

DIARY 2025

November 1st – Saturday

ABH had been restless during the night which meant that we were restless during the night, too. It made the morning a proper muddle and I ended up taking the girls to the beach closer to shop opening than I would have liked. I might have been inclined to hurry them off the beach, but they were playing so happily together, I did not have the heart to interrupt for a while.

It was a bit of a race against the clock, but I managed to get the newspapers all stuffed and on the shelf in the nick of time and did the beer fridge and bread order after we had opened. Obviously, our customers had heard that I was hard pressed this morning and stayed away in any numbers until at least the middle of the day, bless them.

I did get a visit from a contingent of the devilish girls who had called upon me last night and whom I had grievously short-changed on their sweeties. It gave me the opportunity to redress the shortfall and they left with bags of sweets for their journey. Before they left, they asked if they could say goodbye to BB. Refusal did not look like a viable option, so I went up to drag her out of bed. Happily, she is quite compliant, and she does get excited in the company of children. I cannot see the attraction myself but if it brought smiles all around, what is not to like.

The visit was a pretty clear signal that the party had come to an end. By the middle of the day it was even clearer as we had seen precious few visitors come through The Cove. Many of my customers had been locals and of the visitors we had seen, few were families and children. It picked up a little, a very little, towards the middle of the day but that was quickly scuppered by the weather.

The early rain had given over to some blue skies and brightness. The temperature had dropped some and I considered shoes for a bit but decided that it really was not that bad after all. The Missus considered walking the girls shortly into the afternoon but decided to wait until a hefty band of rain was about to pass over us. It was moving fairly quickly in the west wind that had moved around from the southwest during the course of the morning. It was gone in half an hour, but the girls had made it abundantly clear to the Missus that they would wait rather than venture out in it.

We were back to blue skies a short while after the rain cleared us although with rather more patchy cloud that turned the sun on and off at random intervals. The sea still looked spectacular in the sunlight although its power was much reduced from yesterday. Yesterday was super-spectacular and attracted in a lot of watchers. Today it was not quite so exciting.

That just about summed up the shop day, too. We had a bit of a rush in the later afternoon, no, even I could not stretch that to a five minute to closing rush. It was the busiest we had been all day with consecutive shoppers lined up begging me to take their hard earned. Keen not to disappoint, I obliged. Shame the flow of the day did not convert to sales of pasties (sorry, MS) but I had sold quite a few to people heading home in the morning. I had deliberately under ordered for this weekend expecting a drop in demand but even so, it looks like I will have an excess. It all rides on improved sales tomorrow.

I am sure that they do it to excite me, but I had more than one person suggest that since tomorrow was our last day that they might look forward to reductions on our shelves. The absolute cheek of it. If customers cannot be fagged to buy our goods at the proper, very reasonable price, then I shall be begged if I will let them buy it at a reduced price just because we are closing for the season. As my old pal used to say, any eejit can give it away. Sadly, that is probably exactly what we will be doing if it does not sell tomorrow and even more sadly, to the same people who were suggesting I sell it at a discount. How cruel life can be.

November 2nd – Sunday

Ah, the last day of opening this season. There is usually a fair bit to do after the first electric sliding door closes for the last time but this year, we were to just drop everything and go. There was still a fair bit to do, but it would either be ignored or, what could, wait until we got back.

While the timing of having my dickie knee undickied would cause some problems tying up the loose ends in the shop, working until the last minute had distracted me from the impending doom. I really have not had time to think about it despite more people coming past during the last few days to wish me luck. I am very much hoping that luck does not play a part in it.

We are definitely not that lucky in having the laurel and hardy newspaper company supply our newspapers. I had written to them last week to notify them that from MONDAY – I had written it in capital letters and in bold – we would no longer need a supply. Amazingly, they had responded inside a couple of days – actually, responding at all was amazing – reiterating that we would be closing at the end of today and that they understood to cease newspaper and magazine supply from Monday. They had also taken the trouble – I think that they were mimicking my highlighting of the dates – to write the dates in bold. If they were indeed trying to be sarcastic, it would be even more embarrassing for them that they failed to delivery any newspapers at all today.

To say that I was not happy may slightly understate how I felt about it. Last year they failed to pick up the returns on the Monday and this year they have failed back a day.

It makes it worse because I then had to cobble together a returns note for the balance of the weekend newspapers that needed to be returned on Monday. They also have the opportunity to screw up again by not collecting the returns on Monday. If they do not, I will not know anything about it until we come back during the week sometime.

For our last day, the weather at least stayed dry. There was a robust wind from somewhere in the west but it did not seem to be bothering anyone, although it was helping to hold down the temperature which seemed a tad chilly for most of the day. I do not think that the weather was to blame for a decidedly sedate business day, most of which I spent apologising for the lack of newspapers.

I also found myself apologising for closing. I always do as I feel quite bad about it despite knowing that we have no alternative. It was particularly poignant because an older couple who have been coming down regularly moved into the holiday let next door. They have stayed there before because it is convenient for the shop. The lady explained that they had a wedding to attend which kept them from coming earlier.

In terms of running down, we did not do too badly. I think that there was only a handful of pasties left when I judged the ones already in the warmer were sufficient for the rest of the day. The same applied to the dairy and any vegetables left will keep for a while anyway. The Missus came to shut down the dairy and fruit fridges half an hour before we closed. I can actually claim a five minutes to closing rush at three o'clock because we had decided to close at four o'clock to give us time to get to Plymouth, east of Camborne, with enough time to have some tea.

The Missus had done the usual and organised all the packing. We travel as a unit, Mother, the Missus and I and the two girls. It takes a lot of organising. There were half a dozen large bags to load into the back of the truck along with Mother's travel case. The girls probably had two bags between them including their beds, food and eating paraphernalia. On top of that, the Missus precooked all the meals for up to five days away and carefully froze them. The plan took a bit of a knock when we arrived at the accommodation to discover there was no freezer.

Amazingly, we got away reasonably on time. I did the newspapers, magazines and vouchers not long before we closed. We had seen a few people breeze through at around half past three o'clock but after that I was free to bring in the outside display for the last time before Christmas, hopefully, and draw the curtains on the end of the season.

There may be a short hiatus in Diary production – I do not want to get blood on the keyboard – and the hospital have warned not to bring the mobile telephone or laptop in initially, presumably so that they do not get blood on the keyboard, either. Then I will have to play it by ear, if I still have one – mistakes do happen, I believe. Nervous wittering, you ask. Gisson. Man of steel, me. Right then: Maaatron.

November 3rd – Monday

What, you thought that a silly little thing like having my knee undicked would prevent me from publishing The Diary. Pah, and pish. Merely a flesh wound.

I cannot say that I had the most comfortable night in our temporary billet. The bed was alright, but the pillow was wafer thin and caused my neck no end of problems. The girls, however, after a shaky start while they acclimatised to their new surroundings are enjoying having a garden they can run around in.

The morning, as you might imagine, dear reader, was nothing more than a waiting game for today's main event. In fact, most of the day turned out to be a lot of waiting, the consequence of which was that I nearly finished my book. This would become a bigger problem later because I had not asked the Missus to bring the spare I brought with me, because I could not communicate with her. Miscommunication was also a feature of the day.

I had read the welcome pack that the hospital had sent and was sure that they advised against bringing a mobile telephone, so I did not. The first thing the welcome nurse said was that she was surprised I had not brought my mobile telephone with me. Actually, she said it twice because I also thought that it was best that I left my false ears behind as well. I suppose the smart thing to do would have been to have the Missus bring them and take them back with her if necessary. I shall remember that next time I am having my left knee replaced.

Not having my false ears was a much bigger problem than not having my mobile telephone with me. During the extended period of sitting around waiting, which was obviously done to maximise the fear factor, I was visited by a number of different people all of whom want to ask detailed questions. Over the period of a couple of hours I think I managed to infuriate a whole litany of hospital people from surgeons to trainee nurses. How I managed to get out the other end still alive will bemuse me for years to come, no doubt.

Once the time came, everything happened very quickly. I was walked to a room that must have doubled as the hospital walk in fridge – it was bleddy freezing in there. A team of three people worked in concert to connect me to all manner of tubing and cables, straps and horrid needles. Two of them held me down and gagged me to muffle my screams while the third did all the connecting and inserting. In one final ignominy, he took my legs away and before I knew it, I was out cold under a bright light.

Clearly, I remember nothing of the procedure. I do recall a very bright light. There was a bunch of people saying I should go towards it and another bunch saying I should not. What a conundrum. I can only put it down to the last conversation I had with the Missus about buying a torch so we could see where ABH and BB were in the darkness of the garden. Odd thing how the mind works.

It was probably not advisable to josh with the nurses taking me on to the ward where I was expected to recover. With one at the head and the other at the tail of the very posh gurney, I told them that it was not the first time I had been taking for a ride by a couple of ladies. I decided that it was probably a good idea if I did not eat anything they offered after that, just in case. Fortunately, they were not part of the team looking after me as I suspect I would have been last in the line for painkillers.

Placed on a ward with three other gentlemen – I had to make an assumption that they were – I waited less than patiently for my legs to put in an appearance again. For the first time I was able to consider what it might be light for a person with the knowledge that their legs would not be making an appearance again. Sobering.

It was a good couple of hours before movement first, then gradual feeling returned. I checked with the nurse before I started that it was the thing to do to start flexing and trialling movement in the all new, undickied knee leg. She told me to fill my boots, something that would have been very probable had I been vertical because apparently the bladder was the last to come back under control. I apologise, dear reader, but it concerned me greatly and a problem shared and all that.

The nurse explained that with the return of movement and feeling would also come the pain. I told her that if the screaming disconcerted the other patients on the ward I would cease immediately, or bite down on my leather bookmark. She told me not to worry as my screaming would probably be drowned out with theirs. She added that once the pain started kicking in, I should call for assistance and not to try and be brave. I told her not to worry as that was the last thing I would be doing.

In fact, the pain never came, well not in the level that I was expecting. We are so dosed with drugs they keep asking my name and date of birth to make sure that I still have a basic level of consciousness. I imagine it is to suppress the screaming that would only keep the night nurse awake. Lights out at ten. Well past my bedtime. I will look forward to going home for a rest.

November 4th – Tuesday

I endured a terrible night of sleeplessness. There were all sorts of contributing factors that I would not bother you with, dear reader, as you may be enjoying a healthy breakfast, after all. On top of those various things, I was visited once every two hours or thereabouts to have my 'stats' taken. The staff were incredibly good about it and I have no complaints in that regard. I do find the smorgasbord of drugs I am being asked to take complex and confusing. I do hope that no one asks later what they are, as I would not have a clue, although that was all resolved just before I left the hospital today. I was asked if I wanted any lactulose something which I determined was not anything to do with milk but apparently it would give me a good run for my money. On the basis that I was likely to be confined to bed for the next several hours, I thought it best to decline.

As predicted, I ran out of book almost at the end last night. When I spoke with the Missus this morning, she volunteered to bring in the spare, which was most kind. I would have been polite and turned the offer down but on the basis that I would be sitting about scratching my behind for several hours, I readily accepted.

I was still not wholly sure that I wanted a breakfast, large lunch and supper, which was the menu last night. I settled for a breakfast of omelette and toast. I had no idea that it was possible to make an omelette with half an egg. Apparently, it is. I only ate the toast because a small lad had struggled up Gold Hill in Shaftesbury to bring it to me. If I ever meet him, I will extoll the virtues of being a butchers' boy – with a motorised scooter.

When the Missus came in with the book, we agreed that she would pack up from our local accommodation with a view to heading home as soon as I am released. We came to the conclusion that I would be much more comfortable at home with the added benefit that I can sleep in a room with the door shut to exclude the likelihood of the girls inadvertently jumping on my tender knee. During the day, they may well still feel inclined, but I will be most likely forewarned of the impending assault and be able to brace and pick my spot on the ceiling to dig my claws into. For those of you pointing out that I do not have claws, if a 10 kilo hound jumps on my injured knee, I will find claws from somewhere, believe me.

A little way into the morning and not long after breakfast, a very pleasant lady asked if I might wish to conduct my ablutions. She kindly provided one of those compressed cardboard bowls with warm water and a paper cup of water so that I might sluice after cleaning my teeth. What only became apparent after I had wet the various parts of my anatomy that I could reasonably reach, was that she had not left a means to dry myself. This seemed to me to be a careless omission but perhaps it was assumed that I had provided my own. I improvised but it severely restricted the scope of my operations. It did not bother me greatly - I do not wash at home, either. I was told that I might dress in my day clothes afterwards, which was a pleasant surprise. Another step closer to freedom.

What followed was a long and boring set of intervals interspersed with x-rays, physio meeting and a very pleasant lady from the pharmacy who wanted to ask some questions. The surgeon who had carried out the operation breezed by, presumably just to check that I was still alive. I do not think that we shared more than half a dozen words.

At one point I had the physiotherapist, the pharmacist and two nurses all arrive at the same time to carry out their various roles. I told them that there was only one of me and that they would have to share nicely if we were all to get along. Since I was keen to leave as soon as possible, I was even more keen that one of these necessities did not run off to return later in case later was delayed longer than I would wish. Somehow, it all worked out, and I was left with the physiotherapist who took me

through my various exercises. I listened very carefully as I will be adhering to the regime closely.

We then tried moving about with the crutches supplied. There is a set manner in which to traverse forwards and backwards and directions for going up and down steps. I told her that the steps are steep and high and even without an operated on knee, I was very careful coming down them. In all likelihood, I will be using the steps as infrequently as possible until I am fit. Until then my preferred method would be on my behind. Nevertheless, she insisted I try the pretend steps they had in the physiotherapy room, which proved quite easy to negotiate.

She left me with an exercise ball, the sticks and a tool for hauling my leg into positions that it would not happily be hauled into without it. Such as getting in and out of the truck. Of course, when it came to getting into the truck later in the afternoon, the Missus had already put the tool away in the luggage space and I had to do the hauling of my leg manually.

While I tried out the walking with the crutches, it struck me that less than 24 hours earlier I was on the operating table having a ceramic knee fitted. I found it entirely remarkable that I was now walking on it without too much trouble or pain at all.

Unfortunately, what I also found remarkable was the wait to get out of Dodge. Everything had been done and finalised. All that remained was for the pharmacy to deliver my various drugs and the instructions on how to use them. The two other patients in the room had their visit just after two o'clock and were duly released. I flagged down the very pleasant lady from the pharmacy as she left the ward. She promised she would find out what was happening with my package, which was largely the same as the other two.

Nearly one and a half hours later, after being as patient as a patient could be, I took to my crutches to find out what was going on, or not as it happened. The cleaners had cleaned the ward all about me and it looked very much like I had been forgotten. It looked even more like that when I went to the nurses' station where they were all standing around apparently celebrating getting rid of us. I think they were surprised to see me.

Not long after my request, a couple of nurses returned with my demob package. They took me through what to take and when and then organised a wheelchair to take me to the entrance. If I had walked, I believe I would still be trying to get out now. I had already mobilised the Missus when the other two patients left, thinking that I would not be too far behind.

I had been hearing weather reports from those able to go outside for most of the day. The weather had been foul, apparently. It was still being foul when we left and there was flooding under one of the bridges on the Tavistock road out of the city. Traffic was heavy but moving and we were soon on our way – much later than I had hoped.

The rain had left the Far West by the time we got there but had left thick fog behind and it was dark. The main road into St Buryan was closed for works and we had to detour when dropping Mother off home and detour again to get home. Dropping down into The Cove it was clear that they holidays are over; there were very few lights in houses.

Coming home was definitely the right thing to do. On the way up to Plymouth, my leg had caused me the usual amount of grief being bent up in the truck. The most welcome thing about the journey home was that I had no discomfort at all. In celebration, I bounded up the steps to the flat on my sticks in the method prescribed. Well, I never did.

November 5th – Wednesday

I had gone out like a light and slept like a log last night. My refreshed state lasted as long as it took me to stick it to my collection of pills and pop some more pain killers. I very quickly concluded that as long as I am consuming them, I shall be on the brink of sleep every minute of the day. I do not have a simile for that.

Given than following the exercises that I have been given would appear to be key to a quick and successful recovery, I started my day by doing the first sequence. I would have started with a cup of tea but quickly dismissed the idea. I could not think of a way of transporting it from the kitchen to my seat short of drinking it first, so it would have to wait for the Missus to appear.

As I thought about that it occurred to me that while I could get about the flat with relative ease, moving anything with me would be another matter altogether. I innovated with some items: I moved my laptop from the sofa to my desk where I needed to charge its battery by sliding it across the carpet, shiny side down, with the end of my sticks in between steps; my hair trimmer – I have pretensions - and mirror I moved from the bathroom to the kitchen by placing them in a bag dangling it from one of the handles of my sticks, and similarly with a bit of breakfast.

Washing was even more problematic. With my balance in disarray thanks to my pills, I very quickly established that taking a shower would be a very risky venture, with or without a waterproof bag over my knee. I resorted to the services of a flannel and a bowl of water at the kitchen sink. As my shampoo – I use it for psychological reasons – was out of reach in the shower cubicle, I used the dog shampoo under the kitchen sink. The whole operation was an adventure in awkwardness but at least I will have shiny coat for a day or two.

I rather think that I had subconsciously contrived a lot of time wasting this morning so that when I eventually got around to it, I was not too rude to the people at the Laurel and Hardy Newspaper Company. Notwithstanding the fact they deserved a very rude letter I did not think it would help in getting them to do anything. Mind, writing perfectly pleasant requests were completely ineffective as well. You may recall, dear

reader that the eejits had failed to deliver newspapers on our last day of opening. I had berated them for their lack of performance and reminded them that the newspapers still needed collecting. When we returned last night, I asked the Missus to check the newspaper box and, sure enough, the complete eejits had not picked up the returns, either – including £200 of vouchers to be claimed.

