

INDEX

Introduction ...
Prologue ...
Chapter 1 ... September
Chapter 2 ... October
Chapter 3 ... November
Chapter 4 ... December
Chapter 5 ... January
Chapter 6 ... February
Chapter 7 ... March
Chapter 8 ... April
Chapter 9 ... May
Chapter 10 .. June
Chapter 11 .. July
Chapter 12 .. August
Epilogue ...
Conclusion ...
Glossary ...

INTRODUCTION

On the South Coast of England the town of Hastings is best known as the furnace in which modern England was founded: '1066, and all that.' Today the adjacent suburb of St Leonard's has become synonymous with all that is wrong with modern England.

Exactly one hundred years ago author Robert Tressell lived and worked in the streets of St. Leonard's. He wrote about the poverty and deprivation endemic in the town with such emotive power that his book, 'The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists', became so popular it encouraged the rise of a militant Labour movement, inspiring the National Strike of 1926. This led to the foundation of the Welfare State and a free Health Service, but Tressell was buried as a pauper, at the age of forty.

He wrote his one and only novel in a rented flat above 241, London Road, St. Leonard's. It spanned the period of one year, from 1905 to 1906, and was edited in 1911. My own chronicle was written in a rented flat in number 8, London Road, and edited exactly a century later in 2011, in the form of a daily journal. It focuses around the homeless of St. Leonard's, the most densely populated and deprived ward in Sussex.

Like myself, Tressell was born and bred in Ireland, but somehow we both had the misfortune to end up in St. Leonard's, which became 'Mugsborough', in his novel. In his time he worked for Adams and Jarrett in Norman Road, just fifty yards from where I now live. He nicknamed them 'Slog'em and Makehaste.' This shop is still the largest in St. Leonard's and very popular. At the time of writing I also worked in Norman Road, where I had a photographic studio.

My own story also deals with the poverty of the deprived and the destitute, in the very same streets where Tressell lived and worked. I also share the sentiment of Tressell, who claimed:

'Everything in my story possesses the merit of being true, and nothing has been invented that I have not witnessed, or had conclusive evidence of.'

My own story is also empirical, with just a few names being changed, to protect the guilty. It chronicles the day-to-day lives of the street people living in St. Leonard's, or 'Mugsborough', from August Bank Holiday in 2010 to the same Bank Holiday one year later. It concentrates on the same area of central St. Leonard's, and the same streets covered by Tressell in his original novel. Whereas the whole of St. Leonard's has a current population of 6,392 (2010) central St. Leonard's consists of around a few dozen streets, (see Map) housing just a few thousand, but these enclaves are quintessentially 'Mugsborough.'

Most of the people mentioned in my book are those who found themselves forced to escape reality through drink and drugs or a variety of substance abuse. I came to know them through my work as a volunteer in the various soup kitchens in the area. There is not, nor never has been, a night shelter or hostel for the homeless in this locale. Many of them perish in their thirties or forties and, in my opening dedication, I list over a score that were known to me personally, and who died from neglect, since passing through the hands of the various soup kitchens here. I seem to attend a lot of funerals, where I have to watch the others come to terms with their own mortality.

Of the hundreds we do help some depend on us totally, for everything from food to sleeping bags, while others just hang around for a few days before continuing their itinerant lifestyles. Over the years most of them came to know me on a personal basis, some becoming close acquaintances and others the best of friends, sleeping in my car at night, or even sharing my home for months at a time.

I first got involved with the street people over ten years ago as a member of Duke Road Church. Every Sunday morning a few of us, led by Pastor Chris, a sanguine character with a real heart for the poor, would serve around eighty breakfasts to all who turned up, including travelling gypsies, kids and occasionally dogs. The washing-up left my fingertips wrinkled for days.

The only other effort made, in respect of the homeless, was by St. Leonard's Parish Church who once ran a soup kitchen, but had to close when a client was stabbed to death 'over a sausage'. (Sic).

I later joined Wellington Square Baptist Church in the middle of town and got involved when the church there decided to open their basement for a soup kitchen.

They called it 'Hope' kitchen, and it opened in the winter of 2005 and still operates twice a week. It was there, being in charge of the 'clothes room', that I began to get personally involved with many of the clientele. This involved sorting out numerous bags of old clothes, full of everything from smelly socks to underwear. I made wooden rails where shirts and trousers could be displayed in order of size. This meant the needs of the many could be met in the few hours we were open each evening. Some would even get a whole new set of clothes and shoes. This brought me into intimate contact with them, so I developed some rapport with the vast majority.

I also worked for the other soup kitchens operating at the time, including the Salvation Army, Snowflake, His Place, and Surviving Christmas. The same clientele would turn up at the various venues, so eventually I got to know not only their names, but also how many sugars they took in their tea and what their specific peccadillos were. I also kept close contact with the Darvell Community in Robertsbridge, and their various outreaches into Hastings. I also had a friend who liaised with the 'Beachy Head' Chaplaincy, keeping me informed of suicide attempts at that location. This is the most notorious spot in England for suicides averaging out at one per fortnight during the year, but this can escalate dramatically at Christmas and New Year. The Chaplaincy there conducted seven hundred and fifty searches for missing people this year alone (2011).

My friend had once been collecting outside a supermarket when a man approached and placed a rather large donation in her tin. He explained that, a couple of years ago, he had been on the cliff-edge himself, but was talked out of jumping by one of the volunteers there. His wife had just died of cancer and he was at his wits end; but since then he had married again and now has two lovely little girls.

I became friends with a girl from Hope Kitchen, called Tracy, and gave her a job looking after my shop. On my first visit to her flat in number 115, Milward Road, she pointed out a plaque on her wall stating Robert Tressell had once lived there. It was at this juncture that I felt the element of synchronicity was coming into play; something was urging me to tell my own story.

Kitting out clients in 'Hope Kitchen' with everything from toilet-paper to shoes, made me feel very grieved that some had to go back out into the snow to sleep under

sheets of cardboard. So I took a chance and started bringing the odd one home for the night. Unfortunately it's very difficult to eject someone once they are ensconced in your home, so after a few 'mishaps', I decided to kit out my coal cellar with a camp bed and a blow-up mattress. There was a light in the place and a door with a lock, so when they snuggled down in a sleeping bag they felt relatively secure. Others slept in my car, even in the snows of winter, but some of the more reliable sorts shared my home for months at a time. In the heat of summer most would sleep on the beach rather than on an open bench, where local thugs would rob them or wake them up by urinating over them – or worse.

In the dead of winter only a dozen or so diehards would brave the elements and hunker down beneath the hot air ducts outside 'Iceland Frozen Foods', where they risked toxic fumes and unprovoked attacks by strangers. The vast majority would 'sofa-surf' in various bed-sits or squats, until they overstayed their welcome; then move on to the next. Many itinerants move to the coast in summer. Logic dictates that if you have to sleep rough you might as well do it in the sun. Big cities are so impersonal they de-humanize the vulnerable.

The latest Labour Party circular (2011) states, after noting St. Leonard's has some of the cheapest, nastiest accommodation in the country with up to 2000 homes left vacant at any one time, that: 'Never before has any Government cut so deeply, and so fast, into the affected areas that need support the most.' (The ten most deprived areas were chosen for cuts in funding up to 50%.)

They stated this, after the government declared swingeing cuts of up to 50% by 2013 for this area.

In a recent inquiry into the London riots this summer, the Prime Minister (David Cameron) announced that the report stated:

'One hundred and twenty thousand families in the U.K are deeply dysfunctional, and a million are "troubled", with many individual cases where whole generations had never worked a day in their lives.' To alleviate this dilemma would apparently require one billion pounds of public money. Apparently, one in five adults in this country are now functionally illiterate.

I soon became familiar with the 'modus operandi' of the street people and the massive routine problems that people with little, if any, identity have with finding

housing of any sort. I developed contacts with councillors and agencies and landlords, even resorting to finding squats for these people and 'sorting out' the electric meter so they could at least have light in some abandoned premises.

The property prices here are well below the national average, as are the lifespans for individual groups. The demographics speak for themselves. Nationally the average male lifespan is 79. In Mugsborough it is only 69, and a third of the children, (over 5000) live below the poverty line. According to the Public Health Observatory this area is significantly higher than normal for drink and drug problems, with six beds a day assigned to these alone, in the local Conquest Hospital (street people call it the 'Inquest' Hospital); that does not include statistics for admissions to the Accident and Emergency Department.

In the year of 2011 fifty-seven staff were assaulted in the Conquest - mostly by drunks at the weekend. East Sussex Healthcare Trust stated:

'Far from indicating that the Hospital has become a dangerous place to work, this is actually proof that we have good procedures in place for reporting assaults.' (Sic) One solution to alleviate these scenarios would be to breathalyse all revellers taken into Accident and Emergency to see if they are over the drink limit. If they are, they should have to pay for all their treatment.

The Conquest featured in a report this year that cited an outbreak of 'Scabies' in three wards. This was only one of eight serious incidents reported in November. The total number of serious incidents in the last year (2010) was 64; considerably higher than the previous year of 47, and there were seven very serious 'Never Events'. These are events that should never, ever happen, if normal procedures are followed. They occurred when a throat pack was left in a patient under general anaesthetic for dental surgery, from which the patient could easily have choked to death. The Dental Department also managed to extract the wrong teeth on another occasion.

Other mistakes included a biopsy on the wrong part of the body; a surgical instrument, (a Proctoscope) left in a patient after surgery; also part of a retractor left in another patient after an operation; a Guidewire left in after insertion of a Central Venus-pressure line, and unbelievably, surgery on the wrong hip. A spokesman for

the East Sussex Trust declared: 'This Trust takes patient safety extremely seriously'. (Sic) I really think they need a new spokesman!

On November 10th 2011 a dozen large cylinders of Nitrous Oxide were stolen from the Conquest. This is laughing gas and may soon be on the streets; the authorities are not laughing, as many local scroats will be 'shooting the breeze'.

The Hastings area is among the most deprived areas in the whole of the U.K. according to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation. Teenage pregnancies are 50% higher than the national average, and twice as many pregnant women continue to smoke during pregnancy.

Most street people die when they do 'Cold Turkey'. This is when they come off their poisons for a time and then suddenly relapse, as their system cannot handle the usual dose, so they end up choking to death on their own vomit. It appears a liquid diet of three bottles of cheap sherry a day will keep you going for ever; or a grand's worth of crack a week will sustain you in good health; the trouble comes when you try to suddenly quit. Then you die.

Local M.P. Amber Rudd admits there is an entrenched culture of alcohol and drug abuse in the area and rightly claims the ludicrously cheap price of alcohol is the catalyst. Cans of 10% vol. Lager can be bought for less than one pound. One and a half litres of 8% vol. Cider costs only £1.29; even two bottles of strong wine can be purchased for less than a Fiver.

There are seafront shops, open at six in the morning, that sell drink out of hours and 'alkies' may be seen queuing up there before they even open. One such establishment may now lose its license because this October a public analyst, Mr. Paul Hancock, tested some very cheap bottles of vodka on sale there, finding no labels of origin. He concluded the liquid was of industrial origin and not fit to drink. There have been other similar cases in Mugsborough, notably when 'Gynns Vodka', sold in London Road, was found to contain Ethanol, which the local paper warned could make you blind.

Trading Standards officer Robert Newton visited the 'Pleasant Off Licence' in Mugsborough, and found three bottles of Vodka they sampled to be a misleading product, containing 2.8% Methanol. Labels were found on 'Redstar Vodka', which read, 'Made in the heart of Russia – Berlin' (Sic).

The drug trade fares no better. Dealers use a variety of methods to bulk up their goods, to make more money. A warning was posted in the 'Day-Centre' of Seaview that heroin was on the street which was contaminated with Anthrax. Heroin is often mixed with Warfarin (a rat poison), or even brick dust and talcum powder, or chalk, but coke-dealers prefer Novocain when their cocaine needs to be 'stepped on' (diluted for profit) as Novocain possesses similar nose-numbing qualities.

One not-so-astute dealer made recent headlines, when he tried to pass off fine sand from the local beach and brick dust, as heroin. Unfortunately he sold it to a couple of undercover cops and was rewarded with a free holiday - at Her Majesty's Pleasure.

In regards to the drink problem I feel a minimum price per unit of alcohol should be set nationally and strictly adhered to, by every outlet countrywide. Also, legislation should be enacted to prevent sales of alcohol below cost price, i.e. as a 'Loss Leader.'

Mugsborough itself deals with possibly the worst instance of alcohol and drug abuse per capita than anywhere in the country. In Mugsborough so many addicts use public toilets to 'bang up', that the Council have inserted little 'Sin-Bins' in the walls of the cubicles, where 'works' (needles and syringes) may be dumped. (See photos) They are supposed to slip through into a bucket behind the wall but get used so much that the works all get jammed in the tube that leads to the bucket. All the toilets now use roll dispensers for the toilet paper, because street people who live rough have to use these facilities to wash, and tend to clog up the bog with loo rolls, whereas the machines will only dispense one sheet at a time. The Council has developed an ingenious strategy to tackle vandalism or misbehaviour in their toilets. They just board them up for a year. Simple!

All the supermarkets deploy Ultraviolet lighting in their toilets because this makes it impossible for drug users to see their veins properly, especially if they're at the stage of jacking up between their toes because the rest of their veins have collapsed. There are many chemists here who give out free 'works' to anyone who asks: just go in and ask for some syringes and a packet of pins declaring you have a habit: this process alleviates the spread of diseases.

Bottle Alley, in Mugsborough, is notorious. It has been the subject of books and plays about the indigenous alcoholics who frequent the place- pervading the area with the distinct aromas of alcohol and urine. Originally built by Sidney Little, the Concrete King, who used this new material to construct a double-decker promenade along the Mugsborough seafront, it is half a mile long, and called 'Bottle Alley' because its rear wall is comprised of a solid mosaic of broken bottles. It originally had glass shutters to protect against inclement weather and sea-spray. These did not last long, because local alcoholics fondly imagined that Bottle Alley was named after them, and felt duty bound to patronize the area; naturally, it quickly deteriorated.

Sidney Little also built the first underground car park in the country, just next to Bottle Alley. It is a thousand yards long and houses hundreds of cars. Unfortunately, like the pier, it was recently burnt down (see photos) with just the shell and a heap of damaged cars remaining. It took a year to renovate and nobody, including myself, got a refund on our parking permits costing four hundred pounds a year.

It was not always like this. When James Burton founded St. Leonard's in 1828 it was as a Spa, for royalty and the aristocracy from nearby London, where he had many friends and contacts. He was the most significant builder of Georgian London and even today, signposts in London Road, the heart of Mugsborough, point downhill with directions to 'Burton St Leonard's'.

In 1850, his son Decimus, began the second stage of building St. Leonard's, in the tradition of his father. He had already designed Hyde Park with its triumphal Wellington Arch, and Kew Gardens and London Zoo. So the place became an instant hit with the landed gentry who found it politically expedient to install their mistresses and concubines in this secluded venue by the sea. To the residents it was, and still is, regarded as a separate entity as opposed to a suburb, while the 'Old Town' to the East of Hastings then languished as a poor fishing village. In the changing fortunes of time the roles were reversed. Now the Old Town is much more sought after and expensive than St. Leonard's, leaving the town proper slumbering in between the two.

Burton then built a series of archways around the area, which served to segregate the 'hoi-polloi' from the coiffured coquettes of the aristocracy and royalty. Unfortunately it became a victim of its own success as it prospered in the mid 1800s, expanding onto the main town of Hastings by the current pier (or rather what is left of it, after a couple of 'scroats' recently burned it down on the fifth of October. Unfortunately the demise of St. Leonard's really started when the railway line was extended up to Warrior Square in 1828. It became an obsession with the poor townsfolk to take the train over, on a Sunday afternoon, from Hastings to St. Leonard's, to gawp at the upper class strutting along the promenade in all their finery.

On enquiring at the Hastings Information Centre for a local map, I was given one that finished at the pier. When I queried where St. Leonard's was situated, I was told: 'We don't put it on the map; I mean, who wants to go to St. Leonard's?' The trouble is, thousands of people have to because that's where they live and this story concerns the lives of those people. Many of them feel forced to escape the reality of it by over-indulgence in drink or drugs. The fact the local council was "persuaded" to re-house many hundreds of dysfunctional families from London after the war into the heart of St. Leonard's was a blow it never recovered from - and one that sealed its notoriety.

Most of the homeless in this area 'kip down' (sofa-surfing), for a night or so, with a friend; then move on when they outstay their welcome. The 'Seaview' drop-in centre does a valiant job, housing some in their own accommodation, but only for a few weeks until they get back on their feet. Trouble is, most never do. Many will sleep on the beaches in summer but, in winter, if no-one will let them 'sofa-surf', they look for the warmth of the extractor fans round the back of hotels and restaurants such as the side of the fire escape of the Royal Victoria Hotel, or the Chinese restaurant at the bottom of London Road.

Iceland Frozen Foods is very popular because lots of heat is extracted from the deep freezers. The back of Debenhams is also popular because much cardboard packaging is dumped there and rough sleepers use this as blankets. Across the road from Iceland, the bin area of the 'Flavours of India' is excellent once they close, because it has a simple wooden door to push open and the smell is great.

One regular rough sleeper has permission to park up behind the steps of St. Mary's-in-the-Castle; the vicar has agreed to this, as long as he relinquishes his spot before 7 a.m.

The mental health centre in Holmesdale Gardens was home to Paul Russell for many years. Everyone knew him, even the staff who would greet him, as he slept in the porch entrance, when they were entering the building to start work. In a simple twist of fate he became a client there, so they became acquainted with him on a social and professional level. At least he didn't have far to travel for his appointments. I used to drive him 'home' after the soup kitchens closed to help him get settled for the night. When the weather changed for the worse I took him back to my flat, where he stayed for a number of months. Until then he had not removed his boots for over a year. He survived on three bottles of cheap sherry a day and nothing else. He couldn't drink tea or coffee or even a glass of water.

What struck me first in the soup-kitchens, was that the women usually had dazzling smiles. This is because most have no teeth left and need to wear dentures. Most of the men cannot take solid food for two reasons. Firstly, their stomachs have shrunk so much from a liquid diet that they will throw up on even a bowl of soup. Secondly, they don't bother with dentures and most sport only one or two teeth. In the kitchens they can chew only soft white bread without crusts, as some drugs, especially 'speed', destroy the teeth. Some reckon this is because it makes you grind your teeth together. Many of our clients reek of alcohol even if they haven't had a drink recently, because their system secretes it the same way that a lover of curry seems to constantly exude that pervasive aroma. Consequently most of the junkies live on pot noodles or crisps, or ice cream and similar junk food - which is why they are called 'Junkies'! The drug dealers themselves are known as 'Ice-cream men', after the infamous Glasgow gang wars in the 1980s. These occurred when rival ice-cream vendors used their vans to distribute drugs and stolen goods to clients. It was the perfect cover, until April 1984, when Fat-Boy Doyle was shot through the window of his ice-cream van and the ensuing violence resulted in the deaths of six members of the Doyle family. The prosecution of two rival gang members dragged out over twenty years before they were finally sentenced to life imprisonment. It still remains the most contentious case in Scottish Legal history,

and has earned the Strathclyde Police the nickname of the 'Serious Chimes Squad'.

Things have progressed since then. The 'Yardies' drive down from London, scooting about on a Saturday night dropping off consignments for local distributors. With the use of mobile phones they jump from one street corner to the next, stopping briefly to deal, without leaving the vehicle. After the local drug squad got to know and recognize the cars, some were chased and caught. Then the gangs used only 'hire' cars but eventually they were caught again. Unfortunately, even with a trunk-load of drugs the 'CPS' (Crown Prosecution Service) failed to convict because the culprits claimed they never even looked in the trunk, and were unaware of any drugs in the vehicle. Now the Police seem to have given up in that respect.

If you are on the streets, you have no fixed address (required to claim benefit) and little money. So you may not be able to afford drink or drugs. But other avenues of escape lie open. For 'affluent' junkies a 'Christmas Cocktail' would be the drug of choice; a potent mixture of cocaine and crack, perhaps spiced with a little heroin and injected directly into the system. Not many people know that crack can be 'jacked up' when mixed with heroin. 'Jacking up' is the art of injecting into a vein. If a third party does this, with or without your permission, it is known as being 'Jacked'. But some, if they cannot afford heroin and get desperate, may resort to a boot polish sandwich washed down with metal polish or a swig of raw diesel fuel. An old trick, used to avoid 'National Service', was drinking a bottle of after-shave. One would go completely crazy, but hopefully recover, a day or two later.

One drug most people can afford is cannabis. This is where Mugsborough really excels. There is a proliferation of cannabis factories flourishing in the area with new ones starting up soon after the old ones are closed down by raids. Over a period of a few weeks this November, over sixty thousand pounds worth of the drug was seized in three raids. Another recent raid netted two hundred thousand. The reason cannabis is more popular than ever is the fact that growers spray toxic chemicals like PCP, a horse tranquilizer, and other substances onto the plants as they grow resulting in a variety called 'Skunk'; this is very potent, and very popular. This year Police are finding more than twenty cannabis farms every day in the U.K. and

seizing cannabis worth a hundred million pounds. Nearly eight thousand farms were discovered this year.

Dogs are a big environmental problem. Even with huge five hundred pound fines for dog fouling, the local council still found it necessary to post notices everywhere stating:

‘Oi- we’re not taking your S**t, anymore.’

The other environmental problem is one of seagulls. These clever creatures have become so brazen they roost all over the sea front ripping open rubbish bags and scattering rubbish and nappies all over the street as they forage for scraps. All this bestows a deserved ambiance on “Mugsborough”. The council has just now decided to supply zip-up bags with Velcro closures in the hope this will alleviate the problem. Hordes of gulls cluster along the rooftops near Pebsham Tip sensing exactly when the bin lorries are due to unload their wares, flocking down like zombies when the vehicles leave to devour everything in sight. If you slip up once, by leaving a crust on the windowsill, you will have a friend for life. Day after day, at the same time, year after year, the same seagull will return to savour whatever scraps you leave and you won’t have a choice because they will peck your window loudly, and screech until you feed them something.

Hastings produced John Logie Baird, who gave the world Television and Alan Turing, the father of the modern computer, who was instrumental in cracking the ‘Enigma’ code in the last war. Because of his homosexuality he was chemically castrated, and committed suicide two years later, by swallowing cyanide. Aleister Crowley, the most notorious Witch of modern times, also lived and died here. He donated a strong legacy of occultism through a cluster of local covens, which survive and flourish even to this day. Hastings also spawned Siobhan Blake, the youngest female ever to receive an A.S.B.O. (Anti-Social-Behaviour-Order) at eleven years old. This was for recurrent misdemeanours like hurling eggs, spitting, violence, and rampaging through gardens at night. Hastings Council may also squirm at the fact she was brought up close to a twelve-year-old boy who became the youngest driver ever to be banned in the United Kingdom. This young man is currently in juvenile detention, for his part in a train robbery.

Up to a dozen cars have been torched in one day in this area and on many occasions, whole street loads of vehicles have their mirrors ripped off.

In the ranks of the destitute and deprived, there also lies an undercurrent of the depraved. This town can now boast its own 'Hannibal Lecter', who was recently given a load of life sentences for murdering two women in separate incidents and eating their body parts. Police even found a hand in a saucepan. There are also many convicted paedophiles living in this area, and Mugsborough can also lay claim to possibly the most notorious paedophile in English history. Ian Baldock of Cliftonville road, Mugsborough, was jailed for a number of years when he was convicted of hoarding nearly a hundred thousand indecent images of children, some described as horrific. The thirty-six year old was a key figure in the world's largest Internet ring, the exclusive Wonderland Club. Users needed ten thousand sick images of children to join this club. The National Crime Squad claimed the number of images on Baldock's computer was on a scale never seen before, and many featured babies of only three months in horrific sex acts. Many of the officers involved were so stunned by the scale of depravity, that they needed counselling, after spending time on the case. (Observer 2004)

In this concise journal you may read of the pornographers and the prostitutes; the sadists and the self-harmers; the conmen and the killers; corrupt Pastors and even a gun-toting priest.

This is their story. It is the story of modern 'Mugsborough'. Welcome to the jungle.

PROLOGUE

Sunday 29th August 2010

Is it really just over a week since I carted the boys from 57 Church Road over to the air display in Eastbourne? This air show is called 'Air-Bourne' 2010. We drove over in my big old Jaguar. It is now ten years old but in pristine condition, unlike its owner who has been round the block a few times.

I had agreed to meet the boys, known as the '57' crew, outside my flat in St. Leonard's. They are clients of mine from the Soup Kitchen and I realized they didn't get out much and felt they'd really appreciate a run over in the Jag to see the air display in Eastbourne.

But when they turned up on my doorstep, loaded with bag loads of cheap cider, I sensed things were not going to go as smooth as I had hoped. These lads don't really leave town, spending most of their time up at 57, which is Steve's flat in Church Road.

Each of them consumes three bottles of cheap cider a day and each bottle holds three litres. They cost only a few pounds each but, over the week, every one of the 'crew' consumes over two hundred units of alcohol. This particular cider has got no apples in it. It is purely chemical. The nearest it ever got to an apple was if the delivery driver had one in his lunchbox. The three lads coming with me in the Jag are a motley crew. They live at '57' with a variety of hangers-on, who just stay for a few days when they are 'on the street'.

'Ducati Steve' owns the flat, or rather rents it. He is the baby of the bunch, barely thirty, but very tall and scrawny. I've seen more meat on a butcher's pencil. He used to be a test driver for Ducati Motorcycles in Italy, where he once lived, and is known round town as the 'Ducati Kid'. Then there is Big Jimbo, his partner in crime, who is six foot four and a devout alcoholic. He has a bad leg making him limp and he needs a stick to get around - plus a few 'bevies'. He is quite stocky and probably weighs twice what the Kid does but is a bit of a 'Div' (an individual who may be mentally challenged). Last, but not least, there is 'J.J.' (John Joseph Gorman), a real enigma. (See photos) He is very clever and very funny. These three form the core of the '57' crew.

J.J. lives life to the full and is always the life and soul of the party, which at 57 is an on-going affair, and like the other two, is a hardened alcoholic. He doesn't indulge in anything except drink for most of them avoid drugs of any sort. But he does eat, whereas some alkie's avoid food of any sort. J.J. used to be transport manager for a chauffeur-driven car firm and has experience of all sorts of luxurious vehicles. So it is rather sad that he is currently without a car or anything else - except a sleeping bag at this moment in time. He is also over six foot tall and quite fit and stocky. He can be rather excitable when drunk, but he's great fun and very quick-witted with a marvellous sense of humour. He is the 'Daddy' of the crew.

As we start off for Eastbourne, 'Big Jimbo', who has a severe speech-impediment, answers his mobile phone and informs the person on the other end that we are all off to the Eastbourne 'Air-Crash' show. When Jimbo talks he is always 'in your face' and very loud. He spits out mumbled clusters of words, slicing them with jerks of his head, and we are all ears, just nodding in agreement until he finishes. Although he can be very confusing Jimbo has a lovely placid nature and is a very affable personality, but has been described as being as dumb as a drum with a hole in it. He seems mercifully free from the ravages of intellect, but the whole crew suffers from delusions of adequacy.

We got to Eastbourne early, so I could find a good spot to take photographs and set up my tripod and camera, which I did at the end of the pier. While we were waiting for the air show to start, dozens more people clustered round because this is a prime location for viewing. The boys have carted their bags full of cider up to the top of the pier but managed to attract the attention of the two security guards. The security guards realized that with so much drink around there's bound to be some sort of trouble. After a couple of hours, when the drink runs out, the boys head down to the off-licence, or 'Offy', to buy some more.

They were gone some time and I was beginning to get worried that perhaps they had not been allowed back on the pier, or had fallen off into the sea. Suddenly they turned up with two large, but vertically challenged people; a lady and gentleman, who looked a bit like Tweedle Dumb and Tweedle Dee, but incredibly, they were even more intoxicated than the 'crew'. The boys had managed to find, among a crowd of ten thousand, the only other two people who must have been even

drunker than they were!Of course, by the time they got back to the pier, they were all boozing buddies, promising all sorts of allegiances to each other; with the crew even resolving to go back to their home for a good drink after the airshow.

The security guards were now getting very itchy, fingering their wooden batons and flexing their arms, as they hovered behind the crowd which had visibly thinned due to the volatile demeanour and language of the '57' crew.One of the reasons for this was the Red Arrows have arrived and J.J. is now leading the crowd, by encouraging the Red Arrows to 'Go for it' and, 'Watch it, he's going to loop the loop! Yes! Give him a big hand, folks!' Now, as he starts the rest of the boys clapping, the crowd around us thins visibly.I notice this, but am concentrating mostly on my photography until I see that there are only eight people standing on the end of the pier; six of us, and the two security guards.The rest of the crowd, with their families, have sensibly drifted off to another spot. Needless to say our airshow came to an early climax, with a personal escort off the pier.We drive back to Mugsborough, but in fact leave Big Jimbo in Eastbourne with his two new compatriots, and I still don't know to this day what happened, but I find out later he ended up in the local 'nick'. When I get home, I check out, as I do every Sunday, a copy of the local 'Observer'. It relates the different incidents that happen in 'Mugsborough' during the week, and I will highlight these, as I go through the year:

I notice that Dave Atkinson, of Warrior Square, just around the corner from me, died after drinking fifteen bottles of vodka this week. He was only thirty-three.Also on Tuesday and Wednesday last week, two men were stabbed in separate incidences, in the same street.

A taxi driver, Mohsen Nilchian, 50, of Marina, St, Leonard's, was sent to prison for two years, for sexually assaulting two young passengers in his taxicab.

Also Robert Henderson, 34, of Woodland Vale, Mugsborough, was arrested on two counts of burglary. Some houses had been broken into and he was found hiding in bushes nearby, wearing a pair of socks on his hands, presumably to avoid fingerprints.

In one of the many raids by Trading Standards, three people from Mugsborough were in court this week accused of trading in illegal cigarettes and drink.These cigarettes are mostly composed of sawdust and straw, and contain cadmium and

phosphorous to keep them lit. But one of the defendants claimed that, back home in Libya, this was no big deal because all sorts of cigarettes were on sale at all sorts of prices.

Jason Willis, 22, who was refused service at Cosmos Restaurant because he was so drunk, head-butted the manager breaking his glasses. Just after the incident he was restrained by an off-duty police officer, who found him wearing a forty-pound shirt, which he'd just stolen from Debenhams; the reason this became apparent was because Jason had left the price tag on the shirt.

On my way to Church this morning, which I try to attend every Sunday, I noticed posters, aimed at dog-walkers along the sea front which stated: 'Oi- we are not taking your S**t any more'. It eventually transpired that these posters were so contentious, and generated so much publicity, that they made national headlines. Unfortunately, they didn't have as much affect on the environment as they did on the media. Caroline Kelly, a council spokesperson, declared only two people had complained as to the content of the posters, whereas hundreds had rung in to voice support.

In Mugsborough, there is an abundance of dog-mess on the streets, caused mainly by the local drug dealers' dogs. They use mostly bull terriers for personal protection and have little regard for the welfare of the dogs.

When I finally got to church I discover that our Pastor, Michael Adelasoye, has had a fraud case adjourned till the sixth of September. He has already been convicted of partaking in four hundred sham marriages and will be sentenced for that also, when he appears for his fraud case. The congregation is obviously upset and everyone is at a loss what to do.

Finally, an amusing incident, from another client of oursoup kitchens. Joanne Latter, who is only twenty-five, was arrested after hiding seventy pounds worth of drink in a pram that she was pushing round a Tesco supermarket. She also pleaded guilty to taking a 'Class A' drug, after she was observed on close-circuit television, taking heroin in her cell.

Monday 30th August

9 AM Bank Holiday. Bright sunny day.

This town is invaded every August Bank Holiday by nearly thirty thousand Bikers who arrive from all over for their annual Rally, so clusters of motorbikes are roaring round all day long.

J.J., who was just out of prison a week or so, walks into Londis Supermarket in Norman Road and does a 'Kamikaze.' This is when you run in, grab a beer, and run out. The trouble is he's on the 'ten most wanted' list because the place is blistering with closed circuit television. His photo is up behind the counter with nine others, whom I also know from the soup kitchens. He gallops down to the beach with his crate of cider. I am there with his brother Stuart and the Ducati Kid. J.J. boasts, 'I showed 'em; J.J.'s back'.

He's quite proud of the act. The trouble is, because he's been recognized so readily, the police are soon on his case. They arrive in less than ten minutes and unfortunately the evidence is not yet consumed. J.J. jumps onto the groyne and runs into the sea fully clothed. The cops are really cheesed off. 'If we have to,' they shout, 'we'll get the lifeboat to drag you out!'

J.J. calls their bluff, until a police dog arrives and they threaten to send it in after him; so now he comes quietly. Needless to say, he has breached his 'ASBO' in more ways than one, and before the day is out, he is straight back in Lewes prison. He had been free only about a week.

When he went to court he threw himself on the court's mercy, addressing the court with his arms outstretched, saying he needed to 'Detox' and making an impassioned plea, 'I need help, your Honour'. The magistrate sentenced him to a twelve-month supervision order, with six months alcohol treatment program. He was also ordered to pay £40 in court costs, and given a six month suspended sentence. The chairman of the Bench, Mr. Brian Higgins told him: 'If you break this order, in any way, your feet will not leave the ground until you are back in prison. This is your Last-Chance Saloon, Gorman.'

Word of this got round the soup kitchens, and every time someone wanted soup they would raise their arms up, and cry out: 'I need soup, I need sandwiches, please help me. I need to "Detox"'.

Tuesday 31st August

10 AM Sunny Day.

I bump into 'Long Tom'; he has a wooden leg. He has just been given a new car by social services because he is severely disabled. It is a nice blue Nissan Micra. Now he is able to help people with lifts, mostly to hospital, which they seem to need a lot. I haven't had a chance to talk to him about his partner, Dee, who died recently. She was a lovely lady and they were together seventeen years. She was only forty-seven. She suddenly had a stroke, and when they took an MRI, it showed she was riddled with cancer. Tom explained: 'She had it all over; in her brain, her spine, her lungs, kidneys and her bits down under,' by which I assume he meant her ovaries, etc.

When I asked if she suffered much, he said she was in a lot of pain, but had spent only a day and a half in St. Michael's Hospice. I remember seeing her just before she went in and she looked the picture of health. To me she looked radiant, but she went in on a Monday morning, and died the next day. Tom said: 'She died at 1.30 that afternoon, and I had just left, twenty minutes earlier. When I drove home I got a phone call to say she had just died, in her mother's arms.'

When anyone volunteers to help in a soup kitchen they have to submit to a CRB (criminal records bureau) check, and get inoculated against Hepatitis, etc. We are informed that most of the clients will perish in middle age, due to their lifestyle, and in fact many die in their thirties and forties. I seem to attend an awful lot of funerals.

CHAPTER ONE

SEPTEMBER

Wednesday 1ST September

10 AM Mild day.

It is the morning of the Wednesday breakfast. Every week we supply a free breakfast to all the homeless and destitute in the area. Normally we get about a dozen or so people in, but today there's about thirty people in the café. Amongst the clients are two little chaps, of very vertically challenged stature. They are colloquially known as the 'Two Dwarfs'. These guys, Dennis and Graham, are also known locally as D&G, after the fashion house of Dolce and Gabbana; not that they contribute much to the world of fashion; au contraire. They walk round together, in huge anoraks, but they don't really get picked on. They sport little goatee beards and live together in sheltered accommodation.

One regular client, Nannette, who lives just yards away from the café, is conspicuous by her absence. She has two sisters, Molly and Sandie, and the three girls are all hardened alcoholics, and known locally as the 'Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence'. Nannette is also partial to 'Chasing the Dragon'. This is a mild form of heroin pursuit where the 'gear' is crumpled up on silver paper, to be heated by a match or lighter, the fumes of which are then breathed in. Before Nannette started 'chasing the dragon' she was doing the same thing with cocaine. Her husband, whom she found dead in bed beside her, was a big-time coke-dealer. They would host extravagant parties, sometimes on their boat, where large amounts of cocaine would be open for sampling by all their guests. This was elaborately done by rolling up a crisp fifty-pound note, inserting one end up a nostril and sniffing a fine line of coke off a glass table. The trouble is, if any person indulging before you has Hepatitis, you would be certain to catch it if you use the same note. This is because the mucous membranes in the nose are very easy to scratch with the sharp edge of a note and just a few molecules of blood on it would transmit the virus to any other users. The saying on the street is 'The difference between Hepatitis and true love, is that Hepatitis lasts forever.' That is unless you are prepared to take tablets every

day and inject yourself with a long needle straight into your stomach every week for six months. People who do this on a Friday tell me they are sick all weekend.

After the Wednesday breakfast I walk round to Nannette's to see why she didn't show up. I find her totally off her face, because she has taken a load of 'Oxycontin' tablets. These are slow-release morphine tablets for severe pain and she took twelve when she retired last night; now the total effect has crept up on her.

I have to ring the paramedics and her daughter who rushes round. When Sarah, the daughter, arrives she comes in to see her mum sprawled out and totally disorientated. Nannette says: 'Who are you. My new social worker?' and Sarah explodes, 'No, I'm your bloody daughter.' The paramedics soon arrive and Nannette is taken off to the 'Inquest' hospital, to get her stomach pumped. As I leave I consider that one of these days she's not going to make it, but the strange thing about the street people is, the ones whom you least expect to die do so, whilst the real reprobates seem to live forever.

Ben, known on the street as Ben the Bacon, so called because he steals loads of bacon from all the shops in Mugsborough, had arrived in Nannette's while we were waiting for the ambulance. She allows him to store his ill-gotten goods in her freezer until Saturday night, when he will collect the lot, giving her a few packets, and selling the rest in the Fox Pub, just a few doors away. Ben manages to acquire dozens of packets of prime bacon with the use of a long coat in which the pocket liners have been cut away. He can stroll into a shop with his hands in his pockets, and stand over the cabinet, just looking; he then simply slips a hand out through the buttoned coat and grabs a couple of packets to secrete down his trousers. He never hits the same shop twice but is careful to spread his custom around.

When Ben turned up I noticed he had a pirate-patch over his bad eye. He has always had a glass eye, which garnered a lot of sympathy. When I ask what the patch is for, he explains he has lost his glass eye. I later learn that Ben had ripped some punter off, but the guy caught up with him in town. He then asked Ben which was his bad eye, and when Ben pointed to the left one the guy hit him on the right. Trouble was the shock made his glass eye bounce out of its socket to roll onto the pavement. Ben scrambled around on the floor but couldn't find it because his one good eye was closing up. He never did get a replacement.

Thursday 2nd September

7 PM Murky day.

Hope kitchen is running tonight. One of the clients, Silly Sally, is invariably as bald as a Coot; the reason being she tears her hair out, bit by bit. Not just in pieces, but all of it. But tonight Sally has turned up wearing a wig. It looks pretty obvious, but most of us know she is bald anyway. She sits down with her bowl of hot soup opposite Liam, who is not backward at coming forward. Liam says to Sally: 'Nice rug, Sally', at which she flares up. She tells him to shut his cake-hole, which he does not appreciate; he then flicks his hand at the wig, but as Sally jerks away, it falls off - to land in Dino's soup. Sally screams and lashes out with her nails. Liam ends up with scratches down the side of his face. Now all hell breaks loose: Dino and Liam and Susan are all screaming at each other; Big George, the doorman, goes over and puts his hands on Liam's shoulders to calm him down; this does not have the desired effect, as Liam lashes out and knocks George to the ground; the rest of us rally round and Liam is asked to leave. 'You're banned,' George tells him, and when George bans you, you're banned for life. 'Get him out of here,' George tells me. So I escort Liam to the door, making sure I don't get too close. As he leaves he turns to me and complains: 'He shouldn't have touched me. He grabbed me. It's all his fault.' Just to get rid of him, I agree.

Liam had just been de-commissioned from the Army, and like a lot of guys in that position, finding little work on 'Civvy-Street' to match their skills, had become disillusioned and aggressive. He then turned to drugs, and was sleeping rough at the time, not far from 'Hope' kitchen, where he was found dead a few days later.

Friday 3rd September

11 AM Dull day.

Friday morning is when the Sally Ann (Salvation Army) gives out food parcels and sleeping bags. The tinned food we hand out has to have ring openers on the lids, as street people never have tin openers. Bottle openers, yes; tin openers, no!

Not many turn up on Fridays, as it's early and most of those sleeping rough or 'sofa-surfing' don't have an alarm clock. Big Gary, a Salvationist, is in charge that

morning. Gary is from South Africa, and is a huge guy. He has narcolepsy. This means that if he gets anxious or excited or has a laughing fit, he can lapse into a cataleptic trance, as though he had just died. We must be careful that he doesn't get a sudden shock as he could go into one. Gary wonders why nobody will employ him, as he swears God has cured him. Prospective employers seem a trifle reluctant to take his word for it. Also in attendance is Peter, an ex-junkie-alcoholic, with a long grey ponytail. He relates very well to the clientele as he has been there himself and has the T-shirt, but he turned his life around when he found God and became a Salvationist.

Afterwards I visit the '57' crew up in Church Road. There are at least half-a-dozen people squatting there, when I arrive. There are a number of 'loo' rolls scattered around; they have been recently procured from the toilets in the various soup kitchens. The reason is that until recently the '57' crew never bothered with such niceties as toilet paper. They simply used local free community papers like the 'Friday-Ad'. But now the toilet has got bunged up with this newspaper, and despite valiant 'rubber-gloved' efforts to ram the blockage round the bend, the toilet has now started to overflow onto the carpets. Everyone is too drunk to care, and although the stench is horrific Gay Ray claims he quite likes it, but I suspect he's just being his old outrageous self.

Access to the fridge is impossible: about twenty large bin bags of empty cider bottles are littered all over the kitchen.

In my own esteem, Ray is more erudite than myself, with his public schoolboy education. He is tall, presentable, and has perfect teeth, which even seem to be original, which is rare in the circles I move in. He has a great sense of humour, and is as camp as 'Butlins.' Sometimes he has the crew in stitches, but not literally; other people do that.

Gay Ray just visits for a laugh and a drink, although he likes Geordie, who the crew now suspect 'leads with his left foot'. Ray has a lovely flat just over the road and sometimes entertains the crew to a meal. He is an excellent host and the lads feel safe in his place because the entrance door is actually armour-plated, with a sheet of steel on each side. Nobody has ever bothered to ask Ray why he needs this protection.

Saturday 4th Sept

9 AM Drizzle.

I stroll up to the 'office', a large bus shelter overlooking the promenade in 'Mugsborough.' The boys use this shelter as a meeting place to conduct drug deals, etc. It conveniently doubles as a drinking den, sheltered from the elements. The boys all keep a beady eye on the nearby CCTV camera, which swivels around. When it's turning their way, they quickly secrete their tins of drink into little paper bags on their laps, for they cannot be seen drinking in public. As I approach, Lurch hands me a coat and a bunch of keys that he claims to have found lying on the beach. I draw my own conclusions. He asks me to take them to the local Neighbourhood Watch Centre in Kings Road as the keys are 'remote' car keys, and obviously the owner will not be happy to lose them, and may create merry hell. I hand the keys in, but they are reluctant to take the coat and not wanting to get anyone else involved I bring the coat back home and hang it on a post outside my flat, in the hope some needy individual will use it to keep warm.

J.J. is outside with a couple of the crew, sneaking quick slurps from paper bags that hold their cider. They hang around here so much it has become known as J.J.'s 'corner'. Graham, who is a 'Geordie', and a new member of the 'crew' is staying up at '57'. This little squat reprobate reaches up and retrieves the coat. I am pleased it is going to a good home. With my kitchen window open, I wait for him to try on the coat, when he shouts to the others that he must take a 'dump.' As I look out over the scene below, this 'Geordie' character looks furtively around, before making his way round the back of my car, parked directly below. He carefully lays the coat out on the ground, and I'm assuming he is going to grab forty winks. Before I realize what's happening he drops his trousers and proceeds to defecate into the coat. I am shocked and angry. The rest of the '57' Crew walk off in disgust. I lean out the window and shout, 'What's your game, what are playing at?' He spins round, more shocked than me and blurts out, 'Sorry mate, just having a pee. Honest.' He is folding the coat up as he speaks, and bundling it under his arm, scuttles off down the road.

3 PM

This afternoon I go into town and bump into Tim Harvey, who goes to the kitchens. We sit down for coffee in the open air outside Costas. We are chatting away when Pinhead-Ned, another street person, approaches us. 'Hi, Rad, got any "shrapnel", (loose change) I'm "Brassic." ('Brassic Lint', - skint)' As we are both indulging in expensive 'latte' coffees we can hardly refuse. Ned is always lurking round the shopping precinct; usually with his eyes half closed. He claims he is photosensitive but I suspect it's due to some substance - other than sunshine. He parks himself down and tells us he's had to take fifteen 'blues', because he can't find any 'gear'. At this news Tim brightens up; he has a penchant for 'blues', as Valium is his drug of choice, when he can get it. Blues are the strongest Valium at ten mgs. Yellows are five mgs., and whites, two. I resort to one white if I can't get to sleep at night with my bad back, and Pinhead-Ned has just ingested the equivalent of seventy-five 'whites'. This would finish off a normal person, but Ned has built up such a tolerance that he's almost immune, but will sadly never get off the drug, as it's very addictive. I know people that have been on it for over thirty years.

Ned will stuff anything down his throat; even if he has no idea what it is, but he is also a devout 'pinhead'. He has been jacking up for so long his veins have collapsed, and he now resorts to sticking between his toes, or into his jugular. In the end he resorted to jacking into his groin as this gives the quickest hit of all, but this kills the veins in the legs. He has developed gangrene and now needs one of his legs amputated.

I remember once, locking up, in the Salvation Army when I found him sitting on the toilet. He had a syringe sticking out his neck, and asked if he could have some sandwiches to take home. I agreed to get him some, but had to remind him to remove the needle from his neck before he consumed them.

7-30 PM 'Hope' kitchen.

Dickie Hibbert, the 'Professor', graces us with his presence tonight. He is nearly seventy and the oldest member of our 'club'. Many years ago, he was a professor of music and a choirmaster and had a good life, until one night when he was returning home after a concert in Brighton. As he strolled along cliffs by the pier, carrying his violin, some ferals saw him, and threw him over the cliffs. He survived, with brain damage, but was never the same since. Now he dresses very shabbily

and sports a long beard. He always carries his possessions in a tatty plastic bag, for he feels nobody will mug him again if he looks poor, which he is these days. He tells us he's going to a recital in Manchester by his old music colleagues.

I ask him: 'Where are you going to stay, professor?'

'In the Park Hotel, old boy,' he informs us.

'And are you booked in?' I query.

'Yes, indeed, third tree on the left.'

Sunday 5th September

9 AM Dull day.

On my way to the 'Ark of Hope' church, I stop off at the 'office' to see how the boys are. A few of them will have 'kipped' here overnight, but will have been up a lot earlier than I was, because just across the road is 'A's Off-Licence'. This is one of the few outlets prepared to sell alcohol out of hours, at 6 a.m. When he opens there is always a queue of drinkers who have been 'rattling' all night. If they don't have a quick drink they may start fitting, and some even need to go to sleep with a can, because their body wakens them up every so often to have a sip; if they get no more alcohol, they get no more sleep. 'A' will risk breaking the law, as he admits to making more profit from six to eight in the mornings than he does for the rest of the day. He will sell mostly cheap lager, at one pound a tin, but this is 10% vol. alcohol and quite potent.

I have a chat with 'Scouse Pete', (See photos) a diminutive character with a huge beard. He always wears a hat and once, when he took it off I didn't even recognize him. He is sleeping rough, but because he is so civil and tells me he was freezing last night I offer to let him sleep in my Jaguar. I keep it in the underground car park, just beneath the 'office'. I bring him down and show him how to recline the electric seat, which is also heated, so that when he's wrapped up in his sleeping bag he should be quite comfortable. I do point out that he must be very careful with his 'works', as I do not want to get in the car and sit on a needle, which could give me Hepatitis – or worse.

He is quite indignant with me for supposing he would ever abuse my hospitality and swears not to leave any works about. I do point out that his needles could even

puncture a neighbouring car tyre, if he throws them out the window, but he promises to be careful.

As it's Sunday not much happens so I check the papers to catch up on local news. This week Rachael Gordon, 26, was charged with GBH (grievous bodily harm) with intent to kill. This is as serious as a murder charge.

There was also a stabbing in the middle of town: a fourteen-year old girl, who was out walking with her mother, in Kings Road, the High Street in Mugsborough, was attacked by two black women. One of them bit her in the stomach, and she was pregnant at the time.

Someone else was stabbed repeatedly, with a pair of long-nosed pliers.

One of our most notorious clients is Dave Helm, who once again makes the papers this week. He appeared in court for using abusive language and threatening behaviour. The prosecutor Jeremy King told the court that an ambulance had been called at 4.20 p.m. last Saturday afternoon, due to reports of a gentleman lying curled up on the pavement in Seaside Road, Mugsborough. When the paramedics approached Helm, who was sleeping on the pavement, he swore at them and threatened to slit their throats if they didn't clear off. Dave argued in court, and I quote: 'On the Queens Highway, if a person is prevented from carrying out their day-to-day routine, then that is an offence under the British Constitution.' His councillor, Nick Bassett, claimed that the defendant's life was a bit topsy-turvy at the moment, and he was simply re-charging his batteries. Dave was fined £100 with £15 victim surcharge, but magistrates waived this as he had been in custody for a day and a half.

In other news Roger Nuttall, a nurse at the Seaview drop-in day-centre, is looking for more volunteers who must be qualified in medical procedures. Roger explained in the local paper that it is challenging work, which is unpaid, and not the sort of work that appeals to everyone. I tend to agree with that statement. In its first year Seaview had five hundred people pass through the doors; the same as 'Hope' kitchen. This number escalated to fourteen hundred last year. Drug warnings are always posted up in Seaview, and if more than one person enters a toilet cubicle they will both be banned for life as they would be suspected of drug abuse. There is

currently a warning posted there that new heroin, now on the streets, has been laced with Anthrax.

Street artist, 'Banksy', who remains anonymous to this day, has done a mural on the seafront in Mugsborough. Within hours, word has spread that it is indeed genuine, and hordes of tourists are flocking to see and photograph it. It doesn't last long in Mugsborough, for that night someone decides to chip a part of it away, and now the Council have had to screw a Perspex plate around what remains of it.

In the papers, the joke of the week is awarded to J.J. He was due in court last Tuesday but did not appear as he had a hospital appointment, and apparently now has to have one of his kidneys removed, as it totally diseased due to alcohol abuse. He had been charged with breaking his ASBO preventing him being drunk in public. According to the papers, he had been asked to leave 'Yates', in the town-centre, when he got abusive. Police were called and even offered to give him a lift home, but he started shouting and swearing at them. His ASBO has now been extended until 2013.

Monday 6th September

9 AM Rainy.

I bump into Tim again; he has realized that Ned could be a good source of Valium. Tim had been on Valium until his doctor realized he was getting hooked and stopped his medication in that respect. But now Tim has a weakness for Valium and earnestly seeks it out whenever he can. Valium is the pill-poppers drug of choice being so readily available, for a price, and can even be purchased on the Internet. Like many other drugs it is not only addictive, but when combined with alcohol creates a third chemical, which itself is even more addictive. So when the user tries one or the other they don't get the same high and always crave that missing ingredient. Tim tells me he has given Ned fifty quid to buy some Valium; I had advised him against this, as I know he'll never see the drugs or his money again. Ned, like most street dealers, is very astute. He has agreed with Tim that he will supply the ten mg. 'blues' for one pound each, as opposed to one-fifty, as he has only thirty left. But he will supply another thirty 'yellows' for the other twenty quid. This clever act of commerce has convinced Tim to hand over his fifty quid.

7.30 PM.

At the 'Sally Ann' this evening 'Bridget the Midget' has just walked in, out off the rain. As she sits down blood starts to pour down the sides of her face. She does not seem concerned as people rush to help, and it transpires this is just beetroot juice, which she has used to dye her hair. She starts an animated chat with Stretch.

'Did you hear that Andrew Lloyd Webber had another burglary at his mansion?'

'Sacre Blue', replies Stretch, 'Was it in the papers?'

'Indeed, he rang me up for advice and I told him to erect an electric fence. He said the Police made him remove the machine-guns.'

'Pity,' responds Stretch. 'That's because of the Common Market. They keep interfering.'

'Indeed, but he told me he's now got an electric fence around the place. It's high up, so you can't see it. It uses millions of volts, to vaporize anyone walking underneath it.'

'How does that work, Bridget?'

Quick as a flash, Bridget responds, 'A lot of people would like to know that!'

'Absolutely, but I think I know,' claims Stretch.

'Do tell?' says Bridget.

'If I told you I'd have to kill you, Bridget.'

'Indeed,' she responds, 'But I guess it's to do with Astrology!'

'Absolutely,' says Stretch.

Tuesday 7th September

11 AM Bright day.

I meet Tim Harvey and we go to 'Seaview' day-centre to have a cheap meal for a quid each, which is great value. Geordie is there with the Ducati Kid, and is 'sauced up' as usual, because when he carries his drink to the table he tips it all over some 'scroat's' head. This new 'scroat' is a stranger but lashes out at Geordie and a fight erupts. A free-for-all ensues as people take sides, and the management has to shut up shop ejecting everyone out onto the street. People are not happy because they've had to leave their dinners unfinished.

Geordie is so frustrated he smashes his fist into the wall outside. So the Kid and Tim and myself bring Geordie down to the beach to soak his swollen hand, which is now very painful, in the cold sea. Geordie needs to walk down the groyne to soak his whole arm, so wants to take his shoes off. As the Kid is removing a shoe he finds the laces so tight he has to prise the shoe off with his fingers. As he levers his finger down the heel, Geordie staggers and falls. The Kid's finger is trapped and gets broken. We now have two casualties, to run to hospital.

3 PM.

I deliver the boys to A & E, and leave them to get on with it, as there is always a three-hour wait, day or night. Harry Hatch, known as 'Hatchett' had come into the soup kitchen last night, looking for another sleeping bag. Apparently in the heavy rains last night he was asleep in the tunnel, by the car park, when a flashflood swept him away, still wrapped up in his sleeping bag. He soon woke up. We are very short of sleeping bags so he is refused, as is Ben the Bacon, who also lost his sleeping bag. Ben had actually left his here last time, forgetting to collect it. We search everywhere but cannot find it. Ben is not amused. He storms out, shouting, 'You lot couldn't find your asshole with both hands,' which does not amuse the ladies behind the counter. So, no more sleeping bags tonight. The Hatchet has scars all over his face, but nobody has the nerve to query where he got them. He has a five-second fuse and an aura of latent malevolence in his demeanour, which looks ready to explode at the slightest incentive. But we seem to get on well together!

I speak to Tim, as to how Ned managed to rip him off. Apparently they headed back to Ned's flat, after he'd handed over the fifty quid, but Ned announced that his room-mate was paranoid about strangers thinking they could be 'Old Bill', so Tim should wait round the corner, in the next street.

So Tim waited and waited, and waited. No Ned, no pills!

Wednesday 8th September

10 AM Sunny.

A new 'scroat' turns up for breakfast this morning. He is London Charlie, a Cockney hard nut. He starts swearing during the 'preach', which is just a few minutes of the

Gospel, which we have to deliver in order to call it a 'Charity' breakfast. I go over and tell him to shut up; he has a metal fork in his hand and jumps up threatening to 'Fork me right up.' On reflection I wondered if this was a Freudian slip, but I rip my apron off and we head outside to do battle. Fortunately, everyone steams in and separates us. Charlie is ejected. However he hovers outside making rude gestures at me through the window. So I expect some sort of 'agro' when I leave the premises. There is one poignant moment in the proceedings when Geordie suddenly asks Pastor Chris: 'Is there a better place we go to, when we die?'

3 PM

This afternoon Dean Langley, who is just known as 'Dino', is arrested outside the 'Anchor Pub' in George Street, for busking, and singing the same two songs repeatedly. The two songs were 'American Pie' and 'Wonderwall', but the people in the pub complained because they were so tired of listening to them, over and over again. When the Police took him to court he was fined £80 with £65 costs. He had pulled away from the Police when they tried to arrest him and started swearing loudly. Unfortunately he was well known to them, having numerous convictions for begging, and having breached his ASBO recently for committing the offence of 'Outraging public decency'. The mind boggles! He has been an alcoholic for ten years, and is on medication for Asperger's syndrome. He also takes Methadone on a regular basis. The trouble is when he resisted arrest, the Police allegedly gave him a good hiding, and he has been haemorrhaging from his head ever since. That night the large round window of the Café, where I had the confrontation with London Charlie, is smashed in; it is ten foot high, and costs £8000 to replace as it has to be specially moulded.

Thursday 9th September

8 PM Cold.

Hope kitchen, and Dave Helm has turned up. This character is larger than life and nothing he does would surprise me. When it comes to chucking-out time he develops a coughing fit and starts rolling round in pain, begging to stay, but we have seen it all before. When that doesn't work he starts taking his clothes off down

to his socks and underpants, then methodically turns them inside out, before getting dressed again. This gives him another fifteen minutes.

When the kitchen closes I take him for a drink in the Clarence, round the corner from 'Welly' Square. There is a group playing and lots of ladies dancing about. I ask him: 'What are you having, Dave?'

'A large whiskey,' he replies, 'What else?'

After a few drinks his mood changes. 'Here, Rad, I'm going to pull tonight, if I'm not careful,' he states.

But he's not in as bad a shape as some I've met on the street, who can resort to drinking metal polish or diesel oil. I even met a glue sniffer, called Milky, who described how he would smear 'Bostik' glue onto a piece of wax paper, and place a towel round his head to sniff up the fumes. He got to love it so much he had to fight hard to resist smearing his face into the paper, or rubbing the glue all over himself. Nowadays, he survives by going into his wardrobe with a few small cylinders of butane gas, which are used for topping up gas lighters, and releasing all the gas at once. In the confined space he can get quite high; but has to pray nobody turns up with a lighted cigarette! He discovered his partiality for toxic fumes when first filling his car with petrol, and since then has never looked back. In the old days he would use gas from the oven to get high by passing it through milk with the aid of a rubber hose. This started when he was nicking milk from neighbours' doorsteps, and ended up with more than he could drink; a friendly reprobate gave him the tip about the gas and he started ordering milk himself. After a month or so he was ordering a crate a day. In fact, he ordered so much the milkman inquired if he was on a 'health kick'. Au contraire, but he really earned his nickname of 'Milky'.

Friday 10th September

10 AM Dull day.

Salvation Army. 'Bridget the Midget', is present with her new hair-do. She has smeared 'Hammerite' enamel all over her head. This is normally used to rustproof metal boats, etc., and may now be a permanent fixture in her make-up.

1 PM

I bump into Tim in town, and when we go for coffee, he confides that he once had a lucrative 'Video' business, which he built up over ten years. He explains how he got started in this enterprise. He used to buy the odd 'Porn' tape, from adverts in 'Loot' magazine when he lived in London, but after watching these a few times he got bored. He then decided to advertise his old videos, swapping three for one new video that he hadn't seen. Before he sold them he would make copies, so he was gradually building up his collection. He would then sell his own originals, for ten pounds each, or six for forty pounds; or ten for fifty pounds. Before long he was buying tapes from other people who had gotten bored with their repertoire and he would supply them with one tape that they hadn't seen in return for three they wanted to get rid of; so his business quickly flourished. With the money he was raking in he was now able to afford a duplicating machine that could make ten copies of a single tape at once. With the money he made from this he went to New York on a short break. He was shocked to discover videotapes of movies there, which were not yet released in England. He bought copies of Pulp Fiction, Reservoir Dogs and Clockwork Orange, which were all banned in England. The trouble was when he bought these tapes home they were in 'NTSC' format instead of 'Pal-Secam', which is the European standard, so he had to purchase an expensive decoder machine to change the format, enabling them to be played in England. He found a second-hand one on the Internet for £1500. He now concentrated on copying videos not yet released in England. He bought blank tapes in bulk, for fifty pence each, and cases for ten pence. Unlike compact-cassettes, which can be copied at high speed, VHS tapes have to be played at normal speed, to copy properly. With the profits he bought nine more copying machines, so was now able to make one hundred copies of a single tape at one play, but had to keep checking to see when the recorders ran out, or jammed etc. He would stay up all night on 'speed', feeding the different machines and unloading and labelling the finished products.

Soon he was making enough to holiday in the Bahamas for months every winter, which is what he did for five years. It was there, where he became an expert windsurfer and where he met his wife, a British Airways hostess, on a nudist beach.

Saturday 11th September

9 AM Cold.

Down at the office I learn that Julie Taylor, 48, has just died. Details are scant, and we have to wait for the autopsy. Everyone plans to go to the funeral.

11 AM

Meet up with Tim again, and enquire what happened to his lavish lifestyle to force him into the soup kitchens. He explained that he got 'busted' when he decided to revert to doing 'Hard Porn', because all the latest movies were available over the Internet now, but there was still a great demand for porn, of any sort. Tim tells me he then went to Germany, and smuggled back some high-quality 'hard-porn' videos. When he copied these on his machines he was making a fortune just by selling them through various newsagent's shop window ads. He built up a regular clientele, who would come round to his flat to pay and collect, after an initial phone call. He got to know many personally. They would watch different tapes, on different screens, as he now had a number of monitors, while he plied the customers with tea and biscuits. As they scanned just a few seconds of each tape, the usual response was, 'I've seen it, - seen it, - seen it, and that one.' Sometimes it would take an hour before they found a tape that they hadn't seen. Tim then realized that most of his clients had, in fact, seen much more than him, and he needed to branch out. He was always being asked if he had any 'Young Stuff', or something a bit 'different'.

So he went to Amsterdam, where he procured a number of 'Dutch Seventeen' tapes. These were legal, because the girls, although made up, to look like schoolgirls etc., were in fact seventeen. But he soon realized that 'a bit different' meant 'sado-masochism' so he ventured into that market as well. As irony would have it, he found his best-sellers were the 'amateur market', because these simple home-made tapes always appeared more genuine; more so than the professional models, who were obviously acting. It was easy to show these were made by amateurs, as comments on the tape like, 'That camera isn't on, is it?' and a denial followed by 'Don't worry, the red light just means it's charging.' These sorts of comments gave the tapes a ring of authenticity. It transpired, that in one of the newsagents where Tim advertised the local Police used to buy papers and

tobacco. Before long their attention was drawn to his advert so they rang him up on the pretext of purchasing one of his tapes. They turned up in force and raided the place; they confiscated players, monitors, copy machines and thousands of videotapes, which ended up being stacked in the Police station all round the corridors. He pleaded guilty and was fined a few thousand pounds, but when they searched his flat they never discovered the seventeen thousand pounds that he had screwed under the floorboards. He now needed to escape the 'scene' so went back to the Bahamas, where he blew it all, in one glorious year.

Sunday 12th September

8 AM Sunny.

It's a bright sunny morning as I head up the 'office' where the crew are cracking open a few tins of beer. They are all 'rattling' and need to get 'oiled.' As we are sitting there in the sun, 'Robocop' approaches. He is a 'PCSO' (Police Community Service Officer) but has no powers of arrest. On the street these officers are known as 'plastic policemen', or 'plastics'. Robocop has earned his name because he was recently endowed with a small video camera on his helmet, of which he is now very proud. As he approaches, the crew all line up in a row, and start a well-rehearsed robotic dance, jerking their arms in perfect unison. Robocop is not amused. This looks hysterical, but I have walked over to the railings on the seafront, trying hard not to lose it.

'What's your name?' he asks the Ducati Kid. 'Dave', he replies. 'And you,' he asks of J.J., who responds, 'Dave.'

He then asks Geordie, who answers 'Dave.'

Clearly frustrated, he declares, 'You can't all be Dave.'

At this point I stroll over, and suddenly the boys all shout out 'It's Dave. Hi-ya, Dave?' I can't resist and respond with 'Hallo, Dave, you okay? And you, Dave, keeping well?'

Robocop stalks off in disgust, leaving a chorus line of robots in his wake.

10 AM

After this, I head off to the Ark of Hope church across the road from the 'office'. A couple of the crew comes with me; not for spiritual enlightenment, but more the

taste of the curry that is served up after the service. We learn that our Pastor, Michael Adelasoye has been jailed for four years for his part in a marriage scam, involving nearly four hundred couples, most of the brides being from his homeland in Nigeria.

It transpires that this is the biggest case of its kind ever recorded in the United Kingdom. I also learn that my friend, Sid Benyon, 54, who ran the Arts Forum, a few doors away from the church, has died in the 'Inquest'. He went in for only an infection in his big toe, but died a few days later. He died only two days before his first Arts Exhibition. The artists in the 'Forum' made his coffin themselves, inscribing it with the picture of a big toe. His funeral is scheduled for Wednesday 15th October.

4 PM

I bump into Strumpet, another street person. She is a sad example of how drink and drugs can change a person. She once had a great job as a personal assistant, and always looked smart and clean and owned her own car. She spoke with a refined accent and lived in a smart apartment, but she went to an office party one Christmas, when someone plied her with 'Coke', and she hasn't looked back since. She is now on every drug going and swears like a fishwife. She is also one of the toughest cookies you could hope to meet and could easily scratch your eyes out. She acquires her drugs by procuring them for other people, mostly strangers who don't have the right contacts. She is clutching her sides, and I enquire what's wrong. She explains that she had been round to 'Drongo', her dealer who is tagged and can't leave his flat, even to walk 'Tyson', his vicious pit bull terrier. She was arguing about price and they ended up sitting on the sofa shouting and swearing at each other. When she suddenly stood up the dog launched itself at her, and before Drongo could pull it off, had bitten her on the right breast and down each side. She showed me the puncture wounds, surrounded by massive black and blue bruising. They both knew if she went to the 'Inquest' for treatment the dog would have to be put down, so she managed to score off Drongo for a good price, after all.

Recently she did this for a total stranger, on the promise she could have a 'ten-bag', if she scored quickly, which she did. They went back to her place to 'bang up'. They jacked up and got high, but the 'scroat' wanted to stay the night. Most addicts have

little interest in sex, and it was merely because it was a very cold rainy night. The 'scroat' settled down to sleep in front of the 'gas fire' in the lounge, while she went to bed in the other room. The next thing she knows is she is being dragged out of her bedroom by a fireman, and the flat is filled with smoke. Apparently the 'scroat' had woken in the middle of the night, and feeling cold, started tearing up a telephone directory and tossing pages onto the imitation gas fire. He was off his face, so never realized it wasn't a real fire, but one soon started when the pages caught light. This didn't happen immediately because scroat had become so cold he had decided to leave, without waking Strumpet. The firemen told her she was lucky to survive, because the whole front room had gone up in flames.

My friend Chris Sears, who runs the Wednesday breakfasts in His Place Café (see photos) is the Pastor of Duke Road church, and was recently awarded the M.B.E. for his services to charity. He lives in the quiet cul-de-sac of De-Cham Road, and was shocked when a van reversed over an elderly woman this week. She died on the spot, just opposite his house. She was seventy-nine-year-old Doreen Garlock, a close neighbour.

In other news this week vandals caused a trail of damage last Saturday night, by smashing the windscreens of eight cars. Four of the youths, all about sixteen years old, were reported to police.

Roy Tarrent, of Seaview Road, Mugsborough, has been charged with indecent assault on a girl under fourteen; two counts on a girl under sixteen, and nine counts on females over sixteen.

On a lighter note, Ray Arnold, who lives in London Road, Mugsborough, has just been jailed for a year for breaches of his ASBO. On June 15th he was found slumped against railings in London Road. The police took him home, but the next day he was found drunk again, in the same place, at the same time. This time he became abusive, refusing a lift home and threatened to kill the police officers. Four days later the same officers found him outside Costcutters, in an inebriated state. He was swearing profusely at passers-by. Later on he was found drunk, lying in London Road, by a PCSO. Then a week later he was seen outside the Council Offices in London Road, with his trousers round his ankles.

Monday 13th September

10 AM Sunny.

Just opposite my flat resides the 'One-o-Clock' café. On passing by, I notice Debbie the owner sitting there with Geordie. He is in a dreadful state, covered in blood and bruises, and crying his eyes out. It's most unusual to see any of the street people in tears, but he informs us that he's just been attacked and robbed by the 'Giro Hounds' outside the Post Office, just over the road. I manage to extract the names of the culprits, and it appears Lurch and Ned were to blame. Apparently it's the second time this has occurred, and Geordie now has no money for another fortnight.

He's very fortunate that he stays with the '57' crew, as they will never see anyone go hungry, and there's always plenty of booze. I make the mistake of putting the word out on the street, as to who was responsible for these atrocities. Unfortunately this backfires for everyone starts calling Geordie a grass. This now alienates him from me totally, and puts me in jeopardy, as Geordie is now calling me a grass, and I'm now in danger of losing the trust of the rest of them.

7 PM

That evening the '57' crew head off for the Sally Ann kitchen, but they leave Geordie nursing his pride, with a gallon of cider. He is alone there, but fortunately Arlette, a long-time girlfriend of the Kid's, drops in to see how he is. They are having a drink when the door bursts in; it is Ned and Lurch, looking for payback. They threaten to put Geordie in the hospital, and seem intent on doing so, until Arlette, who is freaking out, throws a fit and starts shaking all over. She suffers from Peripheral Neuropathy. They don't like this reaction, and decide to scarper before the rest of the crew return. Afterwards Arlette confesses she'd never been so scared in her life, but now realizes she has saved little Geordie from a good hiding. At the kitchen that evening there is a new boy on the block. Apparently he's just been released from prison after a long stretch for armed robbery. He is called Nick and has nowhere to live. The 'crew' is impressed with his 'credentials' and they offer him a place for the night; he obviously does not know the state of the place. A problem arises because I already have four passengers in my Jag, and there's no room for Nick, but Ginger, also known as Rudolph because of his large red nose,

suggests Nick can go in the trunk. Nick agrees because he's desperate, but I'm rather reluctant to get stopped in Mugsborough with an armed robber in the trunk. As it happens I do manage to deliver the full cargo intact, even with the boys egging me to go fast round the bends, so Nick would bounce around in the back.

When the crew gets in, they are not amused to find Arlette in tears, and Geordie in a right state. Big Jimbo retrieves his huge machete, which he stashes under the sofa, and the crew is gearing up for action. It is only the pleas of Geordie, and myself that prevent a possible bloodbath that evening.

Tuesday 14th September

2 AM Cold night.

In the early hours, after a few drinks, Nick tells us all how he took part in a little 'squeeze'; a robbery at the Burlington Arcade, in Mayfair. His gang drove right up the steps from the street, and gunned their B.M.W. straight along the arcade, with all the punters diving out the way, into the shops. Screeching to a halt outside Hirsh's, the big jewellers, they dragged balaclavas over their faces and stormed in, waving pickaxes and smashing everything in sight. He claims they had two sawn-offs (shotguns) - not that they needed them. Running round shouting above the noise of the alarm, and smashing in the display cases, the noise was terrific, and the staff just lost it.

'You could smell them lose control, but the women just fainted; it was 'minging', but we were in and out in less than a minute. Mind you, we left a hell of a mess behind. But we got nicked afterwards; not a good result.'

'What happened? Were you grassed up?' I enquired.

'No, the police helicopter spotted us on the motorway!'

'How did they spot you?'

'Well, when you're doing twice the speed of the other traffic you stick out, like a sore thumb.'

'I got a twelve—stretch for that caper' he adds, ruefully.

But up at Church Road, Nick can't hack the 'aggro', or the smell in '57'. He leaves as soon as it gets light. Seems they don't make armed robbers as tough as they used to.

9 AM. Sunny.

In the morning I go visit Nannette, who lives in the next street. She's doing her level best to get back on the straight and narrow, and I try to help. Her sister Sandie is there, and is very relieved because her daughter has just been born normal. Sandie herself is Rhesus Negative, and after giving birth the first time, was warned to have shots of Anti-D serum to avoid the risk of stillbirths in future. She declined this option because she knew of someone who caught Aids through this serum. She decided against any more children, so got a coil fitted; this did not work, for soon she was pregnant again. On getting an ultrasound test they discovered that the coil had disappeared, so she was advised to abort the child as it was considered the coil could be embedded in the baby's skull, and she might give birth to some sort of monster.

7 PM

In the evening I go to Snowflake, and meet Paul Russell, who is a lovely guy. An ex-public schoolboy, without a trace of aggression, he is blissfully happy just drinking three bottles of sherry a day. He neither eats, nor drinks anything else, but just spends his time nursing his sherry, and chatting away to himself. He has just turned fifty, and has quite a large beard. He hasn't had a home or permanent place to stay for over ten years, and in fact, hasn't taken his boots off for a couple of years. He currently sleeps in the porch of the Mental Health Centre in Holmesdale Gardens. This place is ideal, as it is set back from the street just far enough for privacy, and even has a little porch light that is left on at night. Paul is a client there, so is known to all the Staff. At least he didn't have to travel far for his weekly appointments.

They would greet him in the morning as they arrived for work, stepping over him, as he woke up. 'Morning Paul, sleep well? How are you this morning?'

Paul would be lying on sheets of cardboard in his sleeping bag. He would then gather up the cardboard to stash out of sight round the side of the building and scuttle away, with his sleeping bag in his little rucksack, to the nearest 'Offy'.

When he comes to the kitchens I am in the habit of giving him a lift back here, and helping him sort out his sleeping arrangements. Now the weather has turned bitterly cold, so I decide to find him somewhere inside. I bring him down to a squat, in

Eversfield Place, which is a rabbit-warren of basement flats. Some street people found one of these flats had been empty for ages and started squatting in it. They confided to me that one of their group had always to be present in the place to keep it secure, so I went and fitted a Yale lock on the door so they could come and go as they pleased. I also took the trouble to 'hot-wire' the electric, so that at least they could have some heating and light, so they owed me a favour. They were Lisa, a young teenage girl, her boyfriend Tony, and her pimp, a large taciturn Turkish gentleman, whose name escapes me. They accepted Paul, and I left him in their tender mercies, knowing he would not run short of his sherry as he had just collected his sixty-pound 'wages', from the 'PO'.

However, when I checked the following morning, Paul was clucking. Someone had really rattled his cage. In the night he had snuggled up between Lisa and Tony. He imagined that Lisa had been fondling him during the night, but realized later that she had been going through his pockets; successfully as it happens because all his money was missing in the morning. The others soon realized that Paul was starting to fit and getting the 'D.T.s', so Lisa, who swore to the rest of them that she had no money, disappeared for five minutes. She came back with a bottle of Ember Cream Sherry, which calmed Paul down. He queried where she got the money and she told him she had just 'turned a trick' on the beach, over the road. She obviously didn't have time to do that but Paul didn't argue. The others knew she normally sold herself for a fiver, which Tony thought was too cheap; but it kept her pimp happy. I later learned she got pregnant and bore the pimp's child. He went back to Turkey, and she ended up in Woodlands mental hospital.

Wednesday 15th September

9 AM Warm, sunny.

His Place Café. Kings Road. Mugsborough.

It's the morning of the free breakfast. I bump into Pugwash in the café. He is nicknamed this because of his huge white beard, and the fact he's a part-time fisherman. He would be a full-time fisherman, if it weren't for the fact he's also a part-time drunk, but he is a very pleasant character and very polite as well. He's clearly upset today because his friend Julian, who lived on a farm in Robertsbridge,

has just been killed at the weekend. Apparently Julian was woken by the noise of his Land-Rover being stolen. It appears he ran out to stop it, but they ran over him in their escape and killed him.

So we say a prayer for Julian but, as we finish, 'Cockney Joe' pipes up and demands a prayer for his hamster, which also died at the weekend. I am leading the prayers this morning as Pastor Chris is away. I don't know whether to laugh or cry, but soon regain my composure and offer up a prayer for Joe's hamster.

Thursday 16th September

7 PM Warm and cloudy.

Hope kitchen is running tonight. I am in charge of the 'clothes room' there and, among the donations, we get given stuff from churches, charity shops and individuals; stuff that nobody wants and can't get rid off. As I sort through the dozens of bags I am always afraid that I might catch Scabies, which I know from experience is a very contagious and irritating disease. Amidst the stuff we can't use (which is most of it), I discover a pink petticoat and a lady's corset in bright green satin. At the time J.J. is with me getting a pair of boots, as the ones he has are flapping around at the soles, possibly due to their recent expedition off the groyne. He sees I'm going to dump the corset and petticoat, and says, 'I'll have them' so thinking he has a lady friend who might appreciate them, I wrap them up for him to take away.

10 PM

I drop the crew off at '57', and come in for a quick drink. Heavy Eddy is there and it's the first time I've ever met him.

'My name's Eddy. They call me Heavy Eddy, but I'm not really heavy, I'm just Eddy,' he informs me. He tells me he's just left the army, and says: 'I've killed better men than this lot, before breakfast.'

'I have no enemies,' he boasts, but I suspect he is intensely disliked by his friends. He comes over as a very charming, handsome middle-aged guy, but I sense he's as sharp as a rat's gold tooth. He is very tall, very fit and very strong. Apparently he is just visiting, as is Gay Ray who has a flat just opposite number 57.

'Rudolph' is also there with his huge blotchy nose. The Kid has collapsed on the 'Loo', and Jimbo has passed out on the sofa clutching his machete. Geordie, who nowadays is permanently oiled and asleep, is snoring away in the corner.

Eddy decides to go over and wake him up. He does this by slapping Geordie hard across the face. The Kid has returned and is now filming the action on a mobile phone. Geordie stirs, but does not wake up. Eddy has darted back to his seat, but gets up again to repeat the performance. This time Geordie's eyes flick open; he knows something has happened but is not sure what, as he is so intoxicated he is impervious to pain. He glares around the room. Everyone is sitting staring at the ceiling, in innocence. Afterwards, this video of 'Happy Slapping' is posted on U-tube, and is an instant hit.

Friday 17th September

6 AM Cool, misty.

The persistent smashing of glass rudely awakens me. I look out the window at the crossroads, looking for the source, wondering if some more car windscreens are getting smashed in again. Recently, I had looked out one night to see a couple of 'scoats' on a motorbike, working their methodical way down the road, stopping by every car. The pillion passenger had a pickaxe and was systematically smashing in every car windscreen in the street. I was very glad I had surrendered my gun-licence, as I may have succumbed to temptation. However this morning was different. I see J.J. robed up in the corset and petticoat I gave him. He is standing in the centre of the crossroads with a crate of milk that has been left in some shop doorway. He is flinging the bottles left, right, and centre. When he exhausts the supply he lies down in the middle of the road, puts his feet on the crate and proceeds to fall asleep as he drinks the last bottle of milk. Luckily, at that time of morning, there is little traffic about. I'm sure the police will arrive at any second. I shout at him to clear off quick, but he simply throws the last bottle at me, which smashes against the wall. However, he does get up, and stumbles off down to the beach.

9 PM

I hear later that last night everything sparked off at '57' when I left. Gay Ray, who quite fancies Geordie whom we now know 'leads with the left foot', objected to what Heavy Eddy was doing to him. So Eddy attacked him and actually knocked him out. During the fracas the glass table got smashed and the T.V knocked over, with all the drink that was on it, and there is always drink on the table up at '57'.

When Gay Ray comes to, he makes a dive for the machete that Jimbo harbours beneath the sofa. As he starts swinging the cops are trying to get in, for the neighbours have called the police. The crew knows that they do not want to be caught in possession of a machete, so the Kid grabs it and flings it through the window, which sadly was shut at the time, into the garden. They have to go outside afterwards, to find it in the overgrown garden.

Saturday 18th September

10 AM Drizzle.

I visit Paul in the squat, in Eversfield Place. He is not happy, as he knows he has been ripped off. I decide to take him back to my flat, as I am now concerned for his safety. When we arrive all he has is his sleeping bag and a bottle of sherry in his little rucksack. He's quite happy to kip down in the little conservatory I built onto the rear of my flat. I have put a camp bed in there and placed a blow-up mattress on top. His feet smell because he hasn't taken his boots off for over a year. I decide he cannot sleep in his boots every night, but when we remove them I am horrified at the state of his feet (see photos). He has in-grown toenails which badly need cutting, as he can't manage this himself. His socks have moulded themselves in between his toes and definitely seem past their sell-by date. I have lots of spare socks but realize a bit of work is needed before putting these on. I take a basin of hot soapy water out into the garden and proceed to wash his feet but get quite pensive when he declares: 'Do you know, Jesus used to do this?'

3 PM

As it happens a girl friend later turns up to stay for the weekend; her name is Susan, and she came from Brighton to visit me. We had not seen each other for ages. In the conservatory Paul is wrapped up in his sleeping bag.

7 AM

In the morning I hear Susan screaming her head off. I am still in bed, but she has got up to make a cup of tea.

My God, I think, what's happening? It sounds like he is trying to rape her! I stumble out in my dressing gown, in my bare feet, to be confronted with the most amazing scene. My little dog, Bruce, is barking his head off; Susan is screaming and Paul is stumbling around naked, grunting and groaning; he had defecated in the duvet I lent him last night and Bruce is trying to sniff it out, while Susan is screaming at me to keep the dog away. I cannot breathe but stagger over to the sliding door, to let some fresh air in, when I notice my feet are all wet.

As I open the door I look up at the roof, thinking I must have a leak. That's all I need, on top of all this. However I soon realize I'm now standing in a pool of urine, where Paul has tried, in vain, to slide the door open during the night but simply decided to urinate against it. He is still drunk; but Paul is always drunk, and I notice his bottle of sherry has been smashed on the floor. 'Sorry, old boy. I do apologize.'

Susan is angrier with me than with Paul. She says it's my fault for taking him home; she then packs her bag and storms out into the rain. I never did see her again.

8 PM

Local MP, Amber Rudd, has turned up at Hope Kitchen for a visit. I know her because I had taken her portrait in my studio, in Norman Road, Mugsborough. She later told the 'Observer', 'We are very lucky to have such dedicated volunteers, to serve in these places!'

Sunday 19th September

8 AM Fair mild day.

Before I leave the flat I move Paul, the camp bed, and the mattress out into the little coal-cellar opposite my front door. There is a light in there, and a door he can lock at night, so he seems quite content, although mentions he is sorry to be vacating the 'Conservatoire', as he puts it. I have had to stuff the duvet in a black bag and dump it; it would be impossible to clean. Paul settles in nicely, and actually stays there some weeks.

On my way to the Ark of Hope, I pass by the shops at the side of my flat. 'Silverhill Computers' is run by a friend of mine, Steve, and I am surprised to see him in his

shop on a Sunday morning, talking to a couple of police. He tells me he had a break-in last night, and I notice the bottom panel of the door has been kicked in. There was so much noise that the neighbours rang the police and they caught the culprit just up the road. It turns out, as Steve informs me in front of the police, that it was my friend, Geordie. This doesn't look good. It also transpires he is in hospital. He's been charged with breaking and entering, and resisting arrest. Although nothing of value was stolen, except a bunch of keys, Steve wants to press charges despite my pleas. Unfortunately, the keys were a spare set of mine that I'd left with Steve for safekeeping, and they were never recovered. I just hope Steve never bothered to label them with my address.

The police then tell us that Geordie kicked them during his arrest, but had a slight accident at the police station later on; apparently he slipped while drunk, and fell down a flight of stairs. I discover later that Geordie thought the shop belonged to me, because I owned the photographic studio just round the corner, and of course he knew I lived over Steve's shop. He wanted to hurt me for spilling the beans about his attackers, who have since turned on him. I discovered this later when some of the street people hassled me to get the charges dropped; but of course there was nothing I could do.

