

Greenmount – September 2016

Thursday September 1st: It was a nice day and what better way to spend it than cutting the grass. I started work about 10:30 and by lunchtime I had cut and strimmed the side and front gardens and started clearing the weeds from the block paving on the drive. After lunch, I finished off the drive and started work on the path at the front of the house. I finished about 7 p.m.

Being somewhat dirty and smelly, I thought a shower might be in order, followed by a nice cool beer.

Jenny and Rachel did not go swimming as they normally did on Thursday evenings, so we had tea about 8 p.m. and settled down for what was left of the evening.

Friday September 2nd: We made a late start on our journey to Unicorn because I had an unexpected and very nice Skype call from Mike in New Zealand. We were chatting for well over an hour and he sent me a couple more pictures of his granddaughter, Olive and a couple of his grandson, Austin.

The late start made for a late finish, traffic on the M60, the Manchester outer-ring road, being somewhat busy, mostly occupied by drivers who do not understand that, by leaving a gap of about a bus length between their vehicle and the one in front (a) avoids accidents, (b) gives drivers of vehicles an opportunity to change lanes without you having to slow down too much and (c) allows traffic joining the motorway to merge into the traffic, again, without the motorway traffic having to slow down too much. An even larger gap in heavy traffic may mean you do not have to slow down at all and generally guarantees you never have to stop.

That is how one should drive on the motorway, not with your vehicle's front bumper virtually touching the rear one of the vehicle in front. That can not only lead to accidents but actually slows you down and makes your journey last longer. Oh, by the way, if you ever have to stop in traffic, a good general rule is that it is always best to stop so that you can see where the rear wheels of the vehicle in front touch the road. That guarantees that if, for any reason, the vehicle in front is unable to move, you have room to pull out and pass it without the need to reverse, something you cannot do if the driver of the vehicle behind had made the same mistake as you.

Changing lanes to try to always be in the fastest moving lane can save you journey time; research shows you can save between five and ten minutes on a two-hour journey. Given that lane-changing is one of the most dangerous manoeuvres in heavy traffic, is it really worth it? And, in any case, what exactly do you do with the time you save?

Saturday September 3rd: We went round to the Old School early. Jenny was helping on the bric-a-brac stall at the monthly Drop-in and I was testing and pricing electrical equipment for the next jumble sale. We came home for lunch about 1 p.m.

I spent the afternoon applying updates to the Old School's Windows 10 laptop and tidying up my desk in the conservatory.

Sunday September 4th: I carried on with the updates to the Old School's laptop and I started work on Matthew's old tower system, the intention being to use it to replace my old XP system that had turned up its toes.

The first job was to make sure Windows 7 was up to date, clone the windows disc to the larger back up disc and then switch to using the larger disc.

That didn't take long and I began to copy the files from my documents on Jenny's laptop to my documents on the tower system. I used the network and it was taking ages.

We went down to see Matthew and Carrie in the afternoon for a chat.

Monday September 5th: It was back to copying files. The chap from Just Trees arrived as arranged to cut down the large sycamore tree at the back of the garden to leave a stump about waist-high to use as a bird table. Needless to say, I kept the logs. He took away all the rubbish on his truck.

While here, he also trimmed the hawthorn tree and took some branches off my trees for our neighbour across the back, Sylvia, that were overhanging her garden.

He had an even better day when I told him Matthew wanted his bamboo shrubs trimming and he went down to do that as well.

Jenny and I put back our picnic bench, which we had moved before our tree feller started work as a precaution and we moved the logs he had left in a pile on the lawn to storage under the car port and tidied up as much as we could in the damp conditions.

After lunch, we went for a potter in Ramsbottom, mainly to partake of some fresh air, since Jenny had a bit of a headache. As we toured the charity shops, I bought what I thought were three DVDs, Ghostbusters on Blu-ray, Prometheus on DVD and David Suchet as Hercule Poirot in Agatha Christie's After the Funeral on DVD. When I catalogued my purchases at home, I discovered the latter was not the DVD at all but a DVD mystery game that looked like the DVD. That was going back for a refund.