When I eventually sat down to pen a note to the company explaining their further shortcomings, I was almost circumspect. Perhaps that is why, by the end of the day, I had still not received a reply. This could be set to run and run.

One of the other tasks I had to complete in closing down our operations was writing to the recycling crew at the same company. Last year I learnt that they did not know how to use a calendar and therefore I could not cancel the service by giving notice. I had to advise them on the day I wanted the service ceased. Since this was on the weekend, I wrote to their specific electronic mail address duly advising them. Sometime on Monday I had a reply telling me my request had been forwarded to the 'relevant team'. Clearly, the address called 'recycling' is to the team whose sole job it is to forward messages to the relevant team. I wait in wonder.

If I thought that I would be climbing the walls at home with nothing to do, I was sorely mistaken. I have a schedule for pill taking and a schedule for exercising. Well, no, I have a list of exercises I must do and the suggested minimum number of them. Only one, knee bends are specified as hourly. I am also not to spend any more than 40 minutes at a stretch sitting in a normal seated position, that is with feet on the ground. Additionally, I have to get up and wander around but for no more than a short period initially, gradually increasing. At the same time, I must ensure that my leg is elevated for extended periods to stop it swelling up. I am yet to establish if meeting all those requirements is actually achievable, but one thing is for sure, I do not have time to find out.

Not that I had much time to be gazing out of the window but the glimpses I had were not all that inspiring. It was a grey day, possibly damp too – how would I know, ah yes, the Missus was wet coming in from outside and so were the girls when they jumped on my lap. In that regard, the anticipation is worse than the event. They are far too quick at it for me to prepare and on the odd occasion they have landed on target, the pain has been minimal.

The sea was a steely grey underneath that sullen sky and the beach at low water was big and largely empty. When I looked a little later, there were big waves lashing the bottom of the cliffs all the way from Air Point to Cape Cornwall. I had another geek around high water time, and the swell was huge and all the more menacing for not breaking into crashing waves. The big crashing waves were reserved for Cowloe where they were dancing and boiling and over the Harbour wall where they were erupting and lumping.

I blame the beavers. It is their moon, apparently that is causing all the anxiety – well, that and a good bit of low pressure sitting just off the Bay of Biscay. It is a good job my prison cell has windows.

One of the very excellent Shore Crew who lives up the hill but is always hanging about in The Cove visited in the middle of the day. He brought grapes and flowers. We all keep in touch through our group messaging facility and not long after I returned, I had mentioned grapes and whisky when someone asked to let them know if I needed anything. Clearly, the Mickey taking extended to the grapes but not the expense of whisky. They are a jolly good bunch of fellows but do not tell them that, for heaven's sake. They will be uncontrollable.

I have been flooded with messages and cards from well wishers, and I thank both of you for taking the time to send them. Do not worry, I will not let anyone know who you are.

Time for bed. I have a busy day tomorrow.

November 6th – Thursday

The day did not take very long to shrug off its veil of grey rain clouds and ugliness. Even before it was properly light, there were bits of blue up to the west of my line of sight. While I sat at my desk publishing The Diary first thing, there was a big moon staring down at me in the gap between the neighbour's property and the Lifeboat station.

There have been all sorts of warnings about flooding along the coast because of that big old moon. It is a supermoon. It was not that long ago we had another that was billed as the biggest of the year so far. That was a hunter's moon, I think. I am wondering just how much more bigging up of a moon the media can do before the hyperbole loses credibility. The swell yesterday, along with it being a big spring tide, would have been quite threatening, but I have not heard any reports of flooding this morning. There again, I do not get out much – and even less now.

Today, the sea looked much more respectful. It was blue and very pretty with no signs at all of misbehaving. Mind, I was looking at it at low water and gazing down on a wide and bright beach, the air clear and the cliffs lit up in every detail. I would have been able to see much more had our windows not been clogged with condensation.

Down on the Lifeboat long slipway a team of workers are beavering away. It is coincidental and nothing to do with the moon. I saw them yesterday but only now got the chance to ask one of the very excellent Shore Crew what was going on. They are replacing the lining of the keelway that runs down the middle of the concrete toe of the slipway. Further up, there are rollers but right at the bottom the keelway is lined with a special lining called feroform, although I am not sure if that is how it is spelt. If

we had rollers all the way down, the boat would roll back out again when it came in for recovery.

The ferroform has lasted around 15 years from when it was installed with the last big station rebuild in 2009. It is now in a parlous state and has needed to be replaced for the last couple of years, really. Since the ferroform has done such a great job and lasted so well, it is being replaced with marine plywood. Anyway, it was a very pleasant day to be working at the bottom of the slipway.

Apropos of nothing at all, a headline in the trade press caught my eye yesterday. It told me that the number of cigarette smokers in the UK has fallen to its lowest level of 10.6 percent. That equates to approximately 5.3 million people. More people now vape than smoke. Make of that what you will. What I make of that is that I will continue to carry fewer brands of cigarettes each year and a lower stock in the shop. Hopefully, it means I will have less cash tied up, or certainly no more as inevitably, the price will continue to increase.

I watch with interest the progress of the tobacco and vape bill passing through Parliament. This may introduce the generational ban on smoking which will be a begger to manage in the shop. As each year passes, the grumpy shopkeeper will need to determine whether a customer was born after 2010. So, in say 2035 I will need to be able to accurately gauge whether a customer is 25 years old or not if they ask for cigarettes; if they are 26 years old, they can. Five years later, the demarcation would be 30 and 31 years old. Asking an eighteen year old for age verification is one thing, asking a 30 year old person, quite another especially if the person asking is a nineteen year old shop assistant, for example. Additionally, those born around the crucial time with face age checks their whole life whereas, with current legislation, there is probably just five years of being asked depending how fresh faced you look.

If that were not introducing enough complexity into the humble practise of shopkeeping, there is also a likelihood that a licensing regime will be introduced, similar to the one for alcohol sales. The one for alcohol is complicated enough with premises and personal licences and a fat licence fee to pay each year. There is already a system in place to ensure the tobacco products we purchase are genuine. I had to apply for an Economic Operator and Facility identification set of codes without which I cannot legitimately purchase cigarettes. Quite why I would need a licence as well baffles me. However, if the government can make a simple process complicated – and more expensive - for people, it will.

I am glad that subject came up. Our alcohol premises licence fee is due soon and until I mentioned it, I had forgotten all about it. I used to have a pitch battle with the relevant much maligned council department every year because they will not send a receipt for the payment. They still do not, so I do not send a remittance advice. They actually noticed I exist last year and told me I owed them the fee. I told them I had paid it and heard no more. It is a very efficient system where we just ignore each other, and the world keeps turning.

Talking of which, when the sea state returns to relative calm on a Thursday, we can expect an exercise launch of the Lifeboat. We had been pre-warned that it was likely and, this morning, we had another message to say that the launch was on. I still have a part to play by assigning the various roles each of the very excellent Shore Crew will take up, such as who will be head launcher and who will run the winch.

The purpose of assigning the roles is that so everyone gets rotated around the various jobs reasonably fairly. It feels a bit like being bossy, but I have asked more than once if the crew mind and it appears they do not. I think and hope that they find it useful and I always present it as a suggestion rather than an instruction. I keep a record on a spreadsheet, which makes the process relatively straightforward.

What I cannot do is go down and join them. It does not bother me greatly at present maybe because I am still involved. We were having our tea when the boat launched, and I was able to listen to the VHF traffic on our scanner. I also happened to be standing at the window when the boat came back towards half past eight o'clock. It looked very much like a textbook recovery up the long slipway to me. We are, after all, a very consistent, very excellent Shore Crew.

November 7th – Friday

We were back to rain again this morning. Not that it bothers me very much as I do not need to go out in it. The girls are getting a free pass on early morning walks out, but I am not getting the lie-ins that I anticipated. They come and get me if they cannot wake up the Missus. It was felt sensible that I sleep in the spare room to avoid being jumped on while asleep. Well, it seemed a good idea at the time.

The café is still open next door. He was complaining that it was quiet last week. There are a few people milling about but nothing on the week before, so I imagine he is climbing the walls. I do not think he will last much longer, so if we want one of his excellent bacon rolls, we will have to get a finger out.

Mind, eating is the last thing I should be thinking about. Other than some very light exercises, I am doing better all to use up any calories. I have already mentioned the grapes and flowers from one Michael-taking member of the very excellent Shore Crew. Well, his parents who live at the end of The Cove sent two boxes of fancy biscuits and a tub of chocolates around yesterday. I am not sure it was intentional but getting fat and watching my teeth fall out will probably take my mind off any issues with my knee, so I am very grateful.

The NHS are certainly not going to let me forget it. I had a call from the assignment people in Truro yesterday. Despite numerous attempts at getting them to use the land line, they insist on calling on the mobile telephone which works most times when I am in the front of the flat but otherwise the signal is poor. Anyway, I managed

to hear enough to understand that they were trying to arrange an appointment with one of their physiotherapists. It caused me some consternation and rather wishing I had some more time to consider my responses.

Now, you see, dear reader, the NHS here and in particular its physiotherapy and I have a *history*, even though it was some years ago. I cannot tell you exactly when, if only I had kept a diary or something.

My first concern was that I really did not want to have to travel all the way to Truro for a half hour session. The very pleasant lady quickly assured me that the appointment would be arranged for West Cornwall in Penzance, which relieved me of one of my concerns and allowed me to concentrate on the other.

It had been some time since I had anything to do with the physiotherapists at West Cornwall and I really did not see that as a disadvantage. When I last went to see them, it was in response to me snapping my Achillies tendon while trying to recover the Lifeboat one stormy night. The appointments were in the run up to Christmas time and I was repeatedly cancelled by the physiotherapist due to his holidays and other activities and when I eventually managed to get to see him again, I was told that the interval between the last appointment and the current one was so long that I would need to restart the process.

If that had happened once, I might have been forgiving – alright, I would not have been *that* forgiving – but for it to happen twice, was bordering on the ridiculous and I decided to seek to restore my wasted leg muscles another way. This, dear reader, was the origin of my visits to the gymnasium. So, perhaps I should be grateful to a less that attentive physiotherapist because it changed my life and very much for the better.

So, biting down on my prejudice, I allowed the very pleasant lady to book me an appointment with the physiotherapists at West Cornwall next week. I am still apprehensive: it seems very soon after the session I had with the physiotherapist in Plymouth; the instructions I have from that session are for six weeks; what if the new physiotherapist disagrees with the programme I have been given. I shall try very hard to go with an open mind, but I am battling against history and trust.

I am also existing in a very weird world at present. My doziness, a product of the particular drugs I am taking, is causing me to drift off every now and then. In between times, I am reading a thriller, reading news reports on the Internet and browsing some social media pages. The lines between my realities, fiction and dream world are becoming very blurred at times. I have a strong recollection of John Cleese saying something. It might have been an interview, but it was something that the Missus was telling me about earlier. Grace Kelly had a part to play too, but that came from the book I was reading. I alerted the Missus to tell me if I was speaking gibberish, but she asked how she would tell, which is a fair point. There have been other instances that I can either not remember clearly, or I would rather just not say.

In the meanwhile, the Missus continues to run the girls out between everything else she is doing. She left me and Mother at home in the afternoon and ran off to the big beach. Looking at it earlier, we still have visitors about and at times there were a fair few down there. With a spring low tide, there was plenty of room for everyone and the Missus feels confident enough to have both off the lead. She showed me some film she had taken of them playing. Under all the fur, BB has long and gangly legs. When they are wet, she looks like a miniature, hairy camel.

I try and do as much as I can for myself in the house despite the Missus' insistence that she will do it for me. I am fearful to ask the Missus to do things as I suspect I am running up a very large, virtual bill that I will have to settle, probably for the rest of my life.

That is me for another day. I am off to a dinner party with Alfred Hitchcock and Snorky from the Banana Splits. I am looking forward to hearing what Wilma Rudolph – no, me neither – has to say about quantum theory in retail management.

November 8th – Saturday

Our day slowly turned out to be quite a bright little button as we moved into the late morning. It had been trying hard from early morning by the look of it. The Missus certainly had no complaints from her early run out – which I continue to note is much later than my early runs out. Her bedroom door was closed when I got up, which I think was inadvertent but at the time, I was not sure. There was silence beyond it, so I sneaked about taking care not to alert the girls. It did not work, and they all got up while I was making tea.

I can carry a few things between the kitchen and the living room. Tea is not one of them. I can traverse the hallway really only using the sticks for balance and maybe to keep full weight off the left leg. I will not know if I am being a wuss by continuing to use them or being prudent until I have met with the physiotherapist. Even then, it will depend on how much I trust the person which is probably not the best position to be in with your healthcare provider.

Now that I do not have the daily newspapers to tell me, I struggle to tell which day of the week it is. It is a good job I have a Diary else where would I be, at least that is one use of it. Being a weekend means that some of the things that I meant to do, I cannot now do until Monday. I really should have been more on the ball.

For one, I missed the opportunity to cease the general waste and cardboard collection, although I did intend that it was collected last week. What I imagined was I that would issue notice last week and the last collection would be Wednesday of this week coming. That would provide enough time for the Missus to close down the

remaining fridges and freezers and throw any out of date or potential out of date items in the bin before the last collection.

Another was the statement from the drinks company we use for beers and spirits which had an outstanding balance. We have had trouble with them before where they somehow get a hiccup in tracking our payments. We pay cash on delivery, so it really cannot go very wrong. I hand the money to the driver, who checks it, and he takes it back and hands it to accounts. It is all recorded and even my CCTV picks up the physical transaction at the counter. I did have to use that once because a new lady in accounts made a mistake and blamed me and the driver. In my defence, the statement arrived late on Friday, and I did not open it until later still in the afternoon. I should have called then but will have to now leave it until Monday – if I can work out when it is Monday.

I jealously watched as the Missus harnessed up the girls for a walk on the Harbour beach. I do not think I am far off a walk up and down the street but following her down the slipway might yet be a bit of a challenge. The battle of bright and slightly less bright was continuing as she left. I fancied that the less bright was winning, slowly. We had bits of blue up there but not much. There was white, high level cloud and quite a lot of it and then quite a bit of dirtier low level cloud. The positive side was that it was not raining or looked to have any intention of doing so.

It did make quite a picture of the big beach. It is only three days off the very big tide of Wednesday, so there were acres of beach around the precinct of low water. There were several small groups wandering about from North Rocks here and there to the reef under The Beach car park all of whom seemed to be accompanied by multiple dogs. It was an ideal day to be dog walking with so much room down there you would be unlikely to upset anyone. The sea, at low water, anyway, was just right too, with plenty of shallow water to run in and out of.

The swell in the bay had picked up a bit today, rolling big waves into the beach. At low water, they were breaking a good way out spreading a white blanket of foam ahead of them as they headed to the beach. There was a line of breaking water along the reef from Brisons to Cot Valley and at the foot of the cliffs from Aire Point northwards. The white stood out against the variously blue or grey of the sea, depending on the brightness of the moment. It was later, though, when the tide flooded in that the swell really showed off its muscle. Before it got dark, the white water was thrusting up at the cliffs opposite and threatening the Harbour wall.

The Missus had spent a good part of the afternoon down in the shop with the aim of organising the freezers. I had left the solar panels in favour of the shop when we closed as we were still using more electricity down there. The plan on closing is always to shut down as many fridges and freezers as possible and switch the solar panels to the flat. All I could hear was crashing and banging as frozen things were moved from place to place then after a while she called. Our upright freezer, the

oldest in the shop and the one most packed with our winter food, had gone into meltdown.

We had a problem with this freezer earlier in the year. I had left the flap of plastic from the pasty bags pack (sorry, MS) dangling and it had got caught in the freezer door. It was enough to let the air in. At first, we had thought that the freezer had just stopped because it was so old and had considered replacing it. I wish now that we had. This time around we could find no reason for the defrosting.

We considered that I had inadvertently turned it off when I switched off the beer fridge and the pasty fridge both of which are on the same sets of sockets. I had been very careful when I turned them off to make sure that I had flicked the correct switches. Part of the problem is that there is no longer a light that indicates its operation as all the bulbs have long since stopped working. By listening, the Missus established that the compressor is still starting, so we have no idea why it stopped freezing this time around.

Replacing it is now a certainty, although starting that ball rolling will have to wait until Monday. I doubt that we will get something exactly the same size, due to its age, but it requires nothing special, just the biggest unit we can squeeze into the gap.

Chatting with the Missus when she returned upstairs – when the girls had finished mobbing her – it seems she had managed to save quite a lot of the contents. I will ask her to take some measurements tomorrow and get on the case during Sunday as I have nothing better to do – and there was me thinking that we would have such an uneventful time of things I would have nothing to write about. Before I hear any whispers, no I did not do it deliberately.

While I think of it, our postman arrived while I was lounging with my feet up. He and the parcel delivery person both very kindly opened the front door and, seeing my predicament, handed me their letters and parcels. I have now covered it up to save further embarrassment. It reminded me – the deliveries, not my predicament - that I meant to say was thank you for the get well cards I have received. I should single out L&L who sent theirs the furthest, from very far north of Camborne. Others have not come quite so far but are equally appreciated, thank you.

I spent the latter part of the evening applying the use of the ice bucket, tube and collar that I had been lent. During tea, for which I sit up, my foot had swollen quite alarmingly. Elevation, compression and ice is the thing. I checked with the hospital that very kindly provides an emergency contact number for such things. There is now telephone queuing, because my call is important to them, they simply answer the telephone, which makes you feel better all by itself. They confirmed I was doing the right thing after checking I had no symptoms of thrombosis – which I always thought was an instrument from the brass section. They also recommended lifting my leg about my heart for at least an hour.

