A. Hobbe Walker

"Is Friday 13th an auspicious day to begin marketing a house again? Will the property market be affected by the growing Corona virus crisis?"

United Kingdom, 13 March – 28 July 2020

Diarist's background and life context:

Gender: female.

Age: twixties, neither young nor classifiable as 'elderly'.

Household; me, partner, one greyhound, one pony.

Family: daughter, 137 miles away; former husband, 7 miles away.

Professions: author – anthropologist, writer, photographer; partner – self employed photographer.

Health: Neither of us are in any 'high risk' category. I have allergies and recently diagnosed autism. Partner prone to winter cough. Otherwise fit and active – so far!

Location: UK, rural East Anglia, 25 miles from nearest large town. Our house is one of an isolated group of four buildings including two semi-detached former farm cottages, a farmhouse, and a large medieval manor house from which a high-end holiday accommodation and wedding venue business is run. All the properties are rented from the local landowner who farms the surrounding land. The properties are cited within a complex of defunct farm buildings and yards, and the enclave is closed to public access.

Landscape: officially designated as an 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty' containing

several 'Sites of Special Scientific Interest'. Forests, heathland, marshes, farmland. The North Sea bounds the eastern horizon.

Nearest services: no bus service; railway 6 miles away; shop and post office 4 miles away; small town 7 miles away; hospital 22 miles away.

Friday 13/3/20

Having been trying, unsuccessfully, to sell my late mother's house since last autumn, I put the house in the hands of a different estate agent today. In late 2019 the property market was disrupted first by by Brexit and then by Christmas. Is Friday 13th an auspicious day to begin marketing a house again? Will the property market be affected by the growing Corona virus crisis?

Recently we began assisting with a new project at the local museum but today the curator, who has a very young baby, called to say she wants to postpone the work to avoid any infection risk.

Saturday 14/3/20

I was meant to go to London today to meet my daughter but we postponed as we both feel apprehensive about the news concerning the escalation of the virus pandemic. Six hours train travel and time in a busy restaurant doesn't seem wise at present.

A friend emailed from Scotland saying that the supermarkets there are stripped of pasta and *Irn Bru* and she wonders how the Scots will survive without the latter. We're not feeling particularly panicky as we hardly interact with anyone anyway, but the effects of this natural force are starting to come home. For example, when I did

my internet grocery order on Thursday there was no delivery slot available until Monday and many items were marked as unavailable. My former husband has not been to work for two weeks and is now reluctant to visit the shops. He has begun asking me to buy things for him as he is wary of online shopping. He gifted us some masks and gloves several weeks back with strict instructions for use and since then he emails frequently on virus related topics:

“If/when you use the masks please ensure that you’ve read and complied with the fitting instructions. It is very important that the seal around the nose and face is tight … obvious I know but many people wear them slovenly.”

“I keep writing/deleting my concerns about where we all are, the huge challenges facing us all and the naivety / unawareness of so many. I am fine…able to live quietly but aware of so much going on out there.”

“I am not visiting a hairdresser so l may not be immediately recognisable in the future!”

“I think that the authorities know more than they are saying, as always. The social, economic, psychological and behavioural consequences of this are big in my view. I have my own plan of action to safeguard myself and those l care for.”

He refutes the idea that he is a ‘prepper’, but his plan of action has included padlocking his front gate so as to protect the huge stockpile of firewood he has amassed in an attempt to go partially ‘off grid’. He believes that the pandemic could trigger civil unrest in Britain. He does not want our daughter to travel to Scotland next week. She told him last night that she will go to Scotland unless officially instructed not to and today said to me, out of the blue, “Mum, if I die, I die. I’ve had a good life and I’m ready to die.”

So far, my partner and I are safe, warm and well and so are our animals. We always maintain good stocks of food and fuel due to our rural location. Our usual grocery

items are ordered for Monday, but whether everything on the list actually materialises remains to be seen given the news of shortages. We are booked for a meal at a quiet local pub tomorrow. I'm happy to go but might be unnerved if we're the only diners there. News-wise we're already completely virused-out and can hardly bear to listen to the interminable speculation and inane vox pops.

Sunday 15/3/20

An odd day, full of strange feelings of tension and restlessness. We took the morning slowly then went out to lunch as planned. On the way I wondered if we would be alone in the place or if it would be packed out with people celebrating Mother's Day a week early so as to beat any virus-driven ban. Were we brave or mad to go given the worsening virus news? We weren't alone, but the place was far from full. Somehow we both ate more than we should have and came home feeling much more tired than we should have. Suddenly any and every slightly unfamiliar physical sensation has me wondering if I'm experiencing early symptoms.

Out walking later on we met our neighbour from the manor house. She said that all her 2020 wedding bookings are being cancelled one by one.

Monday 16/3/20

One of those mornings when I'm convinced I've done 'nothing', but since getting up I've sorted out the animals, done the housework and laundry, answered emails and phone calls and done admin, taken the dog for a walk, been out on the bike, been on a short photo mission, downloaded and sorted the photos, got bathed and changed. It's now 1pm. I'm reacting to a nagging idea that I need to get organised, do all I can while I can, just in case … Everything feels urgent and no matter how much I do it

still doesn't feel like it's quite enough. I realise that it's the pandemic news which is driving this hyperactive behaviour.

This morning I saw the sunlight catching some graffiti on the end wall of a neighbouring Victorian farm cottage, so I went and photographed the marks: lots of initials and other rudimentary X shapes. There are scores of the latter type around the doorways of the medieval barn and the derelict Georgian stables opposite. On those buildings the marks are apotropaic, intended to protect animals and harvested crops. Every one of those tiny incisions represents the belief, the faith, of an individual past inhabitant of this place, someone who spent a lifetime living and working here: each mark a tiny memorial to an entire life. Currently the impetus driving such signage feels relevant. Whether it's a scratch on an ancient wall or a virus diary entry written today in an electronic file, the aim is the same, a way of saying "I was here. This is my mark, my memento."

Tuesday 17/3/20

It feels as though the world has changed overnight with Britain now subject to increasingly stringent virus precautions following last night's prime ministerial statement. Neither of us slept properly and at 3.30 this morning we were sitting up in bed speculating about the weeks and months ahead. The idea that in the future we will talk about pre-virus and post-virus, just as we refer to pre- and post- 9/11 and pre- and post- war times seems completely plausible today.

Our restlessness was unsurprising given that during the time were watching the prime minister's announcement, I was also taking calls from the estate agent. Two kinds of important news were arriving at the same time and each prevented me from immediately seeing the full and interconnected ramifications of the other. In short, I received and accepted an offer from a cash buyer. I don't know whether to be

overjoyed after the long wait to sell, or whether to question everything and ask why did this offer happen so fast? Is this the time to be buying rather than selling? What if I get the cash and the banks collapse and I lose all the money? How long before we can go to Scotland to start searching for a house to buy? We won't be going anywhere if movement restrictions are imposed and I doubt that we'll be welcome at any accommodation for some while.

This morning has been one of the strangest I've ever known. Time seemed to keep stretching out as we sat drinking coffees, contacting solicitors about house conveyancing, sending and answering friends' and colleagues' emails concerning virus impacts. The autism support group has been postponed indefinitely. I had a call from the friend I ride with. We spoke for a long time and concluded that riding has to stop for a while. Since I've been riding for the past half century, this is a massive decision, an unprecedented break with my contact with horses and the activity that I thrive on.

Everything feels so muddled and contradictory. On the one hand time and space seem to be opening right up: no riding, no work bookings, no dentist or hairdressing appointments, no plans to meet friends, no museum work, no autism group meetings. Peter has cancelled his outstanding London appointments. The pandemic is forcing him to consider ending the small business he has run since 1982. Today he steps into the new wide open space of a life without professional commitments.

Yet, on the other hand, things are shutting down. We fully expect that restaurants and pubs will close and that curfews may be imposed – and more. We live a pretty isolated life anyway, so self-isolation in itself isn't especially worrying. That said, it would be serious if my partner was ill because, due to my autism, we're a one car / one driver household in a very rural location. Without the car we'd be in great difficulty.

I checked the supermarket website repeatedly and found more and more items

marked 'unavailable'. Supermarkets are preventing people from booking serial delivery slots. Having had a delivery last night, I've secured one for next Monday but there's no certainty of getting one after that. Last night's order was fine, only eight items missing. There is no doubt that panic buying is in full swing, most especially of toilet paper. Had an audit of household cleaning products and toiletries: there's enough for two, maybe three weeks. We have a total of five toilet rolls as I obediently, and probably unwisely, followed the instruction not to panic buy. Our Plan B for this is to work through the box of archival grade white tissue paper that my partner normally uses for wrapping his customers' art works. There isn't a toilet paper Plan C.

The other thing which is so odd is that, to us, the world outside *looks* completely unchanged. There's no more more and no less traffic than usual; as always I didn't see a living soul anywhere when I took the dog out for an extra long walk. Yet TV coverage shows that big London rail termini are eerily empty: much of the urban world is shutting down. Airline flights are reduced, but here buzzards are wheeling overhead, birds are singing, the wind is blowing the daffodils. Blackthorn bushes are throwing up spectacular white fountains of new bloom, and the magnolia is unsheathing its claws of dark magenta. It looks like a completely normal mid-March day, but what will tonight's news bring? How will it all feel in a few days, a few weeks' time?

Wednesday 18/3/20

Awake early as I've resolved not to slip into an apathetic state at the very start of this strange virus-influenced phase. My first thought was that our calendar is now just about clear: no appointments, no work bookings, no places to be, no people to meet, no horses to ride. Now all I have to do is move from point to point on my daily job lists. It's not the sense of there being any massive contrast to normal that I have to

get used to, rather that the days have been emptied of the idea that I have the freedom to come and go should I decide to. Externally imposed control has come to the fore, suddenly become part of our lives.

Normally I'm concerned with careful editing of my daily task lists to make sure that I do just the right amount of things: too much and and the autism leaves me overwhelmed, too little and I become over-anxious about under-achievement. Does this new situation mean that I will have more or less ability to exercise the all important qualities of control and self-determination? It's too soon to know yet, but this morning I find myself relishing the idea of using all that clear diary space, all that vacated time to get to my desk and write more than I am normally able to. Will it actually work out this way?

Today's Corona effects so far. I went on a tissue and soap hunt around the house. One of the traits of autism is literalism, so when news reports advised that panic buying was unnecessary, I took them at face value.This was a big mistake. Autism and allergies go together. I react to dust, fluff, cat hair, pollen. At times my eyes stream so that I can barely see. Tissues are essential, but now they are in short supply as, thanks to the toilet paper shortage, people are repurposing them. Luckily various coat pockets, handbags and rucksacks yielded the equivalent of almost a boxful of unused tissues. I also found five miniature soap bars stashed away, the complimentary kind provided in hotel bathrooms. The soap bars for the bathroom sink, the bath and the utility room sink had all worn down to slivers, so I followed my grandmother's habit of pressing them all tightly together to form a single bar of a more usable size. This made me feel justified in getting out new bars to replace the slivers, but why does my salvaged soap bar feel not quite clean enough, less able to clean than a new bar? Soap is soap and all soap is dirtied at first use.

A second kind of soap shortage was announced today: the BBC has suspended filming of the soap operas *Eastenders*, *Holby City* and *Casualty*. The only TV I watch regularly is the evening news and *Eastenders*. I watch these programmes because,

ultimately, they are similar because the narratives have no beginning, no middle and no end. No matter how bad the news, I need the the reassuring routine of watching at a fixed time and I like the continuity, the predictability of unpredictability itself, the familiar faces, the recurring tropes. My condition means that while I am bad at following storylines, I take a great interest in long-running accounts where the only underlying plot is plotlessness itself. The evening TV ritual matters because it marks the end of my working day. News and *Eastenders* help to rinse thoughts about research and article-writing out of my mind. But now they're gone, melted away like a piece of soap. Where is the end of the day now? How will I stop my busy-brain thinking all night?

After seeing repeated news footage of cleaners wiping handrails every few hours and hearing the advice concerning regular cleaning of all hard 'high touch' surfaces, I thought 'Welcome to my world'. Even in non-virus conditions I wipe and re-wipe work-surfaces, sinks, taps over and over. I don't plan to increase the wiping as it's a pre-established autistic trait which means that daily life is heavily punctuated with surface- wiping episodes. If I increase these I'll risk reversing the balance so that it's the surfacing-wiping which comes to be punctuated with ever diminishing spells of normal activity.

After the cancellation of the autism support group yesterday I was looking forward to seeing a new friend from the group today, but decided to postpone as Peter has his usual late-winter cough. Elena is from Eastern Europe, far from home, and an NHS employee. I was going to take her on a walk to show her the spectacular wild flowers here and she was going to help me learn to use alternatives to email and Facebook so as to increase my woefully minimal social interaction. We were both disappointed. When I asked her what she had been doing this morning she said "Cooking for my freezer" and I told her that I had been doing the same, carefully using up every food oddment to avoid wasting anything.