Tuesday September 6th: As well as working on Matthew's PC, I also started tidying up my account on Jenny's laptop and bringing some of the PC documentation up to date. This became an integral part of the whole process.

Wednesday September 7th: I had an appointment at the local surgery for what I thought was my annual check-up. It turned out to be a blood test to check my sugar level.

I met Bob and Marie, Carrie's parents, in the waiting room and spent quite a while chatting with them until the nurse called me in for my appointment about half-an-hour late. She explained the delay had been due to her training another member of the staff.

While I was there, I asked if I could have an appointment with a doctor and I was told if I waited a few minutes, I could see a doctor that morning. I ended up with the same doctor who had seen Bob a few moments earlier.

My problem was with my throat and oesophagus; I had some difficulty swallowing, my oesophagus was hot inside and I did not feel well at all. I also had some chest pain and an almost constant need to clear my throat, resulting in an irritating cough. I believed my symptoms were due to my hiatus hernia and the generation of excess stomach acid (which, incidentally, is concentrated Hydrochloric Acid), leaking up into the oesophagus and the doctor agreed. He prescribed an extra dose of Omeprazole of 200 mg twice daily for two weeks and a review after two weeks to see whether any further investigation was required.

I suspected that my problem was due to overworking in the garden and at the Old School, pushing, shoving, lifting and carrying, having irritated my internal area on the right side where I was operated upon to remove my gall bladder many years ago. I also suspected that some of the generic Omeprazole products I had been prescribed over the past year were not as reliable as others and had not been effective against my stomach acid as they should have been.

After lunch, we paid a visit to Tesco in Bury.

Needless to say, any spare time went on Matthew's old PC.

Thursday September 8th: I spent the day working on Matthew's old PC.

Friday September 9th: We made a reasonably early start on our weekly grocery shop and reaped the benefit by averaging nearly 70 miles to the gallon (of diesel) on the outward journey and arriving at Unicorn to find several spare parking places instead of having to queue for one. Unfortunately, the return journey was not as trouble-free, encountering stationary traffic a couple of miles before our M60 exit junction, delaying us for a short while. Why it stopped was anyone's guess.

We were home too late to go to the DeCaFF dementia session at the Cricket Club so I turned my attention to Matthew's old PC again.

After tea, we went to see the local rep (Summerseat Players) in Agatha Christie's "And Then There Were None" at the Theatre Royal in Ramsbottom. I imagined, given the number of players and the plot, it was a difficult play to direct and, on the whole, it was well done and we enjoyed it. It was the first night, in aid of Bury Lions charity and a few prompts were required but they were done discretely and did not affect the performance. The Summerseat Players were quite accomplished and they had a very nice theatre. We would have seen more plays there if they performed the ones we liked.

Saturday September 10th: It was a case of more of the same, working on Matthews PC, in the lounge, which had become to look more like an electronics workshop.

Sunday September 11th: All of my hard work over the past few days finally came to fruition as I installed Matthew's old PC in the conservatory, my account on that mirroring my account on Jenny's laptop and by keeping the two in step, I could use either.

There were a couple of outstanding issues that needed resolving but nothing major.

Monday September 12th: I finally tidied my desk in the conservatory and put Matthew's old PC in its proper place, having completed all the necessary preparation work in the lounge, which was beginning to look more like a lounge. The outstanding issues were: (1) some of the icons in the notification area on the task bar refused to appear, (2) the sound recording did not work and (3) Windows Media Centre refused to recognise the tuner until I unplugged the aerial cable and then reconnected it.

I performed three separate updates to the village web site and one to the Tottington District Civic Society's web site despite suffering with my oesophagus, finding it difficult to swallow and having severe chest pain. Even a beer hadn't helped. Talk about being a martyr to the cause!