It was one of those times that I wished I had joined the yoga sessions at the OS. I would have been able to slip into a classic rhododendron position, or some such exotic floral name, with my left ankle behind my right ear while balancing on my right elbow. Instead, I relied on an unfeasibly high pile of cushions and pillows on the bed, like one of those piles of rocks you see on the beach, and placed my leg on that. It was surprisingly not as uncomfortable as I imagined, and I promptly fell asleep. I woke an hour later as intended to assume a more normal sleeping position. I would have to repeat this during the night. I made a note to only have a swollen foot during the daytime when it would be easier to manage.

November 9th – Sunday

We all had a lie in this morning. I was the first one up but none of the girls stirred until I had sat down at the computer. Senior girl needed a bit more of a prompt, but she took the junior girls out for a run as soon as she was up. It was raining, I noted.

I am pleased to report that the three extreme leg elevations I conducted during the night had a positive effect and my bulbous foot was slightly less inflated this morning. I am told this is to be expected along with the emerging bruises from top to bottom of the offended leg. I am imagining that my particular procedure gave them so much grief, the surgeon took his frustration out on my leg by beating it with a stick.

Listen, I am stuck indoors with little of substance to do. I can hardly be blamed for letting my imagination run riot, now can I.

For the same reason – having nothing to do – I got stuck into looking for replacement freezers. I know that having the outer measurements of the old one was the first logical step, but I was not about to get those until I could persuade the Missus out of bed and downstairs to provide them. Anyway, I had a reasonable idea of what they were, and single door freezers tend to come in three general sizes anyway, small, under counter ones, medium upright and large upright. We were in the market for the latter.

As with most white goods, commercial or domestic, there are only a few different types, and the rest are rebadged duplicates with perhaps a different bell or whistle here and there. Our key requirements were, as capacious as possible and that it fits in the hole. Bells and whistles are not required. It also had to be supported by our maintenance company, but I could not establish that until Monday.

Unlike domestic freezers, there is little comparative information available; Which? does not do a commercial freezer report that I am aware of. There is also not much in the way of unique selling points to differentiate between the models, so I stuck with the company names I recognised and stayed clear of the ultra-cheap ones. It did not take long to come up with a short list of four. Now, I had to find something else to do.

My options are severely limited. Not by my recovering knee, or by the requirement to get up every hour to exercise or at sometime during that hour to walk around supported by crutches. No, the most restrictive limitation is ABH's apparent need to curl up on my lap whenever I sit down. If she encounters me sitting in the chair in which I undertake my exercises, she sits it the way, expectantly. She follows me when I head to the kitchen and shadows me on the way back so that she can be there the second I sit down and raise the recliner. If by some miracle, she had decided to perch elsewhere, all it takes is for me to set up my laptop on my lap. Ten seconds later, I have to move it to one side so that she can settle back on my lap again. I suspect that this is a test of my allegiance, to make sure because I have moved out of the bedroom, I am not leaving completely. It is certainly a test of my patience.

The swell in the bay was still with us today. It was difficult to determine whether it was stronger or weaker than yesterday. Perhaps it was just the same. It certainly did not have the same allure under a grey and uninteresting blanket of cloud. It is likely that our visitors thought so too because there were far fewer of them wandering about on the beach. I spotted one swimmer in the middle of the day on the southern end of the big beach. She provided some scale to the waves that were still rolling in at around six feet, maybe. The swimmer seemed comfortable in such conditions, so I guess she had been there before. Personally, I cannot see the fun in it. I am sure she felt the same about sitting on a recliner with her leg in the air and I believe she had a point.

Later, we sat at the table for our Sunday dinner because Mother is here and it is Sunday. We could be assured that just because it was dark and no one could see it, the sea continued to be big and muscly into the evening. Even with our new insulation and double glazed windows, we could listen to it as the waves pounded the rocks under the promenade and lumped over the Harbour wall. It is even more intimidating at night. Sleep well.

November 10th – Monday

I seem to be getting the hang of this lying in lark. Almost half past seven o'clock when I eventually stirred my bones. I have a seven o'clock schedule for drugs, but I am sure that can be a bit flexible. I also note that my codeine runs out tomorrow, so it is into uncharted territory after that. I have seen it in the movies. The right and proper thing to do is to lock me in the bathroom and not let me out no matter how much I protest and scream and shout. I was obviously not paying attention because I cannot remember what you are supposed to do after that.

It was a very pretty day to be contemplating such things. The sun was out quite a bit in the morning but then the big fluffy clouds seemed to increase in number, and the sun was slowly shuttered out more and more. The big waves were still racing across the bay, dashing up the cliffs opposite and having a little dance over Cowloe. We

have seen it much worse but calm it was not. The first fifty metres of sea away from the beach was all white and foamy where the waves were breaking, then running in.

I really should have paced myself, but I did all the exciting things I had lined up for the day all at once. Having published The Diary for the day I found that it was late enough to call the surgery. I have a letter of recommendation from the hospital that asks that I implore the good nurses at the practice to remove my stitches next week.

I think that is one of the few things that I can telephone for and get an appointment without having to use the triaging booking system on the computer. Whatever the case, they were happy to make an appointment, two in fact, because they did not know how long it would take. I do not think it will take long because the incision appears to be very short. I will shortly be able to compare scars with Mother who had hers done about ten years ago. Her scar runs from the middle of her thigh to the middle of her calf. Mine is far shorter. I am guessing that scars can be made much smaller these days.

The other thing I needed from the surgery is a medical report, one that says that I am sane enough to still possess firearms. My licence renewal comes up in March next year and I thought that seemed like a long time away. When I went to check, the Devon and Cornwall Police who are in charge of it, welcome applications from four months in advance. I am late. My understanding is that they are now much improved in efficiency but some members of the club at the start of this year had been waiting more than a year for renewal.

I had a visit yesterday from the club secretary who is helping by ensuring my range logs are up to date in my absence. He alarmed me by saying some members had been charged £160 for a medical report and that I ought to check our surgery first before commissioning them for the report. I was pleased to discover that the charge was far less and I have now sent off the request.

The other item on my agenda was, of course, the freezer. I had another look at the shortlist this morning and whittled it down to two preferred. I am sure that either will do, although one is nearly half the price of the other. The cheaper one is slightly bigger and, as far as I can tell, does not have any black marks against it. I have sent a request for information off to our refrigeration company and also to see if they want to supply the unit. I await developments.

By the time I finished all that, it was still ahead of ten o'clock. A whole day to go and I had done all the exciting things, so I went and sat down for a while to recuperate and try and think of some more exciting things I could do. Franky, that exhausted me and I dropped off mid-think. I find that mildly interesting how I can be actively engaged in thinking, reading or writing and before you know it, I suddenly realise my eyes are drooping. At that point, I still have a choice, sleep or give myself a virtual slap and carry on. If I leave it too long, I am gone. It is never fully asleep, just halfway there which is when all the weirdness happens, the unidentifiable merging of realities and

fantasy. It really is quite good fun. If only I could remember the detail, I would share it with you.

The surgery came back first, with a result from my early morning request. They sent me a bill for the medical report, which was very efficient. So, I efficiently paid it. Hopefully that will not take too long, and I can start the intricate process of applying for my firearms licence renewal. It can now be done online but from what I hear, it is not efficient at all. Apparently, it has to be done in one session; you cannot do half of it and come back to it later. It clears everything and you have to start again. I am also told that each gun has to be done separately and the whole process can take hours. Some have said it is easier to maintain that you do not have the facilities to do it online and do it on the paper forms instead. I will let you know, dear reader, because I am sure you will be enthralled.

I had thought that the refrigeration people would be a bit quicker off the mark but the next response I had was from the local interest book company. I had written to them last week to tell them that the unsold books we had taken on sale or return were ready for collection. Our man will turn up tomorrow, so we will have to remember to put the books in the newspaper box outside to save me having to go downstairs.

Thinking of downstairs, I have been turning over the idea that it might be time to go and face the big wide world – our little part of it at least. I cannot spend the entire six weeks of the initial recovery period cooped up inside. Well, I could but that might be a bit weird. I have been practising stairs – we have two steps inside the front door – so I have the technical and theoretical know-how. I certainly managed to get up the steps two days after the operation, so getting down them should not be too much of a challenge and getting back up them again, a breeze. The big question is, have I the cojones for it. There again, I have just seen a weather warning for rain issued for tomorrow. Maybe I will leave it a day.

November 11th – Tuesday

There was not quite the swell in the bay of the last few days, I thought, but it was big enough, thank you. It was a picture in monochrome; of a day that could not be bothered to get dressed for the occasion; that had just turned up because it had to, sort of thing. It must have been disappointing for the sea that was clearly making a bit of an effort at near high water.

All the big tides had now gone, so what it was doing was very impressive in the circumstances. Biggish rolling waves were trundling into the bay and holding themselves to break all the way down on the beach. Alright, they were having a field day over Cowloe where they were dancing and jumping and exploding in a big foamy mess. They were making light work of the Harbour wall, too. One moment lazily flushing over here and there and the next, nimbly leaping over the entire length of it.

The wind was a big feature of the day, it seemed, although we knew nothing of it. I probably would not have mentioned it at all had I not gone looking for the rain. We had been told that would be the main feature of the day, but which had not materialised until halfway into the afternoon – about the same time the Missus decided to run out with the girls. The wind was thumping in from the south, which is why we had not felt much of it and was up in the early fifty miles per hour at all the weather stations. Even Gwennap Head, windiest place in the universe had not overstated it today. I fancy it is the western cliffs there that give them the problem.

As soon as the rain arrived, as part of a cold front, the wind desisted almost immediately. A fascinating bit of weather if ever there was some. It certainly cancelled my venture out on my sticks.

Alright, I had all morning to get down the stairs and have a stroll around. A fair cop, guv. In my defence, the Missus wanted to get out and do a bit of shopping which meant me staying in with the girls while they moped and sulked. BB is getting better at not whining when the Missus goes now. I still have ABH sitting on my lap for the entire duration which has never been shorter than three hours. I had put aside my breakfast that I intended to have on my lap before she got there. When she eventually got off and I reached for my tray, BB slipped smartly into her place. I had to wait until the Missus got back before I could tuck in. Yes, I could have pushed them both off, but I would then have to endure eating my breakfast while being jostled and under the glare of some harsh, offended stares.

The Missus had gone off in search of Christmas decorations. Yes, as if we did not have enough, which clearly, we do not. These decorations, I am told, were for the new Santa's Grotto that will be installed in the Lifeboat station's viewing gallery. It is an expansion of the Carols in the Cove event which will be even bigger this year with more lights and, very possibly, the addition of the Pendeen Silver Band. I am sure the latter, if really not able for a carol or two, will come up with a few themes from Christmas movies favourites such as The Great Escape, It's a Wonderful Life and The Wizard of Oz. I do not have a date yet for Carols in the Cove, but I suspect that I will not be as mobile as I might wish come the day.

While on the subject, sort of, many people have asked, alright a few people have enquired ... let me start that again. Someone asked in the shop the other day what had happened with the proposed Hallowe'en – there, we have the apostrophe back again – drive in cinema in support of the RNLI. Well, it is a long and sordid tale. Actually, it is just a sordid tale, but I can probably pad it out a bit to fill a few more much needed column inches.

The Missus had come a long way down the organisation of the event but had stopped short of producing tickets or committing funds until she had heard back from the main man at the cinema company that was providing the drive in cinema kit, which included the physical equipment as well as the appropriate licences and fee payments. Having established all the various costs, she was told at the last minute

by an underling, that because she would be selling tickets – the main vehicle for raising funds – the company would be relieving her of 40 percent of the gross take.

It did not even require the back of a fag packet to calculate that such a hefty tax on the ticket sales would make the whole venture uneconomic. While we probably could have got around it by charging for the parking space or having a suggested donation amount, it made the organisation complicated even if the cinema company had not allowed for such trickery in its contract. She tried to contact the main man, but he was making himself scarce and with time running out, the fundraising committee unsurprisingly, pulled the plug on it.

It now looks like The Missus is venting her spleen on Carols in the Cove by making it bigger and uglier than ever before. Since there is a likelihood that I shall be confined to barracks still, or at least somewhat hamstring, there will be no one to hold her back – just someone in the background feeling ever so guilty by not being able to help.

After the middle of the day, I ran out of my hallucinogenic and addictive drugs. I also ran out of the ones that the hospital gave me, and I needed to either find alternatives or man up. On the grounds that the latter was probably unlikely, I have switched to an over the counter product that we have an abundance of in the shop. Only time will tell whether they are as effective. I should from now on be less likely to have mind bending half dreams and altered reality such as thinking that I could manage my knee pain by manning up.

The rain arrived in the afternoon. Some of it was heavy but as far as we were concerned, it did not seem like the sort of rain that warranted a weather warning for rain. Perhaps it was heavier further up. The only time when the girls came back dripping from a walk, was when they had been dipping in rock pools down on the Harbour beach.

While I did not manage to get out today for an outside spin, tomorrow I have no choice. I have my physiotherapy appointment which I am anticipating with interest and an open mind. No, I really have an open mind. I really, really do, it says here. Honest, guv.

November 12th – Wednesday

I had no idea it was visit a broken grumpy shopkeeper day today. I wish they had chosen another day because it was also confuse a grumpy shopkeeper day, as well. Had I only looked at the date this morning, all would have been well. As it was, I did not, and it was mayhem.

I had made detailed preparations for visiting the physiotherapist in town, psychologically armed myself for the trauma of going down out steps and how I might traverse the slope down to the physiotherapy unit at West Cornwall Hospital.

As it happened, there was not a great deal to be worried about. I managed the steps effortlessly – I had been practising all week, of course – and getting in and out of the truck was an absolute doddle. The path down to the physiotherapy unit offered me not the slightest hindrance and I arrived at the reception window with plenty of time to spare.

It was as soon as I realised that my name was not on the day list that it occurred to me that the one thing I had not done, was check the appointment. I had already had a pre-appointment questionnaire arrive and a message had been sent to my NHS app on my smart mobile telephone. None of these advance warnings did I heed or even read, truth be told. So, it has already occurred to me in that moment before the receptionist opened his mouth to speak, that today was the 12th and not the 13th of November.

What had wrong footed me, as I rehearsed my defence for the cross party board of enquiry that would, no doubt come later, was the other appointment I had on the horizon. That was on a Wednesday next week. I had simply confused the two. Clear in my mind's ear was the very pleasant young lady receptionist who told me that the appointment was on Wednesday. Of course, she was referring to next week's appointment at the doctor's surgery to have my stitches removed, not the physiotherapy appointment that had been made previously which was on a Thursday, tomorrow.

Still, the excursion was worthwhile to stress test all the procedures and activities required to get me to the appointment on the correct day of the week, tomorrow. We also managed to carry out a couple of errands in town that we would have needed to do anyway and the come home again, none the worse for the experience.

Once home, very fortunately, I had time to complete my ablutions that had been set back by the unnecessary early start in town. I had just made my breakfast and had sat down to eat it at a more appropriate time than yesterday, when the first visitor arrived. Ex-Head Launcher generally comes and goes as he pleases but he knocked today, aware of the escapability of BB, especially, I think. I am pleased that people are patient because it takes me a moment of two to extricate myself from my seat, collect my crutches and scrape across the floor to the door. In fact, it too me so long that the Missus got there first, and she was in the kitchen making coffee.

Ex-Head Launcher stayed for a couple of hours, the first of which was trying to stop him being mobbed by the two girls. By the time he left, my breakfast sandwich that had been staring me down all the while, was even more welcome than it had been when I brought it through from the kitchen. I was most grateful that I had not chosen something hot.

I had barely finished my breakfast when another visitor arrived. He had already been once – he brought the grapes and flowers. He had also attended the station operations meeting I would have attended myself last night and brought me up to

speed with the very little that had been said. There were some operational matters related to the new plywood keelway that needed to be agreed and tested. Apparently, it had affected the hauling in of the Lifeboat that had adhered more firmly to it than the previous ferroform. It was agreed that the very excellent Shore Crew would pour eco washing up liquid into the keelway to reduce the friction when the boat is pulled in. Quite how we get the eco washing up liquid into the keelway is quite another matter. I will leave that to the innovative boys and girls to come up with a solution that does not incur the wrath of the health and safety watchers.

The visits were most welcome and successfully broke up what otherwise would have been the tedium of another day. It also cancelled two exercise sessions and postponed my medication. After the second visitor had left, I resumed the routine with the medication and just started the exercises, when there was another knock at the door. Fortunately, this was a delivery driver with a package, but it did give us a start.

Having finished my breakfast, medications taken and at least one bout of exercise done, I settled down to pen some Diary. The Missus took the opportunity to run the girls down to the Harbour beach and normal service in The Cove was resumed. I might have reached my third paragraph by the time the Missus returned. I heard voices and assumed that she must be talking to the girls but instead, she arrived at the door with another two visitors. These were people we have known for many years, visitors to The Cove with family members that we have seen grown up and some shuffle off. They stayed with us for a couple of hours while we, mainly the Missus, caught up with and exchanged gossip from afar and near.

Darkness had descended by the time they left. Another two exercise sessions had been lost and another medication event was approaching. I do not think that I will win any awards today for sticking to my recovery schedule and I had far too much rest, which is probably not good for keeping the blood flowing. I am not sure that I can now make amends, but I think that one day I might be able to get away with. I had best not get used to it, though.

We had not long arrived back from my failed visit to the physiotherapist when the local surgery called. They had received a letter from the hospital providing information that I had been referred to a local physiotherapist and requesting a blood test. The very pleasant lady acknowledged that I already had an appointment for next Wednesday (at least she knew what day it was) and wondered if I would find it convenient to coordinate the stitch removing with the blood letting.

I was thinking that one may inadvertently follow the other and could they not just mop up after the stitch removing and use that. Disappointingly, I was assured that the blood letting would almost certainly need to be a separate procedure. I said it would be ideal to combine the two and one would take my mind off the other. Apparently, that would not be possible, but she could organise a separate event ten minutes before the other. I had intended to telephone regarding the bloods but was

beaten to it. I commended the lady on the clinic's proactivity, which was most refreshing.

