

DIARY 2021/22

November 30<sup>th</sup> – Tuesday

The bleddy hound and I were up early doors. It was the bleddy hound's fault because she decided that lying across my lap when the Missus got out of bed might be a subtle way of suggesting that she got up too. I went back to bed having thrown her out of the bedroom door. I did not have a clean hankie to wave after the Missus anyway.

It was not quite so moderate a day we discovered when we eventually stepped out. The bleddy hound ran off the beach again and once again we headed for the Harbour car park. It was when we got there that I decided that turning around and heading back, as the bleddy hound seemed keen to do, was a pretty good idea on this occasion. I had spotted an advancing line of rain coming in from the west that would have got us had we continued; the bleddy hound just wanted to turn around regardless.

With the Missus away deep, it was never going to be an action filled day for those left behind; the Missus had the truck. The weather was less than inviting for a stank anywhere and the bleddy hound is no longer able for such things anyway. There was finishing off setting up the computer, which needed finishing off because I was fed up with it by now. It is not as if it were something new. Everything I have done, I have done before, although the problems were different and provided some frustrating entertainment.

By the middle of the afternoon, that was all done and dusted with the benefit of some of the things that did not work on the old computer now work on the new one and I can now send and receive electronic mails. I took the opportunity to clear out the old speakers from the system before last when I thought having a good sound system on a computer was a good idea. A rare Diary helpful hint: if you want a good sound system, buy a good sound system. The most recent computer was only able to service two of the speakers and even those I had not used for some years; it is far easier to plug in earphones if I need to hear sound, which I do not very often.

I ventured out in the middle of the day with the bleddy hound. It had stopped raining but it was still overcast and grey and just not very appealing at all. I did not even try to get the bleddy hound down to the beach, but I still had to drag her in the direction of the car park else she would have just turned around and gone home. There are a few people about still and it seemed crowded today with half a dozen people milling about. I think that the numbers we have seen this month adequately suggest that closing was the right thing to do.

After we got back from our time away with the Aged Parent, the Missus purchased one of those capsule coffee machines. In fact, she purchased it while we were still away having been inspired by the property we were staying in that had one. She had

bought some capsules for it but discovered she had purchased the wrong ones. Quite obviously, then, she needed to buy a machine of the correct sort so that they would not be wasted. One package of the 'few items' from her last shopping trip was some decaffeinated coffee capsules for me.

I used to drink coffee in abundance and as a preference to tea. I also took it black as a hangover from the days when I worked long hours in an establishment without a fridge. I discovered that the caffeine knocked me for six eventually (although, oddly, someone told me there is more in tea, of which I drink plenty) so I only have the occasional cup of decaffeinated when forced into a Costalot Coffee shop with the Missus. She thought that I might like one occasionally at home, so I tried one just before I went out with the bleddy hound. It was very pleasant as a change, but I will need to re-establish how much sugar to add as I have sugar in coffee but not in tea. Oddly, the Missus is the other way around.

I took some fish out of the freezer for my lonely tea. It is just as well the Missus is not here; the Missus hates fish.

November 29<sup>th</sup> – Monday

It was a good job that I managed to get to the gymnasium today (and take the bleddy hound out a few times, obviously) else I would have been chained to the computer all day long. Saturday would have been an ideal day for all these shenanigans to happen, but it happened today instead.

The weather had moderated quite a bit, making it actually quite pleasant stepping outside the door this morning. There was hardly a breath of wind and it was not all that cold. The bleddy hound made a bit of a fuss about being on the beach and was in the process of heading for home when I caught up with her. She was not getting away with that, so I took her around the block instead. I mean, I am not saying that there had not been any seals on the beach in the last 48 hours but on the balance of probability given that the evidence would still be there after a couple of high tides, it was highly unlikely. Still, a walk around the block made a bit of a change, although nothing much had changed in our little world since the last time we went that way – apart from there being more boats in the car park than cars.

The Missus is away deep for a couple of days taking Mother on a mystery tour. Since there is a snitch in the family somewhere that keeps Mother abreast of any remarks I might make in her direction, I can divulge no more, else it would not be a mystery. The Missus was clearly keen to make an impression because she went over to Hayle to get the car washed. This is a bunch of mainly Eastern European workers who have carved quite a reputation for themselves making the cars of West Cornwall sparkle just before they fall apart from the rust accumulated from being in a sea air environment. Since the Missus discovered that we cannot take the truck to a modern car wash because of the roof bars and the excellent facility at St Buryan garage is no more, she had little choice. It came back sparkling.

She also dropped off at Tesmorburys for a 'few items' which she dropped at the foot of the steps to the flat when she came back. We apparently have a small gulf in our understanding of what constitutes a 'few items'. I can only say that it is a good job that I regularly attend the gymnasium that enables me to lift such large weights with almost gay abandon. The explanation was that she is making sandwiches and things to take with her, so I must conclude that they are meeting up with a small village of very hungry people when they get wherever they are going.

I started my computer sojourn not long after I had come back from the gymnasium. There are several things that do not work having installed things and settled on a new data strategy. One of those things is the new data strategy that was designed so that we would have access to all our daily used data on one of the network drives making it available even when the office computer was switched off. This was an excellent theory but did not work in practise because so many applications are geared to things being on the "C" drive on the computer on which they are installed and it is difficult to tell them otherwise.

I concluded that I would have to move the data back to the office computer for everything to work properly. This then meant uninstalling and reinstalling the applications that I had installed that were happy to work off the network drive. This took some time but was largely successful.

The biggest issue of the day was the electronic mail system. I had chosen to dump the one I had been using for years because it was a bit fragile when it came to power cuts, which are relatively frequent in these parts. I decided to go back to using Microsoft's Outlook package, which started out well but soon became a constant irritation. It assumed that my electronic mail accounts used a special security option, which they do not, but would not let me change it. Deleting everything and setting them up again seemed a really good idea at the time. However, even having deleted everything I could find and uninstalling and reinstalling the package, it still wanted to reinstate the old settings.

It took all day trying different approaches and reading interesting help suggestions on the Internet that were no help at all. Absolutely nothing worked and unless I restore the computer back to the state I took it out of the box, I cannot use the Microsoft package again until I get a new one – or someone comes up with a solution. I gave up and rather than go back to the one I was using, which would have been embarrassing, I installed the only other option left that would do everything I needed it to do – I think. I will no doubt discover its shortcomings as time goes on and I may yet need to swallow humble pie and go back to the other one. Let us hope not.

There is still much to do on the computer but I will leave it until tomorrow as I am thoroughly exhausted with it. Instead, I watched the news and rather wished that I had not. One day I will switch it on and it will have lots of stories about hungry people

being fed and warring factions sitting down with each other to have a cream tea – jam first, of course. All I can say is that I am rather glad that the shop is not open at present.

I kept out of the way while the Missus ran around packing things and making sandwiches. She is away early doors tomorrow and as I suspect she will not go quietly, me and the bleddy hound will be up early doors as well.

November 28<sup>th</sup> – Sunday

I was up a little earlier than usual today as it is range day. The bleddy hound, now settled into a slightly later routine, was having none of it and elected to stay put in bed. I did have to rouse her eventually else she would have made me late and I had already cut my timing quite finely.

At last, the vicious wind had abated, and Storm Arwen had beggered off somewhere. I recall that the name either came from or was used by J.R.R Tolkein in Lord of the Rings. The name means 'alone of maidens' or 'noble maiden', which I uncovered when but a mere youth greatly taken by the novels and taught myself some of the his language. He was a bit of a clever sausage that Tolkein fellow and the language, possibly based on Celtic roots, was fully developed by him although only fractions were used in the books. I can recall all that from forty odd years ago but still wonder what I did yesterday.

Anyway, I digress. Now, where was I? Ah yes, although it was still pretty much a grey day it was actually rather benign. The only thing off about it was that it was somewhat chillier than we would like. The bleddy hound was not going to hang around outside for long and we were back in the flat in no time.

I decided that I would try out the new bathroom heater and switched it on a good fifteen minutes before I went in there. It was doing a pretty good job especially as I had not included the powerful extractor fan in my calculations when making the decision to install it. Nevertheless, with it churning out a moderate heat and it being cold, it felt a lot more comfortable in the bathroom than it has for a long time. I cannot say that I would turn it on everyday because I do not spend much time in there but now and again when it is very cold it will be most welcome.

With the Missus only just recovered from her bad reaction to the booster jab – it was probably the small microchips objecting to our intense wifi in the flat – she had decided not to have Mother over. This also helped not having to explain why she was covered in tin foil to stop the Government reading her brain waves. This meant that I would be taking myself up to the range whereas normally I get dropped off and collected. Since I was only going to be there for half a day, this was most convenient.

There are a good and friendly bunch of attendees at the club meetings, which makes for an enjoyable session. It was cold up there on the hill but at least there was little

wind and only a sprinkling of minor showers to contend with. We would have been most uncomfortable had we had our meeting yesterday. I was even happier after I saw the results of the competition from my last visit. I was second in the one that used my Dirty Harry gun. I was definitely feeling a lucky punk that day.

The Missus was out with the bleddy hound when I came back home again. I used the time in transferring all the tools from yesterday's work from the living room back to the shop along with the large box that the new computer came in. After cleaning and locking away my gun I took up the frustrating work of continuing with the setting up of that new computer.

However mature computing products get and however clever there is always some element that still refuses to work or takes hours to implement when it should really have just worked in the first place. I understand that the developers of such systems cannot hope to cover every combination of every type of software but after paying a chunk of money to Mr Microsoft, I should really be able to login to the Missus' account and use the word processor without it telling me I have not paid.

I thought that I would be safe getting lost in a good book instead. Having arrived at the forth chapter of a lady comedian's book and instead of it being funny is filled with continuous pages of pretentious drivel, I gave up that too. I concluded it was far more satisfying to write my own continuous pretentious drivel and share it with you, dear reader.

November 27<sup>th</sup> – Saturday

Today was not a day for venturing out very far. Let me start that again. Today was not a day for venturing out. Sadly, due to having a bleddy hound that was not an option, although at first thing in the morning the weather was not too bad. This was noted in retrospect because at the time it was bleddy awful.

The howling had been going on all night as far as I could work out. I was not sure if the bleddy hound might have been a bit concerned with the noise as I caught her alert and looking about at one point in the night. It was difficult to tell because she has never been one to care about very much. Fireworks do not bother her and as far as I can tell neither does the cold, although she cannot cope with the heat very well. It will remain a mystery.

A friendly neighbour righted our newspaper box that had slewed out onto the pavement at one point, but I had to right it again when I took the bleddy hound out last thing last night. It seems that the wind sounded worse than it was, coming in gusts of 70 miles per hour or thereabouts. When the bleddy hound and I headed for the beach it was still running in about the same but at that time the rain had not arrived. A line of showers running to our north hit us around mid-morning and continued well into the afternoon. When I had looked out at the bay at first I could not

see very much for the salt on the glass. At least the showers saved me the job of washing them.

The sea was a particularly angry beast, although we have seen it worse. The swell was coming straight at us and despite being broken up a bit by Cowloe, it was still hitting the end of the long slipway in four or five feet rolling waves about ten seconds apart. That would have made a launch particularly tricky as it would have to be timed between the waves. We still had a bit of a beach to run on in the morning even if the waves were trying very hard to run up the beach to catch us. Needless to say, we did not hang around very long down there.

I pressed myself to hurry up with the morning schedule as I was keen this time to get the bathroom heater finished. If all went well it would be a half hour job plus a bit more to get the electrics connected as I had purchased a cleaner and unbroken fused switch for it. The new tile cutting drill bit I purchased was well worth the money. It made some perfectly clean holes in the tiles with very little effort and I even managed to drill all four of them in the correct place. It became very apparent very quickly that the depth I had elected to drill to came nowhere close to reaching the granite wall behind. This could have been a problem – if I needed to go deeper I would have needed longer screws, which I probably had but also longer wall plus, which I definitely did not. I decided to stick with the original plan even if it meant not getting into the granite and just hoping that the fixings would be sufficiently robust for the weight of the heater.

All finished, it did seem that I had been lucky and the heater seems robustly secure on its mountings. The electrical connection also went remarkably well. Although it was a bit of a trial feeding the cable back through the route in the skirting. The only potential issue is that there is insufficient clearance at the top of the heater according to the manual. This may cause us a problem with the sloping ceiling at that point. I will keep an eye to see if it discolours and we will not use the heater on maximum. If necessary, I will purchase some heat resistant panelling and install it above the heater.

Once I had tidied away it was time to start work on the new computer. In all probability this will take several days before everything is squared away but I had to start somewhere. Quite why Microsoft has not yet found a way to automatically migrate applications and settings from one computer to another, is a quite a gap in its toolbox. The mobile telephone people seem to be able to do it on various types of telephones. I started with just a few programs to make sure they all worked properly and just enough to pen these very pages and to send them to the world wide web page for both of you to read. Clearly, I am making an assumption that the upload will work tomorrow morning when I set about it.

I had to interrupt my workings to take the bleddy hound out, twice. The first time was in the middle of the day with the concatenated squalls pounding into the front. The bleddy hound was definitely having none of it and turned around to come back in

having stuck just a nose out of the front door. I cannot say I blamed her. I did not want to go, and I was wearing full metal jacket waterproofs. Needs must, however, and in the end I had to strong-arm her down the stairs. She was not out for long and was grumpy for a few hours after. Again, I could not blame her at all.

In the few times I had to go outside today, all of which were with the bleddy hound, I found that I was quite worn out when we came back again. The constant wind is wearing, I find, and even the noise of it gnaws away at you. I have not looked to see when it might abate. It would be really good if it was quite soon but definitely before I make my way to the range tomorrow – only if the Missus is recovered, of course.

November 26<sup>th</sup> – Friday

Well, that was a frustrating day all around. The sum total that I have to show for quite a lot of effort and time devoted to doing things today was a blister in the middle of my right palm. That is not how the plan was supposed to pan out.

