

DIARY 2025

February 1st – Saturday

The new day commenced just as glorious as the old one had departed. It was a tad sharp on the legs but thankfully there was little in the way of breeze. The sea was still clinging to power like the last days of a tired dictator and throwing itself over the Harbour wall first thing, but it seemed somewhat out of place. The day was crisp and sharp as a new pin. Shame it did not last.

Once again, we lazed our way through the main part of the morning. Alright, that is not exactly true, I finalised a couple of orders that I had been working on during wet play Wednesday and that took a while. I agonise over some purchases, will it, will it not sell, and that process can take long painful days. I also made a startling discovery about the back pages of The Diary.

The Diary is written in reverse date order, which has long been an irritation. It is fine if you are reading one day at a time. If you wish to go back or wish to catch up because you have missed one or two days, or perhaps years, it is a right royal pain in the rear end. When I compiled the two Diary books all those many years ago, it took forever to reorder the days. I cut and pasted each day into a new document thinking with each CTRL-C and CTRL-V that there must be a better way.

There was. All it took, dear reader, was to ask Mr Google the correct question because it turns out it is incredibly easy to do. I really, really hope that this is a new Microsoft Word feature because if this was available ten years ago – gosh, is it really that long ago – I could quite possibly burst into retrospective tears. It seems that if I mark up the date at the top of each entry as a header, all I have to do is use the 'sort' feature and it reorders the whole month in the blink of an eye. Starting this month, I am marking up each date as a header as I go. When I have time, I will go through the last ten years Diaries and reorder them all. That will come straight after I have built the greenhouse, moved the IBCs (come along, dear reader, it was only last week – Intermediate Bulk Container – please), reloaded my growing supply of empty cartridges, painted the new skylight frames, taken the unwanted decorations to the Household Waste Recycling Centre (dependent on the Missus sorting them), painted the shop outside walls, replaced the windows in the seeding shed, previously known as the greenhouse and taken ABH on a thousand walks.

Setting such things aside, we answered the call of the wild and headed on up to The Farm. I had no idea how much time I would need to dedicate to the Missus' side of the project, so I did not have a target of what I wanted to achieve. As it happened, the Missus proved to be self-sufficient and is getting quite adept at reversing a trailer. It left me to concentrate on my own work which turned out to be exceptionally boring and demonstrated very little visible advancement in the work at hand but was very necessary.

Today, apart from planting the last post, was all about preparation. The other reader pointed out how poignant it would have been to play the last post as the sun went down last night having finished the job. Well, this is real life, and such things do not happen. What does happen is that I get thoroughly confused about the height of the front and back roof lines, the rafters which are four inches lower than the front beams to allow for the roof supports and the side beams which are four inches higher so that they cut out the wind whistling in from the side.

So that I could suspend a beam between the posts with a level resting on the top, I temporarily screwed a small block of wood at the appropriate place on the posts. I was going to take them away after I had made the mark on the next post along, but I reasoned that they would provide additional support to the various beams and rafters and would make fitting them so much easier, I left them where they were.

There was much trial and error going on and testing of ideas. It all took time but was immensely useful. It crossed my mind to install one of the four rafters, which in retrospect was a mistake but I think that I was desperate to have something that looked like progress by the end of the day. It was therefore rushed and the plan I had to mark the roof supports on the rafter before I installed it – because it was easier – went by the board.

Installing the beam was always going to be the most difficult part of the next phase. These follow the roof pitch and therefore need to be mitred at either end. Because the roof pitch is not standard, it is 89.1 degrees or 766:12 or thereabouts, it was going to be necessary to place the rafter against the posts at the right angle and mark them with a pencil. Since I could not be at both ends at the same time, I had to rest the lower end on one of my temporary blocks then work my way along the rafter until I could get to the ladder resting against the far post so I could lift it onto the temporary block at that end. I had just got there when the lower end fell off its perch.

Starting again, I clamped the lower end onto the rest and again worked my way to the high end and clamped that. Later, at three o'clock in the morning, I would resolve to make an 'L' shaped temporary rest so that the rafter would remain in place at the lower end while I moved the higher end into place to mark it. This will be particularly necessary for the two middle rafters because I cannot walk the beam across because the raised beds are in the way.

Spoiler alert: I have realised that to lop the top off the back posts I will need to stand on the second rung of the ladder. To add to my woes, the ground is uneven and soft making the ladder unstable. I have managed thus far because I only need to elevate one rung and have the ladder resting against the rock solid post. Even then I am too close to the post for efficient use of hammer and screwdriver. Doing the lopping that close would be impossible. We will look forward to the lopping off with excited anticipation, will we not, dear reader.

We were at The Farm just short of five hours, I suppose. The sky had clouded over almost as soon as we arrived, and a cold breeze was blowing from somewhere in the north, although I could have sworn it was in the south. It was bleddy chilly wherever it had come from. There was no stripping off of layers today, and I was glad of them all the while we were there. It was not bitter, but you knew you were alive, alright.

We packed up shortly before four o'clock today because it was convenient and also because the Missus was talking Mother and the in-laws – different ones to earlier in the week – to The Meadery. I avoid the place like the plague because I am a grumpy shopkeeper but mainly because it is darker than a pit in there, the food is served on a plank of wood and everything is deep fried, even the salad I suspect. I like to see what I am eating and prefer it not to be dripping in grease. The Missus is happy that I stay at home and cook my own tea – a variety of chilli with meat, beans, lentils, lime juice and clotted cream. My glowering presence would merely blot out the already scant light and sour the milk for their coffee afterwards.

February 2nd – Sunday

It was not quite so glorious this morning. It was cold, grey and dank and there was none of the customary blue to greet us as we stepped out into the day. It was also gloomy but if it had been raining – the street was wet – it had stopped and did not come back. If I had imagined that the sea might have given up its unhappy onslaught, the crashing of the waves coming over the wall and making a mess of the Harbour waters told me otherwise. Our morning walks coincide with high water at the moment, so the fury is at its peak when we walk by.

After several months of Sunday range shooting this end of the season, I have the getting ready routine pretty much nailed. I have an effective hour to do the necessary morning routine leaving me half an hour to make a couple of flasks of tea and to pack my dinner and water into a bag. It relies heavily on making sure that everything that can be done the previous evening has been done. It makes life far easier than having to rush around, which I try not to do so much anymore.

I might have been able to drive myself up to the range today but for the fact that the Missus had to go shopping and would take Mother and the in-laws with her. This being the case I was well down the arrivals list when we got there. Even then, not much had been done in the way of setting up courses of fire. This appears to wait until certain regulars have arrived and when they start to get involved several others will follow suit. I suppose it is the same in groups everywhere that the same people in them seem to do most of the work. It is irksome but I have found that it is easier to accept such things than rail against them.

Today was shotgun day. I do not think my guns are getting any heavier, but it certainly feels that way. Shotgun day is the heaviest shooting day of the month, and it is getting to the point when I will need to hire a sherpa to get to carry my kit from

the truck to the firing point. When I need a sherpa to carry me from the truck to the firing point, I may consider it time to give up. I sense the clock is ticking but then again, we were five hours at The Farm yesterday so perhaps I should not be too harsh on myself.

After everything slotted into place, we had a marvellous day shooting things and watching them fall over then putting them back up again. Not only are the shotguns heavy and the ammunition for them is heavy but the targets we shoot at are heavy as well. When we load our own ammunition for other guns, we nearly always use a light load as the range is small thus the need for more robust targets is lessened. Shotgun cartridges are factory made and are therefore 'full strength', hence heavy targets. By the end of the morning, my muscles were feeling the burn from multiple resettings and the seed of perhaps skipping a gymnasium session tomorrow were sewn.

There were more attendees today that we have seen for quite some time. Shotgun morning is popular anyway and the moderate weather attracted more fair weather shooters. It had started out quite mild but at some point during the morning and very suddenly, we were enveloped in mist and I found myself reaching for the jacket I had not long taken off. The mist hung about for the rest of the morning and encouraged a bit more running around when resetting the targets. It cleared in the afternoon for clay pigeon shooting which was just as well because we would not have seen them else. Mind, the way I was shooting them it would have made no difference.

The day was perking up quite nicely as we drove down the hill into The Cove. We were closer to low water than we were to high but the sea state still looked fraught. There was plenty of white water in the bay and it was difficult to determine whether the mistiness was mist or spray hanging about. I tried not to dwell too long on such things; it was a bit misty.

The in-laws were ensconced in the living room waiting on a not too far off Sunday dinner. The Missus had not long taken ABH out for a walk, so other than making a fuss of her, I left her be. I would have taken her out after we ate when everyone went back to Mother's, but she was lost to the world on the settee. I do not know what she had been up to all day, but she slept all the way until last knockings with a brief moment when the Missus came home. Even then she put up a fight when I came to take her out. If she thinks she will get any better rest tomorrow, she best think again. The weather is looking good, and The Farm beckons.

February 3rd – Monday

I was early out of bed this morning, alright, marginally. which I took to be a good sign that the body was willing to get on with it. Halfway through the night I told myself that avoiding the gymnasium was sheer laziness and nothing to do with Farming or too much exercise elsewhere. I decided that I would go early and still be back in time for heading to The Farm at a reasonable hour.

Not only was the body willing this morning, but the day looked like it would behave itself, which is more than the sea was doing. The blue skies, through broken white cloud, brought out the colour of the water and highlighted the white of the foam of which there was an abundance. At high water or thereabouts the waves were piling into the bay, particularly on our side of it, the Harbour wall was inundated and the Harbour itself and all around it was boiling and swirling and being carried away by the next big wave coming through.

I had not long posted The Diary and finished my morning tea when our neighbour, the one from frozen Vermont, very far west of Camborne, came and knocked on the door. It is a trait of The Cove that during the winters we are apt to lose contact even with our closest neighbours. Weeks can go by, and we might not see each other. I suppose it is a lack of effort, in truth, but we Brits are not particularly known for knocking on our neighbour's door with no good reason no matter how good friends they are. So, it was a pleasant surprise to see our friend from frozen Vermont, very far west of Camborne who I had not seen for some time, however, this was less a social visit and more a request for assistance.

She had discovered a juvenile seal close by the western slip that showed some evidence of injury and wondered if I knew the number to call for help, which I did. There are two numbers in fact, one for the living and another for the no so living and I usually get the two mixed up. It is partly why I did not choose a career in medicine. That and guidance from my science teacher at secondary school. He was reading down a list of names and recommending to students' strengths, specific sciences to follow to certification. When he reached my name, he simply said, 'grumpy, (I was not a shopkeeper then) do not do biology'. His sage and timely advice, which I had little option but to follow, probably saves thousands of lives.

Sorry, I digress. Now, where was I? Ah yes, calling for help from the British Divers Marine Life Rescue (BDMLR) having already discovered that Cornwall Wildlife Trust are only in it for the not so living ones. When I had called previously, I have merely been asked for a location and left the rest to the nearest volunteer crew who are allocated to help. On this occasion the respondent asked for photographs of the casualty, which was a surprise and sent me hither to the western slip to comply with the request.

Since the tide was in, I assumed that the seal and our friend from frozen Vermont, very far west of Camborne would be this side of the western slip and therefore viewable from the corner of the Lifeboat station. When I did not see anyone, I walked around to the Harbour car park so that I could see down the western slip and also into the corner that was indeed cut off by the tide and very wet. I was about to give up, making the assumption that there had been a miracle recovery, the seal had returned healed to the sea and our friend from frozen Vermont, very far west of Camborne had gone home. I was set on doing the same and returned across the wharf just to make sure I had not missed anything when I saw her, the seal and a

young man she had left in charge while she came to find me, nestled in the corner by the winch hut.

They had wrapped the ailing beast in swaddling clothes, even though it was far from Christmas, believing it to be cold or in shock or possibly both. Alright, there may have been some use of diaristic licence there as the swaddling clothes looked remarkably similar to clothes worn by our friend from frozen Vermont, very far west of Camborne – a moniker that I am beginning to regret, by the way. I did comment at the time that seemed incredibly generous given that they would probably smell of seal forever but there again Eskimos wear seal clothes and do not seem to complain. There again, again, I have never been that close to an Eskimo to discover whether that is a reasonable assertion or not.

Sorry, I digress again. Now, where was I? Ah yes, taking a photograph of the seal, or at least attempting to. I did think that perhaps the BDMLR would want to see the animal warts and all if they were to make an assessment of its condition, which is what we collectively thought might be the case. Actually, it was our friend from frozen Vermont, very far west of Camborne who pointed that out, but I wanted to avoid saying our friend from frozen Vermont, very far west of Camborne again. Oh.

I took some photographs of the seal with the covers pulled back and sent them off to the BDMLR. A few minutes later we had a reply admonishing us for wrapping the seal up. Apparently, they find it easier to regulate their temperature without the blankets, which seemed reasonable since they spend their life in water that varies from 10 degrees to 15 degrees – around here, anyway. The pictures I sent also had hands removing the clothing and the response also suggested that hands should be kept away from the sharp end because the creatures are known to bite and carry disease.

Thus reprimanded, my two friends completely unwrapped the seal and left it alone. I must say that it did not look like it was about to leap up and tear our throats out. I should note, however, that I am unfamiliar with both sorts of seal: those who would not tear your throat out and those that would, to be certain of the difference. I stood back, just in case. Finally, having also sent a video of it moving about which was more a sequence of spasms, a very pleasant lady called me to say that someone was on the way. The young man who was there found this a good juncture to make an exit and since I had a greenhouse waiting to be built and the Missus has a bean plot to set out, I thought so too.

I had some misgivings about leaving our friend from frozen Vermont, very far west of Camborne on her own – after all it might well have been the sort of seal that tears your throat out – but needs, must and so forth. I made a mental note to check with her later but was unable to send her a message. I will try again later, but that is another story.

It may not have been a murderous seal, but it certainly killed off my best intentions of going to the gymnasium. Nevertheless, it was a welcome distraction from building greenhouses. I find that whenever my brain tries to slip into a restful neutral gear, it is flooded with calculations, timber sizes, potential problems and solutions, nails versus screws and what happens next. I managed to keep such things at bay a little longer while I breakfasted heartily then took the Missus up to The Farm.

We arrived in the middle of the day and just in time to miss the delivery of my reciprocating saw with which I intend to lop off the top of my posts. Most delivery companies send a message informing the recipient of the approximate delivery time. This company relies on the recipient discovering that this estimated time is embedded in its system on the Internet, which I did subsequently. I will now have to ensure that I am at home tomorrow when they company tries to deliver it again.

Again today, the fruits of my labours were largely invisible. All the posts now have little blocks screwed to them at the appropriate positions to facilitate the placement of beams and supports. In theory, I should just be able to collect a beam, place it on the appropriate blocks and nail it into place. I will certainly have to climb ladders to the second rung – the whole frame construction is cunningly arranged around this precept – but largely, the measuring part is all done.

I intend this time to affix brackets to the tops of the rafters before I install them so that I do not have to climb to a third rung to do it. Unfortunately, I only thought of that after I set the first rafter in place and that was done solely because I wanted to see some visible progress and hurried it. That will teach me.

I had started with the posts at the back as they are higher, and I wanted to get the high bits done first while I was still feeling brave. It was only after I had screwed the support block onto the second post that I remembered that it is out of alignment to the others. I ran a line from the two posts either side to discover just how out of alignment it was, and it is nearly exactly 3 inches, which is a good thing. Timber comes in 3 inch thicknesses so the grand plan is to attach a 3x6 plank to the post and thus bring it into line. Gosh, I have nothing to declare but my genius. What could possibly go wrong.

It is nearly the time to order the timber for the side frames on which the transparent roofing sheets will be attached to form the walls. I will order my 3x6 plank at the same time and the smaller posts that I intend to use as the door frames. I could call this in, but it is useful to visit the builders' merchants to mine them for advice. While I am there, I might ask why I ordered four 4x3 lengths as I now cannot remember for the life of me how they fit into my equations.

I also said that I would take our friend from frozen Vermont, very far west of Camborne as she has no transportation and the much maligned council cancelled the bus service. I am rather hoping she has a coat and shawl other than the ones

last seen swaddling Sammy on the Harbour slip. Of course, if things did not work out so well, she might be wearing Sammy's.

February 4th – Tuesday

It turned out to be a day of utter frustration and I would rather it be filed away in the cabinet of forgotten things and locked away. I will need to pull a rabbit out of the hat to make up for this one.

I should have known from the outset when we stepped outside for the first walk of the day and the drizzle turned immediately to rain. We were out for the shortest time possible, which got us wet enough and set the scene for the fortunes of the day.

It was exceedingly unlikely that we would get to The Farm today. The weather in the morning was against us and I had to wait in for the parcel that we missed yesterday. I knew that whatever time the parcel arrived, and it would not be that early, the impetus would be lost. The idea of heading out to St Just was abandoned, too, so I got myself ready for a wait by the window and the arrival of my package.

There was nothing on the tracking system when I looked in the earlier part of the morning and I decided to check back in a little while. I had breakfast and set about finalising the first big order from our main beachware supplier, just to pass the time. It had been mainly ready to go and just needed to be checked but primarily it had to be done soon so that we could take advantage of the show offers. It must have absorbed me because the next time I checked the tracking of my parcel it said that the driver had found the business to be closed and had gone away again.

I found it hard to believe that I had missed the driver coming to the door, so I checked the CCTV. The reason I missed him coming to the door was that he did not come to the door. He did not even cross the street. He mere observed that the first electric sliding door in The Cove was closed and took it that no one was home and drove off again. I was highly miffed about that because nowhere during my purchase did I mention the delivery address being a shop, open or closed.

The website told me that they would try again tomorrow, the third and final time they would do so. I thought that I had best not leave it to chance and even knowing that I was entering the hopeless spiral of eternal button pushing as far down as the eighth circle of hell, I do not think that I had much choice if I wanted my parcel.

As I anticipated, it was a company that really did not want people telephoning it. There was no option to speak with a real person and each of the options offered would end with an automated response. I broke it a couple of times and on the third attempt to reach someone with any sense I had the measure of the system: ask for "Customer Service Representative". It was not a listed option, of course it was not, but once discovered, it worked repeatedly which saved some measure of my sanity.

The third customer service representative I spoke with, having been cut off twice, actually promised to do something. They would call a person in this country and have them call me. Amazingly, they actually did and while I had suffered a bout of terminal depression having missed his first call, expecting to have missed my chance, he called back again. The very pleasant man assured me that he would send a message to the depot instructing them to actually knock on the flat's door this time – presumably after persuading them to actually cross the road and climb a flight of steps.

I find it incomprehensible that a delivery driver, it being his job and all, would simply look at a building and make an assumption that there was no one there. I cannot imagine they go to houses, see that the door is shut and assume no one is home. I have prepared large notices for the shop windows requesting that the driver climb the stairs – risky, I know but I am darned if I will spend five hours waiting in the shop – and actually knock on the door. The note on the flat door also instructs the driver to wait for someone to answer it. I thought that I had better be precise as the previous two drivers were clearly hard of thinking.