I proceed on my way to church and bump into Big Kevin. He is a huge guy, and one of the nicest alcoholics you could ever hope to meet. Ironically, he has great strength of character, because every six months or so, he goes 'on the 'water-wagon' and stays dry for a month or even longer. But circumstances always seem to overwhelm him, and he suddenly relapses; but in his dry periods he goes to the gym, quits smoking, and builds himself up again. This repetitive cycle has been going on many years.

This morning he tells me he has been dry for months, but just started drinking again last night, when some mate treated him to a weekend drink. He wants to come to church with me, so tags along. We get the bus down there, but he is 'brassic' so I have to pay his fare, and also give him a quid for the collection plate, so he won't feel embarrassed. But at the church, just as Communion is being passed around, he disappears and doesn't come back. As I leave the church I spot him, by the 'office' with the '57' crew. He has spent the pound on a tin of cheap lager.

In other news, over the week Mark Griffiths, of Gensing House, London Road was in court this week for breaching his ASBO. He had been drunk in public, again. Gensing House in Mugsborough is a hostel for alcoholics. Mark has been buddies with Peter Eagle for many years. I know them both very well. They possess an almost symbiotic relationship, supporting each other in hard times. They were on the street together for over five years. Eventually they were offered a place in Gensing House, but when they were given separate rooms they declined, and stayed on the street, slowly deteriorating. I went to the managers of Gensing House, in the guise of a charity worker, wielding some pseudo-authority, and managed to convince them that the boys needed to stay together, sharing everything as they did on the streets. To my astonishment they agreed and Mark and Peter were given a large double room together.

When Mark appeared in court last week his solicitor Aiden Harvey told the court: 'The defendant resides in a house for people with alcohol problems, where the cardinal rule is, no drinking on the premises, so my client is a street drinker as he has to drink in order to function.' Mark was fined £30 with £15 court costs.

In other news this week, a twenty-four year old man was attacked outside the Kebab shop just up the road from me; this occurred at two in the morning and I heard the screams as his attackers beat him with a metal pole and a plank of wood. Earlier that evening, in Mugsborough, a fifty-one year old woman, who answered her door at 9.30 pm., was hit over the head by a brick when a robber burst in to steal £1200 off her.

Last Thursday two men robbed a taxi-driver at around midnight, in Kennilworth Road, Mugsborough. They held large kitchen knives to his throat before beating him up and escaping with £250 in cash. Taxi drivers have been in the news recently, since another one was jailed for two years for sexually assaulting his passengers.

Louis Birch, 47, of Kennilworth Road, Mugsborough, was convicted of drug possession, and given six months conditional discharge, with £40 court costs. He told police he has a neurological condition that makes his brain shrink! The police found a 'Kinder' egg containing Class 'C' drugs secreted in his underpants. It later emerged he had a record of forty-five offences, twelve of which are for drugs, and nineteen for dishonesty!

The papers also report about our Pastor, Michael Adelasoye, who has been sentenced to four years in prison. Another friend, Ray Arnold, was locked up for a year for continuous breaches of his ASBO.

I recall seeing Ray a few days ago, propped up against the opticians opposite where I live, with his trousers round his ankles. I went outside and hoisted them up in front of passers-by. Ray was so oiled he suffered no embarrassment, unlike myself, but had I not done so he would have been nicked again, for obscene behaviour in a public place.

As a comic interlude, I hear that last Sunday, Dino (Dean Langley) was arrested again for irritating passers-by with his repetitive busking. Dino lives in Charles Road, Mugsborough, and was fined in July for playing the same two songs annoying all the customers in the Anchor Public House. This time he was charged with begging in the underpass, his favourite busking spot.

Needless to say Dino got some 'stick' from the others in the soup kitchens, as they nicknamed him 'Dino-Two-Tunes'; but he swears he only ever got asked for these two songs, and happens to know thousands of others.

Monday 20th September

6.30 PM Miserable Day.

The Sally Ann is running tonight.

I meet Sparky, a tall fearsome looking individual, with a Patch over one eye. He also has a bad leg and needs a large stick to get around, which makes him look a bit like a Pirate. He never looks in pristine condition as his face is pock-marked with sores. He acquired these when he was working in a scrapyard, burning rubbish. There was a gas cylinder in the rubbish, which exploded spraying molten sparks into his eye and all over his face. Hence his nickname. Tonight he looks especially bad, because he has a long slash down the side of his face. He tells me he was mugged, as he walked through the park at midnight. I serve him tea and sandwiches while he sends Tanya out 'dogging'. She is back in an hour with a bag full of 'dog-ends'.

Sparky is over six feet tall but can only eat soft white bread without crusts, as he has no teeth left. As I ply him with food and drink, it never occurs to me to question

why anyone would have the nerve to attack Sparky, who carries his big stick wherever he goes; or what he was doing in the park at midnight; or why someone would want to mug a man who looks like he hasn't got a penny to his name.

Here everyone knows everyone else, so I enquire if he recognized his attackers, because I could set Heavy Eddy onto them. He tells me it was too dark to recognize anybody, and that he'd had a few drinks anyway.

I am very upset that someone would do that to a friend of mine; to rob him was bad enough, but to slash him across the face, as well adds injury to insult. At least it wasn't a 'double-whammy'. This is when two craft-knife blades are bound together, with a matchstick between, to keep them slightly apart. When someone gets slashed with a 'Stanley' blade the cut is difficult to heal, because it's such a clean cut the tissues have no rough edges to grip together. But they heal, in time, with just a fine scar. The more vindictive method of employing double blades means that a thin strip of skin is totally separated from each side. This strip is so thin it cannot be stitched back either side, so the victim loses it, leaving a deep scar across the face; but not as bad as a 'glassing', which tears the whole face apart. This is when a glass gets smashed in your face.

The person in charge of the kitchen that night, a Salvationist, rebukes me saying: 'It's not up to you to seek vengeance. The Lord will repay.'

I reply, 'I am the Lord's avenging angel; that's my calling,' but this response does not go down very well.'

So, when I get home from the kitchen, I ring Heavy Eddy. He laughs down the phone at me; 'You're so naive,' he cackles. 'Sparky did that to himself.' I find this difficult to believe, until Eddy explains that he knows Sparky splurged his 'wages' on heroin, but couldn't go home and tell his missus they had no money for the next two weeks, so he slashed himself, and then went to the 'Old Bill'.

'What for?' I query.

'So he could get a crime number and give it to the Social; now they'll have to give him a crisis loan.'

I ask Eddy what makes him think that Sparky spent the money on heroin. 'Cos I sold him the gear,' he tells me!

At this juncture I do feel rather naïve, for I realize Sparky has pulled the wool over everyone's eyes.

Tuesday 21st September

10 PM Cold.

I go round to visit the '57' crew, leaving Paul ensconced in his concrete bunker. He's quite happy as long as he's got his bottle of sherry for company. He doesn't even want to listen to the radio; he just talks to himself all night.

When I arrive at '57' there's five people there. There's Geordie, who's out on remand, the Ducati Kid, and 'Andy Fish', another part-time fisherman with a drink problem. Big Jimbo is also there, as usual. He never goes out, unless it's a real emergency, like running out of drink. Another big guy, 'Rudolf the Nose' is present, and is called this because of his huge bloated nose, radiating a sea of sweat. He is a traveller, but once lived in the caves on the East Hill, before they were boarded up. The crew have loads of drink in, and are having a 'lock-in' tonight; nobody comes or goes till the booze is all finished.

11 PM

The cider is flowing, and spilling, all over tables and rugs; they have been at it for hours already. Suddenly Geordie collapses, after a fierce argument with 'Rudolph the Nose'. Andy Fish attempts to give Geordie 'CPR', as he's lying on the floor thrashing around. Rudolph, who probably feels guilty, shouts at Andy to leave him alone, because he's only 'trying it on'. But the rest of us don't think Geordie is faking it, so Andy persists in his efforts. At this point Rudolph drags Andy off Geordie and decks him, with an uppercut to the jaw. The Kid has rung for an ambulance, but because there has been so much trouble at '57' in the past, the paramedics won't come without a police escort, and because it's busy tonight in Mugsborough, it is over an hour before any help arrives. The ambulance has been sitting outside for twenty minutes, with their blue lights flashing, but the paramedics will not come in without a police escort. Andy has recovered consciousness and needs a drink, as you do, when you've been knocked senseless. Jimbo is not yet 'Compos-Mentos.' He is so oiled-up he's unaware of what's occurred. Geordie now starts to froth at the mouth, just as I open the door to the police, who now enter, paving a path for

the paramedics. They are just in time to see Andy get decked again by Rudolf. They slap the cuffs on him, as Andy slumps to the floor. Geordie wakes up screaming, even managing to wake Jimbo up. As he comes to, Jimbo grabs a copper's sleeve and begs him to make him a 'roll-up'. The copper is not amused, especially when Big Jimbo starts shouting and swearing, as he realizes someone drank all his cider while he was asleep. He immediately rings for a taxi, to go to the 'Offy'.

Each of the crew had three five-litre bottles, but it's all disappeared in the space of a few hours. The police think I'm some sort of social worker, for they've seen me in the café, serving the homeless breakfasts. I am free to go!

However, as I jump in the Jag to escape, Geordie and Andy are carted off in the ambulance; Rudolf, in cuffs, is dragged out and shoved in the cop-car, and, as the taxi arrives, Jimbo disappears to the off-licence, for more cider.

Wednesday 22nd September

10 AM Sunny.

At the morning breakfast, we learn that gangs of Irish Gypsies are abducting homeless people, from places like day-centres and soup kitchens. They offer fifty quid for a day's work and all you can eat and drink. I give out a warning that this offer is too good to be true, and warn everybody that they might end up locked in a caravan, or even a horse-box, for months at a time. The gypsies then move to a different location, with their victims locked inside, of course. As a sequel to this I discover, exactly a year later, that a gang of travellers has kept twenty-four vulnerable people as slaves. Some had been held for over fifteen years in captivity. God only knows, this may be just the 'tip of the iceberg.'

At the Wednesday breakfast, the Kid, of the '57' crew is steaming drunk. He's so well oiled he can't even speak. Every morning, the '57' crew head down to the 'office' on the seafront, waiting for 'A's' to open up, at 6 a.m.

The reason he got so drunk today is his landlord came round this morning, after numerous complaints from the neighbours, and freaked out when he saw the mess. The fact that police were involved didn't help matters much. So he has informed the Kid that he's going to issue a 'Section 21', which means he will now lose his

flat. The landlord had stumbled across Ned's hypodermic syringes and needles, as he was fighting his way round the bin bags, swimming in the saturated carpets.

Thursday 23rd September

7.30 PM Mild.

At Hope kitchen, Pastor Chris, tells us of how he met David Cameron on a visit to the Seaview day-centre. The Prime Minister knew Chris, as an MBE, and bumped into him leaving Seaview. When he inquired what he was doing there, Chris replied that he was just getting details for the funeral of one of the clients. Cameron's response was that, 'I wouldn't be here either, if I didn't have to assure the staff there are no funding cuts on the horizon'. It appears Cameron did not conceive this to be a 'labour of love', and couldn't wait to get out of the place. As it happens severe cuts did follow within a year and all the staff were asked to take a cut in pay and downgrading in their job status. They all resigned, except the manager, and even he was later replaced; so much for political promises.

An interesting incident happened in the kitchen tonight. Leon, a tall verbose individual, pulled out a claw-hammer halfway through the session, and started banging it on the table. George and I rushed over to disarm him before he attacked anyone. All the women started screaming. As Leon gets evicted and banned for life, he asks George if he can have the hammer back!

Friday 24th September

11 AM Dull.

I first meet Tracy in the Sally Ann, as we are handing out food parcels. She comes across as tall, elegant and demure, and I find her very attractive; the trouble is she is also a crack addict. She gets her gear for free because she has a huge flat and lets out a room out at weekends to a couple of 'Yardies'. These are drug pushers, who come down from London to sell crack to the local dealers. They are three black boys, whom she knew in London, and they always arrive by train. They find this a lot safer than driving, because they never get searched on public transport, like they often do when driving, because they're black. I offer Tracy a job in my studio in Norman road. She is claiming Job-seekers Allowance but can work up to sixteen

hours a week without losing any of her Allowance, and we both hope this will help her get straight, and back on her feet, which she is desperate to do.

Saturday 25th September

2 PM Bright sunny day.

My 'tenant', Paul, has lost his carrier bag of sherry bottles on his way back to the flat. When I come home I find him 'fitting', in the cellar. This happens when a devout alcoholic can't get the drink his body is used to. I stick him in the Jag, where he promptly throws up, and we head off to the 'Inquest'. We rush up to 'A & E', where parking is a nightmare, and have to wait hours before they will admit him. He will spend the night on a metal trolley, until he gets assessed. Paul has been down this road before; his ilk get fed up waking up every morning to spew their guts out. They are unable to even hold a drink steady with both hands and, until they get a few slurps down, are left jerking about spilling it everywhere; but after a few swigs their hands are steady enough to fire a long distance target rifle. I learn that this is because there is so much alcohol in their systems that just a small amount is needed to act as a catalyst and revert them back to their normal state. But because of this craving their body wakens them up during the night, and early every morning.

This is why 'A' does so much trade so early in the morning. Most of the boys can hack it, until their liver packs up, or they need a kidney out, like J.J.

I am surprised to learn that the liver repairs itself. I dare not tell the crew this, or even the fact they can survive with just one kidney.

Sunday 26th September

10 AM Dry but cold.

On occasion, I still attend the 'Ark of Hope' church, and J.J is there this morning as he's just painted the children's crèche, and done an excellent job. The elders are very pleased. They are holding a healing service this morning and I have brought along an old friend called Stan, for some prayer and healing. This was quite an effort, as he is a complete atheist. Stan has a severe problem because he is a convicted paedophile, but really wants to change. I have told him if he gets prayer,

he can free himself from these terrible desires. I discovered his aberration when I took him to the beach, for a swim last summer. As I was lying on the sand after a swim, I looked to see if he was still in the water. He was perched at the water's edge and seemed to be jerking up and down. I couldn't figure out what was wrong, but as I approached I could see that he was 'playing' with himself. There were a couple of young girls in the water, frolicking around, and he was actually 'playing' with himself, in front of them. I was totally stunned and could not believe my eyes. I went over and threw my towel at him, demanding that we get out of there immediately, before someone noticed. I knew if he got caught we would both get a good hiding. Stan had been married and has children himself. He once told me his wife, who was German, hated sex because some soldiers raped her during the war. As we drive home I ask what he can possibly see in a young kid to get excited about. He says, 'they are so innocent at that age, but they get bitter and twisted when they grow up.' He tells me he first started to like young girls when he ran a hairdressing salon in Eastbourne. He paid youngsters to wash the customers hair after a haircut. After he shut up shop he would give them extra money to stay behind and sweep up the hair. As he got friendlier with them he would ask them to go in the back with him, to 'mess about.' He gave them more money, but decided he was getting in too deep and could easily be found out, so he told the girls he didn't need them anymore.

Of course these schoolgirls were now used to the extra money, and got annoyed. One of them said: 'My dad was asking what keeps me here so long, after the shop closes? What can I tell him?' Stan was nobody's fool, and could recognize a blackmail threat when he heard one. 'I decided I had to carry on giving them money, but I never corrupted any girl who wasn't corrupted already.'

Stan tells me he hates himself for the way he is, and I have learned enough in life not to be judgemental. As a Catholic brought up in Ireland, I learnt to detest homosexuals, until I moved to England, and discovered my best friend was one. I now realize that all of us are just the result of the way others have treated us, as we were growing up. So I offer to bring Stan to church for prayer and he agrees. I ask him if he regrets the life he's led, and he tells me he is sad because he's never been happy in his whole life. As the minister is laying hands on people and the

whole church is 'praying up a storm', I drag Stan up in front of the whole congregation. He is very old and in no position to harm anyone, but he still has these feelings and wants to be normal.

'I wish I'd had a happier life,' he tells me, sadly.

'Don't we all,' I reply. 'I wish I hadn't had so much pain in mine, but you've got to play the cards you're dealt.'

So here we are at the 'Last Chance Saloon'; the 'Ark of Hope' church. Some guy has just hobbled up to the altar. He is looking for healing for his back, which was damaged in a Judo competition last night. The elders gather round and lay hands on him. They start praying in tongues and our young friend claims he can feel heat coursing through his back. Suddenly, the guy straightens up, twists from side to side, and then does a back flip. The whole church erupts, as the men shout 'Alleluia', and the women scream.

'Praise God, you've been cured,' says the pastor. 'Stay for the service and tell the World of this miracle.'

'Sorry,' says the Judo champ, 'I must go and train, but thanks a lot. I'll be back if I get hurt again!' Then he casually strolls out.

The Pastor then starts to pray over Stan. The whole church is wailing away, when Stan suddenly blurts out, 'Your Voodoo isn't working on me.'

The room is suddenly deathly silent; everyone, especially me, is asking, 'did I hear that right?'

I am now praying harder than ever that the floor would open up and swallow me because I have brought this character to the church. But, after a surreal silence, the Pastor turns to Stan and calmly says, 'It's not Voodoo, Stan, it's the Holy Spirit.' Stan stalks off, leaving the whole church stunned by his reaction.

Later on, in the service, Lurch leans over to the woman sitting in front of him and steals the purse from her handbag, as she stands up to sing a hymn. He scoots out to the toilets and finds £35 in the purse. Ricky, another street person, has seen this, and following him into the 'Gents', insists he leaves her credit cards and keys in the purse, and puts it back in her handbag. Lurch returns to the service and when we rise again for another hymn, he slides his jacket over the handbag and slips the purse back. I didn't see any of this; only the poor woman's face as she notices,

after the service that her handbag is open, and digs in her purse to find the money missing. Lurch leans over and offers his commiserations.

In this week's papers there are headlines about the town's very own 'Hannibal Lecter'. He is Graham Fisher 37, now jailed for 21 years with no parole, after two murders and an attempted murder. He strangled Clare Letchford, 40, in Cornwallis Gardens, cutting flesh from her arm and eating it. Before leaving the premises he ordered a prostitute from a local Escort Agency. Eight days later he killed Beryl O'Conner, known as Dornie, at her flat in Clifton Court, in Holmesdale Gardens, where a lot of street people are re-housed. Police later found a hand in a saucepan. He then surrounded the body with newspapers and attempted to burn it. He also admitted the attempted murder and rape of a teenage Czech student, on the Hastings to London train. The teenager was left in a coma for three days. He pleaded guilty on grounds of diminished responsibility.

Two men from Mugsborough have been arrested for trying to smuggle eight million pounds worth (sic) of illegal drugs into the U.K. They hired a catamaran in Spain, and loaded it with three tons of cannabis in Morocco. Armed police boarded this boat last Friday. Half a million pounds in cash was also recovered.

Ian Saunders, 48, of Haverleigh Road, Mugsborough, was jailed for four months after flouting a driving ban for the eleventh time. He had ten previous convictions for driving while disqualified, and nine for driving with no insurance.

In a lighter note, Billy Kennedy, a regular client of the kitchens, was jailed for eight weeks after two breaches of his ASBO. He was caught urinating in the street, and a few days earlier was found drunk in public. He was abusive to police on both occasions. Billy has forty-two previous convictions.

Monday 27th September

10 AM Murky Day.

I visit my lodger Paul in hospital. He's actually lying in the bed next to Geordie. I have bought some flowers in the gift shop there, but they neglected to tell me flowers are not permitted on the wards. Geordie has managed to get drunk, and I can't understand how, and neither can Paul, much to his chagrin. It transpires later that Geordie was draining the numerous hand-wash containers into a Coca-Cola

bottle. The hand wash contains nearly 80% alcohol. To drink it, he just diluted it with the Coca-Cola, and managed to stay paralytic the whole time he was there. This doesn't help Paul, so I agree to get him a bottle of sherry, because otherwise he threatens to discharge himself. I nip off and soon return with a cheap bottle of sherry. He gets into his dressing gown, supplied by the hospital, and we wander out into the corridors. We notice some large potted plants at the junctions of the corridors, and secrete Paul's bottle in the middle of one, confident it can't be easily spotted hidden in the plants. Now he can go and have a swig every few hours until his medication kicks in. The trouble is because all the plant containers look the same and we have wandered some distance away, I find on my next visit that Paul is clucking because he couldn't find the right plant container, so we ended up stalking the corridors for twenty minutes, before we found his bottle of sherry.

Tuesday 28th September

2 PM Bright, clouding over.

I am with Stan at Seaview, when he meets a rather stout lady at dinner. They 'click' immediately, and she invites him home to meet the family. She has five children, ranging from sixteen to twenty-five. The husband is a saint, slaving after his huge wife, and seeing to the kid's needs. He looks after them hand and foot as they sit round eating and watching television while he does the housework. The fat lady tells Stan he looks just like their beloved grandfather, who passed away recently. Stan is old, and not very mobile, but is now invited round for dinner every day, when he gives the kids a pound or so in recompense. The trouble starts when the youngest kid likes to sit on Stan's knee, after dinner. I had warned him to avoid this, but of course he touches her leg, and gives her a fiver not to tell her parents. Not long afterwards Stan gets a phone call, asking him not to visit for a while, because of family problems. He is upset, but I tell him he's got off lightly.

Wednesday 29th September

9 AM Fair, bright day.

I have to be in the café about nine to get ready for our ten-o'clock opening. Pastor Chris is there at eight, to cook all the food. During the breakfast, as I'm serving up,

the phone goes off in Heavy Eddy's pocket. This is the phone that he recently nicked off the Ducati Kid, who's sitting at the next table. I happen to recognize it's distinctive ring-tone, so I turn to the Kid and shout out 'Your phone's ringing,' to embarrass Eddy. No such luck. Eddy simply ignores this, and carries on eating, leaving the Kid feeling impotent.

3 PM

The 'Inquest' hospital.

I visit Paul and Geordie, but Geordie has been discharged, because they found an empty hand-wash container in his locker. Paul looks ten years younger, because they have shaved his beard off. They are going to put him on Antibuse, a 'detox' drug, as soon as it's safe. This drug is usually injected, but can be implanted as a slow-release method, which by all accounts is more efficient. This implant can last six months, but the injections have to be given weekly.

Antibuse causes the recipient to be violently sick if any alcohol crosses their lips. Paul begs me for a last drink, threatening to discharge himself. I then ask him if he's serious about giving up, and he says he's quite happy just to carry on as he is. He claims he has no responsibilities, no bills, no wife or kids, or mortgage to worry about; and gets his 'wages' on a regular basis. He decides to discharge himself, so I end up bringing him back to my place.

I have to wonder which of us is better off, after all.

Thursday 30th September

9 AM Misty.

My Jaguar, left parked in the underground car park in Mugsborough, is virtually destroyed this morning. A fire was started in the early hours that damaged a hundred cars, and destroyed the car park. The word on the street is that Geordie started it, as an act of revenge on me. I manage to sneak in before they seal it all off, and clean enough sooty grime from my windscreen (see photos) to allow me to drive it to the garage for repairs. It has to be re-sprayed. The Council refuses to rebate anyone for the four hundred pound parking permits saying we can use other car parks, which of course is too inconvenient for most.

Still, I count myself lucky, for some of the cars were melted into shapeless lumps.
(See photos)

CHAPTER TWO OCTOBER

Friday 1st October

10 AM Fine bright day.

Big Jimbo, of the '57' crew, has just been given a bed-sit; five years after he first registered on the housing list. It's in Chapel Park Road, just round the corner from '57'. He moves in and allows Geordie, who is getting paranoid in '57' and afraid to leave the place, to stay with him. Because the Kid has been issued a 'Section 21', he has given up trying to keep the flat, and the crew, in order.

Everyone knows the writing is on the wall for '57', literally as well as figuratively, for the boys have taken to sprawling graffiti on the walls of the lounge. I help Jimbo move what few belongings he possesses, and have to push him up the stairs, because of his bad leg. This entails me getting behind him on the stairs, and shouldering his bum as he grabs the banister and hops one step at a time. Not quite an 'elevating' experience because hygiene is not Jimbo's first priority.

When he moves in we discover there is no electricity meter; a few cables, but no actual meter, so no lighting or heating in the place.

It actually takes repeated visits to the 'Electricity Board' in town, before we find out that the Police have taken the meter, because the previous tenant hot-wired it; he is being prosecuted for this, but the police have the meter, in custody, as evidence.

The Electricity Board will not supply a new meter until this case is heard in court, and they find out who's going to pay for the debt, which could take ages! With no heat or light, and Winter drawing in, Big Jimbo and Geordie still spend a lot of their time in '57', only going home to sleep.

Saturday 2nd October

10 AM Cold.

After successfully passing the selection process for the 'Samaritans', and done a bit of training, today is the final selection of the chosen few. There were about twenty applicants, but they only need about six. Today is when they evaluate each candidate based on a series of loaded questions, in front of the others. It is ironic

that their office is directly opposite the Salvation Army Citadel, in St. Andrew's Square, where I do the soup kitchen, during the week. I am posed a series of three scenarios, as I sit at a table with a dozen other candidates. The first is a direct query asking, 'Do you feel we let too many foreigners into the country?' I respond by stating that a significant number do contribute to the country as there is a shortage of skilled labour, but I do add that some cultures need to integrate more fully.

The next question asks, 'How would you respond to a self-confessed paedophile who tells you he is still abusing children?' I reply that my faith tells me to hate the sin, but have compassion for the sinner. After informing me that I must never bring up the subject of faith, of any kind, nor advise anyone to seek spiritual help, they hit me with the last question.

'What are your views on same-sex parents adopting babies, and children?' I state that I am totally against it, no matter how wealthy, or famous, they happen to be. Some bright spark at the end of the table shouts out, 'So you're prejudiced, are you?'

Sensing I've blown it already, I spout on about how hard it is to bring up a normal child in a heterosexual family, and if two homosexuals adopt a boy of tender years there is no chance of that child ending up normal, because in modern society a child needs to relate to a male and female gender. This goes down like a lead brick. My day ends with a 'Don't ring us, we'll ring you,' situation.

7 PM

That evening I head off to 'Hope' kitchen, where I learn Geordie died last night, in Jimbo's flat. Details are scanty, but apparently he was found half-naked with puncture marks in his arms, and the Geordie we know didn't do drugs. In the kitchen, rumours are rife that he was 'jacked', and then sexually assaulted.

It appears Big Jimbo, who is conspicuous by his absence tonight, tried to administer CPR after he got home and found Geordie unconscious. The trouble was that Jimbo needed time to search his flat, ensuring there was no trace of drugs, before he dared ring the ambulance, because he knew the police would arrive as well. When they did turn up, it was too late.

Sunday 3rd October

11 AM Sunny, but cold.

Have a lie-in this morning, so I don't bother with church. In the papers this week they relate how the Co-Op, just fifty yards from my flat, had an armed robbery at 9.30 on Monday night. In the aftermath of this, local traders voiced the opinion that Central Mugsborough is becoming a crime 'hot-spot'. Raymond Patel, who runs 'Cost-cutters', opposite the Co-Op, said that he feared the area was getting much worse in regards to crime, teenage drinking, and anti-social behaviour. I also read that two men were arrested after two robberies within fifteen minutes of each other in the Mugsborough area.

Chris Hunnisett was cleared in court this week of killing the Reverend Ronald Glazebrook, in his flat in Dane Road, Mugsborough. He had served eight years for this murder in 2002. The Reverend Glazebrook not only had a conviction for possession of a live firearm, but also a history of sex-abuse on minors, over a two-year period.

Lee Wilkins, of Eversfield Place, Mugsborough, was given a conditional discharge when he was convicted of carrying in public a claw hammer covered in blood.

Janine Gooch of Mugsborough was fined £70 and £40 in costs for being in possession of a £100 worth of cannabis, although she claimed it was for self-medication as she is awaiting surgery.

Personally I find a comparative incongruity between these two sentences, but of course I lack the wisdom of a learned magistrate. Police Constable Lloyd Archer was on patrol along Mugsborough seafront. He tried to arrest Captain Chris Short, of London Road, Mugsborough for drinking in public in an alcohol-free zone. A violent struggle ensued, during which the officer had his shoulder dislocated, but still managed to hang on until help arrived.

A stranger attacked a pregnant woman of sixteen, in broad daylight. She pulled her hair, punched her stomach and spat in her face.

A man sitting outside the Clarence Pub was suddenly attacked and ended up in hospital, with five stitches in his face.

Dave Thomas 32, of St. Johns Road, Mugsborough, was convicted of stealing over twenty pounds worth of cheese, from the Spar Shop, by stuffing it down his

trousers. He also stole from the Warrior Square Pharmacy, on 22nd September; the court was told he has a heroin addiction that has been endemic throughout his life.

Monday 4th October

7 PM Dull day.

At the Sally Ann kitchen tonight we are presented with a cheque for £1000, by the 'Lions' local charity. This will help keep us going during the coming year.

Stretch is there with Bridget the Midget. She inquires if he watched the 'Magic Roundabout' on TV today.

'No, been too busy, and I'm not into magic anyway.'

Bridget then asks him, 'Did you know 'Dougle' used to be a Monk?'

Stretch replies, 'Absolutely; but tell me, what's that pink stick you're lugging around?'

'It's a wand, stupid; all wands are pink, even the false ones they sell in the shops!'

'Dunno,' replies Stretch, 'never bought one.'

'You know nothing' she retorts. 'Do you even know what a fairy is?'

'No, but I see angels all the time,' he replies.

'A fairy is a dead child, who's training to be an angel,' she informs him.

Stretch counters, 'Absolutely.'

Bridget is now on a roll.

'Indeed, and a fairy godmother is an older one, who's failed to make the grade! But, she still needs a wand.'

Stretch enquires, 'So, are you a fairy godmother then, Bridget?'

'No, stupid, but I have told you I've got fairies at the bottom of my garden. I found that out when I threw a piece of cucumber out the window, and it grew into a tree. But they've all been eaten.'

'Indeed, so who's eating all your cucumbers, Bridget?'

'It's Bronwyn. I'm training her, but she's only five, so she's just an Imp.'

Stretch says, 'Yes, they all are, at that age.'

Tuesday 5th October

2 AM Cold.

I am woken in the early hours by dozens of sirens wailing away as fire engines and police cars make their way to Mugsborough seafront. It transpires that the pier has been set alight and almost burnt to the ground.

11 AM

In the morning I head down with my camera but there are clouds of black pungent smoke billowing from the fire that is still ablaze. Later I am pleased I was not allowed too near as it transpires some old buildings that were burning contained asbestos, and there are fears that some particles were present in the smoke. Everyone is very upset, but the crowd is consoled by news that two teenagers were caught as they climbed off the structure, as it caught fire. They were apprehended by a dog-walker, who just happened to be there at the time. The police have them in custody, and the public is hoping for an early prosecution.

Wednesday 6th October

10AM Sunny

The café is full this morning for the free breakfast.

We offer a prayer for Geordie, who died at the weekend. Pastor Chris, who will be conducting the funeral, has asked me to write a eulogy for Geordie. The Ducati Kid is oiled up on 'Red Star' vodka, although we've all warned him it contains Methanol. He is well aware this is counterfeit vodka because the label states, 'Made in the Heart of Russia – Berlin', but he drinks it because it's 38% proof, and very cheap. After the 'preach', Kelvin Catt announces he's hoping to join the 'Street Pastors'. This causes much merriment, as Kelvin has got convictions for sexual offences, and is one of the most unreliable people in town. He comes to the kitchens dressed in a bright green security vest and calls himself a security guard.

He managed to organize a group of six guys from the kitchen to go work as security men at the 'millennium dome'. He promised them £50 a night but when they got there nobody had ever heard of him. After the breakfast I drag the Kid round to Arlette's flat. She lives a few streets away from his place in '57'. All she can do is let him sleep it off on her sofa. She hates him when he's drunk because she used to be an alcoholic herself, and can't stand any drink being brought into her home.

Thursday 7th October

11AM Rainy.

Geordies' funeral takes place at the Crematorium. Pastor Chris conducts the service, but there are less than a dozen people there. My speech, which gives brief details about Geordie's love for food and drink, and the fact he was a traveller moving from fairground to fairground, is well received. He also did tarmac work, on the roads, but apart from that I was unable to gain much insight into his life. He was only thirty-one.

As the curtain closes at the end of the service, one of the congregation shouts out in frustration, 'You still owe me a tenner.' As we file out we have to waken Ned who's passed out. His face is covered with bruises, which he claims came from a fall, but nobody believes this. I give him and 'Scouse Pete' a lift home to '57', where they are now staying as part of the crew.

Big Jimbo, who only uses his own flat to sleep in, has gone to visit Tweedle Dum, in Eastbourne, so there is a bit of room 'til he returns. I have to open all the windows when I arrive there, because of the smell.

Friday 8th October

11 AM Sunny.

At the Sally Army this morning I meet Tam, a bearded Scotsman, who seems quite a character (the understatement of the year). He informs me he has a gambling problem, which makes a change to the usual problems we encounter. He does mention that he might also take a 'wee nip', from time to time!

Tam tells me his story; he used to live in Folkestone, but when some neighbours stole his car and threatened his wife, he went crazy and attacked their front door with a pickaxe, on St Patrick's Day, in 2001. When the police were called Tam defended himself with an electric saw. He lived in a small block of flats and was running round the garden fending off the law with this huge saw. He had it on an extension lead and was swinging it all over the place, so the police called in the riot squad, and even the Army, who blocked off the street with snipers. The Electricity Board was called in to cut off the electric to the whole street, which was evacuated. At this point Tam retreated to the safety of his little flat where he

barricaded himself inside. In the process of breaking the door in, Tam was sprayed with CS gas a number of times. In fact the other residents could not go back for twenty-four hours, until the gas completely cleared. Tam was charged with causing an affray and malicious damage. Also possessing an offensive weapon with intent to kill, and threatening officers of the law. He got five years, and lost his flat, and his wife, and his job.

When he got out of jail he found a job on the 'scaffold', but as he was working on a roof he fell and slipped through a gap in the scaffolding where someone had neglected to place a board. When he fell he broke a number of bones. He was later awarded eighty thousand, but had not been able to work for months, and before his accident was earning a thousand a week, working all hours. After long delays he was ecstatic to receive this award, and went straight into the 'Bookies', and put five thousand pounds on a horse. It was evens, but it fell at the first fence. Sick as a parrot, he put another five thousand on the very next race, which featured A.P. McCoy, a famous jockey. He was a 'four-to-five' odds-on favourite, so he would have won four thousand on his five thousand gamble. The horse came second, so he lost another five thousand. Altogether he lost ten thousand on his first serious venture into gambling. The next day he put thirteen thousand on a horse that was eight bar thirteen; it won so he re-cooped eight grand. The next day he won another two thousand with six five-hundred-pound bets on the 'Dogs'.

So now he was back to square one, but the bug had truly bitten. His marriage had broken up so he decided to go to Scarborough, and in the next three months of September, October and November he lost over fifty thousand pounds. Once on a single bet, of twenty thousand pounds. He claims he put more money on this horse than the jockey would have got if he'd won the race.

I have seen his betting slips for fifty thousand pound losses, but altogether he showed me receipts for eighty thousand pounds, but of course, he won some back. In total he lost just over fifty thousand pounds. Nowadays Tam can only afford to put bets of one pound on 'accumulators'. He will bet on fourteen football teams to draw on a single Saturday. Once he nearly won when twelve of the fourteen drew, but the last two let him down. Bradford beat Cardiff, one-nil, and Doncaster beat Queens Park Rangers, two-nil.

If these two last teams had drawn, the goals being scored during injury time in the last minutes of the game, Tam would have won one hundred and ninety-seven thousand pounds, for his one-pound stake.

He still dreams of striking it rich and retiring to the Riviera, but admits that at the age of fifty-five he ended up living in a 'clapped-out' Peugeot mini-van. The reason he ended up in Hastings was that he was on the way to France for a new start in life; the engine blew up on the seafront so he ended up sleeping on benches, along the Mugsborough promenade.

I felt so sorry for him that I arranged to get him a nice flat in the building where I live, next door to my own place.

Saturday 9th October

8 PM Cold.

Down at 'Hope' kitchen I serve tea and scones to Bridget the Midget, accompanied, as usual, by Stretch and their lack of communication tonight is not helped by Stretch's growing deafness.

Crazy Mary is also present. She wheels about a little toy baby doll in a small pram, and this doll does most of the actions that a real baby would; it cries, talks, wets itself, etc. Sadly, Mary lost two children in childbirth; we are all aware of this and very tolerant towards her. She talks to the doll, and people just sit round and accept it, and even inquire as to its health.

She has accused Dickie Hibbert of sexually assaulting her, and, although we all know this is ludicrous, the Police have turned up to interview him. The professor disappears, so we tell the police he's gone home. He was actually hiding in the toilets. He's rather fragile, and although we tell him not to worry, it's taking its toll of him.

Stretch and Bridget enquire as to my recent trip to Antarctica. Long Tom joins in because he also went there, during his days in the Merchant Navy.

Bridget enquires, 'Did you see any mermaids while you were down there?'

Stretch interjects, 'Don't be stupid, Bridget, they've all died out.'

Tom, who has a dry sense of humour, butts in. 'No, there's still loads of them down there.'

Not to be outgunned Bridget says, 'Indeed, indeed, there's still one or two tribes left, but the Russians moved most of them to Siberia, 'cos they were worse off than the Africans.'

Stretch responds, 'Didn't know there were Africans in Antarctica, Bridget.'

'Yes, indeed, that's where they originated,' she continues. 'My African friend went into Chester hospital recently, and had a black 'Merboy', complete with tail.'

Tom enquires, 'Does he need a Godfather, Bridget 'cos I'm free for the next ten years.'

Bridget is impressed, 'Yes indeed, I'll get back to you on that one, Tom. By the way, Stretch, did you know the reason the Russians moved them was the cold made them crap all the time.'

'Absolutely,' Stretch replies, 'for now they want to keep that place pristine.'

Sunday 10th October

10 AM Sunny cold day.

I visit the Darvell Community in Robertsbridge. I met Jeremy and Annie, from Darvell, in the kitchens where they sometimes come to help us out. Darvell is a self-sufficient village of a few hundred strictly religious individuals. They live in sparse rooms without any embellishments like Computers, Televisions, or even Mobile phones; and they don't seem to miss them. They work six full days a week, and have a little factory where they make toys for children's nurseries.

They grow all their own crops, and keep sheep and chickens. Jeremy even harvests wild Garlic roots, and makes lovely dandelion coffee, which tastes of nutmeg. The ladies all sport long hair and long dresses but never wear make-up, while the men all look like lumberjacks, wearing thick shirts and sandals, sometimes without socks, even in winter. Each 'House' there, harbours four families; two up and two down, and each house has its own wood-burning stove. Communal heating is supplied to them all, from a huge wood-burning boiler, fed from their own forest.

Anyone can visit for a few days, and perhaps join if they're spiritually inclined and don't mind hard work and the simple life. But they must give away all their possessions and, if they leave, they leave with just the shirt on their back. Tonight is

a communal meal, where they invite local villagers and outside friends like myself, for drinks and snacks. The Punch they give me, made from their own herbs, is a bit spicy and upsets my stomach because I suffer from acid reflux.

10 PM

When I get home I check out the papers for the previous week in Mugsborough. A teenager, too young to be named, has been charged with armed robbery. He held up the Co-Op just yards from where I live, at half-past-nine, in late September. He had appeared before Hastings Magistrates on October 2nd. but the case was referred to Crown Court.

Daniel O'Conner, 29, blundered into police tape at a crime scene and was then arrested himself for possession of crack cocaine and carrying a knife in a public place.

A bungling thief stole a kayak from the roof of a car in Mugsborough, but neglected to take the paddles.

Robin Clark, of Carpenter Drive, Mugsborough raided a nearby garden pond and stole three valuable fish. He was arrested when police followed a trail of water back to his home.

Natalie Leach, 27, of Eversfield Place, Mugsborough was charged with fourteen offences involving theft totalling ten thousand pounds, and 'GBH', on a seventy-year-old man.

The paper also reports that a hundred years of history went up in flames on Tuesday when sixty firefighters fought to prevent the pier from burning down. However, it was 95% destroyed. This included the ballroom that hosted famous groups like the Rolling Stones and Bob Dylan. Two teenagers have been charged with the offence but have now been bailed.

Apparently the local Council had been debating that very same evening on what to do with the pier! Someone suggested the best scenario would be, if it caught fire!

Monday 11th October

3 AM Mild night.

As it happens I have a rough night. I am woken at three by the sound of bin-lids being chucked about. When I crawl to the window I see a girl, in a long thick coat,

rummaging amid the rubbish. I recognize Eileen from the soup kitchens. She is very pretty but is systematically going through all the rubbish in the bins, and on the little wall nearby, she has carefully placed a bizarre line of objects that are of no use to anyone. They include the arm of a toy doll and the top of a yoghurt carton. She has a long line of these things laid out which she is polishing and placing in a certain order. After watching this for a few minutes I see a police car draw up. The bins are placed next to my Jag and the police may have thought she was trying to break into it.

The police ask her, 'What are you doing. Eileen?' They obviously know her. She just stands there and stares at them. I open the window, and shout down to her. 'Eileen, do you want to stay in the Jag tonight?' The police glare up at me so I say, 'It's okay if she stays in my car, in my car park, isn't it?' They retort, 'That's up to you, mate,' and drive off.

7 AM

I am rudely awoken by my intercom, buzzing away. It's only seven in the morning, but a voice on the other end tells me it needs to get to hospital. I assume it's urgent so get dressed in a hurry, and rush downstairs.

It's Misfit, so called because his shoulder is badly aligned after many operations at the 'Inquest', and his backbones protrude at an alarming angle. He thanks me as we head off in the Jag, and explains that he has a 9 a.m. appointment at the hospital. He is sleeping on the streets so obviously has no alarm clock. He didn't want to be late, but never considered that I might resent being dragged out my bed, or the fact that petrol for the Jag would cost more than the bus fare to the hospital.

My car has been re-sprayed thanks to Geordie, but the police told me if Scouse Pete had been sleeping in it the night of the fire, and had suffocated they would have charged me with manslaughter. This is no longer a problem as the council claims it will take a year to repair the million pounds worth of damage. I drop Misfit off, and leave him with a quid to get the bus back. Apparently it's just a routine check-up, but when I asked why he got me up so early he says he didn't want to walk there, as he had no money for the bus!

7 PM

At the Sally Army tonight it's unusually busy with over thirty clients. We make five gallons of soup, but only three volunteers have turned up, and I get stuck with the washing-up. Unfortunately 'Pony-tail-Pete', who usually runs things is not here because his dog has just died and he's had it for fourteen years. Unfortunately, I have taken my watch off to do the washing-up, leaving it on the window-sill, by the serving counter. I still have fond memories of it.

On the way home Long Tom, with the false leg gives me a lift in his new car. It's a little Nissan Micra, and a lot cheaper to run than my Jag. This makes a pleasant change, for normally it's me who gives everyone else a lift.

Tuesday 12th October

9 AM Sunny.

The day starts sunny, but cloud soon gathers.

I stroll round to Nanette's to give her a card. It's her sixtieth birthday, but it seems she is having trouble coming to terms with that. She has spent the night getting oiled up to the gills. She is also unhappy because her doctors have told her she now needs a liver biopsy as they suspect her liver is packing up. When she enquired how painful this would be they told her it would be no worse than having a baby!

3 PM

I bump into Katie on the seafront. She's quite pretty, but quite plump. However I don't recognize her today as she has slimmed right down and looks very fit. It turns out she was on too many tablets, and has cut them right down, except the Valium. She has been on these for thirty years and the medics now tell her she will never be able to stop taking them.

She has just had a lot of tests in the 'Plaza' medical centre, in the middle of town, as she was worried she might have 'Hep.C', like Nanette. It turns out she is clean.

Wednesday 13th October

10 AM Strong winds.

It is a brisk windy day, and very few are here for the Wednesday breakfast. Katie turns up, and informs us she has been granted a flat in Halton Flats, which happens

to be the most notorious venue in town. It is a sobering experience just to walk the corridors of this place. It's not just the graffiti, or the smell of urine, or the copious amount of litter left everywhere. It seems that every door has at one time been smashed in, and a lot of them left without locks. Even the framework to the cupboards has been ripped away, looking as if the whole place is ready to collapse. It's hard to believe anyone lives here, yet the council still plough millions into it, building balconies while most tenants don't even have carpets.

11 AM

Heavy Eddy is there as we go round to inspect the flat. He lives nearby and offers to plumb in her washing machine. Eddy seems to have some really fine qualities; it's just that crack has messed him up so badly. When Katie explains she has no carpets anywhere, Eddy offers to bring us up to his mum's.

She just had her lounge carpeted and the old stuff has been dumped in the garden. Trouble was, when we arrived, this foam-backed stuff had been left out in the rain and was useless. When we return to Halton Flats we find Katie's washing machine is not working, but Eddy, who is a mechanic, strips it down and finds a little plastic bag jammed in the outlet. He fixes the problem, saving Katie fifty quid, which is the cheapest she could have got another machine. Everyone is happy and I risk a cup of tea there, before heading home.

At the breakfast this morning the Ducati Kid asked to meet me. He was totally tanked up but begged me to meet him later on, in the 'office' on the seafront. When I arrive he explains he has just broken up with Arlette. He has been having a hard time lately. He's ended up in the 'Inquest' three times in three weeks for overnight stays. He was hoping Arlette would straighten him out, as she agreed he could stay with her for a while. Round at her flat he was watching Coronation Street, as she was having a 'joint', her only indulgence. Suddenly, she went into a rage, and threw him out at ten at night, whereupon he went to Ashleys and bought a bottle of 'Gynns' vodka. Now he is really hung-over and very depressed, for he's heard the boys on the street are taking bets that he will be the next one to follow Geordie. He decided to make his way up to the hospital hoping for a bed for the night, but is drinking as he walks up there. When he arrives he is totally 'off his face'. He tells them he's going to commit suicide if they don't admit him. He is now a familiar face

at 'A&E', but they do give him a metal trolley to sleep on. The trouble is, no sooner has he fallen asleep than the police arrive and drag him off to the 'Woodlands' mental facility next door, where there has been a few suicides recently. This is because he has threatened suicide, but he resists so violently, they 'pepper spray' him. He has now resisted arrest so instead, ends up in the cells at the "Pig-Sty". (police station)

Friday 15th October

10 AM Windy.

Down the Sally Army again, giving out food and sleeping bags. It is there that I meet up with 'Serita' again. When I was married I had a large six-bed-roomed house in Braybrooke Road here. She had been a tenant of ours for a year or so, but I thought she had died. When I took her on as a tenant I didn't realize she was a self-harmer until I noticed her arms totally covered with slash scars. Every single inch had a scar, none of which had been stitched up. Apparently the reason she looked so bad, but never got infected, was she let her dog cleanse the wounds, rather than go to hospital. Dog's have a natural antiseptic in their saliva and she realized if she turned up at the hospital the doctors would 'Section' her and she would lose her kids. They lived with her mum in Newhaven.

I recall that when Serita was a tenant of ours she once locked herself in the bathroom. After ten minutes of waiting we had to break the door down and found her on her knees in a pool of congealed blood. She had her slashed arms in the basin with the hot water running which apparently alleviates the pain. The plug was inserted in the sink, which was full of blood. Trouble was, it had all overflowed onto the tiled floor, and as we slid over it in our bare feet, she begged us not to ring the Paramedics. So we sat her on the toilet and bandaged her arms up with toilet paper striving to keep our balance on the slippery floor. It was totally surreal because blood and tiles do not mix and we were sliding all over the place sorting out her arms, before we could tackle the floor.

We used two more rolls just moping the blood from the floor, and because the blood in the plughole had congealed, I had to use a large sink-plunger to clear it.

My wife and I got to know her children when they came to visit, but they were all adopted in the long run.

I wrote a poem called 'The Saga of Serita' which was published in my poetry book, 'The Century Collection', and until now I thought she had passed away years ago. I am quite surprised to see her, but she tells me she never saw her kids again.

Saturday 16th October

8 AM Cold and sunny.

I am over the other side of town to pick up a chap called Leo, who is a friend of my son, Jay. They were good friends when Jay lived in Hastings and they got up to a few tricks together, but Jay now lives in the Isle of Wight. Unfortunately Jay now is as big a reprobate as anyone I know in the soup kitchens. I keep visiting him to see if I can sort him out because he makes me feel guilty for everything that's gone wrong in his life. If I made a mistake with Jay, it was just spoiling him completely but children have a great knack of bestowing guilt onto their parents.

I arrive at Leo's basement flat at eight in the morning. Unfortunately, he's still in bed, and we don't hit the road until an hour later. I have to put one hundred pounds worth of petrol in my big Jag, and draw another hundred for expenses, as I will have to pay for our bed and breakfasts. We stop at 'Crossbush', a lovely little Motel, halfway to the Isle of Wight, where we have lunch.

I managed to get a cheap weekend return ticket for the ferry, for only £38. We hope to stay overnight and return tomorrow evening. The 'Sat-Nav' in the Jag is invaluable, for when we hit Portsmouth there are over a dozen roundabouts leading to the ferry terminals, with different signs to different ferries.

4 PM

Leo has rung Jay and met him in a cafe. I am not welcome but I want Leo to see if he can arrange for me to meet Jay tomorrow. Leo had hoped to save me the money for his bed and breakfast by staying with Jay in his flat but tells me Jay has three 'scoats' dossing down in his flat. I want to go round there and throw them all out, but of course Leo is correct when he tells me not to interfere. When we arrived in the Island I had booked into the Crown Hotel, one of the cheapest in Ryde. It is actually a pub, with fourteen rooms, scattered over a maze of corridors. In my

opinion if a fire broke out, this place is a veritable death trap. It has been decked out to accommodate as many tiny rooms as possible, but Leo and I find a flat roof next to our room, which we can just reach in a crisis. We don't get much sleep as our room is right over the pub, and being Saturday they have a 'Disco' running downstairs.

Sunday 17th October

10 AM Sunny.

It's a beautiful morning in the Isle of Wight, and Leo has gone for breakfast with Jay. He texts me to tell me which café they are in. I have to go down and surprise Jay otherwise I'll never see him. Leo had not told Jay that I drove him over so when I walk into the café Jay is shocked and confused until the penny drops. He starts ranting and raving throwing his tea all over the tables. His language is now so bad we all get evicted from the café. I see my son is very drawn and shaky. Recently he slashed his wrists and was carted off in a straightjacket. The institution would not tell me, or his mother how he was because he didn't want us to know and they just quoted the 'Data Protection Act' at us.

He has lost a lot of weight, and as he was sitting at the table his right leg kept jerking up and down. He has confided to Leo that he does the odd 'rock' of crack. And I know he's also on loads of medication for Asperger's syndrome. As he talks to Leo out in the sunshine he notices my Jag, and Leo asks him does he want to drive to some country pub for a good drink; something that Jay always finds hard to resist.

He is sitting in the front seat with me, but suddenly starts harping on about how I've ruined his life. Suddenly he lashes out with his fist and smashes the Jaguar windscreen. Although it's just cracked I am amazed as it's toughened glass, but I calmly pull over and inquire if he has broken his hand for the hospital is just round the corner. He shrugs it off and even apologizes. When we park in Newport I examine the screen because if the crack has not gone right through it will cost me over six hundred to get it fixed, as it will be obvious the damage was caused from inside the car.

I run my finger over the outside and manage to get a glass splinter in it, adding injury to insult. At least I know I need only pay one hundred pound excess for the insurance to cover it. After this Leo and I decide we should leave the island as soon as possible, so after dropping Jay off, we head for the ferry, hoping the windscreen won't shatter as we're driving back home.

10 PM.

Get home, after a long slow drive and am struck by the sudden cacophony of sirens, and the clatter of 'ferals', banging their skateboards along the seafront promenade, welcoming us back to Mugsborough.

I never heard a single siren, or skateboard, the whole time I was in Ryde.

This week, the papers report an inquest is due on Kate McLaughlin, 18, a local girl who died from ecstasy earlier this year. Two people were arrested on suspicion to supply but released on bail.

A man, out searching for his twelve year-old son was accosted by Simon Crittenden 22, and Joe Ripley 27, both of Mugsborough. They asked him what he was looking at and kicked him to the ground, giving him a beating. They both pleaded guilty in court this week.

Roger Candish 36, and Angelo Kyprinanon 24, of Warrior Square, Mugsborough were charged with stealing twelve bottles of wine, from Iceland's. They were found drinking the wine, in Warrior Square Gardens, so had little choice but to plead guilty.

Laurence Dun 39, of Carisbrooke road, Mugsborough was jailed for thirty months for dealing drugs in Mugsborough.

Hazel Lambe 38, was shouting at the top of her voice in the town centre at 3 a.m. on Sunday morning. She claimed she was simply having a conversation with other revellers but refused to be quiet or give police her details. She was convicted when the court heard she had several similar convictions.

Gareth Wilkinson 31, was pulled over by police for speeding. He informed them he was rushing home to avoid breaking his 'curfew' order. He also happened to mention he had no licence or insurance.

When Tim Coyte 22, was refused service in the 'Prince of Wales', he threatened to burn the pub down, and then accused the landlord of making sexual advances towards his girlfriend.

Monday 18th October

8 AM Sunny, but cold.

I stroll down to the 'office' on the seafront, which is the big bus shelter on the promenade near Warrior Square. It is near the nice new toilets, opened up at the bottom of London Road. These incorporate little 'Sin-bins' up on the wall, for addicts to deposit their 'works', and they are now stuffed full of needles and syringes. (See photos).

'Mouse' is there dealing drugs. He used to work in London Underground, during the night, picking up papers and litter in the tunnels. He called himself a 'Ventilation Engineer'. When he worked in the tunnels the live rail and the ventilation fans were switched off for a few hours, and the place would get hotter and hotter until all the wildlife emerged from the tunnels. There were rats as big as cats, and cats as big as dogs. But, thankfully, no wild dogs.

Mouse said, 'All these creatures were completely wild and lived in the tunnels all their lives. The cats were ferocious and when they saw you eating your sandwiches they would gather round and snarl at you, so you had to throw them something, to stop them getting too close. But the clever ones were the pigeons. They would cluster, in a row, on top of a Tube train and let it transport them through the tunnels. On the Metropolitan Line they would fly in at Baker Street, and fly up the platform to cluster at the end, waiting for a train to Fulham Broadway, another open-air station. They would queue up on the fluorescent lights waiting to 'board' a train that would once again take them into the fresh air.

Two street-women approach; Sticks, so called because her arms and legs are so thin she they look like sticks, and her friend, Jezebel. They want to score but Mouse's prices are a bit stiff. He says, 'You know I don't deal in rubbish. This gear is class. In fact I suspect its "Class A".' He's peddling his gear from little packages wrapped in thin plastic, which is why they are called 'wraps'. The normal mode of transport for such produce is up the dealer's derriere. Mouse doesn't hang around

for he's a known face to the police but makes a few sales before moving on. I suppose now he calls himself a travelling salesman.

7 PM

On my way to the Sally Ann tonight I bump into 'Heavy Eddy'. He is very friendly to me but I realize he's back on the crack as he's constantly spitting everywhere. This is the body's defence mechanism to help clear the poison from the system. Eddy confesses the text he sent me about 'time to quit the crime' has expired and he's now back breaking into vans. He is a trained mechanic and can get into any vehicle. Every night he goes out and steals tools from builder's vans. He steals about three grand's worth a week, and then sells them onto other builders, for a third of their value. This gives him enough for a thousand pounds worth of crack every week, which he now needs to function. This is not unusual for I have heard ex-addicts witness, in church, that they could do three grand's worth of crack in a single weekend. Eddy tells me the trouble is some builders are realizing that they are now buying back their own tools. Eddy may now have to leave town because some of them are driving up and down outside his house, hoping to catch him crossing the road. As we leave the kitchen Eddy has to take to the side streets because if he goes on the main roads he fears he might get run over.

Tuesday 19th October

9 AM Sunny, but cold.

Beautiful sunny morning, but clear skies last night meant it was very cold for the 'rough sleepers'. I am worried about Leon. He hasn't been to any kitchens lately and I know he's sleeping on the beach. I speak to Lee Clark, the Councillor for this 'Ward', in an effort to arrange some emergency accommodation for him. There is an emergency set-up in place, where after three days of sub-zero temperatures the council tries to arrange an overnight stay in some bed and breakfast. The trouble is, whenever I ring up, they ask details to see if the applicant has had this service before and if he abused the privilege. Even if he's eligible, the council won't ring back until they have confirmed a vacancy. This rarely happens because the proprietors know what kind of clientele they will be housing; most likely a smelly drunk or a crack addict, so they usually claim all their vacancies are taken.

To make matters worse it appears I have developed Acid Reflux, which is so painful it can make you think you're having a heart attack. After an inspection down my throat at the 'Inquest' they discovered the outer flaps of my vocal cords have been eaten away, which is why I get hoarse quickly. The consultant enquires if I suffer from stress!

"Don't worry," he says 'we can coat them with Teflon if it gets worse.'" I promise to think about it, but not for long.

Wednesday 20th October

10 AM Very cold.

Very cold, for this morning's free breakfast, and we only have twelve people in the café today. Cockney Joe is there, 'giving it large' to anyone who will listen, but generally there is a jovial atmosphere.

3 PM

I visit Nanette. She has recovered from her sixtieth birthday depression by 'Chasing the Dragon'. Unfortunately to pay for this she gave her bank-card to a visiting friend who swore they would score for her and bring the card back, which they did. But the next day Nanette found two hundred missing from her account.

7 PM

The Ducati Kid pops in for a drink, which he really needs. His face is covered with 'claret' and he says he's just been stabbed. He was down the 'office' on his own, and started hassling some new guy who turned up. The bloke suddenly pulled out a 'shiv' and declared he was going to stab him. The Kid said, 'O.k. so I'm giving it large, but I don't give a fuck.'

The new 'scroat' politely asks him, 'Where do you want it. In the neck or the eye?' When the Kid repeated that he didn't really care, the scroat jabbed him right between the eyes, but clears off as some 'plastics' turn up. They know the Kid is really a 'wuss' when he's drunk which is most of the time, and not one to start trouble, so now they are hunting this new face on the block.

Thursday 21st October

10 AM Very cold and windy.

Before I leave my flat I notice a letter pushed under the door. It is from Nora, the tenant upstairs. Paul has been living, or should I say hibernating, in the outhouse for four weeks. Nora's letter is a nice one but she states that as much as she sympathizes my looking after the homeless man, she now states 'enough is enough' because he keeps her awake at night by chatting away to himself. Also the drain beneath her bedroom window is starting to smell like a public toilet as he gets up to urinate there during the night. She says she will have to complain to the agents.

3 PM

It looks like Paul will have to move out. He agrees to go back to London, where he has many friends and knows the ropes up there. He tells me there is always a dosshouse, or 'Spike', up in the City. He tells me he lived many years in central London, sleeping rough. His favourite habitat was the Victoria area, and he would stay in McDonalds till he got thrown out at midnight. Then he would wend his way over to Victoria Station and kip on a bench there until 3 a.m. when the Station closed. He would then make his way over to the 'Bureau de Change', where he'd throw some cardboard in the doorway and sleep until they opened in the morning. He often went for a meal in the 'Passage', which is the largest Day-Centre for homeless people in London looking after two hundred a day. It was run by 'Centrepoint', a charity that was founded in the Centrepoint building, in London. That huge, ugly building was built by Harry Hyams, and contravened all current regulations. The history of this thirty-two-storey monstrosity is so contentious it is regarded as the pinnacle of greed and the acme of avarice in the city of London. Conspiracy theories abound that the Government of the time paid ludicrous rents just to keep the building empty for many years.

The most popular theory why this should have occurred was that this building was one of the few air-conditioned skyscrapers in London, at the time. It was also situated directly over Tottenham Road tube station, and all this would have made a perfect nuclear bunker and government re-settlement centre in the event of Nuclear War.

Eventually squatters, who were security guards there, occupied the building for a few days in 1974 trying to establish a centre for the homeless on the ground floor.

Those humble beginnings spawned dozens of Centrepoin charities, up and down the country but mostly in London, helping nearly a hundred thousand, mostly young, homeless people a year. Currently H.R.H. the Duke of Cambridge is the patron of Centrepoin.

St. Martins-in-the-Fields, was, and still is, a great source of comfort and food to the homeless, but although it has a high capacity it often had to turn people away when it got full up.

Paul once went to the Dean Street hostel operated by 'Novas', and now taken over by Stonewall Housing. The lady whom he asked for a bed told him there was a vacancy but he'd better have a look inside first. He walked round and it was full of people being sick, and jacking up and smoking gear. He went back to the desk, and told the lady he'd rather sleep on the pavement. Paul ended up in Edward Alsop Court, in Westminster, which is run by the Salvation Army, and stayed there almost a year. I sort him some shrapnel, and a train ticket and he merrily heads off on his travels, with some sherry in his rucksack.

5 PM

As I leave the house I notice a commotion on the seafront. Someone has been run over by a bus, and there is a host of paramedics and police there. I see that it's Leon, the guy I was really worried about, and my friend J.J. is there, pushing the crowd back, demanding they give him air. As he kneels over Leon trying to reassure him the police are trying to pull J.J. away so the paramedics can get to work, but he starts swearing so he is cuffed up, and dragged off in a police van. Leon is taken unconscious to the 'Inquest' but when he comes to, he discharges himself, as he badly needs a drink, as you do when run over by a bus. When a patient does this, the hospital will not re-admit them even if they get worse. If they turn up later on security simply throw them out. Leon once again has to spend the night on the beach.

Friday 22nd October

10 AM Brisk cold day.

It was another cold frosty night, but now a lovely sunny morning. Down at the 'office' I learn that Leon died during the night. He was fifty. And he could have died

of anything from drink to drugs or even exposure, but there is talk on the street that he may have been 'jacked'. This happens when someone is sleeping rough, on a bench for example, and somebody comes up and sticks a hypodermic into their neck, just injecting air, which travels to the heart and stops it, within a minute. Most of the time the rough sleepers are pulled off the benches, to fall on the concrete. Because their arms are inside their sleeping bag they have no defence and are usually given a good kicking. This happens a lot when the teenagers leave the nightclubs at the weekend. Afterwards the sleeping bags are useless because they are usually 'peed' on, as the occupant receives his early morning alarm.

3 PM

Going over to chat to the boys at the 'office' when one of the PCSOs comes up and gives them all 'Dispersal Orders'. When these are given out it means that no more than one person can stay in that spot for twenty-four hours. If you return you get an ASBO. No more than one person effectively means everyone has to sit on their own now, so they all head off to the 'Blind Park'. The boys must go somewhere to drink because if they don't they will start fitting and even die: not that the authorities care. Au contraire. This park is just around the corner and was Decimus Burton's original habitat where he built a magnificent house. It is called the 'Blind Park' because all the plants and shrubs have braille inscriptions, so the visually impaired can realize which plants they smell, or touch. As the son of James Burton, his pyramid tomb resides on the hill-top there.

12 Noon

I stop off in 'Bridgebuilders', a referral centre, for a bowl of cheap soup. I am mates with John who owns a number of houses round town and comes here to give free financial advice, so they tolerate me. As I sit outside in the sun I notice Smiley who is a client there. As I sit down she pulls her collar up, and as I continue eating she proceeds to slink down inside her coat until only the top of her head is visible. Now she starts jerking her knees up and down and all this makes me realize I'm not so hard done by, myself. Most people here have to be referred by their doctor and they have even formed a music group, which performs at venues like 'St. Marys-in-the-Castle'. They call themselves the 'Referrals'.

I have agreed to meet the people who run 'Bridgebuilders' for a discussion on my own mental welfare. Over time they have gotten to know me and now say it is obvious I am getting very stressed working with the homeless and they are concerned I might be getting too close to the problem.

I make an appointment for a review with them, next Monday. I do suffer from GORD (gastro-esophagus-reflux-disorder) now, and had to rush to the doctors recently as I was vomiting up what I thought was black bile. As she gave me an injection, and made me lie down she exclaimed how remarkable it was that I was able to drive to the surgery. She explained all the bile was actually blood from my stomach and was black because it was not oxygenated. I also suffer with painful sticky eyes, which wake me up in the middle of the night, every night. Sometimes I can't even open them as my eyelids stick to the cornea, and scratch it when I force them open to put drops in. So I only get a few hours sleep before my painful eyes or my stomach acid wakens me up. When this happens in the middle of the night, I tend to shout out, 'Oh, GORD!'

Saturday 23rd October

10 AM Cold sunny day.

I open the door to Heavy Eddy. He wants to come in, as he's just been stabbed in the leg. This is the second person that has turned up on my doorstep with a stab-wound in a matter of days. Last Wednesday it was the Ducati Kid; today it's Heavy Eddy.

Apparently one of the builders tracked him down, for when he went to the door this guy lunged at him with a knife. He tried to kick it away but got stabbed in the leg in the attempt. He managed to slam the door but can't risk the hospital for there might be someone waiting for him. He comes in and shows me what is obviously a stab wound. I fix him up as best I can and give him a cup of strong coffee. Like most 'Crackheads' he doesn't touch booze. Of course there is always the exception, like Pinhead-Ned, who will devour anything on offer.

Eddy has to report every day to the Probation Service in Shepard Street just round the corner. He has had to do this for about a year, but when he was first caught for

nicking tools it was in the local paper and all the gory details were made public, so everyone knows what's going on in his life and he makes no attempt to hide it.

1 PM

I go with Heavy Eddy up to visit the crew, in '57'.

The Kids stereo is on number 'eleven' and the joint is 'rocking'. The boys are having arm-wrestling competitions, and as Eddy is sitting next to me I agree to take him on. We do it properly, with our left hands in our back pockets, with us both kneeling on the floor. After a minutes stalemate I sense Eddy start to weaken, just as I'm about to give in. Realizing I might actually beat them, I draw a deep breath, and go for it. He slowly collapses, and the boys are taken aback.

J.J. says, 'Well. Shit in a bag and punch it.' The others offer similar sweet obscenities, but Heavy Eddy actually congratulates me, and shakes my hand.

Everyone is oiled up and lovely little Kelly has taken a 'Cocaine Cocktail'. It's her first try at one, and it hits her hard. She is really only a 'Pinhead', and normally just sticks to 'skank' (heroin). She freaks out and collapses on the floor frothing away. The crew is very laid back about this for they've seen it all before. Big Jimbo concludes, 'some people just can't handle their poisons,' while the Kid states, 'Reality is for those who can't handle their drugs.' I suggest we call the paramedics immediately but we know they won't turn up without a police escort and with the state of things we'd all get nicked. Ned says, 'If she dies, she dies!' But the Kid wants to know what we'll do with the body. Rudolf asks if I have the Jag outside, and says, 'When it gets dark we'll stick her in the trunk; she's only small, and Rad (me) can dump her in Ashdown Forest.'

I'm taking all this in, and am not amused. Just then Kelly jerks back into life and runs to the toilet to throw up. I realize she will be okay so another crisis is averted.

8 PM

At Hope kitchen, Bridget is chatting to Stretch.

'I like your new handbag, Bridget. Looks like a little dog.'

'Indeed it is, her name is Moogos. She's from the planet, Nexus, the same one as Spiderman. All the animals come from there.'

Stretch reaches down to stroke Moogos, but knocks her on the floor.

'Now you've killed her,' says Bridget. 'Just like a woman.'

'But I'm a man, Bridget,' protests Stretch.

Bridget responds, 'Indeed, but most men are women. They start off as men, but when they get envious of women they get thrust into a woman's body.'

'Right,' replies Stretch, 'then they end up down an alley, keeping score.'

'Absolutely. Now they can sell their bodies, which they couldn't do when they were men,' says Bridget.

'I'm confused dot com.,' concludes Stretch.

We had not seen the 'professor' for ages, and learn tonight that he has passed on, and his funeral is next week. I knew the stress of the police investigation was keeping him away from the kitchens, and it now looks like he couldn't handle the strain, any more.

Sunday 24th October

9 AM Sunny.

I meet Lurch who is 'ham and egging' on the seafront. He asks for a bit of 'shrapnel', which normally I never refuse but now decline for I know he mugged Geordie who has since died.

In the papers this week the Conquest hospital has been severely criticized (again) after discharging a newborn baby boy. The parents of Louis Boylan claimed he was clearly unwell when discharged as his temperature was fluctuating wildly. When the midwife visited him at home she rushed him back to the hospital but he died shortly afterwards. He was only five days old.

Police Sergeant Peter Yeats has been charged this week with fraud in his attempt to procure three and a-half-thousand pounds in cash which he himself had earlier handed in to the local police station there.

Solomon Oghene 24, of no fixed abode has been given four years in jail for possession and intent to supply heroin and cocaine.

In other news East Sussex County Council has revealed plans to switch off all the streetlights in Mugsborough, between midnight and seven in the morning in a bid to cut costs. Councillor Matthew Lock claimed that elderly people would now be prisoners in their own homes.

In nearby King's Road, a man who walked in and grabbed the money as the girls were cashing up for the day, stole five hundred pounds from Jempson's Café. He then ran off towards Warrior Square station.

Ricky Johnson 23, of Mugsborough, was fined £140 in total for breaking a police cordon around the pier, the night it caught fire. When told to go the other way around the tape, he abused police and started ripping up the tape in front of them. Also at the pier Mark Genner 22, also of Mugsborough was arrested after swinging his heavy dog-chain at security staff guarding the site. He was arrested for possession of an offensive weapon and also for 'affray', because he was also observed gesturing at the security people aggressively.

Monday 25th October

9 AM Mild cloudy day.

My review at 'Bridgebuilders' takes place. The manager, Bob, calls me to the interview room. He asks me what my boundaries are with the street people. He enquires if I'm getting too close to them. When I tell him I sometimes let them stay in my car, he can't believe it. 'You'll be taking them home with you next,' he states. I don't respond to that one. He says:

'I like you a lot, Rad, but we'd never go for a beer together. We have to keep things on a professional level. How do you get on now at Hope Kitchen?'

I tell him they've taken me off the 'clothes room' because I was giving too much stuff away, and getting involved with the clients by giving them lifts home.

'So, what does that tell you? Have you had relations with any of the girls?'

I confess that Tracy, whom I employed in my shop, has been staying the odd night, and he is shocked. I mention about guys turning up on my doorstep, with stab wounds, and he suddenly declares: 'You must have boundaries. You are going to burn out, if you're not careful.' He tells me he has just been on a course in London for setting boundaries and defining limits with clientele. He says he can get me on this course, and suggests I take advantage of the offer. I decline, gracefully.

8 PM

Hope Kitchen. Stretch comes in with Bridget the Midget. His beard is longer now but his teeth fewer, as he lost some more during the week. Tonight he will attempt an egg and cress sandwich.

Bridget says: 'I hope they're not free-range eggs Stretch,' to which he replies, 'I thought free-range were better than the battery ones, Bridget.'

'Absolutely not. They are full of Salmonella. They used to think the poor battery hens were responsible but they have since discovered it's all those free-range rascals running wild in the dirt, with no control.'

Stretch ponders for a moment before he takes the sandwiches off me. 'I'll still have 'em,' he says, 'because Jesus is me brother, and the Sun me father, and the Moon is me mother.'

Briget is stumped by this devastating logic, but replies, 'Well. Sunlight will kill Salmonella, Stretch.'

'But it's dark now, Bridget.'

'Don't worry,' she counters, 'so does Moonlight, and it's a full moon tonight'

I don't bother checking that one, because with these two, it's a full moon all the time.

Tuesday 26th October

10 AM Sunny cold morning.

I head down the 'office'. All the boys are there, and they are really pissed off with the Ducati Kid. Because he 'grassed' to 'Old Bill' about the knife incident everyone has been searched and, of course, had their drugs confiscated so new ASBOs have been littering the seafront.

I have decided that Mugsborough is not the right place for my photographic studio, although I have spent many thousands fitting it out. My main clients have been politicians and the Mayoress, but Tracy, who is still looking after the business and booking appointments, will be upset.

5 PM

When I suddenly turn up at the shop I know Tracy has been smoking Crack as it leaves a very distinctive odour behind. I am angry but have to forgive her as she's

having a hard time lately. The 'Yardies' have ripped her off yet again. I lock the shop up and sit behind the counter as she finishes her 'Pipe'. She suddenly says: 'You don't know what you're missing. Why don't you try this? It will cheer you up.'

I am rather curious, as I deal with crack addicts all the time, and often wonder what the attraction is that would compel someone to throw their life away. I am so stressed out after the 'Kelly' incident that I agree to have a snort, on a one-time basis, so I can know what I'm up against in the kitchens. She breaks up a rock of crack and puts it in the small bowl of a tiny crack pipe. When I take the pipe in my mouth she holds her lighter over the rocks, which crack, as they ignite. Now I know why it's called 'Crack'. I inhale but at first don't get any hit at all. She says, 'You're not doing it properly because you don't even smoke tobacco.' At the second attempt I take a good lung-full, only to find my head swimming leaving me a little nauseous. I am actually relieved because this means I will never become a crack addict. I realize this is like heroin, where you have to indulge a number of times until your body gets used to it.

Wednesday 27th October

10 AM Fine morning.

His Place Café.

The Wednesday breakfast is very busy. We have to lay two new tables out for 'late-comers'. I see J.J. there and he is upset with me, because he heard I was 'Slinging Crack', with Tracy. I assure him it was a one-off, and he warns me not to try it again, adding, 'If you lie down with dogs you get up with fleas.' J.J. has a way with words. He is there with the rest of the crew. The Ducati Kid has interrupted the 'preach'. He asks Pastor Chris why God allows so much suffering. I tell him to shut up, and shout out that he shouldn't worry about it because he doesn't even believe in God. He starts 'giving it large', in front of the whole café, until Spike, a newcomer asks him, 'Do you know who I am?' The Kid just nods, and Spike tells him to 'Shut it', which he does.

After the breakfast he tells me he is disappointed that I 'came out against him', in front of the 'crew'. I explain that we can only give free breakfasts if we call them charity breakfasts, which means listening to five minutes of Gospel. I emphasize the

word 'listening'. Besides, I tell him: 'You've often told me you believe in nothing.' He then queries, 'Why do you bother going to church, for you're no angel?'

I totally agree with this judgment, admitting I can still be a bit of a rogue, but ask him what he thinks I'd be like if I didn't make peace with the 'Guvnor' upstairs on a regular basis. I explain that God didn't send his Son on earth for the good guys who don't need him, but for sinners, like him and me.

'I see your point, but why do you hang around with Heavy Eddy? Is it for the excitement? He's a dangerous bastard.' I can't argue with that one, but ask him how he knows Spike.

He tells that Spike is a 'Lime and Shovel' man, who used to run with the Krays and the Richardsons, in the East End of London. He has to explain that when people cross Spike he digs out his shovel and a bag of lime, and his foes just seem to disappear.

The Old-Town Fishermen had a similar method called the 'Newhaven Run' where troublesome characters would be taken out 'fishing' to Newhaven, where the tides ensured their bodies were never washed ashore. Everybody has heard of this so I suppose there's no smoke without fire.

But now I sense the Kid's current state is giving him the opportunity for some spiritual reflection.

Thursday 28th October

Bright sunny day.

8 PM. Hope Kitchen

Everyone is upset with Ned. He sold his little dog today to Heavy Eddy, for just a couple of rocks of crack. I see Ned is now heartbroken, and regrets it, so I try to buy the dog back, but of course Eddy has since sold it on for fifty quid, making a nice little earner. There is nothing Heavy Eddy won't do for money.

This morning, round at '57', the Ducati Kid was rattling and needed a quick drink. He gave his bankcard to Rudolf whom he trusted, so he went with Eddy to draw out some money. At the cashpoint Eddy waits until Chris has drawn a 'tenner' for a few tins and then grabs the card. When Rudolf objects, he threatens him and tells him to stay 'stumph' for he will sort it all out, back at '57'.

Eddy draws out two hundred in cash, and when they get back the Kid is given a few beers and a receipt for the ten-pound withdrawal. It is not until afterwards he discovers all his 'wages' have been withdrawn, Eddy excuses this act of treachery by saying the Kid would just have pissed it up against a wall, anyway.

Friday 29th October

11 AM Sunny.

Up at the crematorium a lot of volunteers and clients, from the kitchens, are present for the Professor's funeral. He is buried after a service in the Crematorium, conducted by Pastor Chris, in a plot of land way back in the huge graveyard, under some trees. A trio of his old colleagues have turned up with instruments and sing Amazing Grace, as his 'wicker' coffin is lowered into the ground. Just as they finish, a blackbird bursts into song, on the tree next the grave.

It seemed to be waiting for silence, and everyone is moved, especially when Bridget shouts out, 'That's Dickie, up there, saying goodbye.'

There wasn't a dry eye in the place.

1 PM

After the funeral this morning I stroll along to the 'office'. The crew is assembled in full drinking regalia, and Scouse Pete is there but someone nicked his hat while he was sleeping on a bench. I have never seen him anywhere even when asleep in my Jag, without a hat. I am quite surprised because I hardly recognize him, but I do notice Heavy Eddy strolling towards us.

Today Eddy has the 'hots' for Pete. Apparently someone has been ringing his doorbell in the middle of the night and he reckons it's Pete. He now corners him, and asks for a 'quiet word' over by the railings. He tells Pete he's going to deck him if he doesn't apologize for ringing his bell in the middle of the night. Pete is adamant it wasn't him but Eddy swears he saw him running up the road afterwards, and is going to hit him if he doesn't apologize. Pete decides that 'discretion is the better part of valour' and apologizes, as Eddy is actually twice his size. Eddy also makes him promise he'll never do it again, so Pete says, 'I'm really sorry. I never did it, and I promise not to do it again.' The anomaly of this statement is lost on Eddy, who feels he has won the day.

Saturday 30th October

7-30 PM Brisk cold day.

Hope kitchen is running. As it's Halloween the kids are out 'tricking and treating' and Bridget has arrived decked out as a witch. Unusually for her she is a bit 'steamed up' and tells us:

'I needed a drink tonight. My ears are killing me.' She is sporting an enormous pair of sunglasses. Stretch tells her, 'It's probably those new glasses, Bridget.'

'No,' she replies 'I bought two bottles of cheap wine for a fiver, but they were so sour I put some saccharin tablets in them.'

'So what's wrong with your ears?' asks Stretch.

'Got spots behind them, and also on my wrists. Went to the doc and he explained it all.'

'Dr. Cooper?' queries Stretch.

'Are you mad. He's killed more patients than Harold Shipman. He once gave me pills for amnesia and I lost half my body weight down the toilet.'

'Absolutely,' says Stretch, 'so what's the prognosis?'

'I dunno, but he did tell me what's wrong. He says the spots are natural, like what hyenas get when they eat water-voles.'

'You mean buffalos,' responds Stretch.

'No, stupid, buffalos don't have any spots. Don't you know nothing?'

'Indeed,' says Stretch, 'but what time is it?'

Bridget looks at her wrist 'It's just turned septic,' she says.

Sunday 31st October

3 AM Cold.

Ed, who rents the 'Love Café' just below my flat, has organized a Halloween Party for the kids. It finishes early, but afterwards the market traders all pile in for their own party. They have a few dogs but when everybody gets tanked up and starts singing to music, the bloody dogs join in as well. I am lying in bed at three in the morning listening to Frank Sinatra being accompanied by a load of drunks and a bunch of howling dogs.

9 AM

Too tired to make church this morning.

According to the papers, a number of interesting incidents occurred in Mugsborough last week. An alcoholic died after a morphine overdose, exactly seven days after watching his best friend die in the same way. Carlos Bradshaw 50, of Willington Way, Mugsborough, was found dead in his bedroom, by his girlfriend. She said he was depressed after their friend, Mark Mason, died seven days previously.

He lived on the first floor of 10, Charles Road, and was a tenant of my friend, Richard Brabazon, who tells me he was a Mason by trade, as well as a Mason by name. Police launched a murder investigation. However, a post-mortem showed that he died from a combination of morphine and alcohol. Mr. Mason was five times over the drink-drive limit when he died, with what the coroner called a 'colossal' amount of alcohol in his system. He had also taken ten morphine tablets (oxycodone) belonging to his friend, Mr. Bradshaw, who used them as painkillers for a back problem. I know these tablets, because I have the same ones for my own back problem. When a back spasm hits you, these are the only things that work.

According to recent statistics Hastings tops the chart for lung cancer deaths in the whole of the U.K. They currently run at 47 per hundred thousand, as opposed to the National average of 19.4 per hundred thousand.

A teenager was arrested this week for setting fire to seven cars.

Also, in news this week, Liam Nolan 29, of Silchester Road, Mugsborough, was given four-and-a-half years for burglary.

Thieves stole a mountain bike, worth a thousand pounds off a car in broad daylight as it was parked in the centre of town.

A sixteen-year-old was fined six hundred pounds for a string of local burglaries.

Someone walked into the 'Antiques Warehouse' at 11 a.m. during the week and stuck a valuable statue up their coat before calmly walking out with it.

A teenager and two women were arrested for money laundering, and possession of cocaine, when police found a large amount of cash and 'Class A' drugs in a raid in Pinders Road last Thursday. The teenager was a fifteen-year-old schoolgirl.

A mugger punched a woman in the face, stealing her handbag in a nasty late-night attack as she was getting out of her car in Charles Road, Mugsborough.

When police went to arrest a twenty-four year old Security guard for theft, they found 'Skunk' worth twenty-two thousand pounds in his premises at Towerscroft Road, Mugsborough, and hundreds of pounds worth of cocaine.

To finish, my friend Roger Nuttall, who works at 'Seaview', co-ordinating a service for the homeless, is appealing for hats, scarves, gloves and belts as the winter approaches. Research shows that two thirds of the homeless here suffer from serious health problems, including frostbite, trench-foot, bronchitis and pneumonia, as well as a host of self-inflicted injuries, like gangrene which comes from drug injections.

Comedy spot this week goes to Anna Towner, 33, of Clarence Road, Mugsborough, who was arrested in the Conquest Hospital, for punching, kicking and scratching police. They were called there because of her abuse to the public, and, all the time, she was in a wheelchair.

CHAPTER THREE

NOVEMBER

Monday 1st November

1 PM Mild day.

I go downstairs to the Love Café, to complain about the noise last night. The proprietor, Ed Lovell, is an old acquaintance, with whom I used to be friendly. Since he started a consortium of market traders to invest in these premises, things have sadly taken a turn for the worse.

Recently I have been looking after Shaun, an Irish friend of mine who is a qualified joiner. I asked him what the difference between a joiner and a carpenter was and he said, 'about fifty pound a day.' Shaun has been working downstairs, helping to renovate the place, which was a dreadful mess. But now, when I try to resolve the noise issue with Ed I get a frosty reception.

He keeps me waiting while he potters about, serving customers. I tell him I have some issues about the noise of the markets, which operate just beneath my window, and the constant background music, not to mention the dogs' chorus which vibrates through his ceiling into my bedroom, keeping me awake.

I also mention the powerful halogen security lights fixed just below my bedroom window, which come on erratically during the night, flooding my bedroom with light and waking me up at all hours.

As a 'black-cab' driver in London, Ed has more 'front' than the Houses of Parliament. He hates his London job, and hopes to move into the café business.

He says, 'You've got issues, have you? Well, I know things about you, that you don't know I know!'

I reply, 'Yeah, but you don't know, that I know you know things, you think I don't know you know, but I do know!'

I can't believe I actually said that, but before our tete-a-tete degenerates into music-hall farce I decide to cut my losses and make a graceful exit. On my way out, Ed simply says, 'You go to your landlord, and I'll do the same, and we'll see who comes out on top.'

Before I complain to the landlords, who are a Jewish consortium called Clockwork Estates Ltd., with a number of companies based in London.