Last night I spoke with my daughter who described going to a supermarket last

Friday and finding the shelves reasonably well filled. But on Monday they were stripped of all toiletries, domestic cleaning products, canned fish, canned vegetables, canned soup and pasta. She has cancelled her holiday in Scotland.

Having checked my supermarket grocery order, booked for delivery in 5 days time, I found a newly implemented section called 'Items removed' which listed 12 of the 47 items I ordered – virtually 25% of the order. There is no bread flour, no self raising flour, no rice, no shower gel, no sugar, no tissues, no pesto, no dog food and, of course, no toilet paper. I realise that from now the only thing that I secure when I book a delivery is the slot itself: the items listed as available are liable to vanish in the ever-lengthening interims between ordering and delivery. Daily checking and amending is pointless so I will make my final check on the amendment deadline which is midnight on the night priory to delivery day. Despite these problems I still refuse to visit a large supermarket; autism means I don't cope well in big gatherings or over-crowded spaces especially when there is an air of unease, competitiveness or threat.

Thursday 19/3/20

Up and about very early once again. As soon as we'd sorted the animals we biked to the neighbouring village to visit the produce stall. Bought twelve eggs, a cauliflower, potatoes and broccoli. I had eaten a stupidly tiny breakfast so as to conserve cereal and then felt depleted and horrible after the bike ride. The road seemed to be extra busy with farm traffic, but there are less cars about. The Forestry England car parks are closed so now people are parking on the verges and at the edge of the stack-yards before heading out for long walks. Yesterday when we went to the forest to collect pine cones for firelighting, we saw one such couple and when we passed on

the narrow lane they totally ignored us – a small indicator of social suspicion and unease.

Supermarket delivery vehicles are conspicuous by their absence today. Having checked my pending order once again, I found another £25 worth of goods removed. Now the panic buying focus has shifted from cleaning products to dry goods including tea, coffee, all the grocery basics. Even 1kg packs of low grade carrots are being rationed. I've been buying three of these every week for the pony over the last five years and they're little better than stock-feed grade, but obviously in high demand right now. I've got to stop thinking about the supermarket issue as I'm getting obsessive about it. The car is in for a service but when we get it back we plan to go to town for pharmacy items.

Last night brought news that from tomorrow all schools must close after the weekend. My next door neighbour arrived mid-morning with her grand-daughters, so presumably their school has complied a day early. London is shutting down with the underground offering reduced service and many stations closed. BBC Look East reported that Southwold is filled with an influx of weekenders presumably escaping the increased virus risk in London.

Our friend Sarah called and we were glad to hear from her. She lives in a very isolated cottage on a neighbouring farming estate and has just one other elderly lady neighbour. Sarah says she has food and is making the most of walks on the estate, reading, and writing up her recent researches into local history. We would so much like to see her, but it's going to be a long time.

The dentists' surgery phoned and cancelled my appointment.

I asked Peter this morning which would be worse: if my house buyer died, or I died, or both, before the transaction is complete. He says he's not thinking about that just yet. My question reflects my anxiety about the pandemic, our plan to live in Scotland,

and a lot more. Even in this quiet place there's a decidedly odd feeling, something that's both out there, in the air, and very much in here, in my head too. The weather is dull and cool and still, strangely silent. The dog can tell that something is going on. Yesterday he was ridiculously excitable, especially in the evening after we had been talking about the situation. He keeps rushing up and down the stairs, looking out of the windows as though to say 'Where's the problem? Let me see it!"

The estate agent was very quiet over the last 24 hours so I called her and discovered that there is now no need to worry about dying before the sale: it is off as my buyer is not in a position to proceed as the person buying her house has backed out. This came as no surprise: I knew on Tuesday that it all seemed just too good to be true. The agent said that many sales are collapsing and she sounded very despondent. We went for a long walk in the forest while we digested the news. All we can do now is sit tight here and try again post-pandemic.

After photographing for the London art market since 1982 Peter has written to all his customers and told them he is taking no more bookings. Over the last few days he has been receiving, and turning down, many requests from galleries which are now closed for physical exhibitions because they are switching to online-only shows in order to sidestep the virus – a whole new trend that he doesn't want to engage with because it would expose him to the virus. A lockdown would obviate this activity anyway.

Friday 20/3/20

Set the alarm set for 5am so that we could sort the animals and be out of the house by 7 on a food shopping expedition. Went to the small supermarket eight miles away and found no queues and the shelves reasonably well stocked – except for toilet paper. Many products were limited to two items per customer. This meant that I was

limited to two unpackaged pears but it was fine to buy a pre-pack of six apples or six pears. I couldn't work out whether it was OK to buy different flavours of the same item, for example, would plain oatcakes, rough oatcakes and cheese oatcakes of the same brand count as three different things or three of the same thing? In the end I bought two flavours. I saw a woman selecting the three biggest leeks and she gave me a questioning look. When I pointed to the 'two only' sign she said "But I need three for my home-made soup recipe", so the restriction worked against someone who was trying hard to avoid tinned soup which is unavailable.

We collected a few butchery items, then called at the mill for our usual amounts of fuel, horse bedding and apples. The so-called horse apples are actually good enough for us to eat, so the pony won't be getting so many as usual. Next we drove to the service station for a petrol fill up, then down into the town for a couple of items from the pharmacy and the fishmonger who said he will open next week but beyond that he doesn't know. At the pharmacy the sales assistant sharply reprimanded a woman who joined the queue and stood vertyclose behind me: " Keep your distance! Move two meters back please."

Back home it was good to unpack the shopping and fill up the many gaps which had appeared on the pantry shelves. We estimate that, excepting fresh fruit and vegetables, we have enough for at least three weeks, possibly more, so now we are in a position to self-isolate if the need arises – or to comply if there is a ban on leaving the house.

I bought several items for my former husband who was very grateful as he is still not going out. Left them in the barn for him to collect. The trip was a success. I feel reassured, in a better frame of mind than yesterday. The rest of the morning was taken up with several phone calls. I learned that there have been angry exchanges in local shops and incidences of people turning away from their loaded shopping trolley only to find that another customer has removed items from it. My daughter called and said she was in an enormous supermarket queue and expected to have to queue

at more than one store today to find all the things on her list.

After some heavy duty housework, a bath and lunch, we walked the dog. The road was almost deserted, a great feeling of quiet everywhere. I was very tired by 3pm but somehow drifted into a photography and writing session until 5. It felt very good to concentrate on something other than food supplies for a while. Peter is is not 100% well: he doesn't have the virus, but has been tired and not in such good spirits for a week or so. He has been working hard on finishing his final jobs for customers. I want him to take some well-earned rest and recuperate when this work is finished.

The main news tonight is that bars, restaurants, gyms and pools must close. Today is the final day of school for most children. It's a bit like the day before a Christmas holiday, all the shopping done, the house clean and tidy. Feel like I'm in a state of readiness – but nobody is coming. Instead of a Christmassy sense of anticipation, there's trepidation, uncertainty.

Sunset at 18.09. The vernal equinox ended cold and clear, the wind from the north east.

Saturday 21/3/20

No need to get up quite so early as yesterday, but had the animals and domestic jobs sorted by 9. It was a lovely cold, clear morning with a strong breeze off the sea so we decided to have a bike ride. While out we saw a group of seven cyclists, two cars and a JCB – the roads exceptionally quiet. We also took a short trip to the plant stall and bought a dozen broad bean seedlings. Now that our move to Scotland is on hold, we have reversed our decision not to grow vegetables this summer. Stopped at a village shop which had a good amount of stock. I bought tissues and joined the queue of six which was being very efficiently dealt with by two cashiers. As yesterday, everyone was very good humoured: there was some banter about the customers being well

behaved and one man said “Yeah, I’ve been on an Anger Management course!”

After lunch we walked the dog in the forest. Saw several other walkers in the distance, many more than usual. I wanted to take a quick look in the church for ancient graffiti. Opening the door I saw half a dozen people sitting in the pews with maximum distance between them. The woman closest said “We’re having a meeting but you can have a look around so long as you don’t come near.” I hastily backed out of the door, apologising and saying that I’d visit another time. Passing the produce stall on the way home, I noticed that it had only a couple of items left. There were no eggs there at all – something I have never seen in the three decades I’ve been buying from it.

Received community news emails about local pubs which are now supplying take away meals. One email mentions our nearest pub / village shop which has been closed for several years and is about to re-open. The new proprietor is described as ‘wanting to help the community’. Basics are already in the shop. From Monday, there will be fresh cooked ‘school dinners’ for anyone with a child needing feeding. A pizza oven should be up and running early next week and take-away food will be available. Anyone needing quiet space for home-working can book to use a room in the pub.

An email from my daughter summed up the feeling of the day: ‘A *short message at the end of the first weekend day of the new world. An outing to the RSPB reserve on the South Downs was just the ticket. Warm breezes rustled through the oaks; all the ground is ready for the bluebell carpet. Just what’s needed, seeing nature carrying on.*’ She had captured the sense of spring’s most beautiful aspects arriving at the very moment when a malign force of nature is quickly gathering strength.

It does feel like the first day of a much changed world. I imagined a great many people in Britain waking up in a state of shock and reluctantly confronting job loss, difficulties of many kinds, apprehension and deep uncertainty. For many there must

have been a sense of novelty, albeit of a negative kind. The strangeness will intensify in two days when the new working week begins and there is no school, no work at all for some and working at home for others.

Death toll in Italy reached 800 today. Social distancing is the new social intercourse: while we emplace physical distance, we get closer by email, social media, phone. I anticipate that early next week there will be a prohibition on being outside except for trips to pharmacies and food stores. It feels as though the school closure was intended as a primer, timed so that people might spend the weekend starting to come to terms with the prospect of further restrictive measures, the reality of what is happening so very fast now.

BBC reportage seems to be over-focusing on the food stockpiling crisis and the vulnerability of the NHS. In a global emergency it's as if the scope of news is, paradoxically, contracting and becoming more parochial, more domestic. Why does the toilet paper shortage and panic buying take precedence? Why is there such scant coverage of Libya's troubles? Has the Syrian crisis vanished? There's an unhealthy inwardness developing.

Sunday 22/3/20

A slow start to the morning. Sat up in bed first thing looking up Foucault's writings on plague cities, and various internet news and opinion pieces about the pandemic.

Another lovely day, so we took a slightly longer walk than usual after feeding the pony, then came back to what is settling into a routine: more coffee, emails, virus-inflected discussion followed by housework and a bike ride. Today we rode to the stall again. It is almost empty; still no eggs. Bought one of the two bags of potatoes available. Then biked the long way home. Lots of cars parked down on the heath and people walking and picnicking, perhaps celebrating Mother's Day in a new al fresco

way. Later we walked the dog up the hill and did some serious social distancing: nobody in sight anywhere in the huge 360 degree panorama encompassing land, sea, river, forest and fields.

There are some hand-written signs pinned to the noticeboard beside the post box. One reads '*Hellow if anyone in the area neads any shopping dile this number. We will be happy to help and and shall deliver to your frunt or back door. Call us*'. The messages purport, I think, to be offers made by children to assist with grocery deliveries. Are they genuine? Aren't those spelling errors overly self-conscious, too studiedly childish? Should I be sceptical, suspicious? I can't make up my mind.

Monday 23/3/20

Where did the day go? I was determined that this would be a day of minimal domestic work so that I could concentrate on writing. We were up at six and quickly into action, but somehow the tasks stretched on and on until 1pm. In that time I did the animal jobs, walked the dog, did cleaning, laundry, ironing, baked a batch of cakes, stripped a chicken carcass and made stock, prepared lunch and dinner in advance, answered emails, and went for a bike ride as it was too fine a day to stay indoors. The fairy cakes were very parsimonious -and unattractive – with very, very thin water icing. My stockpot contained all the usual ingredients plus a few weird and wonderful extras, namely the outer leaves of a rather tired lettuce, some slightly yellowing parsley, some stringy celery trimmings, scraps of cooked rice and leftovers from last night's meal. I keep finding myself thinking of my grandmother, her thrifty domestic habits, first the soap slivers, now the stock. It's as though the virus has the power to resurrect strong memories of the dead as well as to kill the living.

We have decided not to pick any more daffodils as their pollen is aggravating Peter's cough. This may or may not make him more vulnerable to the virus, so we're not

taking any risk. Instead we cut some wands of dogwood and sycamore to bring indoors so that we can watch the new leaves opening. After a quick lunch I took the dog for his long walk, then poured the stock into re-used water bottles and froze it ready for future soup-making. By 3pm I needed to rest, not write.

Up again at 4, and then the long-awaited and much-amended Tesco order arrived early. After days of the online order yo-yoing up and down with article after article being removed, I was relieved to see the driver bring five boxes. There were few substitutions and few missing items. Everything is well stocked but not overstocked.