The whole fiasco darkened my day even more than it was dark to start with. Some of the rain that breezed through was heavy but fortunately, I did not have to venture out in it. The sea was in as thunderous a mood as I was, but it started earlier than I did. At least it could vent its frustration at the Harbour wall and the cliffs opposite and throw itself down the bay and beat the beach up. I only have a Missus and ABH and both of them bite back.

Towards the end of my debacle with the delivery company, the weather had improved considerably, although my mood had not. Sunshine and blue sky ensued, which made matters even worse because had the delivery happened as it should, we would have been heading for The Farm. We were looking down the barrel of a wasted day.

It was into the afternoon by the time I took ABH out with sunshine and Harbour beach in abundance. We cavorted momentarily on the beach with an older dog who tired quickly and subsequently ignored the little girl's efforts at play. After having our fill of sandiness, we went up the western slip and around the block enjoying being away from the scene of the crime, as it were. I was just beginning to lighten a little when just a few yards from the door when the delivery company contact rang, and I missed the call. An hour later, he called again which relieved me greatly.

In the afternoon, ABH believes it is her right to sit on a cushion on my lap and doze. If I am at my desk, she will harangue me until I give in and go to the sofa. I had resisted for twenty minutes after our walk then capitulated. She was not long in repose when our refrigeration engineer called to tell me he was outside the shop to carry out our bi-annual service. I had not expected him, and it irked me in my overly sensitive state that the company had failed to inform me of the visit. They have previous for such omissions, and complaining has not improved their administrative

efficiency. The engineer said that the visit would take longer because he would have to wait for all the dormant fridges and freezer to come to operating temperature. I told him that it was up to him and that we could always rearrange. He told me that it was up to me as he did not mind coming back. After ten minutes of both of us trying to out-polite the other, we agreed that since he was here and did not mind waiting, he would continue with the service as, erm, unplanned.

It was due solely to the events of the morning that I had only just returned from a short walk with ABH. Ordinarily there would have been a longer period between the last and the next, but I thought that she would not mind a longer stank if I forced her. Having already turfed her off my lap to attend to the refrigeration engineer, she was better disposed to being dragged out again.

The spring tides are slipping away but there are still wide expanses of big beach to gaze upon. Under the largely clear sky and bright sunlight the beach looked resplendent. It was also easier to see the changes brought about by the recent raging waves. If you regard the beach as a reverse 'L' shape both the northern upright and the southern base, both have benefitted from an increase of sand deposits. The northern stretch is also flatter, so it may be that the sand at the back has been smoothed out rather than an abundance brought in. The southern base, however, has definitely more sand and certainly more than we have seen for a while there.

Sadly, all the damage has been reserved for the corner of the 'L' tucked in between the OS and The Beach complex. The rocky field extends to about halfway to the site of the Lifeguard hut – it is in the process of being rebuild – which I believe is a shorter distance than before. The rocky field looks deeper, though, extending further to the sea. There is also a lake, smaller than it was before, that cuts the beach in two just at the foot of the rock field forcing walkers to go around at the top of the beach. Here the bedrock and boulders are exposed all the way to the sea wall as are the old telegraph cables that once terminated at Cable Cottage just under the road.

It is still a wonder to look at and I gazed down on it as we traversed the Coast Path above. The afternoon had turned the morning on its head and apart from a sharp breeze from somewhere behind us, it was a splendid day for walking. As usual we took our time getting to The Valley, then turned down to the beach on the north side of the stream. It was then that we discovered that the beach was a bit flatter, although it is still sandy all the way to the dunes here. There is enough of a build-up for the stream to have carved a deep ravine closer to the dunes, which it presumably has to mostly recut after each big tide.

We picked our way through the boulders and over the bedrock under The Beach car park. There was sand between the boulders and the bedrock is flat and clear of weed mostly, so it is not an onerous task. There were quite a few people down on the beach too and some other dogs to play with. Largely, however, ABH seemed disinterested. Whether she was over walked or just waking up to the reality that not

all dogs want to play with her is hard to know. In any case, the walk did me a power of good and I felt much less inclined to vent my spleen on small defenceless creatures and inanimate objects when I returned.

I felt aggrieved that we did not get to The Farm in the afternoon, but it was a wonderful afternoon for a stank on the beach, so perhaps the day was not entirely a waste. My nose will be pinned to the window tomorrow as I maintain a vigil for the arrival of our delivery. I will throw myself in front of the van if needs be, although, on reflection, I would have to be very certain that it was the correct van, so perhaps not. I am sure it will work out just fine.

February 5th – Wednesday

Oh, woe is me. Here we go again.

It was a far better looking day than the one we woke up to yesterday even if it did not look like the picture the weather forecasters put on the Internet. Theirs was a big yellow sunshine and ours was overcast and grey but bright nevertheless. When we stepped out into it first thing, there was a chill in the air and a breeze from the northwest on the heavier side of light. We would have been very happy to be working up at The Farm on a day like that.

There was, however, the small matter of a scheduled delivery, the package we had missed on Monday because we did not know it was coming. It would probably not have made any difference anyway because the company turned up yesterday and made the assumption that as the shop was closed, we did not want the parcel at all.

Today, I was going to make sure that the driver did not escape The Cove with our parcel in his van. I set the CCTV camera to capture every likely movement and pinned myself to the window from before the earliest time estimated for his arrival at nine o'clock. A passing mouse on a skateboard would not have eluded my observation.

By half past eleven o'clock, half an hour after the end of the two hour estimated window, the van had not arrived. The tracking window on the Internet resolutely confirmed that the delivery was 'on its way' and I hoped sincerely it was. I now had to answer the question: how long should I wait.

An hour later, fraught with dismay, I thought to try the 'chat' facility on the delivery company's website. It did not work well yesterday as the tracking button on the Internet automatically diverts me to an agent in the USA. I made sure this time to switch to the UK version before trying and was much more successful. It was still a worthless conversation but at least it was with an agent the correct side of the Atlantic. I was told that there would be no further updates and if the driver had not

arrived by seven o'clock in the evening, he would not be coming at all. I think that I might have been able to work that out for myself.

It meant yet another decent day, or at least afternoon, that would be lost in the furtherance of getting things done at The Farm. It was a detestable waste of time – again – and was almost certainly playing havoc with my blood pressure. Additionally, if the parcel was not delivered today, I would have to spend time negotiating with the supplier as to what happens next.

I had the Missus stand vigil for me while I took ABH around in the later morning. While the cloud cover endured as did the chill northwesterly, it was a pleasant enough day and just made me feel worse about not getting any work done in it. There were again today a few people milling about and the car park had maybe ten cars parked. I am presuming most were walkers and had gone up the hill, but we did see a few people head past the shop going down the road. One of my three o'clock in the morning thinks considered whether we should open at half term this year. I have not entirely dismissed the idea but there would be much work on top of the much work we already have to make it happen.

Knowing that I would be waiting in for this bleddy parcel to arrive, the Missus had arranged for a local maid to buff her kneecaps, or some such beautifying treatment. I of course told her no such refinement was necessary; I never look at her kneecaps. She went anyway and I am sure she felt better for it. I replaced her at the window, looking out for this blasted delivery which eventually arrived at half past one o'clock. It would have been far better had the driver, the same one as yesterday apparently, said nothing at all. Instead, he starting making excuses about the shop being closed. I was polite but firm. Very firm. Honest guv.

Sadly, I now had to wait for the Missus to return. Who knew that having your kneecaps buffed would take quite so long. It left very little time for farming, but I was not to be denied a visit, even if it was only for an hour, which was better than no hours but only just. Just as I was thinking such things, the Missus arrived home and just as keen as I was to get up to The Farm. Since I was already stepping into DIYman overalls it did not take us long to get ready.

I still have not purchased my new overalls, despite the excellent assistance I had from my preferred manufacturer of such things. Apparently, I should call them coveralls or boiler suits. Overalls are what we might call dungarees. They are not the cheapest, which is probably central to my reticence, but given that all the other clothes I have from the same crew are of exceptional value, I really should not be too worried. There is also some element of superstition, I think, about changing my overalls mid project. Anyway, my DIYman suit is not quite yet falling apart, well, not completely, so there is time yet.

It was well past two o'clock when we set out and well past half past five o'clock when we came back. It was dusk and the last embers of the sun were on the western

horizon. It was three hours well and intensively spent. While the Missus fetched more earth from the bottom of the field and levelled it out with the digger, I pressed on with the rafters for the greenhouse.

One of my three o'clock in the morning bright ideas was to manufacture a temporary ledge for the rafters so that I could put them in place and mark the mitre at the ends without the beam crashing down and breaking things like my arms and legs. It meant lifting the beam above my head at the extremity of my reach to slot each in place in turn. It crossed my mind that a hard hat might be a useful accessory. I shall see if I can borrow one from the Lifeboat station tomorrow night and hope that I can keep those rafters above my head without dropping them in the meanwhile.

I remarked the other day that I had been a bit previous in erecting into place the first rafter. Each of them needs brackets screwed on the top to stop the purlins sliding down the sloping rafter. Had I been less keen to get the first rafter in place I would not be three rungs – yes, three rungs, ladies and gentlemen and without the aid of a net – up the step ladder retro-fitting the metal brackets on it. For the others, I first cut them to size, mitring each end and then marked the positions of the brackets along the top.

While I was marking up the mitres of each rafter, I meticulously marked the top of each end with a letter 'T' so that any eejit would know which way up they went and on which side to screw the brackets.

With the gloom gathering and ABH getting a tad restless, I thought that I would leave proceedings there rather than hurrying having marked up the rafters. When I noted that the Missus was still engaged in her levelling, I thought it probably would not take long to rest the rafters with their carefully attached brackets into place. The first proved a simple operation, although the pair of posts I chose to join were at the low end of the greenhouse and therefore easier to mount. The next proved to be more difficult partly because it was higher than the last relative to the ground and also because it seemed too long.

This was clearly an irritation having expended some effort in marking the beam carefully. I left that one and went to the one at the end. This is higher than all of them and I needed to use a ladder even on the short end. It was at this point that I noticed that the mitre was reversed. I wondered how I might have turned the beam around and it took a couple of minutes before I noticed that the letter 'T' meticulously marked at the top of the beam so that any eejit would know which way up it went, was at the bottom along with three very carefully placed brackets. Perhaps I can take some comfort in the notion that I am not just *any* eejit.

I left everything as it was and started to clear up. I could take my eejiocy home with me and use it to lash myself with through the night. There was rather more to clear up than I thought, and I had also left the tractor out which I had to put away and the Missus was waiting for me when I eventually came to lock up the cabin. Even in a

few hours, and discounting my faux pas, we had achieved great things. Tomorrow, the Missus can now progress to setting up her bean frame and I should, all things being equal, be able to complete the roof frame phase of the greenhouse. Whoopie.

February 6th – Thursday

We awoke to a day with clear blue skies and a temperature a woolly mammoth might find unkind. Even ABH was not disposed to going outside and she needed to be persuaded at least two hours after I arose. While the shop is closed there are no rush and I am happy to let her be. Two hours seemed a little extreme, so I encouraged her by loudly closing the front door that usually brings her running.

There was enough beach to have a small run on, but the tide was pressing. Much of the power had gone out of the sea and for the first time in a week, there were no white caps in the bay. At first glance it looked quite placid but a look over at Gwenver where waves were charging in, their caps pulled back by the breeze, and the cliffs opposite with spray catching at the footings, said otherwise.

We went around the block, which is unusual for a first walk out, and through the empty car park. One of the fishing boats was poking out of the tractor shed. It is the time of year for maintenance and replacement of keel plates wrecked from a year of being dragged over sand and rocks on the beach. The boat in the shed today probably has more use than all the others.

I had been putting it off until I got a little further with the build but if I left ordering the next phase timber any longer, I would have a gap in the project. This order was all about the side frames onto which the cladding would be tacked. It is the same material as the roof, transparent Glass Reinforced Plastic (GRP), which has stood the test of time on the seeding shed, previously known as the greenhouse, although it is a much smaller area and half of those walls are timber.

I also asked for a length of 6x3 to bring that errant post in line with the others. The building supplier did not have any, so I settled for two 3x3 posts instead. As luck would have it, all the timber would arrive in the afternoon.

In the meanwhile, the Missus moved her attention to levelling the area where the previous bean frame had been. Later when I looked, the digger was surrounded by old pallets, cement bags, broken bits of wood and metal and piles of old compost that had resided there for decades I would say. It would cost a lot to get one of the local commercial waste trucks up to take it away, so we will lose much of it piecemeal in our own bin and trips to the household waste recycling centre, where it can be tipped.

I pressed on with the upper structure of the greenhouse. My first job was to rectify the upside down beams and reseat the brackets on the top. They lifted into place

and fitted perfectly, which was as much amazement to me as any outside commentator. I thought that I would have greater trouble lifting the 3.6 metre 4x4 posts up onto the beams. They are heavy, but once I had the knack of it they went up reasonably easily. I had intended that I use nails for most of the fixings but it was much easier at height to use screws and an impact driver. Additionally, I was able to use the raised beds to stand on which proved to be a good height for the works and I was not so uncomfortable as I would be a ladder.

There are, effectively, three sections to the greenhouse and I thought to complete the two outer ones first. The purlins for the third will overlap the purlins on the outer sections so have to go in last. I was surprised just how quickly the purlins went in and how the planned frame came into shape. Rather than move onto the next set of purlins, I decided to install the front beam that runs across the front of the posts and the one at the back. Before I could do that one, I needed to attach the 3x3 posts onto the main post that was out of alignment with the rest.

Having completed all the first section, all the beams and purlins in place, I slipped a length of 3x2 over the top to test the roof alignment. Apart from the smallest of gaps on the back beam, the purlins are in perfect alignment. So joyful was I that I did a little jig – once I had descended from the ladder. Having ended the day yesterday with two upside down beams, I thought it sensible to leave today on a high but when was the last time I was sensible.

We were close on the close of play and light was beginning to fade. The Missus was still digging, so I took time to put my tools away and thought that I may as well just move the end section 4x4 purlins into position and attach the brackets the next day. It was while I was doing this that I noticed that the structure could sway along the alignment of the purlins. It concerned me somewhat. On one hand I was relatively happy that the 6x2 beams could take the weight. After all, the Highly Professional Craftsperson had not commented on the use of 6x2s. I was also reasonably sure that the structure would stiffen when the roofing sheets were applied but it left me with nagging doubts.

We came away from The Farm just as it was going dark and because we had nothing prepared for tea, we repaired to St Just and the Chinese takeaway there on the way home. While I waited on the Missus who had gone in to get it, I considered the frame. The conclusion I arrived at was that it would do no harm to retro fit some strengthening to the beams. The only matter remained was just how that might be most effectively done.

I left that at the back of my mind while I went to the Lifeboat station where we launched the Inshore Lifeboat into the darkness. We used the opportunity to train some of our team in the art of driving the Tooktrak about on the beach. While two people were engaged with that in turns the rest of us discussed the nature of things as we gazed at the moon and the planets above our heads and watched the shapes of unknown birds fly across us. It was as well that we had dressed up for the

occasion because the temperature was dropping and the breeze that had been chilly all day at The Farm, freshened some more.

We did all that for so long that we were still doing it when the boat came back to be recovered. We are, after all, a very hardy, very excellent Shore Crew.

February 7th – Friday

It looked 'ansum enough out of the window first thing. I will grant that it was a little cold in the flat, but I thought nothing of it until I stepped outside with ABH. Out of the northeast came a robust breeze that was icy and although even in a pair of shorts, it was not too uncomfortable. I had agreed with myself that I would make a special effort to get to the gymnasium this morning. It did not exactly fill me with enthusiasm given the cold, but I had made enough excuses this week, I was not going to back out today.

So, having finished my morning chores and routine, I slipped into something suitable for a blistering session, and headed for the gymnasium. I had not intended to do a full circuit as I felt that lifting sturdy beams and purlins probably counted towards a bit of weight lifting. However, when I arrived, I just fell into the usual routine and did the weights as well. Obviously, I am using my legs at The Farm, it is difficult climbing to the second rung on a ladder without them, but it is not quite as beneficial as a 5,000 metres row. I was definitely rusty, and my rowing performance was lower quartile, but at least it was not any lower down the ranking. At the end, I felt suitably blistered.

The in-laws, going home today, had brought Mother around and were there to say farewell when I came back. Unbeknownst to me, they were in the shop, which I surmised only when I arrived upstairs. I was expecting them to come up, but they went straight out of the shop, which left me looking rude for not saying goodbye. That is my story, anyway, and I am sticking to it.

After they had gone and I realised my mistake, I took ABH out for a spin as I usually go on my return from the gymnasium. There was just enough room on the Harbour beach for a bit of a run and as fortune would have it, we were joined by friends and their dog and shortly afterwards a neighbour and her dog arrived. With so many trips to The Farm, ABH probably does not need the exercise, but it is a joy to see her running about enjoying the company of other dogs. So many times, the dogs she meets are too old, too big or just plain not interested. Then come two at once.

We did not tarry long and within the hour we were ensconced at The Farm. With the sun shining, the cabin was toasty warm and the chilly breeze in the northeast meant that it was not blowing in the door, although with Mother comfy on the sofa we kept the door closed. ABH had little choice but to stay inside. She had runs out at break times, but she did not have a wander like she usually does.

This left the Missus and I undisturbed in our separate endeavours. We are so frequently at The Farm now that we are able to start as soon as we arrive, deploying tools and machinery almost as if accustomed though life. Although I had left The Farm with a conundrum to resolve, I knew exactly how I was to proceed to remedy the problem of the wobbly superstructure.

At three o'clock in the morning and after some considerable inner argument, the solution had come upon me in a flash of inspiration. The flash cannot have been that bright else it would have woken the Missus. Actually, it was not that much of a revelation. I had decided upon placing a second bean adjacent to the first. The alternative was to muck about with mitres supports which would have been a proper fag and probably not as effective.

I had sufficient timber of the correct length if I used the timber reserved for the door lintel. Rather than using a beam hanger, for which there would be no room alongside the existing one, I would attach a very robust support under the adjacent pair of beams. The only left-handed screw in the box of crackers was that I would have to go to the builders' merchants and collect the replacement lintels as they would not deliver just the two.

Casting caution to the wind – which seemed to be diminishing enough for me to remove my jacket, at least – I decided to cut a corner and measure all the beams off the same pair of posts. This almost came to grief while fitting the beam closest to the cabin as it is wider between the posts than all the other pairs. There was enough of a gap that I had to widen the support under the beam for it to rest on. It was not ideal and will not win any design awards, but it was functional and did the trick in a pinch.

Retro-fitting the beams had taken most of our time up there. I had intended to slip away to the builders' merchant to collect the beams but also purchase some more brackets; I would not have enough to complete installing the purlins. It was getting late, but I probably had enough time to go. I was just thinking about how to strap the five metre lengths of timber to the top of the truck when the Missus told me she had to take Mother into town to collect her new spectacles. I had taken the message about them the day before but as the Missus was still asleep at the time, I had forgotten all about it.