We will make another attempt at the physiotherapy tomorrow provided I do not need psychotherapy first.

November 13th – Thursday

Ground hog day, at least the morning was. For some reason there seemed to be less available time for mucking about, and it was a bit of a rush in the end to get out of the door. With the outside steps less of an unknown quantity, I fair near skipped down them and getting into the truck is a thing of elegance and grace.

I had very little confidence that the trip to the West Cornwall physiotherapist would be of much use at all. After all, it was of very little use yesterday, although I can see how that might have had something to do with me and not them. Even arriving on the correct day, it took an awful lot of self-restraint to maintain an open mind.

The session was as unremarkable as I imagined it to be, but I have been assigned a very pleasant lady who is clearly very experienced at her job. I handed her the sheet of exercises I had been given by the hospital, in fact she had asked for it. She had no comment good or bad to pass on reading it and proceeded to ask some relevant questions on how it felt, how I found doing the exercises and the medication I had been taking.

She then progressed to seeing how I was standing and had me perform some tricks like rolling over and begging, all of which she seemed quite satisfied with. The only thing she found not to her satisfaction was the straightening of my leg. It is the one part that I struggle with, getting it to lie flat no matter how many knee hangs that I do. She suggested another exercise that I could do involving the use of another chair, a sack of flour and a leather strap. I will not go into details, dear reader, in case anyone is of nervous disposition. I shall work on it discretely.

Our refrigeration company had responded to my request for a new freezer with a shortlist of five including the two that I had suggested previously, which was good work. One I discounted straight away because of the issues we had with the dairy fridge of the same make. Another, a Turkish brand, was the most expensive and looked like one of Dr Who's unlikely monsters. I would be afeared of going into the store room alone with that sitting there.

It came back to the two I had previously short listed. Having reviewed my preference, I decided that we should probably opt for the more expensive of the two for a number of reasons not least, buy cheap, buy twice. There was also the matter of number of shelves, which you may think a minor thing but is really quite crucial to maximising capacity. I have asked for clarification as the number of shelves our company has

listed differs from that from the models I have seen online. They have also got the product model code wrong, which might be the crux of the issue. We await developments.

No sooner had we returned from Penzance than the Missus ran off to The Farm. Carols in the Cove is pressing, along with the new grotto and decorations, hurriedly packed away last season, need to be sorted and organised. I double checked the dimensions of the freezer while I was still downstairs and while the Missus wrapped a package to be sent off. She then went off with the girls, bravely leaving me to negotiate the steps by myself, alone and without the aid of a net. I survived, I should let you know, but I will have to set up a base camp for future attempts.

After a brief breakfast that I managed to consume in a timely manner, I set to with some administration tasks. A couple of bills had presented themselves that needed my attention, including one that I thought I had paid until the statement arrived yesterday. We also had the bill from the returned sale or return books that had been collected on Monday. The company may not be very sharp in responding to requests for information or further books, but they are spot on when it comes to issuing invoices. I shall attend to that one later.

Next up was the conundrum of getting a cup of tea from the kitchen to the living room, unspilt. I had considered using a vacuum flask, despite it leaving tea tasting like it had been vacuum flask, which should be unsurprising but probably worth the effort. I would have tried it too had extracting the vacuum flask from under the sink not itself been a too much of an effort.

I had already made the tea in a mug by this time, thus introducing some urgency into finding a suitable solution. I tried wrapping cling film across the top of the mug but it split too easily, so I resorted to using our large, plastic measuring jug that the tea could slosh around in without ending on the carpet. It was idea. The tea was not long enough in the plastic jug for it to take on the taste of the plastic and the jug was easily large enough to not permit any spillage.

The Missus arrived back at the same time as our single visitor of the day, our friend from slightly over the hill behind us. He had been waiting for a free slot in my busy social diary and ventured that he might be lucky today, which he indeed was. We had a convivial twenty minutes and when he left, I had a couple of television series to add to my list of none to have a geek at. I watch so very little television it is good to have a recommendation, so that I do not waste my time on watching something awful.

The rest of the afternoon dissolved into a cycle of exercise, book reading and social media watching, which can be entertaining at times. Later, I also spent a little time organising the roles for the Lifeboat launch due in the evening.

As I spent less time at the station, the Missus is starting to fill the gap. Should I be concerned that there is some sort of take-over bid going on, I wonder. She will spend increasing amounts of time between now and Christmas at the station or involved in projects connected with it. The Christmas lights will be going up on December 1st almost certainly alongside the trees and the decorations. Since that is only a little over a fortnight away, it is highly unlikely that I will be able to lend a hand. The Missus will be delighted at this because 'I only get in the way' and I shall be mortified that she will be lifting heavy things and working all hours because she will not let anyone else help. It will, of course, look the business at the end.

There was a good attendance for the evening Lifeboat launch. My selection for head launcher of the day drew some criticism from the head launcher of the day because it has started raining. He imagined that I had chosen him especially. Had I been head launcher of the day I definitely would have nominated him to be head launcher of the day and elected myself winchman. As it was, the appointment was inadvertent, honest guv. I did not dwell to watch the launch but when the boat returned an hour or so later, the head launcher of the day disguised his chagrin and performed what was clearly a textbook recovery up the long slip in wet conditions. I have not asked how the deployment of the washing up liquid went. I shall wait until head launcher of the day is talking to me again. We are, after all, a very vindictive, very excellent Shore Crew.

November 14th – Friday

It looked the least inspiring day of the week when I took a geek through the front windows of the flat today. I was rather glad that the appointment in town was yesterday. I was also rather glad I was not taking the girls out first thing, but I did feel sorry for the Missus who is suffering from a particularly bad cold currently. She has passed it on to me, but I think that the smorgasbord of drugs I am consuming are holding the worse effect of it at bay.

With another tedious day in prospect, I decided that I would have a go at the much maligned council consultation regarding dogs on beaches during the summer months. You may already know, dear reader, that our beach is subject to a public space control order that restricts access to the beach for dogs during summer months to certain hours of the day. You may be aware, dear reader, but it would appear that you are probably the only one given the number of dogs on the beach that we see during the season. I am told that for all the hundreds of incursions, just one person has been prosecuted for flaunting the rules here. It is hardly a deterrent, now is it.

I am of the opinion that the hours of restriction are very fair but because the big beach is an 'award beach' the restrictions bite in the middle of May rather than the beginning of July for other controlled beaches. There really is no need to start earlier here as the beach does not get busy until later in the season. I had hoped that the survey would allow the flexibility for me to convey that and, curiously, it did. The

survey then departed from asking questions about beaches and dogs to enquiring about my gender, the gender I would most like to be, my ethnicity, my inside leg measurement and the flavour ice cream I most favoured. It did not ask the latter, but it might as well have done as I could see no relevance at all between dog beaches and the other questions asked at all. Would it make any difference at all to the decision making if it were discovered that the overwhelming majority of people who wanted to relax restrictions were black grannies over 70 years of age who identified as being grandpas. Most odd.

I might have concluded at that juncture that my excitement for the day had reached its apex but, as luck would have it, we received a communique from our International Correspondent in Tasmania, quite a long way south of Camborne. Tasmania is, I hesitate to write 'enjoying', its late spring, because he tells me the weather has been anything but spring-like. The temperature has been see-sawing between 26 degrees one day and 14 degrees the next and followed by snow the day after. The wind, too, has been erratic with gales to cyclonic which has prevented our correspondent from walking his dogs in the woods and down to the beach.

Along with the messed up weather, the Southern Lights, the Aurora Australis, are particularly distinct. We are informed that colours are so bright that they can be seen through the clouds, so clearly nature is good enough to provide a distraction as well as all the weird stuff.

We had an altogether lazy and indifferent morning. There was a bit more administration to do and the hourly performing of stupendous feats of exercise plus another new one to come to grips with. It is a rather good fun, as I am sure you can imagine.

I had checked the weather forecast for the day and noted that the rain was set in from dawn to dusk and very likely beyond. So, early in the afternoon, after the rain stopped completely and the skies cleared - well, they did not exactly clear but the cloud looked very unrain-like to me - I slipped on a jacket and my brave face and headed out with the Missus and the girls for a stroll.

They headed off to the beach, so I watched them go and stayed on the flat to take some air and introduce the new knee to some of its surroundings. No one has said that slopes are not to be attempted, I rather just assumed. The problem is, when will I know that slopes can be attempted and will I discover that having successfully negotiated a downward slope, subsequently discover that an upward slope is beyond my capability. That would leave me in a bit of a pickle. I decided that since it was my first venture out, perhaps I should not risk it.

We walked to the end of the Harbour car park and came back again. It had crossed my mind to head up the slope and back down Coastguard Row, which is an unmade lane, but discretion got the better part of me being a nincompoop, and I turned

around and headed back. The knee ached a little after I got back and could see how a little further might have been inadvisable on a first excursion.

Unsurprisingly, the Harbour car park was almost empty. Any cars at this time of year try and squeeze into the private area at the far end but even that did not look all that full. The sea state had returned to calm and attracted some of the cold water swimming lot back into the Harbour where the tide was on the way out. It was a couple of hours after high water and there was enough beach for the girls to charge around and bark at the lone swimmer in the water. They continued to charge about after they got back had had been hair dried dry again.

On the way back I had stopped by the shop for provisions. While I was there a bottle shaped parcel arrived, which was very exciting. I had already received a rather nice bottle of whisky from one of our departing neighbours from up the back, thank you very much, and I suspect that this was another from the Aged Parent, although I was unable to open it while I was there to find out. That will have to be a surprise for another day. I will have to have my knee replaced more often.

That, it seemed, was the sum total of our excitement for the day. Having settled back in the flat it was back to the usual round of exercise, rest and reading. Hopefully, I will be able to stand up for longer periods as the days roll on now, which will open the door to more interesting activities. I have sat on my behind now for nearly two weeks and have managed better than I expected; I have not yet been inclined to climb any walls. However, I feel the time is almost nigh and my reserve of calm and sedate is rapidly depleting. Look out.

November 15th – Saturday

The girls woke me up so that I could wake up the Missus so that she could take them out first thing. I get reveille at around seven o'clock when ABH kicks in the bedroom door and storms in. If she were allowed thunder flashes, I am sure she would use one. Sometimes she will be satisfied with making sure I am awake and return to her own bed for a while more, sometimes she hangs out with me for a while first and sometimes there is no let up until I physically get out of bed. Even then she will sometimes go back to sleep again. At least there is variety in there and we never know what we will get from morning to morning. It will be a revelation when, as Vera Lynn promised, I will sleep in my own little bed again – except my name is not Johnny.

I cannot help but be grateful. It was the most excitement that I would have all morning, which is why I dedicated a whole paragraph to it. The weekdays have been dull enough and I could not help but think that the weekend with its lack of supplier interaction would be even worse.

Just because suppliers are not talking to me this weekend does not mean that I could not speak to them. We have a new supplier. Well, a new direct supplier; we

have been selling their products for years. The Missus met with a representative of the company, St Ives Brewery, while I was at the gymnasium before we closed – oh, how I miss the gymnasium. She subsequently sent a price list through of not only their products but also additional products that their delivery service would supply.

When I first had a look at it, the prices seemed that it would cost more for St Ives Brewery to supply their own beer than I could get it from a third party. After the sales lady reminded me that I had not sent a reply to her message, I thought that I had better have another check. Second time around, having checked and updated the third party prices, St Ives Brewery delivery service would be slightly cheaper and therefore no reason not to use them. They can supply once a week, which, if we plan well, would be sufficient.

The reason why I mention it is that the very pleasant lady sent an account application form for me to complete. I do like a good form filling in the morning, makes the whole day seem worthwhile. I wondered, though, why anyone with any IT nous at all, and most people in business certainly do, would send any sort of form out in Word format when PDFs are much easier for the recipient to complete. It also required me to sign the form, which I am definitely not going to do electronically on a Word form – the electronic signature can be cut and pasted onto other documents. It was not great problem for me to convert it before I filled it out and sent it back, but it puzzled me more than a little.

While I was at it, I paid the local interest book invoice. I had thought to make them wait for it, but I really could not be bothered to be petty. It also means that I could file the invoice away in the invoice box. This reminded me that we have a box full of invoices in the shop still that will need to be brought up. The end of the VAT quarter is nearly upon us, and we should be considering doing all the inputting again. The Missus has done the last two quarters almost exclusively. My turn this quarter, I think.

For the rest of the day, I was monumentally lazy. I still got up almost hourly to execute my exercise regime which reminded me of something I discussed with the physiotherapist. I has asked about extending the amount of exercises and had seen on the papers I had been given, the use of a mini pedal exerciser. It was recommended for use after the initial six weeks. I did not mention that bit and my new lady said that it would be a good idea to start using it now.

The exercisers, come in varying designs up to hundreds of pounds but the basic ones are not very expensive at all. I used up some of my excess idle time in researching the best of the cheaper ones to purchase. I ended up going around in circles. Because they are very cheap, no one has wasted any time reviewing them and hence there is very little researching to be done. I selected one without any bells and whistles and it will arrive tomorrow. No doubt I will need another next week after the wheels fall off this one after a few days use.

The other excessively interesting thing I did today was reduce the amount of pain relief pills I was taking. Either the pain relief pills I was taking were supremely effective or I was taking too many as I have had hardly any pain at all, even from the outset. The codeine ran out last week, thank heaven, because it was awful stuff. It may have sheltered me from the worst of the initial discomfort but, my, what a price to pay.

I had initially replaced the codeine with ibuprofen for fear that I would suddenly hurt very much. When we attended our casualty care course, the instructor informed us that the ibuprofen forms an excellent platform for other pain killers and enhances their performance, which was an interesting soupçon. I had a continuing feeling of nausea which I could only attribute to the excess of pills, so decided on Friday to stop them. I was advised by two parties to reduce rather than stop suddenly. Apparently, it is no good feeling better all at once; it is much better to feel better slowly. Today, I cut the dose in half to no ill effect, and the only discomfort is while doing my exercises. I do not feel immediately half better - remember I cannot feel all better, all at once – as I have contracted the cold the Missus has been nursing all week.

Together, we make a right pair. Me with my feet up on one sofa and her coughing and spluttering in a blanket on the other when she is not taking the girls out, making tea, cooking meals or working on Carols in the Cove or Santy's Grotto. The imbalance is exceedingly unfair but at present, I can do little about it, although the little I can do, I try and do without falling over. I cannot help feeling that we will conclude this episode of our partnership with an awful lot of red ink on my side of the ledger.

I consoled myself by watching an excess of television in the latter part of the afternoon, more than I have watched in a very long time. I started watching a series, limited, fortunately, that had initially seemed worthwhile. By the time I discovered that it probably was not, I was far enough into it that I needed to watch through to the conclusion. To expedite that so that I could move onto something a bit more interesting, I watched two and a half episodes at once. It was exhausting.

To make matters worse, I feel the same about the book I am currently reading. It is not so bad that I would stop reading it completely and move on but continuing to the end feels a bit of a chore rather than a pleasure. I am not in the least invested in it or the characters, but it is well written, for which I should be grateful. The story is interminably slow going and it is a big book. I keep looking with trepidation and a certain disappointment at the position of my bookmark, the balance before and after it seemingly unchanging day by day no matter how much I read. Pages cannot be that thin, surely.

I am not an expert, but I rather fear that these are the constituent symptoms of an acute case of cabin fever. I shall keep an eye on it and consult my Boys' Own Book of Medical Signs, Symptoms, Diagnosis and How to Fix Them with

your Swiss Army Knife and Things You Find Under the Kitchen Sink.

November 16th – Sunday

If I was monumentally lazy yesterday, I had run out of superlatives to describe just how bone idle I was today. There was no administration to do, no suppliers to write to and no chores to undertake. I spent the lion's share of the day on the sofa with my feet up pausing only to execute some exercises here and there through the day. That was it, well, almost.

It was not as if it was hacking down with rain outside that prevented perhaps a couple of outside excursions. The weather was unremarkable, a brighter side of grey with an even more unremarkable waveless sea to look out upon. I was even unsure about that because from the sofa I can only see the furthest part of the bay from North Rocks to Cape Cornwall. I know that there was not a storm raging on the bits I could not see because I did spend a little time at my desk from where I could see a lot more.

Rather encouragingly, we had a purchase placed on our online shop. That is the one you see next to The Diary button on the main page of the website, dear reader. Someone had found it and purchased a hooded sweatshirt. They had sent a message earlier asking if the garment had any writing on the back, like the t-shirts do. Only moments after I had sent a message back confirming that the hooded sweatshirts only have a logo over the left breast, an order appeared on the website.

The customer also ordered a leather key fob of which I had a recollection that we were completely out of stock. It was an oversight, failing to remove the missing item from the website. I am now faced with having to make a grovelling apology and also discover how to make a partial refund via the payment software. Possibly the simplest way is to send an appropriate number of first class stamps in with the parcel, although a refund would be more professional. Realising I was out of stock and updating the website sooner would, however, been more professional still.

That had consumed almost ten minutes of my day, although the subsequent concern about letting a customer down persisted much longer. This left me with the prospect of watching the end of the series that I did not really want to watch, reading the book I could have done without starting or browsing through some social media, which I had to admit is becoming increasingly tedious.

Towards the end of the open season, I had subscribed to the TicTok platform merely to pass the time between customers in the shop. For those of you unfamiliar with it, the facility allows anyone to record a few minutes of video and post it so that anyone else can watch it. Upon signing up, I was asked which categories I was interested in, such as humour, animals, history, news, etcetera. Subsequently, I have been opening the app to be entertained with clips of people doing humorous things, dogs

performing amusing stunts and various humans expounding upon any subject from politics to food consumption, some good and some downright awful.

