

DIARY 2022/23

November 30th – Wednesday

Well, we actually made it down to the beach this morning after what seemed like a long exile. I am sure that the fishermen who had started to gather at the time we arrived felt exactly the same. The sea had apparently calmed completely but a closer look revealed still quite a heavy swell with a long period between peaks. It looked pretty ideal for surfing but when I spoke with one of the fishermen later, he told me it made coming in again very interesting.

The Missus had already told me that she intended to head off to Travaskis Farm today with another set of in-laws – mine, not hers – who had turned up this week to visit Mother. It is that time of the year when she feels it right to get all the meat that is required for Christmas. I am reasonably sure that there was a wider range of goodies that came back with her but I was not present when she returned.

The raised beds continue to haunt my dreams and my every waking hour. Alright, maybe not every waking hour; I have to eat. Nevertheless, the thought that I really ought to have a circular saw crept into my head so that I could saw straight edges for the project. In all honesty, the thought had occurred to me before and every time I have had to cut timber with the jigsaw and seen wobbly lines. Cast to the back of my mind during this process was the already somewhat tiresome load of four cases of tools I currently load and unload when we head for The Farm. There will be five if I added a circular saw.

I put all thoughts of this aside and headed to the gymnasium for a proper blistering session. When I got there I decided to be avant garde and jump on the cycling machine for a change. I usually use this to warm up quickly if it is especially cold in there and suspect that I might have to do just that on Friday. In this case I just wanted to mix things up a bit. I had omitted to put my earphones in and had not looked at the time, so I had no idea how long I spent on there, but it did me a power of good. I mixed up the rest of the session, too. Gosh, how avant garde can one person be, I must ask myself.

Coming home on top of the world, a spring in my step and a feather in my cap, I emptied the truck of all the decorations we collected yesterday and made it ready for the Missus' quick escape. I felt a good deed was required ahead of purchasing the circular saw that I convinced myself to buy while I was at the gymnasium.

It was while I was completing the purchase that a Lifeboat message came through reminding me that there was a launch at two o'clock. This threw me a bit because the last I knew was that one *may* happen but we would be given notice – I guess that was the notice. With the Missus absent, this meant taking the bleddy hound across to the station.

I do fret about taking her with me. I have had to do it a few times when I have been home or shop alone with her and every time she clearly hates it. We now go every Thursday while the Missus collects payments for the 'bonus ball' competition that raises a few pennies for the comfort fund. I have to drag her kicking and screaming up the stairs.

If that was not bad enough, getting her downstairs to the very excellent Shore Crew changing room is even worse. I have to carry her down the stairs as she will not go in that direction else. If she was off the lead she would head straight for the front door. Once I get her down there, I then have to tie her to the bench that is there else she would be off up the stairs – that I normally struggle to get her to ascend these days – in a flash. I have no idea why that is but sometimes, like today, it becomes necessary as she will not do home alone either.

The launch was for the inspector's exercise as they are here on an audit. Everything has to be done by the book and we must be on our best behaviour. Fortunately, no one mentioned the bleddy hound being there, so it must be allowed. We had more than sufficient numbers for the launch, but they were a bit light on the boat. It is a function of holding an exercise in the middle of a working day, which sometimes, like today, cannot be avoided. We were lucky that the sea state had calmed enough to launch.

The launch went well enough, but it was while we were setting up and taking the span down to the bottom of the long slipway that things went a bit awry. I was following on from a recent crew member who suddenly took a detour from the walkway. He pointed out a gaping hole where once there was slipway and had taken the middle of the slip to avoid it but found that dangerously slippery. I had a look at the hole, as you do, and saw that it was, indeed, a hole. It could also not be safely bypassed, so I decided that we should switch to the other side for this recovery.

The plan was sound enough until we discovered that the path less trodden was as dangerously slippery as the middle of the slipway at the bottom. We deployed the new additional length of high pressure hose and gave the steps a wash down which was not as effective as we hoped. The other side had more wear, more washing and had been previously subject to chemical cleaning too. Perhaps several more cleans with the hose might help but it is a multi person job and can only be done at low water.

We trod very carefully while setting up and again when I went down to bring the boat in. I suggested to the Coxswain when the boat turned up that he arrange for a left-hander to toss the heaving line in the new arrangement; they have trouble getting the line accurately thrown even on the other side. As it happened, the thrower did a very good job and we had the boat hooked up in no time. From where I was standing, in the thick of it, it looked pretty much like a textbook recovery up the long slip from the wrong side too, which is something of an achievement. We are, after all, a very ambidextrous, very excellent Shore Crew.

It was quite late by the time we finished off. The Missus had planned to erect and secure the two trees she came home with but with burgeoning darkness, we thought better of it. The main tree that will sit opposite the shop is much larger than last year, I think. I asked the Missus if she had returned via Trafalgar Square – alright, perhaps not quite that big. They, including one for the living room which is a much more manageable size are currently sitting in the shop. Stand by for Christmas tree pictures tomorrow.

November 29th – Tuesday

Pitch black again and the earliest getting up time yet. I helped her get out of bed, noticed the time on my second bedside clock that is appropriately dim this time, and went back to bed myself, letting her stew for half an hour. Instead, I stewed wondering whether she actually wanted to go out or she was just fed up with being in bed. When I did get up, she did not seem bothered at all, so I proceeded with my normal routine before taking her out.

It was still dark out there, even then, apart from an exceptionally bright Mars out to the west. We probably could have got away with a run down to the beach as the tide was an hour behind the day before, but the waves were still quite boisterous and I did not think it worth the risk. I am sure we will be alright tomorrow, particularly as the sea seemed to have calmed a great deal by the time we came back from The Farm later in the afternoon. With high pressure building we might have some calmer – and colder – weather for a while.

Today, however was quite temperate and an ideal day to be messing around on The Farm. With the Carols in The Cove rapidly approaching, the Missus has her full focus on preparation and part of that is getting the Christmas decorations ready and part of that will be not one but two Christmas trees to gaze upon with wonder. All our decorations are stored up at The Farm in the barn, which as I have described before us chock full of cardboard boxes either full or empty. All these and the attendant mess needed to be cleared up before any decorations could be sorted.

It is a task tailor-made for the Missus. She dominates such tasks and they wilt before her like candles in a furnace. I left her to it, standing by for instructions to move this or that here and there - no, not there, here. The first aim of all this clearing and cleaning was to be able to move the large tipping trailer into the corner and out of the way. That was my task when the way was clear. It would have been much easier to use the tractor but that, unfortunately, still had the flayer mower attached and removing that and finding a place to put it would have taken too much time. I had to move the trailer with the truck.

Even going forwards this trailer is not designed to be towed by a truck. Going backwards is tougher because visibility is limited in the truck despite a reversing camera and the manoeuvre space is limited in the barn doorway. It took several

attempts to line up properly, but it is now exactly where the Missus wanted it and at the time of putting it there was full of the Christmas decorations.

The next task was sorting the decorations out to set aside the ones required to take with us. This was a job that the Missus could only do by herself. Initially, I cleared an old workbench that has seen better days. With now gash tables in the polytunnel from the grow bag experiment, we had to find room for them elsewhere. One of them will replace the one I took from the barn and two more will help reorganise the wood store, which is an utter mess. I have no idea what I have in there unless it is sitting on the top and all I do is buy more. Do not worry, dear reader, I know I do not have any of the timber required for building the raised beds in there so that task can wait until more important ones have been done or when we need to find space for the spare tables/workbenches from the polytunnel.

Having got rid of the damaged table, I looked about for other things to do while I waited for the Missus. One of the support bars in the polytunnel has been in need of a nut and bolt for some time. I bought some appropriate nuts and bolts in a small bag and then lost sight of them last year sometime. I thought that I would have a quick look in the cabin where I thought that I had left them and strangely found them straight away. Well, that is one long outstanding job done if I need to point to any success at all from today.

One thing I will definitely not point to is the nettle sting on my wrist. It became a proper irritation for the rest of the day despite clapping some dock leaf on it as soon as it happened. Perhaps dock leaves are not what they used to be. I did not even realise that they were nettles I was pulling up as they were devoid of leaves. I was only doing it to pass the time waiting on the instruction from the Missus that I could load the sorted decorations into the truck, which came late in the afternoon.

After all that bitty, non-productive work we did not feel much like emptying the truck when we got back. It will wait until tomorrow when something will come up and it must be done in a big rush. Part of the load is some end of line wetsuits that arrived last week. I had labelled a couple of boxes to take up to the store but then noticed I had put shortie labels on the full-length suits. They will need to be done again.

Dipping in and out of the polytunnel yesterday and spending much time filling in waiting on instruction from the Missus had thoughts of the raised beds niggling at me. We do not have a huge amount of time left available to us and much of that time will be needed to clear the relevant parts of the flat – nearly all of it including the loft - ahead of the works. Now we have a design for the raised bed, I am determined to fit in the build of just one for proof of concept. I might just slip an order in tomorrow.

November 28th – Monday

The sea is still very angry about something. This has been going on for most of the month and high time that the sea got over whatever it is upset about. The bleddy

hound for one remains very miffed that she cannot get down to the beach in the morning and today, particularly, it was dancing a merry jig down there and swallowing up the Harbour wall.

I mention in passing yesterday the movement of the sand in the Harbour. There is quite a bit missing and no particular surprise after what we witnessed this morning. It is also moving about on the big beach I noticed later when I was going past. It is difficult to remember from day to day because it does change so much but I would say that it has been scoured out again around the reef immediately at the bottom of the OS slipway. There is also a great deal more gone from under the dunes and there is a sizeable rock field exposed there as indeed there is on the other side of The Valley under Carn Keys, the black huts.

I had no great plans for today, but I was gently aware that I wanted to change my mind about the way I had set up the under-shelf lighting, fed from the top. It would look far better with the drivers and the extension plug hidden under the plinth. It was not until the Missus announced that she was going up to The Farm to collect the Christmas lights and could I drop her off on the way into town that I realised that I was going into town instead.

Well, I did know that I was going into town at some point, just not that it was going to be today. I thought, in an idle moment, that perhaps I ought to do one of my signature dishes to give the Missus the night off from cooking the tea. I mentioned this in passing to the Missus but did not specify a day. It turned out to be today.

I visited my usual haunts of independent shops, the greengrocer and the rather good butcher down Chapel Street. I also needed to visit the Asian food shop for some oyster sauce. Having sampled the real thing, it is difficult to go back to getting anything else, particularly as it is generally only available in Tesmorburys and I was not going there. I mentioned this visit to the Missus and asked if she wanted some crispy aromatic duck, like the ones you get in the Chinese restaurants, shredded which you roll into pancakes. In fact, what we buy is exactly that, frozen and just needs cooking in the oven for a bit. She did – want me to buy some.

The Missus also asked me to call her when I got in there as she is partial to the little pots of noodles they do – just add hot water – and she wanted to choose from what they had. She bought a lot, and I feared that perhaps I might not have enough cash on me for the volume I was stuffing into my bag. I asked the very pleasant lady behind the counter to add it up for me as perhaps I may have to put something back, which she very kindly did.

We discovered that I had enough with just a little left over. I mentioned that I thought that the total would be more, only really because of my limited funds but she assured me that they do try and keep their prices reasonable. Afearred that I might have upset her I told her that her shop was the only one in town for such goods and that she was welcome to charge what she liked, really. I also said that we had been visiting

the shop for a number of years and had always been pleased with the goods and the service. Had the prices been extortionate, we would not have come back – probably. I was going to tell her that I did not care what she charged as long as they stayed open, but it sounded a bit like tempting providence, so I did not.

When I arrived back at The Farm, the Missus was still knee deep in cardboard and boxes of bodyboards. She had extracted some of the decorations she was after but the whole thing was a complete mess. She wanted to come back tomorrow when she would do some more clearing away and organising and have a better shot at getting all the things she needed.

Before we went, we measured up for the raised beds in the polytunnel. I had done some thinking overnight and looked again at what was on offer. Some of the kits were no more than the required timber cut to length and a bag of screws. Costing this from our local friendly timber merchant I can do the same – but having to cut the wood myself – for half the price. The Internet had a video of someone making a raised bed in exactly the dimensions we required, and it was much more straightforward than I had planned for. The information on the robustness of the design swayed me and we shall be going that route. We have enough available topsoil, two hundred tons of it at the bottom of the field courtesy of our neighbour. We just need to find the time to do it.

We repaired back home where I could get on with reorganising the wiring under-shelf lighting. I would really like to know who came up with the design for three pin plugs and sockets because there is never enough room for the wires. If you cut the wires to have just enough to fit then getting them in the little brass screw holders is near impossible and if you cut them longer to make that easier, there is not enough room to accommodate the spare wire. It took an age to refit the socket.

My next issue was dropping it down between the two back to back shelving units. Since the socket fitted between them at the top I rather assumed it would do so until the bottom, but not so. It got stuck somewhere. I ended up having to dismantle all the shelves, now wired with lights, and take the back panels off. It would not have worked if I had waited to fit the socket when the wire was down, either, as there would not have been enough weight in the wire.

It is all now safely done and looks much more aesthetic without unsightly spare cable and LED drivers stuck here and there. I stuck magnets on the underside of the drivers so that they would pin to the shelving legs off the floor. It has not happened for a while but we occasionally get flooding through that area – something I had not previously considered. I will have to get a small plastic pot to put the socket and connectors in and should do that soon, lest I forget.

I went straight from that to cooking tea. I had forgotten coriander and we did not have sesame seeds – we always have sesame seeds! Even had I remembered I did

not have sufficient money on me. When the Missus complained I told her she had not given me enough housekeeping this week. That went down well.