They packed up to go and I elected to stay behind with ABH as there was still plenty I could do, even without the additional brackets. In the event, ABH was having none of the being left behind lark and planted herself in front of the truck as the Missus tried to drive away. She may act daft sometimes, but she is a smart little girl when she wants to be. The Missus had little choice but to take her too leaving me to attach the second section purlins on my own.

The sun was almost touching the horizon when I thought to try out the extra long 4x4 purlins on the middle and last section. I was quite surprised how much extra weight there was in 1.5 metres of the timber. The builders' merchant had run out of the

shorter lengths and sent the longer ones instead rather than keeping me waiting. Since I was happy to let the purlins overlap, I thought that I would not bother to cut the extra length off but use them as they were. This fell at the first and second fences when I discovered just how heavy they were as I tried to lever them up on top of the beams and then found that the carefully measured position for each did not quite line up with the ones on the adjacent beams. Lopping off the extra would be preferable and as an added bonus, would give me some practise for when it came to taking the tops off the main posts which draws ever nearer.

Having tested out the long purlin theory and reached my conclusion, the other conclusion that I came to was that I had run out of time. I also concluded that the Missus, on her return, would want a quick turn around and whisk us all home. With this in mind, I further concluded that I should pack up my tools and make them ready to hook into the truck and that I would boil the kettle while I did so – it takes a minute or two when the gas bottle is low – so that I could have a cup of tea while I waited.

I had made my cuppa and just sat down when I heard the truck in the lane. I concluded that I did not have time to even start my tea and made myself ready to leave. And with all that concluding, I shall conclude this episode of life on The Farm.

February 8th – Saturday

My little friend tried to wake me half an hour earlier today. I beat her to it as I was already awake with measurements and calculations, timber lengths and fixings abounding in my brain. I am afraid I am stuck with it until this greenhouse project is over and I am equally conscious that you will be sharing it, dear reader.

It was grey and gloomy out of the window when I got up this morning. It was mainly gloomy because the sun had not yet risen but it remained gloomy even after it had. ABH was hot on my heels, and I discerned that she probably wanted to go out for a walk. That did not stop her leading me a merry dance first.

I usually have trouble getting her harness on. She likes to have a play fight with me, rolling on her back and showing her teeth and using her front paws to bat away the harness. Sometimes I am treated to growling as well, just for added effect. She lets me win in the end and when she has the harness on, she generally heads for the door. This morning, however, she feinted a move for the door and disappeared under the seat in the corner. There is no point in trying to wheedle her out, so I sat down and waited. Eventually, she would come out but as soon as I made a move for her lead, she was straight back under the seat again. I cannot recall how many times we played this game, which is new, but by the time we went out the headtorch I was wearing was superfluous and made me look ridiculous.

I did not think that I would need them today, but I was keen to head off to the builders' merchant in St Just to collect the 6x2 planks for the lintels at each end of

the greenhouse. I also needed to get some more brackets which I did need today as my intention was to finish off the roof structure. I have said before that they are a friendly bunch up there and much like a family business. It is a family business but everyone there seems to be part of it. Despite still being a tad naïve about what is what up there, they never patronise and are always helpful no matter how daft my questions.

Having acquired all I needed from the shop, I drove down to the timber store where, as luck would have it, another employee helped pull down the five metre planks for me. It was fortuitous that he was there because they were up high, and I would have struggled to clamber up on the lower levels of timber to reach them.

My next issue was strapping the lengths to the roof rack of the truck. I have proved absolutely useless at such things in the past and using ratchet straps generally leaves me in a complete muddle. I had pre-empted my trials by taking some appropriate lengths of rope with me this time. When luck is on my side, I can tie a reasonable bowline or a half hitch and can mostly tie my own shoe laces. I quite astounded myself at lashing the two planks to the roof rack such that they did not move sideways or fore or aft. Just in case, I used some cable ties too. Belt and braces they call that.

Having collected all the goods, I headed back home to collect the Missus and head on up to The Farm. Once there, I discovered that not only could I lash a couple of planks to the roof rack and drive six miles with them still attached, I could also remove them without cutting off the knots that I so carefully tied. Alright, I did have to cut off the cable ties but that does not count. I was going to place the 6x2s alongside their eventual location, but I reasoned that they would be in the way, and I was right.

While the Missus continued with her mission of clearing where the bean frame had been – she could not recover the old frame as it was rotten – I pressed on with the purlins I was about yesterday. In case you had fallen asleep by that point in yesterday's Diary, dear reader, I shall recap that I had decided to shorten the five metre posts to their correct length before I used them. It made all the difference in weight, and I was able to heft them into position much more easily when they were 1.5 metres shorter.

About half of the brackets deployed to attach the purlins to the beams could be done from the ladder. When I had to stand on the raised beds, I felt most uncomfortable though less so if I was able to hang onto the beams. It is very hard to explain the issue that I have with heights, but I think that it is predominantly to do with balance. Even on the third rung of the ladder, I was more stable than at a similar elevation without, erm, stabilisers; I could use my knees to steady myself on the ladder. The upshot is that it is debilitating, which I could do well without during this project. It irks me much, but I have come to the conclusion that I will need to ask for help in attaching the roof sheets. It is probably prideful and no doubt a sin – the trials of

being raised a Catholic – but I would have been chuffed to finish the project by myself.

Having finished the purlins, the last of the up high stuff was to attach the outer beams, fascia boards if you like, across the main posts at the back. The ones at the front are lower, not by that much, but enough that I am quite comfortable reaching them. As the last nail went in – ha, *went* in. That makes it sound like the nails very generously inserted themselves into the main posts. No, they took much thumping with a hammer, mostly on target, and I have biceps like popeye – on just the one arm – to prove it. So, as the last nail was thumped home, I was about to do another little jig in celebration when I remembered that the tops of the posts needed to come off.

I fear that this will be the nastiest working at height, save the roof itself, of the whole project. Sawing through the 4x4 purlins was not all that straightforward and that was on a nice low down workbench. It is the next job to do, although it could wait, but I will try one on Monday and if I do not saw through anything soft, like my arm, and do not topple off the ladder because my balance is skewed by pressing my weight against the saw blade, I might do the rest. Alternatively, I could leave them and cut the roofing sheets around them, then I could stick little flags on them that flutter in the wind with “Boathouse Farm” written on them. Now, there is a thought.

It was not my last thought of the day. My last thought of the day was, ‘oh, begger, the roofing sheets for the sides of the greenhouse are going to be too long’. I had waited until the fascia boards were in place so that I could accurately measure the drop from there to the ground. The ground is uneven, so the measurement would be arbitrary, however, I reasoned that I could clad with wood if there was a shortfall or bury an inch or too if there was too much.

The drop is at most 2.2 metres. The roof sheets, the shortest I can get from the selected company, are 2.5 metres. That is a deep trench to bury the extra and the concrete of the main posts would get in the way, too. I pretty much dismissed cutting 500 millimetres off the bottom as cutting GRP is fraught and I would need to slice off 30 metres. There was also the matter of what I might do with 15 square metres of waste roof sheet. I do not think that the rubbish police at the Household Waste Recycling Centre would wear that it was domestic garden waste. The more I considered it, the more I leant towards installing the roof sheets laterally. I would use fewer but longer sheets that way but the purlins (if they can be called that if they are vertical) would need to be vertical rather than horizontal.

This is where I had started out until the Highly Professional Craftsperson pointed out that I had the purlins the wrong way around. At the time we were both assuming that the roof sheets would be installed vertically. To go back now requires a change in design and if I was going to have horizontal purlins, I would not have started from here. I will not be shooting tomorrow and will have some time to go back to the drawing board, quite literally, and set out some sketches of how it might work.

If nothing else, it will take my mind away from lopping off the tops of the main posts while perched three rungs up a wobbly ladder. Little flags. The idea is beginning to grow on me.

February 9th – Sunday

The reason why I did not go shooting this morning was that the new boy Coxswain decided that it would be an ever such a good idea to have a Lifeboat training launch this morning – at nine o'clock. We are limited to when we can launch during the winter, and it means taking an opportunity when it arises. Also, some training is better done in daylight particularly for new or less experienced crew of which we have quite a few. The new training regime also means that without training launches, some crew would be flagged as being unavailable for live launches.

The weather did not encourage anyone out for an early start. There was a firm northeasterly breeze blowing which was especially unkind when it became laced with rain as we tried to set up the long slip for recovery. It was like having icy needles fired at you and made me regret volunteering to miss shooting where I would have had some shelter. We looked thin on the ground when I made my decision, and it would have made life difficult without me.

We of the very excellent Shore Crew are not excused the rigours of the new training system. New recruits now have to be ticked off for units covering launch and recovery procedures, roles and responsibilities, Personal Protection Equipment for each role, pyrotechnics and so forth. Our new Coxswain has hit the ground running on all training and has been encouraging me to bring the relevant personnel up to speed. So, while the boat was out, I covered some of the units with the newest recruits and attended by the more experienced who made helpful suggestions during the session. The very excellent Shore Crew has hitherto been a bit left out on a limb where training was concerned, and it was good to see everyone getting on board with it.

We were interrupted in our educational activities by the Coxswain calling to report that they had one more duty to perform in the bay and would be back after that. It took us a little by surprise because before we left, he was talking about the possibility of returning when the tide was a bit further in. Most of the work in deploying for the long slipway had been done but the cable had been deliberately left short. It took a few moments to pull it down to the right length and we executed what was clearly a textbook recovery up the long slip. We are, after all, a very educated, very excellent Shore Crew.

It was too early for breakfast when I headed across the road. I had a very welcome and warming cup of tea when the boat went out but was a bit keen for something to eat when I got back. ABH, however, had other ideas and insisted on a run down to the Harbour beach and a walk around the block afterwards.

We took an unusual turn under the slipways today and I was heartened to see that some of the sand had been returned there. The big rocks are still piled up at the back under the short slip and I suspect that they are there for the duration. We explored a bit the other side of the slipways where there was a young couple rockpooling. I do not know if it was a bit more serious than that, some scientific research – they certainly looked serious – and were a bit old to be doing it for fun. They were too far off to ask, and we returned to the Harbour to continue to nose about. There was not too much lingering, which I was happy about because my breakfast was calling and although the wind had abated a bit and the rain had cleared up, it was still chilly out.

Sometime after that, the Missus went to collect Mother. Left to my own devices my mind strayed back to the cladding of the greenhouse. I was still not satisfied that I had measured enough or looked at alternatives hard enough. I had toyed with the idea of horizontal sheets and to change the direction of the purlins to suit but I was not convinced that was the best answer for the higher rear. If I went with horizontal there, I would have gaps that would need to be filled with timber and I wanted to avoid too much timber particularly at ground level.

For certain, I needed better information and when the Missus came back with Mother, I slipped into DIYman overalls and headed to The Farm with a clipboard and A4 pad. It was going to be an official visit, obviously. Perhaps I should have white overall for such occasions.

While the only good thing about the ugly duckling weather in the morning was the placid state of the sea, the afternoon was transformed into a beautiful grown up duck – we will have no fowlst talk around here, thank you. I was sitting at my desk, clearly distracted in my thoughts and when Mother arrived, I looked out of the window to see blue skies and bright sunshine. It was therefore glorious up at The Farm and it crossed my mind that perhaps we should have really been working. Alright, well I was working, but not really.

I spent far too long checking measurements and testing options with clamps and bits of timber. I was interrupted by the same neighbour from the village who had suggested the chainsaw for lopping off my posts. He came with his dog, and I cursed that I had left ABH behind because last time they played marvellously together. Not one to let an opportunity go by, I asked his opinion about the roofing sheets for cladding and the sizing problem I had. He was very positive about cutting them to size, suggesting that with a jigsaw and a fine blade, I should not have a problem.

It was welcome advice, although I am still not keen about having an excess of waste. Since the amount cut off at the back was minimal, I could go with that but continue with the horizontal solution at the front, perhaps. The sides, well the sides are going to be difficult anyway with a door in the middle of the run and a sloping roof to cope

with. Whatever I decide, I will have to be utterly convinced of the plan because once ordered, there would be no going back.

The reason I was anxious to return home in a timely manner and why I did not take ABH to The Farm with me was that I thought she would benefit from a walk in fresher fields. The tide was in and although they are not big tides this week, I decided a walk up the cliff would be pleasant. Up at The Farm, I was feeling reasonably comfortable in the warm sunshine. The breeze from the northeast was still present but it seemed reduced and was not laced with rain. I agonised for a moment or two about my attire for the walk and reasoned that I would be fine with one layer less.

It turned out to be the correct decision because much of our outward journey, at least, was sheltered from the wind and in direct sunshine. It only started to bite when we reached the cycle path on the way back and by then I was warm from walking. I might be wrong – surely not – but it seemed to take much longer to get to the turn off on the Coast Path today. ABH made frequent returns to spots we had already passed and spent ages sniffing familiar ground. She is a dear little thing, but it is very frustrating having to walk the journey twice on the same trip, especially as her turns are sudden when I have just got into a stride.

Nevertheless, it was a most enjoyable interlude away from The Farm for a change. I confess that most of the way I was distracted by thoughts about the bleddy cladding and the advice I had received. I think by the end of the walk and certainly by the end of the evening, I had decided that we would go for Plan A which was to have all the sheets vertical and hang the waste. Looking at the websites and having read a dissertation about the benefits of using polycarbonate, I was briefly distracted until I saw that they were twice the price of the GRP sheets. What worried me most was the little box that stated delivery date for orders placed that day; it was the end of the month. I am running out of time.

I need to check to see how many fixings I have already which are up at The Farm and I will place the order tomorrow evening – unless I change my mind.

February 10th – Monday

Today turned out to be a bit of a disappointment, for me at least. It was mainly the lack of a coherent plan B and left me leaving The Farm with hardly anything to show for being there all day.

I had already discounted a repeat visit to the gymnasium. I am getting more than enough exercise at The Farm and will supplement what I am doing there with perhaps one visit a week. It was nothing to do with the temperature that had dropped through the floor overnight, honest guv. It would have been a bit parky in the hut with a tin roof this morning. At least the air was relatively still after yesterday's breeze and as long as I kept moving, I was not too badly off taking ABH around first thing.

It took some motivation to get geared up for The Farm with the cold starting to seep into the bones. I should not have worried so much. Half an hour working and I had stripped my coat off and later the hat came off too. It had started out bright, which was very encouraging after yesterday, but as the day went on, the sky clouded over. It did not bother either of us very much and at least it was dry all day.

My intention was to lop the top off the posts today. I was aware that I would have to steel myself, working at height and wielding a powerful and very sharp electric saw. What could possibly go wrong.

A while ago, several years in fact, I purchased a portable platform to see if I felt more comfortable on it rather than the ladder. I did not and it has languished in the barn ever since. It seemed that it was worth another try, especially as I had brought out two ladders so that I could put a foot on each for stability and that did not work either. I set up the platform between the two ladders so that I had plenty to hang onto. The only issue with that was that I needed both hands on the saw.

To make it even more challenging, I thought I would start on the higher post at the back of the greenhouse. If I could master that then the front ones would be a breeze – probably. I was high enough so that I was not reaching up with the saw, a point that I felt was important. It would – should – mean that it would make it easier to keep the saw level. In the event, while I was following one line with one eye, I was going off the opposite line that I was watching with the other all while trying to stay upright. By not being able to see reference points, like horizons, to keep myself level, I become very unsteady. I try to compensate by shifting my weight about with nothing to tell my brain whether that is working or not.

I persevered and cut through the top. Mercifully, it stayed in place. Had it toppled, my eyes would have followed and probably the rest of me too. Once I was hanging on to the beam again, I was able to push it off. There is only a foot of it, but it is heavy and hit the ground with a thud. I was glad it was not me. I was even gladder when I clambered down from my lofty perch and stood on solid ground again. I spent the next twenty minutes shaking and feeling sick, then set up the platform and the ladders to see if I was any better off on the lower side.

I was still reeling inside my head from the experience on the higher post and it took two seconds balanced on the platform to admit defeat. This affliction is irksome, frustrating and a right bloody pain in the backside. I will not only have to cede the roofing to a third party but the lopping off of the posts as well.

I had been so determined that I was going to succeed with the lopping off that I had not properly thought through an alternative for today. The main things I have to do are put up the side supports for the cladding, install the door posts and clear the ground for the bottom of the cladding. There were also some nails to knock in that I

did not have time for the last day we were up at The Farm. I felt a bit lost wondering which one would be best to do next.

Usually, at three o'clock in the morning, I would walk myself through the next steps looking for problems and agreeing solutions with myself – probably why it is so frustrating when things do not go as expected because they all went alright when I did them in my head. I had wasted my three o'clock in the morning on thinking through my miserably failed lopping off – which I managed perfectly well, then. [Wanders off growling, kicks lopped off top into the undergrowth, hurts foot, wished hadn't].

I grabbed a spade and cleared started on clearing the channel where the bottom of the cladding will go. I was engaged on this task when our builder friend and neighbour from the village stopped by again with his dog. The dog and ABH are around the same age, also temperament and size and they ran off joyfully playing chase and rough and tumble. It gave me the opportunity to engage our friend in conversation about the build. He had previously offered to lend a hand if I needed it, which I now did, and the upshot of our conversation was that he will come and nail down the roof sheets for me. I have another friend - I know, hard to believe – who has also offered, and I will ask if he can come along too.

We discussed some details during which he pointed out several of the, erm, rustic qualities of my handiwork such as the line of fascia boards along the front being not exactly straight. I explained that it was more streamlined against the wind and had been done deliberately. He countered by pointing out that it might make installing the launders down that side a bit tricky, which I admit I had not thought of. There was also the matter that the back is a tad shorter than the front and the right end is just a little longer than the left end. The posts, however, are plumb, I had him know. Between us we agreed the roofing and cladding sheet sizes and I will place the order tomorrow after talking it through with the supplier.

I had trouble separating ABH from her friend when they left. Even after I brought her back. she ran after them again. It distracted me for a moment but afterwards I felt somewhat deflated having the small non-standard building qualities of my work pointed out. I will get over it and I am not rebuilding the bleddy thing, now.

The Missus faired rather better than me. She had levelled as far as possible the old dump and bean area in front of the barn and had progressed onto clearing what was a growing area at the back of the tool and tractor shed and the seeding shed previously known as greenhouse. We only have the digger for another week meaning that we have had it for three weeks. My time really does fly when you are having fun.

Before I knew it, it was time to clear away my tools and equipment. It takes me half and hour to put all the tools back in their boxes, the workbenches away and the

ladders and other tools away in the shed then lock everything up. The Missus just has to drive the digger back to its spot.

I am hoping for better progress on the greenhouse tomorrow, although it will be a late start as Mother has an appointment in town. I must also gird my loins and make the big roofing purchase and not cry too much.

February 11th – Tuesday

I completed the order for the roofing and cladding sheets this morning signalling the beginning of the end of the greenhouse project. The sheets will be here toward the end of next week and I will have to hire a truck to take them from The Cove, where they will be delivered, to The Farm. As I recall from the last time I ordered from them, they are very professional, and the delivery went according to schedule and very smoothly. I hope to have the hire truck here when the sheets arrive so we can transfer them straight onto the back of the truck.

