

DIARY 2023

November 30th – Thursday

So slowly was that geet lump of rain moving that it was still with us in the morning. It brought with it a wickedly chilly northeasterly draught that made for an interesting experience in shorts when I first let ABH loose on the world in the morning. I had stopped to put her waterproof, fleece jacket on her but even then she still was not keen to be out.

With Mother staying, her routine was in turmoil and she plagued us a while after we had gone to bed. The Missus eventually turned her outside to let off steam and then stayed up with her for a bit. It had done the trick and led to a lie in for me to a more reasonable hour in the morning. It was still dark at gone seven, which was disappointing as I had thought to leave on my Monday sojourn at that time and hoped we would have a modicum of light.

It was not the sort of day to be outside and it very much looked like everyone else thought so too. I would not have been out in it either but for the needs of a small ABH but even she had an inkling that she was better off inside with a fire lit. After the initial morning run out, we stayed in until the rain stopped, which was just before the middle of the day. It had rained heavily and incessantly and collected quite a pool in the front yard of the house. It had also blown under the door in the shop but had narrowly missed anything of note, which was quite a feat since nearly the entire floor has something or other sitting on it.

It was bitterly cold with fleck of rain still falling from somewhere or other. Up and down the road and all along the big beach there was not a soul to be seen and I really could not blame them. It had brightened up quite a bit after the rain eased off; it could hardly have become any gloomier. The beach had great canyons carved out of the sand where the rain had run down the slipway to escape into the sea. It would have made an excellent field trip for A level geography students to see the whole river lifecycle from meanderings to delta and it moved across the sand.

Cold though it was, it did not hold the little girl back any. She charged into the sea at one point chasing after an unconcerned herring gull, which, if it had fingers, probably would have used one to show just how unconcerned. She found another rock pool under the short slip which she dipped into trying to claw out a piece of attractive oar weed. I was feeling cold enough without her demonstrating the gentle art of arctic plunges. I was loathe to come away while she was having such fun but my fingers regretted it most after a good half an hour or so exposed to the icy wind.

Rather than get all my waterproof and warm togs off, I went straight away to run into town to collect some more logs. I am not sure but I think that the two bags we had lasted about three weeks, although we were quite frugal with them. We clearly are

using a few more this week for Mother and especially today and the bitter cold that it is. Nevertheless, we needed more and that meant a trip into town.

We had heard from various sources that there had been some snow about at this end. It surprised me a little and then surprised me a lot more when we discovered that it was so heavy in Helston it had disrupted various businesses and travel. I did not have to go very far from The Cove to see some a bit closer to home. Chapel Carn Brea sported a white dusting and thicker on the exposed earthy bits and there was a good bit of slush on the road from the turn off to St Just all the way to Crows-an-wra. There as none after that despite the increased elevation over the moor at Tregonebris.

It was the very pleasant lady at the firewood depot that told me they had to shut their Helston yard because the trucks could not get in or out. She was disappointed to learn we had some at our end because she lived there. I told her that it was not so bad, which I hope helped. She went on to say that it seemed that the snow had dropped across the middle of West Cornwall through Camborne and Redruth. Radio Pasty warned that the temperature was to drop deeply overnight and introduce a dangerous freeze to the meltwater from today. The gritters, we are assured, would be out in force.

I did my best not to go out again but had no choice before tea to take ABH out again. We would have dipped down to the Harbour beach where it was a bit more sheltered but one of the fishermen turned up in his tractor at a most inopportune time and I did not want to risk the little girl running about with a tractor on the move. We were consigned to do a quick trip around the big block that was uncomfortable to say the least. Even ABH did seem keen to head back and did not tarry quite as much as she might otherwise have done.

In the evening I headed over to the Lifeboat training. It was good enough for a launch but our very thoughtful Coxswain suggested that practise in the cold icy wind would not be beneficial operationally. There was hardly anyone who disagreed. Instead we watched while some who are professional carpenters and fitters installed some more kit storage facilities for our expanded crew. While there were so many useful types around, the Missus suggested installing the Christmas decorations and those not otherwise engaged helped out.

We now have a small Christmas tree atop the fuel store at the front of the station alongside the 'dead Fred' dressed up as Santy. The 'dead Fred' is a life size and life weighted prop used to simulate rescues in training exercises. The lights in the window at the top of the station are now illuminated wishing all a Merry Christmas from Sennen Cove Lifeboat. 'Station' did not quite fit in.

It was still bitterly cold and somewhat breezy, which should be an adequate test for the decorations sustainability. The youngsters of the crew carried out the installation, bounding up the wall to reach the fuel store roof like lizards up a wall – after a full

risk assessment, of course. The grown-ups went up afterwards to secure the tree with twine. Lizard up a wall did not spring to mind.

November 29th – Wednesday

ABH made a brave attempt at getting me out of bed at ten minutes to five o'clock this morning. I told her not to be so silly and got another hour and a half. No wonder I am dozing by dinner time.

I ran her around the small block in the cold and dark of the early morning. It was not raining then but it had by the time I was ready to head to the gymnasium. I wait until some light has been established as I have discovered that the electricity in the building has been turned off. I am not sure whether this is a money saving exercise, a safety precaution due to the rain occasionally dripping through the roof or just some sort of omission. I did not get the stool out – it is the only way to reach the consumer box – just in case it was the middle one.

It was not raining still when I came out again after yet another blistering session. It perhaps was not quite as blistering as Monday's as there were no seconds taken off my benchmark time. However, it was quite satisfactory as blistering sessions go and I felt all righteous and glowing afterwards as you should.

There was no rain for the rest of the morning or indeed most of the day and the wind had failed to appear today as well. It was therefore quite pleasant to take ABH down to the deserted Harbour beach after I returned from the gymnasium. The fishing boats had gone out again some hours before as their tracks stopped where the tide line was at the time. It was way down the beach when we got there.

Much of the weed that was there yesterday had gone but there was a little up in the western corner and where ABH found a cuttle bone to play with. We took a look at the other side of the Lifeboat slipways and it is clear that much sand has been restored to the eastern side of the Harbour beach as well as the west. It is steeply sloped up towards the back of the beach. There appears to be no change at all, though, in the southern part of the big beach that runs alongside Cove Road. It is a clear of sand as it has ever been in the last 20 years.

Toward the later part of the morning, the Missus went down to the shop to decorate one of the trees I had hitherto been unaware of. It is a small tree for the Lifeboat station decorations that will follow shortly. I will not say too much as it will ruin the surprise. She reappeared later in the afternoon leaving the tree bristling with baubles and tinsel. We might have to leave the other trees until Friday if the weather forecast is to be believed.

While the Missus was decoratively engaged, I went and collected Mother. She is staying with us for a few days because I shall be away deep on Monday and it did not seem much point in Mother just coming for the one night. I had not been over to

St Buryan in a quite a while and I can confirm that in that time, nothing has changed – unless you count St Buryan lights that have gone up since then.

A friend and regular visitor who has been in The Cove longer than some of the locals have lived, called yesterday with a request to find a present for her odd job man. The gentleman, a Cover who had been looking after her house and doing a few odd jobs about the place, lives at the OS end of The Cove. It seemed sensible to combine my delivery with a walk out for ABH, so I loaded up my knapsack and hooked up the little girl to her harness for a stank down the road.

We have been walking out that way most evenings recently. So ABH was quite familiar with the journey. She was unfamiliar with the drains at the bottom of the hill, however, that amplified the sound of the culvert water than runs below them down the hill and onto the beach. She has an affinity for drains but on this occasion jumped back in some alarm after sticking her nose into the grille, as she does with all the ones she comes across. It was such a rapid reaction that I had to stand still with her while some traffic came past lest she leap back into the road as we walked up.

It was a fruitless journey anyway as our man was not at home. I decided that I would drop the gift at the sister's place on our way home but was diverted in the direction of the beach by ABH who was clearly keen to visit.

On the way down we stopped for a moment to talk with some much maligned council contractors who were busy replacing the wood railings that have run down the OS slipway for many years. They have, since as far back as I remember, been in a parlous state of disrepair and broken in several places. They were unlikely to stop anyone accidentally tumbling off the edge even without much impetus behind the movement.

I spoke in more detail when we came off the beach half an hour later. The very pleasant workman related how it was a very difficult job because the railing is supposed to be a metre high but as the slipway was uneven they had to compromise here and there to keep the railings looking in line. Quite fortuitously, he also pointed to the advertising boards that they had removed from wood railings, once he learned we had a shop at the far end. He told me that they had returned the chip shop sign to the chip shop since it was an easy match but they were not sure of the others. They had been instructed to bring them back to a depot in Penzance and a general message would have been left somewhere explaining where to collect them. He said it was not a very user friendly way of dealing with the businesses that put them there and I could not help but agree since one of them was ours.

Thanking him for his time and kindness, I told him that I would come back with our truck and take the boards that I knew I could rehome. He said that when it was all finished, probably by the end of tomorrow, they could go back. I think we will all have a problem with that as the new railings are a single rail and any attached board would simply flap in the wind.

Prior to all that, ABH and I had enjoyed a short visit to the OS end of the beach. The rocks are exposed again between the end of the OS slipway and the rest of the beach. It is possible to get through without scrabbling over the rocks but only at low water. We did not get that far as we bumped into a very amicable family walking their small dog. For the next half an hour we all stood about and watched the two dogs have a whale of a time running hither and thither and ABH dunking herself in a deep rockpool between times to cool off.

We went back to the house after dropping off the gift on the way where I did three fifths and five eighths of nothing at all for the rest of the afternoon. It was not precisely like that as despite running ABH around the beach like a thing possessed, she still wanted a game when we got back. That is hardly fair, I explained, as I capitulated for another twenty minutes.

Outside it was turning into the coldest day that we have had in a while and certainly the coldest since we had been in the house. Very oddly, the temperature in the house remained comfortable and we did not have to light the fire. I have no idea what that was about especially as I had opened the output of the storage heater that surely would have led to it running out of hot sooner than had I not.

It was getting proper parky in the late afternoon when I took ABH around the big block just before tea. There had been a geet lump of rain sitting off the southwest tip for all of the day and I had expected it to come over us in the middle to late afternoon but it had not. I was doing better than the Meteorological Office who expected it early in the morning and they have a multi-million pound data centre to help them. We were both wrong, but they were wronger. It was moving at a glacial pace and eventually reached us shortly after tea when I took the little girl out again. We did not tarry long as rain is one thing, very cold rain quite another.

We are in for a couple of cold days, so we are told, and a bit of wind to go with it. We can hardly wait.

November 28th – Tuesday

There was some rain about today, just in case you had looked at the forecast and thought that we were basking under sunny skies down here. It did not get me, though, like it did yesterday. Amidst all the excitement of mushrooms I forgot to say that I had taken ABH out later in the afternoon with some odd colours in the sky from the setting sun bouncing off some odd cloud formations. Out to the northwest there was some rain on the horizon but I did not think much of it, forgetting that was where the wind was coming from.

We had got to Coastguard Row and the rain was starting to sweep in across the bay. I took shelter behind the thatches there and blessed my luck that the shower was only short and light. My relief was short-lived, and the rain came back much more

heavily as we crossed the RNLI car park on the way back soaking my trousers. It was testament to the heat issuing from the log burner that has my treads were bone dry before the end of the evening.

It was nearly the middle of the day when the Missus leap into action. ABH needed a routine trip to the veterinary clinic, picking up Mother on the way. On the return, the Missus picked up the Christmas and memory tree from the vineyard just our side of town.

After she left, I pottered about in the shop. There are still invoices to clear and we approach the end of the quarter. I decided to leave those for removing the glass shelves in the kitchen that would come to grief when the work started or would have crumbled to dust in the waiting for it to happen. There were a few other chores to complete in the flat before I realised just how cold the flat had become with no one in it. I repaired downstairs.

Initially it had felt much warmer in the shop and I am sure that it was. It was just after an hour of standing keying invoices, it did not feel so warm any more. Despite the Meteorological Office still trying to jolly us up by insisting that it was bright and wonderful, it really was cold and damp and it was that getting through to my bones. I persevered with a few more invoices but I remembered that the Missus had suggested I do those while she decorated the tree and that would be tomorrow. I decided that it would be a good plan and head back to the house for a cup of tea.

I had not long arrived when she called to say she was on her way. I thought to finish off responding to a couple of enquiries that we had received from the accountants and our window people. I was halfway through doing that when the Missus called again, impatience in her voice. She had called me from the top of the hill; I thought she was still in town. I must try harder, you know.

The two trees looked enormous but I think it was because they were lying down. The vineyard that had them last year were only doing smaller trees this year, so the Missus got conspiratorial with the shop assistant there who whispered where the bigger trees were to this year. It was a trip back to the other side of town again, but they look decent trees and she has a good eye and knows exactly what she wants – which is largely why I did not go with her.

I went to take the little girl down to the remaining sliver of beach after being cooped up in the truck for a few hours. She was not keen and as soon as I had her off the lead, she made her way back to where the Missus was reversing the truck into the Mews. I caught up with her there and dragged her around the small block for a functional walk and let her run home afterwards. She likes the company of Mother, as did the bleddy hound, so who am I to intervene.

When I returned, the enquiry from the accountant was still outstanding. She cited the difference between the 21/22 electricity bills and the 22/23 ones, which was an

increase of about 60 percent, and asked if this was correct. I went back to the day and unit rate change we had and looked at the two August usage figures for each year and was able to confirm the numbers. She was astounded but not quite as astounded as me who had to pay it.

Just for fun and because I am a closet masochist I sent an enquiry to the electric company asking if I changed my contract now, what would I be paying. They told me that the day rate had increased by another 50 pence but the unit rate had decreased by about 12 pence. This would save me around £1,200 a year but I am locked into a three year contract with another year to run. However, the seemingly expensive contract protected me from what had become much worse rates during the summer. Them's the breaks, as they say.

ABH might have considered the same philosophical view after getting two soakings in the same day, except she had little choice in the matter. I might have considered her little waterproof jacket had it been raining as hard as it was when we were half way through our walks. Unfortunately, the intensity had increased while we were out and I only had time for regret. My head to toe waterproofs worked just fine, thank you very much.

November 27th – Monday

The best thing that we can say about today was that it was dry – mainly. We did not put a great deal of effort into it but we did get a few things done, so I do hope that the world will forgive us if we did not do our bit to move humanity forward any.

As usual, the day begins with a small furry creature deciding that it is time for you to get up even if she does not wish to get up herself. She gets her comeuppance and duly gets pushed out into whatever the weather is on that day. Today, it was a tad chilly but dry – apart from the ground that was wet – and had a wind that was happy to slap you around the face as you went around corners.

I did not bother to try and go back to bed. It is fruitless. Instead I hastened to the gymnasium as soon as it was light in order to get a march on the day, even though there was no particular reason to. It is entirely possible that the day was quite temperate for the time of year but the brisk northwesterly wind, soon to go northerly, had other ideas about us enjoying it. I certainly felt it on the way to the gymnasium but warmed up during a truly blistering session where I knocked eight seconds off my previous recent best on the rowing machine. Some days you just wake up and it is like that.

The wind definitely had its way on the way back from the gymnasium. I went from comfortably glowing to chilled down before I reached the end of the road. It is not often that I put my jacket on after a session to take the little girl around but today I was going to make an exception.

We headed for the Harbour beach, as usual only to find that a local dog was already there and one not really in the right age group to be chasing around the beach. ABH does not realise this, or care, or both and runs around the aged beast barking. Catching hold of her to drag her away is always a trial but today happened quite quickly. Fortunately, the other dog was taken off shortly after we arrived – hopefully not *because* we arrived – and we had the beach to ourselves.