Our stormy day started early. The wind was buffeting so loudly in my ear 'ole that I failed to hear the warning at the top of the slip that the bleddy hound's best pal was about to bowl me over. I did not quite take a tumble but the bleddy hound's best pal is always incredibly pleased to see us and very enthusiastic with her welcome.

Under the beating wind the sea had upped its game and had gathered a bit of ground sea swell to add to its wind-blown choppiness. It was coming over the wall too but as the tides are small it was more slopping over than bounding. There was still a full house of white horses across the bay and the dark clouds came and went at will, some choosing this spot for a bit of rain and some not. This morning, like yesterday, we were spared getting wet.

I waited for the latest squally shower to blow through before attempting a run down to the gymnasium. I took back my latest failure to fix monitor, which only leaves one rowing machine fully operational – if you want to count what you have done. You call still pull the 'oars' and row all you like but it helps to have a bit of a guide.

I was halfway through a blistering session when my telephone rang. I often do not answer it if I am in the middle of something but for some reason I decided to on this occasion. It was just as well because I had made an appointment to meet our book man this morning for him to take back the books I believed were his. Fortunately, I was near the end and he agreed that he would go to Land's End Attraction where he was performing a similar duty and come back in thirty minutes.

My duty performed and a subsequent breakfast eaten, I turned my attention to the job at hand, which was to install the bathroom heater. First, I had agreed with the Missus, that I would dismantle the existing metal ladder heater so that she could clean the wall behind it. I had discovered in my preparations that it would be useful if I had a carbide tipped masonry drill bit to cut through the ceramic tiles for the new

fixings. Knowing that there was granite not far behind that I would also need a couple of new masonry bits as I reasoned I would probably blunt one after the second hole.

Why is it, that when there is a simple five minute job at hand, all of it will go smoothly except for the last minor insignificant thing that throws a spanner in the whole works. Taking Mother's rusting decorative brackets down should have been a two minute job. Three of the four screws came out without a problem. The fourth needed an angle grinder that I did not have with me but fortunately responded well to the application of bolt cutters, which I did. Today, the two geet screws holding in the upper fixings unscrewed without complaint, the last at the bottom shredded under the onslaught of various sizes and types of screwdriver it was in so firmly. I left that with the Missus, because she is inventive and tenacious and above all has patience. Time was pressing, and Mother needed picking up and my drill bits needed buying, so I fled.

I headed out to our local building supplier just outside St Just. I must expand one day about their location because, once, china clay was quarried there and West Cornwall had its own minor Cornish Alps. They are a very friendly bunch and most helpful. As it was, I managed to find everything that I needed without assistance, which avoided a run into Penzance that I was expecting. Given the hour, that would have been most unhelpful. We have an account at this business but I have not been back for eight months. The fellow behind the counter explained to the lady who was serving me what the account name was. I commented that I was surprised he remembered after such a long time. He replied that it had not seemed that long to which I suspect he meant, 'Remember? Could he ever forget!'

We had to detour to St Just town centre as the bleddy hound has, this very morning, finished off the last of her meat that we use for breakfast and tea. I stopped into one of the very fine St Just butchers and remembered while I was there that we also needed some milk. Rather than go to the national chain store across the road, I waited in line outside the independent greengrocer and grocery store in the square. Here they sold local milk, which was just the ticket until I discovered that it was £2.20 a litre. Not wishing to appear ungrateful – or cheap – I swallowed hard and bought it. It comes from St Ives, which explains a lot. I have often worried that our own milk is too expensive at £1.06 but have justified it to myself that most of the profit goes direct to the farmer who produced it. I shall worry no longer.

Back then to heater installation. The new one comes complete with towel rails that attach with screws to the rear of the unit. I will not name the manufacturer, let us call it Dumplix randomly, and are probably known as being at the cheaper end of the market. I might have – and probably should have – steered clear but the only other similar product was £500 and frankly it would have been cheaper to set light to the bathroom for some heat and repair the damage afterwards. Given that we have not actually turned on the unit yet, I cannot say whether it is effective as a heater or no but what I can say is that the towel rail attachments are completely useless.

There are four screws provided to secure each rail in place. Rather than affix a nut at the back of each hole and charge an extra tenner, Dumplix drilled a hole marginally too small and relied on a self-tapping solution. This might have been effective had they provided self-tapping screws rather than standard bolt screws or even hinted in the manual that there was no thread in the hole. As a result, none of the screws fitted any of the holes and neither – what a surprise – did they self-tap into the holes. This has left the towel rails loose and wobbly and probably prone to falling off in a week or two. I did manage to find one self-tapping screw among my souvenirs which worked marvelously. Did Dumplix never even try and build one of their own units and discover how rubbish it was?

The whole project came to rather an ignominious end when the Missus announced that she felt unwell. She had her dreaded lurgi booster jab yesterday evening and had reacted similarly after the first jab eight months ago or so. Mother, sensing her pasty tea was in jeopardy and did not want to look at an ill person all night, suggested I whisk her home with a pasty that she could cook herself. I could not argue with her logic and took her home forthwith.

We have the weekend to decide whether we send back the rubbish heater or not. I suspect that we can rig the towel rails somehow and we will get a few years out of it. The alternative is a rather expensive solution for a bit of heat in a room where we spend half an hour a day. As if that argument will wash any time soon.

Time for another beer, I reckon.

November 25<sup>th</sup> – Thursday

The forecast man on the television yesterday evening warned us to expect severe gales from the north come Friday night and into Saturday. The wind had other ideas and decided to have a little practise last night. I woke a couple of times and listened to it howling in the eaves and just about everywhere else since it was coming right at us.

It seemed to have moderated by the time the bleddy hound and I got out there, which was something of a relief. While the wind may have moderated, the sea state was now choppy, spurred on by the high winds and little white horses flecked the surface as far as the eye could see. There were some geet heavy clouds lined up in the direction of Cape but over to the east there were patches of blue sky. Our timing was immaculate as we got away with just a few spots of icy rain and were back inside before the first squall of the morning tore across the bay.

The onset of that first shower was majestic. The sky glowered low upon the water and cloud and sea turned a dark steel grey. Immediately in front of Cape Cornwall sat a wide foot of a rainbow the upper reaches of which faded into the cloud. Around half the distance between Cape and Brisons was bright, intense yellow light and it floated towards us across the bay surrounded by the grey mistiness of the falling rain

it was carrying with it. Against the backdrop of the dark water and sky, the white of the waves and the seabirds wheeling about, stood out stark white. As brightness came forward, the rainbow reached ever higher into the sky and the first clatter of wintry rain hit our windows.

I had thought that the forecast I watched yesterday said that the rain would have passed through by the middle of the morning but it was with us all day. Some of the showers were heavier than others but all of them were powered in by that blustery northerly wind. It was a most uncomfortable day.

This was a bit of a set back to our plans for the day, which were mainly replacing the decorative hanging basket brackets outside Mother's front door. What really stuck the boot into that plan was a call in the morning telling me to expect a parcel between half past twelve and half past one o'clock. I assumed it was the bathroom heater, which confused me because I thought it was coming via a different courier. It turned out that it was, according to another message a little later that warned us to expect it between half past one and half past two o'clock, which introduced a further delay to Mother's brackets.

All parcels received and accounted for we hacked our way through the rain and wind over to St Buryan. Here it mercifully stayed dry for the duration of the work. We had called upon the services of DIYman, just in case, and almost all of it went swimmingly apart from discovering that the head of one of the existing screws was stripped and had to be cut off. Nevertheless, the job is done and the two lanterns that the Missus purchased for stuffing with the solar Christmas lights that we bought for the tree last year, are up and running. There was some concern that it was a little premature to put up Christmas lights, so we agreed that they would be Thanksgiving lights in sympathy with our brothers and sisters across the ocean until the beginning of December.

No sooner had we had completed the task than another shower blew across us. In The Cove we can see them coming – especially when they are arriving from the north – and we have time to duck. In St Buryan they can sneak up on you and catch you by surprise, which is what happened when I chose to load all the tools back into the truck.

We scurried home quickly because the Missus had an appointment in town during the evening. She elected to go shopping afterwards while me and the bleddy hound gather around our one bar electric fire and sang rude camp songs in the gloom. Naturally, we both pretended to be reading sensible books when the Missus came back. She will suspect nothing and anyway, I have to mentally prepare to put the new heater up in the bathroom tomorrow.

November 24<sup>th</sup> – Wednesday

It felt a little more temperate today when I threw back the covers and indeed it was. There was a good bit of cloud around, that explained the temperature, and there was a bit of a sharp breeze coming from nearer north by the look of the flags on the channel markers. I keep expecting to be run off the beach by the tide but we are in neaps at present and even at high water there is enough sand for the bleddy hound and me.

My anticipation of going to the gymnasium today was tinged by a feeling of dread, remembering that the temperature inside the 'hut with a tin roof' is markedly lower than that of the temperature outside. I was mildly heartened by the increase in temperature today but as it transpired, I need not have worried as it was perfectly normal inside the room when I opened the door. After missing three sessions I was a little wary that I may find renewed effort a little strenuous but everything soon fell back into place. In truth, I probably only need worry if I am absent for several weeks at a stretch.

I do not know whether it was due to the gap in use but the monitor on the rowing machine that I use died a death just as I started to use it. This was the one that I had taken home and 'fixed' by attaching it to my computer. It had a fit on me today and died. When I got the screen working again it started displaying the same fault for which I had taken it home for in the first place. I fear that it is not long for this world and a good second hand replacement is close to £100. It is not that it is not worth it, but the machines belong to the Gig Club and I do not wish to step on toes or interfere. I will make enquiries and see what transpires.

There then followed a good deal of time sitting on my behind and not doing a great deal thinking that I should be doing something. Before I knew it, we were past the middle of the day and I thought that I really ought to be doing something. So I did.

Each year we have local interest books delivered on a sale or return basis by a firm just up the road. We have been in business with them for eighteen summers and the books sell very well. The company also puts the effort in to ensure there are new titles about now and again. Each year we need to box up the books we have not sold and send them back. A count is taken and we pay for the books we sold through the year.

This year we discovered that some of the titles were missing. Another company supplies some of the whole range and have decided to supply direct for one reason or another. When these arrived, because they are the same size and shape as the original company's books, I put them on the same rotating display. They arrived when we were busy and it was with a lack of foresight I did not note down which titles there were.

Wind forward again to this afternoon and me merrily taking the books off the display and stuffing them into boxes for collection. There is a list provided when the books are supplied that I try and keep safe. I this this that I use to write down the numbers

as I take them off the display. However, some books are provided at charge during the year and come with an invoice that eventually goes to the accountant. This is all well and good if the books received are top ups but if they are new titles, I do not have a record to hand.

Therefore, having emptied the display and exhausted the list I was working to, I was left with a pile of six titles. Logic may dictate that these were supplied by the new company, however, they could also be new titles supplied by the original company. I do hope you are paying attention still, dear reader. It is a very complicated and serious matter. As I pen this very page for your elucidation and delectation – and the learning of long words -, I await a return telephone call from the new company that will tell me what I purchased from them that will resolve the issue.

The Missus suggested that I cook our tea. I suggested that we need to work on emptying the freezer of some of the boxes of meals there. I do not think I will get away with that more than a couple of times so I had better line up a few meals that I can cook that she likes. I will steer away from fish; the Missus hates fish.

November 23<sup>rd</sup> – Tuesday

There was a little less sitting around and a bit more doing today. The bleddy hound must have felt it too because she got me up half an hour earlier than the day before. This was a bit of a shame because, for once, I could have lingered there a little longer especially as the air the other side of the duvet was a lot colder than the air inside it.

I have not set any timers on the few heaters that we do have. I would rather leave the turning them on to necessity. Despite the fact it felt very necessary first thing in the morning, I left them off and thought to wait until I could stand it no longer or more like when I was likely to be sitting inert for a while. Since I was about to take the bleddy hound out, that could wait – how very eco-minded of us. I think the Missus calls it being tight.

It seemed to be a little more user friendly out in the big wide world. That northeasterly had abated to the point we could hardly feel it at all. I think that we had been told that the temperature would drop today but without the breeze it was hard to notice. It was just as glorious today as it was the day before and the light and the colour of the sky made it good to be out and about in the loveliness of it all. The sea was exceptionally calm but I suspect, quite cold. One of our regular local swimmers arrived while we were down on the Harbour Beach. She spent about five minutes in the water and, when she came out, declared it suitable only for those of more cast iron resolve.

An errand run into town was awaiting my attention today, so I wrapped up against the chill and headed out after breakfast in the mid-morning. The roads were incredibly quiet today. Even when I arrived in town and traversed the Promenade,

there was hardly another car driving about, although quite a few were parked along the side of the road. I concluded that it was just the hour at which I was travelling because the big wharfside car park was about three quarters full, which was most unusual for this time of year. Whoever these parkers were, they were not milling about in town – unless they were all hanging around inside the shops and cafes against the cold.

I only had to visit the bank and was no more than half an hour in doing so. My car parking charge was 60 pence, which I did not think unreasonable. Stay for up to two hours and it will cuff you for £2.30, which, for a winter rate ostensibly for 'locals only', it is daylight robbery if we are trying to encourage in town shopping.

Given that I had been alerted that the first of our heaters would be arriving today, I thought that I would get ahead of the posse and make sure I had all the appropriate fixings for it. I was pretty sure I could get one pair of fixings into an upright but the second pair would require those clever 'speed plugs' that burrow into plasterboard. I was sorely tempted to purchase a level while I was there purely on the basis that I had left mine up at The Farm. It was a close run thing but the little voice in my head that told me not to be so bleddy lazy and go and get it won the day.

I picked up Mother on the way back and, having swapped her for a pair of wellies when we got back home, I headed up to The Farm with the bleddy hound so that she could have a bit of a wander. If it was glorious in The Cove, up at The Farm it was, erm, gloriously. The bleddy hound has come to expect one of her treats from the cabin when we arrive there and when I opened the door, the heat flooded out. There is a fair amount of south facing glazing on the cabin and the solar gain is quite efficient. Mother can stay up there on cold sunny days and is quite cosy in the cabin all day.