On their answerphone at Stamford Hill, London, one company listed is Trimarsh Estates Ltd., and they all seem to be under the umbrella of 'Rushmore Street Management Company', whose trading address is 159, Clapton Common. Companies House states their current status is non-trading and the company secretary is listed as having no function, and there doesn't appear to be any registered directors, and there are no overseas or UK Establishments listed, and the Management Company filed no returns for year 31/3/2011.

However, I decide to see what my rights are under the local environmental statutes. I knew the Hasidic Jews, Chaim and Jacob, oversaw the whole block of Saxon Chambers, in London Road, including the café and the shops, so thought the actual landlords would be the same for both Ed and myself. As it happened, before I went to Court they denied they were my landlords, and had nothing to do with my eviction. They kept insisting it was a 'Landlord' decision, of which they were unaware. I never did find out the name my true landlord. In the meantime, I register a formal complaint, with the Environmental Health Department, and arranged for Stuart Bryant, a council officer, to visit me.

7PM

At the Sally Army tonight I lend my phone to Kim to make an urgent call. She has broken up with her lesbian partner, Amber, and has nowhere to stay tonight. I stand by as she rings different people trying to arrange a bed for the night. She is offering them a fiver if they can put her up for the night. She has no luck and tells me later she slept under some sheets of cardboard by the side of Debenhams. It turns out she has to be there for some months.

Tuesday 2nd November

8 AM Beautiful sunny morning.

It is a sunny morning, I stroll down the 'office' and meet Pinhead-Ned. He is squinting through half-closed eyes. He says his photosensitivity has gotten worse. His eyes are watering profusely and I remember I have a spare set of sunglasses indoors. We trek round to my flat and I find them; they are totally polarized, and

were not cheap. As it happens they fit him, but one of the arms needs adjusting. We wander across the road to the opticians just opposite, stepping over Ray Arnold, who has collapsed in the doorway, and Ned is seen to at once. They step in the back, do some adjustments and now the glasses fit like a glove. They don't even charge us, and Pinhead-Ned is over the moon, but I have to make him swear not to sell them, which he does anyway.

Wednesday 3rd November

10 AM Cold, cloudy day.

At the breakfast this morning an ex-client 'Fingers', who's been banned for threatening to slit the Pastor's throat, tries to come in. We stop him but he hovers around outside waiting for his pal, Mouse, to finish eating. Heavy Eddy has left his bike outside leaning against the lamp-post. As I serve the breakfasts I am keeping a close eye on Fingers as he keeps walking up and down past Eddy's bike. Sure enough he bends down to check if it's locked up, and I give Eddy, 'the nod.' He jumps up and runs outside, chasing Fingers down the road. Eddy comes back shortly, but we never see Fingers again.

After the breakfast, there is food over, so I have a couple of eggs. Pete, our very own 'Captain Mannering', jests, 'Are you eating all the profits? I'll have to cut your wages.'

2 PM

I get a call, from Mr. Bryant, of Environmental Health, who has been on holiday, but arranges an appointment to visit next week.

Meet Jimmy, down the 'office'. He is staying with a couple of pinheads up in 'Beirut', which is local slang for Malvern Way, the most notorious spot in the town. My son Jay was given a bungalow there some years ago, and got so frustrated with the 'atrocious behaviour of his neighbours' (Sic) he demanded a transfer. When this was refused he smashed over a dozen double-glazed windows in the property. When he was released after his subsequent detention, he was re-housed in Merrick House, which is a 'half-way' house, and even worse than Malvern Way. It used to be the local 'Nick'.

Jimmy is a really nice guy, to me anyway; but he's upset someone, for he has to report to probation every day like Heavy Eddy, and is under a 'DRR' sentence. This is a 'drug rehabilitation requirement', which stipulates he must not miss any appointments regarding group counselling, which he hates, or daily probation attendance. If he breaks any of the rules he is taken straight back to court. He will get only one warning in the twelve-month period. The court can then only sentence you to prison; they cannot give you another warning, or a fine. Jimmy is so cheesed off with baring his soul in the therapy sessions that he has declared he'd rather go to prison, so I take my leave of him not knowing when we'll next meet.

Thursday 4th November

9 AM Cloudy all day.

Meet Scouse Pete, down the 'office'. He's been sleeping rough since he left the comfort of my Jag. He now tells me, as I bring him for breakfast, that he's coughing and spitting blood, and offers some graphic details of his bowel movements etc. He's bleeding all ends, but thinks it's to do with having no spleen. He was stabbed some years ago outside 'Seaview', and had to have his spleen removed. I have to tell him that blood in the 'motions' is a classic sign of cancer. He reckons that may be so, but hesitates going to hospital as they might keep him in, and not many street people walk away from the 'Inquest'. He has not got a doctor.

Already some Christmas lights, and decorations are appearing around the shops. This now coincides with Halloween at the weekend!

Friday 5th November

11 AM Dull day.

Meet Dave Helm, at Sally Army this morning. He has just been away on a months 'holiday'; a euphemism for prison. Apparently he tried to push a copper under a bus. They take a dim view of such things.

2 PM

Meet Heavy Eddy as I'm walking in Warrior Square. He points out a bicycle rack, which has an end section broken off. 'I did that,' he tells me, 'yanked it out of the

ground.' He just nicked a mountain bike for his son. 'Got to get ready for Christmas early, 'cos I got no money.'

The café downstairs is having a 'do' for the kids. There is an hour or so of children singing outside my window, which is quite nice. Trouble is, after the party the traders go inside for one of their regular weekend soirees. Thankfully, it wraps up about eleven as they head off to the pub for a last drink. I am hopeful of a peaceful night. But in the early hours I am woken up by noises under my bedroom. I know Ed and Co. have gone early, and listen to this rummaging around for half an-hour. It's gone one-o'clock and nobody has ever been down there before at this time. I ring the police saying there may be burglars in the café. As I watch out the window I see them arrive and burst in and shortly afterwards see Ed leave the premises with some woman on his arm. They must have come back when the pubs closed, after 'chucking-out' time.

Saturday 6th November

10 AM Bright sunny day.

Meet Dave Helm, down at the 'office'. He's quite well educated and interesting to talk to, if you catch him sober. He has dived out while on holiday and is drooling over my lovely Jaguar, which he hasn't seen before. I explain it's ten years old, but has only thirty-five thousand miles on the clock. 'It's not even run in yet,' he crows, 'and it's the supercharged version.'

I have to visit my ex-wife this morning and ask if he'd care to tag along for the ride. He jumps at the chance, and we set off in the morning sunshine with the sun-roof open.

I know Dave likes a bit of excitement in his life, so I let loose the four hundred horses under the bonnet. The beast leaps along and screams round the corners. It is a clear quiet road with lots of lovely 'S' bends. I slow as we hit the traffic, and Dave casually rests his foot on the dashboard. I assume he's got cramp, or something, as he rolls up his trouser leg. His leg is covered with scabs, and he proceeds to pick and squeeze them as we drive along. I am not amused, and demand that he stops immediately. He looks at me, puzzled, saying, 'What's the problem?'

I explain, 'My ex-wife might have to sit there if I have to take her shopping, and I don't want her catching anything contagious.'

He puts his foot down and tells me that this is possible, as he may have picked something up in prison. When we arrive we are given a pleasant welcome but kept in the garden, as my 'ex-wife' serves us tea and biscuits. I have come over to discuss Jay, our son, and keep her up to date with his progress, or rather, the lack of it.

Sunday 7th November

10 AM Sunny but cold.

I visit the 'crew' at the 'Ark of Hope' church, and the lovely Nigerian ladies, who help run the place serve us a lovely curry, after the service. After hearing that I took Dave out, in the Jag yesterday, the '57 Crew' hassle me to take them for a run.

2 PM

I have grabbed forty winks after church, as I'm not getting much sleep at weekends with the café below. I meet the crew outside, at J.J.s corner, and they all pile in for a run to Eastbourne. J.J insists on sitting up front and turns the stereo right up. We are all chanting along with some old Rock-n-Roll and the boys are banging away on the seats in unison to the music. J.J. is drumming his hands so hard on the dashboard that I expect the passenger-air-bag to explode. The boys know all the old 'Buddy Holly' songs, and we have a great time, passing everything in sight, and whistling round the corners with the traction-control switched off. I slow for the villages, and suddenly a sports car shoots past. 'Here Rad, he just passed you' cries the Kid, as if such an event was simply unthinkable.

'Yes,' I reply, 'the nerve of the bastard.'

J.J. has brought along his 'Tam-o-Shanter' cap complete with bright ginger wig. As we cruise past the little country villages he stands up through the sun-roof, and shouts out to strangers: 'Do you ken Jimmy McCullough?' Some are naive enough to listen.

He repeats, 'Jimmy McCullough, do ye ken where he lives?'

'Awfully sorry, old boy, no idea whatsoever!'

These responses ferment gales of laughter from the crew and my sides get so sore from laughing I have to stop and put the stereo back on, but a good time is had by all.

Now I don't wonder why J.J. has spent more time in prison than out of it, and I hear he's visited all the ones in England, at least.

A 58 year old man from Mugsborough has been arrested on suspicion of murder after a man was found badly injured after plunging from a third floor window in Kings Road, up the road from His Place Café. The 29 year old is in a critical condition fighting for his life, in a specialist unit.

Local people are worried that they may have breathed in deadly asbestos fumes if they were in the crowd who watched the pier burn down recently. Hundreds may have inhaled the toxic fumes.

Joanne Latter 25, of no fixed abode (one of our clients) was jailed for stealing three thousand pounds worth of clothes, from Marks and Spencer, by hiding them in a pushchair. She made three visits to the store before she was caught.

Jim Gallety 19, of Squirrel Close, Mugsborough, has been charged with stealing three hundred pounds from a local taxi-driver.

Sergeant Peter Yeats 32, of Celandine Drive, Mugsborough, has now admitted trying to swindle three and a half thousand pounds cash that he himself handed into the police station a few weeks ago.

On October 27th. after a teenager was arrested for torching seven cars, another eleven vehicles have been set alight this week, in Mugsborough.

A row between neighbours, over loud music, resulted in a man being severely beaten in the town centre. Chris Annakie 38, has been arrested for the offence.

A large Victorian house, which was left empty for four years, has been destroyed by drug addicts and squatters. Officers from the Housing Authority visited this week and found rooms littered with syringes and needles. The premises had been stripped of lead and all the rooms were plastered with graffiti. Fed-up neighbours had complained about the house in Braybrooke Terrace.

Ivor Taylor 44, was jailed for a year for sexually assaulting an eighty-six year old woman on the Hastings to Brighton train, on April 27th.

The church of St. Peters, which was the centre of the sham-marriage trial involving three hundred and sixty couples, and is now rented by the 'Sonrise' church, of which I was once a member, was raided on Monday night. Two Plasma Screens and sound equipment worth five thousand pounds was stolen.

Finally, comedy corner: police would like to hear from anyone being offered large bags of loose change, after a householder lost two hundred and fifty pounds worth during a burglary.

Monday 8th November

9 AM Sunny.

At last I get a visit from Environmental Health. Mr Bryant is very courteous and listens as I relate my assorted problems with the café downstairs. These have been worse recently with the smell of bacon drifting into my flat and, as a "Veggie", this is not something I appreciate. He decides, as I have already made approaches to the manager, he will go down and have a personal word with him and ring me later about the outcome. What I didn't realize at the time was the café have the same landlord as me. I thought the commercial side of Clockwork Estates was separate from the residential lettings as different estate firms dealt with us all individually. Stuart Bryant didn't get much out of Ed, except perhaps a coffee and croissant, and a week or so later, I woke up one morning, to a Section '21' notice.

So much for the 'Environmental Health Service'. The landlords, and Ed Lovell, knew what side their bread was buttered on. The landlords were getting much more revenue from the café than from my flat, so the easy solution was to issue me an Accelerated Repossession Order. This requires no reason to be given to the tenant, or the court and usually takes effect in fourteen days. As irony would have it, my agency gave me an excellent reference.

7 PM

Sally Army. Full house tonight, as we have about three-dozen in, off the streets. Bridget the Midget is there with Stretch. She asks him, 'How's your new cat, Stretch?'

'Well, I got him well trained now.

'Does he still feed from the baby bottle?' asks Bridget

'Absolutely, and he runs round with his little dummy in his mouth.'

'But,' says Bridget, 'has he still got fleas?'

'No, I got 'em all now. I just counted seventeen on my right leg, and fifteen on my left.'

Bridget responds, 'It's the horsehair mattress that it sleeps on. I'd burn it, if I were you.'

'No, I don't want to do that,' he answers, 'it's good company.'

Tuesday 9th November

11 AM Sunny.

Gay Ray has a houseguest. Some old scroat he 'pulled', when he was in London. They've known each other a number of years, and he comes down for the occasional 'dirty weekend'. The old boy works for the 'Diplomatic Service' in London and is entitled to carry a personal firearm, even when off-duty. Ray, being his usual flamboyant self has invited the crew over to have a drink with 'Draino', as he calls his friend because he finds his presence so draining. Before the drinking session Ray brings Draino down to my studio where I do a large black and white portrait of him as a memento from Ray. His friend is very intense and taciturn and hard work to photograph. Ray told the crew that Draino is into 'Fisting', the very concept of which he finds revolting.

During the drinking bout Jimbo falls asleep and Draino goes over to sit beside him. Big Jimbo wakes up to find Draino's hand on his knee and takes umbrage, as you do in such situations. Not being a man of many words he simply smashes the bottle he's clutching on Draino's other hand, which happens to be resting on Ray's 'Art-Deco' glass table. The others wake up in time to see Draino pull out his 9mm 'Glock' pistol. Everything now runs in slow motion: Gay Ray starts squealing as J.J. comes to life and 'nuts' Draino; The Ducati Kid kicks the gun from Draino's hand; it lands on the floor; Jimbo kicks it under the sofa; the boys make a headlong dash for Ray's armoured door; Draino gets up and scrambles round looking for his artillery but the 'crew' manage to make good their escape.

Someone even managed to grab a bottle of wine, as they scrambled out the hallway and over the road, to the relative peace and quiet of number '57'.

Wednesday 10th November

9 AM Dull cold day.

At the weekly breakfast Nanette is eating two breakfasts. She is clucking badly for a score. She has been 'Chasing the Dragon' all week and has run out of money so has no food in the house. She tells me she had a very bad day yesterday. She tells me she got high yesterday but panicked as it was the last of her smack, so she decided to rob some punter at the cash machine when they drew money out. So she waits by the cashpoint until this bloke comes along and draws out a load of cash. She has a very large kitchen knife up her coat and when he turns round she pulls it out and says, unbelievably, 'Your money, or your life.' The bloke stares at this bleary-eyed demented woman, and simply says; 'Fuck off, love, before I shove that up your ass.' Then he walks off without looking back, leaving her in the middle of the street clutching this giant carving knife. Not to be thwarted Nanette staggers over to the Spar grocers where she nicks a couple of bottles of wine. She is stopped as she leaves. They dig in her bag and find the wine and this huge knife. They are not interested; they just want their wine back so let her walk out with a stern warning never to come back. I have to tell her she was very lucky that nobody called the police, and on reflection, she actually had a very good day.

Thursday 11th November

11 AM. Cold day.

One of my contacts is the private agent for a London Charity, which has three houses they let out in town. One is number 38, St. Helens Road. The agent, Robbie, is an old guy, and he wants me to help him evict this 'scroat' who's paid no rent for a number of months. He agrees one of my 'people' can move in if I help him change the locks and bag up the 'scroat's' belongings

'Scouse Pete', who's been on the streets, since last living in my Jag, is my number one candidate. He badly needs a place. The three of us head round to number 38. Robbie has keys to get into the top flat in question. We bang on the door; no answer, so Robbie lets us in. There is nobody present so I get to work changing the lock-barrel while the other two bag-up scroat's possessions. Someone brings down

a cat-litter tray. 'There shouldn't be any animals here,' says Robbie, 'it's against the agreement.' We decide we'd better check that there definitely is no cat present so make a through search of the premises. No cat is found so everything is bagged up, and left in the hallway downstairs.

I am still messing around adjusting the lock, as these things never go to plan, when the front door bursts open and Darren, the tenant runs upstairs. We are blocking the way, and won't let him in.

'Where's my cat?' he demands.

'There's no cat up there. We checked.' I tell him.

He starts to freak out. 'Look, I've just bought cat food for it.' The evidence is overwhelming so Robbie lets him go up for a look-see. He comes down with a little kitten. It was hiding under the sofa. This has put a new slant on things.

'Where am I going to sleep tonight? You can't put me on the street with a cat.' I sympathize with him, and talk Robbie into letting him stay for the cat's sake. Pete is badly let down, and we have to give Darren the new keys to the new lock, as I certainly wasn't going to change it again.

Friday 12th November

10 AM Cold sunny morning.

The Crew asks me to run them down to Morrisons as there is a special offer on some cheap cider. These come up occasionally and are known in the trade as loss-leaders. The idea is to entice the customers into the shop and then they will purchase other goods. It is not geared towards devout alcoholics who can actually survive on drink alone.

I park the Jag in the supermarket car park and the five of us head into the store. The security guard instantly thinks this could be a holdup for a security van is arriving to collect the takings. Glancing at the 'crew' I can forgive him jumping to conclusions.

However, as I see him start to follow the boys round the store, I bury myself in the magazine section until the crew reaches the checkouts.

J.J. has picked up a 'Scotch Egg,' thinking perhaps it contained a wee drop of Scotch. As he has no basket he just carries it in his hand. The security guard,

'Butch', now knows he's on a winner, with this one. As the others file past the checkout and J.J. goes to walk out with the egg, Butch queries if he is going to pay for it.

'I just found it on the floor. Don't want it,' he tells Butch, but unsure of its contents, samples the egg with a large bite. His perfect palette tells him instantly no satisfaction is forthcoming from this egg. Butch tells him triumphantly, 'Now you'll have to pay for it.' But J.J. plonks the egg down, on the belt, by the till.

Butch then picks the egg up and flourishes it: 'Take it, it's yours now.' He takes it, but ignores Butch and turns to the cashier.

'Did you see that, Missus? He just gave me this egg!' and turning to Butch, he says, 'I'm sure the cameras will back me up.'

The rest of the crew concurs with this statement so Butch is left speechless, as we all file out the door. Two of the boys are already waiting at the Jag, but security guards and police now surround it. They have tried to get in and police were called when the crew first arrived. Butch had reported the 'Egg' incident, and the boys are now banned. I will be totally screwed if I am included in this as I do all my shopping at Morrisons. As I unlock the car, the police ask me, do I know 'this lot'?

I confirm that I am doing some social work, on their behalf, so once again escape the clutches of the 'Law'.

Saturday 13th November

10 AM Cold dull day.

Round at '57' the Kid knows his time is fast running out on the section '21'. He needs to move his stuff. Arlette has agreed to look after his stereo and his computer and printer. Heavy Eddy is vulturing about, claiming it would be best if he took the washing machine for safekeeping and perhaps the fridge-freezer. When the Kid agrees, Eddy kindly arranges a van, at no extra charge. As there is room in it, Eddy suggests he might as well take the huge television as it will save the Kid the trouble of getting it all to Arlette's. So everything is working out nicely, for Eddy at least!

8 PM

'Hope' kitchen.

News is going round that Lurch robbed Ben, an old guy who runs round on an electric bicycle, of five hundred pounds. It seems he had a gun, but Lurch could never afford a gun so it was probably a banana, but he did relieve Ben of five hundred pounds. Lurch is unavailable for comment, and is conspicuous by his absence. The saga continues.

Sunday 14th November

9 AM Sunny, warm.

On my way to church I pass the new disabled toilets on the seafront. It is early and few folk are about. I suddenly notice the distinctive chirping of a budgie. It is emanating from the disabled toilet, which is engaged. As I pass by a wizened old guy stumbles out carrying a bird-cage, full of budgerigars. I have heard of this character. He is called 'Budgie', because he breaks into aviaries at night and steals budgies. He has a ready market to sell them on to; apparently he only picks the best, as he has become an authority over the years. Because of his disability, he has a key to the disabled toilet facilities in town and when it grows dark he goes into one and settles down for the night. There is enough room to stretch out, and free electric light, not to mention washing and toilet facilities. He has a tiny electric camping kettle that he makes tea with and a small radio to lull the birds to sleep. He has been doing this for years without the councils' consent or knowledge. He has also been arrested many times for bird-theft.

In the papers this week, Police seized forty-five thousand pounds worth of cannabis in two raids in Mugsborough. They found a fake wall built into the basement of a lounge in London Road, behind which they discovered a hundred large cannabis plants with an elaborate system of heating, lighting and ventilation. (This set-up is called 'Hydroponics')

Toby Gittins 23, has been jailed for five years after admitting setting fire to a flat in Bohemia Road, Mugsborough, while a mother and daughter were at home.

Steve Delaney 23, of Cambridge Road was jailed for three months for kicking his girlfriend repeatedly in the face, in broad daylight.

In the 'comic section' this week we read about the son of the owner of French's wine bar, Mr. Foot. He was sacked by his father for being drunk all the time and

was also banned from the premises, but gained entry one evening to the club. He started shouting racist remarks, and running up and down the stairs, threatening to kill Jason George, who was in the club with his girlfriend, who was looking after the bar at the time. Young Mr. Foot had drunk fifteen large Vodkas. He was then evicted, but managed to get back in, whereupon Mr. George, who was also very drunk, ran across the bar and smashed him over the head with a bottle. Another quiet night in 'Dodge City'!

Monday 15th November

9 AM Murky day.

Heavy Eddy has to go to Wales for a spell, as he is afraid to leave the house. He will have to leave his dog, Nalia, a purebred Pit-bull which just gave birth to fourteen pups. She ate two, but Eddy sold the rest and they were all lovely dogs. 'Nalia' herself has a lovely temperament, but could be too friendly at times, jumping all over any visitors.

Eddy invites me round to say goodbye before he gets the train to Wales. His friend Nathan, whom I've never met, is also present. As the agents are coming to inspect the premises before he leaves, Eddy asks me to take the dog to the park, as he's not supposed to have animals in the flat. Nathan will stay to help him tidy up.

As I'm walking the dog I receive a text message. 'Congratulations, you are now the dog's new owner. I can't take her with me, and you're the only one I trust to look after her, and I know she will look after you'.

I love dogs, especially this one, but I can't have a dog in my flat, so I rush back to Eddy's. It seems Nathan has run him to the railway station and I'm stuck with the dog. I go to the pet shop for advice, but they tell me if I bring it to the RSPCA (Royal Society Prevention Cruelty Animals) it will be put down, as it's clearly a pit-bull. Eddy sold the pups by advertising them as Irish Staffs. In the dog world everyone knows what this really means.

On making enquiries from Eddy's neighbours, the 'Outdoorsman Shop', the owner is examining the dog when his teenage daughter comes running over. Nalia is all over her, and she falls in love with the dog. I cannot assure them that the dog has been inoculated, but they agree to take it on if I pay fifty quid for this. I give them the

money on a card, as it's a shop, and am really happy to get rid of the burden and the fact the dog will have a good home. No sooner have I left the shop when Eddy texts me saying because I didn't want the dog he has just sold it to Nathan, for two hundred pounds. When I tell him the 'doggone' dog is gone, I get a text off Nathan to say he wants his two hundred back, off me. At the time I am really worried, but later realize this is just the way Eddy does business, although it takes a few days to fend off the various 'text-threats' from these two characters. I know myself well enough by now to realize that if I keep winding myself up about some aggressor I will eventually tackle them, for better or for worse.

After such a stressful day, I skip the soup kitchen this evening.

Tuesday 16th November

10 AM Cold bright morning.

Meet J.J. down at the 'office' He has been 'on holiday' to 'Wormwood Scrubs' and has bought me back a present. It is a 'home-made' tie, which is only available from the prison itself. It sports the minute pattern of the giant stone entrance gates of the prison and the symbols are only recognizable on close inspection. I shall keep it for special occasions, like interviews, etc,

We meet Dave Helm at the 'office', and take him for a pint, as I know he's sleeping rough. I've got him a sleeping bag and decide to let him sleep in my car. I emphasize no drinking, or eating, or smoking inside the vehicle. He agrees, but next day I find crisps scattered all over the seats and condensation running down the windows into the speakers. I tell him to leave the sun-roof open at night and he agrees. I am very wary of bringing drinkers home now, after finding the Ducati Kid doing e-mails on my computer at five in the morning.

Wednesday 17th November

10 AM Sunny, then rain.

At the breakfast this morning John McCullum is seated with thirty others, casually devouring his bacon and eggs and beans and tomatoes, not to mention the cold toast, when the door flies open and four men jump on him dragging him to the

ground. Everyone is stunned. They start groping in his pockets, 'til Captain Mannering shouts out, 'I'm calling the Police.'

'We are the Police,' they reply. 'He's got drugs on him.' However they find no drugs, but say, 'you're being detained for resisting arrest.' Our Pastor then tells them, 'If you take this to court, I shall testify against you, because nobody here heard you state you were the police.'

They let go of John, and strove off in a right huff.

Thursday 18th November

7-30 PM Miserable dull day.

At Hope kitchen tonight, we are graced with the presence of 'Angel', so called because for years he has carried a large 'Barbie' doll round with him, called 'little angel'.

This guy is a hard man. He is covered in tats (tattoos) and sports six rings on his right hand and seven on his left. He also has a weighty amount of gold chains around his neck, which might help to explain his huge neck muscles. He wears four sets of watches and bracelets on each wrist, and each ear sports gold hoops. He always wears a sparkly sequined waistcoat, and is quite a character, to say the least. He once held a knife to a woman's throat in broad daylight, and made some very suggestive remarks as to how they might spend time together.

Being hard not to miss, they soon caught him but when he appeared in Court he took 'little angel' into the dock with him. When the Judge queried this, he told him that 'little angel' was his partner and they had been engaged for ten years and were going to get married. The Judge told him he could only tolerate one person in the 'Dock' at a time (Sic), but in sentencing him informed Angel he would now be able to spend another five years with his betrothed, in complete privacy.

Friday 19th November

11 AM Sunny.

Quiet morning at the Sally Ann with few visitors.

I go to the bazaar in Kings Road, the main Mugsborough shopping centre, because I'm short of money. I sell a two-thousand-pound SACD player to them for a hundred

quid as it's no longer working. I had given it to my son who threw it out the window and I have just picked it up from the Isle of Wight. I see Harry Hatchet in there, and he reminds me of my son; sweet and neat when he's sober, but a bloody nightmare when he's not. Harry is trying to flog a new pair of glasses with very expensive titanium frames. There is no case for the glasses and the dealer offers him a tenner. He suspects Harry might be one of those 'street people' who wanders into opticians looking at display racks, occasionally forgetting to remove glasses that they may have tried on for size. Harry accepts the tenner.

Saturday 20th November

8 PM Cold

Hope kitchen, and it's a pretty full tonight. 'Sniffer' is present, so-called because he is asthmatic and uses an inhaler all the time. He takes the mouthpiece off to clean it, and it is black with dirt and even has fag-ash inside. Sniffer is constantly hovering outside betting shops picking up dog-ends. He carries round a plastic carrier bag full of them and is always making roll-ups. While I chat to him he makes 23 in the space of half-an-hour. I invite him to church in the morning but he informs me he has a C.T scan in the morning, at the 'Inquest'.

After the kitchen I have to get the Ducati Kid to hospital as he tells me he's losing it, because he's just taken twenty-five 'Traumadol' painkillers; and he's been drinking, as usual. When we get there they drag him away to pump his stomach, which is very unpleasant. He discharges himself when he recovers, to avoid being carted off to the 'Woodlands' mental facility, next door.

Sunday 21st November

12-30 AM Mild.

I had a sleepless night so have missed church this morning. I go along to Concordia Kitchen, which runs for a few months over the winter. They are based in Church Road, just opposite '57'. They have just opened and have a menu on a blackboard. There is 'asparagus and courgette' soup, which the street people have never heard of, so they tentatively enquire can they have bacon and eggs, but then notice the sweet ladies of the nearby 'Catholic Church' have marked 'Rissoles' on

the menu board. One of the 'crew' has rubbed out the 'leg' of the R, turning it into 'Pissoles'. Some 'scroat' comes to the counter and says, 'I'll have some "Pissoles"'. The nice lady says, 'It's not a 'P'. It's an 'R', whereupon he says, 'Okay then, I'll have some 'R'-soles'. The 'crew' end up giggling and nibbling on genteel sandwiches of egg and cress, with cucumber.

In the papers this week readers learn, as if they didn't know already, that Hastings has a massive domestic violence problem with more than five incidents reported every day. This is even more alarming as less than four out of ten incidents never even get reported to the police.

Ten drug addicts were rushed to hospital this week, after contaminated heroin was sold on the streets of Hastings and St. Leonard's. It is red in colour, and 'gels up', when heated, making it difficult to inject or smoke. My friends on the street tell me it'd spiked with Rohypnol as it causes memory loss as well. In fact Seaview had notices up last week stating this stuff was spiked with Anthrax. Those treated do not respond to 'Naloxone', an opioid antagonist, which usually reverse the effects of an opiate. Police say it is fortunate there were no fatalities.

A man walking in St Helens Park was attacked and battered by three men who stopped him and demanded his wallet.

John Larkin 24, was stopped by police who wanted to speak to him on an unrelated matter when they saw him hand over some pairs of sunglasses to his brother. They still had the price tags on them, valued at nearly five hundred pounds. He had just nicked them from 'Specsavers'. Larkin, who has a long list of convictions, pleaded guilty.

Francesco D'Agostino, (one of our clients) who admitted stealing hundreds of pounds worth of goods from shops appeared in court on Wednesday morning. He was due back for sentencing in the afternoon but was not sent to the cells where he had been remanded in custody and simply walked out.

Marlowe Cruttenden 19, of Cross Street, Mugsborough, was stopped for driving very slowly with no lights. Police smelt strong cannabis and a load of drugs were found in the car.

Robert Robinson 44, of Mugsborough called police claiming he had fallen off a bus in Hastings. After smelling cannabis they decided to search him and found an illegal

lock knife, which he claims he must have found on the bus, as he could not remember how he got it. He has a long list of convictions for burglary, theft and drugs.

One of my favourite clients, Geoffrey McMaster 43, was bashing away on bongo drums in the subway in the centre of town when unamused residents complained to police. He was sitting on a fold-up chair with the drums and a few tins of 'Tennants' lager. He was told it was an alcohol free area and asked to move on.

A short time later police were called to the same spot, as he had returned, with his bongos. Again he was warned by police, but told them, 'Please arrest me or I'll throw myself under a bus.' The police told him they were not going to arrest him so he got abusive, shouting and swearing loudly, demanding to be arrested. Geoffrey's wish was granted, but then he changed his mind and threatened to head-butt the officers. He was charged with being drunk and disorderly and was due in court this month, but the case was adjourned as he failed to turn up. He has an alcohol problem, and a long list of previous convictions going back many years.

Monday 22nd November

10 AM Misty.

After I evicted Dave Helm from my Jag he acquired a broken down old Volvo station wagon to sleep in. Last year he spent the winter in my old Citroen and I had to get him to leave the side window open. Trouble was the teenagers coming out the clubs late, would start to kick the car in an attempt to wake him up. He would swear at them, and they would retaliate. Eventually, I told him he could keep the windows closed if he opened the sunroof slightly. He would be difficult to spot then, huddled up in his sleeping bag. He could then let himself out in the early hours and lock the door after him, but unfortunately, one night it snowed.

I will never forget sitting down on a mushy seat. I had cleared his mess up from this passenger side, wiping away the crisps and pistachio shells. His seat was dry, because he'd been lying on it with his sleeping bag, but when I sat down on the drivers' side, I was wearing wet pants for the rest of the day.

Tuesday 23rd November

Very cold. Midnight.

'Seaview' arranged with the Council to do a body count of those sleeping rough on the streets. There are a dozen or so volunteers gathered and after a briefing and lots of warm drinks, we head out at 4 a.m. We split up into small groups to search given areas. I am with Pastor Chris and some stranger and we explore dark alleyways and graveyards and underneath the pier. We all return a few hours later and the body count comes to fourteen. The council tell us they don't accept these figures as they are far too high and we infringed 'Health and Safety', by going under the pier and onto private property like basement flats currently under renovation. We agree to do it again on January 3rd next year.

Wednesday 24th November

10 AM Rainy.

The day starts fine, but it rains later. At the morning breakfast I meet up again with Marcus, a client. He is on the way to the 'Inquest' to see if they are going to amputate his legs, which seem to have gangrene. He asked me at Hope kitchen, last week, to bandage one, but I couldn't breathe when I took the old rotting bandage off. His whole calf muscle was a lurid colour and seeping puss. I did my best and wanted to run him to hospital but he was afraid they would take it off. This state of affairs comes after years of jacking up in the same place. We offer to pray for him, but he says he's off to his local 'church' - 'The Horse and Groom' - to get 'legless', which was funny at the time.

Thursday 25th November

8 PM Very cold.

Hope kitchen.

Heavy Eddy has been away a week or so and is now back in Mugsborough. He rings to ask, 'Are we cool?'

I don't bear grudges so agree to pop round to see him. It is quiet in his flat (which he never really left) without the dog barking, but he is in a bit of a state. His table is covered with ash, from dog-ends. He uses the ash to 'cook up' his crack by sucking the smoke through an empty beer can with a hole punched in the side. I nag him for

going back on the 'skank' but he begs me to be quiet and not spoil the 'bliss.' Later he starts mixing some violin wax with Ketamine to pass off as heroin, as it is the same colour and melts in exactly the same way.

10 PM

As we leave the kitchen Captain Mannering relates to me how he saved a friend from being mugged. He was driving up London Road one evening when he noticed a builder friend of his coming out a betting shop. He must have made a 'killing' on the horses for he was suddenly set upon by three men. He saw one of them hit his friend over the head with a brick. The Captain screeched to a halt blowing his horn and ran over to help. After he ran him to hospital his friend was very grateful and wanted to give him some of his winnings but Peter refused this offer. Instead the builder suggested he come and dig over the Captain's garden as he knew it needed doing badly. Peter agrees to this and wakes up the following Sunday to find his friend, with a whole gang of Navies, in the garden digging away. They sorted the whole lot out in a few hours where it would have taken Peter months, working alone.

Friday 26th November.

11 AM Very cold.

At the Sally Ann there are lots of scroats looking for sleeping bags as snow is forecast and it is growing colder by the minute. There are flurries of snow but they soon melt.

12 Noon

Visit Nanette. She is there with 'Susie Crack.' Last night the 'Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence' had a party and Susie stayed over. Also at the party were Jezebel, Cathy and Sticks, so a wild time was had by all. During the evening Nanette goes to her bathroom upstairs but can't find her bottle of Channel No. 5 which her daughter, Sarah, bought her for her sixtieth birthday. She also notices someone has been rummaging in her bedroom drawers as her best underwear has disappeared and when she returns downstairs she finds the rest of them collapsed on the floor after they had 'banged' up. She manages to speak to Cathy who tells her that Jezebel tried to sell her some perfume just now, so they search Jezebel's handbag, and find

not only the Channel No 5, but also her bottle of Obsession, which cost a hundred pounds. Needless to say, all hell breaks loose, and stuff gets flung around as the 'ladies' all seek to scratch each other's eyes out. Jezebel gets laid out on the floor. Nanette's missing underwear is later discovered under the bath so Nanette does not plan any more parties, in the immediate future.

Saturday 27th November

9 AM Snow flurries.

Nanette discovers this morning that two hundred and fifty pounds was withdrawn from her bank yesterday. Before she went to bed she gave Cathy her card to get some drink, to calm her down.

Another notorious reprobate, Ryan Mosswell, is visiting her this morning and suggests she better change her pin number, and card, or she could lose more money. She is too oiled to move so gives him the card. He says he can do this in the post office as his cousin works there so she will get a new card sent out immediately. He goes out and draws another two hundred and fifty pounds from her account and brings the card back suggesting she tear it up, as it's now cancelled. He also informs her she'll be getting a new one in a few days but before he leaves asks to use the bathroom and steals eighty pounds from her bedroom while he's upstairs. Needless to say the pin was never changed and Nanette now has to order a new card, and a new pin. Nanette complains to the police and they come round to take a statement. In the meantime, she hears from Ryan Mosswell's mother-in-law that he had stayed in her flat last night, and she discovered all her jewellery missing in the morning.

Sunday 28th November

11 AM Very very cold.

After church I check in with Nanette, to see if she's recovered. She learns that Ryan's mother-in-law fingered him to the police who took her round the local 'pawn-shops', where they recovered all the jewellery except a Diamond and Sapphire ring. He had sold off five thousand pounds worth of stuff, for fifteen hundred. She is ringing Nanette because Ryan is texting her all the time from prison making threats.

I am puzzled to hear this as no phones are allowed 'inside', but apparently some 'scroats' smuggle them in by shoving them up their backside. Ryan's wife, who hates him even more than his mother-in-law, says if her mum drops any charges she will never speak to her again. The police have said there is no need for Nanette to press charges as they have him on the burglary count. As it happens he later gets sent to some detox unit where he meets Nanette's sister, Molly, who is also detoxing. He convinces her that Nanette is now a 'Grass'. She later learns he has ninety-five previous convictions, and was out on 'licence'. Nanette pins a large laminated notice on her front door, saying all visitors must ring her first to gain admittance.

Tonight the first real snows of winter are forecast, and the street people are starting to panic even if they do have a sleeping bag. The ones that do not have one will have to wait until tomorrow night when 'Snowflake' starts up.

In the papers this week, Police have discovered sixty thousand pounds worth of cannabis in three weeks, the latest being a stash of fifteen thousand on Sunday afternoon. This was discovered when they went to visit someone at the flat, and smelled the drug.

Dave Gale 60, of Mugsborough, was jailed for twenty months for conning fifty-five thousand pounds out of local businesses. He did this by contacting Taxi firms offering to print them cards and leaflets at a discount rate. They never heard from him again.

A twenty-seven year old bouncer, at Flair's nightclub, intervened when he saw a man punch a woman but he ended up in hospital with a broken nose.

Thieves broke into Gregg's bakery through the roof, and stole a large steel safe containing over a thousand pounds some of which was charity money. The green safe was two foot by three foot, and police say it would have been extremely heavy to lift. They are anxious to hear from anyone who learns of a man with a recent hernia.

Nathan Sinden 26, of Mugsborough, pleaded guilty to trespass on railway property and threatening behaviour. When he saw a woman using the Gent's Loo he started shouting and being abusive. When arrested he said, 'Take these cuffs off, and we'll

go toe to toe.’ He had recently been sentenced to prison for a year for theft and breach of a non-molestation order.

Tony Lacey 23, of London Road, Mugsborough, was so angry about being give a parking ticket that he grabbed the female traffic warden from behind, and refused to let her go until she removed the ticket from his windscreen. When a group of taxi-drivers rescued her, he claimed he was merely cuddling her. He was given a twelve-month supervision order and ordered to pay fifty pound compensation to the warden.

Monday 29th November

8 AM Very heavy snowfalls.

I see Wavin Dave, an old client and personal friend, outside ‘Londis’ in Norman Road. He is crouching down in the doorway. Customers bustle past trying to buy bread and milk. All the other shops have run out but Londis have some left. They are limiting this to one pint of milk and one loaf per customer.

Dave’s problem is not food. I ask if he’s okay and he tells me he’s got migraine and needs some painkillers. I go into the shop and buy the strongest I can find, ‘Neurophen’, which seem expensive for what they are. He tells me later that night at the ‘Sally Army’ that he took six of these, and six 500mg. tablets of Paracetamol. That makes three grams of Paracetamol and a similar amount of Neurophen. He later confesses he was clucking from withdrawal as he had no money to buy any gear.

7 PM

I head out in a storming snow blizzard to the first night of ‘Snowflake’, which ironically has started as the first snowstorm falls. At the end of November every year the Sally Army relinquishes control to ‘the Snowflake Trust’, which operates Monday and Tuesday up to the end of March the following year.

I find Mouse has been sleeping rough and Captain Mannering, (our pet name for Pete Bourner) is worried for him. Our sleeping bags are useless in this weather. Captain Mannering is in charge if, as he says, ‘you’ll let me.’ Councillor Lee Clark is present. He occasionally drops by to see if he can sort out any problems. He rings the council emergency number, 451999, which is supposed to provide overnight

accommodation if the temperature falls below zero for three consecutive nights. While we wait for them to ring back I am serving the teas and coffees. We use a 'Gold Blend' Jar, but just keep topping it up with 'cash and carry' rubbish. We have to do this, because Hope kitchen is actually serving 'Douwe-Egberts' coffee, which is about the most expensive around.

Brian Lee, a gypsy hippie type, comes strolling in with his long staff, festooned with a string of flashing Christmas lights. He asks if we have any spare batteries as the cold is making his own fade rather fast. Hippy Brian also wears an 'Aussie' leather hat and carries his guitar (covered with 'Jesus' stickers), everywhere he goes. He has to do this as his 'drum' (room) keeps getting broken into and he now leaves it unlocked. I know residents in Mugsborough who even leave their cars unlocked, as it saves the windows getting smashed in.

The council ring Lee Clark back, and true to form, claim all the places they spoke to were fully booked. He draws me aside and admits the reason for this is the 'B and B's do not want drunks and addicts mixing with normal clientele. I tell him I did manage to get Dave Helm fixed up last year, but he's now banned because he got up in the middle of the night, and went down into the lounge to make some percolated coffee.

Tuesday 30th November

8 AM Heavy snow.

There is one foot of snow all round with little moving except 'four-by-four' vehicles. As yet, no night shelter is available for the half-dozen we have sleeping out and the Government have recently decided that this area is so run-down that regeneration is not feasible at the moment. This year alone, the local council is braced for nearly 40% cuts in funding and workers of all sorts are often protesting in front of the Town Hall. Councillor Jeremy Birch stated these cuts would be very damaging, while Amber Rudd, the Tory MP, says the figures are simply unthinkable and must be inflammatory.

In the kitchen, Stretch comes in and declares to all the staff that he's just won the lottery, and he's taking us all to Florida until the snow clears.

Bridget inquires, 'How much did you win?'

He replies, 'I could tell you, Bridget, but then I'd have to kill you!'

'Indeed. Well, tell me how you picked the numbers?'

'You know I see faces when I look into candle flames?'

'Indeed,' says Bridget, 'So did you see numbers instead?'

'No, silly, the faces spelled out the numbers for me.'

'Right,' says Bridget, 'so how do we get to Florida?'

'Well, I just purchased the last Concorde, but they had to park it up in Scotland.'

'But how do we get to Scotland, Stretch?'

'Well, if you can't get there you'll loop out on my offer,' he responds.

'So if I can't afford the fare to Scotland I won't be able to go, then?'

'Absolutely,' says Stretch, 'absolutely not'.

CHAPTER FOUR DECEMBER

Wednesday 1st December

10 AM One Foot of Snow.

At the Wednesday breakfast I have to do the opening prayer as the Pastor can't get here because of the deep snow. There are only a dozen clients to start with but it soon fills up and we have a full house of thirty by half-past-ten. Capt. Mannering gives the 'preach', and we manage to feed everyone although Debbie has to work 'overtime' in the kitchen.

Heavy Eddy tells me he is really worried as his blood pressure is 200 over 165. This is very high, and as I have a spare monitor I offer to lend him it; although I realize I'll never see it again.

The florist next door hates the street people hanging around waiting for us to open on a Wednesday. This is because her son was stabbed to death by one of them some years ago. Capt. Mannering brings a breakfast over to the old man in the 'Yella', shop just opposite, so called because it is bright yellow. There is also the 'Purple' shop, in Robinson Street, and even 'The Corner Shop' in Prospect Place, where the Strip Club operates. The resourcefulness of these names is simply staggering in its initiative.

Speak to 'Animal' down at the 'office' where I head after breakfast. Want to see if anyone's been staying there overnight. Animal is so called because when you first meet him he roars in your face like a lion and then bursts out laughing at your reaction. He tells me he is soon going 'on holiday' for some time. I enquire for how long and he tells me 'five-to-seven'. He means years, and this is a long sentence, so I enquire how he merited it.

He says, 'You know the "Tooth"? Well, he was giving it the "big-un" down the seafront to some birds and I told him to shut it but he got leery, so I decked him with a Glasgow-Kiss! (head-butt) Well, that broke his nose, but the silly sod got up screaming he's going to kill me, so I decked him again.'

'So, what's the big deal?' I ask.

'Well, blow me, he kept getting up, and I kept kicking him down! I told him to leave it out, but he kept coming back for more. I didn't notice, in all the excitement, that a couple of 'plastics' had clocked me and I got pulled. It was a cuff job. The geezer was sparked out flat on the deck and it seems he nearly died, so they done me for 'GBH with intent'. I've got lots of previous, so the beak remanded me for reports but I know I'll get a long stretch for me brief's told me I've just got too much form.'

Thursday 2nd December

8 AM Rain.

It has rained all night, so most of the snow is gone.

Last night I scraped a foot of snow off my car but still could not move away from the kerb and my offside folding mirror folds no longer. The snow seems to have penetrated the motor inside.

Get a visit from J.J. I never know when he's loose on the streets or banged up 'on holiday' again. He's in and out of prison like a yo-yo. He cracks a can while I just have a 'jolly civilized' mug of 'Earl Grey'.

He tells me, 'I'm furious with the Kid for I heard recently that he's now on the smack. I know Arlette is trying to "blow him out", for she's had enough grief.'

J.J. departs to go hunting for the Kid, promising to give him a good 'slap'.

Katie has escaped from Halton Flats. The reason her luck changed was her daughter, Kirsty, came of age, and decided to move back to her mum's. She had been living with Katie's brother up North since George died so tragically. So now she needs another bedroom. She has found a little cottage hidden away down an alleyway, offering her the privacy she needs. I make her promise not to give the address to anyone.

Friday 3rd December

10 AM Icy.

Don't expect the Sally Ann will open today. There was a big freeze overnight, and I amuse myself watching cars out the window, sliding all over the road. I go out, and laugh as cars end up helplessly careering into kerbsides and trying to reverse. Only the four-wheel drives have a chance in these conditions.

Walk round to Arlettes, who nags me silly to photograph some icicle hanging off a lamp-post outside her window. I have to go home and get my camera but it's worth it because I get a great shot of this with the sunlight reflecting behind it. The Ducati Kid turns up while I'm there, and tells me he's only been drinking and has not had any 'gear'. He's been 'slurping' since 6 a.m. when 'A' opened, and has already put ten cans of Carlsberg Special down his throat. We all decide to go to the park and take some photos, as the sun is glorious on the frosty trees. Trouble is, the Kid ends up sliding everywhere on his bum as he can't walk properly. He gets all wet and miserable so Arlette takes pity and brings him home for a bowl of hot soup.

Saturday 4th December

7 PM Rain.

'Hope' kitchen.

Jan Vidler, a new broom at Hope kitchen has raised a few hackles by insisting the clients get served the best of coffee and the best of food; even organic, if possible. She was taken on by 'Wellington Square' Baptist church after the recent debacle over our Minister, David Hall. He resigned and as she was in training for ordination, she was roped in.

She'd never been in a soup kitchen in her life but they put her in charge, much to the resentment of the kitchen staff. She now insists on brown bread and the finest ingredients for the soup and, as new brooms do, is making a clean sweep. This includes 'yours truly'. I am called into the small room where the 'overseers' are sitting facing me. They ask if I ever give money to these people? I reply that I normally do not, but they tell me they've heard different. In fact if anyone, anywhere, asks for a bit of shrapnel, I always oblige. They then inquire if I give clients lifts home in my Jaguar. On my confirming this, they state that it's not on, because they will all expect lifts in future. I explain that if I pay for the petrol and the insurance and the tax, surely I can give my friends lifts, if I so desire.

Apparently not. They explain that I was removed from my position in the 'clothes room' for giving away too much stuff and that they feel that I'm a bit of a rebel, but they love me as a brother, and wouldn't have it any other way.

However, they suggest I am getting too close to the problem, and suggest I 'step back' for a spell. This, of course, is a polite way of telling me to 'bugger off' and let them do things their way. I learn later that a vote had been taken over my staying but Jan stated I was not a team player and vetoed my return in front of the committee. But, in the meantime, I am allowed to visit my friends in Hope, any time I wish. This actually suits me better as I can sit with whomever I want and spend as much time as I need, without having to mop out the toilets and wash the floor which were my normal duties.

Sunday 5th December

Noon. Very cold.

'Wellington Square Church'

After the service I am doing the teas and coffees, as usual, when Andy Fish turns up with 'Wavin Dave'. Dave is called this because he keeps waving his arms about as he tries to explain things. The coffee is now cold because the boiler and two percolators were all plugged into on extension socket and the fuse has blown. I rush downstairs to use Hope kitchens' thermos, and manage to supply the lads with a hot bevy. Before we leave I am asked if I would 'do' the teas for the Street Pastors' inauguration, on the 17th at 8 p.m. here in the church.

Have to go shopping, after church. Have had no bread or milk for three days. The supermarket is chock-a-block, with at least six trollies queuing for each till. Heavy Eddy has agreed to help me carry all the food. As we stroll round Eddy casually takes a sandwich from the display and sticks it in my trolley. After a minute he picks it up and opens it. He takes one out and replaces the other in its wrapper back in my trolley. He then strolls round casually devouring it, before coming back for the other one, but he leaves the wrapper and price tag in the trolley. After finishing the second half of the sandwich Eddy waits till we turn a corner aisle, then quickly grabs the empty wrapper and stuffs it behind some jars of Marmite. 'That was a bit gorgeous,' he declares.

We had agreed to meet the Ducati Kid from the crew to feed him up, for we fear the cold might just finish him off. He and Eddy used to be good friends once. The Kid texts us in the supermarket to say he's on his way and can I get him breakfast in

the café 'cos he's starving. It's not a problem but turns into one, for the Kid is now banned and they won't let him in. He rings me but is so drunk he can hardly speak. We have been looking out for him over fifteen minutes, and now realize he's gone home as he couldn't get in. He has to walk home as there are no buses running; even the schools are closed and all train services cancelled.

The papers this week, tell of Chris Chaloner 24, a local scaffolder, who has admitted biting a large chunk off his girlfriend's lower lip, leaving her scarred for life. A thirty-eight year old woman, out walking in Alexandra Park, managed to fend off a mugger by kicking him in the groin.

'Dino' (two-tunes) was again arrested for begging in Havelock Road, at a quarter to three on Monday afternoon. The man he asked for money was an off-duty police officer.

The street pastors will welcome thirty new members this week. They patrol the streets in groups of six or so, handing out water to drunken revellers and flip-flop sandals to girls who can't walk because their 'killer-heels' are killing them. Although they are a Christian organization the Pastors are not allowed to preach and when I went out with them recently, I felt people were starting to take them for granted.

Monday 6th December

8 AM Cold dull day.

Awoken early by a commotion outside my flat entrance. Open the door to Police who ask to search the premises. I ask if they have a warrant and they tell me they can get one if I refuse, so I let them in. They are looking for some mugger who was seen running into these flats. They search every flat, without success.

10 AM

The Ducati Kid and 'Rudolph' pop round for a drink. Give the Kid a coffee but he can only drink booze now, so I ply him with biscuits and flapjacks. He is rattling badly. At first I think it's the cold frosty weather making him shake but he tells me he's just clucking for a drink. I wait for the inevitable: 'Have you got a drop of shrapnel, Rad?' I slide my little money dish onto the table: 'Don't know what's there, but you're welcome to it, Kid.' The boys make a hasty exit leaving the coffee and flapjacks.

On the way out I notice my first Christmas card of the season. I just love Christmas with all the lights and decorations.

7 PM

Am supposed to go to the Snowflake tonight, but the church has got a meeting on to elect new deacons and I don't want to miss it. I do manage to drop into Snowflake before it closes and notice the Ducati Kid is all bruised and cut up. He tells me he fell on the ice a few times, but 'nodded' a wall or two, on his way down. He is now on the streets as the bailiffs finally came and threw the rest of his clothes and gear out onto the snowy pavement. But he still had the presence of mind to go to the 'housing' and has been accepted for Merrick House, one step up from sleeping in the gutter.

Tuesday 7th December

9 AM Very cold and icy.

My car windscreen is totally frosted over. Down at the 'office', Rudolph claims he and the Kid slept on the seafront last night. This makes me feel very bad. At the church meeting it was unanimously agreed that I could exhibit my very large landscape photographs at the coffee morning, next Saturday.

7-30 PM

At Snowflake tonight we have Spaghetti Bolognese as a special treat for the clients. Plus the usual egg mayonnaise, and pickle and cheese sandwiches. As usual I serve all the teas and coffees just coping with the rush. In my haste I accidentally pour some hot water into the coffee tin. It quickly saturates all of it and the only way to save any coffee is to pour it all out into a large container. We try to dilute it but cannot judge the strength, until 'Giggly-Viv' comes cackling back with a few of the others for more 'special brew'. Seems my concoction is going down well and some even claim they don't feel the need for a drink at the moment.

Mickie is here, but no Michelle, as she is ill. Last night, it was the opposite but we give take-away sandwiches to each of them to bring home for the other one, who's not there.

The mood changes when Naomi walks over and asks for some ice as she has a black bruise coming up near her eye. As I hand her the ice-tray from the fridge she

explains she was just having a quiet smoke outside, when some stranger just walked up and decked her.

Wednesday 8th December

10 AM Cold and frosty

At the Breakfast this morning meet up with Tracy. She is still my girlfriend but we don't sling crack any more. Big Sam, a huge lesbian lady, asks to borrow Tracy's phone. She needs to go outside the café to get reception but doesn't come back with the phone. After the breakfast Tracy and I hunt her down and only the fact that she knows I wield a lot of influence, makes her hand over the phone.

7 PM

Have to go to the Y.M.C.A. tonight, for the volunteers meeting of 'Surviving Christmas'. This is an independent charity with no religious affiliations. They feed the homeless and the deprived for three days over Christmas. They also donate twenty-five thousand-pounds worth of food vouchers and deliver over five hundred food hampers to local people. I have talked Heavy Eddy into getting involved in this enterprise as I know that helping the less fortunate gives great insight into your own troubles. He agrees to accompany me as I do my van deliveries with the hampers. I really appreciate this, as he is a local lad who knows this area like the back of his hand. I did the vans last year and it was tough, but with the snow this year things look even harder. He also senses the idea that there may be a hamper or two left over. He is 'brassic', for the C.S.A. (Child Support Agency) took a £180 off his benefits recently. I make sure he realizes this work is voluntary, but he seems keen to escape the deadly routine that keeps dragging him down.

Thursday 9th December

10 AM Dry cold day.

Heavy Eddy comes to my flat. He is really worried. Last night he was round at Merrick House with the Ducati Kid who's just moved in there, and Strumpet who was also present. She had just 'banged up', and Eddy had done a couple of rocks. The Kid was oiled as usual when Strumpet, who was sitting next to Eddy, tried to stretch out on the sofa. The only other furniture in the place was a chair and a table.

There was not enough room for her, but when Eddy pushed her back she suddenly launched herself at him, clawing at his face; he showed me a claw mark next his eye.

He jumped up as she started spitting at him and gave her a right hook. Trouble is it didn't stop there. She came at him again and he knocked her unconscious. Now he's really worried that she will grass him up. Apparently she's really marked up but Strumpet is used to this as her boyfriend beats her up on a regular basis. Afterwards I speak to her and she admits she started it and is doing more nothing about it. She's been there before, and got the 'T' shirt.

1 PM

Pop into 'Bridgebuiders', to see 'Sad Sandy'. She once went in the Jag over to Newhaven, and wanted to get the train back, like Arlette did when I took her and the Kid, to Horsebridge.

She is big into animal rights but carries things to the extreme. I took her for dinner once and she wouldn't sit in a leather chair, or have anything but soya milk in her coffee, and refused the Yoghurt deserts as they're made with milk.

She did partake of the 'Baclava' desert, because it's made with syrup and not honey. She said the bees are kept in greenhouses and are force-fed on lumps of sugar. She explained that bee-farmers kill off all the bees when they reach five years old to encourage the young ones to make more honey, and that a bee should live to be seventeen. Needless to say she did not approve of my snakeskin belt, a real Cobra, which I bought in Mexico. I tried to explain that if they weren't bred for belts they wouldn't even have a life, but it was a waste of breath. She was in a good mood because some of her cronies had rescued a hundred and fifty turkeys from some farm nearby just as they were being shipped off to the abattoir for Christmas.

She has just broken up with her partner, who has prostate cancer. He is now suicidal, and she is going to pieces.

Friday 10th December

10 AM Miserable day.

Eddy has been given a lovely little dog. His name is Teddy Bear, and we take him for a walk in the nearby park. The reason Eddy took the dog was because his friend,

a builder, had just been evicted and was now living in his van, so couldn't keep a dog there. We meet 'Duvet Man', Stewart, who walks round with just a huge duvet wrapped round him, even in the snow, and never wears sandals. He does not go to any of the kitchens at the moment and I don't know how he survives. He is sitting on a park bench, and lets me take his photo; I give him a bit of shrapnel, and he tells us he is doing penance for his sins. I tell Eddy he'd better invest in a few duvets before long. In the afternoon I bring my licence to Henley's car-hire, as they are renting the vans out to Surviving Christmas and demand clean licences. I joke to Eddy that the only reason mine is clean is that most cop-cars can't catch me. Eddy has immediately advertised this lovely dog for fifty quid, as a 'free-ad', in the Friday-Ad, but I know my friends at 'Darvell' would give it a great home, so I give him the fifty and take Teddy Bear home with me.

Saturday 11th December

9 AM Sunny.

The dog is fantastic. He's only a little terrier, but jumps right up, and taps you on the shoulder, when he wants to be fed. I take him over to Darvell, and give him to my friends there, and they are over the moon with him.

2 PM

Katie turns up. She has no heating in her cottage as the boiler's broken and nobody can fix it until after the holidays. I give her a three-bar Quartz fire, which keeps her happy. She tried to get someone to move her washing machine to the new place, but her electric had been switched off as she had officially moved, so she couldn't empty it. All her clothes were in it so they dragged it out of the flat onto the landing at Halton Flats awaiting collection, as she had to hand the keys back to the council. Needless to say it had disappeared by the time she found someone with a van prepared to move it for her.

Sunday 12th December

1 AM Murky day.

Am woken by an horrendous fight just outside my flat. Open the door to see my feisty little Scotsman fighting with Chris, the other neighbour next to him. I have to

call the police, and they soon arrive. They wrestle Tam, who is well oiled, to the floor, and handcuff him. Tam had shut his flat door behind him, leaving the keys inside, so the cops use a large metal mallet to gain entry. There is now a huge round indentation on the door. Three cops carry Tam off, head first, down three flights of stairs.

Trouble is, in all the excitement, Chris's door has slammed shut behind him, and he can't get back in, either. He has to ask if the police will smash his own door in, so now with the broken locks and dented doors the place looks a right mess.

2 AM

Have just watched a late night movie, trying to relax, when I hear another commotion outside my flat. I think the police have returned but when I open up find half a dozen teenagers outside. I ask how they got into the premises and they say the door was open, so I assume the cops left it so, when they carted Tam off to the cells. The 'ferals' claim their young friend was taken into one of these flats by a strange man and she is under-age, so they must find her. I tell them she's not here, so they want to ring the police. They have no credit, so I let them come in and use my phone. They ring their friend on my mobile, who answers, 'Whadya want? I'm busy.' Realizing their friend is okay, they thank me and I escort them out. As they all leave I notice the front door lock, and solenoid have been smashed in. I demand to know who did it as I realize it wasn't the police, but one of them. I am furious, but they won't give me their names so I follow them in my dressing gown as I ring the police emergency service for the second time that night.

As I describe the teenagers, who have caused hundreds of pounds worth of damage the police warn me not to follow them, but wait until help arrives. But I am really angry that a bunch of 'ferals' could just break into my place and cause a lot of damage. I trail them round the streets as they try to elude me, realizing they are being followed. The cop-car spots me in my dressing gown, so they give me a lift back to my flat. They come in, and I explain the situation, regarding the 'ferals'. One of the officers asks if they used my phone, and she then uses it to ring the number again. The same girl answers and the woman police officer tells the girl that her mum is worried about her. The feral asks who she is and tells her to 'fuck off' and

leave her alone. The officer turns to her colleague and states, 'I know who this is; I recognize her voice.'

They promise to go round the girl's home and make inquiries. This is the last I hear of it and I have to spend over a hundred quid to fix the door the next day, because you do not leave a front door wide open in Mugsborough. But I still can't believe I've had the police round twice in the same night.

No church today, but the paper prove interesting.

Ramdan Shariff 31, was jailed for three years this week for preying on old people using cash machines in the area. He would watch them enter their Pin-Numbers and then snatch their cards.

Shaun Reid 33, of Queens Road appeared in court on a number of charges involving armed robbery.

The two 'ferals', from Mugsborough, arrested for the pier fire, have had their bail extended until January. The police dare not release their names.

Alexandra Richards 19, stole her father's gun in an attempt to get back at her stepfather after an argument.

A valuable screen print was stolen from the St. Mary's-in-the-Castle art exhibition, just a few weeks after somebody walked out of the 'FISH' gallery with a two-thousand-pound piece of sculpture.

Strangers, who knocked him to the ground and kicked him in the head a number of times, attacked a twenty-year old victim as he went for a walk, on the evening of 24th. November. A police spokesman later claimed, 'Unprovoked assaults of this nature are very rare in Hastings.'(Sic).I wonder if this is the same spokesperson who also works for the Hospital trust that spouts similar outrageous claims.

A brazen thief, who stole four alloy wheels from a car parked at Beaufort Golf Club, was caught when he advertised his ill-gotten goods on E-bay.

Peter Eagle, who shares a room with Mark Griffiths, in Gensing House was spotted by police, urinating in full view of passers-by and was arrested. He was also charged with breaching his ASBO and in court last Thursday admitted both offences. He was fined fifty pounds.

Monday 13th December

10 AM Very cold.

I drop into 'Emmaeus', an independent organization that has branches throughout the country, and hope to start a branch in Hastings. They have been given some land by Southern water, just behind Sainsbury's on the way out of town. They cater for alcoholics who desperately want to change their lifestyles. This involves applicants moving into sparse premises, stopping all drinking, and earning a living. They acquire skills, but in their stay there do not get any wages. They call each other 'Companions', and aim to run the whole enterprise themselves, although have just advertised a top job here for thirty-thousand a year, for a co-ordinator.

'Ponytail Pete' has applied for it as he has the experience in dealing with such clientele but he gets turned down. They asked me if I'd like to edit their newsletter, to which I agreed, but it seems they now want to keep everything 'in-house'.

3 PM

Drop in to see Katie, in her new cottage. She tells me she is happy there, but gets constant visits from some old 'friends', who keep hassling her for some of her 'Valium' supply. Needless to say she hasn't kept her address a secret like I advised her.

8 PM

Snowflake. Quiet evening, apart from 'Dino two-tunes' losing it, when Micky rags him about his musical repertoire. He ends up chasing him round the hall with Micky fending him off with his big stick.

Tuesday 14th December.

12 Noon. Rain.

Visit Merrick House. You cannot gain entrance by speaking to the staff. Unless you know the name and room-number of the person you wish to visit, they give out no details. I manage to contact the Kid, and I greet Rudolf and 'Scouse Pete', who have also found sanctuary in the same place. I suggest the old '57' crew should open up their own distillery on the premises as they seem to have taken over.

3 PM

Visit Eddy, who lives just over the road. He needs money for his kid's birthday, so I 'lend' him twenty quid, aware I'll never see a penny back.

4 PM

Visit Katie, in her Mugsborough Cottage, just around the corner from Tower Road. It is set back from the road, and you'd never guess it was there. The only problem is the noise at weekends, which emanates from the adjacent pub towering over her garden wall. Still, nothing's perfect - even in Mugsborough. Katie went in for a drink there, last night, and noticed some guy staring at her. Eventually he came over and said: 'I know you, don't I?'

Turns out he was a security guard who once arrested her for shoplifting but he buys her a drink and they have a chat. She was nicking perfume at the time but tells him. 'I only do charity shops these days.'

'It doesn't matter to me, for I don't work 'stores' any more. Anyway the charities never prosecute as it's bad publicity.'

He now gives her some advice:

'They are tagging even small items now like Razor blades and Hair Dye, and it's no good taking them out of the box because there's another tag on the bottom. But you can peel that one off, with your nails.'

Katie replies, 'That's good to know,' and he then tells her, 'If you hang onto the tag you can chuck it into someone's bag, as they're passing, and it will set the alarms off. That's when you make your exit.'

Katie thanks him for the advice, and even buys him a beer.

Wednesday 15th December

8 AM Heavy snow.

Find out from the Jaguar dealers that a new wing mirror could be fitted for five hundred and fifty quid if they use my original shell. But, if I want it complete and guaranteed it will cost six hundred and thirty. Needless to say, the old mirror is still on there. There is a new face at breakfast this morning. He is 'Kulgan', about the most fascinating character I've ever met.

He is a true traveller, and for twenty years has been moving around the country from town to town. He was also known as the 'Phone Box Boy', as his mum abandoned him in one of the old red phone boxes just after he was born. The

children's charity, 'Barnardos', took him in and he was brought up there, until he was a teenager.

He then left for a life on the road, and survived by getting a cheap donkey and a little cart. Due to some ancient by-law, he was able to park up on village greens to 'water' his animal, and he would earn a few bob by relating stories of his many travels. The donkey, which he rescued, was called 'Merlin' and they spent nearly twenty years together. He wore a Top-Hat, and curious passers-by would stop to listen to his tales, flinging coins into the Top-Hat, when he'd finished. One night he parked up on the green at Blewbury and as he was telling his tales some little 'feral-scroats' tied firecrackers to Merlin's tail. When they lit them the poor animal panicked and ran straight under the wheels of a truck. I was greatly impressed with this character and brought him home to stay for a few weeks. He was totally honest and possibly the noblest individual I have ever encountered.

He left Hastings, when some 'feral' on a bike, snatched his Top-Hat as he was strolling along Mugsborough seafront. The bike was going so fast he couldn't catch him, and he never did get another Top-Hat. The saddest time for him was when he decided to go and live in India, after Merlin was killed. He saved up five-hundred pounds by working as a KP (kitchen porter) - as menial a job as you can get - and I speak from experience. He was up in St Pancras Station, with all his money in a little bum-bag. He was waiting for the Eurostar train but had time to go to the gents. He took off his bag and hung it on the door. As he was sitting down, a hand reached over from the next cubicle and snatched his bag, and his money and his passport. By the time he got out the cubicle, there wasn't a sign of anybody, so he lost everything, again. I wrote a moving poem to his memory, called 'The Phone-Box Boy', which is published in 'The Century Collection.'

Thursday 16th December

9 AM Snow and ice.

Load all my large photographs into the Jag for my exhibition in Wellington Square Church next Saturday.

It's a huge task as each photo is three foot by two and mounted on aluminium. There are a few dozen that I have selected for display and I spend most of the day setting them up. My back is killing me.

5 PM

Drop by Katie's Cottage. She has a problem with her son, Paul. He goes to college and smokes weed, as you do, being a Mugsborough teenager. He and his friend Toby arranged to score some cannabis during their lunch break in College. They rang some dealers who kindly obliged and trekked up Maze Hill just to sell these kids a bit of dope. They gave them a tenner each, and the dealers departed. Later on, the dealers turned up at Katie's Cottage, threatening to put the boys in hospital if they didn't come across with six hundred quid. Their reasoning was: they got busted on the way back into town and blamed this on the security cameras up in the college that they weren't told about. They now want three hundred off each of the boys for losing their stash. I suggest that Katie score some smack off Eddy and offer them this, in compensation. I assure her it's just another scam and as they are pinheads they will jump at a bit of gear. This actually works, but they are still chasing Toby for his 'share'.

8 PM

Visit 'Hope', as a client, for the first time. Am surprised they are open, as it snowed heavily today, in the afternoon. All the crew welcomes me, as I am 'one of them' now.

Friday 17th December

Noon. Very cold.

The Sally Ann hosts its Christmas Dinner. It's a simple affair, mostly stew and brussel sprouts with a baked potato, but it's welcomed by all present. There is even some pudding afterwards.

There is snow on the ground, but 'Susie Crack' comes in wearing an open top neck and no hat. I warn her to cover her shoulders and give her a scarf, which she refuses. She then explained that she once lived with a crackhead who would often come home and try to strangle her. She says: 'Even today I can't bear a shoulder rub, or get a neck massage as it makes me paranoid.'

J.J. is there today, with the Ducati Kid and Big Jimbo, and Rudolph. The '57' crew is together again, and they want to go for a run. I get the old Jag warmed up, and we head up the industrial estate. Most of the car parks are empty because of the snow and ice, so we take this opportunity to do a few 'Doughnuts' and reverse 'J' turns, not to mention a number of handbrake turns, which are my speciality. I have picked an icy spot so these manoeuvres are really spectacular. We have to clear off before long as someone might just call the 'Old Bill', not that we're breaking any laws, but the noise and the smell of burning rubber is quite noticeable.

Saturday 18th December

9 AM Snow.

Rush down to the Baptist church for my exhibition. Bruce, a photographer friend of mine, is there for moral support. The pictures are priced from a hundred pounds upwards, but I don't sell one, because the church doesn't even open. It's taken me a year of promises to get them to do this and because of some snow, they don't bother to even come and open the doors for me. I can't even get in to remove the photos.

11 AM

Meet the Ducati kid who's just been set upon by the 'Giro Hounds'. He tells me they took everything as he was in no position to defend himself. He's so oiled-up he can't speak most of the time, and as I watched him stagger across the road, I thought it was a miracle he made it to the other side. He tells me he has to get away from Mugsborough, so has decided to sell his lovely stereo and all his computer gear, which is a Dell Pentium 4, with Windows XP, and includes a printer, scanner, monitor, keyboard, etc. This is all stored at Arlettes, and we nip round in the Jag, to pick it up. She has stuck it all out in the hallway, as the Kid is no longer 'flavour of the month'. We drag this downtown to Cash Converters, who tell us they only take 'Flat Screen' monitors now, so we go next door to the Electric Haberdashery who ask how much we want. The Kid tells them they can have the lot for two-fifty (£250), and they burst out laughing. They offer a mere fifty quid. We are disgusted, so nip down to St. Andrews Arcade Computers, who offer us forty. We then rush back to the shop that offered us fifty, but he now says it's only

worth thirty to him, as he just bought one, five minutes ago, which is identical. We are so pissed off we take the thirty. The Kid bought this lot two years ago, for over a grand.

8 PM

Tonight is the last Hope kitchen, until the sixth of January. Snowflake will also close over Christmas, as will the Wednesday breakfast. They will all rely on 'Surviving Christmas' to take over while they have a break for the holidays when a lot of the volunteers will visit family elsewhere.

Sunday 19th December

10 AM More snow.

Wellington Square Baptist Church is open, much to my surprise. I notice the boys in the band have removed all my photos and stuck them in the side cupboard. They have damaged a few because, in their hurry to set the stage up, they just piled them willy-nilly on top of each other, and not face-to-face, as they should be stored. I complain and they apologize.

In the papers this week, an inquest into the death of one of the kitchen clients, Lou Wells, whose funeral I recently attended, revealed he had over five times the legal limit of alcohol in his system, said by the coroner, to be a colossal amount. At his wake, held in his mum's flat behind Warrior Square, I think many of the lads, especially Ned, could have given him a run for his money, that day.

Apparently there was also cocaine and heroin recorded in his system, and he was not a drug user; giving rise to suspicions he may have been 'jacked', against his will, so a 'narrative' verdict was recorded.

The saddest funeral I ever attended was that of Peter Wimble. He was a long-time alcoholic, who started going to 'Hope' kitchen and managed to stop drinking. He had to relinquish his old life-style and his old friends, but frequently visited me to listen to his favourite music, 'Dark Side Of The Moon' by Pink Floyd. We would sit in my conservatory for hours at a time, listening to this on my SACD player. But when Peter went home to his bedsit in Seddlescombe Road, he couldn't handle the loneliness.

He went up the East Hill one rainy night, and jumped to his death. He was only forty-four, and at his funeral there were five wreaths, each made from a single letter. They were D, S, O, T, and M (dark side of the moon).

In other news, this week, there were big drug raids in Mugsborough. There were twenty-one arrests, and five people are already in prison. Nick Pook 48, of Devonshire Road got three years. Kelly Briggs 31, got two years. Lawrence Dunn 39, Carisbrooke Road, got thirty months for supplying cocaine while Errol Mew 45, got three years for supplying heroin. Luke Robinson 35, got thirteen weeks for supplying heroin.

Lee Godfrey 42, Cloudesley Road pleaded not guilty, to possession with intent to supply, while Tim Jones 37, pleaded guilty to supplying heroin.

Bryan Rosewell 36, of Marina pleaded guilty to supplying cocaine, and heroin, despite the drugs in question turning out to be sand and a pebble from the beach parcelled up like a heroin wrap.

All the defendants hailed from Mugsborough.

Sarah Taylor, of Parkwood Road, failed in her appeal against keeping animals for ten years. She kept fifty cats, in her home.

Kieran Hollands 21, of Magdalen Road, Mugsborough, pleaded guilty to burglary along with Rob Clarke 26, who also pleaded guilty to charges of assault and drug trafficking. They were amongst six people arrested for a string of thirty burglaries in the area.

Myles Evans, of Elpinstone Road, has been charged with GBH after stabbing twenty-two year old Jason Holewell, in the stomach. He almost disembowelled him and surgeons told his family, in the hospital, that it was a miracle he survived.

Coin Wray 37, was arrested for suspicion of tampering with a number of vehicles, when police spotted him dragging an exhaust system from his Ford transit van in Mugsborough. He pleaded guilty to four separate charges, involving four Ford vehicles.

Lastly, James Cavier 58, of Cookson Gardens a paedophile who was jailed indefinitely for a string of child sex offences, was freed from prison when top judges overturned his potentially lifelong sentence of 'IIPP'. (Indefinite Imprisonment for Protection of Public)

Even Graham Fisher, who ate bits of his victims, might get paroled in twenty-one years, although he got a number of life sentences. The IIPP is equivalent to being detained 'At Her Majesty's Pleasure'.

Monday 20th December

9 AM Bitterly cold.

Collect Smelly Nelly from her squat as I have found a little job for her. It may even be a regular score, if she can handle it. It is cleaning up Stan's gaff, which is atrocious, covered in used tissues and cotton buds with underwear and clothes just chucked on the floor. As soon as we arrive she inquires if he has any rubber gloves. No such luxuries. Stan desperately needs someone in on a weekly basis, but wants to pay less than the minimum wage although this type of work is normally twice that rate. His logic is that these people are on the dole, so shouldn't be working anyway, and anything is a bonus for them. I get stuck in as well, emptying his hoard of little rubbish bins, which are now full of fruit flies. Nelly is picking up dirty underwear and we have to open all the windows as the flat stinks. Stan saves used cotton buds, but we are too afraid to ask what he uses them for, as nothing would surprise me. After an hour of this, Nelly tells me she has to go, as she is going to be sick. We take our leave of 'Uncle Stan', but he tells us now that we have to go to the cash machine to get some money out; even though he knew she was coming round this morning.

7 PM

Snowflake. Now snowing heavily. Not many in tonight. Sticks is there, and she and Big Jimbo seem to be an 'item' these days. Even Rudolph has teamed up with Layla, a Nigerian girl from the 'Ark of Hope', who used to ply him with curries after the Sunday services.

Tuesday 21st December

8 AM Bitterly cold.

Eddy calls for me, and we walk up to the YMCA. He has agreed to help pack some hampers with me. This entails sorting out pallet loads of beans and spaghetti and soups etc. onto different tables. Then the trollies can be wheeled round, and

something from each batch placed into one load to make up an individual hamper. Then we have to sort toiletries, and wrap presents, and these take some effort because there are so many categories: Old men, Young men, Teenage boys, and Young children; also Older female, Younger female, Teenage girls, and Babies. All these need individual boxes with large labels, and, each van driver needs to know exactly how many of each type to carry, so the routes have to be worked on carefully. If not, we could end up miles away with no present for some little old lady, for example. The number of hampers isn't important, as we can't do more than about forty a trip, especially in this weather. We then return for a cup of tea and a bite to eat, about midday. But first a few days of hard work is required to get everything sorted and wrapped and packed, including over a thousand presents. No Snowflake kitchen tonight.

Wednesday 22nd December

9 Am Very cold.

Ring 'Holdens', my solicitors. They are going to represent me with a barrister as the other side is calling in the big guns. Everyone realizes this is a test case, which could draw new precedents. The clever agents make you sign a notice to quit when you take over a tenancy and tell you it's just routine to cover themselves, but if you behave well it will be renewed every six months. But, because you've already signed, a section 21 can get you out with an accelerated re-possession order in a couple of weeks, which is what I now have. The only reason I'm still here is the fact the case is going to court.

10 AM

Very cold and foggy. Walk up to Eddy's but he's still in bed. After a smoke and a coffee we head off to the 'Y'. We pack fifty hampers and all the presents which we have sorted and dozens of little bags of fruit into the huge van. It's bigger than a Transit, and awkward to drive.

On our morning run we do twenty addresses, from which: one has died from last year; one has moved; and one has gone to a home. We also leave one hamper with a carer; one with a neighbour; one with a blind man and one with a ninety-four year old, who tells us we're the only people he will see over Christmas. Most people are

enormously grateful, and now Eddy is beginning to show a softer side. I hope this will give him a new perspective on things.

On the way back he says: 'I feel good, Rad.'

'Never mind,' I tell him, 'it will soon pass.'

3 PM

We deliver to some strange clients. One refined lady lives in the most palatial bungalow I've ever seen. Her doctor, or a relative probably referred her, but she doesn't need a hamper. We leave one anyway in the hope she'll be able to give it to some neighbour. We also have to enter a private driveway on another stop, where there are two Mercedes parked. On handing the hamper over, I enquire if they are both her cars, but she tells me they belong to her neighbours and she just lets them park there!

8 PM

I open the door to Micky and Michelle. They have bought me a Christmas Present. They have a couple of rather expensive bottles of wine, which I assume they lifted from the 'Offy' across the road. They have very little money, and I am truly moved by this unexpected gesture of friendship, but can't say the same for the shopkeeper.

Thursday 23rd December

9 AM Cold icy day.

Out on the van early. We have another fifty hampers, ready to go. We finished off, with the help of Pam. We keep her in stitches, with the 'craic' (Irish humour). After three hours we are gutted, so back to the 'Y' for a break. I can't eat, but Eddy eats for both of us. Later on, I buy a pint of milk and some dark chocolate, for the afternoon run. We manage to work late, getting back when everyone's gone home, having delivered all our hampers and all our fruit and even running out of presents.

5 PM

Rang my solicitors, and they have decided to file a defence, based on some obscure European Court of Human Rights Law.

6 PM

Pop in to see Nanette. The house is cold and bleak. She is lonely over Christmas, but aren't we all, if you live on your own? At least Katie in her cold cottage, who has no money for presents, does have her kids with her. I have given her two hampers, although she's not on our list.

8 PM

I have arranged for the 'crew' to come round my gaff for a Christmas drink and a few mince pies. I also have the 'Sisters' coming as well so there are three men and three women. My girlfriend Tracy will be helping me out, so the eight of us should get the joint rocking. As Tracy prepares simple snacks, the 'Sisters' arrive and watch a Blu-Ray DVD on my fifty-inch 'Vierra' Television.

9 PM

Jimbo and J.J. and the Ducati Kid come bowling in, cracking open their cans, as they greet me enthusiastically. The café downstairs is closed, and I have no near neighbours at the moment, but I do have the latest 'Kef' surround-sound speaker-eggs, and the huge matching sub-woofer. I put on the latest 'Aliens' DVD, when everybody has settled down on my large leather circular suite, after we've shared out Micky's expensive wine, the subtlety of which is lost on the crew's faded palette. I use a Select-2 'THX' amplifier, to feed each of my eight speakers, with 120 watts of RMS sound. With the 'Sub' turned up, the walls vibrate, and the chandeliers tinkle. About thirty minutes into the movie, with a thousand watts blaring in their ears, the whole crew falls asleep. I shake them individually and scream in their ears, but they are out cold and stay like that 'til morning. The 'Sisters' have retired to the kitchen, where they are bopping around to Rock-n-Roll, but when the drink runs out they make a disgraceful exit. I resolve that this will be the last time anyone watches a movie round here. What a waste!

Friday 24th December

Christmas Eve.

9 AM Very cold and icy.

We hope to beat our record with nearly six hundred hampers this year. Last year we used a lot of stuff which was out of date, but E.U. laws now dictate this food must be dated at least a month away from our delivery dates so a lot of food is

junked. What a waste! Now we are sticking soap, toothpaste, razors and toilet rolls in the hampers to compensate.

A hamper normally includes tins of soup, beans spaghetti, tomatoes, fruit, meat, fish, potatoes and vegetables. We also try, if we have them, to include tea, coffee, evaporated milk, jam, custard, mince pies and some cake or chocolate.

Every year 'Surviving Christmas' helps over six thousand people, including five hundred families, and five hundred elderly. Last year, this cost over thirty-five thousand pounds. This year alone, apart from the hampers and the clothes that visitors get to pick from, we also gave twenty-five thousand in food vouchers to individuals.

Of course there are the three days, of Christmas day, Boxing Day and the day after when we feed hundreds of visitors with a Christmas meal. Most have nowhere else to go and the same ones turn up every year. For people like Eddy and myself, with no family, it is also a Godsend.

At the 'Y' when we finish deliveries and drive back, we see six cop-cars parked. Seems one of the gypsy families have caused trouble. Apparently when some young scroat was refused any more mince pies, she told her boyfriend that the guy in the kilt 'flashed' her when she asked what he wore under his kilt. He, of course, was the one serving the pies. He is a volunteer, and it is extremely unlikely this would have happened. The boyfriend goes over and 'nuts' him. The police are called and the boyfriend then 'nuts' a female police officer as he's being put in handcuffs. The whole gypsy family of a dozen or so, is evicted but they have since come back, 'tooled up', seeking vengeance. Hence the six police cars, full of 'Old Bill' spend Christmas Eve sitting out in the cold though we ply them with drinks and mince pies.

11 PM

Head off to Midnight Mass, which I always enjoy. Heavy Eddy even tags along. Pity the churches won't be packed like this for another year.

Saturday 25th December

Christmas Day.

9 AM Snow and ice.

Christmas day. It is still below zero, but the government is giving weekly 'twenty-five-pound' cold weather payments to the disenfranchised, if the temperature has been below zero for three consecutive days.

Up at the 'Y' we had hoped to finish all the deliveries today, but someone has really cocked up, and more route sheets have been found which we never knew existed. Panic mode sets in as I also find the cable clutch on my van has seized up. It refuses to go into first gear and this is doing my left arm in, as I wrestle with the gear lever. Eddy and I don't hit the road 'til eleven, but after three hours come back 'fryed', looking to join the others for Christmas dinner. We are late and the food is all dried up, the peas being like marbles, and the turkey as dry as sawdust.

Today we have been to many hovels, where the smell was pungent and pervasive. The residents didn't seem to notice, and wanted us to stay and chat, as we tried to hold our breath until we got back into the fresh air. I went to one place where the smell of paraffin was overwhelming. I asked the old man living there if he noticed. No, he tells me, because this one doesn't smell like some of them. Because these people are living constantly with the fumes few even notice the smell once the heater's been on a while.

We do see the other side of the spectrum.

One charming lady, who was ninety-seven (we even have some clients aged over a hundred) resided in a penthouse flat with stunning views. As we carted her hamper, and fruit and presents up the corridors we couldn't help but notice the ornate décor, with stunning antiques and paintings. She refused her hamper, but promised to find it a good home. Eddy may have been thinking the same about the antiques.