At last we have the biggest and most urgent gap in our stores covered – toilet paper! In the post I received a big parcel from my daughter containing two giant rolls plus a Mother's Day card. An apt combination in current circumstances. Given that my last two Tesco orders did not include any toilet roll, and that we failed to find any when out, I'm not feeling guilt-stricken about the fact that my optimistic order for two large packs did, at last, materialise from Tesco. We are, however, still boasting to one another about how few sheets we use each time.

Another small bonus today in the shape of partially used bottles of disinfectant, surgical spirit, shampoo, a can of Jeyes Fluid and two empty trigger spray bottles. These items were all part of my horse grooming / care kit and had been forgotten in the old stable which I haven't used since 2016. I want the spray bottles so that I can make my own antiseptic household cleaner from vinegar, lemon juice and bicarbonate of soda. There's my grandmother's influence and knowledge again.

Last night we received a lovely piece of writing from our friend Sarah who has decided to produce a weekly newsletter. She began it like this '*During this strange period of social distancing and self isolation, I thought I would start a little page, each week, of thoughts, experiences, and ideas that occur to me, which I could share with you all. Nothing profound, just odd scraps that happen.*' She mentioned watching a robin, her gardening activities, her cats, some carriage horses going by, still exercising but

with no weddings to work at, and described these as '*the sort of experience[s] you want to share with someone and there was nobody else there.*' It was a lovely thing to receive from someone who takes notice of and values what's around her.

Out with the dog I saw a gang of East European workers covering a field with agricultural fleece sheeting. Looking southwards across a massive expanse of shiny, rippling white fleece, two of the gang were far in the distance, working hard. Against the strong light they looked like black, stripped down matchstick figures. The tractor had stopped near the roadside and another three workers were around the cab. Two were silent, hunched, but the third was shouting, barely pausing for breath – a long litany of nagging complaint. I watched from behind the hedge and saw the man furiously fling his spade skywards. It flew surprisingly high and as it twirled, daggers of white light flashed off the blade and knifed through the air, sharp as the man's rage. I walked on, and he complained on. Ten minutes later his shouting was still audible and the tractor driver gave several long loud blasts of the hooter as though to warn the man to get back to work, but still the shouting continued. What drove it? Working conditions? Fear of the virus? Lack of protective masks? The impossibility of keeping adequate distance from his workmates? Anxiety about being far from home and vulnerable in such uncertain times? It was painful to hear.

Had an email from a relative living in Singapore. He wrote '*These are unprecedented, uncertain times: this is what it must have felt like during the last war. I try not to wallow in the news too much.*' I agree with the idea of not wallowing, and have created a new house rule. In addition to refusing to watch or listen to any TV, radio or internet news until 6pm, I've also asked Peter not to tell me about the news he hears during the day. Enough is enough. Just as supermarkets are rationing food, I'm rationing my news intake to one dose a day – plus Sarah's wonderful weekly newsletter.

Did I get to my desk as planned? Not today. Perhaps tomorrow. Nevertheless it's been a good day in many ways. I've ended it with 45 minutes in the summerhouse

writing this while listening to the gathering spring birdsong. Peter has just been notified that the dog's food order will arrive tomorrow – another relief. We're safe and well equipped for the foreseeable future. Now it's time for the 6pm news.

Tuesday 24/3/20

Last night Boris Johnson announced further virus control measures. The new rules stipulate that we must avoid non-essential use of public transport and work from home, where possible. We must avoid large and small gatherings in public spaces, noting that cinemas, theatres, pubs, bars, restaurants and clubs are now all required to close. We must avoid gatherings with friends and family: no gatherings of more than 2 people are permitted. Everyone should stay two meters apart. Additionally, no non-essential journeys should be made. The following exercise is permitted, one daily walk or one cycle ride or one dog walk, each of these to be either taken alone or in the company of one other person you live with. People should only go out to buy food or medications, or preferably, get their food delivered.

Apropos future food delivery bookings, I checked the Tesco site not long after the above news and found a notice advising that the site was exceptionally busy. Looked again at 6am today and found that all available slots are booked up to and inclusive of April 8th and no slots at all offered after that date.

We took our prescribed exercise this morning: walked the dog round to the field, rode the bikes, and walked the pony. Both walks were within the private grounds of the manor house. We saw a designer-clad man striding around the manor grounds, frantically talking and gesticulating, mobile uselessly clamped to his ear: there is no mobile signal here. Peter pointed out a top of the range Porche parked outside the manor, a sure sign that the place, which doubles as high-end self-catering accommodation and wedding venue, has been hired by holiday makers despite the

fact that across the county there have been appeals for visitors to stay away. These are made on the grounds that visitors will put extra pressure on rural food supplies and emergency services as well as spreading the virus.

Managed to get the jobs done much more quickly today so that I can, at last, get to my desk before lunchtime. Made a phone call to the autism services office and requested that the contacts list the group made at the end of last session be circulated as soon as possible so that we can get on with communicating and supporting one another in self-help strategies until the meetings recommence. Meanwhile I'm adopting the habit of emailing three or four of my friends and family every day so as to exchange news and learn how they are experiencing the current situation.

Received a call from the vet surgery: my appointment for vaccinations and hormone monitoring tests for the pony are cancelled. Vets are no doing no routine treatment, now focussing solely on emergencies.

Wednesday 25/3/20

Why do the days seem to become progressively busier, more hectic as restrictions on activity grow ever tighter? After the usual early morning jobs we decided to take a bike ride to the pub to see how the new village store there is progressing. On arrival I saw a girl in the car park – one of the family running the new venture. She explained that the shop will open from 12 – 4 every day and described the range of things they plan to stock. Followed her suggestion and looked up the pub's Facebook page which includes photos of some of the shelves which have already been stocked. I saw a number of things which I'm running low on.

Riding home, we heard our first chiff-chaff of the year – a day early as they came on March 26th last year.

After the bike ride we walked the pony and, as yesterday, I felt concerned about his stiff joints. The warm weather was making him sweat up – always a sign that his system is under strain. He is 34, the equivalent of 102 in human terms. In this household, he's the one with the underlying health conditions. Had a phone consultation with the vet who gave helpful advice about stepping up his medications before real problems set in.

Received email notification that the physiotherapy surgery has cancelled all appointments.

The long-awaited community newsletter arrived with plenty of useful information about local supplies and services aimed at helping people during the virus crisis. Recently I signalled our willingness to help out and today we were asked if we could distribute hard copy newsletters. This evening I heard about the NHS / RVS Check in and Chat volunteering option. Completed the registration process and then discovered it was pointless as I can't use the necessary app as I have no smart phone because the mobile reception here is non existent. Back to Plan A – informal local link up. At least the RVS guidelines for such work are useful.

Troubling news concerning my daughter who is not 100% well with a cold and feeling the strain of trying to work at home in a very small flat. She seems a long way away. A lot of time was taken up in discussing this with her father.

Received a call from Julie who runs the local NHS autism support group – a welfare check on both my mental state and general wellbeing. We spoke about the proposed circulation of the contact detail list and Julie explained that she is working from home, trying to deal with a big new case load. As only half the group attended the last meeting she needs to get the contact info. from the people who weren't present, but promises to forward the list soon. I'm fortunate to have this contact as the county has a reputation for patchy access to mental health services. If the pandemic had arrived during my pre-diagnosis times I know that I would have reacted much

more negatively. Having knowledge of the condition is enabling me to think around the current problems and anxieties better. I don't doubt that a crash will come, but I know that I'll be able to recuperate more quickly than I used to. I accept that sometimes some days just have to be written off.

The dog was in trouble tonight because he forgot his manners. While I was busy he started careering around demonstrating his super high-speed racing greyhound skills. Given the vet situation, a broken leg would be disastrous. When I tried to calm him he became even more excited and growled, so he got yelled at full blast. He's reacting to the unusual busyness, the constant going in and out and up and down stairs, the back and forth to the pony, detecting the urgent tone of our voices. I plan to be up extra early tomorrow to make more time for writing – which will suit the dog as he likes to lie and sleep when I'm typing. Extra energy-burning walks are off: I'd look as if I was flouting the rules.

Thursday 26/3/20

Awake at 4.30, up at 5.45 and at the stable by 6. Jobs all done quickly, so I managed – at last – to be at my desk by 9.30. Biked to the pub shop again. Mindful that supermarkets are now admitting customers one by one, I knocked at the door first – a new piece of shopping etiquette of my own invention. The tiny shop had all six things on my list, and contactless payment. It was a delight to be made welcome despite social distancing. Will visit again.

Yesterday a friend called and told me of her personal protection strategies when shopping. She decides in advance how many shops she will visit then packs a corresponding number of coats into her vehicle – all on the left side. She puts on a coat and heads to the first shop. After she leaves each shop she returns to the vehicle, removes her coat, puts it on the right side, dons another coat and goes to

the next shop. The process is repeated until all the shops have been visited and all the coats used up. On arrival home she immediately puts all her 'contaminated' coats and clothes in the washing machine, showers and puts on a complete set of fresh clothes.

I'm drawing up other kinds of rules:

1. I must not block the drains as no plumbers can attend.
2. I must not break my washing machine, fridge or oven because nobody will come to fix them and spare parts will probably be unobtainable
3. I must not fall off a horse or bike and break any of my bones as hospital staff will not be pleased to see me.
4. I must not fall behind with laundry or cleaning in case there are power cuts.
5. I must not fall behind with laundry or cleaning – or anything – in case I get the virus .
6. I must not run out of fuel for the range because we rely on this for cooking, heating and hot water during power cuts.
7. I must not run out of the all important, but elusive, tissues and toilet paper.
8. I must try not to open every discussion with Peter with angry allusions to the panic buying phenomenon.
9. I must not panic.
10. I must not panic buy.
11. I must not waste any food.
12. I must not have an autistic meltdown as Peter has enough to deal with.

Other self-imposed rules are falling into place too – ways of holding my sense of self together. For example, concerning appearance and self-grooming, a sudden predilection for wearing black or navy blue head to toe; favouring trousers and boots, not skirts and shoes as dressing up seems frivolous at this time; wearing functional clothes that are a cross between sportswear and uniform. These choices reinforce my sense of being prepared for some kind of unforeseen 'action'. What is the purpose of my rules? What's the psychology driving them? They're my attempt at stockpiling all-important energy reserves, a kind of panic-piling of strengths. And of

course the attempt to create order through rule-making is my antidote to the prospective alternative – physical and mental chaos.

It occurred to me that the changed world actually feels more like my usual personal world. It's become rather more like an autistic world due to the increasing focus on self-sustaining strategies involving space, reduced social contact, hygiene rules, forward planning and the establishment and maintenance of daily routines. Now that these practices are more prevalent in the outside world, I notice that I feel more normal, stronger instead of different, odd, weak and wrong. The new externally imposed proscriptions accord with my capabilities and inclinations. Despite the reality of all the uncertainty, the tensions, the plunge into unknown, I feel strangely more comfortable than usual.

I have been reading Defoe's (1665) *Journal of a Plague Year* – a retrospective account of London life, and death, in a plague epidemic. Over the last few days I've watched reports of the effects of the new restrictions imposed by the government and noticed how so many of these are pre-figured in Defoe's writing. For example, the population's confinement indoors and the ban on public gatherings. Just as Defoe recorded how '*All the plays and interludes [...] were forbid to act; the gaming-tables, public dancing-rooms, and music-houses [...] were shut up and suppressed*' so too have recent news reports documented the predicament of despairing self-employed cafe, pub and club owners whose premises are now compulsorily closed. Then as now, many people's livelihoods simply collapsed as '*all master-workmen in manufactures, especially such as belonged to ornament and the less necessary parts of the people's dress, clothes, [...] stopped their work, dismissed their journeymen and workmen, and all their dependents.*' Right now beauticians, hairdressers and manicurists, who provide what are classified as 'non essential' services are under pressure to cease trading. The issue of whether construction workers should continue working has received attention too as they have inadequate protective clothing and their work forces them into close proximity with one another. Defoe noted that '*All the*

tradesmen [and]all the ordinary workmen [went] out of business, such as bricklayers, masons, carpenters, joiners, plasterers, painters, glaziers, smiths, plumbers, and all the labourers depending on such. In plague-ridden London '*All families retrenched their living as much as possible [...] so that an innumerable multitude of footmen, serving-men, shopkeepers, journeymen, merchants' bookkeepers, and such sort of people, and especially poor maid-servants, were turned off, and left friendless and helpless, without employment and without habitation.*' If he was writing now Defoe might have added the following to his list – workers in leisure activities such as fitness, travel and tourism. A recent news item described 12 European staff at a Scottish hotel being turned out, not only from their jobs but also from the on-site accommodation provided by the employer. There has been reportage too of a viral video showing someone licking the shelves in a Walmart supermarket in Virginia. Defoe describes something similar in his descriptions of plague-infected individuals who took savage pleasure in deliberately mingling with others so as to pass on the disease.