I had noticed a person at the end of the wall in one of those long dry coats that are ever so popular. He took his time coming back and ABH tracked him back along the wall so that she could meet him when he came down because obviously everyone wants to meet her. It turned out it was a local GP and Lifeboat crew member and we stopped to chat while ABH wandered the beach completely unconcerned.

We parted company when the good doctor took a telephone call and ABH and I wandered down to the water line where she took a paddle and poked around the weed. It was pretty close to low water by that time and our beach companion decided to amble out on the rocks alongside the long slip – followed by the little girl who decided to accompany him. When she arrived she thought it something of a plan to climb on the slipway toe, which is lagged with weed and slippery as a baby recently dipped in olive oil. I was too far away to run to get her off, so I called, which usually does not work because she ignores you. Amazingly, she heard and came running back expecting a treat reward that I did not have. Well, she must learn too that life is just full of disappointments – as my mother used to say, mainly looking meaningfully at me.

Nevertheless, we had a good time on the beach, exploring and paddling and, just as we were about to leave, her reluctant chum turned up for a bit of a (half-hearted) run. She came quietly the next time I asked and we headed back to the house for some breakfast.

Next on the agenda was a trip to The Farm. Now that the majority of our moving is done, the Missus wants to concentrate on Carols in the Cove. This, at the outset, involves Christmas trees and decorations. The decorations are up at The Farm just waiting to the opportunity to show themselves off again. There are enough there to decorate a medium sized town and the Missus had great expectations of them all fitting into the truck to be taken down to the shop until the trees can be collected.

I had clad myself in DIYman gear, not that I intended to do any DIY but overalls do a good job of keeping out the wind and we were rather more exposed up at The Farm. They also helped me to wield a small socket set to take the terminals off the battery that had been serving the storage shed in the barn for its lighting. It had done the job it was intended to do and had lasted since before Easter when I installed it. The third bulb up on the monitor was lit, which is red apparently but the lights still worked, so the battery had not run down completely, which is good.

I fetched the fully charged battery from the cabin first, which gave me the opportunity to fall flat on my face after discovering moments too late that the decking was as slippery as the toe of the Lifeboat long slipway and we all know how slippery that is. Actually, I commended myself on a very graceful descent, landing on the flats on my hands in press-up position thus saving my nose some rearrangement. Happily, the CCTV camera was facing the gate at the time and there is absolutely no footage of me taking a tumble, not at all, not even a glimpse, honest guv.

By the time I had finished doing the battery swap, the Missus had piled up all the decorations by the barn door. I started piling them into the back of the truck, then realising that they would not all fit, took them out and started carefully placing them strategically in the back of the truck. We managed to get everything in including the big pot that one of the Christmas trees sits in, which was on the Missus' lap on the way back.

That all done, and a little bit of administration on the computer in the flat, we repaired to the house for some well-earned rest, after all, moving decorations around can be most tiring. It seems we are slowly settling into a rhythm in the house, despite not yet having had any indication of when our work will start, which is frustrating to say the least.

One of the last things I did at The Farm was to look again at the mushrooms I had found on the last visit. I had formed an opinion of what it might have been but had not taken a photograph so that I could properly check against the list on the Internet. I remedied that omission today. Also, as we walked ABH around the field before we left, the Missus spotted another, so I photographed that as well and now I think I have a proper identification of both.

The first, I think is a Cedarwood Waxcap or *hygrocybe / cuphophyllus russocoriaceus*, which is inedible but not listed as fatal when sniffed at and the other, which was dark brown, I am pretty sure is a Brown Mottlegill or *panaeolina foenisecii* in old Italian, also inedible. Well, as uninteresting as it was, it did pass a happy half an hour trying to find the match with the extensive list on the Internet. Of course, someone will now tell me how very wrong I was but you will never take that half an hour away from me.

We met with our builder in the evening that cleared up a misunderstanding. I had a very fraught telephone conversation with him on Friday that had left us quite concerned over the weekend. We have hardly any mobile telephone signal at the house and that evening the wireless signal was also very poor, over which my clever mobile telephone also works – or does not in this case. As a consequence, half our conversation was lost. He mentioned a figure for the whole job while I was hearing a thread about the cost of just the scaffolding. Oh very dear.

November 26th – Sunday

Lummy, what a day of weather we had. I would personally like to thank whoever invented full metal jacket waterproofs as they were most necessary today.

When I first ventured forth into the dark of the day, it was reasonably pleasant and certainly not wet. It had not occurred to me to check any forecast before I went out; I just looked out of the little window in the front door. I took the little girl a second time before I went up to the range and assuming that the weather was the same as it had been just short of an hour before, opened to the to launch myself into the world. It was enting down.

Five minutes later, fully toggged up in full metal jacket waterproofs, I tried again. We headed around the small block but did not tarry very much. I think my working jacket waterproof probably needs replacing as the water no longer runs off it. It still keeps me dry but the jacket itself is getting wet and takes a while to dry out. For the price it was and the amount of rough use it has had, it has been of very good value. I do hope I can get the same again.

ABH needed the hair dryer to dry her coat out. I am sure that it keeps her dry too down in the lower levels of fur but it does not dry very well to a good towelling down. In fact, ten minutes of rough rubbing later and she looks and feels no different. The fact that she enjoys the hair dryer is a bonus as she does not struggle to run away.

The rain ceased by the time we were packing the truck to go up to the range. As we turned down towards St Just the imposing mass of Chapel Carn Brea (well, as imposing a mass as you get around here) stood shrouded in low cloud and so did Carn Grean next to it, where the range is. It had either cleared by the time we got up there or we just could not see it while we were there. I suspect the former because it came in thick later and we could definitely see it.

The mizzle came and went in thickness, sometimes smoking through the range before easing off again. It was quite temperate for a time but having stripped off a few layers, the temperature dropped again when some thicker mist rolled in. We have had some proper heavy rain up there at times but this mizzle seemed wetter than even the rainiest of days. It meant wearing waterproof jacket most of the time, which is a bit restrictive when shooting.

We used the heavy duty paper targets through the early part of the morning. These lasted better than the normal paper targets but even then, they tended to fall off the backing when the target turning mechanism was used too much. When it came to replacing them, they peeled off the plywood backing and crumbed away like papier mache.

It was only half a day for me. The afternoon is for a type of shooting that I do not do. The Missus had suggested to me before I went that we go to the Beach Surf Bar, erm, Surf Beach Bar or whatever its proper name is for Sunday dinner, which I thought a splendid idea. She collected me when we finished and I set about cleaning

up and drying out. Before I headed off on an short excursion with ABH, we asked Mother which she would prefer, Beach Bar or lamb hotpot that the Missus spent a good time last weekend making in batches. It seems I will try out the Sunday dinner another day.

I was very lucky with ABH. We met a neighbour who we had not seen for a while with her dog and as I unleashed ABH for a run around with her somewhat reluctant pal another dog appeared who was definitely up for a bit of running around and chasing. Talk about lazy dog exercising. All we had to do was stand around chatting while the dogs ran each other in circles all over the beach. We do love it when a plan comes together.

The weather started to clear while we were down on the beach and the rest of the afternoon turned bright and dry. We went around the big block after the beach. We were being chased off by the tide and the willing playmate had gone on. Despite it not having been particularly heavy rain, apart from the shower in the morning, there was a stream running down the western slip and when we got there, down from Mayon Cliff and away from Coastguard Row. It helped to clean the sand from my boots and thus the awkwardness of trying not to get too much sand into our borrowed house.

Being so mild for the time of year and the house well insulated, there had been no need to light the fire. As the afternoon drew on, this became a little more necessary and the trickiness of trying to get the heat from soaring away commenced. I am not sure we will ever get to grips with it. Two logs is about the minimum we can set the fire with and that seems to last a couple of hours. It then depends on how cold it is and when we lit it to see if its worth doing again. While it looks good and generates some welcome warmth in a reasonably short time I do not think it is particularly cheaper than turning on an electric heater and certainly less controllable. I do not think we will be asking our builder to install one when – or even if – our building work starts.

The lamb hotpot was right on, by the way.

November 25th – Saturday

ABH played an absolute blinder this morning. I have to hand it to her, it was a beauty.

I am now quite used to being woken at around six o'clock. It is no use pretending to be asleep because the nuzzling and licking is relentless. I have tried taking her out for her brief, necessary walk, and then going back to bed but she is up then and will not settle again.

This morning, she climbed up on my sleeping form and eventually got me out of bed to get dressed. By the time I came back, she was dozing again, so I played the game

and stroked her for a bit in an effort to get her to move, which normally works with a bit of fuss and screeching. Today she would not move. Giving up, I took off my coat and hat and settled back down on the bed to doze until she was ready. No sooner had I done so that she was climbing on top of me again and nuzzling to get me up.

I got up. Went to get my coat and hat which I had left outside the bedroom door and when I came back she was curled up 'sleeping' again. Forceable eviction ensued accompanied by much kicking and screaming. We are not having any of that nonsense, thank you.

It was a day of doing very little. Alright, it was a day of not doing anything at all. Nothing constructive anyway. If you do not get any pleasure about people reading books, wandering about aimlessly and generally wasting their time, I would stop reading now, dear reader.

The air first thing in the morning was crisp, cold and dry. We wandered out further for our first walk than we usually do and therefore by the time we got back I did not feel like heading back to bed again. Perhaps it was in sympathy with the fishermen who were just piling out into the bay when we were going by. It did not excite any interest from ABH today, after all, if you have seen one tractor pushing boats out, you have seen them all. I spoke to one of the fishermen yesterday and he confirmed that it was indeed squid time and very prolific they were too. He also confirmed how rough it was that morning when they were heading in.

We did a bit of mooching around at home and I read up the latest response from the supplier of our new laptop computer. I had experienced a problem with the operating system and had reported it. The company wrote back asking me to dance through some diagnostics, which worked without error, and to reload the operating system, a process that did not work.

I was unhappy with the company's response that it was clearly a software issue and as such was a chargeable fix. I could send the computer back for an exchange or pay to talk to the software people. The latter would be fruitless as the problem has existed for some time, according to reports on the Internet, and is intermittent and so cannot be properly tested for. The company told me that I could send the unit back for replacement and responded telling them that I could also send it back for a refund. I am now undecided as to whether I should do nothing or go through the hassle of sending it back and buying another. I will sleep on it.

There was no sleeping with ABH about, although I did try. Toward the end of the morning she was keen to go out again and since the tide would stop any shenanigans in the afternoon, I thought to get her down to the beach for a run about. We were not alone, which is always a challenge. A small family with a long-haired dachshund were there ahead of us and a group of kayakers were gathered to launch into the small amount of water at low tide. The family were quite amenable to ABH circling them, barking but alas, the dachshund was not and cowered away from our

rumbustious and insistent little girl. In the end I had to put her back on the lead and take her around the beach tethered.

She still managed to take herself in for a swim that the Missus deeply appreciate when we got home. She also tracked down the severed head of a guillemot, most likely the same one she chased into the water a couple of evenings ago. The bird did not look in the best of condition then and clearly was not. It was not ABH's fault but it is likely she hastened the inevitable.

The Missus had repaired to the flat where we met up after the second run out. There had been far less beach, which was unfortunate because we met a three-month old pup on the way around the block who was super-keen to play. It is not the same in a car park at the end of a lead.

I had been chilly during the morning and decided to light the fire. We only really needed the chill taken off but we soon had our hothouse back and I was down to t-shirt and shorts in the house. I lit it again in the evening, which was a big mistake because the outside temperature did not drop like it did the previous evening. While the excellent insulation of the relatively new house is a revelation to us granite house dwellers, the heating options are fraught. One we need to know how cold we will be twenty four hours in advance and the other is uncontrollable.

Those indeed were the highlights of our very sedate day. It is unlikely to be that much more interesting tomorrow as it is a shooting day. Perhaps I should write in my own margin, must try harder.

November 24th – Friday

As I did my rounds last night with ABH in tow, I wondered at how mild the evening was. There was not a scrap of breeze, I had not bothered with a jacket and felt perfectly comfortable.

I pondered this as ABH and I stood outside the shop in the bitter cold blowing in from the northwest as I put our new box together. It was just the thing to be manoeuvring flat panels about in.

We had been to the beach after I returned from my blistering session at the gymnasium. We were lucky enough to find a young boy down there of about the right age to have a play with. Well, I say have a play with. ABH ran around the chap in circles while he studiously ignored her and chased after the ball that was being thrown for him. It did not matter much to ABH who carried on regardless and chased after the dog chasing after the ball into the water. The owner was trying to wash off the heady aroma of dead, putrefying seal that he had erstwhile been rolling in on the big beach. The smell was no disincentive to ABH but they left after a short while and I had to hold on to her while they departed lest she follow.

Even when the other dog had deserted her, she had a grand time chasing around the empty beach, picking up fronds of the copious oar weed that was down there and running it hither and thither. There were more tractor tracks to run up and down and one of the fishermen came down and played with her too. I do not think that we noticed the cold breeze then as we were too busy enjoying ourselves – well, one of us was.

The box was a fairly straightforward construction and much like the previous one. I am not sure whether I was remembering building the last one or just making logical assumptions from taking the old one apart. Clearly I used my extensive knowledge and finely honed technical skills and only had to undo a few things that I had put on back to front. The lid almost fits perfectly but I may have to put a latch on it to stop it blowing up in high winds. The last one fitted more snugly.

The pile of buddleia sitting in the mews taunted me every time I went past it. On my last walk past, returning home after finishing the box, I decided that I had better do something about it – after a cup of tea and sit down, naturally. It was not the ideal solution because it still left us a further job later down the line, but I squeezed it into the back of the truck and took it up to The Farm.

Since ABH was climbing the walls when I went back to the house, I took her too. I had brought her away from the shop when the Missus turned up with Mother and she had been in the house since then.

It was probably as well that I had not attempted to fit the buddleia into the truck yesterday as I had enough trouble getting into the back when it was relatively empty. Fortunately, it bunched up and squeezed in a good deal and with sheer brute force – alright, probably not so sheer these days – I managed to get it all in bar some sweepings that I am hoping the wind deals with. It helped, too, that there were some cutters in the back of the truck that look like bolt cutters but are designed for thicker branches that I employed to good effect. I collected ABH from her position clinging to the ceiling and loaded her too.

We were not able to get the hedges trimmed this year as our main man was having his hedging equipment fixed. I think I reported before that there is a particularly vicious bit of gorse at the start – or end – of the lane that is capable of taking out wing mirrors. I had tried to remind myself to do something about it before but now that I was aware of the bolt cutteresque secateurs I could actually do something about it. I decided to do that on the way out, after I had corrected my wing mirror that had flattened against the side of the truck.

We have rather ignored The Farm over the course of several weeks because of all we are doing here in The Cove. It has suffered a bit but more from the weather than from neglect. The end of the polytunnel is open to the fresh air with a massive rent in it. At first glance, only recovering the whole tunnel or building a wall at the end seem

the likely resolutions. I do not think it will suffer more by being put on the back burner until we have more time to consider what to do.

I am already aware that we have a rat problem in the toolshed. The Missus opened the door to find a rat running around the woodwork near the top of the walls. She reckoned there is a nest in some rolled up tarpaulin, in fact she was sure of it because tarpaulins do not usually squeal when poked with a broom handle. It is difficult to know what to do with that. I have a .22 rifle that would pare down the undoubtedly large population but not really effectively and putting down poison runs the risk of collateral damage – small errant hounds that do not do as they are told.

She demonstrated the latter skill several times during our visit to The Farm. First she wandered into the lane and would not come back when called – until I mentioned the ‘treat’ word. We used to be unbothered by traffic on the lane but a business has moved in next to us and I counted three vehicles passing the gate in the short time we were there. It is a worry.

I let her range across the rest of the field as there is little there to bother either of us, I thought. We had narrowly missed a rabbit casually traversing the decking when we got there but there is little else of note when there is movement around. The rabbit made a quick exit when it saw us coming. I walked with her across the length and breadth of the field when I emptied the buddleia from the truck.