November 27th – Sunday

I have become resigned to taking the bleddy hound out in the pitch black of the mornings. It is not so bad as long as I remember my head torch as it is pretty dim this end of The Cove without its streetlight. We are still not allowed on the beach; the sea was swirling around at the bottom of the slipway and coming over the Harbour wall at the near end this morning when we passed by.

Even by the bleddy hound's standard, we were up pretty early this morning. Deciding not to waste the time, I made a start on the remaining pile of invoices and got through most of them before I had to start the rest of the morning routine. Having done that, I went back to them and got up to date. I am not expecting any more in the next three days left to this quarter, so hopefully I am finished.

Mother has guests arriving tomorrow, so the Missus took her shopping at Tesmorburys. This has never been less than a three hour event so after I finished the invoices I did very little until they got back. I had thought to do the under-shelf lighting but it meant dragging the bleddy hound downstairs and she is never keen with the shop shut as she cannot see out. If I leave her outside, which she likes, I have to leave the first electric sliding door in The Cove open and we are clearly open for business because of that no matter the scene of devastation inside.

It actually did not matter as I took her for a walk when the Missus came home and she refused to go upstairs afterwards, so I had to leave the first electric sliding door in The Cove open while I worked. Sure enough we had three visitors, the last of which had to clamber over my tool box and several cartons and piles of spent cardboard and collared me standing on a stool with a bunch of electrical wires in my hand. How that looks like we are open I do not know but he was Australian so perhaps things are different over there and the shops all have obstacle courses inside the entrance. I shall remember to ask our Tasmanian correspondent.

Just an aside, a New Zealander once told me an easy way to distinguish and Australian from a New Zealander. It is in the way they pronounce an 'e' as an 'i'. You just need to get the subject to say the word 'sex' and they are Australian if they punch you on the nose.

I digress, now where was I? Ah yes, the lights. I had to do some wire trimming to fit the adjoining cables into the junction box, which now looks quite neat. What is still a problem is the low voltage wires coming from the two LED drivers which is all over the place and looks a mess. On reflection, I should have led the spur from the lighting circuit down to the floor and fed the low voltage tracks from there with the drivers and the excess cable hidden under the bottom shelf. It is not too late to

change it as I have not refilled the shelves yet, but I will need a longer length of mains cable.

Before the season started this year, we purchased some tables to go into the polytunnel so that the Missus was not having to spend hours on her knees picking individual leaves of lettuce for our popular mixed leaf bags. This turned out to be an utter disaster because the growing bags did not hold the moisture. Whether it was the wrong sort of bag or no we will never know because the Missus abandoned the plan and went back to growing them in the ground. Sadly, by the time they were growing again, everyone had gone home.

Not disheartened by this experience, the Missus was game to try again and this time with raised beds. If we maintain the soil contact, there should be no problem with moisture. The Missus had looked at the spare timber we have up at The Farm, but it really needs something like railway sleepers or two inch planks properly supported to be anything like robust enough. At a loose end after completing the lights I looked around on the Internet to see what was available and there are numerous kits around, although not all will provide for the nine metres of run that the Missus is after.

The kits would be useful because I would need to find an efficient method of cutting up sleeper size lumps of timber if that is the way we went and I do not have the tools for that. The disadvantage of the kits, of course, is that the ones that look the most robust and will cover the area we need are all quite pricy. It bears some further research, which I will do another day.

The trouble is I had started and my brain, what remains of it, continued to ponder it. It is more than likely that I will carry this to bed and shall be going to sleep on planks or, erm, sleepers.

November 26th – Saturday

We were very lucky this morning and beat the rain to our usual constitutional along towards the slipway. The sea was still looking tricky, but it appears to be calming just a little. It was the last time we were luck with the rain for the rest of the day.

I also was not very lucky with making sure I had some breakfast this morning and ended scaping together a few scraps from the fridge. My bread had gone mouldy, as it might after a week. I was hungry again by the middle of the day when the only thing left was the bleddy hound's biscuits until I remembered the anchovy banderillas I purchased last time I was at our favourite fish seller. I had to look up 'banderilla' and mostly it refers to the barbed dart that matadors use to slowly torture the bull to death in the ring. It may also refer to a type of tapas. Both of those are Spanish related but my banderillas come from Turkey where it means a strip of anchovy wrapped around a pimento stuffed olive soused in oil and vinegar and deadly chemicals used to achieve its six-month shelf life. Oh, they also has a small cocktail

stick, a banderilla perhaps, binding two together which is invisible until the first bite. They were delicious on a small salted cracker and no bulls were hurt in the process, you will be pleased to learn.

I probably would not have needed to resort to such measures had the Feast shoot gone ahead according to plan. I am not in the least surprised that it was cancelled; it was ending down by the time I made my way up there. I appreciate that it would have been difficult issuing a timely cancellation notice, particularly if it was cancelled at short notice. I am sure that they would have made every effort to let it go ahead but in the end the lashing rain and 40 miles per hour head winds would have made it dangerous as the clays would have a tendency to fly back over our heads.

It did not take a great effort to get my gun out and slip into some serious full metal jacket waterproofs – and back out of them then minutes later, of course. It is a shame but that is what you get when your local village saint was either born or died at the outset of winter. Actually, St Senan died in early March, which is a bit too close to his mate, St Piran, but would have been much kinder for weather, I suspect. In any case, the shoot did not happen and I ended up with a free afternoon and my meagre breakfast and subsequent hunger got the better of me.

I did consider the pile of invoices that sit on my desk begging to be input into the computer system and also heading to the shop to finish off the under-shelf lighting. The considering lasted no more than a few minutes and I watched a film instead.

November 25th – Friday

I have mentioned in passing previously that our local cash and carry will be closing at the end of the year. The boss man warned me before we closed that he would be putting together some discount offers during December to clear out the remaining stock. Yesterday he sent around a message announcing a Black Friday twenty percent off everything sale starting at half past eight o'clock in the morning.

I told the Missus on our way home last night and she was quite excited by the prospect. So avid was she to take part in this sale of the century that she announced we would be leaving the house before eight o'clock to ensure that we were head of the queue – apart, that is, from those who decided to camp overnight at the warehouse doors. I was a tad sceptical, it has to be said, that there would be any queue at all. Twenty percent off the local cash and carry prices brings it into striking distance of the big boys we have orders with once a fortnight when we are open. Nevertheless, it would be worth it for some of the things we usually buy there that we do not normally get from the bigger suppliers. Additionally, the Missus wanted to get some beverages and mulled wine for the Carols in the Cove concert early in December.

I managed to get the bleddy hound around quickly in the morning. Once again, we could not go down to the Harbour as it was too dangerous. We had to be satisfied

with a quick walk to the Roundhouse, which she was not, particularly. How dare the sea interrupt her routine. We managed, however, and were ready at the appointed time to launch our assault on the cash and carry, picking Mother up on the way.

We arrived at the cash and carry doors spot on the opening time. I suspect that they must have opened a bit sooner because there were already a few shoppers there, but it seemed to me that they were only buying their regular orders and were not serious sale goers like ourselves.

The Missus has a single mode of operation in any store she arrives at. Regardless of what is on her shopping list (if she had one) we must traverse each aisle whether there is anything in it that we want or no. The cash and carry was no different, although it was probably a good idea this time as we rarely visit the place in person, relying on deliveries nearly all the time.

We were surprisingly disciplined and stuck to what we knew that we wanted, steering clear of things with best before or sell by dates. We also have a good stock of some items that we struggle to get elsewhere, although obviously we will run out of them at some point and possibly sooner if I do not remember where I put the excess stock in the store room when we got back. There was one unexpected bonus and that was a length of thin plywood.

The Missus had taken the gash length of shelf from my work under the pasty warmer in the shop. She had designs on making a star with it to go on top of the 'memory tree' that will make an appearance at the Carols in the Cove event. The plywood she had sequestered was heavy duty stuff and probably inappropriate for the tree but the plank we found at the cash and carry was just right.

There were a few more errands to run in town before we came home including fuelling the truck for the second time in two days. It would be rather convenient if we had a different vehicle for different purposes as the truck is definitely not designed for economical long distance excursions, no matter how comfortable it is. We also stopped at the electrical store so that I could pick up an appropriate junction box so that I could finish off and tidy up the under-shelf lighting. The remaining lights for the last four shelves turned up yesterday.

I could have donned my DIYman suit and headed downstairs to finish off the lighting. Instead, with a poor forecast for the days ahead of us, I thought it a jolly wheeze to head up to The Farm to make an attempt on my personal north face of the Eiger – the bleddy CCTV installation.

It was a beautiful afternoon at The Farm with the sun beating down. It remained a tad chilly with a bit of a robust breeze heading in from somewhere, but I soon warmed up and shed my jacket and my hat. I knew precisely what there was left to do and the order in which I wanted to do it. For once, everything went precisely according to plan and on occasion much better than expected.

The part I feared most was putting the right sized hole in the wall of the cabin. I picked my spot and guessed the diameter of the hole and found that not only had the hole gone exactly where I wanted it, but the cable fitted through snugly. It did need a little encouragement when it came to the join I had made but once that was through the rest of it was a breeze. All the cable clips went just where they were supposed to, the length of cable I had left outside turned out to be exactly right and the ends went on the power end without fuss and installed with only one issue. The fuse in place was duff and needed changing. It was a good job that I remembered the multimeter else it would have taken much longer to find the fault.

I had added some width to the supporting post to accommodate the junction box. The cable from the camera could have been a bit longer but it was never intended that it should be boxed by the suppliers, so I can hardly blame them for not providing for one. I had hoped that I could connect all the cables before I hefted the structure aloft but, alas, the cable lengths would not allow it and I had to climb a ladder to attach them and tuck them into the waterproof junction box. It was quite a bit higher than it looked on paper, which was in my head.

I had tested the camera operation before it went up and I tested it again after it was properly installed. All was working correctly, and the picture and general operation of the camera is far better than the first one we had. It also has a near limitless supply of power being attached to the cabin batteries. It may need some tweaking but by and large it was a huge success, another job ticked off the list and it has made a semi-retired grumpy shopkeeper very happy.

So deliriously happy was I that I had lost all track of time. The sun was heading for the horizon down in the southwest and there was not long before I would be bedimmed if not benighted very shortly. There was still Mother's tiny tomatoes to gather, the cardboard boxes and old newspaper to collect from the barn and the Missus' plywood star to cut out.

It was a pretty tough choice whether the tomatoes or the star came first when both would attract equally painful punishment if not completed. I elected to do the star first as there was more clearing up to do afterwards of tools and workbench. The Missus had already drawn out the template leaving only the cutting out and sanding down. This took a little longer than expected because holes needed to be drilled at each turn point and the board needed to be turned and clamped several times.

I left the cardboard collection until last. This is so that we can start clearing out the living room bit by bit and get ahead of the posse. We cannot yet utilize the space in the shop to store things as we will be open at Christmas but at least the boxes of stuff will be ready to move when we can. Naturally, with a barn stuffed full of cardboard it took an age to identify boxes of the right size, which of course were few and far between. I also had to work by the light of my big battery flood light because it is gloomy in the barn at the best of times.

I headed home rather pleased with a good afternoon's work complete and with very little trouble. Having been exceptionally lazy throughout most of November, it was a step in the right direction, I felt, although I suspect the lion's share of all effort from now on will be towards roof type things. We will have to move out during the work and are lucky enough to be able to use one of the holiday lets at the rear of us thanks to a very kind offer by the owner. The only part of it I am looking forward to is it being all over, but I am already relieved that we appear to have a fixed start date.

The weather tomorrow looks pretty miserable, so it must be Feast Shoot, revived after a couple of years of dreaded lurgi. I shall waterproof my gun.

November 24th – Thursday

I let the bleddy hound lead the way at early o'clock this morning. We were going to have to get going and get ahead of the posse as we were driving out beyond Camborne. To be fair, she was only at the earliest extreme of her normal getting up range, it is just that I got up with her this time.

I could not see out of the window when we were ready to head out for our morning run. I had turned on the living room lights and it was pitch black outside. It was not even possible to see if it was raining, so I consulted the rain radar, which says a lot about modern living when you reach for the computer before thinking about sticking your head out of the door. It was not raining in any case.

What the computer had not warned me about was the vicious state of the sea. We tarried at the top of the slipway for a minute or so and watched the ebb and flow in the Harbour. It is quite incredible the difference in the daily tide. Yesterday, there was plenty of beach and no danger of catching a wave and today, three hours after high water, the waves were running up almost within reach of the slipway.

Having watched for a good period we started down the slipway thinking that there was probably enough sand but we would need to be wary. A little way down I reconsidered because those waves were pressing on to only a small area of sand and although the tide was receding it did not look like anyone had told the waves. I made the unpopular decision to turn around and just as we did so a wave ran clean up the beach and up the slipway. Good call, I thought to myself.

We walked up past the Roundhouse but the bleddy hound was having none of that and we returned the way we came. Looking down at the Harbour we watched a good third of the beach appear as the waves drew back. That was one very dangerous sea running today and we absolutely made the right decision not to be anywhere near it.

I wish that we had made the decision not to go anywhere near the road out of The Cove today, either. As soon as we reached the top of the hill the strength of wind,

presumably coming from somewhere in the southwest, made itself very apparent. We dropped the bleddy hound off with Mother on the way out and were fair near blown away at St Buryan. Stopping for fuel at Tesmorburys, it started to rain a little and the little turned into a lot by the time we stopped at Hayle to pick up something to eat.

We had no sooner slipped onto the A30 when the heavy rain became a torrent and visibility dropped to less than 100 yards and sometimes less than 50. When the rain eased, which was not very often, the spray continued and in all it was a very difficult, slow and unpleasant journey. We had started out early with the hope that we could return early but our extra time was consumed by the outward journey.