Sunday 26th December

Boxing Day.

10 AM Ice everywhere.

Eddy and I go in early. We must finish all the deliveries by today. Some addresses have been typed wrongly, others simply don't exist; and then there are the callbacks of those we've missed. Some clients from last year are still on the current list, as their social worker or doctor never bothered to inform us that they have died, or gone into a hospice or an old folks home. We even have addresses that have

been demolished, and some clients just refuse to accept charity. One old boy said he couldn't handle it. He had enough stuff. 'Well. Take the present, at least,' we ask. 'Oh. All right then!' he responds.

When we finish for the day, and return 'Home', we see Naomi has a black eye. She was involved in the fracas yesterday, but was just standing outside today when someone came up and clocked her for no reason, so she says. These odd events seem to occur at regular intervals to Naomi, for some strange reason.

Eddy and I enjoy our dinner, as I sit opposite our local M.P. Amber Rudd. I know Amber, as I once did a photo session with her, in my studio. She has popped in to see how we run things and tells me she is quite impressed.

We have fulfilled our quotas, and have even managed to give Stan, and Katie and Eddy's mum and sister some hampers. And I have even remembered Nanette.

The most rewarding event was on the way back with two hampers left out of fifty. I noticed two women from the soup kitchen, slouching past. The street people don't have any address, so they don't get anything. We stop and give them our last two hampers with some presents, which will be the only ones they're likely to get. This brings tears to their eyes, and ours, as they are so grateful!

Christmas week is a very quiet week as regards local news. Two men were alleged to have made a string of hoax calls to the emergency services.

Cars, abandoned in the snow, have been targeted by opportunistic thieves. A large number of cars and vans were broken into after being abandoned around town.

Dan Dawson 19, was jailed for three months for attacking a thirty-two year old man, with a hammer.

Daniel Marlin 31, who was on his way to hospital, died when a Highways Lorry crashed into him.

Martin Delaney 38, was convicted of three counts of assault. He had returned home from the police station, where he had been questioned for an earlier assault on his girl friend, when he found her in bed with another man. He went berserk, and attacked both of them. He pushed his girl friend, who has a heart condition, against a door handle damaging her back. The court was told he was very apologetic the following morning.

Councillor Godfrey Daniels who once visited my house in his capacity of Mayor urged Sussex Police not to lose focus on the drug war as cuts continue to bite. He stated: 'I think it is one of the biggest scourges in our society. In my role as a magistrate I find drugs are the root cause of a huge number of crimes and I urge the police not to under-estimate the problem they cause. We are not doing 'Strictly Come Dancing', here. We are doing a very serious job!'

Godfrey has little love for the street people, once telling me he'd like to cart them all off back where they came from, as they clutter up the seafront, making a mess. But when he comes down to the Salvation Army Citadel for his choir practices, in the room next to the soup kitchen, he never comes in to see how things are going or makes any effort as a councillor to interact, unlike Lee Clark.

Joke of the week: Hastings Police Station has had its opening hours slashed in half as part of the on-going cost cutting drive.

Monday 27th December

Christmas Holiday. Very cold. Snow.

All the shops and businesses are closed. This is a bank holiday. Last day of 'Surviving Christmas'. I meet Eddy up there and he's really cheesed off. When he got home yesterday, he discovered he'd been burgled. Obviously his friends - and his enemies - knew he'd be helping out on the van yesterday, so someone took advantage of that and broke into his 'drum'.

Eddy and I have a few hampers left that are ones we've missed. One is for John Holland, known as 'Dutch', down at the kitchens. When we go round there, I am amazed at the state of his room. He has a great stereo system, but not much else, apart from a mattress on the floor. The place is freezing, and he shows us a bill for four hundred and eighty pounds, for the last eighteen months electric.

Ironically enough, on the way back, Gay Ray rings. He has been laid up in bed for the last five days, and has no heating either, as he couldn't get out to top his gas card up.

There is a large Christmas tree, festooned with lights, up in YMCA, and I sit with some of the street people; a Salvation Army band comes in and plays requests for carols. It is quite nostalgic, and home away from home. We also enjoy our last meal

there, but the turkey has run out so it's just meat-loaf, and vegetables. As I don't eat meat I just have some quiche.

We give out a few Christmas cards, to each other and head off into the night, back to our own little lives, for another year.

Tuesday 28th December

9 AM Icy day.

Another Bank Holiday. All the shops are shut again, but the supermarkets open for 'Sunday Hours'. The 'Darvell' people come down, and clean up the YMCA, carting off the giant tree, which they kindly donate every year.

Eddy has got a friend who's acquired a handy gadget on the Internet, for two thousand pounds. It is a sort of card reader, which shops use to credit customers with Gas and Electric when they top up their cards. This machine pre-loads so that when a card is put into any meter, it credits it with fifty quid. The 'scroat' charges twenty, so the 'customer' gets another thirty, in extra credit. He tells me he and his friend went down a whole street, in a poor area yesterday, and made about a grand in a couple of hours. He offers to try it out on mine, and sure enough, it seems to work.

Ring the Isle of Wight, and speak to Adrian, who was Jay's boss when he was working as a window cleaner. He had to sack him for he kept coming to work drunk, and Adrian couldn't risk him falling off a ladder. However Jay managed to fall down a fire escape when out drinking and now has a titanium plate in his jaw. He is so proud of it I think he wants one for the other side.

I just ring to find out if Adrian gave Jay the twenty-five quid, and Christmas card I sent. I cannot send anything direct, as Jay rips it up, and sends it straight back, so I send everything to Adrian.

I mention in the card that I know the money will go on Valium or crack, and would like to send him more, but now have to start saving for his funeral.

Wednesday 29th December

10 AM Snow flurries.

Shops all open again, and supermarkets have stocked up, so there's a massive rush to get food in, as almost everyone forgot about the extra bank holiday. It takes over half an hour just in the queue, as the trolleys are six deep on every aisle. I spend a hundred quid, as I have run out of everything, even basics like bleach and toilet rolls.

1 PM

J.J. visits me. He is so pissed, literally, but mentally as well. He was 'Can-ning' it in bottle alley, where there are no cameras to catch him breaking his ASBO, when some off-duty 'plastic' saw him opening a tin, and rang up the 'Bill', who caught up with him before he had a chance to knock it back. They grabbed him and he's just spent the night in the cells. He's now on probation, and they want to drag him to court in the morning. In the meantime he's round my gaff, shouting about how many arms he's going to pull off, and smashing imaginary eyeballs on my kitchen table. This is the other side of J.J. - not a pretty sight. I have to humour him as I don't want to get chucked out the window, as my flying skills are not yet perfected.

I do my usual ploy to get rid of him; I go to the toilet and ring a friend, getting them to call me back in five minutes. When my mobile goes off I suddenly find it's an urgent call from a friend in trouble and have to shoot out. This always works, but it still takes ten minutes to manoeuvre J.J. down the stairs.

Thursday 30th December

9 AM Cold dull day.

J.J. appears before the beak. I accompany him, for moral support. This particular magistrate knows him very well: almost like family. He starts giving it large:

'Gorman, you persistent recidivist. Everything you've told me is a tissue of lies.'

'Don't slag me off, you old scroat, or you'll get a good clumping.'

Neither understands what the other has said, but fortune favours the brave. The court learns J.J. has just had a kidney removed, so he is remanded for rehabilitation involving six months detox. He gives the Judge the thumbs-up, and leaves the Court chortling, blowing kisses to the probation officer, who is not amused. But J.J. has just had a kidney out, and knows he'll lose the other one if he carries on drinking. Even he seems to sense that he won't last with no kidneys. He

had gone to London for a spell to escape the scene, but the festive season has drawn him back to his friends in the 'crew'. I run him home to his scrubby little room, and he sits there telling me this sentence is just what he needs. He actually starts crying as he tells me, that at last he'll have peace and quiet in a room of his own with his own TV and no bills, and even three meals a day. 'And', I pipe up, 'as much boiling water as you can drink'.

I am quite shocked to see him sitting there, bolt upright and sober, with tears rolling down his face. He's the toughest son-of-a-bitch I've ever met, and at first I thought he was crying with laughter.

Friday 31st December

7 PM Dull frosty day.

It is New Years Eve, and Gay Ray has organized a party and meal this evening. All the crew turn up, loaded with booze and, as Ray prepares his 'Mussels Molinier', try to get as oiled as is humanely possible without actually dying. J.J. is there, off the wagon again, and Big Jimbo, and the Kid and Rudolf. The whole 'crew' is still alive, and back in action again. Jimbo crashes out shortly after the meal, which I confess I really enjoyed, as someone who can't stand mussels since they once poisoned me in Turkey. Ray's great stereo gets wound right up (he used to be a sound engineer) and things really take off. The joint is rocking and the place gets trashed, as the neighbours ring the police.

They bang on the window because Ray's armoured door is impenetrable, and banging on it just reverberates right through the house, winding the neighbours up even more. Eventually, realizing the police are not going to go away, I let them in. We turn the music down to hear what they have to say for themselves, disturbing decent people on a special night like tonight.

As they threaten to drag us all off to the cells if we don't 'shut it', Jimbo, the only peaceful party in the room, wakes up. The head cop, who has noticed it's just gone midnight, turns round to him and says, 'Happy New Year, Sir.' Big Jimbo, who's not happy to be woken by the cops at any time, replies, 'Fuck off, Officer.'

The copper is really taken aback, not because this guy was the quiet one, but the fact he has added, 'Officer' to the response, which adds injury to insult.

CHAPTER FIVE JANUARY

Saturday 1st January 2011

New Years Day. Very cold but bright.

A multitude of text messages start flying around as everyone recovers from last night and the backlog of messages starts to filter through. The street people all have mobiles, which can now be purchased for as little as a tenner.

Arlette sends me a 'Twelve days of Christmas' text, which goes as follows: 12 Feral kids, 11 Rotten teeth, 10 Dodgy Fags, 9 pm Curfew, 8 False Boobs, 7 Div-Dads, 6 Grams of Coke, 5 more ASBOs, 4 Stolen Alloys, 2 Many Beers, and a Brand new STD.

I text my son, Jay, in the Isle of Wight, wishing him 'Happy New Year' and later get a voice message back. He rants and raves at me down the phone about how he can never be happy which is all my fault.

The kitchens are all closed for a week, so hard times on the streets. Even the Sally Ann won't open, and no Wednesday breakfast this week.

After the 'do' last night I have a sore throat, a bad stomach, a splitting headache, and am coughing and spluttering all day. Went to my friend Myrium for a meal, but couldn't eat any mince pies or Christmas cake, which I love, because I've now developed Diverticulitis, and a Hiatus Hernia. This makes me nauseous and gives me a bloated feeling, and is even worse than the 'GORD', which I sometimes suffer from. Even a cup of tea in the morning gives me acid indigestion, and makes me burp for hours afterwards.

Sunday 2nd January

9 AM Sunny bright cold day.

Head off to 'Welly' Square Church, to collect loads of cards from other members of the congregation. I place them round the Christmas tree I have at home. It is a real pine tree, with millions of needles - mostly on the floor.

I have festooned it with a string of three hundred lights. I love the festive season and my pet hate is people who claim they don't 'Do Christmas', mainly to save on presents and cards, but always seem to accept them from others, of course.

It is interesting that even the Muslim Taxi drivers, in Mugsborough all seem to have little tiny trees, lit up, on their windscreens. Even Heavy Eddy goes out of his way to get his kids presents for Christmas, even if they do belong to someone else.

People bitch about how everyone should be nice like this all year round, but I say the real miracle is the fact they can be so for just a few days.

Monday 3rd January

9 AM Very cold.

I cannot drink alcohol for the moment. My guts are so bad now I am getting the shakes when I stress out. This never used to happen and I was working out at the gym until recently. Maybe I am just 'burning out'.

Have just received an Accelerated Repossession Order in the post. I can't believe it as I've spent thousands on the flat, and always paid my rent on time. I suspect the reason is I've called in Environmental Health, concerning the Love Café underneath my flat, which bears the brunt of its noise and smell.

After consulting Holden & Co., my solicitors, I find I am entitled for legal aid to appeal this. There is no record of a section 21 being overturned, except by a council tenant in Manchester, who was given one because his son collected ASBOs for a hobby. The Court ruled in his favour, stating he was entitled to the privacy of family life, but of course I have no family, and am a private tenant.

I rush down to the agents HAS, in Robinson Street, and they are just as surprised as I am. They ring the landlords, the Jewish consortium of 'Clockwork Estates', in Stamford Hill, but are offered no explanation. I have always got on well with 'Chaim and Jacob', who were my landlords, and even had a gentleman's agreement to fix things when they went wrong. 'Anything you want, Sir, get it done, and just leave the receipts with HAS.'

The agency now type me a reference, which states, 'This is to confirm that Mr. R. has lived in the above property for two years and always paid his rent on time. We have always found him to be a very good tenant. He has kept the property in an

immaculate condition and his rent of four hundred and fifty pounds a month, has always been paid on time. We have no hesitation whatsoever, in recommending Mr. R. to another landlord, and will be very sorry to lose him as a client.'

But they still want to throw me out.

Tuesday 4th January

9 AM Calm cold day.

Have an urgent appointment with Joe Holden, the scourge of local landlords. He informs me a precedent was set a month ago, in 'Pinnock versus Manchester Council'.

Apparently they'd taken this man to court over an issue where his son was given too many ASBOs, and they wanted the family evicted. He won the case. Mr. Holden tells me it's never been attempted before with a private landlord, so may change the law of the land. I give him a list of how much work I've done on the flat, since moving into it. Apart from carpets, I fitted eight Venetian blinds, and seven 'touch-dimmer' light switches. I also fitted two chandeliers, loads of wall mirrors and a carved wooden fireplace. I even tiled the kitchen and fitted new window locks. He makes out a comprehensive list, which includes gold bathroom fittings, but I am bemused when he insists on putting the new wooden toilet seat on the inventory. I have to photograph everything and supply him with copies.

Wednesday 5th January

9 AM Cold, foggy start.

No breakfast this morning, so I wander down the 'office' to meet the crew. They have a few tins on them, and offer me a cider, which I accept although I realize I can't drink it with my bad stomach. I surreptitiously pour it into the nearest plant pot. J.J.'s brother Stewart, is there with the crew. He is also a big lad, and just the opposite of J.J. who is blessed with a five-second fuse. Stew is very affable and harmless. Suddenly a cop car pulls up nearby. As they see the coppers get out, the Ducati Kid hands me a large plastic bag, telling me it's full of empties, but he doesn't want to be seen carrying them. It's quite full of cans, but as I take it I realize there's some full tins in there as well, because it's just too heavy. I walk off as the

cops approach. They don't bother me, and they know all the crew, but they call Stewart over, who's now walking away.

'Come here, I want to speak to you,' says the copper.

'Well I don't want to talk to you. I don't know even you,' replies Stewart, as he carries on walking. This takes the cop off guard, but he stays to interrogate the rest of them and hand out Dispersal Orders. Fortunately I have disposed of my drink, so avoid the ignominy of this.

We all decide to go into town and have a drink there. I have a great idea. I go into 'Jempsons' and order a coffee, sitting at one of the outside tables. I tell the crew to get some cans in a bag, and join me at the table. So we all sit outside, in the pedestrian precinct, but behind the café's cloth barrier that adjoins the public precinct. It is only waist high, which offers a great view. The sun is shining, for a change. Suddenly the same cop car cruises up the precinct. The boys all have their beers in a bag, and raise these in salute to the cops who drive by with their windows down, within inches of where we sit.

I also salute, with my cup of coffee, as I know the enclosure is beyond their jurisdiction. There's nothing they can do, although they know the crew is drinking alcohol in public. But they are not happy. We wait until the coast is clear and the lads head off again to the 'Offy' for a top-up. Next thing I know, J.J. is sitting on top of the electric entrance bollard that controls the flow of traffic into the precinct. He is rising up in the air with it, just as it lets the cop car out the precinct. The trouble starts when he bounces up onto the huge bins nearby, and starts clowning around like a monkey up a tree. He soon gathers a crowd, including the same cops, who have parked round the corner, and walked back.

They arrest him, putting him in cuffs, while he tries to explain he has a court case in London in the morning, and even has the train ticket in his pocket. He is telling them now that they can't lock him up. But they can and they do.

As he's taken away he screams out for us to ring his 'brief', and explain the situation. The rest of us feel this was planned all along by J.J., as a means of avoiding his case up in London.

Thursday 6th January

6 AM Sunny all day.

I head off to the gym early and get a 'Swedish Massage', by a beautiful girl. She is very thorough, and finds four knotted muscles in my shoulders, as hard as marbles. She tells me it is tension. What's new!

8 AM

Chris, who lives in the flat below me, has taken Shaun in for a few weeks. Shaun had moved in with me at the end of October and stayed over two months. Chris had the room now, so it gave me a break. Now an old flame of Chris's has turned up, and also wants Chris to put her up for a few nights although there is not enough room. Her name is Sara and she is very attractive. Chris goes to work and Shaun decides to take Sara for a drink. They end up drunk, as Chris soon realizes when he gets home from work.

Shaun gets chucked out, but has the keys to a house he's working on, elsewhere. This house belongs to John, a friend of mine, and I actually got Shaun the job.

6 PM.

I drop Shaun off at this house, and he settles in nicely.

In the meantime Sara has upset Chris, and he's told her to clear off, or words to that effect. So she turns up, the same evening, with her cases at Shaun's place of work. He is there on his own and she says she has just called round to say goodbye, before going back to London. She wants to bring her cases in, out of the rain, until she can get a taxi, so Shaun drags them in and makes her a cup of tea. She suddenly bursts out into tears, and confesses she has no money and will need to stay the night. Shaun is already unhappy with her, so chucks her and her bags out in the rain.

11 PM

Shaun has already gone to bed, on the old sofa, but is awoken by police hammering on the door. They arrest him, and he is dragged out in cuffs with just the clothes he's got on. It seems Sara has filed a rape complaint against him.

He has a great defence. He tells the police to ask Sara what is unusual about his body, because if they'd slept together she would have spotted this. She has no answer and they have to let Shaun go: he had an orchietomy recently, when he got cancer in his testicles.

The police run him home, and casually mention they found out Sara has a host of complaints against other men in London, but they must investigate each new case in a fresh light.

Friday 7th January

9 AM Very cold day.

Wake up to a load of abusive and threatening texts from Heavy Eddy. He rang yesterday to say he was going to Darvell to get the dog back. To stop him I pretended that I had sold the dog to them for three hundred and fifty quid, which I know he hasn't got, but would need, if he did want to buy back the dog.

He says he was going to give me back my fifty, but now I owe him three hundred. I knew at the time Eddy couldn't look after the dog, which he saw purely as a commercial venture. I have invested time and effort into this guy, for I could sense he was torn between his bad habits and his obvious talent. He seemed to be in a spiritual battle, and admitted as much many times. I am now forced to consider he may be just a total reprobate.

Eddy soon realizes he won't get his three hundred, but admits he is 'clucking' and will settle for a hundred. I realize he needs to score and ignore his texts, until he threatens to come round with Nathan, and rip my door off. I have some pepper spray, and borrow a 'stun-gun' off Chris, as I know crack addicts can resort to desperate measures when they need a pipe. It is at times like this that I wish I'd been able to hang onto my gun licence.

I had a stainless steel Magnum, (a 686 Smith & Wesson), and a 45-70 'Pedersoli' buffalo gun. When I purchased that one, people wanted to know why, for there are no buffalo in Hastings; I could only fire it up at Bisley, as it would destroy the 'Butts' up at the local club. I also had a Bakail double-barreled shotgun, and a 'Ruger' target rifle with a silencer and laser sights.

I lie awake that night, waiting for the door to burst in.

Saturday 8th January

8 AM Very frosty all day

I had a sleepless night. Many deadlines from Heavy Eddy were issued by text, but passed without incident. I was reluctant to involve the police, as once you do that, you are known as a grass on the streets.

However this situation did a 'U-turn', when Eddy sent a text to say if I didn't bring him some money round and drop it through his door, he was going to the cops to report the theft of his dog. This plays straight into my hands, for now I 'text' him back to tell him I have a record of all his threatening texts on my phone. Afterwards, the next text is different in tone and he begs me to send him Arlette's number as it's very urgent. I assume something's happened to the Ducati Kid and, as I send him the number, text back asking what the trouble is. There is no reply from him so I phone Arlette to see what she knows and it appears Eddy just rang. He told her he'd paid thirty quid to the Kid for his computer, and was coming round for the money, as he's just found out that the Kid sold it from under his nose.

This, of course, is rubbish and I warn Arlette not to give him a penny if he turns up. Later on I visit Arlette and apologize for giving her number to Eddy, who now texts me to say he wants no further contact and does not ever want to speak to me again. This is the answer to a prayer, as I have felt on the edge of a nervous breakdown, this last couple of days.

Sunday 9th January

9 AM Cold sunny start.

Manage to drag myself to church. George, who helps me serve the teas and coffees after the service is not happy with me. This was because I was gossiping to other church members about the schism in the church, over our Pastor and a young lady member he was supposed to be involved with. George reminds me not to say anything, in or out of church, as the Baptist Union and solicitors are now involved, and although it seems the Minister will not be coming back, we still have to pay his wages. I agree to keep my remarks to myself.

After church I go visit Nanette. Her daughter is there and tells me Nanette's liver just packed up, and she was rushed to the 'Inquest' hospital at the weekend. It seems some of her veins have exploded and she had some sort of heart attack. I hear they put a stent in her jugular, down to her liver, but she has been moved to

another hospital in London, as they didn't seem to have enough white platelets to restore her system. Afterwards we learn that when she was in a coma in the hospital, she heard them lean over her and say, 'She's gone. We've lost her.'

However, if she does recover, she must now avoid all acidic foods like tomatoes and oranges. I suspect that, for Nanette, her drinking days are over.

The papers this week open with news of the body of an unidentified man being found in a basement flat.

The body of a woman was also found, hanging in her bathroom.

Vandals smashed open a wishing well, to steal coins destined for the poor. This was operated by the 'Winkle Club Charity'.

Staff at Heron House, are currently being trained to spot loan-sharks who are now preying on clients that claim benefits there.

Angry staff are staging a sit-in at the High Beech hotel, in Mugsborough. There is a large annex there, where problem families are placed. The general manager, Dr. Wyramuttoo Maheswaran is taking court proceedings against the manager and five staff, in an effort to get them evicted.

I make the news myself this week as one of my photographs, 'Wild Dolphins', won first prize at the town's Camera Club. Later on, I also won another first for Digital Image of the Year, when the Mayoress presented me with a trophy.

Monday 10th January

8 AM Frosty morning.

My neck is so stiff I have to have an emergency appointment with Balman, my Osteopath, at the Canute Road Practice. This costs nearly thirty quid, so I don't normally go unless things are really bad.

I burst a tyre on my Jag and have to pay a hundred and twenty for a new one, and because they can't get the lock nut off the wheel, without smashing it, another forty for four sets of new nuts. The insurance ran out as well, so that cost me five hundred, and another hundred or so, to get the beast through the yearly 'MOT' (Ministry of Transport) test.

Balman asks if I'm suffering from any stress. I don't bother mentioning Heavy Eddy, and my looming eviction, or the thousand pounds I've had to find to get the Jag

back on the road. Also my short-term memory seems to be fading fast, but that may be a blessing in disguise.

Tuesday 11th January

7 PM Very cold evening.

Missed the Snowflake session last night, and the night before, because I'm afraid that Heavy Eddy will be there. It's the first time in five years I've ever missed two consecutive sessions of a soup kitchen.

For a change I visit Richard. He is an old Public Schoolboy so he's well educated. We share a love of poetry and writing. He is a bit of an obsessive compulsive when it comes to cleanliness and hygiene. As he makes me a cup of tea he carries on with the washing up. He always wears two pair of rubber gloves, which has earned him the name of 'Double Glover'.

It is so nice to have a normal conversation with somebody who does not drink, or smoke, or take drugs of any sort. As I leave I wonder what sort of life I'm leading, and how I got into it, and how I can get out of it before I crack up.

Pop round Nanette's to find out how she is. Arthur, an old family friend, is looking after the place while Nanette's in hospital. As he updates me, I inquire about his hands, which are covered with bandages. Apparently another friend of Nanette's appeared last night also enquiring after her. Arthur has heard of this guy, whose name is Spike, so invites him in for a minute.

Spike has a bag full of 'bevies', so they crack open a few tins. As they listen to Nanette's stereo, Spike crashes out on the floor. Arthur finishes the last tin, and kips out on the sofa. After a couple of hours Spike comes to, and freaks out when he finds Arthur has polished off his last drink. Spike needs to sip something every couple of hours to get any sleep. He is very angry and pushes Arthur against the wall where a mirror is hanging. The mirror breaks, and Arthur lashes out at Spike, who picks up a shard of broken mirror, and retaliates. Arthur gets his hands badly slashed, as Spike 'goes into one', slicing the air with this lump of glass as Arthur tries to protect his face with his hands. The 'claret' is squirting everywhere, even onto Nanette's new sheepskin rug. He ends up covered in blood but Spike won't let him ring for an ambulance. He doesn't have to, for the neighbours have rung the

police and they soon arrive, with the ambulance, and a pair of handcuffs for Spike, who has to be pepper-sprayed to comply with their wishes. When Nanette finally returns home she's puzzled why her lovely white sheepskin has turned a brighter shade of pink, after Arthur stuck it in the washing machine. I learn later, that Spike got three years, but Arthur got three thousand, from the criminal injuries board. 'All's well that ends well'.

Wednesday 12th January

At the Wednesday breakfast I turn up wearing a 'cricket box' down my trousers, and a 'pepper spray', in my body-belt. I also have Chris's stun-gun so I feel like a Gladiator going into the arena. Am expecting some sort of agro from Heavy Eddy, but I can't run for ever and will have to face him sooner or later.

As it happens he doesn't turn up but sends me a text to say he feels our friendship is worth more than any dog, and claims he's had to go to hospital with blinding headaches. He tells me later they discovered a 'bleed' on the brain. Not sure if this is a polite term for a minor stroke but I tell him he'll die soon if he doesn't slow down and pull his horns in. He tends to listen to me when he's clean which is rare at the moment.

Have a chat with Shaun when I get home and he tells me how lucky I was not to have got involved with Sara myself. She had actually turned up at my drum(home) the day after the debacle with the police, looking for a place to stay. She looked radiant in a long white cotton dress, which complimented her long blonde hair. She spoke in a demure refined voice but Shaun had already warned me and as much as I wanted her, had to refuse hospitality.

There, but for the Grace of God, go I.

Thursday 13th January

8 PM Very cold day.

Down at Hope kitchen Tony the Hat comes in with Susie Crack. She is shacking up with him at the moment and last night they nearly died together when a washer-dryer caught fire. They had been donated this by 'Seaview', who sometimes do deals with Adams and Jarrett. This was a 'Bosch', a very good brand, but they must

have stuffed it too full, and the thing caught fire on the drying cycle. Tony woke up to find the room full of smoke. He slid out of bed, dragging Susie with him, but couldn't find the door through the smoke. Luckily a neighbour burst in and pulled them both to safety. The flat was destroyed and the machine melted. Tony's beard and hair stank of smoke as if he'd fallen into a bonfire, and his eyebrows were clustered with fine granules of carbon. Even his clothes smelled. On complaining to 'Seaview', they were sent to Adams and Jarrett, as the machine was under warranty, but they referred them to the manufacturers who referred them back to 'Seaview'. After many expensive phone calls, they never got any satisfaction, or compensation - or another machine.

Friday 14th January

10 AM Dull day.

Receive an amazing text from Eddy. It reads,

'I just want to say your friendship is worth more to me than money. In fact more to me than anything I can name. Lately I've been insecure and paranoid, and then got that bleed on my brain. Now the hospital has cleaned me up and I am more like myself. So I am truly sorry for being so horrible to you and it won't happen again. I give you my word. I think of you a bit like my dad. I want the chance to speak to my dad and stand in front of him, and look him in the eye and tell him I love him.'

At the time I find it sad, that a crack addict can relate to me better than my own son, who just happens to be the same age.

It is a weight off my mind that Eddy is so friendly after what I can only assume was a crack binge. He tells me that when he was in hospital he watched a man die in the bed next to him. He was called Herbert and he was wearing a Crucifix when he passed away, with Eddy holding his hand. Eddy says they prayed together, but he still died. He now says that was final proof for him that God does not exist.

11 AM

Meet up with Eddy as we open the Friday session of the Sally Ann. We confront each other and he asks, 'Are we cool?'

We shake hands and I give him a hug. I also give him my expensive golden crucifix, inlaid with diamonds. It's about two inches long and quite beautiful, but I never wear

jewellery now and I feel Eddy needs it a lot more than me. It is in a box, which I tell him not to open 'til he gets home.

3 PM

I see Eddy later that afternoon. He tells me he cried when he opened the present I gave him. He says he always wanted one like that but could never afford it. He claims he will now save up for a gold chain, befitting the crucifix, and swears never to sell it or give it away. I am very pleased that he appreciates it.

He then tells me he's just seen a miracle that very afternoon. Some kid with no brakes on his bike sailed into oncoming traffic. He hit a car and shot straight through the windscreen. The driver, and the teenager both staggered out of the car, as he ran over to help. As everyone starts ringing for an ambulance the 'feral' dusts the glass off himself and then runs up the road, leaving the mangled remains of his bike stuck in the car. It could only happen in Mugsborough.

This is, of course, a miracle to Eddy, who's now elated he's found proof of God at last, but he seems to vacillate between great faith and the total lack of it, and I sense a great tug-of-war going on for his soul.

Saturday 15^h January

8 PM Cold evening.

At Hope kitchen I chat to Bridget and Stretch.

'You're looking smooth tonight,' I tell Bridget.

Stretch enquires, 'Have you done your hair again, love?'

'Indeed, indeed', she replies, 'Oven-Black', this time. That 'Hammerite' paint lasted well, but it was an absolute bastard to get off.'

'Absolutely,' responds Stretch, 'so you've given up with the boot polish, then?'

'Indeed, there was more on the pillows than on me, and this is much more hygienic, anyway.'

'Where did you find the Oven-Black, Bridget?' I ask.

'Discovered it at 'B&Q' the hardware store, as I was looking for radiator paint to enamel me bath.'

Stretch enquires, 'Do you do that yourself, then?'

'Absolutely. All you need is board chalk, and radiator enamel.'

I am intrigued, 'How's that work, then?'

'Don't you know nothing? You just grind the chalk up by putting it in a coffee grinder, as you mix in the radiator enamel. But you have to work fast, and you must sieve it first.'

Stretch responds, 'Can't be easy, sieving paint.'

'I learnt how to do it, on the Internet!' she replies.

I throw my oar in, 'I thought you needed to bake enamel, Bridget?'

"Absolutely, so I used my hairdryer, on full power.'

"And did it work?' enquires Stretch.

'Indeed, but I had to leave it for a week to settle. It kept running.'

'So', I ask, 'is your bath nice and white, now'

'Well, actually, it's more of a bluey colour, for some reason.'

'But is it smooth?' asks Stretch.

Bridget hesitates, 'Well I don't need a bath mat now. It's actually non-slip, at the moment.'

'Absolutely', says Stretch, 'you just can't beat non-slip paint in the bathroom!'

11.30 PM

I am unloading the Jag, just outside my flat, when who should I spot, but J.J. stumbling across the road towards me. He greets me with a bear hug, as the crew all feel that mere handshakes are just for 'divs' and 'wuss'. He has been ensconced in the Pizza Palace, just opposite, where he's been nursing a coffee, but they threw him out when he begged for a meal. He tells me he hasn't eaten for days. As fate would have it I have just drawn some cash, from the 'Hole in the Wall', so I lead him back into the Pizza Palace and tell them to give him whatever he wants. He orders some bits and pieces, and as it starts raining decides to stay there and eat. He is sofa-surfing with one of the boys. I hadn't seen him for some time, and I feel this is pure providence that we should bump into each other on a lonely rainy night, when he's hungry and has no money.

Sunday 16th January

12 Noon. Sunny pleasant day.

After church, I take Myrium, my friend from church, to 'Darvell', in Robertsbridge. They always make us very welcome and feed us dinner made with their own homegrown produce, and simply served with glasses of water. There is always some homemade rhubarb pie, or such, for desert.

They are really into singing. They even sing in rounds, the women doing the first line, and the men the second, harmonizing over each other. They sing before a meal and after a meal, and then we sit in a circle around a table lit with a solitary candle. There we set the world to rights with our profundity and idle chat. We go for walks in their grounds, which have small lakes and hosts their own huge swimming pond. When weather permits, we barbecue one of their chickens and eat outdoors. Jeremy is even hatching out chicks in an incubator, and they squeak out a subdued cacophony to our singing. There is a great family emphasis here, with the very young mixing with the very old and helping to look after them. The community here, also have their own burial ground, up on a hill. I say to Myrium:

'You know what, we've just gone back in time fifty years.'

She replies, 'No, not fifty, more like a hundred!'

Afterwards, before we leave, they sing again. The songs are simple, reflecting their lifestyle, and are mostly German folk songs with a sprinkling of hymns.

In the news this week Chris Hunnisett, has once again been charged with murder. This is for the killing of a Mugsborough supermarket worker, who died of severe head trauma.

Attempts are being made to renovate more than five hundred houses, sitting unused and in great need of repair, by the Borough Council. The Council has started selling them off at auction as they felt the growing problem was making the area look down-trodden to visitors, and opening up a 'Pandoras' box for squatters. Great idea - but too little, too late.

After undercover police spotted a man hiding something under a car, they arrested a teenager with twenty-two wraps of heroin, plus a large quantity of cash. They then searched his home in Mugsborough, and found a thousand pounds worth of cocaine and heroin.

A teenage girl, in a hoodie, grabbed a forty-five year old woman who was out walking in 'Summerfields' last Thursday. The girl spun her round and demanded money but the woman was not harmed, though badly shaken.

Sarah Taylor 37, pleaded guilty to breaching a ban of six years from keeping animals imposed by the 'RSPCA'. This was imposed for keeping fifty cats in her home, but she has now pleaded guilty to keeping another fifteen cats in squalid conditions. When the RSPCA removed the cats, some could not be retrieved due to piles of faeces and over-flowing litter trays placed on the windowsills and even on beds. She was fined only four hundred and fifty pounds, but saddled with costs of twelve and a half thousand pounds.

The old man, found burned to death in a flat last week, has still not been identified.

Bryan Rosswell 37, of Marina, who sold undercover cops brick dust as heroin, has been jailed for one year.

Chris Chaloner 24, who has admitted biting his girlfriend's lip off, was ordered to pay £750 compensation, and to carry out three hundred hours of community service!

His girlfriend has since emigrated, to Australia!

Monday 17th January

11 AM Sunny but cold.

My friend Katie, has rung to say Heavy Eddy just cornered her in 'Seaview' complaining that her boyfriend, (me) owes him three hundred quid for a dog. He is obviously back on the crack.

7 PM

I get psyched up for my session at "Snowflake" tonight, with a body belt and a 'cricket box'. I have decided I may have to have it out with Eddy, man-to-man. To my great relief, he doesn't show, and there are no more texts that evening.

At the Sally Ann, Captain Steve tells me of a delivery driver who got stuck outside in the recent snow. He helped push the driver free, and the guy thanked him profusely and offered him a tin of beer.

'Sorry', he replied 'I've sworn off alcohol.'

'Well, give it to someone else,' replied the driver.

'I can't. It's against our rules to distribute alcohol. We have to deal with alcoholics, all day long.'

So the driver was left holding the can, so to speak.

I park the Jag a few streets away, as I know Heavy Eddy prowls round at night looking for vans to break into and, if he spots my Jag, might just damage it.

Tuesday 18th January

7 PM Very cold.

Go to Snowflake, trussed up again, tonight. Heavy Eddy is not there, thank God. 'Dino Two-Tunes' has a dog with him tonight, but someone else reckons it's not his dog, and he's nicked it, for it belongs to a friend of Scouse Pete.

Captain Steve calls the police. I have a dilemma, as I like Dino and want to warn him the cops are coming, but I am also concerned for the dog. They arrive and 'Scouse Pete', who is only five foot tall, starts chasing big Dino around with his stick as the police try and grab the dog, which does not want to be grabbed, by anybody, but it's just another day here, in 'Dodge City', with everyone chasing something.

'Giggly-Viv' and Mick, of St Andrews Square just round the corner, live in a house let by the council for people with special needs. They live in the basement, beneath little Kelly, who is very sweet, but has opened her gaff up as a 'shooting gallery'. At all hours of the day and night, addicts arrive needing a place to shoot up, and Kelly survives on the scraps.

Add to the fact that there is also a demented drummer living above Kelly who doesn't come to life until four in the morning, and you're living with the 'Neighbours from Hell.'

Works are always present in the communal toilet, and needles litter the hallway. There is no toilet paper, as the visitors seem to need it more than the residents. The gear is cheap here, and apparently a five spot (a fiver) will get you a tenth of a gram, but it is 'stepped on' with anything from talcum powder to rat poison. Recently four cases of Anthrax poisoning have been reported to 'Seaview'. But dodgy gear still gets sold, and needles still get used over and over again. I have even seen junkies digging in bins for used needles, even though free works are available from local chemists.

Wednesday 19th January

9 AM Very cold.

Am shocked to hear at breakfast, that Cockney Joe has been in the 'Inquest' for some weeks with a broken hip replacement. Phil Walsh is also there, swollen up like 'Michelin Man', so after breakfast I drive up to the hospital to visit. Scouse Pete is also visiting, but tells me he's being evicted from Merrick House because he hasn't paid the seven-pound-fifty per month top-up fee, which is a supplement to the rent which 'housing' pay Merrick House. Most clients, who get evicted from their homes, do so because they neglect to pay this top-up, although it's only a few pounds a week. I have a word with Lee Clark, the councillor later on and he sorts out Pete's problem.

11 PM

In Kings Road where the café operates, they are planting trees in the pavement. This entails digging into the concrete and inserting small trees and high guardrails to protect them. The reason this is being done, is because the new pavements have recently got torn up by delivery lorries parking on them, and now these trees are spaced to stop vehicles mounting the pavement. The noise in the café this morning from these efforts outside was just too intense to preach, or even talk to each other.

2 PM

Meet Stewart, who is J.J.'s brother, up at Bridgebuilders Resource Centre. He tells me that someone has 'grassed' to 'Housing' about J.J. staying at his gaff, in Holmesdale road, and now they have stopped all his housing benefit. He has had to throw his brother out, and J.J. is now kipping on the beach, but Stewart is really worried that J.J. might get 'jacked'. If you are out cold, as he usually is every evening, the worry is someone can creep up on you, and stick a syringe in your jugular. By the time you wake up it's too late.

Thursday 20th January

11 AM Very frosty.

I had taken the Jag over to Eastbourne with my Irish friend Shaun, who is now staying with me again after finishing his job at John's house. He is now happy sleeping in the lounge and is no bother as he doesn't talk much, but spends most of his time doing crosswords. After finding out that I cannot afford the cost of a replacement mirror, we head home. Shaun does not mind me driving fast as he's known me for years and knows I don't take stupid risks. On the way home it is very cold and I feel depressed, when suddenly the front wheel starts to judder, and the 'Traction Control' warning light comes up on the dashboard. I feel this is a bit of a coincidence as I've just left the garage where they had the car on a ramp. We stop at 'Pevensey Bay' for fish and chips, and I really need petrol, but can't afford it now. Shaun, as enigmatic and taciturn as ever, accepts the fish and chips and tea, without a word. I put this down to pride.

He can earn a hundred a day as a joiner, but lives from one job to the next. He never signs on the dole and always sofa-surfs, never paying any rent to anyone. I think it's against his religion. He just buys his own food and keeps himself to himself, and is very quiet. When he has money, he can drink three crates of 'Newcastle Brown' a night, washed down with 'shorts', and can still go to work in the morning. This is about a hundred 'quids' worth of drink a night. I met Shaun years ago, when he was sleeping under a tarpaulin in the local park, and coming to Hope kitchen. He started attending the church above Hope kitchen, every Sunday, and I let him move in with me.

He started getting blinding headaches, which turned out to be a brain tumour, the size of an orange. Just before he was scheduled for an operation on this, he was prayed for in the church. He claims he felt heat coursing through him and when they operated the following week, the surgeon told him the tumour had shrunk to the size of a walnut.

He gave testimony to this in the church when he recovered. He was awake during the operation when they removed the top of his skull. They told him to move certain fingers, and kept him talking, as they took bits out and probed around to see if his speech started to slur. If it did, they knew they were in the wrong place. I said to him afterwards, 'You're a very lucky man.'

He replied, 'I don't feel very lucky.'

Friday 21st January

10 AM Very cold.

There is no Friday market outside my window today; a welcome relief. My flat is now quiet, but Shaun and I are off once more to Eastbourne, to get a new sensor fitted on the Jag. I have to spend the money, on a credit card of course, because you could not even give away any car with a brake warning message constantly flashing on it's dashboard. It costs me a few hundred, and although I could get it done for half the price, only a Jaguar Service Centre has the facilities to switch that message off the car's computer. So they have you by the 'short and curlies'. They also balance the wheels for free when I complain there is a slight shudder when I go over a hundred, although the receptionist tells me I'm not supposed to do over a hundred in the U.K.

If only they knew!

At the Jaguar showrooms we drool over the latest five-litre models, and enquire how fast they will go. I learn they are limited to 175 miles per hour. They have dashboard televisions that allow the passenger to watch a T.V. program from their side, while the driver can see only the Sat-Nav. from his side, and all from the same small screen at the same time. I spend time lusting over a supercharged Coupe that's nearly ten years old, but has only seventeen thousand on the clock. It sports a JC number plate, and Shaun jokes that it probably belongs to Jesus Christ, as it's so beautiful. It has the most gorgeous large walnut dashboard I've ever seen. It is a thing of beauty, but a dying breed, like myself.

I think it's possibly the most desirable car I've ever seen, and would prefer it to the French built Bugatti Veyron, which you can purchase for just over a million pounds, if you don't mind waiting a year or so. I figure this Jag will do at least fifteen miles a gallon, whereas the Bugatti will only do half that, but I realize it won't be long before the price of petrol reaches ten pounds per gallon, for everybody.

6 PM

We drive back to the abysmal poverty of Mugsborough, and the realization that none of the people we know in the soup kitchens will ever be able to buy a car of their own.

Saturday 22th January

2 AM Rain.

My back is playing up because of the two long drives to Eastbourne this week, so I took two powerful painkillers to get to sleep, last night.

But I get woken up at two a.m. with a sudden back spasm.

It suddenly wakens me, making my back arch up like a turtle shell. I cannot believe the intense pain, which stops after a second or two, leaving me terrified and wondering what's happened, but thanking God that it's all over. But, a few seconds later it starts again, this time in earnest. I have had a dozen operations in my time, but never, even imagined pain like this. I use language I never thought I possessed as I scream my head off and shout down the phone for an ambulance. This is the most traumatic and painful experience of my life. For months afterwards I am afraid to go to sleep at night, in case another episode wakens me up.

Nowadays, if I forget to take my mobile with me when I go to bed, I start to panic, because I know if I have another spasm I will be unable to get out of bed to phone for help.

When the ambulance does arrive they have to break the door in, as I cannot get out of bed. After trying different blood pressure meters, as they cannot believe my high count of over two hundred and twenty, they give me two morphine injections. They say they don't normally do that, but must get me into the ambulance. The only way is for me to rope my arms around the guy's neck, as he drags me out. The ride to hospital is an experience I'll never forget. I thought the springs had gone in the suspension, as every little bump was agony. Next time this happens, I have decided just to load up with painkillers, and ride it out, because all they did in the hospital was give me pills and let me scream my head off for a couple of hours.

They concluded it was a herniated disc, which it wasn't. Eventually I needed a 'Spinal Probe', under local anaesthetic, so that they could observe which bits of me jerked about, as the needle pierced different parts of my spine; this was immediately followed by a neck stretch, under a general anaesthetic. Great fun!

I spend the next couple of days in hospital.

Sunday 23rd January

6 AM The 'Inquest'

Although I am in hospital today, I can read the events of last week's papers and chronicle them when I get home.

They tell this week, of a young girl of seventeen who was out for a walk, in Mugsborough, when she was punched to the ground by two men. One held her down, while his friend raped her. She is the third teenage girl to be raped in Mugsborough in the last nine months.

At the court appearance of Chris Hunisett this week, it emerged that the man he is accused of murdering recently, Peter Bick, was himself recently imprisoned, for conning a ninety-year-old lady out of seventy-five thousand pounds. Hunnisett spent eight years in prison for the murder of the Rev. Ronald Glazebrook, 81, in 2002. Body parts were scattered in the street, and a head found behind the local Police station.

A local estate agent, Neil Newstead, who owns and runs 'Oakfield Property', in Station Road, was sentenced to nine months prison, suspended for a year, and ordered to do two hundred hours community service, for punching a police officer several times in the face.

Michael Orishadare 18, was jailed for a year when police saw him dealing drugs, in broad daylight as he cruised through town. They suspected he might be another 'Yardie', from London, as this black teenager was seen driving a top-of-the-range Mercedes. He had seventy-seven wraps in his car, forty of heroin and thirty-seven of cocaine, with a street value of twelve hundred pounds.

Robbie Cook 26, a local scaffolder, has been charged with head-butting a delivery driver, in a road rage attack.

The recently opened ASDA supermarket has had a cloning device attached to its Cash-point machine in Mugsborough. Police are concerned the so-called 'skimming device' may not be the only one in town.

Finally, two women Alexandra Richards 19, and Zayna Moon 22, have admitted aggravated assault in a racial attack against staff in the local kebab shop. They refused to leave, after swearing and shouting racial remarks like, 'Fuck off back to your own country,' and 'What's the matter, monkey, do you want a banana?' After

Ms. Richards got up on top of the counter, and spat at staff, Ms. Moon threw a jar of pickled eggs at them. When police arrived the girls spat at the officers before being arrested. It transpires both young ladies have a string of convictions going back several years. They have been bailed for reports and return to court next Monday. Watch this space!

Monday 24th January

5 PM Dull day.

Am released late this afternoon from the 'Inquest', and not a moment too soon. There is more chance, these days, of getting something fatal like MRSA, after an operation than dying on the table.

I am dosed up with Oxycontin and Oxycodone that are the strongest painkillers available and have to be individually signed for at the pharmacy. I walk round like a zombie for the next week but everyone is very sympathetic.

As I leave the hospital I am so 'spaced out', I jam my finger in the door of the taxi, which is taking me home. So I strut round to the Accident and Emergency department of the hospital I have just left, as the pain from my nail is blindingly intense. I have injured nails before and know that all the black blood needs to be drawn out before it congeals or you lose the nail.

The place is full as usual, with the normal three-hour wait, so I go straight home, and stick a red-hot needle through my nail. This doesn't hurt much and after a lot of squeezing I manage to get most of the black blood out but the nail is still very sensitive. It will take months to grow back.

Tuesday 25th January

9 AM Cold windy day.

In this morning's post I receive a letter from my Solicitors, regarding my re-possession case. I will not be represented by Mr. Holden himself, but by a barrister, Mr. Denham.

11 AM

At the Bridgebuilders Resource Centre I meet 'Big Peter', a tall stocky guy who weighs over twenty stone. He is the original 'gentle giant', and very amiable. He

tells me cannot handle any sort of stress and was referred here because of his nerves. He used to be a long distance lorry driver earning very good money but now just works as a window cleaner.

8 PM

Snowflake is very busy tonight. Nanette has brought a friend, called Mitch, in to meet me. His name is short for Michel and he says his father was French. He is very wiry, with staring eyes. Because I am a good friend of Nanette's, he is quite talkative and we have a long chat. He has just turned forty, and tells me he's been on heroin and coke for eighteen years, living mainly on three slabs of chocolate and six bags of crisps every day, a true Junkie. He reckons over the years he's spent two hundred thousand pounds on drugs, when he used to work for the Yardies in London.

He confesses to killing two people, one by accident, one by design. But we are both stunned when he starts to tell us of the people he tortured. He has used electric drills on enemies' kneecaps, and tells us that he really, really loved this. In the street, when he got an opponent on the ground, he would give them a good kicking, but explained he found this embarrassing in public. He then explains that he sometimes had to walk away in embarrassment holding a hand over his groin. We assumed this would be because he probably had received a kick between the legs but he explained it was because he always got a hard-on, (sexually excited) and couldn't hide it.

Nanette and I are sitting there, with our mouths open. We've only heard of this kind of guy in the movies, and weren't sure if his kind really existed, but Nanette has had Mitch staying with her, and even sleeping in her bed. She looks ready to throw up.

He now tells us his comrade-in-arms was the Crossbow Kid. I met this guy once, when he visited Nanette's. He asked if I'd like to see his knife collection. I asked Nanette: 'Is he a butcher?' She replies, 'Not exactly, he's a sort of debt collector.'

There were over a dozen knives, of varying lengths and design. Some very ornate, and others very functional with blood channels built into them! They would make any Kung-Fu museum green with envy. They look intimidating just lying there, as some have long wavy blades that are razor sharp and others with knuckle dusters or long spikes built round the handle grips. He picks up an especially wicked looking

one, telling me that this is his favourite and the one he usually takes with him when he's 'working.' His favourite weapons once were crossbows, but nowadays if anyone gets done with one of those he is the first person they start looking for.

Mitch now says he's sick of his lifestyle, as he's having nightmares every night. He wants to get away, so I give him the number of a religious community called Betel, which weans people off drugs. I tell him that I sense the dark side is very strong within him, and if he doesn't turn to God, he is definitely going 'Down the Tube'. This Betel Community is based in Windmill House in Birmingham, and after the kitchen tonight, Mitch promises to ring them up in the morning.

Wednesday 26th January

9 AM Sunny day.

After a long phone conversation in Nanette's, the Betel people tell Mitch to come up at once as they will find a place for him. Normally the wait is three months at least but they tell him he needs to get there immediately and can even sleep on a mattress on the floor 'til they get him settled. Nanette gives him his fare and he catches a train to Birmingham, from Warrior Square Station. He knows he'll be doing 'Cold Turkey' but he's been down that road before. We give him our blessing, and he departs.

10 AM

At the breakfast this morning Ned tells us he's been ripped off. This makes a nice change. Apparently, he met somebody who wanted to score big time, and Ned, being hard-core, knows all the dealers. This punter has money, is a bit of a 'toff' and wants a load of 'skunk', for a big party in London. Ned goes along and meets the dealer in a squat. The punter is with his girlfriend who hands Ned the two hundred quid, so the dealer goes off with Ned, into the back, to measure out the weed. Ned and the dealer jump out the back window and do a runner. They head off in different directions but the 'toff' soon realizes the flat is empty, and he's been ripped off. But he goes straight to Old Bill, because he knows they'd love to pin something on Ned and the dealer. Ned is soon picked up, for the punter claims he just drew two hundred from the cash machine, and his girlfriend witnessed Ned, whom she knows, suddenly snatch the money out of his hand. Of course when they

search Ned he still has the two hundred on him. He is bailed to appear in the morning. Nice one!

7.30 PM

Tonight is the yearly de-briefing of Surviving Christmas, up at the YMCA. There are the usual complaints that twenty per cent of the clients were not listed properly. This year funds were down as collections were postponed because of the snow, and takings went down because of the recession. We are pleased to report no one got stabbed this year, despite our use of metal cutlery instead of plastic, for the first time. The resident caretaker didn't help much, as the promised fuse for the front door heaters never materialized. I did door-duty my first year, and it was cold enough to freeze the balls off a brass monkey.

On Christmas day the lights were out all day in the Gents toilets and the shower room, which a lot of clients use. We only managed five hundred and fifty hampers, and the usual parasites stashed their car-boots full of free clothes to sell later at street markets and boot fairs. We name the usual suspects, but the Gypsy family who came back again were refused entry by the police. Nobody else was threatened, and not a single shotgun was produced. It transpires 'Darvell' not only gave us the huge tree, but a donation of ten thousand pounds, as well.

Thursday 27th January

11 AM Bright sunny day.

Down at the office I meet Phil Walsh, who's just left the 'Inquest'. As he was leaving he saw 'Tony the Hat' in the day room, waiting for a bed.

1 PM

Get a call from my solicitors. They had told me I did not need to attend court yesterday as the case would be postponed and, sure enough, the Judge said fifteen minutes could not resolve such a complicated case and reserved a two-hour slot. They will send all parties a list of available schedules, and we will all have to submit any dates that are personally inconvenient. I realize I could drag this out for years, but I just want a result as soon as possible. But I do not fancy being chucked out in the middle of winter, which looks like being a really harsh one. Snow is forecast again for tomorrow. Now my flat does not feel like home any more even

though I've spent thousands making it look real cosy. I know I'll have to leave it all, sooner or later.

Friday 28th January

11 AM Dull cold day.

Stewart, J.J.'s brother, is down at the Sally Ann. He is very upset as he's just learnt that Michelle Hudson, a neighbour of his in Holmesdale Road, was thrown fifty feet to her death off a nearby railway bridge. Police have charged a local man with her murder.

1 PM

Off to Morrison's where I do the weekly shopping. Spend fifty pound on food and twenty-five on petrol. I am close to my overdraft limit of a thousand pounds, and after Christmas am now 'maxed-out' on all my credit cards. Things can only get worse.

3 PM

Katie, and her daughter Kirsty, arrives for tea. She tells me she has avoided 'Seaview', since Heavy Eddy got 'heavy' with her over the dog. I feel bad about this. Kirsty doesn't drink tea or coffee, so I give her a glass of milk. She just sits in the corner listening to some tripe on her mobile phone and never says a word. It is hard work just to get a 'yeah' or 'neah' out of her. Katie wants to 'borrow' six pounds to top up her electric, so I feel sorry for her and oblige, but then she says she also needs tobacco or she'll have to go 'dogging'. She also shows me a Bailiffs' Notice, for nearly four hundred quid for Council Tax. It is obvious that nobody in her position should be eligible for this tax so I tell to go to the CAB (Citizens Advice Bureau) for it's just another Council cockup. I know Katie can look you straight in the eye and lie through her teeth, even though they are false. I only have a tenner left, but I tell her to go across the road to 'Londis' to top her meter up, and bring the change straight back. She disappears with Kirsty, but I don't see her for a week.

Saturday 29th January

10 AM Mild day.

Visit Nanette, who's has just been sent home by her daughter, Sarah, this weekend. She had gone up London to babysit her new grandchild for a week to give the parents a break. But Sarah discovered Nanette is drinking again, even while in charge of the baby, and sends her packing. Needless to say her drink problem is totally out of control but I've never seen her without a can in her hand, unless it's a piece of tinfoil she's using, to 'Chase the Dragon'. She is amazing on the phone when her daughter rings up to check on her. She is so sauced up she can hardly make it over to the phone, but as soon as she realizes it's Sarah on the line she sobers up immediately. We discuss Katie, and Nanette says she visited her this morning and she 'borrowed' a tenner. Nobody ever sees anything back, when Katie 'borrows' money.

Nanette tells me, when she was in Bottle Alley this morning walking her dog, she bumped into Heavy Eddy. He told her he was on his way round to my place to tear my door down, and kill me. I must have missed him but I'm not too worried as I've got my pepper spray and stun-gun, and have arranged to visit 'Mad Willy' a mutual friend, who reckons he can get me a little 'scarer'. On the phone I explain to Willy, the 'quartermaster' for the Mugsborough area, that I need to get 'tooled-up'. Just a small tool, nothing bigger than a two-two, as I just want to put the 'frighteners' on someone, and don't want to risk killing them. I mention that I'll also need a bit of food for it, and he reckons three hundred should cover expenses, which I figure is about right.

Mad Willy suggests we go to Brede, where a friend of his, Sid, has a farm out there. When we get to this hole in the woods, Sid greets us as old friends. Willy just tells him that I'm looking for a gun, like you walk into a shop looking for a pencil. Sid asks if am I interested in 'Sawn-offs?' I tell him I like shotguns but prefer 'over-unders' to the 'side-by-sides', because they are more accurate. He agrees for he knows that side-by-sides are sighted to converge at about twenty-five yards. As a gun-lover, I am now accepted into this dark fraternity. I ask him what he's got and he tells me he just sold a semi-auto shotgun. I have fired one of these, a 'Spas-12', and it's so rapid and fierce you must lean into the line of fire or you'll fall over. It's just too 'over the top' for personal defence, even in Mugsborough. He has a four-ten shotgun but it's hard to get shells for these, so we agree to come back. 'I'm

getting new stuff all the time,' he tells us. We stay for a chat, and Willy tells Sid that one of his dogs got torn up, jumping a barbed wire fence after a deer. Although he's banned from keeping dogs, Willy gets round this by living with his dad and claiming they belong to him. Apparently these guys take deer out with dogs. The farmers don't object as long as they get a 'slice' of the action but most of the meat goes to all the best restaurants in town; it's an easy tickle, they tell me. Trouble is, if the dogs leave the guts lying all over the ground the farmers go crazy and it takes time to clean up the mess. There is a massive increase in wild animal welfare crime. Urban based gangs like Willy's go out with dogs and firearms, killing everything they see, including Magpies which they claim are just predators. They should be experts on that one.

Apparently insurance claims from farmers for stolen and missing animals have risen twenty-per-cent in the last year.

Attacks on people by dangerous dogs have risen thirty-per-cent in the last four years. This year alone six thousand people were treated in hospital for dog bites and one in six were children under ten.

Sunday 30th January

9 AM Sunny day.

At church I go up for some healing, and the pastor asks, 'What seems to be the problem?' There is so much wrong with me, at the moment, that I simply tell him, 'God only knows.'

After church I get a call from Katie. Her stepdad, Jeremy, has died in hospital. He fell over at home and hurt his hip. While he was in hospital he was having a shower on his own when he fell and banged his head. After two days in a coma, he passes away. Katie did not sound too upset but death is no stranger to her after her husband 'Junkie George' choked to death in her arms.

Get a text from Willy saying he's got a little tool for me and it's just the size I need. I give him a ring and arrange a meet. I meet him outside his house and notice he has a caravan parked in the garden. He joins me in the Jag and asks for the money. He says: 'I don't know if you're aware of how these things work.' I can't confess that I often buy guns on the black market so I listen to what he has to say.

‘Obviously the dealer doesn’t want to meet you, and I’m sure you don’t want him to recognize your face either so just give me the dosh and I’ll go get the weapon. It has to be like that because if he grasses on you after the deal you’ll get pulled and if you’re ‘Old Bill’ he will be in the shit. But you both know me, so I can be the go-between. Willy can see I’m loathe to hand the cash over without the goods, so he simply says, ‘I don’t care what you do, one way or the other. I’m just saying he won’t give anyone the gun without the readies.’ Willy is playing me like a fish. His nonchalance is the clincher and he states: ‘If you don’t like it when you see it, this way I can bring it back, and nobody loses’

I am still unsure, but don’t have any choice. He drives off and tells me to go home and wait for his call, which comes an hour later. The first thing he says to me is:

‘Have you had a ruck with Eddy over some dog?’

As soon as I hear this, I realize immediately that I’ve been set up by both of them and tell him so. I say:

‘As soon as you mentioned Eddy I knew right away that you two have conned me.’

He continues, ‘Listen, Eddy came round to visit, and saw the money as I was checking it, but when I told him it was yours he went crazy and snatched the money off the table. He was ranting and raving saying you owed him three hundred for some dog and then ran screaming out the house.’

I’ve been conned a few times in my life, but never by such accomplished scroats. They really deserve an academy award for the acting and the timing was perfect. I ring Eddy, who denies of course that he played any part in the set-up but tell him that I’m going round to burn Willy’s caravan, later on in the week. He says, ‘Don’t do that. His kids sleep in there, some nights.’ I am shocked, as this never occurred to me and naturally I change my mind.

If you live long enough, someone, somewhere, will con you at some point in your life. I’ve learned that one.

Michelle Hudson, who was Stewart’s neighbour, is mentioned in the paper this week. She was thrown to her death off a railway bridge. Police have a local man, of twenty-one, in custody charged with her murder. She was only twenty-five.

I see on Page eight that the seventeen year old who held up my local Co-Op round the corner, has been banged up for two years. He also did a street robbery, and of course breached his ASBO, as you do.

On the same page it was decided at inquest that Mark Balconer 52, an alcoholic whose body was found sitting on a sofa, may have been dead for over a month as he was in such a severe state of decomposition that the coroner could not say what he died from.

Monday 31st January

9 AM Dull cold day.

Pop round to see Nanette. She has been told she has to detox or she will die. They have put her on 10mg. Valium and Citalopram of 20mg. This is to stabilize her before she starts a course of Antibus, which is now 'Disulfiam'. She has these already, and shows me huge '200mg.' tablets, which she has to take for the next six months, but she is scared to start. When one takes these just a drop of alcohol brings on violent nausea. She must take four a day to start and gradually cut down to half a tablet, or 100mg as a daily dose. The medics don't like prescribing these as many people die from them. They warn her that even using an alcoholic mouthwash will make her very ill. She is told that if she realizes she must have another drink then she must stop all the tablets three days in advance or she will die.

I had a friend who died like this. He was helping someone deliver a barge up a canal in France. It was blisteringly hot and they stopped by a village where some sort of festival was in action. A pretty girl, who spoke no English offered them some glasses of sparkling water. As they sailed past they each grabbed a glass to quench their thirst. He quickly knocked it back but realized too late that it was local wine from the festival they'd just passed.

8 PM

At Snowflake tonight, Bridget is queuing along with Stretch, as I serve the teas. She turns to him and says, 'Look at this place, Stretch, it's full of Neanderthals.'

He responds, 'Absolutely. It's the land that time forgot. This bunch is so dumb they couldn't get a job in a waxworks.'

Bridget asks, 'Are you still eating those egg and cress sandwiches?'

'Don't worry, I got an injection for Salmonella once.'

'Indeed. They're all colour-coded, you know!' she tells him.

'What, the injections?'

'No. Stupid, the eggs! It's all down to the colour of the yolks.'

'How's that work, then?' he queries.

'Don't you know nothing? Depending on the colour, there are four main groups,' she tells him.

'Absolutely. (pause) So what are they, then?' he inquires.

'Saffron, Dandelion, Semolina and Buttercup! They used to put saffron in sweets, to put babies to sleep.'

Stretch replies, 'Don't you mean chloroform, Bridget?'

CHAPTER SIX

FEBRUARY

Tuesday 1st February

1 PM Mild dull day.

January has shot by and I think of Bob Dylan's song, 'Time is a Jet plane, it moves so fast'. Went back to the gym today to try and get fit again. I have lost a lot of weight due to health problems and I've missed out on the gym as my strength was really waning. I was really fit a few months ago and, up in '57' even beat Heavy Eddy in arm-wrestling.

Have to get ready for Snowflake tonight. I spent three hours in the gym, this afternoon and this is the last thing I want to do. I don't even have time to eat before I head out into the rain. Heavy Eddy doesn't show and seems to be keeping a low profile, although he knows I can't grass him up.

Things were quiet tonight although we made loads of sandwiches: we have to ask clients if they'll take some home. Trouble is, we now have shot ourselves in the foot because, from now on, they all want sandwiches to take away. In future we decide that they will all have to wait until ten minutes before we close, so that will limit take-ways to the most desperate.

Katie and Kirsty have popped in tonight. They have Bobby, Nanette's dog, and tell me Nanette's stopped drinking but is too weak to walk the dog. Katie also tells me she's just got a fine for six hundred pounds on account of her son, Paul, not going to school for four years. Seems whenever the Youth Support Worker called to pick him up for school he would hide under the bed so they gave up in the end.

Wednesday 2nd February

10 AM Rainy morning.

At the Wednesday breakfast (see photos) we used to have thirty in here, before Christmas. Now the numbers have gradually dropped off and today there are only eleven present. Capt. Mannering shouts out that nobody leaves 'til they've all had two breakfasts each. This raises a laugh.

Wobbly Bob, who drives a Mobility Scooter drops in with Celia. Wobbly Bob has a wooden leg but is not to be confused with the 'Centipede', who has two. Bob is often to be seen perched on his Scooter outside his local, drinking in the sights - and his pint of beer. His machine is bedecked with pennants and badges and he's quite a character, especially when he wobbles over to the bar.

Celia has just had her morning dip. This remarkable woman swims in the sea every day of the year unless it's really rough, but the cold doesn't seem to faze her. She is over sixty and tougher than Heavy Eddy and the rest of us, put together. Some of us doubted the truth of this routine until she brought in a Calendar for this year of local 'bathing beauties', showing her going for a swim in the snow.

Pastor Chris, has been invited to visit a church in California, all expenses paid. He runs Duke Road Pentecostal over here and has never been out of the country before, even to France. He does not have a Passport, or even a license to drive, and I warn him he is in for a big culture shock. As it happens, on his return from the 'States', he says he liked the place so much he'd love to live there.

Thursday 3rd February

8 PM Rainy evening.

Usual crowd down the kitchen tonight, but a new scroat walks in. He wants to pay for the soup and the sandwiches. We tell him there is no charge and no money involved. As he's having his soup he claims he's just found a hair in it and wants his money back. We have to remind him he never paid in the first place.

'Wavin Dave' comes in twitching his head, and waving his arms all over the place. He is steaming drunk and we will have to carry his soup and coffee to the table for him. As I bring over a cup of strong black coffee, he sits next to Bridget and stares at her coffee: 'My soup's a lot stronger than yours' he says, pouring a load of pepper into his cup, and before anyone can stop him knocks it right back. I bring his soup over but he is very nervous and apologizes profusely, putting sugar, instead of white pepper in his soup as he talks. He then remarks how bitter the coffee tastes tonight. He gets up for fresh coffee, and more 'Loup-de-loupe' (soup), but refuses to let me carry it for him. I tell him he'll spill it but he's adamant he won't. When he does spill it he pauses, and glares down at the floor as if it made him slip. When he

leaves I notice he leaves a puddle on the chair where he was sitting. Whether this is from the soup or the can of lager he was drinking from or he's just wet himself, I cannot tell.

Friday 4th February

11 AM Very cold day.

At the Sally Ann meet the Kid. He relates an amazing story to me. Apparently Arlette came with him to visit Gay Ray whom they are both fond of. They share a bottle of wine, but the Kid needs to get oiled up, so leaves to find some shrapnel for more drink by 'ham and egging'. Ray gets drunk and starts giving it 'large'. When Arlette wants to leave he physically restrains her, perhaps because he wants an audience. He throws her on the sofa and won't let her use the loo so she starts to lose it. She now insists she must have her 'meds' and when he realizes she's not kidding, he finally agrees to let her out of his armour-plated door. However, when the Kid hears of this he storms round to Ray's but of course can't get in, and Ray has probably passed out anyway, so he throws a brick through the window, 'as you do'.

Saturday 5th February

8 PM Dull day.

Chris O'Donnell is at Hope tonight. He takes so much gear he's always nodding off into his soup. Rosie, and Rollie her husband, are there as volunteers. Rosie used to be married to Mick Taylor of the Rolling Stones, who replaced Brian Jones, the first leader of the band before Jagger took over. Brian Jones drowned in his own swimming pool and was replaced by Mick Taylor, who himself left not long afterwards.

Rosie cries out: 'He's doing a Keith.' She is referring to Keith Richards of the 'Stones', who would also end up with his face buried in the plate when he 'over-indulged'.

Rosie used to have quite a lifestyle, and was hooked on everything from drink and drugs, to shopping on 'Rodeo Drive' with Bianca Jagger and Anita Pallenberg, who had three children by Keith Richards. She first met Marianne Faithful when she

came back to Mick's place and this girl with the voice and the face of an angel was singing 'Greensleeves', on her guitar. When Rosie found herself falling asleep while driving her Porsche at a hundred and fifty, she decided she needed to turn her life around or lose it like so many of her friends. She turned to religion and found God. As Chris slowly spoons one mouthful after another his head nods up and down between them, getting lower and lower with each nod until his nose hits the soup, when he jerks back to reality, but as we watch he finally ends up with his face buried in the bowl. As it happens, I shout out to Chris that I'm not giving him 'mouth-to-mouth' if he drowns. This gets a laugh. He doesn't drown, but actually dies, on the spot.

We cluster round as we wait for the paramedics. His heart has stopped, but we manage to revive him. He has to go to the 'Inquest', which he's not happy about, but he is happy to be alive.

Sunday 6th February

1 PM Cold, but sunny day.

Concordia is just closing when Pinhead-Ned staggers in.

I don't know how he can see. His eyes are almost closed for he's always on the gear. I don't know how he keeps his act together, but he never seems to lose it. He asks about his usual cheese and pickle 'sarnies' (sandwiches) but they are all gone. He turns round and addresses the crowd: 'Who's taken my bloody sarnies?' To shut him up, he's given cheese and tomato with the tomato removed and a jar of pickle. He quietens down.

Stewart keeps coming up for more sandwiches. He goes back to the table, and pretends to be reading a paper, but we see he is stuffing all the sarnies into a plastic bag, to take home. He then has the nerve to ask for his large Thermos Flask to be filled with coffee. He looks and talks like Tommy Cooper, the great comedian. When he leaves he comes back in half an hour, and says, 'There I was, waiting for the bus. Ten minutes. Bus arrives. Wrong bus. Bus driver says, 'My bus left four minutes earlier.' How could it? Been waiting ten minutes. There you go.'

Just like Tommy Cooper, without the punch-lines, but just as funny, as this is real life.

Last Saturday crack cocaine worth seven grand was discovered in Mugsborough, when officers raided a house in Southwater Road.

A twenty-three year old man walked into Nelson Antiques at 4 p.m. on Wednesday afternoon, and smashed a bottle over the head of the man behind the till, demanding money. The manager and a passer-by came up and held the culprit until police arrived.

Even after Government figures showed more people admitted to hospital for cannabis abuse than for cocaine or even heroin; all the agencies dealing with cannabis abuse have now been closed. Now Bradley Bailey 23, of Stockleigh Road, Mugsborough, is just given an advice leaflet, and two years conditional discharge, after he admitted possession of the drug in Court last week.

Reports are coming in claiming two thirds of all HMOs (House of Multiple Occupation) in Mugsborough, that comprise about 15% of rented housing in the area fail to meet government standards. The national average is only 2%, so there are three thousand houses in this area that fail to meet national standards.

Last week a house in Battle Road, Mugsborough, was raided and fifteen cannabis plants found in the loft. Also in Hughenden Road, sixty-eight plants and a large amount of cash were discovered. After a twenty-one year old was found dealing drugs police found him with nearly three hundred pounds worth of cannabis and two hundred in cash. When officers searched his home more cannabis and cash were discovered, and two more men were arrested.

Ali Parvaneh 47, of Cambridge Gardens, Mugsborough, admitted possession of thirteen wraps of crack and fifteen of barbiturates. He was sentenced to a six-month community order, and ordered to undergo a course of drug treatment.

A refugee from Iran was found in town with a condom stuffed full of drugs in her possession.

Rob Kelly 26, of Dell Close, Mugsborough, was charged with four counts of arson to cars. He admitted the offences and asked for eleven others to be taken into consideration. (Sic)

He has a long history of previous offences.

Monday 7th February

9 AM Very cold day.

My friend Katie turns up, all bedraggled and smelling like a wet dog. She gave her son, Paul, twenty quid for his birthday, but he borrowed another forty off her promising to pay it back when he got his 'wages', from the 'PO.' He has only given her back a tenner, and now she has no money for tobacco for a roll-up. She has been scuttling round the betting shop over the road, picking up dog-ends. There is always competition in this department, with most of the other 'doggers' being men, so she never comes out on top.

I take her out for a bite to eat, and bump into 'No-Name'. This is a guy who knows everyone else's name, but nobody is sure what he is called. He is always on the 'ponce' for shrapnel and is a real nuisance. He approaches everyone, by name, 'Hallo Katie, how are you today? You're looking well, Rad, got any shrapnel? I'm starving. Just want some chips.'

This is the only guy I don't give money to, because when he first asked I went straight to the chip shop and got him a big bag of chips. When I gave them to him five minutes later, he said, 'I don't want them. I need a drink.'

We leave No-Name with no money, and walk off.

No Snowflake tonight as it's cancelled through lack of staff. This only occurs once or twice a year.

Tuesday 8th February

8 PM Dull day.

Snowflake runs tonight, but we have no soup. Instead we get two bags of chicken drumsticks for a pound a bag. The ten drumsticks were carefully broken up and mixed with a big bag of instant rice. It was mixed with some powder and made a few dozen rissoles. Everyone appreciated the change. There were a few sandwiches put aside for vegetarians, of which Madget is one, being Hindu, I think. But most devout alcoholics will stuff anything down their throat if they can stomach food at all.

Katie turns up with a cold sore on her lip. She tells me this is just Herpes Simplex but I tell her I could still catch it by kissing her. She is clucking because she has no Valium. She started giving some to a friend and now her friend wants more all the

time, leaving Katie short. I have endless supplies of Valium for my bad back, and often help her out.

Wednesday 9th February

8 AM Bright cold day.

Morning breakfast has to be missed today, as I have to go to court in Lewes. I am suing someone in the small claims court, for four thousand. (I lost, by the way.)

After a stressful morning in court, I pop round to Lewes prison, to visit an old friend. I have a VO (Visiting Order) for J.J. I have been here before, visiting others, and even know the Chaplain who once came to speak at our church. After waiting downstairs, we visitors wind our way up the tall stone staircase, which leads out into a large room, with the prisoners all sitting behind large desks. I spot J.J. immediately and go sit with him. He says the atmosphere is terrible today. Someone who's just been sentenced to life was screaming their head off all night long, and in the morning they found some old guy had hanged himself. I manage to smuggle a fiver over to J.J. who slips it up his derriere, by sliding his hand inside his overalls. The head screw is staring at us, and J.J. is starting to sweat as he is obviously struggling. Every time I glance at the screw, he is staring intently at both of us, and I am now worried I may be joining J.J. on the other side of the table for the next visiting day. However the bell goes, and so does J.J. and so do I, on our respective paths.

Thursday 10th February

1 PM. Mild dull day.

Meet Ricky in town in the tunnel where he's busking. He is looking for his friend 'Tooth', whom he says is in need of a drink and rattling badly. Ricky has earned enough for a couple of cans and wants to help 'Tooth' out. I happen to spot him on the way home but can see immediately he's off his face on 'gear' so don't tell him about Ricky and the drink. Tooth has only one tooth left in his head and it's so loose he can wriggle it round with his tongue. He did have more until Animal encouraged most of them to fall out, in a vicious attack. This tooth is not really loose but just flexible. He calls it 'Tony, his flexible friend', as it's 'Tony tooth' he's got left.

Tooth is sitting on a bench, gazing at the remnants of the pier. He doesn't recognize me, and I notice 'Tony' is 'out', today, and flexing about in the fierce wind, making no attempt to run for cover.

8PM

Down at Hope kitchen I speak to Katherine, a lovely girl whom I find very attractive. She starts to cry as she tells me the man she decided to share her flat with has just kicked her out. She now has no chance of getting another place as the council says she's made herself voluntarily homeless. The fact that the guy beat her brains out every weekend, and she was too scared to do anything about it, doesn't help matters. As far as the council is concerned the flat was in her name, but they will probably evict him anyway.

Friday 11th February

11 AM Fresh cold day.

At the Sally Ann this morning we sort out a load of tinned food. For sofa-surfers we can give away any type of tin, but for the street people we need to supply tins with ring-pulls on them, as people who sleep rough never have tin openers, or watches or even torches; only the light off their mobile phones.

I was watching National Geographic last night. This program told of Alaskan State Troopers who have the biggest alcohol problem in the world. They often find people dead on their porch or driveway, who've been drinking. It is such a big problem in Alaska that thirty-three communities have banned alcohol completely.

There is a very high rate of suicide in many of the indigenous Eskimo communities. One Trooper lost nineteen friends in the space of a year, mostly heavy drinkers. There are huge profits to be made from bootlegging into the 'dry villages', where a twelve-dollar can of drink may cost three hundred dollars.

Saturday 12th February

10 AM Bright cold day.

I grab some free-range eggs and organic mushrooms from my fridge, and head over to His Place Café, for breakfast. This is where we do the Wednesday morning

breakfast, for the homeless. They don't mind me bringing my own food into the café, as my stomach is now so bad I have to be very careful what I eat.

'Fast Eddie' is in the café having his second breakfast, as usual. He is a huge guy who lives in a home but seems to lack the attention he deserves. He came to the breakfast with no shoes on last week and was seen in the snow without a jacket, wearing just a shirt. Pastor Chris took him back to the home and was harangued by the staff for encouraging him to go to the soup kitchens.

'Maybe if you fed him properly and looked after him, he wouldn't need to go there,' Chris retorted.

Although he was overweight and moved slowly, his recent stroke slowed him to a snail's pace. He comes in the café groping from one chair to another as he makes his way to the counter. He doesn't like help, as he wants to retain a degree of independence. But everything takes him ages; hence 'Fast Eddie'.

8 PM

At Hope kitchen Chris O'Donnell comes in at his usual time, and as usual goes to the 'Gents' before coming to the counter. He comes out and collects his soup as usual, and starts 'nodding' over it, as usual. At exactly the same time as last week, he again collapses into the soup and his heart stops, again. The paramedics are called again, to the same place, for the same guy, and want to know what he's taken. We learn later he is hooked on Valium and all he does in the loo, before coming into the kitchen for his soup, is knock back a tin of brew, but when the alcohol mixes with the Valium it seems to stop his heart. They manage to start his heart, as usual, and as he comes to I ask him if he knows where he is. 'In Hope kitchen,' he tells me.

'No, Chris, you're in the "Last Chance Saloon",' I tell him.

Sunday 13th February

11.30 AM Sunny.

After church I pop round to Nanette's. She greets me wearing a lovely black eye. It seems she bumped into Jezebel who was with some scroat she'd picked up, and when she saw Nanette, she asked this scroat to slap Nanette in the face. This was in revenge for the beating she received at Nanette's party, at the end of

November. The two girls had not seen each other since, but the scroat obliges and just slaps Nanette across the face. Hopefully this will be the end of it but Nanette is now afraid to walk down that particular street.

Afterwards down at the office I meet Wavin' Dave. He tells me that Heavy Eddy picked on Darren at Seaview, during the week. Darren is very shy and a bit backward. Eddy called him a Div, and a Nonce. This word originates from where sexual offenders in prison are put in solitary for their own safety. On their cell doors a notice is placed, saying 'NONCE'. This means 'Not On Normal Courtyard Exercise', because if they mixed with other prisoners in the exercise yard their safety would be jeopardized.

I ring J.J. about this situation, and he says Eddy has been out of order lately, and he might have to get a few of the lads to pay him a visit. As you do.

In the papers this week I read about the car crash round the corner in Norman Road, which woke me up during the week:

Mirosław Swedrowski 35, of Bohemia Road, Mugsborough trapped himself in his van, after crashing into a parked car. When paramedics freed him he became abusive and was arrested, and then charged with failing to provide a breath test, driving without insurance or a licence and driving while banned. He was banned for a further four years, and given six months in prison. James Tyrell, who lives round the corner, observed all this but became abusive to police and was arrested himself when he spat at officers and attempted to punch them as he was being escorted from the scene.

Bert Wheeler 54, of Mugsborough has to pay back £6,814.96 in benefits he claimed whilst he was actually working.

Three pellets have been removed from a swan, which was shot by a shotgun this week. It was taken to Mallydams Wood 'RSPCA' centre.

All public spaces in Mugsborough have now been made Alcohol-Free Zones in a new police scheme marking hotspots around Mugsborough, where the local 'Ferals' have been making people's lives a misery.

Brett Moor 32, and Peter Booth, of Mugsborough, were given five and four years respectively for possession of cocaine worth one hundred and seventy thousand pounds.

Finally, a bald thief Malcolm Smith 31, has admitted stealing hair straighteners, from Boots, the chemists. His friend Mark Steele, of Eversfield Place, Mugsborough admitted stealing toothbrushes, suntan lotion and mascara from the same store. Steele is a heroin addict and Smith has a long history of convictions.

Monday 14th February

9 AM Mild day.

Meet Mouse on the way to the 'office'. He is with some of the 'crew' and I decide to buy them all a coffee as it's so cold. They come over the road with me but suddenly declare they'd be a lot happier with a can each. This is ironic as a 'Latte' costs two pounds and a lager only one, so I don't mind. When I give away shrapnel, I know it's not going to go on chips, or bus fare to the 'Inquest', or on an emergency phone call but most likely on drink and drugs. But I decided long ago, that once you give money away, it's not up to you how it's spent.

3 PM

Katie arrives to score some Valium off me. I realize her friend, Karen is draining her supply, and getting nasty if she refuses, so I don't mind giving Katie a few tablets. I always have spares as I hate taking pills unless I have to but like having a good supply in case I get a back spasm.

8 PM

Get kitted up with my 'cricket box' and body belt for the kitchen tonight as I hear Heavy Eddy is out for blood. I decide not to take my pepper spray or stun-gun as I know he won't be using any and I should just face him alone. He may beat the crap out of me but I do not want to lose my four new crowns, which I had done in Mexico on the cheap.

Hastings and St. Leonards have the highest rate of addicts, drunks, stabbings, and domestic and street violence than anywhere else in the country, except perhaps the Gorbals in Glasgow, but, since most of the old tenements there have now been bulldozed it has acquired a new image, which Mugsborough may rightly envy.

As it happens I realize after an hour or so that Eddy's not coming tonight, so relax and enjoy a peaceful evening. I hear from Micky that Eddy has told others it's beneath him now to mingle with the lowest of the low.

Tuesday 15th February

3 PM Dull day.

Get a buzz on my intercom. It's the Ducati Kid with the rest of the 'crew'. They were down at the 'office' when the Kid, oiled up as usual, caught his foot in a hole in the road. There are many of these about at the moment due to damage from frost and snow. Even driving can be hazardous as some of the potholes are huge. He thinks he's broken his ankle so we need to get him up to the 'Inquest'.

I dump Jimbo and J.J. in the back of the Jag and the Kid sits up front today because of his bad foot. Normally nobody would dare take J.J.s front seat. We manage to find a parking space in the hospital car park, which is never easy, and carries quite exorbitant charges, even for the staff that work here.

At the Accident and Emergency Department the Triage Nurse tells us the Kid needs an 'X-ray', so we'll have the usual three hour wait. The 'crew' is upset about this but I could have told them that, if they'd asked. The Kid's foot is so swollen he can't get his shoe on again, and he's getting cold. I get the boys some coffees and croissants, which comes to over twenty quid. Even a tiny slab of butter here costs twenty pence. I have to leave them after an hour as I must get ready for Snowflake tonight.

7 PM

In Snowflake tonight we have a big crowd. Micky is there again with Michelle who is wearing the latest street fashion: a little fluffy Tutu over some leggings. She actually looks quite foxy tonight and Micky is getting rather randy. As they lean over the counter to get their teas, he brushes against her and declares: 'I want you to put that ointment on your hair tonight, that stuff that kills the nits.'

Little Michelle is slightly more sensitive than Micky and reacts badly to the stunned looks from the kitchen ladies as they visibly shrink away from her presence at the counter. Micky and Michelle sit at separate tables for the rest of the evening.

Wednesday 16th February

10 AM Dull day. 'His Place.'

Heavy Eddy was at the breakfast last week, which I missed as I was at my court case in Lewes, (which I lost) so I expect he'll be here this morning as well. I am beginning to wonder if he's possessed, as one minute he can be polite and even kind to people, and the next, full of hate and evil. I use to joke with him, 'The IRA have a ten-second fuse, but yours is only a five-second one.' I've seen him switch from a gentle giant to a vicious thug in just a few seconds. I often say to him, 'What the Hell's got into you?' and I might just be right.