She went off exploring ahead of me, so at least I could keep an eye on her. She was sniffing at everything on the ground, as small errant hounds do, and nibbling at the well known delicacy merde du bunny here and there. She stopped to sniff – only sniff thankfully – some mushrooms growing in a single patch of ground where the conditions were clearly good for that sort of thing. She did not need telling not to eat them, so, since she will eat just about anything else including whole snails, these mushrooms were not for mushroom soup. I looked them up later and the closest I could find, though not definitively so, were False Funnels which can make you very dead if consumed.

As if terribly disappointed that she could not worry me with mushrooms, she diverted from our return path up the field to the far side. She came bounding back with glee and a ‘thing’ dangling from her maw. She was not about to let me anywhere near her to remove the object which, when I managed to get close enough, looked like it might have been, a long time ago, a big bird of some sort. The only thing left to do was to turn my back on her and make towards the truck. Happily, she followed without her prize, which will remain where she left it until our next visit, no doubt. There is no other creature alive dumb enough to want to move it.

I stopped the truck at the end – or start – of the lane to deal with the gorse bush that had just flatted the wing mirror on the other side. Yes, dear reader, the smart money would have dealt with it before driving by but I think you will find that the smart

money would have discovered that they could not get out of the truck before as the lane is too narrow and choked with weed.

After clipping part of the bush away with the cutters, I pushed the bigger, problem part to one side to get at the thick stem holding it in place and it duly fell off in my hand. Sometimes you must wonder whether getting out of bed in the morning was really a wise move.

November 23rd – Thursday

It was quite cold first thing out and about in The Cove. I did not put too much interest into where the wind was coming from, probably somewhere in the west, only that it was blowing and it was sharp – and way too early for any sensible person to be out and about.

The weather these past two days has been very odd, weird if I were to have to narrow it down. For example, yesterday, the greyness disappeared for a while in the middle of the day and we had high level wispy cloud above us with blue sky nearly all the way across. Looking out across the bay on my way home from town, there was a sizeable cloud of mizzle sweeping across from the northwest. This was effectively rain at ground level and with nothing above it.

Today, we had much the same. In the middle of the day heavy mizzle swept in across the peninsula and above it, innocuous and rainless grey cloud. It seemed much heavier than yesterday, too.

My pal, true to his word and almost to the minute he said he would arrive, dropped off the crowbar this morning. I promised that I would not break into his house, honest, and frankly I did not have enough time to. By the time I got out of the door after another running ABH around the block - twice, the Missus was ready and wanted some assistance breaking down our bed in the flat so we could use the room for other things that needed to be moved out of the way.

As soon as I was released, I set to on the box outside. The crowbar was exactly the right tool for the job and it made light work of it. Next up was lopping off the last big branch from the buddleia with the electric chain saw. When I last used it, the machine came to a grinding halt which I took to be the battery going flat. In the interim I had recharged the battery and the machine still was disinclined to buzz. It appeared that the chain had got caught up somewhere which meant taking it to bits while I was at the most inappropriate place to do it, under the bush in the gully beside the shop.

It took a while to work out what to do, which involved taking the chain off and refitting it – with the battery safely in my pocket, of course. After a couple of attempts, I got there and the vicious machine made light work of dismantling the bush. I cut up the

big bits that I had already done so that they fitted into the truck and placed them in a pile on the side.

I reasoned that it would be easier to put the bush bits in last, so I took the truck down to the front of the shop so that I could load everything else. I had to drop the rear window to fit the tall CD tower in. This nearly took my head off when a car stopped in front of me for no particular reason on the way into town. It was not until I was at the gates of the, erm, Household Waste Recycling Centre that I remembered that I had not gone back up to the mews and loaded the bush; the primary reason for going. I will have to take it up to The Farm now for burning – when we get around to it – the burning that it, I will have to take it tomorrow before I get complained at.

ABH did not get much of a look in today. I whizzed her down to the beach when I came back from the tip, sorry, Household Waste Recycling Centre but it was very brief. I nearly managed to lose a shoe while I was there. It happens every now and again when the tide has been in to cover the tracks made by the boats going out. The sand replaced in the grooves is almost liquid and a foot can disappear before you know it. I trod more carefully after that.

I had tried to get her down to the beach twice earlier on but was thwarted by the fishing boats. When they were going out we spent ten minutes waiting while ABH, front paws on the wall overlooking the Harbour so she could see over the top, watched the brightly lit tractor haul the boats out. We picked a poor time later as well when the boats were coming back in again. We watched them rocking around just outside the entrance to the Harbour. The sea state had picked up a bit heading towards high water and it did not look very comfortable at all.

I was rather hoping that things calmed down a bit toward low water in the evening as someone had called up a training launch of the Lifeboat. We duly gathered at half past six o'clock in the dark and the cold to push the boat out and wave our hankies at the Boat Crew.

We set up the long slipway, which was a long way down before we found any water. It was even further down when the boat returned heading toward half past eight o'clock. Our man, standing in front of me, had to climb down on the slippery rocks to receive the heaving line from the boat. It looked very dangerous and I would have done it myself, of course, but someone had to stand there and do the other very dangerous and highly trained job of waving the green light around to signal the winchman to start hauling the boat up. It was, without doubt, a first class, textbook recovery, not that anyone could see it – no even us and we were there – as it is fearfully dark at the end of the long slip at low water when it is nighttime. It is a lot lighter in the day.

We took our time in bringing the boat to the top of the slip and washing it down after an arduous training session alongside the Inshore boat that was being recovered at the same time. We are, after all, a very multi-tasking, very excellent Shore Crew.

November 22nd – Wednesday

I was wrong about the wind. It came back today but not quite as punchy as it had been the last few weeks. It certainly did not stop the fishing fleet from heading out, or at least some of them. We should be well into squid season by now but I have not heard anything but there again I have not spoken with any of them either.

It was an early start again this morning but I stayed up this time and despite a second trip out with ABH a little further into the morning, this time when it was just getting light, I managed to get to the gymnasium much earlier than of late.

The beach was a pleasant place to be that early in the morning. The waves were still lapping that gave the little girl some sport chasing them in and out. She also loves the tracks that the fishing boat keels make in the sand and runs up and down them. It seemed a shame to come away prematurely, so I let her play as long as she wanted and still made it to the gymnasium earlier than usual.

I was keen to get ahead of the posse because I wanted to see if I could do my chores and make it to the tip, sorry, Household Waste Recycling Centre at a reasonable hour as well as dropping into the bank in town. It was an ambitious plan and consequently failed miserably. I will have to set more achievable goals next time.

The chores included dismantling the newspaper box at the front of the shop and chopping down the remains of the, what I now think is a buddleia, ... now here is a thing. Sorry to intrude but I ought to explain this before the moment is lost. When I make a spelling mistake, the very useful Microsoft Word program underlines it with a red squiggly line. If I want to discover how Microsoft Word thinks the word is spelt, I right click on the word and it will give me suggestions, like I did with buddleia. Because I am using my new laptop and a new installation of Word, it keeps popping up 'suggestions'. The suggestion it popped up when I right clicked on the misspelt buddleia to correct it was 'right click on misspelt words for suggestions'. Mmm.

Sorry, I digress. Now, where was I? Ah, yes – chopping down the remains of the, what I now think is a buddleia, at the back of the building. I also needed to chop up what I had already chopped off so that it fitted in the truck. It was a tall order, and by the time I got onto the box at the front I should really have been heading into town to avoid missing the bank.

I broke off all other jobs, collected what I needed for the bank and headed into town. It has been a year at least since I parked at the bottom end of town and walked up through Wharfside. What a desolate place that has become. Most of the units there are empty but at least they have some tidy advertising in the windows rather just whitewash and posters. I believe it is more cost effective for the owners to keep the

units empty than rent them out at reduced rates. Not very helpful when in this part of the world there are more than the average number of entrepreneurs waiting for a break.

Market Jew Street fares no better and possibly worse as its empty shops do have whitewashed windows and scraggy posters. Many of this premises that are occupied could do with a bit of TLC but I could not criticise a shopkeeper for not doing so. There will be better things to spend slim profits on. The much maligned council must take quite a lot of responsibility for the state of affairs – need I mention an unused park and ride in Tesmorbury's car park of all places.

I am quick enough to condemn the bank for its lack of human tellers, so I had better give praise to the one lady teller who was sat at her post. I had found an envelope containing some old twenty pound notes and decided to ask if I could pay a bill using them. This was indeed acceptable but left me with one note spare. I asked if the machines there would take the remaining note as I believed that they now had to be banked rather than exchanged. The very pleasant teller asked if I would prefer it if she just swopped it for a new note, which pleasantly surprised me greatly. I never did check to see if it was a real one.

Coming back, the Missus had saved up some boxes and bags for me to take up to the house. I am surprised it is not full yet. It worries me because the more we take up, the more we bring back. We could, of course, leave bits behind we no longer want and claim that they were nothing to do with us. With each bag and box my goal of breaking down our newspaper box and attacking the remnants of the buddleia took another step backwards.

As if I did not already know, our newspaper box is very robust. It was the best one I could get my hands on and it served well over several years. I would not be replacing it at all save for the hinges that are rusted through but even now, I found that they were loathed to desert their posts. Only one hinge had given up the ghost completely. The other was still hanging on. I thought to rip the lid off but even that was not as easy as a quick twist and took me ten minutes of twisting and turning before it gave it and snapped off.

The remaining hinge bits, bolted to the plastic, also were making a last stand worthy of The Alamo. They needed to come away because behind them was a screw holding the side panels to the back panels. Eventually, the nuts and bolts and screws came away and I assumed a quick belt with a mallet would part them but it was not to be. The sides are held in place by the base plate, which was a snap-on during construction but clearly not designed to snap-off again. The tool of choice would be my crow bar or, quite possibly, my wrecking bar both of which are at The Farm. With time pressing on, I decided to run away and meet battle again another day.

If you are looking for a garden box, dear reader, or a shed or garage all made of eco unfriendly plastic, you could no worse than look at the catalogue offered by the

company, Lifetime. I highly recommend them – providing you never want to get rid of it.

In between all these shenanigans, I had run ABH out a good half a dozen times during the day. The tides are tiny this week and there is never a time when we cannot get down to the beach, so we have been taking advantage, mainly at her behest. I think we visited three times during the day – no wonder I cannot get anything done – and the last time it was getting a bit gloomy down there. We very nearly tripped over a small guillemot sitting on the beach. It was most put out that it had to make a swift exit to the sea as ABH thought it was yet another potential playmate.

I had sent a message to a pal and I now have a crow bar turning up first thing in the morning. When he asked what I wanted it for I told him I was trying to break into his house while he was at work but could not prise open the window. It is a testament to my lack of credibility that he is still bring it around in the morning. I just hope his house is not broken into during the day or I am well and truly in the frame.

November 21st – Tuesday

Well, this is going to be a very short entry for today - possibly.

I missed out on the last RNLI casualty care course because it was run over full days when the shop was open. Therefore when another course was up for grabs, I signed on. However, this one is only the one day and is a light version of the casualty course and aimed at First Aid instead.

It was a chunky day's worth of course and ran from early until late. I had to call the Missus to drop some biscuits over from the shop as no one had thought to provision the day properly, which was very remiss of someone. Very necessary they were too, sustaining us through heart stoppings, chokings, drownings, broken limbs, life threatening bleeds and hypothermia. We were exhausted by the end of all that.

Darkness had fallen by the time we came out and the temperature, even during the day, had dropped dramatically. Earlier on, just about the time we stopped for some dinner, a shower had blown through The Cove, which no one was expecting.

That breeze was quite strong from the outset this morning. ABH was not all that happy about it when we made our short excursion around the block just before I went off on the course. We followed the bin lorry that had just emptied our own bin and she seemed unfazed by the noise, which is an advance on her first scared half to death encounter when our commercial bin lorry arrived when we first started sitting her in the shop. It might have been because this lorry was not quite as noisy, but I prefer to think on it as progress.

The Missus was out when I came back to the house for dinner and to pay the much maligned council for the building regulations planning. At least it was some indication that things are progressing, although we still do not even have a date for the scaffolding going up yet. Most of the running has been done by the structural engineer who seems to be pushing things along at pace. For this we are very grateful, although he is hardly doing it out of the goodness of his heart.

I took the little girl down to the Harbour beach almost as soon as I got back from the end of the course. It was very gloomy but not quite dark yet. She made a beeline for the water which was very calm and clear and had a bit of a paddle. It made a change from crashing waves running up the beach giving ABH the opportunity to demonstrate just how fleet of paw she is. This time she was just wet of paw and somewhere up the beach discovered a tiny crab claw, tossing it about and rolling about until she was sandy and wet of paw.

We did not tarry long as it was teatime. With the temperature as cold as we have felt it of late, I was quite grateful to come into the warm of the house with the log burner on the tail end of its cycle. The living room was pleasantly warm this time rather than furnace-like as it was on Sunday. I do not think that it was because of the cold outside, just that the fire was better controlled today.

I noticed from the synoptic chart I gazed at yesterday that we are in for a bit of high pressure. Hopefully, that will put paid to the breeze that we have had to put up with for what seemed like weeks. The last couple of times I took the little girl out, the wind had almost gone completely. Things are looking up.

November 20th – Monday

I was up with the lark again, which is very much dictated by ABH but since I was awake anyway, it was not too much of an issue.

It was raining when we stepped outside the door and I had to encourage her not to come straight back in again. She was out in much worse the other night but for some reason, rain in the morning is just not the same. We did not linger and spent only the necessary amount of time outside followed by a towelling down when we got back. I do love a good towelling down when I come in from the rain. I also did ABH since her next stop was the bed and the sleeping Missus. I may not have done as good a job as I might judging from the screams of surprise from the bedroom a few seconds later.

I decided against trying to fit a visit to the gymnasium in. I knew that I would have to wait in for the delivery that I missed on Friday, but I was not sure when. It was not until long past going to the gymnasium time that the company updated its delivery times by which time it was too late to go and be back in time.

Today was going to be a day of waiting around in the flat or in the shop as alongside the laptop delivery in the morning, the new box for outside was arriving between four o'clock and seven o'clock in the evening. The three hour window was not in the least helpful and would mean that I would be stuck with very little to do, at teatime, waiting in the flat or the shop. The advice said that the driver, and it gave his name, which was friendly of them – no, the driver's name was Ryan, 'friendly of them' is what I thought the company was being – and the message said that Ryan would call before he arrived. I have noticed after a couple of calls to my mobile telephone that the signal in the house is not the best and I have missed a call or two otherwise I would have waited in the house.

As it turned out, the box arriving in the evening was to be the least of my concerns. The Missus had gone ahead of me to type up the Carols in the Cove song sheet and I followed over a good hour later but still an hour in advance of the laptop arriving. To pass the time while I waited, I decided to do something constructive and date ordered the invoices ready for input. This itself took quite a while and by the time I started keying in, the delivery window I had been given had commenced.

I was right in my assessment that having something to do would pass the time quicker and before I knew it the delivery window had elapsed. The only sardine in that particular can of olives was the delivery had not actually happened. I left it another half an hour and called the courier company.

I always thought that I would have to go a long way to find a company worse at delivering than Doing Parcels Dreadfully, but Unspeakably Pointless Service were streaks ahead of them in awfulness. At least the former generally delivered something in the window they give you, even if it is only part of what you wanted or not what you wanted at all. The very unhelpful person I eventually spoke with might as well have been an automated voice response. Whatever I asked, I was told that the window I was given was just an estimate and the driver would be with me by seven o'clock this evening. I said that I had already waited three hours and that there were no toilet facilities at the location, which was not a complete untruth. Did he really expect me to wait a further five hours? 'Yes', he said, completely without emotion.