We stopped long enough to check the various outbuildings and the state of the polytunnel. There are a few cucumbers still there and a whole row of spinach. They would probably still be growing if they could get some water, but we have abandoned them for this year. I checked the big IBC water containers and the second one, installed this year, is close to half full. The Missus reckons that if we start the summer with both of these full then she will have enough to see her through without the need for me to install a pipe from the butts down by the barn. This is a disappointment as it was a challenge that I was quite looking forward to. Still, there is plenty left to do as one more IBC is required by the polytunnel and another three are planned to collect water off the barn roof which will be ample for the greenhouse and the growing patch to the rear of it.

Having collected my tool bag and the level, I returned home along our newly levelled lane. This has made all the difference to progress along the lane and it is no longer required to have a raised suspension vehicle, nor does it feel like you are driving on rails. It was a little slippery but that is something we can easily put up with.

As luck would have it, the hallway heater arrived as I was just about to depart for The Farm. After I came back with my tools, I was able to get to it right away. It was the same make of heater that we have in the living room, which are plain and simple but look quite modern and unobtrusive. As they are not very heavy, they require just four holes to be made to attach them to the wall and thanks to my meticulous advance planning the fixings were up in a jiffy, even without the appearance of DIYman. The only slight disappointment was that the flex was too long and the plug was a moulded one and impossible to get off. To shorten the cable from the plug end I will need to find a spare plug. I did remove the back of the heater to see if it could be shortened at the terminal end. Whereas some items have a standard terminal block between the mains and inner wiring, this box uses the mains cable direct with soldered connections into the circuits inside. I will need to find a spare plug.

We shall see how it performs. Currently, we still have curtains up to close in the living room after a concerted campaign by Mother and me. The Missus cannot abide the curtains as we get caught up bringing in trays of food, but it does make the living room heaters more effective. With the corridor heater deployed and the bedroom doors closed – we keep our bedroom window open all year - we might get away without the need for the curtain.

The bathroom heater is coming tomorrow and that will be a whole different cabbage patch of donkeys with ceramic tiles and granite walls to drill into. I can hardly wait.

November 22<sup>nd</sup> – Monday

I had spoken with a few people who had warned that it was going to be so cold that several brass monkeys had left the country. When I looked at the forecast temperatures for this week in an idle moment at the latter part of last week I recall thinking that it did not seem so bad. How mislead could I have been? Outside with the bleddy hound in the morning it still did not really strike me as being uncomfortably cold. However, sitting around in the flat, waiting for our visitors to arrive, the cold set into my bones.

It did not help that our visitor called when he was already fifteen minutes late to tell us that he would be a further hour after that. At least it gave me time to get ready for the day and to have some breakfast. The movement helped to dispel some of the ice from the joints. His assessment, after he arrived and spent five minutes in the loft, was that we did not really need any further loft insulation. What we had there already was sufficient and another layer would provide scant improvement. In one respect this was exceedingly good news because the work would involve ripping up the boards in the loft and clearing everything out. On the other hand, it was still rather chill in the flat, even with the electric heaters turned on and if additional loft insulation was not the solution, what is?

Yesterday, I made the schoolboy error of looking at additional heating for the flat. This is akin to going shopping for food when you are hungry. The decision should

have been made during the summer when it could be made with a level head. There is a matter of division between the Missus and I regarding the towel rail in the bathroom. I have barred its use on the grounds that it is useless as a heater of the bathroom and does not dry the towels. It just eats up electricity to poor effect. To dry the towels it is cheaper to put them in the tumble drying for half an hour. The Missus raises the issue of damp towels and cold bathroom when I least expect it and to demonstrate my Scrougeness in casual conversation with strangers.

I have been considering a solution to the bathroom debacle, now and again, mainly when the Missus raises the issue of my Scrougeness in casual conversation with strangers. Yesterday, I did something about it and purchased a panel heater to replace the towel rail. I also bought a skirting heater for the hallway, which I had determined to buy anyway but after all the building work had been done. I reasoned that it was not worth installing it before the insulation was done but we now know that will not help. I am once again, in the good books, or at least will be when I have installed the new heaters and the flat is toasty for the short while before the bank balance evaporates.

Outside it was a glorious day. It was quite lovely looking at it through the window because however cold it was in the flat, it was a darn sight colder outside. The northeasterly has refused to go away, although it did seem that it was a good bit lighter today. Right from the outset we had clear skies almost from horizon to, erm, top of cliff except for a benign row of cumulus clouds dotted along the northern rim. These dropped in a little closer by the end of the day but were still far enough off not to spoil our vaulting sky.

I ventured out a few times, wrapped up against the chill. It would have been nice to say that it was warmer in the sunlight but at two o'clock it was already down close to the low water mark. This is The Cove in winter mode, and we shall not have sun on the pavement until the middle of February.

There was plenty of sun on the backs of the flocks of gulls excited about something or other to the east of Cowloe. I noticed that some of the fishing boats had been out so it might have been something one of them left behind. The few gannets later on were happy to dive for their own dinner and the big splashes they made on the water caught the eye on the waveless water of the later afternoon. It set off nicely against the sepia cliffs glowing in the reflection of the dipping sun.

I had cleared up a few more files on the computer and installed an under the cupboard light in the kitchen. The Missus had progressed a little further investigating the horde from the Aged Parents but other than that we had done very little. This is a worrying trend, although it really should not be given that we worked for seven months without a break. It just seems wrong. Work at The Farm is hanging over us and while it seems we have plenty of tie at present, it will soon disappear.

There is a trip into town looming tomorrow, so perhaps that will kick start my enthusiasm. If it is cold again, I fear that will be short lived.

November 21<sup>st</sup> – Sunday

Gee, but it's great to be back home. Mr Simon Garfunkel had a point, notwithstanding that it was just a great seeing the Aged Parents again after a couple of years parted.

It did not take very long to fall back into the routine of being back home, either. The bleddy hound did give me a few minutes extra grace time in bed but that might just have been how much later the sun comes up since we were last together. For the first time in many weeks it was necessary to tool up with an additional layer before venturing out. The increasing northeasterly brought the already cooler temperature down a few more degrees just for added joy.

The bleddy hound would not descend the slipway yesterday when the Missus took her out after we got home. We suspected the niff of a seal put her off. I was therefore quite surprised that she came down all the way to the beach with me this morning. However, she stayed around only for a fleeting few necessary minutes and headed off back up the slope again. I am guessing that she has learnt that if she does not come down to the beach she will end up going around the block. Fear of a longer walk clearly trumps fear of being eaten by a seal.

There were a few sharp, wintry showers blowing through The Cove during the morning. Aided and abetted by the now buffeting northeast breeze, the sleety rain clattered upon the windows. There were a few people wandering about wrapped up in their winter woollies and heavy weather gear so it is still holiday time for some. If the weather was bothering them they certainly did not show it and the four wing surfers on the snazzy hydrofoil boards racing about the bay were just loving it all it seems.

Later in the day the sun broke through and by the time the bleddy hound and I ventured down to the beach again, it was positively blazing down. Blazing it may have been but the heat part of it must have been held up on the way as it was pretty chilly in that northeast draught.

There would have been only one thing I had to do in the afternoon and that was to find the documents required for the loft insulation people tomorrow morning. I had, however, established before I went away that the computer that I am penning this very page upon had started to act up. It looks a bit like the hard drive about to give up, so I took the plunge to replace the computer before the supply of those or the chips inside them give up as well. This necessitates a bit of preparation on the current machine to make the switch to the new one smooth and painless. It is also a good idea to increase the regularity of backups in the meantime. It was this that took up much of the rest of the afternoon.

We had just finished a rather welcome roast dinner when my Lifeboat pager went off. Sunday seems to be the day to have a Lifeboat shout, so I should have been

expecting it. What we probably were not expecting was a lone yachtsperson to be attempting a run out to the Emerald Isle on this breezy and inclement day. He had the good sense to scarp from the wind and go and hide in Mill Bay around the corner. Whether there was a shortage of regular updates to the Coastguard or there was some gap in the understanding is not clear but some alert watch commander noticed the route across the Irish Sea was missing one lone yachtsperson who was supposed to be there and the alarm was raised.

Happily, someone had spotted the yacht hack north across the bay and rather swiftly turn around and race back again. The last position was either assumed or notified and our boat was tasked to search Mill Bay and then east while Penlee would search the coast west and the two would meet up.

Our boat did not have to look for long and found the yacht anchored up safely at Nanjizal. Under the safe watch of the Penlee boat, it was escorted back to Newlyn for the night or until the weather improved.

Released from its duties, our boat headed back to the station after we carried out a quick assessment of the state of the sea at the bottom of the long slipway. There was quite a bit of wash there, although we have recovered in worse conditions but normally with a few more of the very excellent Shore Crew in attendance. There were two permanent members and we made up a small team with keen volunteers from the Boat Crew.

With conditions as they were it was important that we had the cable as close to perfect length as we could get. It was almost there but the Boat Crew had to tug a bit to get a few more inches up on the boat. This is far preferable than having yards too much and we brought the boat up the long slip in what was surely a textbook recovery.

I was very glad to get back into the boathouse as we pulled the boat the remainder of the way as it was mighty chilly down at the toe end of the slip. Washed and polished, we secured the boat for the night and returned home for some serious sleeping under a warm duvet – well, I know that is what I did. We are, after all, a very chilled, very excellent Shore Crew.

November 20<sup>th</sup> – Saturday

We packed our humble belongings at the house that we have rented for the last few days and stuffed, quite literally, the couple of bags into the back of the truck. We did a little detour to get fuel and returned to order a sandwich from our favourite sandwich shop before heading back to the charity shop.

The progression of things had to be carefully organised as we had very nearly run out of room in the truck and something needed to come out before the last few bags and boxes went in, remembering of course to leave enough room for ourselves. By the time we had finished the packing up at the Aged Parents', which was almost the last stop, you could not get a postage stamp into the load area and not a great deal more in the back seats of the truck.

We said our fond farewells and headed off into the occasional drizzle, which lasted all the way home on and off. We were lucky to avoid a couple of spills on the route including a FalFish truck that had gone off the road, ironically, at the stretch of road known affectionately as Hamburger Hill, due to the large burger chain outlet sign at the side of the road there. The services would have to work quickly if the truck was full because it would probably climb out by itself if left a day or two.

There was a brief stop of Tesmorburys for a morsel or two for tea and the last stop was at Mother's to collect the bleddy hound. Mother was quite pleased to see us but the bleddy hound really could not give a stuff. She had been fed and watered by someone she regards as far more suitable an owner than we but came along peaceably when it was time to go home.

The Missus took the bleddy hound for a bit of a run while I unloaded the truck. Half of the contents went into our commercial bin on the basis that we really could not be fagged to take it to the tip, sorry, Household Waste Recycling Centre. We took the view that the fee for one pick up was probably similar to the fuel cost of driving to St Erth and, with the particular company we use, a good percentage of it would actually be recycled rather than ending up in the incinerator at St Dennis.

The other half of the contents of the truck was split between the flat and the shop, where it will be sorted and assessed for sale on the Internet shopping website or to the local auction house. I foresee quite a lot of photograph taking about to happen in my very near future and a lot of anxious looking at the computer screen to see what price the Aged Parents' goodies have fetched.

Must be time for a beer by now, surely.

November 19<sup>th</sup> – Friday

After collecting another excellent sandwich and a rather alluring bunch of flowers from the local florist I headed to the greengrocers. The ladies there provided for the Aged Parent during the last eighteen months sometimes delivering just a few items of sustenance and checking all was well. It was the first opportunity that I had to thank them in person and I hoped the token flowers would show just how much they were appreciated.

With the Missus following on behind in the truck a little while behind me, I headed to the charity shop where the first eight bags and boxes of clothes and nick-nacks were to be dropped. Since we had run out of boxes, we asked for ours back, which caused some disturbance. I told them that there was more to follow to which they asked if we could leave it until next week. We are leaving tomorrow, so I rather forced their arm to accept the remainder in the afternoon and the following morning.

Thus reset, the Missus renewed her onslaught on the upstairs, finishing the Aged Parents' bedroom and continuing onto the office. Here, the Aged Parent needed to be on hand to process all the various bits of paperwork, some of which we will take home to slip into our industrial shredder. There was also an abundance of books, some heavy tomes among them that nearly all fitted into three, almost immovable, large laundry bags. The rest we brought downstairs so that the Aged Parent would be more comfortable as he sorted through the contents.

By dinner time the Missus had progressed to the living and dining rooms. Most of the decorative china had been packed up the evening before but there was still plenty of everything else. At one point there was an impossible pile on the living room floor that I thought that we would never get through by the evening, which marked the finish line. It was clear toward tea time that we would not quite make it to finish the kitchen. This would probably take a couple of hours by itself and several more boxes than we had.

Also toward tea time, the Aged Parent was looking somewhat diminished by the continual sifting through letters, cards, ornaments and personal effects and deciding what to keep and what to not. It was perhaps time to bring this episode to an end and return to finish what remained another time.

Since we had decided to have tea in on our final night, the Aged Parent and I took a stroll up to the town while the Missus packed, wrapped and disposed of the processed items. There is a particularly excellent selection of independent shops in the town, the butcher and the greengrocer being just two. Here we picked up some gala and pork pies, some ham and some salad items for a simple, locally farmed tea. On the way we dropped off at the chemist to rid ourselves of a collection of loose batteries we had found in a drawer. One of these was an ancient PP9 battery which is large and square and was used in equally bulky transistor radios. How it was in such good condition is something of a mystery but unfortunately the hole in the top of the box was not designed for such things. We will have to take it to the, erm, Household Waste Recycling Centre when we get home where I double very much that it will be recycled – just tipped.

We brought our main drive to a close at around nine o'clock, which just gave sufficient time to clear up the bags and boxes and to squeeze everything into the truck. I had already moved much of the rubbish, around five or six refused sacks of it to the back of the load space so that we could push other boxes that we were taking back, including a small chair, in next. At the last came the remaining charity bags and boxes that we hope to drop off in the morning on our way out.