Being unsure of the fixings and precisely how many we would require, I called a very pleasant man at the company who was very helpful. He understood the requirements very quickly and was able to recommend the requisite fixings and how many. Then he told me how much it all was after making sure I was sitting down.

The Missus had headed off early to take Mother to her appointment for her ears at the optician. She is about to go through the trauma that I went through of making sure her ears are clear by getting some expensive operative in to do the job. When that is done, she will go to the doctor to be referred back to the hospital. They would refer her to one of the two high street opticians for ears in Penzance, so she can get her hearing aids sorted. It was frustrating enough for me, and Mother will have the Missus to help her through it. I cannot imagine how someone in their 90s with no support would manage.

Once, I might have been convinced that ear cleaning was an expensive service; the equipment was in infancy and the providers thin on the ground. Things have moved on and I could set up in business for a few hundred pounds and maybe a few hundred more if I wished to have a certification. There is now a proliferation of these people; at least half a dozen in the small area here, and they are charging £40 per ear. It is a scam, and the health service is complicit by making it an 'essential' step to having hearing problems sorted out. I will rely on my old greasy spoon café tomato sauce dispenser filled with warm water and a bit of bicarbonate of soda solution drops for a week before. I am sure it is not medically recommended but I will be darned if I am forking out £40 to line some charlatan's pocket for a five minute job that probably cost them a few quid at most to provide.

Dear reader, I do apologise for being carried away there, for a moment. Some things really irk me. If you are a professional ear cleaning service provider I will happily retract if you can demonstrate that £40 per ear is entirely reasonable.

Mother and the Missus returned and paused for a warming cup of coffee before heading off to The Farm. I am sure Mother would have agreed with my assessment of ear cleaning services, but she could not hear me. The day was once again very cold and there was a bit more breeze around. I did not feel it too much when I took ABH around this morning but up at The Farm we were very exposed to it as it blew in from the east. I kept my coat and hat on for most of the day and only removed it when I was nearly finished installing the purlins on the back wall of the greenhouse.

The installation took a little while longer than I anticipated. Nothing went wrong, thankfully, there was just more to it than it at first seemed. I had decided that I would make the effort to mitre the ends of each row, so they married up with the purlins at either end. It did not occur to me until much later that the purlins at each end may well be at different heights to the ones at the back. They will be without doubt different heights from the ones at the front. So, that was a complete waste of time, then. I will use the off cuts that have the opposite mitre to round them off, so they do not look daft. I will also have to mitre the ends of the ones at the front so that they do not look different from the ones at the back.

I could have pressed ahead with the front purlins since I was in a purlins sort of mood, but the door posts at either end are pressing, so I started on those next. I think that I was putting it off as post holes need to be manually dug out for them. I fetched the post hole spade and the wrecking bar from the toolshed and set about the task with vigour. It did not take too long into the job for the vigour to dissipate and aching arms set in.

The tool is very effective despite the effort, and it was not long before I had two decent depth holes to look into. Time caught up with me before I finished them off, but I am reasonably certain that they are in the right place. The holes do not need to be as deep as the ones I dug for the main posts, not so deep as a grave nor so wide as a church door, but just enough to serve the purpose. I should have the one end complete tomorrow and a good start on the double doors at the cabin end as well, I hope.

There were some brief moments of sunshine towards the end of the day but they were very brief. When the sun starts poking through the gap at the horizon, it is time to pack up and go home and I was increasingly concerned about Mother. It is warm, snug and comfortable in the cabin but several hours of sitting there must eventually wear a bit thin. The main problem with turning in for the day is getting the Missus out of the digger. It is like trying to take a favourite toy from a child or to coax a dog away from a bone. There will be absolute hellup when it has to go back next week. I might have to send her on an errand and do it while she is gone. I do hope I do not have to promise some sweeties or a trip to the zoo to compensate for the loss. Perhaps I

could buy her an ear cleaning tool to distract her – she could afford her own digger after a year.

February 12th – Wednesday

Yet another day of Farming, you lucky, lucky people. Today we had some blue sky to go with it, which made a welcome change from yesterday, although it did not last.

I had heard the wind howling through above us in the very early morning and thought that we might be even chillier today than yesterday. Down in The Cove we did not seem too badly affected although I thought that we would be more exposed at the top of the hill. We were certainly not uncomfortable as we traversed the top of the slipway when I eventually got ABH out of the door.

She was in one of those moods this morning. She did not get up immediately after me but when she did, she refused her harness and went back to bed again. I could not blame her; it was cold. The second time she interrupted my exercises as she frequently does. Having already made the one attempt, I let her wait while I finished off. She watched as I put my coat on then ran and hid when I picked up her harness. I had to play tough in the end else we would have been at it all day.

Having got ABH out for her rounds, there was no particular rush, I had been up early after all. Despite my not rushing, we arrived up at The Farm in good time to get a bit done. My main job was to progress with the door posts while the Missus continued to clear and prepare her growing grounds.

I did a bit of tidying up of the holes I dug yesterday and measured up for the posts. Since there are beams now above where the posts are going, it was not possible to mark the posts in situ. The measurement I did for the first was a bit long and I had to make the cut again but for the second I was spot on and it needed to be nudged into place. The first was a bit more troublesome than just the height. I had run a line from the main posts either side and found the post to be too far forwards. I had to dig the back out of the post hole to get it right, after all, I did not want any professional builders coming along later to tell me it was squint.

I had purchased an extra two bags of cement when I did the last of the main posts in anticipation of doing the door posts. It was a shame that I had not anticipated the post holes being quite so deep – I had originally only planned a minimum hole but went the whole hog (hole hog, perhaps) when I found the ground was amenable. It became clear very quickly that two bags would not service both the field end and the cabin end doors. The holes needed one and a half bags each, which is irritating because I will be left with half a bag gash at the end of it. Depending on how I sort the doors out, I may need some cement to fashion latch holes in the ground, so that half bag may be useful yet.

To dig the holes at the cabin end I needed to dismantle the old doorframe from the polytunnel. I had hoped to leave it where it was as until now it had not been in the way. It would have made a visually appealing frame to the new doorway as well as standing monument to the old polytunnel. It had merely been thumped into the ground with a heavy hammer and once the nuts and bolts holding it together had been removed, it came away quite easily.

One of the holes it left behind was a tad too close to the new hole being dug and has consequently made that hole bigger than I needed. I may need that extra half bag of cement, after all, which means I would have to buy a new bag and use half of it if I wanted to have cemented latch holes in the ground. Apart from that, both holes went in quite easily using the post hole spade, which is still a tool of wonder to my mind – I wonder how my arms still work after an hour of post digging.

Having cut the posts to size and set them in the ground in readiness for cementing, I turned my attention to the purlins or cladding supports for the front of the greenhouse. As I supposed yesterday, they will not be the same heights as the ones at the back because the drop is a different size. I took some time measuring up for the middle section, chosen so that I can decide whether mitres are required on the end sections later, and took my time to get it right. On that score I failed miserably.

I meticulously took measurements from one main post to the other, then subtracted the width of one main post so that my support would run from halfway across one to halfway across the other. This would have worked marvellously had I not subtracted the span in centimetres by the width of the post in millimetres. Fortunately, I am measuring twice and cutting once, and when I put the marked-up timber against its intended position, immediately noticed the error of my ways. I returned the post to the workbench and marked the correct position further along the timber just before the Missus called me in for a cup of tea.

I mentioned yesterday that trying to get the Missus out of the tractor seat would easily make a shortlist of modern day labours of Hercules. During our tea break, she set to work on me how having the digger for another week would be oh, so useful and how it would not cost an arm and a leg in the grand order of the money being sunk into the greenhouse. Knowing how miserable life could get without a digger for an extra week, I only put up a facsimile of a fight before capitulating.

Having finished my cuppa, I returned to my timber and promptly cut it on the mark I had done first. Luckily, it will be of a suitable length to use on one of the ends when I get there.

When we left for The Farm early, I cursed myself for forgetting to charge the batteries for the power tools. I only had two batteries left and one of those was not fully charged. I had used one for the impact driver to screw in the brackets holding the doorposts in place and the other, more fully charged for the reciprocating saw. The latter, it seems, uses a phenomenal amount of battery when operating and after

four posts, was finished. The circular saw I used to make my poorly placed cut on the support timber, finished off the second battery, so, as it takes me half an hour to put everything away, I called it a day.

We needed to leave The Farm relatively early because a Lifeboat launch had been arranged for seven o'clock. During one of our tea breaks, we had listened to a weather warning from the Coastguard for gales tomorrow evening, which adequately explained the rescheduling of our weekly exercise.

There was sufficient Boat Crew to man both the big boat and the Inshore. Unfortunately, on the shore, we were exceptionally thin on the ground. One of our crew who floats between boat and shore needed to keep up his currency on the winch. This fitted in well and by nominating a new trainee head launcher, we covered all our bases. Also, the Inshore launched a few minutes ahead of the big boat which left the driver free to come and assist on setting up the slipway for recovery.

In the new order of things, the very excellent Shore Crew have training units to complete while the boat is out. On Sunday we covered pyrotechnics with some new recruits and today we ticked off emergency procedures with the few of us present. Despite having been around for a while, existing crew need to maintain currency on training units. Having been trained once, this tick will expire after a certain time period and need to be done again. Because it is a new system, some 'ticks' have been assumed while others need to be demonstrated to be done. So, while the boat was out, we did that.

The boat was out far longer than it had been on Sunday and after our little training session, we were left at a loose end until we saw the boats coming back. Again, the Inshore was ahead of the big boat with enough time before the big boat returned for our missing man to be available for recovery. Even so, I found myself on point at the bottom of the long slip, avoiding getting my wellies wet with the increasing swell racing up the concrete toe.

When the heaving line was thrown from the boat, the first fell short and the second fell in the middle of the slip and out of reach. Ordinarily, we would wait until the Boat Crew found someone who could throw a rope accurately but on this occasion, the first heaving line was snagged on the slipway about six feet ahead of me. I had no choice but to brace myself and step down to untangle it. As I feared, the fierce swell – possibly also known as moderate – rushed in and made my wellies wet while I fearlessly – yes, I know I said 'I feared' to start with but I am telling a story here, dear reader, so do not interrupt – while I fearlessly untangled the heaving line at the edge of the raging sea. I will no doubt be in line for a medal or a citation on vellum for my bravery, which I will obviously refuse or accept only on behalf of the whole team.

After such a gripping moment, we continued to execute a textbook recovery up the long slip. Washing down and securing the boat, we finished off with a debriefing where, to save my embarrassment no doubt, no one at all mentioned my heroic

action. We were home safe by quarter past nine. We are, after all, a very humble, very excellent Shore Crew.

February 13th – Thursday

The strong breeze kicked in a bit earlier than advertised today. It was already making itself felt down on the Harbour beach when we visited this morning. ABH had stirred late today, no doubt worn out from chewing her bone almost addictively for four hours non-stop during the night. She had me up twice and on the last time I managed to sneak the bone away and hide it. She did not go looking for it, which is something I was afraid of, and we both enjoyed some sleep for what remained of the night.

My intention was to head into town early as we had failed to take the white diesel drum when the Missus went in on Tuesday. We only half filled the digger on Monday and the use it is getting we would need fuel sooner rather than later. Since I was tied up for most of yesterday, I did not get the chance to do all the things I need to do that are not Farming or Lifeboating. This took far longer than I anticipated and rather than delay any further, I skipped breakfast and headed off.

Shortly before I went, I had a message from the Coxswain wanting to know if we covered any training units yesterday. It was easier to go over and chat about it than write it down, so I dropped by the station on the way to the truck. I explained that the unit we were tasked to do needed to be broken down further as it could not all be done in one go. This training malarky may sound like a huge faff for us very excellent Shore Crew but, in truth, it gives us something to do. Previously, on nights without a launch, we had nothing much other than Tooltrak or opening and closing doors. Now at least we have some structure, even though it is taking a bit of effort to organise it.

The meeting with the Coxswain did not take very long and I headed immediately into town. That did not take very long, either, although I made an additional visit to Tesmorburys for meat for ABH. Having filled up our drum and taken the opportunity to fill up the truck as well. I headed off to the builders' merchant at St Just for the cement I needed for the last two doorposts. The Missus caught up with me just before I left and asked if I could get her a rake as she is moving topsoil into her growing areas and wants to spread it out. They only had one which looked quite substantial, it is a builders' merchant after all, so I got that.

I told the Missus that I was on my way, and we had a smart turnaround in The Cove. ABH was demonstrating that she was indeed very tired after a sleepless night. I knew how she felt but given that it was her fault, she was given no quarter and unceremoniously bundled into the truck and up to The Farm.

The weather continued to deteriorate through the afternoon. The increasing breeze was not helpful to me in the least and in the end, I had to give up any pretence of

doing things. There was rain but it was sporadic and with the wind it was hardly noticeable. It was only when I went to the tractor and back of the truck that I had foolishly left east facing and open that I noticed how wet everything was.

I was also unable to take my coat off and because of my many layers, even walking about was a bit of an effort. Bending down was even worse given bending down generally is a bit of a challenge. Still, I managed to concrete in the posts on the cabin side, finding that I only needed one of the three bags I had purchased. I am not entirely sure how that works because the holes at the other end did not seem to be wider and definitely not deeper than the holes at the cabin end. I now have a couple of bags of concrete with no particularly plan for them.

Soldiering on for a bit, I managed to get all the supports on the field side of the greenhouse attached. I had completely forgotten about mitred ends for the field end of the front. It is now the only corner of the project that will look different. I think I might do something cosmetic about that but will see how time goes.

Talking of timing, the one thing I did not want was a Friday delivery of the cladding and roof sheets. I had planned to hire a truck and if the delivery was too late on a Friday, I would not have time to drop it back to the depot in Redruth and therefore have to pay for an additional two days over the weekend. Of course, when the delivery notice came through from the supplier it was for a Friday, advising the latest time might be three o'clock which would not give me sufficient time.

I called the company, and they arranged for the transport person to call me back. Not long later, a very pleasant lady from the company called and assured me that her man would be no later than one o'clock. Thus assured, I called the hire company to enquire about timings for collection and delivery only to be told that the van I needed was contracted out on a long-term hire. I had not anticipated nor planned for such an eventuality, and it left me somewhat flummoxed.

As part of my thinking through the transport of the panels to The Farm it had crossed my mind to ask a local lad who has a drop-sided truck for assistance. I am not sure why I dismissed the idea, but it suddenly came back to mind. I asked the Missus to leave him a message on social media to call me which he duly did a few minutes later.

He is a very amiable character and often visits the shop when we are open. Once I had promised recompense in the form of wads of used notes, he was even more amenable to help out. We love it when a plan comes together. It is two weeks away, so I am sure our lad will have forgotten about the wads of notes by then. Surely, he did not think I was serious.

With the weather closing in, we gave up Farming for the day. I was being knocked about by the gusts of wind, doing me no favours at all trying to accurately measure things. It was even blowing the expanding rule about. The Missus, for once, was

happy to abandon using the digger for an early bath and ABH, who had spent the entire visit trying to shelter from the elements, was overjoyed at the prospect of going home.

Looking forward, we may have to abandon plans for tomorrow as well. We will have a look through the window tomorrow.

February 14th – Friday

Rain stopped play today. The wind that howled a bit overnight, softened by and by during the day. That did not stop the mizzle smoking across the bay from the east during the morning. Earlier, when I first went out with ABH, the rain was coming in much more heavily but fortunately we were not out in it for very long. The little girl needed a rub down with a towel and I left my jacket to drip dry.

It was therefore an enforced day of rest, which was probably about due. It is easy to forget that bits of me are wearing out when we are taking advantage of every dry day we can get. We have six weeks to go before the shop opens and we are under no illusion just how quickly that will pass. The greenhouse needs to be finished and the IBCs (the 1,000 litre water containers - come on, dear reader, they were mentioned only a week or so ago, do try and keep up) need to be moved to take advantage of the rainwater run-off and to make access easier.

Given that it was a day of rest and there were no pressing matters, I decided a blistering session at the gymnasium was in order. The rain had eased off a little since first thing, but I was still damp when I got to the gymnasium. That mizzle persisted after I got out and headed back to take ABH out again. It did not seem too heavy at all but by the time we came back down Coastguard Row, my shorts were soaking. This was exacerbated by the water dripping off my jacket and finding a nice absorbent material to soak into. It was fortunate that I was not wearing my flannel shorts as they would have been around my ankles halfway across the car park.

We were just coming to the end of Coastguard Row when I was collared by a local lady. She wanted to know if we would be open for the half term as she wanted to purchase spades for the soon to be arriving grandchildren. I told her that we would not be opening but being a desperate sort of grumpy shopkeeper, I would be more than happy to drop some around the next time I was passing with ABH. We went through the polite dance of it not being urgent – the grandchildren's arrival was imminent, although it was unlikely they would be heading for the beach today – and me saying it was no trouble to drop them by. Rather than forget and because I was already as wet as I was likely to get, I returned to the shop and brought them back right after unleashing the damp ABH on the unsuspecting Missus still in pyjamas.

I find that it always pays to keep my hand in on the selling things front. It also marked the first sale of the season. It also crossed my mind that I ought to make the effort to

sell the viable bits of polytunnel rather than transporting them to the scrap metal dealer over at Hayle. If I do not do something soon, it will languish up at The Farm for at least the summer and although it is not going to rust, it will be in the way. Even on a day of rest I could not help but progress some Farm type business through my head. While I was at it, I ordered some diamond grit blades for the jigsaw with which to cut the GRP roofing sheets to size. Gosh, they are expensive, and they are not even real diamonds.

The sheer effort of all that forced me into an involuntary zizz in my desk chair. It was short-lived because Mother and the Missus arrived home. Mother had another pair of spectacles to pick up and the Missus found it an excellent opportunity to go shopping. They arrived home, interrupting my zizz, loaded with more shopping than shoes at millipede's second hand shoe fair. Had I thought about it, I would have had the builders install a hoist over the shop front.

There followed some proper lazing about in the afternoon. ABH settles in next to 'nanny' and is less inclined to run about and want to go out. We had taken in some more rain while the Missus was out, and I did not need to take her again until after tea. On both occasions it was mizzling the sort of rain that soaks through without you noticing at the time. My jacket did not have time to dry out between walks and it was still very damp when we went out again in the rain at the last knockings.

The rain is set to persist overnight, too, but clear during the morning. We do hope that it does because we cannot afford too many rest days with the amount of work we have left at The Farm. I am holding out for fair weather next Friday, especially for no wind, when the roof and cladding panels arrive. I have to ask myself, am I feeling lucky.

February 15th – Saturday

I cannot find fault with the forecasts this past 24 hours. We had the rain that was predicted and as they predicted it would still be raining this morning, it was. There, I can say nice things about the weather forecasters occasionally – when occasionally they get it right.

It did not make me any more comfortable about taking ABH around in the morning but at least we had the shortest going around in the history of goings around. I could possibly have got away without my jacket, although had I done so we would have had the longest going around in history instead. My jacket was still damp around the cuffs from yesterday, so I was mightily glad I did not have to get it soaked again.