Friday 27/3/20

BBC reports tonight that yesterday the number of coronavirus deaths in the UK jumped by more than 100 in a day for the first time. Number of deaths currently 578, with 11,658 confirmed cases.

The BBC has a new ident to replace the images of people kayaking and running in the countryside: these are newly forbidden activities. Now programmes are punctuated by a calming photograph of a woodland scene.

At eight last night we opened our window and joined in the Clap for Carers tribute. Our next door neighbours did not participate but we could hear the sounds of clapping and children shouting across at the farmhouse. I hope that the local GP who lives about a quarter mile away heard us all. The clapping lasted for maybe a minute

– a little like the sound that thin, dry kindling sticks make as they ignite – a brief flaring of gratitude lighting up the night and then the darkness and silence closed back in around us all.

Passed a very restless night as the dog was unwell with an upset stomach. He asked to be let out several times between 11pm and 4am. Couldn't re-settle to sleep. Switched my worries about vet attention for the pony to anxieties about vet attention for the dog. The animals are feeling like a bit of a liability this last couple of days. Now I have an inkling of why so many pet dogs were put down in WW2 – not that I'm considering parting with mine! Dog seems a little better this morning. I'm feeding him very lightly and keeping him quiet beside me. Fingers crossed for continued improvement.

After disrupted sleep I'm feeling deeply tired today, so no dog-walking or cycling. I need to conserve energy, take things steady. A tired and depleted system is a vulnerable system. So much for yesterday's theory about rule-making and stock-piling energies. One wakeful and anxious night has made a big dent in my reserves. Again, those questions creeping up on me – am I just tired or actually ailing? Am I experiencing early symptoms?

Today's waste not, want not measures. I cut the opaque hand-lotion tube in half so that I can see how much is left and scoop out the very last dregs. I propped the washing-up liquid bottle and honey pot upside down so that the final drops run right down into the nozzles.

Saturday 28/3/20

Awake early after a good night's sleep. The dog is better. The pony is better. I feel better. I don't have symptoms, so back to getting on with the new abnormal normal.

Worrying statistics in last night's news: 181 deaths in UK in last 24 hours, making the national total 759. Ipswich, 22 miles distant, has recorded its first death. In Italy, 919 deaths over the last 24 hours and a total death toll of 9,000.

During today's bike ride we collected a batch of hard-copy community newsletters and I delivered them, my first bit of volunteer work. En route I saw the Porsche belonging to the manor visitors parked at the forest access point. Last night's news, which firmly reiterated the instruction not to drive to beauty spots and walk about, has obviously fallen on deaf ears. Do I feel welcoming towards these people? No. Do I resent their presence? Yes. It seems that their presence is passively unhelpful to me and all other local inhabitants. I admit that I disapprove of the visitors' presence. These aren't my usual responses. The presence of the virus is influencing my attitudes to those others who I perceive as 'outsiders'. I disapprove of my own disapproving.

While out I saw celandines, alkanet, dandelions in full bloom and wild cherry blossom and bluebells on the way. Chiff-chaffs, chaffinches and dunnocks were singing and a woodpecker was drumming loudly – all the signs of spring appearing. But this year the spreading of the spring coincides with the spreading of the virus.

Moving from continent to continent, country to country, city to city, person to person, its progress is accompanied by ever expanding efflorescences of fear, anxiety, panic, suspicion and blame.

Sarah sent her second weekly newsletter which contained these thoughts:'*What day of the week is it? Without any set appointments, no volunteering, no classes, no gym or t'ai chi, no lunches out with friends, I tend to forget which day it is and indeed what the date is. I suppose it must be like this for anyone isolated involuntarily, such as long-term patients in hospital or prisoners or refugees in camps. Putting ourselves in self-isolation is small beer when considered in that light.' [...] 'Did you applaud on Thursday night for the NHS? Nobody would have heard me, but I did. It was a beautiful night*

and the stars were stunning. A friend in the nearest village overlooks the fields of this estate and told me the tractors were out, sounding their horns and flashing their lights. I do hope all this goodwill continues through to the other side of the crisis.'

Sunday 29/3/20

On the eve of Week Three I don't want to write much: I need a break from thinking about the crisis. Spent time indoors as the weather was cold and wintry. A quiet day, but not relaxing.

All supermarket delivery slots are booked until 18th April and the new month hasn't even begun yet.

Today's shortage – plastic bags for food / freezer storage. Hunted all through my bags of previously used bags and found about 20 suitable ones. Put them all in the washing machine and pegged them on the line in the wind – a strange looking line of laundry. A few are proper freezer bags, but there are also some zip-seal ones from the vet and some which were originally packaging for new socks, underwear and stationery items – which reminds me that we are running out of copier paper and I can't find any available online.

Wednesday 1/4/20

A different day, a different month, a different feeling.

March went out like the proverbial lamb. After a few days of warm sunshine that seduced us into thinking spring had arrived, the weather has turned – heavy frost in the early hours, now overcast, still and very cold. My spirits have sunk. My energy levels are low. I'm not sure what the reason is. My body feels on edge and cold. My

mind feels unfocused. I've an overwhelming sense of malaise and depletion but am not sure what the reason is. Slept well. Got up and completed all the jobs in good time but by late morning I was flat, craving rest. Resisted. Went out on the bike and came back feeling worse. Slept after lunch and Peter walked the dog for me today. The sleep hasn't refreshed me so I'm going to sit still, take time and work my way through this.

Much of the content of the last autism meeting dealt with the subject of social energy, the idea that autistic people's reserves tend to run out more quickly than other peoples'. Too much 'peopling' is exhausting. Normally the remedy when social energy levels crash is to take quiet time alone and / or participate in activities that are positive and pleasurable. Today I ask my self this question – how does the relationship between social energy and social distancing play out for autistics during the current situation?

I have only one person to be with, Peter. We don't spend all our waking hours together as we both work separately on our own things for long spells each day. But I'm developing the idea that social distancing, which for us comes pretty close to self-isolation feels as though, paradoxically, it comes with a hefty social burden. Instead of emphasising our distance from people it feels as though multitudes of people are far closer to us than normal. This isn't easy to explain, but despite not experiencing direct and tiring in-person contact, somehow I feel overloaded by thinking about all those people who are out there, at a distance. I wonder about the welfare of my daughter, our friends, our relatives and neighbours near and far. I wonder how academic colleagues and professional contacts are faring both personally and in their work: how they are reacting and whether the crisis is making them more or less creative – or both at once. I wonder about dead friends and relations, what they would have said, how they would be handling things if they were here now. Those are the people I can put names and faces to, but I also feel pressure from and about people who I don't know, people in the abstract. They feel

much more present, able to exert far more influence over me at this time.

Am I experiencing and describing an unfamiliar pandemic-inspired social pressure? Is it that the events of the last few weeks have honed my social awareness? Is the way I feel today an effect of soaking up rapid cultural change? It's the kind of change that on the one hand demands that I look after myself, while on the other requires me to take ever increasing notice of how others are acting, to be responsive to what they say and think and feel. This feels like a difficult position to adopt, staying in, but looking out. There's an uncomfortable tension between being physically 'in', but mentally 'out'. I don't know where I am.

Social distancing makes that notion of 'looking out' double-edged. Now it has the parallel senses of being self-protective yet aware of others; caring for and about self and others. There's an inwardness to looking out when I apply it to myself by being wary, watchful, cautious, self-preoccupied. Yet, at the same time as I'm looking out for myself I'm also keeping an outward-looking empathetic eye on others who are distant both physically or in their situation or world-view. For me, social distancing involves maintaining vigilance towards myself and towards 'others' in the abstract. I forces me to look out for myself as well as to look out for and at others. Seen in these terms, social distancing is not an isolating process but instead brings an unprecedented influx of vicarious contact and influence of an especially potent kind.

Social distancing is burning up huge amounts of social energy. We're all in touch but untouchable, in touch but out of touching distance, pulled in two directions at once; togetherness/ apartness. I can't find my way into the space of my own brain: can't be alone with own thoughts because the barrage of space invading instructions keeps me out of myself: keep fit, maintain mental health, volunteer, do this, do that etc. etc.

Friday 3/4/20

"Is Friday 13th an auspicious day to begin marketing a house again? Will the property market be affected by the growing Corona virus crisis?"
https://boasblogs.org/curarecoronadiaries/is-friday-13th-an-auspicious-day-to-begin-marketing-a-house-again/

A. Hobbe Walker

Started the day well and managed to be at my desk by 10am. Cleared lots of admin and answered emails, then did some work on the piece I'm writing for a a UCL blog. Also wrote a supportive letter to an 80 year old lady who lives nearby and who I have ben told may need some support. It felt slightly odd writing to a complete stranger and being very conscious of avoiding saying anything that might alarm her.

Just before lunchtime we went out. I delivered my letter at the lady's house. Went on to the village shop as I had a parcel to post. At the shop there was a sign on the upper door panel saying "Need some cash?" The lower door panel had been kicked in and boarded up.

Approaching the door I paused, waiting for the activation of the automatic opening device, but the door remained closed until the the assistant let the previous customer out and allowed me in. I said "OK for two from the same household to enter?' and Peter was let in too. This was our first experience of socially distanced shopping. Although we had the whole shop to ourselves and there was no queue when we arrived, we could see one quickly building up outside and this made us hurry to collect the things we needed, just a few necessary items – milk and broccoli, and a few specials that Peter impulse-bought, namely chocolate ice cream, a box of sweets and 2 beers. The last time I was in this shop two weeks ago there was a sociable air, lots of banter, but today there was silence, emptiness.

High temperatures and good weather are forecast for the weekend but warnings to stay at home are being issued. Strange mind-set today: routine is good, but I'm reaching a moment when I want to smash the routine and I know that if I smash it I will want to re-construct it again. So instead of the long term reliability of repetition, the same shapes, the same structures, what I want now is the cycle, the rhythm, of moving in and out of routine, in and out of order and chaos. I can't fully appreciate order without letting myself go to the brink of chaos. The two states work to define one another.

The end of the working week. What am I looking forward to next week? Sarah's newsletter. The next Clap for Carers. Sunshine. Getting my blog submissions completed and sent off. Opening up some space for working on new ideas.

Saturday 4/4/20

Housework all morning, then out on the bikes. Roads deserted.

After lunch, long walk with dog. Spent time in the summerhouse emailing friends to see how they're faring.

Quiet day. Everyone being firmly told to stay home, not to travel far afield, even though the weather is set to be especially good.

Sunday 5/4/20

We placed an online order for flower and vegetable plants from the nursery. As the nursery doesn't usually offer an online service staff have put together a very basic typed list of all their products. It took a long time to make the order as we were doing it 'blind', first thinking of a simple colour scheme for the flowers (orange, yellow, white, peach, apricot) then looking up every plant variety on different illustrated nursery websites so as to see the colours and petal formations. I ordered geraniums, marigolds and begonias just to keep it all very simple. So long as we have some bloom it'll be fine even the colour mix is a bit off.

A lot of banging about next door – the neighbours removing all the contents of their summer house. The clearance was followed by several hours of frantic sawing and hammering. Peter joked that they must be re-purposing the place as as 15 bed virus hospital. The floorspace is about 2m x 2m.

Had positive feedback and encouragement apropos the proposals I have written for contributions to various anthropological projects focusing on the virus. Decided to begin a new one this week about local food provisioning. On this morning's bike ride I stopped at and photographed the newly-dug veg plots which are appeared in local gardens.

During the walk I saw Flora out in her garden so we had a socially distant but very friendly chat. She was really appreciative of the offer of help I made in a note to her last weekend. As always, she looked well and smart, and her garden was in immaculate order. She was very disparaging about the news footage she had seen of people in Richmond Park disobeying the 'stay in' rule, but then she said how the feeling of people caring for one another is returning quickly. I was struck by the way she described this as a "growing back". Just as people are getting on with food growing, so too is there a growing, a cultivation of positive attitudes. To illustrate how things were in the past, she told me she has lived in her house for 63 years, since newly married. When she first arrived her neighbour was an older woman whose husband was bed-ridden as he had had both legs amputated. The neighbour not only cared for her husband and children but also worked long hours on the fields. Flora was in full time work when first married and she recalled how, despite her own heavy work-load, her neighbour spontaneously helped her by getting the laundry in if it began to rain, or leaving Flora a bowl of newly picked and shucked peas. "How did she find the time?" Flora asked. We both said how good it was to see one another, to speak to a real person rather than a virtual one for a change.

Back home I suggested a small piece of community service that Peter might do for the residents of this private former farm enclave. The sign, discouraging entry to the former pig unit, has been overgrown for about 8 years, so peter clipped back the brambles to reveal it and re-purpose it for the current situation.