Anyway, nervous as I am, I enjoy serving up the breakfasts. Celia has had her morning swim and has a hearty appetite. Michael is there with 'Giggly-Viv' and he is the last to finish as he only has two teeth in his head. They tell me the bailiffs are coming to evict everyone from number eleven, as Kelly and co. have turned the joint into a crack house.

'Fast Eddie', as usual gets second helpings. He already has had one breakfast in the home before he came out and will 'nip' down the road for another, when he leaves. He's either got worms or a huge appetite, but we have to sit him at a table on his own, because he drools and dribbles so much it puts the others off their food.

Thursday 17th February

10 AM Drizzly day.

John, whose house my friend Shaun was doing up, has since employed Chris, my neighbour, to paint the place. Chris and Shaun have fallen out over Sara but Shaun has left his tools round at John's house so comes with me in the Jag to collect them. Chris doesn't want him in the house so I go in and pick up Shaun's tools. Chris tells me he doesn't want any trouble, that he's a gentleman and not violent, but I think he may be the most volatile person I know.

Shaun told me of the time they both went drinking in town. Chris had met up with an old friend who'd just left the Army. They were all outside the pub having a smoke when a bunch of scroats started a fracas up a nearby alley. Chris looked at his mate and they both nodded and ran up the alleyway where a lot of the teenagers were fighting. Chris and his army friend just piled into them all, decked a few and then ran back to the pub, laughing. Shaun was stunned. Chris also confided to

Shaun that when he threw Sara out she went to the 'Bill' and said he'd raped her. He had to admit they'd slept together once or twice, but she claimed that he had forced her the second time, and the case will now go to trial.

8 PM

At the kitchen tonight little Kelly is there with a large slash down the side of her face. She asks me, 'Will I be scarred for life?' I know she will but reassure her otherwise. I demand to know how it happened. She had been given money to score from someone round her house, but got some gear off a dealer on the 'slate'. She had found a new boy friend so spent the money she was given on make-up and shared the gear she was given for the other bloke with her boy friend. Afterwards she realized she couldn't go back to the shooting gallery with no gear, so she decided to fake a robbery. She got 'Large Barb', her lesbian friend, to slash her face with the ring pull of the can she was drinking from at the time. Seems Barbara was overly enthusiastic, or drunk, for Kelly now sports a long scar down her face. The dealer let her off but the boyfriend went round and put him in hospital, for Large Barb swore he was the one who slashed her, and she knew nothing about it.

Friday 18th February

11 AM Cold day.

At the Sally Ann this morning the '57' are all trying to get sleeping bags as the boiler, like the fridge, has broken down in Church Road.

Stretch is chatting to Bridget the Midget:

'I'm fed up being poor,' she declares.

'Absolutely,' agrees Stretch, 'you and me both.'

'Yeah, but I've found a solution,' she tells him.

'What's that then?' he inquires.

'I'm going to get a large castle on a remote island, and rent out rooms.'

'Do it up, like?' he asks.

'Indeed, paint it all over, with whitewash.'

'Absolutely, inside and out, with whitewash' he responds.

'That's the plan. It will be in the best possible taste, but I'll let people live there.'

'And will it be on a tropical island?' he inquires.

'Yes, but it must have volcanoes and jungle and coral reefs,' she answers.

Stretch then asks, 'How will you get the money, Bridget?'

'That's the easy part. I'll just run a lottery for each of the rooms, and the revenue from that will fund the whole project.'

Stretch is impressed. 'So, you'll sell the rooms off to the winners?'

'No, stupid, I'll give the winners the rooms. Simple.'

'Fantastic,' says Stretch, 'and if you got one over I'll have it. I can be the caretaker.'

'Indeed,' says Bridget, 'done deal.'

Saturday 19th February

7 PM. Rainy.

I don't go to Hope kitchen tonight as I am taking Tracy out for a few drinks. I get home by taxi and feel dehydrated as I've been drinking shorts because of my bad stomach. I decide to make a protein shake and have mixed everything together when I try to unscrew the blade off the blender to wash it. Unfortunately, it is still plugged in and I watch stupidly as it grinds up the palm of my hand.

My reactions are too slow to pull my hand away when I hear the motor start, and now my hand is a mangled mess. I realize I can't wait for an ambulance so wrap a towel round my hand and run out to the Jag. It's almost midnight and there is little traffic on the road to the 'Inquest'. I manage to get there without spilling too much blood on the carpets and run into Accident and Emergency. The bored receptionist looks at me dripping blood, and starts asking loads of questions:

'What's your full name? Have you been here before? What's your Address? Who's your doctor? What surgery is that? What's your phone number? Have you got a mobile? Now tell me your symptoms,' she finally asks.

'I think I'm bleeding to death,' I reply.

'Have a seat, the nurse will be with you presently.'

As all this is happening a little old lady with a mop and bucket has magically appeared. I never noticed her arrive but now she is asking me to move here and there, while she mops up my blood, my precious blood that is still dripping onto her shiny floor. I can tell where her priorities lie; on the floor, with my blood.

Sunday 20th February

9 AM. A windy miserable day.

After my late night, with my hand glued up, I decide I should lie in and give church a miss. They can find someone else to do the teas and coffees this morning.

11 AM

Go for walk later on in the woods. Visit Andreas and Cara, who have been living in a tent for years. They get moved on every so often by council workers who are generally very sympathetic to their plight. They have a chemical toilet, and solar lanterns and a radio and are fairly self-sufficient. They have a huge groundsheet and a blow-up double mattress.

They live under the stars, and in fact know all the constellations. They get their laundry done at Seaview for a pound a time, and have a tiny gas ring they can make tea with, and even the occasional meal. They lunch at Seaview for a pound a day and go to all the soup kitchens and the Wednesday breakfast. Without these facilities they would soon go downhill.

3 PM

Drive out to visit Tall Paul, an ex-copper who runs the Camera club. Since I joined this we have become good friends. Paul is tough, like some hard men just think they are.

He narrates to me the time he was called to a pub fight in Mugsborough. He is first on the scene and marches in to see this giant 'Mountain Man' has laid waste to the whole pub. Bodies are sprawled everywhere and mirrors smashed, with women leaning against the walls, screaming. He picks up a metal bar stool and clouts this guy around the head with it. Mountain Man just grunts and goes for his throat. Paul reaches down and grabs the guy's nuts, and asks if he's going to come quietly or does he want a sex change. Mountain Man immediately turned as meek as a lamb, he says.

7 PM

Get a phone call, from Rolie and Rosie, to say John Holland's microwave has just blown up and can we help. I ring John, known as 'Dutch', but there's no answer.

The papers make interesting reading this week, as usual.

In the middle of the afternoon two burglars forced their way into a home in Blackman Avenue, Mugsborough and held a seventy-nine-year old woman at knifepoint. The pair ransacked the house and made off with jewellery, including rings and bracelets, earrings and watches, as well as cash.

Mr. Peter Owen, of Lauriston Care Home in Mugsborough, died when he cut his wrists in desperation of being refused assisted suicide.

Police detained a twenty-one year old man, from Mugsborough, after someone he was chasing on the A21 contacted them on a mobile. The guy was arrested for drink driving, dangerous driving and driving without a licence. He was bailed until March.

A twenty-two year old man, also from Mugsborough is being held in custody for causing death by dangerous driving, after a sixty-two year old man died in a car crash.

Police stopped a fifty-thousand-pound Ferrari, when a 'NRC' camera (number-plate recognition camera) showed it to be uninsured. The car was seized in Mews Road, and taken away on a lorry. Like the Titanic, it was on its maiden voyage.

Jamie Harbor 26, of London Road, Mugsborough, pleaded guilty to six charges of actual bodily harm, driving without due care and attention, failing to stop after an accident, threatening behaviour, driving without insurance and driving otherwise than in accordance with his licence.

Police obviously couldn't think of anything else at the time, but did well, considering. He had attacked Mr. Graham Potter as he got off a late train in Warrior Square. (I can't think of a better name for this place.) He hit Mr. Potter with a bottle, causing facial injuries. When police arrived and tried to block his car, he drove straight at a Female Police Officer, missing her by inches. It seems he has a long history of motoring offences.

Mike Reid 19, of Southwater Road, Mugsborough, and his friend, a youth too young to be named, have pleaded guilty to burglary when they went inside a broken shop window and stole cash. Reid told the court he was just looking through the window, which was already cracked, when his friend leant against it and it simply caved in.

Lastly, large red pillar-boxes are being ripped out of the ground in a spate of local attacks. Apparently they can fetch five thousand pounds from collectors in the United States.

Monday 21st February

9 AM. Very Windy, but dry.

I ring 'Dutch' Holland, as soon as I get up. He tells me his Microwave just flashed and banged and then blew up. He asks if he can come round for a bite to eat. I put him off for the moment, but offer to find him a second-hand microwave.

'That's no good,' he tells me, 'I need a new one with a guarantee.' He tells me we can get one in Argos for less than forty quid. I tell him I haven't got forty quid to spare, although I know Rolie will go 'halves' with me over this. I still can't spare twenty quid, at the moment. I will find a good second-hand one with some sort of guarantee, and when I ring Rolie he agrees to split the difference.

12 Noon

Go to the Bridgebuilders Referral Centre, for a cheap bowl of fruit, and a piece of cheesy garlic bread for only fifty pence a slice. This is because the food here is subsidized.

7 PM

Go to Snowflake tonight. I am sometimes very psychic, and know Eddy will be there tonight so am not shocked when I see him waiting at the door when I go to open up for the crowd.

He asks, 'Are we cool?' and I tell him, 'No hard feelings, it was a nice scam.' He claims he knows nothing so I let it drop. Besides, I have learned a valuable lesson. I tell him Willy's performance, with perfect timing, was worthy of a Hollywood script. We have a brief laugh. Despite everything I still like this guy.

Tuesday 22nd February

9 AM Dry and windy, but very cold.

During the night I got a long friendly text from Eddy.

3 PM

Katie turns up, and comes in for tea. She is upset for she found 'The Shadow' in her kitchen, making a cup of coffee. Her son, Paul, let him in as he was going out, so the Shadow sat there for hours waiting for her to return home. He is the guy who gave Kate the two-hundred-pounds deposit to move into her cottage and who now feels he has a right to be there - anytime.

She sees him shadowing her as she is walking round the streets and is getting quite nervous about it. She also feels he is getting very possessive; as he has just told her he loves her. If he finds out that she often comes round to see me I'm going to have a problem. She tells me she has no feelings for him, but she needs to tell him that as well.

8 PM

There are over thirty at Snowflake tonight, and they keep bumping into each other spilling soup all over the place. Most are off their face, or 'well-oiled', as this helps keep out the bitter cold. As they try to carry their sarnies and coffees back to the tables they slip on the spilt soup, and the floor gets another coating.

Wednesday 23rd February

9 AM Cold, drizzly rain.

At the Wednesday breakfast we only have six tables laid up as numbers have recently dropped to twenty or so. As it happens a few new faces turn up late and we have to refuse them, for although there's food over, they should have heard the preach as the only reason we can give out free food is to call this a charity breakfast by preaching two minutes of Gospel.

Big Richard arrives late as his bicycle had a puncture. We make an exception in his case as he's a regular, but the new scroats take umbrage. They have been given only a cup of tea and are sitting there making remarks about Richard's 'tights'. These are cycling trousers, but the scroats claim he's showing off his 'bulge', and if he turns up like that next week they will beat him up.

3 PM

There is a new 'ice-cream-man' in town. As I was standing outside the café this morning giving out tickets, he didn't know who I was. Now down at the 'office' he is chatting to a couple of potential clients. He has just arrived from London, and says,

'This is the purest "blow" this side of the Thames. Never been stepped on.' We all know this to be pure fiction, as all hard drugs are stepped on before they get to this part of the woods. Recently six 'Seaview' addicts contracted Anthrax, when they banged up with some dodgy smack. It was known as 'Red' on the streets, as it turned to red gel when cooked up.

Thursday 24th February

10 AM Rainy day

Went to see Nanette. One of the 'Sisters', Molly, came to stay with her at the weekend. Molly was on a binge because her daughter had taken the car to stop her 'drink driving'. She has been done a few times already for this and only kept her licence because she has a great job and needed the car for work. In the flats where she lives she has set the place on fire twice, albeit accidentally, but has done so again recently and is now being evicted. Although this time she extinguished the flames herself, the woman beneath her reported her because this lady lost her husband and two kids in a house fire a year ago.

When Molly arrived she was oiled up, so Nanette took Bobby out for a walk. When she got back the place was trashed and full of police. They had arrested Molly for shoplifting and abusive behaviour. They were still searching the place after Molly was carted off, as it seems when Nanette went out Molly went and nicked some wine from the shop over the road. Trouble is Nanette, who's preparing to detox, found an open bottle of Jack Daniels in the Fridge that Molly hadn't finished and polished it off. She is very hung-over and remorseful and wants me to bring her church on Sunday.

Friday 25th February

11 AM Damp foggy morning.

At the Sally Ann meet Heavy Eddy. He is very happy to see me and is wearing the crucifix I gave him on a shoelace round his neck. He tells me he's saving up for a gold chain. He has moved back to his mum's house and swears he's been clean since he moved, as he's got away from the temptation of the pushers, where he was.

I have been looking for a cheap microwave for 'Dutch', as he has to eat out all the time with friends who will feed him. He only has tins and microwave food as his bed-sit does not possess a cooker.

1 PM

Eddy comes with me to look for a microwave and we try Lidl and Asda and even Argos, who are supposed to be the cheapest, but we find we have to pay at least forty pounds for one.

Eddy suggests a second-hand shop opposite to where he used to live. We drive there and see in the window a nice one for twenty quid but the shop is shut. Eddy knows the guy and when he rings him the bloke turns up in ten minutes. We collect the microwave and drive round to 'Dutch's'. He's not answering his mobile but we can see him asleep in his room with the T.V. blaring. Eddy climbs over the railings, onto the window-ledge and bangs on his window until he wakens up and comes to the door. His place is a bit of a tip, but he is very grateful for the microwave.

Saturday 26th February

6 AM Very foggy.

I love the fog and get a camera out to do a shoot on the beach. As I pass 'A's' off-licence I see some of the crew staggering out with six-packs under their arms. It is not even half-past-six in the morning. 'A' knows he's on a winner. No officials run round at that time of the morning and the customers certainly aren't going to register a complaint. If 'Old Bill' walks in, he's just selling milk Officer, and newspapers of course.

9 AM

I go round to Sandie's, the other 'sister of perpetual indulgence'. Her carer is there this morning and she always brings some simpleton with her on her visit. Sandie sends the carer out shopping for some cheap wine in Morrisons.

Unlike her sisters Sandie only drinks wine - but a lot of it. The carer insists that Sandie washes the girl's hair while she goes shopping, because she isn't supposed to buy drink for clients. Sandie agrees. As we chat to the child we discover that this visit to Sandie's is supposed to be a country outing for her. She is supposed to go for a drive in the country every week but only ever ends up visiting other people's

homes. She is always told to say she's enjoyed her run in the country or she will never be taken anywhere in the future. Sandie is more concerned that the carer always demands money for petrol, although you could walk to Morrisons in five minutes.

Sunday 27th February

8 AM Lovely sunny morning.

Myrium, who liaises with the 'Beach Head' people wakes me with a phone call. She tells me a twenty-year old jumped during the night, but survived, probably with severe brain damage. Some time ago, in the fog, four people in a car drove up the wrong road and flew over the edge of the cliff.

9AM

Go to Nanettes to bring her to church, as she asked me to on Thursday. She is still hung-over and needs a shower and a lot of persuasion. She does get ready in time, and enjoys the service, getting prayer from the pastor afterwards. She is also very angry as her grandmother rang from Scotland to say the police had been round to interview her husband who is now in his late eighties and suffers from dementia. She informs Nanette that Molly has registered a formal complaint of child abuse against the old boy. Molly has told police that Nanette saw the old boy rape her when she was only ten years old, and Nanette was just six. Although this occurred fifty years ago I know the sisters have been traumatized ever since and claim this is the reason they drink. I am in no position to judge, but realize most addicts and junkies have some story like this to relate.

8-30 PM

Katie turns up and gives her special six-bell ring. I have had so many street people turn up lately that I've had to select a few friends, and tell them to ring a certain number of times. By the number of rings I can tell who's at the front door, and buzz them in. She needs more Valium, which I gladly give her.

This week the papers report that the local police have defended their investigation of the burning down of Hastings pier, amid mounting frustration that the two nineteen-year-olds arrested that night have been bailed three times, despite being

grabbed as they jumped off the pier when it caught light at two in the morning. The police claim the CPS (Crown Prosecution Service) has the final say in proceedings. Two young girls walking down Priory Road at seven-thirty on Monday evening were set upon by two women, aged between twenty-five and thirty. In the unprovoked attack the girls had their hair pulled out and were punched repeatedly. One was even kned in the face.

A pizza-delivery man aged twenty, was knifed in the face as he made a local delivery. Police arrested twenty-two year old Marcus Jones, and charged him with aggravated robbery and possession of cannabis. The driver needed hospital treatment.

An off-duty policeman looked out the window of his house in Park Way and saw two 'screats' pushing away his neighbour's car. He gave chase and managed to grab one of the men.

Tony Green 44, of Roundwood Road, Mugsborough, has been jailed for eight years for numerous counts of sexual assaults on girls under thirteen.

A fifty-seven year old man who told a mugger he had no money on him was punched several times in the face, causing massive bruising and swelling. The suspect, in his twenties, then fled empty handed.

Steven Sheppard 53, of Blackman Avenue, Mugsborough, was given a one-year conditional discharge and forty pound costs for making six hoax calls reporting a man with a knife sticking out of him. He wasted seventy hours of police time, and the average callout costs the public two hundred and fifty pounds each.

Thieves siphoned five thousand pounds worth of diesel fuel from the Building Centre in Seddlescombe Road, Mugsborough, over the weekend.

Monday 28th February

10 AM Drizzle.

A late start for me this morning, as the Love café below me had a noisy late night party for the traders.

Went to pay my electric bill of £88, only to find in the morning post that I had received a gas bill for £140. I will never get out of debt at this rate. After the usual ten-minute queue at the post office in Mugsborough I manage to pay my electric

bill, but notice Naomi at the next counter, kicking off as usual, giving grief to the helpless cashier.

I then walk to Bridgebuilders, for my bowl of fruit. Tiny Tony is there, giving it large about Omega XL, and B17 vitamins, which are supposed to cure cancer. He shows me 'U-Tube' videos about these on his Sony Erickson phone. I can never understand how street people can afford the latest phones yet never seem to have any money.

7 PM

Snowflake. There are thirty-four clients in tonight, a record for us. Someone tells me that Steve of the 'crew' (the Ducati Kid) who is now in Merrick House, has been charged with rape. We are all stunned; until it emerges it's another Steve, who is also ensconced in Merrick House.

Clifford comes in for a rare visit. He is a real 'Gentleman of the Roads' and travels round with the 'Centipede'. His companion has two wooden legs and is so-called because he's had over a hundred replacements while travelling round the country. The reason is because when he and Clifford hole up in an empty warehouse, or such, they sometimes get so cold they burn one of the Centipede's wooden legs. In the morning he goes and gets another one off the shelf, and they continue on their travels.

But one night it got so cold, and they got so drunk they decided to burn both legs. In the morning Clifford rings the ambulance as his friend cannot get up or use his crutches. The lady asks:

'What's the emergency?'

He tells her, 'I've got a man here, who can't move.'

'What's wrong with him?' she asks. Clifford replies, 'He's legless.'

'Sorry,' she says, 'we're not sending an ambulance out for a drunk.'

'No,' says Clifford, 'you don't understand. He's not drunk, he really is legless!'

CHAPTER SEVEN

MARCH

Tuesday 1st March

9 AM. Cold and damp.

At the Referral Centre I discover that the first of March is 'SIAD' Day, which stands for Self-Injury-Awareness-Day. They are displaying some graphic pictures on their information poster. When I devour my cheap bowl of fruit I rush home to find my new computer has 'blue-screened'. Not good. The local computer 'Nerd' is arriving at two today to sort it out, hopefully.

11 AM

I go to local Internet café to collect my E-mails. As I am there this 'Dude' comes in with a memory stick. He sits down at one of the twenty computers and plugs a memory stick in. As soon as he does this, his screen starts flashing, then blue-screens. The horrified manager panics and starts running round trying to pull the mains plugs on all the computers. He is too late, for like lightning the screens quickly flash one after the other. This is the first 'Virus' attack I've ever witnessed. The new customer, it turns out, had just come from the library where he downloaded something and, when he next used his memory-stick, it messed up all the computers on the same network.

The manager is furious, but cannot blame the guy because he knows the anti-virus program used by the library is totally archaic, and punters are always getting problems when they use library computers. The library just cannot afford to purchase the latest software protection. These premises now have to close for a week while the manager wipes all the drives, and starts afresh. Memory sticks are now banned.

12 Noon

Visit Nanette. She is off her face, again. The dog has not been taken out so I take it out for a walk. We go on the beach and he chases stones one way and then the other, as I stand in the middle chucking them as fast as I can. When I bring the dog back Nanette tells me a young man helped her yesterday as she was stumbling around, drunk in the street. He even took her for a meal and informed her that he

actually has his own estate business, and has just purchased a flat in the next street. He is exactly half her age, so I tell her to be very careful she doesn't get ripped off - again!

2 PM

'Nerd' informs me my new computer has collapsed and needs a new hard drive. At least it is under Warranty so will be returned to the Apple Centre tomorrow. I pray I haven't lost any files and that they can recover all my photographs.

3 PM

Katie arrives to 'borrow' four Valium. She has been getting threatening texts off Heavy Eddy, demanding a hundred pounds, or he will 'Dobb' her in to the Social for claiming too much money!

7 Pm

Snowflake. Quiet night. Two girls come in and as newcomers their details have to be taken. They claim to be eighteen, but one is fifteen and the other only fourteen. They both look to be in a dreadful state but are refused entry because the age limit is eighteen. What in God's name a fourteen-year-old is doing in a soup kitchen in Mugsborough is beyond me.

Captain Mannering tells me latest reports state ten thousand children in England are the subjects of Care Applications as they are regarded to be at risk, so my friend Sarita, who lost her three children, is not alone in this respect.

Wednesday 2nd March

8 AM Sunny but cold.

Up early for the Wednesday breakfast. Pastor Chris is in California this week, so I say the opening prayer. The same thing is more or less repeated every week.

'Let's come to God in Prayer. Father God, we thank you for this morning and for the food you have provided. We give thanks for all the volunteers and we ask you to bless all the people here, especially those with no homes.' I add that we should remember absent friends, like J.J. who is on holiday, in Lewes Prison, and 'Tony the Hat', who is very ill in Ticehurst ward in the 'Inquest'. As I finish my good friend, Nanette pipes up, 'Holy Mary, Mother of God, send us down a couple of bob.'

As I serve the breakfasts, known as 'heart-attacks-on-a-plate', I always know who wants beans and who doesn't want tomatoes, etc. Heavy Eddy, who seems friendly this morning, tells me he just 'found' two English Bulldog puppies. 'I know what you mean by that,' I retort, realizing he's been going round the gardens at night and discovered a kennel somewhere. They are worth fifteen hundred each.

Fisherman Andy comes in with a friend at ten-thirty.

The trouble is all the food is finished and Fast Eddie has had seconds as usual. I inform them that they must be here at ten sharp for the prayers or they won't get served. They don't seem to grasp the point of this being a Charity Breakfast, so I give them some leftover toast and a cup of tea.

Andy Fish is rattling, and Heavy Eddy offers to get him a can. Andy hesitates for he knows Eddy's form, and doesn't want to be indebted to him for anything. Eddy reiterates, 'Well, do you want it, or not?'

As Andy Fish and his friend follow Heavy Eddy to the 'Offy', I now wonder about his sudden generosity, and ponder if he's sold the crucifix I gave him as I haven't seen him wearing it lately. He later assures me he doesn't want to wear it out as he might get mugged!

Thursday 3rd March

9 AM Beautiful crisp morning.

'Nerd' brings my computer back. The drive needed to be wiped but is now sorted. I give him a drink for his trouble and he goes away happy.

10 AM

Bag up my rubbish for the binmen, or should I say, Refuse Disposal Officers. They come early these days and if you miss them your rubbish gets ripped open by the seagulls and strewn all over the street.

11 AM

Go visit Nanette. Her front door is wide open and she is sprawled out on the floor where she slept last night. No point making her a coffee as she still has a six-pack clutched to her bosom and I notice two bags full of empties in the kitchen. She is looking for a ten-pound note she had on the table to buy more drink, but my guess

is she's spent it already. She is also looking for her dog because last night he wandered out the open door, and has not returned.

12 Noon

Her sister Molly rings. She has just got out of Detox, only to come home and find her flat had been 'turned over'. She had been introduced to a friend of the lady in her block of flats who lost her kids in a fire. But this stranger declared his undying love for her after about five minutes, and promised to visit her in the Detox unit as soon as she went in.

He did keep his promise but only stayed two minutes to confirm she wasn't going anywhere in a hurry, and then rushed round to burgle her flat. She lost three televisions, two laptops, a 'Nintendo Wii', and a Nano - whatever that is. Molly is one of the 'Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence', and like her two sisters a devout alcoholic, but she has a first-class Honors Degree in Computer Science and Mathematics.

3PM

Down at the 'office', Jimmy is giving it 'large' to some girlfriend. After haranguing her for ten minutes the girl lashes out, kicks him in the 'family jewels' and does a runner; but like a born fool she returns in fifteen minutes. Jimmy chases her down the promenade as all the passers-by ignore them.

Friday 4th March

9 AM Cold. Bleak

Nanette rings to tell me her dog has come back, so she is very relieved. The Gas Fitter arrives to check my boiler as I have been without heating all weekend.

I hear J.J. finished his holiday in Lewes yesterday so wander down the seafront office to see if I can spot him. Lurch and Jimmy and Strumpet are there and tell me my prayer at the Wednesday breakfast must have worked because he was given an early release. Apparently Nanette has been down here this morning drinking with the rest of them, and apparently slagging me off something rotten! Don't know what her beef is, but she does love to gossip like most women.

Go round to Nanette's. Her two sisters are also there. Nanette is asleep on the floor again while Molly has crashed out on the Sofa. Sandie, who is off her face but still

conscious, explains that Katie came round and they all gave her money to buy them a few bottles of Vodka. They can each drink a large bottle of Vodka a day. Molly comes to, and declares she wants to come and live with Nanette. She also wants her new boyfriend to move in, and unbelievably this is the guy we suspect has ripped her off while she was in Detox.

Understandably, he refuses to talk to her on the phone when she rings, so she gets me to phone and say I'm her Social Worker. When I get through to him I pass the phone to Molly and she pleads with him to come down and stay with her and her sister. I am so concerned at this turn of events that I ring Sarah, Nanette's daughter, who tells me she's had 'years of this shit', but has made me promise to ring when things take a turn for the worse.

Sarah, in turn, rings Carol who is Molly's daughter, and she promises to come over and take her mum back home. I promise to ring if the thief reappears.

Saturday 5th March

11 AM Very cold, but bright and windy.

Nanette went shoplifting today. Unfortunately she got 'pulled', but she had left her dog tied up outside. As they sort her out someone nicks the dog, which was tied to a post outside the chemist. For a change Nanette was not nicking drink this time, but hair dye and deodorant.

This occurred in Boots in Mugsborough, who employ full time security staff even though it is a small branch. As the police carted her off they didn't believe she had a dog and said it wasn't their problem anyway. When she got out the 'pig-sty' she went back to Boots and they kindly played the security tape of the incident for her. The security guard recognized the 'scroat' who lifted her dog. When he spotted him on the shop videotape he claimed: 'This guy often comes in to shoplift, usually when I'm on my lunch-break. He had already been in but couldn't take anything as the staff had called me to follow him round the premises. Obviously he just took your dog because he didn't want to go home with nothing.'

2 PM

Nanette puts up posters with her phone number offering a reward, and within an hour receives a call.

She has offered five hundred pounds reward and loads of people turn up on her doorstep with loads of dogs. But they are all the wrong dogs. Finally two black girls ring up stating that their friend nicked the dog but they have stolen it back off him. They ask does she still want to pay a reward. After confirmation of this they soon arrive with Nanette's dog.

She hands over the five hundred most of which she has borrowed and the two girls go away happy. Personally, I would have handled things a little differently. However, she is happy and the dog is none the worse for wear.

Sunday 6th March

10 AM. Cold and windy.

Receive a newsletter, at church, this morning giving details of the 'Beachy Head' project. They are looking for volunteers and I have considered applying, but I get dizzy at the top of a ladder so wouldn't be much use. The Spring issue of their newsletter claims seven hundred and sixty-seven searches, with two hundred and seventy-nine rescues, last year.

My friend Myrium, who is part of their prayer-team, gets woken up most nights with requests for prayer concerning serious incidents. Every night last week she got calls, sometimes two a day, but last Friday received three. These were for young girls of thirteen and sixteen, and one for a man who had travelled from Norway to end his life at Beachy Head. Even his family had no idea he had left the country, but people come from all over to commit suicide here. Last week a man jumped four hundred feet but miraculously survived. The helicopter pulled him up but he was so severely damaged he would probably be better off dead. At the moment the suicides are averaging one a week.

In other news an eighty-four year old woman was shot in the leg, as she was carrying her shopping home. A twenty-year old man has been arrested.

On the twenty-third of February a sweet-toothed thief stole seventy pounds worth of chocolate from the 'Co-Op'. He was seen on CCTV, at 10.40 a.m. which happened to be the exact time he went in there the previous Wednesday and stole fifty pounds worth of chocolate. Police Constable Duncan Cleverly stated, 'If you have

been offered chocolate recently by a man in his twenties we would like to hear from you and please keep the wrappers.'

There was a big noisy demonstration outside the town hall at the council meeting this week, against the 50% cuts the council is facing. It seems the Mayoress will lose her chauffeur and personal assistant, and may not be able to wear her chain of office.

Cullum Smith of Maze Hill, Mugsborough, pleaded guilty to possession of Cocaine. In his defence he claimed, 'I don't do drugs. I found it outside a pub.'

Martin Davey 41, was pulled over by police in his Alfa-Romeo, but he didn't stop and kept swerving all over the road. When he was finally stopped he was asked to provide a breath test, but demanded, 'Arrest me, I'm not doing that.' In court he pleaded guilty to a charge of failing to provide a specimen, claiming he had not been drinking, but was simply taking a friend to an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting, which would explain the smell of alcohol in his car, and the reason he couldn't walk properly was that he had a crumbling ankle.

Police found eight hundred wraps of crack and heroin between a man's bum-cheeks, when he was stopped and searched in Hastings. Magistrates sent Emmanuel Laurenon 26, to Crown Court, because they claimed the case was too serious for them to deal with. Laurenon declined to comment when interviewed by police, but did say he was having a hard time of it since recently leaving prison.

Darren Hallowell 31, of Mugsborough was given an ASBO, after a string of complaints from the public over fifteen months of drunken and abusive behaviour. This ASBO lasts two years and bans Hallowell from using threatening or abusive or insulting words within the area of Hastings and St. Leonard's. He is also banned from drinking in public.

John Wilson 44, who was arrested for driving with sixty mgs of alcohol in his blood, when the legal limit is thirty-five claimed he only drove a hundred yards from the pub. This was because two men stole his shoes as he was trying to get away from them. He was still fined a hundred pounds and disqualified for three years, as he'd had a number of previous convictions.

Michael N'Ganga 48, of Old Church Road, Mugsborough, pleaded guilty to the theft of two bottles of brandy worth twenty-two pounds, from 'Lidl's'. He told the security

guard he had taken them because the 'VAT' duty had just gone up so he didn't quite have enough money. Magistrates gave N'Ganga a three-month conditional discharge.

Monday 7th March

10 AM Sunny but very cold.

Went round to see Nanette. She had promised to go to church with me yesterday but instead went on a binge with Molly and Sandie. She even swore she would sober up for the evening service as it's a healing service but when I went to collect her, all the 'sisters of perpetual indulgence' were upholding their reputations and still completely oiled-up. That was a special service for anointing with oil and communion as well so I really felt she might have benefited from that.

I come to check on her today as I suspect her two sisters will have gone home by now. Her neighbour catches me knocking at the door and seems angry, wanting to know if she is expecting me. The sisters must be the epitome of the 'neighbours from hell'. The door is open so I walk in to find Nanette comatose on the floor. I revive her and immediately she wants me to get her a drink in the 'Offy'. She explains the neighbour's anger by telling me the police and ambulance were called at 7 a.m. this morning. Molly had been running about naked, screaming and shouting with the stereo turned up full blast. This woke Nanette and Sandie who came downstairs to find the place trashed. The carpets were soaked and the dog's food everywhere with Molly wailing away like a demented banshee. She wouldn't calm down so they phoned the ambulance service but they called the police. Molly wouldn't go in the ambulance so she had to go in the police car. Nanette found two empty bottles of Vodka and the poor dog is still trembling. Her neighbours are scared to death as she also burnt the duvet badly with a cigarette. They know she has already set fire to her own flat, more than once.

Tuesday 8th March

8 AM Very sunny, but very cold. Temp is just one degree.

Very worried about Nanette. When I pop round this morning there is no answer and the door is unlocked. Let myself in and find the dog has shit everywhere. Go

upstairs, as I guess she's in bed still. Knock the door before entering to find her in bed with a young scroat, who squeals out, 'No, no, no! I make my apologies and a hasty exit. I was going to take the dog out but decide to go for breakfast first.

After my fruit and garlic bread, and a game with Tim Harvey, who's also a client here, I head back down London Road to Nanette's.

Scroat has gone but so has twenty quid that Nanette had left on the mantelpiece. The place is still trashed from Molly's 7 a.m. freak-out, but now smells even worse. Nanette tells me the police took her to the train station and put her on a train home. Nanette's daughter, who has the mortgage on this place is furious when the police tell her what's been happening and is coming over, swearing to evict her mum onto the street.

7 PM

Snowflake, and today is Shrove Tuesday, or 'Pancake Tuesday', so we have decided to make and serve our own pancakes to the clientele. The '57-crew' are all there and J.J. and Big Jimbo polish off a load while the Ducati Kid cannot eat anything, as usual, not even the soup. Neither can Micky for he's got a stomach hernia. He shows me how it comes out by his stomach, as big as a fist, and he just pushes it back in again.

Cockney Joe, who was once a Jehovah's Witness shout's out, 'I don't want none of them Pagan Pancakes.' But the fun starts when all the others in the queue demand some pagan pancakes, and let it be known in a loud voice that they would also like some pagan soup and will there be any pagan sarnies to take away later on?

Wednesday 9th March

10 AM Sunny, but cold and windy.

There is a full house at the breakfast this morning, with over thirty street people. On the way to the café I meet Misfit who tells me he's really stuck and needs to get to the 'Inquest' for an appointment. I have no shrapnel with me, but borrow something off Captain Mannering in the café. He often helps me out, for he knows he'll get it back.

Am getting worried about my own finances as this month I've gone over my overdraft level of a thousand pounds, which incurs a twenty-five pound fee on top. I

refuse to use my credit cards any more because they're almost maxed out and I must keep something for an emergency, like eating!

Nanette comes rushing into the café at ten-thirty. She is paralytic but I have to tell her there's no food left - but she's not here to eat. She's just had a call from Sandie. Apparently Molly rang her to say she's just poured petrol all over herself and is going to the cooker to light up - as you do!. When Molly loses it she does so big time. She was in the local papers when the woman in the flat below reported her for starting a fire, and now Nanette wants me to ring the police where Molly lives and explain the situation, asking them to go check on her and the flat.

None of the Sisters is in any state to converse with the police, so I have to do it. I ring 999 and am on the phone from 11.35 until 11.50 talking to some woman called Naseem, who tells me the police are outside Molly's but will have to wait for the fire brigade as petrol is involved. Paramedics are also there but they are waiting for Social Services who are waiting for a doctor and psychiatrist to 'section' poor old Molly.

Eventually they had to break the door in for she wouldn't answer it, probably because she had passed out. But she was too drunk to light the cooker!

Thursday 10th March

10 AM Sunny but cold wind.

Go round Nanette's to see if the 'Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence' are still in the land of the living. Susie Crack is there this morning with Mad Mary, a demented eighty-five-year old witch. As I go in Nanette accuses me of stealing twenty pounds in front of the other two. I am gob-smacked and remind her that it was me who found the twenty quid that Molly had lost down the sofa recently.

Mad Mary starts her engine, giving it large about the washing machine I got J.J. to plumb into her flat, when I moved her from Scotland to Mugsborough. Apparently it leaked all over her carpet (or rather the landlords carpet) and now she claims I owe her two hundred pounds, even though the carpet was so mangy you couldn't give it away. As it happens J.J. was only doing her a favour and never charged her, but she now has the nerve to blame me for his incompetence.

However Mad Mary has done a good job of winding Nanette up, and I have to remind her that 'scoat' Ben took the twenty pound note off her mantelpiece when he stayed over and I walked in on them in bed together. I am so pissed off with Nanette that I will get Sarah, her daughter, to ring her up and sort things out. She says she suspects Ben and has laid a trap for him.

On the way home I bump into 'No-Name', who corners me for shrapnel. As I cross the road he shouts out asking if I'm going to the soup kitchen tonight. I was just going to chat up a fine looking woman but his remark has put paid to any efforts in that direction.

5 PM

A bunch of 'ferals' is just across the street, in Norman Road, next to the 'PO'. They are all screaming at each other; two boys and two girls, one of whom is screaming into her mobile, like she's possessed - which maybe she is. This row echoes round the street for another twenty minutes, before the cops turn up.

6 PM

Meet Graham, one of the D&G 'dynamic-duo'. His left arm is covered in a cloth bandage, which is seeped in blood. He tells me a dog just bit him and he thinks it might be Nanette's.

Friday 11th March

9 AM Sunny and no wind.

Went to see Nanette. I have a note I want her to sign, if she's sobered up enough to read it. It reads, 'This is to testify that I formally apologize to Mr. R for accusing him, in front of my friends, of stealing money off me. It is in a sober and lucid mind that I sign and date this.' She reads and signs the note, although she's too pissed to get off the floor. There are a dozen cans scattered about and, as she comes to, Nanette wants a smoke but just can't get it together to make a roll-up.

I take the dog out for a walk, and have to feed him when I return, as Nanette has discovered more drink hidden away.

3 PM

I go to His Place café for a cup of tea, but really feel the need for something stronger. Slim Tim, who is actually very fat, is in the café, where we do the

breakfasts. Pastor Chris is back home from California, which he now loves - saying he'd prefer to live there than here. Tim declares he'd rather live anywhere else than here and as I'm a bit depressed, after my visit to Nanette's, I feel like a pint of Guinness so I ask Slim Tim if he fancies a drink.

We walk out of the café and up to the end of the road to the Railway Tavern, just opposite Warrior Square station. Two brothers, Thomas and Robert Catt run this place. They are known as Tomcat and Bobcat.

The brothers use an old Irish technique for controlling 'trouble-makers'. Behind the bar they used to keep an old Bulls' penis. They are thick but flexible and when the recipient is hit across the top of the arm by the shoulder, it renders him incapable of raising his arm, as the Deltoid muscle gets torn. If this is done to both shoulders the culprit is effectively rendered 'Armless'. Nowadays a thick door spring does the job.

7 PM

Katie visits for tea and shrapnel. She needs £7.50 for 'baccy', although I later discover you can get a smaller pouch for half the price. I bring her to Morrison's for a snack as I have to do the weekly shopping, today. Katie gets sixteen-hundred-pounds bereavement benefit on Monday. On the way out we spot Mad Mary.

I have Nanette's' note in my pocket and Katie gives it to Mad Mary. Afterwards I hear Mary is going round saying I am now forging people's signatures. This is because Nanette does not remember signing the note and has denied doing so; I can't be bothered with these people.

Saturday 12th March

10 AM Fine day, but rain in evening.

Round at Nanette's I find Mad Mary had brought my note back to show Nanette, who says she does not know whom to believe any more, as she doesn't remember any note. She does admit she's known me for years and knows I wouldn't steal from her, but Mad Mary the 'witch', has poisoned her mind. Now I have lost interest, as you do.

1 PM

Katie comes round for a visit. She is on the 'ponce' for money for some 'baccy', and says she is starving so I take her for a cheap meal, in the café. Afterwards we drop

round to see Stan, who's so old now he has trouble getting out. We do a bit of shopping for him and he confides that Mad Mary has been ringing him up, demanding he avoids all future contact with me. This is a bit of a dilemma for him as we have all known each other for years, and even went to France together. This woman is so vindictive.

5 PM

Robbie, the agent who deals with some local rented houses rings me that there is a spare room in 54, St Mary's Road. I go round, with Scouse Pete to have a look. It is let to Spud and Silly Eileen who go through the bins at night. I cannot believe the state of the place when we get there. Spud has a collection of guitars and keyboards in the spare room, so Scouse Pete can't even get in to look at it. The furniture including a sofa, which I remember is supposed to be stored in the damp cellar but seems more likely to have been burnt in the open grate. You couldn't swing a cat in the kitchen it's so full of junk, and I mean junk, like a bloody great anchor blocking access to the cooker, the glass door of which has been smashed. I now realize the reason why Spud and Eileen get on so well, is because they share a penchant for useless trivia.

Sunday 13th March

9 AM Bright, but cold.

Go to collect Nanette, as she sent a text begging me to take her to church this morning. When I call she is all ready and dressed up, which surprises me, and as pissed as a newt, which doesn't, but we go anyway, and she's really happy.

2 PM

Collect Myrium and we shoot over to Robertsbridge to visit the Darvell Community. Myrium has become great friends with Annie, as I have with Jeremy, her husband to whom I gave the dog. We spend the day discussing the pros and cons of Technology, in view of the recent nuclear disaster in Japan. The folk here shun all technology like computers, TV, cinema and even mobile phones.

There are reports this week of a local debacle, which made national headlines. It regards the police, who cornered some 'Yardies' with a huge stash of hard drugs in the trunk of a hire-car. They failed to convict because the gang claimed the drugs

were there before they even hired the car. This week however an 'ice-cream-man', from Hackney, in London, was found to be in possession of one hundred and eighteen 'wraps' of crack cocaine worth over a thousand pounds on the street. He was in a hire-car, but may not have had the wisdom of stashing his gear in the trunk.

Three men from London, have been charged after a house in Mews road, Mugsborough, was raided at three-thirty last Monday 7th. Heroin and crack worth over four thousand pounds was recovered.

Police had to 'Tazer' a man wielding a kitchen knife, in Blackman Avenue, Mugsborough, Eighteen year old James Denet was arrested and charged with affray.

After police spotted Dennis Wagg leaving the Smugglers Pub they had trouble stopping him. Eventually he was pulled over and asked to give a breath test. He was most annoyed and told police they were wasting their time. In fact he gave a reading of three times over the legal limit.

Monday 14th March

9 AM Sunny after a cold rainy night.

Katie phones to tell me Nanette's daughter, Sarah, is going to collect her mum and bring her home for a while, because she feels she's mixing with the 'wrong people'. Little does she realize Nanette is the 'wrong people'.

11 AM

After a visit to the doctor I hear that I may have a Hiatus Hernia, so she recommends a 'Scan', at the 'Inquest'.

3 PM

Go to the gym, as I feel the need to get fit again. Find it hard work to get back in my old routine.

7 PM

Snowflake runs tonight. There is a good atmosphere until Zoe Davenport shows up in tears. I sit down with her and learn she's sleeping on the beach. She is only about twenty. She had Hostel accommodation of her own but met some 'scroat' and moved in with him. He later threw her out and 'Housing' rightly claim she made

herself homeless and they can't help her any more. I ring emergency Housing on 451999, and speak to someone called Kevin. He asks if she's pregnant, which I have to find out, or if she's on drink or drugs. "Negative on all three," I tell him, although the exact opposite probably applies.

Suddenly I remember the usual criteria for housing allocations. They always put alkies and addicts and 'nutters' in the top band, so I change my mind and inform him she has mental health issues and may be even be pregnant. If you're normal in Mugsborough you might as well cut your wrists; at least that will place you in a decent band with a chance of accommodation.

Kevin rings back to say the 'Clevedon' have a vacancy for a young lady! I bundle her into the Jag before they change their mind and she then tells me she must collect her stuff from her mum's. When we arrive at St Helens Road I find it is number thirty-eight, where I changed the locks and missed the cat. I am surprised her mum lives here. As I wait in the car a furious row erupts as she starts a screaming match with her mum in the street. I manage to get her and the huge case into the car before the police are called and we shoot round the Clevedon.

When we arrive they tell her she can only stay one night. She freaks out because she can't drag a big heavy case everywhere when she leaves tomorrow. She begs me to put it in the trunk and tells me she is clucking so I get her a couple of tins of Crest, which is 10% proof. I stick her case in the car but tell her I'll get the Sally Army to look after it until she can collect it. Luckily enough, they agree to do so.

Tuesday 15th March

10 AM Sunny bright day.

See Strumpet outside my place and buy her a beer, for her face is covered in bruises. She is normally very pretty but her boyfriend, Tall Tony, has bashed her up again. I offer her my stun-gun for protection. It kicks out three quarters of a million volts, and can even knock a cow out cold; I offer this, and my pepper spray to protect herself. She refuses, saying she deserved the hiding she got, and it was all her fault; same as last time, and same as next time.

11 AM

Get a text from the Kid to say he's got my new number off J.J. He says he is now back home in Teesside, as he was getting a lot of stick from Heavy Eddy who was always 'on his case'. I tell him the reason I changed my number was all the evil texts I'd received off Eddy. I have decided not to give my new number to the street people in general, as Eddy often steals their phones and would find my new number on them, but if the Ducati Kid is five hundred miles away, it's not a problem to give my number to him.

7 PM

At Snowflake we only have a couple of Tuesday sessions before we go back to Mondays only, and the Salvation Army take over. The Kid texts me to say Eddy has ripped off two phones, two hundred quid, a TV, a washing machine and a fridge-freezer, in the last year.

As it happens Eddy is here tonight, but I keep my distance from him even though he swears he's clean. I've heard it all before, and am now disillusioned and disappointed, especially after the fiasco with Mad Willy and the three hundred quid. He played me like a fish, but I think these guys could sell the Encyclopaedia Britannica to a blind man. If most of the clients here put as much effort into finding work as they do in avoiding it they'd be rich.

I have brought Zoe Davenport's giant case to the Citadel tonight, as she promised she would pick it up. I am so relieved not to have it bouncing around in the Jag, but true to form, Zoe fails to show and the case is left blocking up the hallway here.

Wednesday 16th March

10 AM Bitterly Cold.

At the breakfast, when we open, only three people are there at 10 a.m. After I say the opening prayer we get loads of latecomers arriving. It's as if they move slower in very cold weather. We soon have over two dozen in and have to lay up three new tables. There is a bit of a panic as we run out of food and some stragglers have to wait fifteen minutes for their grub as we cook more up, but a great atmosphere prevails and everyone seems very grateful.

I hear talk that the Ducati Kid is still in town hiding out in Merrick House. He rang to say he'd moved up North, and then I heard he was in Battle, so now I don't know what to believe.

Normally there is some grub left over for the volunteers. Steve, the doorman, normally has four sausages and Captain Mannering will take a breakfast, while I as a vegetarian, stick to egg, beans and tomatoes.

1 PM

Go visit Nanette. She only lives in the next street so it's no trouble to pop in when I'm passing. Her daughter, Sarah, came over to collect her at the weekend but she was too drunk to move. Sarah picked her off the floor and got her to bed. Nanette tells me she's not had much sleep, for when she does go to bed she wakes up just before 3 a.m.; this is the time she found her husband dead in bed beside her. The hour between three and four is the time most people die and is known as the hour of the wolf; when he comes to devour the living.

Thursday 17th March

11 AM Mild with slight fog.

Some of the street people are flogging false Iodine Pills, cashing in on the fallout fears from the nuclear disaster in Japan, where some of their reactors are going into meltdown. Everyone knows the entire population of Tokyo has been given these tablets, and now some clever scroat has printed up some labels and stuck them on jars of aspirin. Proper Iodine tablets build up iodine in the thyroid gland so that it will not assimilate any more iodine, radioactive or not, for it's already saturated. The authorities warn that atmospheric ingestion of radioactive iodine from the air will cause cancer in the thyroid in years to come. Choking from throat cancer is not a nice way to die. Ask Katie.

3 PM

Drive round to visit my friend Jane whom I haven't seen for ages. She typed my last book out and we still keep in touch. She is into the 'wacky baccy' but has no other vices, apart from a love of cats. She had six but one died and I buried it for her under the Yucca tree in her garden. I see immediately she has put weight on and

she claims it's because her dealer died and she gave up on the weed. She was an ardent 'puff-head' all the time I've known her so I'm surprised and pleased.

She hasn't eaten solid food for years and lives on three 'Dollops' a day, which is what she calls the little bottles of vitamins and minerals supplied by her doctor. How she survives just drinking these is a bloody mystery to me and the fact she has put weight on is nothing short of a miracle. She was so thin she had to dance around in the shower to get wet.

Friday 18th March

9 AM Sunny but cold.

Meet Ben, the scroat, on my way round Nanette's. 'Threw me out, she did,' he tells me. 'What, just because you nicked twenty quid?' I reply.

When I get to Nanette's the place is spic and span. She tells me she got Susie Crack and her mate to come round and clean up after she'd got rid of Ben. She had called them in to help evict Ben, so gave them a few bob to clear up afterwards. Ben had stayed a few nights but was 'getting his feet under the table'.

'Glad he's gone for he stole money off me. I knew all along it wasn't you,' says Nanette. I help her do some shopping for food as Sarah is coming over with Anna, her baby, who is very clingy and totally spoiled, according to Nanette. The child empties all the drawers and takes all the CDs out of their cases tossing them all over the place.

2 PM

Meet J.J.'s brother, Stewart, up at the Referrals Centre. He tells me Heavy Eddy is on a crack binge again. He lured Rudolf in for a drink in his place, and when he sat down smacked him across the head with a golf club. Then when he was unconscious, robbed him of every penny he had on him. I also learn that the Ducati Kid is holed up in a flat with J.J. next to Stewart's flat, (which belongs to Sara, from the church, who is now Rudolf's girlfriend).

There is safety in numbers, for Heavy Eddy turned up one dark night and wanted to take Sara's dog for a walk. Everyone knew that would be the last they'd see of the creature, so bluntly refused. We all suspect Eddy is involved in dog fighting which makes me glad I 'rescued' Teddy from him.

If he'd taken the dog out he would have come back claiming it just ran off and he couldn't catch it!

Saturday 19th March

10 AM Very sunny and mild.

The local police have provided a new phone number that can be used to report anti-social behaviour on a Friday or Saturday night. It is 07717 490407. Try and remember that one, when you're panicking! Apparently a 999 call takes too long to get through as all the lines are choked at weekends.

Buy a local paper for the weeks news, and go to the café for a quiet read over a cup of tea. The 'Anorak' is there as usual sitting in the window, scribbling away. For years I imagined he was writing his memoirs, but as I pass by I see he is just taking down the licence plate numbers of all the cars that drive down the street. I think to myself, 'Get a life.'

2 PM

Pop into the Sally Ann, which has started 'healing sessions' for anyone who walks in off the street. They give me a cuppa, and a piece of excellent home-made cake, which I devour, certain it will bring on my acid reflux - but you only live once. Meet Mark who's doing the books. This guy prayed for me when I went to 'Morrison's' once. He was working on the fish counter and greeted me as we'd met in church. He asked how I was, and when I told him my back was playing up, he came round the counter knelt on the ground and prayed out loud in front of all the customers and staff. I envy him his faith. As he says only one in ten responds, but that makes it all worthwhile.

At the Sally Army healing rooms, I receive prayer for my back because of my spasms, and my eyes, which water all the time, and my stomach, which is giving me grief at the moment.

Sunday 20th March

10 AM Very sunny and warm.

There was another party in the 'Love' café, downstairs last night and I didn't sleep well, even after they all went home.

Meet Kevin on the way to church. He wants to come along as he had a bad experience last night. He got drunk and went for a walk. When he went to sleep he dreamt his feet were hanging over the edge of the bed, but when he opened his eyes he saw he was sitting on a cliff edge with his feet hanging over the edge. I told him he's lucky he didn't roll over in his sleep.

Last week Bob Kelly was given three years for arson attacks on fifteen cars he torched during October and November. His girlfriend Lucy Gower 18, got fifteen months. They both live in Dell Close, Mugsborough.

Police have applied to revoke the licence of the most popular pub in town, the Havelock, as there is so much 'agro' there.

Three muggings in Mugsborough this week.

Two teenagers out walking in Alexandra Park ended up in hospital after they refused to give cigarettes to six hoodies. One of the victims had their teeth and nose broken, and the other his phone stolen and then thrown into the boating lake.

In another Mugsborough incident, a fifteen-year-old was walking her dog when three strangers attacked her in an unprovoked assault. She was battered to the ground and kicked in the head badly injuring her.

In yet another unprovoked Mugsborough assault Darren Adams was cycling along Silchester Road, when four hoodies blocked his path. When he stopped his bike, one of them, Craig Eden 23, punched him twice in the face. And when he then ran into a nearby launderette, Eden chased him and continued punching him and even broke a finger by twisting it. Eden was given a whole nineteen months in prison but will probably be loose on the streets again in nine.

A meal in McDonalds turned into a nightmare for two teenagers. One put his I-Phone on the table, and Paul Osmond 40, picked it up. When asked to return it he swore at the youth and punched him in the face. Osmond has previous convictions and had already been sentenced to two years in prison for wounding with intent. Magistrates adjourned for reports to be drawn up.

Monday 21st March

9 AM Very foggy morning. Sunny afternoon.

The painful sty that I've had in my right eye has cleared up after months of irritation. Thank God it was only a sty as I was worried it may have been glass from the old days when I had glass broken in my face. I was blind for two weeks and they had to take splinters out of the eye in an operation. I was also informed that I could lose both eyes, with sympathetic oculitis, up to forty years later.

11 AM

After a spell in the gym I feel refreshed enough to visit Nanette again. Her friend Ritchie has returned from France where he was working for a while and wants Nanette to put him up for a spell.

3 PM

Tam the Scotsman drops in for coffee. Tells me he won two hundred and fifty quid on the 'Gee-Gees' yesterday. He spent seventy-five of this on 'Baccy', buying ten packets at seven-fifty each, and blew the rest of it on the 'Dogs', the same day.

Spoke to Darren, the 'missing cat' tenant, who now comes to the Kitchens. He's quite friendly with me now and tells me Lera, the coloured woman who is the landlord for the houses in Hastings, took him to court on an eviction order. She runs the 'Wallace Project', and was asked by the Magistrates if she ran a Charity.

She replied, 'We help homeless people.'

'But are you a Charity?' she was asked again.

'We are a charitable organization, with a heart for the homeless in Hastings.'

'But are you an actual charity?' she was asked again.

'We get involved with charity work,' was the reply.

'Please answer my question, Dr. Lera. Are you a Charity, or a Housing Association?'

She replied, 'We are privately run!'

Although Robbie or I never got a penny off her we thought all along the Wallace Project was a Charity.

We will not be doing any more of her dirty work in the future.

Tuesday 22nd March

10 AM Lovely day.

Reading an article in 'Catalyst' magazine, about the Beachy Head Chaplains.

Quote: -

'Recently a woman was found wandering the escarpment, like a ghost in the grey twilight, slitting her wrists with a shard of glass. Ross gently called to her, and with the guidance of the police led her to safety, as he hurled the deadly shard of glass over the cliff edge.'

7 PM

Snowflake. Stretch walks in with Bridget the Midget, as we open up. He is at the front of the queue. He has a 'modern' haircut with a design razored into his scalp. It is shaped as a pentagram, and he has sprayed his head with glitter, which we feel is better than Bridget's boot-polish or paint. Bridget mentions she's been carrying a small tin of paint in her handbag for ages but can't remember why she bought it.

Stretch says he knows, but when she asks him to explain, he says, 'I would if I could, but then I'd have to kill myself.' She tells him not to bother, if that's the case.

She then tells us her friend Lisa has ended up in a wheelchair.

'How come?' enquires Stretch.

'She was going to the beauticians to get little red veins removed from her legs.'

'And did it work?' asks Stretch.

'Well, she saw it was a busy place, for there were always people getting worked on, but it turned out they were all staff and she was the only customer.'

'But what about your friend?' reminds Stretch

'Indeed, she ended up paralyzed because they took the nerve out of her leg.'

'Well, that's what happens when you lose your nerve,' concludes Stretch.

'Absolutely, ' agrees Bridget.

Pinhead-Ned, walks, or rather hobbles in. He is in a lot of pain with his leg. Captain Mannering jokes, 'When's the amputation, then?'

Ned looks stunned, 'How do you know about that? I haven't told anyone yet.'

With that, he pulls up his trouser leg to slowly reveal a sticky weeping raw-red wound edged with green pus.

'It's got worse since someone told me to put honey on it. Was supposed to help, but it's making my jeans stick to it. That's why I need the heroin. Not 'cos I'm a Junkie. It just helps keeps the pain away.'

The smell makes us recoil in horror. I tell him it's going gangrenous and he should go to hospital.

Wednesday 23rd March

10 AM Beautiful sunny day.

At the breakfast this morning we expect a full house but you never can tell how many will appear. The weather seems to be irrelevant in this respect. We've done all the toast, which is always cold by the time we serve it, and fried all the eggs and sausages and bacon. We have 'nuked' the beans and tomatoes in the Microwave, and made giant teapots full for tea and coffee. All is ready for our guests.

Bob McIver comes in with a ferocious injury to his left eye. He is a very friendly guy with a very friendly drink problem, which causes him to fit all the time, as you do. Trouble was, he started to fit in his sleep and fell out of bed, catching his head on the edge a metal coffee table which made his eye come out the socket.

His eye has over twenty stitches round it and is so swollen, days later, that he still can't open it. This happened last Wednesday, exactly a week ago, but Bob had to be dragged off to the Inquest, as he didn't want to Detox.

The other casualty this week is 'Cockney Joe', who's just spent four weeks in hospital with two broken hips. He already had a metal hip joint, which suddenly gave way and as he fell he broke the other one. Now, instead of a stick, he will have to use crutches.

Bridget, who has recently inherited a broken down hovel of a house from her aunt, has decided to cement the outhouse there with a view to letting it out as a room. In the process she ripped up some boards and discovered some sort of sewer beneath them. She tells us, 'I saw some rats in there and they were as big as "Jack Russells"' She tells us she needs to convert it to get some money coming in and also would like the company. She asks would I perhaps be interested. I decline gracefully as I'm quite happy in my Penthouse overlooking the sea.

The Rev. Chris is on top form, cracking silly jokes, as usual. He says, 'When I gave up smoking I bought a dog but it had no legs, so I took it out every day for a quick 'Drag'.'

Thursday 24th March

11 AM Gorgeous day.

I was stunned to bump into my old girlfriend Tracy, when I went shopping. She looks okay, but I suspect she's still into Crack. It makes me sad for some of these women would make great partners, or wives, if they were half-normal. I ask if she got the 'Surviving Christmas' hamper that I left at her house over Christmas. I had to leave it with one of the Yardies as she'd gone away for the holiday.

1 PM

On the way home, as fate would have it, I meet Catherine, another paramour of mine, from way back. I didn't recognize her at first, and in fact couldn't even remember her name, which I could see embarrassed her. It was only when I walked off I realized who she was and nearly cried. When I met her a year ago, I fantasized about marrying her for she was so cute and demure. But now, 'a year on the gear' has changed her into a wrinkled old woman with rotting teeth.

2 PM

When I get home find a letter from my solicitors, telling me my case is due to be heard at 2 p.m. a week from today.

9 PM

Go to the Commissioning Service of the Street Pastors up at St. Helens. It's run by my friend, the Rev. Chris Keys. The street pastors have to pay three hundred quid for the privilege and also train for months. One of them relates a story about the 'Prayer Team', who reside in Wellington Square Baptist Church, dealing with prayer requests, as the pastors patrol the streets.

At t 3 a.m. one of them got a 'picture' of someone lying flat on the ground. They rang the pastors on patrol to tell them of this. They were told the street was empty with nobody about. They were then advised to stay where they were. As they waited in the dead of night a young kid comes out of a nightclub, which is just closing. Two 'hoodies' appear round the corner. As they pass by, one swings a vicious punch at the boy, who collapses to the ground. As the pastors rush to help, they find him flat on his face, out cold.

Friday 25th March

10 AM Very warm and sunny.

Drop into 'Referrals' and have my bowl of fruit and garlic bread. I am feeling down about the near-certainty of losing my lovely home. Check my e-mails while I'm there, and see my friend Bruce, from the church, has sent me a video of a young man with no legs and no arms, who does wonderful things although severely handicapped. His sense of humour and courage brings tears to my eyes and makes me feel ashamed for feeling so sorry for myself.

1 PM.

Meet Misfit on my way to Nanette's. The plate in his right shoulder has slipped and he needs a replacement as soon as possible. I relate well to him, for my left shoulder had a muscle transplant after a bad motorcycle accident, which nearly killed me. This was in the days when you didn't need to wear a crash helmet, and, on reflection, I wish I had. I was concussed for a year, and every time I bent down, I fell over.

Nanette is so weak she cannot even walk the dog. She hasn't eaten for a week. I take the dog for a run on the beach and because he hasn't been out for ages it's a nightmare trying to get him back on his lead.

3 PM

Sit in the sun for an hour, with the dog, wondering what to do about Nanette and the fact I have to look for another home. I only live a hundred yards from the sea and am going to miss it. On the way back with the dog I cut through the seedy back streets of Mugsborough that are home to all the brothels and the 'ferals'.

8 PM

At the Rooms in Mugsborough, just down from Warrior Square station, one hundred 'Idlers' have gathered together to celebrate a life of loafing and idleness. Cult Idler, Tom Hodgkinson, editor of the bi-annual 'Idler Magazine', founded in 1993, claimed the evening was a tremendous success.

This sounds unbelievable, but sadly I have to report I can no longer afford the luxury of disbelief.

Saturday 26th March

9 AM Rainy but dry later.

Pop into Alan's who lives in the same street as Nanette. I haven't seen him for 'yonks' and he introduces me to his new 'missus'. This term applies to any lady whom one is seeing or living with on a regular basis. My last two had no teeth, so I was reluctant to introduce them to anybody as my 'missus'.

Alan goes into the Mugsborough visitor's routine of rolling a 'Spliff', instead of offering a cup of tea or something. He tells me about a mutual friend, Dave. We all used to walk our dogs in the local park.

'There I was, round at Dave's, rolling a joint, as you do, when his missus, Sharon, - God, I hate that bitch, - starts giving it large, about me smoking (cigarettes) and toking (marijuana) in the house. I can't 'Adam and Eve' it.' (believe it) This slag is banging on about me having a joint, and she bumps 'E's (ecstasy), huffs Gas, (poppers) and pops pills (Valium). What a hypocrite!

Alan's missus is oblivious to this rant. She is sitting in front of a mirror - the only mirror in the place - preening her hair. She pulls it this way and that, trying different styles. She works as a care assistant in a Home and Alan tells me with a laugh: 'She's assisting me with my personal care.'

11 AM

Nanette is surprisingly 'Compos Mentos' today. It's refreshing to see her when she's not oiled up. The reason is simple. Her wages haven't been paid into the 'PO', so she's 'brassic' and running on empty at the moment. As I look at her now it's hard to relate her to the person who took twelve 'Oxycontin' tablets and went off into outer space for a week.

Sunday 27th March

11AM Sunny.

After church I bump into Big Kevin. He is rattling, so buy him a beer, on the promise I'll meet him in the gym tomorrow. He started drinking again only two days ago when he had a game of snooker in a club and someone bought him a pint. Says he hates being drunk and feels that he's possessed.

Meet Ricky, the busker, down Bottle Alley. He is reading a book, 'The Powder Wars', about gang warfare. Most of the seating has been removed here and most

self-respecting 'Drongos' go to the Blind Park, at weekends, as they're sure to get a dispersal order from the Plastics if they hang around here.

There were two local gun dramas in as many days this week, putting two people in hospital. There was a fourteen year old boy with a pellet in his neck, and a thirty-nine-year-old lady who needed surgery after being shot in the leg. That incident happened at six-thirty on Tuesday, when half-a-dozen shoppers leaving Morrisons were shot. A twenty-five year old man and a lady of sixty-three who was shot in the stomach were also taken to hospital. Police arrested two men for firearms offences and actual bodily harm.

The following day, again in Queens Road, a man was arrested for pointing a gun at a receptionist in the Citizens Advice Bureau. An armed-response-team closed off St Margaret's Road in Mugsborough. Police say the incidents are not related.

Two patients in Woodlands, the mental health unit at the Inquest hospital, used their belts to hang themselves. An SCR (Serious Case Review) found that both men were on regular fifteen minute suicide watch and should have had their belts removed.

There was another hold-up in Mugsborough on Tuesday night, when two men forced a terrified worker in the Premier Convenience Store to hand over ninety pounds cash, before filling their carrier bags with spirits and cigarettes. Not exactly gold bullion, but it is Mugsborough.

Stefan Gilmore 18, was given a months prison sentence after he stole a car in which he was given a lift. The owner had stopped for tobacco at the Co-Op shop, for two minutes, when Gilmore drove off in it. Police had to smash the windows of the VW Golf, as he had locked himself inside.

Finally, vandals caused several thousand pounds worth of damage when they sprayed several cars in the car park of the White Rock Hotel with green paint. Coaches are frequently vandalized in the nearby coach park say police. This makes a change!

Monday 28th March

10 AM Sunny

Get up late, as the clocks went forward last night.

Call round Nanette's. No answer, but she might be out with the dog, or in the office on the seafront, or the Inquest, or even the morgue.

Head off to Referral Centre, where I have my fruit and garlic-bread. Ring the Ducati Kid and he tells me he's looking out at the North Sea: he has definitely gone back home to escape Heavy Eddy. He tells me 'Chrissy-Boy' went to Geordie's inquest where it was revealed he died from a drugs overdose. Trouble is Geordie wasn't into drugs. He'd been staying at Jimbo's with Dino who was homeless at the time and it was found he had been bugged. Jimbo had to clean up the flat before the 'Fuzz' arrived, and then did a runner. The authorities are anxious to speak with him and Dino, whom they believe may be able to assist them in their enquiries.

The Kid is so pleased to speak with me, and chats about the old days. He says he always wants to keep in touch. He recalls when I took him and Arlette in the Jag to Hailsham and she clung onto his thigh so tightly her nails bit into him. She insisted on getting the train back and the Kid swears he still has the scars on his leg, to this day.

Tuesday 29th March

11 AM Warm and sunny.

Meet 'Mouse', down the 'office'; he still has no home, and is sleeping rough on the beach next to the new toilets. Am so annoyed with his situation that I take him to Renaissance House, just up in London Road. They inform us that to be eligible for housing you have to fall into certain categories before they will classify you into a specific band, A,B,C or D. i.e.

Have in your possession a court order of eviction, like a Section 21, or an Accelerated Repossession Order.

If you are mentally ill - be classified as disaffected!

Be sleeping in a skip, or a large wheelie-bin; but if you have a tarpaulin or a sheet of plaster board covering you then you are not officially homeless.

If you are found asleep with your eyes shut on a bench then you're homeless, but if the cops shout at you and you wake up you're a vagrant. If you're still dead to the world, and they smell drink, you will end up in the cells for the night.

If you have on your person a musical instrument of any sort, from a guitar to a mouth-organ, you're a street busker and not homeless.

If you're a sofa-surfer you will be classed as a squatter, so, - take a load of pills, crash out on a bench in a public space, and if you can't be woken up you will be classified as homeless. There you go! Simple.

7 PM

This is the last night of the year, for the Snowflake soup kitchen. Next week the Sally Army starts running the kitchen here, but only on a Monday. It's a quiet night, and everyone is very subdued, as the clients are mostly morose.

Wednesday 30th March

10 Am Cold and cloudy. Rain later.

Only a dozen turn up for the Wednesday breakfast; maybe they are avoiding the 'Census' man, who is currently touring all the soup kitchens, asking clients very personal questions, like what their proper name is; a lot use aliases.

The boss here, Chris, is running healing sessions and training courses next week, at his church in Duke Road. A private session is fifty quid, and training is one hundred and fifty. There are many here who object to these charges, which stem from the American Evangelists who are visiting from the church that Chris visited in California. Many Christians are saying it's not very spiritual to pay for blessings. I would like to be a street pastor, but can't afford three hundred for the training.

1 PM

I drop in to see Nanette, whenever possible. Katie and I have been trying to contact her with no success and I have not heard her dog barking when I did try and visit. We debate as to whether Nanette has collapsed or simply 'popped her clogs'. We have to decide whether to call the police immediately, or leave it until tomorrow.

5 PM

I see Strumpet in the street. She is covered in tears and mascara, mixed with blood. She says her boyfriend beat her up again. She is crying her eyes out, but as I try to comfort her she keeps saying: 'It's all my fault. I keep going back.'

Just then, I notice Tall Tony coming out of a shop. Obviously this has just happened, and although I'm no spring chicken I am ready to have a go at him. Strumpet begs me not to get involved.

Thursday 31st March

8 AM Very rainy day.

Up early to drop my Jag in for repair. It's had the drivers door panel kicked in, leaving a dent and a scuffmark. Just some passing scroat who's jealous and takes a kick as he passes. Usually they break the mirrors off, so I'm lucky. Could be I parked too close to someone, but in Mugsborough it's more likely to be spite. I also have a long key mark right along to the petrol cap. This damage will cost a few hundred to fix and I can ill afford it. I realize now that I could have paid the full amount for the training, which I thought I couldn't afford, and am really upset.

I must fix the car because I may have to sell it, as I've just been to court and got a decision on my eviction. I've been given fourteen days to vacate, and must calm down and chill, or I'll lose it.

I need about a grand to move to another place, but if I move out in two weeks I'll only get one weeks rent back - even if I cancel all rent payments immediately. Because the rent is taken by direct debit on a Friday, (which is tomorrow) next weeks rent will be paid automatically. I would therefore be three weeks in credit when I move, and I have a months deposit to get back as well - if I'm lucky. However, I know the 'Jew Boys' at Clockwork Estates hate giving anyone their deposits back. I think it's against their religion.

Anyway, I now have a problem. I need to have moved out completely before I get any money back, but I still need a grand to pay up front as a deposit to move into a new place. Catch 22.

CHAPTER EIGHT

APRIL

Friday 1st April

10 AM Lovely warm day.

Go round Nanette's. It's April Fool's Day so I'm on my guard for surprises. Finally get to see her. She has just got out of bed, where she stayed four days with nothing to eat but cartons of yoghurt. She has left the back door to the yard open, so that the dog can get out to do its business. The whole place stinks.

While I'm there Susie Crack drops in and offers to take the dog for a walk. This saves me the hassle, and I'm quite relieved.

1 PM

I just purchased a 'Broadband' Dongle', but it doesn't work, so I bring it back to the shop. They explain that the Relay Mast was damaged by some 'ferals' with catapults and nobody is getting any signal. I demand my money back but now have no Internet facility.

2 PM

Drop into the café, and hand in my 'healing request' for SOZO, and fifty quid. This session will take two hours, and may happen tomorrow. I have lost track of all the things that are wrong with me, but my eyes are my biggest concern. I have to get up in the middle of the night to put drops in them when the pain wakens me up, usually two hours after I get to sleep. I have to use ointment in my eyes even to get to sleep, and they are very painful when I do wake up, as the eyelids stick to the cornea, scratching it when I blink my eyes open. This heals itself over the day, as my eyes water constantly, but then it recurs every night.

Saturday 2nd April

8 AM Mild day, calm sea.

I rise early to collect my Jag, which is now repaired. I've had Geoff, a paint-spray expert, tart up the key marks and you couldn't tell there was any damage. He has also fixed the door as good as new. He is an old friend and lets me off with two hundred and fifty quid, which is a really good price for a really good job.

I have decided I will have to sell the Jag to get the deposit for a new flat, so it must look pristine. I have only ten days left before my eviction and the HAS agency tell me I can't get my deposit or surplus rent back until I hand all the keys in to them. They say they cannot estimate how much money I'll get back until they know when I actually moved out.

12 Noon.

The American evangelists wanted one hundred and fifty quid for a SOZO session, which I can't afford, but Pastor Chris tells me to come along anyway. He is very kind and tells me just to turn up, as he's booked me in on Friday for a private session with John, the head 'Honcho'. It's his church, where the venue's being held, so he has the final word.

8 PM

Visit Hope tonight. 'Glamour-Girl-Kate', who considers herself a Goddess, is there with boyfriend Jake who's been run over by a car earlier on in the day. An ambulance had been called, but he wouldn't go to hospital as Kate refused to accompany him. So he's limped to the soup kitchen in agony, and he's bleeding from the hip. He doesn't want to let Kate out of his sight, as she can be careless in her affections.

I insist on ringing the ambulance, and on the phone receive the usual diatribe. 'Is he breathing? Is he conscious? Is his breathing fast, or slow? Is he in pain? Is his back hurting? Is he bleeding? Is he sweating?' etc. etc.

'Just get the bloody ambulance here,' I tell them.

Sunday 3rd April

11 AM Mild day.

Receive a call from Julie Rapley, an old friend. She is in a bit of a state. She has her two sons staying with her for the weekend and they went to a party in town with their friend Tomas Wiseman. He was on Methadone for his heroin addiction, but the night of the party mixed this with heroin and died. He was only twenty-one and had never been to a soup kitchen in his life.

Julie had stayed away overnight, but when she got home that morning woke her sons but found she couldn't wake Tomas up; she went shopping in Morrison's,

telling her two boys to get Tomas up. While there her sons rang to say Tomas had stopped breathing. When she got home the police met her on the doorstep and asked if she was the mother. When she confirmed this they then told her that her son had just died. She then explained she was mother to the two other lads but not Tom. The police then had to notify Tom's mother.

Today, as it happens, is Mothers' Day.

The inquest is scheduled for the ninth of November.

The papers this week report that Rebecca Reasbeck 20, has denied murder and manslaughter, after deliberately setting fire to the Nursing Home she worked in.

Apparently there is now so much faecal pollution in the sea here that the Environmental Agency is using DNA tracing to determine whether it's human or animal. Could the street people be to blame?

In Mugsborough a cop-car went through a red light hitting a pair on a motorcycle and putting them in hospital.

An armed response team turned out at ten on Thursday morning, when told of a break-in, where someone was carrying a gun. Officers failed to catch anyone but later received another call stating people were smashing cars up, in the same street. They decided to search a particular house in the street, and discovered a cannabis factory, complete with lights and heaters and hydrating equipment. They have since charged thirty-year-old Lee Edwards with cultivation and possession.

Matthew James. of St Margaret's Road, Mugsborough, fraudulently spent three and a half thousand pounds on credit cards, which he obtained illegally.

Johnny Wheatley 32, walked into Sainsbury's and stole sixty pounds worth of meat, on March 18th. On Sunday 20th. he again stole thirty pounds worth of meat from the same store. In court he claimed to have a heroin problem for the last ten years. He was fined sixty pounds in compensation, and thirty costs.

Monday 4th April

10 AM Cold.

Ring the local Friday-Ad. and put my Jag in for sale. I am asking five thousand but will take less. I am also selling my huge printer from my Studio, which has since closed down. A fellow photographer, Reg, is giving me three thousand for the lot.

Myrium has offered five hundred pounds if I need money urgently. And I have three hundred left on my last credit card. I need a 'grand' at least, to move before the bailiffs turn up and dump all my stuff onto the pavement. I have to confirm tomorrow if they will write first, or just turn up and kick the door in.

Trouble is, I have a huge flat, with loads of lovely furniture; a fifty-inch Plasma TV; and a surround sound system wired to ten speakers around my lounge. I also have my twenty-seven inch Mac computer and all my camera gear to worry about. This is all worth a lot of money and I don't want to lose any of it - although I will have to give quite a bit of furniture away. I have given Alan the two chandeliers of stained glass, and have decided to leave the ten touch-dimmer switches as they'd be too much trouble to remove and fit again in the new place. Besides I'd have to buy new light switches if I took the dimmers with me.

8 PM

Snowflake has finished, from today, but anyway I have to go to the SOZO meeting in Duke Road church. It is very interesting with a few dozen people there. I tell Pastor Chris I will see him alright, once I sell the Jag, but he tells me not to worry about it; he says few people were able to afford the initial amount asked but I still feel guilty about paying so little.

End up with lots of pamphlets and information, but need to clean my act up and do some fasting, before I'll be ready for this.

Tuesday 5th April

10 AM Very cold.

Call round Nanette's. She is still not drinking, but taking lots of tablets to help her. She has decided to leave the 'Antibuse' course until she's stronger.

11 AM

After my bowl of fruit at the referral centre, I head off for the café, which is predominantly patronized by the Christian community. Some of the SOZO group are out on a Treasure Hunt. My friend Gynn was on one at the weekend. These people meet up for prayer before they take to the streets. She had a picture in her mind of a guy in a yellow anorak with a gold chain round his neck. She felt he was suffering from depression. She went out 'hunting', and eventually saw someone

who fitted the description. She approached him when he paused to cross the road, and asked if he could spare a moment to talk to her. She explained she was on a treasure hunt and he was the treasure and she'd been told he was suffering from depression.

'How did you know that?' he exclaimed.

'God told me,' she replied. They had a long chat, and he informed her he was contemplating suicide that very morning. She prayed for him there and then.

7 PM

I attend the evening SOZO session at Duke Road; about healing tonight. This course is running all week, even in the mornings, and seems very comprehensive.

I find it very instructive, but a bit heavy.

Wednesday 6th April

10 AM Very Mild.

Only about fifteen street people are in the café, for the breakfast this morning. As Pastor Chris says, you can never judge the number who might turn up. As Chris is up at the church with the SOZO people, I say the opening prayer and mention the fact I am aware many of the people here are suffering trials and tribulations. Captain Mannering gets up to preach the Gospel for five minutes, but, depending on the subject, many get restless after four and start chatting amongst themselves. We serve up as he preaches, but he frequently has to pause when someone's mobile goes off or a guest explains that he only wants bacon and sausage with no egg or tomatoes.

3 PM

I get a welcome phone call from J.J. I heard he'd finished his 'holiday' and when I talk to him he even sounds sober. I hardly recognized his voice! He laughs as he tells me he's put on loads of weight, eating three square meals a day. I tell him I heard that the Ducati Kid had gone back home to Newcastle. He becomes cagey, and says he doesn't want to talk on the phone. He knows that Heavy Eddy was giving the Kid a hard time, and we should all get together and talk about it. I fear he may be planning a quick demise for Eddy and do not want to get involved, especially as I'm trying to clean up my act with SOZO.

Thursday 7th April

10 AM Sunny and Warm.

Go to SOZO, to learn how to set up a healing room. I learn that I am booked in for my session with John, the head Honcho, at nine-thirty tomorrow morning.

I have junked what little pornography I might have had floating about, as websites, or whatever, and made real efforts to force myself to forgive any enemies I might have acquired - and I can think of a few. I was planning to make their life a 'merry hell', but now realize I'd be hurting myself more than them. I am now trying to become a better person so that I can help and advise others, through the experience of my own mistakes.

At the start of this SOZO class, I get prophesied over by a member of the team. We are both swaying 'in the Spirit', when she suddenly tells me I will be able to help others greatly, as I know a lot, and have experienced much. I am pleased and surprised at this.

2 PM

Rush down to HAS, my estate agents, who have assured me they have some alternative premise for me which should prove amenable. I urgently need somewhere to live, and I have had no response to the advert for my Jag. I will have to borrow money off Myrium.

I find that the agency's attitude to me has changed. Apparently the Jew boys told them not to let me into any of their properties because I took them to court. Sue from HAS, now explains that 90% of their business comes from Clockwork Estates, and they have nothing else left on their books. I now spend the rest of the day looking into other estate agents around town. I find a flat I'd like to view out in the country. It is a twenty-eight foot square studio annex, with a mezzanine area, built above, as a sleeping and cooking area. All this for five hundred and fifty pounds a month, which is the rent some landlord wanted for a little hovel, which I viewed in the Old Town.

Friday 8th April

8 AM Sunny and very warm.

Up early for my SOZO session with John, the SOZO 'Master' up at Duke Road. My session lasts a couple of hours and turns out to be the most dramatic, wonderful and traumatic experience of my entire life. Master John draws on my childhood experiences, pulling them out like thread from a jacket.

But he starts first with a question and answer session.

'Do you believe in God?'

'Of course, but sometimes my faith is tested,' I respond.

'It doesn't matter, my son, because He believes in you. You cannot judge God by the actions of men. We are all corrupt and fallible.'

I ask, 'Is God infallible then? Does he never make mistakes?'

'How can He, if He really exists, and really is God?'

'But,' I reply, 'How come the world is in such a mess?'

'The world has always been in such a mess because it was man who created the mess. The world is perfect, or was, until man messed it up. This is in the nature of man, because he is fallible, whereas God is infallible.'

'I sometimes lose Faith, master, when things go wrong.'

'So, my son, your faith needs to be stronger. If a stranger speaks words to you, and these words deprive you of your faith, then you never had real faith.'

I query him. 'What exactly do you mean?'

'If someone comes to you, and tells you that your child has just been run over by a bus, and suddenly you lose faith, you have not really believed in God, just the comfort of God. You have merely trusted in the notion that something, out there, is controlling everything and will not allow any great harm to befall you!'

Then he asks, 'Do you love God, my son?'

'Yes, totally, but I don't love man,' I reply.

'Or yourself either, I suppose!'

This throws me. This old guy is right on the mark.

I respond, 'I am disillusioned by myself, and mankind.'

'So you've seen how low you can go, now try to see how you can fly,' he tells me.

I would love to, but I don't need man's love, - yet I crave it, but I do need God's love - yet I realize I cannot earn it.'

'Now, we're getting somewhere. You realize that God's love is a gift. No amount of good work earns you a place in Heaven, but do you know what his greatest gift is?'

'Yes, the gift of free-will,' I reply.

'This was given so man could choose between right and wrong; it is the freedom to pick the path of Light, or dwell on the dark side.'

'Is our nature bad then, master?'

'All your life you will battle against your nature, until you find God. To rise above Human nature is the reason we were put here. To develop a Spiritual nature - but God loves us, as you know.'

I reply, 'Yes, I know God loves me, because he bothered to make me, and the world I live in.'

'Correct, but do you sense His love, my son?'

'Yes, but I don't know how to receive it. I need to feel it, master'

'You do feel it, every moment of your life, my son. The trouble is, you don't know how to accept it.'

'How do I learn that?'

'You need to surrender.'

'Surrender what, master?'

'Everything. You have become rooted in the ways of Man. How can you follow God if the world of man rules your heart?'

'Must I surrender my worldly goods, then?'

'No, my son, it is yourself, your nature, that you must surrender,' he replies.

'How do I do that? I'm lost. I still do bad things.'

'We all do. You are a man, and this is the nature of man.'

'But,' I reply, 'I don't want to be just worldly. I want to be spiritual, as well.'

'My son, the path to God is repentance; continued daily repentance. You are not yet a spiritual being, It all comes down to Love. God is Love.'

'You mean I must love people! I don't even like people.'

He says, 'You don't need to like them, but you must have compassion for them.'

'Maybe I do. I feel sorry for them, and do try to help them.'

'Yes, my son, I see compassion in your heart.'

'But,' I reply, 'I'm not happy.'

‘Do you really think almighty God placed you on this Earth just to enjoy yourself, or to make it a better place? All men must suffer on the Earth. It is full of pain, but pain can make one a better person.’

‘So,’ I ask, ‘does that mean I can never be happy, on this Earth?’