It is an annual journey to a supplier's trade show. They have a big showroom at their warehouse and it is all very well done. They would not fit half of it into a trade show and it would cost an awful lot more, so you really cannot blame them for going out on their own. We now have a list of all the new goodies we might have for the new season and once we have completed our stock count, we will refine the list to a proper order. It is a good job we have nothing better to do, ahem.

The trip back was a breeze by comparison. It was a relief not to have to use the windscreen wipers that we discovered on the way up need to be replaced. They were effective but despite sufficient rain they graunched on every swipe.

We even made it back in time to make it to Lifeboat crew training where we had a look at new gizmos for our casualty care bag and updated manuals. We have not been able to launch on training for some weeks. It is the time of year when training launches will be fitted in at any day of the week when we have a weather window. Nothing wrong with a bit of surprise training every now and again.

November 23rd – Wednesday

We are back to breezy again today after it seemingly dropped out during the evening yesterday. It woke me up at some point in the small hours after it briefly visited the southwest before heading once again to westerly. It had the blind on the back window clattering against the frame for the remainder of the night.

It fair near took the bleddy hound off her feet to start with until she got used to it and we headed down to the Harbour. She has relapsed to half past six again getting up when it was still dark outside. It was gloomy when we got to the beach but I did not quite need the head torch that I was wearing. It had rained during the night but there was little evidence of it on the beach and the street was just damp. There were some big clouds out to the east but with everything now moving that way they were not of great concern.

What was of concern was the quote from the solar people. It came with a breakdown of expected yield from the panels and last night I had numbers swimming in front of

my eyes that were not making much sense. I had a good look this morning and found that I was able to elicit some pertinent facts, such as even with sixteen panels split between the shop and the flat, it was not going to make much of a dent in our usage. This was a huge surprise and somewhat worrying.

The discovery immediately prompted dropping off the battery installation. It would be much more useful to invest that money in additional panels - if they will fit on the roof. I was somewhat irked that the salesman had persisted with the smart box option that gives real time usage information. The surveyor had already discounted that as it was logistically tricky to run a cable back from the controllers to the incoming mains supply. It was also annoying that the examples had covered the entire year when I had asked for data covering only the relative periods. Our usage is significantly different between summer and winter on the two properties, which is why a big switch turning output from shop to flat in winter would have been so useful.

I fired off my thoughts to the company before turning my attention to the task of moving everything out of the living room in the short time between the end of Christmas and the work starting a week or so later. The biggest issue, other than the computer and associated communications equipment, is the smart new(ish) motor driven sofa we had delivered during the summer and that is putting in some sterling service. It was assembled by a couple of people who knew what they were doing and there are cables or connectors that join the various bits. It would be sensible to have someone who knew what they were doing disassemble it and, preferably, move it to a storage space.

To this end I made enquiries with the company that sold it to us, but they did not provide such a service. They were very good about it and had someone from the store called us. The very pleasant man told us that it would be easier to show us how it was done, so we will go and visit in the near future for our lesson. I did have the barefaced cheek to ask if the install team would be happy to moonlight and he was very good about telling me no, although had I asked the install team directly I might have had a more favourable response.

We did very little of real value today. I had thought to go up to The Farm to progress work on the CCTV camera, but I did not. I think the rot has set in and it will take dynamite to get us ever to work again. Still, we are away deep tomorrow and we cannot laze our way out of that.

November 22nd – Tuesday

Well, at least it was not raining today. The wind, however, had ramped up late yesterday and persisted through the night. It sounded much worse than it actually was and when I checked the data later in the morning it had hit a peak at around 65 miles per hour, which is a light breeze around here these days. Gwennap Head registered an 83 miles per hour but I think that was a local aberration. It is atop the cliff there and the wind can funnel up do strange things.

Locally light breeze it might have been, but it was playing havoc with the bleddy hound's newly washed fur. Oddly, it all went a bit calm at the corner of the Lifeboat station where it is normally the worst but after going around the corner, the breeze was full in our faces. We struggled down the slipway nonetheless and made a mess of the clean and virgin sand stretched out towards the ever more distant tide line at this time in the morning. Out in the bay, even at low water there was plenty of white water and noisy waves.

I had to get my act together this morning as I had arranged a meeting with the structural engineer and the builder with regard to our going-on-forever roof work. I had watched with growing nervousness the growing bits being added to the building plans - new A frames coming in, old A frames going out, walls coming down. It was a worthwhile meeting and heartening that they both listened. The structural engineer is a smooth operator and was most convincing when he told me that the plans were, in fact, fit-for-purpose Austin Mini and not over the top Rolls Royce Silver Shadow.

Work is all set to start in January, only about three years late and fifty percent more expensive. I still do not know the cost of it but am assure everything will be just fine. Our biggest challenge will be emptying the loft and the front room in a couple of days just after Christmas and finding somewhere to put it all.

While we are on the subject, the quote arrived for the solar panels along with several pages of expected yields and usage data. I think it will take me, a calculator and a spare brain to work through what ratio of the total panels we can fit on the roof we need for the business and the domestic supply. It is such a shame that we cannot redirect the business ones to domestic use over the winter because the business usage drops to nothing and the panels will sit idle. You would think that there would be a gizmo to do that, but I doubt many people have a seasonal business and domestic requirement under the same roof.

Such thoughts were cast aside by the arrival of the in-laws in the afternoon. It is the last such visit for a while and they came bearing gifts, which was rather nice. In return I vacuum packed the top quality hake they had purchased from our man in Penzance for them to take with them tomorrow on their way home. I will need an early dash to the gymnasium in the morning so that I am back in time to wave my hankie at them as they depart up the hill.

The sea has put on a pretty good show for them during their visit and today was no different. It has drawn some visitors to The Cove who drive down and sit in their cars in the Harbour car park to watch the waves crest over Pedn-men-du, filling the air with salty sea spray and knocking ten percent off the value of their motors through the early onset of rust. It was fabulous watching it from our windows while we still can. For two months of the start of the new year we will not have that view thanks to the scaffolding, indeed, we will not have windows for a good part of it.

The in-laws did not tarry long into the evening; once Mother's shoes are on it is time to go home. I did return briefly to the solar panel data but when my head starting to smoke I thought it best to leave it alone for a bit. To round the day off the Missus discovered that the hot water bottle that she left in the bed all day had leaked and it took a little while to dry it out. I do hope that is not an omen.

November 21st – Monday

I took my time this morning getting ready to go out because it was enting down. I did not bother checking the rain radar but just relied on a bit of hope that it would clear up shortly. It did not. It was on with full metal jacket waterproofs, although had I recognised the strength of the wind before I went out, I would have worn my full metal jacket 'plus' waterproofs to go out in. It was pretty poor out there but the bleddy hound managed to get down to the beach, nevertheless, and was back up the slipway in no time. I gave her a rub down when we got in but even halfway through the day she was still a bit damp, so when she was nearly dry the Missus gave her a bath. Alright, not quite as bad as it sounds; she gets blow dried afterwards.

The rain had cleared by the time I headed to the gymnasium not too much later after we got back. The powerful wind was still there, piling in from somewhere in the west. It was not the worst we have had but we were fully exposed to it. I need not have bothered with the blistering session because it needed a good amount of effort to fight my way back from the gymnasium against the headwind. It peaked around 55 miles per hour from the west northwest.

I had wanted to get the joining of the CCTV power cables done today; I had promised myself. Brother-in-law said that it could not be done in DIYman gear because it was scientific not handyman stuff. I should have a white lab coat, I was told. He was right, of course, the trouble was I did not have a white lab coat and I would just have to take the risk. I must say, it all went swimmingly. It was just two sets of wires I was joining together, of course, nothing too complex but it is that sort of complacency that leads to trouble. I should be grateful I got away with it. I was very glad that I had bought a shrink wrap kit to go with it. There would have been far too much risk of a short else with that bare negative wire in the camera supplied cable. Unless you knew it was there you would not see the join, well, apart from it is one cable going in and twin cable coming out, but I meant apart from that.

After that there was little else to be done. That is nonsense, of course. There was plenty to be done but I just did not do it. The weather had turned quite wintry and the temperature had dropped a good deal and the wind persisted but dropped off later in the afternoon. The sea, however, had other ideas and just got bigger and bigger. The bay and as far as you could see was white horses. Over Cowloe and the Harbour wall it was a boiling, crashing mess and it was trying desperately to climb the cliffs opposite for the rest of the day. What we were seeing was mostly heading

to and from high water. It was dark before we got to low water and I have no idea if it calmed any. It certainly did not sound like it had.

The Missus took the bleddy hound out in the early afternoon and came back wrapped up like Nanook of the North. I took her out later in the afternoon, the bleddy hound, not the Missus, and it was much cooler than before, dull grey and damp and just not the sort of day to be hanging about in. There was a shower or two passing through as well, so I did not feel too badly about not going up to The Farm. I did some measuring up of the camera width and the junction box, which is huge. I will have to add some width and consequently some bulk to the post, which is not necessarily a bad thing.

I cancelled the rest of the day and watched a film instead.

Not long before we went to bed the wind started up again. It was proper wind this time heading for the late sixties in miles per hour. I had forgotten to put out the bins from the mews at the back, which turned out to be a good plan and I shall have plenty of time in the morning provided there is not too much wreckage to clear up.

November 20th – Sunday

It was a bit of a nondescript day today, in case you were wondering later why I did not describe it. My trip to the range was cancelled as I did not have sufficient cover for Head Launching the Lifeboat should it be needed. I was therefore at a bit of a loose end, but I managed to think of a few things.

My primary concern, after the normal running out of the bleddy hound down to a bigger than expected Harbour beach, was to finish the counting of the wetsuits. I rather hoped to have my order in our supplier's in tray when he had a peek into it first thing Monday. I had no idea if it was first come first serve or a more fair distribution based on demand, but I was not going to take the chance at 25 percent discount. This endeavour required a quick count of the wetsuits in the shop that would not take very long and a run up to The Farm to count the ones that were in the trailer and that the Missus forgot.

I also was driven to push further ahead with the installation of the CCTV camera that had already taken far too long. Most of all I wanted to be sure about the power line that I had to take apart at one end to hook onto the busbars that run off the batteries in the cabin.

I was concerned that I would not be able to determine the positive from the negative if I simply cut the moulded plug off the end. I did have a go at cutting the moulded plug carefully but utterly failed with that because the wires inside were so delicate, they snapped away in the process. It did not matter in the end because the positive was a red wire inside the outer sheath and the negative is unsheathed and wrapped around the red wire. They are, however, exceedingly thin and delicate and with the

negative wire unsheathed it runs the risk of shorting other devices at the distribution point. I will have to solder a section of sheathed wire onto it and attach the final endings to that – after I have managed to get it through the cabin wall.

I knew I had some twin wire up at The Farm from when I wired the lights into the cabin at the outset and as I was going there anyway, job done. I arrived there purposely early and finished the wetsuit count and collected the reel of wire. This gave me sufficient time to do more work on the post that will carry the camera. After just a bit of work it is now ready to go up once the camera and the junction box are screwed into position. It is cleverly planned that I can do it without going up a ladder to attach the camera after the post is installed. It should work just fine as long as I can hold the heavy camera attached post into position while I screw it in without dropping it.

Next up was a visit to the range. It was a fleeting visit to attend the committee meeting. The secretary had asked for committee members to attend if they could because it was the one just before the AGM. It took less than an hour and I went from there to collect Mother and the in-laws and bring them back for an afternoon of jollity and excitement at chez nous. Well, I brought them back and I can hardly be responsible for everything, now can I.

The sea in the bay provided much of the entertainment, boiling and crashing and thumping over the Harbour wall. It was the sort of day to run along the Harbour wall in a wetsuit and be merrily tossed into the sea by the waves as they came over the top. We watched as some young tearaways did just that and an older seal came charging over from the direction of the big beach to have a look-see. We wonder what it is about a lively sea that attracts the seals in. It cannot surely be calmer closer in than it sitting on a rock in the lee on, say, Brisons. I do not think they will come and tell us, so it will forever remain a mystery.

It was soon time to hurry off to bed to try out my new clock that I set up in the morning. I do hope I shall sleep with such excitement going on.

November 19th – Saturday

It did not take the bleddy hound long to backslide. She was up at least fifteen minutes earlier again today. It was not a bad early morning to be out, the fishing boats were out again for the first time in weeks and the skies were clear apart from some big chunky clouds out to the east. There was not much in the way of breeze, although it was noticeably colder than it has been hitherto.

I forced myself not to dither too much in the morning. The in-laws and Mother were coming in the middle of the afternoon and there were things to do. Most of all I wanted to finish the under-shelf lighting in the shop because with that done, the planned shop work was complete. This would give me a clear field to start on the CCTV installation up at The Farm and the Missus had promised to take me up later.

The package that arrived while I was not here looked suspiciously small for eight long lights and a couple of LED drivers but these are not huge items anyway. It did not take much unwrapping to discover that they had only sent the starter pack and the additional four lights and add-on LED driver were missing. Even then the manifest was incorrect as it only showed five lights instead of eight.

I broke away from the work to contact the company in the hope that perhaps they worked Saturday morning, but they did not. I sent an electronic mail and will follow it up on the telephone on Monday. The delivery note stated that I had three days to report shortages that I had missed by two because I was away. I am sure they will not quibble.

Discovering that I would get no help until at least Monday, I pressed on with the installation of the first four lights. They work best halfway back on the underside of the shelf and do a marvellous job. There was no trickiness in the installation and it only took a few minutes. I am very glad now that I did not persist with putting a kit together myself.

The Missus arrived kitted up for The Farm just as I was finishing off the installation. I spent a few seconds appreciating my seal of approval that she gave and we decamped to The Farm with all my work kit.

We had a message on Thursday from our wetsuit company. They are changing the style of their wetsuits next year and getting rid of the current stock at a reduced price. These will go very quickly and there are several sizes we need to restock with but as yet we had not completed the stock take. The wetsuits are all well organised on rails at The Farm and it would not take the Missus long to count them and that is ostensibly why we hurried to The Farm in the first place.