Monday 6/4/20

I recently added a message to the community newsletter offering help in the form of shopping collection or supportive telephone conversation. In response to this I have heard from an 80 year lady, Ellen, who very much wants her daughter, Julia, to see the paintings she has been producing as a means to occupy herself during lockdown. Julia lives in the west country and Ellen has no internet facility.

This is what we do: Ellen hangs her sketchbook on her front door handle, we collect, photograph the images, then email them to Julia. Having got the system going, Julia then asked if we could show her paintings to Ellen – so these are emailed to me. Peter makes prints of them and we drop these in at Ellen's house. She has been very appreciative and the picture swap system gives us things to talk about as well as enabling me to be able to let Julia know that I have seen her mother looking well.

Good Friday 10/4/20

British daily death toll of 980 overtakes Spain's and Italy's.

I count my blessings.

It's felt like a Sunday all day. Slow pace. Summer weather.

Hot cross buns in bed. Finish the last few lines of an essay. Long walk in the forest. Bike ride on deserted roads. Birdsong. Blossom. A hour in the summerhouse making a tiny painting from tiny strokes like stitches. A way of stopping my brain from constantly thinking thoughts.Release. Relaxing.

Receive paintings by email from Julia; Peter will make prints to give to Ellen. An hour at the sewing machine, making a new bed for the dog and repairing the pony's summer fly sheet with a piece cut from a pair of outworn Levis.

Quiet. Very quiet.

Channel 4 news urgent, worsening. Distant things. Things in the near distance.

Things in the distant distance.Trump rambling.

Us. Here. OK. Fortunate.

Peter wanted to order vegetable seeds, but found he was number 2062 in the online queue.

Easter Sunday 12/4/20

We're doing OK. I think that having animals that make you keep up a regular routine is very good in these circumstances. Our routine also includes a lot of gardening for Peter, a short bike ride and a longer dog walk each day – technically rule-breaking, but seeing as there's nobody about I doubt we've unwittingly killed anybody yet. Over Easter I've slightly lost touch with my habit of writing up my nature diary, my Covid Crisis diary and my anthropology blog pieces. There's a lot of cooking going on, and probably a bit too much eating. Every afternoon I spend an hour in the summerhouse working on tiny little paintings so that I can empty my brain of words.

Our friend sent us her latest newsletter today in which she wrote "*Three weeks in and it looks as though it will last very much longer. The death toll is frightening but it is heartening to hear that the majority of people are abiding by the guidelines, staying at home and keeping their distance. On Good Friday I saw four silly men on bicycles discussing which way to go at the top of their voices, all bunched up together. My daughter reminded me that they might all be part of the same family, so I was suitably admonished, in the nicest possible way. I feel very lucky to live in the middle of a rural environment, with the ability to walk and not many people about, but there is the*

possibility that I tend to consider it my environment, which I must curtail. Even today, Easter Sunday, I have seen only one pony and trap, two riders and 1 walker.

More work in the garden this week. I have sown vegetables in the greenhouse and started despairing that the broad beans were not germinating in the open ground. However, this morning, there they were, poking out of the soil in the raised beds, so clearly I need a little more patience. I have also been weeding madly, filling wheelbarrows full of weeds and rubbish to go on the bonfire. There is still more to do and the garden is desperate for rain. It's forecast for tonight and tomorrow, I do hope so, I have been carting watering cans round the most desperate of plants and the pots."

Easter Monday 13/4/20

Dark. Freezing east wind: complete overnight reversal from midsummer to midwinter weather. Back into winter clothes – padded coats, thermals, gloves and scarves.

We walked to Ellen's house so that we could give her the prints of her daughter's paintings. No sign of Ellen, and the car not on the drive so presumably she had gone on one of her outings.

Back home to light the final fire of the season – and we really appreciated it.

Spent a little time in the summerhouse in the afternoon as the sun came out. I worked at my tiny paintings again. Not sure that they're going very successfully but I find the highly repetitive process of making little tiny brush strokes very relaxing – like knitting.

Tuesday 14/4/20

Back to work after the so-called Easter 'holiday'. Managed to create an impossibly long job list for the day. Apart from catching up on housework and the massive pile of ironing generated by washing all my summer clothes at the weekend, I baked scones, sorted out a food order and generally got myself organised.

I had a call from Ellen. She said that she had left another batch of her paintings ready for collection. Decided to kill two birds with one stone and walk the dog with me to collect the painting. As promised, the sketchbook was in a bag hanging on the door handle – heavier than previously. Ellen had put in three tiny Easter eggs and a can of beer as a thank you to us for sending pictures back and forth between her and her daughter.

Later on we spoke on the phone and Ellen said that she has now finished her sketch book. When I asked her if I could give her another, she seemed uncertain. If she doesn't continue with the painting swapping process I'm not sure how I can support her, apart from speaking on the phone. Tonight I had the impression that she is becoming frustrated with the lockdown. She misses her part-time job and wants to see her daughter.

I didn't have any time for my tiny paintings or for writing today – and the omission makes me feel uneasy. I did manage to complete a little journal piece I wrote for an anthropology blog and got that submitted. The decks are clear for resuming writing tomorrow.

Wednesday 15/4/20

A frosty start to the morning, but a return to better weather. Less cold wind and the sun out. After the early morning jobs, a strange feeling of restlessness creeping up on me and worsening by the minute. Routine is good, but when does it tip over into monotony? The government plans to make an announcement tomorrow concerning

the lockdown. I don't feel any sense of expectation or hope about news of the lockdown ending or being reduced, I just feel on edge because tomorrow is a marker, a distraction. It looks likely to be a moment of anticlimax when we will be told to continue as we are – so then we can concentrate on continuing.

By mid day the sun was in the south east, lighting up all the buildings in the manor house complex. It was good to take a long walk looking back from a distance at the array which includes the farmhouse, the medieval barn, the cart bay, the Victorian cottages, the 1950s, 60s and 90s barns and our house. Somehow seeing them all so small and far away gave me a fresh perspective. I'd walked off my lockdown pre-occupations.

Having dropped the dog indoors I cycled to the letter box with some post, then cycled back round to the field and shut the pony in off the spring grass. Then we had lunch in the summerhouse. Feel like I've got a grip of time again after drifting a little and trying somewhat unsuccessfully to think myself into holiday mode over the Easter weekend. Feel more secure in getting back to work on the new abnormal normal.

Thursday 16/4/20

We biked past the cottage that stands at the end of the old airfield runway. There was a stall outside with several pots of vegetable plants for sale – and a box of new laid eggs. Sadly I didn't have a pound on me, but I opened the box to see the contents – six eggs all in subtly different shades of cream. Some with an almost olive tinge. There is quite a small-holding at the cottage; a plot sown with lots of vegetable seeds. I saw black turkeys, ducks and hens. The family, including a young boy were all outside working in the sun. Over the last few weeks there have been no eggs at the stalls and I don't really like the ones that any of the shops are supplying. They

smell fishy and the yolks are insipid looking. I've written notes to the airfield small-holders and to the stall-holder near the church asking if they will call me when they have eggs available. Hope they will both answer as I would buy a half dozen at a time from both.

The lockdown has taught me the wisdom of the adage that advises against putting all your eggs in one basket. My shopping 'eggs' are getting to be distributed across an increasing number of 'baskets' as the weeks of lockdown pass. We are settling into buying greengroceries from the pub shop, dry goods and cleaning products from another village shop, toiletries online from Boots the chemist, horse bedding and apples from the local mill and dog food from various online suppliers. This morning we sat up in bed making an online order for smoked fish, smoked ham and fish pates from the smokehouse across the river– all treats to enliven our diet. I can't imagine ever resuming my habit ordering everything from Tesco. I don't feel like giving them business following their inability to create a fair and functional delivery system a month into the crisis. We haven't set foot into town or into a supermarket since 20 March. My last Tesco order was delivered on 23 March .

Time to stop writing. We are going on a shopping mission; to drop off my note at the nearest egg stall, to the pub shop to pay for yesterday's order, to the forest smallholding with my other note, and then on to the village shop to pick a box of things I ordered this morning. It will be quite novel to be in the car and I'm looking forward to driving around seeing the fields, the forest, the marshes and the wide open span of the sea.

Tonight we will hear the government announcements about plans for the next few weeks, then we'll participate in Clap for the NHS.

Friday 17/4/20

A. Hobbe Walker

The hen robin is sitting on the nest in the woodshed. How many days will she sit? The incubation time is about 13 days, but the count begins once the final egg of the clutch has been laid, so maybe there will be young robins in about three weeks' time. Every day the neighbours put out food scraps intended for the deer and the feral cat, but the food also attracts rats. Last year there was a blackbird nest in the hedge beside the gate. The bird had been sitting for a while and then we found the nest abandoned and empty as the rat had climbed up and eaten the eggs. To try and protect the robin, Peter re-baited the rat box this morning.

Three weeks. That's the time-span not just for robin egg incubation, but also the next phase of quarantine. Last night the government announced that there will be no easing of quarantine restrictions until at least 08 May. So we go on, just as we are now, as expected. One quiet day at a time.

I walked the long loop around the crossroads, The Drift, and back up the manor drive today as I had another print to drop off at Ellen's house. Once again she was out, but she had left another gift out for us – four more cans of lager. These were weighing heavy by the time I reached home. It was a blustery and cold walk despite strong sunshine – really chill wind coming in off the sea. But once again it was a pleasure to see the strengthening colours of the trees, the green verges dotted with white, blue and yellow flowers: ramsomes, garlic mustard, stitchwort, spurge, bluebells, periwinkles, celandines and dandelions. As I walked I was trying to think of some other project to suggest to Ellen as she doesn't seem to want to continue painting. The picture exchange has worked really well as a way of staying in touch and knowing that she is OK. Maybe we could set up a new to and fro that involves writing a few short observations at a time about the spring, or about our gardens. I'll suggest it to her.

These details of the quarantine feel to me as though they matter, as though they are worth recording. I suppose I could track the daily death and infection statistics, or recount and reflect on the harrowing personal accounts of death and loss that are

relayed on the news daily. The reason I don't focus on these is not because I don't care. It's more that in an age of high volume and instantly accessible media reportage the facts are there in the public domain. There seems to be no need to add and add to the mountain of info. If someone I knew fell ill, I would write about it, but I'm unwilling to join in with speculating or commentating from a distance. What feels important to me – because it's all I can do in this situation – is record what I notice firsthand, observe how things close to me change, explain their effects and how they feel. There's a way that the claustrophobia, the very fine detail of the closing in, the closing down and the slowing down feel like they might have a lasting value. There may be big lessons to learn from the minutiae of this massively disruptive situation.

From time to time I catch myself wondering what my mother would have made of this situation. She would have been approaching her 90th birthday now. As she worked as a matron in care homes for many years I'm sure she would be very pre-occupied with the predicament of care home residents and staff. She would have her radio tuned to news reports all the time. From a matron's perspective she would be indignant about the lack of provision for staff protection, but if she were a resident she would be completely terrified. At the end of her life she adamantly refused to have anything to do with the idea of entering a care home; she hated the idea of communal living and the health risks it might entail. This would be her worst nightmare come true. She would worry incessantly about me, her grand-daughter and everyone she knew, but I think that she would cope well with self-isolation. Her experiences as a nine year old evacuee and of life in the London Blitz left a life-long impression and made her mentally self sufficient. I imagine her recounting her wartime experiences and ending any worry-sessions with the words "Well at least it's not as bad for us as it is in Equador. Aren't we lucky." Would she have hoarded food? Yes unashamedly, but only giant size jars of pickled onions, large tins of Cadburys Roses chocolates and food for her cat. What would she have missed most? Fresh seafoods, visits from her home hairdresser and her carer and looking forward to her next out of season holiday in some small English seaside town. What would

she have worried about? Lack of chiropody, having an accident that would expose her to the virus during a hospital visit, being a nuisance. I know she would have called me daily adding items one by one to an ever growing shopping list and every time I got the shopping, she would immediately call to say she forgot something and the list would start again. As she would be nearly ninety now, I'd have to be patient about that habit. Although she would have become frustrated, angry and anxious about being shut indoors, I imagine her displaying resilience and patience through the lockdown. She would get out her painting kit and make a wobbly rainbow poster for her front window and she would definitely have clapped enthusiastically and wholeheartedly for the NHS every Thursday evening. How strange to think now about what she would make of this if she were still here. It's as if she's come back to life a little.

So far I don't think I have once considered the possibility of my daughter being dangerously ill with the virus. I just don't allow my thoughts to wander to that place. Conversely, she never speculates about me or her father falling ill. Maybe both of us have the attitude that we will cross that bridge if and when we come to it.