‘No, you should not strive to be happy, if you want to be at peace with God. Only a blind man deserves happiness.’

‘And myself?’

‘If you find peace with your Creator, and realize you are His creation, you will understand he would not make you just to be happy, or unhappy, but to find contentment in your heart, and your soul.’

‘But not happiness?’

‘On this Earth, my son, happiness is an illusion. It is perfection; and perfection on this earth does not exist. Otherwise man would not need God.’

‘So God would only create a world where people needed him?’

‘Yes, a world in which they would have to turn to him, in their suffering. But he does send his Holy Spirit, to guide and help you.’

‘How do I receive the Spirit, master?’

‘You must open yourself completely to God. You should pray and ask him into your life. He only comes to those who seek him. Ask and you shall receive. Knock and the door will be opened.’

‘When should I pray, master, and will prayer work, for me?’

‘Well, billions of people around the world pray many times a day, my son, and if it didn’t work, why would they bother?’

The SOZO master then goes on to explain about the three virtues of Faith, Hope, and Love. He quotes the scriptures, where Christ said, ‘Even though you have the faith to move mountains, without love you are as tinkling brass’.

The session continues for hours, and I end up weeping hysterically. I have never done that before, and I still can’t believe it. When I get prayed for at the end of the session, I feel greatly relaxed and exit the church feeling as though I’d been born again. I am so grateful. This has sorted my head out.

When I emerge into the sunlight I notice the colours of all the cars seem different. Brighter, and more subtle, with shades that I’d never noticed before. I see flowers

almost glowing with luminescence. I notice the faces of the people as they pass by, some glistening with pride and others with pain.

2 PM

I have arranged a viewing of the property in the country. It is in Three Oaks, about a ten-minute drive out of town. We drive down a private country lane to a lovely house set up in a few acres of its own land.

Myrium declares it would be a perfect spot for writing, and I am very impressed until I speak to the owner. He tells me he wants an extra seventy-five a month, for bills. This is to cover sewage, as the property only has a septic tank, and a share of the electric, which is attached to the same meter as the main house.

He shows us around the beautiful gardens, where I see a number of peacocks. These are beautiful birds, but he tells me when they roost in the tree, which is adjacent to the Studio, they can be a bit noisy. He does say he is looking to re-house them - but how easy that would be? Nobody knows. At the back of the studio, underneath the mezzanine, where I would sleep, there is a chicken hutch, with the biggest cockerel I've ever seen. I never imagined they grew that big. At first glance I thought it was a big dog.

'What time does he get up?' I enquire.

'Oh, don't worry, you'll get used to him.'

I'm not sure if I want to, and am now having serious doubts about the place. The thing that convinces me it would be a big mistake are the forms he gives me to fill out.

They are from some 'Rent Assured' company that promise to pay him the rent, even if I default. This firm wants proof of income; three months bank statements; two months advance rent; three references and all recent utility bills - not forgetting a copy of my passport. But, for some strange reason they didn't want my blood group!

Saturday 9th April

10 AM Fresh windy day.

Roll down the 'office' for a chat with the boys. Bump into Ned. He has news of Heavy Eddy, who made friends with Jimmy when he received a back payment of

three hundred pounds from the Social. He suckered up to him as Jimmy went round the shops to buy a new mobile phone. Jimmy bought a three hundred pound Samsung 'smart' phone, and even got Eddy twenty quid's worth of rocks, so he went straight home and piped up. Then when he was high, went round to Jimmy's and asked to borrow a phone charger.

'I need a Samsung charger. Have you got one?' he asked. Jimmy replied that he should know he has one because he just bought a Samsung phone.

'Can I see how it plugs in?' says Eddy.

As soon as Jay gets his new phone out Eddy swings at him and knocks him down. As he picks himself up, Eddy hovers over him, saying: 'I want you to pack it all up for me.'

He makes Jimmy wrap up all the leads, and the charger, and package everything in the original box. He then demands the receipt, and brings the whole lot back to the shop, getting a refund of three hundred pounds cash, which went straight on more gear, all of which he smoked that evening.

7.30 PM

Down at Hope kitchen Sparky, who was courting Tanya (one of the volunteers) much to everyone's surprise, came in and as soon as he saw her behind the counter ducked back out again. They recently broke up, for he didn't hold to his promise to keep 'clean' and went back on the gear. She did notice his quick entry and exit, which we put down to embarrassment, but she turns to me and says she's really worried now he's seen her here. She feels he might possibly use this opportunity to burgle her flat, as he knows she won't be home for hours. They had a relationship, so he knows where she lives.

9 PM

As I pass Duke Road church I notice the side door is open. Pastor Chris was down at the caravan park visiting the American evangelists. He does not have a mobile, so I shoot down there in the Jag but can't find him anywhere. The church is full of sound equipment and instruments laid out for the morning service. I have to go back and sit in the church until Chris decides to return home, and have to keep ringing his home phone until he gets back, hours later. He comes rushing up, and I tell him I couldn't leave the church unguarded as the pub next door would be soon

turning out and someone might just go in and nick something - or a lot of things. He is very grateful and explains that Dennis, the caretaker, was there earlier and must have forgotten to lock up. It was very fortuitous that I happened along.

Sunday 10th April

10 AM Mostly dry.

I attend Wellington Square Baptist Church for the last time. I have told them I feel there is not a great move of the Spirit there; not like Duke Road, which I have decided to join. This does not sit well with Jan, our trainee pastor, especially as I announced it in front of everyone at the church meeting during the week. They were discussing the debacle over David, whom I really liked, and when I made a public announcement that after five years I was leaving, there was a bit of a reaction from the hierarchy. George shouts out:

‘Who’s going to make the teas, then?’

‘You are,’ I joke back.

So this is the last time I make tea and coffee for them down here. I am handing in my dishcloth.

6.30 PM

Go to Duke Road, where the Yanks are having a ‘fire tunnel’. This is where the people walk through a double line of church elders who bless them with the fire of the Spirit. You have to see it to believe it. A lot of the congregations are sceptical, but I often get ‘slayed’ when the Spirit hits me and knocks me to the floor. Some people end up face down on the floor for hours. As people take their turn to stagger through the tunnel, the further you get in the harder it hits you, and most of the time you just end up on your knees or sprawled on the floor. The first time you experience this yourself, all doubts about its veracity disappear.

Everyone in town is surprised to see in the papers about Lance Bassett, who committed suicide this week. I met him briefly, as his father runs the Canute Road Osteopathic Practice, which I regularly attend. There was no logic to this and Nigel, his dad, is devastated. He is fortunate in having two other children and a wife to support him at this dreadful time. He is a Salvationist, and this blow may be a test of his faith.

As Seaview celebrates its twenty-fifth anniversary, there is still no night shelter for the homeless, and I personally know of two young girls who are sleeping rough, under cardboard, round the back of Debenhams.

Howard Pinks 28, told magistrates last week that he would be happier going to prison, than sleeping on the streets. They obliged with a three-month sentence.

The two teenage scroats, who were seized when the pier burnt down, have been bailed once again. They are both from Mugsborough and much to the frustration of the locals here, the Crown Prosecution Service is no closer in deciding whether to charge them or not.

An inspection of local restaurants and snack bars found one hundred premises in need of major hygiene improvements. Ninety-four scored either a zero or a one, on a scale of one to five. Half of these were based in Mugsborough.

Chris Hunnisett 27, was remanded in custody for murdering a Mugsborough supermarket worker, who died from several severe hammed blows to the head.

Owen Prosser was sentenced to four months for cheating the benefit system out of twenty thousand pounds.

Two men walked into Sainsbury's and walked out with three and a half thousand pounds worth of 'MP3' players.

Finally local police confiscated eighty bottles of alcohol, from under sixteens, on the Friday and Saturday nights of the last two weeks.

Monday 11th April

9 AM Mild with some rain.

I was so drunk in the Spirit, last night that I couldn't find my car when I left the church. I had to go back and get some people to help me look for it.

It reminded me of the time I dragged old Stan to the Healing Rooms, for prayer. He was actually helped with one of his problems, concerning his knee, and keeps trying to rationalize that event. At the time the group were praying over him I got drunk in the Spirit, and started swaying about trying to keep my balance. Stan said to Pastor Chris, 'What's he been drinking? He's drunk.'

Chris replied, 'He's drunk on the Spirit,' so Stan says, 'I'm not letting him drive me home, if he's been drinking spirits'.

2 PM

My back is playing up badly, so I shoot up to Nigel Bassett's Osteopathic centre for treatment from Balman, my usual therapist. I offer Nigel my condolences regarding the tragic death of his son. Nigel is there with Imogen, his beautiful daughter, as I chat to Pat, the receptionist.

7 PM

Snowflake is finished, for another year. The Salvation Army took over last week, and will run the kitchen on Mondays only. As I serve Mandy she tells me of her epileptic fits. She had one recently and fell, breaking a couple of ribs. She can tell when a fit is due for she gets a metallic smell in her nose and one minute later; bang, down she goes.

Captain Mannering, who normally does the prayers before when we open, does not turn up so I offer to say them. I often pray at the Wednesday breakfast, but have never preached in public. This only takes a minute or so, but I am nervous, as I have never preached to a room-full of social rejects before.

They actually clap when I finish, but most of them are quite fond of me anyway. I know if I died there would be dozens of addicts and dozens of alxies at my funeral. Now there's a comforting thought.

I still can't believe how much I've changed. It just stuns me. I feel like a different person, a new person, and isn't that what it's all about? I now shall try to leave this world a little better than I found it.

Tuesday 12th April

10 AM Mild.

Stroll down to the 'office'. The '57' crew are all there. J.J. is winding everyone up, as Big Jimbo reclines on the bench, out to the world. The Ducati Kid has turned up and tells me that he never left town, but is fitting all the time and in and out of hospital.

He's been hitting the bottle hard because he was afraid to go out without the crew, as he knows Eddy will rob and threaten him. J.J got so upset he rang Eddy up and threatened him. Eddy just told him to come over whenever he feels up to it, and he'll put him in hospital. I now hear there is a contract out on Eddy, from the gypsy

family. Apparently he went and ripped off a load of their tools and they can no longer work doing up cars. I rang Eddy up about this, but as I expected, all knowledge of the incident was denied.

2 PM

Meet Strumpet, on the seafront. She has so much to offer, if she got clean and sorted her head out. She is wasting her life. Her boyfriend, Tall Tony, has been banged up for ABH (actual bodily harm) for beating her up. As soon as he was released he went looking for her, and beat her so badly this time she ended up in hospital. Now, she will not testify against him, having concluded, 'Discretion is the better part of valour'.

Like all the battered women I've encountered, Strumpet keeps going back for more. I feel this may be a form of self-abuse. Why cut yourself when you can get someone else to do it, and share the blame? I recall when she was so refined in speech and demeanour. Now she just struts about; shouting and swearing.

Wednesday 13th April

10 AM Pleasant Day

At the Wednesday breakfast I see that Chris is back.

Happy Hazel, so-called because she never is, listens intently to what Chris is quoting from the Bible. (Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth!)

Chris is reading from Chapter sixteen of Genesis, which starts with Sarah, Abraham's wife, who was barren. Abraham was told by God to sleep with Sarah's handmaiden, so that she could bear him a son, etc. Suddenly Hazel, an ardent feminist, pipes up. 'I believe in the empowerment of women. That's not on.' No amount of logic or the fact that life was like that two thousand years ago can put Hazel's mind at rest, and she walks out leaving her beans and tomatoes, (which is all she wanted, for she is also a Vegan).

Bridget the Midget, informs us that the Brighton Housing Trust, which also deals with Hastings has moved to Havelock Road. She also informs the whole café that her bright red underwear has come out of the washer a faded pink colour; too much information. To keep her quiet I ask her: 'Tea, or coffee?'

She answers, 'Yes, please.'

A client gives me a booklet, which is circulating around the kitchens at the moment, entitled 'Living below the line'. It narrates how to cook for less than a pound a day. I study this with interest, and it is possible.

Trouble is, you need to buy in bulk to start with and street people just cannot do that. You have to purchase all the ingredients at the start of the month. Loads of pasta, rice, lentils, beans and pulses. We hand out a piece of cake and tiny Easter Eggs to the clients before they leave this morning. Bridget gets one, and suddenly screams out that her cake has hatched an egg, for she never noticed me putting the egg beside her plate. Nobody bats an eyelid as she rants on, so she leaves, with her luminescent orange hat flapping in the wind. As I let her out I enquire if she needs an outdoor aerial for the hat, but she informs me she gets good colour without one.

Thursday 14th April

11 AM Bright day

I am up at the 'Referral' centre, for my morning 'breakfast', and just admiring the wooden decking that Shaun my friend has built there. This place is next to the Jehovah's Witness's Kingdom Hall. One of the clients there, Sniffer, has declared that we're all going to get Weil's Disease, because rats will be foraging for the scraps of food that fall between the cracks in the boards. He actually goes and makes a formal complaint to the management about this health hazard. He raises this matter in a volatile manner but is laughed out of court. I feel his heart's in the right place, and he tells me he only comes here for the fruit juices, and I remember that I have a 'Jacque-La-Lanne' juicer at home, which I never use. This is the king of juicers and will juice even apples. When I offer him this, he is over the moon, so I deliver it, in the Jag, to his house.

I meet up with him, some time later and enquire how he is managing with it and he tells me he's given it to a charity shop as it was too much trouble to clean! I would have loved it back, as I've started going to the gym again, and eating more healthily. Never mind.

Pop along to Hope, in time to see Tall Tony, who beats Strumpet up, walk in. 'Glamour Girl Kate' is ignoring Jake her boy friend sitting next to her and makes

eyes at Tony. A nod's as good as a wink to a blind man, so Tony makes a beeline over to their table. Jake may be a bit of a Div., but he's not totally stupid. He tells Kate they need help in the kitchen so she goes over to ask. This gives him the opportunity to read the 'Riot Act', to Tony. Kate returns from the kitchen, and says they don't need any help. I tell her she should help her boyfriend Jake who still has a painful hip, whereupon she blurts out: 'He's not my boyfriend. He's just a ponce. He beats me up all the time.' With that she bounces out with Tony in tow. Now, he really likes to beat on women, so I feel these two were made for each other.

Friday 15th April

9 AM Fine sunny day.

I have finally found a flat. They want five hundred and fifty a month, so I offer five-thirty, which is accepted. I have great references. One from pastor Chris, the MBE, and of course one from my current agent. I contact Jeremy from Darvell, who has offered to help me move out, with a few of his lads. I have hired a van, but he tells me I can use theirs, so I cancel mine with Greenhill's round the corner and lose only my ten pounds deposit, but save fifty.

I spend the day filling in all the little holes in the walls, where my photos used to hang and painting over them. I decide to leave the touch-dimmers and all the Venetian blinds; they were made to measure and won't fit anywhere else.

Still can't get hold of Shaun, who erected my fireplace. I need him to dismantle it, and only he can, for all the screws are embedded, and painted over. I also need him to help move my giant printer, which needs four people to shift. It's an Epson 7900.

I just cannot get in touch with him, and found out afterwards he'd lost his phone in a taxi when drunk, and cannot ring anybody for, of course, all his numbers are on the 'Sim' card.

Alan, who lives near Nanette, has taken the two chandeliers, with a promise to help me move, but when I went downstairs to collect the mail, found a note from him in the mailbox. He claims he has found a job, white-lining the roads, which starts tomorrow, the day of the move, so cannot help me after all.

So I have lost two good men I was relying on. Panic sets in, and I have a restless night, dreaming that bailiffs were smashing my door down.

Saturday 16th April

8 AM Fine day.

The Darvell boys turn up, with a large van, and Driver. My dear friends Rolie and Rosie, from the soup kitchen, also arrive with their station wagon. The first job is to hump my giant Epsom printer down four flights of stairs. We have to lift it off the stand to start with; a job in itself. Unfortunately, like myself the Driver has a bad back and can't lift anything, so we keep him outside guarding the stuff in the van. As I can't bear anyone stomping around over me, my current flat is on the top floor, as is my new one, a Penthouse overlooking the sea, just by the pier. It is fifty steps up, with no lifts, and a lot smaller than what I'm used to, but has views to die for.

On our first trip we manage to move the printer, and the Laminator into Reg's flat, which thankfully is on the ground floor, in Church Road, of all places. We have to tip the printer on its side to get it in and after we leave Reg has to move sideways to get round the room. To say his flat is cluttered would be too kind. It's a total mess and looks like it's just been trashed by burglars. Maybe all the flats in Church Road are like this one, and, of course, number '57'. But he's happy.

We have to do half a dozen trips to get everything moved, and Gambler Tam, my Scots neighbour who wanted to help, is so shattered at the end of the day he can't even walk upstairs for a cup of tea. Of course the young Darvell lads are bouncing up two steps at a time.

Sunday 17th April

9 AM Windy.

Manage to drag myself to church to pay my respects to the 'Guvnor', thanking him for a safe move.

2 PM

Collect Myrium in the Jag, and we shoot off to Darvell, for the afternoon. We bring a little potted plant and a load of Easter eggs. These are tiny cream ones that I hand

out to all the kids that live next to Jeremy and Annie. They really appreciate this rare treat as the community does not believe in spoiling children.

8 PM

When I get home to my new flat, I spend a few hours unpacking and stuff three dustbin bags full of empty cardboard boxes. I store all my cameras in a cupboard, and decide to get Shaun to fit a mortise lock there. I am worried about security, as three other people have flats in the building and I simply cannot afford the thousand pound insurance premium to insure all my equipment. I soon discover a drug dealer occupies the basement flat. Every house should have one, in Mugsborough anyway!

Police have launched a fresh appeal, in the papers this week, after a vicious rape was perpetrated on an eighteen year old, next to St Leonards train station.

The Church of England has instigated new rules after two Mugsborough Vicars were jailed for four years each, for conducting three hundred and fifty bogus marriages with foreigners. One was my pastor at the time, in the Ark of Hope church, in Mugsborough.

After a gang fight, between fifteen men in Mugsborough, a number of people were arrested, and a man ended up with a punctured lung. All the windows and door of a house had been smashed in with a baseball bat.

In a raid last Wednesday drugs worth two hundred thousand pounds were seized by police. A thirty-seven year old man from Mugsborough was bailed.

About a hundred yards from my new flat, the Pig in Paradise' pub had its cash machine ripped out the wall. It contained about eight thousand pounds.

Daniel Mills 20, of Mugsborough, was bailed for sentencing after he admitted biting off half of a teenager's ear. He has admitted violent disorder, which has left his victim permanently disfigured. Police claim it was a savage and unprovoked attack (which, of course, is very, very, rare in Mugsborough) on an innocent young man, over a toy trumpet. Mills had taunted the sixteen year old by repeatedly blowing a "Vuvuzela' trumpet in his ear, as he was walking on the seafront in Mugsborough.

Two coke dealers were arrested after CCTV operators spotted them dealing drugs from their Fiat Punto in Mugsborough. When police searched the car they found three kilos of cocaine.

A dozen cars had their tyres slashed in town, last week.

Graham Smith of Southwater Road, Mugsborough, was fined a thousand pounds with eight hundred costs, and had his stereo confiscated, when the court heard that he had already been fined nine hundred pounds in 2009, and had his stereo seized when he first upset the neighbours where he lived.

Monday 18th April

9 AM Windy Day.

Shoot down to HAS, my old estate agents, to hand the keys of my old flat over to them in person. I told them that I came down on Saturday to give the keys in, but they were shut and there was no letter-box. They insist they'll have to charge me an extra two days, for Sunday and Monday, as they've just got the keys today. I figure that I'm owed three weeks back rent, as I'm always a month in advance. They do a printout, which confirms this, but say they can't hand over any deposit, which they're entitled to hold for fourteen days. They inspect the flat later that day, and agree it's in pristine condition. In fact they advertise it afterwards as being 'Immaculate throughout', and they also raise the rent from one hundred and five a week, to a hundred and twenty. I tell them there's no reason to withhold my deposit, which is held by an outside agency anyway.

However HAS claim that landlords always have the final say on whether the deposit should be returned! Nobody I know of has ever had a deposit returned from HAS. They always manage to find some excuse, like a damp patch, or a stain on the carpet, or a greasy oven, or smudged paintwork, or a chip in the bath, which may, or may not have been there when you moved in. It's just like putting a car through an MOT test. If they want to fail it, they will find something wrong. I never did get any money off HAS, because the Jew Boys told them they also wanted court costs off me and not to give me any money, on any account. It is very lucky that Myrium lent me eight hundred pounds for a new deposit, or I would have been joining my soup kitchen friends, on the street.

Tuesday 19th April

9 AM Mild but windy.

I introduce myself to the other tenants, in my new flat. There is Greg, who works in a Funeral Parlour and his partner Liz, who commutes to Tunbridge Wells every day, so gets up really early. They live directly beneath me so I must be careful with noise. I do have a lovely thick carpet, which covers most of the room. They mention the draught under their door, through which the wind whistles, so when I fit a draught excluder on my own door I pick a spare up and fit it on theirs. They are very grateful, but Liz enquires: 'How much was that?' When I tell her it was only a tenner, she retorts: 'Well, I certainly wouldn't pay that.'

Now I know where I stand. There are no bells for any of the flats, so I have to purchase a wireless bell, which costs me fifty quid, as I need the most powerful type, living four floors up.

I meet Stacey, who lives beneath Greg and Liz. When he comes to the door I see this huge mountain of a man, about seven foot tall and built like a tank. He seems a really nice guy and we become friends. He works for the British Heart Foundation, as their assistant manager.

I have to put up a curtain rail and soap dish in the bathroom, and replace a recessed ceiling light in my flat, but that is par for the course.

The other tenants tell me the guy who lives in the basement is an 'ice-cream man', and I hear punters turning up at all hours round the back of the building, underneath my bedroom window. They cry out, in the middle of the night, 'Andy, have you got any gear?' It appears that a resident drug-dealer is a prerequisite for any large household in Mugsborough and that they all live in basement flats.

Wednesday 20th April

9 AM Sunny, but cold.

There are a couple of dozen street people in for food today. I say the opening prayer and pray for Pete Medhurst who died of an overdose a few days ago. We are all shocked, but I'm not sure why we should be. Every month someone fits out, or dies of liver failure or an overdose, or drinks themselves to death, so we should be used to it by now. Pete was only forty-five.

Trouble is, I know these guys and help them out and listen to their woes, and it's hard to realize it was all a waste of time.

Ned stands up, and shouts for silence. He just wants to say, how he spent time with Pete (literally) sharing a cell with him in prison, and a flat on the outside. I actually moved Ned into Pete's flat, with my Jag stuffed full of his rubbish. He also wants to thank the volunteers for feeding him and the boys, and helping them, and looking out for them. This brings tears to my eyes, and now makes everything seem worthwhile, after all.

2 PM

Meet the two dwarfs, Dennis and Graham, or Dolce and Gabanna, in Kings Road. I never see them anywhere else. Maybe they don't go anywhere else. Graham tells me he's booked into Hanover House, in the Marina at Brighton, for a Detox. I never knew he was an alcoholic until now. He shows me his damaged arm, where Nanette's dog bit him. It is weeping through the bandages, and when he pulls them back to show me, I see the wound is red raw.

Thursday 21st April

2.30 AM Fine day but cold.

Shaun, my Irish friend is again staying with me in my new flat, on the seafront. He was sleeping on the sofa in the front room last night when he was woken by screams and shouts. When he looked out he noticed by the pier, three drunks being spat at by a couple of girls. They have some scroat with them. He sneaks up behind one of the drunks who is shouting at the girls, and bashes him on the back of the head. As he goes down the other two drunks each grab one of the girls, but 'scroat' comes up again and bats another drunk on the back of the head. He must have had a stone in his hand for Shaun hears the clunk and this guy hits the pavement with an awful thud, leaving a pool of 'claret' all around him. The remaining drunk pulls out his phone and rings the police, as the two girls and the scroat leg it down the road. Two ambulances and one paramedic car arrive with four police cars. The observer appeals for witnesses, but Shaun doesn't want to get involved. He has his own problems.

7 PM

It is Maundy Thursday today. There is a special service tonight to celebrate Easter. A church group, called the Thursday Fellowship wants Christ's crucifixion to be

celebrated today, because the Gospels of Matthew and Luke state 'He rose on a Sunday, after three days in the tomb'. This means that if the resurrection was on Easter Sunday, the crucifixion must have been on the Thursday, and not the Friday. Our communion service is accompanied by many Easter hymns, and the wind of the Spirit blows through the whole church.

Friday 22nd April

9 AM Sunny.

Just after ten I arrive at Christchurch on London Road, Mugsborough for the Good Friday procession. I chat to Pastor Chris and a few Anglican Priests gathered there. This is the church where I brought Nanette, as it's not far from where she lives. The Sunday mass here is indistinguishable from the Roman Catholic version and she just loves it here.

There are many bags of hot cross buns, with Easter greetings from all the churches, sitting by the bench, and these will be handed out to passers-by as we carry the cross through the streets. Soon hundreds gather to participate in the Easter Walk.

Last year I went to the 'Old Town' procession, where they can afford to do things in style. There they enact a passion play through the streets, but here Chris carries the cross in his street clothes, and I feel it's important to support my local church.

I recall, many years ago in the city of Jerusalem, I was present when a Crucifixion procession was due to head off, up the Via Dolorosa. There were many hundreds of people joining in, and I spoke to some stranger from Ireland.

'Indeed, you're from the old country, are you?' he asks.

'Sure, I am that. Just seeing the sights.'

'And how long you been here?' he says.

'Nine months. I was on "Gesher Haziv Kibbutz", for a long time, then went down to the desert, to work in Eilat.'

'Listen', he says 'it's the turn of our group to carry the cross, but we're all a bit long in the tooth. Do you fancy your chances? It's very heavy.'

'No problem,' says I. 'Give it here.'

They throw an old poncho over me, and load me up with this giant cross, which drags on the pebble-stoned streets behind me, and we head off with Israeli soldiers clearing a path through all the traders standing outside their market stalls. They hate this disruption to business, and start spitting at me.

Christians are generally held in contempt throughout the Holy Land. The strange thing is, the whole crowd is behind me, chanting and wailing. The only people I see in front are the odd tourists jumping out of alleyways to take a quick shot on their camera, before the soldiers poke them out of the way with their Uzi machine guns. At the fifth station I stop as a girl runs up to mop my brow. This, I thought, is too much like the real thing. I still wonder, to this day, if her name was Veronica.

By-standers gawp at our procession, in Mugsborough, as we head down to Warrior Square, handing out buns, as we go, to anyone who will take them. Even though we tell folk they are free, lots of people won't take any, thinking there's a catch in it. As I walk with the crowd I divert to the seafront, on my own, seeking out the dossers who are still kipping on the benches there. We find a few, and they end up with more than one bun each. They are actually more receptive and grateful for a kindness than the average guy in the street. Dr. Mike Cooper, a guiding light in the Christian community, sees me leave the procession, and asks where I'm taking the buns. When I tell him they're for the street people, he warns me to give only one bun to each person, joking, 'I know how generous you are, Rad.' As usual I ignore his advice, as you do.

Saturday 23rd April

9 AM Mild day.

Duke Road church has set up Healing rooms open to all, in a large room adjacent to the church. This is the second session since the Yanks went home. I got prayer for my eyes and felt they were cured, as they stopped watering all day, but later I had to put drops in to sleep. I am reminded that even Jesus had to pray twice for the blind man to see properly. I hear about a lady who came in last week, with two hearing aids, one in each ear. She received prayer for her hearing, and was asked to take them out. Pastor Chris asks her across the table: 'Can you hear me?'

'Yes, of course, for you're shouting.'

He tells her: 'I'm not shouting,' and gets up and walks to the far side of the room.

'Now, I'm speaking in a normal voice. Can you still hear me?'

When she leaves her two hearing aids are left sitting on the table.

I also learn about the guy, in a wheelchair, who turned up at midday, as the rooms had just closed up.

He didn't realize that, and tried to reach up and ring the bell and found that he could stand. He ended up pushing his wheelchair four hundred yards back to his home. He came into Chris' café, first thing Monday morning and told him all about it, and Chris says if anyone doubts this happened to drop into the café in Kings Road, where we do the breakfasts, and he'll set them straight. I don't know if the guy was confined to a wheelchair, or just needed it to get around, but the fact remains it's in his backyard, rusting away.

Sunday 24th April

10 AM Sunny but windy.

It is Easter Sunday. After church I walk into town with Shaun, as someone has nicked my bus pass. There is a festive atmosphere and the town is crowded. I am surprised to see Greg, the Hangman, sitting in a wheelchair in the centre of town.

Greg who works for a local undertakers, has become known as the hangman, because they always get him to cut the bodies down, when somebody hangs themselves. He tells me it's seldom a rope but usually a scarf or sheet, because people like their comfort, he jokes. I always thought the police or paramedics would do that job, but no, it's down to the undertakers who deliver the body to the coroner. Anyway, the hangman is perched in a wheelchair and Shaun enquires what happened to him. He points to a collection box and a display stand set up by the Filsham Wheelers, and tells me he's only giving them a break, as a stand-in, or should I say sit-in.

Ned comes hobbling by and says he could do with one of them, pointing to Greg's wheelchair, not realizing that Greg is not really paralyzed. Shaun is quite angry and tells Greg he's conning the public out of money, but Greg explains that this bunch is one of many chair-bound groups who challenge other groups to basketball matches, so they need donations to follow their sport. When he went to chat with

them, they asked if he could spend an hour collecting for them, so they put him in a wheelchair, as you do. Liz rings up to see what's keeping him. Imagine the shock she gets when he tells her he's stuck in a wheelchair in the middle of town.

3 PM

Take Myrium to Darvell, where they have set up a barbecue in the woods. We are served a meal of fresh pork from one of their pigs, but I have an omelette cooked by Jeremy who confesses he's not the best cook around, to which I heartily agree.

7 PM

At half past seven the whole community gathers on the hilltop for songs of praise and Jeremy formally introduces Myrium and myself. Apparently this is the second time today they've gathered here. They had a big bonfire up here this morning at six am, as the sun rose, to greet Easter.

When I get home I check out the news this week.

The two teenagers arrested for the pier fire have been released, without charge, despite the police finding evidence that they were both on the pier at the time of the blaze. This case now joins a long list of unsolved high-profile crimes in Hastings. Mugsborough Police conduct a very successful drugs raid this week in Mugsborough. Two hundred thousand pounds worth were seized in Hollinghurst Road, just ten days after a similar find in Magdalen Road. Neighbours had complained about the smell, and the constant humming of the lights, and the water system, which pumped water from large water butts placed in five rooms of the house. The doors had been glued shut and all the windows hard-boarded. Vents had been drilled through the walls and a very sophisticated hydroponics system deployed in a round the clock operation. Usually the heat signature of such an operation is detected by police helicopters using infra-red cameras but the ceilings had been lined with space blankets. The meters had also been rigged, as the Electricity Board always inform police when an inordinate amount of electricity is being consumed.

Seven thousand pounds worth of cigarettes were stolen, from a 'Mugsborough' newsagents, when thieves smashed down a wall at the rear of the shop and gained entry through a rear stairwell.

Fake booze and cigarettes are once again in circulation in Mugsborough, after a host of local newsagents were raided last week. The cigarettes were from Vietnam, and contained lead and arsenic to keep them lit and actually tasted awful. Also top brand counterfeit packets from Russia were found which were indistinguishable from the real thing, as the packet wrapping was identical. But this was not as bad as the drink from Spain, which was laced with ether, which is known to actually kill people.

Arburas Sibirovas tried to buy three hundred and thirty six pounds worth of Marlborough cigarettes on a forged credit card in Tesco in Mugsborough. The transaction was declined but two hours later tried again in another store for a similar amount, but he was arrested. He was given a years conditional discharge and eighty-five pound court costs.

Matt James, of St Margaret's Road, Mugsborough was given one year's community order, and fined four hundred pounds compensation, after he spent four thousand, seven hundred pounds, on a stolen credit card belonging to Mr. Neil Turner. The court also decided he must undergo treatment for alcohol addiction.

Monday 25th April

3 PM Very warm and close.

Stacy, my neighbour, who has to tolerate Andy, the ice-cream man next door to him has got bailiffs coming round about his council tax arrears. They have sent him letters about his arrears saying they are entitled to break in and seize his goods. He has been to the council office to try and sort out some compromise of regular instalments, to no avail. He is assistant manager of a local store and has quite a substantial job, but due to recent commitments has incurred unforeseen expenses. He just needs the council to ease up for a spell until he gets back in the black. I contact Lee Clark, a councillor who helps me obtain accommodation for the homeless, and it only takes one phone call for him to get the council to back-pedal, and call off the bailiffs. His payments for arrears will be set at a more reasonable level. Considering he had made countless visits and written letters, Stacy was amazed that the problem could be solved with a single phone call. He is very grateful.

7 PM

Down the Salvation Army, 'Ponytail Pete' is back in charge as Snowflake has finished for another year. This venue will only operate now on Monday evenings and Friday mornings. Pete relishes his authority and tends to be a bit of a control freak. Sue and Eileen feel that things ran smoother without him, and on occasion I have had words with him, walking out on occasion. When he learned I was doing the opening prayer he seemed surprised that anyone else would even consider this. After all, Gary, the Salvationist, is usually around. However, he is rarely available as he is organizing the hall next door, which is let out to the local choir on Mondays. This choir includes Godfrey Daniels, the local Mayor. There are about a hundred people in the Hastings choir.

Tuesday 26th April

11 AM Very sunny.

Bump into Heavy Eddy down the 'office'. He seems clean and is quite friendly and rational. We go to Kassa's for coffee, and sit outside in the glorious sunshine. I have wanted the opportunity to witness to him and tell him about my recent experience at the SOZO session. I tell him how the session changed my life and explain how important it is to forgive people.

I tell him the Jew Boys are still clutching onto my money but I have to forgive and forget, and I've got a lot to forgive others for as well. I ask Eddy if he knows the Lords Prayer. He says he does and I ask him to recite it. When he gets to 'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive others', I tell him that's the toughest prayer anyone can pray. I explain that when you pray those words you are telling God to forgive you, if - you forgive others, but it also means you are asking God not to forgive you, if you cannot forgive others. I tell Eddy about the woman with the hearing aids, and the guy with the wheelchair. He does me the kindness of listening intently, as I explain about forgiveness. Eddy is not big on forgiveness and vindictiveness is a word he understands better. I suggest he should go along to the Saturday morning healing sessions. I ask him where he thinks he'd end up if he dropped dead right now. For once he is at a loss for words. I tell him he would just be a memory in the mind of man and remain just a memory in the mind of God.

Wednesday 27th April

10 AM Very sunny.

At the breakfast this morning we lay up only five tables with four chairs each. Tony the Hat is with us this morning, eating with his 'Trilby' still on his head. Nobody had seen him for weeks and it wasn't until Wobbly Bob rang up the 'Inquest', that we discovered he was in there with liver problems.

Bob McIver has had the stitches removed from his eye. He is fortunate not to have lost it, but it was closed for so long he is now known as 'Blind Bob'. He tells us his cheekbone split open, and the eye came out of its socket to rest on his cheek. He was also knocked out so his mate poured whiskey over it and poked it back in. He was bleeding profusely but didn't want to go to hospital even when the paramedics arrived.

Chris, of the weekly death syndrome, was released from hospital on Monday and when he had to go for a check-up was told to come with a full bladder, so he went into the chemist and asked for a bladder. We have a new couple turn up. He looks so much like David Walliams, you could call him the 'Spitting Image'. He announces to all that he would love to open a café just like ours, so I put on a Falsetto voice, and say 'Oh, yes, we ladies must stick together.' The subtlety of this, which cracks most of the clients up, is lost on Pastor Chris who never watches TV.

Thursday 28th April

7.30 PM Hope kitchen

It's been a hot sunny day, unusual for this time of year. Some heroin users are reporting disturbing after-effects from new gear on the streets. They report a period of some days' loss of memory after their hit, and figure this stuff that turns green when cooked, is spiked with Rohypnol. That is known as a 'date-rape' drug, which renders girls helpless and unable to recall faces or events.

Bridget the Midget greets her friend, Stretch: 'Easy, you sweet?'

Stretch replies, 'We're cool, I'm sound.'

Bridget asks for cucumber sarnies, while Stretch orders soup, or loupe-de-loupe, and says: 'Thought you didn't like cucumber, Bridget?'

'No, but I chuck the bits in me garden.'

'To feed the foxes?'

'No' says Bridget, 'to grow cucumbers. I grew a cucumber tree from one little sandwich'

'That's bloody amazing,' he replies.

'Not as amazing as the "Nossies,"' declares Bridget.

'Do you mean the two queer boys, Bridget?'

'No, stupid, - the Loch Ness Monsters.'

'What about 'em, Bridget?'

'Whole herds of them have just come down to Hastings!'

'Indeed, but why Hastings? Why not Eastbourne?'

'More room, I expect, and cheaper as well, but they're over a hundred years old, and all the local ferals want to catch them.'

'Like, as pets?'

'No, stupid, to eat them. They taste delicious.'

'Indeed, they should bring a new law out.'

'About shooting the monsters?'

'No, about this "Loupe-de-loupe". It's disgusting'.

Friday 29th April

10 AM Sunny pleasant day.

It's a Bank Holiday today, as it's the Royal Wedding of Kate Middleton to Prince William. I decide to head for Darvell to escape all the street parties with their clutter and clatter. I'll catch the highlights on TV later on. Some people feel it's a great expense on the public purse but I consider Monarchy is the last vestige of significance in a crumbling empire. I love all the pomp and circumstance. Just like Christmas! I feel the Queen works extremely hard and benefits the populace in general, being so popular. Apparently Kate Middleton is a commoner, and may one day become Queen herself, so good luck to her.

The good folks at Darvell don't have TV, or mobiles, or computers, so the day is very quiet, although there's a street party down in the village. The Jag cruises over

on empty roads, as most people are indoors glued to their televisions, watching the comings and goings of the great and the mighty.

Some brave soul at Darvell, moves a swarm of bees from a beech tree back into the 'large tree where they normally live'. I stay well clear, as I've had a few bee-stings in my time, both here and abroad. I have a simple meal in the woods where various barbecues have been set up. They are eating venison from their own herd of deer, while I stick to a cheese omelette cooked by Jeremy; stick being an apt description. I have some of their homemade bread, which is absolutely delicious, because Jeremy didn't make it.

Saturday 30th April

11 AM Fine sunny day.

I invite the crew out for a run in the country. I actually want to photograph the bluebells, which are just at their peak, but also feel the boys need a day out. We come across out to Bodium Castle in the middle of nowhere, and I get us in on my Press Pass, but do have to pay for the car park. I was heading for Hole Park, and discover it's not many miles from here. So, after a good look round, and a cup of tea J.J. and the Kid and Jimbo get back into the Jag and we go looking for bluebells, which is not actually one of their usual pursuits.

4 PM

We pause for tea and cakes in the stable yard café at Hole Farm. The crew have not seen any horses or wild animals, apart from those in the soup kitchen, for years, and are tickled pink.

5 PM

We are just in time to catch the 'Rolvenden' motor museum, before it closes. Here we droll over pristine Morgan three-wheelers, with their 'V' twin engines mounted in front of the car, over the front bumper. We spot a 1904 Humber Tri-car, and some great old belt driven motorcycles. The lads are impressed.

7 PM

After a few hours of taking photographs of bluebells in Hole Park, with the crew staggering along behind, carrying tripods and tins of cider, we headed off to the nearest pub, for a bite to eat. All of us are ravenous and find a quiet little pub; at

least it was quiet until the crew entered. For a change the boys have some money and insist on buying me a meal, which I appreciate. They don't 'do food', so spend the next few hours watching the large TV, which is showing highlights of the Royal Wedding. Needless to say, the boys are all staunch Royalists.

11.50 PM

We don't leave the pub until closing time. I don't drink, so I'm the only sober person in the Jag as we cruise out to the dual carriageway. We pull up at some traffic lights and on my left is a Nissan Skyline. Like my car this beast kicks out over four hundred horses, and inside we see four young 'scroats'. J.J. who is sitting beside me winds his window down and then starts to wind the 'scroats' up. He inquires if they are hairdressers, out on a 'Stag Do, and compliments them as only J.J. can. He asks where they're heading, and it's the same route as ours so he challenges them to a 'duel'. The big 'Cat' is just purring away, but that changes as both cars start revving their engines. The big 'lumps' send a cacophony of rasping throbbing vibrations out into the darkness. I'm always up for a good chase, unless it's the cops. We are the only two cars on the road, and we are both level, at the lights. So I fancy my chances. There are four guys in each car. We all agree to go on the 'green'. I turn off my traction control and feed the Jag as much throttle as I dare, edging into the red line. My four-point-two 'V-Eight' roars and whines, as the supercharger bites, and we scorch off the line, leaving a cloud of burning rubber behind us. I knew that whoever got the head start could make it difficult for the other party to pass. There is no traffic on this road as it's gone midnight, and after the bank holiday and the Royal Wedding, everyone's gone home. As the Jag blisters the tarmac we surge in front, but all I can see is the Skyline's headlamps burning into my brain as it drives right up my exhaust pipe. I slow for the large roundabouts, which both cars take at over ninety, as we can see they are clear with no other vehicles about. I have two fog-lights, and four Zenon headlights on full beam, eating up the darkness, and I push the beast to over a hundred and thirty. I have raced cars on the roads, at over a hundred, which is 'easy-peasy', but when you go over one- twenty, you enter the 'Death-Zone.' This supercharged 'S' does a hundred and seventy-five, as I've had the limiter disconnected. Nothing can keep up with us, I hope, but I realize the Skyline is just as fast. These two cars are oldies

but goodies, which these days can be purchased for a few grand, but you'll spend a fortune on petrol, getting about fifteen miles a gallon. As we take long sweeping curves, at well over a hundred miles an hour, J.J. shouts out to the boys, which way to lean. If we don't lean our combined weights into the corners the Jag could easily tip over, as I'm pushing it to the limit. I'm surprised the scroats are still with us and rather annoyed as well. The crew is ecstatic that we're ahead. Suddenly we run into suburbs with their yellow overhead streetlights, which make the whole deal a lot safer. It's still a dual carriageway, but there is a wide traffic light junction dead ahead, crossing another dual carriageway. Trouble is, I see at the bottom of the hill, a single car parked on the right at these lights, ready to cross our path. There is no opposing traffic at the lights. As I drive, I cannot even glance at the dashboard to check my revs, or my speed. All my concentration is geared to keeping this thing on the road, but my mind clocks the fact that this car, waiting at the red light, is an old model Mini, and will take time to cross in front of us. The lights are about a quarter of a mile away, still green, and we are going down a hill. The navigator, J.J. is screaming out the speed. I'm doing over a ton, as the lights start to change. It's too late to stop, as I'll end up with the Skyline on my roof, as they probably can't see the lights, they're so close behind. I floor it, and the 'Big Cat' surges forward. The lights go amber. J.J. hollers out, "Lean to the Right." My brain goes into autopilot, calculating the speed of the old banger ahead, which has now started to cross over the junction, as I count the seconds from when the lights turned red. One, two, three. We are still two hundred yards away from the lights, which are now blazing with deep red intensity. Four!

We're still a hundred yards from the lights, and my brain is shouting five, six, seven. The crew is now silent, realizing we are all on the edge, and pushing the limit, but the Skyline is pushing mine. Eight, nine, as I steer as far over to the left as I can without mounting the kerb, and swiftly clip the gearbox into third, making the whine of the supercharger fill the car, as it howls like a wildcat, throwing us back in our seats, as it lunges forward. I don't know what speed we took that right hand turn, and I don't know why the Jag didn't actually take off or roll over, but I held it together as the little old Mini reached the centre of the junction, and we whistled round it. He probably thought it was a silver flash of lightning, which looked a bit like

a car. As I jerk the wheel this way and that, wriggling out of the curve to straighten the beast up, J.J. hollers out, 'They're still behind us!' I am stunned.

'They can't be. It's impossible,' I protest, and actually take time to look in the mirror to check. It's true; they must have taken the corner on the right side of the old banger. These kids can drive.

However we pull ahead now, for we just shoot another red, leaving the Skyline with no choice but to stop for a huge lorry crossing the junction. We reach the big square in town, and screech to a halt. 'Everybody out,' cries J.J. and we all stumble out of the car.

As the Skyline goes past we are all reclining on the Jag, resting on the roof and leaning over the trunk, waving to the losers as they cruise past.

J.J. has lit a cigarette, making it look as if we've been here for ages, waiting for them. They are not happy.

CHAPTER NINE

MAY

Sunday 1st May

9 AM Fine, but windy.

Need to seek repentance off the 'Guvnor', for my recklessness last night, so force myself to go to Church. As I pass the office the crew are there, already liquored up, and talking about the chase last night. Ned is there with Tim Harvey. They are now bosom buddies, as they share a common love: Valium.

At Duke Road church, which I have now joined, I give my testimony regarding my SOZO session, proclaiming to all and sundry that I am now able to forgive anybody, anything. My attitude to people and myself has radically changed. During the service I repent of my sins, and open up to the Spirit, receiving a powerful anointing. As the band finishes a song the leader turns round and says I am really blessed, as he sees me staggering about, drunk in the Spirit. However in 'Welly Square', my old church, the monthly newsletter is distributed today, and a letter I wrote to them is published in it. In it I explain why I left after five years. I notice a footnote in the magazine from Maureen, the editor, thanking me for my loyalty and wishing me Godspeed. I am pleased there is no acrimonious feeling on either side. I tell about my recent SOZO training and my emotional session with the master of the SOZO. I also mention the fact I'd like to get involved with the healing rooms. I don't seem to get much healing myself, but there seems to be no logic behind who gets healed and who doesn't, even in the scriptures.

In the papers this week I see the town is expecting twenty thousand bikers to visit tomorrow for their annual Mayday rally.

Ian Barnes 40, of Cloudesley Road, Mugsborough, has pleaded not guilty to a charge of kidnapping and assault involving Laurence Marshall. Barnes and a co-respondent were remanded in custody.

David Fitch 34, of Mildenhall Drive, Mugsborough, appeared at Hastings Magistrates Court last week, for sending a host of obscene text messages to a twelve-year-old girl whose mother rang back to see who it was. The family was present, as she put the call on speaker-phone, and they heard a tirade of obscene and sexual remarks, from Fitch. He had also sent obscene texts to former work

colleagues. The mother is now a nervous wreck as she realizes he now has her address, and Fitch has been released on bail, on condition he does not contact any of the family.

After 'ferals' were seen brandishing 'BB' guns, on the street, the police have warned they may be confronted with armed officers. Firearms offences have been increasing lately, and police say it is difficult to tell the difference between real weapons and replicas.

Comedy corner of the week.

Graham Smith 24, of Southwater Road, Mugsborough, was fined for the fifth time, (Sic) for playing loud music, and banned from even owning any sound equipment. He has already been fined over £2500, to date, plus costs.

Monday 2nd May

8 AM Windy, but very sunny.

The hum of thousands of bikers thronging the seafront and roaring round town, has been echoing from the early hours of the Bank Holiday today.

I spend five hours walking round with my heavy Hasselblad, photographing the amazing variety of bikes from old belt-driven models, to 'trikes' made out of Reliant Robins. The paintwork and colours are spectacular, so I take hundreds of shots with my Fifty-Megapixel camera.

Distributors have set up stands, to display the latest bikes and some say the oldest, as Steve McQueen's Triumph from the 'Great Escape' movie is on show, with everyone wanting to be photographed alongside it. Even Sussex police have got in on the act with their own stand, displaying a rather nifty three-wheeler.

6 PM

I return home as the Sally Ann is running tonight. I am exhausted, and my left foot, which I badly sprained last year, is playing up. I intend to grab forty winks before setting off for the kitchen, but don't wake up until nine-o'clock. When I try and get off the bed I find I can't put my foot to the floor, it's so painful. I crawl back to bed, after strapping on an elastic bandage, which I reserve for such occasions. Fortunately when I wake in the morning I can stand up and am very relieved. I was also worried about my back, after lugging round five kilos of camera gear in the sun

for five hours. This is an on-going problem that has plagued me for years, giving me spasms of excruciating pain, which even morphine injections don't alleviate. I now have to keep four rectal-tubes of liquid Valium beside my bed, in case I get struck with a spasm in the middle of the night. They are 2.5 mgs each, and if you take more than four you go to sleep, permanently.

Tuesday 3rd May

9 AM Sunny, but very windy.

Visit Nanette, who is very drunk today. She was very drunk yesterday, and she will be very drunk tomorrow. She also has another problem, as you do. She has decided she wants cured of her Hepatitis.

She was talked into this by her next-door neighbour, who contracted the disease from a blood transfusion in the 'Inquest' hospital. She got cured by getting her husband to inject her stomach, as she couldn't bring herself to do so. The needle is very long, and daunting to look at. I know how she feels, for I have to insert a long catheter into myself once a week, for a minute or so, after a recent operation for 'waterworks problems'. The first week I had to go to the doctors to get her to do it, then the next week I took painkillers, and now I can do it myself, very slowly, on my own, without anything or anybody. It is a foot long.

Nanette is determined to go for it, for she now gets fatigued just drinking a glass of wine. But she now learns from the neighbour that she was laid up for months and if it wasn't for her husband looking after her, she wouldn't have made it.

Susie Crack, who lives just round the corner, has offered to see Nanette through her ordeal, but although she may be very sweet and bubbly, Susie is a 'crack whore', and crack rules her life, so reliability is not her strong point.

Wednesday 4th May

10 AM Cold dry windy day.

The breakfast is running this morning, and we have twenty-one clients in Chris' café. Rudolf, who was part of the '57' crew for a while, has had a heart attack. He was going to get married to the black girl from the Ark of Hope Church, and this

occurred the day before his wedding in Bexhill. It has been postponed, but he's had two more attacks since then.

Pinhead-Ned was walking past an ambulance yesterday, when he recognized one of the paramedics, whom he knows well, who said to him, 'I've got your mate in here.' Ned looks in, and sees the Ducati Kid, not recognizing him at first glance. The Kid's thick black hair has turned completely grey, and Ned now announces, in the crowded café: 'Now he's even greyer than you, Rad,' which I don't appreciate, one little bit.

'Seems the Kid had seven fits in twenty minutes,' Ned nonchalantly tells us, 'I think he'll die soon.'

Ned fancies Arlette, the Kid's girlfriend. She has come from New Zealand, to settle in Mugsborough. To me, that's like someone from Paradise choosing to live in Hades. However she nursed and nurtured him since they first met in a rehabilitation centre. Although he moved in with her she wouldn't let him bring any drink home, so he congregated with the street people, until he got his flat in number '57'. Then he invited his old friends to kip there for a spell, but discovered neither hell nor high water would shift them out of the flat.

Arlette also has Hepitius 'C'. She was arrested once in the middle of winter, when the police evicted her. They had to drag her out and kept her in the cells overnight. In the morning she realized she only had one shoe. She figured she had lost it in the police car but they denied all knowledge, so she was left hobbling round in the snow until she got another pair of shoes. As well as the Kid, she also had to contend with her peripheral neuropathy.

Thursday 5th May

10 AM Warm and windy. 60 Degrees.

Still getting sorted out in my new flat. I have personally given up trying to get any money back off Clockwork Estates. I can't even get through to them on the phone, so have put the problem in the hands of my solicitors. My new agents call my new flat a Penthouse as it's on the top floor. They neglect to say the premises come with a resident drug dealer. He is Scottish, but I have never met him, as most of his dealings take place around the back of the house, where he has another entrance.

He wakens me in the middle of the night when he goes out into the backyard to transact business on his mobile. He needs to do this as he gets bad reception in his basement. I was woken last night by his girlfriend ranting and raving, for him to let her in. I had to get up and tell her politely, to clear off. The second time I had to get up was just before five in the morning when he was shouting into his mobile. I was fed up this time, and my manners went out the window, literally! Stacy, on the ground floor next to him also had a go, telling him that he had to get up for work in the morning. Andy shouts back, 'I'm working right now. We all have a living to make, mate.'

The other problems I currently have are that the extractor fan in my bathroom is vented directly into the loft above me, and I get all the household smells as they feed back down the tube, into my flat. It needs a non-return flue fitted to it, to alleviate the problem. I later find the bath drain also smells, as it needs a spring flap to stop fumes feeding back on a windy day.

Although there are no pets allowed on these block the lady next door has a dog, which barks at all hours. She is stone deaf but this thing lets her know if someone is trying to contact her. In the circumstances I cannot complain about that.

Friday 6th May

5 PM Quite warm. Still windy.

Shaun, who has moved in with me, tells me his story. He came out of a pub in Mugsborough one night when some geezer approached him. He asked Shaun to pay for his taxi home. As Shaun had never met the guy before, he naturally declined, whereupon the guy pulled a knife. Shaun decked him. As a joiner his arms are massive and he is very strong. The guy was knocked out cold before he hit the deck, but took sick, choked on his own vomit, and died. Shaun did a year or so inside, and when he was released three friends of the dead man attacked him with craft knives as he was leaving the same pub where the incident occurred. They sliced him to bits, and left him for dead. Because of his physique Shaun survived and, after he got out of the hospital, went back to the pub. His old friends who were also Irish didn't recognize him, as he had hundreds of stitches holding him together. They joked asking which one should they pull to make him unzip, and fall apart. But

some of these guys were in the IRA, and a week later when he went in the pub they told him he was going back home to Ireland for a holiday. They presented him, with a two-week-return ticket so he went to visit his family.

When he got back to Mugsborough he heard that one of the geezers who attacked him had been shot dead; another had been chained to railings, and knee-capped, but nothing could be done about the third, as he was on 'holiday,' in Brixton Prison, for a long stretch. Shaun wants to put all this behind him, but I wonder if it's contributed to his very heavy drinking. He is not an alcoholic as such, because he only drinks at weekends when he goes on a binge and consumes up to three-dozen bottles of Newcastle Brown - a night. If he's not working, and has no money he can lay off the drink and go without for months at a time.

Saturday 7th May

11 AM Fine but windy.

Come home after my weekly shop, to find my flat door has had wax stuffed in the lock, and marks, which look like a break-in attempt. Shaun suggests calling the 'Old Bill' who tell me when they arrive, it's likely Andy tried to get in, as he and his brother are well known to them for things like robbery. While they have words with Andy, I drive down with Shaun in the Jag to the store in Bexhill to purchase an extra door lock. There were a lot of 'visitors' yesterday in the back as Andy had a party, and I had to shout down a few times. This was revenge, I guess. Andy, and his brother, a heroin addict who lives just up the road are frequent guests in her Majesty's emporiums. I make sure my door is bomb proof by getting Shaun to fit extra locks. We also fit one more on the front door as Andy's guests sometimes leave by the front door, which leads onto the main entrance. Trouble is, they leave the main door open as they exit the premises, for it has to be locked with a key, and Andy isn't going downstairs just to let them out. After finding the main door left open all night, the rest of us have decided on this extra front-door lock but agreed that we won't give Andy a key for it, so that in future, all his customers will have to come and go from his other door, at the rear of the house.

8 PM

Pop down with Shaun to Hope kitchen, and find the soup tonight looks like it has lumps of white bread in it. It is not bread and everyone is arguing if it's swede or marrow, or turnip or just hard bits of potato, but it still tastes nice. Bridget the Midget describes in a loud voice how she took sick on the bus today. She gives a graphic description and expresses surprise that nobody on the crowded bus moved away from her. 'They just let me get on with it,' she exclaims. The clients just groan and wince, as Brigit renders a blow-by-blow description.

'Too much information, while we're eating,' booms George, the doorman. All evening people drift in and out for a smoke, and now I can go outside and chat with them, as I come here only as a visitor. Sean, the other doorman belongs to the street pastors and wants me to come and join them. I agree to go for a look-see in the near future, but it costs three hundred quid, and weeks of commitment.

Sunday 8th May

8 AM Rain early, then sunny, but still windy.

Up early for a morning service at Darvell. This is when the whole community gathers outdoors for their weekly service. The only other visitors are from Beechgrove, their other community in Kent. They all sit in a large circle and start with singing hymns, and then the Elders give a 'preach'. Then various people, at random, make their way to the microphone to relate some testimony, or story. The whole thing is fed to loudspeakers, so you can hear every word.

Afterwards Jeremy and Annie and Teddy, the dog I gave them, all go for a walk down by the ponds. They have a rowing boat there that the kids use to go camping on an island in the centre of one of the ponds. Some of the community have gardens and play areas placed nearby. They even have their own park.

Then it is back to their house, one of many in the community. This house is huge and holds four families. The wood-burner oven is just outside cooking all our food. It is so big, more than one family can use it at a time. They support themselves and turn a tidy profit by running a small toy factory, which supplies many nurseries and playgroups in the area. They have their own orchards and woods and cattle and are self-sufficient in feeding themselves. I go with Jeremy after lunch and we collect dandelions, from which he makes coffee, and wild garlic for tonight's supper salad,

and nettles for soup afterwards. They have made their own Bratwurst sausages, but I settle for an omelette from their free-range hens eggs. We have a long discussion about H.G. Wells that evening, before I depart home for the joys of Mugsborough, about eight-thirty as it gets dark. These folk go to bed early and rise early, very early. Ramona walks Teddy before six every morning.

Over Easter four schools were broken into, and an arson attack at Parker Road School caused thousands of pound worth of damage.

An Asian gang selling the 'Big Issue' round houses, have been linked to a series of robberies. Police state they believe they are not genuine 'Big Issue' vendors.

A teenager, Rodney Burns 18, was chased round Mugsborough on a mini-motorcycle, which had no insurance, etc. He was finally stopped when he drove down an alley and a police officer threw a baton at him.

A local rally generated one million pounds revenue for the town, when twenty-six thousand bikers invaded the town over Easter bank holiday.

But finally, note should be taken of a man who was caught pushing a stolen car down the road. He told police he suffered from Schizophrenia and had no intention of stealing the vehicle. The court was told he just decided to push it away.

Easter, like Christmas shows a significant reduction in local crime statistics. Roll on, Religion!

Monday 9th May

7 PM Sunny windy day.

Down the Sally Army, I am getting the coffees and teas ready. I put a spoon of coffee in each cup, and prepare the tea and fruit juice, while the ladies make up the sandwiches. Some of us have a 'cuppa' and a 'sarnie' as we prepare for seven-thirty when we open. I have to arrange the tables and chairs as Captain Mannering does the books. He has a record of all of the clients by name, and all the dates when they came to the kitchen. After we open there are a dozen or so people clamouring for drinks and sarnies and bowls of soup, which has to be made beforehand by Jamie, our 'Chef'. I am frantically making more tea and topping up the milk and sugar, when I suddenly run out of all the cups, which have coffee granules in them.

I simply have to hold these under the hot geyser to quickly make a cup of coffee. The clients then put their own sugar and milk in, as this is the only way I can serve a lot of people quickly. So in the rush as I run out of cups I have the jar of coffee in my hand, ready to spoon out more doses into more cups, when someone yells for coffee and I hold the jar itself under the hot water. In an instant I realize my mistake, but it's too late. Some boiling water has flowed into the large jar of coffee, and this dollop has melted all the coffee in the jar. The only way to serve the coffee now is to pour the thick mixture from the jar into a large jug, and top up with water. Of course it's very concentrated, as there was enough coffee in the jar to make several jug-fulls.

As much as I try to dilute it the mixture is still really strong, but some clients love it. They dose the mixture up with lots of sugar, and keep coming back for more as the caffeine rush hits them. Half the clients won't drink it, but the ones that do get really hyper, like 'Giggly-Viv' who comes back saying she doesn't feel the need for a beer any more as my coffee did the trick. The atmosphere levitates as more and more people drink more and more coffee.

Gary, the head Honcho, jokes that it's against policy to give drugs out over the counter, and for weeks after people keep asking me for some 'special coffee'. We acquired a few caffeine addicts tonight, but an hysterical time was had by all.

Eileen refused Mark any take-away sandwiches, as they are reserved for those sleeping rough. Mark insists he's not sofa-surfing, and swears he slept under the pier last night. So he gets his sarnies and Eileen gets his abuse.

Tuesday 10th May

8 AM Beautiful sunny morning.

I get up early, as it's such a nice morning. The boys are all down the 'office', and I remind them all that tomorrow is the Wednesday breakfast, as some don't even know what day it is.

9 AM

Pop round to Nanette's. I am getting my mail from HAS delivered there as I don't trust them not to reveal my new address to Clockwork Estates. My solicitor is trying to recoup some losses regarding my deposit and advance rent, which works out

over six hundred pounds. The Jew Boys sent a letter through to HAS, for they refused to deal with me directly because I took them to court, which stated their reasons for withholding my monies. They had informed HAS they would only deal with my queries through a solicitor, knowing this would incur me more expense. Their letter has not yet arrived and I have an appointment with my solicitor tomorrow. He needs to see this letter to clarify the reasons for withholding my money.

7 PM

At the Hastings Camera club I meet the new Mayoress, Kim Forward, as she comes to judge and present prizes for our clubs competition. I have entered two 'A0' size portraits, about two foot by two and a half, of the local conservative MP, Amber Rudd, and her Labour counterpart, to balance the scales - as you do.

However, although most feel these are the best on display she does not pick them for it might prove political bias. But I have won the Digital Print Image of the Year and tonight is our annual prize-giving. Most of the other prizes are cups and trophies, but the Mayoress presents me with a little metal cannon. I suspect this is because last years winner has failed to return the trophy for this category and they've had to find a quick substitute as an award. Anyway I wait until the club meeting and tell them all I would like to return it, as I would be embarrassed to give it houseroom. They take it back, saying they'll look after it for me, until next year.

Wednesday 11th May

9 AM Sunny, but windy,

Have an appointment with my solicitor at ten, so ring them to cancel as the letter from Clockwork Estates has failed to materialize.

I am now free to serve at the Wednesday breakfast. We have thirty in, but can only seat twenty-eight, so two have to stand by the counter, until the 'window-boys' finish. These are a few guys who like to see what's going on outside, and usually finish eating before the rest. Others hang on, until we have to throw them out. We have to cook up more food so some have to wait for seats and others for grub. Already people are asking for seconds, but we explain we haven't even got enough for 'firsts'. Captain Mannering cracks a joke about the loaves and the fishes, as I

scurry about topping up teas and coffees, washing up fresh cutlery and replenishing the toilet rolls, which are fast disappearing. He also tells the clients how good they've been today, for if they hadn't left such a mess, we'd never have known they'd been here. Debbie and Susan do a sterling job on the washing-up, which takes ages. He tells me not to talk to the clients as I serve them, if Chris is still preaching. They often ask for 'no tomatoes', or just 'bacon, egg and sausages', and I must make sure I get the order right, which means talking. He threatens to make me the scullery wench, and I tell him I don't deserve a promotion.

11 AM

I meet Katie coming from Nanette's as I go looking for my letter, which has not yet arrived. Katie has had her hair dyed again, and she's done this so often it's now starting to fall out in clumps. It hasn't reached the state of Bridget's, who told us this morning that she feels her house is haunted and they've come for the fairies at the bottom of the garden, who keep raiding the cucumber tree, which is why there are no cucumbers on it!

I have given Sticks and Andreas a few bits and pieces for their home, which is a tent in the middle of nowhere. They had no light, so a wind-up lantern should come in useful, together with a huge groundsheet.

Thursday 12th May

9 AM Windy, but mild.

After texting Nanette to see if there is any mail, I ring Sue at HAS to tell her no letter has arrived yet. She apologizes, and promises to e-mail Clockwork Estates right away.

I go round Nanette's, and as I go in she is sitting with 'Sister' Sandie, and Katherine, whom I've never met. She looks up and casually says: 'We're just doing a bit of heroin.' They have torn slices off a roll of tinfoil, which is on the sofa beside them. They each have a piece on their lap and on them are dollops of melted heroin. They periodically hold a gas lighter under the tinfoil, and as the heroin melts and smokes they sniff it up through a rolled up fiver. Katherine tells me she hasn't done this for ages, but they got drunk last night with Susie Crack, from round the

corner, who owed Nanette seventy quid. She only came across with twenty, but supplied fifty quid's worth of 'gear' in lieu, to the Sisters.

However, Sandie tells me she went to church last week, as she desperately wants to clean up her act. I arrange to pick them all up for a visit to the Healing rooms, on Saturday. We all agree they both need help. Katherine tells me her son, Barry, was the driver of the stolen car, which crashed in Mugsborough a couple of years ago, killing him and four other teenagers. The whole town was shocked at five kids dying together and the police took a lot of stick. Katherine claims what the public don't know is that an undercover cop-car was involved in the chase, as well as the traffic police, and that car was the cause of the crash - not the traffic police who got the blame.

I know that top-of the-range cars are currently floating round town as unmarked cop cars. They are Mega-expensive, perhaps costing as much as fifty grand.

Friday 13th May

11 AM Mild day.

Drop in the Sally Ann, for their morning session. It's normally very quiet here on Fridays, most people just popping in for food parcels or sleeping bags. We have just run out of these, as the distributor from which we bought in bulk, has just gone bankrupt. The '57' crew are all there this morning, which is unusual, and the Ducati Kid is almost sober and badly wants to talk to me. I imagine he needs some shrapnel, but no, it turns out he's having nightmares every night. I sit him in a quiet corner and he tells me he can't sleep because he keeps dreaming of an incident that happened back home in Italy, where he was brought up. He is not Italian, but his father has a lucrative business there. When he was a teenager his dad took him for a drive in the country, and they pulled up in a remote spot. His father told him it was time he acted like a man, and he had something he wanted him to do, to prove himself. They got out the car, and his dad opened the trunk to reveal a terrified old man trussed up inside. He was gagged and bleeding from the head.

His father pulled out a Beretta pistol, cocked it, and handed it to the kid. 'He's a paedophile and a nark, so I want you to shoot him.' Steve was horrified and refused point blank, but his dad said: 'If you can't do this you're not a man. You're no son of

mine.' Steve looked away and pulled the trigger. When he turned back the guy had a hole in his head, and was lifeless. The next week the Kid left for England to start afresh. Now he sits here telling me what it's like to take a life, and how guilty he feels after all these years. I can't tell him to go to counselling and can only suggest he seek spiritual help. Trouble is, the Kid doesn't believe in anything, as he's told me many times, in no uncertain terms, so all I can do is pray for him.

Saturday 14th May

10 AM Sunny start, but clouds over later.

Go round Nanette's, in my Jag, to pick up the Sisters, and Katherine who all want to go to the Healing Rooms, at Duke Road church. They are no-shows, there's no answer at the door, and so I head off on my own. I receive prayer for my eyes, my right hip, which aches constantly, my back and my vocal cords, which my acid reflux has eaten away. I leave out my left shoulder where I had a muscle transplant, and my dodgy left ankle. I tell them I need a spiritual MOT test. At the moment I feel like I'm falling apart.

I meet someone here from the Sally Army and they tell me eighteen new people from London turned up looking for sleeping bags and food parcels. Apparently the boroughs of London started evicting squatters and rough sleepers from the centre of town in preparation for the Royal Wedding and the forthcoming Olympics. They put some on trains with a one-way ticket to wherever they wanted to go, but most decided to head for the coast so we got our fair share of them.

Sunday 15th May

11.30 AM Cloudy

On my way home from church I see Stacy from the flat below me, the manager of the British Heart Foundation. His shop is open on Sundays, and Stacy is delivering a large sofa to a basement flat nearby. Stacy asks if I'm going home could I bring out some tools, as he needs to remove the door here, in order to get the sofa inside. After we remove the door the sofa ends up wedged half in and half out. As we're working away, our resident reprobate, 'Scots Andy' comes charging up the street, with a knife hidden up his back. He confronts Stacy who is twice his size,

and probably weighs twice as much, screaming that because of him, he's just been served a 'Section 21' notice, and that he's going to cut his legs off!

Paddy, who is now the proud owner of half a sofa, rings the police as I battle to restrain Stacy from tearing Andy apart. When the police arrive Stacy is given a crime number, and with the number reference they gave me for my door lock damage, we feel we have some ammunition to take to the Agents when they open tomorrow.

The local news tells of a man who was badly injured when three teenagers attacked him in an unprovoked assault in Mugsborough, which of course, is very rare here (occurring only on a weekly basis).

Also another - yet another - cannabis factory was discovered in Mugsborough. This was when the police were investigating a fight, which had broken out at the premises, where six men were arrested. One had to be treated in the "Inquest", for head injuries. These factories seem to turn up every week!

Thieves broke into an electrical sub-station and stole all the copper 'earthing' cables.

Attacks on seagulls look set to soar, as 'ferals' have already started shooting them with air-rifles, as the breeding season begins.

Christopher White, of Mugsborough was jailed for ten weeks for stealing an I-phone, and an I-Pad, from a 'bait' car.

The Police helicopter was used to track a bunch of 'Ferals', riding round Mugsborough on stolen mopeds. Three teenagers have been arrested.

Ram-raiders in a stolen Range-Rover caused thousands of pounds worth of damage when they drove through the front doors of the Blue Reef Aquarium Centre. They escaped - with five pounds charity money from a charity box.

Sam Tufnell 28, will avoid prosecution for going through a speed trap on his skateboard, at over thirty miles per hour. Like everyone else I detest speed cameras, but the Road Traffic Act says they cannot prosecute non-motorized vehicles for speeding.

Monday 16th May

10 AM Cloudy, but windy.

Meet Scouse Pete, him of the broken teeth and rotting gums, who tells me he's in the local jail now, meaning Merrick House in Bohemia Road, which actually used to be the police station in the old days.

11 AM

Pop into Nanette's to check the mail. No letter as yet. She says to me, 'This is it. My last day, on the drink.'

'You tell me that every week,' I remind her.

She goes on to tell me how Katherine stayed last night, because she missed her train to Bexhill, as they were both Chasing the Dragon. They were both starving so Nanette, who was in no fit state to travel, gave her bank-card to Katherine to get two take away meals from the corner shop. This morning, when she went to draw money out she had none to draw out, as two hundred and fifty pounds had been taken the previous night.

'She's just wired my head,' claims Nanette.

7 PM

I reach the Sally Ann at five past seven tonight, to find that only Peter, (Captain Mannering) and his wife, Susan have turned up. Narcoleptic Gary puts in an appearance, shortly after, but that still leaves only four of us to deal with thirty street-people. Hope kitchen won't even open their doors if they haven't got at least a dozen people. It becomes such a mad rush we ask one of the clients, John, to do the washing up. Mouse has four bowls of soup, which Peter says is taking the piss. He responds by telling him that 'Seaview' banned him and he's had nothing to eat all day. The Salvation Army has a policy of never banning anyone, but will eject them for the evening, and maybe call the police. All the other kitchens ban people, for life sometimes. Dino Two-Tunes is so oiled I have to carry his soup to the table. We notice Bridget's hair is jet-black. I dread to think what she's used on it.

At the counter I say: 'Bridget did you want ham sarnies?'

The guy next to her says: 'Don't insult me. You know that I is Muslim.' It's Madjet and he thought I was addressing him. He also asked for a bowl of soup, but unsure if there's meat in the soup tonight, I call for a small bowl for him and a normal amount for Bridget. When the two bowls arrive they look similar, and as I top the teapot up say to Madjet: 'Have you got a small one?'

Bridget retorts: 'Don't tell him that. It's personal!'

Tuesday 17th May

9 AM Cloudy and Cold.

Went to the referral centre at Bridgebuilders. Spoke to my friend John, who gave Shaun the building work. He is the financial advisor here and helps many people out. Spoke to him about my finances; or rather the lack of them. I told him I'd advertised my Jaguar for five grand in the local Friday-Ad, which actually comes out on a Thursday, but didn't get one phone call. He explains that Easter and Christmas are bad times to sell anything.

My eyes are watering again. I need to get a second opinion from another consultant, in another hospital. I had a very painful procedure done recently in the Inquest, which involved two injections into the side of each eye. There was a young trainee there, under instruction being told exactly what to do, by the Dutch specialist Madame Gerritsen. Mr. Colin Merrick recommended me for this, saying my problem was one of two things, 'but we'll try this first'.

The young girl reamed out my tear ducts, with what looked like a compass needle, to enable a tube with saline to be inserted into each. I am supposed to tell them when I feel the saline run down the back of my throat. No saline yet, so the young trainee attempts to enlarge the tear duct. 'Wat are you doing?' asks Madame Gerritsen.

'I'm trying to be gentle,' responds the trainee.

'Gentle doesn't get us anywere. Give it here.'

She proceeds to show the girl how to do a proper job. When other consultants examine my eyes later, they can't believe the size of my tear ducts, which are now about six millimetres long, instead of being tiny holes. After the saline starts flowing they pull the ducts out a bit and cauterize them, cutting a snip off each with a fearsome pair of long pointy scissors.

I have since met other victims who have had the same treatment, and they say if they had to endure it again they would rather go blind. When I left the 'Inquest' that day, I looked like I just had my face kicked in.

The most annoying aspect in all this was the fact when Mr. Salina-Velez later examined me he stated I should never have had that operation, as what I had was just a severe case of acute Blepharitis.

Wednesday 18th May

10 AM. Miserable drizzly day.

There are twenty-four clients at breakfast this morning. There is a guy here for the first time, Big Steve, who tells us he has fourteen kids. He has a bad drink problem but says if he could get work he'd get out of the routine of drinking every day. When I first met him in the Sally Ann I had arranged with Stacy, where I live, to give him a job as a volunteer to start with, in the British Heart Foundation. He was supposed to go for an interview, but never turned up. I phone Stacy and arranged for him to go in today. I hear later he turned up reeking of booze.

Mouse is here this morning and tells everybody he's got a brain tumour, which is killing all his brain cells. Some bright spark pipes up: 'Don't worry, they're probably just dying from loneliness.'

Mouse has a good come-back: 'If brains were dynamite, you wouldn't have enough to blow your nose.'

Heavy Eddy is conspicuous by his absence, but we have five new faces from London. One bloke comes in last and wants to be served first, or he'll be late signing on the dole. Trouble is, in here it's first come, first served. But this guy sits down, and when he sees Ned nip out to the toilet (probably to bang up) he nicks his breakfast. He manages to scoff it down before he returns and quickly scarpers out the door. When Ned returns he is hopping mad, but we give him a fresh plate, and promise to ban the scroat if he comes back.

Fast Eddie is slopping everywhere as usual, and is so unsteady needs his tea to be carried to the table. We try to sit him on his own as he tends to make some lose their appetite, as he devours his food.

Thursday 19th May

11 AM Sunny but strong wind.

Pick up some basics for Katie. Tea, milk, sugar, bread and margarine. She is brassic, again, but has two kids to feed.

3 PM

Collect Ella, a sweet girl, from the soup kitchens, to come to Stan's with me for a cleaning job. I got Smelly Nelly to do it once, but she won't come back. Stan is over eighty but still a bit of a rascal. When Ella sees the state of the place she asks for some rubber gloves. Of course, our Stan doesn't indulge in such luxuries, so I have to go to the shops for a pair. Before I leave he asks me if she's easy going, and if there's any chance of a quick grope. 'I do like a little cuddle,' he explains.

Ella is gone by the time I return. She has disappeared, and she has also stopped coming to the kitchens. I can get no information out of Stan as to what occurred, but I can imagine.

4 PM

Meet Nanette on the way home, or rather meet her dog. It's being held by some kid on it's leash, and Nanette is staggering along behind. The dog has recognized me and jumped up, or I wouldn't have recognized her. Her face is all muddy where she has collapsed in Warrior Square, while walking the dog. She is so sauced up she can't stand without hanging onto my arm as I lead her home, with the kid walking beside us with the dog. He found her collapsed, face down, in the mud.

9 PM

The gas runs out and I'm too shattered to go to the shop at this time of night. I have no hot water for a shave in the morning, so I go boil the kettle. Trouble is, the electric has also run out in the middle of the night, so I can't even boil water. When I go to the shop they won't accept my bankcard, so I have to walk to the bank to draw cash out, in order to top up the meters.

Friday 20th May

8 AM Sunny, but cold.

Katie rings to thank me again for getting her some grub, and in the same breath asks if she can 'borrow' a fiver for tobacco. She and her son, Paul, buy two bags each a week, and a bag costs seven-pounds-fifty, so they spend thirty quid a week just on tobacco.

I receive a final demand, a closing bill, for my last flat for fifty-three quid, from British Gas. I know this has to be paid as they hound people for years, if they don't get paid. After pressing a number of buttons for various options I finally get to speak, after twenty minutes, to a live person, at least that was my first impression but I may have been mistaken.

I decide to pay 'Sky-TV' off, while I'm at it. This takes twice as long, although they keep stressing how important my call is to them. I manage to cancel my landline phone, which they had reconnected here, without my knowledge. I have 'Freeview', built into my T.V., and feel that Sky is a real time-waster as most of the movies are repeats. I had cancelled everything with them, but discover from some kid in Mumbai, that they even plan to connect me up to broadband next week now my phone line is set up again.

3 PM

Meet Stacy for coffee, and he tells me Big Steve turned up for work, clean and sober. He did a couple of hours, and was moved to tears by all the praise the staff lavished on him. It seems he does need to work to take his mind off the drink, but Stacy is convinced he will relapse, and as it turns out, he is right. They all do, he explains, but I give them three chances. If they screw up three times, they're out.

Saturday 21st May

9 AM Windy and cold.

Receive my closing bill from the Electric board. Miraculously it's only for thirty- four pounds.

Visit Big Steve, down at the British Heart Foundation. He's doing more hours now, but we all know he can backslide at any time, as you do! Stacy says he's a terrific salesman, and if he carries on like this, he may give him a full-time paid position.

'Now see what you've done,' he jokes.

I am happy about this, as it seems things can work out sometimes, except in my own life unfortunately. I have to shoot up the 'Inquest' to get my hip X-rayed today, as it gives me pain even in bed.

2 PM

Gregg, the 'Hangman' is not working today. He knocks on my door to tell me he has a visitor who knows me well. I am intrigued, but I wanted to keep my new address secret from all the street people. It turns out to be Mick, a Christian friend from church whose marriage has just split up. His wife ran off to Turkey with her new boyfriend, and Mick now has custody of their two kids, which is fine, except he is considering suicide. He walked through Alexandra Park on his way here, and saw a rope, hanging from a tree, and says he considered using it. I find this story surreal, as he relates it in front of the 'Hangman', whose job it is to cut such people down. You couldn't make it up.

8 PM

At Hope kitchen a bowl of sliced beetroot is on the counter, and everyone's dipping bread in it, but all their clothes get dyed red. 'Bridget the Midget' has shaved her hair off and dyed what's left of it with a gingery concoction. She should have used the beetroot juice on the counter. Madjet insists on vegetable soup, which they make especially for him, but when he asks what sandwiches they have, I wind him up, saying only sliced pork, tonight.

Sunday 22nd May

9 AM Very windy, but sunny.

On my way to church I drop in at the 'office'. There are about ten newcomers here, from Lithuania, whom I don't know, and I hear that many more are sleeping on the beach. They confess they've been smuggled in on a truck and are exhausted and starving, with no money. Everything is closed until tomorrow, so they can't even get sleeping bags. The papers say that the immigrant population has risen 40% in the last eight years, and that in five years time, it will outnumber the indigenous residents in many large towns.

It also reports that drug addicts alone, pocket benefits of one thousand million pounds a year (Sic).

A friend of Shaun's, Jason Holewell 22, who is a Rugby Player, was nearly disembowelled when the owner of the 'Outdoorsman' shop in Mugsborough, thirty-eight-year-old Myles Evans stabbed him. He was sentenced to five years, which Holewell claims was far too lenient, as it was touch and go if he would survive the

attack. He told Shaun he thought he was going to die, and before his operation, which required thirty-eight staples, surgeons told his parents he might not make it. This was not reported in any papers!

In other news, a Taxi-Controller had his nose broken, by Andrew Hassan, who was refused a taxi, as he was very drunk. Hassan has been sentenced to one hundred and fifty hours community service.

In three separate street incidents, last week, police seized seven hundred pounds worth of cannabis.

Emmaeus are hoping to open next month, giving accommodation to nine people. The clients themselves, who call each other Companions, want to run it all themselves.

There are pictures in the paper this week of long queues along the seafront, as over three thousand unemployed people went to a local job fair.

Matthew Stock 37, went on a shoplifting spree, just two days after being sentenced to a nine months 'drink and drugs' rehabilitation order. His lawyer claimed in court he was no longer on Heroin, but now takes Methadone instead.

Monday 23rd May

11 AM Sunny but windy.

Still no letter from HAS. I ring them to find they apparently received a Fax now, from Clockwork Estates, stating they will only deal with me through their solicitor, who will only deal with my solicitor. I ring my solicitor, and actually manage to get through. He informs me he is in the process of drafting a letter to their solicitors. This Saga is becoming a bit like Bridget's Magic Roundabout.

I despair of getting any money, and decide to dismiss the problem, as it's just not worth the energy involved.

2 PM

Drop into see Arlette. She tells me how, as a teenager from New Zealand, she went to Nepal. She learned how to Chase the Dragon while she was there, and says: 'We got great brown from Burma, and pure white from Pakistan, just over the border, but I was careful never to 'jack up', as I knew I would become too fond of it. When I got back to New Zealand I couldn't afford to carry on, as heroin was hard to

score in those days and very expensive, so I hit the bottle, for I found being straight was so boring. I couldn't stomach gassy drinks like lager or cider, so drank only Vodka, or Brandy. I decided to immigrate to England as my hometown was so dead but, soon after, developed an over-active thyroid and came down with Peripheral Neuropathy. My hair started falling out and I could hardly walk. At one stage I was so bad I had to crawl up and down stairs on my bum. I was placed in a sort of halfway house detox unit, and it was there I met Steve, the Ducati Kid. We 'clicked' immediately, but he was a raging alcoholic - even in those days.'

7 PM

At the Sally Ann tonight, Brigit the Midget comes bouncing in, wearing a pair of big fluffy boots. She sidles up to Stretch, who says: 'Them's snow-boots, aren't they Bridget?'

She replies, haughtily, 'These, my friend, are moon-boots. Don't you know nothing?'

'Moon boots. What's the difference?'

'These are silver. These are what the men on the moon wear, over their spacesuits.'

'So why are they silver, to keep the heat in?'

'Don't be silly, Stretch,' patronizes Bridget, 'there's no heat on the moon.'

'To keep the cold out,' Stretch comes back.

'No stupid, to stop the men's souls drifting off into space, when there's no gravity.'

'Absolutely, now I remember. They have to be earthed.'

'Indeed,' says Bridget, 'we must all be earthed.'

Tuesday 24th May

11 AM Sunny but clouding over.

Meet Heavy Eddy who says he wants to chat. I take him to Kassa's for a Latte, and he tells me he had a furious row with his mum, and will never speak to her again. I tell him your mum should be your best friend. He goes 'into one', telling me how much she despises him, and how much he hates her.

'She's hurt me so bad. She's turned my kids against me,' he says. I tell him he must learn to forgive and forget, and that he really needs God in his life.

'It's okay for you,' he says. 'God's your best friend and you've got a great home and a lovely car. You've had a good life. Not like me.'

I tell him: 'Stop feeling sorry for yourself; nobody has an easy life. If it were easy we wouldn't need God. But we do. Look at how many churches there are around. Man needs to worship God. It's as simple as that.'

'It's okay for you to talk. You don't have the agro I do,' he replies. 'You've had a good life.'

'Don't be too sure about that,' I tell him.

'So what bad things have happened to you?' he demands.

'Well, apart from losing my mind in hospital on an acid trip, and waking up in a pool of my own blood after a motorbike accident, getting into dozens of fights and breaking loads of bones, and having a dozen operations, not a lot.'

'You sound like a hard man,' he concludes.