My first job, however, was to replace the battery in the store room that had lit the place all summer long and now was close to expiring. Since its backup, the one we used last year, seems not to keep its charge I swapped it with the primary battery in the cabin to see if that is any better. This job done I could then proceed with the preparations for the CCTV.

With limited time, I managed to put the two sets of build-out blocks on the side of the cabin and prepare the post with one screwed in beside it to make it wide enough that will carry the camera and its waterproof junction box. The second screwed in alongside the first will sit above the roof overhang and provide some additional stability, although it will only be resting on the roof. I was just testing the robustness of my handywork when the Missus uttered the immortal words, "Oh, I thought it was going on the other side". I had chosen the side I had because it was a shorter run to the power source and if the camera was mounted high enough it would still cover all the main points of interest.

Clearly, despite an “Oh, I suppose it will be alright,” which I translated as “just bleddy move it,” I ran out the cable supplied with the camera and discovered it would be just long enough in the new position. It did not take long to shift the build-out blocks and remeasure and I will be in a good position to recommence when we next go up. The next challenge will be determining the positive and negative wires in the cable when I lop the plug off the end.

With the family gathered again we sat around the dining table which affords us a view of the bay. Sister-in-law has become an avid cold sea swimmer since she moved to North Devon and was interested in joining the crew that regularly dips in the Harbour here. They had arrived towards the latter part of the afternoon, so she went down to have a chat to see if they would mind her joining them on their next trip, which they did not. I will check my RNLI casualty care book to refresh my memory on the treatment of cold water immersion casualties, just in case.

The local swimmers were not the only ones out and about on the briny today. Sister-in-law spotted some wing surfers coasting into the bay from the west. At first we thought that they must have slipped out unseen earlier and messed around out of sight and were just coming back. It did not seem likely that they had arrived from around the corner but as we had been watching the bay for some time by that stage it was also unlikely they had set off from our beach. This was confirmed by the arrival of some more wing surfers in their hydrofoils shadowed by a support boat. Despite scouring the Internet, it was not apparat what was going on. It was starting to be a bit of a mystery.

We were curious but not so curious as to walk down to the big beach to go and ask them. This almost resolved itself when one of the two crew from the RIB walked past in the direction of the beach and I was nominated to go and ask him when he came back. As it happened, I was in the throes of moving our tea from the kitchen when I was alerted from the living room. Coming out immediately, I discovered that one of the wing surfers was arranging himself opposite on the benches, so I hurried out to have a chat.

The slim fellow towered above me and I am not exactly a shorty, and with a big beaming grin he told me that they had wing surfed from the Isles of Scilly – quite a feat – in conditions that although not particularly adverse, were not the best they could have chosen. A bit of breeze helped; I am sure.

We had thought initially it might have been a charity thing but, no, it was a promotional jape for Viking Foils, which I name because it would be churlish not to after such a brave effort. The company is based at Stithians Lake, so it is no surprise they had to take to the sea as Stithians Lake, a reservoir, is currently a puddle.

Having solved the mystery I returned a tea of many parts and because it was the Missus preparing it, the tea was a feast that could have lasted several days. We were pressed, however, as the rugby I had mentioned yesterday was about to start. I

will merely say that it was an entertaining game, particularly in the second half but I am not entirely certain that it went as expected for the national team management.

November 18th – Friday

The bleddy hound has reached a wake up time of nearly seven o'clock. I suspect it was shock therapy after trying to get the Missus out of bed that early whilst I was away. I have to say it was rather pleasant.

I followed this success up with a run down to the gymnasium, the first for a week and that was also rather pleasant. I managed a blistering session, which having been cooped up in a train and hanging around on platforms for much of yesterday, was a blessed relief. It also warmed me up because a noticeable chill had arrived with the showers that blew through yesterday and not helped by a lively breeze from the northwest. By the time I sat down again after the session I was much more comfortable.

After witnessing the very clever alarm clock they had installed at the let I was staying in up at Sherborne, it had awoken my interest in getting something similar for the bedside here. The main feature was that it not only told the time, most useful for a clock, but also dimmed away to almost nothing when I turned out the light. I was not much interested in the fact that this one you could also talk to and tell it to set alarms and whatnot and, frankly, I was not much interested in the alarm feature – I have a bleddy hound - or having a radio present. Just the time would be sufficient.

I had a brief look at the Internet shops last night and wrote the names down of some likely contenders. When I looked this morning, I noticed that many had bells and whistles I really did not want, the dimmer had to be set manually or the face of the clock doubled as a mirror. The last 'feature' seemed to spoil any option that I looked at that came anywhere close to meeting my basic requirements. After about an hour I gave up.

Mentioning this in passing to the Missus was something that I should have done at the outset because she found one almost immediately and it is on its way on the post for tomorrow.

The Missus also alerted me to the fact that brother-in-law was arriving today, no, not that one, the other one. They were coming to visit Mother but dropping around to us for tea because we have fish. They are from North Devon where they do not have any fish, of course, so I suggested I go to our favourite supplier in Penzance and get some fresh rather than using our freezer stock. I was already heading in that direction because the under-shelf lighting had arrived while I was gone – at least that is what the package that is sitting at the top of the steps looks like – and I needed to run a spur off the lighting circuit to power them.

They arrived when I was in the midst of installing the spur. I had already packed away the excess fish that I had purchased and set aside what we would be eating tonight. I paused to welcome them then carried on while they settled upstairs. It was a reasonably successful job but unfortunately the junction box that I had purchased was the wrong type and had insufficient space in it for the connectors I had used. It is perfectly safe without a box for now and I will be able to install the under-shelf lighting, but I will need to get a box next week to finish the job off.

The brother-in-law and missus were the ones that we see less often than the other ones. We therefore spent a pleasant evening catching up and discussing dogs, as they had brought their young one with them. It is a border terrier and the bleddy hound does not normally do border terriers as she had a dust up with one when she was little and has held a grudge against the whole breed ever since. She is Cornish, you understand. She was, however, on her best behaviour and knows that taking chunks out of visiting dogs is very much frowned upon as well as, at her age, she cannot be fagged with it. She did, though, try and make herself scarce and stuck to her high perches and dark nooks and did her best to ignore the young whipper-snapper who did his best to seek her out for a game.

The tea was pleasant, the meeting convivial and we will do it all again tomorrow. There is also rugby on, which I knew nothing about as it is happening east of Camborne. Brother-in-law was surprised and asked if I did not follow the rugby anymore. In reflex I said I did not have the time, but I had considered that subsequently. I really have just gone from project to project during the winter and in summer I am consumed by shopkeeping. I have yet to conclude whether that is a good or bad thing, but we shall watch the rugby together tomorrow and I shall see if I feel deprived of work time. I suspect that will rather depend on the result.

November 17th – Thursday

Since I spent any useful time today seated in a train carriage there is very little to be said about it. I had made my last stank up the hill to see the Aged Parent before I left, this time with a heavy knapsack on my back valderi valdera. Come the appointed time we said our farewells and I waved until I could no longer see the white handkerchief being waved to me – which was about ten yards from the door as a van was in the way.

Both my trains were a few minutes late in arriving where I was catching them from. The first, no excuse was given but the second was delayed by a police incident. Another train, also late and from the same direction had been delayed because of disruption by some passengers. I shall endeavour to discover more.

The Missus picked me up from the station with a happy smile, which was most convincing and the bleddy hound gave her normal nonchalant, 'oh it's you' look. I was definitely home.

November 16th – Wednesday

Without a needy bleddy hound to cater for I had carte blanche to spent a long time in bed this morning and be care free for an hour or two. I still woke up at half past six, darn it. I remained in bed stubbornly, wide awake.

I had intended to meet with the Aged Parent at ten o'clock, largely because I wanted some breakfast before I went to meet up. There were some establishments open but I decided to look around first to choose the right one. This presented itself quite early on because on the menu at the top was eggs benedict, the only fly in the yoke being that the place was closed. I looked elsewhere but I am afraid the call of the eggs benedict was too strong so I decided to wait for the place to open at half past nine. It was worth waiting for.

It is a good stank up the hill from the café after that. It appears that all the main eating places are a good stank down the hill from the Aged Parent and shows that the small gods of grumpy shopkeepers can extend their range even beyond Camborne. Happily, it was not raining, although it had tipped down in the night. It must have been very heavy because I discovered early on that the sound proofing in the flat is exceptional – I could barely hear the bells in the abbey that persisted for quite some time into the evening.

Having spent a couple of hours visiting, I came away again with a plan to meet up later as we had an appointment that I had agreed to attend with the Aged Parent in the afternoon. I had a quick geek at a couple of shops on the way back but only out of light interest. Sherborne appears to be a town much like any other where the out of town supermarkets have sucked the mainstream shops away, although there are a few of those left too. It has left mainly a strange mixture of independent shops, many niche boutiques of one sort or another whose existence is a wonder of economics. There are also shops of substance such as artisan butcher, greengrocer and such that ooze quality as their draw to shoppers. They also denote a somewhat well-heeled clientele. These are the new suburbs of London.

It does appear to be lacking any serious choice of places for us to eat in the evening, with many of the alehouses choosing only to serve food in the middle of the day. Perhaps it is no surprise because the streets were thinly populated in evening, which might, of course, be because there are not too many places to eat. Of the few that are left, two are Italian and it was to one of those we went for tea.

An added complication of the evening was that it had started to rain in a serious sort of way from the middle of the afternoon. I had to resort to full metal jacket waterproofs for my return journey from the Aged Parent and I had told him that I would return later with a taxicab. The plan was perfect, we would organise another taxi for the journey back later on in the evening. This fool proof plan came to a rather premature conclusion when I discover that taxicabs in Sherborne are a rare beast and that not one across three companies was available for the task of collecting the

Aged Parent. On reflection, we should be grateful that it was not a cab for the return journey that was unavailable else we would have been proper stuck.

I had already booked the restaurant and since I had to eat anyway, I did not cancel it and hoped that they would not notice that we were one person short. If they did, they never said anything, which was very polite. It took me at least an hour to read the menu that was three miles long. It would seem an impossible task to resource it all each service but on closer examination there were only a handful of ingredients that were mixed and matched with different pastas. It still took me an age to decide but the end result was suitably delicious.

It seemed churlish not to finish the evening at the Digby Tap that was much busier than it was the previous evening. It would not surprise me in the least that it was the busiest alehouse in Sherborne. Yaboo sucks to all those trendy pretenders everyone is supposed to like. Give me this place any day of the week.

I retired early as it had been a tiring day. I had lost count of the number of times I had stanked up the hill these last two days and it demonstrated that I need to get some proper walking in rather than just gymnasium exercise in future. I will have to do it again tomorrow with full backpack, which will be interesting. It will serve me right for missing the gymnasium today.

November 15th – Tuesday

Alright, that was definitely different and reasonably successful since I am penning this edition from my digs in what was somewhat sunny Sherborne – east of Camborne.

The first bit went swimmingly. I took the bleddy hound down to the beach and we came back and had breakfast, or rather she did. I took my time, which I discovered later I should not have done, but these things are very clear in hindsight. What I should have done is got myself ready for my sojourn and then mucked about then I would not have remembered almost too late that I left my false ears in my shooting bag and would not have forgotten my earphones. Too late now for recriminations.

We arrived at Penzance railway station quite late to the party, it appeared. There were loads of people there all waiting for the same train that I was getting on. I had chosen the one at this time because I thought it would be quieter. In the event it was very quiet because it had not arrived, stuck behind a broken down train somewhere up the line which other trains could not get past. The company might have phrased that better to not sew panic into the heart because the train arrived a mere twenty minutes late and made up most of that on the journey.

I had walked up the carriages in search of the one that my ticket told me contained my reserved seat, in carriage H. I got as far as carriage D and found that the next carriage was first class. I could not see further down the train but assumed that there

probably was nothing beyond first class other than the engine. I sat in carriage D. I did ask the ticket lady if there was a carriage H that I had missed and she told me that they must have forgotten to put it on. I am very glad that all the people on the station once seated in the train, hardly made an impact on the available seats and I was left alone for the entire journey.

It had rained for a good part of the night at home and now I found that I caught it up at Exeter. When I looked out of the window of where I was having a cup of tea – please note, having, not necessarily enjoying – the rain was cascading onto a train parked in the station off one of those awnings with the oh so familiar valancing of daggerboards. It had only ceased half an hour since when I arrived at Sherborne, too.

The reason why I was able to so enjoy the view at Exeter was the delay on my train arriving at Penzance had caused me to miss the connection at Exeter. The reason why I was having a cup of tea at Exeter station was that they would not accept hard currency for it on the train and I refused to go through the rigmarole of trying to find my credit card for a, albeit, rather expensive cup of tea. It was probably not cheaper in the chain coffee shop at Exeter, but at least they were happy to accept my five pound note. I did not discover until afterwards that they only had semi-skimmed milk else I would have settled for the water I brought with me.

I noticed a big poster on the platform that told me that I could claim a rebate on my ticket had the train been more than 15 minutes late. My journey certainly was because I missed the connection but the Great Western Railway train was only 2 minutes late. The remainder of the journey was on a South West Trains train, so I would guess, almost certainly, that does not count. I shall try anyway just for fun.

The remainder of the journey and arrival at Sherborne were uneventful. I met up with the Aged Parent at the appointed time, an hour late, and in the evening we ventured into town to a restaurant. Since the walk back is up hill, it was wet and also dark, I suggested a taxi ride, which was readily accepted. I walked back because I am tight.