Perhaps it was the rain yesterday, but the roadworks that commenced in The Cove at the start of the week, seemed to slow down. It was difficult to determine what was going on but eventually I passed by slowly enough to read that it was something to do with fibre optics installations.

I was a little bemused because I thought that fibre had already been installed where they were working. There used to be a green box outside Aubrey Villa, three doors and a driveway down from us, which I was sure was the end of the fibre line. It was too far away from us for our installation, and we ended up with a fibre running from the telegraph pole at the back of us. Supporting my theory, the property Water's Edge, which is in the middle of the roadworks run, is definitely fed from underground as they had to dig up the modern cobbles outside to run it in and put them back very badly.

It might be that the original cable is at capacity and a new one is required. I suppose it is also possible that it is a different company, but surely that would be nuts. I do hope that there is some sort of overseeing body that prevents several different companies having to dig up the same stretch of road at different times so that their individual lines can be installed. I also would have hoped that the overseeing body might have pointed out that doing the work over half term week was not the best time to get it done.

Continuing the run of accurate forecasts, the rain stopped in the middle of the morning signalling that it was time to return to The Farm, sodden as it would be, to continue our separate labours.

Sodden, was perhaps something of an optimistic term for what we got. It must have rained some heavy in the night because we have not seen the lane quite so deep in water for some time. It rises up after the first corner and it was just puddles in the potholes after that, of which there are many. When we got to the field, it was a different story altogether. The Missus and her running around in the tracked digger has scat up the ground in all the places she has been working. It has ripped the grass out by the root and left just earthy patches. They were earthy patches but when we arrived, they were muddy patches. I had put the truck in 4x4 mode as we entered the lane. Even so, it slipped heading into The Farm and inscribed deep tracks in the ground.

We made an instant decision that we would not get the tractor out today; it would just make the ground worse. Also, the digger would have to avoid all the places it had been previously for the same reason. We had a brief discussion and agreed that the Missus would make a start on the second growing area and churn up the ground there, instead. Although, that ground will now be a no go area for a while, at least the parts where we traverse on foot would not get any worse than they were.

Unfortunately, I did have to traverse the scat up areas on foot as they lay between the project and the tool shed. I had to pick my way carefully trying only to stand on the grassy clumps. Even then, all I could hear was the sucking mud as my feet struggled to take me forward without slipping.

My aim today was to finish off the supports for the side cladding, arriving at the end of next week. All I had left to do was the six supports either side of the doors at each

end of the greenhouse. This posed some momentous decisions: should I line up the supports with the ones at the back or the ones at the front. I did not think that I could do both - that is the supports at the rear side of the doors lined up with the back and the front side of the doors lined up with the front. I reasoned that would ruin the aesthetics of the job. Quite why I am concerned about the aesthetics when the front is wider than the back and there is a kink in the line of the front posts, I do not know, but it seemed important at the time.

I went with lining up the sides with the back mainly because both ends at the back are mitred and only one at the front is. I suppose, I should have considered the front to be all important because it is the bit you will see most. There again, begger it.

The mitres proved the least of my problems and in the main married up nicely. Where I had most problem was the far end where I had to cut notches in the supports so that they fitted snugly against the door posts and the main post at the front because of the lining up issue. I am sure that the hired help arriving to finish off the roof will be professional enough to find work arounds for these issues and polite enough not to mention it.

I finished just as the sun was making for the western horizon. The Missus was away with the fairies, digging and scraping with no notion of time or place. Someone has to take the reins and be the bad man and unfortunately, that seems to be me. Perhaps it is my natural suit. The Missus was most put out when I called time on the shenanigans for the day but at least ABH looked relieved to be heading home.

She also looked lagged in mud – and other things - from head to foot, mainly because she was. We reasoned that it would dry out quickly and be easier to brush out later. It was not, or at least mainly not. Some of the worst in her coat came out but her feet have clods attached. The Missus plans to give her a haircut tomorrow which should solve the problem. I shall be out shooting and will avoid the carnage, thank you very much.

February 16th – Sunday

My, it was a bit chilly when I set foot outside the door this morning. It was a bit grey, too, although it did not seem to bother ABH much in her thick, overgrown coat. By the middle of the afternoon, she would know all about it.

It was the breeze more than anything driving down the temperature. It is unusual for us in The Cove to be so affected by an easterly, but it was blowing in at just under 30 miles per hour to start with and steadily increased during the day. When I first arrived at the range, we seemed quite sheltered at first. After helping out setting up the courses of fire, I was able to dispense with my coat for the whole of the morning session. This was quite useful as too many layers can impede movement and makes aiming difficult which is quite useful when shooting, especially for everyone else.

I am reasonably adept with my John Wayne rifle and accurate, too. Perhaps that is why it is my favourite gun in the cabinet. It was a most enjoyable first session made more pleasant by the lack of rain. We were also able to use paper targets as it was dry, and the wind did not interfere too much being so sheltered from the main blast.

Despite the brightness and the moving about resetting targets and plates, by the end of the morning session the cold was starting to creep into my bones. I was glad when we retired to the clubhouse – read small hut with chairs – that has a gas heater warming the place for half the morning. I had braved it right to the end of the morning session but with the wind chill increasing as the afternoon went on, I decided not to be brave anymore and put my jacket back on.

With fewer of us around in the afternoon there was more running about, and it was an altogether shorter session. With hat and hoodie wrapped around my head, there was no more I could do in defence of the bitter cold. I checked the Land's End weather station halfway through the afternoon and was very surprised to see that the ambient temperature was eight degrees. When the Missus came to pick me up later, the truck's outside thermometer confirmed it. Land's End reckoned on at least five degrees of wind chill, but it felt much colder than that.

It was oddly heartening to see that the cloud had broken in the east and blue sky was starting to emerge. I am not sure why this was heartening as without the sunshine we would lose the meagre heat that we had been trapped with under the cloud all day. Just before it got dark, that blue sky had spread over The Cove and only out to the east the steely grey cloud hung about.

I had noted in the morning, not long off high water, that the waves were coming over the Harbour wall at the near end. The sea did not look that busy glancing over the bay but there must have been some ground sea running. This was much clearer later on, approaching high water again, with ponderous sets rolling across the bay with not enough peak to break. It was still stirred up later on when I took ABH around after tea but had decline to jump over the wall this time.

Talking of ABH, I hardly recognised her when I came home from shooting. She was half the size of the hound I had left behind in the morning and probably half the weight. The Missus could have stuffed a couple of cushions with the discarded and expanded fur. She did not seem too bothered by the new feel, although surely it must itch to start with. With the wind still blowing strong after tea, it was clear that she felt more exposed from behind. I am sure there is not a Scots piper on the battlements of Edinburgh castle who would not empathise with her.

February 17th – Monday

There was a bit of a rush on this morning as I had been called to the hospital for a poke and a prod. I had missed the previous appointment they made for me back in

January because they had decided that I was better off not knowing about it. I had a telephone call outside our beachware supplier in Devon asking where I was. I told them that I was outside our beachware supplier in Devon, which I do not think they found very helpful. For this appointment, I had at least three weeks of notifications across three different messaging methods. They were not about to let me slip the net this time around.

I was informed in a letter that the appointment was to test for abdominal aortic aneurysms, which was very good of them to care as I had not asked for one. I know that the Aged Parent has had similar testing, but I rather thought that he said it was in his neck. I do not know about these things, but I reasoned that perhaps the neck was found not to be such a good place for aortic aneurysms and that it had been moved to the abdomen as part of a late model improvement.

My appointment was at ten o'clock, which is not all that early unless you have an ABH to take around who does not rightly understand appointments and the need for a bit of haste. I thought to leave at nine o'clock which would give me plenty of time to park – there is no parking at the hospital in Penzance now and the nearest is a ten minute stank up the hill. I was still early when I got to the hospital but from previous experience the place you need to be is the other side from where you start – unless, of course you start at the back - and in a labyrinthine building of some age, it can take a while to get there.

The hospital gives the impression that it is mainly empty. I passed by room after vacant room on my way to outpatients following the signs. Occasionally, I would pass a uniformed health care worker – it is impossible these days to tell apart nurses, assistants, doctors and porters but there must be something in the colour of the similar workclothes they wear. Now and again, I would pass by a waiting area set in the corridor filled with little knots of people staring blankly at the walls or their mobile telephones that suggested anything going on at all.

I passed one such area with just two people waiting before I came across the anonymous kiosk which, when I asked, turned out to be the outpatients' reception. I was directed to another waiting area sporting a fish tank with almost invisible fish in it and about fifteen empty chairs – the fifteen empty chairs were in the waiting area not in the fish tank for clarification. I was nearly half an hour early and settled in to wait for the appointment time to come around – so I assumed the staring blankly at the wall stance that seemed to be the thing to do even though I did not have anyone else there to avoid eye contact with.

There are a number of chilling stories in the press that highlight the growing concerns of healthcare workers and others in public service being subject to unkind, or worse, attentions of some of the lower end of human existence. I am not sure that I would see it in perhaps an inner-city hospital but the lady doctor who attended to me well before my appointed time was alone. No one had passed by while I was there, and no one came or went during my visit. I did not even see anyone until I was

well down the corridor on my way out. I was not sure whether to be grateful that here at least, lone female working is still seen as low risk or to be concerned for her welfare.

Happily, her main concern was my welfare at that instant and she set about confirming that my inner workings were working well. She told me that aortas ought to be less than 3 centimetres in diameter, which is the upper limit and that mine was a slender 2 centimetres. She took great delight in telling me that not only was my aorta in fine fettle but that the traumatic experience of having lubricant – that she had taken the care to warm in advance – squirted on my tummy and an ultrasound wand pressed through it would never need to be done again. It must be true because she said it twice.

For the second time at a hospital appointment, I was away again before the time of the appointment arrived. This would have been some advantage had it not taken me the time I had in hand to find my way out of the building. I must have lost concentration at some point and missed a turn and found myself in an area that said it was the pharmacy. I have watched horror films set in deserted hospitals – usually former mental institutions - where monsters, ghosts or ghouls come out of rooms that looked remarkably like the empty ones I passed. Reminding myself of such things somehow focused my mind a bit and I quickly recovered my bearings and with some relief, found the front door. I am very glad that the hospital is not twenty-four hours as I do not think that I would like to attend at night.

Given that the appointment and the journey had cut across my breakfast time, the Missus suggested that we have bacon rolls from the café next door. It has opened just for the half term week, and it seemed churlish not to have at least one breakfast there. I ordered as soon as I arrived back from town. I was going to wait in the shop until they were ready but was hailed by a couple we have known for many years. Their children have all fled the coup and as she is a teacher, they took the opportunity to get away for a week. We were still talking long after our bacon rolls were delivered and agreed to meet later in the week for a longer chat when the Missus would be there too.

It was a particularly bleak day to be visiting The Farm. There was a sullen grey sky from the outset and a damp chill in the air that the breeze cutting across us in the field did not improve any. I am sure that you can guess what the Missus was doing again, dear reader, but I changed tack from timber construction to digging a small trench around the bottom of the greenhouse structure. The bottom end of the wall panels will sit in the trench and be bolstered with earth to give some stability to the bottom end and cover up the mess I am likely to make cutting them to size.

On the face of it, cutting a trench in soft earth does not seem to be much of a challenge and some of it was not. It was the bits covered in anti-weed matting I struggled with, trying to peel it back out of the way when there was loose compost behind it that continuously dropped into the trench I was trying to dig. I discovered

that, once again, the post hole spade was most useful in clearing the trench after I had broken the ground first with a traditional one.

After ten metres of frustrating digging, I returned again to timber work. I think it is the last on the frame and concerned the bit in the triangle created by the roof pitch at the top of either end. I had taken some time to consider how best to deal with this and concluded that throwing as much timber into the gap as possible seemed the most reasonable course of action. What was unreasonable about it was the back end is still three rungs on a ladder high up.

Despite the height, it provided a welcome break to trench digging. However, when I returned to it the damp in the air had turned damper and I could no longer see beyond the end of the field for mist. It did not take long before the damp turned to wet and in the course of one tea break, it was proper heavy drizzle blowing in. The tractor seat was awash when I went to put it away for the day and by the time I had finished the trench on one half of one end of the greenhouse, I was dripping from head to foot. I had already put away most of my tools leaving only the spades which very quickly joined everything else.

I retired to the cabin where I could watch the Missus finish off her digger work in her nice warm and dry cab while I towelled off ABH on my lap. She, of course, went immediately outside again and returned shortly after with the remains of a small bird poking from her maw. Such was its state that the only indication that it was indeed a small bird once were two small bird legs poking forth.

Early, we had watched our barn owl float gracefully across the field, hunting. I did wonder if small birds are part of its diet and according to the Internet, they are. Mind, the Internet also says that house mice are a favourite which seems obtuse since barn owls are more likely to come across a field mouse. Perhaps it is akin to humans liking delicacies that are less prolific, like beluga caviar and larks' tongues. I commented to the Missus that I thought that owls were nocturnal hunters. She pointed out that it probably was but since we were in and out of the tractor shed where it roosts, it did not have much choice.

The weather was still closing in and by five o'clock, it was almost dark. It was a very shabby end to a day that had a great start either. The mist was so thick that The Cove was almost obscured when we drove back down the hill. So wet and muddy were my outer clothes that I left them in the shop where they would probably still be wet and muddy in the morning. Happily, ABH declined to go around after tea and at last knockings the rain had stopped.

Radio Pasty happily announced that today was the best day of the week. I do hope not.

February 18th – Tuesday

Before I launch into the wonders of today, I thought that I would add a short addendum to the thoughts of yesterday regarding the seemingly empty hospital of West Cornwall. Part of the reason there is little car parking at the hospital is the building work being carried out to complete a new, three storey outpatients building adjacent to the old building. In fact, it is so adjacent that the artist's impression of the completed unit has it adjoined to the old one.

The south facing frontage, including the reception area of the existing building is relatively new, but the rest of the building is showing signs of old age. Not that it is falling apart, but just that it appears very dated. This is no surprise when you come to understand that it was completed in 1907, built on the site of the old 1874 West Cornwall Dispensary and before that the workhouse. In fact, it has all the main ingredients of the horror film I spoke of, apart from it being a hospital for the insane.

The sprawling site is built as a single storey when land in the town clearly was at less of a premium than it is today. We are lucky to have it as it has been pegged for closure several times and even the new outpatient unit was in doubt until as late as 2023.

There, history lesson over.

There was quite the tempest playing out in the bay as we took the air first thing. Unusually, ABH wanted to traverse the big block and who am I to stand in her way. The weather was much more amenable to it than yesterday afternoon, even if the sea was not.

The day brightened as it went on. We made the decision early not to go to The Farm as both of us felt it would be unfair on Mother. My arms felt so too after an extended session on the post hole digger yesterday. It was just a shame that the day turned out so well in the end and if we could have swapped the weather yesterday for today, it would have been ideal. It heralded a day off and I had such plans for doing things rather than being a wastrel. Of course, it did not work out that way and I was, indeed, a wastrel – well, mostly.

One of the things I was keen to track down was some flexible drainpipe. I have had enormous trouble with the fixed pipes that run from the various buildings at The Farm to the IBCs and water butts. They keep getting dislodged and damaged in the vicious winds that scour across the field. The drainpipes have also been twisted and bent to fit the necessary gaps between the building and the hole at the top of the IBC. I thought that by connecting the ends with flexible pipe might be the solution.

It took a while to track down a company that sold what I was looking for. The main problem was finding flexible pipe of the right diameter. A little bit bigger would be alright with a jubilee clip around it but even then, it was hard to find. Eventually, I

tracked down a company that did all manner of hoses. I telephoned a very pleasant and helpful man who told me that my idea, erm, held water, which was useful, and that I should press ahead. I almost did until I discovered that for the two standard sized drainpipes, my little experiment would cost close to £100 and if I wanted to do the same for the bigger drainpipe, that on its own would be £150 for a metre of pipe. I suddenly found that I did not want to do that.

There are cheaper kits on the Internet, which might stand adaptation. Details on measurement were scant, but I reckoned that they would probably be made to fit on the smaller drainpipes and if they did, I would get some more. This development is worth several more paragraphs in future Diary pages, I am sure you will agree, dear reader.

Having satisfied one of my nagging issues I proceeded with another. I had ordered some diamond grit jigsaw blades from our favourite builders' merchant over on the moors at St Just. I had a call yesterday to tell me that they had arrived and since we would not be diverted to The Farm today, I would not be wasting work time in going to collect them, although first I would collect Mother and take her along for the ride.

There have been very few occasions when I have been able to enter the builders' merchant and leave with just what I have gone in there for. Almost as I open the door, I am thinking of other things that perhaps I need, just in case or because I suddenly have thought of a solution to a problem that I had not yet encountered. Today, I went in for some screws I had used up and the jigsaw blades and emerged with additional jubilee clips – alright, I did need those – and a screw in eye to attach the other side of our newspaper box to the wall to stop it flying off in the wind. At the side of the counter in the shop I have a small pile of big washers purchased to fix the multi-gym machine in the gymnasium. They have been there for two years. I will put the eye with them – to remind me.

I brought Mother back home after that in case I spent even more money elsewhere and decided that since I had not spent money elsewhere, I may as well order the overalls that I probably quite desperately need. The cuffs of my pink overalls are hanging off and some of the poppers have gone. I still, however, have an irrational superstition that I should not yet start wearing new overalls until the greenhouse project is finished lest I jinx the whole thing. The front is longer than the back, the front is not aligned, and we expect a gale of wind when the roofing sheets are delivered. Quite how I might jinx it further would require a leap of imagination but that is the thing with irrational fears, they are irrational.

While I procrastinated, I was putting off another irrationality: that I should be doing something constructive. Surely, having a day doing nothing would not hurt for once – although it does make Diary writing a bit of a challenge. Anyway, I was mindful that I had not yet put the warning reflectors on the big metal guard protecting the back corner of the roof on the drive up to the mews behind us. It is only a matter of time before someone scats the corner off their vehicle instead and puts the blame on me.

I also reasoned that now that I had purchased an eye, I should drill a hole into the front of the shop so that it could be installed.

All that thinking can make a grumpy shopkeeper weary and I found that having a little zizz with an ABH on a cushion on my lap an irresistible temptation – plus the fact that she was kind of angling for it too by pawing at my leg. By the time I woke up, it was too late for any working, so, it having turned into such a pretty afternoon, a stank down to the beach seemed in order.

We took the Coastal Path above the beach as usual. From there it is possible to witness the utter devastation of the south end of the beach in all its glory. It really is in a pitiful state with no sand at all to speak of from the bottom of the OS slip to the end of The Beach complex. I am going to have to find a better description for car park and restaurant with the kiosk underneath. It has not been called The Beach for many years and new readers – alright, it is not beyond the realm of possibility – will not have a clue where I mean.