I tell him: 'I was when I first came to England, and was afraid of nothing or nobody, when I slept under Clacton Pier for three months. I took any work going and I've literally had dozens of jobs, about forty at the last count. When I was back in Belfast I might have been a hard man. I got into fights every weekend. I'd come home pissed, with my clothes all torn and covered in blood. When I got in the house I'd be so drunk I'd just lean against the wall, and listen to my mum, sobbing her heart out. My old man beat me up a lot as a kid, and I probably deserved it, but when he saw some of my friends joining the IRA, he decided to send me to England. One day, when I came home after a really good hiding, when I had tackled two guys at once, he turned round in and said: "This has got to be you. No-one gets in as many fights, unless they go looking for them." I realized he was right. It wasn't so much I looked for them. I just couldn't walk away.'

Eddy has been listening intently. 'I'm sorry. I never realized. Maybe I need to change.'

I ask him, 'What have you done with you life so far, except break into a load of Vans, to nick things?'

He takes umbrage to this: 'So what have you ever done?' he demands.

'Well, if you must know, I've been to the ends of the Earth. Well, one end anyway, Antarctica. I've climbed the highest mountain in Africa, and dived in the depths of

the sea, on my own, and even in a submarine. I've been with a hundred, or so, beautiful women around the world, and married two of them, one in a hot-air balloon, and done things you could never imagine in your wildest fantasies.

Eddy responds, 'Big deal, anyone can do that, if they've got the money.'

'Well,' I continue, 'I've published a nice book of poetry, and photographed the wonders of the world. I've survived loads of car crashes, and written off a score of cars. I've fired machine-guns and had guns held to my head and even had people try to kill me. I've watched people die, and 'Laid them out', afterwards. Once I even planned to kill someone myself, but God came into my life that very same week. I've had marvellous miraculous blessings, like Spirit Anointing and speaking in tongues, and other religious experiences. God even spoke to me!'

'Really,' says Eddy, 'Do tell'.

'Well', I replied. 'I had joined a religious cult, called the Divine Light Mission, in an attempt to acquire intimate knowledge of God, which is what they offered. To get this you had to give away all your possessions, stop eating meat, watching TV and movies, and stop smoking and drinking. You had to work for the cult doing everything from cleaning toilets to driving the Mahatmas around to the shop outlets that they operated. Some months after you were indoctrinated, you begged for 'Divine Knowledge' every day, from the Mahatmas, and eventually when they got tired listening to you, you were offered a "Knowledge session" by Mahatma Satchidenanda, of the Divine Light Mission.

When I got this I was ecstatic, but afterwards realized it was not the knowledge of God I had acquired, but just some powerful meditation techniques.

I went home very disillusioned and depressed. I was at my wit's end, with nowhere to turn. I had tried everything from drugs to monasteries in my efforts to get closer to God, and nothing seemed to give me the answer. I fell to my knees in great distress and cried out to God, "Why have you forsaken me?"

I said it three times, as I looked out the window, when suddenly I heard a voice, up to my right say, "Behold, I am with you always, even unto the Ends of the Earth."

I just got up and made a cup of tea, and as I sat there I reckoned either God actually spoke to me, or I was starting to hear voices. In which case I would hear a lot more, but it never happened to me again.

I contacted my Aunt, in Ireland, who had been a Poor Clare Nun for over fifty years, in a convent in Ennis, and asked if she could explain it.

She said, "It actually happens to lots of different people. It's called a 'Locution', and what I was blessed with is known as an 'Exterior Locution', from outside. When a voice is heard inside your head, like on earphones, it's called an 'Internal Locution'. Where instant knowledge is attained in times of great danger, and one is made immediately aware of what to do in a 'Life or Death' situation, it's termed an 'Intellectual Locution', and is the highest form. What you had was the lowest kind."

Eddy says, 'Well, you're lucky. You've got the proof we're all looking for.'

'Yes, I tell him, but I still haven't got the faith to believe that, every second of my life.'

'What do you mean?' he asks.

'When you're lying awake on an operating table, with bits of you being torn out, by anonymous people in gowns and masks, it's very, very hard to find God in that situation.'

'So', says Eddy, 'tell me about speaking in tongues.'

'Well, you're just praising God in a tongue or language that you don't even understand yourself. If you do this in church someone else usually comes up with the interpretation of what you've said.'

'How did you get this gift?', asks Eddy.

'It was many years ago, when I belonged to a religious commune, a Christian one this time, and again I had given away all my worldly goods. The day of Pentecost came round and the Elders asked if anyone wanted the gift of tongues that this was the day the Disciples were blessed with it, so we should step forward and be prayed for.

I went up with five others, and the Elders gathered round, and laid hands on us. Straight away one of us started speaking out, and then returned to his seat. Shortly afterwards another one started and he went off. Now there were only four of us kneeling up front and the Elders seemed confident everyone would be blessed. Trouble is I had 'borrowed' a typewriter from the office there, with the intention of writing a book, about my different religious experiences - to honour God, of course. So I found that was a great reason not to return their typewriter, which was a lovely

IBM 'Golf-Ball' machine. I'm now thinking maybe I better give it back, when another person starts rattling away. There are now only two others left, beside myself. I say to God, "OK. Lord, I'll give the typewriter back, immediately I finish the book, if you will just bless me with tongues." Nothing happens except the bloke on my left starts up, leaving me there with just the guy on my right. Now it's getting embarrassing for I sense I may be the 'odd man out'. So I say to God: 'I'll give it back immediately, if you'll just give me that gift.'

Needless to say nothing happens, except the last person there gets the gift, and leaves me kneeling in front of the whole church, on my own.

I suddenly decide and say: "Okay God, I'll give it back today, even if you don't bless me."

The very instant the very thought flashed through my mind, I burst out with a long unbroken cluster of praise in a dialect I'd never even heard before. The most amazing thing was I couldn't stop, and rambled on for a good thirty minutes. Afterwards complete strangers came up to me and said, "That's a true Miracle, for you couldn't do that when you first entered the room."

I tell Eddy it doesn't compare to the first time I really encountered God, and had a re-born experience, but I didn't feel he was ready for that one, just yet.

'So I get the point,' he replies, 'are you saying I've led a wasted life?'

'No, of course not, that's what you just said!'

Wednesday 25th May

9 AM Fine, but windy.

At the breakfast this morning Richard arrives late as his bike has had another puncture. We tell him to get some proper tyres on it, as the ones he has look razor thin. And his saddle makes your eyes water just to look at it. We greet a newcomer called Markie, who seems really nice, but tells us he slept on the beach last night and it was freezing. I did give him a blanket at the Sally Army, last Monday, for we had no sleeping bags left.

Two strangers from Lithuania turn up. Their names are Sergio Sokolaus and Darius Baranauskas. They are quite friendly and a good atmosphere prevails. At the end of the prayer, I am bringing Heavy Eddy his breakfast and am stunned to see he is

actually listening to Pastor Chris, with his eyes closed and his hands clasped together. I stand there with his plate until he finishes praying and opens his eyes to see me staring at him, in disbelief.

There is no food left over for the volunteers today, so I scuttle out as soon as I've collected all the dishes for Debbie and Susan to wash up. We have a tiny toilet right next to the kitchen, and how this place ever got over the Health Regulations is a mystery to all. I guess Chris must have prayed up a storm, for when the inspection took place we even got four stars. Nobody can believe it.

Thursday 26th May

10 AM Very windy and cold.

Shaun, my tenant, is away today. He has found work putting in windows for my friend, Myrium, and I know she pays well. I just hope he doesn't drink it all before he gets home.

5 PM

When Shaun does get back I smell drink, but he says it's just a couple of bottles that Myrium gave him with his bacon and eggs. He has also contracted a job with my old nemesis, Ed Lovell, in the Love Café but the materials haven't come through yet. That afternoon I get irritated, for Shaun wants to watch Rugby, while I'm trying to write.

7 PM

Down at Hope kitchen, Mitch, the guy who went up north for a detox, comes in and testifies he has found God and become a Christian. Nobody is more surprised than me, as I know his history. I find the change in him quite remarkable, and almost unnerving.

He has agreed with Sylvia, one of the volunteers here, to give his testimony at church next Sunday. He tells us he is clean, and I just pray he can stay that way, now he's back in his old hunting grounds.

Friday 27th May

10 AM Very windy, but cold.

I nip down to the coffee morning at 'Welly Square'. Myrium is there with Bruce, my photographer friend. They run out of coffee in the percolator and, as I used to do this every Sunday, offer to set it up for them. As I'm doing so a lovely lady comes up and asks if I'm 'Rad'. I am pleasantly surprised at her smile and friendly approach, but am taken off guard.

I enquire as to who she might be, and we have a long chat as I secretly hope she feels some of the attraction, and affinity I feel for her. She is not married, and I really need to get married again as I don't do well on my own. Loneliness is still a big problem in my life and Shaun is no compensation. Trouble is, every girl I meet, I wonder could she be the answer to all my prayers. I was married twice to really beautiful women, and if I do get blessed with another wife I'll make sure I don't screw that marriage up, as I did the others. But I'm a little wiser these days, and a little older: maybe too old.

4 PM

Have just spent another hour on the phone, trying to convince some 'SKY' scroat in Mumbai, that I want the money they keep taking out my bank every month, refunded, as I cancelled my phone line even before they reconnected it; I don't want their phone service, and I don't want broadband, and I don't want Sky Television.

I speak to Semie, who puts me through to Ben, who puts me through to 'billing', who inform me I must write to Customer Services, as they can see on their screen that my service has been cancelled, and cannot understand why I'm still getting billed, and politely tell me, I will still get billed in the future, as they can't do anything at their end. I go to my bank, who tell me because I've given out the long number on my bankcard over the phone, even they cannot halt these monthly debits, and I must now cancel my card, and apply for a new one, which will have a different number. It will also mean no more use of my debit card for a week or so, until a new one arrives in the post - if Scots Andy doesn't take delivery first, as these cards cannot be collected from the branch any more.

Saturday 28th May

10 AM Very windy and cold.

So much for the Weatherman's promised heat wave. Still, if you can't spot a hurricane, what chance a heat wave?

After my morning dish of fruit at the Referral Centre, I chat with Tim Harvey, who has just discovered he's bi-polar. I think this is a polite term for a manic-depressive, but I may be wrong. I find Tim to be a very spirit-filled guy, although he's not a Christian. We share a lot in common, but not his love of Valium. He has travelled a lot, and bought property here and abroad. Now neither of us has any property and can't afford to travel that much, but are stronger than ever in our Faith.

1 PM

Catch the bus from Mugsborough into town, as it's such a hassle to get the Jag out of the underground car park, and the petrol costs double the bus fare. I see Heavy Eddy, at the back of the bus and he is pleased to see me. He tells me that after his mum chucked him out he was staying with Chris, who had the fits in Hope kitchen and died twice. Now he has lucked out, and found a nice flat in Gensing Gardens, with its own garden. He swears, as usual, that he's off the gear and been clean for some time. It's all sweet and sound, he claims.

3 PM

I leave Shaun in my flat, watching Rugby, as I head for the gym. I work very hard but feel if I didn't do this every week, my back would pack up, and I wouldn't be able to walk. I decide to limit my TV viewing to three hours a day. With Shaun we end up watching movie after movie, every night, on the fifty inch Viera. When I play a Blu-Ray disc on this it looks like three-dimensional, it's so good. I once let Jeremy and Annie see one called 'Earth', and they were in such shock with the picture and the thousand-watt surround system, that they had to sit on the beach for an hour to recover. They'd never seen anything like it.

Sunday 29th May

8 AM Sunny but cold.

When I go in the lounge I see Shaun is still asleep on the sofa. Normally he's up hours before me, saying he'll have plenty of time to sleep when he's dead. It looks like the late night movies have taken their toll, and I can't even remember what it was we watched last night. A terrific waste of time. Only that I've paid thousands for

this set-up I'd gladly get rid of it all. Shaun cannot do any work for the 'Love' café, until after the May Bank Holiday (Whitsun) as Ed cannot get the materials delivered until after the holidays, so any hope of Shaun finding a deposit for the flat he's just been offered, is fast ebbing away. He has found a place, but they will only hold it for a week. Apparently Shaun could get this money off the Social, if the landlord would give him a Rental Agreement, but the landlord won't do this as Shaun could then legally move in, and not pay any more money.

In the papers I see a worker at Ripley's car breakers was critically injured when he got caught in their car-crushing machine. Both his legs were badly crushed and he was trapped for over forty minutes.

A gang of four stabbed a man repeatedly, in Manor Road, on the 19th May. Two men in their twenties were arrested on suspicion of wounding, with intent to kill.

A twenty-year old was boarding a bus in Mugsborough when another woman walked down the aisle, grabbed her hair and punched her in the face. She then grabbed the victim's mobile phone, and ran off up Battle Road in Mugsborough.

Thieves this week carried out a theft, which could have been lethal. They ripped out copper piping from a house leaving gas seeping into the building. Luckily it was noticed very quickly and disaster was avoided.

A landlord in Mugsborough is calling on police to take action over drug dealing in the area, claiming it is out of control. Mike Thorpe of St Margaret's Road is sick and tired of rampant dealing where money and drugs are openly changing hands in the street. He claims he is having trouble finding tenants willing to live in this area, when they see needles scattered all over the streets. He says: 'I've had strangers knock on the door looking for drugs, and even had my door handle ripped off. I realize it's difficult for police, as there's so much of it going on, but this state of affairs has gone on long enough.'

Another Mugsborough resident, who was too scared to be named for fear of reprisals, says, 'The situation is getting worse all the time. I wouldn't advise anyone to move into this area.'

In two separate incidents in Mugsborough this week two large widescreen televisions were stolen in daylight robberies.

After months of noisy 'Ferals' buzzing round Mugsborough on mopeds late at night, police have cracked down with Operation Vortex. In one evening officers issued sixteen penalty notices to riders.

Eleven were for speeding, three for having no MOT certificates, and two for using mobile phones while driving.

Finally, amusing news that Sussex police are to share their Major Crime Division with Surrey, in order to save seven million pounds over the next four years. This Division deals with murder, kidnap and rape.

Monday 30th May

11 AM Windy but mild.

Whitsun Bank Holiday. I go for a stroll with Shaun, who still sleeps in his clothes, on my sofa, with just a blanket over him, but seems quite content. I suppose it's better than the tarpaulin he had in Alexandra Park.

We meet up with Strumpet, and her dealer, Drongo. They are walking Tyson the dog that I suspect is a pit-bull. Drongo tells me he had to move home recently as his huge Boa Constrictor was playing up. He calls it Dracula, because of its huge fangs, and it runs round the place loose. Or should that be 'slithers' round. I've had many exotic pets in my day, from Iguanas to Water Dragons, and six-foot Reef aquariums, but never kept snakes. One afternoon Drongo fell asleep on the bed, and woke to find the snake lying beside him, stretched out stiff. He rang the vet, who told him to get out of the place at once, as the snake was measuring him up.

6 PM

Rollie and Rosie pick me up for the Sally Ann kitchen tonight. Because it's Bank Holiday, we are thin on the ground, and although we don't open until half-seven we have to get there at six to make sandwiches and soup. There are endless chores like grating cheese and chopping vegetables, and slicing bread. On the subject of grating, Eileen once again grates Doggy Mark, who 'goes into one', and has a right go at her.

Bridget the Midget is waving a pig's trotter about, asking if anyone wants to buy it. She was given it for her dog, but imaginary dogs can't eat pig's trotters, so she is hawking it round the various soup kitchens. One of the Lithuanians tells us he used

to drive long distance trucks, but was forced to work too many hours. He wants to get back to this, as the trucks all have tachometers in them now. He had applied in this country and spent seven grand in training, but has failed the test six times. But he says, 'I want to go back to it. It's what I'm good at!'

Tuesday 31st May

10 AM Lovely day. Warm and sunny.

Drop into the British Heart Foundation to see Stacy and Big Steve, who, it seems, is doing very well. In two days he sold over seven hundred pounds worth of stuff. 'They love him. He's a born salesman,' says Stacy. Steve looks a different person, neat and clean. He tells me he is now taking care of himself, and only drinking in the evening, after work. He lives in a tiny room, but has just bought a lovely flat-screen Television.

Just after leaving the shop, I bump into big Kevin. He is oiled up and apologizes to me for being so. He is only thirty-five, but doesn't look a day over fifty. I tell him, it's his problem if he wants to piss his life up against a wall. I can't pull punches with these guys or they'll just ignore my advice. The irony is when he meets Pastor Chris in the street, he begs him to pray for him. He then gets clean for a few weeks, but when he meets an old friend, and goes in a pub, his aspirations fly out the window. Now he tells me he is going on a course of 'Antibuse', in a final desperate effort to halt the problem. The main problem is his friends are all devout alcoholics, and hate a reformed drinker, as it makes them all feel guilty.

4 PM

Visit Sticks and Andreas in their tent. They have been having a 'domestic', as you do, if you've been together five years. They both have problems with drugs, but Sticks tells me she is now taking 'Suboxone' for heroin withdrawal. This new drug is also a blocker, which means if you do jack up, the gear will have no effect on you. It sounds like a dealer's nightmare.

CHAPTER TEN

JUNE

Wednesday 1st June

9-30 AM Very Windy

We have twenty-four in this morning for the free breakfast, but a few turn up late and by the time we give out seconds, there's nothing left for the volunteers. I usually grab an egg, with beans on toast, if there's any over.

It's very unpredictable trying to gauge just how many people we'll get. In bad weather when it's rainy we are sure of a full house, but other than that there's no way to work it out. We either have a lot of food over, or we're running round laying extra places and cooking more grub.

Captain Pugwash, with his beard, is here today. I speak to him, about going out in one of the boats to take some shots. His usual boat is the RX-58. He invites me out to take some shots of his mates fishing, and hints that I'll get some fish as well.

Pastor Chris explains that they all have to listen to a short sermon, so that we can call this a charity breakfast, in order to conform to the law. You would think you could give away your own food if you wanted to - but not in these bureaucratic times.

1 PM

Meet Chris Woodcock, one of the local 'Plastics', as he's patrolling along the Mugsborough seafront. He knows all the crew, and I often ask him how J.J. is getting on; whether they've caught him again, or if he's still loose.

He tells me the new rules for handing out an ASBO; these fall into three categories. They are allocated on a points system: Standard, which garners from zero to sixteen; Medium from eighteen to twenty-four: and High, from twenty-six to thirty-one. Mugsborough and Hastings only action the Medium and High categories. The Matrix Call Centre filters them out with seven questions:

1. Time, date and location.
2. A summary of the incident.
3. Screening queries – Is the caller safe, upset, or a repeat victim?
4. Victim's personal details.

5. Details of any witnesses.
6. Is the victim, or a third party, making the complaint?
7. A Community impact statement.

Mugsborough holds some national records for ASBOs and one of our clients had the highest number in the U.K. He should apply to the Guinness Book of Records.

Thursday 2nd June

9 AM Sunny and Warm.

As I walk along the seafront I bump into Misfit. He tells me the plate in his shoulder blade is now fractured, and I'm at a loss for words. He is sitting on a bench being fed chips by a group of people that I think are Kosovans. He has a key for the disabled toilets in town and spent the night in there. An attendant came in to clean, very early, and freaked out when he saw him lying on the floor. He thought he'd died, not realizing he may have spent the night in there. The attendant started taking pictures of him on his mobile phone and Misfit went 'into one', shouting that only a paedophile would take pictures of people in toilets.

9 PM

Pop into 'Hope', to see who's about: there is a new guy there, wearing a security vest with luminous stripes. I introduce myself but I can't make out a word he's saying. He has a lisp and a severe Scottish accent. I go over to Bridget the Midget, and ask her if she's met him.

'Yes', she tells me, 'I spoke to him, and we had a great conversation.'

I point out that he's wearing a fluorescent cap and might be a watchman or a security guard, and she responds: 'No, he's actually got lights in his head.'

'Really?' I respond.

'Indeed, he's on Nightwatch, see?'

'I knew that, Bridget, I knew that.'

Friday 3rd June

8 AM Sunny and warm.

My son, Jay, rings me from the Isle of Wight. He tells me he's still hurting from his 'long-lost love'. After ten years of unrequited love, I tell him it's time to move on. I

agree to visit him, as he sounds rational at the moment and he's never asked me over before.

I book a ferry on the Internet, and head off just after 9 a.m. After tanking up and checking the tyres I discover the right front brake pads are squealing under heavy breaking, which is the only sort I bother with. The traffic down to Portsmouth is horrendous and I get lodged in three separate traffic jams, for thirty minutes each. I stop for coffee at the Crossbush Pub and it takes me four hours to reach Portsmouth. What's the point of a fast car if you can't use it?

I meet Jay on the Seafront, in Ryde, at three-o'clock that afternoon and agree to stay overnight in his flat, as he has got rid of his 'sitting tenants'. He is pleased I got the windscreen fixed without too much trouble. The weather is gorgeous and we go to the beach, which is very shallow in Ryde, and consequently the water warms up quickly and holds the heat of the sun. I go for a swim while Jay sits fully clothed on the sea-wall. He used to love the sea, but now loves nothing except his fantasy. Later I meet some of his friends, who seem half-decent, but they tell me that Jay smokes crack every week. He'd take it every day if he had the money, so thank God he can't afford it or he'd be hooked.

That evening, in his flat, we have to endure a noisy party going on in the building next to him. I want to go and complain but Jay objects, saying he has to live there and not to make waves. However, in the morning, while he's asleep I go next door, and tell the revellers that their neighbours were really upset by all the obscenities floating about last night. I explain to them that they all wanted to call the police but I managed to calm them down, by promising they would keep the noise down in future. They are ever so grateful!

Saturday 4th June

10 AM Sunny.

Jay and I have breakfast, in a local 'greasy-spoon', but then he wants to go for a drink, at ten in the morning. I try to explain to him about mixing his poisons, but he doesn't want to listen. He is on all sorts of medication and shouldn't drink at all. He tells me that people who slag off drugs have never tried them, and I have to listen while he explains the sort of buzz he gets off 'crack'.

I know he will kick off if he starts drinking, so I talk him into going back home to show me his collections of insects and fossils. He has a chess board there, and yesterday his friends told me he still plays but doesn't like losing. Quite the opposite, in fact, for then he kicks off, and goes 'into one'.

He starts showing me all sorts of insects, from scorpions to beetles and spiders in Perspex boxes, but then starts saying he doesn't want them any more and that he's going to chuck them, if I don't want them. When I decline he starts emptying them all into the trash-can. I think it's time to go, so I take my leave of him, while we're still on speaking terms.

I catch the ferry back, after buying a very expensive fresh-crab sandwich in the pub next to the ferry terminal at Fishbourne.

Six quid, but worth every penny.

Sunday 5th June

10 AM Windy, but sunny.

At church today I bring Mouse along for a healing service. He has settled in Mugsborough as it's a good base for potential clientele. There is a new 'Charismatic' visiting our church. His name is Ashley Schmierer, and he is a preacher with a special anointing of the 'Spirit'. He used to be a farmer, in the 'Outback.'

At the service he calls all sinners who want to repent up to the front, for a dose of the Spirit. This could mean everyone, but suddenly he jumps on a spare seat at the front, and waving his bible crosses over into the next row. He is making his way round the congregation, by hopping from one chair to another, as you do.

He is Australian, which explains a lot.

Now he motors up and down the aisle, giving it the 'Old time religion', and dragging people up from their seats, for an anointing of the Spirit. Many fall down, as soon as he lays hands on them, but then he goes to the very front of the church, and declares: 'I'll have the first row stand up.'

The whole of the first row - more than twenty people - stand up. I am at the back of the church making my way to the toilet, as he waves his hand across the row, and shouts out: 'Wind of the Spirit.' The whole first row collapses back in their seats,

and some have to be caught by helpers who are poised behind them. I am walking at the back thirty yards away, and I also go down like a ton of bricks.

Mouse is watching all this with avid interest. At the close of the preach Ashley calls for sinners to repent. 'Come forward if you want to change your life. Receive the anointing of the Spirit. Get blessed this morning.'

I look at Mouse, and say: 'What have you got to lose?' After a moment's hesitation, as he watches someone else get 'floored', Mouse agrees to go - if I accompany him up the aisle.

We leave our seats and Ashley advances towards us. He has met me before so heads directly for Mouse, who has now halted in his tracks. Ashley is a big man and he marches right up to Mouse with his hands in the air. 'Repent, and receive,' he bellows, and just touches Mouse on the forehead. Mouse gasps and recoils back as if he's been stung. Ashley pursues him as he staggers backwards, and grasps him, placing a hand each side of his head. 'Spirit,' he shouts, and Mouse sinks to the floor. He doesn't come round for a good ten minutes, and says to me later, 'Now I see why they call it being "Slayed in the Spirit."'

Back home I read that the seafront newsagents, near the 'office', was burgled last Saturday, when thieves smashed the shutter in and stole two-and-a-half-thousand pounds worth of cigarettes.

The papers also report that staff in the 'Inquest' hospital suffered ninety-nine attacks in the last year, averaging two a week.

Paul Connell was charged with burglary after a break-in at the Parchment Trust, in Mugsborough. He was also arrested last Wednesday for carrying a gun down his trousers, when he went into McDonalds.

Six of the town's Street Pastors are embarking on a seventeen-mile walk to raise funds for the project. I am pleased to announce I won't be joining them.

Customers in 'Subway' in the town centre, have donated fifty cans of food to the Salvation Army. Unfortunately it's all going to the 'Ore' Citadel at the other end of town, so our lot won't see any of it.

The decision not to charge the two culprits, who burned down the pier, has been slammed by the body, which oversees the police. The S.P.A. said, 'This will dent

public confidence, and we wonder if the man who grabbed the suspects climbing off the pier as the fire started, would do the same thing again.”

Councillor Godfrey Daniels, the former Mayor, stated, ‘I am not happy with the role of the Crown Prosecution Service. In effect they seem to have been Judge and Jury. I would have preferred this to go to court and let justice take its course. The police have been left dumbfounded by this decision.’

A multi-million pound bid, to the National Lottery for a revamp of Hastings Castle, has been rejected.

Monday 6th June

10 PM Windy all day.

Pop round Nannette’s. Susie Crack is there, and is freaking out. She came round to help Nannette clean the house. Nannette just keeps falling over all the time, she’s so oiled, and is usually dragged home by total strangers when she takes the dog out. The dog runs loose in Warrior Square Gardens, and she collapses on a bench, waiting to be rescued by some passing Samaritan. Susie is freaked because she has discovered a large spoon, with scorch marks underneath it. This is a dead giveaway that someone is cooking up heroin and the buck stops here.

8 PM

It’s a full house at the Sally Ann tonight. The ‘57’ crew have graced us with their presence, and Bridget the Midget is wandering round the place with her new mobile phone. She is photographing the radiators. Stretch asks her what she’s doing.

‘I’m going to get these developed in infra-red, to see how much heat they’re giving out.’

Stretch replies: ‘They’re not on, Bridget, for they turn them off in the summer.’

Bridget pauses for a moment, then points the camera at the ceiling.

‘What are you doing now?’ enquires Stretch.

‘I must find out how much heat is escaping from the roof,’ she responds.

Afterwards she holds court at one of the tables. She sits beside Silly Sally who is sporting a floppy hat that hangs down the sides of her ears. Sally declares: ‘It’s my floppy-eared rabbit hat.’ Everyone knows that Sally pulls her hair out, and sometimes wears a wig. She now wears this floppy hat instead.

I know she two keeps rabbits, so enquire as to their well-being.

'Well,' she replies, 'a hare got into my garden the other day, and was trying to mate with my large floppy rabbit.'

J.J. is sitting at the table and chirps up, 'If it was trying to pull another hare, it wouldn't have got any joy outa you, Sally, 'cos you pull all your own.'

This not-so-subtle attempt at humour is lost on Sally, but the rest of the rabble crack up laughing.

Tuesday 7th June

11 AM Sunny. Still Windy.

I head up to the Referral Centre, and chat to 'Sniffer' about his fear of rat disease, and other paranoia. He is an ardent conspiracist, who devoutly believes in any theories from the Kennedy Assassination to Nine-Eleven, to Marilyn Monroe. His latest one concerns the planet Niburu, or planet X, as it's called on the Internet, and the effect it will have when it aligns with all the other planets in our Solar System, on December 21st. 2012, This happens to coincide with ancient Mayan prophecies about end times. I do agree that the enormous gravitational pull will conjure up massive Solar Flares, which have caused blackouts in the past to major cities. However Sniffer claims that the Electro Magnetic Pulse these generate will devour our Magnetosphere and fry all the Electric Grids - burning out any solid-state objects.

These, he informs me, will include quartz watches, fridges, microwaves, and any household goods like T.V.s and radios. I ask him if the heating will be effected, and he confirms it will, as all boilers have to have electric ignition, so even if the gas supply is unaffected, there will be no heat or light anywhere.

I agree this would be a doomsday scenario, especially when he reminds me there will be no transport, for all cars now have computers in them, which will melt. And, he says, when the shops run out of batteries and candles, and food, there will be no means of stocking up the warehouses again, and the country will grind to a halt with no transport.

Having been thoroughly cheered up by this prospect, I finish my bowl of fruit, and bid Sniffer adieu.

Wednesday 8th June

9 AM Showery.

At breakfast this morning The Ducati Kid begs me to come with him after breakfast as he's had a spot of grief with a mutual friend, Spike, who dabbles in a bit of 'brown'. The Kid is totally sauced, and wants me to 'Taxi' him up to Spikes, by holding his arm to stop him falling over.

After the meal, we head for Spike's basement flat. Why is it all the 'ice-cream' men inhabit basements? is it the same reason rats do, as it offers a quick escape?

When we arrive at the flat I say hello to Rudolf, who is ensconced there at the moment, and I acknowledge Spike, and can't help but notice a huge guy, lumbering round the room, swinging a Ghurkha knife and mumbling, 'Who's the dude in the sandals?' (Me) They all know me except him, for we've never met, but I've heard of this guy with his Ghurkha knife. He's called Aitch, and I think he's Turkish. When we go in, after the Kid falls into the flower garden of the adjoining flat, you could slice the atmosphere with a knife. (A Ghurkha knife).

These guys are furious with the Kid, for it appears when he stayed last night, and they went out to the 'Offy' to tank up on reserves, the Kid left the flat, taking the one and only key with him. When they returned they had to smash the door in, to gain entry: the Ducati Kid had stayed the night with Arlette. Now they would love to extract retribution, but I'm in the way and they realize with all the friends I have on the street, there would be massive repercussions. I decide the Kid would not be safe here for one minute, but he's too drunk to realize that, so I drag him out saying we'll go for a drink: an offer he can't refuse. As we head down the street, I am shocked to see the three guys trailing behind us as we stagger away. They follow for a hundred yards, but when they see I'm sticking to the Kid they double back. If I'd left him he would have ended up in hospital.

Thursday 9th June

8 AM Sunny, but windy.

I get a call on my mobile. It's Nannette, and she wants me to help her out, as it's really urgent. She tells me she hasn't eaten for days and needs to 'borrow' twenty

quid until her money comes through next Monday morning. In actual fact these benefits are paid in at the weekend and can be withdrawn after the stroke of midnight on Sunday evening, which is why you see street people hanging round cash machines at midnight on Sundays. In my vast experience I also know 'borrow' is a euphemism for 'donate'.

As I live nearby, I drop into a local shop and just spend a few quid on basics, which I know will sustain her for a few days until her money comes through, for who knows what she'd spend the twenty quid on, if I gave her cash.

I pop round to Nannette's and Susie Crack lets me in. I dump the bread and stuff on the table, but when I open the fridge to put the milk in, I see it's choc-a-block with food: I am not amused. The girls explain their sudden affluence by saying they just shoplifted the lot, but I can see they're too stoned to even make it to the shops. They still want to 'borrow' some money; until I tell them I'm not paying for their drugs. Susie smiles sweetly and says, 'We're both clean; we haven't done any gear for weeks. All we've had is a few beers.' Without a word I gather up my food, and make a graceful exit.

As I make my way home, I bump into Ricky, the busker. He just had a brief 'holiday' in Lewes Prison, and met Pastor Michael in there. He told Ricky he was planning to appeal his four-year term, but Ricky advised him against this as he figures they will throw the book at him and increase his term because of all the publicity the case has generated. Ricky thinks they might do a Gate-Arrest on Michael, for the Mortgage Fraud case with which he's charged. This is when they release you, and as you're walking out the gate with your travel voucher, the C.I.D. cuff you and drag you off to the nearest nick. I give Ricky the grub I bought for Nannette, and feel a whole lot better now.

Friday 10th June

8 AM Mild day.

I'm off to visit Jimbo, who's got banged up for a month's porridge for breaking too many ASBOs. They gave him the job of mowing the football field twice a week. He was warned beforehand not to pick up any tennis balls he sees lying around, or

mow over them: the inmates get their friends on the outside to fill them with 'gear' and fling them over the fence into this field.

He tells me the other day someone asked him if he fancied a drink. He thought they meant Coca-Cola, or Orange Squash, which you can buy in the prison, but when he joined this guy in his cell, he produced a little gadget and unscrewed the top of his bunk. Jimbo was stunned to see a whole range of contraband from drugs to drink, of all kinds. They had a 'smoke' together, and polished off a whole bottle of 'Jack Daniels'. His friend was depressed because his mate had just hung himself in his cell; a common occurrence in most prisons.

You have to get sent a V.O. (visiting order) to see someone in prison these days, and they take your details when you check in. I have no doubt these all get fed into the system and kept on record. Just the way fingerprints are never destroyed when they're taken, 'to eliminate you from our enquiries, Sir.'

As a Journalist I learned the ultimate aim is to have a National Databank of everybody's DNA fingerprint, and even dogs, so they can tell who does what, literally.

I leave Jimbo in safe hands, with a few cigarettes to keep him going. He's big enough and ugly enough to look after himself.

Saturday 11th June

10 AM Sunny, but some showers.

I have collected a letter from my solicitor, which 'HAS' have demanded; they refuse to deal with me directly. This letter demands my deposit back, as HAS are advertising my old flat for rent 'in immaculate condition', with a large rent increase. I also have a letter-headed note from an accountant friend, which stipulates two weeks rent is due back. This comes to nearly seven hundred pounds and I need it badly.

I storm into HAS demanding to speak to the manageress. I tell them I need to speak to the person-in-charge, as I need to know whom to take to the small-claims court. She is not there, but I learn her name is Eileen Bowen. I give my letters to Sue, who is always very sweet, and ask her to Photostat them. I tell her that my solicitor can't deal with it any more as my legal aid funding has now run out, and it's

now a matter for the small-claims court. The Jew-Boys are just trying to make this as awkward and expensive as possible, for me, because I took them to court over the accelerated re-possession order on my old flat. I resolve to pick up the three rugs I left in Saxon Chambers, in the hallways.

11 AM

Pop into the Sally Ann, but there are only a few new faces there, which I don't recognize. Stay for a 'cuppa', and listen while Narcoleptic Gary kindly explains the criteria for getting money off the Social. He tells the newcomers that Income Support is changing to E.S.A. (Employment Support Allowance) and Half-Way Houses like Merrick House are now Supported Lodgings. He tells them: 'If you haven't got a drink or drugs problem, you will have to go and get a 'Script', off your doctor for Attention Deficit Disorder, or something similar. This is the only way to get placed on the Housing List, if you are normal.'

Sunday 12th June

10 AM Showery.

A visiting Healer, Chris Kilby, is coming to our local church and his reputation, in these circles, precedes him. He is from my hometown, Belfast, but doesn't have an Irish accent at all. After a bit of Praise and Worship, he brings up a PowerPoint Presentation, relating some recent cures, or miracles. The most interesting one was of a young builder called Luke, who won't mind me using his real name.

Chris had a picture in his mind of two long bones being broken, and asked if anyone in the congregation had broken a bone, recently. Luke held his arm up, to show it was in plaster. Chris asks him to come up and prays for him. As he's praying Luke feels heat coursing through his arm, but also gets a pain in his side, below his stomach. The next day he goes to the hospital, where they are surprised to see him, as he only had the plaster cast a week ago. He insists they X-ray his arm again and it looks perfect. The bones have completely knitted, so they take the cast off. While he's there, they say it might be an idea to X-ray his side where he has the pain. It turns out he has a ruptured spleen, which nobody suspected, and if he hadn't gone back to hospital would have died in a day or two.

In the papers this week, police in Paris have deported one of the 'Hastings Paedophile Twins', (Ken and Tom Parker, of Hastings) when they absconded to France. These twins are wanted by Sussex police.

Tracy Lloyd 42, of Western Road, Mugsborough, killed herself the day she was due to be evicted from her home.

Another doorman was bitten on the face in 'Yates' town centre bar, and a thirty-year-old man arrested.

Police arrested Duane Price 24, of Mugsborough, when he was spotted after midnight carrying a load of copper cable.

Dawn Baldock, and her son, Paul, were arrested at the 'Inquest' hospital, for abusive and threatening behaviour.

Arsonists celebrated Easter Bank Holiday by torching five thousand pounds worth of beach huts.

Steve Goodfellow 69, who started the Pub Safety Scheme, has had his licence revoked when he pleaded guilty to eight counts of unauthorized activity. The court heard of eighteen incidents, linked to the 'Havelock' pub he was running. These included incidents where one woman 'glassed' another, and also when he himself was stabbed with a pair of scissors.

A pensioner was conned out of five thousand pounds by a woman claiming to be from the Ministry of Justice. She told him he was eligible for a payment of thirty thousand pounds, for being mis-sold payment protection, on his insurance.

My little friend Kelly Hughes, from the kitchens, was arrested for nicking eighty pounds worth of gear from Sports Direct. She has been an alcoholic for five years, but was on heroin for thirteen years before that. Now she is back on the gear, but hoping to be placed in a Detox unit.

Finally it emerges that the number of people claiming disability in the Hastings area, has rocketed by over 50%, in just eight years, to over six thousand. 25% have not been contacted for ten years.

Monday 13th June

11 AM. Mild.

Bump into Heavy Eddy, and take him for a coffee, as he wants to tell me about his latest escapade.

He was visiting some friends the other day, when his ex-wife turned up. She knew some of the people there and started slagging him off. His friends laughed at her 'going into one', and he was pissed off that they didn't stick up for him. They were all 'stoned', and, in that state, anything and everything seems funny. He waited until they all passed out, then picked up their laptop from the table and walked out with it. He flogged it immediately for a hundred quid, but of course, they cornered him about it later on. He told them, as he was leaving their place he let their dealer in. He had heard them ring him up for some gear, while he was there. He tells them the 'ice-cream man' must have taken it. To cut a long story short, he got away with it.

I can only guess what he spent the money on, but I heard later that he went round to Ponytail Pedro's, swung him round by the hair, and lifted his mobile phone off the table, as you do. I am constantly amazed at how Eddy is still walking about, without crutches. Back home he would have been kneecapped years ago. As we walk to town he greets a number of people, and I realize why he's still in town. He knows everybody, and everybody knows him - and his reputation. This is a world where people accept you for what you are: your bad points, as well as your good.

Eddy tells me that yesterday he met an old flame, whose husband recently hanged himself. She is pregnant but is now worried about bringing the child up fatherless, and desperately wants some sort of father. Eddy jumped in, and offered to be a surrogate dad. I ask him if he realizes what a responsibility he has taken on, but he laughs it off. I'm not sure he knows what the word means.

People here are stunned to learn that the Chief Inspector of Police, Mark Ling, has just been suspended from duty over a single offensive text message. The local consensus is, that there is more to this than meets the eye.

Tuesday 14th June

10 AM Really sunny and warm.

Drop into the Referral Centre for my bowl of fruit. They are selling vegetables grown by the clients so I buy some broad beans and radishes. Somebody asks what I'm going to do with the radishes. 'Eat them,' I reply.

Sniffer is rattling on about the computer here. 'Every time I go on the Internet I get Porn come up, for no reason.' Someone asks: 'What do you do?'

"I press a button,' he replies.

Bump into Silly Sally along the seafront. She is still wearing her floppy-hat, and suddenly goes 'into one' shouting to me, about how much rabbit dung she has to shift every day. She turns to the nearest passer-by, and shouts out that her rabbits are full of shit. I decide to Van Gogh, (clear off) before Old Bill arrives.

2 PM

Drop into the British Heart Foundation. When I speak to Stacy, he tells me that Big Steve, the guy with eleven kids has slipped off the wagon as he prophesied. 'I told you he would backslide. They all do.' I have to agree.

4 PM

Visit His Place café, where we do the breakfasts. There is a discussion going on about drink and drugs. Everyone there agrees that the most difficult thing to give up is tobacco. Seems nicotine wins, hands down, but they haven't considered 'Ice', or Crystal-Meth, which has yet to hit these shores. This looks like glass crystals. I think drink cause more problems and crime than the rest of them put together. There is mention in the papers of a move to de-criminalise hard drugs. Must be a Government ploy to create more revenue.

Wednesday 15th June

9.30 AM Cloudy.

At the breakfast this morning we have twenty, mostly regular clients, including Heavy Eddy and the crew, minus the Kid. Scouse Pete, whom we let in early to use the toilet, has been chucked out of Merrick House 'Prison' and is back on the beach.

As Pastor Chris is on holiday in Torquay, I open with a short prayer. I mention Manchester Bob, who's been in the 'Inquest' for nearly ten weeks, with a bad heart. This is a long time, and sounds to me like a one-way trip. It is.

'Dutch' Holland asks me for forty quid, saying he's going through a metamorphosis. I decline, saying my bank manager is, as well.

I hear from J.J. that Heavy Eddy is threatening to rip the Ducati Kid's head off, so when Sarah, his latest girlfriend, arrives in her car to give him a lift, I ask Eddy in front of her, if it's all cool with him and the Kid. He assures me it is, but then say's 'As long as he gives me two hundred quid.' As I look at him in disgust, he shouts out, as they drive off, 'Only joking.' So I go back in the café and tell the crew that Eddy say's it's all cool now and the Kid can come out of hiding.

I pass Dave Helm, on the way home. He is sprawled on the pavement, picking the scabs on his legs. He tells me it was a full moon last night and, as I walk off, starts howling like a wolf.

Steve, of the eleven kids, texts me to say he's okay now. At first I think it's Steve, the Ducati Kid for I have a selection of 'Steve's' on my phone for they keep changing their numbers when they lose their phones, or have them nicked.

Thursday 16th June

1 AM Rain.

Shaun comes home. I can tell immediately something is wrong. 'I've just spent five and a half hours, in the "Inquest"', he tells me.

He's been stabbed in the stomach. He shows me an eight-inch scar with nineteen stitches in it. I make him a cup of coffee. He must have gone to the pub when they discharged him, for he reeks of booze. Apparently the ambulance took him away from his ex-wife's, in Mugsborough, at four-o'clock. She had let him see his two kids, and then demanded £150-a-week if he wanted to make it a regular visit. He refused so she told the kids she was going out that night to find them a new daddy. An altercation ensued, during which she stabbed him - as you do - in Mugsborough. The police turned up at Accident & Emergency and demanded to know what happened.

I told them: 'I cut myself when I was trying to shave my bollocks.' Obviously they didn't buy that, for when I left the hospital they kept ringing my mobile, demanding answers. I didn't want to tell them, because last time she went for me with a carving knife, and, when I wrestled it off her, she called the police, and claimed I'd attacked

her. They took me to court. I had already spent time inside, and a jury found me guilty and gave me twenty-one months, so this time, I told them: 'You can all piss off.'

8 PM

I am at Hope kitchen, when 'Giggly-Viv' collapses. This is the second time it's happened, but I don't think the cause is drink, or drugs. She is definitely on medication and looks it. She is not her usual cackling self. She turns to Michael and says: 'Nothing a cup of Rad's coffee wouldn't cure,' as we wait for the paramedics.

Friday 17th June

9 AM Mild day.

When I ring Michael to see how Viv is, he tells me she's having tests done and he'll stay with her till the results come through. Michael is very loyal to her.

I now think of Wayne, Sandie's partner. He is another saint. As one of the notorious 'Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence', Sandie leads him a merry dance. They live in a council flat, and Wayne works for a local Hospice, in Mugsborough.

Nannette tells me they don't have a physical relationship, but he obviously dotes on her. He bathes her and shaves her legs, and dresses her, tending her every need. She still hits the sauce but is very likeable. She is rather frail, but very polite, except when she gets oiled up, and picks on those nearest and dearest to her. But she is the best of the three - if a choice were to be made.

Nannette can be very mischievous, and loves to gossip. Molly is destructive, and dangerous when she's on a binge, and could easily burn your house down, but Sandie is very polite and a real sweetie, when she's straight.

8 PM Rain.

Head into town, to patrol the streets with the Hastings Street Pastors who have asked me to join them. Tonight is a test run, to see if I like it, or not. It is an eight-hour stint, till four in the morning, and it's chucking it down, so I'm not very keen.

Saturday 18th June

1 AM Torrential Rain.

I've been out with the Street Pastors since nine-o'clock, and we have returned to the prayer-centre, for refreshments. And boy, do we need them! It's been a wild night: torrential rain, and very windy. I wore two pairs of jeans and they're both soaked. Others have waterproof trousers. They are all dressed in black, but I have to wear a fluorescent vest, which makes me stand out like a sore thumb. As we venture out into the wilds of Hastings we meet Mike, a friend of mine from the kitchens. He is a junkie and is lying in his sleeping bag, begging, with his dog beside him. He tells me he needs the dog for protection.

We head up through the tunnel to the Old Town. We reach George Street, where all hell seems to have broken loose. A hundred and fifty teenagers have hired the 'Venue' nightclub, to celebrate someone's birthday. But most of them arrived drunk and were banned from going in. Others were chucked out when they got drunk inside, so they are all milling about in the street. At the same time as the girls are 'throwing up', the boys are breaking bottles, and starting fights.

I am stunned to see three of our people follow three drunks up a narrow alleyway as they smash bottles on the ground. These three ladies are trailing the three drunks up the dark alley, picking up their broken glass in a little shovel, which they carry for the job. We men stayed at the entrance to the alley, and kept an eye on them, but I felt the women were asking for trouble. Luckily the three guys were too drunk to notice. As we progressed, our lot would pause to pick up litter and bottles off the ground. We spoke to two teenagers, who had asked for some of the lollipops, that we all carried.

Whenever Martin, the team leader, got asked for one he always demanded a recitation of one of the Ten Commandments. Everybody knew 'Thou shalt not kill', but not much else.

We spoke to two grown-ups who told us what a great job we were doing. Later on, we gave flip-flops out to girls who could no longer walk in their 'Killer-Heels' (as they're killing them!) Although it was very inclement weather most of them were wearing the skimpiest of dresses, and skirts which looked like curtain pelmets, or large belts, but they all had so much to drink they didn't seem to notice the cold.

Every so often, we would ring the prayer-centre, when we felt an incident needed prayer, or counselling. There were another six people in there, praying for our

safety. We stumbled on a fight, where a group had gathered round two men in their thirties. One had blood pouring from his head and what was left of his nose. He was being pinned against the wall - by his friends - as he was trying to retaliate against his attacker who was waiting in the crowd. This is normally the sort of situation you would cross over the road to avoid. As it's all ready to kick off again, Martin goes up to the two guys and politely asks if they would like some bandages.

I just hold my breath, waiting for a reaction. Luckily the street pastors' caps and jackets are unmistakable, and the guys just walk off up the street. Seconds later two cop-cars arrive, so we wander off on our travels, looking for more trouble. We have picked up a bloodied 'Hoodie' jacket from the scene and stuff it in a bin as we carry on, back through the tunnel.

We give Mike a drink of juice and some biscuits, and head up to Robertson Street, which even at three in the morning is buzzing with life. People sprawled on benches, and gangs of cops outside every nightclub.

I feel a lot safer here. We even meet some foreign students, who take flip-flops off us. Some young scroat grabs Martin's cap, and starts screeching in a maniacal voice at him, but Martin is very sweet and ignores it all. I decide if the kid comes near me I'll deck him, instantly, without a second thought.

Sunday 19th June

9 AM Muggy day.

On the way out to church I speak to Greg, the 'Hangman', downstairs. He is very depressed but Mark, whom he calls Mr. Wink, and myself have been trying to get him to church for ages. He doesn't want to go this morning but I have already arranged for Heavy Eddy to come to church today. I pick him up, outside his 'gaff', and we motor up to 'Kings', which always has about four or five hundred people in the congregation. Eddy likes some of the songs played live by some very talented musicians. This church is well organized, and so is the band. They even have a 'drum room' on stage, built from Perspex. Sometimes it's just like going to a rock concert, the acoustics are so good.

Eddy doesn't stay long. Says he feels weird, and walks out after the preach. This may have had something to do with the fact the preacher assured us that just

because we were all regular churchgoers it didn't mean we'd all end up in a good place in the next life. He related a story about once meeting a prostitute, who told him her father would go to church every Sunday, and then come home and rape her, and her brother.

Eddy asks me: 'Would that geezer be going to Hell then?', and I assure him he would if he doesn't repent before he dies. 'What about the thousand million Muslims then?' he asks. I tell him that nobody knows who goes up or down. I assure him there will be many surprises, even amongst 'God's People'. I say that any Muslim who prays four times a day, and fasts for a month every year must have a strong faith and love of God, and that I wouldn't dare judge him.

The council has declared that ten large houses, in Mugsborough, have become magnets for crime, as they have been empty for decades. They want them to be subject to compulsory purchase orders.

Gary Mills 48, of Upper Maze Hill, Mugsborough, vandalized a police cell by spreading faeces across the walls. He was detained after he attacked a woman in her car, causing £970 worth of damage. He also ripped up blankets in his cell, costing eighty pounds. It took a specialist cleaning team three hours to clean up the cell, at a cost of three hundred pounds.

Magistrates gave him a twelve-month conditional discharge, and a one hundred-pound fine. Wow!

A drunken reveller, who banged on police vans at three in the morning, was given six months conditional discharge and a fifty-pound fine.

There seems to be a disparity of staggering proportions between these two sentences.

In order to raise the quality of the multitude of shared houses in Mugsborough, a new licence costing up to fifteen hundred pounds is to be introduced. A recent report claimed a significant number of HMOs (Houses of Multiple Occupation) and the area they are in, (Mugsborough) is directly linked to social problems, like high levels of crime and poor health. Tell me something I don't know!

Nearly six thousand children live in poverty in the Hastings area.

Dog fouling fines have risen by 20% even though 183 fixed penalty notices have been issued, so far this year.

Two brothers were jailed for eight and ten years, for stabbing one man with a knife, and slashing another with a broken bottle during an horrific botched burglary in Warrior Gardens, Mugsborough. Michael Boney and his brother, Ian, were convicted with their accomplice Ray Adams, who got eight years. The attack in the house occurred in front of a woman and her two young children.

Kabir Bresthen, from Mugsborough, was a lock thief, who ended up 'locked-up', when he stole expensive 'Yale' locks from B & Q Superstores.

Hillside, a mental health unit in Mugsborough, is to close with a loss of nineteen jobs, once alternative arrangements have been made for the patients. Perhaps the patients could run the council and the courts, and the staff could take over the Crown Prosecution Service.

Monday 20th June

10 AM Mostly sunny, rain later.

Meet long Tom, down at the 'office'. He tells me his girlfriend Mandy, who also comes to the kitchens, was at Pastor Michael's church yesterday. This is the 'Ark of Hope' in Mugsborough. She saw a set of used 'works', on the floor of the church, and only went and picked them up. She then gave them to Busker Rick, who gave her a right rollicking for he thought they were hers. We learn that Pastor Michael is being moved from one prison to another, because he starts preaching when he arrives at a new place and soon gathers a crowd of followers, much to the authorities' displeasure. Then they move him on again, to a different prison.

7 PM

Off to the Sally Ann. As we open up I can see we are short-staffed. As everyone queues for soup and drinks I notice 'Giggly-Viv' has half her nose burnt off. When I ask what happened she says: 'Michael and I got sloshed last night because we finally got our money through, after waiting six weeks, and I was so oiled when I lit a ciggy, that I burnt my nose, but never felt anything at all.'

I tell her she's lucky it wasn't her eyeball. The burn is a good square inch, and she never realized until she looked in the mirror this morning.

Zoe refuses to take any 'sarnies' until we cut the crusts off. I ask: 'Did your mum not tell you that crusts make your hair curly?'

She says, 'Well, it's always been straight, but she always lied to me.'

Rosie butts in, 'Never mind, love. Lie on my couch, and tell me all about it.'

As we're understaffed tonight, we're all bumping into each other, and I manage to spill boiling soup on Rosie. Luckily she avoids getting scalded.

Bridget is there with Stretch.

She says to him: 'All the airports in Russia have new high-tech scanners.'

'Indeed, Bridget, what's them for, then?'

'To find the mark of the Beast,' she informs him.

'I suggest they search Flight 666,' he responds.

'But they haven't got them here yet. Britain can't afford them.'

'Absolutely not. But we could, if we got a Lottery Grant,' concludes Stretch.

'Indeed, then we could buy some second-hand ones from Mexico,' she agrees.

'But soon we'll be able to get them ourselves, on the Internet,' says Stretch.

'Indeed,' Bridget agrees, 'we can buy them there for less than ten grand, I hear.'

'I think I'll get two,' he says, 'just to be sure.'

9 PM

As we lock up shop in the Sally Ann I have to brush and mop the floor and check there are no bodies in the toilets. I go in to find Mouse stripping all the paper off a toilet roll. I stand silently and watch him for a moment, before I speak up. He is shocked to see me there, but says he's on the street, and he needs it more than I do, which I reflect, is absolutely right.

Tuesday 21st June

9 AM Sunny but clouding over, later.

Bump into Misfit. He tells me he slept round the back of the Sally Ann last night. I'm glad I never noticed as I would have been tempted to bring him home for the night.

His shoulder needs a new plate, as he's managed to fracture the current one.

He eggs me for a cup of tea, and I give him eighty pence but he retorts that tea costs at least a quid, so I hand over my last pound. I don't really mind, although I realize the quid will go on a can of 'Crest'. I was going to get my bowl of fruit for £1.80 and now I must go to the bank to draw more money out.

11 AM

Walk down to the British Heart Foundation, to see if Big Steve, with the eleven kids, is still on a bender or has gone back to work. He is conspicuous by his absence, so I head back home.

On the way I see and hear J.J. and the boys heading my way. He is almost sober, but not for long. He is with Jimbo and the Kid, and his brother Stewart, and some new scroat. The new guy is with Busker Rick, and they are all headed down the beach for a 'wee' drink. Now there's the understatement of the year, for they are all lugging along carrier bags full of Frosty Jack, a potent poison, camouflaged with Cider labels.

They beg me to join them, but this is not my idea of a good time. As I struggle for an excuse, I see a bus coming, and as we're chatting in the 'office' (the bus shelter), I tell them I've been waiting twenty minutes for this bus. J.J. hollers out, as I board the bus that he would never wait twenty minutes for a bloody bus. As I relax on the bus, I wonder what J.J would do if he had to wait for a bus. Burn down the bus-shelter, perhaps?

6 PM

I did promise the boys I'd try to pop down the beach later on, to say hello, but meet Busker Rick, who informs me that the plastics had turned up, and given everyone Dispersal Orders.

J.J has scarpered, for if he's even seen with a drink in his hand, he'll be back inside, and he's just got out. His whole life consists of going in, and out, like 'Bridget's Magic Roundabout'.

Wednesday 22nd June

11 AM Heavy rain to start.

I miss the Wednesday breakfast, as I had another back spasm last night. The most frightening thing is these can occur without warning, and are totally draining. My electric has run out again, so I strap on a huge body-belt to support my back, and get the bus to the shops.

Normally the shops won't top up a meter key with a bankcard, but 'Londis', in Norman Road will do so, for a small surcharge. I have always had quarterly meters, but since I moved have resorted to key meters, topping up as I go, which avoids

large bills every four months. It is saving me money, for you have to be more prudent when you know you could run out at any time, and be without gas or electric. Although there is a reserve amount you can draw on, if this occurs, it is charged at an exorbitant rate and I try and avoid this, but lately I have been going into the 'red'.

However the first person I meet getting on the bus is Sniffer, on his way to Seaview, for a one-pound lunch. Between sniffs, he shows me a leaflet that has been put through his door. It states that the Russians have developed a Foetus-Scanner, which uses genetic engineering to detect a 'twisted nerve', (whatever that may be) and is deploying these scanners to detect the imminent arrival of the Beast. This leaflet even has a website direction to the 'House of Lords', and urges people to vote for the destruction of the embryo, when it's discovered. So Bridget is not alone, in her perambulations through paranoia.

Sniffer urges me to contact the website, but I tell him I have no computer as computers give me hallucinations. This avoids me giving him my e-mail address. He sympathizes, and we part company. When I arrive home I find a load of the same leaflets have been shoved through my own letterbox. Perhaps Bridget has a rich friend, for somebody has just spent a fortune going round all the houses in town, with these leaflets. Get a life!

4 PM

Receive an anonymous text from someone who must know me, to have my number. It states that the girl Lisa, who stayed with Paul Russell in the squat, is now in Woodlands mental hospital. She is pregnant and contemplating suicide. What can I do about it? Nothing, absolutely nothing!

Thursday 23rd June

10 AM Rainy day.

Stroll down the 'office' to see the boys. The crew are all there as usual, and as usual are all oiled up. Busker Rick, and the new scroat, 'Sparky' are also present. The drink helps them through the bad weather, but when I greet them with the usual bear-hugs - praying none of them have nits or scabies - the Kid informs me

this is his last drink, and J.J. says he's going to stop as well, just like Nannette and all the others.

Ricky strums his guitar, and starts chanting the Beatles song, 'This will be the last day, got to be the last day.' Before J.J. takes umbrage, I joke with him that he should have sold his kidney to a Pickle Factory, for their research and development team would have paid a fortune for it.

One of the boys then tells us that the Crossbow kid has just shot some paedophile. This goes down well, as everyone condones anything that happens to a paedophile. In fact Chris Hunnisett, who murdered Vicar Glazebrook, and the 'supermarket' man, was just targeting homosexuals, whom he felt were paedophiles. If a street person is accused of giving someone a good kicking or stabbing, it's always because they were a 'nonce', anyway.

It reminds me of my old father-in-law, who hated Asians. In fact I used to tell my wife, 'Your dad is a very fair man. He's not really prejudiced. He hates Blacks and Asians and Kosavans and Irish, all alike.' Once we were passing some newsagents, which had banner headlines up, about naming and shaming paedophiles. The huge notice board had 'Named Shamed' as the headlines for the day. As we passed Albert said, 'What's that bloody Paki, "Nam-ed Sham-ed", been up to this time?'

8 PM

At Hope kitchen tonight there are thirty-seven in the hall, a record number, and the talk is of bed bugs. The council says many HMOs are infested with them, and somebody says they can live fifty years behind the cracks in wallpaper. Bridget the Midget wonders if any of them fought in the last war.

I have personal experience of these things, but was able to catch them, by lying naked on top of the bed. I would lie awake with just a candle for light, watching as they crawled out from the corner of the room, over to the heat of the bed where they would parachute down, as they smelt my blood. I smoked at the time, and had a 'Ronson Varaflame' lighter, which I turned up like a blowtorch, to fry the bastards alive when they landed. They actually used to explode with a little bang and a puff of smoke, which gave me great pleasure, after waking up one morning to see one perched on the end of my nose, sucking my blood out. (Sic). I was half asleep and

it took a minute for me to realize that this beastie with its nose stuck into mine, was actually a bedbug. As it sucked, I watched its whole body pulsate and throb with pleasure, until I woke up and crushed it to death.

The council claims it costs between five and ten thousand pounds to clear a house of these creatures, as they are resistant to temperatures up to fifty degrees. The council might like to buy a load of gas lighters, for I can assure them the swine are not resistant to them. Besides, it would work out a lot cheaper.

Friday 24th June

10 AM Muggy.

Pop down the 'office' on the seafront, and am very surprised to see Big Steve there. He's never been a 'social drinker', but admits to me he has slipped off the wagon, again. My lodger Shaun has told me he got a job today, which requires the help of a strong man. I offer it to Steve and he jumps at the opportunity. Somebody needs a large cast-iron bath moved, and is prepared to pay sixty quid. I tell Steve to sober up, as Stacy will till take him back at the shop, for he still hasn't 'done in' his three lives.

11 AM

Down at the Sally Ann, little Debbie tells me she has found a bed-sit on her own. I can't believe it for this lovely innocuous lady has been sofa-surfing for five years. She has a severe speech impediment and was staying with Hippy Brian, with his flashing stick, in his psychedelic flat (see photos): this place would blow your mind. He has the whole ceiling festooned with fairy lights and lanterns and strings of beads etc., and the walls scrawled with scriptures of doom and gloom. He has even painted the kitchen cupboards a lurid green. All the doors and the whole bathroom are bright 'puce', for he read somewhere that if people working in factories went into a red toilet they couldn't get out quick enough. This is essential for Brian, considering the calibre of some of his visitors and the things they indulge in.

Whenever I pop round to see him, I am constantly surprised at who his guests are; they are just as surprised to see me. Debs had been sleeping in the back room, but he didn't charge her any rent. Debs has now been given a tiny room in a huge house, with the promise that if she behaves the landlord will move her to a double

room. I feel this is a 'con'; for once a landlord gets Housing Benefit for a small room he's not going to shoot himself in the foot and start the process of paperwork, all over again. It's much easier for him to rent a large room, than a small one.

5 PM

After doing my shopping I am walking home and see Big Steve staggering towards me. He went round with Shaun, did the job, and they both went to the pub, to splurge the sixty quid, as you do.

Saturday 25th June

10 AM Muggy and misty.

Walk down the 'office', and who should I see? - but Debs talking to the crew, and Busker Rick who is playing old Bob Dylan songs to them. I ask Debbie what she's doing there, for she doesn't drink or take drugs, but she tells me she's looking for a spare T.V. off somebody. Debbie is an older woman, but possesses nothing except the clothes on her back, and a set of false teeth.

I am in conflict with myself, for I'm supposed to donate a tenth of my spare income to the church. This is called 'Tithing', (a tithe is a tenth) but I now want to give this to the street people, which sort of by-passes the middleman. Trouble is, I always find if I hold back say a fiver, I end up getting a parking ticket that same week, or something unexpected happens, like I find I've incurred an overdraft charge or my credit card gets cloned. It happens every time.

I had a close friend who died recently, and he told me if he ever missed Sunday Mass he knew the following week would be harrowing. He couldn't explain it, and neither can I. Not even sure if tithing is scriptural, but it seems to affect me in any case. I withheld my tithe this week and now find out that I have probably lost my deposit from the Jew-Boys, as they now claim I owe them for the gas consumption, going back a year or so. This is because there was a communal gas meter for all the flats and the three shops, underneath, so it was illegal for them to rent out anyway. The Gas Board couldn't even find the meter, to start, as it was buried in the cellar, under Steve's computer shop. So we all got free gas for a year, but now they want their money.

Even though I did loads of repairs to the house: like putting in an new entry phone; and solenoid; and four strong hinges on the front door, which was coming off, after being smashed in by the police and the feral kids looking for their friend. I just gave all these receipts to Sue at HAS, which Chaim and Jacob told me to do, and told her to put them towards the gas bill for I knew sooner, or later, we'd all have to pay this. It now transpires that Clockwork Estates claim to have no record of these invoices, so I realize I'm now flogging a dead horse.

Sunday 26th June

9 AM Warm and muggy.

Try to encourage the 'Hangman' in the flat beneath me, to come to church. He refuses, but would like to talk to me afterwards, as he's upset about something. After church I pop in to see him, thinking perhaps he's had to cut someone down this week. He tells me he's used to that, and this is a different matter. One of his duties is to visit the 'Inquest' hospital to collect the remains of babies that have been aborted. He has no car, so goes in the bus with his Gladstone bag, which looks quite official. This week the nurses gave him a tiny body wrapped up in big white fluffy towel. On his return to the funeral parlour, his boss takes the bag, and instead of placing the whole lot in the tiny cardboard coffin unwraps the towel, saying his missus would love that, once it's been through the washer. When he unwraps the towel it is saturated with blood and mucous, but a perfect little creature, the size of a bag of sugar, lies within.

Police are investigating an arson attack, which has destroyed the bungalow of the Reverend Alex Brown, who was jailed for four years, together with his friend, our late Pastor Michael Adelasoye.

In a survey of thirty-seven towns, Hastings has the third highest rate of syphilis and the second highest concentration of Genital Warts.

Ryan Barrett of Beaufort Road, Mugsborough, pleaded not guilty of breaking into William Parker School. He was caught when his DNA was found on a carton of orange juice. He also admitted stealing nine hundred and fifty pounds from the community centre in Mugsborough, and two thousand pounds from the Hastings

Baby Centre. He was fined one hundred and fifty pounds and given a year's supervision order, when he was found guilty, after a trial. Such a heavy sentence!

There is public outrage at the thirteen hundred pounds damage done by Gary Mills, who smeared his cell with his own faeces, but was given only a one hundred pound fine, and a year's conditional discharge.

A gang of ferals, in hoodies, beat up and mugged a man in Devonshire Road, Mugsborough last week.

Two other teenage ferals were charged with stealing metal from the old college in Mugsborough, which has had all the lead ripped off its roof.

Thieves stole a very large widescreen T.V., from a house in St. Helens Down, in broad daylight.

Two cars were broken into in Mugsborough, and a driver was threatened with a heavy crowbar, in a road-rage incident.

Finally, joke of the week. A local pioneering scheme is claiming success, as patients now seeking treatment for panic attacks and depression are given a prescription (Sic) from their 'GP', for a specific book dealing with their problem. They take this to the local library, and read all about it. This scheme should save the N.H.S. a fortune, and some people in Mugsborough might learn to read - for one in four adults cannot do so at the moment.

Monday 27th June

9 AM Very hot and Sunny.

Head down the beach to catch some sun and have a swim. I meet Julie Rappley and Trisha who always sunbathe down by the Sailing Club. Both girls look really fit, and Trisha always looks like she's just come off holiday as she always sports a great tan. Julie knows I fancy her like crazy but is always eager to tease me. She's just been shopping and pulls out a shiny gold bikini, to dangle in front of me. I am a very sensual person, and she knows it. She asks if I think it will suit her, as she shakes it about, in front of my face. I decide I need a cold swim.

As we're lying there some street people come up and ask me for some shrapnel. I don't have any, for I'm just in my shorts, and T-shirt. As they wander off Julie turns to Trish, 'He loves that lot, would you believe?'

I tell her, 'Indeed I do, but they love me right back.'

6 PM

After a lovely day on the beach I meet the 'crew' who were trying to catch fish, but only succeeded in catching their fingers on hooks. I head for the Sally Army. We didn't expect such high numbers tonight but have to cater for twenty-seven half-baked lobsters. The sun was really hot today, and I have to serve lots of squash and cold drinks.

I am told of a new type of 'coke' on the street, and I don't mean the drink. It is stepped on (diluted) with sheep-worming tablets. This probably originates from the recent vogue of mixing ecstasy with dog-worming pills, which apparently enhanced the effects three-fold. What bemuses me is, who on earth tries these things out to see if they work?

It used to be that most drugs were stepped on with innocuous substances like chalk, or talcum powder, or even flour and icing sugar, but now the whole trend is very cynical. As big a hit, as possible, for as little money, as possible. Mind you, in my day many people drank methylated spirits, which affected the blood vessels in the eyes; hence the expression 'Blind Drunk'. But I do recall the old days, on a bad LSD 'trip', when the acid I took was laced with strychnine. I was woken up by something jerking around in front of my face. It was my right arm. Needless to say a bad trip is something no one will ever forget, if they survive the experience. The worst living nightmare you can ever imagine. One minute you think, 'Wow, this must be what it's like to be mad', and the next minute, 'Oh God, I really am mad'. It defies all imagination, and you think you'll never get back, which is why they call it a 'trip'. It lasts twelve hours.

J.J. says he found out that 'Animal' hanged himself in Lewes Prison. He got nine years, but would have been out in five, for good behaviour but - good behaviour was not his forte. He had attacked the Tooth, and nearly killed him. I had advised him when he was out on bail to move away, while he had the chance, for he never struck me as dangerous. The Judge obviously thought different.

Tuesday 28th June

10 AM Sunny.

Bump into Ian Saunders in the Kings Road café, where we do the breakfasts. When I saw him last, he was a raving drunk, who went to Emmaeus for help. He joined their 'Portslade' community six months ago and is now as clean as a whistle. He is now the main van driver for their Brighton branch. He informs me that a new headman at the 'Hastings Emmaeus Centre', called Simon, sacked all the volunteers there. They were employed collecting furniture and doing house clearing, but he discovered they were running a racket. They would cream off all the valuable gear and sell it on the side, telling Emmaeus that they were only being given junk these days.

3 PM

Shaun and I meet Busker Rick, carrying his guitar, as we're going to the British Heart Foundation. He has just been given a 'dispersal' order, for busking in the tunnel. He tells us he only earns a fiver an hour, at the most. He also mentions that the Kid has a new girlfriend, called Layla, and we laugh as he starts playing the Eric Clapton song, 'Layla, I'm down on my knees, begging you please, -'

On leaving I wonder if this is the same girl Rudolph was hoping to marry, before he had his heart attacks.

Shaun is owed over five hundred pounds by Ed Lovell, who just told him he had to use his wages to purchase materials, so he could finish the job; but Shaun needs his money now, and won't do any more work for the Love café, until he gets paid. It takes another three months before he gets any money off Ed.

Shaun has been talking with Stacy, who lives beneath me in a one-bedroomed flat. The two of them feel it would be mutually advantageous to share a two-bedroomed place, as they could both save money, splitting the rent.

Wednesday 29th June

9-30 AM Very hot and Sunny.

There are twenty clients in this morning for the free breakfasts. When we know we'll be short staffed Jeremy and Annie come over in the train, from Darvell. They are a little like, 'innocents abroad', and Annie is still nervous about crossing the road and going into shops.

We serve the two brothers first, Stewart and John McCullum. They are twins, but John dies some months later, at the age of fifty-three. They are both over six foot, and today are in a rush, for they have to 'scratch on the sausage' (the Dole).

Heron House is the local Dole Office, but so many drug and money deals take place there, it's known as Heroin House.

Big Richard, another regular, dumps his bike in the entrance and stuffs his rucksack and helmet under the table, still wearing his tight cycling trousers.

I arrange with Captain Pugwash to go out with him in his fishing boat, when he's sober. It's very calm and perfect weather for taking photographs at sea, and not falling in, but I relish the idea of going out on the RX-58 in the middle of the night.

The '57' crew is present this morning, but the Kid is conspicuous by his absence, but probably has Layla cooking him breakfast. That is, if they can get out of bed.

Captain Mannering has a 'pop' at me this morning. We had lots of food over, even serving seconds, so I helped myself to a couple of eggs. As I'm eating he comes over and says, 'That's right, you help yourself. Don't worry about anyone else.' It's only afterwards, when all the clients have gone that I discover there wasn't enough left for him, as I had scoffed the last two eggs.

On the way home I count six buses in a row going up London Road, and three, in a convoy, coming down. The long queues at the bus stops are not amused.

Thursday 30th June

7 AM Sunny, but clouds over later.

Get a text from Katie, my young friend, who wants to come and see me. This time I know what she wants - money. I ignore her, but the same texts keep coming, all day long. Either she's really hard up, or she's getting free texts.

9 AM

Meet Debbie, on my way to town. She tells me there's a shelf high up, in her little box room, where she can place a small T.V. She must be careful, as she has to go sideways round the bed to reach the sink which the shelf is over. I told her to speak to Stacy at the British heart Foundation, and mention my name, and he'll get her one for a tenner. She tells me she can't afford a tenner, so I resolve to pick one up for her.

When I speak to Stacy he tells me Big Steve came back to work, and was doing great - until he got some money. He then booked a twenty-pound trip to Belgium, got a load of cheap booze, and has been pissed ever since. He has used up his third life, and now Stacy won't take him back.

He also mentions they store old black TVs in the rear of the shop, and he will sort one out for Debbie, for nothing. He says the Gypsies arrive every month to cart away the rubbish stuff, which saves him paying to dispose of it, and they usually take the old T.V.s as well, plus anything else they can nick without him noticing.

When he tells me he has lots of these old-style T.V.s I ask if I can have them for the street people, but Stacy tells me it's not as simple as that, for every electrical item sold, or given away, has to be 'PAT' tested for safety, and that costs nearly a fiver an item. Still, it's cheap for a TV. He says it's no problem, but he'll have to clear it with management.

11 AM

I meet a young girl, nicknamed Strumpet, who occasionally comes to the kitchens, wheeling a twin buggy with her two kids in it. She is only eighteen, and pregnant again. She tells me when her mum found out, she just threw her out. I give her a bit of shrapnel and walk away, realizing her life is now over, but she doesn't know it yet.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

JULY

Friday 1st July

11 AM Hot and sunny.

Drop in the Sally Army this morning to help out. Bridget the Midget is there for a food parcel, and Stretch needs a sleeping bag, for he's back on the streets.

Bridget says to Stretch: 'Got my rabbit blessed at the weekend.'

'Did it need it?' asks Stretch.

'Well, you know Smelly Nellie was sofa-surfing with me. She found a real fur coat in the Charity shop, for a fiver, because these days ordinary people won't wear real fur, only street-women. The rabbit fell in love with the coat and kept pissing on it.'

'I know how it feels,' says Stretch, 'disgusting habit.'

'What', says Bridget, 'pissing on a fur-coat?'

'No, stupid, wearing one!'

'Well, she is a street person, and it keeps her warm, but now she smells minging Stretch.'

'She always smells minging, Bridget. Coat, or no coat.'

'Indeed, but now I got Floppy blessed at the animal service, by the Bishop himself, it's now Holy Water coming out the rabbit. I explained that to Nelly, and now she's happy with the coat.'

Stretch says, 'So she's getting blessed all the time, now.'

'Indeed, I've done her a favour, but I want you to do me a favour.'

'What's that then, Bridget?' he asks.

'Take me to church on Sunday, I hate going on my own.'

'Absolutely not. Every time I go there they always try to sacrifice me.'

3 PM

Pop round Nannette's. She has dried out, and is on the 'water-wagon' again. She tells me she is determined to cure herself of 'Hep-C', but is still afraid to go for a liver biopsy. When she asks if I'm aware of the process, I ask her to tell me.

She says: 'As well as the weekly injections I have to have regular blood tests to check my red-cell count, for if it falls I may become anaemic. Even then I must get

checked out in six months, to see if the Virus has regrown. After an injection I will feel cold and miserable for a few hours, and my skin will hurt, as if I'm in withdrawal, all over again. After three months the pills I take, will make my hair fall out, and dry my skin making it all flaky."

I drink my tea in silence, wondering if she washed the cup.

Saturday 2nd July

9 AM Very hot and sunny.

Katie visits me. She has no money, and her son, Paul has a broken nose, for he just got beaten up and needs to go to hospital. There is only one bus an hour to the 'Inquest', and he needs a fiver to get there and back. As I walk with Katie to the nearest bank-machine, I bump into J.J. who greets me like an old friend, which of course, he is. When any street people bear-hug me, I try to avoid stubby bristles rubbing on my face, as you can get boils if they prick your skin. He 'eggs' me for a tenner as he's run out of Electric. I have already given Katie a tenner, for she's got no 'baccy', and I don't mind this, for I know she neither drinks nor does drugs - apart from Valium which she'll be on for the rest of her life. I feel obliged to give J.J money, for he's seen me draw money out for Katie, but I feel stupid when Strumpet suddenly appears and asks me for a drop of shrapnel. I explain that I've just had to fork out twenty quid, and I'm brassic myself. She walks away disappointed, for if someone asks me for money I usually try to help, but don't normally just give it away, willy-nilly.

8 PM

Go to 'Hope' kitchen this evening. Roger Nuttall, of the Red Cross is there with a nurse. He usually goes to Seaview, but is doing a walk-in surgery in one of the rooms here. It turns out Heavy Eddy, of all people, is getting treatment for cuts and bruises.

Strumpet comes over asking; 'Is it true you beat him up?'

'I should be so lucky,' I reply. I didn't get the chance to speak to Eddy, for when he left he went straight out the door, and didn't check to see who was in the big hall. I hear all about the Ducati Kid and his new girlfriend Layla, whom they say is a 'Pinhead', and is turning the Kid onto 'Gear'. It never rains, but it pours.

Jeremy and Annie and Ralph, from Darvell, are helping out as volunteers tonight, but I just sign in as a guest these days.

10 PM

On the way home, I meet Captain Pugwash, coming out the Railway Tavern. He's been chatting to 'BobCatt', who also wants to go out on the RX-58. It's been in dry-dock for a month now, but he'll let me know when they're back in the water, so I can go out for the day. I love the sea, and am really looking forward to this.

Sunday 3rd July

8 AM Sunny, but Muggy.

On my way to church I hear the 'Ark of Hope' is planning to move out of Hanover House and to also change their name. Church people are on the move all over, and there are about ten churches without Ministers at the moment. Only a few, like King's, are getting an influx of new blood as the older generations die off, and Edward Preston, who runs the Independent Church, only has Mandy at the morning service. Sometimes, if she can't make it, Edward stands at the pulpit, and delivers his sermon to himself, and God, I suppose.

I hear that Tony Crouchman 46, of Beecham Place, Mugsborough who was accused of murdering his daughter, Vicky, was found hanged in his cell in Lewes Prison. The inquest returned a verdict of suicide.

Philip Stevens of Omerad Avenue, Mugsborough, admitted conning Housing Benefits to the tune of fourteen thousand pounds. He was given a suspended sentence and three hundred hours Community Service. This means he'll be 'working' the time off, at nearly fifty pounds an hour, for all the money he received. Not bad, if you can get it.

My friend Billy Kennedy 41, who was been on the streets, has been sent away for a six-week 'holiday', when he was caught drinking in Bottle Alley, in Mugsborough, on June 17th.

Nick Huggins 22, and Ryan Williams 17, broke into a house in Dudley Road, and burgled it, on Saturday 18th June, at half-past-one, in the afternoon.

This week, an elderly man was attacked as he cycled through town, by Tyron Avis 24, and Bradley Bailey 23.

Police have launched Operation Chiltern, in Central Mugsborough, in response to being inundated with complaints about drunken behaviour. In the last twelve months over a hundred drink-related crimes were recorded in this small area, prompting a resurrection of Dispersal Orders.

I even notice police pinning notices about these orders, on the railings outside my front door.

The local Conquest Hospital (the Inquest) has been given two months to make drastic improvements, or face prosecution. This follows a damning report by the Quality Care Commission (QCC) Inspectors found a catalogue of failures, including patients left without food or drinking water; staff lacking appropriate training; and even a pensioner left on a trolley for seven hours, despite nursing a painful broken hip. I wonder if this was the lady who waited, on a cold pavement for over an hour, for the ambulance to arrive. The Inquest has already been given three warning notices. What a joke!

Monday 4th July

7.30 PM Hot and sunny day.

Sally Ann. We have forty clients in tonight, a record. One latecomer is Scouse Patrick, who hobbles in on crutches. He is only forty-five but his right hip is shot, and he is awaiting a replacement. He tells us he can't sleep on either side, and has to lie on his back all night, with a rolled-up blanket under his knees. The pain enhances his normal irascible disposition, but my heart goes out to him as I know the pain a dodgy hip can give, every step you take. I carry his soup and bread over to his table, but now I can see he is on something, for he's giving it large to the other punters.

'Narco Gary', who's in charge tonight, rings the police and after listening to ten minutes of monotonous 'Elevator Music', interrupted by an answer-phone telling us how important our call is, the line goes dead. Gary is Captain for the evening, but is getting stressed for half-a-dozen clients are 'out of their tree' on drugs, and we have to keep an eye on him in case he goes into one, and falls into a trance.

'Wavin Dave' is running round doing 'swimming exercises' with his arms, and I tell him to sit down, for he won't swim far in an anorak. Mad Mark, who winds Eileen up

every night, wants water for his dogs, and Mouse walks in, covered in stitches, and nursing a broken nose. He looks a sorry sight, even at the best of times.

'Been mugged,' he declares.

I remind him we do live in Mugsborough.

Fingers turns up and, when I remark we haven't seen him lately, informs us his left lung collapsed three times and his right one twice. He declares he has 'neuro-thorax-tumours'. Micky is more demented than usual, and is running round 'gurning' at people, while Long Tom is hassling for his thermos of soup to take away. It's all happening tonight.

Tuesday 5th July

10 AM Sunny but windy.

Just manage to catch the binmen, or Refuse Disposal Officers, before they rush off on their rounds.

I see Robocop sticking up a notice about Operation Chiltern, on the railings beside my flat. This was in the papers recently and is the continuing onslaught against the street drinkers, designed I suspect, to keep them away from the Seafront and the tourists.

These notices state, 'Anti-social behaviour, such as drunkenness, Vandalism, assaults and Public Disorder are causing great concern to the residents of St. Leonard's (Mugsborough) as members of the public have been intimidated, harassed, alarmed and distressed. This anti-social behaviour is a significant and persistent problem in the area, so Dispersal Orders are now in effect. If more than one person is seen drinking, or with a can of drink, they will both be told to move out of the area, and banned from returning for twenty-four hours.'

There are 'T-shirts currently on sale, stating 'St. Leonard's is a small drinking town, with a huge fishing problem.' Others state: 'Hastings for the Continent' – St. Leonard's for the Incontinent.' Another shirt I saw on a really heavy looking dude, stated, 'Don't worry, I'm from St. Leonard's as well.'

These ones are popular with the bikers in the Carlisle.

1 PM

I promised Heavy Eddy that I would visit his new gaff. He has moved into a flat in St Andrew's Square, just next to the Sally Ann, so he'll be our best customer. I'm intrigued to know how he found the deposit for such a nice place. He tells me, 'I went to the Social Services, told them about my "skagging" out on crack, and I was now homeless, as my mum had been putting me up or should I say putting up with me. I told them I had found a flat but couldn't afford the deposit. As it would cost them more to stick me in Merrick House, they agreed to pay the deposit, if I got a loan off HARC for the first month's rent. I managed to do this by signing an agreement to pay it back at ten pounds a week.'

Eddy tells me he has to go to Eastbourne with a girl tomorrow. Seems he got her pregnant, and she wants a termination. He wants to 'borrow' the fare, but he knows my views on this, and I refuse. I explain to him that I think the world's in such a state because all the little 'Einsteins', that are supposed to arrive every decade or so, haven't made it, for they've been chopped up before they even got here. I tell him there are 42 million recorded abortions every year and statistics say the abortion rate so far equals one for every woman on the planet.

The number of women on the planet of childbearing age is one and a half billion. I show him a website, 'World-o-Meter', which gives live statistics of the number of abortions occurring so far this year. It is in the tens of millions and ticking away, and as we watch, at least every second another one is being recorded on their live counter. I remind him these are just the recorded ones that are registered.

Wednesday 6th July

10 AM Sunny, but very windy.

A full house at the Wednesday breakfast. J.J. and the crew are conspicuous by their absence, so a quiet time is had, by all. I do the Grace (opening prayer).

3 PM

I am having a Latte, outside the new Café Nero in town, when Pinhead-Ned staggers across the Plaza with Zoe, who still manages to look hot, with her long blonde hair. He always looks cool and laid back: his shades covering a set of sleepy 'Bob Mitchum' eyes, which are always half closed. I reflect that Mitchum

indulged in the same things as Ned, but decide that anyone on gear is going to look cool and laid back.

I'm perched on an outside chair with my lodger Shaun, and Richard, a local landlord whose family control forty HMOs and who helps me find places for the street people. Ned swaggers over in front of everybody and declares, 'I love you, man.' But when you're that high, you just love everybody.