Having been caught in the act by one of the staff from the OS and explained that I was looking at TicTok he said that time for me would no longer exist. He was right. Opening the app with the intent of watching a few clips it is easy to close it an hour later without noticing the passage of time. What makes it even worse is that the content is completely superficial, subjective nonsense. I come away not having learnt anything of value at all nor collected any information of use or interest outside of the moment it was viewed. I shall no doubt watch some more later.

It was well into the afternoon when I eventually felt that I needed to get out more. Having spent almost the entirety of the day with my backside pinned to the sofa, a walk to the car park seemed almost like an expedition to the wilds of Borneo. Negotiating the stairs is now a matter of procedure. I had done it earlier to break the monotony but only to drop down to the shop.

My intention was to call the Aged Parent later in the morning. Before I did so, I wanted to make sure that the parcel that had arrived earlier in the week was indeed the bottle of whisky that I thought it was and that it was from the Aged Parent. The fact that it was a bottle of whisky was in little doubt, especially after I had opened the parcel. Who it was from might have remained a mystery given that there was no sender information in the package. It was only the name of the whisky that gave it away. Only he and I know that the whisky delivered is one of my favourites.

I would share the name of it with you dear reader, but then it might look like I was entreating you to send me one too, and I wish to avoid that, obviously. Or you might just feel compelled to send me a bottle anyway and then I would have the embarrassment of not knowing which one of you it was who sent it. Of course, if I received two bottles, despite being doubly embarrassed, I would at least be able to thank you both – unless one of you sent two bottles. Oh, calamity.

While I was down in the shop, I decided that it would be worthwhile to have a look to see if we had any leather key fobs salted away that I had forgotten about. There was only one place that they would be and having rooted around in the draw for a few minutes, found a last remaining packet of them. What a relief.

I had almost left my little perambulation too late. The gloom outside was starting to gather but I think much of that was due to some dark clouds floating in from the west. They glowered a bit and I had a quick peek at the rain radar, now fully operational again. Assuring myself that I was not in any danger of getting a soaking, I stepped out on what is now becoming a usual circuit to the end of the car park and back.

There are precious few people about at this time of year and even fewer at gone four o'clock on a Sunday. However, I did manage to bump into a couple of acquaintances from the locality, and we enjoyed a brief chat. Subject of the day is unsurprisingly

knee orientated. I told them that I could thoroughly recommend total knee replacement even if they had no need for it, such a jolly venture that it is. Other than the excessive consumption of drugs, I can find nothing to say against it.

You will be pleased to know, dear reader, that I did indeed manage to conclude watching the television series that I wished I had not started watching. There was nothing particularly wrong with it – a little over-long, perhaps – it just did not enthral me very much. I still have the book to read and the rate that is going, I will still have it this time next week. It is a tough life all this recuperating.

November 17th – Monday

Daylight arrived alongside a pretty little morning, which was a pleasant surprise. There were patches of blue here and there and substantially less grey altogether. Before long, sun was lighting up parts of the beach for the lone couple who had decided to conquer it all, with little in the way of opposition. At this time of the year, good weather comes at a price: it was bleddy cold.

I am sure that the day would have been quite perfect, apart from it being a tad chilly, had I not been advised in the middle of it by our doctor's surgery that I had missed both my appointments for blood letting and having my stitches removed. They were very good about it, I must say. I can only imagine that my head is in some turmoil to confuse appointments two weeks running. I was convinced that it was on Wednesday. Someone, at some point mentioned Wednesday, I am sure of it.

Even without the appointment it was something of a manic morning and one I was not quite fit for. There were some chores to complete such as putting out the rubbish for a bin collection that might start, we are warned, from seven o'clock in the morning. The much maligned council are at pains to warn us that should we fail in this endeavour our waste may not be collected. The lorries even have CCTV fitted, so that should we complain that our waste collection has been missed, they can check that our waste was in the prescribed position at the time the lorry arrived.

Eager to comply, I collated the rubbish from the various litter bins around the flat and put them in the kitchen's big refuse sack. I put this by the front door so that the Missus could take it down the steps – the only bit I could not do quickly – and put it in the wheelie bin, having first taken off the locking strap. She duly took the bag down after returning from walking the girls – casting caution to the winds at quarter to eight o'clock – and promptly returned telling me that she could not unlock the padlock that holds the locking strap in place. Without this device in place, our wheelie bin would be full of litter in hours – maybe not at this time of the year, but in summer, certainly.

I toggled up and went down to investigate. This took some time, not because it was a lengthy operation to unlock the bin but merely the component parts of getting me and my new knee down the steps. I have also noticed that the colder it is, the more effort

that is required. A little easing oil later – for the lock, not my knee - the bin was open, and our solitary refuse sack was in the proper place for collection.

I had noticed that over the last few months, our waste collections have been getting later and later. Today, the service did not arrive until late in the afternoon, rendering my early morning effort to comply with the much maligned council dictate, utterly pointless. It also means that our bin is open to potential abuse for much longer and during the busier part of the day, which is irritating.

It seems ridiculous that I required a rest after such a simple task but, nevertheless, I did. Getting up, sitting down, walking to the kitchen and, especially, going outside seem to require so much extra effort. Not only that but I seem to have far smaller reserves of energy with which to execute the tasks. Some of it will be my second hand cold, I assume, the rest, who knows. I will continue to rail against it.

I had barely recovered from my labours when the Missus announced that she would be going to The Farm presently. I declined the invitation but was alerted to the fact that the items purchased on the online shop yesterday needed to be wrapped, addressed and despatched. This required a second trip to the foot of our stairs and a visit to the shop.

This time, my descent had the additional burden of taking my laptop with me which is required so that I could print address labels for the parcel to be sent. It was only when I got into the shop and connected the laptop to the label printer that it occurred to me that I had not brought my spectacles with me. I also had not brought my mobile telephone with me so that I could not request that the Missus bring them hither or indeed throw them at me for being so daft. I got around it by using a pair of the reading glasses that we offer for sale in the shop.

On entering the shop, I had left the first electric sliding door in The Cove open, largely because I was too idle to close it behind me. When I had come down, the street was empty, so naturally I had three callers in the short time I was there enquiring if we were open.

Having prepared the parcel, complete with leather key fob, I then had to take the ensemble back upstairs again. As you can imagine, dear reader, such extreme efforts required an even longer period of recovery during which I might possibly have dozed off for a moment or two. It must have been for my sins that I was prevented from snoozing too long as that is when the surgery called.

After I had woken again, I felt much revived and a cup of tea had me back on my feet again, metaphorically speaking. Having not learnt my lesson that two trips downstairs in the cold had nearly wiped me out for the day, I thought that heading off to The Farm would be a jolly wheeze and told the Missus that I would tag along.

I was installed in the cabin while the Missus headed to the barn to sort out even more Christmas decorations. The girls, let loose, did their own thing of chasing each other all over the field, between the buildings and into the swimming pool, at least once. I know this because they crashed into the cabin, soaking wet and looking for a lap to sit on, which unsurprisingly they did not find. I was about to pen that there is very little trouble that they can get into at The Farm. This is not true. There is all sorts of trouble that they can get into at The Farm but somehow, they seem to avoid it. They are very content to play with each other and BB seems inseparable from ABH, which is a very good thing.

I rather wished that I had taken my book. The Missus was willing to turn back and get it, but I demurred. Instead, I looked at my TicTok and Twitter accounts and time just flew by.

The Farm has not get fallen into winter ruin. The Missus' efforts at weed control appear to have been entirely successful and there is very little sign of incursion around the greenhouse or between the pea and bean enclosures. The work she had put in up there has been noteworthy indeed. Ordinarily, at this time of the year we would be making plans for improvements and doing a bit of weed clearance from other areas. There were no plans for another huge greenhouse, in fact no plans at all due to me having my dickie knee undickied. Had I not, we would have been converting the composting shed into a bee shed for all the bee paraphernalia. It is still our intention to start bee keeping again, but heaven knows how the Missus will fit that in with everything else.

Instead, I spent my time there with my feet up in the cabin, occasionally staring out of the window and watching the girls play. It was however a welcome change of scenery, and the cabin was reasonably warm against the cold outside. We did an excellent job of insulating it and until last year it was better insulated than the flat. Because it is two thirds' windows, it benefits greatly from solar gain even in the depth of winter.

I have no idea how long we were there. We did not go up until two o'clock and it starts getting gloomy at four o'clock, so it cannot have been that long. It was entirely pleasant even if I only sat there and did nothing with my feet up. Quite what happened during those hours and whether The Farm has some force of nature emanating from it, who can say, but when I returned home, I could almost walk normally only using the sticks for occasional balance.

I shall keep that under my hat because the last thing the Missus would want is the place being turned into some sort of secular Cornish Lourdes. On the other hand, I am seeing in my mind's eye, stalls selling miniature crutches that can be symbolically thrown away and another selling little bags of The Farm healing earth at a fiver. I think, dear reader, the bee shed might be on hold for the foreseeable future. I have a plan.

November 18th – Tuesday

You will be pleased to know, dear reader, that I did indeed remember to go to the surgery today to have my stitches removed. I shall not descend into too much detail – I do have full colour photographs, by the way – but will comment that it was very straightforward and reasonably painless. I am sure that the news is much relief to you that I did not suffer too greatly but I can assure you that it was not half the relief I felt.

The day had started out cold and grey, which made it seem so much colder. It was also wet and was raining when I ventured downstairs on an errand even before the household was properly awake. Halfway through the morning, there were expanses of blue sky here and there and a few surfers trying their luck close in, suggesting that there were a few waves about today. While none of them showed up on the rain radar, there were also showers blowing through every now and then. Did I mention it was cold.

I had dispensed with little boys' trousers from yesterday when we went up to The Farm. I felt it was time and given that I am idling the days away, I am not generating any internal warmth. I reverted today to make it easier at the surgery. They have heating on in there, so I only suffered getting in and out of the truck at both ends of the journey.

There is a very jolly lady who sometimes does my birthday bloods, and it was she who called for me when I arrived. I asked if she was unstitching me or doing my bloods and she told me that she was doing both. The dressing that I had stuck on after the surgery had lasted very well though all the exercise punishment I had given it without budging. Nevertheless, it came off very easily. It was the Missus who has asked for the full technicolour photographs, so I did not have a good look at the scar until I had attended to her request. I have to say, it is a very ragged line. Perhaps the surgeon's hands were still vibrating from the use of the power tools he was wielding or maybe he had spent the previous night on the toot.

I had heard the term 'staples' used several times in relation to closing wounds but had no idea that it was a literal term. Up until a fortnight ago on Monday, I had never required any wounds closed in any manner, let alone with a stationery item. The nurse, with hands as steady as a drunk on a tightrope, removed them with a very small pair of pliers. She did not even have to poke her tongue out while she was doing it. Sheer professionalism. I did ask her how many staples there were but subsequently forgot the exact number. I think there were 32 or 36 in all.

The hospital had supplied a new dressing to replace the one removed. The nurse said that she would assess the wound first as I may not need to replace it. When it came to it, however, she told me that there were still some 'open bits' and I would need the dressing for a few more days. In terms of care, once removed, I should use Vaseline on the scar to keep it moist. The plan is that I will remove it on Friday at

home. We segued into blood-letting almost seamlessly. It was almost a pleasure after the nervous anticipation of the staple removal. I should know presently if the iron I was missing post-surgery is restored or if I should continue with eating rusty bicycles.

St Just is quite a metropolis but on a small scale. All you might want related to food is largely available in quite a compact area. Parked in the square after the main event, the Missus was able to pick and choose from an excellent butcher shop, grocery and national chain food shop. I might have been inclined to be uncooperative and avoid the national food chain store in favour of the independent grocery store, but the Missus is a glutton for punishment.

The Missus was keen to go to The Farm again but as we descended the hill from St Just there were showers sweeping in across the bay. They were not very heavy and did not even show on the rain radar but were sufficient to put the Missus off her visit. Instead, she took the girls to the Harbour beach, and we settled in for another more sedate afternoon in the flat.

I failed to mention yesterday that there was a Lifeboat training exercise in the evening. It went on some, too. Two mechanics were being passed out, one yesterday and another today. Yesterday, was an evening exercise and well attended, culminating in a textbook recovery up the long slip in benign conditions. Today, to meet the needs of the examiners, the boat launched at eleven o'clock and was not, understandably, so well attended. On the shore side we just about managed to meet minimum requirements with the kind assistance of one of the spare Boat Crew. We were back in the flat by the time the boat returned with a newly passed out mechanic on board. I watched with unconcerned interest as our skeleton crew executed what was clearly a textbook recovery up the short slip in fair conditions. We are, after all, a very consistent, very excellent Shore Crew.

Addendum: I have just recalled, dear reader, that I did once, long ago require a stitch for a wound I sustained while attempting to cut my hair with a razor blade – please, do not ask. It required one stitch. Of course, in those days they used an old darning needle and a length of cotton extracted from a loose hem. I still carry the scar today.

Also, the dressing provided by the hospital to replace the one removed appears to be substandard. I am not surprised; I was, after all, an interloper in a private hospital. By the evening it was falling off and had to be secured with sticking plaster. It only has to last until Friday, so I am unconcerned.

November 19th – Wednesday

I had heard the wind moaning in the eaves at several points during the night. It took several moments to recognise what it was because first, I was not in our usual bedroom – still – and secondly, we have not had a bit of wind for enough days to have forgotten what it sounded like. It sounded quite feisty.

The girls, who had the Missus up during the early hours, decided to stay in bed this morning and gave me a free pass until eight o'clock. I was awake anyway, but it was warmer in bed than it was out, so I decided to stay put until ABH eventually came to get me up.

First, I went to survey the scene through our front room windows. The sea was a choppy mess with a sizeable swell rolling in and the wind, clearly coming in from the northwest, was whipping the tops of the waves into a myriad of white horses right across the bay and beyond. There was plenty of cloud but also some gaps where blue sky could be seen, glimpses of what we could have had instead. Even in the front room with our all new, superefficient insulation, it was bleddy cold, much to do with us keeping the window of our bedroom open in all weathers I suppose.

Throughout the day, the windows were lashed by sharp showers backed by the 40 miles per hour winds throwing hail against them. While most unwelcome, especially if you were out in it, which for the record I had no intention of being, it would ensure that our windows were crystal clear until the next dry wind threw salt at them.

One of the benefits of having clean windows is that it was abundantly clear that the wheelie bin lying in the gutter on the other side of the road was ours. It had been tied to our big, commercial bin and had survived the night. It would have survived the day too had our commercial bin collection man not unleased it to empty the bin and failed to tie it back up again. Fair play, he is on a schedule and probably not best pleased that he had to spend time untying it in the first place. Just once, with the wind howling about him he might have thought to just put a simple knot on it. I will not lose sleep over it.

With the Missus still poorly, I was loathed to call her to address the matter and to let the girls out who did not at that moment need letting out. Therefore, I set to with toggging up to go fetch it myself.

My intention was that I would wear my shorts and several layers on top. The choice of shorts was primarily to avoid getting a pair of big boy trousers wet. The alternative would be to seek out my full metal jacket waterproofs which, for just collecting a bin, seemed an awful faff. My deliberations were interrupted by the sounds of the Missus getting out of bed. She would be very shortly taking the girls for a spin and thus would be able to retrieve the bin on the way back. As luck would have it, our esteemed Coxswain resolved the problem by dragging it back into place on his way to the Lifeboat station. All it required now was to be tied to the big bin again. The Missus did that on the way out because it had fallen over again.

I am very sorry, dear reader, if you were expecting tales of derring do in the high winds and lashing hail in today's Diary. I very firmly resolved to stay indoors today. The Missus on the other hand could not. Perhaps I should write her story as proxy for my utter cowardice.

Not long after she got up, I bullied her into calling the doctor to do something about her continuing cough and cold. It had been a couple of weeks at least and was unlikely to cure itself. Quite surprisingly, after registering for an appointment using the online triage system and do so late in the morning, she had a call back from the doctor by midday. The gates open at half past seven o'clock and by quarter to eight o'clock all appointments are usually taken. She was prescribed antibiotics over the telephone which she was to collect from the surgery in the afternoon.

Unfortunately, she also had the girls to take out.

You might have noticed, dear reader, during the wheelie bin adventure, that we are still having collections made of our commercial waste. This is sort of intentional. I could not curtail the collection for the first week as I fully expected to be in hospital and in our haste to leave, we had not emptied the bins in the shop nor tossed out the out of date produce. I had decided to leave it an extra week, which was last week, and then we had the issue with the freezer. This had prevented the Missus from clearing the other fridges and freezers in the shop as she had nowhere to put the decanted goods. The process would also likely generate some waste, which would need to be put out in the bin, and therefore collected. While today's collection was probably wasted, we hope that next week's will not be.

Yesterday, having had no response to my message seeking to clarify the freezer model and the number of shelves, I called our freezer company. The salesman had clearly not received my message, so I quickly apprised him of our decision based on him clarifying that our chosen freezer did indeed have six shelves rather than five. By end of business day, actually a good bit beyond, he had furnished me with a new quote for the correct item and verified the number of shelves.

I had already agreed with him that if the conditions were met, he would raise an invoice for the freezer, the installation and collection of the old one which we would pay on receipt. One last unexpected hurdle, the fact that it also came in stainless steel at £100 more, resolved, I received and paid the invoice this morning. He will confirm the delivery date in due course.

To combat the monotony of the day, I opened the parcel containing the mini pedal exerciser. Contrary to the description that this is a device to exercise small pedals, it is actually a device for exercising my poorly exercised legs. It is small beer compared to the rowing machine that exercises rather more than my legs and to a greater degree, this machine will serve as an interim measure.

It is a very simple machine. It has a stand and an axle with pedals either side, similar to those on a bicycle but without the chain. In the middle is a screw that can be tightened and thus increase the resistance felt in operating the pedals. It is made in China where the manufacturers assume that all European people have very small feet. It is only possible to fit a foot under the strap that prevents a foot from sliding off

it is if it is unshod. I suspect that the only issue with this is that excessive use might lead to hard skin on the balls of the feet. I shall be wary.