Yesterday afternoon we went on our round tour as mentioned. The stall-holder who usually sells eggs was standing at the roadside talking with another elderly man. They both looked uncertain and slightly dejected. I handed the stall holder my note and briefly mentioned what it was about. He told me that he can no longer access the supply of eggs that he usually uses to supplement his own hens' production. He said " I don't know when I'm going to get no more, but I'll let you know if I do." At Fern Cottage by the airfield, the garden was deserted and I haven't had a response yet. On our travels we noticed a well-stocked egg stall at some cottages just outside one of the villages and further on saw a home-made sign pointing towards another one but we decided not to buy from either as we have a few eggs already and I want to see if the people at Fern Cottage reply as this would be our nearest supply.

Saturday 18/4/20

Yesterday I emailed the pub shop as follows and included a picture of the pony:

"*Hello,*

Just a note to say thank you very much for all your help with shopping. It's being much appreciated by this (carrot crunching) customer. He is 34, equivalent to 100+ in human years and happily retired here with us."

This reply arrived:

"*How lovely to see a happy 4 legged customer. We are often gifted end of life carrots – know just where to send them now. You are very welcome, pleasure to be of service.*"

Given the pony's advanced age, I'm not sure that I'm completely comfortable with the notion of 'end of life carrots'.

I also received answers to the two notes I sent to the people who put out eggs on their stalls. Neil, who has a stall just along the road called late morning and said that he had put by a dozen from his own hens for us, so we drove there straight away to collect. Neil was in the garden and came out onto his drive, wanting to talk. He said he thought that his normal supplier was probably able to get a higher price by sending the eggs into town. He had also been told that "eggs are scarce" but couldn't understand why since hens are in full lay at this time of year. We spoke about the sudden snap of cold, dark weather. He described driving through an area this morning where the roads were "heaving with people, walking, jogging and cycling." The place doesn't really fit the profile of either small town or village as it's just a suburban sprawl stretching between two large towns. The huge numbers of people there live in vast newly built housing developments just a few minutes drive from the retail park which contains several superstores including Tesco, Boots, Shoezone, Mountain Warehouse, Next, Pets at Home and more. Neil wanted to know how I

passed my time and whether I was bored. He seemed quite surprised when I explained that I seem to be busier than usual. I had the impression that he might be missing contact with family and friends. He promised to call me again next week when he has another dozen eggs for me.

Peter drove back home, but I got the dog out of the car and walked him back. Normally the road isn't very good to walk on as it's straight and very fast. But as it's been virtually deserted during lockdown I thought egg-shopping and dog-walking could be combined. Near the church there was a new, carefully hand-painted sign at the roadside advertising plants and logs for sale at the cottages. Decided to take the more indirect route home and go and investigate. On the cottage driveway there was a lovely array of plants, mostly flowers, but also some healthy-looking strawberries and raspberry canes. There were a dozen or more irises neatly potted, but they had no labels to say what the colour would be. I plan to do my note-writing contact method again to find out as I love irises and some rhizomes can easily go with us when we move. The rest of the garden looked beautiful, even on such a dull and drizzly morning. There were lots of little flower beds cut into the lawns and shady wooded areas. All along the hedge dozens more pots of irises had been lined up ready for sale.

Walked home slowly, taking the track down the hill and around behind the pigs' paddocks. Just past the little cottage at the edge of the Harman's Wood I turned off the track and looked into the wood for the first time. Normally it's strictly off limits as it's used for shooting, but there wasn't a soul anywhere in sight. The bluebells were thick under the oaks.

Passing the chapel cottage I dawdled again, taking another close look at the new little veg plot there. More work has been done: more frameworks and twiggy sticks put in place for bean or pea vines to climb. Lots of CDs suspended on strings were spinning in the wind, momentarily flashing iridescent rainbow colours. The radish seedlings are up. While I was looking, the gardener came out of his summerhouse

and we chatted. He asked where I was from and if I had a veg garden and what did I grow. He pointed out some mole hills, dangerously close to the little plot. Gesturing towards the enormous field abutting his garden, he asked "Why do they have to come in here when there's all that ?"

As soon as I got home I wanted to see the eggs we had bought – and they were every bit as good as I'd hoped – a dozen, all in different shades of cream and brown, their shells glossy and perfectly clean. While I was looking, Peter told me that he just had a call from Val, the lady at Fern Cottage, the other place I hoped to source eggs from. She told him that her hens hadn't laid yet today, but we should phone in the afternoon. Peter learned from her that many people just take the eggs without paying. Looking at satellite images on the computer I saw that Fern Cottage is much closer to us than I realised. The road takes you in a long loop away from it, but there's a far quicker way through the forest. Before the pine plantations existed it would have felt as though the cottage was little more than a stone's throw away across the fields. There's a way that the thick, dark firs seem to create impenetrable barriers in the landscape – the 'blockage' isn't just physical, but psychological too. Whatever is on the other side of the fir plantations feels a long, long way away, cut off, unreachable. The tree plantings must have badly disrupted interconnections between the villages a century ago: villages, communities and relatives must have found themselves unexpectedly arboreally distanced by the arrival of the trees.

At five we had a call from Graham at Fern Cottage so we drove over and I met Val who was waiting outside. She offered me hens', ducks' and turkeys' eggs. I had only managed to find £1 in cash, so accepted the hens' eggs. The turkey eggs were huge, pale cream and thickly speckled with dark brown spots. Val said that one turkey egg is roughly equivalent to two hens' eggs. I'm definitely going to try some next time and I hope to visit her again next weekend. Three different conversations with near neighbours in one day: this is unheard of! What a contrast to the hostile yet prying attitude of the people in the other half of this house.

I'm really enjoying the kinds of contacts that our recent food provisioning endeavours are prompting. Suddenly it feels so much easier to talk with people that I don't know: we all have topics in common, mainly the lockdown, where we go shopping, what we can access and what we can't, the weather, gardening, what might be around the corner pandemic-wise. I've got into the habit of keeping my shopping lists and my receipts from food shopping because I like looking through them not only to see what I got from where, but also because they remind me of the interactions that happened, the conversations had during shopping. I'm enjoying lockdown shopping and all the benefits it brings.

What am I missing during lockdown? Seeing the sea, riding in the forest, the *idea* of freedom of movement – even though I've no desire to travel very far, and money, that is coins. Yesterday I shook out a coat and several coins flew out of the pockets. It seemed a real novelty to handle them, to remind myself of the shape, weight and feel of a 50p, a 5p. After buying the eggs we're painfully short of coins. It's hard to know when or how we will get more as shop-keepers are reluctant to handle cash due to the infection risk, and of course ATM machines only dispense notes. Maybe we'll have to pay for our next batch of eggs with a £10 note and be in credit for nine more boxes.

Sunday 19/4/20

We took the dog for a walk after lunch. At Manor Cottage there was a hand-written sign advertising 'Punch and Judy, church 10.30' – wish I'd seen it before as I was curious about the idea of a socially distanced audience spread out in the church yard. We paused at the chapel cottage as I wanted Peter to see the garden and I took some photographs, then walked on up to the church cottages again as I wanted to photograph there too. As we were passing the church I thought I heard voices and a short drift of music, but as it was so windy I wondered if I had imagined it. When I

looked over the hedge there were two girls in front of the church porch. They were playing a cello and a violin, something slow and wistful, the phrases all interrupted by the wind rushing through the new leaves and blossoms.

Ellen called and said that she would like the sketchbook I offered her. I'm relieved about this as the to and fro of paintings is a good way of maintaining contact with her. Biked to Ellen's and delivered the new sketchbook to her.

Our friend sent her 5th newsletter which contained the following:

"One night last week, I was awoken by noises downstairs and on investigating found that one of the feral cats had managed to get in. My two non-feral cats were cowering in the corner hissing and as soon as he saw me, he went bananas, racing up the walls and curtains. I opened the back door, but these ferals are so interbred, I have an idea that their eyes are not good and he could not distinguish it. I had turned the cat flap so that mine could get in, but not get out again. He ended up behind the hot water tank, from which I batted him out with a fly swat. He did fly out of the door eventually and we returned to normal, picking up books, magazines and papers that were strewn around.

The other semi-wild life of interest has been a small herd (or are they flock, like sheep?) of goats on the fenced-in area of the estate. I am reliably informed by their owner that they are Boregate goats, renowned for their meat. But they are the most beautiful I have ever seen, pure white with soft brown ears and markings on their faces. The first time I met them, I said hello and told them how pretty they were and strode off on my walk, only to find them very quietly following me in a pack. But they soon gave up when they realised I was not going to feed them."

Spoke with Anna on the phone but found we had little news for one another – it's all routine. Also spoke with Lucy – this time at length about the ills of elderly ponys' feet. Finished the day with a lengthy emailing session from my bed. Enough: a very

long and busy day.

Monday 20/4/20

Felt all wrong from the moment I woke up. I was out of the house well before seven and cleared the jobs quickly as I very much wanted to take time on my own. Every year around mid-March, just as the spring starts to gather pace, I like to go to the woods and spend time sitting still and taking in all the new sights and sounds. Somehow, this year I haven't found any time. So today I walked slowly looking carefully at the bluebells and the sunlight and shadow falling on the tree trunks, then I crossed the manor drive, walked through the dip, over the road and into the trees on the hill. More bluebells there and on the banks down by the springs. Re-crossed the road and went into the big wood. The sun was at my back, the shadows of the oaks all stretching away ahead of me and falling in complicated traceries over the blue flowers. The blues, greens and shadows looked solid and strong. Fumitory is coming into flower and the looped stems of new bracken are shooting through the leaf litter. Although everything looked so beautiful, I felt on edge and needed to keep walking rather than sit and stare into the blue. I retraced my steps, this time looking into the light and seeing the flower colours and delicate leaf shapes back-lit and semi-transparent.

Back at home, at nine, I felt deeply tired and empty. I slept for an hour. In the afternoon I slept another hour in the summerhouse. The wind had risen and the trees in the wood were full of agitation and noise. By four I felt worse still and gave the day up as a bad job and went to bed. It's been a dense month of thinking and constant activity. I've had enough of the routines, the habits and tactics. It feels as though I've been living each and every experience two or three times over, mentally rehearsing it, doing it, then reviewing and considering it. I feel as if I have to capture everything I see. There have been no spaces: the days have been crammed with

action and attentiveness. I've got to stop, let things happen, let things go for a while.

Tuesday 21/4/20

Slept until 3.15am then started anticipating hearing the birds singing – which they did about 45 minutes later. Got up at five and my first thought was a resolve not open my emails for a week, not to slip back in to over-busyness and not to look at any online news for a week. I'm sick of hearing the same topics being endlessly re-cycled, sick of seeing the same BBC news graphics.

Peter's brother called last night and said that he and his wife are feeling extreme tiredness too. I can't fully account for my exhaustion yesterday as I'm not aware of stressing. At first I thought it was the autism coming to the fore, but it doesn't really feel quite like that. Perhaps we're moving into a phase of collective pandemic-fatigue? That said, I mentioned the autism diagnosis to my friend Yanna: I'm finding that the situation is giving me both reason and self-permission to tell people, mainly because I'm convinced that autism is making me better able to handle quarantine and if I don't give a reason for this capability it just sounds as though I'm bragging.

My dawn rule about over-busyness lasted about 30 minutes as I've started the day by typing and catching up on my journal. I'm not out of bed yet, but I'm pressurising myself about what to do or not do today, how to balance out keeping a close eye on some things and turning a blind eye to others. Every time my daughter calls she speaks at length about her worry that she may not be achieving enough during her enforced home-working and every time I tell her to give herself a break – but I'm incapable of following my own advice. Everything matters – a lot!

Out before eight to the stable. Saw the first swallow of the year, all alone, perched up on the wires. By ten, after I'd finished all the jobs I found myself deep in another horrible energy dip so spent a while sitting up on the bed looking through a 1940s

book of my grandmother's, *The British People at War*. The text is pure nationalistic propaganda, but the black and white photographs are good. I was looking for any parallels with the current situation and found some in the sections about food production, digging for victory and rationing.

As the light was right with the sun still in the south I cycled over to Fern Cottage to take photographs of the smallholding's unique position right next to the airfield runway. I went via the forest paths and, as suspected, the distance was far shorter than by road. The forest looked wonderful with all the birches just coming into shimmering green leaf – such a contrast to the high chain-link fencing attached to cast concrete posts topped with triple strands of barbed wire, and the perimeter lights set on top of stark three-branched 'trees' of metal. The airfield itself is bleak-looking, covered in scrubby gorse and desiccated boulder-like clumps of out-of-flower heather. Viewed from the straight road and through the fencing, Fern Cottage has a sterile look about it, but if you step off the road onto the forest track and view it from amongst the birch trees the house seems transformed. You see it as it originally was, an isolated house embedded in a more forgiving and alive landscape.

As there was still time before lunch I walked the dog and and noticed that the Punch and Judy signs had had the word 'cancelled' added.