There was nothing really for it but to take ABH down to the Harbour beach for a run about. The Missus had deserted me at the outset of the delivery period to go and visit a friend recuperating from an illness. ABH had been sitting there all that time being very good. I was still able to keep an eye on the hill down and know that I did not miss anything. I also put a big note in the window for the driver asking for a call when he arrived.

I returned pretty smartish at the sight of a van coming down the hill but it was turning around further up the road when I arrived. I had no choice but to ride it out. It was a long time coming but the driver eventually arrived and caught me napping, not literally but I had stopped being attentive for vans turning up. There was no apology

forthcoming and therefore no thanking him, definitely no tipping and he had me at my most surly. That will teach him.

That only left an hour before my next vigil or rather it did not. A ping on my mobile telephone kindly informed me that Ryan was running between one hour and two hours late. That made the latest he might arrive, barring any further delays, nine o'clock. I do want our new storage box for the outside but I am not staying up late for it; I have things to do tomorrow. Neither did I intend to sit in a cold flat or stand around in the shop for potentially four hours waiting for it; I would leave it until he telephoned.

This gave me the problem that signal in the house is next to non-existent. I tried at both ends of the ground floor but the signal was not sufficiently strong to assure me that I would not miss the call. It took a while but I eventually worked out that I could forward the call to my landline, which I get across the Internet. I also set my screen up to watch the camera outside the shop. I would, however, not lose any sleep if the process did not work.

We were in the middle of tea, of course, when the call came through. It had found a single thread of signal and come through on my mobile telephone. This was fine until I moved the telephone to answer it and promptly lost the signal. I made the assumption that it was our man because hardly anyone calls my mobile telephone, so I knew he was probably half an hour out. He called again when he arrived but I had already seen him on the camera and was on my way.

At least now we are settled in the house we can use its address for future deliveries. The problem with that is that we used to get a line of delivery drivers call at the shop asking where the Mews was. Perhaps we should just stop ordering things.

November 19th – Sunday

Earthquake! Well, I never did. Apparently, we have them from time to time, but this is the first one I have heard and felt and measured 2.7 on the Richter scale, which for these parts is quite a lot. I have been asked during the day by anxious bystanders, yes, I did ask the Missus if the Earth moved for her. She assured me that it had and apologised that it had woken me up. ABH did not batter an eyelid at such trivial natural phenomena.

There was a moment's panic in the morning when I realised that I had not checked to see if I had any Lifeboat launch cover for when I went off shooting. Thankfully, I did because it was one of my preferred sessions using my cowboy rifle in the morning and revolver in the afternoon. We were few on the ground, particularly in the afternoon but we had a fine and enjoyable session all told.

The breeze plagued us all day, banging in from the west all day and reaching slightly more than 50 miles per hour at one point. We certainly felt it up on the hillside

despite being sheltered in the firing point. All our target stands had to be weighted down, although we did not have quite so much trouble with the targets themselves as there was no rain about today.

It had been reasonably mild all day if you discounted the wind chill. It only started to dip in the afternoon after about two o'clock as the sun loses whatever potency it might have had earlier in the day. We all started to feel it a little bit, but we closed down early as there were only half a dozen of us there for the afternoon session. Even so, by the time I had cleaned my kit and put everything away, we were gone half past four o'clock.

I took ABH out as soon as I got back. I am glad that I had waited until after cleaning up because a heavy shower smoked through The Cove on the punchy wind. It was long gone by the time I took the little girl down to the Harbour beach.

At that time in the afternoon, we have it to ourselves – nearly. Yesterday, we were down at about the same time and had played around for half an hour. All our cavorting had been at the top end of the beach and it was not until near the end that we ventured down to the water line. This turned out to be quite fortuitous. I missed it again, but ABH started barking and circling and when I looked at the focus of her attention there was an adult seal lying there. It blended into its surrounding and could easily have been another rock or pile of weed in the gloom of dusk. It took a minute to snatch up the little girl before she decided that this was her new best friend and started to harry it to play games with her. We made a swift exit but by the time we reached the top of the western slip, the seal turned about and plopped back into the water.

There was no seal there today, but I made sure that ABH revisited the scene of the crime. She should be wary of seals and their sharp teeth, but I wanted to make sure that she was not traumatised by the encounter. It was her second seal and clearly she could not give a care. We will stop counting now as I do not want to know what happens after the sixth.

It was nearly teatime when we got back. The Missus had lit the wood burner for Mother in my absence and when I arrived back from the range, it had gone out, but the room was still exceedingly warm. They agreed they should give it one more burn to see us through until the end of tea and when I came back with ABH the room was a furnace. Mother enjoyed it though, but I do hope she is not spoiled for when we get back home eventually.

It was not until long after we returned home again after a last run around the block while the Missus took Mother home that the room started to return to a more, for me, acceptable level. It was immediately on our return that I discovered that the windows downstairs do not open, and I had run out of layers to take off. I am sure that the warmth is not excessive, really. It is just that we are unused to such luxurious temperatures in our home. I am hoping that after the work is complete, the insulation

in the walls, windows and ceiling in the living room is markedly better than it was before. There surely has to be some tangible benefit from all this upheaval other than not having the roof collapse on us or perhaps that is just being unreasonably greedy.

November 18th – Saturday

It could hardly be said that we set the world alight today and it was not even raining. It did look like it might not long have finished but the streets were not running in water, so I guessed we had got away lightly. When I checked in the shop later on, there was no evidence that we had been overrun. It has to be pretty bad and sustained for that to happen, really.

I milled about a bit during the morning then took ABH out for a proper spin around mid-morning. I had agonised about what I might have for breakfast. With the shop now closed, we are running on frozen leftovers and things like fresh ham and cheese are a distant memory. We still have them, but I need to have decided the day before so that they can defrost. I also need to prepare dinner for tomorrow at the range, which is a weekly challenge. It was on the way back from our circuit that the smell of bacon originating from the café next door caught my attention.

The Missus had a bacon roll yesterday but the timing was wrong for me coming back from the gymnasium. An added factor in my decision-making today was that the café closes from Friday next week, but it really was the aroma that clinched it. They do a BLT sub, which is huge. Too huge, really, and eating a whole one is a bit piggy. It is also quite juicy and cannot be halved for consumption the next day as it will become soggy – honest, guv. Anyway, the Missus resolved my guilt by offering to have a slice of it, so that was alright then despite begrudging her every crumb.

She was off soon afterwards to continue the deep clean of the kitchen in the flat, ahead of the deep clean she will be doing after the work has finished. I hung back with ABH until I thought that the coast was clear and followed her over. A second item on the Internet marketplace had sold for much more than I had anticipated and needed posting off.

This time I used the suggested route of paying for and printing the postage using the facilities on the website. Quite how it is markedly cheaper for the same service, I have no idea. I was going to have to trek up to the post office anyway to drop the parcel off for collection as it did not fit the slot on the post box. As luck would have it, I ran into our postie as I was taking the package up to the flat.

To celebrate such good fortune, I harnessed up the little girl and took her out for a walk. I had no intention of wandering far and, as usual when it is available, we headed for the Harbour beach. Our angler was there again, comfortably seated in his picnic chair. We have become quite pally over the fortnight he has been here, and I stopped to have a chat while ABH sniffed his bait box for scanky mackerel. The little

girl ranged all over the beach but only when the angler's wife appeared with a small scotty dog did she become more animated.

The other dog was about the right age for a run around with her and they got on well together. The three of us watched for ten minutes or so while they chased each other in circles. I was informed that the scotty had just come back from a lengthy walk and it became clear that she was flagging a bit. I rescued her by collecting ABH and whisking her away up and around the big block.

I was informed that I had been informed before of a list that detailed where everything in the living room was to go. I do not recall the original informing but looked at the list anyway. I had thought that the television and associated equipment was going into the bedroom. That was the old plan, and the new plan was to move it into the shop, which I duly did. In the age of wireless everything I wonder why there are so many wires. The television, AV controller, DVD player and satellite receiver had at least twenty cables hanging out of the back. These are all neatly coiled and put in a cardboard box where they will be knotted and twisted together by the time I come to pulling them out again.

Having completed as many tasks as I was able to on my own, I retired to the house. The Missus came and went on various missions and when I came to preparing my dinner for tomorrow, I too came and went collecting things from the flat and the shop that were necessary for the task. Quite how long it will take us to return it all is a mystery that I would rather not contemplate.

It was late afternoon by the time we were able to sit on our behinds and take a breath. As I sat and opened a small libation I glanced at the clock and realised that it was probably time that I took ABH out again. I must have been some wicked growing up.

November 17th – Friday

After the excitement of yesterday we had a typically bland and sedate day today. The afternoon rain had much to do with that and does not inspire in us the desire to go out and do things, despite things needing to be done. It is very much a case of putting off today what can easily be done tomorrow, which I might have engraved on my headstone – although I will have to get around to that at some point.

I slipped away to the gymnasium later than I had wanted to but that is what happens on days where impetus has deserted you. Luckily, the impetus to execute a blistering session had not and I did. I think I may have just edged my recent best time over 5,000 metres, which after yesterday's walk, I was most pleased with but more surprised at. I still had enough left over at the end of it to take ABH out for a spin. We headed for the Harbour beach but did not tarry long. I hope that she has not found the scales fallen from her eyes now that she has explored further and something as

simple as the Harbour beach will no longer suffice. I will be in real trouble if that is the case.

One of the things that is most disruptive is that I have not yet moved my desktop computer up to the house. I am using an old laptop that is slow and does not always perform what I ask of it – much like my body these days. It also does not have a numeric keypad which makes inputting invoices, yes, there are still some to do, impossible. Since the laptop in the shop requires replacement and some time soon, I decided to purchase a new laptop to serve in the house. This will give me some options about moving the desktop and provide me with a proper computer to use in the meantime. When all is done, it will replace the shop laptop and the shop laptop will replace the outdated one I am using at present.

It took several days to define the laptop I would purchase as it will have to last a few years. The supplier boasted that there would be a next business day service, which turned into next business day but one when push came to shove. That was today. For once, it was not Doing Parcels Dreadfully making the delivery but another courier. We never see couriers down here until the early afternoon – ever – until today. I had expected a message of some sort to give me a delivery window, but none arrived. A message had turned up yesterday that permitted me to track the package and by the time I discovered that the delivery time was buried in this facility, they had already been and gone. I will have to wait until Monday and be vigilant. I will also have to cancel my Monday gymnasium visit in case it arrives during that.

When the Missus came back from collecting Mother, I headed down to the shop. The Missus had stopped halfway through cleaning our chest freezer in the shop and the resulting meltwater sitting in the bottom of the freezer for a week or more had become a health hazard. Fed up with the nasty niff, I took it into my own hands to bail out the water and finish off the clean – with plenty of soap, clean water and bleach – and a nose peg. I took my time and in the meanwhile the Missus came down and suggested we move her big two-seater chair. It was purchased ostensibly to permit enough space for the bleddy hound to sit down with her but the bleddy hound never did like such things and stalwartly would sit as far away from us as possible.

Naturally, at the time we decided to move it, the rain had decided to do some raining but it was not so hard that it would prevent us making the short journey up the slope. It makes for a bit of a squeeze in the living room and my leg rest has gone. I will have to improvise.

I had avoided taking ABH out in the rain, quite by chance. She had trotted down after the Missus when she came to get the chair but by the time I came back up in the late afternoon, there was plenty of time to wait until another walk was necessary. This worked well as it tipped down soon after I settled back in with a cup of tea. That seemed to be the nature of the rain today, several waves of heavy rain each followed by a pause in hostilities. It was not always possible to avoid the rain and when the

time came for our after tea walk, it was fair tipping it down. It would be some while before I could see any sort of pause and while I did consider not going, we ended up kitting up and going out into it.

It was not long into the walk when it became clear that a compromise was on the cards. The little girl seemed unphased by it but the rain was particularly heavy and there was no point in persisting for the sake of it. Even selecting a short cut did not dissuade ABH from taking her time.

The Missus had purchased her a waterproof jacket which keeps the majority of it dry. This is quite useful because it takes an age for her fur to dry. We even use a hair drier on her which after an initial battle, she rather likes, and it helps tremendously. Even so we try and avoid taking walks in the rain as it is such a fuss afterwards.

The rain was particularly heavy and was set to return after this lot had gone and continue all night and into the morning. The Cornishman's online outlet, which is not-at-all over-sensationalised or prone to exaggeration, told us that the Duchy would be lashed with heavy rain for ten hours. Roughly translated as a bit of rain overnight and clear by morning. I will have to check the shop in the morning and make sure we placed the furniture out of harm's way.

November 16th – Thursday

What a lively day we had. The Missus was out of bed early doors to make a meeting at Hayle of the great and good from the RNLI fundraising world. Particularly, she was there for the event organising bit to see what they could learn from her, I suspect. She said that most of it appeared to be about fund raising, so she would have to sit through the bits not really relevant to her. I am sure we have all been to those 'away days' and been bored rigid, half asleep in our chairs for much of it.

I asked if there was anything I could do to push forward the remains of our moving but was told, rather bluntly I felt, not to touch anything. This left me at a bit of a loose end with a needy ABH who was showing just how needy five minutes after the Missus left the house.

It was yesterday that I resolved to take the little girl to the top of the hill, whether she wanted to go or not. I am fed up with the repeated walks around the block and I am sure she is too. After an hour or so with her in the house, I was even more sure that was the thing to do, so after breakfast and completing a few chores, I went and fetched my walking boots from the flat.

A friend had called earlier that caused a minor delay in leaving. We had a plan in place to move the furniture before Lifeboat training in the evening. I had to change the plan shortly afterwards when the Coxswain called our first training launch in

several weeks. We would move the furniture with whoever was left after the boat launched. My friend told me that it was going to rain at about the time we had now planned to move the furniture and did we want to do it in the late afternoon, instead.

I was loathed to change the plan a second time and checked the weather forecast, for what it was worth in case he had looked at the wrong one. I looked at four and none of them contained any, or at least not enough rain to divert our work. He was still pretty keen to give it a try in the afternoon, though, so I agreed that we would see what the pair of us could do alone.

The reason for mentioning that at all in relation to our planned walk up the cliff was that I had looked at the forecast. The Meteorological Office had made it plain that the grey morning would remain grey and possibly mizzly right through until the end of the afternoon, when we would have sunny spells just before the sun set. I dressed accordingly, because looking out of the window, it did seem a little grey but also looked like it was improving. There was, however, a rather bitter wind blowing in from the northeast and that enticed me into waterproof trousers and a few layers to keep out the cold breeze.

I was jolly glad of those layers when we detoured to the Harbour beach for a bit of a play before we got going. It was empty down there and the sand had shifted about some more. The top corner was once again deep in sand as was most of the rest of the beach. There was hardly any weed about now, but ABH found a lump of sponge which thoroughly entertained her for fifteen minutes – what a resourceful small dog she is.

We eventually headed across the Harbour car park and up the steps to the new gate on the path. She hesitated a bit here and I was concerned that despite all the preparation that she would balk as she did last time. Luckily, there was a fellow walker coming up from behind that distracted her enough to get her through the gate and a good way along the path.

I bade our fellow walker a good morning as he passed and in doing so, he pointed up at a flock of birds above our head and said, “they’re all choughs”. I told him not to so ridiculous as I had never seen choughs on any of my walks in twenty years, but he was insistent. I looked again and sure enough, they did look a bit choughy. As I looked back to thank him for his observation, out of the corner of my eye I just caught sight of a unicorn going over the crest of the cliff, which clinched it for me.

It was still breezy going up the hill and I was grateful for my layers and wind-proofing. The eternal grey we were promised, however, was anything but and even on the beach, cloud was giving way to acres of blue sky and strong sunshine. By the time we started heading back along the cliff, I was starting to feel a little warm under the collar. When we reached the end of Maria’s Lane, the coat was coming open and the layers underneath were starting to feel very unnecessary.