As luck would have it, as the evening wore on, the chest pain seemed to travel downwards, which, I assumed, was a good thing.

Tuesday September 13th: To my surprise, I was feeling much better – until I had to move a heavy box of old stationery items from the conservatory to the garage loft. Jenny gave me a hand as far as the ladders in the garage. The rest was up to me and I wasn't really up to it. I did make it but I didn't feel good afterwards. Little did I know this was going to be the tip of a somewhat fairly large iceberg.

We spent most of the morning and the early part of the afternoon tidying the conservatory and when we had finished it looked a lot less like a tip and more like the black hole of Calcutta with windows, i.e. bright and crowded. There was still too much furniture in there; my desk and filing cabinet not helping.

We lunched outside in the warm sunshine under a blue sky with clouds drifting in from the south and it did rain with a vengeance later. Since it was forecast, we were prepared for it.

It was about this time I discovered Jenny's laptop was off, having powered it on earlier to look up something. I tried powering it on and it died almost immediately. It then dawned on me that there was no power to it and it had run down the battery.

Nothing on the four-way in which it was plugged worked. I checked that the plug had not come out of the double socket behind the TV and that it was switched on. I then tried the TV, which was plugged into a second four-way, connected to the same double socket. That didn't work either.

All the other sockets worked, except the one in the lounge to which Jenny's reading lamp was connected.

Since we had solid floors downstairs, all the wiring was under the floor above and, for the purposes of economy, the electrician who wired the house when it was built ran single cables to all of the sockets downstairs, so they were spurs of the main ring. Needless to say, the sockets I installed, I connected correctly, running two wires, making them part of the ring.

Since the socket powering Jenny's reading lamp was wired from the landing, I decided that was a good place to start looking for the problem, particularly since I had installed two

junction boxes there, breaking into the power ring to install additional sockets. I thought I might have a screw loose, which should come as no surprise.

Having had the large slabs of chipboard flooring that was nailed down replaced with nice tongue and grooving that was screwed down, removing the floor to check the junction boxes was a straightforward but time-consuming job, requiring the removal of a hundred or so screws to reach the bit I needed to investigate. That was after removing three heavy drawers full of clothes and soft furnishing from the chest, then moving the chest and finally taking up the carpet, distributing these items to our front and the back bedrooms.

I checked the first junction box and it was fine. I was about to remove the cover of the second when I heard a slight crackling from the socket on the landing into which my drill was plugged. I asked Jenny to turn off the power and removed the plug cover. The neutral wires were loose. I pushed them into the connector firmly and tightened the screw. Jenny switched on the power and checked her light and the TV. Both were working.

Obviously this was the cause of the problem and it was, as far as I could recall, a socket I had never touched since the house was built in 1978 so the loose wire must have been down to the electrician at the time.

It took about an hour to put everything back and tidy up. Had I looked at the socket first, it would have been a ten minute job. We live and learn.

Wednesday September 14th: We spent most of the day cleaning the cooker. My role was to cut new, aluminium-foil protectors for the four hobs, which took most of the morning and the early part of the afternoon.

I was then called upon to assist with the removal of grease spots from the inside of the glass, right-hand, oven door. We tried all sorts of cleaning products, except for one we had purchased from Lakeland. That was so caustic, it damaged the door seal if it came into contact with it and required head-to-toe protective clothing (I exaggerate not). We thought it best to keep it sealed up at the back of the cupboard.

I resorted to using the tool I deploy to remove paint off glass, a small hand-held device fitted with a razor-blade. That did the trick – eventually.

I retired to my desktop computer to print off some labels for some storage boxes, which was part of my methodical inventory system, which worked very well. I was able to locate items very quickly from a simple enquiry on the computer, instead of spending hours looking for bits and pieces. Unfortunately, the logging of items was work in progress and far from complete.