The later afternoon and evening descended into what has become a display of abject idleness interspersed by exercise sessions, which I am feeling are becoming increasingly lightweight. Had spent the day labouring in the field – although today, we might have called a truce – I would have called it well-earned. Having spent a day when the sum total of my achievements was constructing a mini pedal exerciser, it feels like frustratingly futile waste of human existence. Things are going to have to change and soon.

November 20th – Thursday

I moved back into the marital bedroom last night, ours, in case you were wondering. With the windows open it is like an ice box in there and the summer duvets are still on the bed. Still, the girls seemed pleased to have me back. BB went to the lengths of having a little dance in celebration, on my damaged knee – twice.

The day looked much a much more handsome prospect today. Big cumulus clouds dominated the sky but there were bigger bits of blue and the sun was taking full advantage. Judging from the temperature in the bedroom, it was still just as cold outside. I had heard the wind, recognising it instantly from our own bedroom this time, howling a bit in the night. When I checked halfway through the morning, it was much diminished on yesterday.

The swell in the bay had also almost disappeared, although the wind was still flecking white caps on the waves that were there, right across the bay. The beach looked resplendent in all the brightness but just as empty as it had the day before. When I looked in the late morning, a lone surfer was heading up the beach clasping he white surfboard under his arm. Had it not been for that, I might have missed him completely.

The good looking day inspired me to be a little more attentive to my exercise schedule than I had been of late. It is not as if I have missed any appointments but as I indicated yesterday, or was it the day before, it was beginning to seem a little too easy. The only exception to this is trying to straighten my leg fully, which is difficult and requires some special attention. So today, I decided to give the mini pedal exerciser a good run and since I imagined it would quite quickly become tedious, went to it with my book that I would rather not be reading.

It was quite difficult holding the book steady but without hardly noticing the time, fifteen minutes had passed by. I only intended to do ten. Never mind, the exercise seemed a bit more worthy that the small beer routine I had been assigned for the first six weeks and did the physiotherapist not give it her blessing. It was probably no more than an hour after the exercise that I began to feel the benefits of it: a knee that

was clearly quite unhappy with me. I had only just started getting myself around the flat without my sticks and now I was relying upon them again.

I assumed rest would probably fix the problem but, in the meanwhile, it was a brae bit sore. It was probably at the root of my decision to attend the Missus on her journey up to The Farm again. If I had thought that the Cornish Lourdes would do its thing again, I was sorely – in the truest sense – mistaken. I think in fact, it was getting worse. It certainly was not getting any better. I distracted myself by reading the book I did not want to read and awaited the time to return home and a little more comfort.

It was also colder in the cabin today. The sun had not done its job of warming it up or the breeze, despite being at the back of the cabin, must have inveigled itself inside somehow. Fortunately, we were not there for long. The Missus must have arranged her Christmas decorations and passed by the cabin without me noticing. The next I knew, she was emerging from the greenhouse with a bounty of cherry tomatoes, spring onions and tiny green peppers. I did not even know she was growing green peppers.

In the morning, a trip to The Farm would have been much more welcome, I think. By the afternoon, we had started seeing sporadic hail showers passing through and we had narrowly missed one getting into the truck. You will appreciate, of course, that getting into the truck is no five minute venture; it takes time to get me down the stairs and loaded up while the Missus runs around locking doors after me and carrying my baggage. We still missed the hail, then and up at The Farm.

Just before we left, ABH's local pal turned up for a run around. BB has never met the friend and was a little unsure but ABH's pal is a very friendly soul and included her in all the games. I had not seen our friend's arrival and my first knowledge of their presence was when the dog exploded into the cabin and onto my lap. The two dogs have been thick as thieves all summer but had not seen each other in a while. It showed.

On the way back, the Missus expressed her concern about the amount of time left to make ready for Carols in the Cove. There is only next week, and trees must be collected, the fencing along the railings put up, the scaffold poles to support the lights – more this year – need erecting and the trees, once in place, need decorating. The format this year is different with the church choir replaced with Pendeen Silver Band and a choir from the school, which is an added complication.

I have two appointments next week in town and another on the following Monday. I think, for the first time ever, she is going to have to delegate and rely on others to help, which she will hate. The boys at the station will do anything for her, if they are allowed. I have suggested that she allow them.

Our evening, should I need to explain, was, once again, sedate. For some added jollity, I applied the ice jacket to my knee fed from an elevated bucket, which was very effective. Just the thing on what was doing a pretty good impression of a winter's evening.

November 21st – Friday

At last – it had only been a couple of days – the northwest wind abated. It had its swansong in the middle of the night, and suddenly dropped to 5 to seven miles per hour and all the way around to the southeast where, even if it were stronger, it would not bother us too much. I had stared up through the skylight last night at a sky full of stars. Alright, that was a supposition as I could only see a window's worth of sky.

The view out of the front window this morning was much the same as yesterday but seemingly a lot brighter. If we had enjoyed clear skies last night, they had been superseded by a sky with quite a bit of cloud. It was likely because we were under a ridge of high pressure all day, but it was not set to last.

There were more people on the beach today that I had noticed in a while. Whether that was because I had not noticed them previously or they were not there to notice, will forever be a mystery to me. Whatever the case, it looked a splendid day to be out walking the beach and I am rather hoping that it will not be very long before I can do that very thing myself.

What is most unlikely that I will be doing is cruising the placid waters of the bay on a powered hydrofoil board, or eFoil. The exponent, who was gliding with apparently effortless grace across the inshore area of the beach, made it look so easy. Having born witness to a local chap who took it up, the practise appears to be anything but easy and there is nothing less about the effort. It was quite mesmerising to watch.

On more than one occasion I have mentioned the book that I am currently reading. I have suggested that I would rather not be reading it because it is long and tedious. I keep waiting for something to happen and, so far, halfway in, nothing of note has happened at all. The other reader wrote to me today and asked, quite reasonably, why I was persisting with it. It was a very good question. Really, I am not very sure. Perhaps I am still holding out hope that something does happen and, more than that, I have become invested in the characters and want to see what happens to them. If what happened to them happened a bit sooner, I might have been more encouraged to stay with it.

The book puts me in mind of Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, which I was forced to read if I wanted any chance of passing my English 'A' Level. Indeed, it is very similar, set around 60 years after the time of Becky Sharp but the protagonist in the current book is a girl of easy virtue who manipulates herself into the world of her benefactor. At 832 pages of fine print, it is probably longer than *Vanity Fair* but not quite as long as

Cove Diary 2. Now there is a book of substance – and things happen in that – and they are not made up, well, not entirely.

I suggested in my reply to the other reader that even reading the last chapter of the book may not reveal sufficient detail to neatly tie up the loose ends and unregretfully put the tome aside. However, having turned to the last page to see the page number, I found myself reading extracts over the last 100 pages to try and piece together the final episodes of each of the characters. It worked. I am satisfied and can now put the dreadful – although it was rather good, just not my thing – book to rest.

Today, was a red-letter day. Not just for terminating a book read but also for a large step forward in my return to what passes for normality in the household: I had a shower today. It was my first for nearly three weeks. I should stress, dear reader, that I had, in the intervening period, not been entirely stranger to personal hygiene; there are more ways of keeping clean, just maybe not as efficient.

I removed the second dressing, as advised, after the recommended period to reveal my car in all its glory. I think that now the cold snap is over, it might be time to slip back into little boy trousers for my walks abroad. Oh, what utter fun to watch the looks on the faces of passers-by as they at first doff their caps in greeting. Then, with eyes averted to my largely unclad legs, suddenly notice the raw scar, which looks every bit the sort of thing that may be found in Frankenstein movies. Oh, what a spiffing wheeze.

November 22nd – Saturday

My assessment of the morning from the near comfort of my bed was bleak. I came to this conclusion because I had been listening to the insistent heavy rain washing the skylight for a little while. There did not appear to be any let up and consequently assumed that these were not just passing showers. No stars to gaze up at, although the dim, early morning light would have probably made them invisible anyway.

It was the girls who decided that I should perhaps get up. Not they were going to. They do like to snuggle in, but this is accompanied by squirming, fidgeting and generally climbing over my supine form. There is only so much of this I can take, which they obviously know. The Missus slumbered on.

Not long into the morning, the rain ceased. It left us with a damp, grey and cold morning, although nowhere near as cold as it had been of late. By and by it brightened up, the heavy grey clouds slowly disappearing leaving quite a pleasant afternoon. It ended up a balmy eleven degrees, but the wind had gone around to the northwest again and was picking up speed making it feel much cooler.

The Missus took herself off to Tesmorburys in the early part of the afternoon. It might even have been late morning; I was not paying much attention. The girls sulked as

usual, and I intended to get on with a bit of research. The camera up at The Farm is playing up and will need to be replaced. Had I been fully fit, I would have taken it on myself, but that is futile thinking, and we cannot really afford to wait. I had tried to think of one of our friends who might be able to lend a hand but could not think of anyone with the relevant skills and I also did not want to put on them. While it would be a deal more expensive, I concluded that we would have to get in a company to sort it out.

Having thought more about it, if we were to get a company in to do it, we may as well go for a second camera that would cover the barn and potting shed previously known as greenhouse. The camera we started with a while back, also picked up a fair amount of wildlife milling about, especially at night. The newer more intelligent cameras only alert when the form they are seeing is human and the Missus would dearly like for them to alert on wildlife once again.

There is one company not too far off that purports to do everything CCTV orientated, so I thought to make enquiries with them. I was going to do it yesterday but thought that I would set out the situation and our requirements on paper first to give them a background before I called.

I have moved the shop laptop upstairs, so that I can do some work with my legs up. This is probably less important now as my leg is deflating day by day and the danger of clotting recedes. The only problem with it is as soon as I put the laptop on my lap and sometimes before I think of doing it, ABH jumps onto my lap first. In fact, she has just done so now, and I have only been typing a moment. She is not to be denied and makes her displeasure obvious or pesters me until I take the laptop off my lap.

After she dismounts, I will leave it a beat or two before recommencing my work just in case she comes back. Unfortunately, she too leaves it a beat or three and comes back just after I started again what I was doing before she interrupted me. Worse still, if she decides that she is not coming back, BB will consider it her right to be next. This time there is no polite grumbling or pestering, she simply steps onto the keyboard and stays there.

I still have not finished the paper.

It might have been prudent to use the time given me by the Missus' decision to go up to The Farm. Naturally, she went with the girls, but I decided to stay home this time. I am sure they had a splendid time. That was apparent when they returned a couple of hours later with muddy legs and paws, forcing my laptop off my lap once again.

While they were gone, I took myself off for a walk out to the end of The Cove. This was when I discovered that it was breezy and chilly, but the fresh air did me the power of good. On the three previous occasions I have been out, I have come across people I know and have stopped for a chat. The last time it was a regular

visitor staying a few doors down and today I encountered the Highly Professional Craftsperson and family as they returned from the OS.

It is probably not the weather to be stopping for extended conversations at the roadside, but we were all suitably dressed. They informed me that the OS has pulled up its bootstraps somewhat and improved its service, which, by all reports – and I mean all – was lamentable. The opening of the Surf Lodge at the far end of the car park, from where I have had nothing but positive comment, has obviously had a beneficial effect. It is a shame that it took such a kick in the backside to spur the OS into improvement, but I look forward to spending less of my time in the shop fielding complaints about the place.

We could play a game of guess how I spent my evening, dear reader, but I suspect it would be almost as tedious a pastime as actually doing what I did in the evening which was three fifths and five eighths of not a great deal. That would not be so bad had I not spent the entire day doing much the same. How are you still here, dear reader. I admire your tenacity or faith that it can only get better. You *are* still here, dear reader? I said ... hello, hello. Dear reader?

November 23rd – Sunday

I am struggling to keep track of the days. Thank heavens I have a Diary. Mind, that it not an awful lot of use while lying in bed wondering what day of the week it is. I suppose it does not matter greatly at present. Still, it is good to know, just for my piece of mind that I have not forgotten to do something.

Once again, it had rained heavily in the night but by the time I dragged myself or was encouraged out of bed, it was brightening up quite nicely. There was a bit of noise that I took to be the forecast northwesterly gale of wind but which actually turned out to be the sea rushing in on the rocks at high water. The forecast northwesterly decided that it was going to be westerly during the day and not half as severe. By the afternoon, the forecast was amended to the northwesterly coming in the evening, instead. Nice to have something to look forward to.

Down on the big beach in the middle of the day, a host – alright, it is a relative term – of people decided to take to the sand for a bit of an amble around. Yesterday, there was a kite surfer down there plying his sport. A little later there was someone dangling from a similar looking canopy hanging over the cliffs. I idly wondered if a sudden and unexpected gust of wind had put our man from earlier up there. Today, however, it looked like everyone was having a rest and the waves were too washed out for playing with, anyway.

The Missus was feeling a brae bit poorer than on previous days first thing. On advice, she took herself off to West Cornwall minor injuries unit to see if she could get some better medicine. She was gone for several hours but not as many as we had expected. This left me to witness the pitiful sulking of two bereft girls who, in a

very orderly manner, took in it turns to lie on my lap and do their sulking there. BB is doing much better with the Missus' absence and does not whinge for more than a minute or two after she leaves. I cannot help but feel that there must be limit to how long a good whinging can go on for and, I am sure, that the Missus' absence must have exceeded it.

Quite obtusely, with the Missus feeling worse, I felt much better. I stepped out of bed this morning feeling like there was nothing much wrong with my knee at all. I have been walking around the flat without sticks for a while without too much issue, but this was in a different league. I would happily have turned down this leap in recovery if it meant that the Missus felt better but I am not sure it works like that. I would have stepped out for a run around the block, demonstrating lighter reliance on the crutches, but I could hardly leave the girls without either of us. I am still a way off taking them with me.

As Sunday's go, it was not our finest. Perhaps we shall settle for a poem from Mr Peter Hoskins who is writing a book featuring around Britain in poems in to benefit a charity. We have previously heard from Peter when he sent some recollections of The Cove some years ago, now.

[Sennen Cove Cornwall "As Winter Approaches"](#)

*Cold Atlantic coastal winds
that redden cheeks and chafe the hands,
dry and strip, the toughest skin,
and lift on air the stinging sand.*

*Challenge those who walk the bay
between the Kelp and Bladderwrack,
and Oar Weed, fingertips displayed,
atop dark brown, untidy stacks.*

*Waves that strain in deepest seas,
crash to quarry granite cliffs,
boil and foam relentlessly,
and toss the rope moored, fishing skiffs.*

*Off the headland cormorant's dive,
around the hamlet peals of bells.
From slate and thatch where all survive,
the Sunday congregation swells.*

*A treachery of noisy ravens,
struts on walls and lichen seats,
interrupts the conversation,
takes the food that others eat.*

*In the round a lonely Rook,
on upturned sod and old grey stone,
plucks a worm from muddied nook,
and hungry hops to dine alone.*

*Young boys breakfast on the sea wall,
lines and bags of bacon fat,
shouting as they reel their haul,
a fat filled crab and wind-blown hat.*

*Crystal clear the turquoise water,
golden hues the sandy beach,
chilling winds and blue-skies augur,
sun kissed days now out of reach.*

November 24th – Monday

The fearsome wind of which I spoke, joined the party during the night and refined its game by early morning. It had reached the early 50 miles per hour at its peak but was variously banging in between 35 and 45 miles per hour into the afternoon.

I had very carefully arranged the recycling box and bag on the wall behind the flat. Usually, they sit in a pile between the wall and the wall of our building, sheltered and secure and, more importantly, easily accessible from our back door. The evening before collection, I place the ensemble on the wall because it is nigh on impossible to lift it out of the gap while standing at the back of the property. This I imagined would be even more the case encumbered by crutches.

Any other day, I would have entreated the Missus to bring the boxes and bags down to the front of the shop where they sit waiting to be emptied by the recycling team. Now, with the Missus incapacitated and confined to quarters, it fell to me. Fortunately, my recovery appears not to have regressed from yesterday's improvements and if anything, improved some more and, crucially, some confidence is starting to build.

I have noticed, certainly after my Achillies incident, that confidence is my chief constraint. For years after that, I was most tentative about picking my way across rocky terrain, stepping up or jumping down relatively minor heights. This was not helped by the burgeoning dickiness of my left knee. Building confidence seems to be central to my thinking on exercising and walking now, particularly as my left Achillies is quite alarmingly tender. I am told that this is normal but am having trouble

convincing my brain that it is not about to pop if I make the slightest wrong move. I am also doing the same regarding the knee. I keep thinking I might break something if I am not overly careful. I suspect that it is actually more robust than I give it credit for.

With this in mind, we returned to the moving of the recycling to its collection point. During the night, I had heard a crash outside the back door which I took to be the recycling box falling off the wall and back into the gap. It was not my only concern: getting up and down the slope with the box had been one of them while mentally planning this task; getting up the slope without the box was my immediate concern because when I had tried it last, straining my Achilles was at the forefront of my mind because it was tugging a bit.

So busy was I with my concerns, that I found myself at the top of the slope having arrived there without even thinking about it. I had, I think, walked almost normally up there without the slightest issue.

The issue only arrived when I saw that the recycling box and bags had indeed slipped into the gap between the wall and the building. I might have even said a word that parents would admonish their offspring for using in front of the vicar on Sunday and people of fragile disposition might throw up their hands in horror at. It presented a challenge – not the use of bad language, the fact that the recycling was in the gap – that is for sure. There was only one thing for it, drop the sticks and man up. Well, I managed to drop the sticks and with some careful and strategic tugging, slip the box back onto the wall.

Aided by gravity, although it was not at all serious, I pushed the loaded box and bags down the slope with my sticks. I also used them as a brake to stop myself running away down the hill, a feature I had noticed on gentler slopes on previous walks. Even on the flat on the pavement, the box slid happily along to its collection point alongside our bins.