The intention was that I would get to the top of the hill. The journey after that I had not thought much about. Stone Chair Lane looked a little premature to be heading down but as we approached the end of Maria's Lane, heading off around Carn Olva seemed a little too much for a little girl with little legs. The alternative, however, was to go down the path beside the road. I know that some work had been done on those deep steps, but I feared probably not enough. The little girl with little legs was not an issue for that route but for the big grumpy shopkeeper with dickie knees, it was going to be a mountain to climb, erm, in reverse. I opted for the Carn Olva route.

We headed on the path I last took with the bleddy hound some years ago, when she was still able for it. If someone had kept a meticulous record of what a grumpy shopkeeper did on his holiday, I would be able to look it up. As we walked down The Valley, I noticed markedly that heading downhill was a little more tricky than going up, especially being attached to an eager ABH. I was right about going down the Cove Hill footpath.

We joined the big beach at the bottom of The Valley where we were guaranteed not to have to clamber over rocks to get to it. The only other dogs I could see were right down by the tide line and about a quarter of a mile distant. I looked at ABH and reasoned that she would not hack all that way and that I was safe to let her off her lead. I was wrong.

I eventually caught up with her about ten minutes later having calculated the intersection point of the man and the two dogs who did not alter their pace heading to North Rocks. Luckily, it was a friend from the top of the hill, and we fell into conversation for a while. I was going to walk a bit further with them but I could see ABH eying two other dogs that were just about in sight at North Rocks and by the black huts of Carn Keys. Sadly, I had to put her on the lead again to stop her running off.

There is a large amount of sand missing from the big beach. I would not have been able to get up the large step onto the first path up to The Beach complex and the second was no better. The old Atlantic cables are exposed there looking in apparent good nick for something that has been there for around 100 years. The reef is exposed from that point to the OS slipway but there are plenty of routes through on the sand, so it is not as bad as it was, just different. I think we would struggle to get the Tooltrak down there in an emergency.

The weather had gradually improved on our way around The Cove. It felt like a summer day at times during the walk. By the time we got to the beach it was clear that I was seriously overdressed and overheating as a result. I was grateful when we reached the shade of Cove Road where the sun has deserted until February. To say that I was uncomfortable by the time I got back to the house was something of an understatement. A shower and a change of clothes was necessary.

The girl and I chilled out for an hour or so before I took her out once more. It was still very pleasant out, although it was getting cooler. There was just enough time for a run on the beach before my pal turned up to help with the furniture. Between us we managed two of the smaller modules of sofa and the big double chair the Missus has. The two larger waited until the very excellent Shore Crew had a spare moment before recovery later in the evening. There is a reason why they are very excellent and they proved it by quite routinely moving the bigger chunks of sofa with some ease.

We had gathered at six o'clock to launch the boat into the dark at near high tide. Some new recruits were getting their first feel of boating on the big water and we had one on the shore who turned out to be very good at moving sofas. We set up the short slip for later on and used the new leading lights that now switch on instantly and with just one press of the button. The Boat Crew can now turn them on from outside the gaps in the bay if they remember to take the switch with them.

The boat was gone for just over an hour and returned as the tide was receding. There was a bit of movement on the slip as a few waves slapped about a bit but we have had much worse. We brought the boat in at around half past seven o'clock in what was clearly, despite the passage of time, a textbook recovery. We are, after all, a very retentive, very excellent Shore Crew.

November 15th – Wednesday

It was a good looking day in the main and reasonably temperate for the time of year; I found myself taking ABH around later in the day without a coat on for the first time in weeks. It was still quite gloomy for the first run out and a little damp on the ground, but I still do not recall any rain overnight.

I slipped away to the gymnasium earlier than I managed on Monday. The floor had dried out and I managed a decent blistering session. I had swerved my warm up session earlier because my routine was disturbed – quite by what I cannot now recall. So chipper was I feeling at the end of my blistering session, I tacked on the session I should have done earlier. It was not wholly welcomed by my body. It seemed that it was only my mind in favour of the idea.

Nevertheless, I still had some resources left to take ABH out, which is usual when I come back from the gymnasium. Not that we tried to go there, but the beach was out of bounds first thing as the tide had caught up with us. It was a much better prospect later with plenty of sand to cavort around on, although ABH did not think so and headed up the western slip almost as soon as we got down on the beach. I do try and not be too prescriptive on our walks, although sometimes the available time means I have to direct a little bit, so I let her lead, and we went around the usual big block and back home again.

I was not back five minutes when the Missus announced that she was heading back to the flat to carry on carrying on. I have to admit that I have rather lost the plot of what the game plan is from this point, and I have not been made privy to it either. I was left to shower and have some breakfast and wonder over when I was ready.

There were some items that needed to go downstairs, and the Missus had emptied the kitchen freezer as soon as I had arrived. My job was to take some of it up to the house freezer and the rest to the freezer down in the shop. There is an expression: a quart into a pint pot, which originated from some other poor fool of a grumpy shopkeeper doing much the same thing a while back. I was much at a loose end after I had completed my only task.

I momentarily watched the Missus about the job of cleaning everything in the kitchen that was staying. The logic of this process defied me as the ceiling will be coming off issuing plaster dust about the place like a snow globe in a tumble drier. It will all need to be done again before we move back in again.

In fact, the cleaning and examining the appliances in greater detail has revealed that the fridge that is rusting here and there, will need to be replaced along with the freezer that was inherited when we moved in twenty years ago. The electric hob, that is cracked, has long been on the list and the oven door has recently ceased to close properly. If there is any money left at the end of the build it looks like we will need a new kitchen. If there is no money left at the end of the build, we will be living off salads for the rest of our days.

I ran away to the post office. During our clearing out I had found some items that were worth selling rather than throwing, so I listed them on an Internet marketplace to see what would happen. One of them sold. It has been a long time since I had used the system and there is no doubt that it is most useful on occasion. Some people make a living from it. In my absence, things had changed and there is a facility for buyers to place offers on the things you have listed before the auction is over. I had no idea.

I nearly lost a good offer for the item because of my ignorance, but the buyer was very keen and gave me a second shot at it. What I was confused by was the auction site's description of how it might be posted. It clearly has a deal with one particular courier, which it favours. Other options are available, but they are all orientated around the seller sitting on his or her behind at home and buying everything online, including the postage – there is even an option for home collection! When I went to the post office to send my item, the lady at the counter had no notion of what service the auction site had specified – some of the services are only available online – and posting the parcel cost me three times what I was charging for the service.

Returning home, full of ire, I thought to investigate before sending off a complaint and discovered that the post office names two of its options nearly the same. Post

Office has Tracked 48 and Parcel Force the same, but they are two different services ten pounds different.

Anyway, it was more exciting that sitting around watching the Missus clean things that were going to get dirty again. She was still doing it when I came back, so I took ABH our again and whisked her down to the beach where she was happier to play for a bit longer. It might have been because our angler was there again, which might lead me to believe that I am not a playmate of sufficient interest for her. It was a thought with implications not worth bearing with, so I did not think about it again.

It was our last big run out and we returned to await the Missus finishing her chores. While we were waiting, I decided to try and see where our replacement outside box had got to. We ordered it a couple of weeks ago and while the suggested lead time was a week, it was well overdue. It was more for something to do than because I was not desperate for the delivery, and I would have preferred to send a message rather than telephone, but that was not an option. It really should be an option for companies that do not like answering the telephone.

I had to wait almost interminably for my turn in the queue but when I was answered the very pleasant man on the other end was most helpful – or at least sounded like her was. The delivery has been outsourced to a ‘fulfilment’ company and it is them who are dragging their feet. The very pleasant man who answered for the supplier agreed that I had waited long enough and would send an appropriate message to make things happen. He said he would copy me in so that I would know what was happening. Either he did not send the message or he did not copy me in because I heard nothing further. I continue to wait.

The little girl was keen for another run out after tea, but it was a simple stroll around the big block. I was quite astounded that it was still very temperate out and I most probably could have done without the jacket I was wearing again. There was a weather front on the way, so we expect all change on the western front by morning. I can hardly wait.

November 14th – Tuesday

It was an early start again today but happily not as early as the previous one. I am not averse to an early start; it is a waste of daylight else.

The ground was wet from overnight but for our initial run out, just in the mews, it stayed dry from above. By the time we were ready for a proper stank about our end of The Cove, the rain was coming down in sheets. We were not exactly pressed for time and only had to wait half an hour before we could get out in the dry. I had not anticipated it raining any more but wore my full metal jacket waterproofs anyway, more out of habit than anything else.

We headed for the beach, as usual, which was empty and broad and long with the tide a long way down the beach. As I suggested yesterday, a great deal of sand had been scoured out and the rocks up in the corner that were completely covered yesterday were now exposed again.

There was a bit of running around and I found a frond of seaweed for her to chase as I swung it around. The builder chose this exact moment to call, which was the first time any of our builders had called us instead of having to be chased and cajoled into contact with us. I could hardly ignore such a momentous occasion but as I answered the telephone another dog owner descended the slipway, letting his dog off the lead as he came down.

This could have gone either way, but the man was clearly confident in the actions of his dog, and I knew exactly what ABH would do – leap for joy and make a beeline for the new arrival. I recognised the owner as the RNLi area manager, so probably just as well that things with the dogs went smoothly. For once, our little girl's attention was reciprocated, and the two dogs had a whale of a time for about twenty minutes. She was firmly put in her place more than a few times, but this did not make the slightest difference, ABH just kept on coming. Fortunately, the other owner was pragmatic and completely unconcerned. It is a shame the pair of them are not around more often.

While it may have been good news our builder calling, it offered no comfort that our works will start any time soon. He mentioned that the scaffolding was in design stage, and I reminded him that he had said that two weeks ago and nothing seemed to have changed. It was after I had taken ABH home and started work in the flat that the Missus called to tell me that a scaffolder had arrived, which was quite remarkable.

It was even more remarkable that the scaffolder told me that his brief was for just the front half of the building to be covered. I was slightly surprised as I had sent the schedule of works three times now, the last only a week ago. I called the builder, who was also surprised, so I enlightened him in a very grown-up and calm manner while screaming my head off on the inside. I think that we now have a common understanding – I really hope that we have a common understanding because I cannot promise to be grown-up and calm on a further occasion.

I spent a good proportion of the morning and much of the afternoon working in the flat, much like the Missus did the day before. I shifted one module of the sofas downstairs to the shop, a side table, the dining room tabletop and the dining room chairs. They need to be strategically placed so that they are not in harm's way if, and more likely when in this weather, the shop floods.

We still have the issue when the drain down the side of the building is inundated, and the water runs into the shop on the right-hand side. It follows a specific course

across the shop floor and disappears under the card stand on the opposite side. It generally does little damage except if you have left something in the way, like a sofa or two, or possibly a tabletop. I think I have missed the wet spots, but we are running out of sensible space. I now need some muscle in multiple hands to take down the bulkier and heavier modules of sofa – looks meaningfully in the direction of the Lifeboat station.

The rest of my time was spent clearing my desktop. I was at it the best part of an hour so deep in papers and ‘things’ was it. I had decided to just drop everything into a plastic container but inevitably ended up sorting wheat from chaff. I must stop having my breakfasts at my desk. Even then I did not finish. It did not help that I was distracted by some accounting work that popped up on the computer while I was there and the need to clear emails that had built up in my absence.

In the end I gave up and returned to the house. Given that I was away for so long, ABH felt it necessary to explain to me that she wanted to run around the block again because she was bored. The same had happened in the morning while we waited for the rain to clear and for me to have my breakfast. She gets to the point that she has asked nicely and that did not work, so it is time to play dirty. This involves ‘Nanny’s’ slippers, my gymnasium plimsols, and when they were put away, my waterproof lace-up shoes. The list goes on a bit because there is quite a bit that she knows she should not touch, although we have never had to reprimand her before about nicking the garlic bulbs out of the vegetable rack. That is now on the floor for the first time and clearly a legitimate target under the Leonberg Convention. Like the Geneva Convention but for dogs.

I avoided a repeat of the morning episode by capitulating early in the negotiation for another trip out after I had come back to the house. It had been pleasant enough all day with no rain that I could recall. There was a robust wind blowing in from somewhere toward the west and had been all day in different strengths. The sea was once again in a frenzy, running up to the slipway in the Harbour, over the Harbour wall and exploding over the footings of Pedn-men-du. It all looked rather grand in the setting sunlight that vied with a bit of cloud for sky space. It is a lovely time in the afternoon for things looking pretty.

I had a Lifeboat meeting in the evening, so there was no evening run out, just the one before bedtime. It remained dry until the end of our bit of the night but the wind is persistent. With the lack of streetlight still at our end of The Cove, we switch on the powerful floodlight – only one remains, although there is another that points out to sea – which gives plenty of light to the street. When (if?) the scaffolding goes up, we will lose that as well. Still, we have been in the dark long enough that it will make little difference. We will eat more carrots.

November 13th – Monday

ABH had me up at five o'clock this morning for the call of nature. I cannot complain as it means the process is starting to click with her. We were back in bed fifteen minutes later much of which was me getting dressed into something appropriate since the rain was still hanging on from early the previous evening.

We were up again at seven o'clock, which is more the normal time and I supposed just routine for the little girl. We paid the first of two trips to the Harbour beach but this time our angler had got in there first. This time I did not bother waiting as his line was already out there catching oar weed. He is a pleasant fellow anyway and understands why I am so cautious.

There is even more sand back on the beach, other that around the Lifeboat slipways. Up in the corner by the wall, the lower lying rocks are now completely covered. There is very little in the way of weed on the beach, other that what our angler friend had caught and left behind. On our earlier trip the retreating sea was making a meal of it, rolling in and crashing on the beach. It used to alarm ABH, but she is clearly used to it now, which perhaps is not always a good thing. She was even oblivious to the rattling of the shingle that the waves were dragging about, which was louder than the waves crashing in.

In between our two trips to the beach, I managed to squeeze in a trip to the gymnasium. I was late going, which was not ideal with so much to do in the flat, but I was not about to give up to my sessions. It was a blistering session without a doubt, and I managed to get back on top of my rowing performance again. Maybe it was the flood of rainwater that had leaked through the roof, blow under the tiles by the wind. I rather hoped that I had left enough oomph to start moving furniture about as instructed because I was unlikely to be given any quarter had I not.

As it transpired, I did not need my oomph for moving stuff as the Missus had other plans. I was to head into town, mainly to get fuel for the truck but also to go into Tesmorburys – you see, she really likes to punish me – to get the ingredients for a new experimental tea we are to have. I did cheat a little bit as I had errands to run in town, so I stopped by the very good butcher at the top of Chapel Street and got the pork mince from there. It was made up for me at the time, so I knew it had not been over half the country and stuck in a warehouse for a week first.

I also purchased some replacement light bulbs for the house. Many of the ones in place are those energy saving ones that take half an hour to warm up and are about as bright as a birthday cake candle. I bought some bright and shiny LED bulbs and put them in when we eventually made it back to the house. What a difference. There are some rooms where those energy saving bulbs are useful, such as ones you rarely use and do not have to see in. When one is placed in the smallest room of the house that is windowless it is as much use as a tissue paper thimble.

On the way back home, I passed by the fuel merchant that sits beside the main road. It is only accessible via a narrow lane that you need to know the turning for. I reckoned that I could get a better deal for logs there than our current supplier and sure enough they were a few bob cheaper. I also enquired about logs for the shop, and they can do better than our current supplier for those too and delivery twice as often. I bought two big bags of logs from them one Ash and the Birch to see if we can get more mileage from one than the other. I think that the Ash, which is harder, is supposed to last a bit longer and will be useful when Mother comes around. For ourselves, we probably only need a couple of hours in the evening and the softer, quicker burning wood would be better then. Depending on how cold this winter gets we could have ample time to experiment.