While the Missus was still clearly champing at the bit and bitterly disappointed that she had failed to conclude the kitchen, I and particularly the Aged Parent were quite worn out by it all. Nevertheless it had been a successful few days and an achievement not to be sniffed at, especially from the Missus' perspective who had worked like a little Trojan.

We need to wrap up smartly in the morning, so we headed to bed back at the billet for some fitful kip.

November 18<sup>th</sup> – Thursday

Gosh we are flying through the week as quickly as the Missus is flying through the house. We only had half the day of it today as we had to honour an appointment in the afternoon.

The shortage of time did not hold the Missus back for a moment and the second we had finished the excellent sandwich that I had again collected from the sandwich shop, she was hard at it. This time she attacked the Aged Parents' bedroom before anyone had the time to object or bar the door. The process is to clear everything from every drawer and every cupboard and whisk it downstairs for assessment. To give the Aged Parents' their due they have been as brutal in their decisions as the Missus has in her clearances. Only required items are returned, neatly, to the room from whence they came.

While all of the clothes that are no longer required will end up at the charity shop along with the few trinkets that are deemed as having little value, some of the goodies have been kept aside. This also applied to the wealth of decorative china in the living room cabinets, which will be boxed up and taken back with us. The Missus will be spending an awful lot of time in the coming weeks on one of the Internet auction sites attempting to squeeze maximum value from the horde. We will, of course, be sending back the proceeds – after commission – naturally.

As you might imagine, the clearance has resulted in a fair bit of rubbish being collected. Many of the clothing items were enclosed in cellophane bags of the non-recycling type – apart from one bag that had printed across the front 'I am not plastic', although it must have been in the drawer for twenty years and had not degraded in the least. In every item of clothing that the maternal Aged Parent possessed, there was a paper handkerchief in every single pocket, no doubt for being spat on to rub a dirty mark from a small boy's face.

Along with the plastic and the geet pile of paper handkies, there were bars of perfumed soap in abundance. These were placed randomly among the drawers to maintain a fresh aroma to the stored clothes, presumably more cheaply than the sachets that are specifically manufactured for the job. In any case there must have been thirty bars of soap of various sorts and smells among the many drawers emptied.

As mentioned before, the plan was to drop these waste bags at local tip, sorry, Household Waste Recycling Centre but having discovered that it was closed could no longer apply. The Aged Parent told us that Friday was bin day, so I thought to get rid of a couple of bags in his wheelie bin. This too was scotched when he discovered

that it was recycling week – general waste is collected once every three weeks! It also did not help that we could barely fit just one bag of rubbish into his very small wheelie bin. The much maligned council maintains that for those visitors to Cornwall who do not have access to waste or recycling facilities in their holiday accommodation, should take home their waste. It is pure irony, therefore, that we will be returning to Cornwall with waste we have generated in a foreign county because it would not take it.

We reconvened in the early evening for another meal out. It was deemed preferable to stay in town so that we did not have the fag of driving out somewhere. I was dubious about the selected establishment because a few years ago while looking for alternative accommodation I tried it out and found it wanting. The menu was not particularly inspired and reasonably basic. However, I particularly, was pleasantly surprised when we arrived and had our basic meal. It was wholesome and the dining area quietly tucked away from the raucousness of the main bars and it was also the only place so far where the staff took dread lurgi precautions seriously and wore masks as a general rule.

It was mizzling a little more heavily than it was when we had stepped out a few hours earlier. Nevertheless it was not too unpleasant for a refreshing walk home and the Missus, bless her, threw herself into wrapping up the decorative china when we got back. The clock is now ticking down to zero and we have the office and the kitchen left to process. A synch, no doubt for the Missus. I am wondering if she will test herself by starting it in the afternoon for fun.

November 17<sup>th</sup> – Wednesday

Quite how we managed to be so lazy on a morning when we were due to do some proper work and house clearance, I do not know. The Missus had the reins today, so I demurred to her expertise in this area and stayed in bed until I could stand it no longer.

Since I needed to visit the shops on my way to the Aged Parents' abode having discovered that during my meticulous preparations that I had left my toothpaste behind, I went on foot and left the Missus to drive on behind. I would meet her there. Another reason for heading out on foot was that there is a cracking little sandwich shop on the way. We had frequented this establishment each time we had visited over the last several years. The lady makes the most delicious sandwiches, knee deep they are in just about any combination of anything on the extensive list of local goodies. She makes them from scratch and with such speed and finesse it is worth ordering something complex just to watch her perform.

The reason why the Missus brought the truck around was that we had brought with us large carrier sacks in abundance as well as cardboard boxes to put everything in. Having assessed the work the evening before, the Missus set to shortly after

finishing our sandwiches and very soon had several bags full of clothes and decorative objects from just the first room she tackled.

The net stage of the process was to parade the contents of the bags in front of the Aged Parent. The Aged Parent came into his own with a thumbs up or down, depending on the item and whether it should be kept or not. Any thumbs up was met with an interrogation of the last time it was used, the next time it might be used and 'are you really sure?' before it was segregated to a separate bag. While the Aged Parent believes that this is the bag of things to be kept, it is actually the bag that we will dispose of more subtly than the bag that contained all the thumbs down items.

Much of the good and reusable clothes and trinkets will go to various charity shops in the town. They are of sufficient quality and generic fashion to be shifted quite easily. I, particularly, felt a bit of a pang regarding some of the knitted items that were clearly knitted by my great aunt. She had knitted me a cardigan in her final years while near blind that is quite remarkable. I still wear it at home as it is warm and comfortable. It seemed disrespectful to dispose of it but there again, it would only languish unused in a cupboard else.

The Missus purged two rooms during the few hours we allotted to the task and most of the collection will go to a charity shop. There were a few bags that will need to go to the tip, sorry, Household Waste Recycling Centre and therein lies a tale.

I had checked ahead with the much maligned council's sister authority and discovered that a permit would be required if I wished to use the facility nearby. I tried to apply for a permit but was denied because I was not resident in the county, so I wrote for assistance. I was also denied assistance because the authority could not be bothered to reply to my letter. The only reasonable course of action open to me therefore was to lie, so I applied for the permit using the Aged Parents' address and hoped that the authority would not cross check the truck's registration number. They clearly could not be bothered to do that either because the Aged Parent let me know a week or so later that the permit had arrived.

Feeling quite smug that I had catered for the eventuality that we would need to use the tip, sorry, Household Waste Recycling Centre, it was something of a shock to discover that the nearest one would not be open during our stay. The Aged Parent being a little more thorough than me had discovered that the facility was open on Monday and Tuesday and then not again until Saturday morning. I was astounded. What was the use of such a service open just a few pathetic hours per week? The next nearest was so far away it would have used up time we did not have getting there and back.

If we are to assume that the ridiculous opening hours at the nearest facility are due to cost reductions, then I was even more incensed when I opened the letter containing the permit. Pasted to the front of a covering letter was a credit card style plastic permit that must have cost a fortune to design, encode and produce. I was

livid and it was not even my council. What an utter waste. At least the much maligned council only sent out a permit consisting of a scrap of paper for the document they never checked. I almost considered dropping by the nearer facility on our way home on Saturday, despite the guaranteed lengthy queues, just to see if they checked the plastic permit. I decided that it was probably not such a good plan just in case they did not.

I agree that there needs to be restrictions. Ordinary citizens do not need to be paying for commercial waste disposal but unless we want rubbish strewn across the countryside, should we not be making it easy for people to get rid of domestic waste and recycling?

Once more we elected to eat out. This time to another establishment that we had used before but required a bit of a drive out to. Again, we had the choice of some wholesome pub food and again in quantities that we are unused to. We should contemplate a fast for tomorrow evening as I believe we have eaten sufficient for a week and I must consider my sylph-like figure.

As if spending the day with the Missus packing bags and me unpacking and sorting them under the scrutiny of the Aged Parent, you might have thought that we had enough of such things. It seemed churlish, however, to leave the bags from room two until the morning, so we sorted those when we got back from our meal. The office is next, which is a completely different casserole dish of marbles as it is mainly records, papers and books – mere bread and butter to the Missus, I am sure.

November 16<sup>th</sup> – Tuesday

What utter excitement. For the first time in two years we were stepping outside the boundaries of the parish – well, in a metaphorical sense, at least. We felt like intrepid explorers.

Alright, we did not, but it was a bit of a red letter day and would be the first time we would see the Aged Parent in that time. That was excitement and gratification enough, to be fair. First, however, we had to build up sufficient momentum to exit the gravitational pull of The Cove and that took some time.

We did actually leave The Cove at around the time I thought that we might. It was then that The Cove started to pull back again. First, on the way to drop the bleddy hound with Mother at St Buryan, I discovered a parcel that I forgot to send yesterday and had to stop at the post office. Since that requires a modicum of cash to complete, I then remembered that we had left the money behind, which might be quite useful for things like food and fuel to get back again. I left the Missus with Mother and drove back to The Cove to collect it.

There is no escaping Penzance without first stopping at the Cost a Lot coffee place for the Missus. It is a small price to pay for not having a grumpy farmer sitting next to

be on a long drive and talking of long drives I will spare you the details of it. Needless to say that it was tedious, even if it was uneventful with little traffic, and so too was the stop at the Swedish furniture superstore that has opened on the route. I had to wait until we had arrived at that point for a spot of croust that we had brought with us. I consumed that instead of traipsing around the store. I did go in at the last to stretch my legs and caught up with the Missus about 100 yards from the checkout, which was immaculate timing if I say so myself.

We arrive at the Aged Parent's late in the afternoon with a magnificent sunset going on in my rear view mirror for the last half an hour of the journey. We have left a line of frequent showers behind on the journey and if that was the reward for enduring them, so be it.

The main purpose of the visit, other to see the Aged Parent's smiling visage and enjoy his vivacious bonhomie, which should go without saying, is to assist in clearing the now over large house that he finds himself in. By removing some of the unwanted collection of clothes and memorabilia, it will give him some options for the future and not the least make it easier to clean and maintain the remaining rooms that are occupied. The Missus is the ideal person to carry out such work as it is part of her natural skillset with the additional benefit of not having an emotional connection to the items being removed.

There was little time to do anything by assess the work to be done as the hour was late and tea was beckoning. We had been exceedingly brave and booked into a local hostelry for our tea. This too would be a first, having not dined out – or indeed visited an alehouse – for those intervening couple of years. Despite the reasons for it not been ideal, I suspect that such an upheaval to a person's ingrained routines is actually a good thing and a chance to re-evaluate priorities and requirements. We had long since abandoned going out to eat unless with visitors or special occasions. We discovered that we both, although mainly the Missus, cook a blinding bit of scoff at home and more often than not, dinners provided in restaurants had become a disappointment in the main.

Thus we found ourselves in an alehouse that was probably the last place we dined out in those two years ago. Then they provided a decent simple meal, homegrown and well cooked, and had not lost any of that talent in the meantime. It was also my first draught pint in two years.

As we exited the establishment we discovered that the light rain that had followed us for a good part of the journey had, eventually, caught up and was making the pavement a tad slippery. Having walked from our accommodation to the premises we decided to err on the side of caution and sent the Missus ahead for transport to carry us back. It was exceeding pleasant to finish the evening with a nightcap of the Aged Parents' finest single malt while we examined some of the treasure he had already uncovered in his efforts to clear up the detritus from the house ahead of our visit.

And so to bed – in an 'Air BnB' rented accommodation just around the corner.  
Another first.

November 15<sup>th</sup> – Monday

Today was a day of preparation and the first thing to prepare for was the Lifeboat coming back to The Cove.

I had already had a peek out of the window having set my alarm for early o'clock. It was clear from what I was seeing that the sea conditions, as we headed towards low water were benign enough at the foot of the slipway to enable us to recover the boat. There was white water over Cowloe and all along the shore to quite far off and there was sufficient swell for one early wake boarder with his hydrofoil enhanced board to practise his art for a couple of hours beyond the Lifeboat channel markers and just to the north of Cowloe reef.

My analysis was confirmed by the Coxswain a little while later when he sent me a text message to expect him and the boat back at around quarter to nine o'clock. As if further confirmation were necessary, I met with the crew as they mustered before climbing aboard transport in the direction of Newlyn. There was only a skeleton crew – they did miss tea last night, after all – but enough to make the boat Search and Rescue able on its return journey.

I alerted various members of the very excellent Shore Crew to muster a good half hour before the boat was expected and we set up on the long slipway. There was a bit of waiting to do after that but soon the boat appeared from around the headland of Pedn-men-du and took up position at the moorings. I took up position with a compatriot at the bottom of the slipway and waited the boat coming astern to meet us. Given that it was I that positioned the cable at the bottom of the slipway it would seem a little smug to say that it had been placed perfectly and the take up was an exemplar of the process. Nevertheless, the cable had been placed perfectly and the take up was an exemplar of the process. It set a new standard for textbook recoveries as if it had been at all conceivable that our previous textbook recoveries could have been bested.

Still smarting from such a revelation and what it meant for textbook recoveries everywhere, we brought the boat up to the boathouse where it was washed down in a combination of effort by Shore and Boat Crew. We were all done by half past nine o'clock. We are, after all, a very timely, very excellent Shore Crew.

It dropped me into the morning at the exact time that trips to the gymnasium are usually conducted, so I headed there for a blistering session. This was some more preparation as I may well miss some of the forthcoming sessions and needed to make this one count. The timing also ensured that I was home in time for the Missus to go shopping with Mother because although we are unlikely to need provisions

over the next few days, Mother almost certainly will as she will have guests staying while we take a leave of absence.

While the Missus was gone, I carried out even more preparation. We are away deep for a few days to visit the Aged Parent and since we have not been away for a while, the preparation is a little more thorough that might otherwise be the case as we have forgotten how to go away. The Missus started early by cleaning the interior of the truck yesterday, which, given the state of the interior of the truck, was a Herculean task and after which I climbed inside at the range with my muddy boots on.

