed when I noticed the local store was out of stock. I could have ordered some for home delivery but the additional cost would have been almost as much as two bags of the compost. I telephoned the local branch to see when their next delivery was scheduled. I was told the compost should be in on Tuesday.

I spent the rest of the day finishing off the TV recordings for the coming week, tidying up what we had watched during the previous week and backing up my documents. I also threw in a little administrative work as well.

Sunday, 21st March 2021

It was a day of bits, or, alternatively, a bit of a day.

I started off by filling in the 2021 census form, online, of course. I then realised that Rachel, a visitor for the week end (at least), staying overnight, still had to complete her census even though her flat was empty. The drawback was that she had not received a census form.

We worked round that by obtaining a pass code for the completion of an online census and I helped her send that in.

Jenny and I went round to the old school to return some of the electrical jumble I had tested and priced at home.

I then turned my attention to scanning some documents, printing some labels for some items destined for storage in the garage and then looking at ways of implementing the new version of my web site piecemeal, integrating it seamlessly with the old version. Having made a start, I left off to listen to this week's recording of Jazz Record Requests. What a pile of rubbish that was. Most of the programme was dedicated to Chick Corea, far too modern and boring for me. I was relieved I had recorded it so I could skip through the tracks quickly instead of having to listen to it all. What a waste of an hour that would have been. I could find more interesting pastimes on which to waste my time, like watching concrete set.

Monday, 22nd March 2021

My back had been giving me some trouble for a few days and it was quite painful last night so I slept with a hot water bottle. Jenny had the same problem and did likewise. Fortunately, there was room in the bed for the four of us.

My back was still painful this morning, which was quite annoying because there was a lot that needed doing.

After breakfast, I sat in my chair reading a little more of the latest issue of Private Eye for a little while.

I decided I would be better moving around even though it was painful to do so. I went into the back bedroom, put on my overalls and sanded down the plastering I had done recently. Then I vacuumed up the debris off the carpet from when I removed the skirting while Jenny shook the cloths that had collected most of the bits and the dust from sanding.

That exercise was interrupted by a visit from Nick, the chap Matthew had recommended for renewing our fencing. Nick was also a contractor recommended by Cocklestorm, our local supplier of fencing. The plan was to renew the concrete posts and bases along the back and top side of the garden, putting in double bases on the top side as well as installing new panels to match those John and Jill had chosen for the fence between our garden and theirs.

Sylvia, across the back, had agreed to go halves on the back fencing and she was also having the fencing replaced on the top side of her garden, between her bungalow and the first one on the block.

Nick measured up, made some notes and said he would come back to us both with costs. He said he could probably do the work in about four weeks if Cocklestorm had the fence panels in stock by then. I also asked him about a gate and he suggested a tongue and groove one as it was sturdier. I said I would try to source stainless steel fittings if he told me what to buy.

Sylvia subsequently popped round for a quick chat as well.

I had a look at my web site to continue merging my development thus far of version 4 with version 3 and spent some time trying to make that work. It was taking quite some time and proving more difficult than I expected so I gave up and reverted version 3 back to its original state.

I decided to try to construct a cross reference of all the links in my web site so that I could see at a glance what any change to a page would affect. That was going to be a long task. I gave up on that as well, for the present.

Tuesday, 23rd March 2021

I did a bit of this and a bit of that. I won't mention the other. Oops! I just did.

I tidied up a little, finishing off some items of jumble for the old school that I had brought in from the garage. I put away some small boxes of items, suitably labelled, in the garage, shuffling the existing boxes to ensure they were all in alphabetical order. This storage of odds and ends, although time-consuming, allowed me to find items quickly, particularly since the boxes were all indexed on the computer.

I rang Wickes in Bury twice, once in the morning and once in the afternoon to see if the compost I required for the new raise bed had arrived. It hadn't and was not now due until Thursday.

Wednesday, 24th March 2021

I started on the back bedroom skirting with help from Jenny and Rachel. I cut the first three of the five pieces for the bedroom and hit a snag. I couldn't manoeuvre the length for the window wall, under the radiator, into position as I had hoped to do, without removing the radiator.

It was 3 p.m. and I wasn't going to make a lot more progress anyway because I could not move the long lengths of varnished skirting from the stairs to outside the back for cutting without help from Rachel and Jenny and they had gone to Bury for a potter round Tesco. I needed at least one new length for the remaining two walls, so I packed up for the day. It was a pity because it was a nice sunny day and reasonably pleasant outside. After today, the forecast was for unsettled weather for a while.

The Radio Times crossword, which I had started at breakfast, was beckoning.

Thursday, 25th March 2021

It was a much better day than forecast so I decided to resume work in the back bedroom.

The first job was to remove the radiator so I could fit the piece of skirting on the window wall. That was not as easy as I expected, but then, the jobs I tackled never seemed to be.

To empty the radiator, I turned off the flow and return valves and undid the union where the combination flow and return valve was connected, removing the bleeding valve to allow the water to trickle into a plastic tub under the union, which I periodically emptied into a large bucket, taking care to tighten the connection before removing the tub. Even so, quite a bit of water leaked out onto the cloths I had put down to protect the carpet.

When empty, I removed the radiator and stood it on the carpet with the open end uppermost so that the black slime left in the radiator did not run out.

Have you spotted the deliberate mistake? I forgot to put in the bleeding valve in the other end, so some of the black slime did trickle onto the carpet. I tilted the radiator, put in the valve and then successfully cleaned the carpet. I also put some toilet paper in the open end and stood the radiator on a cloth.