Anyway, since I had installed my Canon i990 printer on a Windows 7 system, I decided to print the labels on plain paper to check they aligned correctly with the sticky labels I used. They didn't. It worked perfectly in Windows XP. So, somehow, it seems, Windows 7 doesn't add up properly. I always said XP was the best system Microsoft ever produced.

What's more, the behaviour of Windows 7 was totally inconsistent. If I printed the labels, which were in a document using a table in Microsoft Word 2007 with the grid lines showing, they aligned pretty well, with the left-hand margin increased from 3.5mm to 6mm. However, if I hid the grid lines, the alignment was totally awry.

After pondering the problem for a short while, I decided the easiest way to resolve the matter was to print the grid lines BUT to make their colour was white. That worked perfectly. Thinking outside the box made sure the printing was in the box.

Thursday September 15th: I spent the day cutting the grass on the side, front and back gardens. The grass was very wet from a heavy dew and, being quite long in places, had probably retained some moisture from the long and heavy thunderstorm on Tuesday evening, which resulted in quite a bit of local flooding in parts of Manchester. As a result, going was heavy, particularly on the side and the bottom, lower corner of the front garden which was quite muddy under the thick carpet of buttercup foliage. I was of the opinion we could dig a well there if we were so inclined.

I finished and tidied up just after Jenny returned from Yoga and we settled down for a rest and a cup of tea, not wishing to antagonise my acid reflux problem any further.

Friday September 16th: Another grocery shopping day to Unicorn and Waitrose had arrived and it was, once again, time to do battle on the M60. While it was very busy in both directions, we actually managed to keep moving – most of the time. Leaving a decent gap between our car and the one in front helped, except when the idiot behind decided to nip into a gap in the lane to the left, pass us and then nip back into our lane in front of our car. Two drivers did that on the outward journey and one spectacularly stupid driver on the return journey went one better and moved over to the left two lanes, then back to the right two lanes to gain one car position on our vehicle. That later proved utterly pointless as I positioned our vehicle in the left lane to exit the motorway at Prestwich, junction 17 and while travelling towards our exit, we went sailing past said driver who was almost stationary in the fast lane.

In the evening we had a very nice meal at the Swan and Cemetary with Matthew, Carrie, Carrie's parents, Marie and Bob and Rachel to celebrate my 69th birthday.

Saturday September 17th: It was a day of action. I started with the replacement of the broken bulb in the outside lamp on the patio. Then I raked and cleaned the cat's latrine and subsequently picked all the ripe blackberries.

While Jenny and Rachel started the blackberry jam making process, I removed all the ivy that had poked its way through from next door's garden from the fence by the compost bin. I was interrupted by a request to check the sugar had dissolved in the fruit and ended up stirring the mixture to its setting point. For some reason, it set like rock and we had to dilute the jars with a tablespoon of boiling water.

After that, we had lunch outside on our picnic bench and then went into Ramsbottom to obtain a new clothes line, taking the opportunity to tour the charity shops and, on this occasion, Aldi, to check out their organic fruit and vegetables and their range of gluten-free

produce. There wasn't a lot of the former and we could only find one item in the latter category.

Sunday September 18th: It was a 5 a.m. start on a reasonable morning and we were up before the sun. As the sun rose, the mist descended and remained until about 10 a.m., some three hours after we had set out our stall at Ramsbottom Station car park. The mist was not as dense in the valley, although the cloudy start deterred the crowds and trading was slow. It was mid-morning before we had made our stall money and I was surprised to learn that we had cleared almost half what we used to make on the day. Sales of larger items would have been nice.

Monday September 19th: We went to Sheffield to see Jenny's niece, Tracey, who had come home from hospital, briefly, before returning on the coming Wednesday for her operation. Despite having lost a lot of weight and only managing to eat small amounts for the present, she looked and seemed better than for some time.

We went to Shiregreen Cemetery to her mum's and Jenny's mum's graves to take some flowers and I took the opportunity to gather some gravestone information for my family research from the graves of other family members.