Today, on top of the shopping and the taking the bleddy hound to the veterinary surgery, she cleaned the outside of the truck. I did offer to do it while she was out shopping which incurred a 'stupid boy' sort of look. The original plan was to take it to a car wash but apparently they cannot cope with roof bars. Previously, I would have taken it to St Buryan garage where they had the perfect brush and power hose combination and very rarely any queue to use it. Unfortunately, St Buryan garage is now closed, which is hugely inconvenient for many. The Missus did it by hand in the last light of day when she came back.

Since it would have been tricky to do so while the truck was being washed, I will fit the new windscreen wipers in the morning. However, I did manage to fit a new tail and brake light combination bulb as the tail light on the near side was not working. It is now, which was a bit of luck as the website that I ordered the bulb from, along with the wiper blades so that the Missus could pick them up while she was out, was not in the least helpful about the type of bulb required. I had guessed in the end, but I think that they are pretty standard issue on older vehicles.

The preparations, as you might imagine, did not stop there. There was a cornucopia of preparing in the evening, making sandwiches so that we did not have to stop off at service stations on the way, ironing my socks and polishing my toothbrush. I am sure that there were other tasks but the whole evening slipped by in a haze of busyness. If we have forgotten anything I shall eat my hat – unless, of course, I forgot my hat.

November 14<sup>th</sup> – Sunday

There was a bit of mizzle around first thing but it was at the corner of the Lifeboat station, as it always is, where some big drops fall off the roof. If the station was being built in these modern times someone might have thought to collect it and use it to flush the toilets with. The roof that we have is unlikely to be retro-fitted with launders as it is the wrong shape. The bleddy hound and I will continue to be dropped on from a great height for some time to come, I fear.

I was not sure that it was just in the flat that the air temperature was unseasonably high for the time of year. I discovered pretty quickly that it was outside the flat as well, which made choosing what I was going to wear to the range a bit tricky. It was

the first time I had been shooting for about a year, I think, although I had been to the range in March to help break up the sand in the butts.

Having been absent for a year I was not entirely sure how I felt about going back again. It is the same with anything, that you get used to a routine and change is a most unnatural state to enjoy. I should have had more faith, especially as today's target shoot was using my cowboy rifle. I was mildly surprised that I was still relatively good at shooting it and remembered without prompting which end to point where.

It was very pleasant seeing old acquaintances after so long and the whole day was thoroughly enjoyable. While the shooting and reacquainting was the enjoyable bit the increasing mizzle was an irritation. It was the sort of rain that drenches you through without you noticing and suddenly you wonder why your jacket is sticking to you. It is not always possible, particularly when it is your turn to shoot, to wear a waterproof jacket as it gets in the way of the voluminous pockets of my shooting jacket where I keep my ammunition. When I returned home, I had to leave my clothes arranged over various bits of furniture to dry out until the morning rather than putting them away in my shooting bag.

As is often the case when we do not see friends for a while one of them will ask *the* question, "have you had many callouts of the Lifeboat recently?" I have mentioned before that this is akin to saying the name of the 'Scottish play' to a thespian – you just do not do it.

Less than three hours later, just as I was home cleaning up after a day at the range, our Lifeboat pagers went off calling us to service. This was for a fishing boat taking on water out by Seven Stones. The boat launched into quite some swell but at least it was diminishing from earlier on. We settled down for a long evening and a possible recovery somewhere between tides, but an assessment of the conditions would need to be made nearer the time to ensure that it was safe to do so.

It was not very long after launching than we heard the message to stand down the Lifeboat because the fishing vessel had got their leak under control and had emptied all the water and had a boy sticking his finger in the hole until they got back to Newlyn. (I made that last bit up – they do not have boys on boats anymore, so it was probably and adult).

We looked at the end of the long slipway dubiously. It was probably possible to have brought the boat back, but someone made the decision that it was probably a bit risky for the very excellent Shore Crew in the dark, which was very pleasant of them, and the boat went around to Newlyn for the night. There will be an early morning recovery now instead of a late night one.

Some volunteers volunteered to go and pick up the crew from Newlyn and I settled in for a quiet night. How very pleasant.

November 13<sup>th</sup> – Saturday

The sea was still churning in the morning but the ferocity was abating. We could hear it raging into the evening and even at low tide it was roaring away. I heard it a few times during the night but at least it was not accompanied by a howling of the wind. When we rounded the corner of the Lifeboat station on our first walk out of the day, there was still quite a draft blowing in but much less in strength than the day before.

There was some brightness first thing and it looked like it might open up a little but the grey returned with a vengeance and stayed for the remainder of the day. The early drizzle, however, soon cleared and the temperate breeze dried the streets. I was hoping it was doing a similar job to the grass up at The Farm as that is where we were heading next and strimming around the ground between the barn and the stables was on the cards.

Those cards fell into a crumpled pile on the ground when the Highly Professional Craftsperson telephoned to tell me that he was available to install the new cameras onto the front of the shop. The cameras have sat waiting for installation since before we were closed but it really was not a clever idea to install them during a busy half term.

I had stepped back from installing the trunking inside because I did not know exactly where the cables would come in. This was just as well because there needed to be some adjustment to suit the timber shape at the front. The two battens I had lovingly prepared became surplus to requirements as the supporting boxes had to come a bit lower than expected. We then scabbled around looking for the most appropriate screws to use and, being a highly professional craftsperson, the Highly Professional Craftsperson spent time locating upright timbers inside the frontage to attach the boxes to.

It took a little longer than expected, largely because the camera aspect of 16:9 gives a broad narrow view when we required a tall narrow view. By rotating the camera the aspect was correct but required a viewer with a head attached sideways to comfortably view the picture. In the absence of a camera manual, it took an age to find the right instructions on the Internet to rotate the image. It took the Highly Professional Craftsman up the ladder with his hand on the camera and me on my clever mobile telephone, looking at the image, to adjust the angles and position of the camera to get the best possible view.

We can now avidly watch for naughty people using our bins instead of the public bin as they should and we can see who is approaching with sufficient time to close the shop if we do not like the look of them.

While we were fully occupied with the cameras, the Missus continued with plan A and headed to The Farm with Mother. There she managed to complete the clearing

of the tomato plants and move on to new and fresher tasks. One of those tasks will have to be a way of keeping birds off the polytunnel. When we were up there yesterday, we noticed several holes in the roof and concluded that the birds had been pecking at it. A quick scan of the Internet suggested a theory that they were fooled by insects on the inside and were trying to get at them. Solutions included netting, but this may trap the unwary bird, or CDs strung along the apex to ward them off. One contributor even suggested a scarecrow. We might have to try several of these to see which works.

After the Highly Professional Craftsperson left, I set to with the trunking. I had assumed it would need to be screwed into place and I gathered all the necessary equipment for doing so. I then discovered that it had a rather effective sticky side so I used that instead and brushed aside the thought of losing the plaster if we ever came to remove it. I happily installed the first lengths of trunking across the bottom of the window and up from the holes half way down the wall where the cables came in. It then became abundantly clear that the trunking I have will only accommodate one of the cables. We will have to get a length of the next size up to complete the job where the two camera cables and the alarm wire runs back to the router. This will probably get done shortly before the cameras become obsolete in a ten years' time.

I managed to complete all that I could do and configure the cameras to operate on our smart recording box just in time to start work in the kitchen on our tea. In fact the whole second half of the day went exceeding smoothly, the work was done, the tea prepared, the bleddy hound fed and the tea coming ready all on time. I sat back for the rest of the evening and savoured that. It was exceedingly rare.

November 12<sup>th</sup> – Friday

I had been looking forward to a day full of hard effort and achievement but somehow things did not work out like that. It seems that we are quite content to let whatever happens in the day, happen and not worry too much if it is not quite like what we imagined it might be at the start of it.

One thing that is as constant as the tide is that the bleddy hound demands to go forth into the day quite soon after light breaks over The Cove. With the day getting later in arriving I had thought that in terms of time, that might get later each day. Sadly, for me, she is pushing the envelope regarding the definition of 'light breaking over The Cove' and I was roused in the half light of morning today to get going.

Having a lie in has long only been a concept for me and I am easily content to get up early(ish). The bleddy hound was a little reticent about descending the slipway this morning and given that the tide had jumped back towards neap tides the night before I could clearly see no evidence of seals on the undisturbed sand. What there was evidence of was human activity and not the human Lifeboat activity that had the Tooltrak running around the sand, although the track marks were still all over the place. There at the bottom of the slipway was a bleddy geet sandcastle at least four

feet deep in the middle with a rampart a couple of feet above level. In front was a moat about a foot deep all undisturbed. This would mean that it had been constructed after we had finished with the Inshore boat. Someone down here currently considers nocturnal sandcastle building a jolly pastime. I suspect that alcohol, at the very least, was involved.

Had we not been heading toward neap tide, I would not have been any the wiser regarding the sandcastle and, I suspect, the boats would have been a good bit further up the slipway. At some point during the night, the wind had freshened and the low pressure sweeping in had stirred up the sea to a jolly, bounding, boiling mass of water. It was dancing up the cliffs in big white spumes, leaping over the Harbour wall and turning Cowloe into an avalanche of white water.

By the middle of the afternoon, on the ebbing tide, the whole bay was white with bold, crested waves running through it all toward the big beach. Close into shore, the waves were dotted by the little black heads of seals, standing out clearly against the sparkling white background. This was nature not exactly doing its best at blending in and neither was it around the corner at Pedn-men-dhu where the big exploding waves were making a particular spectacle of themselves.

It had been somewhat less than clement during the morning, which had deterred an early march up to The Farm. The breeze too would have made life strimming particular difficult, so The Farm was abandoned today even if the sun did break through in the middle of the day. That relief was shorted-lived and we spent a considerable part of the afternoon with a big lump of dark cloud hanging menacingly out to the northwest.

The Missus had taken delivery in the middle of the week of the best part of a whole cow. In fact, it was very much the best part of a whole cow prepared by a local farmer, a relation of a friend. He had butchered and packed the various joints of meat into vacuum packed parcels and our friend had delivered it, the whole thing having travelled less than five miles. Having established contact we shall continue to get various animals delivered, the next being most of a pig, I believe. I do not think that there is even the smallest chance that we shall be going vegan anytime soon.

The reason I mention this is that while I was in Tesmorburys yesterday, I remembered the pack of shin beef and immediately thought of the beef and chorizo chilli that is one of my signature dishes. I knew that the Missus would not complain if I acquired the requisite additional ingredients and presented it as a fait accompli for Saturday's tea. Because this dish needs a few hours smouldering over a small flame, I spent some of the morning, given that we were not farming, doing that. I also took the opportunity to disinfect and clean out our two compost buckets for the kitchen. We had managed to fill both and not make any effort to empty them until the flies were buzzing around a little too conspicuously.

The other reason I mentioned it was that I wished to demonstrate that, although we were not farming, I, at least, was not in the completely idle. I would hate you to think, dear reader, heaven forefend that I should spend my free time being idle. Alright, apart from the later part of the afternoon and the evening when I did begger all.

November 11<sup>th</sup> – Thursday

Today went exactly according to plan, mainly because we did not have one – a plan, that is, luckily we did have a today. The only event written in stone for the day was my appointment at the bone cruncher to convert me from standing behind the counter mode to largely sitting on my behind mode.

It required a particularly fine tuned morning, which is impossible because bleddy hounds do not do fine tuned. That said, we had the advantage that we could head down to the Harbour beach because the tide had not yet covered all the sand. It is quite a bit quicker doing our run out down on the beach than it is running around the block mainly because the bleddy hound does not run. If she could walk any slower doing the 'around the block' then she would be going backwards.

Nevertheless, I was out of the flat in good time to make the trip to Penzance behind a milk tanker that I fell in behind right at the outset of the journey. My bone cruncher is pretty insistent on arrival five minutes before the appointment time and the appointment commences exactly on time. I have never known it not to and I have been going a fair few years. They are the only such practice west of Helston, I think, and are heavily subscribed so they try and fit in as many people in a day as possible.

I saw the lady practitioner who I have seen most over that time, although I do not really care which one I see, as the treatment is fairly consistent. This sort of bone cruncher seem to get a bad rap from the mainstream medical profession who regard them as quacks. Frankly, I am not particularly fussed whether they are or are not, I just know it works for me whether it is just in my head or no.

On my way back I collected some flowers from Tesmorburys and swapped places with the Missus who went off with Mother to mark Remembrance Day while I looked after the bleddy hound at home.

We headed off to The Farm after they came back for some jolly fun doing all sorts of things. The Missus wanted to continue clearing the old tomato plants out of the polytunnel. It is taking some time as she is collecting the green tomatoes as she goes with the grand plan of making some green tomato relish or chutney. With the number of green tomatoes collected so far, I suspect there is enough for an abundance of both.

This left me at rather a loose end. I cannot get on with the major projects as ground needs to be cleared ahead of those and that requires the digger. The Missus' farmer friend had given her some advice on our tractor a while ago most of which had been

followed. However, she was also advised to reduce the excessive number of counter-weights at the front of the tractor which were only necessary in its original role of dragging an ice sweeper across ice rinks. This had yet to be done.

I discovered quite quickly that the weights are held in place by a bar across the back of them, which is secured by bolts. I also discovered that the bolts had been tightened by some superhuman muscle man (or woman, quite obviously). It took quite a considerable amount of time to loosen them that might have been quicker had I realised that there was a nut on the underside of the bolt turning with it. Even after establishing that and fixing another spanner to the opposing nut, it was still hard going because I now only had one hand to drive the bolt instead of two.

It transpired that there was a reason why I throw some weights around at the gymnasium. It was fate preparing me to move eight 24 kilogram blocks off the front of the tractor (one in each hand, obviously) without ruining the good – and expensive - work my bone cruncher had done in the morning. It would have been somewhat embarrassing to try and book another appointment for the following day.

Having completed this Herculean task, it seemed only right that I take the tractor that I refuse to call Poppy for a spin around the field to make sure that it was in perfect balance after my efforts.