With some time to spare I looked about the place to see if there was somewhere else for tea tomorrow. All the available places appeared to be at the bottom of town, of course, while the Aged Parent is situated at the top. There was an alehouse that served food but did not look terribly welcoming, an Italian restaurant that probably would not go down well and an Indian restaurant. I ventured a little further and down a back street found a public house by the name of the Digby Tap. It is feted by the ale campaigns and such and I am not surprised. In a world where most traditional alehouses have been converted to clinical, look-alike 'coffee shops', such as the OS, this place was a proper pub. Nicotine stained ceiling, dark snugs, old men playing chess (it once would have been dominoes, so a nod to modernity) and a dart board in the 'public' bar. There are 'kitchen' tables and wooden chairs, no namy pamby soft furnishings here, a crowded bottle bank at the back of the bar with brews

my grandfather probably drank. Sadly, no food but a proper landlord and if you are in the area, I highly recommend a visit.

I retired to my bed after that, with hope in my heart.

November 14th – Monday

At least we got to see the sea misbehaving this morning. I made the bleddy hound wait a short while before going out and she was ten minutes later getting up anyway. There was enough light to watch the waves running up the beach and lumps charging over the Harbour wall. There was just about enough sand there to facilitate a quick run down but we kept a wary eye on just how far those waves were running in.

The amount of swell was more evident from the flat window. Big, heavy waves were rolling in below the window and down onto the beach further out. It looked a bit more moderate at low water but even so, the waves were running up the beach in great, long and shallow stretches all along the sand. I noticed that those who had ventured onto the beach were keeping a good distance and the few that were not had to be very fleet of foot or wet of foot instead.

Our very useful man who takes away scrap metal turned up in the middle of the day for the old, dismantled shelving that has sat in the shop in the way for a week. By that time, I had wrapped up a collection of items that someone had ordered from our website. Perhaps I have mentioned, dear reader, that there are pagers on the very website that you are reading The Diary from that have some very alluring items for sale. I just mention this in passing, dear reader, in case it may have previously eluded you. I had also washed the rubber mats that our bone china mugs sit on ahead of replacing them on the new shelving, so I had not been entirely idle during the morning, just mainly.

We had quite forgotten that our man was turning up and his appearance was most fortunate at that moment because the Missus and I were just deciding who would take the bleddy hound for a walk and who would go to the Post Office with the parcels that both of us required despatching. A few moments later and neither of us would have been at home. The Missus ended up doing both as I helped to load our man's trailer up with steel shelves.

It may have come up, but I am heading off to see the Aged Parent for a few days. They are east of Camborne, so I must prepare and gird both my loins as it has been said there be dragons to encounter. It is unfortunate, but I am leaving the Missus behind on this occasion as it would be unfair to foist the bleddy hound on Mother without assistance. I am to travel by train, which involved making sure that they were intending to run one in that direction tomorrow and, more importantly, run one back again a few days later.

To this end I spent the afternoon preparing for such a serious sojourn into foreign parts. I have a toothbrush and my woolly hat. Think that is all.

Now, I know that you have been reading the previous paragraphs with only half a mind on the content. Well, alright, it does not usually merit anything like that level of attention, but I merely allude to the fact that you are keen to know what the Missus has been working on these last weeks – with Mother roped in, too. I can now reveal, because she has put it up on FacePage and what not, that there will be a Carols in The Cove night around a tree with the singing provided by the newly formed choir in the village. There will also be a memory tree, if you can remember what one of those is, where people can write a message of remembrance and hang it on the tree. There will be mulled wine and tea on hand to revive the public watchers at half time and ease the voices of the singers. All funds, yes, money is involved on a voluntary basis, raised will be for the Lifeboat. It will be a hoot, I am sure. Be there or be somewhere else.

November 13th – Sunday

The getting lighter later thing is starting to be very noticeable. The sky was not even that gloomy when the light did eventually start to break through, so I did not think that had much to do with it.

There was a handkerchief size lump of sand available for the bleddy hound and I when we eventually got to the corner of the Lifeboat station to peek around it. We had been delayed by the milkman who had trouble getting the door to the café next door locked. That upset the general run of things as the bleddy hound does like to do things her way, although it was her fault in the first place as she is inquisitive and had gone to see what the milkman was up to. If it had been the butcher, I would not have been able to tear her away.

I am up early enough, sorry, I am dragged out of bed early enough to have a leisurely run up to getting ready to go to the range. I was fortunate this week that there were sufficient numbers of very excellent Shore Crew to cover my absence. We just have to take it one weekend at a time but the worst case is that I will be able to go for half a day.

It was an exceedingly pleasant day with plentiful sunny spells to enjoy and palatably temperate, rather more so than for the time of year. We are warned that it will get a bit colder during next week but for two of those days I shall be in a house with heating. Well, I assume it has heating because it did not actually specify. It should have reasonable internet access as well, which means that there should be a Diary entry for each of the days I am away, but do not bank on it.

The day at the range is a long one and it was well attended, which means a bit of a gap between turns. I am quite weary by the end of it but more so if it has been cold up there, which today it thankfully was not. I have upgraded to two flasks, which now

last me the whole session, or both sessions if you wish to be pernicky, without having to ration myself. It does, however, add to the overall load, which today was about as bad as it gets with three guns and three types of ammunition. I will need a sherpa if I carry much more.

The load was not that much lighter going home despite depositing close to 200 rounds of lead into the butts. I have noticed that after a couple of years of light use, I now need to make more rounds and relearn all that entails. I shall have to manufacture some time to do that as we are already two weeks into our retirement and have not even started at The Farm yet.

It was exceedingly pleasant to get home and not have to worry about any of that for a moment. I still had to clean everything before sitting down and not worrying about any of that. It is a tiresome but necessary chore. No wonder officers had batmen. Perhaps I should get one.

Oddly, that reminded me of a chap I knew at the first place I worked. He was a storeman and an old army man, a private, who had fought in WWII. I do not think he was a batman but he was pretty tight with a general who lived up in very salubrious Mill Hill in London. I suppose that happens when you survive a war together. He used to visit the general every now and then and once I was invited to go with him. I discovered later that it was more to get him home than anything else as the general was very generous with his whisky and my pal quite thirsty – I imagine the spare decanter for guests was brought out for such occasions.

I do not remember a great deal about it but my pal recounted stories while the general said, yes, a lot. I do remember trying to half steer and half carry my pal through rush hour London tubes and mainline stations and say, sorry a lot. Very odd what sparks these memories, as I had quite forgotten that.

We took Mother home in the rain after tea. It was very good of it to wait until I had finished at the range. We could still hear the sea raging when we let her out of the door. That is a long time to be in a mood.

November 12th – Saturday

I have been putting off finishing the work I had planned under the pasty warmer in the shop. All that remained was a shelf to be inserted above the smaller of the cabinets on wheels. It should not have been too difficult, other than fashioning a support for the front corner as there was nothing there to attach a leg to. The real reason I had put it off for so long was because I suspected there would be a fair amount of working on my knees and I was not keen.

It was a gloomy day and dark in the morning when I took the bleddy hound out. She still has not forgotten the seal and peeked tentatively around the corner of the Lifeboat station. We are still prevented from going down to the beach by the tide,

which is some relief but the bleddy hound will still not voluntarily walk across the top of the slipway. We managed.

I then proceeded to procrastinate for the rest of the morning. It is quite amazing the things that you can think of doing rather than the thing you should be doing. It was the middle of the day before I realised that I could put it off no longer and slipped into DIYman costume and headed downstairs.

It really was not that bad and the amount of time on my knees was limited to measuring then putting a batten across the back at the appropriate height and a block on the frame to support the right side front. The shelf that used to sit in the cupboard was already the right shape at one end and just needed shortening. You might be thinking, dear reader, what could possibly go wrong with that and, to a certain extent, you would be right. It all went exceedingly well until the last leg, quite literally, that would support the left side front corner.

I had used the measurement that I had used for the batten and block, which would have been correct had I cut it where it was marked. As it was, it turned out a centimetre too short where too long would have been much more convenient. There was also some trickiness at the top where it met the shelf as the clearance for the leg was so tight I had to cut a mortice or rather a notch so the shelf sat on half the width of the leg. I inserted a filler into the notch to sort the length out and it is now comfortably supporting weight.

At some point during the process the Missus turned up with the bleddy hound for her run around the block or down to the beach. I did not see. When she returned, she left the bleddy hound with me as she had a meeting with a neighbour on a matter of great import.

As the bleddy hound wanted to sit outside, we left the first electric sliding door in The Cove open which, despite having the blinds drawn, a workbench in the doorway and all manner of detritus spread around in the immediate vicinity of the door, meant that we were open. It took no more than 30 seconds before the first head poked in and asked if we were open. There were several others and only one who with some sense said, "Ah, you definitely aren't open, are you", and I almost gave her a prize. Another gentleman who happened to be standing outside the shop later on when the bleddy hound had come inside and resolved the problem, I recognised. He was a regular visitor but has not been around for a while. He thought we were completely finished because it looked so different and I concluded that he had not seen the first electric sliding door in The Cove, which he admitted he had not. No surprise he was in a state of shock, it is a wonder to behold.

I rounded off my work towards the latter part of the afternoon by filling the new drawers and cabinet. There are some things that can no longer be accommodated and some things that should not have been accommodated in the first place. At the finish, I labelled the drawers so that we would know what was in them without

actually using the real names for cigarette brands, which I believe is not allowed. It is a much neater solution and we shall see if we can keep it like that.

The Missus spent the afternoon working on her latest project. In fact, she has been working on it for some time and has roped in Mother for a bit of preparation of the materials. The big announcement is due to be made on Monday, so until then, dear reader, you shall have to remain on tenterhooks and on the edge of your seats.

While the Missus laboured at the computer making designs, I watched the last of my serial on the television. It had all looked so promising, I wonder why no one seems to be able to write a decent end to stories these days. It is almost like they run out of things to

November 11th – Friday

There was no having to avoid seal pups today because the tide was in and there was no beach for seal pups or bleddy hounds. This did not stop her from sniffing the air constantly and refusing to go any further than Tinker Tailor Cottage at the top of the slipway. She was alright again once I had dragged her on a bit but was very relieved to get home again afterwards.

There was not a great deal to do during the early part of the morning and once I had finished doing it, I headed for the gymnasium and another blistering session. The sea was just as stirred up as it was the previous day and although not as spectacular as watching it in bright sunlight, it was a wonder to watch the waves cascading in over Cowloe. It is the sort of thing that you can watch for hours but probably not while pumping twelve kilograms an arm up and down, which is what I was doing while looking out of the gymnasium window. It would be good if I could see it while I row for twenty minutes, as that would pass the time very quickly, I am sure.

I allowed breakfast to pass after I came back before suggesting we shift our rear ends in the direction of our neighbour at the top of the hill. We needed to resume the shifting of the rubble that we abandoned at the start of the week because of the flat tyre. The Missus dropped me off there while she went and collected Mother. By the time she came back, we had loaded the trailer and it was ready to hook up and take away. There were another two loads after that, carefully spread about the entrance to The Farm making it a little bit more serviceable than it was previously.

Two of the bags emptied out as solid lumps where concrete had set in them. It was not something I was expecting but, of course, we could not leave it like that. I had kicked the blocks into the verge and left them there temporarily. On the last trip in I asked the Missus to unlock the tool shed and I took out the sledgehammer and the wrecking bar. I broke up some of the other larger pieces that lay about with the wrecking bar by way of testing their resilience. When it came to the big lumps of concrete, the wrecking bar made very little impact, so I turned to the sledgehammer.

Modesty prevents me from explaining the success of my sledgehammer activities. Perhaps if I just said that is Chris Hemsworth ever wants a break from playing Thor in the movies, I am available – winters only.

I decided that having performed a blistering gymnasium session and spent ten minutes breaking rocks – I would also be alright for a spell in Dartmoor prison, I considered – that it was high time I stopped and collapsed in a heap, which I duly did. I found that my hands and eyes still worked, so I went about researching the lights we needed for the gloomy side of the shelving units.

The Missus and I had a discussion about it before we headed off to move the rubble. We came to the conclusion that under the shelf lighting was the only effective solution because we could not get the angle we desired from ceiling mounted lights. I had already seen the 'out of the box' solution on offer and deemed it too expensive, so I started looking for a do it yourself kit. It took an hour or more and even using the cheapest available components, it was still more expensive than the purpose-built offering. It was a case of biting the bullet. I will still need to run a spur off one of the lights to provide the power, but I should be able to cope with that.

I was not completely idle during the remainder of the afternoon. I spent some time composing a letter to our structural engineer and builder asking them to pull their finger out a bit as time is getting on. I will review it several times before I send it as I do not want to frighten them away. I also need to do something about our premises licence for selling alcoholic beverages. The much maligned council has ceased to send out demands. I assume it is still due, but I think that I forgot it last year and no one said anything. I would probably get away with not paying it this year too but there is a difference between being remiss and deliberate and they might rescind the licence – once is unfortunate, twice sheer carelessness. What a dilemma.

I considered it over a beer or two while we still have some.

*What in our lives is burnt
In the fire of this?
The heart's dear granary?
The much we shall miss?*

*Three lives hath one life—
Iron, honey, gold.
The gold, the honey gone—
Left is the hard and cold.*

*Iron are our lives
Molten right through our youth.
A burnt space through ripe fields,
A fair mouth's broken tooth.*

Isaac Rosenberg

November 10th – Thursday

Mornings appear to be getting darker. At least it was much darker than it was yesterday but it was about fifteen minutes later and the moon was still there. It might have been there today but the cloud was much thicker and stayed with us all day.

I let the bleddy hound loose at the top of the slipway, happy that there was still some beach to frolic on and the sea state was such that it was not running too far up the sand. I stepped out ahead of the bleddy hound oblivious to the dangers ahead. It was the bleddy hound who noticed and gave off a series of single barks. She was still at the top of the slip. I looked behind at first assuming something had passed above us on the road, but she was looking down the beach. I was lucky, I could have walked straight into the jaws of death sported by a monstrous and vicious seal pup which could not particularly give a stuff.