We came home with a couple of items Tracey and Andy wanted repairing, if possible and a boot load of potential car boot stock.

Tuesday September 20th: I went round to see Joani Beale who runs the local village Dementia Café, D-CaFF on the second Tuesday of each month at the Cricket Club. She wanted the D-CaFF e-mail address installing on her new laptop computer using the basic Windows 10 mail system. That proved impossible. My experience of Windows 10 as an IT Professional found it to be absolutely useless. I set it up on her tablet instead and then showed her how to use web mail on her laptop.

The second part of the visit was spent discussing a presentation on Dementia Joani was giving on the 4th October at the Skipton Building Society in Bury. Not only did she want a couple of Youtube videos inserting into the presentation but she wanted them to work without an Internet connection, i.e. the videos downloaded and stored locally on the computer.

I spent the rest of the day struggling with that at home.

Wednesday September 21st: I continued with the presentation for Joani. I had managed to download the videos from Youtube using a free piece of software from Anvsoft called [Any Video Converter](#).

I had found some information on the web on how to insert the videos onto the slide using Adobe Shockwave Player (as opposed to Adobe Flash Player used when viewing the videos online). For this, the downloaded videos had to be converted to the Shockwave (SWF) format, again using Any Video Converter.

The final step was to introduce some action buttons to play/resume play, stop and rewind (to the beginning). Again, I found the code (Powerpoint Module) for the actions for each button, linked to the corresponding button using a hyperlink to call the appropriate module. Since there were two movies, each had its own three modules and each of the six modules had its own name.

The problem was the code within the modules. It had to refer to the instance of the Shockwave player on each slide, which was the same for both slides, being ShockWave1. The code also had to refer to the Slide number and you would think that this was the sequence number or the Powerpoint slide in the presentation. Wrong. It was the name given to the slide at the time of its creation and it was found by right clicking on the slide itself and then selecting Properties. The name in each case was Slide followed by a number but the number bore no resemblance to the actual number of the slide in sequence order. This I had to work out for myself and it took ages to discover. The helpful Microsoft web site that provided the Module code didn't tell me that. It just said the reference was Slide followed by the Slide number.

It was later in the day when Jenny told me she didn't think the fridge part of our Bosch fridge/freezer was working properly. I had a look at it and we decided to put some frozen cooler blocks in it overnight to see what happened. As a precaution, we also removed all the freezer items and put them in our back-up chest-freezer in the garage.

Thursday September 22nd: Jenny was right. The fridge wasn't working. After breakfast we packed away the contents of the fridge in cool boxes with frozen blocks and I pulled out the fridge, vacuumed behind it and decided to dismantle it to see what the problem was.

There was only one compressor as far as I could see and that was working. There was no obvious access to the guts of the beast from the rear so I deduced it must have been designed by some deformed alien.

I started from the inside of the fridge, removing all the shelves and the drawer with some difficulty. There was still no obvious means of access to anything technical, so I pulled out the four plastic plugs that I thought were holding the fridge air flow system in place. The plastic air flow cover refused to budge. I then realised it was held in place by four screws, recessed into the holes the plugs had revealed. I removed the screws. It still refused to move, until I decided I would show it who was boss and applied a little determined force, waggling the plastic cover from side to side. It eventually gave in and came away. The bottom part had some sort of motor assembly stuck in place on the polystyrene backing with, would you believe, thin, brown sticky tape of the type used for parcels. I would have described it as cheap and nasty but it wasn't cheap when we bought it.

The assembly was plugged into a socket at the back of the main fridge innards and I managed to disconnect it reasonably easily. Not a good sign, I thought. I could not detect any continuity on any of the connections to it, although I did detect 240 volts a/c on the socket inside the fridge, so my assumption was that it was broken and this was some kind of fan assembly, sucking cold air up to the fridge from the freezer compartment, so it was the point of failure. I removed it from the polystyrene only to find it was some kind of plastic valve assembly and the main fault lay elsewhere.