Received an advisory email from the company who run my local dental practice. https://www.mydentist.co.uk/dental-health/dental-treatments/managing-dental-problems-at-home-during-covid-19?utm_campaign=1731689_How%20do%20I%20access%20dental%20care%20-%20UDCs&utm_medium=email&utm_source=IDH%20Group%20Limited&dm_i=2RZY,1146H,6G6WV0,3XALD,1

This offered the following rather scaring suggestions for DIY dentistry during lockdown:

Lost Crown

1. Clean and check the crown. If the crown is mostly hollow, you can attempt to re-cement it at home if you feel confident to do so.
2. Remove any debris from the crown; you can use something like the tip of a paperclip to scrape the old cement away. Clean your tooth thoroughly; all debris should be removed from the crown and the tooth for the crown to seat properly.
3. Check the crown fits without cement. Check carefully that the bite feels correct, if the tooth feels too tall or proud, it is not fitted correctly, double check for debris. Never try to force a crown or post onto your tooth, this can cause the root to fracture. If you cannot get the crown to fit, keep the tooth as clean as possible and wait to see your dentist.
4. Crowns should be re-fixed back onto the tooth using a dental cement from a pharmacy like Recapit. DO NOT USE SUPERGLUE or FIXADENT to fit your crown.
5. Once you have practiced placing the crown, dry the tooth and crown, mix the cement as instructed on the packet and fill the crown. Place the crown directly onto the tooth and bite firmly to press it into place.
6. Remove any excess cement with a toothpick and floss between your teeth to make sure they do not stick together.

Fractured or knocked out teeth

1. If a tooth has been chipped and is sensitive and/or sharp then applying a sensitive toothpaste or using an emergency repair kit is advised.
2. If a baby tooth has been knocked out, do not attempt to put it back in. Clean the area, bite on a clean hankie or towel for 20 minutes if it is bleeding, give the child age appropriate pain relief medicine and keep to a soft diet until the area has healed.
3. If an adult tooth has been knocked out
    1. handle the tooth by its crown (the white part), avoid touching the root
    2. if the tooth is dirty, wash it briefly (10 seconds) under cold running water
    3. try to re-implant the tooth in its socket and then bite gently on a

handkerchief to hold it in position
4. if this is not feasible, store the tooth for transportation to the designated urgent dental care centre in milk (not water). Alternatively transport the tooth in the mouth, keeping it between molars and the inside of the cheek.
5. You need to telephone for an emergency dental appointment

It's five, getting towards the end of another busy day. Have I done enough? I don't know.

Wednesday 22/4/20

Cycling back up the manor drive I noticed some litter blowing about, so I picked it up – three till receipts from Tesco and Marks and Spencer for food bought yesterday. All three were timed between 4 and 5pm – and the amount spent – a cool £700. These must have been dropped by the people staying at the manor. They had written their names on the receipts: Russian sounding names, so maybe we have oligarchs for neighbours now. I don't mind admitting that I found the purchases intriguing – apart from the many bottles of wine at £18 apiece, there were buckets and spades. I don't suppose these are for digging in the manor gardens, so presumably they're being taken to local beaches, contrary to current protocols.

The vet came to give the pony his his vaccination and do his Cushings blood test. He was a good boy and let her inject him while he was tied up and I stood back. It was very odd having the consultation at a distance, the vet and the pony in the stable and me shut outside. I walked him out for the vet and we talked at length about his lameness, but she wasn't overly concerned and reassured me that I'm doing everything right for him. Test results next week.

A. Hobbe Walker

Thursday 23/4/20

Awake well before six, but didn't get up straight away. Spent time looking at maps old and new of the airfield and the common. I've never quite grasped the lie of the land and how places join up in those locations. Soon I want to walk along the western perimeter fence of the airfield. Also want to get onto the common and walk into it from the airfield side not from the road. Somehow over the years I've ridden round the common and close to it countless times, but never quite got right into it

We went out to pick up various horse supplies, then up to the filling station as Peter wanted petrol for the mower. While he filled the can I stood watching the traffic on the A12: virtually no cars, but many heavy goods vehicles and a surprising number of tractors. I took the chance to buy some chocolate bars. I also needed some cash as I'm down to my last £10 note which I withdrew in the first week of quarantine, but the ATM machine wasn't in operation. Not sure if they're all shut down because they're an infection risk or if it was empty or broken. Anyway, there's still no cash and we want this for egg-buying.

My daughter called and dictated a letter intended for her employers. Home-working on a very tiny and cramped table top has caused RSI in her right hand and she needs to resolve the lack of use of a proper office desk and chair. Typed the letter for her, then baked a cake and somehow the morning had vanished. I began the week with a long list of writing / submission tasks and thought today might be the day when I made progress with these, but it wasn't to be.

It's been as warm as a July day and the east wind has finally dropped – too good to be indoors, so after lunch we went out again. I had an email from a distant neighbour who has been clearing bamboo from her garden and was offering the canes. We went and chose some bamboo canes and Shelley came to her gate and chatted from the other side of the lane. As the cake-making and the scrambled eggs we had had for lunch used up a lot of our supply, we bought another six eggs from the stall outside

the old mill which is now an artists' studio space. This stall has a small oil painting of a chicken done by one of the artists in the studios – which are of course closed right now.

Walked the dog in the shade of the forest. We followed the same tracks as I've been taking to Fern Cottage. Had a look at the fantastic Rainbow eggs on offer at the stall there, but I'll wait until the weekend to get a box of those. I'm becoming slightly obsessed with knowing where all the eggs in the district are, how much they are, what species lay them and what colours the shells are. Writing about this is one of the things on my list. While out we noticed how much fleece has been laid on the fields over the past week or so – more than I ever remember seeing before, and on fields which haven't been fleeced before. This suggests that there's a massive drive towards vegetable production this year.

Had a short rest, then tea and a slice of the new cake. The shopping order arrived from the pub shop; put this away, folded the laundry, walked and stabled the pony and at 5.30 finally made it into the summer house to at least get this written. Before the week ends I need to work out a realistic schedule for tackling the planned writing. Apart from eggs, I want to write pieces on the following – fleece on the fields, east European workers, the rhythm and routine of quarantine days, something about the airfield and Fern Cottage. More than enough to be getting on with! And we're planning to go and see Sarah for a socially distanced cup of tea in her garden on Monday. The days are very full and going by very fast.

Friday 24/4/20

During our early morning walk I glanced down and noticed a small flat stone of a strange greenish grey. The colour wasn't one that I recognised as being typical of lichen or moss. When I picked the stone up and turned it over I discovered that it

had a little alien face painted on it – another one of the series I first started finding at the beginning of March in the churchyard. There was another one that I didn't write about; this was left on the bench at the junction. The painting was of a tiny heart complete with angel wings attached – there one day, gone the next. Today's find suggests that someone has walked along creating a trail of stones. I'm intrigued. Why would you paint the stones so carefully then abandon them? Are they meant as gifts to the finder? The first stones were put out in early March before lockdown began. Was the stone-painter anticipating lockdown and trying to send out a message of reassurance? Is there a way of discovering who the painter is and why they did this? Perhaps there are more stones still awaiting discovery.

More food ordering on the phone this morning: groceries from the village shop to be picked up late afternoon, 2 bunches of asparagus plus home made jam and apple juice from a fruit farm 5 miles away – for collection tomorrow, a dozen rainbow eggs and a half dozen turkey eggs from Fern Cottage ready on Sunday afternoon. This means outings, things to see and write about.

Set off for what was meant to be a quick walk at midday. Discovered an elderly neighbour, Flora, emerging from the thick of the bluebells in the big wood where there is a 'No entry' sign. Stopped and had a long safely distanced chat. She said "I don't care if anyone challenges me, and if they do I'll tell them I'm doing less harm to their wood than their tractors do to my grass verge!" She had her smart phone in her hand and said she had taken lots of photos of the flowers. It was a long and rambling conversation ranging from trespass to the ills of Tesco and shopping habits more generally.

Down at the heath I had hoped to see adders as the sun was warm on the slope where they like to lie, but no sooner had I begun looking than a binocular-wielding man hailed me from several yards away: "You must live close. I've seen you walking here before." I remembered having seen him in the distance a few times recently and we fell into easy conversation – another rambling one about adders, birds. He told

me about the site of a tree creeper nest close by and a place where he had seen three harvest mice. In exchange I pointed out the nightingales' and blackcaps' singing-bushes. He said "Oh yes, I call this place the nightingale patch". I think of south side of the heath as 'Adderland' and the north side as 'the haunt of the nightingale'. I like the idea of different people mapping different parts of a small patch of country with the names of the different species that live there. Before we parted, he asked me to say hello to his wife who was in their car parked nearby – she has been seriously unwell. I found the car and called to the lady from distance. She had the doors wide open and was sitting with her face lifted up to the sun, eyes closed. As she turned to me her long thick silver plait swung over her shoulder. She explained that she is afraid to walk about in town due to the infection risk and said that today's trip is the first time she has left her house in 5 weeks. I said she should come to the heath as there is hardly ever anybody about. The her phone rang, so we said goodbye and I walked on.

Passing the willows I was stopped dead in my tracks by a long, clear trill of nightingale song. I stood listening waiting for the alternating pattern of phrase, pause, phrase, pause. Then there were footsteps, a young man. I pointed to the bush and said "Nightingale?" to see if he was interested. He was, so we stood the requisite distance apart and listened together. In between the bird's phrases he said "Have you noticed how at the moment nature seems so much ...." and his words trailed away, so I suggested "Bigger?" to which he agreed.

I got home far later than intended. In the space of the morning I have had more human contact and conversation than I would in a month of normal times. Maybe it's normal times which are actually abnormal, not this.

Saturday 25/4/20

A. Hobbe Walker

The first thing we both said we when we woke up at six was how exhausted we feel. I slept well, but have no energy. Peter said that he had heard a radio feature about this, the explanation being that pandemic-related stress is causing deep tiredness for many people. I'm just not aware of feeling stress. I don't spend time consciously or unconsciously worrying about the prospects of illness, death, lack of food or money. Peter thinks it's the background and non-stop presence uncertainty that is tiring, but I think it's the non-stop action, the state of hyper-activity that I've been in for weeks now. I find being at home tiring because there's always something that needs washing, wiping, moving, putting away, picking up, folding, cooking, cleaning etc. etc. etc. If we left the house for a whole afternoon I wouldn't be able to keep this up. There's the sense that I'm being dominated by my own possessions and all that I have to do to or with them: stuff never stops making demands. Despite feeling horrible, we got up early.

At midday we called in at the pub shop to pay the food bill. I asked Louise if I could take a photo of the shop and she agreed, but was curious to know my reason. When I explained that I'm writing about the domestic changes brought about by the pandemic she invited me to come back in the afternoon as she would then have the shelves fully re-stocked. It was a good idea, but I took the picture of the shop as it was because I wanted to keep the afternoon clear. When I told Louise how everything seems so busy during lockdown, she seemed surprised and wanted to know how I spent my time, so I reeled off the list. She's right though, I will go back and take more photos when the shop looks at its best. We may go to the bottle bank tomorrow, so I could do it then: a bottle bank and photo mission feels like a big outing to look forward to these days! And there's also tomorrow's prospect of going to Fern Cottage to pick up eggs. And Ellen has more paintings awaiting collection.

We drove to the fruit farm to collect our order which we found boxed up ready in the shop. I took some more photos there, both of the shop and of the cherry orchard all in blossom. Maybe we should go every week for our 2 bunches of asparagus. That

will mean we will know when the cherries and soft fruits are coming along: the visits are another way of marking time, making time take shape.

After lunch I slept for 40 minutes in the summer house. It was sunny and warm and drowsy, a chaffinch and a garden warbler singing really loudly in the wood. Walked down to the heath.There are far more people out and about in the sun this afternoon. I saw three idiots on mountain bikes cycling through the bluebells in the wood and there were cars parked on the heath. I watched one man cross from the forest heading back to his Range Rover on the heath and felt tempted to point out that it's not a car park and that by driving over it he was probably disturbing the ground-nesting birds, adders, grass snakes and lizards who live there. I stood close to the vehicle and glared instead. I feel protective about the place.

I'm now sitting quietly in the summerhouse again, listening to the kestrels feeding their young in the wood.

Sunday 26/4/20

I had a really bad sleepless night. Fell into a deep sleep as soon as I lay down, but then jolted awake and stayed awake until past 5am. Despite that, today has been OK. I've tried not to pile on the pressure, just taken the day at a slow pace and achieved more than expected. Took the dog for a walk in the wood, right in amongst the bluebells. I realised that their colours look best when you see the flowers in areas where bright sunlight and dark tree shadows are intermixed: this reveals the full gamut of violet and blue shades.

Spent an hour in the sunshine in the summerhouse working on two more of my tiny paintings. Then cycled down to the pub shop just before 4pm to re-photograph the interior. We drove to Ellen's to collect her newest paintings. She came out so we had a short chat. I think she is OK: she goes on very long walks each day, mostly by the

sea.