Further along we looked down on the commencement of the work to renew the Lifeguard hut. It looks like they are still preparing the site, and it occurred to me that they must have some trouble getting supplies to the location. All became clear as we walked back across the beach. There was a quad bike and trailer at the bottom of the dune where the Lifeguard hut was. Before we got to it, they packed in for the day ahead of being cut off by the tide. It must have been a venture akin to finding a route through the Northwest Passage as the quad twisted and wound its way across and around rocks and boulders between there and the OS slip where it went up. At a guess I would say they are lucky to be able to do that and that the bedrock there is relatively flat. It is no more than a thread of good fortune that stands between having a replacement Lifeguard hut or not.

ABH got lucky as well. There were several dogs along the beach keen to have a play with her. There were also people in some abundance and families gathered making the best of the weather. We met no one on the Coast Path until we arrived at The Valley, which was not too surprising. I enjoyed the peace of the first half of the walk and she the company of the second.

We must set to with a vengeance tomorrow. Time is running short.

February 19th – Wednesday

It had rained overnight and looked like it had not long stopped. It left the prospect of another muddy day at The Farm but at least it had stopped raining when I took ABH out first thing. In fact, the day was looking half decent with some brightening skies. I do not think that any sun breaking through would suddenly dry up The Farm but at least it would look good while we were sinking up to our necks.

The previous night, the Missus had warned me to pack up my breakfast in the morning so that I could take it to The Farm with me, so keen was she to get going. I told her that unfortunately I had planned scrambled eggs on toast, which would not pack too well. In the event, I scrambled to get ready earlier than I might ordinarily, brooking no procrastination. We were not too late in leaving but I think that we could have been earlier.

We left behind a sea that was slightly less raging than it was the day before but still managing to throw itself over the full length of the Harbour wall. No long after arriving at The Farm, the sun broke through and there was some proper warmth to it. It did not last very long and when I checked the forecast, the mist that had been forecast for the afternoon had turned into heavy rain less than 24 hours later. We do so hate that heavy rain that sneaks up on the forecasters so that they cannot see it until it is nearly here. It is hardly playing the game, now is it.

I need not have worried overly. The weather did indeed deteriorate quite badly, looking very dark and grey when we left at half past four o'clock but the suddenly promised rain turning into a slightly wet squib. We do so hate that heavy rain that pretends to sneak up on the forecasters and then does not. We did get some heavy rain, but it waited until after we had got home.

I did not have a whole lot to do today at The Farm. The trench I was digging for the bottom of the cladding sheets only needed to be dug on each side having already finished the front. The back is just about the length of a full sheet. Only the smallest bit will go underground and then only in some sections of the back. It meant that I was finished with my planned work much earlier than expected.

The IBCs need to be moved about to be more easily accessed from the new greenhouse. Eventually, I will have a marine bilge pump installed in one of them which we can automatically water the growing areas on the greenhouse. That will have to wait until next year but because all the IBCs have become disconnected from their sources, it seems reasonable to put them in place now and worry about the pump next year.

With IBCs on my mind, I mapped out where they were going to sit, overlapping the left front of the greenhouse. The area was less than level to start with so I entreated the Missus and her amazing digger to carve me a flat area where the IBCs could sit. This she duly did at a moment of convenience in her quest to clear the big growing areas and surrounds. When I had finished my digging, I set about marking out the area properly and levelling it accurately. The ground needs to be properly prepared as it will support a metric tonne on each metre square. I do not want the ground subsiding under the weight.

The levelling took a while, but not so long as the Missus clearing the big mound that had been thrown up when she created the first growing area a couple of years ago. Up until that point, she had been filling the trailer, stopping to switch to the tractor to

move the earth down the field and the coming back to use the digger again. With me on the tractor and she on the digger, we easily doubled the speed at which the mound was cleared. I took the last load down shortly before it was time to call it a day again.

The fibre installation works have reached a conclusion in The Cove, leaving the street and the pavement to be parked upon at key constricting locations. The roadworks have now moved to the main road where they have erected traffic lights. At some point very recently, the people working on the information boards that have been coming and going in recent weeks have been back to finish the job, in The Cove and up at the top. I have not had the opportunity to see what information is displayed but it looks very much like the same information is displayed in The Cove, by the telescopes, and on Cove Hill, by Marias Lane. You and I both, dear reader, will have to wait in suspense until I have seen the revelations on display.

It also reminded me that our advertising sign that was blown from the railing opposite the OS by one of the winter storms, needs to be replaced. A neighbour told me that someone had stashed it behind the row of public bins on the OS slipway where it has remained relatively safe. I put some cable ties in the back of the truck to remind me to stop there and replace it but so far that has not worked. The sign is dated and says we sell fresh fish, which is a bit misleading, but we have no time to change it this year. I am not sure how effective it is, but we do get people asking where the fresh fish is to, before I tell them it is frozen but locally landed, so I am guessing that some people read it.

ABH usually conks out when we get back. She does not rest at all at The Farm and got quite cold today as she will not take shelter, either. Climbing onto the sofa, she remained there until late evening when she asked to go out. When she was feeling under the weather, the bleddy hound used to seek out a particular weed to eat. ABH does the same and did so when I took her out. We are not sure if she caught a chill in the damp and the cold but chewing long dead birds and other unsavoury items cannot help. Fortunately, we keep medicine for such eventualities, but it indicated a broken night's sleep for one of us. I girded my loins.

February 20th – Thursday

I do not remember much about the early part of the morning. It was that sort of day. It was raining but not noticeably so when I took ABH around the block. I think we were just lucky because it came quite heavily during the rest of the first part of the morning. It is doing us no favours at The Farm. No, let me rephrase that. It is doing us grievous harm at The Farm and making our work exceedingly difficult. Ordinarily, we would step back and let the ground dry out before continuing but we have limited time left with the digger and limited time left until the shop reopens.

Despite that, we felt we it was more than worthwhile taking some time out to meet with some friends. We have known them through the shop since we opened 21 years ago. We have seen their children grow up to the age of leaving home, which has left our friends with the freedom to come away when they please – almost. The lady is a teacher and constrained by school holidays and he is a farmer constrained by the seasons. Since we have had The Farm, he has been immensely useful providing advice on soil management and providing big bags of this and that with which to sow the fields and scatter.

We met in the café next door. I had suggested ten o'clock not realising that was their opening time this week. I got there early when it said closed on the door, which I thought had not been reversed inadvertently. I was very embarrassed when I realised that they were actually closed, and I had committed one of my own worst faux pas. I was forgiven, I think, and we had a short chat about business until they were really open, and our friends arrived.

We passed a pleasant hour talking about a range of things and time flew. The Missus and I do not get out much, so it was a wonder that we were able to hold a conversation for so long in polite company. I had even worn my false ears for the occasion that allowed me to hear with perfect clarity the clatter of crockery and the whooshing workings of the coffee machine. Having been out of any social circle for some extended time, I think we all had an enjoyable time and found each other's company convivial to say the least.

We wasted no time in heading off to The Farm immediately after we has said our goodbyes. It was a poor omen that the lane was flooded in places, though not as badly as before, and very indicative of what was to come when the truck made two deep grooves in the churned up part of the entrance. We will have to pass across this ground tomorrow and while our 4x4 truck will just about manage, the drop side truck that will be coming up with the roof and cladding panels, will not only need to be towed out but towed in as well.

I left the Missus doing the preparation for the intended work and headed off again. We had already used up the spare diesel for the digger and we reasoned that we would probably need to top up some more before it went back. We had not quite emptied the container last time, so I tarried to empty it into the digger. I then left with ABH riding shotgun on a trip into town, leaving another two deep tread marks in the mud.

As well as filling up the truck and our container at Tesmorburys, I also stopped at the pet food shop since we had run out of traditional food for ABH. Not that she will eat it, but it seems the right thing to do to keep trying. I also stopped at the outdoor activities shop next to the pet food store. I have been looking for a webbing belt to replace my previous one that wore out. Not, may I add, through being overstretched but worn out through overuse. I had notice online that this particular store stocked the sort I was after and had made a mental note to visit the store when I was next

there. I perused the whole store and in the end had to ask the very pleasant lady at the till. It is a very big store that sells everything that I saw they did on the Internet with the sole exception of belts. Gosh, I was disappointed. I had waited a long time to discover that.

We returned to The Farm post-haste and made another two deep grooves in the ground. We were now just making matters worse, not that we could have done much about it. One thing we had noticed was that the Missus had spread some of the subsoil that we have in a pile at the end of the field – long story – in an area not pegged for growing and it was in better condition than the topsoil elsewhere. It had not been subject to the same pounding, but it was worth a try we felt.

The next couple of hours were diverted from our planned purpose purely due to the rain. It was just exceedingly bad luck that the weather had turned against us. We moved another four trailer loads of subsoil up to the affected area and at the end of the day, the Missus moved the digger up to flatten it. It did not bode well that the tractor had almost bogged down putting one of the loads in place and when I drove the truck out later, it left another two deep grooves in it.

I think it extremely unlikely that the ground will dry out sufficiently overnight to give us a free ride delivering the panels. The way it is looking, we will have more rain overnight instead. Looking on the bright side, if the drop sided truck is stuck in the mud it will be less likely to be blown over in the 50 miles per hour winds whipping up from the south.

In another of those, 'you could not make it up' events, I had intended to install the rear panels first on Saturday. On our trip into town, Radio Pasty were warning of a guts of rain coming in Sunday. Around here, heavy rain rarely comes alone, so I checked the forecast and, sure enough, the rain is arriving hand-in-hand with a 60 miles per hour southerly. I very rapidly changed my mind, and I shall be installing the front panels on Saturday. At least they will be blown onto the supports not off them. I live in hope. I will also have to be very particular about how I strap the stock sheets down so that they do not blow away. I recall last time I had to pick some of them out of the field the other side of the lane next to us and they were steel panels and a lot heavier.

It reminded me very vividly of the Bonzo Dog song, Down on Jollity Farm. "And this one's name is Jollity, believe me folks it's great, For everything sings out to us as we go through the gate." Yes, exactly like that.

February 21st – Friday

Dear reader, apologies. I had not set out to write one of the longest Diary pages in history, it just came out that way. Perhaps you might like to go and make a cup of tea and grab a packet of biscuits and find yourself a nice, comfortable chair to sit in.

There again, you might find that turning off your computer and doing something far more interesting a better option altogether.

It did rain overnight and heavily, too. It was not like I could cancel the delivery of the sheets that were almost certainly already on their way. We would just have to press ahead and face the problems head on and there certainly would be problems. That was not being pessimistic. That was guaranteed.

ABH was not very keen to go out around the block first thing. I left it as long as I could but, in the end, had to drag her kicking and screaming – and that is not just a saying where ABH is concerned – from her bed where she had attached herself to the Missus in the hope it would save her. We did not head around the block, but I let her – and me – off with a quick run into the mews behind us. We were back inside a couple of minutes later, barely wet.

It appeared that we were lucky again because the rain came in harder after that. It caused me to rummage for my waterproofs for my trip to the gymnasium, which is almost unheard of. Maybe I have been generally lucky and have not had to tog up in full metal jacket waterproofs more than a handful of times in all the years I have been going. The weather does have to be fairly extreme for me to waterproof up for the gymnasium, but training in wet plimsols is tricky and possibly dangerous when carrying weights. I do not do it very often because it is a pain in the neck changing when I get there and it has invariably stopped raining when I come out, like it did today.

I will not have to worry about it again for some time. Today was my last blistering session at the hut with a tin roof because very soon now, it will be no longer there. I was sent a message from the lady who has been running with the rebuild informing me that the asbestos assessment team will be in there from March 11th and after that it will be out of bounds. Even before that date, all the equipment will be removed to storage. I have decided to pull out what I use on Sunday, so that it does not go missing, and for now, house it in the shop. I have an idea where I will go for the interim but have yet to make those arrangements.

I think I gave my last hut with a tin roof performance its due respect. The next time I head down there, it will be a new building, and I will probably have to book my sessions. In return for such inconvenience, I will probably not have to freeze in the winter.

The message I had from the cladding people was that the driver would be with us at some time between ten o'clock and two o'clock. From the conversations that I had with the company, it seemed unlikely that the lorry would be here very early. I was therefore most surprised when I had a telephone call from the driver not long after I got back from the gymnasium and a subsequent walk around the block with ABH, telling me he was 40 minutes away.

I had carried out some preparation for the arrival and thought to place the sheets on the benches across the road. The five metre lengths could go on one pair of benches and the 2.5 metre sheets in two separate piles on another couple of benches. I collected as many ratchet straps as I could find – I used to have a plethora of these but suddenly I could only find four – so that they would not float off on the wind.

In The Cove it did not seem that we were affected hardly at all by the fifty miles per hour southerly gale blowing in. One gust still managed to dislodge one of the smaller sheets. It gave me more cause to worry about taking them to the south facing Farm than the worry I had already dedicated to taking them up top the south facing Farm. The truck that turned up was much smaller than I was led to believe. It could easily have got down the lane and could have delivered direct. I am glad that he did not as I would have been very embarrassed about the state of the truck after he had been up there. In any case, the driver, who was an amiable, cheeky chappie confirmed that he would not have been happy delivering in such conditions and I could hardly blame him. He had several drops to do after us back up the line.

It was just as well, therefore, that I had asked our local lad and all-around good guy to help out. I cannot think of many people who would have gone through what transpired with a laugh and a joke and without complaint – other than he had just washed his truck and now would need to do it again.

Local lad, we will call him Lucky being roughly his initials and the fact that, today, he was. Lucky arrived soon after the delivery driver had left. With little fuss we loaded the sheets onto his truck. I had envisaged that we would load the small ones flat and the long ones resting up against the frame above the bulkhead. It has occurred to be that by doing so the feisty wind would knock the truck back at the top of the hill. Lucky must have thought so too because we laid the long ones flat as well and had them hanging off the back of the truck by two metres. It was not ideal, but it was only a short journey and better than my idea.

I had anticipated that I would need to tow him across the mud lake between the entrance to the field and the place where the sheets would be set down. I might have anticipated trouble, but I certainly had not foreseen that it would be quite so bad. We had put the subsoil on top of an already wet and vaguely gelatinous lake of mud and all it did was form a crust that our 4x4 sunk into and slid to a stop. I made the mistake of making too slow an approach. In trying to extract myself, made the mess much worse.

Lucky, trying to avoid my mistake, backed up and took a run at it but also came to grief. There was no way he was getting out by himself, so I backed into the mud and attached the strop that I had prepared for such an eventuality. The strop can be deployed much faster than a tow rope and does not suffer the same elasticity, although perhaps it could be a little longer. At least my two front wheels were on slightly more solid ground and with a bit of sliding, dragged Lucky into the field.

I decoupled expecting his truck to manage on the grass but even here, the truck failed to gain traction. I hooked up again and pulled the truck around until it was adjacent to the set down area. Here we undid the straps holding down the sheets and commenced with the small sheets, unloading them.

According to two forecasts, the wind today was supposed to moderate in the early afternoon. I suppose if you consider that it went from 55 miles per hour to 40 miles per hour, it did. It was, however, not very helpful to our operation. As we unloaded the smaller sheets one flipped off and had to be recovered and did it again when we turned our backs to unload some more. The plan was to strap down the small sheets then unload the big sheets, but the wind had other ideas. As soon as the last small sheet was lifted, the wind took three of the big sheets, one after the other, and threw two of them at Lucky. He was indeed very lucky to be able to palm them off and the third I stopped with a crafty block of the midriff. I was wearing several layers and hardly noticed. It shook us a bit though.

We strapped the big sheets down on the back of the truck while we secured the small sheets to the pallets I had prepared yesterday. We very carefully then unstrapped the big sheets and lowered them to the ground in the shelter of the truck. Working quickly, we lifted them onto the second set of pallets then secured them with ratchet straps and a couple of old tyres the Missus had uncovered in her digging.

It was only then we could relax for a moment, congratulated ourselves and wonder at our luck with the flying sheets. I really could not imagine it would have gone so well with anyone else. Lucky is resourceful, practical and we just got on with it with no fuss at all without having to agree what we were going to do first. It is always a difficult moment, but I asked how much he wanted for such sterling service. I did not want to embarrass myself by offering too little or him by paying too much – he said he would not be embarrassed at all, so I gave him double what he asked, which was very little and worth every penny. Best tenner I ever spent, I reckon.

Having concluded the payment for work done, I asked him what it was worth to tow his truck out of the field again.

In this regard, I had some major concerns. Where I had stopped to bring his truck adjacent to the unloading area left no room for a run up to the mud lake. We discussed how we might approach it scientifically but, in the end, agreed to just go for it. I put the truck into low range and fixed differential – no, me neither, but it worked and in slow grinding motion, we drew out of the gate and into the lane. When we go up tomorrow, we will park by the gate and walk all the tools and so forth in. Lucky recommended that we scrape the area and start again. He is a smart cookie when it comes to matters of the land, and much else I have learned over the years, so we will follow his advice. We will take some time out next week to go and get some grids.

There was a couple of hours of work day left and I could have made an attempt to start installing the panels. There again, I could have called it a day and returned home and done nothing for the rest of the day. That did seem favourite, so I did that.

Earlier, while I waited for the delivery truck to turn up and later for Lucky to appear, I stood in the shop doorway in readiness. The sea, after a day of respite, had returned to mayhem and chaos. There was plenty of white water right across the bay, big rolling waves crashing onto Cowloe, white crested waves running onto the beach and plenty of spray climbing up the various cliffs across the bay from us. This display persisted all day and attracted half term visitors wondering what to do with their last day and finding the answer in watching the ocean put on a performance. Despite having lived here for more than twenty years, such a thing is still a spectacle to wonder at.

It is entirely possible that a casual observer might also find that watching some eejit with little in the way of technical skills to commend him, embarking on a reasonably major building project in the middle of winter on one of the most exposed areas of the village, also a spectacle to wonder at. I have had cause, such as the events of today, to wonder at it myself.

February 22nd – Saturday

Sandwiched between two absolute rotters, we had a day that we could be useful in. ABH very kindly woke me up early so that I could take full advantage of it. Unfortunately, she left the Missus sleeping and I eventually had to evoke the doomsday plan to get her out of bed and ready for The Farm.

I was very keen to get ahead with putting the front cladding panels on the greenhouse. Knowing that they would all need to be cut to custom lengths, I was anxious about how the jigsaw with its diamond grit blade would perform. My expectation was that it might be a slow process, and I was wondering if I would get the whole of the front done in time.

Even before we left, it had occurred to me that I might have ordered the wrong length screws for the job. The roof sheets are being screwed into 4x4 timbers and through the apex of the corrugations. When I placed the order, I simply subtracted the height of the apex because the cladding is screwed through the bottom of the corrugation. I thought of using the word 'nadir' there but considered it might seem a bit cocky and highbrow for a simple grumpy shopkeeper to be using, especially one who forgot that the timbers on the sides are 3x2 and 65 millimetre screws would be too long.

I held out hope that it might just work but having tried them against the timber supports, it was clear that they would be way too long. It was a shame since I had battled across the mud lake to find that out and would now need to battle my way back to go and fetch some suitable replacements.