I decided to disconnect the appliance completely, let it defrost and then look for another way in. Meanwhile, we contemplated buying a fridge as a temporary measure.

We had looked at a new Miele (much better than the Bosch) fridge/freezer and saw a very nice one, available online from John Lewis. The cost was £1,749 with £150 cashback if ordered before 30th September. The only problem was that it was 67.5 cm deep and the maximum depth we could accommodate in the kitchen was 65 cm. It was an inch too big. I've never heard that said before.

Friday September 23rd: We set off early to collect Rachel from Tottington Motors. She had booked in her car to have two new tyres fitted and to have one of the rear suspension bushes replaced, courtesy of Bury Council not repairing the pot holes in the roads. We took Rachel to work in Bury and headed for John Lewis in the Trafford Centre.

At John Lewis we ordered the new Miele fridge/freezer we had been thinking about. The expectation was that it would be delivered the following Wednesday.

We moved two junctions down the M60 to go to Unicorn and subsequently Waitrose, arriving home somewhat earlier than usual and experiencing no real problems on the M60 thanks to the early start.

At home, I decided to book a Bosch engineer to have a look at our old fridge/freezer and he was due on the coming Tuesday.

A text message from British Gas arranged an engineer for the coming Monday morning. It was going to be a busy week.

Saturday September 24th: I spent the day dealing with a few outstanding issues I had written down in my note book. The major job was to test all the electrical equipment Jenny had acquired for her car boot stock, much of which was faulty and looking at a fault on a TV Jenny's niece, Tracey had asked me to check. The initial investigation showed that the internal fuse on the power board had blown and I needed to replace it to test it.

Sunday September 25th: I was up at 5 a.m. to check the weather. Jenny and Rachel had packed the car the previous evening for a car boot sale. Unfortunately, rain was forecast at lunchtime, so I went back to bed for a couple of hours.

I was up again at 7 a.m. and at the Carr Road Car Park for 9:15 a.m., Jenny having dropped me off in Rachel's car. It was the day of the opening of the West Pennine Way, a circular route devised by our village historian, Christine Taylor, linked to the Pennine Way. I had been asked to take photographs. The plan was to climb up to Peel Tower on Holcombe Hill for the launch at 10:00 a.m. That went according to plan.

The walk from there to Turton Tower was somewhat challenging, the steep climb up from Two Brooks Valley to Turton Road, from the cottages at the end of the lane, using the very narrow footpath to the left of the stream, proving too much for me as I had to stop a few times to draw breath, becoming the back marker and a cause for concern. I eventually made it and continued up to Affetside. From there we headed down to Jumbles reservoir and,

following a five-minute pit stop at the café, we continued on round the reservoir, over the bridge and up another steep climb to Chapeltown Road. A short distance up the road to the left located the turning on the right to Turton Tower. I made my way to the bridge where the second ceremony was to take place and waited for the people to gather.

Nothing happened for the best part of an hour. I rested and ate my packed lunch. I couldn't help wondering why the pace of the walk had been so forced when I ended up hanging around waiting for something to happen.

The ceremony eventually took place, photographs were taken and I made my way to the refreshment tent for a cup of tea and a scone. Dave Archer had agreed to bring me back to Greenmount and while I waited for him to find other people who wanted a lift, I managed a second cup of tea.

I arrived home about 3:30 p.m., showered and updated the village web site for a second time in two days.

I was too tired to deal with the pictures I had taken.

Monday September 26th: It was a morning of little odd jobs, generally tidying up – the sort of thing I really enjoyed.

I spent the afternoon with Joani from the village D-CaFF running through a presentation she was giving on dementia at the Skipton Building Society in Bury the following Tuesday. While I was there, she also wanted me to make the videos I had inserted into the presentation also play in another presentation, which was very similar, tailored for the Jewish community. That took a little while longer than I expected.