Later, bolstered by my earlier success. I managed to slide the box and bags back with relative ease. They were lighter going up the slope.

The wind continued as the main feature of the day. It was whipping the tops off the waves in the bay and producing an incessant howl. The sound added psychological weight to its ability to drop the reasonable temperature down a degree or two and make it feel cold. The last couple of days had bordered on being overly warm in the flat but today, we had descended into being chilly again and I resorted to heating. I know, I know. Call me rash, but we are both not in the fullness of health just now and a colour photograph of a one bar electric fire in the middle of the room works wonders on the mind.

Casting caution to the wind, and there was a lot of it today to cast caution to, I took myself off for a walk. I combined it with the task of returning the recycling box and

bags to their usual place after the contents had been collected. Wavering confidence aside, the operation of the leg is much more normal these past two days. It is quite remarkable that I had the knee replaced just three weeks ago. Now I was almost striding across the Harbour car park – proper walking too.

Improved confidence or no, I still took my sticks. I have found that if I am just going downstairs, I only need the one. I will persist with two out abroad for now, but it will not be long before I ceremonially toss them over the sea wall and walk away.

While the walking is much improved, I still walk like a drunk, mainly because my balance had never been good but also in part I was being buffeted by the wind. Honest, guv. However, by the time I had got to the end of the car park – in half the previous time, I might add – so springy in the heel was I that I continued, turning left up the slope. By the time I got to the lookout at the top of the cliff, Land's End did not look that far away ...alright, alright. Surely, I am allowed a little flight of fancy. I turned down the unmade surface of Coastguard Row and returned home that way.

I confess that I did feel a little weary after such an epic journey and had to sit down for a while. I still have remnants of the Missus' lurgi, although mine never developed further than an annoying cough and a bit of wheezing. It was more this that scuppered me than anything to do with my knee.

Just before I leave you, dear reader, I wish to mention that we have been flooded with offers of assistance. News travels fast in The Cove and many of the Lifeboat Crew have rallied around. So too have the friends and neighbours with offers of help. Both of us being beggered at the same time was something we had no contingency for. The concern felt by them fair near brought a tear to my eye – although that was probably the wind in my face.

November 25th – Tuesday

At some point during the early part of the morning our gale of wind ran out of puff. It stayed in the northwest but at half the ferocity that it had been blowing in at. It immediately felt warmer for that but was not.

I was a little under the clock this morning. Yesterday, with the prospect of not having any transport, I rearranged my meeting with our accountant from being in person to doing it across the Internet. During the period of the Dreaded Lurgi, there was a surge of meetings in living rooms across the land that were conducted in this manner. To assist, various companies produced software to enable and enhance such meetings, although I had never had to use one myself.

This put me at a bit of a disadvantage, despite having suggested it, but fortunately the accountant had done it plenty of times before. All it took was for him to send me a meeting invitation which I opened ten minutes before the meeting was due to

commence. Thus enabled, all it took was for him to push a button at his end, and we were connected, staring at each other's faces on the computer screen.

I had anticipated it being a lot more awkward than meeting him face to face, but it went swimmingly. The 2024/2025 year had been a difficult one but by some quirk of accounting, we ended up with around the same level of net profit that we had the year before. Quirk of accounting? What am I talking about. It was clearly an experienced hand on the tiller and exceptional cost management is what it was.

Then came the analysis of our tax position. This was greatly affected by the building work and how it was paid for. A great deal of tax had been taken at source by His Majesty's Government and, bless them, they had kept it safe for me until such time as I wanted it back. Our accountant told me that due to all the money we had paid them in the previous tax year and all the money we had paid them in advance of the following tax year, they owed us money rather than the other way around. We would also not have to pay very little in advance for the forthcoming tax year, either. It all sounds very pleasing until you realise that the tax year following that, they will want most of it back again plus some more.

Of course, the budget in a few days could quite happily begger that up completely.

The meeting had left me quite satisfied that we had done the very best we would with a poor year. Last winter was a difficult one, nonetheless, but even then, circumstances had transpired to permit us to invest in building the greenhouse which actually worked out very well indeed.

As we had chatted, the day outside had developed very nicely. There was a good deal of blue sky dotted by big fluffy white clouds. It was the sort of day to be abroad, striding across the moors and hills, breathing the very substance of life. Either that, or slipping down to the shop to gather as much rubbish as possible to make tomorrow's last bin collection worthwhile. Obviously, I chose the latter.

Before doing so, I took a positive step toward breaking this cycle of idleness that I had managed to insert myself into. Up until now, each day had been a repeating picture of slobbing about and kidding myself that hourly exercises, occasional business telephone calls, and responding to messages on the computer was actually achieving something. It was not, although the exercises were essential. Alright, I was a little constrained by the limits imposed on me by my knee. Those constraints are rapidly falling away, and I need to step up or just lie down.

I felt that an important first step in the direction of stepping up was to change out of my sloppy lounge trousers and get into work trousers. I stopped short of a shirt and tie but if the trousers do not work, they will be next. I resolved that I would do this daily now to mark the difference between relaxing time and working time.

Thus fortified, I went down to the shop – without sticks – to collect and bag the remaining rubbish. I started with the fruit and vegetable fridge so that we could turn it off. I had already removed the furry lemons, which sounds like a 90s Brit pop band, and limes yesterday and disposed of them. What was left was largely still consumable, including onions, garlic and potatoes. We kept the apples and bananas as well for the in-laws and Mother. The rest was in the bin.

While I was at it, I emptied the bread and cakes shelf. There was not a great deal there to dispose of, mainly some out of date flapjacks and, very unfortunately, four saffron cakes. Had we been here when we closed, these would have been distributed amongst the poor of the parish. Actually, we would have distributed them among the slightly better off of the parish; the poor would not have appreciated such luxurious quality. Sorry, neighbours.

I completed the sweep with various bits of cardboard and general waste accumulated when the Missus emptied the upright freezer and that which had arrived subsequent to the last cardboard collection.

Since I was adequately dressed, I decided to take another perambulation around our end of The Cove. I stuck to the same route as yesterday and found it just as easy as I had the day before but with less wind trying to push me over. The walk up the slope felt much better as my Achillies appears to be easing up on me, which is a huge relief. Again, apart from the upward slope, I could probably have managed the walk without sticks. I think it would be worth trying to repeat this walk daily – except when it is piddling down - obviously. I would not want my metal knee to go rusty.

Mother and I have concerns. She is most concerned about the Missus' health, as am I, but also that she will try and do too much – which she will. The Missus and I share a concern that Mother has been on her own for more than a week. At first, the Missus was worried about passing on her lurgi and now, it is more because she is unable to get there. On Sunday, the decision was made to call in the cavalry in the form of the in-laws who duly arrived today. They will stay a couple of days, running a few errands. They will also take me to my Thursday, yes, Thursday appointment at the physiotherapist office where I intend to ask about driving again.

The paperwork I have been given suggests that driving should be avoided in the first six weeks. There is no hard and fast ruling, and no one had been informed that the patient has been stopped from driving. Neither the DVLA, the insurance company nor the police are aware that the patient has had an operation. The suggestion is that provided the patient can perform an emergency stop, it should be alright to drive.

Given that we have a vehicle with automatic transmission, my left leg bears no relation to the safe operation of the vehicle. The only constraints are my ability to get into the driving seat, and I would need to only drive places where I did not have to walk very far when I got there. Should I inform my insurance company, I am sure that

they would rub their hands together with glee knowing that, should I have an accident, they would have carte blanche to wriggle out of any claim. If I had an accident having not informed them, they would have carte blanche to wriggle out of any claim. I shall take this under consideration.

Mother and the in-laws dropped around in the afternoon for tea and for making plans. It was good to see Mother again – and the in-laws, obviously – and it was a sign that we are at least moving in the direction of normalcy. Later in the afternoon, we had a visit from a neighbour. She had offered to collect my prescription of medicines that keep a barely alive grumpy shopkeeper, barely alive from the shop at the top on her way back from work. We talked as we watched a particularly adept kite surfer ply his sport in the reasonably large breaking waves inshore on the big beach.

It was a pleasant wrapping up of a more active day before we descended into abject bone idleness. It did rather feel like we were slowly moving in the right direction.

November 26th – Wednesday

I had an adventure today. It may not seem very much to you, dear reader, who gallivants here and there on the merest suggestion of a whim and thinks nothing of it. A step out here or a car journey there, all these things that you take for granted. For those of us confined, restrained or restricted, a simple opening of the front door leads us to believe we might one day stand shoulder to shoulder with Scott, Franklin, Livingstone and Kirk. Today was my day.

The Missus was still asleep when I crept out. I had no doubt she would try and stop me, throw her arm across the door in an attempt to slow my progress and I would find myself impeded by her arms wrapped around my bad leg as I dragged it towards the open portal. We had called in the cavalry for a reason and one of those reasons was that the brother-in-law would help me unload the truck ahead of driving up to The Farm for the balance of the Christmas decorations.

It struck me, however, that the only way we were getting up to The Farm was with me driving. That in mind, I had better give it a trial run in the short journey between the RNLI car park and the shop doorway. It would also mean that he was not hanging around waiting while we emptied the truck first before heading up there.

The spring in my step appears to be sustainable. When I awoke this morning, it was just as good if not better than the day before. Coming down the steps I can almost tread down normally rather than one step at a time, although I do have to crab slightly so that the bend to my knee is not so severe. The jury is out whether that is because I cannot or should not yet do it or I am just too chicken to try. I made it to the car park and up the slope without issue and on one crutch that I did not need –

alright, maybe on the slope; my quads are shot. Getting into the driving seat was the same as I had always got into the driving seat, just a little more tentatively.

I was back in the flat having completed the task without issue and with no one being any the wiser. Even the girls were blissfully unaware of my trial outing of the day. I was primed and ready for my longer journey to The Farm.

We might have had a better day for my big adventure, though. It was grey and mizzly from the outset with some heavier rain, but not much, every now and then. This persisted through the day but at least there was no wind to speak of or even keep quiet about. The street was merely damp rather than wet so there was no need for waterproofs at any stage today. I certainly could not say it was that unpleasant and could have been a sight worse. When I could still see it – the mist closed in later in the day – the sea was flat as a dish. In the middle of the afternoon, there was only one person making use of it and that was a fisherman, beach casting at the southern end of the bay. There were two people further up on the beach taking an amble. That was it.

I had not checked how many were abroad when we eventually headed for The Farm on our, possibly illicit, run. I will, of course deny everything if this ever catches up with me. If pressed on the matter, I will also tell the cops, 'you will never take me alive', 'it is a fair cop, guv but society's to blame' and 'look at me, ma, top of the world'. It will never go to court because no copper in his right mind will want to tell the judge all that lot. Of course, that may open the door to the possibility of me falling down the station steps and being given the rubber truncheon treatment with the CCTV turned off. I might reconsider.

It seemed the right thing to do, because I did not want to go down alone, to take the girls with me. They had been as badly affected by our joint confinement as we had. While they have been exceptionally well behaved, it cannot be easy being a young pup, full of energy and nowhere to expel it. The only problem with the plan was that we were not there long enough for them to get into their stride and without the Missus in attendance, they were sulking a bit – oh, and the weather was rubbish.

The exercise was, however, better than nothing and completely unsupervised. While the girls played, brother-in-law and I filled the truck with the Christmas decorations separated out for us. Looking about, there did not seem to be many left that we had not taken. After we had finished, and to give the girls a bit more time to play, I cast about in the tool shed for some easing oil to squirt into the tractor's steering column. Last year, it had seized and was troublesome unseizing. Unfortunately, I could not find the easing oil but decided to put the tarpaulin on the tractor anyway. Before we did so, I tried the troublesome lever and found that it seemed to be operating well. I hoped it would stay that way.

In truth, the adventure demonstrated that my recovery is sufficiently advanced that I might hope that after Christmas I will be able to carry out some less strenuous

activities up at The Farm. I have certainly made up my mind that opening the shop at Christmas is a distinct possibility provided I did not mind doing it half asleep. By the time I had returned to the flat my meagre resources had been expended and I felt very weary indeed. I suppose that the adventure consumed just over an hour of not entirely strenuous activity. I think I might have to work on that a bit.

The Missus took a call from the surgery in the afternoon. It seems that the team there were diligently following up her attendance at West Cornwall Hospital. It was remarkably efficient for a system we are told is creaking at the seams. The very kind doctor advised that the Missus have some more pills to take to try and beat into submission her complaint. None of us are in doubt that whatever condition she finds herself in heading towards the weekend that it will in any way impede her organising Carols in the Cove and the raising of Christmas decorations.

The in-laws went back to Mother's by and by. Brother-in-law will return at early o'clock tomorrow to take me to my physiotherapy appointment, another reason for them coming. I think that they are planning to go home after that and, if I heard correctly as I dozed on the sofa, Mother is coming to stay on her winter sun holidays. I think it is a ruse to keep an eye on the Missus to make sure she behaves. The weather in The Cove at this time of year is only marginally better than that at St Buryan. Whatever the case, I shall be on my mettle.

I will check with the physiotherapist tomorrow about the driving. There appears to be no information about which authority I should refer to in order to have a blessing to drive again. As I pointed out yesterday, no one has ordained that I cannot drive and no regulatory body has been informed in any respect. Given that I drive an automatic transmission vehicle, I am in no less control now that I was before the operation. Factually, there is no change. I fully anticipate more adventures in the very near future.

November 27th – Thursday

It was another particularly mucky morning, yesterday's mizzle on steroids. I did not much notice. It had been one heck of a night.

I will not go into too much detail. Suffice to say it was utter mayhem. The Missus could not sleep and eventually went off into the living room. The girls, particularly BB, who had been restless since we went to bed, went into overdrive. I remained in bed trying to sleep, dozing in and out. At three o'clock in the morning, with every light in the place on, the girls rocketing up and down the hall, and BB practising a very impressive leap, in an upward trajectory, from outside the bedroom door that had her landing on various of my soft and tender bits, including my leg, turning on those soft bits and launching off again, I decided to bail out and go and lock myself in the spare room.

Up again seemingly only moments later, I was waiting at the window for my lift to turn up to take me to my physiotherapy appointment. We drove through not quite the thickest fog we have seen down here, but it was unpleasant nonetheless and wet too. We made it to the appointment with plenty of time to spare.

I decided to take just the one stick with me to see how that went even though I felt I could do without. I did not want to appear too cocky. It was the right move as the lady suggested it was a good plan to continue to use it, just in case. I am told that I am well ahead of the recovery schedule, but I am not permitted to leapfrog to the next level. I must allow time for the cement to dry or something.

I tested her about driving, but she would not be committed but did agree that it would be nonsense not to be permitted. She advised that I check first with the insurance company. When I returned home, I used the insurance company chat facility that is answered by a computer. It told me that if no DVLA restriction had been imposed, I need not contact them. It went on to state that if I had been given advice, I should follow it. Well, the physiotherapist had the latest advice, so I shall follow that. It is a fine line, and it is not in writing, but it will serve.

It is just as well that I can now drive as the prospect of bus travel as an alternative has taken a turn for the worst. Now, I have been waiting all week to break this particular bit of news, but the opportunity did not present itself until now. First Kernow, the bus company that provides a good proportion of the bus services at this end of the Duchy, is pulling out. It will cease all service provision from February next year, I believe. The writing was clearly on the wall when the company decided not to run the open top Coaster this year, restricting services to Penzance only and did not expand its timetable for the summer months.

Go Cornwall, Transport for Cornwall or whatever they call themselves, have vouched to step into the breach. The clever wording of their statement does not commit them to replacing every service in its current form. We must wait for further information to see if we will have any service at all and whether St Just is still on the menu. Looks like we might need our own cars for a while to come, yet.

My grand plan to wear working trousers during the day has some success over the last couple of days. Today, however, I relapsed into a bit of laziness when I came back from the physiotherapist. Perhaps the glowing report from she gave me had me sitting back on my laurels. It required a bit of an effort to rise above it and promise myself a walk out with my now legitimised one stick operation.

From the wet, mizzly day it was earlier, the day had brightened a little. Roughly translated, that was the mist had receded a little and instead of being wet, it was merely damp. What I had not been able to determine from earlier was the wind had ramped up again. It was heading in from the southwest, which I should have been able to guess at given the mizzle, but even then, it was noticeable in The Cove.

Playing in the back of my mind was the fact that had the weather been better, I might have taken the girls up to The Farm for a run. That was still teasing me when I passed the top of the slipway and found myself staring down the slope. Surely, I was thinking, that is not an insurmountable challenge, if indeed you can surmount a downward slope. The gold star and merit badge awarded me by the physiotherapist was shining bright upon my breast telling me that I was so far advanced in my recovery that such a slope was well within my capabilities – even coming back up again.

Thus armed with bravado, the spirit of derring do and brimming with confidence, I stepped out, or rather down, with the intention of turning back at the first punt a few yards down. It was, verily, a piece of cake. So cakeish was it that I tried it again, this time extending my foray to halfway down the slip. I did it again just in case it was a fluke and discovered that it was not. I also detected a momentary wavering of confidence but channelling my inner Edmund Hilary I tried once more before returning to the sheltered side of the Lifeboat station.

I considered for a while the advisability of taking the girls down to the beach. Of course, it probably was not advisable at all but that was no reason not to give it a try. If I let them off at the top of the slip and followed them down at my own pace, what could possibly go wrong. Once down there they would run about without the likelihood of pulling me over or getting under my feet to trip me up. The only unknown was the trip back up the slipway with them on leads. I reasoned that going up they were unlikely to pull me over.

As luck would have it. What am I talking about. There was no luck involved. It was all carefully calculated, risk assessed and the appropriate mitigations and safety features put in place. Honest, guv. It all went rather swimmingly. Other than ABH taking BB up on the Harbour Wall and leaving her there so that she was inclined to think about jumping off, we had no issues at all. They ran about and chased each other and had quite the whale of a time. We were there for the best part of half an hour. The walk back up, as I imagined was less risky than the walk down, even with the girls on leads. Well, another step forward.