Now, taking the tractor I refuse to call Poppy for a spin around the field may seem like a very ordinary thing to do to you, dear reader, and perfectly reasonable since it had not been used for a while. However, there are certain things up at The Farm that the Missus regards as sacrosanct and are jealously guarded. I had the keys on the premise that I needed to pull the tractor back a few feet so that I could get at the front end, not speed off on a joy ride around the field. So, imagine my utter delight that not only was it a jolly jape to run the tractor I refuse to call Poppy around the field but that it was also forbidden. This resulted in some arm waving and some black looks from the Missus who came out of the polytunnel to frown upon my joy riding. The last thing that I will say on the matter is that 8.9 miles per hour sitting high up on a tractor bouncing across a field, seems awfully fast and quite exhilarating.

One of the other things that is on the jealously guarded list is the petrol strimmer. It is a beast of a machine requiring proper personal protection equipment including steel toed boots and a visor and for very good reason. This did require a modicum of permissions being granted as I needed to ask where certain things were and how to change the brush cutter disc for the ordinary, and less fearsome, strimmer head. I suspect that there is a knack to getting the motor started as it took me quite a while pulling at the starter cord. Once I had got going, though, my word, what wizard fun it was.

As if we could leave the having fun there. At seven o'clock I attended a Lifeboat training session. Here the new training programme for Boat Crew was explained, which has been simplified. It will ensure that the crew can attain competence not

only when being tested specifically on a subject but also when completing those tasks through the normal run of exercises or services when those tasks are included. It will be deployed for the very excellent Shore Crew in due course.

Since the Inshore boat has not been deployed for a while, mainly due to the sea conditions not being conducive to such things, it was set afloat for some close in training later in the evening. This gave the very excellent Shore Crew the opportunity to play, erm, seriously develop our skills on the tracked launch vehicle known as the Tooltrak. Several of those crew members who have not had much experience were taking through their paces and the Boat Crew assisted with practicing recoveries. It was, despite its seriousness, excruciating fun and even I assisted by pulling out the hosepipe to wash it down afterwards.

I will doubtless sleep well tonight after such a day of boundless frolic.

November 10<sup>th</sup> – Wednesday

I should think I might struggle to find 500 words to convey today, which might please many of you since yesterday was nigh on 1,000 more than that. Today was such a grey and slow day it is difficult to say very much about it at all but I shall give it a go.

The bleddy hound and I were compelled to walk around the block again this morning, which displeased her greatly. If she could pout and stomp her feet she most certainly would have done looking at her demeanour. Ignoring her mood was the only thing to be done and there was plenty to look at instead.

Big, powerful waves were running through the Tribbens and thumping up against the Harbour wall and it was quite mesmerising to watch them. It did not look quite so severe in the bay generally, although I did not study it greatly when I looked out first thing. The waves looked even more threatening in the Tribbens due to the heavy sky and sepia light brought on by the dawn. It was exceptionally mild with hardly a breath of breeze and I was quite comfortable in my shorts and light jacket.

I had intended to wrap up my morning routine as quickly as I could and head off to the gymnasium early, leaving the rest of the day free for doing stuff. Well, that is what I had intended until the first interruption of the day interrupted me, as interruptions will from time to time. The Missus had requested something or other from the shop as a matter of urgent requirement. This something turned into a list by the time I got my shoes on and forced me to go and fetch the basket still in the spare room from the last uplift of 'stuff'.

That was all well enough and would not have taken five minutes but when I opened the door the bleddy hound's best mate was standing there. Apparently, she had got as far as the shop and refused to move. Our neighbour had not even realised until she was around the corner and had to come back for her. Due to the fact that we had not appeared in the previous five minutes of waiting – that is half an eternity in

dog time – she decided to come up our stairs and knock. I fetched the bleddy hound down from her perch and the two of them went about being friendly for a bit. I then fell into conversation with our neighbour and that took more than ten minutes by the time I had caught he up on happenings.

It was midway through the morning when I eventually got away to the gymnasium. I had missed out completely on Monday due to furniture hunting but at least I lost more pounds than I would have by exercising. Yes, alright, but I have written it now and I cannot be fagged to go back and erase it. Anyway, I proceeded with a blistering session, venting the cares and woes of a grumpy shopkeeper without a shop. Gosh, I felt so much better afterwards.

It did not take long to arrive at the afternoon after that. It seemed the day had arranged itself into a day for not doing very much. So that it was not completely wasted I suggested that the Missus discover the delights of inputting invoices, of which we have a geet pile, into the computer system. She had done it a couple of times before but that was some distant time ago. While she carried on under my watchful eye, I collected the most recent lot from the shop and ordered the next two piles into date sequence, extracting the statements as I went and filing them away.

It consumed sufficient of the afternoon for it to be time to prepare tea and to run the bleddy hound out for her penultimate walk of the day and afterwards to crack open a celebratory beer – celebrating getting to the end of the day without actually achieving very much other than nudging over the 500 words I promised and ending in a ridiculously long sentence. You may now breath again.

November 9<sup>th</sup> – Tuesday

The last time I had so many meetings in the same day was when I had a proper job. Then it was an acceptable alternative to working and we had as many meetings as possible, I recall.

There was no meeting anyone as we wandered around the block this morning. The tide was in and the bleddy hound did not need much persuading in heading in the direction of the Round House. It was going across the car park that she needed the encouragement as that seemed to be just how far she wanted to go.

We had the pleasant aroma of tar cooking for much of yesterday morning. I had guessed that it was tarmac for the area next to the gig club and I was right. It was only at my first meeting of the day that I learned that it was earmarked for parking for the businesses in The Cove. I thought that was tad decent of the Harbour Commissioners, although the varnish came off a little when I discovered that it would still need to be paid for.

I had to rush around a little as the first meeting was scheduled for nine o'clock. Not only that but the venue was somewhat shrouded in mystery. Our esteemed

councillor from the much maligned council and some officers were coming down to discuss parking in The Cove with some of our parish councillors and interested parties. I was interested, so I became a party along with two other Covers, which pretty much made up all those interested in parking along Cove Road.

I guessed that the meeting would take place around the OS and thankfully I was right. I was also right on time, and we convened on the busy corner at the entrance to the Beach car park. I wished that I had brought my false ears with me but managed nevertheless because everyone had to raise their voice to be heard anyway.

The long and the short of it was that parking restrictions will be set in place as soon as possible using the mechanism of an Experimental Traffic Order. This will last for six months and may be changed to iron out any problems at which point it will run for another six months until all the issues are settled and it can become permanent. Practically with one voice we told the much maligned council people that it would all be for nought if it were not regularly patrolled. They assured us it would be, especially during the initial period while everyone may not be aware of it. Getting a ticket is a very good way of being made aware that the double yellow lines are in force. I think that we were all fairly sceptical that any initial increase of patrolling would be kept up, but we have little say in the matter.

I asked if the suggestion that we could have a dedicated individual between all the local parishes could be brought forward. I was told that it was perfectly possible although the revenue would go to the much maligned council. This, I suggested, rather put the mockers on the plan and could that situation be changed, to which there was much muttering and changing of subject. I pressed and was told that I could ask someone who might know at a meeting next week. This irked me rather as it is very much a swerve and a cop out.

I had to hurry away as I had another meeting very shortly on and I had to take the Missus up to The Farm on my way. I was meeting up with the jeweller about my pinkie ring, having collected my rocks and sand for him. Before we left, we had a look for an old ring we had that would have helped to bring down the cost but neither of us had a clue where we put it.

While at our first meeting, a couple came past on cycles. One was on a low tricycle and the other on a proper bicycle and neither were in the bloom of youth. We wondered if they would make it up the hill. I had to wait outside the jewellers for the previous customers to leave only to discover it was our cyclists. They must have made the ten miles or so, hills and all, in around one and a half hours. I remarked on this to the jeweller who told me they had made it up Paul Hill the day before, which is considerably longer and steeper than Cove Hill.

Third meeting of the day, although it was not really a meeting, was to go back to the furniture store to pay the balance of our bill. It did not have to be done so

immediately but we felt it best out of the way. On the way back I stopped by at Macsalvors in Pool, a shop of many wonders and one most people will spend hours in just marvelling at the cornucopia of products. Our stock take is hard enough, but I would not know where to start with theirs.

I was looking for a blow torch so that the Missus could cauterise the dead beehive. I had already tried in three stores in Penzance, none of which could provide one. I was exceptionally surprised that Macsalvors also let us down as they only had weed torches there that connected to some serious gas supply.

Picking up Mother on the way, we returned to The Farm where the Missus was making slow progress dismantling the tomato plants. I have to say I would not have been so dainty with them and thought that one of Macsalvors' weed torches would be just the job but would probably take the polytunnel with it. I helped her empty the wheelbarrow loads into the compost area. In between loads I attacked the thistles in the lettuce beds and at the foot of the cucumber plants. Some of them were quite well established with prickles enough to penetrate my heavy duty gloves.

My first main job up there is to build a new set of compost boxes with a covered open shed. The roof will feed water into our IBCs between the polytunnel and the cabin and should be sufficient for any drought thrown our way. Before that the area behind the polytunnel will need to be cleared and levelled, which is a job for a mini digger. The digger is on a Christmas list in the la-la land of us having unlimited fund, although we did seriously consider a second hand one that came up recently. We will be on to the hire people shortly and hope that its availability coincides with a nice dry period.

By the time I came back from my travels, it was already the middle of the afternoon. That did not give me long up at The Farm before it was time to come home for some tea. This we managed to squeeze in before the last meeting of the day: the Lifeboat Operations Team Meeting.

I had studiously avoided attendance at the Ops Team meeting since its inception, having agreed with the team that we would delegate to the team member who was not there when we agreed it. Unfortunately, the team member to whom attendance at the meeting was delegated got himself another role and thus I was collared on my way to a launch briefing. It was some dirty trick.

With ten people in attendance it could have gone worse. As it was, the meeting was not too onerous and only extended beyond an hour in length because of a report on a recent tricky service the boat attended that involved multiple agencies. All aspects of the Operations were covered and I was able to say just how very excellent the very excellent Shore Crew were and how textbook the recent recoveries were. No one seemed to disagree, which was pleasing.

As we dispersed, a chance conversation with a neighbouring farmer – we farmers do stick together, you know (although, in truth, it should have been the Missus) – resulted in an agreement to level part of our access lane that is particularly rutted. We have been looking to do this for some time. Hopefully, that will just leave a narrower part of the lane left to do for which a mini digger would be just the job. We're relying on Santy more than every this year.

November 8<sup>th</sup> – Monday

Not long ago the Missus gave me a cost/benefit analysis and cast iron business plan that showed the necessity of us having a new sofa. I am darned if I can find it now and the exact details are a bit sketchy in my mind, but I am absolutely sure that she would have only suggested it if it was absolutely necessary that we have it. It was for this reason I found myself driving in the direction of Truro, with Mother in the front seat and the Missus and the bleddy hound in the rear.

It has been something less than a business necessity, but jointly we had decided to see what the lay of the land was regarding having the floor of the shop renewed. We had no illusion that it would be easy to do because of the various immovable objects scattered around the shop. To do it properly would entail removing everything from the shop floor, including the 'immovable' shelving units and storing them somewhere then hoping we could remember where they went and putting them all back again. We had rather hoped that someone could come in and stick some vinyl tiles on top of the ones already there and bodging around the shelving units.

A man from a second carpet shop we contacted was due to arrive at half past nine this morning to give it a look see. The last one had taken measurements and we never heard from them again. We reasoned they could not all be that bad and this one, at ten o'clock in the morning, seemed to show how wrong we could be. I was about to pack up and head off when he turned up.

His lack of apology irked somewhat but he soon proved that he knew what he was talking about and levelled us with some brutally honest opinions. He was not going to be able to do cheap and nasty, mainly predicated on the fact that it probably would not work that well, leading to peeling tiles and damp issues if we had vinyl sheets, which was one option. I completely agreed with him that we really did need to empty the shop and do it properly – at some point that was not this year – put down multiple layers of screed and then put down the tiles. Leading up to that conclusion, he very kindly went through every other option and the likely issues we would face with each.

Later, he called back to tell me what it would likely cost to do it properly. We certainly would not be doing it this year, or, in all honesty, next year either. It was the sort of thing that we would really only do as a complete shop refurbishment and thus all the fittings, shop shelves and refrigeration would not be store because we would have all new. Whatever the case, it would leave us this year with some money for a chair or two.

I really had envisaged a trawl around every furniture shop in the larger area, testing and agonising over every likely option. The Missus had ordained that we have two single chairs with a table between because currently, the sofa and my side table make progress down the hall tricky. As it turned out we settled on the very thing in the first shop we went to.

The two chairs turned into one pair joined by a console between them. I rather like my recliner with a lever at the side that flips the leg rest out, so a recliner was required to replace it. I was dubious about having an electric one as having extra things that could go wrong and I openly scoffed at the chairs that we saw with integral USB charging ports. What was wrong with standing up and walking to the nearest wall point to charge your telephone, for heaven's sake. As for having drawers and lift up lids containing storage spaces – come on. What is all that about?

Therefore, I am utterly bemused how we managed to leave the shop having signed up to this chair pair with a central console containing storage space at the top under a lid and in a drawer at the bottom. In the storage area at the top are two integral USB charging points as well as two three-pin sockets. Disappointingly there was no shaver socket, which I pointed out as a missed opportunity.

No, wait there. There is more. The reclining is all powered, as you might imagine, but you can also separately raise and lower the headrests using the illuminated touch buttons on the central console. These are arranged around the lip of two cup holders, or more accurately, tin holders as both cavities have an active cold plate at the bottom to keep your tea cold. No, still not finished. The unit has a Bluetooth receiver so that I can connect my telephone and play music from the integrated speakers in the two sides. This, of course, could also have been better arranged with a left/right speaker either side of the headrests. I mentioned this.

A pleasing detail was that the sofa/chair pair is made in the UK and is therefore available without too much of a waiting list. I did ask if it flew in using satellite navigation and installed itself, but sadly, no. The manufacturers will deliver it and install it, which is also gratifying for such a complicated beast and another company will come along and take the existing furniture for a small additional price.