It was extremely fortunate that our favourite builders' merchant had the right thing and had them in abundance. I had purchased 300 of the wrong sort and needed a similar quantity of the right sort. Clearly it meant a 40 minutes round trip to go and get them and it set me back on a day when every minute might have been crucial. When I jumped into the truck, ABH was already in her seat, so I took her for the run so at least she would not be getting under the Missus' feet while I was gone. This was just as well since the Missus was again stuck to the seat of her digger almost from the moment we arrived.

To demonstrate just how single minded I was about finishing the one side of the cladding, I walked into the builders' merchant and back out again without purchasing anything else. I was back at The Farm in the blink – alright, a very long blink, I grant you – of an eye and ready to do business.

I doubt very much that the Missus even noticed that I had gone. She was way down the field removing the mound that had been thrown up by the creation of the second outside growing areas. In any case, she would have been alerted to my return by ABH who immediately ran down the field to her as soon as I let her out of the truck.

It is possible that my three o'clock in the morning think throughs of the day to come are seen as an oddity or some sort of affliction. The latter is possible true, but I find that I am better prepared for the day having already lived through it once in advance. It means that I get to live my days twice and because things do not always go according to expectations, the day is full of little surprises, too – not all of them pleasant, unfortunately.

Therefore, I already knew that I would need two lengths of timber wider than the cladding sheets to pinch them together and make them more stable for cutting. I also knew that I would set up two work benches and have clamps at the ready. All this would have needed thinking about before I started and would have delayed the implementation considerably.

What I could not have foreseen was the expensive diamond grit jigsaw blade was far too short for the job in hand. It would have been the better tool for the job too, but I fell back on my angle grinder and a slim disc instead. This went much more smoothly than the last time I cut panels with it. Last time, I went through one disc every two sheets and the lines were not exactly straight. This time and a few Internet video tutorials later, the one blade lasted the whole job – it was plastic and not metal I was cutting – and my lines were straight. Clamping the panels together made all the difference, too, keeping them rigid while I did the cutting.

I measured and cut the panels in pairs. The difference in height between one end of the greenhouse and the other is gradual and doing the cutting in pairs worked well. I also used a level to make sure that the panels corresponded to the level of the supports and to each previous panel, and I was surprised just how quickly I managed to make progress. My game plan was to start from either end and meet in

the middle, thinking that the sides would marry up. It was fortunate, therefore, that my builder friend turned when I was part way through two panels from the opposite end and disabused me of this notion. He explained that I would be very lucky for the corrugations to match up exactly. I had agonised over this for hours in the small hours of the morning and on several occasions. Having thought long and hard about it, I had concluded that it would work just fine. I will concede that those particular three o'clock in the morning episodes were utterly wasted.

Resuming the panel installation from the original direction I very quickly discovered that, indeed, they did not marry up exactly. It was close, though. I was dreading having to remove the two installed sheets thinking that it would be messy but it was simple enough and the same screw holes in the plastic could be used again. The sun was setting and the light softening when I drove in the last screw. Oddly, all that was plain sailing compared to fitting the little plastic caps. These caps on each screw hopefully protect them from the elements and make the securing a bit more waterproof. A more ballsaching task I could not imagine, other than perhaps taking some of our smaller products out of their overdone packaging in the shop. It did however highlight the half dozen screws that I had inexplicably missed, which was a good thing.

When specifying the numbers of screws with the cladding company, they had estimated 300 for all four sides. I used 250 on the one side. It may well be overkill but this is the side that has to face several 80 miles per hour winds during the year and frequent winds at 50 or 60 miles per hour. The first test will be tomorrow when the southerly winds are forecast to reach 60 miles per hour. I will be torn between watching the camera all day tomorrow or let it be a big surprise when we turn up on Monday whether the panels survived or not. In any case, I now need to urgently restock with about 300 appropriately sized screws before I can commence the next sections. I will however be a little more sparing with their use.

It took me a further half an hour to clear up my tools and put them away, fortunately discovering that I forgot the metal stepladder out just before we left. That flying around could have caused some damage. I had to drag the Missus from the digger despite it evidently growing dark around her. "It has lights", she told me as I bundled her into the truck. She had ignored the advice of our expert and not cleared the mud from the mud lake. Instead, she dumped some more earth on top. I managed to drive out but we will have to take time out to purchase some ground reinforcement panels, probably on Monday, to lay down.

We will take stock of the weather tomorrow before seeing what we can get away with. There is no way I can put panels up in anything more than a light breeze. Even then I was lucky that the breeze was in the right direction, pressing the sheets against the supports today. The Missus can still do digging even if the ground is a little less helpful when wet. Gosh, what busy bees we are.

February 23rd – Sunday

Very much a wet play day today. As usual, it was not even half as bad as advertised, although we did have a gale of rain that lasted all day. I am sure that it would have caused flooding somewhere further up the line, which would have been severe enough for some. It seems these days even the mere thought of rain causes flooding somewhere. I am sure that it was not always the case and that a few poor decisions have been made by people who probably knew better.

It was not just the rain and the wind that made me cancel my usual Sunday at the range; I have been up there in worse. We are hard on our VAT end of year and not far off the business end of year. Up until last year, these two coincided, which was quite convenient. Clearly, having a system that was convenient for us was far too much for HMRC, which changed it last year in the name of Making Tax Difficult, erm, Digital. The end of each quarter requires us to prepare our invoices, input them into a computer system and do other administrative type activities. There is a bit more to do for year end.

Since we have been hard at work at The Farm nearly every spare moment we have, the time left for playing with invoices and counting things has been limited. I did manage to squeeze in a bit more stock counting at The Farm on Thursday between tractor runs when I was waiting on the cladding sheets to arrive. Given the nature of today, it seemed ideal to stop everything else and get the administration out of the way.

During the morning before the invoices got a look in and I also kept my eye on the CCTV at The Farm. There were no obvious signs of destruction, although the camera was waving about a bit, but it is not always easy to tell from such images. It did seem that all the cladding sheets were still in place when I looked last. Also, the wind pegged at reaching gusts of 60 miles per hour barely topped 50 miles per hour. I lost interest after a while and did not look again until late in the day when I noticed that our mud lake had turned into a water lake as well.

One of the other things I had agreed to do today was to get my gear out of the hut with a tun roof ahead of the asbestos assessment and anyone else getting their hands on it. I waited until the Missus came back from collecting Mother after which I took ABH for a quick run around the block. I had to clear the back of the truck to start with. There were five cases of power tools and two tool bags to find space for in the shop so that I could squeeze my rowing machine in. There were only weights and a roll which I lean on and allows me to do my weighted squats while leaning against a wall. One set of weights and the roll are not mine, so I left a note with the lady running things in case anyone cries foul. I do hope not because they are essential to my circuits.

I did not bother to put the tools back in the truck when I had finished. We have to go to Camborne and the wonderful McSalvors store for the ground reinforcement mats tomorrow and we may need the space again.

Maybe it was the sudden forced stop from doing things, but I was feeling a tad weary for most of the day. I took a little zizz in the middle of the day and another just before tea. I cannot say I felt any less weary afterwards, but it passed the time without feeling the need to be doing something.

Part of not feeling the need to do something was because I had already done it. Between the first and second zizz, I went down to the shop to finish counting things I should have counted a long while ago but was at first too idle and then too busy. The hooded sweatshirts that I always shy away from because I think it is too difficult, the best quality mugs and the hats all needed to be finished off for the year end stock count.

I do not know why I am so averse to counting the hooded sweatshirts. I always leave it until the last possible moment and when I do get around to doing it find that it really was not that bad after all. It is a weird notion that the thought of something is worse than the something itself. It is like Sunday roasts, the idea of them fill me with dread but I enjoy eating them and the clearing up after is never as bad as I anticipate.

Counting the hats was actually worse. We have piled some of the outside display and the postcard stands down that aisle and I had to move them all to be able to get at the hats. The other problem with hats is identifying them against the inventory, so while I write down 'big brim hat with shells' when I count them, the inventory has them as LP20010. That seems entirely reasonable when they arrive as the bag has a big identifying code on it. Sadly, the individual hats do not, or not necessarily, so marrying up the two at a count is difficult to say the least. Often, I have to fudge it for the financials which leads to confusion when I reorder, sometimes ordering more when there is plenty in the store because I wrote them down as something else. Happily, counting the mugs was a breeze.

Quite exhausted from counting things and listening to music from my somewhat eclectic collection of tunes on the computer, I went upstairs for my second zizz with ABH on my lap. She started getting a bit fidgety before teatime and by the time Mother had gone home in the middle of the evening, she was full on into irritating mode. I put it down to cabin fever. We had restricted walks out to going around into the mews and back again and had not had a proper leg stretch since the morning before the rain started properly when we had a run on the beach.

In the end, I took her out with her coat on and took a walk around the small block. I think she saw the error of her ways after that because we had no fuss at all in the run up to bedtime. Since I slept twice during the day, it will probably be me cause trouble in the night. That will teach her.

February 24th – Monday

This morning could not have been more different than yesterday; we had blue sky right from the outset and were able to cruise the mean streets with impunity and without waterproofs. It was my kind of day and probably a few other people's too.

It was the sort of day when you wake up and think, I will go shopping for manly and exciting things. Alright, it was not quite as spontaneous as that. The Missus and I agreed yesterday that we would both go to MacSalvors in Camborne because we both needed manly and exciting things. MacSalvors in Camborne is a veritable sweetie shop for grown-ups. It sells, well, it does not sell sweets or food, nor does it sell dresses and dolls. There, everything else is fair game.

What we needed most was some ground reinforcing mats. We had some from MacSalvors several years ago and they have worked a treat. They can barely be seen but the parts of the entrance to The Farm that we can drive over without engaging ultra-double-very-low-gear and locked differential with overhead foxbats are the bits that have the ground pads under them. I looked online and they are very expensive. I do not recall them being quite so much the last time, and when we looked at them in MacSalvors, they were still not as much as the ones on the Internet. We bought 32.

One of the other things I will have to try and do before the shop opens is move the IBCs. I am beginning to think that this may be a bit of a tall order, but I would prefer to try and fail than not have tried at all. As long as I do not leave the Missus short of water over the, ahem, long, hot, dry summer we are going to have it is worth the gamble. The game plan will be to put an empty one in the new location and pump the water from the next full one into it. The new empty one can then be moved and the next full one pumped across.

You may have identified a key element there in the plan, dear reader. Yes, a pump. The Missus already has one, but it is insufficiently powerful to pump the water the 25 metres required. It also lacks a big battery because the one that was purchased for the purpose of watering the plants, has expired. I had been looking online at marine bilge pumps that I thought might be appropriate. The ones I had my eye on will pump several thousand litres per hour, which sounded good to me. I reckoned that 2,000 litres per hour would not be too shabby and would fill one IBC in half an hour and use one of our leisure batteries that are charged off our solar panels up there.

Our friends at MacSalvors have a marine section and just about every imaginable marine appliance is there including several options for bilge pumps. It took a while to select one, the first hurdle being that the pumping capacity on all of them was set out in gallons. Thanks to the facilities available on my smart mobile telephone, one of which will convert litres to gallons in the blink of an eye, I was able to identify which pumps met my requirements. The very pleasant lady at the counter was most helpful and willing to spend time going through each of the pumps. As well as capacity, the

wire that runs between the pump and the battery needed to be long enough to reach the bottom of the IBC on one end and the battery on the other. Many of the pumps, design for the shallow bilges on a boat, were less than a metre long.

Eventually, we found just the unit. It came as a kit and was quiter a bit more expensive than I had hoped, but the wire was at least two metres in length. I also could not believe that the unit, a little smaller than a regular can of pop would pump 500 gallons or 2278 litres per hour. We will give it a go when it is time to send the digger back – we have it for another week – as it will need a wash down before it goes. It will be a good test. I have made a note to self not to do it near the mud lake.

We progressed to the second MacSalvors shop unit across the road and purchased the 32 ground reinforcement plates. Having counted them out, I could not find a trolley big enough to take them comfortably. I found a trolley that would take them uncomfortably teetering on the top, so I used that. We also found the additional screws for the cladding required and all manner of other things that we did not know that we needed. I then forgot to look for longer diamond grit jigsaw blades that they would undoubtedly had and kicked myself all the way home, which is some feat while driving.

We had taken Mother along for the ride. It beats knitting at home and listening to Radio Pasty, not that I have had much experience of that, so it was a huge assumption on my part. Dropping Mother back home so she could resume knitting and listening to Radio Pasty, we went back home first to change into DIYman and woman, squeeze the required tools into the back of the truck alongside the 32 ground reinforcement mats, the bilge pump, screws, 25 metres of 20 millimetre hose that I had to convert to inches first and two rolls of fencing wire, a washing up bowl and some gloves. We could not fit in a cuddly toy even if MacSalvors did them, which they did not. Thus armed, we ventured forth to The Farm.

The morning's adventure had left us precious little time for farming. The previous day's rain had left the ground that was already in a parlous state, an almost impassible swamp. Coming back out again later, I found an even lower gear on the truck to get us out again. It was a gear that in the years we have had the truck, not found necessary to engage. I had read the manual – it must have been a very dull day – which is how I knew the gear existed, but the detail was long faded in my memory. When it came to disengage the gear out in the lane, the procedure for doing so eluded me. There were several fretful minutes while I tried a number of different options before discovering that the usual gear selector had to be in neutral first.

Sorry, I digress. Now, where was I? Ah, yes, we were late arriving at The Farm which did not give us much time to progress our separate work plans. The Missus set to moving the earth again with the aid of the tractor and tipping trailer that I extracted for her. It more easily traversed the mud lake and if the truck should ever get stuck, we have a plan B to get it out.

After delivering the tractor to the appropriate work area, I set out my tools and went about cladding the back of the greenhouse. It was a master stroke that I did the cladding on the front first, although it was because of the forthcoming wind, but it also gave some shelter to the back. I mentioned that putting up the panels in anything less than light airs would be a trial and the wind today was a bit more robust. It was indeed a trial but in the shelter of the front panels, it was just about manageable using clamps to secure the panels while I settled them in the correct place and fixed them.

Also a while ago, I celebrated the conclusion of my working at height. In fact, I think I mentioned a little jig. Well, fate has a way of coming back and biting you on the bottom for such flagrant behaviour and I was up the bleddy ladder again securing the top fixings on the panels. I managed to get six done in the time we had left, which was not bad going and only possible because I did not have to cut any of them. These do not quitter reach the ground, which I knew in advance and will have to be back filled with earth. I also want to put anti-weed matting down because the ferns and brambles will invade more readily on that side.

As I was clearing up it was obvious that we would not have the time to lay down the ground reinforcement panels. The Missus took some time to flatten the area having churned it up some more earlier putting some more topsoil into the growing area behind it. She also informed me that the tipping trailer hydraulics had sprung a leak. I went and had a look at quite spectacularly, it sprays out at the join on the trailer end.

Part of the problem is that the hose that came with the trailer is far too long and had the propensity to drag and snag, which I assume it did. I will have to see if I can get a replacement tomorrow which will obviously add another delay to the cladding. It also means learning very quickly how to replace the hydraulic hose on the trailer. Until I do, the Missus cannot do her work, and the extended hire of the digger is going to waste. I am wondered just how many more marbles the small gods of grumpy shopkeepers have at their disposal for throwing under our feet as time to do the work runs out.

I discovered that they must have found another bag in the toybox because as I lay my head down to sleep, the rain started again on the skylight.

February 25th – Tuesday

There must have been quite a bit of rain on and off during the night as the street was still wet in the morning when we stepped outside. We headed for the near virgin beach at around half past seven. The only visitor ahead of us was a seal that must have been there since high water as there were just the one set of tracks heading for the sea. Judging from where the tracks stopped, we had only just missed it.

Later on, a visiting friend sent me a message to tell me another seal was on its way up the beach. By the time he finished sending the message he had to send another to say that it had changed its mind and had gone out again. The tracks left by our earlier seal started at the point where the dead shag lay. It seemed less of a coincidence, and I could not help but wonder if the seal and the shag were acquainted and it had just come up to stand, or lay, a lonely vigil for a few hours and to pay its respects. ABH had a good sniff at the spot. I hope she felt suitably guilty after chasing the shag into the sea a couple of days ago.

Last week and thankfully before the shag washed up, we were beaten to the beach by one very keen small child. Dressed in a head-to-toe waterproof romper suit and a woolly hat, she had dad out one day and mum out the next before half past seven o'clock. Waving her spade about, she was giggling like a drain. I am sure mum and dad have a few years yet to get their own back.

Unusually, ABH took me up the western slip unbid. Perhaps she *was* feeling guilty. She took me around the block and from Coastguard Row we looked out across the bay to a shower falling on St Just. I did hope that this was not the order of the day but was grievously disappointed later because it was.

Yesterday – I omitted to say – the sea was in a right state of agitation. Over on the reef that runs from Brisons to Cot Valley, white water was piled high. It is unusual to see it quite so active on that spot. It was misbehaving over Cowloe and down the Tribbens too and when we came down the hill later in the brightness of the end of day, white water was beautifully stark against the blue around it. If we had not been farming, I would have stayed and watched it all day.

First on the menu today was to try and fix the tipping trailer hydraulic hose. It had occurred to me yesterday that it might have been easier to take the hose into the shop I had in mind. We did not have time, and I was not going to go up to The Farm first this morning to do it. The farm equipment supplier on the Long Rock Industrial Estate was most helpful last time we needed something, so I thought they might well know which part I needed without the part in hand.

I drove out reasonably early, although not quite as early as I would have liked and went straight to the shop. As expected, the very pleasant man behind the counter was very helpful but did tell me he would need to see the current hose as there were two sizes of the connector I showed him a picture of. It was not an entirely wasted trip because he showed me one of the connectors. At least now I knew how it was arranged which would make removing it easier.

Returning home, I picked up the Missus so that she could do whatever she could without the tipping trailer. I collected my socket set to add to the pile of other tools in the back of the truck and headed off to The Farm. She went off to do some digging and I went under the trailer armed with latex gloves against being dowsed in hydraulic fluid. It did not come to that. I found that the nut holding the hose in place

and when tested it under load – standing well back – I discovered that the leak was fixed. A little later, I telephoned the very pleasant man in the shop to thank him for his time and advice. Shops and service like that should not be taken for granted.

Thus saved from an additional trip to town, I went with ABH and collected Mother. It was warm enough in the cabin despite a bit of a breeze blowing in from the northwest to keep Mother comfortable. After the overnight rain it was getting no better crossing the mud lake, but I told Mother that it was easier going which I put down to the extra weight in the back. She very kindly refrained from hitting me with her walking stick but I daresay I will pay for it later.

I resumed my cladding duties and very quickly finished off the four remaining sheets on the back. All that remained of my cladding work was the two ends which are made more difficult by having to accommodate the roof pitch. When I concluded for the day, half of one end was finished.

Halfway through the afternoon, just as I was about to slice a wedge off the top of one sheet, the skies darkened in the northwest. I sensed that this was something more than just a shower of rain as the air freshened around me with the first few drops. I just had time to throw a tyre on top of the loose sheet on the workbench and collect the angle grinder and slip inside the cabin when the rain came in. It came in heavy and with a mighty squall of wind and lasted about five minutes. I had left my impact driver on one of the raised beds inside the greenhouse thinking it was safe there. It was only after that I remembered that the greenhouse does not yet have a roof.