By the time I got back the Missus had broken down the dining room table and got the living room into a state she was happy with. Everything in there now needs to go down into the shop and that will require assistance. She migrated to the kitchen where there was still plenty of kitchen things to move out to the house. It is quite amazing just how much 'stuff' we accumulate in our lives. Much of it we could point to and say it was still useful but probably only once every several months for some of it. The number of bottles of oil, sauce and potions of various sorts we threw out because it was well out of date was legion.

One of the first things I had to do when I got back was to take ABH around again. The wind had returned with a vengeance. There was a bit more southwest in it than the last few days, but it was still pretty punchy in The Cove and the sea state had returned to boisterous. There were plenty of people in the Harbour car park down to watch it crash over the Harbour wall and boil incessantly over Cowloe and in the Tribbens. It was just smoking over the top of Pend-men-du, so not as severe as it was last week. We stood watching the wave come in from the grassy patch at the end of the car park. It was particularly mesmeric.

I noticed early that the sand was back not only in the Harbour but also on the big beach. Where I was unsure last time I looked, it was certain now that the rocky field under the Lifeguard hut was much diminished and much easier to traverse. We just hope that it does not get stripped out but this lasted turmoil in the bay.

The experimental tea was not quite the comestible delight that we had desired. The picture and description of pork congee had not filled me with much hope but the Missus does not normally produce duds, so I trusted her. The remnants have been frozen in the hope that things that taste of something can be added to it when we are brave enough to finish it off.

There are still things that have been left behind in the flat that are needed. They are only identified when that need arises such as finishing a book or wanting to charge my toothbrush. These things happen shortly after coming back from the flat with the

last thing that was needed. We will need to fix the groove in the path between the two doors soon.

On our last evening trip out in the black ink of the Harbour Car Park and the fresh breeze that runs across it, ABH made to come up the steps to the flat. I corrected her and we went around the back to the house. She pulled me back down the slope and we ended up at the foot of the steps to the flat again, making it clear where she would rather be. I heart feelingly agreed with her. I cannot help feeling that we will come out of these four months needing a break but will have to open the shop instead.

*And everyone out here does mean
And everyone out here does pain
But someone's gotta sing the stars
And someone's gotta sing the rain*

Nick Cave (Steve McQueen)

November 12th – Sunday

It had come in to rain heavily as we made our last trip back from the flat to the house last night. The wind started howling again during then night. We heard it because ABH was having trouble adjusting to her new surroundings we think. I suspect it was a bit of a shock having to squeeze into a bed six inches narrower than the one we were used to. I know it was for me.

I thought to try out the storage radiator in the living room leaving input at max and the output at minimum in an experiment to see if it could sustain some warmth through the day. When I came back from the range in the later afternoon it was still kicking out plenty of heat. The Missus had not bothered with it and instead lit the fire knowing that Mother would be around for the day. After I had cleaned up and settled back in the house, the living room was like a sauna without the steam. I suppose I could have thrown a ladle of water on the log burner for effect.

Even in the morning, with the settings on low, the room was warm enough for me. I am however used to managing without heaters at all in the morning, so this was sheer luxury – if you like that sort of thing.

There was still some rain about first thing, although we managed to avoid it when I took ABH down to the perfect sand on the Harbour beach again in the morning. We might have stayed longer if I had not been going to the range. As it was I was running late with things not being in the place I was used to them being and having to go back to the flat to collect various items and bring them to the house to conclude getting ready. I think this toing and froing is likely to last a few days until we have remembered all the essentials or have adapted to life without them.

One of the things we are used to is having clocks in particular places. There is now one clock in the living room that I forget is there. I have a wristwatch in my pocket as it has had no strap for years. Because it has been easier to look at one of our clocks, I rarely look at the watch. I did this morning and flew into a bit of a panic. I had no idea I had used up so much time messing around and alerted the Missus that we had to leave in a bit of a hurry. It was not until we were about to leave the house that I noticed the clock was showing plenty of time left. It appears that my watch had gained half an hour – or rather it had lost half an hour as I did not correct it when the clocks went back. I did not have the heart to tell the Missus that we were now early.

The rain cleared out in the middle of the morning but by that time it had played havoc with our paper targets. Our problems were exacerbated by the gusty wind that had accompanied the rain. In the end we had to paste the targets to the backing and staple them down as well. Happily, after the rain stopped, the wind also calmed down and business returned to normal.

While I was away on a cold and breezy hillside shooting things, the Missus and Mother decided to try out the Surf Bar, previously known as The Beach. It is under new management and they are trying particularly hard to make it a welcome place for eating, drinking and making merry. By all accounts they are doing rather well. Certainly, both Mother and the Missus thought the Sunday roast admirable and worth going back for another sometime.

I mangled together my own tea later on when I had cleaned up and put everything away. I went back to the flat a further two times in the evening because I had forgotten things I needed for the morning and even then left some behind. I should be grateful it is 20 metres down the slope – although that is 20 metres up the slope on the way back.

As we sat back in the evening, the Missus itemised the extensive list of mountainous tasks that needed to be completed the following day. I am rather hoping that she meant that we would start on them tomorrow rather than do them all in one day. Even so, there is a lot of heavy shifting on that list, and I am hoping we can find some fit young things to help out. We have beer and sweeties. I expect a queue at our door when word gets out.

November 11th – Saturday

The morning could not have been a more different morning to the ones preceding it. The wind had diminished to hardly a breath, the sea had calmed and there was a pretty sunrise colouring the sky to the east. We even had some blue sky here and there.

ABH had nuzzled at me, but I was already awake and the hour was reasonable. We usually have just a quick run out first thing, but the Harbour beach looked so

attractive it was difficult to ignore it. The little girl though so too and tore down there when I slipped her lead. We spent twenty minutes down there running about and ruining the smooth sand – well, she did. I stood about and watched her.

The shape of the beach had changed over the last couple of days of being thrashed by big angry waves. There is very little sand left under the Lifeboat slipways and just beside them. The rest of the beach has benefitted by having more sand dumped onto it and the far corner is now back to its usual state having been scoured out a week ago. I could not tell you much about the state of the big beach as I was not paying attention. Last week we could not get across it but that was during smaller neap tide. It did rather look like some of that big rocky reef had been covered but it might just have been the sea further out.

We took advantage of the Harbour beach again a little later when there were a few more people around. This lasted a while until another dog came on the scene and ABH, once again, would not leave him alone. Once again, we had to leave the beach in disgrace and walk around the block instead.

The rest of the day, in between walks, was moving various bits up to our temporary accommodation. This was mainly kitchen bits so that we can do more than just sleep up there. It does not make for very interesting reading and will make today's Diary necessarily a shadow of its former self. There was some sitting down and learning about the best way of running storage heaters, which in our view was throw them out and buy something a bit more useful and how to use the two-element immersion heater which was new to us.

The Internet has a whole library of useful recommendations and advice on the use of both the facilities, most of it similar, which was handy. There is nothing like looking something up and discovering a whole bunch of conflicting views. The immersion heater, therefore, will go on an hour before we need it, which means getting up an hour before I need to or opting to boil a kettle to shave with. Given that the immersion tank is bath sized, that seems like a sensible option, if a little awkward. The storage heaters will require us to get a crystal ball to determine if we will need them the following morning. I am still looking for the on switch on the log burner.

We dined at the flat and retired to the new house. Hopefully, the fairies will do the washing up by the morning. Now, I must remember to pack my toothbrush.

November 10th – Friday

The wind had been howling through the bits of the night that I had been awake for. It may well have stopped when I was asleep, but I will never know. I just know that we were both nearly thrown against the opposite wall when I opened the front door first thing. Also, by some amazing luck, I had chosen the precise time that the only shower for hours either side had elected to come by.

There were still some showers during the day, but they were few and far between but timed perfectly to catch you out if you could not see them coming. The wind had gone around to the northwest today, so straight into our faces and a little stronger than yesterday. Once again, the sea was the focus of today's entertainment and encouraged some wave watchers to arrive.

When I took the little girl around for a second time, straight after my blistering session at the gymnasium, back on form again, there was acres of beach available. Unfortunately, I was a little pressed for time given the Missus needed some help with our moving programme. I would have taken her down for a short run, but the angler was down there again and I am wary about flying hooks and a none too vigilant ABH. I risked it when we went down later on but we were chased off by the waves. I had not reckoned on them being quite so boisterous so early in the tide and I whisked her off quite sharpish.

My main target of the day was to dismantle one of the sofas. This is the one I intended to do yesterday but was stymied by having the wrong tools to hand. I may have mentioned that it is foolhardy throwing away things that had been kept because they might be useful one day. As soon as they are thrown away, the one day they would have been useful arrives swiftly afterwards. I threw a handful of Allen keys away the day before. What did I need for the sofa?

I cleared the rest of the table, which was another target of the day, so at least I had achieved something. When I came back from the gymnasium, I brought my tool box up from the shop – wherein lie Allen keys – and later in the afternoon set about with the sofa. The intention was to do it yesterday and encourage some beefy Lifeboat people to volunteer to shift it downstairs – beer usually works – but we were distracted by fire alarms and tipping cradles for one thing and the missing Allen keys for another. I will have to find some other beefy volunteer to help shift the sofa modules.

The project had taken a lot longer than I planned for. The sofa came apart easily enough but when I pulled out the drawer that sits in the middle section, the runner came out with it. This took a veritable age to put back together. I was hampered by trying to find the best position as I was having to bend over to look at it. In the end I sat on the bit of sofa I had removed and leant forward. I could not quite work out how it fitted together but was eventually helped by ABH coming back from the new house with the Missus. She climbed on my back while I was bent forward and stuck her head over my shoulder, occasionally with her tongue in my ear. No further encouragement was required, and I discovered a bit of carefully directed brute force did the trick – so I applied some to the runner as well.

We had some success with the log burner in the new house. The Missus lit the fire for Mother before she arrived and before she came back had already gone through a couple of logs. She added some more when I took ABH around the block and they were nearly gone before I came back. I realised that it was the damper, but which bit

the damper was I had no idea. It took some trial and error and I eventually worked out it was the spinney thing on the front. Screwing that down calmed the fire no end but by that time we had gone through the best part of a bag of logs in a little over a couple of hours. I will have a poke around at the fuel merchant in town to see if we can get a bigger bulk of logs for a better price.

The kitchen is in utter turmoil with contents of cupboards strewn about the place. How the Missus found space to cook our fish and chip tea, was itself a feat of craftsmanship. The tea was perfect. The Missus has been pan frying our Friday fish for at least a couple of years and is now master of it. The crust is nicely toasted while the fish within is moist. It helps having top quality fish from our man in Penzance and we have more than enough in the freezer to last the winter.

The Missus has determined that we will move to the new house tomorrow. We are not quite ready, but while we still live in the flat it is difficult to get to grips with things we are still using and is slowing her progress down. It will be a pain in the backside initially because we will be living in two properties, but it should not take long to move the last of the necessary bits. Gosh, it will be nice when its finished.

November 9th – Thursday

It looked a bit stormy out when I first peeked out of the window. Little did we know it was just warming up.

We went out anyway when it was still perfectly reasonable outside. I should have let ABH down onto the beach then because we did not have the opportunity again today. We hurried home where I discovered that I could not publish the Diary due to a technical fault at the other end that had been going on since the previous afternoon. It was a big problem, obviously, and it did not get fixed until the middle of the afternoon.

I set to with our dining room table full of things I needed to sort out and got through much of it. There is, however, still much to do but it got left because we both stopped for breakfast from next door, which was sumptuous, and we had to leave to run errands afterwards.

It was my intention to run up to The Farm, early doors, to empty the back of the truck and to put some oil in the chain saw while I was there. I was expecting to be blown off my feet up there, but it seemed more sheltered from the westerly rage than I anticipated and certainly more than The Cove. By the time I got back, the Missus was champing at the bit to get going, so I loaded the items for the tip, sorry, Household Waste Recycling Centre, studiously forgetting one or two things so that I would have to go again, and we set off to collect Mother.

Mother always comes on shopping trips, but it does not seem to dampen the Missus's propensity to spend any. I left them at the big shops to collect whatever the

Missus was shopping for and went on my way to the, erm, Household Waste Recycling Centre with ABH in the co-driver's seat. We were not asked for our little ticket but there were enough tip police, sorry, HWRC police there to direct each member of the public individually. I was told that duvets and clothes were to go in different containers, so too were the television I had with me, some electrical items and some dead batteries. I think I might have visited all the containers at the site and if I did not I will make it my earnest endeavour to do so next time.

All that and coming back to the big shops took a little while and when I got there, I took ABH for a walk to stretch her legs and mine. Even after all that the Missus had still not finished her shopping. We sat in the truck for a while until the Missus sent me message that I could come and give her a hand to load up. I sent her one back saying it was raining – left it a minute for effect and went anyway.

We have a big container up at The Farm full of Christmas decorations. There are also boxes of Christmas decorations that do not fit into the big container. I cannot describe my delight at discovering that amongst the items I had been asked to help move from the shop counter to the truck were more Christmas decorations.

We dropped Mother back home and by the time we arrived at the top of Cove Hill the wind had whipped the already big seas into a frenzy of white water. It was thumping over the wall and for the first time in a while, exploding over Pedn-men-du in geet towers of spray. ABH took a turn around the block a while after we got back. She was near bowled off her legs a few times and we had to take shelter behind the houses at the far end of the car park. The great towers of water shooting up the headland were taken by the wind taring in at 50 miles per hour and washed across the face of Mayon Cliff and everything below it, including us.

Timing it precisely, we made a break for Coastguard Row and did not slow out pace until a good halfway along. For our subsequent walks we only went around the small block. Neither I nor ABH had the will to be heading out in weather like that no matter how wrapped up against the weather we were.

She did not have the chance later as I headed over to the Lifeboat station for training. Unsurprisingly, we were not launching the boat tonight but there were a few there, many the youngsters from the Boat Crew, keen as mustard, and us somewhat more mature ones from the very excellent Shore Crew – a bit more coarse grain. After several days of station inspection, we had things to learn such as where all the fire extinguishers are and how to reset the fire alarm panel in the event of a false alarm.

We also learnt of the new policy of launching the Lifeboat if there is a fire in the house to save the boat. Very excellent Shore Crew members have been issued with oven gloves in case the handles on the winch get too hot and special dispensation to wear plimsols instead of wellington boots, so we can run away faster afterwards.

I was quite late coming back after fitting a new hose to the pressure washer and checking that we could still use the turntable after moving the fixed hose reel a bit closer to the boat. It was just in time to have a small nightcap before retiring to bed to listen to the sea crashing in one ear 'ole and the wind howling in the other.

November 8th – Wednesday

I was trying my best to lie in this morning, so ABH decided that today she would get up early. Still, I had made it until gone half past six o'clock that was not bad, and I was awake anyway. I rapidly rearranged my schedule so that I could take her out before my morning prayers – press-ups, plank etcetera – and whatever else I might have been expecting to do.

My gymnasium session fitted in after everything else was done, which was a good deal earlier than if I had been in the shop. Blistering it might have been, but my row was nowhere near regular performance which I put down to humping heavy things up to the garage and temporary accommodation over the last few days. The Missus is driving quite a pace, but we are still free-wheeling a bit compared to how quickly we will need to return everything when all is done. An extra week taken shipping our goods is an extra week of rent.

We had intended to move the big cabinet in the living room today, but we got caught up with emptying the window seat at the front of the living room instead. It was my fault because I had started emptying the small filing cabinet next to my desk while I waited for the Missus to get up. Seeing that I was in full 'throwing stuff away mode' she decided to throw some more things my way from the window seat. Initially, I was keeping pace but she was emptying faster than I was sorting and we now have a dining table full of things.