Despite all that and every facet of it screaming that there will be trouble ahead, I am a sucker for a bit of gadgetry and what is more, the Missus loved it – even though she will not be sitting on it. She ensured that I was truly hooked before telling me that it would be entirely churlish not to have the suite's matching three seat sofa to replace our other one and, of course, the matching footstool with its cavernous storage space under the sumptuously upholstered lid. There were, of course, warnings that we should be wary about spilling anything on the special fabric and how we need not worry should we take out a further three year warranty for a further small bagatelle. I told the salesman not to be too concerned on that front as it was

very unlikely that we would be able to afford food or drink until well after the warranty had expired.

At least our adventure had got me out of the flat. Hopefully, this will be the signal that we should start to be a little more active with our time off. Compared to our normal journeys, Truro is a long distance run and one not to be squandered. We also stopped at the bee shop on the way up so that the Missus could acquire the wherewithal to remake the dead beehive. It is the most unprepossessing establishment in a shabby industrial estate, the sort that you would not wish to be after dark. However, the shop has everything necessary for beekeeping – apart from fondant on this occasion – and the Missus is nearly all set up to do her repairs.

There had been light traffic for the entirety of our journey, that is until we got back to Penzance. Quite why Penzance rush hour should start before four o'clock in the afternoon is a mystery, but I have noticed before just how busy it gets around that time. In truth, we had not expected to be that late nor had I considered that any traffic would be thick at this time of year. I had also not expected to return with an extra sofa and a footstool but I do expect to wake up in the middle of the night, white and sweating and wondering what on Earth I have done.

November 7<sup>th</sup> – Sunday

It was almost a completely lazy day with nothing ventured and absolutely nothing gained. Almost.

It started out in the usual way with a run down to the beach. There was much sniffing the air and I imagined all sorts of trouble getting down onto the beach. I could not smell anything, so I asked the bleddy hound and she was dubious but fortunately there was no problem in the end. The air was ridiculously mild for the time of year and there appeared to be no hint of rain to come. There was a bit of westerly breeze going on and the new Lifeboat channel markers were leaning over in obedience. The absence of a single mark on the sand showed that we were the first to be down there, which was not a great surprise.

As we left two ladies came down for a swim. This has become such a common occurrence that I am surprised that there is not a booking system. The original ladies who seemed to have started it all must have their noses properly out of joint or they are dining out on the proceeds of selling the swimming rights. I have no inclination to join them in the water. First, I would not belong to a club that would have me for a member and secondly, it is far too wet.

The only thing that stood between me and utter indolence was the planning of a Lifeboat training exercise with the Gwennap Head National Coastwatch Institute (NCI). This was settled for half past nine o'clock with a briefing fifteen minutes earlier for which a healthy number of Boat and Shore Crew turned up.

The boat was only gone for an hour and a half and during that time the boat successfully chased a dahn buoy around directed by the NCI station high up on the cliff. Once she had done with chasing the buoys, the boat returned to the bay where the slipway had been made ready. I had taken a back seat while after my soaking last week one of my compatriots run the show from down near the water's edge and the boat was recovered up the long slipway in what was clearly a textbook recovery. We washed down and bedded the boat back in the boathouse with all our 'i's dotted and 't's crossed. We are, after all, a very fastidious, very excellent Shore Crew.

This is more than can be said for the Head Launcher who returned home for a spot of croust and did begger all else for the rest of the day. This may have been true physically but underneath that lazy exterior I was thinking great thoughts, even sometimes with my eyes closed.

November 6<sup>th</sup> – Saturday

Things took a turn for the brighter this morning. We were expecting a visit from our electrician to have a quick look-see about installing a secondary ring main expressly for the heap of electronic equipment I have in one corner of the sitting room. Our initial enquiry suggested that he was not available until the next year. We explained that it was conceivable that by then the much maligned council would have signed off our loft insulation and that would make running a cable a lot more difficult so he decided to come and do a recce today. The plan now is that he should be able to do the cable running sooner and finish it off later, which make a lot more sense.

It was a step in the right direction to manage all the work as a whole. It will also result in us having an electrical point to install an extractor fan for the kitchen. At least none of that will rely on me finding the paperwork that proves that we own the flat. Most ordinary people have a mortgage or deeds that they can wheel out. Unfortunately, we purchased the whole building as one and the accountants did the smoke and mirror stuff that separated the domestic from the business. It is this that we will need to convince the much maligned council of, which I suspect will not be straightforward.

I had to wait until the middle of the day to go down and collect my stones and coarse sand from the Harbour beach. The tide jumped overnight and there was not a great deal of beach available in the morning. I also had a difficult bleddy hound with me who took a great deal of convincing to stay on the beach in the first place. She was better than she had been all week, so I am hoping that the seal niff is diminishing. We also had a light, windy shower while we were down there, which did not help. The sand is now back in the oven drying out along with the rocks that I will sift through when they have cooled down.

One matter of complete delight was that I managed to fix the monitor panel for one of the rowing machines. It was giving an error message that I had guessed would probably go away if I managed to reinstall its firmware off the Internet. I had brought

it home yesterday and plugged it into the computer but it resolutely refused to switch on. I was beginning to think that someone had swopped the units over, but I accidentally thumped it on the counter in the shop as I was about to take it back and it came alive. I put some fresh batteries in it and tried again to connect it to the computer. It took a few attempts as it kept disconnecting but eventually I managed a factory reset and it worked perfectly after that. We now have two working units on the two installed rowing machines.

The bleddy hound was a little more relaxed going down to the beach in the middle of the day. She actually wandered about for a bit despite there being other people down there and another dog. The other dog was not really a problem because it was whisked off by its swimsuit wearing owner and into the chilly but reasonably calm Harbour waters. It did not look terribly like the poor dog had much of a choice about it.

I spent some of the afternoon selecting very small stones out of the jam jar size collection that I brought up from the middle of the day. I had put them in the oven for an hour and let them rest for a further half hour. It is quite remarkable how well they retain heat I discovered when I picked out the unwanted larger stones by hand. Having learnt that lesson and let them cool off a bit I now have a small collection of suitably sized rocks for the jeweller. I say rocks, my eyes are not quite what they used to be and even assisted by a clever telephone camera and a pair of spectacles I may well have a collection of odd bits of shell and heat resistant plastic.

I had intended to put the trunking up on the living room front wall in preparation for the camera installation but remembered that I had left the hacksaw up at The Farm. Rather than jump in the truck and drive up the mile or so and get on with the work I decided to do begger all and sit on my behind. Perhaps I should think about pulling my finger out for next week – perhaps.

November 5<sup>th</sup> – Friday

The bleddy hound is still petrified of being down on the Harbour beach. There is no evidence at all of seals being there, but I will agree with her that they do niff a bit and if my nose was as sensitive as hers, I would also be able to smell a seal a week after it had vacated somewhere, I am sure. The problem is that she wants to run away home as soon as possible when she really needs a bit of exercise around the block. It takes a bit of insistence, but she gets there in the end.

I had quite a bit of loose end tying up to do during the morning, though sitting here at the end of the day it is difficult exactly to recall what those things were. One was to try and chase down a replacement laundry service. The one that we have been using has decided to pack in doing a domestic service, so I picked another at random from the local directory. With the Missus farming during the season and me in the shop, the service is a great help. The new people were fairly swift in coming back telling us that they were at capacity and were not taking on new clients. We

would prefer to use a local crew but if that is not possible, one of the bigger boys will have to do but even they are not looking hopeful.

The other thing that was a bit pressing was to collect some sand from one of the beaches to be used in the production of my new pinkie ring. The grand plan was to head to the big beach where I was sure I could acquire some fine sand and some coarse sand for the project. I also wanted to have a pick at the mineral seam that runs through the beach at the OS end, which is the same one that runs out to Botallack and Pendeen. It contains some spectacular colours and an array of minerals to select from.

It has been some time since I have ventured down to the big beach. The bleddy hound's reserve of energy does not quite reach that far any longer and on previous occasions she needed to be carried back. Since I had other errands in that direction, including picking up Mother, I drove down and as it seems customary, I parked like a complete eejit at the top of the slipway.

I scanned the beach for the rocks I was after and could not at first spot them. It has been some while, but rocks do not generally disappear unless there has been an earthquake or they get covered in sand. There was a lot of sand. This had not figured in my meticulous forward planning and left me at a bit of a loss. There was fine sand in abundance but no coarse. I will have to repair to the Harbour beach for my coarse sand and small rocks avoiding if I can the plentiful plastic nurdles and multicoloured sea glass.

Admitting failure until the next tide, I went and collected Mother. I was under strict instructions to call the Missus before I left Mother's to tell her we were on her way so that she would be ready for us to repair to The Farm, for the first time in more than a week. I completely forgot the telephone call and remembered just as we were coming down the hill to The Cove. I pulled over and called her from there, saying we were just leaving. She seemed a bit surprised – yes, there are other words for how she seemed, too - when we turned up a few minutes later but I told her we had a clear run from St Buryan and I think we got away with it.

The Farm is a picture of abundant growth, but I am not exactly sure that it is the sort of growth that most farmers seek. There are six feet high weeds everywhere and, unless the Missus has found a reason to cultivate thistles, they have invaded the polytunnel, too. There is about a month's work to do in clearing this before we start to do any serious preparation and building development for the new season. We will have to start planning with a passion, I suspect.

On this occasion the main purpose of the visit was to check the beehives and the battery serving the lights in the stock shed. The battery changing was the least challenging and I did that while the Missus drove down to the beehives. Her news was somewhat less appealing than mine as she discovered that our original hive was dead and the frames mouldy. There was one solitary bee in the upper section,

but it was not letting on what happened in there but there was a sign, written in bee that roughly started, 'go tell the Spartans'.

More happily, the other hive with the bees collected from our friend's garden were still active and had multiplied. They had not been all that active, however, having only just populated three frames of the eighteen in the hive. There was insufficient food there for them to last the winter and the Missus will have to supplement the three frames of honey with fondant sugar to see them through.

The Missus will have to sanitise the dead hive to ensure that there is no lurking lurgi in there before setting it up for another colony in the spring. While the honey last year turned a handsome profit, we are only really playing at beekeeping. I cannot imagine the devastation for real bee farmers if something like that had happened on a larger scale.

When we left for The Farm, the Falmouth Divers' tug had arrived to maintain and replace the channel markers for the Lifeboat. They were just finishing when we came back a few hours later and deposited the dive crew at the Harbour wall. The tug went and moored up off Porth Nanven for the night watched over by a couple of fishermen with very bright lights on Aire Point.

I had quite forgotten about it being Guy Fawkes night and out on the horizon, fireworks were randomly fired into the sky. We took them to be Cape Cornwall Club, as it now calls itself and St Just Rugby Club and also somewhere in between the two. I hope the displays looked a bit more exciting closer to because from where we were it was a tad disappointing. It does seem that the enthusiasm for the event has waned considerably in recent years. Whether that is because no one can quite match up to the expectations set by the New Year events in capital cities around the world or because of more sensitive concerns that tend to prevail in recent times, I have no idea. Maybe in years to come it will be Guy who? Or Guy the freedom fighter put to death by the evil regime. When I was small boy with a non-risk assessed sparkler in hand and no protective goggles, while the Aged Parent let off some dangerous uncontrolled pyrotechnics in our back garden hoping the neighbour could duck the low flying rockets fast enough, and eating hot potatoes baked in the bonfire after the image of a human being consumed in the flames had expired, it was just jolly good fun. Ah, those halcyon days.

November 4<sup>th</sup> – Thursday

The rain had not quite got into its stride when I took the bleddy hound out in the morning. I am beginning to suspect that she can read the time because for three mornings in a row she has got me up at precisely the same time. Unfortunately, she reserves her inconsistent behaviour for when we are out and today she decided that the wide open beach was not for her. I was down by the tide line and she had turned around and was heading up the slipway. I managed to catch her up but had to drag

her around in the direction of the car park. She was definitely not getting me up at early o'clock and getting away without a proper stank about first thing.

The Missus got off early doors to see a man about Mother's eyes. Mother saw him too, so that was alright then. While they were gone the visitors arrived, a big bundle of them, and invaded the flat. There was much drinking of tea and coffee and much talking. There was a spot of late dinner or early tea and they went home again. So, that was all good then, too.

While they were still here and the Missus prepared late dinner or early tea, I took the bleddy hound around the block again. I had carefully timed our departure for when the geet line of showers that stretched way up the Irish Sea had finished dumping on us and us in the Far West alone. We started off on the beach but did not tarry long. There was a swimmer in the Harbour and while we were there she staggered out, festooned with spaghetti weed. Dressed in black neoprene, she looked pretty much like the creature from the black lagoon, which I shared with her and thankfully, she found amusing.

The work in the Harbour car park creating a compound for pots or what have you, looks like it has been completed. I do not wish to be too judgemental, but I suspect some architectural critics might raise an eyebrow or two regarding its blending in to the Conservation Area in which it sits. Given that fishermen do not hold with the colour green, perhaps it will be painted a brown colour at some stage to help it along a bit. I do hope they were sure that the digger is narrower than the gates.

Just before our visitors arrived, I applied online to a man about some loft insulation after a tip off from a friend at the Lifeboat station. Just before our visitors left, I had a call from the man about some loft insulation who said we could have it for free if we could jump through a few hoops first. They could have it all done in about two to three weeks but the application had to go through the much maligned council. He told me that the much maligned council was the slowest in the land for processing applications and it could take three months or so, by which time it will be getting warmer again. I immediately started to look at thick jumpers on the Internet as I think we are going to need them.

November 3<sup>rd</sup> – Wednesday

The wind had gone properly around to the north this morning and was quite robust. For all that it was not quite as cold as I was expecting, especially as I was in my gymnasium shorts. The bleddy hound did not seem to mind a bit and happily plodded about the wide open space of the beach with no encouragement today.

There must have been some stormy last tide as all the weed was gone and any left behind had clearly been buried under a layer of sand, as bits were sticking up. We are half way between neap and spring tides but the waves had been all the way up to the stones of the slipway pushed on by the northerly wind, no doubt.