We needed to head in the other direction but afeared though she was, the bleddy hound refused to be torn away from the, now, rapidly retreating seal pup. By the time I had dragged her back to the road the beach was clear again. We did not go down. The bleddy hound returned home, glancing back the way every few yards. She sat in the middle of the road when we got back looking in the direction of her mortal enemy. I managed to coax her to the foot of the stairs but even there she had to step out around the bins to look down the road just to make sure the seal was not coming to get her.

There was no day off today, I could not stand it for one thing, but I did not press myself. It was the middle of the morning before I ventured downstairs after various telephone calls that were required ahead of my trip to see the Aged Parent next week. I was going to wait until the Missus was in attendance to put up the shelves on the shelving unit but I reasoned that they would be easy enough to move if I got it wrong.

Some, of course, were easy as I knew what needed to be accommodated on the shelf below, a packet of cornflakes for example, and placed the next shelf accordingly. Others were entirely my domain anyway, such as the fishing tackle that started this whole sorry process. So that I knew I had got that section right I set out the stock that we had left and my, it looks so much better now.

On consultation with the Missus, we decided to leave the shelving height alone. Having put up the shelves I discovered that it is indeed a bit gloomy on the first aisle side and we will need a solution for that. It is not ideal that we should need to add further electricity consumption but I cannot see the alternative. The ideal would be to have under shelf lighting, but I discovered that the very clever magnetic solution on offer was almost half the cost of the entire set of shelving units and shelves put together. They can stick that and I shall settle for some domestic LED spot lights

placed as strategically as possible on the ceiling above. This is not ideal either, as I think that we will not get the angle to light the lower shelves. It is a work in progress.

I have not yet put back the stock, that will wait. I discovered that the trailer wheel was ready for collection and we really needed to get that job finished. It was already a few days later than I had thought and tomorrow would really be the last day for a week that we could progress it. They must have used a rare form of rubber to make the tyre given the price of the thing and they did not even charge for labour. The neighbour whole rubble we are moving suggested that we place the trailer on blocks if it is not going to be used for a while as it will preserve the tyres. I will try and remember that useful tip when we finish with it ahead of the new season.

It was late enough in the afternoon to negate any further effort on any of the immediate projects, so I slouched into the electric sofa and watched a television series I had started yesterday. It is one of those worthy of binge-watching, which is a rare beast these days especially for me. I watched two, back to back, before I tore myself away for Lifeboat training and by the time I came back it was too late to watch another.

There was no launch of the Lifeboat in the evening; the sea state is still not conducive for such things. Every time I think that the swell is moderating, it comes back again, thundering over the Harbour wall at high water. Actually, it has been thundering over the Harbour wall every day at high water for about a week now. I think that there have been changes to the ferocity of the swell but on average it has been big continuously and just a little less evident at low water.

Now, I must go towards the light, or you will never find our bread and saffron cake when you next visit.

November 9th – Wednesday

I awarded myself a day off today and the bleddy hound gave me an extra ten minutes in bed. What more could a poor grumpy shopkeeper ask for, eh?

It was not raining, nor was there any sign of rain to come. The big full moon was on the descent above the Harbour wall struggling through a bit of light morning cloud when we went down to the beach. There was not much breeze and the sea state seemed to have softened since its banging and thumping of the last few days. Had I been minded to look a little further, there was probably a bright golden haze on the meadow and the corn, had it been another season, was probably as high as an elephant's eye. It was the sort of day to do begger all.

Well, that of course does not include a blistering session at the gymnasium. I made it down there a little later than planned because another very pleasant gentleman from the telecommunications communications company decided to update me on my 'complaint'. That went exceedingly well until he decided to summarise the work

ahead by telling me that the ONT box was to be moved. I reminded him that the cable had to be moved as well and we almost set off down the road of why we needed to do that. Luckily, for my sanity and his ear 'oles, we resolved that very swiftly. We shall see what happens on 9th December when the team is due back.

I suggested to the Missus before I left for the gymnasium that we go next door for a bacon roll for breakfast to which she readily agreed. In what could have been indicative of a particularly shoddy day, the café next door was closed today 'due to unforeseen circumstances'. Part of the reason I thought of the bacon roll, quite apart from the fact that they are very good, is that I had failed to remember to take another loaf out of the freezer for my usual breakfast. Since the bacon roll was off the menu, I was stuck and ended up using a baguette that had suffered freezer burn and was inedible. The day was not looking good.

It took a great deal of will power to sit in my seat at the computer having completed the usual round of responses to messages and catching up with anything that needed to be caught. I was very nearly distracted later when I went down to the shop to collect some mince for the bleddy hound's tea. Those bare shelving units were just begging to have the shelves put up on them.

It had already distracted me halfway through the night. The Missus' immediate reaction on seeing them was that they were too high, imposing and had the potential to block the light. I saw her point, and perhaps we might have been better off with shorter ones but I had worked on the principle of maximum shelf space and had not considered the impact of the height. At silly o'clock in the middle of the night it came to me that we could remove the top layer of backing panels to resolve the light problem and still use the full complement of shelves. The stability should not be impacted although there would be an exposed gap between the backing panels. We would just have to be mindful not to push anything too far back else it would topple into the section behind. It is a consideration and an option but would need to be decided before putting the shelves up.

By the early afternoon, it was like the call of the wild; jobs were going begging. I had to put on a film to distract me. I had thought an action movie but went for a light hearted adventure romp instead that did not need too much thought. Between watching the film and pausing to cook the bleddy hound's tea and prepare my own, it consumed the rest of the afternoon and I hardly felt a thing.

The Missus had taken Mother shopping to buy her Christmas cards. Being 93 and having a wealth of grand and great grandchildren, writing Christmas cards can take some time, so she likes to start early. They stopped off at the tyre shop on the way back but our trailer tyre is not yet ready, which means a special trip for me tomorrow. No day off tomorrow, then.

November 8th – Tuesday

Well, that went so well. Our fibre telecommunications equipment is unchanged and the only thing that moved at all was the Missus' nose, which is severely out of joint from having to vacate her bed early.

The bleddy hound provided me with an extra ten minutes in bed this morning, which is a step in the right direction. Sadly, I had to get up early anyway, so I followed her out of bed when she got up. It was a tad windy as we rounded the corner of the Lifeboat station but it was not raining, which is the all defining thing at that time in the morning. It can really ruin your day. Our telecommunications supplier was going to do that all by itself ... thrice.

A very pleasant lady turned up very closely on from eight o'clock. I had gambled on being able to complete my ablutions before she got here but I kept her waiting for a minute or two. Perhaps it was revenge for such a tardy appearance, but she took one look at the work I proposed and said that it was not what she had expected. The work had been written down as moving the internal socket, known as the ONT, only. Moving the outside cable was a different bucket of paperclips altogether.

Whether it was just to placate me, I do not know, but she said that she would be most happy to do the work anyway but would need to discuss it with her boss. She came knocking on the door a few minutes later to tell me she could not do anything at all. The crux of the matter was working on the flat roof and she had not done the working on a flat roof training course and was therefore not allowed on it.

In my innocence, I had imagined that a person from the company would have come along to survey the work ahead of time. This would have been useful because I was not sure that the gable wall at the back was entirely appropriate as it is granite and would be hard to attach the bracket to. I could, however, see no alternative but I am not an expert at siting fibre cables on buildings, which is why I contracted the company to do it in the first place.

The very pleasant lady told me that she would write up the visit and get the job rescheduled and reclassified. The next thing I saw was an electronic mail from the company telling me that it had completed the job and here was the bill, thank you very much.

I called the telephone number at the bottom of the message to discuss realigning our joint expectations. I sense that the call centre is somewhere on the Indian subcontinent. The respondents are the most polite and calm people answering telephones that I have come across and they are also reasonably efficient. I sometimes have trouble in deciphering strong accents, being somewhat hard of hearing, but in truth I would have a harder time understanding a thick Newcastle or Welsh accent than the person I spoke with today.

It took him only a moment to find my work reference and to understand that the very pleasant lady had done exactly as she had said and wrote up the incident as it had

transpired. Whether it was she or the system design or some other goon, but whatever button has been pressed and by whom, it triggered the completion of the job and the bill. It took quite a while longer for very pleasant man to unpick the mess, raise a complaint in order to cancel the bill, and to reschedule the work having checked with me the exact requirement. There was a further interaction where he called back to give me the reference of the complaint. He told me to expect a message to confirm the new work order.

While I waited to receive the new work order, the Missus had run off to collect Mother for her regular Tuesday visit. She had a call early from Head Launcher retired to say that he would use his firm's pickup to collect the rubble that was still in the trailer from yesterday. We did tell him that was unnecessary, but he insisted as that is the sort of person he is, bless him. This had coincided with the Missus coming back from picking up Mother and instead of waiting on us, he had already loaded the truck and was waiting for us.

I quickly toggled up in DIYman outfit in the nearest available tool shed (telephone boxes are rare now and, besides, that is Superman) and was ready to meet the Missus when she got back into The Cove. We headed up to The Farm with Head Launcher retired following on behind. He had removed only the bags from the trailer that allowed our neighbour to tuck that away while we waited for the wheel to be fixed. It was enough to spread on the inner side of the fence and give us a little more grip. We were done inside twenty minutes and given that it was just as windy as yesterday, we headed home for a cup of tea.

There is no sense in letting grass grow under your bottom, however, when there is a small cabinet to finish off and shelving to put up, so I went downstairs to start on that. I had only intended to put the uprights up on the shelving and assumed that I would need the Missus to help with that. Having discovered that I could get the first pair up with the help of a clamp by myself I got carried away with the rest of it. I will leave the shelves until I have the Missus there to direct me regarding the height of each.

The cabinet that I had ordered to complete the ensemble under the pasty warmer came fully built. I only had to affix the wheels and the handles and wheel it around behind the counter. It was then I realised that the clearance I had expected to put an upright in was not as wide as I anticipated. There are some electrical points in the bottom of the cupboard space that I had not taken into consideration. I will have to apply some thought about how to support a shelf with the reduced space.

Just before I went downstairs, a message arrived from my telecommunications supplier confirming the new appointment. It detailed the exact same – and incorrect – work that the last one did. I sent a text message asking for a call back. Some hours later, mid shelving unit construction, the same very pleasant man that I had spoken to earlier called me.

We concluded the niceties, and I explained the issue. He seems to act as an intermediary with the supplier, which is inconvenient when it would be far easier and much quicker to speak direct. However, it is clearly not an option, so we persevered. He came back after a few minutes and explained that the supplier did not do moving the infrastructure around and that they had 'thought outside the box' and had proposed a more powerful wifi solution that would reach the rear of the building and thus negate the need to have the fibre cable moved back. He took quite a few minutes explaining that it would be guaranteed and only cost another £8 per month.

I let our man finish. It would have been rude to interrupt, then commended him on the suggestion that, should I need wifi in all corners of my building, that I would surely consider that an option – I would not as we already have an effective and much cheaper solution in place. Thanking him again, I left it almost as an afterthought to ask what we should do with the fibre cable when the part of the building that it was currently attached to was demolished. There was a deafening silence at the end of the line.

After a while, he confessed that he did not know that was going to happen. I tried to be calm when I explained that two months ago I had set out precisely that as the reason for needing the work done. It is hard to be cross with a man who had been unerringly polite and helpful. It was also not his fault, although it could conceivably be the fault of his colleague who first took the call. I hope that now the correct work order can be raised, and I shall wait in eager anticipation the confirmation message to arrive in my inbox as we are now running out of time. I tried hard not to think about having to do this all again in reverse in a few months' time.

When we had come back to The Cove after our short excursion to move the rubble, I took time to look at the arrangement of the sand on the beach. I made a mental note to take a photograph when we got settled then promptly forgot about it. I can confirm that the sand is indeed back in places that it has been absent from all summer long. I can also confirm that it is now missing from places that had erstwhile been deep in sand and are now thick with boulders. It may be roughly explained as the sand that was heavily banked against the dunes has been dragged forward and now sits where the banks started and has been levelled out. In short, the sand is not back; it has been rearranged.

In the evening, the great and the good of the Lifeboat station team and me gathered for an operations team meeting. I was able to contribute in some small ways, which I took to mean that after a day such as the one I had, there were some vestiges of sanity left. That was gratifying, as was the sight of the full moon riding high, indicative of today's lunacy, and a very bright Jupiter, which probably meant something else.

November 7th – Monday

Still trying to train the bleddy hound to delay her getting up tim4e but, I guess, we are more set in our ways the older we get. Up early again.

I was still wondering if I could be accused of being set in my ways as I headed for the gymnasium for my regular Monday, blistering session. I left early today because I expected our man from the book company to turn up to collect our sale or return books. It was all neatly planned so that I could return from the gymnasium, shower and be ready for his appearance and then have a spot of breakfast. What I had not planned for was the truck containing the pallet full of shelving to be waiting for me when I got back.

He had not been waiting long but had been unable to elicit a response from the Missus who was clearly still hiding under the table from firework night. While I was unhappy that my carefully constructed schedule for the morning had been laid to waste by his arrival, I was glad that we could get it out of the way because I had no idea when he was turning up and probably would have missed him later in the day.

It took some time to dismantle the packaging and ship everything into the shop. It could not really wait as it was raining and I did not want it to get too wet before we had even got it erected. I was pleased that someone had seen sense to lay flat the heavy uprights that were lashed to a makeshift wooden support the last time and ended up thumping me on my nut when I tried to undo it. By the time I had finished all that and got rid of the packaging, it was time to meet the book man.