The exercise had once again drained my reserves, and the rest of the afternoon was spent in restful repose interrupted by a few exercise sessions. When I stuck my head out the back not much later to put out the recycling, it was drizzling heavily. I had not checked before we went out, so it seems we were quite lucky.

Despite benign sea conditions, there was no Lifeboat training launch but shore based training instead. The Missus attended in my place as she tries to nail down attendees for the Christmas party that will be upon us before we know it. Staying put at home I had time to notice that my quadriceps were tugging just a bit. The stank up the slipway earlier had put some strain on them. I had bemoaned the lack of exercise in my schedule specifically for the muscles to the physiotherapist earlier. She had

been sympathetic but told me to be patient. I may be psychic as I can see some extra trips to the Harbour beach in my future.

November 28th – Friday

It was difficult to determine exactly what the weather was doing this morning, but I took it as a good sign that I could see the other side of the bay. I was peering through the gloom as, once again, I had got up early doors. The night had gone better than the one before with the absence of small dogs bouncing off the walls and using me as a trampoline. I had no appointments – yet – but I was early, nevertheless.

As the day dawned, the sea state became a little clearer. In fact, it was difficult to ignore it as it was being some fierce out there. At high water, halfway through the morning, it was thundering over the Harbour wall, doing a jig over Cowloe and launching its way up the cliffs opposite. Later on, perhaps mid tide, I caught glimpses of great explosions of white water breaking over the footings of Pedn-men-du.

Bolstered by my success with them on the beach yesterday, I decided to take the girls out first thing. This would be a little more challenging as I would have to hold onto their leads for longer and while they pulled and changed direction. A challenge it was indeed but I am minded to think that BB is a little more orderly after some practise at it. The only thing I have not mastered is getting them downstairs. I would rather not be holding onto their leads as I descend. They go down at different rates and one or the other needs cajoling to get them to the foot of the steps. To do that while holding onto a stick and the rail would be a task too many for my poor brain to cope with and I do not have enough hands. We resolve the issue by me heading down first and the Missus throwing the ends of the leads down after me. I can then guide the girls down from the bottom.

The Missus is at last on the mend. There were definite signs of improvement today. It had occurred to me, because I berated her for leaving the visit to the doctor too late, that I should have myself checked before my cough got any worse. I say it is because I did not want to be in her position by leaving it too late. The Missus says it is because I was jealous of all the attention directed at her. I do not mind the attention; it is the suffering I do not need. I have enough of that with the knee which was self-inflicted, I am reminded.

Whatever the case, I booked an appointment to visit Cape surgery, and they called back not long after. It must have been a slow day because I got an appointment at eleven o'clock.

It would mark my first trip abroad since the operation without the aid of assistance. Now I have permission to drive, sort of, the world is my wheel – we do not have oysters on the north coast. Since I was heading to the noted metropolis of St Just, I

consulted with the Missus if she wanted anything from the cornucopia of emporia available to peruse there. She suggested that now I had command of my legs for a little longer than a few minutes, I should purchase some comestibles and that I could use to prepare dinners for us both. It was difficult to argue with that since she had made mostly every tea since the shop opened.

I had no detailed list and while we discussed several options, we agreed with time pressing that I just purchase the items I needed for Saturday's tea. I would also buy some cough syrup that, on the advent of me having the first sustained coughing fit for more than a week last night, we discovered that the Missus had used the last of the night before.

On arrival at the surgery, I discovered that the very efficient, if somewhat delayed, administration staff had completed my health report in support of my gun licence. I could now advance with completing what I was assured was the most complex and ill-thought through online application process. I will leave that for another day and start early in the morning. The receptionist invited me to sit and wait for Susan (not her real name) who would see me shortly. I was not exactly sure what I was to expect because if Susan (not her real name) was the doctor, which it turned out she was, it was the first time in my life that I had heard a doctor being referred to by her first name other than in a social context.

I am not sure what I think about that. After a lot of years of calling doctors, doctor, it does rather sit uncomfortably but that is merely conditioning and habit, perhaps. On one hand it possibly creates a more conducive relationship if a patient is reticent about discussing deeply personal or sensitive issues. On the other, it perhaps destroys a sense of respect and authority which may, in some circumstances, be useful. Would I be better disposed to take advice or instruction from Dr Robinson or Dave. One of the doctors at the surgery I visit is also a neighbour and a member of the Boat Crew as well as a customer in the shop from time to time. I still find it hard to delineate between meeting him professionally and casually.

I did not have to wait long and as the second surprise of the day I was called by a young lady of about 14 years of age to come hither. I imagined, of course, that perhaps Susan (not her real name) had brought her daughter into work as some work experience thing. I was therefore more greatly surprised when the young girl started to ask medical type questions and produced a stethoscope from a drawer. It actually looked like a real one, too, and I made a mental note to commend Fischer-Price on the realism of its products.

It further surprised me therefore when the young lady explained that she was a medical student in the last year of doctor school and had been assigned to Susan (not her real name) as her mentor. She would refer to her at the end of the session just to make sure she had pressed all the right buttons and listened to all the right bits of me. I had absolutely no qualms about being seen by her as after five years of training, she probably knew a thing or two. I might be a little more nervous had my

complaint been a little more complex and might have asked for a more experienced view. There again, I am sure that she would have done the asking first had it been. She told me that I could be assured that there was nothing wrong with the operation of my lungs, which was good news. However, the proper doctor would write a post-dated prescription and that if my symptoms persisted into next week, I could come back and claim it.

I wished her well with her final year. Apparently, she can be sent to any part of the UK or perhaps England and Northern Ireland once she passes out. I think that is to ensure the good behaviour of the students. If they upset the tutor, they will be sent to some rough inner city neighbourhood as punishment.

The centre of St Just could not quite be described as inner city, but it is the closest we have on our doorstep. I have said before that between the shops there is sufficient choice and breadth of offering that a shopper probably would not need to venture much further unless they were after something completely outlandish. All I wanted was some meat for my first dish, some dinner for the girls and some scallions or spring onions.

Since there are two very good butchers in St Just, I spread my meat shopping across the two of them. I also added some scotch eggs and gala pie to widen the scope of my breakfast choices and then proceeded to the Market Square for the spring onions. There is a very good greengrocery and grocers in the Square, and I went there for the vegetables.

It is usually empty, and I have time to chat to the friendly person behind the counter. Today, there was a queue around the shop of at least eight of us waiting to be served. I would not normally have minded but I had been on my pins for far longer and had walked further than I had planned or anticipated. My knee was in the process of explaining that it was unhappy with such an arrangement. I am not surprised that there was a queue. It is a very good independent grocery store, and I am very pleased to see them doing well.

I think that I was on the boundary of the limits my new knee will currently permit me to explore. It is possible that I might have marginally exceeded them. By the time I returned home both my knee, and my reserve of energy were nigh on exhausted and a sit down with my leg up was most welcome. My good intentions to prepare the tea for tomorrow evening were at that very moment lost. I will, no doubt, be up early again tomorrow and will do it then.

It was a bit later than I intended when I stirred myself again to take the girls down to the beach. The day had developed quite nicely, with large portions of blue sky and sunshine picking out the white foam liberally spread across the bay. Even at low water, the waves were crashing in and the whole bay was in disorder and turmoil. There was quite a punchy wind blowing in from the southwest. It had pushed me

about a bit as I headed down Market Street towards the car park. The rest of the town was sheltered from it, so it caught me rather by surprise.

I would have been a little disconcerted had the wind been effective in The Cove as I headed down the slipway. I let the girls slip the lead at the top of the slope and headed down as they ran off to meet a recent swimmer over on the far side. I only recognised her and the chap she was standing with as I drew closer. An ex Very Excellent Shore Crew member and long time friend. We stopped for a while and chatted as the girls bothered them for attention until the lady swimmer suggested that it was a tad chilly for such niceties, however pleasant. I saw her point and we were left to command the beach by ourselves for a while.

The raging sea had been at work in the Harbour over just two tides. Yesterday, we were able to walk freely under the Lifeboat slipways to the other side. Today, the sand had been scoured out leaving an abundance of rocks that would be difficult for me to navigate. Fortunately, the girls were not too interested but did disappear under the short slip for a while. They emerged around the bottom of it a few moments later and concentrated their running about on the main part of the beach. I am not yet ready for rock climbing.

I returned for more rest and rehabilitation in the comfy chair for much of the rest of the afternoon. I will be up early to attend to the preparation for tea, which will then have the rest of the day to cook and steep. Another step forward to normal.

November 29th – Saturday

At two o'clock this morning one almighty squall blew through the Far West. It was very localised. Land's End had it at 50 miles per hour and Gwennap Head, windiest place in the universe, 62 miles per hour. It hardly affected St Ives at all. BB and I clung to each other as it howled in the eaves and rain rattled against the skylight. The other two were snoring, a world away.

The wind was still fresh from the west when I eventually broke the surface of the morning. I was about to discover, as I took the girls down to the beach for an early morning foray, that it had a bite to it as well. According to Land's End, we had lost a degree or two of ambient warmth and were subject to a four degree wind chill. I could not agree more as it slapped me in the face. Still, I was on the beach in shorts, so I guess I could not complain too loudly.

Along with the wind, there were frequent showers blowing through The Cove. These were short and sharp but at least you could see them coming. One minute the sky was dotted with big, fluffy cumulus clouds with plenty of blue sky and sunshine and the next, it was largely grey with low, leaden rain clouds blotting everything out. A good day for rainbows, though.

The girls and I were lucky with our rain cloud lottery. We had ventured to the beach unscathed in the morning and again just into the afternoon when we went out during one of the sunny periods of the day. It was breezy both on the beach and around the block and definitely chilly. Given that I am not quite as robust as I would like, I wrap up much more warmly than I might have done when I was. It rather leaves me nowhere to go if it really gets cold. Let us hope that it does not.

True to my word, I made a start on tea almost as soon as I was up and the girls had been catered for. It is beef and chorizo chilli in case you were curious. Depending on the beef cut, I like to simmer it for three hours and preferably let it rest overnight. At the time I started, I had plenty of time for the three hours but clearly, I had missed the overnight.

The Missus made a start on preparing the decorations just as the showers made a start on arriving in The Cove more frequently. Not long after she went down to the shop, our lights man arrived to announce that he was going to set up the lights. This year, his stated intention was to run further up the street in the direction of the OS and to include the wharf as well. To this end, additional scaffold poles had been delivered from somewhere, organised by someone in the station. He uses these to hang the lighting strings from.

What we were missing, however, was a team of happy volunteers to help do some of the donkey work. We have enough trouble trying to get a crew together for a Saturday launch with three or four days' notice, so I was not expecting that they would be overrun with offers of help. Fortunately, the usual suspects turned up, and the Coxswain's family and they all piled in to help as the weather deteriorated, and it got a deal colder.

Having only started at three o'clock, they were still hard at it into the darkness. At half past five o'clock, a truce was called, and they will start work again tomorrow. They had done well, however, and the lights are in around the wharf and most the way down the road.

Also missing was the metal fencing that we use each year to back the trees and to hang decorations from. We need three for the tree area opposite but there were only two left this year. The fence panels arrived with the work effort to clear up after the station roof blew off a few years ago. No one knew to whom they belonged and they sat for years next to the Inshore Lifeboat house. I noted that they had dwindled in number last year and did raise the concern that three should be, erm, ring-fenced for Christmas use but, this year, we were down to two.

The girls had been sulking for most of the afternoon during her absence. At one point, when the Missus came back on some errand, they escaped the door, and the Missus had to spend ten minutes rounding them up. I had risked taking them to the beach a bit later and had to stop BB running back up the slip. Fortunately, she is

quite good on recall and I managed to capture her, but it cut short our play and consigned us to indoors for the rest of the afternoon.

The Missus, who had also wisely wrapped up well, required warmth and sustenance on her arrival home. I did say that she would not be prevented from doing the decorations, poorly or no. A hot drink and a plate of steaming chilli was just the ticket, apparently. Now, if we just had one of those mobile saunas in The Cove ...

November 30th – Sunday

It looked like it might have been raining at some point during the morning but clearly not very hard. I would have noticed. As soon as the dull bit of the morning cleared out of the way, we had some blue skies, sunshine and a fair bit of cumulus cloud dotted about. In fact, it was just the sort of day for filling out Devon and Cornwall Police's shiny new online firearms licence renewal form. Well, that has ensured anyone trying to read this from a computer in anyway associated with local or national government will be whisked away and never heard from again.

There was just sufficient beach to let the girls run amok first thing when we went out. For me, it is the easiest solution and for them, they get to run around and expend some energy that they have spent the night accumulating. We do not tarry long in the mornings, but should we have decided to, it was the sort of morning in which it would be pleasant to do so. That was probably much to do with the lack, or lack of severity, of any noticeable breeze.

Other than breakfast, I had nothing on my plate in the morning and decided that I had best get on with my application for renewal of my gun licences. I had heard that the online form took some while to complete and probably required more than a modicum of concentration. I had already pulled together all the documents that I could think of that I might need to help me complete the details: current licences, digital passport size photograph, etc. I also looked up the map reference for The Farm as I would need to explain where it was should I wish to shoot on it.

I got as far as the home page where the application form can be accessed and found that I needed details of two references in support of my application. I had two people in mind, but I was warned that I would need their dates and places of birth, occupations, addresses, hat size and inside leg measurements. Fortunately, the two people that I had in mind were clearly not busy doing anything else and responded to my request almost immediately – in the positive I might add. The police information sheet that I was asked to send my nominees reminded them that they should respond to enquiries in a 'reliable and honest' manner. Gosh, I hoped not, which is why I chose those particular two.

Eventually, with all my gnus in a row, I embarked on the unknown and the form required to make my application which it rather optimistically told me would take 30 minutes to complete.

I found it relatively easy going, cut into sections about health, my personal details and finally the guns I wanted registered or wanted to purchase next. I can see if a person had a lot of guns, the process would be a tortuously painful process. Happily, I do not have that many. I suppose that it would be far too much to hope that the system would find your existing details and permit you to update them accordingly. I would suspect that the vast majority applying for a renewal, the details are the same even after five years. I was making good progress when the Missus appeared and announced that she was off to get the Christmas trees for our outside display. We would collect Mother on the way.

I was not particularly bothered about leaving the progress of my application. I had heard that if you closed the form, you would have to start again, so I left the screen on at the place I had got to and left it there to continue later.

For the last few years, the Missus has purchased the trees from the same people. They started out using some space at the Penzance winery on the outskirts of town but had migrated to the Tremenheere Sculpture Gardens near Gulval not far distant. I went along last year. The Missus has developed an excellent relationship with the owners of the tree company. They single out appropriate trees which meet her requirements, so she does not have to wander through avenues of trees to pick one. They are also happy to provide a discount on the basis that the trees are related to RNLI fundraising.

Last year, it was midweek, we were the only visitors and were able to park the truck at the spot where the trees were wrapped. This year, the population of Penzance and the surrounding villages had descended on the gardens and were parked both sides of the lane on the approach as the car park was full. They were not all tree buyers. We were told that there was also a craft fair in progress at the same time which probably accounted for the majority of the people there.

The company runs a very efficient operation. It was hard to tell, but I think that there was probably three or four of them, talking with customers, wrapping the trees and taking the trees to customer's vehicles. We were immediately welcomed and immediately shown two trees that fitted the bill.

You will not know, dear reader, but anyone who has gone tree shopping with the Missus will understand that it is a process far more tortuous than filling out forms for Devon and Cornwall Police. The tree has to meet a rigorous set of exacting specifications and standards in terms of height, width, bushiness, number of branches and straightness. It would not surprise me in the least if there are specific counselling facilities for salespeople who have experienced the other side of the Missus' quest for the perfect tree. Yet, for three years running, including the current

one, these boys have singled out trees that required no second glance and no search for comparable alternatives. They are either tree angels not of this world or the Missus is going soft.

With the trees loaded into the back of the truck, we headed for home. We felt that the trees would be perfectly safe in the forecourt of the Lifeboat station and tipped them over the wall. The Missus and Mother went straight to the shop to begin the mammoth task of preparing the decorations. This year includes a further five, colour themed plastic trees because, why not. Not even the Missus knows where they will go but the decorations for each must be meticulously attached, capable of withstanding a force 9 gales or nuclear attack, whichever comes first.

While they were fruitfully engaged in tree dressing, I took the girls around the block for a run. There was no beach available, so we headed through the Harbour car park and back down Coastguard Row. It was still a good looking day and there were a few visitors parking up for a look around or a walk up to Land's End. I noted that the wind was winding up a bit but nothing too severe. It was a pleasant little stank and my walking is improving but I have to concentrate. Having spent two years or so walking oddly to protect a dickie knee, I have to relearn how to walk with a good knee again.

Having settled the girls on our return, I went back to my computer screen to discover to my horror that the bleddy thing had timed out. I have no idea how long you get before that happens but clearly a couple of hours is too long. When I started all over again, I was conscious that I was under some sort of clock which ruined my concentration completely. I got it done but if anyone from the constabulary is reading this, first, it is a lovely system and absolutely no issues with it whatsoever, well done all of you and secondly, just an incy wincy little observation, nothing at all, really, it takes a lot longer than 30 minutes to complete.

The Missus along with Mother, labourer long and hard in the shop preparing the plastic trees that have an uncertain future. My labourers were not so long or hard and mainly consisted of keeping the girls happy and taking them for the occasional walk. We made it to the beach again, where the breeze had picked up and the temperature had gone down and then we went around the block for an after tea stroll for a change. By the time we got to the last walk of the day, the rain that had threatened throughout the day, got us. It was not particularly heavy, but was unwelcome, nonetheless. Good job it was bedtime, then.