I was a bit late heading to the gymnasium as I had to fill the commercial bin with the last of our commercial rubbish and cardboard. I had just started my rowing when someone else entered the hallowed interior. I used to have a gymnasium buddy but that stopped eighteen months ago or more and I had become accustomed to having blistering sessions all on my own. Fortunately, I knew the fellow who joined me and we were happy to share. Unfortunately, it seems only one of the monitor panels on the rowing machines is now working correctly and I was using it. He made do with the half working one, but I will have to be mindful in future to get there first.

There was some time after that for me to enjoy a bit of breakfast. I had just taken my first mouthful when our alarm man knocked at the door. He had called previously to tell me that he could not make the original date and would be in touch to arrange another. I thought that it was a bit much to inform me that the new date was today but he assured me that an appointment had been made, just clearly not with me. It really was not much of a problem. He knew where everything was and got on with the job while I finished my croust. He was gone inside twenty minutes, announcing that all was working as it should – until tomorrow when it will all go wrong, or course.

It was not long after this that I had to run across the road to attend a launch briefing. I had almost missed the message as it was sent no more than two hours before launch and I saw it half an hour before muster time. The Lifeboat station has been subject to an annual 'audit' where inspectors come to make sure everything is tickety-boo. The day before, a bunch of engineers had turned up to fix a list of problems the boat had been having with communications. The launch was organised to make sure we know how to launch it properly and to test the newly installed equipment.

The boat trundled down the slipway at around one o'clock and splashed into a very lively sea. There was not a huge amount of ground sea but the wave height was running at around four or five feet, which was quite enough, thank you very much. We almost immediately set up for a short slip recovery with the boat scheduled to arrive back about an hour before high water. With so much time to go, we decided to wait until the boat was in view before completing the setup, mainly as the tides are getting bigger and we did not want to have what we set up swamped if we got it wrong.

It was a good call because the tide had advanced much more than I anticipated, pushed on by a robust northerly and a tidy swell. I have mentioned the telescopic 'fishing rod' device before that must be attached to the slipway at the lowest point and extended so that the Boat Crew can reach out for the leading line that allows them to haul the span onboard the boat. Setting this up in calm weather is a pain in

the bottom, in rough weather it is downright risky, which is why I decided it would be excellent training for one of the newer very excellent Shore Crew to do it. As it was, he could not attach it to the part of the slipway for which it is designed and had to go on the last step before that section. Even here he was being swamped up to thigh height by boisterous waves.

There was a little more cable down on the slipway than I would have liked but I had not expected the boat to come up the slipway so far. There was an extended pause while we waited for the slack to be taken up, which is what we do not want when the sea is that lively. Nevertheless, it was almost a textbook recovery – apart from that bit – and the rest of the procedure went like clockwork. Given that there was just three of us, it was an excellent effort all around.

So exuberant was I that I merrily volunteered to collect the fishing rod from the bottom of the slip, a good twenty minutes further into the flood than when we put it there. Because it was on a part of the slipway for which it was not designed, it did not come free of its moorings quite as easily as it should and in the time I struggled to release it I was hit by several large waves. I was in the bent over position pulling at the fixings when the last and largest of these waves launched at me and soaked my seaward side quite comprehensively.

I was fortunate in that nobody had seen this happen. However, appearing drenched down one side back in the boathouse moments later, was a cause of some merriment amongst my two colleagues. I have taken their names and there will be retribution. We are, after all, a very just, very excellent Shore Crew.

I had an even more delightful treat awaiting me when I returned. We have visitors tomorrow and not a thing in the house for them to eat – notwithstanding a shop freezer full of stuff collated from the shop freezers and waiting to be consumed. I did volunteer to go shopping but that was before I was made to promise that I would collect the items on the shopping list prepared for me from Tesmorburys – and I thought Halloween and all its horrors was last weekend.

Happily for me, there were not many people in the Tesmorburys when I arrived. There were still far too many people not wearing masks for my liking and far too little proper air blowing through the place. I had no intention of using a basket because I had brought a bag. When I use a basket I find that it is not big enough half way around the shop and if I select a trolley, the pathetic contents look like I should have used a basket and the thing is cumbersome. I asked the security guard if it was alright to place my shopping items into my bag and he looked at me as if I was from Mars – apparently, of course it is alright to use my bag.

I hurriedly collected the items on the list and only had to ask once where something was. In the aisle marked 'milk' and 'butter' would it have been too much to add 'cheese' as well or just call it 'dairy'? The checkouts, all both of them that were open, had queues stretching back into the aisles. In a shop that was ostensibly empty of

shoppers shopping, how come they were all ready to check out at the same time? I elected to use the dreaded self-service checkout.

I have used these tills before and had learned some of the quirks of the system like, placing your shopping bag in the bag area before you start scanning your shopping. Yes, putting my bag that was full of shopping to be scanned into the bag area ready to put all the shopping that was already in it, in it. I am normally pretty much on top of my forward planning but on this occasion it had been subsumed by my urgency to get in and out as quickly as possible.

Fortunately, all the shopping that I had, including nine loose potatoes, fitted on the 'basket' side and allowed me to put the empty bag on the other side of the scanner. It did at first confuse the machine when I scanned the loose potato label and added one potato at a time to the bag, but it soon caught up. It was only when I had completed all the scanning and searched the screen for the 'pay by cash' button that I noticed the 'card only' sign.

I assume that the theory is, card payers are quicker, but we all know how long it takes for someone to find the right card in their card wallet and then discover that a pin number is required which they do not know for that card and have to select another and do not get me started on paying by mobile telephone 'app'. I had to queue again and use one of the more appropriate tills. To give the machines their due, it came up with the same price for my shopping that the first till did, which is more than you can say for some grumpy shopkeepers.

Leaving the car park made me very happy and so did getting home and discovering that I had purchased all the right things. I was very worthy of the beer that I had afterwards, I am sure.

November 2<sup>nd</sup> – Tuesday

I was scheduled to see a man about a ring in the middle of the morning. It was, at least, a run out to somewhere I had never been and gave me something to do, even if it did not come to much.

There was absolutely no chance that I would oversleep with an over-eager bleddy hound to keep an eye on things. She was very enthusiastic this morning and had me up a good fifteen minutes ahead of yesterday's early call. I have nature on my side as it will get brighter later and later until the end of December by which time, hopefully, she will have learnt to have a longer lie in.

It was a perfectly reasonable day out with the wind having lost most of its ferocity and there being little in the way of rain about. The bleddy hound was all for running home again as soon as she got to the beach. I have no idea what that was all about but I managed to encourage her to hang about and explore the beach down to the

tide line. If she thought that there was anything threatening down there, that theory was dispelled and she seemed quite comfortable after that.

My appointment time soon came around and I set off in the direction of town. The last time we met this particular jeweller he was in a little sail loft in Newlyn, with the emphasis on the little. He must have done quite well since then and has progressed to the old pump house on the Trengwainton Estate, which is a much more comfortable building for his needs. The problem with it, though, is that it is impossible to find.

It looked very easy on the map and despite memorising it, I used the clever mobile telephone I have – hands free, attached to the truck's radio screen, of course – to guide me. Even that had not got a clue and I ended up in Madron, which I knew was wrong and too far. I headed back and parked up in the Estate car park and telephoned our man from there. A very pleasant lady guided me back down the hill and, in that direction, the entrance to the pump house is clear; it was completely invisible from the other direction.

Our man is a clever cove and for his best works he uses beach sand to make his jewellery look a bit more hewn than moulded, or whatever it is you do to make rings. The whole thing has come to be because I have lost weight from my fingers and the ring that was on my little finger keeps falling off. I stole someone else's design that originally contained a diamond. I had the notion that it would be rather nice to have some of our beach included in the design and have agreed that I will slip down to the big beach one quiet night and nick some rock from there. It is also because I am cheap and diamond's, I have heard, are expensive. Rocks from the beach are free – if you do not get caught – and if I choose a very shiny one, no one will ever know the difference.

The Missus suggested that I find some sea glass, bits of real glass that have been worn down over time to small pebbles. They are often used to make home-made jewellery and advertised locally. I told the Missus that I did not want some shoddy bit of glass on my ring but something from the natural world. I said that I would remind her of her position the next time she asked for diamonds.

I collected Mother on the way back, once I had worked out which way to go, so I could bring her back for the day. Having spent five days in the wilderness, she will now be subject to us for so many days in a row, she will be begging to be left alone.

The Missus, now fully functional, decided that she would go down to the shop when I returned. We spend a couple of days before we open making the shop ready. After we close, we spend an hour or so making the shop unready. This includes consolidating all the frozen goods into one or two freezers and turning the others off. Any fresh goods that can be saved are and any excess we distribute to the poor and needy of The Cove, or, in The Cove's case, the not so poor or needy but those who appreciate a good thing when they see it.

I took my old office chair downstairs for Mother to sit in while the Missus scurried around. It was a good deal warmer in the shop than it was in the flat. It will not be so for long as the majority of the fridges and freezers are now turned off and our electricity bill will go from £500 to £50 per month almost overnight. Unfortunately, this will also have a detrimental effect on the flat. We were going to include upgrading our loft insulation when the work on the shop frontage was completed. Since that will not be done until next year we are considering having it done sooner and preferably before someone comes and glues their hand to the pavement outside.

There were some pretty intense showers blowing through The Cove from the northwest all day. As a consequence, the bleddy hound did not get much of a run out, which is more her choice than ours. It was a shame because between the showers were geet patches of blue sky and, in the sun, it was quite warm and pleasant. We must try and make amends tomorrow with a run up to The Farm that has been abandoned over the last few days. I am imagining cucumbers of a world invading size awaiting us. Our idle bees also need to be checked and they must be wrapped up for winder soon. We will be having stern words, I am sure, about their purpose in life and the terms of their beehive tenancy.

Given that it was pushing on into the afternoon, I did not feel too badly about sitting in my chair and doing nothing but reading a book. The current book is quite interesting but excessively long and I am beginning to regret starting it, although, when I have finished it, I might feel that it was worth the effort. The problem is, I might also feel that it was not and that will be an awful lot of wasted time. Having got to this line, dear reader, you probably feel the same.

November 1<sup>st</sup> – Monday

There is no such thing as a free lunch. My first day off and my first opportunity to lie in for seven months and after that a day of freedom. The bleddy hound was having none of it. Her routine demolished by some eejit putting the clocks back an hour, she was going to get me out of bed at the same hour she would normally get up, albeit an hour later in real time, come what may. Obviously, I capitulated as there is no sleeping through a vexed bleddy hound lying across your legs, now is there?

I did make her wait while I got ready for the day and did some warm-up exercises. She was not going to get it all her own way and I was going to make some sort of stand, even if it was pathetic and hardly worth doing. At least I did not have milk to load into our dairy fridge or newspapers to sort and put on the shelf. We headed straight for the Harbour beach that had plenty of room for a bleddy hound and a semi-retired grumpy shopkeeper and a few geet lumps of weed. We have seen it worse and at least there were no seals hanging about making a nuisance of themselves.

Since the bleddy hound had been sorted out and had now gone back to bed again, it was my turn and I took myself off to the gymnasium for the first full session for a very long time. To be honest, I had been slowly getting back up to a full session for the last month, so it was not a huge step forward and did not finish me off for the day. Not that it mattered too much even if it had, there was nothing particularly strenuous that I had to do today.

If there had been, it would not have been doing something outside. There were frequent short sharp showers passing through The Cove for most of the day and I was lucky to avoid them on all my trips outside. This would have been much to do with the fact that I planned my trips outside largely by looking at the rain radar to check if I was going to get wet or not.

I was sent to collect Mother in the middle of the day. The Missus has been under the weather for the last few days and Mother had stayed away but this morning the Missus felt that the coast was clear and Mother could come over for some company. She had been all on her ownsome for the last five days. I took the long way around to St Buryan through Polggia and Treen just because I could. The roads were wet but there was no evidence of lying water from the heavy rain of the last few days. Perhaps we had been lucky here. Everything was verdant and luscious but there was not much in the way of colour about nor was there much in the way of traffic. It seems that either our visitors left here after last week's half term were few in numbers or had stayed home for the day.

No sooner had we arrived home than it was time to take the bleddy hound out again. The tide was back in by that stage, so I took her around the block. She is none too keen to start on the round the block journey anymore. For the first two hundred yards I might as well have been dragging a big rock around at the end of a length of rope. She picks up pace a little by the middle of the car park, either because it is clear we are not going back or she gauges we are past the half way.

The Harbour Commission must have had a bumper year, too, as there is work afoot in the car park. At the back, all along the wall to Betty's garden, the remaining earth has been dug out and the last of the old boats moved out. A kerb edge has been put in and a metal security gate installed. It will be a compound of some sort, possibly for pots or nets or both. The area next to the gig shed that was cleared out at least a year ago has been levelled (again) and hardcore distributed ready for a concreting or tarmacking. This might be a car park extension, although unlikely, or some further storage – maybe for the boats moved out of the back of the car park. There are no footings, so another building is very unlikely. It will be a wait and see.

There was nothing doing in the afternoon but settle a few niggling tasks that I had been meaning to do for a few weeks. This largely consisted of sending electronic mails to people but there was one telephone call to a flooring company to see if they might be interested in reflooring the shop. The last company we contacted came and

measured up never to be heard of again. I did not see why I should use my time to chase them, so I elected to use someone else. They will be here next Monday.

I also stuck my oar in on the great street parking debate with our much maligned council councillor. Once I would have sided with the status quo brigade because there really was not too much of a problem. In recent years, the issues have escalated as more and more people park on the street and do so without regard to anyone else. The Lifeboat crew have reported problems getting through for shouts and should ambulances or fire engines be needed, they would have great difficulty in responding especially if they were needed in the stretch from the OS to the chip shop, which is effectively single file.

Since the meeting with the technical people and the politicians was cancelled before the half term and we have heard no more, I decided that poking the issue with a big stick might be just the thing – and I get bored very easily – and it is only the first day. That does not bode well.