The rain having soaked the cladding sheet I was working on rendered the felt marker I was using useless. I had to cut a length from it using only the ridge for guidance for which I found the jigsaw and the diamond grit blade much easier than the angle grinder. Amazingly, it fitted around the door frame perfectly leaving me a very chuffed grumpy shopkeeper.

I was far from chuffed later. We cleared up in a bit of a rush and once again did not have time to deploy the ground reinforcement plates. It takes me an inordinate amount of time to put my gear away, especially as some of it has to be carried across the mud lake to the tool shed. I was keen to get on and get Mother home as it was getting fresher in the dying day and the cabin was no longer warm. In my haste, I forgot about the sheet I had left propped up in its place at the end of the greenhouse and the spare sheets that I had not tied down. It was just before tea when something the Missus said reminded me and having seen that the wind would freshen overnight, I had no choice but to go back up to The Farm in the dusk and secure the loose sheets.

More rain is forecast overnight. I feel like one of those unexpected heroes in the movies that has 24 hours to achieve a goal that will save the world and the closer he gets to the end, the baddies throw more and more rocks at him. If I had not been brought up properly, I might have found a naughty word to say about now.

February 26th – Wednesday

If I had any lingering doubts that the gods had it in for me, they were dispelled with some finality by the events of the day. I must be getting close to the truth or the pot of gold or whatever it is they are scared of me reaching. It only remains to find out whether this is a proper feel good movie ending or one of those absolute rotters where the hero unexpectedly goes down in flames. I have to admit that at the moment, I am feeling a bit singed.

The day started out well, if you can call the end of a night of heavy rain starting well. It actually did a bit of a reprise not long after I had come back home from taking ABH out for her first run of the day. It was a shower that blanked out the bay for about ten minutes before giving back a bit of brightness and blue sky when it went. I did not think that the rain would hang about today but we had another day of showers, although none of them really affected us up at The Farm.

Before we left for the day, I load up the back of the truck with anything extra we need for the day. The truck has an after-market hardtop on the back that has a flip up window at the rear. It has been binding on the fibreglass of the hardtop now and again, so I thought to spray some grease on the spot to ease its passage. I also noticed that the hinges were terrible rusty, so I gave them a spray of WB40. Clearly, I should have done so more regularly starting several years ago because when I went to work in the oil, the hinge sheared off.

The lid works on gas struts that are now pushing the broke side up without restraint from the hinge. It takes a monumental effort to hold that side down while trying to close the lid. Unfortunately, that monumental effort bent and twisted the other hinge which is now almost completely sheared too. It leaves the lid hanging on by the gas struts which are not exactly in prime condition either. I just about managed to get the lid down into some semblance of being closed to allow us to get up to The Farm.

The overnight rain was heavy again. Our entrance into The Farm was even more tenuous than it had been the day before and even ultra-very-extremely-low-double-fixed-differential gear had me close to needing a tow out of the mud well into the field. I told the Missus that we would have to finish early today so that we could put the ground reinforcement plates down before we left.

We had to take our tools out of the truck with the lid half down. Thankfully, the tail gate still works, although the gap is minimal and awkward to use. Later, when I had myself organised, I managed to find the original supplier of the hardtop and contact them for replacement hinges. If I had thought about it, I should have bought replacement gas struts as well and had the garage fit the lot when the truck goes in for a service on Monday week.

Putting aside my woes regarding the truck, I set about finishing off the cladding of the greenhouse. I had a reasonable expectation that I would finish the job today but had not reckoned on how finicky some parts of the operation would be. The last two sheets on the field end of the structure went on without issue even though I did need to slice the end off the last one, so it did not overhang and complete the usual slope at the top to fit the pitch. When it came to the front, the more robust wind that was now blowing the sheets off the structure at the cabin end. I had found it helpful at the other end where it pinned the sheets in place while I worked on them. However, it was the bit above the door where I had the most difficulty.

Rather than use a whole sheet and waste most of it, I used the offcuts from the panels at the front. Two of these were required for each run because none of the offcuts were high enough to cover the space with one. This threw up the issue that there was nothing to secure the top end of the lower sheet to and I had to find some suitable timber offcuts to fit. It worked after a fashion, but I will ask my builder friend to avert his eyes when he comes to fit the roof hopefully next week.

Where I really mucked up was cutting the slope for the upper offcut. I used a previously cut slope as the template but had to be careful to ensure I got it the right way around because, of course, the slope was a mirror image of what I needed. I looked at it, measured it, looked at it again and used my vivid imagination to see it in place in my mind's eye. And still got it wrong. Happily, I got it right on the second attempt because I was running out of offcuts.

After all those shenanigans, I did not have time for the final two sheets, which was a bit of a disappointment to say the least. I had hoped to get onto the doors tomorrow but may well have to put that back by a day, too. It took me the time for the Missus to flatten the mud lake with the digger to put all my tools and equipment away now having to skirt all the way around the mud lake to get to the tool shed. I then started laying the plates. The Missus thought that I should lay two lines in line with the truck tyres but in order to do that I would have to measure the distance between each pair accurately then drive precisely along it each time we came in or out.

Instead, I laid a line of four across – two metres – and left a gap between each row. While we have 32 plates, which seemed a lot at the time we bought them, they covered just about eight metres. Around a third of the length of the lake and half the width. Having nearly lost a welly on several occasions while laying them and carefully crafting a curve in line with the truck, when I came to drive out the 1.8 metre width of the truck's wheels ran along the edge of the outside plates causing them to tip up and dislodge. It was better than not having them but they will have to be moved before I drive over them on the way in tomorrow.

The matter of the rear window raised its ugly head again before we left. I managed to get everything back into the truck through the gap below it rather than try and move it again. On top of the window problems I saw that it has also dislodged the spoiler above it which now hangs off one post. It is alright for the short runs to The Farm, but

I would be concerned on longer journeys that the window might fall off completely. I found a spare ratchet strap in the barn and have used it to keep the window in place. I had thought to fit the hinges myself as, in theory, it is quite straightforward. My concern, one of many, is that if it goes wrong I neither have the tools nor the expertise to put it right. Without it done we are hamstrung about heading into town, which we will certainly need to do before the service, and then not being able to use the luggage space or only in a limited way and not leave the truck unattended. I could go on.

Somewhere in this lengthening list of things to do, I have to think about opening the shop. I may need to revise my expectations, darn it.

February 27th – Thursday

I fancy that it rained yet again overnight but I am not entirely certain. If it did, it was not as heavy as it was the night before, so that was something. The morning looked like it might have potential to turn into a fair day, but it was colder than yesterday probably due to the wind being somewhere in the north or northwest. For some reason, ABH was not disposed to head down to the beach when we went out. She purposefully ignored it yesterday as well, so I am wondering if it was anything to do with the dead shag, which is now gone.

We did not tarry too long in the morning and scurried off to The Farm as soon as we were ready. We collected Mother on the way because we were having pasties for tea and we cannot have pasties for tea without Mother – even if she will adulterate them with bleddy brown sauce. I am thinking she must have some Australian blood in her.

There was no time wasted in setting out our separate stalls and getting on with business while Mother watched over ABH and did her knitting. It took a little while to install the last two sheets to the side nearest the cabin. A bit disappointingly, they are slightly short of the ground while the ones the other side are spot on. In a perfect world, I would have known this and bought two sheets longer than all the rest, but I will backfill the bottom with earth to compensate.

Actually, I had decided to concrete between the doorposts and along the front so that the sliding doors work a bit better than they did before. It was a bit of a toss-up whether I would install the doors first or do the concreting as both rely on each other for measurements. In the end I decided to go with the doors but remove the doors from the runner after, then do the concreting to where the doors sit.

Because the small gods of grumpy shopkeepers are long, long away from having finished their sport with me, where the runner would need to sit, there was no timber behind it to screw it to. With the gift of hindsight, I would have installed some timber when the wood frame was being built and certainly ahead of the sheets being

installed. It was hard enough measuring up to fit the runner with all that in place. Without it would have been nigh on impossible.

I spent some time working out where and how to place the timber and then, because there were only two anchor points on the runner from its use on the polytunnel, I spent some more time making two more and installing more timber to support it. During this process, I removed the hex bit from my impact driver so that I could use it to screw in normal screws. Having completed all my sawing, drilling and screwing in, I was ready to install the runner, or at least clamp it in place while I ensured it was in the right place. Looking to find my hex driver bit, I discovered it was not where I left it, or at least where I thought I left it. I then went looking in a lot of other places I could have left it and, indeed, probably should have because I would have found it. As it was, it was in none of those places and wondering if it had dropped off the workbench went looking for it on grass. The hex driver bit is a rusty coloured, mainly because it is rusty, and the grass is green, so near enough the same colour, then. I had no chance of seeing it and when I asked the Missus, she could not find it either.

Since I only have the one 19 millimetre hex driver bit, it rather stopped play for the day. As fortune would have it, my builder friend who is doing the roof with another friend on the very excellent Shore Crew, does not have one either and since they are doing me a favour, will go and purchase half a dozen tomorrow, just in case. Later in the evening, the Missus, in a casual, just-interested-in-case tone, said that if the sliding doors did not work out, she would like a couple of stable doors instead. It would be three o'clock in the morning that I would be staring at the ceiling wondering if the stable door was really a casual thought or a burning desire.

We had a break for tea during which my builder friend turned up with his two dogs. They play properly with ABH and she with them, so much so that when they leave, ABH follows them into the lane. Previously, we have had to shut her in the cabin until they are long gone else she just goes back out after them again. Today, she took this to another level – twice. The first time after we let her out from confinement clearly was not long enough after they left. ABH disappeared from view and on walking down in the direction our friend left, we met them coming back more the 100 yards down the lane. Quite a bit later, she disappeared again. Mother noticed and raised the alarm. Judging she had gone in the same direction long after our friends had departed, I walked in that direction calling her. She had gone a good bit further this time but at least I met her coming back, either having given up of hearing me call, which I admit is less likely for a very stubborn ABH.

Resolving to close out gate next time we are up there, I returned to work. Since I could not continue with the doors, I set about clearing up then to work on the patch where the IBC will eventually go. At three o'clock the previous morning I had agreed with myself that I did not have time to move all three and do the launders and the concreting and the setting up of the shop and the taking of all the accumulated detritus to the Household Waste Recycling Centre where it could be dumped.

Instead, I would install just the one IBC so at least the runoff from the roof – being installed on Tuesday – could be collected.

I have decided to use gabion cages on which to rest the IBCs (you are going to have to look up gabion cages, dear reader, because I am a ready on a word count of 1,102 and have the Lifeboat launch to cover yet and, besides, in a week's time you will be sending me messages asking what a gabion cage is and I am not going through all that malarky like I did with the IBCs again). We have plenty of rocks to fill them with and they are cheaper than timber, although a bit more work, and as soon as I remember to check the measurement of how far off the ground they need to be to get a watering can under the tap, I will order them.

We came home late which is when I discovered that the Lifeboat launch for the evening had been called early. It left no time for the pasties that my stomach was expecting after a hard day at the greenhouse and I left just after Mother and the Missus were sitting down to eat theirs.

There was still some semblance of light when I walked up to the Inshore boat shed as I had elected to launch the little boat this evening. I did it not long ago but it had not been recorded properly for the new system and it left me an incomplete marker on the new system that records our every action. The rest of the crew stayed to launch the big boat and I joined them later for recovery.

Having launched both boats away and arriving back in the boathouse just too late to help setting up, I slipped away back home for my pasties. This allowed me to return to the station with renewed vigour to await the arrival of the Inshore boat that came back well ahead of the big boat.

The delay allowed me to pack away the Inshore and return to the station. The big boat was about half an hour behind the small one, so we had plenty of crew to help out. The boat was brought up the long slip in what looked very much like a textbook recovery up the long slip in the light of the slipway floodlights. We were a little short of ten o'clock when we eventually closed the doors for the night and concluded our debriefing. We are, after all, a very nocturnal, very excellent Shore Crew.

ABH was waiting for me when I returned and because it was late decided that she would like to traverse the big block for a change. Having got back from an extended last run out, I then had to put away the truck that we could not get into the car park because of all the crew cars that got there ahead of us.

Just before I let you go, I have been berated for not mentioning the continuous fog horn going off on Longships Lighthouse. The event has reached the national news before The Diary even mentioned it. I mean, what is the point of The Sennen Cove Diary if it does not bring you Sennen Cove news before the news has even happened. My apologies, dear reader. I have been somewhat distracted and, to be honest, it did not really register as being eventful. Obviously, I was aware the horn

was going off, even though I am deaf, and it was not foggy. It has happened before and when it goes off even when it is supposed to, I generally ignore it because I am not likely to run into any of the rocks that it was warning me to stay away from; my head filters the sound out and puts it to the back of what is left of my mind. I think it has stopped now but I really was not paying attention while playing with Lifeboats and watching a bright Venus out to the west and Jupiter up above us in a star littered sky.

And if you think that the small gods of grumpy shopkeepers have relaxed their grip on me today, think again. When I came to tighten the strap holding on the hardtop tailgate on the truck after emptying it last night, the roof bar the strap was attached to came away. The clamps holding it to the roof had rusted clean through. I am off now to search my pockets for black spots.

February 28th – Saturday

It was an absolutely gorgeous, sun soaked day, just right for doing all sorts of things up at The Farm with only the lightest of light airs just enough to cool the brow while undertaking arduous physical labours. This was probably why I felt compelled to spend half the morning running around Penzance looking for elusive 8 millimetre hex driver bits.

The morning evaporated before my very eyes. It was close to the middle of the day when I eventually was ready to go and do things. I cannot blame it all on ABH, but my little furry alarm clock failed to go off early and I remained in bed long after I should have got up. I should point out at this juncture that my 'long after' may differ somewhat from popular opinion. I mean around half an hour.

We then proceeded to take a long walk around the block again, taking our time to sniff everything that we had sniffed last night to make sure that it smelled the same in the daylight. She also encouraged me to take her out for a second elongated trip to the beach just after my breakfast. At least she ventured onto the sand this time and all the way out on the rocks revealed at the bottom of a big tide. While I am thinking about it, I should also mention that there appears to be much sand restoration at the southern end of the big beach. Some of the big rock field remains but it is very much reduced and there is sand between it and The Beach car park again. It would mean that the people rebuilding the Lifeguard hut would have a better time of it towing their trailer out to it, but I have not seen them up there again since the last time. There again, I have not been looking.

My first job was to go and collect Mother. The original plan had been for me to venture into town first and collect her on the way back. Because I was so late starting, we decided to collect Mother then come back for the Missus and drop them and ABH up at The Farm. I would then head into town.

As well as the hex driver bits, I also needed some fuel for the truck, and I thought it best to top up our 20 litre drum of white diesel in case the digger needed it. Having extended its hire week after week, it had definitely and certainly reached the end of the line and will be collected next Tuesday. If we do not use the fuel for the digger, we will use it for the tractor, so it will not be wasted, although we could have used cheaper red diesel for the tractor. Also on my shopping list was some hydraulic fluid for the tractor. The tank was near empty after the leak we had earlier in the week.

I spent some of all that evaporated time in the morning searching for an online version of the tractor manual so that I could determine just how much fluid to purchase. The only detail that I could find was that the pump capacity was 31.5 litres but I did not think that was the capacity of the reservoir. I did not know, but I knew a very pleasant man that would, so I arranged to go to the farm machinery shop in Penzance.

It just so happened that the shop is in the vicinity of the builders' merchant I thought to go to for the hex driver bit. They had two of the four I wished to purchase, so I went to the tractor shop next. The very pleasant man behind the counter was indeed most helpful and although he was not familiar with the tractor we have, he knew the type of hydraulic fluid we would need, even if he did not know how much. At first, he was talking about a drum at £60 but I rather suspected we would be alright with the five litre bottle on the shelf behind me. Thankfully he agreed and also put me right about the 31.5 litres which was most likely the capacity of the pump.

In the meanwhile, I still had to find another two hex driver bits. Two would probably do, but if there was a problem or one got lost, we would have no spares. I visited a further three likely establishments and got lucky on the last one. The very pleasant man behind the counter there explained that they were once very popular but had since gone out of fashion. If you are in Penzance and are looking for 8 millimetre hex driver bits, sorry, but I have purchased them all. Probably, I have the Duchy's entire stock as it certainly felt that way.

I had allowed plenty of time, I thought, to carry out my tasks in the big city but trying to find the additional driver bits had put me well behind. I was under the clock to get back to sign for a package containing the rear gate hinges for the truck and after the last episode with the delivery of the reciprocating saw, I was keen to be home when the van arrived. Naturally, the small gods of grumpy shopkeepers saw an opportunity to place the slowest drivers on Earth in front of me on my journey back.

I absolutely agree that there is no need for speeding. If you need to get to a place at a certain time, leave in plenty of time to allow for eventualities. Some of these can be reasonably foreseen such as rush hour traffic, roadworks and small animals, hedgehogs for example, holding up traffic to protest at the lack of available safe crossings. I would argue that two cars ahead of me driving at 30 miles per hour or less in a 60 miles per hour zone and only increasing their speed to 40 miles per hour in the only 30 miles per hour speed restriction on the whole journey, could not have

been reasonably foreseen. Naturally, the delivery driver arrived an hour after I got home, so there was no need to panic. Had I only known, I would have taken a good book with me to read as I trundled home.

It was far too late to do very much up at The Farm when I got back. I managed to slip a bit of timber into the gap in the roof structure we had noticed yesterday. I worked with the Missus to move the empty IBC across from the barn where it has resided unused for two years to close by its new place next to the greenhouse. I remembered to measure up for the height of the gabions – I do hope you looked it up, dear reader – and will go ahead and order the ones I saw over the weekend.

While I was gone, ABH escaped The Farm again. This time there was no provocation from other visiting dogs. She just got it in her head to wander off and explore and this time did not come running back when called. This is a worrying development and one we will try and nip in the bud. Until now we have been able to go about our work in the knowledge that ABH was around somewhere but not getting into trouble. The Missus spent over an hour fixing chicken wire to the gate which ABH spent two minutes working out how to get under. We will look for a better solution but in the meantime, she is in 'the cooler' until further notice.

The sun was dipping away and making a spectacle of itself as we left The Farm. It is quite remarkable how quickly the mud lake has dried up. It has left, unfortunately, the ground reinforcement plates in a complete jumble and sitting at different angles where they have been driven over unevenly. The mud is still pliable, but it will not be long before the plates are effectively cast in concrete. There is not much we can do about it now, so we will just have to see how that pans out.

I did speak with the Missus about doors for the greenhouse and, yes, she would really prefer stable doors handmade by some eejit with expensive power tools and not much of a clue how to use them properly. There, she is in luck, and I am quite game to give it a go. In fact, I will apply my enormous mental capacity – as there is not much else of value going on in there - to the task at three o'clock tomorrow morning.