Even then he was very late in coming, which resulted in my having a very late breakfast. So far, the day's schedule had been a complete mess, but it was about to get a whole lot worse.

The Missus had arranged with a neighbour at the top of the hill to help them get rid of some rubble that they had accumulated from some building work. We thought this would help fill some of the potholes in our lane, although after agreeing to our next-door neighbour at The Farm to lose some topsoil in our field, our gateway had become churned to a quagmire by his trucks. The rubble would allow us in and out of The Farm without slipping all over the entrance even in four wheel drive and making it worse.

The small half-ton trailer on loan from the Highly Professional Craftsperson's parents, had been sitting idle at The Farm all through the summer. I had checked it, none too thoroughly, when I went up the other day to make sure it was accessible, which it was. The Missus came too, just to give the bleddy hound a run more than anything, but when we arrived and stepped out into a 50 miles per hour gale of wind, she changed her mind and came with me to pick up the rubble.

I decided not to try and reverse the trailer into position as the clearance I had was quite small, so we manhandled it and started to load the heavy black bags. We estimated that they were probably less than one hundredweight each as I guessed I

would not be able to lift them if they were – even (especially?) after a blistering session at the gymnasium and at the peak of my physical fitness. We loaded ten bags just to err on the side of caution.

It was as I walked toward the truck that our neighbour pointed out the flat tyre on the nearside of the trailer. This was a bit of a setback that I had not expected. Not only was the tyre flat but we had expended some effort in loading the trailer on top of it with the best part of half a ton of rubble.

We have a big butch compressor in the shop that we use to inflate our footballs. It had an attachment for car tyres, so I took the truck and went and collected it. By the time I got back our neighbour had run an extension out and very quickly the tyre was inflated again. It also very quickly deflated again as the valve appeared to be leaky. The tyre needed to be fixed, which would mean removing it, which would mean emptying the half-ton of rubble we had not long put into it.

I was about to start unloading when our neighbour said that he had a trolley jack with a two tons capacity so could remove the wheel with the trailer loaded, which was a bonus. What then became the problem was finding a friendly and convenient garage that could fix the tyre in short order. We could see Zack's garage from where we were standing, although we know they are very busy, but the Missus can smile sweetly when she wants to. I can too, but it tends to have an effect counter to what is desired for some reason. The boys were very kind and replaced the valve, which we thought might be at fault, and I hurried back to the trailer for our neighbour to fit it.

We hooked the trailer up to the truck and headed off to The Farm. Between the Missus and me, we had the trailer unloaded in less than fifteen minutes and the rubble spread in front of the gate. Wasting no time but to give the bleddy hound a bit of a run, we headed back for another load.

Dear reader, please re-read paragraphs 8 and 9. I have marked these with an asterisk to make them easier to find.

It was clear that the repair that the Missus had sold her reputation to have done so quickly had not worked, at least not for long, and a more permanent solution was required. I was recommended to try a tyre company in Newlyn. I had used them once before and they are very good, but it had been so long ago I had quite forgotten about them. It was there that I went next after dropping off the Missus and the bleddy hound at home. The tyre will be replaced hopefully by Wednesday afternoon. The still full trailer is up on blocks until then.

I had to return to The Farm on the way back as I had left the gate open. By the time I came down the hill into The Cove, the sea was properly throwing its weight around as it headed to high tide. Great walls of water were pounding over the Harbour wall and huge plumes were exploding up the cliffs at Aire Point and Creagle. It was quite the spectacle again.

It had scoured clean the Harbour beach when we looked in the morning whereas the day before it had been littered with sizable rocks. I had not particularly noticed any change to the amount or shape of the sand, but I have been alerted that the sand might have returned on the big beach where it has been missing all year. Of course, it is entirely possible that today's waves thundering onto the big beach might well take it all back out again and we will never know. You may expect a full report tomorrow if I am able to connect to the Internet.

Tomorrow is the scheduled day to have out fibre moved ahead of the expected building works. It is a major disruption and an untested plan. What could possibly go wrong?

November 6th – Sunday

I had to get up fairly early today to get ready to head up to the range for a day of shooting. A bit of banging away with shotguns today, in case you were interested. Naturally, it was the first day that the bleddy hound got up a little later than during the previous week.

We just caught the start of the rain on our way back from the beach, but I had prepared for it with full metal jacket waterproofs as I could see it coming. It was black as pitch out to the west, which I could see because we actually went out in daylight this morning. I did not think we would get away with it, but it was very fortunate that we were not out ten minutes later because it came enting down and wind assisted, too.

It marked the end of the major line of showers passing through and there was just the one heavy shower later when we were up at the range. Happily, the wind was in the west and we can quite easily shelter from it, although two unlucky souls did their shooting in it and the heavy rain. The afternoon brightened considerably and with the sun out, it was quite warm up there. It did cool off quite rapidly in the afternoon, but we were not particularly inconvenienced by it.

I may not be able to go again, in the morning at least, because we are a local man down on the very excellent Shore Crew. He is recovering from an operation and is unavailable for the duration. With one other that has a prior engagement with his son on a Sunday morning that does not leave sufficient numbers to cover a launch in my absence. I got away with it today, but I really should not make a habit of it because at some point we will be caught out. Even if I had the truck with me, which I do not, I would not have time to get back from the range in time for a launch.

Despite this lingering in the back of my mind, I had an enjoyable first day back at the range in seven or eight months. I was very pleased that I remember which way around to hold the gun but probably not as much as my fellow shooters behind me. We finished up in the middle of the afternoon as there were not that many who

stayed behind for the clay pigeon shoot but with the brisk wind it made for an interesting and challenging shoot at times.

When we returned to The Cove the sea was in a proper boisterous mood, thumping over the Harbour wall in ever more vigorous waves as it pressed on to high water. It was smoking over the ledges on Pedn-men-du as it thundered up the cliff on the other side. This had attracted quite a crowd into the Harbour car park by the look of it and who can blame them. It does look quite spectacular. It kept this up into the evening and we could hear it charging into the bay long after night fell. Morte to come, so we are told, which I am sure we all look forward to.

November 5th – Saturday

Remember, remember and all that. Frankly it was not all that memorable unless you consider getting wet on our first walk out for the first time in quite a while.

It was hacking it down, although happily there was no wind to blow it about. It was running off the Lifeboat station roof in waterfall-like cascades, which for once the bleddy hound avoided. It was still dark, and it was very wet; we were definitely not going to spend any length of time down on the beach.

Since I was up before the dawn yet again, it seemed reasonable to get a head start on the day, which would wait until I had a cup of tea and read my messages. It would also wait until I had carried out my ablutions and procrastinated long enough for it to be time to have a spot of breakfast. I made sure that I had washed up first then got on with the work of the day. Amazingly, it was still only mid-morning. This was a day that could run and run.

Having cleared the cupboard under the pasty warmer, it would have been remiss not to continue with that work. I took my time, imaging that I had all of tomorrow to finish it off if I did not finish today. It was not until later that I remembered I would be spending the day up at the range for the first time since March. It was fortunate, therefore, that I had done everything that I could before heading back upstairs.

The screws I had seen holding the bits of frame together that I needed to get out of the way turned out to be nails. In one respect this was not helpful but in another it meant that there would be no struggling to get them undone and cutting them off was not an option. I resorted to the only solution available and that was to saw off the bits that I did not want. The idea is that three cabinets on wheels would roll into the opening where we would have easier and possibly more comfortable access to our stock of cigarettes and other under the counter supplies.

Two of the cabinets had arrived a few weeks ago from the well known Swedish store in neat little flat packs that I had not yet ventured to open. The company's wood furniture is known to be well designed and quite robust and we have some

experience with them over the years. The two, six drawer cabinets we ordered were steel and so a new experience.

I thought that we had been short-changed one item of inventory, so I nicked one from the other box with a mental note to complain later. It is as well that I did because when I stood the half constructed item upright the missing article fell out. It was straight forward to put together and as well designed as the wooden furniture but certainly nowhere near as robust. The tops and sides attached together by bending metal tabs over the lip of the neighbouring element. The drawers came flat and the sides bent up to make the form. Someone had clearly been very scientific with the design selecting just the right steel and thickness so that the tabs bent but did not break.

Despite their shortcomings, the cabinets are just the right thing for our needs. Moreover, they could be put together by placing them on my workbench and no kneeling down was required.

The third cabinet is yet to arrive and may well come at the same time as the new shelving, so that will relegate this work to second place. I cannot put the wood structure back in place until it arrives as I wish to make sure of the measurements and not jump the gun, which I will be doing plenty of tomorrow. Instead, I cleared up and retired for a cup of tea.

The Missus had been busy while I had been gone. Our spare bedroom has been the general dumping ground for everything that did not need to clutter the rest of the flat. Since it was not used last Christmas, the build-up of detritus in the last two years has been legion. The Missus did what she does so well and cleared the lot while I was building cabinets. I was disappointed not to see a geet pile for the bin and other stuff that I thought we did not need went into the attic where it will need to come down again before our building work commences.

As the day progressed, the rain cleared and there was a bit of brightness around for a while. The sea state had moderated some but there was still a decent swell running into the bay, although not crashing quite so high up the cliffs opposite. Radio Pasty assured us that the evening would remain clear for fireworks, which I am sure delighted a few. I am not particularly fussed and the bleddy hound has never been bothered and is now possibly a little deaf and therefore even less bothered, if that is possible. The Missus on the other had gets very anxious and distressed and hides under the table, the poor defenceless creature.

People are also being urged to be careful before lighting bonfires to check for hedgehogs that might have burrowed into the pyre as they might be burnt. They are far better lightly done I am told*.

Moving swiftly on, I did a little light invoice inputting before tea just to keep my hand in. I note that the powers that be will not now accept VAT submissions via the portal

route and all must be done via a compatible bit of software. It is all part of the Making Tax Difficult campaign by the Government and making sure it is just a bit more expensive to report in and get our money back. Still, I am slowly getting used to it.

We had quite forgotten about firework night by the end of the evening but just before it was time to take the bleddy hound out for her last walk, a duty that the Missus performs, a single rocket fizzed past from somewhere. I took the bleddy hound out.

*No hedgehogs were harmed in the production of this tasteless buffoonery. Things have not been the same since we fired all our content moderators. We apologise unreservedly.

November 4th – Friday

What a day it turned out to be after all that wind and rain. Blue skies and fluffy white clouds, which rather made me wish that I had spent the day gainfully employed in the open air up at The Farm.

I did actually make my way up to The Farm in the late morning but not before getting in a blistering session at the gymnasium and procrastinating my way through another hour or two. I decided, particularly after getting a bit dusty yesterday, to slip into my DIYman overalls in shocking pink and smelling a bit fausty after several months of inattention in a pile of work clothes in the spare room. Obviously, I did not then do anything that required wearing them but that is just the way things go.

We have a broken chair leg. It is a dining room chair and one of those modern ones that can be detached, secured in use by two bolts through the top. All the chair legs had become loose by and by and I had recently tightened the bolts to stop them swaying alarmingly. Instead, one leg broke at the bolt location. Perhaps the bolts were too tight, or it had been at the wrong angle. Whatever it was, it was broken.

After a few weeks I decided to look up to see if it could be mended and discovered a small independent crew in Hayle that do just that. I did not see what recommendations they had as they were in fact the only ones. It was comforting, therefore, that they had so many jobs on that they could not fit us in until after Christmas. I sent them pictures of the offending article and had a reply back in the evening. They would fix the chair before Christmas so that we were not inconvenienced for Christmas dinner, which was a kind touch. It was a small job for them so they could fit in between others in December but the leg would be permanently fixed. It was such a good plan the Missus suggested we ask them to do all the others.

Having procrastinated long enough I left for The Farm. I had omitted to pick up my workbench when I was there last and given my left knee, it would be handy for the next job. I also picked up some 12-volt electrical bits as I had purchased a bits box

for them. These will go back up to The Farm shortly but at least I will be able to find everything I need next time I need them.

Had I not been heading into town I probably would have stayed at home today, but I needed the junction box that arrived yesterday at some point next week and today seemed a good day to go and get it. I picked up Mother on the way to give her a bit of a change of view and we headed into town to drop off a fish box that I had from when the shop was open and pick up the junction box. We arrived back home shortly before two o'clock and roughly did nothing at all for the rest of the day.

That was until I decided that I would just empty the contents of the cupboard under the pasty warmer ahead of the rework it was going to get, after all, it would only take a few minutes.

It did indeed take a few minutes at the end of which I thought it was scarcely worth coming down the steps for. Perhaps I could just take the doors off, after all, it would only take a few minutes. It did not take long before I realised that I had been lulled into a false sense of security. The screws on the doors were very small and the screws were painted over. The thing about small headed screwdrivers is that they are not designed to produce maximum torque as they are generally used for delicate electronics and watches. The paint required me to be beastly with the screws and, sadly, I could only be tender.

After looking at a number of different options using a number of different tools, I decided that being brutal was the only solution. My multitool has an attachment that will cut through metal - eventually, so I deployed that to cut the screws off behind the hinge. Trying to be careful with such an approach is like trying to cut a cake with a chainsaw carefully and I made rather a mess of the woodwork. There was also quite a lot of smoke and it occurred to me that it would be preferable to try and avoid setting fire to the shop at this point; I think Mother sitting upstairs might disapprove.

I rested the process when the smoke became severe and sprayed some water about to cool things down. The tool takes a bit of time to cut metal but eventually I had both doors off and sanded down the gouged woodwork as best I could. We have a clever infrared temperature gauge I use to test the temperature of food in the fridges and I used that to examine the wood. Even after the water, the sites of the work were several degrees higher than the wood that surrounded them, so I waited.