After tea, I went to the village A.G.M. and meeting. It was supposed to be held in the middle room at the Old School but there were too many people so we all moved into the church. The thought occurred to me that there were more people in the church than our minister had seen for a good while.

Our village Chairman, Alistair, breezed through the A.G.M. and gave a brief introduction before moving onto the main event – the “Greater Manchester Spatial Framework”, otherwise known as the “Make the Builders and Landowners Rich and Destroy the Green Belt Plan”. The local plan, for which, as far as I could gather, the details were being fashioned in secret, was designed to build a large number of new homes in Bury, mostly on green-belt land, as part of the government initiative to provide more housing. Thus far, no strategy for infrastructure has been considered. No justification for the number of proposed dwellings has been made and, what is more, there was no growth in the population in this part of Bury to warrant any sizeable development. In any case, the type of affordable homes that were required for first-time buyers were not the type of houses builders wanted to erect. They were more interested in four-, five- and six-bed-roomed houses for which they could make huge profits. The land owners also stood to make obscene profits with the value of land, once released for building, would increase ten-fold if not more. With all this money flying around, it was not surprising some politicians would be keen to do all they could to assist the profiteers, being more interested in financial gain than in votes at the next election.

The whole process smelled of corruption and had nothing to do with what ordinary people needed, what was practical and what needed to be done to preserve our environment.

At the same time, councils needed more cash and one of the processes underpinning the Plan was for councils to devise ways and means of acquiring cash out of the developers. If councils were free of central government intervention and allowed to raise the necessary funds to provide services and maintain what they had and at the same time paid their executives far less, we, the voter, might get a better deal and a better environment and people who needed houses might get houses they could afford. But then, who said we lived in a democracy?

Tuesday September 27th: Abel and Cole had delivered our groceries we had ordered late on Sunday night before we crawled out of bed at just after 8 a.m. I stepped outside in my pyjamas, took in the boxes and checked off the items.

After breakfast, it was a case of making ourselves busy with small jobs until the Bosch engineer arrived to fix our fridge/freezer. He arrived about 11 a.m. and when he saw the fridge/freezer and I explained the problem to him, he told me I had actually fixed the problem by allowing it to completely defrost. Nevertheless, he checked a few things, said it was alright and plugged it in. He explained, although it was a frost-free device, it had to be defrosted completely every couple of years. The problem in my case was that during an automatic defrost cycle, a small piece of ice had become lodged in the drainage tube and had blocked it. Subsequently, any excess water had gone inside the fridge instead of down the pipe to the reservoir on top of the compressor from which it evaporated using the heat from the compressor. This explained the build up of ice in the freezer and it was that which had stopped the fridge working, since the fridge drew cold air from the freezer using a fan. The fan had iced up. Manually defrosting it and melting all the ice had solved the problem. This advice was not in the manual and was not available online. Nor was my request for assistance by E-mail to Bosch acknowledged. The call-out cost me £95 for absolutely nothing. I decided I would not be buying any more Bosch products.

After that and lunch, I decided to have another look at a halogen heater I had been fixing the previous day. One of the bolts holding on the base was missing and I found a pair of matching bolts in my collection of odds and ends that did the trick, except for two problems. They were too long and the heads were on the small size and in danger of disappearing down the holes of the base. I cut the bolts to size with some difficulty, a hacksaw and a file and found two matching washers to hold the bold heads in place.

Then I discovered that the spring-loaded switch on the underside that prevented the heater being operated when it was lifted off the floor was not making contact when the heater was firmly on the ground. I thought I had fixed this problem the previous day. The solution to this fault was to replace the short spring with a longer one. Unfortunately, the one I had in my spares was too long and I had to cut that to size as well. A pair of wire-cutters fixed that.

I positioned the fridge/freezer in the corner of the kitchen by the back door and, when it had reached the appropriate temperature, helped Jenny put the items in the fridge from the cool boxes we had been using in the garage in the interim period.