Some of the drawers I was emptying were full of various cables. Some were still useful patch leads for computers, but many were scart leads, old mobile telephone charge leads and leads that I had no idea what purpose they may once have had. The latter will become apparent because I will need one of them as soon as I have taken them to the tip, sorry, Household Waste Recycling Centre tomorrow. I also filled a bag with old papers, and I now have a geet pile of shredding waiting for the next time I am at a loose end in the shop.

I must congratulate myself on being quite brutal. There are things going out that I might once have thought that I would keep just in case. I simply applied the rule that if I had not used it by now it was very likely that I would not use it again. I was a little regretful on sending to the jumble pile some DVD films and series that I would happily watch again. Most notable among these was the highly prized Rock Follies series from the mid to late 70s following the antics of three wannabe rock stars. It starred Rula Lenska, Julie Covington and another who I always forget – ah yes, Charlotte Cornwell (I had to look it up). The album made number one in the UK

album charts so it was not all bad. The last time I watched, about ten years ago, it looked very dated but I still remembered all the lyrics.

While I was piling through all that, the Missus cleared out what was left in two of the bedrooms as a nice surprise. I thought that we had finished for the day and had taken the little girl around the block – again – but when I came back our bed was piled high with stuff for the garage at the back. It was a case of shifting it or not having anywhere to sleep tonight.

We got some pleasant walks in today, albeit they were all the same. Enough beach was available on two occasions, and we took full advantage. For once there was no threat of rain, although it was grey all day, and the wind kept up a noticeable blow for yet another day. The sea state has calmed considerably from a few days ago. It was still making a bit of noise and waves at mid tide were still flogging over the Harbour wall, but it was no threat to us on either time we were down on the beach.

The last time we were there, we shared the beach with the same angler who was there a few days ago. He is still catching oar weed and seems much more proficient at it after a few days of practise.

Neck deep in 'stuff' all over the flat, we scabbled together a tea out of left over bits we found in the kitchen. The Missus had bits of recycled Chinese food and I threw a bunch of things in a pan with some eggs. We sat in the living room among the piles of 'stuff' and ate it, thinking it would be nice when its finished. What joy we will have doing it all over again tomorrow.

November 7th – Tuesday

There was no competing with larks this morning, although I was not late getting up either. By the time we open the shop again in March I will have got the hang of this sleeping in caper. I did not intend to get up early because I did not think that I had very much to do, at least until the Missus got up. Fate had other ideas for me.

For the last couple of weeks our light circuit has been tripping out. I had already replaced the LED bulbs that looked suspect, and the tripping continued. I considered the smoke alarm as it has been over-sensitive of late, which has been irritating in itself but not quite as irritating as the frequent tripping. Anyway. I dismissed the smoke alarm as there seemed to be nothing wrong with it and if there was, noting I could do about it.

It was purely by chance that I found what was most likely to be the culprit. On switching on the circuit again, our big printer by the door reset, which was odd as it is on the ring main so should not have been affected. While I was pulled to the door, I could hear a buzzing sound which I gradually nailed down to the security light outside the door. We had removed the bulb a while ago because it was coming on

when it felt like it. It was wired in without a switch, so there was no way of turning off the unit. I now needed to turn off the unit.

I remembered when it was installed. The electrician told me he had wired it into the double two-way switch by the door as there was not other alternative nearby. Opening up the switch, there were so many wires in there that I could have been all day determining the correct two. I scratched my head for a bit which is a strange thing to do because it does not help any. What did help was remembering when I last had the front off the light to remove the bulb, there were wires in plain view.

Collecting screwdrivers and a terminal block from the shop, I removed the lens and pulled the power cables out and terminated them in the terminal block, which was a good place to terminate them. It will not have to last long as all that side will be demolished soon – we hope.

It was only after this small distraction that I turned my attention to publishing the previous day's Diary, dear reader, which explains its tardiness. I will have a different excuse for tomorrow.

There were some minor tasks that needed completing and a breakfast to consume after that. By the time all that was done, the Missus was ready to go and collect Mother and ABH was ready for her second trip out of the day. I spent some time scanning the beach this time to ensure no resting seals had crept in. I also checked that there were no people watching resting seals that had crept in and when I was sure of both, I let her off the lead to cavort on the beach that was fast being eroded by the pushing tide. This week we can visit the beach early doors or after dark in the evening. The latter is unlikely.

One of my instructions before the Missus went off was to try out the log burner in our temporary accommodation. It is the only heat source after the storage radiators, which clearly require some advanced planning before they are useful. I was late by the time ABH had led me astray and because I could not carry logs, kindling and a small ABH, I left her behind while I sorted out the fire. It seems that I could also not carry matches as well and I had to go back for them.

Lighting the fire was quite literally a roaring success, although I still need to work out which way the damper goes and what the spinney wheel at the front is for. It also will pay to find a better source of logs and kindling because we went through a lot in the short time we used it.

The Missus had work to do inside the new house, so I repaired to the shop to count the postcards. Apart from the stock at The Farm, it is nearly the last thing in the shop that needs counting to complete the stock take. It took me rather longer than I anticipated and when I came out, the Missus and Mother were back upstairs again. In fact, Mother was upstairs, and the Missus had taken ABH down to the Harbour

again, which was a surprise, but the tide must have retreated faster than I thought. We are in spring tides, after all.

We are living in a state of flux at present with the flat in utter turmoil and nothing where it should be and the new home not yet ready for habitation. We have decided to plough ahead with the move on our schedule rather than wait for a date when the scaffolding will go up and work to that. It will probably mean leaving the flat sooner than we need to but better that than have to leave in a panic.

It had been a cold, grey and damp day all through and it had rather crept into the bones. There was sporadic rain, like when I was trying to fix the security light and when I was returning to the shop after lighting the fire in the house, for which I would get no benefit. Luckily, we avoided the rain during any of the walks out with ABH but that was largely because I checked before we went out. Oddly, it is still very much warmer in the shop than it is in the flat even with only a couple of the freezers now running. Perhaps we should move the shop upstairs.

I had warmed up considerably by the time evening came around. I ran ABH around the block at the time the Missus took Mother home mainly to distract her. It is pitch black in the Harbour car park and I am very glad for my powerful headtorch and I think, so is the little girl. She does get spooked easily by sharp noises such as the Tesmorburys van driver parked up in the corner slamming his van door when we had gone around the corner. She recovers well, though and does not dwell on it.

More moving stuff tomorrow. There is always something to look forward to.

November 6th – Monday

I was up with the lark this morning. Not there would have been any self-respecting lark getting up that early on a cold and damp morning such as the one we started with today. In retrospect, there probably was nothing wrong with the morning in general, it is just that the combination of dark, damp and cold did not align with my aspirations for the day.

It was expressly for the telecommunications people that I got up so early. I was awake anyway but could quite easily have remained in bed for another hour fretting about the building work. It was not exactly fretting, but the structural engineer, who seems to be driving the project at the moment, for which I am quite grateful, sent through updated drawings and completed CDM, which you will remember is Construction (Design and Management), details. That is supposed to be completed by the client but quite how any lay person was supposed to provide the sheet, which is full of quite technical detail, is beyond me. He had also asked for completed drawings from the solar panel people, which was the source of my vexation.

When I eventually managed to sit at the computer to prepare a request to the solar people, I spent some time wading through our correspondence. I discovered that I

had first asked a year ago and sent a reminder was the beginning of September. I found the response, too, telling me they had all been busy but that he was meeting the design team the following week and would get onto it. That was the first week in October and I had heard nothing since. I wrote again requesting the drawings urgently and suggesting that twelve months to complete them, even if they were very busy, was quite generous.

I had an automated response from our contact. He is on a course. He was on a course last time I tried to contact him, too, and the time before that as I recall. It is clear why they never have time to do any work: they are constantly on courses.

By mid-morning, the skies had brightened but it was still colder than we have been used to, although what we have been used to was warmer than what it should have been. Bits of blue up in the sky does make it seem a lot more attractive than constant grey. I still had the notion that there was a bit of rain around, which is probably why we had arrived at late morning and still no sign of our telecommunications people.

It was a major source of irritation because instead of sitting staring out of the window, we could have been shipping stuff out to the garage and house at the back in readiness of having to move out shortly. The Missus is firmly in charge of this endeavour. She has a particular set of skills, which may indeed end up killing me, but will ensure the job is done methodically, efficiently and with nothing missed out. What baffles most people is that there is no project planning, nothing written down and no especial order of work. It just happens. There is also no information sharing, consultation, inclusion or idea that it might be team-work – there is no ‘I’ in team and that is just fine, thank you. Do as you are told.

It has crossed my mind that I could hire her out at a premium. I am not sure there are clients out there who are brave enough, though.

Naturally, the telecommunications man turned up just as I was about to do something else. I had already risked a trip to our new accommodation to deploy the new mattress. That did not go all that well as the compact packaging came adrift as I was towing it up to the house. By the time I got in the door, it was unravelling fast. The Missus helped me drag it to the bed and we held onto the new mattress with one hand and stripped the bed with the other. I was putting the packaging in the bin when the engineer arrived, which at least was timely.

I had specified that we needed a flat roof trained person as the fibre terminated on the flat roof. Our man only told me afterwards that he was not so certified but had determined that access to the roof was not by ladder and there was little in the way of risk. He was determinedly practical through the whole job and was quite happy to string the fibre to a sensible point on the wall even if it was a bit close to the ground.

We have had a bush growing on the corner since we had been there. It is a weed, not planted and has been left so long that the trunk is now about four inches thick. It was growing in a direct line of where the fibre would run and although we could run the cable through the bush, it would be better if the bush was not there. I had remembered seeing our electric chain saw in the back of the truck a while back and had filed that soupçon away for just such an occasion. I went to retrieve it but on doing so discovered that the battery was not with it. I checked with the Missus who told me it was up at The Farm.

I have not been up to The Farm since before we opened, so it was a pleasant jaunt up there despite being on a mission. The main thing I noticed was that the lane is seriously overgrown even though autumn had started to ravage it a bit. Our usual man who trims the hedges did not have his equipment working this year and we could find no one else. I nearly took the wing mirror off on a large overhanging lump of gorse near the start and brambles scratched at the sides all the way along. We will have to find someone before long or wrap plates down the side of the truck.

Returning with the batteries, the chain saw made light work of the bush. It is a job I had relished for some time. I would have cut up what I had taken off so I could tuck it into the back of the truck, but the chainsaw stuttered to a halt. I noticed that the oil level was too low, and it equally could have been the battery that stopped it. It will have to go on the bottom of the to do list.

Our telecommunications man made pretty light work of the installation after that and the planning I had put in place to ensure that the cabled and wireless signals still worked meant that we were back up and running less than two hours later.

When I returned to the flat, ABH was waiting for me. The Missus went off to visit a friend recuperating from being a brae bit poorly recently and left her with me. I was free until she got back so I took the little girl out for run. The tide was rolling out and had left enough sand to play on. I stopped at the top of the slipway, checking the sea state and that there were no other dogs about before I let ABH off the lead and we headed down to the sand.

I thought that I could hear shouting as we walked down but the wind carried the sound and I could not work out where it was coming from. It was not until I was nearly on the sand and the little girl started barking that I realised there was a seal pup at the bottom of the slipway. ABH was making quite some fuss but was not inclined to go closed. She had backed away and I managed to get between her and the seal, but she was still barking her head off and refusing to be caught. Matters were made worse when one of the three watchers start to chase her, despite my appeals to leave her to me.

It was all very embarrassing, but I calmed ABH down and put her back on the lead and apologised. I was somewhat miffed by the look of distain meted out by the

watchers. I had not seen the seal. They would have done better to alert me before I let her off the lead rather than after.

The Missus had been away for some time, which I had expected and I had finished the few jobs that I had remaining. I knew that the Harbour beach was out of bounds still, so I looked out at the big beach. As so often is the case, the waves were pushing so hard that it takes forever for the tide to recede. Sometimes, especially on neap tides, it does not manage to at all. Today, the beach closest to the OS was inundated with shallow waves still piling in. There was a path out behind them, but you could not get far before coming across a great reef of rocks laid bare as the sand was stripped out. I did not fancy crossing the rocks with ABH on a lead unbalancing me – twisted or broken ankles here we come. The only recourse, if we wanted some sand to run around on was to walk up the Coast Path behind The Beach buildings and drop down into The Valley.

It has been some while since I did any serious walking – that is more than to the end of The Cove and back. Despite heading to the gymnasium three times a week – although it will only be two this week – walking is a different sort of exercise and I was definitely rusty. The path is also dreadfully overgrown with brambles hanging across where the path narrows. You would be hard pressed to let someone pass in the other direction. Thankfully, we did not have to.

It was worthwhile because as we dropped down onto the sand by the stream that runs out there, we had a wide stretch of beach all to ourselves. The little girl loves to range and run about, so I left her to it. We were completely exposed to the westerly draft, but it was not uncomfortable since I had kitted up with waterproofs, which by their nature are also windproof. We had gradually moved back down the beach to the south and found ourselves in front of the Lifeguard hut. I did not fancy stanking all the way back to get off the beach, so I thought we would brave the rocks to get to the path that runs up by the hut. My balance has never been the best but at least I was not attached to ABH. You could almost see her laughing at my balancing act as she effortlessly pranced from rock to rock – bless her.

The Missus arrived home shortly after we did. I was looking forward to a sit down and a cup of tea. She had other ideas, and we shifted a good bit of kit up to the garage behind us for an hour. I was pleased that I had not changed out of my full metal jacket waterproofs. Despite being very warm after the walk and again as I shifted some heavy gear, some more of the heavy showers that had been coming all day arrived back while we were working.

Since it was now dark, cold, grey, miserable and late, the Missus decided that I would go and fetch a Chinese meal from St Just. We have not had one of those for well over a year. It was very welcome and meant no washing up either.

It had been a busy day. I suspect it will not be the last.

November 5th – Sunday

It was a bright and cheerful morning. Oh, we do like bright and cheerful, and the wind that had seemed to be screaming in for the bits of the night I awoke for, had damped down some. The sea was not yet finished with its raging and in fact came back this morning with renewed vigour, charging into the bay, thumping over the wall but not making much effort over at the cliffs on the other side of the bay. The swell direction must have been wrong for that.

With the sky clear in parts and filled with big fluffy clouds in others, the sea was blue, or some other colour, and the white wave tops were very white indeed. It seemed the best thing to do with a day like that was to go up to the range and make some big bangs with loud shotguns – if I remembered how.

It was breezy up on the moors all day, increasing until the early afternoon, after which it eased a little. There were occasional showers passing through, but they did not bother us very much and we were sheltered in the east facing shooting point. We were plagued a little when the wind reached its peak with steel plates toppling off their stands. Fortunately, it was towards the end of our morning session.

The afternoon clay pigeon shoot was interesting. The clays never went the same way twice and danced on the gusts as they blew in. Given that I had not shot clays in some time, I was relatively pleased with my performance, and I did not manage to shoot anything I was not supposed to.

During the wintertime we like to start early as the shortening evenings close us down. It gave me enough time to take ABH down to the Harbour beach when I returned, and she had a good run around the smooth sand. All was going well until a neighbour brought his elderly dog down and she would not leave it alone. She refuses to come when called as well in these circumstances and it took me a while to catch up with her. We will have to work on her recall, which works fine when we are alone. It is quite frustrating.

We ended up coming off the beach earlier than we might have done else and walked home around the block. We tarried to speak with a neighbour who lives out that way and we had been out around an hour by the time we got back. I had paid no mind to the weather when we left, it was quite pleasant, although it had been threatening rain all day. It was almost as soon as we got back that we had the biggest downpour of the day. What lucky boys and girls are we.