I took the bleddy hound for a walk, it being near five o'clock by this time, and tested the temperatures again when I got back. The temperature was still higher at the work site than the remaining wood but it was declining, which was a satisfactory sign that things were going my way for a change. The work that as supposed to take a few minutes had taken more than an hour but at least it has moved the project forward and less for me to do tomorrow. There are more screws tomorrow. Let us wait and see.

Fish pie and beer. It is the very thing after tearing doors off cupboards. I highly recommend it.

November 3rd – Thursday

It was still early but the bleddy hound is getting better at staying in bed by increments each day. Obviously, yesterday upset the applecart a bit. We are closing in on the time I was getting up when the shop was open. I am really not sure how she managed to think getting up earlier was a good idea.

I had a message from the shop in Penzance that now has my junction box, the other item on my order that I collected some of on Tuesday. I still did not fancy a special trip to go and get it but the Missus has no plans to go in there either, so I may have to make the trip anyway. I do not know how long they will hold it for me as I do not need it immediately, so perhaps it will wait until next week.

It took a little bit of will power to nudge me in the direction of the shop this morning to continue dismantling the old shelving unit. The new one slots together but the old one is bolted by at least twenty nuts and bolts per section, per side. At least these ones are not welded in place by rust, being far from the damp walls, but most were absolute beggars to get undone nevertheless. This I could handle whilst standing up, but I do not do very well on my knees for extended periods of time and that is where the majority of the nuts and bolts were, at hands and knees level.

I had managed the first section, which was separate from the next three all by myself. Even using a kneeling mat this required a certain amount of colourful language to express to no one in particular that my left knee especially was putting up a certain amount of resistance to its treatment. Of course, this helps enormously as does thumping the offending nuts and bolts with a big hammer to loosen them. It was quite fortuitous that as I set to with the first of the next three sections, the Missus appeared on her way to take the bleddy hound around the block. She promised some assistance when she returned that I would be most grateful for.

The Missus sits and leans forward to do the work, which goes against every piece of sensible advice about manual handling and posture but somehow she finds it comfortable. She did most of the remaining low level nuts and bolts while I found the easier ones that I could do bending over – still not an ideal posture - and all the upper ones. Within the hour all the units were demolished and put out of the way to one side awaiting collection. There should be sufficient space to bring the new bits in and assemble them.

When we lifted the plinth shelf on the three adjoining units we found quite a collection of food packets that had somehow dropped underneath. Quite how they got there is difficult to imagine as there did not appear to be gaps at the back of the shelves. We looked at a couple and discovered some best before dates going back to 2004, when

we first arrived. There was nothing older, which seemed to suggest that our predecessors were somewhat less careless than us.

I felt that we had probably done enough to earn our keep for the day, so we retired upstairs for the rest of the afternoon to wallow in the decadence of doing nothing at all. I did take up the doings from inside the pasty warmer to give them a good scrub so that they are fit for when we open again at Christmas, which reminds me that I need to set dates for that.

Later I attended the Lifeboat station for our normal meeting. There was no launch planned as the sea state had decided to remain quite boisterous for the evening. We met with a kind benefactor who wished to meet the crew – whether he was still a benefactor after he met us, I do not know but we were on our best behaviour. Afterwards, a few of the very excellent Shore Crew went to observe the potential fitting of a new gizmo on the slip hook that launches the boat. It adds a couple of pounds to an already heavy piece of kit, which is interesting.

The new gizmo apparently makes it easier to pull the catch open. I know there is a knack to it, but the current system works perfectly well. While we are unsure that it will provide much of a benefit, we are more than happy to try it out on the next exercise. I will step up my weight training at the gymnasium so that it can be moved afterwards.

It was raining a bit when we came out of the Lifeboat station later on. I suspect it was raining quitter a bit more than a bit but we were sheltered from the northwest by the big granite building. The wind had been practising for the second half of the day and was really getting into it stride. By the end of the evening it was banging in with plenty of lashing rain in at least 70 miles per hour gusts. If this is the sorts of windspeeds we are getting in November, I do hope we get someone who knows what they are doing when our scaffolding goes up in January.

November 2nd – Wednesday

All my concentration has been on trying to get the bleddy hound not to wake me up early in the morning. It did not occur to me I should have trained the Lifeboat first.

Pagers went off at around five o'clock this morning to attend a fishing vessel broken down a couple of miles southwest of Land's End. The poor weather expected in the day had not yet arrived and the call came at low water, so the sea state in the bay was reasonable. It would not have been a comfortable tow back to Newlyn over a period of a couple of hours or so as the wind was picking up from the southwest and there was a robust swell to go with it.

Obviously, I empathised with the crew for quite few minutes before I drifted back off to sleep again having sent the boat out into the dark. The launch was well attended,

too, which was comforting for such an early call and for once we were over-manned on the shore getting the boat away.

We had a pretty good idea of the schedule, assuming that all went well and I awoke with plenty of time to get organised to bring the boat back in. The tide was rising by this time and there was some discussion about the worsening sea state and whether we would be able to recover the boat or whether it would have to remain in Newlyn until the weather passed. The only thing to do was monitor the situation and make a decision nearer the time.

It became clear that the sea state would worsen as the day progressed and it was already starting to pick up in the bay. The windspeed from the southwest would peak at more than 70 miles per hour in the middle of the afternoon but it was nowhere near that yet. When we looked, at around the time the Lifeboat arrived in Newlyn, we estimated that the Harbour should remain safe enough for a near high water recovery, but the boat should leave Newlyn as soon as possible, which it did shortly after half past eight o'clock.

A ragged band of desperados, or possibly a desperate band of rags – it was hard to tell - gathered at the appointed time at the Lifeboat station to set up for a short slip recovery. We had already decided to put out the 'fishing rod', from which the Boat Crew collect the leading line for the span, early to avoid the risk of putting it there with waves washing us down.

It is supposed to be a safer method of transferring the line to the boat, as one of the very excellent Shore Crew does not have to be present on the slipway when the boat comes in. I have argued without success that on certain occasions, when the tide is on the push and the sea state poor like it was today, it is more dangerous as some unlucky Herbert has to retrieve the equipment with the tide higher than when it was put out. I made the decision that we would leave it there and risk losing it if the tide had overwhelmed it when it came to collecting it.

The boat arrived when we expected it to and although the sea state in the bay was very lively by this time there were significant lulls that allowed the Lifeboat safely through. Also, in the Harbour, the swell was far less ferocious and we had very little trouble bringing the boat back up the short slipway in what was clearly a textbook, rough weather recovery. We had also chosen well about our siting of the 'fishing rod' and were able to recover it safely using a dispensable member of the team. We are, after all, a very practical, very excellent Shore Crew.

The Missus has long since banged on about how good the bacon rolls are from next door. Because they open later than my breakfast time when the shop is open, I have been unable to verify the veracity of this claim, so today I decided to change that. Yes, I can confirm that they are every bit as delicious as the Missus says they are, packed with local bacon and spread with real butter. Just the thing.

There was a bit more of my day wasted with relaxing, like I was on holiday or something. I will have to break myself of this habit. It does not help that the weather has been unkind these last few days, dark, grey, overcast and sometimes wet. When it has not been wet, it has looked like it might be and that really puts a fellow off. I suppose it should be no excuse because the immediate work that I have in mind is all indoors. Still, I am slowly working through the schedule of works, so it is going in the right direction.

Today I managed to slip downstairs and empty the remaining shelves that are due for disposal and demolition. Two of the shelving units have been taken down and the one that can be, has been dismantled. I asked the Missus to put it on FacePage and within the hour both shelves had been claimed. Either people were coincidentally looking for shelves at that moment or people spend their lives looking at such things constantly. Frankly, I do not care because the end result is that both will be gone in short order without a trip to the tip, sorry, household waste recycling centre, where they will be tipped. In my haste I forgot the fake teak bookcase, so that will have to wait until tomorrow. I am sure there is a huge market for fake, second-hand teak.

So keen was I to wrap up the shop on Sunday, I forgot to pack up the two local newspapers for return. There were quite a few of them that I suddenly noticed yesterday. I cursed myself for forgetting them and resigned myself to lose the cash of their return, which was most irritating. Fortunately, it was one of those things that wake you white and screaming in the middle of the night and after staring at the stars through the skylight the answer came to me. So, after I had finished dismantling shelves, I packed up the newspapers with a return note and took them up to the shop at the top of the hill. Our identifiers are on the pack, so it should work.

Oddly, while I was in the shop, a customer who came in behind me and told me that I could make a papier mache roof with them. I was about to tell him that I would rather have the cash, thank you, when he launched into the story of how he made a replacement roof for his Dutch barn in North Wales out of papier mache made with some polymer glue. I am sure it was exceedingly interesting, and I made a mental note not to tell our roofers all about it.

It was raining in varying degrees of intensity when I went up, so I had not chosen the best time to go. It was, though, also not the worst time either as within the hour the rain was hosing into The Cove so thick and grey, we could not see beyond the end of the long slipway. What a lucky chap I am.

It was still raining when the first of our collectors came for the dismantled shelves. I do not know which of us was more grateful, them for getting some still rather smart shelves or us for getting rid of them so sharply. The taker for the other unit is just down the road but is poorly at present, so we will shift it down there when he recovers. That just leaves the bookcase. I will set about the metal commercial shelves tomorrow but the man collecting those is away and will not be able to pick

them up until next week when the new ones arrive. It might get a bit crowded in the shop for a few days but I am sure that we will cope.

November 1st – Tuesday

Up before the crack of dawn again thanks to the bleddy hound. This time I left her to stew for half an hour before getting up. Perhaps she will get the message slowly.

The winds had eased off last night before we went to bed. Eased off meaning 30-40 miles per hour instead of 50-60 miles per hour. Bins were still largely upright because they were full but wind continuing to gust had them over after they had been emptied. I resecured ours and the ones for the mews at the back as soon as the bin men had been. As usual we got a face full of wind at the corner of the Lifeboat station, but it was much less than severe and we managed to miss the rain as well.

The rain was a feature of the day. It came in short and heavy bursts and sometimes in long and heavy bursts. It occasioned me to put on full metal waterproofs for my trip into town that was put off from yesterday. I was picking up Mother on the way back and decided that I would go to The Farm first to collect my tools rather than drag her up there on the way back.

The lane leading up to our gate is in much better nick than it has been for some time. Our neighbour shaved the middle so that the ruts are not so deep and the shared bit near the start was in the process of being laid with some sort of hardcore. This made the mess by our Farm gate look much worse, although it was pretty bad even without comparison. We have so far managed to escape with very little damage at the entrance, mainly because it is only we who use it and we are generally careful. Recently, we have allowed our neighbour to dump ten tons of topsoil down at the bottom of the field and the trucks he used to do so have churned up the entrance into a muddy quagmire.

It was not something I had expected but at least the shoes I was wearing are akin to boots without the ankles. My wellies were left in the barn during the summer as I was not likely to need them, so opening the gate was a bit of a mucky affair. I had to shift the truck into four wheel drive to negotiate the entrance and reverse it up to the barn. Here I switched to my wellies so that I could go about without worrying about getting my shoes muckier. Nevertheless, I was still not going to cross the entrance mire in them and having collected my tools, I drove over to the cabin where I measured up for the CCTV camera. I also collected a rattan chair that had blown over to the gate during the night. I will collect it again after Wednesday when it will blow over there again, if it has not migrated to the next field.

The whole Farm is a mess. The barn is full of boxes strewn about, some full, some empty and the weed is thick in places – I had trouble opening the toolshed door. It will take at least a week to clean and tidy the place up before we start any serious

development up there for the new year. I cannot imagine what the Missus was doing up there all summer, but she really let the place go. She will probably claim she was growing, planting, picking and tending to our crops as well as fetching mountains of stock for the shop, or some such nonsense. I made a mental note that we need to move the barbeque that we used only once in the year under cover before there is nothing left of it to move – not that it looks like we will miss it much.

Town looked quite busy, although I did not have very much other than a deserted Cove to compare it with. I did not tarry and once I had completed my errand and a single purchase, I went on to collect the junction boxes I had ordered on Sunday.

The whole purpose of leaving the extra day to collect the boxes was that one item was not ready to collect, which was supposed to be there today. It was not, so I will have to make a second trip, which is irritating. I enquired about cancelling the order and ordering again for delivery, as it would be cheaper than another trip into town but it was the last of that type of unit in the warehouse, so I am stuffed.

As I approached Mother's at St Buryan, the rain that has started when I left Penzance became heavier. By the time I arrived on the outskirts of the village it was cloud burst material and laced with ice. I pulled in by the alehouse and waited for it to pass because I knew that as soon as Mother spotted me arrive in her road, she would be out the door, no matter the weather. It was another five minutes before the rain eased to something more reasonable, so I made my way around the corner. As soon as I pulled in to turn around to face out again, the rain came back with a vengeance. I had hoped that Mother would wait in her doorway for it to pass but I knew she did not. She was out of her door into it and to make matters worse, I had to wait for a van to go past before I could turn. Typically, by the time I pulled up and she clambered into the truck – no waiting for me to get out and help her, of course – the rain had stopped again but not before she had walked across the grass in the thick of it.

Back home I made another attempt to sit down and do begger all. This lasted, perhaps, a little longer than yesterday, so I am getting better at it but the work I had planned to do yesterday, fixing the lights in the bathroom, was calling. This was pretty straightforward and was done without incident. I had to do a bit of guesswork with the mains cables on the new driver as the live and earth cables were such similar tones it was difficult to tell the difference. They work, so I must have got it right.

While I was in town, the Missus finished off the shop fridges, leaving just the ones in the store room to clear and defrost. One will remain on but we will be down to our minimum for the winter and hopefully and with a fair wind, when we restart in the new year we will have shiny new solar panels taking some of the weight off our bills.

It was the first evening where I have felt even remotely chilly and the little boys' trows have now been relegated to the washing pile – except for gymnasium days, of course. It will be snowing soon, I am sure.