After cleaning up, it was almost lunchtime.

It was the day Wickes in Bury was expecting a delivery of the compost I wanted so I telephoned the store. There was none in stock and none on order. I gave up and e-mailed a complaint to customer services. I then found some in stock in another Wickes store at Clifton, about seven miles away so I decided to go there after lunch.

Sylvia had been asking if we had heard from our fencing chap so I gave him a call. He said he was busy but would get a price to me by the end of tomorrow. The fencing panels I wanted were not a stock item at Cocklestorm and the lead time for them was normally four weeks. So the work was not going to be done any time soon. I let Sylvia know.

Rachel and I went up to Wickes at Clifton, about a 30-minute drive each way, where Wickes had a fair stock of the compost and I bought my eight bags. Jenny declined the trip because her back was quite painful.

We called at Matthew and Carrie's house to collect some groceries they had ordered for Jenny and me.

Returning home, Rachel helped me empty the eight bags of compost into the new raised bed.

Friday, 26th March 2021

We went grocery shopping to Sainsbury's at Heaton Park and Tesco in Prestwich. Jenny's back was still painful so we didn't call at Matthew and Carrie's house on the way home.

I'd had a letter from Bury Clinical Commissioning Group regarding my second Covid-19 vaccination. After lunch, I went onto the web site and booked my second vaccination appointment at Ramsbottom Civic Hall. That took a bit of doing. My first attempt came up with some weird error I didn't understand but the second attempt worked.

The subsequent E-mail confirmation told me to take along the attached Q-code to my appointment, which was all well and good except there was no attachment. The letter seemed to have the semblance of a Q-code. It also opened with a paragraph as follows:

“According to our records you are due your second dose of your Covid-19 vaccination during week commencing 5th April March 2021.”

At least it didn't contain any sentences ending with prepositions.

I turned my attention to putting in the TV programmes to record for the coming week, breaking off for tea.

Saturday, 27th March 2021

I finished off planning the TV recordings for the coming week and tidied up my media files.

Sunday, 28th March 2021

I dealt with a backlog of E-mails, then I had a look at the book commemorating our former village chairman's ten years in office, a copy of which was presented to him following his resignation as chairman and for which I provided the majority of the pictures.

I finished off by starting my weekly file back-up, which, this week, took much longer than expected because I needed to move some fairly large files around.

Monday, 29th March 2021

We were up quite late and I was feeling a bit groggy again, just as I thought I had overcome my nasal congestion, catarrh and associated cough. I still wasn't sure what brought it on but it was bad last night and this morning.

Following the persistent, heavy rain and cold weather over the past few days, we decided against trampling all over the grass at the back to populate out latest raised bed and instead chose to take advantage of the warmer, sunnier weather to stroll down to Home Bargains at Crosstones in Bury and back (about a six mile round-trip, mostly off-road). I thought the exercise and fresh air would do us good. Jenny found it heavy going. That took us all afternoon because we walked slowly and we stopped to talk to people we met en route, not that we knew any of them.

Tuesday, 30th March 2021

At last, it was a beautiful, warm, sunny day. The birds woke me before 6 a.m. and I lay dozing to the lovely dawn chorus. I nodded off to sleep and didn't rouse until turned 10 a.m. By the time we'd had breakfast it was getting on for noon and we spent the afternoon in the garden putting all our strawberry plants into the new, large raised bed,

freeing up several pots, some of which had suffered frost damage and one of the smaller raised beds. Jenny also tidied up the herb raised bed. That left us with three empty raised beds in which to plant vegetables.

Nick, who came to look at the fencing job for which Sylvia and I had asked him to quote still had not responded despite promising to let me have a price by the end of last week. Sylvia had approached another chap, Billy, who had done some excellent work for neighbours across the road and he came to see Sylvia. He said he would come back and see me tomorrow. Meanwhile, a chap was trimming the back hedge for Jill and John next door and needed to come round into our garden to trim the end of the hedge. While he was here, I mentioned the fencing and he said he did that kind of work and left me a leaflet. He also assisted Billy from time to time.

I later spoke to Nick who said, firstly, the job was too big for him with his present workload and secondly, Cocklestorm, the company providing the fence panels, was having some difficulty with supply. I said I may leave the fencing until the autumn.

Wednesday, 31st March 2021

We spent the whole day in the garden and we had lunch outside. Jenny sorted out the plants in the pots while I tidied up the blackberry bush. I didn't manage to finish my task, running out of time. The last job I did was to replace the bulb in the outside light at the back, something that I had been meaning to do for weeks. Fortunately, the other two bulbs had continued to operate when the sensor was activated.

Billy didn't turn up as promised to look at the fencing I needed replacing.

I dug out the receipt from Cocklestorm for the panels I purchased two years ago for the fence between us and our next-door neighbours and telephoned to find out if they were in stock. I was told someone would call me back. By 4:30, I was giving up on ever finding anyone to replace my fencing when the telephone rang for the umpteenth time. Up to that time, all the calls bar one had been nuisance calls. It was a chap from Cocklestorm and we discussed the panels I wanted, which were not a stock item. The lead time for supply was anything from three to seven weeks. I explained I also needed the base panels and the posts replacing as well and I was looking for someone to do the work. It turned out that company had an in-house installation team and I arranged for someone to come and give me a quote for the job. I subsequently informed Sylvia across the back.

Wasn't life complicated?