We did think about cancelling the order for the new Miele fridge/freezer due the following day but decided to let it stand on the basis that it was bound to be better than the Bosch and the Bosch could act as back-up, freeing up the chest freezer in the garage for sale again.

Wednesday, September 28th: We were stirred from our bed by the door bell just about 7:40 a.m. The chaps had arrived to deliver the Miele fridge/freezer we had ordered the previous Friday from John Lewis at the Trafford Centre. I came down in my dressing gown in true Arthur Dent style and moved the car up the drive so they could manoeuvre the large package through the front door and into the kitchen.

It took us most of the morning to unpack it and move it into the hole in the kitchen units previously occupied by the Bosch appliance. I powered it on and left it to cool down.

After lunch, we took some rubbish to the tip and, while Jenny toured Tesco for a few odds and ends, I nipped across into Bury to buy a new, internal, anti-surge fuse for the TV I was repairing for Jenny's niece, Tracey.

We continued tidying up on returning home and I tested the TV with the new fuse. That blew as soon as I connected the power supply, so I removed the power board, intending to take into the electrical repair chap in Ramsbottom. Meanwhile, I put the TV back together, minus power board to make the conservatory look a little tidier.

The Miele fridge/freezer was finally down to the required temperature (4°C in the fridge and -18°C in the freezer), although Jenny had started using the old Bosch again now it was back in normal service.

I registered the Miele guarantee and claimed my promotional cash-back from Miele. I also sorted out my car insurance for another year, remaining with the RAC.

This was proving to be an expensive month.

Thursday September 29th: The strong overnight wind had blown the cover off our picnic bench and the cover was on the edge of the lawn by the blackcurrant bushes, the inside full of rainwater and the outside covered in slugs. We had the joyous task of rescuing it and pegging it to the line to dry out before breakfast, after removing all the slugs, that is. Perhaps I should have secured the cover to the bench legs using the elastic straps, as I usually did.

It hadn't been on the line for more than a few minutes when it started to rain, so I moved it into the garage to dry out. Then the rain stopped. We covered the picnic bench with some spare plastic sheeting, sticking bits of it together with sellotape and securing it with bricks. That eventually blew off, by which time the cover was almost dry and we covered the plastic and bricks up and secured the bench cover using the fasteners provided.

After breakfast, we headed off to Prestwich. We thought we might be able to buy an organic, gluten-free loaf at Village Greens, the local alternative to Unicorn. No such luck. We bought a few items and called at Tesco for a few more.

After lunch, I tidied up a bit and cleaned out the fire, which was full of ash from a couple of nights earlier when it had turned cool in the evening.

Then it was time to scrub the kitchen and hall tiled floor, as in kneeling down with a scrubbing brush, the old-fashioned way.

A couple of hours later, the job finished, I settled down with a well-earned beer before tea.

Friday September 30th: The plan was to tidy away all my external hard drives I used on the laptop in the lounge, together with the USB hub, all of which normally adorned the top of the large cabinet, in which I kept all my audio media, under one of the lounge windows, then nip into Ramsbottom to the electronics repair man with the power board for the TV I was fixing for Jenny's niece, Tracey and up to Walshaw to pick up the new vertical blind for our bedroom.

Part one of the plan went well enough. When our guests for the Macmillan Day Jenny and Rachel were hosting started to arrive, I started chatting with them and the day just flew by. Our last guests left about 4 p.m., by which time we were thinking in terms of tea, having managed to grab a sandwich during a brief gap between visitors around 1:30 p.m. The day proved to be quite successful, making £120 and Rachel was taking the leftovers to sell at work on the coming Monday, which would add to the sum already collected.

It was a nice way to end the month and I hoped that those in need benefited more from our contribution to the charity, staffed by a wonderful and caring group of nurses, than the bank balances of any executives who ran the charity.