There were some fireworks on the horizon on Friday night, but we had seen nothing since. I would imagine that the wind played havoc with any scheduled displays. We rarely have anything closer and when we did the bleddy hound never paid any attention. We have yet to discover how ABH might react. Sudden noised do alarm her but she recovers almost immediately, although tries to put some distance

between her and the source first. She takes after me in that respect – fight or flight; there was never any competition.

We have our telecommunication people coming tomorrow to ostensibly move the fibre. We may be incommunicado for a while if all goes well and if all goes well we will be back to normal a few hours later. There is also the possibility that the engineer sent may not have been trained in walking up steps to our front door and will have to go away again. Fingers crossed.

November 4th – Saturday

It looked a half decent morning when I stepped out today but decidedly colder than we have been used to of late. We have been spoiled these last couple of days because we have had Mother and the in-laws around and splashed out on a bit of heating. I should have turned it off soon after they went because it was very warm in the flat by the end of the evening and all that latent heat would go to waste. I would have sat up all night fretting about it but went to sleep instead and missed the opportunity.

The in-laws were around again in the morning, but we did not roll out the red carpet today, mainly because it was not our house we were going to. It would not be exactly true to say we had some level of expectation that the building works would start next weekend but that is the date we gave the builder initially. The problem was that we had to give our very kind neighbours at the back some idea of when we might like our accommodation from. Having done that, despite the building works now not likely to commence until the beginning of December, we could not really mess our friend around again.

The Missus had also quite rightly suggested that we would need some time ahead of moving in to arrange things so we could move straight in. As a consequence, and as a particularly long-winded way of explaining it, we signed on the dotted line to have the accommodation available from today. We took the in-laws, who are going home today, and Mother up there for a geek and also to let ABH explore a little. Although we did nothing further today, we are able to move in piecemeal and at our leisure – quite a lot of leisure since we have at least two unnecessary weeks.

Our drop-dead date for getting out and the date by which we must have the living room empty of furniture is the day before the scaffolding goes up. The builder, fabricator and structural engineer walking into a pub ... no, sorry, that was something entirely different. They met at the beginning of the week to discuss the project. It was a meeting that I had hoped would have happened three weeks ago instead of on the only date that I was not in The Cove. It was taken a few days to get a fullish picture of what was discussed and, more importantly for us, what was not discussed was the scaffolding, so we still do not have a date to move out – or in.

I spoke with the builder on Friday and was told that the scaffolders were still designing the build, so no date was available yet. One of the key aspects delaying it was the wind considerations. It alarmed me rather, although I am sure it was just a poor use of words, that the wind was only just being considered as a factor. It is not as if we have never had wind in Cornwall before.

It was the structural engineer who sent me a summary of the things discussed at the meeting. I rather wish he had not. There are all manner of regulations and considerations still to cover, which I had hoped we had covered last year but it seems the regulations continue to change, and things need to be done again and new things need to be done a first time. I do hope someone is keeping notes because I am beginning to lose track.

It seemed the best idea was to wait until the early afternoon today and take ABH for a run just when it was most likely to rain. I was really waiting for there to be some beach available, but the tides are all wrong at the moment. Happily, there were no other dogs on the beach but there was a fisherman, beach casting for oar weed it looked like. He had left his kit on the beach and was down by the waterline, so naturally ABH went straight to investigate the kit. I managed to drag her away and this time she only ventured back once.

I think I will need to take her for longer walks or at least down to the big beach occasionally as she seems to get bored quickly on the Harbour beach now. In fairness, the tide had scoured clean the sand, so there was nothing much to play with. Scoured may not be the right word here because it was very likely that the clean sand had been dumped there by the tide rather than being cleaned out. Yesterday, when we were down there, I noticed the lack of sand up in the corner by the wall. Many more rocks than usual were exposed by the heavy waves of the last few days. It is quite remarkable how much sand can be removed or returned in a single tide.

We ventured down there again before the end of the day, just for good measure. In the evening, the Missus decided that we ought to have some evidence that we had moved things forward a bit and emptied the single bedroom. There will be something happening in all the rooms of the house, but the front three rooms are worst affected including the kitchen, which will take some emptying.

When the time came for our evening stroll out, the rain was hacking down. We had avoided it all through the day, so I guess it was our turn. ABH has a coat, which is very effective against the rain, and she does not seem to care anyway, and I have my full metal jacket waterproofs. We came home and dripped but were largely dry underneath. It is definitely not the best weather at the moment, but I am sure the water board are grinning from ear to ear at the level of their reservoirs. There is always something that makes someone happy.

November 3rd – Friday

ABH had me up in the middle of the night for no apparent reason. I will be having stern words later. It did not seem to affect what time I woke up, but she was happy to snooze through to half past eight o'clock and woke up fresh as a daisy.

I felt a little more human after I had returned from my first gymnasium session in a week. If nothing else the breeze was still strong enough to provide a good slap in the face. Happily, there was no rain about and we enjoyed some sunny spells the day long. The sea was raging again when I first looked out of the window in the morning and there was no way we were going down to the beach because the reach was a good twenty feet. There were people down there right at the edge of it with a small child in tow.

The Harbour wall was buried for most of the time I was looking, and the sea state did not really diminish all day. Even at low water there was very little sand on the big beach that was escaping the long run of waves as they pushed in. I had momentarily considered taking ABH down there later in the day, but there was little point as we would have spent our time wave dodging.

When we did get out – to the Harbour – we arrived at the same time as a young dachshund. We were discussing earlier how some dogs were suffering from lack of socialisation, especially through the dread lurgi times. I rather fear that ABH is a little too socialised. She ran over and introduced herself to the dachshund, which was all very pleasant and then hounded them and the owners all over the beach. No amount of calling her back was effective and in the end the couple had to pick their dog up and move to the other side of the beach while I held onto the little girl. Having seen them disappear under the slipways I thought we, or rather they, were safe but as soon as I released ABH she ran after them again.

It took me a while to retrieve her again and get her back on the lead. Even if the other dog tells her off, she thinks it is just part of a game. I am not sure what to do about that other than hoping she will grow out of it.

Just to say that I had done something rather than just lazed about all day, I decided to tackle the bathroom sink that has been taking an age to drain. It is an annual problem, fixed by some judicious poking around with a flexible stick up the drainpipe from below. Once the gunk is clear the problem goes away for another twelve months, but not today. The drainpipe cleared and water emptying freely, I replace the cap on the u-bend contraption only to discover that the sink, once again, emptied slowly. The blockage must be further along. It will require the u-bend unit to be removed and I did not feel like doing that today as I would need my PTFE tape handy, and I think it is up at The Farm. Another day, then.

There were a few more trips out with ABH, which was not unpleasant at all given the weather. There was still the breeze to contend with that did not let up all day, but with a woolly hat on and a windcheater, you would hardly notice at all – hardly.

The sea state had brought down quite a few wave watchers and it was relatively busy all day. It is the end of the tail end Charlie's half term, so we can expect it to drop dead after today. I noticed as we walked around the visitor cars replaced with cleaners' cars then replaced with big empty spaces. The Harbour car park was empty later when we walked around. We have been deserted.

Not, it seems, by the Laurel and Hardy Newspaper Company who chose the last business knockings of the day to respond to my query about not having newspapers last Sunday. I had already had a response from our escalation contact. She had put her hands up to say that she had misread the date on my second message and had cancelled the papers a day early. The message I had last thing was from the 'Customer Experience Team'. The respondent told me that they could not stop newspapers on the date I asked because it was a Sunday, and I would still have had newspapers the next day.

You might almost imagine my wry smile, dear reader, as I took in this latest claptrap. Often, I will leave it a day before replying to such messages lest I say something I might regret. Today, I wrote back immediately, telling them that they had been closing me on a Sunday for the last 20 years and if the procedures had changed this year, they had plenty of time to tell me. I might even have used the phrase "utter tosh". I did not bother telling them I already knew what really happened, as I could not be bothered. I really cannot see me regretting that in the morning.

November 2nd – Thursday

I was awoken in the early hours because the power went off. You might think that you would not notice the lights not being on when they were off in the first place, but my smart mobile telephone sprang to life. I use it as a bedside clock, which only runs when there is power to it – it is to save you running battery down. It is also remarkable just how much artificial light there is about in the dead of night.

The noise from the gusting wind was horrendous and we were not even in its direct line of fire since it was banging in from the south somewhere. I ventured into the living room to get my torch as I thought it might be needed if the outage continued. It was then I discovered that one of the windows at the front had inexplicably blown open. Even in the lee of the wind it demonstrated just how strong the gusts were. The catch must not have been closed properly on its last use. Papers were strewn about the place and there was some wet on my seat and the computer screen. It would have been much worse with a different wind direction.

Having secured the window, I went back to bed. It was around three o'clock. Before I settled, I checked the weather stations at Gwennap Head and Land's End and both were showing around 70 – 75 miles per hour gusts. I checked again later when I got up at a more reasonable waking hour and Gwennap Head, the windiest place in the universe, had peaked at 92 miles per hour. Land's End was showing 80 miles per

hour, which was a more reasonable recording and matched Culdrose and the Islands.

A friend suggested that I had brought the whole thing on myself by daring to leave The Cove for a few days. The small gods of grumpy shopkeepers get a bit miffed if I dare stick my head above the top of the hill. I am just glad I came back when I did as I would not have liked having to travel back today if indeed I could.

It was indeed a mighty low pressure system. The pressure recorded at Land's End was 948 millibars. The lowest ever recorded was 920 millibars in 1929, so it was indeed deep.

The wind had moved around to the northwest in the morning. It seemed less severe. It had sounded like the end of the world last night and we were sheltered from it. Unfortunately, the roof is still on. Storm Kieran could have done us a real favour – and if you think that spelling is wrong, you should hear the different pronunciations on Radio Pasty – anyway, I spelled it fonetically.

As a small side, it is very likely that St Sennan, our parish saint, was actually Ciaran. It is recorded that in Cornish, the hard 'C' was not used and the name was somehow transfigured into Sennan and later Sennen.

Anyway, I digress. Now, where was I? Ah yes, the weather – as usual. We had some heavy showers blow through during the rest of the day, most of which I managed to miss or at least miss the full force of them. Some were laced with hail, like the one that arrived just as I was coming back from town. I waited at the entrance to the RNLI car park for it to finish throwing icy water against the driver's side before I wound down the window to operate the gate keypad.

I needed to run an errand in town and left just as the in-laws who were down with Mother for a few days arrived for visit. The timing was entirely coincidental. I suppose I could have gone tomorrow but Monday would have been out as we have the people coming to possibly move our fibre connection in the morning, which is a whole bundle of fun just waiting to happen – or not.

Both the Missus and I went down to the shop to do some clearing up after the in-laws took Mother back. The bin man is coming tomorrow and we will suspend collections for a while thereafter, so all that we could pile in there needed to be done today. The Missus stayed down there to reorganise the freezers having emptied nearly of them into two units still left on. This will dramatically reduce our electricity bill for the shop over winter.

I retired upstairs to wait on a break in the showers so that I could take the little girl down to the Harbour beach for a run. It was less than an hour later when I adjudged that we would be relatively safe. There was a big wide open, low tide beach waiting for us and we used all of it. We were joined a while later by a little timid puppy who

was a bit overawed by ABH's enthusiasm and went away shortly after. Then a bit older spaniel came bounding down and game was on for a short while. They raced about the beach like mad things until a squall came charging in and the owner, ill-equipped for squalls, did a runner leaving us alone again.

We went out several times during the afternoon and missed the rain most of those times, but there was no avoiding the wind that stayed in the northwest or west for the rest of the day.

It was still blustering when I went over to the Lifeboat station for Thursday evening training. We discovered that the leading lights have now been fixed and come on immediately, the remote switches working flawlessly. The sea state will be rough for a few days yet, so there is no prospect of training launches.

At least we were in for a quieter evening. I spent a little time looking for a replacement outside box, our only casualty of the storm – apart from the last of the old outside lights that is now dangling from the front of the shop. I had not realised that a neighbour had put out box back from the road where he found it first thing with the lid adrift. I had forgotten to secure it properly and after several years of sterling service, it now needs to be replaced. Even now the only thing that is wrong is a broken and rusted through hinge but replacing that alone is not possible.

I settled in for a quieter night than the last and was dozing off when the splash from some wind-blown rain sprayed across my face from the open skylight above the bed. Good night, indeed.

November 1st – Wednesday

A sudden gust of wind in the early hours of the morning blew in the curtain and threatened to take the old wooden window off its hinges. It woke me with a bit of start and forced me from my bed to go and close it lest another came along. A sometime correspondent in St Just told me that the wind there had already topped 70 miles per hour. The latest storm is threatening to be a big one with a particularly deep area of low pressure to the west of us. It seemed to be reaching east to see where it was going later.

The Meteorological Office told us that there would be no rain in Sherborne until later in the afternoon. I did not share their optimism but still left my waterproof trousers behind when I went up to bid farewell to the Aged Parent before I headed for the train station. I was a little early so dragged my feet as I neared, looking at a map of Sherborne for something to do. It was while I was tarrying there that the rain started, and I just made it to the front door when it commenced in earnest.

The day before I had stopped in roughly the same place to listen to some bird song. There were hundreds of unidentified tweeters in the big tree in the car park and I even recorded the chatter between them as I was under the impression that the

Aged Parent knew a thing or two about birds. When I played back the recording, I had a non-committal answer that was a huge disappointment. Apparently looking at them and hearing them are two different branches of the interest group. Who knew.

We did not spend long with our goodbyes. The Aged Parent was keen that I did not miss my train, although I made assurances that I had plenty of time. I did too, as I had to wait nearly half an hour at the station and the train was late arriving, too. I would have had to wait somewhere as I had to be out of my billet at ten o'clock. There was nothing more to do in town. Had I known that the sandwich shops, of which there are plenty, would be open at that hour I would not have purchased a filled bagel – all they had left – the previous day. It served its purpose on the train to Exeter but was not particularly inspiring.

There were three changes on the way back due to some works on the line on the Cornish section of my journey. I had enough time while waiting at Sherborne to read that even then there was disruption expected on the leg between Exeter and Plymouth due to the inclement weather. As it transpired, there was not and despite the multiple changes into increasingly full and uncomfortable carriages, all the connects worked seamlessly.

There was confusion and queuing at St Austell for the buses the rest of the journey. I had the conversation with a traveller in The Cove about them. Apparently, they had plenty of buses but not enough drivers. I was glad that I had been persuaded by the Missus to come and collect me, although I still had a minor regret about not hiring a Mercedes to drive home myself. I think that the bus trip would have finished me off as it was not exactly plain sailing in the truck. The roadworks at Chiverton causes a fairly major delay rolling up to the new roundabout that is half a mile further east than it used to be. The old one has completely disappeared. There will be a fly-over there eventually but at the moment it is just a fly.

ABH was very enthusiastic about seeing me again, which is hopefully a step in the right direction of breaking her complete reliance on the Missus. I took her for a walk down the car park to stretch both our legs before getting back into the truck again. She travels very well and dozed for most of the journey. We reasoned that she would benefit from a good belt around the beach, but the state of tide meant that there would be no beach when we got back to The Cove. We stopped at Long Rock instead and wasted time on a ticket machine that insisted on me using a credit card for the 90 pence charge and then failed to produce a ticket.

It was just as much a failure trying to encourage ABH onto the beach. The sand is much coarser, and the tide was way up the beach. It was also blowing in at 30 or so miles per hour and she is not keen on the breeze. We made it up and down the car park before we gave up and came home.

I took her around the block when we arrived. It had started to rain by then, but we went around a couple of times, which was the best we could manage. Our after tea

walk out was cancelled because it was hacking down and only just stopped in time for a last run out before bedtime. It was not the most eventful, Diary worthy of days but perhaps that is just as well for what came later.