From Ellen's we drove on to Fern Cottage to collect our egg order. The stall has a new sign up giving a strong warning that CCTV footage would be used to shame egg thieves.

A quiet evening: glass of wine in the summerhouse followed by Sunday roast. Sarah's 6th newsletter arrived. She wrote: "*Another week and it still looks as though we are a long way from the end of this crisis. Whatever our politics may be, those in Government have a terrible job at the moment, balancing lock-down against the possibility of a second wave and the economic situation which we will face for the foreseeable future. Those of us of my age will certainly not see the end of any of this in our lifetimes and I feel so sorry for the younger generations and the legacy they will receive. [...] The bluebells are out in a wood on the estate and in my garden. But the ones in the wood are a carpet of brilliant blue, enough to lift the heart. My garden is working hard to give me pleasure, the aquilegias are just coming out and the alliums will be next. Lots of veg seeds popping through in the greenhouse, lettuce transplanted out and the broad beans looking strong.*"

I find myself constantly returning to thoughts of craving entry into some other time, some different space – somewhere where there are no other virus-obsessed people and no talk of the virus. I might not have the virus but I'm definitely afflicted with the cultural contagion of Covid-19. There is an apparent contradiction here because I'm really enjoying the contact with people at the shops and food stalls, the chance encounters with walkers, the talks with strangers, albeit that these are all distanced. What I'm not liking is the way that my mind is full of others in the abstract, their concerns, the pressures they exert. This is why I want to wake up in the early hours, to be out soon after dawn, to get to completely empty places and spaces. It's tiring embedding deviance from the routine into my very strict routine.

Monday 27/4/20

Awake before 5 to make tea as Peter wanted to go on a dawn filming expedition. As I was expecting the farrier at 8, I needed to give the pony time to have an early feed. Had our first socially distanced farriery session which went OK although I had to keep turning my back on Vick when he was working on the forefeet. We spoke about the pony's lameness on the hard surfaces and Vick told me how to make some DIY pony bootees from denim jeans and leather scraps. He promised to leave out some leather for me to collect later in the week.

Received an email from the estate agent: "*We are rotating photos to ensure your property doesn't go stale online. When we have received enquiries, we have proactively replied to these straight away and are contacting them in person to talk through your property in detail. We are, of course, retaining their details so that when we are able to, we can arrange viewings, etc. This week, we will be contacting all potential buyers who are registered on our database to make sure we have a system with motivated buyers and where we can talk through any properties we are marketing which might be of interest to them. Again, this will enable us to register interest for when we are out of lockdown. Please bear in mind we are at home with small people so you may hear them in the background!*"

Spent time in the summerhouse dealing with admin. and clearing up odds and ends of writing. One of Sarah's newsletter recipients emailed this: "*[…] I feel so useless not being able to do something useful, just hibernating here in this lovely house and setting, so lucky in comparison with so many. So I am a phone friend for people who are isolated and lonely, and after this particularly un-social war I shall enjoy meeting up with them for lots of close-proximity cups of tea, or, in some instances, something very much stronger.*"

After lunch I walked the dog over to Fern Cottage to drop off the empty egg boxes. Slept an hour, and then the afternoon was flying by with the evening animal feeds

and our food preparation imminent. No time for paintings today and I miss doing this. I still haven't begun my two short pieces of writing about egg-buying and migrant workers.

Tuesday 28/4/20

Woke a little later today after a good night's sleep and thought that I'd be up and in action early and able to concentrate properly on writing. However, I decided to look at the BBC News site and saw an article about Tesco's intention to make 200,000 delivery slots available in the next 10 days. Despite being sceptical about this I checked the site, and there, for the first time in 6 weeks, was a page of vacant slots – so I took one. We sat up in bed adding many items to an order, but only selected the things which have been hard to find at the local shops, for example decent non-biological laundry powder, pan scourers, highly elusive bread flour, soap, washing up liquid, the dog's favourite treats. I completely ordering avoided greengrocery and fresh foods as I want to keep buying these from the pub shop, the village shop, the egg stalls and the fruit farm.

Kept the early morning walk short as it was raining. By the time we got back home we'd thought of more items to add to the order, then I thought I should offer a relative the chance to request some things. So after two phone calls and a lot more fiddling with the order I found it was gone eleven o'clock and I hadn't even begun the housework. I hadn't anticipated that Tesco would cap the order at 80 items, so had to keep taking items for us out and squeezing things for the relative in. How did the order take almost three hours? It's normally a 20 minute job.

Ellen called, wanting us to collect more paintings. Another thing I hadn't anticipated was that having given her two sketchbooks she can now keep painting and ramping up her production, using one book while we've got the other for photographing.

Today I've realised that I have reached my absolute limit energy-wise. It's 3.15 and I've had an hour of deep sleep in the summerhouse. I can feel the autism weighing heavy, closing in on me: a strong sense of claustrophobia and limitation coupled with energy depletion and an inability to let myself let go even though I know I've got to. If I keep resisting and persevering, a full scale melt down is pretty well guaranteed. I want to work, but deep tiredness isn't the ideal state for approaching the projects I've been looking forward to. Low atmospheric pressure, low light, and mental overload are my recipe for disaster.

On the good side, our plants ordered from the nursery on 5th April arrived at long last. They're sitting looking rather forlorn and very wet on the table in the front garden, the marigolds and begonias all in flower.

Weather forecast says dull tomorrow, but not so rainy. A new month on Friday. Warmer southerly winds at the weekend.

Wednesday 29/4/20

Steady day. Still feeling deep tiredness. Walked the dog in the forest in the morning and saw the sites of two weekend barbecues: brilliant idea given the tinder-dry state of the forest.

Received two very interesting emails about anthropological blogs, one from Sophie Day at Goldsmiths discussing the issue of the way that restrictions insert us into a grid, and another from UCL about the way that restrictions create or show up social inequalities. Both these concepts are interesting and I'd like to think about them and work on them. I ask myself often what is the new 'me' that the pandemic is producing? What kind of pandemic work in progress am I? What bits of myself have gone missing? What new aspects of myself have shown themselves? What do I turn the pandemic into via my own ways of dealing with it? And what is it turning me

into? Am I at ease with / accepting of the me I'm becoming?

Thursday 30/4/20

The end of the first complete month of lockdown. The end of the sixth week of restrictions. May tomorrow. I'm in great need a fresh start, a new outlook.

Looking back over over April, I'll remember it as a time of adaptations, of the adoption of some new habits, the acceptance of some rules, the refusal of others. The days have felt full, too full, each one passing very quickly yet the month has felt long.

I ask myself what got done? I wrote up the diary of events just about every day. I had 2 pieces of writing published. Notes and photographs have been collected and prepared for three more articles. I kept house as well as is possible in this house. I cared for the animals maybe a little better than usual. I've tried to support my daughter by phone. Together Peter and I have regularly helped Ellen. Inspired by her, I began my series of tiny paintings. I've worked at being neighbourly and helpful wherever I can. I've stayed in touch with friends and relatives by phone and email. I've kept up with tracking the arrival of spring in my nature writing diary.

What didn't get done? I haven't done any work in the garden. The sale of the house and all the Scotland plans are at a complete standstill. I haven't done any spring dressmaking. I didn't have a Tesco delivery in over five weeks – and I'm glad of it. I haven't been sleeping, not proper deep sleeping. I haven't spent time relaxing, just letting time pass.

What have I gained? New contacts, more confidence about approaching people I don't know. Better knowledge of who is where locally and what they're like and what they do.

A. Hobbe Walker

What I have I found difficult? Spending huge amounts of time thinking about which foods to order and where from. Writing lists and constantly revising and updating them. Knowing when to stop trying. Knowing how much is enough. Recognising and accepting the limits of my strength. Worrying about my daughter's state of mind during her home-working. Sleep.

What have I missed? Riding the horse in the forest. Walks on the marsh. Being by the river. Seeing the sea.

What have we gone without? Bread flour. Pan scourers. Decent washing powder. Filo pastry. Kale. Ibuprofen. Dried apricots. Sultanas. All nuts. Physiotherapy. Autism support group meetings. Dental maintenance. Meals out. Trips to other parts of Suffolk, like Covehithe. Research missions. In person contact with friends.

What have I learned? That I'm well equipped to deal with changed circumstances. I've been surprised to discover that I can talk with strangers, establish friendly relations with them more easily than I realised. I have come to value chance, one-off meetings with people who I will probably never see again; the brief crossing of paths has value. I've learned a lot about shopping, or I should say food provisioning – how to locate and source really good food without relying on Tesco. I've learned that retail giants have no loyalty towards their long-standing customers. I've learned to shop in a more ethical way, one which is focused on supporting small local businesses.

How is the pandemic shaping me? It's exaggerating my tendency to create routines: the self discipline is double-edged as it means that I can get things done, achieve goals, but it brings the danger of restriction, cramped thinking, uncreative use of time. My regimes are making me very, very tired. There have been too many nights of sleeplessness, too much thinking and re-thinking of habitual thoughts, too much hyper-activity which is now draining me to the point where I'm worried that my focus on maintaining control is taking me to the brink of loss of control.

Have the restrictions made me obedient, compliant? Yes and no. Although I'm trying to follow them in a sensible way and not put myself or others at risk, there's a limit: I won't survive if I can't continue taking more than the one permitted walk a day. I don't think that matters here as I rarely meet anyone, so I don't see that I'm increasing the risk in the same way as I would if I walked four times a day in more crowded situations.

How does the pandemic touch me? I don't know anyone, not even a friend of a friend, who has contracted the virus. It touches me via TV news, via refusal to go to big shops and join queues. It touches me via dense daily email traffic from academics who are either researching the social effects or desperately trying to provide appropriate teaching materials / texts for their students. I haven't been able to work with the vet who knows the pony best.

This has been by far the worst day of lockdown. I've done no work, just tried to take it quietly. The combined effects of lack of sleep, hyper-activity, autistic responses, hay fever, severe headache have felt just a bit too much today. I slept in the afternoon and felt slightly better but the day ended badly; while searching for his toy, the dog tore up his bed because his claws desperately need cutting. When I called the vet surgery I was told that they are only working on life-threatening cases, so obviously claw cutting doesn't qualify. I'm angry about this as the same surgery called the other day wanting to come and vaccinate the pony: seems like 'life-threatening' is a flexible term right now. I called the grehound re-homing kennels where we got the dog from. They told us to bring him on Saturday and they will trim his claws. Somehow the dog's destructiveness felt absolutely overwhelming. I very much need the first day of May to be a better one than the last one of April.

Postscript

"Is Friday 13th an auspicious day to begin marketing a house again? Will the property market be affected by the growing Corona virus crisis?"
https://boasblogs.org/curarecoronadiaries/is-friday-13th-an-auspicious-day-to-begin-marketing-a-house-again/

A. Hobbe Walker

Tuesday 28/7/20

At the end of April I took the decision to stop writing a discrete Coronavirus diary. This was for several reasons.When the crisis began I had the sense that the diary would serve the purpose of recording a unique, short and temporary phase, but as time went on it became clear that the changes would be not only far reaching, but also very long lasting, if not indefinite. Diary-writing was already a pre-established habit for me before the pandemic and at first the idea of separating out pandemic-related material seemed interesting and feasible. However, as time went on I realised that this separation was unrealistic because it reinforced the notion that splitting pandemic events from everyday events was possible. In the event, it became obvious that the pandemic was the new everyday, the new normal and that such splitting was untenable long-term. My documentation of C-19 hasn't ended, but it has become subsumed into a diary which reflects a range of other interests.

For me, writing this diary was often satisfying, sometimes reassuring, but very often deeply tiring. I had the sense that I was living out the events of the strange new world not just once, but three times during the processes of experiencing, documenting and reviewing. My newsletter-writing friend, Sarah, (mentioned in this diary) has continued with her weekly three pages of documentation of self-isolation until now. She plans to write her 20th, and final newsletter at the end of July. She feels that the record-keeping has run its course. If the situation worsens at some point in the future, it's possible that both of us might re-start our pandemic-specific records.

I close by summarising some of the personal effects of quarantine:

1. I do not know anyone who contracted C-19.
2. I know of only one person who died with C-19, a very elderly former teaching colleague who I have not seen for years.
3. Between the end of March and the end of July 2020, my partner has spent £90.00 on diesel. In the same period last year he spent £540.00 –

therefore a massive reduction in car journeys and carbon emissions from this household.

4. Since the third week of March I have been to the local town four times.
5. I have had 9 deliveries from Tesco. In normal circumstances I would have had 20 deliveries over this period, therefore my food shopping habits have been transformed. Tesco delivery slots continue to be difficult to secure.
6. The food shop which opened at the village pub at the start of quarantine has failed.
7. Although we had no need to undertake formal self-isolation, we had no social contacts throughout lockdown. On July 22nd and July 25th we had our first visits from two different friends.