Unfortunately his love doesn't extend to some nearby scroat, for he and Zoe start giving it large, and soon cups and saucers go flying off the tables. The waitresses run out, but soon decide 'discretion is the better part of valour' when Ned tells them to 'fuck off' and get back inside. They do so, leaving our trio free to carry on business.

Thursday 7th July

9 AM Windy and cloudy.

Shaun has been here exactly two months and owes me a few hundred quid, as I've been buying his food for him as well. The fifteenth is next week, and I need money to pay the rent. Trouble is Ed Lovell won't give Shaun his money until he finishes the job, and he won't finish the job until he gets what he's owed. Catch 22.

He decides to go and see Ed in the Love café, but is kept waiting by him for thirty minutes, as he potters around, obviously trying to avoid a confrontation. When Shaun goes to the toilet, Ed scuttles out the side door, and heads off home. When Shaun comes out of the loo and finds Ed gone, he follows him home to where he lives just up the Norman Road. He goes into the house and the discussion soon turns to a shouting match. It is so bad the neighbours have to call the police. When they arrive they listen to what been happening and say they can't get involved, as it's a civil matter.

3 PM

Very windy, so the sea is really stormy with waves lashing up to the seawall and showering the road with shingle. In King's Road, Mugsborough, I spot Katie doing her 'charity run', as she calls it: she works her way down London Road, visiting half-a-dozen charity shops, taking one item from each. The only one she gets a pang of conscience over, is St. Michael's Hospice.

If she wants a coat she will just wear a jumper into the shop, and slip a coat over it, as she walks out. She is infamous in the area, and all the shops are aware of what she gets up to. She has grown so blatant she will now pick the most expensive item and go for it. She has found out from Nannette, whose neighbour knows the manageress of shelter, that she has acquired a reputation as a known shoplifter, but, to avoid being attacked or stabbed with a needle, they will let her get away with it. They know its pointless calling the police because by the time they arrive, the culprit could have flown to America. The irony is Katie doesn't touch drugs after her experiences with her husband, George, who choked to death.

Friday 8th July

9 AM Sunny and Windy.

Down at the Citizens Advice Bureau this morning, for a final attempt at getting my money off the Jew-Boys. I was here at nine-thirty, and there was a queue already, even though they don't open until ten. It is so busy that there is usually a wait of an hour, no matter what time you arrive. I was here last Wednesday, but had a two-hour wait, so I left. After speaking to an advisor she tells me the only way forward for me is a small claims court, which means more money up front.

1 PM

Pop round to Nannette's, and find her as sober as a Judge. I tell her it's years since I've seen her looking so well. She has put on weight, and is lucid and clean in her appearance. All the sisters have decided to clean up their act.

Nannette confesses to me, over a cup of tea, that she was having blackouts. She would see everything just going black and then wake up to find herself lying in the middle of the street. On the last occasion she fell, she cut her head open, and head wounds bleed profusely. She also damaged her shoulder to the point where she still nurses her arm in bed every night.

Sister Molly is now on Chloradizapoxene, but still insists on taking four cans to bed with her, complaining she can't sleep, and has to wake up every thirty minutes for a quick slurp. Sister Sandie, the third part of the unholy trinity, gets home-visits from 'Action For Change', who want her to do a home detox. First, she must limit her

intake to one and a half bottles of wine a day, which is what she's cut down to, at the moment.

This is about six units a day. They supplied her with a small glass measure, but she has to limit herself. She's on Librium, but if she doesn't cut down slowly may start fitting and die. Although she's really scared of this happening, she finds it really hard to manage on less than two bottles a day, because she also drank a bottle of Vodka every day, for the past year.

Saturday 9th July

10 AM Sunny windy day.

Meet Misfit down the 'office', chatting to the crew. I got him a room through Robbie, at number 38, St Helens Road, below Darren and the cat. Trouble is, when he went to Glastonbury, where the tickets cost two hundred pounds each, he had to sublet his room to the lesbian couple Kim and Amber, to fund the trip. They are regulars at all the kitchens.

When he came back from the festival with Alan Carter they had a few drinks. Alan slipped and fell on his head, and died. He was a big lad from Lancashire, and not a regular at the kitchens, but Misfit brought him along sometimes. He had just turned fifty.

9 PM

My lodger Shaun comes home, and I can tell right away he is upset. Over a drink he confesses that he tried to kill himself tonight. He tried three times to jump off the East Hill, which is where our mutual friend, Peter Wimble, took his life. He had gone to visit his two girls who are nine and ten, as they were staying with their grandmother. They told him that: 'Mummy wants us to live with granny now, but she says she hates us, so can we come and live with you?'

Shaun told them this was impossible, as he needed to stay with me, on a sofa, but they blurted out: 'So, you hate us as well.' He went and had a few drinks and ended up on the East Hill. He tells me that three times a mysterious wind moved him back from the edge of the cliff, and even though it was pouring with rain his clothes stayed dry. He pointed this out when he arrived home, in the rain!

Sunday 10th July

9 AM Very warm and sunny.

See the crew, down the 'office' on my way to church: J.J. is missing as he's been banged up again, for breaking his ASBO, again. I hear Andy Fish lost the plot during the week. He freaked out and ended up in the Inquest but they wanted to section him, so he did a runner. He's running round the streets paranoid, and silly as a box of lights.

An acquaintance of mine, local author, Jack Semmens sent the Observer an e-mail announcing his own death, as a press release. He was an elderly American that I knew for only a short time. He purchased a cheap American device from the States, and used it on himself. He finished his press release with the cryptic comment, 'Ten thousand pounds to Dignitas. I don't think so.'

Michael Reid 20, punched a copper, when he was asked to hand over a tin of beer. Ten people had to be evacuated when arsonists set a fire in a bakery, which spread to the Clown pub.

The two youths mentioned recently, Nick Huggins and Ryan Williams, who broke into a house, were given three years each.

Michelle Meager 34, stole eighty pounds worth of razors from the Co-Op, in Mugsborough, on June 19th. Two days later she took twenty pounds worth of food from the Spar across the road. The next day she stole make-up from the Body Shop and, two days after that, stole two hundred pounds worth of perfume from Debenhams. She also threatened shop staff when they tried to apprehend her. She was jailed this week for four months.

Hastings Advice and Representation Centre, (HARC) is having to close its doors, as it is being deluged with clients.

On June 28th in broad daylight, a home in Eversfield Place, (where I lived), was burgled when thieves forced the front door. Two laptops and five hundred pounds worth of jewellery were stolen.

Finally, the joke of the week. Stuart Green 36, of Carisbrooke Road, 'Mugsborough, broke into Earl's Bakery and stole display cakes from the window. He was caught and charged with burglary.

Monday 11th July

10 AM Sunny and very warm.

Bump into Heavy Eddy, walking along the seafront. We sit on a bench in Bottle-Alley and he tells me his girl is recovering, after the abortion in Eastbourne. Now he tells me he has finished with her, but doesn't go into details. I don't push him.

7 PM

Down at the Sally Ann, to open for seven-thirty. We get thirty-four street people in, nearly as many as Hope kitchen last Saturday. It is so busy we ask John, a client, to come and do the washing up for us. He is always very obliging.

Peter and Eileen have fourteen days to vacate Lera's house in 55, St. Mary's Road. They've now been given an accelerated-repossession order, although they've been there three years. I fixed them up with this home, so it's a personal affront to me; that Lera has done this. God only knows where they are going to put all their bits and pieces, especially the huge anchor in the kitchen. Some 'barrack-room lawyer' tells them that the Council will have to store it all, as they're being evicted. But, I have severe doubts in this respect.

Tuesday 12th July

9 AM Very hot and sunny.

Strolling down to the office, I meet the 'Simpleton'. She is not a regular at the Kitchens, but is quite a character. She is blind in one eye, and her little Pekinese that got savaged by a 'Mugsborough Staffe', has one of its eyes blind as well. She tells me her wrist cracked and gave way yesterday, but Long Tom drove her to the Inquest. On learning the wait was four hours at least, they drove back and Tom carefully bandaged her arm by himself. The Simpleton was round at Susie Crack's with Nannette yesterday, and went into one because she couldn't score any crack. A shouting match developed in Susie's back yard, and although Nannette begged the Simpleton to 'shut her cakehole', she kept giving it large, and they had to drag her back inside, before the neighbours rang 'Old Bill'. This forced entry, to get her back in the house, was when her wrist got broken.

Ritchie, Nannette's new lodger, has just put a picture of himself on the mantelpiece. This was taken at the recent Biker's Rally, and he is pictured on Steve McQueen's

Triumph Speed Twin motorcycle, which featured in 'The Great Escape' movie. He tells me it's the original machine, but when I point out the disc brake on the front wheel, and tell him they weren't invented until decades later, he gets quite upset. Nannette tells me she didn't get up until the crack of noon, because she took too many Chlorazapoxene, and thinks she might have been unconscious most of the night. Personally I feel she was lucky to wake up at all.

Wednesday 13th July

9 AM Cloudy, but warm.

We have twenty-two in for the free breakfast. I say the opening prayer, and remind them all it's a charity breakfast, because one new lady wants to pay for her food. As usual, the usual culprits turn up late. I tell them first come, first served, and last come, last served. Cockney Joe is the last to arrive, and only gets beans and tomatoes. It is his 'last supper' with us, for that week he goes into hospital in London, and dies of a brain haemorrhage. He gets buried up there, so nobody gets the chance to pay their last respects.

Captain Mannering warns a couple of newcomers not to sleep on the beach, as they might get mugged; peed on; jacked up; or set on fire.

Scouse Pete, who slept in my Jag in the underground car-park, has been given a council flat in one of the four Mugsborough tower blocks, Roosevelt House. This is after he has spent six years on the street. After the café, I walk down King's Road with him and Cockney Joe who manages to attract the attention of a passing Plastic. I ask Pete his address as I want to visit him and do his portrait, and he tells me number eight. The plastic has stopped to talk to Cockney Joe, so Pete says loudly, 'number eight, Bevin Court,' as he doesn't want his true address broadcast to the police. All the four tower blocks are named after an American president, or head of State.

Bridget has shaved her head again, and looks awful, but not as bad as Silly Sally, who just pulls her hair out. I cannot even imagine the stress that compels someone to pull all their hair out. It must be excruciating. This is common among street people, and is called Trichotillomania.

Thursday 14th July

9 AM Sunny and warm.

Stroll down the 'office' and Sparky is there, chatting to the crew, and Busker Rick. He relates the time he was working near Ripley's scrap-yard where they burned up loads of Council rubbish. One load dumped there, had a gas cylinder amongst the rubbish, and it blew up, showering a load of sparks into his face - hence the nickname. The flash gave him third-degree burns, all over his face, so they stuck his head in a bucket of cold water and rushed him to the 'Inquest' hospital, complete with bucket. At Accident and Emergency he had to kneel on the floor, dipping his head in the bucket all the time. As the receptionist asked him some questions, like date of birth, etc., he had to lift his head, blurt out the answer, and duck down again.

'Doctors name?' Head up, answer. Head down.

'Are you in any pain, at the moment?'(!) Head up, answer politely. Head down, and so on.

As anyone who has had a severe burn, including myself, will tell you, the only thing to ease the initial pain is cold water - and lots of it. The mop lady makes an appearance, (I suspect they keep her in the broom cupboard) and cleans up around him, as his mates scurry back and forth with plastic cups from the cold water fountain, to keep the bucket topped up.

Friday 15th July

9 AM Very windy.

The 'Wellington Square' church meeting was last night, and the minister David Hall, whom I really like, has been suspended, and Jan, who still attends Bible College, has stepped in two days a week. The deaconship has suspended David, but they now learn he is going to take a Sabbatical. In the meantime they still have to pay his wages, for they cannot sack him.

I resigned my membership, at the last meeting, because I wanted to go to Duke Road church, and also because I felt stupid helping to pay for someone who was never there - and will probably sue the church.

The Deacons said the rules had been changed recently, and David is now covered by the current employment rules for lay-people, which means he should have been issued written warnings, etc., before being dismissed. Shaun, also a member of the church, had written his letter of resignation last week, but Jan declined to mention this. She did mention that Nigel, another member who is a prison officer, has also handed in his resignation.

The Deacons admit that they handled the whole business badly, and did things wrongly, in not following correct procedures. They have had to pay David's full wages, while he's been absent for the last six months, and will have to pay his full wages for the entire length of his Sabbatical, although they'll never see him again.

Saturday 16th July

11 AM Horrific gales. Torrential downpours.

Katie visits me, for 'tea and shrapnel'. As I walk her home, we bump into Peter Eagle, who lives with Mark in Gensing House, a home for 'retired alcoholics', where I managed to get them a room together. I enquire after Mark, and he tells me they fight like cat and dog all the time. Pete does not drink so much these days, but he tells me Mark comes home drunk every night, and keeps him awake. Every morning they argue with each other.

As we walk away Katie says:

'He fancies me, you know. He asked me out for a drink, but I declined. Then he spotted me, as I was walking past the New England Pub. He was standing outside, smoking, and begged me to have a quick drink with him. I went in and had a squash, and now he keeps pestering me. In the pub he was telling everyone I was his girlfriend, but I've never been out with him, and I don't even fancy him.'

I walk Katie to her cottage, and on the way down London Road, bump into Peter Eagle again. I can see he's wound up.

'I just decked some scroat,' he tells me. 'I was walking down to the "office", on the seafront, when some kid on a skateboard says, "Get out of the way, Grand-dad!" I told him, "Don't you speak to me like that."'

He says, 'Fuck off, or I'll put you on your ass.'

'I put my stick against the wall, (he demonstrates) and walked right up to him, and snarled at him.' (which he now does to me) He continues, 'Put me on the deck, will you?' as he glares angrily. 'So I grabbed my stick and swung it, giving him a vicious blow across the ear, like this.' (slow-motion demonstration) He went down, of course, out cold.'

I tell Peter he did a grand job, and take my leave of him, wondering if the incident really occurred, or if this was a vain effort to intimidate me, because of Katie.

Sunday 17th July

11 AM. Miserable rainy day.

Don't bother going to church, as I can't get out of bed. I would have to walk in the rain half-a-mile to the underground car-park, to get the Jag out, as the bus company only operates a fictional service to the Ridge, on a Sunday morning.

Headlines this week carry the good news that the fishermen will no longer be forced to throw fish back in the sea, if they exceed their quota. I was told that, as Cod were so scarce, they could only land one of these fish on each trip. Under mounting pressure the E.U. announced plans to prevent this needless waste. There is also a big photo of the RX-58, on the front page. This is the boat Captain Pugwash works on, and he has told me I can join him and the crew, for a day's photo-shoot, when I'm not busy.

Two men were injured, after a fight between five people broke out at Bottle Alley, along the seafront.

Michael Reid 20, of Southwater Road, Mugsborough, was sent to prison for thirty days for nicking a crate of lager from the Co-Op in London Road. He also assaulted staff who tried to stop him leaving. He has a string of previous offences.

The old college in Mugsborough, which recently had all the lead from its roof stolen, was set on fire last Monday. It took two hours to control the blaze.

Twelve hundred homes were blacked out as thieves cut through large copper cables carrying eleven thousand volts. The police say it's very lucky nobody was killed. The public seems to disagree.

Scores of jobs are at risk, as the magnificent new college in town faces drastic cuts in Government money.

John Lynes, a local peace campaigner from Mugsborough, has come home safely after being locked up in an Israeli jail, for attempting to support Palestinians in the illegally occupied West Bank.

The local Council has admitted losses of over a million pounds in council tax.

A jobless man attacked a Good Samaritan, as he tried to defuse an argument. Tyrone Avis 24, pleaded guilty to assault, and also admitted breaching a conditional discharge, imposed on him after he was convicted of criminal damage. Mr Avis and his friend were larking about when a cyclist narrowly missed them. He was going to have a go at the cyclist, after shouting abuse at him, when a passer-by, Aaron Kirk stepped in. Avis punched Mr. Kirk and got him in a headlock, and a violent struggle ensued, and both men ended up fighting on the ground. Samantha Wingfield, defending, said:

'The defendant accepts he had a fair amount to drink, and through a lack of judgment - perhaps due to drink - punched Mr. Kirk.' Magistrates gave Avis an eighteen-month conditional discharge for the criminal damage offence, and a nine-month community service order for the assault charge. He must also pay eighty-five pounds costs.

My friend the Hatchet, from the soup kitchens, earns the comedy spot this week. He stole several shirts from St. Michael's Hospice while he was drunk, but was arrested when they fell out from under his jacket. Three days later he stole food from Iceland stores, and a week later was caught stealing a four-pack of drink from Morrison's supermarket. He also pleaded guilty to failing to comply with a dispersal order. He was given an eighteen-month conditional discharge, and a fifty pound fine.

Monday 18th July

10 AM Showery day.

Katie rings to tell me that Nannette is in a state. When I go round there, she tells me she was walking the dog in Warrior Square gardens, when this old guy started screaming blue murder, literally. He was walking round, carrying his shopping and shouting: 'Murder! Mur-der!', at the top of his voice.

I calm her down, for I explain this old boy is well known in Mugsborough. He has Tourette's, and sometimes sits on a bench in Bottle Alley, barking like a dog. She says the most disturbing thing was everybody just ignored him and carried on walking. I told her even if he was normal, that would be the standard Mugsborough response, so not to worry.

7.30 PM

Down at the Sally Ann we have twenty-two in tonight. But, we will have to shut for the next two weeks. Susan and Peter (Captain Mannering) are going on holiday, and we can't operate with just Narco-Gary and myself left, to control the rabble. Hope kitchen can't get enough volunteers to open on Saturdays, so it's shutting its doors throughout August, because many there are also on holiday.

The irony is when Rollie and Rosie applied to return to Hope Kitchen after they were ejected, like myself, for giving lifts and money to the homeless, they were told there were not welcome - even though Rollie is an ordained minister. They sent me a text after their rejection. – 'Welcome to the Leper Colony.'

'Hope' is now so short of staff they will have to close for a whole month.

Speak to 'Wavin Dave', who tells me he's had to leave the 'crisis' accommodation that Seaview gave him. He was placed there because his previous landlord had his property condemned by Health and Safety. When Dave applied to Seaview they agreed he didn't make himself homeless, so they gave him temporary accommodation for a maximum of four weeks. When he went to Housing they told him he was also eligible for a grant of one month's rent, on another flat. It appears he could also get a crisis loan for a deposit, which he can re-pay from his weekly benefit. He has found this Studio flat (euphemism for a bed-sit kitchen, toilet all-in-one) for three hundred a month. When he returned to housing to get the money they promised him, he finds there's been a change of staff, due to the cutbacks, and, naturally they've lost his file. He now has to submit a load of new forms over again, detailing all the jobs he has applied for since being unemployed, and all the new paperwork for a crisis loan and deposit for the first month's rent. The fact he's dyslexic doesn't help.

Wavin-Dave was sent to 'Argos' in Hastings, for a thirteen-week 'Unpaid Work Trial'. He did not receive any remuneration but had to work full-time, in order to

continue claiming his benefit of J.S.A., which was £140 every fortnight. He was promised that someone there would be taken on for a paid position, when the trial ended.

The trouble with these schemes was that with so many unpaid workers, there was no need to employ any more regular staff, and have to pay them regular wages. When this scheme first started it was limited to charities, but in order to massage the statistics, it was extended to commercial outlets like 'Argos' and 'Poundstretchers', which had as many as ten 'slaves' working every week at no cost. Recently the European Court of Human Rights declared in favour of a young girl, who took the Government to task over the schemes, and they are now changed to thirty-nine hour apprenticeships. The standard wage for any of these is £2.40 per hour. They last at least a year, and could be something like bar work, the basics of which can be learnt in a matter of hours.

Tuesday 19th July

10 AM Sunny day. Warm and calm.

Bump into Bridget the Midget on the bus to town. She tells me she's on her way to Dance Class. She weighs about sixteen stone, and I inquire if she's trying to lose weight.

'Goodness, no. I'm learning Ballet,' she tells me. 'You know I've got my own house. Well, I'm going to charge people two pounds a time, to come and watch me dance.' Something about the Sugar Plum Fairy flashes across my mind, and I decide I'd rather pay two pounds not to see her dance.

4 Pm

Meet Big Steve, on the way home. He has completely blown it with Stacy, at the British Heart Foundation, which is sad, for Stacy has great ambition to help the underdogs in society. As I pass his shop I pop in and we go for coffee. Stacy is in a bad mood as he has a kidney infection, which is giving him grief. I walk with him, round to the new Station Plaza Clinic.

This is a great new facility, which is a walk-in-centre for those without doctors, or anyone who needs to get checked out right away. It has magnificent facilities and

even a Ping-Pong table which you can use while you wait to be seen. I wonder how the coming 50% cutbacks will affect it's funding.

Wednesday 20th July

10 AM. Showery all day.

There is a good crowd this morning in the café, as they know we are closing for four weeks, after this morning's breakfast. There is lots of idle chatter about a 'Brown Dwarf' star heading into our atmosphere. There are one and a half million pages about it on the Internet and U-Tube, mostly by a guy called Terall, who reckons this could cause an 'ELE', or Extermination Level Event. For that reason the heavy mass object is called ELEnin. It seems a coincidence that the Russian astronomer Elenin Leonard, who discovered it last year, has the same name. The street people seem more interested in surviving this event than the rest of us, because the Internet says only people used to hardship and hunger are likely to last, and poor backward societies used to rough living, have more of a chance than their pampered cousins.

9 PM

My lodger, Shaun, celebrates his birthday today, or rather doesn't, because his son Darren was killed in a car crash on this date. He was only twenty and died exactly four years ago, to the day. I was with Shaun, in Hope Kitchen that night, when he got the news. We were all in shock, and Dr. Mike Cooper, who was in charge that evening said to me, 'I can't believe it. Shaun has just given his life to God, and got cured of a brain tumour, and now his son is taken from him.'

I replied 'I believe as a Christian, that God will let anything happen to anybody, at any time.'

Thursday 21st July

9 AM Very sunny all day.

Shaun treks up to 'Heroin' house for a crisis loan. This is refused because his JSA (Job Seeker's Allowance) has not yet come through. He must see a Claims Advisor, so makes an appointment for 3 p.m. tomorrow. He then heads for the Tax Office, on the forth floor of Ocean House. He is now informed he needs a CRCH, a

new card which replaces his old CIS (self-employed) and his UTR, which is a 'Unique Tax Reference'. When asked if he has paid tax in this country, he says: 'Yes, of course. I even got my CIS card here when I was working on the six houses in Sandwich Drive.'

They ask him: 'What was the name of the company?'

'I can't remember,' he replies.

'Well, we can't find you on the computer. When did you last pay tax?'

'When I was working with John Nash, doing up the Love café, in Norman Road, he was a contractor for Clockwork Estates. I was earning a hundred pounds a day for several months, so I should have a few bob in tax-returns coming to me.'

3 PM

I hear from Steve in the Computer Shop below Saxon Chambers, my old home, that the Jew-Boys have put the building up for sale, which means they can easily empty it, by giving the other tenants Accelerated Re-possession Orders, for we all signed Section 21 notices, when we moved in, for HAS insisted the six-month 'Short-hold' tenancies would automatically be renewed.

Steve reckons they will never sell it, for they're being really greedy in their asking price. He tells me they bought Saxon Chambers for two hundred and sixty-five thousand, and have just put it on the market, for half a million.

If they do sell, he reckons he and Ed will have their leases bought up, and may have to move out. Steve says, 'The Jew-Boys will have made another killing on the market, but they own half of Mugsborough anyway, operating from different companies in Stamford Hill, and all without registered Directors.'

Friday 22nd July

10 AM Sunny and Warm.

Walk up to Bridgebuilders Referral Centre, for my bowl of fruit. It is nice to see my friend, Tim Harvey there, as I haven't seen him for ages. He is having a hard time. He's just had a psychotic episode. The police were called, and he was sectioned for a spell. We play games for a few hours on the new 'Wii-PlayStation' upstairs, where they have a large room with a screen. Never tried this machine before and Tim beats me, no problem.

1 PM

On my way home, I drop in to see Nannette. She's out walking the dog, so I knock on Susie Crack's door as she lives just round the corner. I can hear she's in, but she takes a few minutes to answer, and apologizes, saying she thought it might be the TV Licensing people. Susie, like most crack addicts, is very excitable and unpredictable.

She's stressed out as it's her grandson's first birthday, and she's got no money for a card or a present. She never has any money, for though her place is a 'crack-house', the people who come to score just pay her to get their 'rocks', and give her a slice of the action so she usually has crack - but no money. Then they go out in the backyard to 'skag-up', for crack has a very distinctive smell, that lingers a long time.

I 'borrow' her a tenner, which she swears she will pay back when she gets her 'wages' on Wednesday. I tell her to forget it, knowing full well that I'll never see it again.

3 PM

Shaun goes to his interview for a crisis loan. Trouble is this interview was with a Claims Advisor, in order that a Jobseeker's Agreement could be drawn up for him. It turns out the 'Claims line' closed after 3 p.m. In two weeks he's got an interview with a Personal Advisor. Today they asked what are the minimum wages he would work for. He told them the current rate for a joiner is a hundred and twenty a day, and the minimum he'd work for would be a hundred a day. They told him he might be deemed as deliberately pricing himself out of the job market.

Saturday 23rd July

10 AM Torrential rain.

Get a bell from the Kid. He tells me he was coming out of Warrior Square Station last night, a bit drunk, and wearing his padded 'Puffer' jacket. He noticed a gang of black 'hoodies' sauntering over the bridge as he was crossing it. This bridge is the only footway from the platform to the road. As they passed by, he heard a ripping sound, so stopped to look round. His jacket sleeve had been sliced open with a

craft knife, and he noticed a trail of little feathers had fallen from it. He realized what had happened, and was just grateful the blade had not penetrated his skin.

Many people get sliced with these in Mugsborough, and they take ages to heal, for the cut is razor sharp. The Kid glared at the ferals, who had stopped and turned round. They were leering at him, and physically daring him to make a move. He just stared at them, trying to remember faces. Their clothes were immaterial, literally, as they all wore black hoodies. He decided 'Discretion is the better part of Valour', and walked away, slowly.

8 PM

There is some local election coming up, and there is no Hope kitchen tonight. I meet some of the boys in the 'office' and they are discussing politics. Jimbo declares he always votes Labour, for they give him a free pen and a balloon.

'Them other parties never gave me anything, so I'll stick to Labour,' he declares.

I am stunned that anyone would vote on these principles, but also wonder how many others are like him, in Mugsborough

Sunday 24th July

10 AM Very warm and sunny day.

Went to church this morning and a total stranger came up. He says he hasn't seen me since before Christmas. He is clean-shaven and dressed in a smart suit, and carrying a Bible.

'You don't remember me, do you, he says?' As I stumble for recognition, he says, 'It's Stewart, Duvet Man, as I used to be called.'

I cannot believe my eyes. I would never have recognized him in a million years. Even in the old days he did actually carry a book round with him all the time, and was very well read; we had all sorts of discussions on Theology and Philosophy.

In regards to reading, the papers report this week that an attempt to keep the Seafront Concert Hall of St Mary's-in-the-Castle from closing has failed, for the Government has just refused a grant of four and a half million pounds for the purpose.

Police are hunting a man over the sexual assault of a fifteen-year-old in an alleyway, in Mugsborough.

Another cannabis factory was discovered in Marina in Mugsborough last Wednesday, July 13th. Five thousand pounds worth of plants, and twelve hundred pounds worth of resin were seized. Considering these are found nearly every week it is a puzzlement to me that the growers don't move shop, down the road, to Hastings.

Bouncers in Yates Public House found David Pilkington snorting cocaine in the toilet. His brief Ronan Crummy said: 'He was so drunk someone took advantage of him, by selling him the drug.' He was fined two hundred and fifty pounds with eighty- five costs.

The annual Mugsborough Festival, in Warrior Square Gardens last Saturday, was a washout, due to torrential downpours.

The Burton St. Leonard's Society is to host a year-long program of events, culminating in a ball at the Royal Victoria Hotel, on July 28th. 2012. James Burton was born 250 years ago, in 1761, and is acknowledged world-wide, as the central figure in Georgian development, well known for his work around Regents Park, Bloomsbury and St. John's Wood, as well as planning and founding St Leonard's - now Mugsborough.

Stuart Green 36, of Carisbrooke Road, Mugsborough pleaded guilty to burglary last week when the court heard that he smashed the window of Earl's Bakery, when he was hungry and penniless. He stole two large cakes out the window, but they turned out to be polystyrene display items. Mark Kateley, prosecuting, told the court, 'He did not quite "have his cake and eat it"'.

Finally joke of the week. David Shields, whom Judge Madison described as an extremely dangerous rapist, having already served ten years in prison for rape, has walked free, after the C.P.S. charged him with an offence which ceased to exist seven years ago. Reporting restrictions were lifted, after the judge declared that Shields had been charged with a defunct offence, and that the C.P.S. should not seek a re-trial.

Monday 25th July

10 AM Very warm muggy day.

On my way to 'the hole in the wall' to draw some cash out, Mouse comes stumbling up to me. He is bleeding profusely from his left finger, and explains that he was trying to make a hole in a leather belt with the buckle, when it slipped and pierced his finger. Although he sleeps rough he had managed to procure a small bandage, through which the blood was still seeping. Sensing a run in the Jag, to hospital, I asked if he needed stitches.

'No way,' he responds, 'I'm not waiting six hours in the 'Inquest.' But have you got the price of a beer? I need a drink.' - as you do!

I give him a bit of shrapnel, and later feel guilty I didn't offer it first, as I realize when someone corners me at the cashpoint they are bound to want some spare change. I don't mind in the least, if I've got it, for recently I decided to half my tithing to the church, to help the street people, as most of the pastors I know seem to go on holiday every year, while a lot of their flock just can't afford to do so.

8 PM

No soup kitchen tonight, but Katie comes round to 'borrow' some Valium. She tells me Paul wasn't mugged. He knocked himself out when he was riding his skateboard. He now says that he ran into a lamppost, but was too embarrassed to admit it at the time.

Tuesday 26th July

11.30 AM Muggy sticky day.

As I'm passing the Norman Arms, in Mugsborough, I bump into J.J. who is outside smoking and drinking with his brother and Jimbo. His brother Stewart is not really a drinker, like myself, but has been known to embark on the odd binge. J.J. gives me his usual bear-hug, and I make a mental note to run a bugrake over myself when I get home. I don't like mixing the breed - as they say on the street. Stew is now part of the crew, having earned his colours when he jimmed open a 'one-armed bandit' on the seafront amusement arcade. He got a bagful of coins, and good luck to him, for gambling is a mug's game – but we do live in Mugsborough.

I hear the Kid has just gotten engaged to Layla. I can't believe this, for he's either stopped drinking or switched poisons. J.J. clarifies this, for he tells me later he's

looking to give the Kid a good slap, for he's found out that he is now 'slinging' crack.

J.J. says:

'When I find him, I'll stuff him in a wheelie bin,' pointing to a large plastic monstrosity, parked nearby. J.J. cuts to the quick, and has a way with words, but when he starts giving it large things tend to kick off, and more often than not the Old Bill turn up. He's usually on an ASBO, or a Dispersal order, so they drag him off, to everyone's delight, for he usually puts up a fight.

2 PM

As I'm walking home along the Mugsborough seafront I bump into Strumpet. She is with Eric, a 'tasty-looking' scroat whom I've never met before. He is walking a Pit-bull, which are supposed to be illegal, but I'm told you can actually get licences for them. She is very pleased to see me and gives me a kiss and a hug. Straightaway I can see Eric is not happy at this, and keeps glaring at me. When I shake hands with him we grip firmly, but he hangs on too long. As we stand there, our grips tighten as Strumpet prattles on, oblivious to all this. Suddenly he lets go, and I make a graceful exit.

Wednesday 27th July

9 AM Very hot and Sunny,

No Wednesday breakfast this morning as the café is closed, for renovations while Pete and Sue are away, so I go fishing off a Groyne on the beach.

J.J. sees me on the beach as I'm fishing. Like most fishermen I'm useless at catching fish, but we all like an excuse to stand in the sun, looking busy. I've only caught one mackerel even though they are running and shoaling in front of me and jumping out of the water. The guy on the Groyne next to me has caught dozens: 26 in twenty minutes. He has loads of feathers on loads of hooks, and I suspect he probably knows what he's doing.

J.J. is hungry, but I've got no shrapnel in my shorts, so I give him the fish. Now he's happy, but not quite. He tells me this morning in bed his phone went off; it was the police in Lancashire:

'Mr. John Gorman? Hallo, it's P.C. so and so here. I'd like to talk to you.'

'Oh, yeah,' says John. 'Fuck off, before I throw this phone at the wall.'

He was just going into one, for he's not keen about Old Bill waking him up, when the copper says: 'It's about your daughter, Wendy.'

'Now you've got my attention, officer,' says J.J.

He explains she's been arrested for dealing drugs, but has been bailed into the custody of her aunt.

'I was beside myself,' he says 'I'd no idea she was into drugs. She's only fifteen, for God's sake.'

J.J. calls in his social worker, He does not want his sister looking after the girl. The social worker makes a few phone calls and an injunction is issued against Auntie.

He tells me: 'She should be in my care,' (Debatable) He continues: 'Of course I'd have to knock the drink on the head.'

I tell him: 'That's easier said than done, J.J., for you're oiled most of the time.'

Anyhow he's going up there tomorrow, for he has a return ticket paid for, he laughs, by Social Services.

I continue fishing, as J.J. stumbles off down the beach.

Thursday 28th July

11 AM Hot and Muggy.

Go round to visit Nannette, who is out of hospital, after a successful operation, to put a stent in her liver, releasing the pressure in her veins. She is in bed recuperating and Susie Crack is in attendance. I have a chat and a coffee, and then take my leave of them.

1 PM

Have gone to Bridgebuilders Referral Centre, for a bowl of fruit. I can't have my Garlic bread any more and feel grieved about this as the smell is killing me, as the others indulge. One guy up there suffers from Tourette's. When he sits eating in the café he sounds like he's spitting into his food all the time. It can put you off, until you get used to it, and he is actually a very nice guy.

Tim Harvey has purchased some cheap tobacco, which smells awful. But he doesn't seem to notice for he always lights up with a match, and the smell of the phosphorous blends beautifully with the pong of this Russian rubbish. The packet actually states that it not only has benzene and formaldehyde in it, but also ferrous

cyanide. I tell him they use cyanide to kill people and formaldehyde to preserve them, but he assures me there must be some tobacco in there as well. Most consumers bestow the same respect on these products, as they do on the Heroin that's laced with Anthrax.

6 PM

Steve, the agent of my current landlord rings to tell me that Andy, the ice-cream man in the basement, was actually given notice two months before he went to jail. But if you are locked up, your Housing Benefit still gets paid whereas, if you end up in hospital for a few weeks, it is not. So the landlord could not evict him until he was released. He has taken this to court now that Andy's loose again, and has acquired an eviction order but there is such a backlog in this area that the bailiffs won't be free to serve it for a number of months. Trouble is, his clients have started coming back, and going round by my bedroom in the middle of the night, banging on his window, squealing:

"Andy, you in? Andy, got any gear?"

Friday 29th July

10 AM Very warm day.

Pop round to see how Nannette is. She is on the mend, and tells me they had to change three quarters of her blood. Her liver had packed up completely, and they only gave her a twenty-per-cent chance of survival. When her veins started bursting she was offered an operation for repairing them, but it only had a thirty-per-cent success rate. She had blood platelets in the 'Inquest', but they only had one dose there, so she was flown by helicopter, to the Royal Chelsea Hospital in London. They gave her loads of white platelets, gluing all the veins that had torn and prayed her blood would clot. Against all odds, she pulled through, and is now home with the stent in her liver.

She tells me Sister Sandie is now on just one bottle of wine a day, and is on a Home Detox program. Every time she finishes a measured glass of wine, she has to drink the same amount in water.

Molly is still knocking it back, but two out of three in the 'Zone', isn't half bad.

2PM

More noise from 'Aggro-Andy' in the basement. He is thumping away on his Bongo drums on a diet of Jungle music, and the repetitious thuds carry all over the house. I feel he should be deported to Gabon, where he would probably thrive, like the current corrupt president, Ali 'Bongo'.

7 PM

My phone credit has suddenly expired for some reason. I check my text message and find six really obscene texts, from some obscure setup, offering me videos of some sex-action: 'To watch, simply Press "Star"'. I save my credit.

Saturday 30th July

10 AM Warm and humid.

Today the R.N.L.I. hold their annual Charity concert down the Old Town. They have their own enclosure and all the street people are welcome. This is about the only day they can run riot without being arrested, for it's not policed the way the Mugsborough festival is, where they're searched and banned if a can of drink is found. I am mingling with a few of the boys, and hear Strumpet in the background. I really like her, but she has a mouth like a septic tank. In the old days butter wouldn't melt in her mouth she was so refined. Andy Fish is here, and seems as normal as he'll ever be and needless to say the crew is ever present, with J.J. giving it large, as usual.

'Micky and Michelle' were dogging as usual. Everyone got totally paralytic, but there was no aggro as we were all listened to the Heavy-Metal bands. Gay Ray was there, prancing and dancing, with Mouse, and Suzie Crack turned up with Big Jay and the French woman. No doubt Heavy Eddy was out pulling the birds, for he didn't bother the Kid who stayed with Layla but looked a lot the worse for wear.

Jimbo had invited Tweedle Dum, and Tweedle Dee and the three of them made their own little space in the crowd, as they bopped around.

The 'Gavvers' (police) were conspicuous by their absence, which was fortunate otherwise they'd have arrested everyone on the spot. It was a free-entry concert but collectors were going round with tins for donations, but everybody was warned to beware of imposters, which probably gave the crew a few ideas.

Sunday 31st July

9 AM Very hot and sunny.

Before I head for church I pop round the 'office'. The crew is all there, and being entertained by Dino-two-Tunes. When he finishes his two songs he tells the boys what it was like inside, as if they don't already know. He says he was put on the 'Vulnerable Wing' because some scroats in there knew him and threatened him. On this wing he mixed with the 'brown trousers', the 'civil' prisoners, who can wear their own clothes. They are mostly people who haven't paid their Community charge; or maintenance; or fines; or have broken a court order.

There are different sections for sex offenders, who get NONCE notices on their cells. This stands for 'Not On Normal Courtyard Exercise', as they probably would end up being the football in a football match. Then there are the 'Yellow Stripes'. These are prisoners who have made escape attempts, unsuccessfully, or they wouldn't still be locked up. Dino tells us that when you do try and escape you get charged with stealing Government Property, the uniform that you're wearing, for there is no set charge for attempted breakouts. Interesting!

Last Monday the police arrested five men for rape. A local woman in her twenties was enjoying a night out with her partner, when she disappeared in the early hours of the morning. She had been taken to a flat and raped while her partner searched for her. Detective Inspector Williams called the assault 'traumatic and shocking' Police are seeking another two men caught on CCTV.

On the same day, 23rd, two young girls were victims of sexual assaults in Alexandra Park. Earlier in the day, two other language students were attacked while waiting for a bus. The two girls, both seventeen, had their hair pulled and were punched in the face. A passer-by intervened, and neither of the teenagers was seriously injured.

Also in Alexandra Park last week a gang of three assaulted a group of Spanish students. They approached them and started hurling racist abuse. They then assaulted two boys and a girl in the group. One of the attackers was black and of stocky build, and in the last two attacks the attackers were all young women

Alvin Atkins 37, of Kent Road, Mugsborough has been charged with causing death by dangerous driving, when he hit a car driven by Daniel Martin 31, from Horsham.

So much rubbish is now littering the streets of Mugsborough that people are beginning to call the area Eyesore-on-the-Sea.

My old Pastor, Michael Adelasoye 51, has had his appeal against his four-year sentence quashed. He later received another three and a half years for mortgage fraud.

Finally this week's funny corner. A man had his arms and legs and hip and both ankles broken when he was run over, just outside the 'Inquest' hospital. The car then proceeded to demolish a large storage hut. The driver was ninety-five and his passenger was ninety-three years old.

CHAPTER TWELVE AUGUST

Monday 1st August

9 AM Very sunny and hot.

Spoke to Leo, my son's friend. He tells me his stepson Ryan has just been locked up for three years, for burglary. He is only seventeen.

11 AM

Bump into Andy Fish along the seafront. He is a big strong guy with a ruddy complexion, which makes him look pissed, even when he's not. He tells me everyone is hunting for the Kid because he's beaten up Arlette, his old girlfriend. 'That's not like him,' I say to Andy. He replies: 'Not normally, but he's on the pipe now, for Layla turned him onto crack.' It seems what J.J. told me about the Kid is true. Andy Fish seems to be normal now, or as normal as he ever was.

2 PM

It's my birthday today, and I receive a special present, for I have to go for a Colonoscopy this afternoon. When the doctor told me, I got this confused with a Colostomy, and nearly had a fit. When she explained I felt a bit better - but not much.

When I arrive at the 'Inquest', after a long wait I am ushered into a little room, by a nurse. I notice a very long flexible metal tube, resting by the sink.

'Trouble with the drains?' I enquire.

'Not exactly,' she answers. It transpires that this implement was going to grace my rectum, but when I saw it first, it never actually occurred to me that they would use something like that on a live person. Anyhow, as I lay on the bed I am able to see the procedure on a monitor in front of me. It was fascinating to watch this metal snake bend its way round my intestines, until it stopped, and the doctor said: 'I think we've hit a blockage.'

As he urged the beast forward, I watched with interest as it started to prod at this blockage. It was just like watching a movie ('Aliens' comes to mind) when all of a sudden reality hits me, as I jerk with pain, and realize that what I'm looking at is actually happening, inside me, right now.

They tell me the results will be forwarded to my GP.

Tuesday 2nd August

10 AM Very humid day.

Pop into 'His Place Café'. I know there is no breakfast there tomorrow, but hope to meet my friend Richard the Landlord. I'm going to see if he can give a friend of mine a room. I tell him all about Misfit, and his bad shoulder and the fact he's on the streets, and awaiting an operation, but he informs me he has no vacant properties at present. While I'm there Pastor Chris tells me Hope kitchen must stay open one day a week, for all the others are now shut. He mentions that Oliver, who attends Duke Road Church, which Chris runs, went down to 'Hope' kitchen, and was so abusive to George the doorman, that they had to call the police. Oliver is now banned from Hope kitchen, and the Café, and even the Church.

10 PM

Watching the news, with Shaun, my lodger, when a piece comes up about Jim Devine being released from prison. He was the Labour M.P. for Livingston, who was sentenced to sixteen weeks for fiddling his expenses. He has just been released after serving only four weeks of his sentence. He claims he is happy to be released from behind bars. Shaun is incensed.

He tells me: 'There are no bars in Stanford Hill Prison. It's a category 'D' prison, on the Isle of Sheppey and I spent time there, myself.' Shaun tells me he was transferred from Brixton, after eleven months, and sent there to finish his sentence. He goes on:

'They gave me a key to my own room, and when I first arrived I noticed they just had a little picket fence you could step over, as a perimeter. I worked in the stables, where they kept four Clydesdale horses, and got a job putting new roofs and doors on the building. Sometimes the prisoners would be allowed out to work on houses on the Island. We made a lot of money, smuggling out the Prison blue-striped shirts, which had HMP (Her Majesty's Prison) on them, for they used to sell for fifty quid each. That place is a holiday camp, and there are no bars to be seen anywhere. They farm their own produce and I could take a shower any time I wanted, even at three in the morning, whereas in Brixton I got one shower a week.

You could even mingle with other prisoners in your cell; all night if you wanted, as long as you didn't make too much noise, or play loud music. There was an Olympic sized swimming pool, and football fields, and tennis courts. We even had squash courts and a cricket field and a Badminton court. They had three pool-tables, and a full-size snooker table, which I thought must be for the officers, when I first saw it. You could even get your own snooker cue, and your own darts sent in, for the dart boards.'

I ask Shaun do they cater for day visitors.

Wednesday 3rd August

10 AM Mild day.

On my way to Bridgebuilders, for a cheap bowl of fruit, but no garlic bread, as my guts are getting worse and I'm now booked in for a Cat Scan. We are all getting ready for Pirates Day, on Friday. Last year the whole town beat the world record for the number of people in pirate costume, and this was entered in the Guinness Book of Records. This year we aim to make the biggest 'Skull and Crossbones' in the world. You must have a cutlass or sword, and eye patch and blunderbuss, etc. so the Referrals are making up costumes and accessories for the occasion. I have booked a helicopter flight, as I need to photograph the remains of the pier.

1 PM

When I get home and go to the 'loo' I notice blood in my urine, and nip along to the doctors, to get her opinion. She tells me we need to slip a little camera 'up my tube' to see what's happening. I am not happy about this, and as it turns out, I have good reason.

Thursday 4th August

8 AM Sunny to start. Then rain.

Up early to visit Captain Mannering at his yearly Boot Camp, near Rhodes Minnis, which is his version of an annual holiday. It is in a field in the middle of nowhere. He is there with his wife, Sue, and his three sons, and their girlfriends. This camp is at the top of the North Downs, and consists of six tents, and a toilet tent, called the 'Honey-pot'. They are all clustered together at the top of a field, and the boys have

set up a rifle-range, with targets. (see photos) The Captain and his wife have a large army tent with 'block and tackle' stays.

They even have two wooden beds in there with chairs and a table, and Peter has an artist's easel and canvas to paint on. They use a chemical toilet in their tent while the 'hoi-polio', who need to get up in the middle of the night, make do with the Honeypot.

There are little 'Tilley' lamps festooned between the tents and they have fresh water from a hose that runs the full length of the field, four hundred yards, to a standpipe at the entrance.

I drive the Jag slowly over the field, to the far end and am given a warm welcome. I am given my own one-man tent, and the boys have even squeezed a blow-up mattress in there, complete with two pillows. Unadulterated luxury. Almost like an open prison, but with no Olympic swimming pool.

The boys and girls have a four-man tent each, and we also have a store tent, and a mess-tent with eight fold-up chairs, for the meals. There is also a kitchen shelter with four gas rings, fed off a bottle, and this covered space also sports shelving and a table.

I take a shower, after my long hot drive, in the shower-tent, which works by hanging a plastic bag containing a gallon of water in the hot sun.

After a lovely meal, cooked by Sue, who runs His Place café, I try my hand on the range, and then we sit around the huge brazier, chatting until it gets dark. I retire for the night but we all wake up to a torrential downpour. The campsite reverts to a quagmire, and the boys plod round in their bare feet. I decide after a few hours of this to make a run for home, as I have come up with a bad rash on my chest, where I lay topless in the grass, on the rifle-range.

Friday 5th August

9 AM Sunny warm day.

Up to Bridgebuilders early to join the rest of them, all bedecked in Pirate Costume. There is a lot of 'Arr'-ing and 'Shiver me timbers' going on, as I take a few photos of the Referrals, who have really made an effort. We had all been on a day-trip to France recently (see photos) and do get up to some fun and games.

As we walk down to the Old Town we encounter thousands of fellow pirates and there's not a Landlubber amongst them. Even the kids are festooned with swords and pistols, and everyone heads for the enclosure by the 'Stade'.

After helping to form a giant skull and crossbones, I head up the East Hill for my Helicopter ride, and manage to hang out the little window to take some great shots of the burnt-out pier.

Back at the Stade, a 'Johnny Depp' lookalike is entertaining the crowd with some swashbuckling activities, together with a ferocious troupe of drummers. The evening ends with a singsong of Pirate shanties, in the Stag pub, and everyone drinks lots of Pirate Ales. A good time was had by all, and I noticed - no aggro. Pity it can't be like this everyday.

Saturday 6th August

9 AM Warm and humid.

Get a call from Myrium. The lodger and myself are invited to lunch tomorrow. The last week has been a bit harrowing for Myrium. Every night she was woken by calls for prayer from the chaplaincy, about suicide attempts from Beachy Head. There is a twenty-four hour watch maintained by volunteers there and they ring her for prayer, any time of the night or day, when a situation becomes hazardous. Despite this, every other week on average, someone goes over.

The waitress in the pub, near the cliffs, told me she could always spot a 'jumper', when they come in. She claims they are different to the normal tourist, and usually come into the pub more than once. The most amazing thing is that people come here from all over the world; it's such a notorious spot. I also find it incredible that when four young men in a car, accidentally flew hundreds of feet off the cliff, all four survived.

3 PM

Bump into Mouse along the promenade in Mugsborough. He's just been to the 'office', where he learned a friend of his, Stuart Peat, of Carisbrooke Road just died from a heroin overdose. He was only twenty-nine, and was found by his four-year-old son.

Sunday 7th August

10 AM Warm muggy day.

I have to miss church this morning, as I am booked for a C.T. scan today, of all days. Myrium agrees to keep me company as I may not be able to drive home, and I want the moral support. I am worried because the note from the hospital says to warn them if you are allergic to iodine, as they inject you with a huge amount to scan your system. When I had my spinal probe I woke up and felt my back was on fire. I put that down to the procedure, but when I had a bath, realized it was the iodine they had painted on my back, to sterilize it.

As we arrive at the hospital I am given half-an-hour to drink a few litres of water, but I suspect it's not just water.

So they now tell me to expect a metallic taste in my mouth with a nauseous feeling, and also the sensation that I've just peed myself. This sounds like great fun! As the cannula is inserted, I am told I will notice a cold feeling in my body as the iodine flows round my veins. An injector pump is mounted above me for they need to fill my system with about a thousand 'c.c.s' of Iodine, as quick as possible. When I tell them I'm allergic to iodine they just say this is a different sort, but I'm laying there thinking this must be what it's like for prisoners on Death Row, who have to die by Lethal Injection. But I survive their brand of Iodine and it's not half as bad as I feared, and soon I'm out having a cup of tea, in case I feel dizzy.

There are bad riots in London, which started yesterday and last until Wednesday. Some real atrocities take place, and efforts are made by local ferals to spread the unrest down here. Fortunately the police have got their act together and blocked off the main shopping precinct and all the shops are closing early.

I read that a man and a woman were assaulted at the beach party last week, and worry it might have been the Ducati Kid and Layla.

Another Spanish student was mugged on Tuesday evening in the town centre. He was punched and kicked and he had to be taken to hospital.

Pastor Michael's trial for mortgage fraud and forgery continues at the Crown Court in Croydon.

A man was punched to the ground when he told another customer in Asda's supermarket to stop swearing loudly in front of his two children.

Several motorcycles were stolen in a raid between 6 p.m. Monday evening and 5 a.m. Tuesday morning.

The toilet block on Mugsborough Seafront was destroyed in an arson attack last Saturday.

A teenage skateboarder attacked a van driver on Wednesday 27th, along Pevensey Road Mugsborough. The driver works for a charity for the Blind.

This week's comedy corner is about a million pounds' worth of Cannabis, being uncovered by police last Tuesday. (Sic) This was the largest drugs haul ever discovered here and was found in a disused restaurant in the White Rock. When I moved here after my eviction I noted my flat was next the White Rock Hotel so it's only a hundred yards away from where the find was made. Tunnels had been built into the cliff face, behind the White Rock Theatre, where the haul was discovered.

It's hardly worth mentioning that yet another Cannabis factory was found in Nelson Road, last Monday.

Monday 8th August

6 AM Hot and sunny, but very breezy.

Am woken early by the rumble of a truck thundering along the seafront. The roads have been badly damaged by the icy winter, and the big trucks are just making the potholes bigger: with a resonant frequency down to ten cycles a second they make all the buildings vibrate as they roar along.

10 AM

Down at the 'office' I bump into Tommy-two-toes. He lost the other three from his left foot, while angle-grinding a paving slab. He is patrolling Mugsborough, looking for open cellar-hatches next to pubs. Most get their deliveries today to stock up after the weekend. So there are lots of delivery trucks unloading kegs down these cellar-hatches. When he comes across one he waits until the men's backs are turned and then throws himself down the hatch - as you do.

Like a barrel of beer, he rolls to the bottom, but somehow always damages his back. He has had two successful claims so far, and that's in this town alone. He greets me like an old friend, and inquires if I still have the Jag, and puts a proposition to me. He says he is so good at timing the speed of a car he can throw

himself over the bonnet of an approaching vehicle, without getting hurt. He then asks me to run him over, at twenty miles-an-hour on a busy road. He assures me he won't get hurt, and tells me we'll make a fortune between us. He's done it many times and can make it look as if he's been flung over the bonnet. The real skill is acting as though he's damaged his back, but this is notoriously difficult to prove medically, one way or another. He always ends up in hospital, with suspected fracture or herniated discs. The insurance companies want to pay off quickly, in case his condition worsens, over time. We must pretend we've never met before and I must 'go into shock'. There's no need, for I'm in shock already, and have to decline his offer of fame and fortune.

Tuesday 9th August

9 AM Hot and sunny.

Meet up with the crew down at the 'office'. All the talk is of the recent 'Band on the Beach', as the R.N.L.I. day is called, by the street people. Fisherman Andy tells me the story of the biker from the Carlisle, (the toughest pub in town) whose girlfriend had disappeared. He went looking for her down at the party, and Mouse stood on his foot, as he was dancing about with Gay Ray. The biker decked little Mouse, as you do, but when he was leaving, Andy followed this guy across the road to the Blue Dolphin fish-shop. Andy 'pulled' him as he was leaving with his bag of chips, and he got such a stomping his jaw is now wired up. As Andy laughs, 'You have to be up early, to beat a fisherman.'

4 PM

Speak to Welsh Pete and Eileen, who tell me they've finally been evicted from number 55, St Mary's Road. This is the house owned by Dr. Lera in London, who runs a so-called charity. All their possessions are now in boxes as they await the arrival of the bailiffs, and I know how this feels - to be living out of a suitcase. Very depressing!

Although they have found a landlord who will accept just a deposit, and will waive the first month in advance, they have been refused a crisis loan, which you have to pay back anyway. Housing Services told them they have now stopped most crisis loans, because of recent Government cutbacks. When the bailiffs arrive all their

stuff will be chucked out on the street. They are gambling on the fact there is a terrific backlog of work for the bailiffs in this area. I can vouch for this, as our own resident drug-dealer should have been evicted six months ago.

Wednesday 10th August

9 AM Sunny, but very windy.

No Wednesday breakfast this morning, although Captain Mannering and his wife are back from holiday. Pastor Chris wants to renovate the café, as it needs a good lick of paint. My campsite rash has almost gone. It was so itchy I went to the doc's and she said it was an allergic reaction to 'jiggers' in the grass, which I laid on. I had read in yesterdays Daily Express about 'ticks', and worried that I might have got infected with them. I figured that I might have been bitten by one of these things, but she assures me they don't just drop off, even if you do go to the Sauna, which I did.

4PM

I meet Scouse Pete, who is walking up London Road, accompanied by Wobbly Bob, on his scooter. I am so pleased Pete is happy in his tower block; for I realize I wouldn't be; but of course I haven't been on the streets for over five years. The four blocks are called Kennedy, Roosevelt, Bevin and Churchill, and I wouldn't be seen dead in any of them. I think they should all be razed to the ground.

Pete needs furniture and stuff, but tells me his application for a 'Community Care Grant' has been refused, due to recent Government cutbacks. Wobbly Bob complains that the Wednesday breakfast isn't running and says we should all be back in harness.

9PM

The police are on the streets of Mugsborough until 4 a.m. today, because of fears the London riots might inspire copycat repercussions. Go visit Nannette, and her dog, which I take for a walk, as she's afraid to go out tonight. The dog loves me to walk him. I meet Micky and Michelle, on the way home from Nannette's, and they tell me 'Dino-two-tunes' died today, of an overdose. He was only thirty years old. Micky was with him, when he died, and gave him C.P.R., in vain as it happens. Later on, Micky and Michelle both testify, at Dino's Inquest.

Thursday 11th August

10 AM Warm and Windy.

Up to the 'Inquest' again for my optical invasion, down below, to which I'm not looking forward. As I lie on the table a very pleasant young doctor gives me a local anaesthetic up my tube. When I tell him it stings he says that shows it's working. I see a monitor where I can watch the telescope wind its way up my pipe. He tells me to stop clenching my behind, but I can't because it's getting quite painful. He says the reason is there's a narrowing of the urethra and he can't go any further, as he'd hurt me too much. He shows me this on the monitor, but I'm not sure what I'm looking at. He says: 'We'll have you in for a little investigation.' Doctors have a talent for understatement. What he's actually telling me is I need an operation. When the 'telescope' is pulled out a profusion of blood follows it. This is quite disconcerting, for it doesn't stop, and I need pads in my underwear for some time afterwards. Stupidly, I worry about blood loss, as I change my pads in the grubby public toilet along the hospital corridor. When I get home I only bleed when I urinate, and I'm okay in a day or so.

3 PM

I switch off for the day, and hit the sack, as I'm feeling sorry for myself.

Friday 12th August

11 AM Cloudy, but humid.

Speak to Sparky, down at the 'office'. He is 'Tagged', and on a curfew, for some burglary. He is wrestling with the tag-belt around his ankle, wondering how to lose it; so he can leave it in a drawer at home, and go about his illegitimate business. He is a 'speed-freak', who was known as the 'Urban Spaceman' when he was on four grams a day, for four years. He tells me he recently 'laid' a gram of speed on Dino, who might have jacked it - which would have killed him; or it may have been dodgy gear, for he died the next day. He tells me he can't wait to score some 'Ice' which is Crystal Meth, and probably the most potent drug around at the moment, but still very hard to find. It is a distilled form of crack, and currently rife in North America.

Much more insidious is a new drug from South America, called Scopolamine, which is currently the most dangerous drug in the world, bar none. It is derived from the Borrachero tree, which is very common in South America. It has sweet-smelling flowers called 'Angel Trumpets', which are toxic, but the flower pod itself is used to distil the drug, into a very fine powder. If a tiny amount is blown into a victims face the effect is dramatic, and immediate. The street name for it is Devil's Breath.

Too much can kill within five minutes, but usually victims are just reduced to a complete Zombie, with no free will and open to any suggestion. They will still look and react normally, but are open to any suggestions. They will gladly lead anyone back to their home and help them ransack it, or go into their bank and draw all their savings out, while behaving perfectly normal. They can be easily raped, and even persuaded to donate one of their organs. They will have no memory of what they have done, or what's been done to them, and the most worrying aspect is they will not remember who drugged them, or when, or the faces of the people who did it.

3 PM

Have bought some Colloidal Silver Spray, for my eyes. Rollie and Rosie recommended this medication. They also advised me to go to the Wellington Square health centre, where I have just spent a few hours, and eighty quid having a Quantum Biofeedback Health Scan. I discover after months of antibiotics to cure my eye infection, which proved futile anyway, that these have destroyed the 'Flora' in my gut, and I am now allergic to Gluten, and can't drink ordinary tea, or eat any yeast products. Also taboo are: onions; potatoes; tomatoes; wine and beers; and vinegar. My favourite snack used to be Marmite on toast, and my favourite meal was chips with garlic-mushrooms dosed with lots of vinegar; all currently off the menu.

I now need 'pro-biotics' and strong garlic tablets with Vitamin B to rebuild my immune system, which has deteriorated.

Saturday 13th August

10 AM Windy day. Cloudy.

Meet the crew, minus the Kid, down at the 'office'. They tell me Rudolph has given the Kid a good slap for stealing his girl, and beating up Arlette. Rudolph first met

Layla in Pastor Michael's church, where she helped serve the street people curries, after the Sunday Services. They were living together, next door to where 'Hannibal Lecter' ate parts of a woman. They were hoping to get married until Rudolph had his heart attacks, and went away to recuperate. This was when the Kid made his move on Layla.

Bump into Mitch. He has promised to give his amazing testimony to King's church tomorrow, and tells me last time he did this, at 'Welly Square' church, his left leg kept twitching, he was so nervous. He's dreading the prospect of facing five hundred people, but I tell him I'll be there with Bruce, my photographer friend, who's also going to testify. He worked with his wife, Caroline, in the slums of Madrid where addicts died every day from drugs.

Sunday 14th August

10 AM Hot and Sunny.

Up at King's this morning, and after Mitch gives his testimony, my friend Bruce tells of how he and his wife would go out to the slums in Madrid, where they used to live, to feed and care for the homeless. Most were drug addicts and there were hundreds of them living on the outskirts of the city in filthy huts and even on, and in, rubbish heaps. One evening they come across a commotion where an addict has just died: all his friends are wailing and beg Bruce to do something. Some medic there has declared the man to be dead, and they are all waiting for the 'meat-wagon' to cart him off to the morgue. Still, the people are in such a state, Bruce feels compelled to pray. He kneels on one knee and picks up the dead guy's wrist with two fingers, for he knew most of them had HIV. He feels it's hopeless, but senses God is telling him to do this. After he prays for a minute or so, he gets a shock, and suddenly jerks his fingers away from the guy's wrist. He has just felt a strong pulse spring into life. After a second or so the man jumps up, and everyone runs round declaring a miracle.

I just read that my local Pastor, Michael Adelasoye, has just had another three-and-a-half years added, for forgery, to his current four-year-sentence because he illegally obtained three hundred thousand pounds to buy his house. The court heard

his monthly repayments were being funded by his immigration scam, when hundreds of false marriages were conducted.

In the local Alexandra Park a Staffordshire terrier, which was off the lead, mauled to death a beloved puppy. The owner ran off, as you do.

Nathan Sinden 27, of Blackman Avenue, Mugsborough, was sent to Crown Court for sentencing, after being found guilty of spreading rumours on Twitter and Facebook about riots in Hastings. This coincided with the London riots and generated fears of bombs in supermarkets and fires in Warrior Square Station, causing many business and shops to close early, in panic.

A woman of thirty-five was treated for cuts and bruises after being subjected to a vicious sexual assault, which occurred in Magdelan Road, Mugsborough, last Saturday.

Dominic Chambers 28, of Church Road, Mugsborough was fined £563 pounds for failing to appear in answer to a charge of 'dog-fouling'. Councillor Scott said, 'We now have to adopt a no-nonsense approach to the problem of dog-mess, even if it means fines of over five hundred pounds, as the problem is now out of control.'

Natalie Leach 28, of Eversfield Place, Mugsborough, was given a three years nine month prison sentence for nine counts of theft and GBH. (Grevious Bodily Harm)

Finally this weeks' comedy spot.

Grigorlis Cigrajs 29, also from Eversfield Place was jailed for two years for dealing heroin and cocaine. He was caught in a car with the drugs and a significant amount of cash. Police suspicions were aroused when they noticed a set of weighing scales in the car, when they stopped him.

I fondly imagined when I moved from London Road to Eversfield Place, that this section of Mugsborough, along the seafront, should be more salubrious, but how wrong can you be?

Monday 15th August

7-30 PM Very sunny and hot, but windy day.

Down at the Sally Army, all the talk is of Dino, who died during the week. Clare, who was with him the same day, bounces in, all smiles and giggles. We are all

shocked at her demeanour, and as I serve her I ask: 'How do you feel about Dino's death?'

She suddenly goes into one: 'I just can't believe it, for he slept with me on Monday night, and we were telling each other how much we loved one another. Next day he scored some "skag" off "HIV Kev"', and died in a house in Cambridge Road.'

'The inquest is next week,' I tell her, and she suddenly breaks down in tears. I suspect her initial 'Laissez-Faire' was some artificial buoyancy, which has now evaporated. So 'Speedfreak Sparky' is off the hook, for now, but rumours are rife amongst the street people that Dino was jacked.

Heavy Eddy is in tonight, and solemnly informs me he is now vegetarian. He is worried about his memory, and says:

'I think I'm getting that memory loss ailment, "old-timers" disease, for I've always eaten out of aluminium pots.' I suggest it might be Alzheimer's disease, he's thinking about. 'Can't remember,' he says.

Bridget the Midget tells him he'll never have memory loss, for he can't remember anything in the first place. Riveting logic!

She then turns to Stretch and says:

'Have you been caught yet in the caterpillar rain?'

He asks: 'Do you mean the infestation of caterpillars on the trees, 'cos of the hot weather?'

'Indeed, indeed,' but she then grosses us all out by saying: 'My doctor told me I was allergic to sunlight, which is why I wear shades at night, and walk round in the nude at home.'

Stretch inquires, 'Why's that then, Bridget?'

'Well, when I switch off all the lights I don't need to wear my sunglasses, and it also stops the flies nesting on my Dandelion wine, that I just made.'

'I love dandelion wine,' declares Stretch. 'In fact I love all wine.'

'Well,' says Bridget, 'I had to put silver foil all round it, to keep the flies out. I reckon they've come from the cucumber tree.'

'Absolutely,' says Stretch, 'but that foil is a great idea; so we can still have some of your wine,' he declares.

'No, you can't. I did cover it, but the bastards crawled in underneath, and I've had to throw the whole lot out.'

'Well,' concludes Stretch, 'at least they died happy.'

Tuesday 16th August

9 AM Windy but sunny. Clouds later.

Gregg, the 'Hangman', from the flat below me pops in for a cup of coffee. He starts telling me why he hates his work as an undertaker. I ask is it true they don't burn the coffins, but recycle them. He tells me this is just a myth. He does say that the Metal Handles are removed but the tributes, flowers and wreaths are sent back to the nursing homes, if the deceased died there, but most are left out for the local rabbits.

He explains:

'When a coffin is placed in one of the two 'crems' (ovens) it takes about two hours to consume the remains. Normally we do about five a day in each, but in winter we are twice as busy. The guys have bets to see how long different people take to burn, the record being a little old lady, in one and a half hours. Of course children and babies take a lot less, but one huge guy took two hours and twenty minutes. The ovens reach two thousand degrees, but we cut the gas when they're hot, until they're down to half that. This is about halfway through, when the coffin is gone and the flesh burnt off. When we rake out it's still ferociously hot, so we just rake out the skull and bones to put in the crusher.'

I ask, 'What exactly is the crusher? I've never heard of that.'

'It's a machine like a washing machine drum. We stuff all the bones into it and a metal crushing ball pounds them into powder. It is very noisy and it gets quite hot, as we rake the remains out.'

I enquire, 'Do you always get the remains of the person who died, or are they all mixed up?'

'Well, you do get some bits of the deceased, but the guys can't brush out the 'crems', because of the heat, and the time factor, so you'll get the remains of others mixed in with your loved one, and they could be anybody.'

He continues, 'We hold the local contract for babies, suicides, and RTA's.'

‘What’s an RTA?’

He says, ‘A road traffic accident.’

‘What happens if the family can’t afford a normal burial?’ I ask.

‘The council pay for a ‘Limited Package’, as it’s called, and they claim the money back off the relatives, even sending in bailiffs to repossess their worldly goods.’

‘So what does a limited package consist of?’ I ask.

It’s a ‘Hearse Direct’, that is a straight pickup from the mortuary to the Crematorium, with no cortege and no Lim. (limousine) and we use a Park.’

I enquire, ‘So what’s a Park exactly?’

‘It’s a cheap black compressed cardboard coffin, (sometimes called a Foil) which comes with plastic handles, so you cannot use them to lift with, for they come off easily. You must ‘shoulder’ these coffins or we lose the handles, and have to stick them back on with ‘Bluetack’. The total cost of a limited package is only twelve hundred, as compared with at least three grand, for your normal one.’

Wednesday 17th August

10 AM Warm cloudy day.

No Wednesday breakfast as the café is shut, for renovations. Shaun tells me he’s starving, so I take him to Morrison’s to stock up. He doesn’t eat the same things as me, so has to buy his own grub. At least he has money today.

Yesterday he went to the ‘PO’, (Post Office) with a letter detailing proof of address, from Social Services, and proof of ID in the form of a letter from the hospital, informing him that he had a tumour on the brain. (which has since been operated on) They insisted on either a driving Licence, or a Passport, and a Bankcard. He doesn’t drive any more, having been banned for ten years, doesn’t have a passport, and has no current Bank account. He did have a passport, but it was nicked when he was sleeping rough in the woods. He was living for seven months under a tarpaulin shelter that he built himself, until it was discovered by a gang of teenage ferals, and burnt down. He didn’t go to the police for he was camping illegally, in Alexandra Park, so he didn’t get a crime number, and can’t get another passport.

He finally got the PIN number for his Post Office card, sent through to my address, but the actual card is waiting at the PO, so he goes back to Mugsborough Post

office, with his PIN number and pick-up notice. They scan the bar-code on this and then he dials in his PIN, and they give him the card. So, he presents his Giro, but they still won't cash it, even though he's just proved his ID by getting them to give him the Post Office card.

So, he goes back, yet again, to Heron House to tell them his Giro is useless, for he can't cash it. Low and behold, they have a special form for occasions such as these, a BF70, so he gets one filled out, but they warn him it's a one-time offer, so don't lose it, and don't come back. So, he goes back to the Post Office, pays the Giro into his account there, draws some money out, and arranges all future payments to be made direct to his new PO account, so he won't need any more ID, and can draw money out of the hole-in-the-wall, whenever he needs.

Thursday 18th August

10 AM Cloudy, and rain later.

Pop into the British Heart Foundation, to see Stacy, but he's away on a course in Eastbourne. Big Steve, of course, is conspicuous by his absence, and the shop seems very quiet.

11 AM

Meet Landlord Richard for coffee in town, and discuss a future flat for a 'street' client, which will become vacant soon.

1 Pm

Nip down the bank to sort out my Debit card, which has been cloned, and used twice, in Australia. I've never been there so it's no problem, even though my signature was apparently used, and I should get my money back - sometime!

8 PM

'Hope' kitchen is running tonight.

It starts to bucket down, as I leave the house, although it hasn't rained all day. Nannette's new lodger, Ritchie, is there. He has the house to himself, as Nannette has gone to Cornwall with the dog, to detox at her daughter's house. Ritchie is happy to have a bit of peace and quiet and privacy.

All the regulars are here tonight, except Dino, and nobody knows where or when the funeral will take place. We discover later his parents have taken him away, for a private family funeral.

Pastor Chris is here tonight, which is unusual, for he normally only does Saturdays. He tells us, his wife Margaret, is away for a week and he's so bored, he just popped in. There was no Wednesday breakfast at his café yesterday, and Hope is only running on a Thursday, as lots of volunteers are on holiday; but not many clients, unfortunately.

Friday 19th August

10 AM Hot, sunny and breezy.

I head up to the 'Inquest' to visit Captain Pugwash. He is in Newington Ward, for stomach ulcers. I have just been to the eye clinic here, and been told I need to be referred to a 'lid' specialist. I figure this means another operation of sorts, on my eyelids. I already have an operation booked after the camera job, for I need to have a piece of scar tissue from inside my tube cut out. It's left over, I guess, from an old 'TURPS' operation on the Isle of Wight, which I had years ago. I remember the absolute agony as a trainee nurse pulled my catheter out, as it was still partly inflated. I was pissing blood for six weeks after that, and when I went to the toilet it felt like a soldering iron had been shoved up my derriere. I used to hallucinate with the pain.

Pugwash has detoxed during his time here, and is considering another Antibuse implant. As I sit by his bedside, he tells me his interesting story. His real name is Chris Flagg and his mum died on 9th January, 2008, when he was living in the house with her, on their own. Even in those days he was on Disability Benefit, and found out he would lose all his benefits, if he inherited his mum's estate as he was meant to, so he left it all to his sister. Then his brother, a lawyer, gave Chris a month to get out of the house, so exactly a month later he moved into a room, above the Rising Sun Pub, in Mugsborough - not ideal for someone with a drink problem. This is the place my lodger Shaun patronizes. The manager there has to order extra crates of Newcastle Brown every week, for Shaun can polish off three crates a night.

As it happens, Chris had to move out but the landlord, Steven Fitzgerald, got Shaun to box up all his possessions and dump them in the alleyway behind the pub. It snowed that night, and all his stuff was ruined. 'Even my furniture was destroyed,' he tells me. 'I took the bastard to court, and got £7,850 compensation. But then, of course, pissed it all away, as you do.'

Saturday 20th August

11 AM Lovely calm warm day.

Going down to the 'office' when I bump into Bridget the Midget. She tells me she found a great lodger for her spare room, and they get on really well for he also loves animals. His name is Gupta, and he is a strict Muslim. He loves seagulls and feeds them every day. People even bring him sick birds that have caught Botulinus, from eating the rubbish off the streets in Mugsborough. You see this frequently for the creatures stagger round as if they're drunk. Some ferals feed them yeast, for it's well known these birds cannot fart, so they actually explode, and the groundkeeper at William Parker school is constantly having to scrape up their scattered remains from the playing field. The school kids of course love it, for being mostly degenerate ferals, they hold no respect for man or beast.

Bridget tells me it's now Ramadan for Gupta, and, because he doesn't eat till it gets dark, neither do the seagulls, so she has to tolerate the squawking and the banging on her windows as they clamour for food. Then they flock onto the roof to hold protest meetings, and the din is driving Bridget crazy, not that you'd notice. She tells me her big buck rabbit chewed through the garden fence and went next door, where it bit through an electric cable, feeding a garden pond. She buried it this morning.

3 PM

I drop in to see Mouse who's been given a place in the old prison, Merrick House. This is the most notorious halfway house in the area, and my son Jay had the misfortune to end up there for a spell. His belongings were constantly ripped off, for there were no locks on the doors of the rooms. This is not a big problem there, for most of the inmates don't have any possessions. I am so glad Scouse Pete escaped to the security of a tower block.

Sunday 21st August

9 AM Clouding over, with some rain.

Before I go to church I get a text off Mr. Wink, to say he's downstairs, visiting Gregg, the 'Hangman'. He used to work with him in the funeral parlour and confirms the horror stories Gregg has told me. He is trying to get Gregg to go to church, so I pop down to assist his efforts. Gregg has a recurring growth in one of his eyes, and keeps having to get it cut out, at regular intervals. Mr. Wink, so called, because he has to keep blinking all the time with dry eyes, has just got new glasses, with one plain lens and one prescription. One lens is glass and the other plastic. He has had to wear a contact lens in one eye, so this might improve things. I find it ironic that the three of us in the room are plagued with eye problems, so Mr. Wink suggests we should pray for each other, before going to church; without Gregg. We stand and pray in turn for each other to be healed. It's all very moving, but nothing happens.

There is sad news this week that a couple burned to death in Coombe Haven Caravan Park, in Mugsborough, when a fire engulfed their caravan, on Saturday 13th.

The town's top policeman, Chief Inspector Mark Ling, is still suspended two months after allegations that he sent an offensive text message.

This area topped a poll of local authorities in a survey of fly-tipping, with 3 448 recorded incidents of people illegally dumping rubbish and old furniture, and builder's rubble on the streets.

Alvin Atkins 37, of Kent Road, Mugsborough, has admitted death by dangerous driving, when he crashed into a car driven by Daniel Martin, 31. Due to the severity of his injuries, Mr. Martin had to be attended by both paramedics in the back of the ambulance, while a police officer at the scene drove them to hospital. Unfortunately he veered off the road, crashed, and Mr. Martin died on the spot. The officer faces neither criminal nor disciplinary proceedings, over the crash.

Mark Edwards 54, of Church Road, Mugsborough, had been drinking when he decided to cycle down the A21 main road. Motorists called the police when he crashed, narrowly avoiding the wheels of a truck. He pleaded guilty to being drunk

in charge of a pedal cycle. He was fined fifty pounds with one hundred pounds costs.

Finally, comedy corner.

Sean Jarmin 18, of St Matthew's Gardens, Mugsborough, went into a Fried Chicken shop and bought chips costing £1.20, paying with a forged £20 note. He then returned shortly afterwards and purchased a can of drink, also costing £1.20, also paying with a forged £20 note. The manager became suspicious, as you do, and challenged him. Jarmin became abusive and swore at him, but on leaving the shop slammed the door so hard the glass shattered, costing two hundred pounds. When police arrested him soon afterwards, another forged £20 note was found in his possession. After the Bank of England confirmed they were counterfeit, and he was charged, Jarmin claimed a friend just gave him all the notes, and he had no reason to suspect they were forgeries. Jarmin is now serving a year in prison.

Monday 22nd August

9 AM. Drizzly miserable morning.

I am up at the hospital again for a Barium enema. I have had to flush my system out, for the last couple of days and my derriere has felt like it's on fire, with the different potions I've had to drink. Now my innards are empty, but not for long. I receive an injection which makes my head swim. They never tell you what you're having, but after a minute I can lie flat on the table in the X-ray room. I have a barium enema shoved up me, interspersed with blasts of air to enlarge my intestines, for the liquid to flow easier. I am told to hold out until I can bear no more air, and, as my stomach swells up, the air increases, but I dig my heels in until it reaches the stage where it's too painful to even move. They seem happy with the results that are taken, by rotating the table up and down and back and forth. I joke later that I think their ride would never be successful in a fairground. After the multiple pictures, as the table revolves they come back into the room and take half-a-dozen X-rays with ordinary plates.

As usual they tell me nothing, but I am mighty relieved, after forty minutes on the table, to get the hell out of there.

7 PM

Down the Sally Ann again, watching as Bridget the Midget puts sugar in her soup. Not sure if this is a mistake, or not. She starts chatting to Paul, a volunteer, who helps out on occasion. As she stares at the tattoos round his neck she says: 'I've seen you in Africa, riding a Giraffe.' Paul is very laid back, but is left speechless by this comment. He's never been to Africa, but neither has Bridget, as it happens.

'Yes,' she continues, 'I was with Joanna Lumley, sharing a dung-hut, but she couldn't stand the smell and moved into a five-star hotel. But I loved the facilities in the Masai village, for they had a hot-coal stove built under a stone seat where you could perch with a Masai blanket over you. The steam cleanses you right out, for you're completely naked, and it rinses your bowels as well.'

'Sounds like what I needed before my enema, this morning,' I tell her.

'But it's great for closing up your cervix, as well,' she informs us all.

'Well, that I don't need,' I tell her.

Paul seems to have gone off his bowl of soup, and tells her, 'Too much information, Bridget.'

Heavy Eddy comes hobbling in: 'There was no light fitting on the stairs where I live, so I fell down them in the dark.'

'That's a pity,' I tell him.

'Not really,' he replies, 'for I started a claim, and the company sent me an "I-Pad" to draw out plans of my building, and keep them informed of current developments.'

The average broadband speed here is currently two-and-a-half Megabytes, one of the slowest in the country.

Tuesday 23rd August

8 AM Miserable drizzly day.

Gregg is not working today so I pop downstairs, with my morning coffee, for a chat. He relates an incident that happened last week. Apparently a Chinese lady, who was an RTA, was collected from the hospital after they'd done the PM (post-mortem) and was put into a body-bag.

He tells me,

'When this was carried into the funeral parlour, we found the bag was swimming in blood, so we dragged it outside to the yard, where we wash the Limos, and hoisted

her onto a metal trolley. Then the boss stuck a hosepipe down her throat to flush away all the blood, for she was leaking everywhere.'

I query why she would leak, and he tells me,

'When a PM is over the brain and organs are put into a plastic bag, and stitched into the stomach. That's why a person looks like they've put weight on when you see them in the funeral parlour, and the head is always light because the brain is the heaviest organ in the body. This poor woman was left in the open air for twenty minutes as the water squirted out from the two rows of stitch-holes in her stomach, like a garden sprinkler. The hospital couldn't sew her up properly, for she was left mangled after the accident. Afterwards we put her in a shroud and placed her in a coffin. When I do people's faces I have to wire the jaw by inserting stitches from the lower gums, through to the top, by the nose and down again to keep the mouth shut, for everyone 'purges', after they die.'

I ask what he means by 'purges'.

He tells me, 'Everyone purges when they die. Waste comes out their orifices, as soon as you move them about, and pace-makers have to be taken out of a body before it is put in the 'crem', otherwise the batteries explode and can even damage the oven.'

I take my leave of Gregg and go back upstairs, deciding to give breakfast a miss, this morning.

Wednesday 24th August

11 AM Lovely day.

I walk up to Bridgebuilders Referral Centre, with my lodger, Shaun. There is no Wednesday breakfast as the café is still being decorated. Shaun shows me the house in Carisbrooke Road where he first lived when he moved to Mugsborough.

He tells me,

'It was on the top floor, and they wanted the usual month in advance and one month's deposit. The Bond Board, which no longer exists, lent me the money, in the form of a cheque made out to the landlord. I had to pay this back at twenty-pound-a-week. They even provided me with a paying-in book for Barclays Bank. As soon as I moved in someone from the Bond Board came round with a video camera, and

took shots of every mark and blemish in the place. The idea was that the landlord couldn't refuse your deposit back if you left the place as you found it. The landlords will make any excuse these days, to withhold your deposit because the deposit agency pay it back to them, as happened with you and HAS.'

'So did you get your deposit back?' I asked.

'Well the landlord came round and after he'd inspected the place refused me my deposit, saying there was a hole in one of the windows. I hadn't noticed this, but when they videoed the place they didn't video the windows for they weren't cracked. However the guy from the Bond Board turned up and examined this tiny hole in the window. He turned to me and said he thought he'd seen this flat before, for years ago some crazy guy on a motorbike was going round the streets of Mugsborough shooting a 22 Rifle through the top-floor windows of all the streets. They caught him, so he thought he could convince the landlord that this happened years ago. He did and I got my deposit back in the end.'

I told Shaun he was lucky, as most tenants don't.

Thursday 25th August

6 AM Fine start, but cloudy later.

I am awoken by hammering, from the basement flat. It is empty at the moment, for the ice-cream man has disappeared, but the place needs to be totally gutted; no normal person could live there it's in such a state. Thinking it's likely a client of 'ice-cream man', I open the window to have a go, but it turns out to be Old Bill. Apparently 'Aggro Andy' is loose again, but they're after him because he beat up his girlfriend.

8 PM

Shaun and I go to 'Hope' kitchen. Dr. Mike Cooper is serving the teas as usual, and there is a very mixed vegetable soup on offer. Bill, Eileen's husband, brings round some treats and I am sitting next to Heavy Eddy, who is offered one of the mini-chocolate-rolls. He picks one up but sees the wrapper is split open, so puts it back on the dish, and asks for a fresh one. Bill refuses, saying: 'You'll take what you're given.' Eddy is so incensed he says he'll go without if that's the case. After Bill

leaves he says to me, 'I'm going to buy two boxes of those next week, and give them out myself, just to piss him off.'

Bridget the Midget is here with Stretch again, sitting beside us. She turns to Stretch and says:

'I got a harness for my rabbit yesterday, so I can walk him in Alexandra Park, but I need you to give me a lift.'

'But I haven't got a car at the moment, Bridget.'

'But I saw you driving one the other day,' she says.

'Is that a fact? What, was it a Toyota?' responds Stretch.

'No, it wasn't a toy. I think it was an Aston Martin, like James Bond has.'

'Indeed, flattery will get you nowhere, Bridget.'

'Absolutely, a flat battery will get you nowhere.'

'Besides, Bridget, the drug dealers' dogs will go for your rabbit, if you take it to the park.'

'Indeed, but I've thought of that. I've got a chicken box, like the kids in Greece carry their chickens in, so we can take it with us and simply slide the front up so the rabbit can run inside if it feels threatened.'

'Absolutely, no way. Have a cucumber sandwich, Bridget.'

'Up your pipe, with that cucumber sandwich,' Bridget responds.

Friday 26th August

10 AM Warm cloudy day.

Stroll down the 'office'. The crew doesn't come down here any more, as they've all gone their separate ways. But the Hatchett is there, looking the worse for wear. His face is all scarred from old war wounds, and now he's just got mugged. He tells me he just got his wages through from the PO, and some Giro hounds must have been trailing him. He went to 'Millett's', who have a sale on at the moment, and bought some trainers. As he was carrying them through the tunnel on his way home, he got jumped. They nicked the bag with the shoes and all his paperwork, including his Birth Certificate, which he needs to collect his Giro, plus his last eight quid.

He also got worked over as he fought back - as you do, but he's quite distraught because his daughter is coming down for the weekend. 'Look at the state of me, Rad, what am I going to do?'

'Tell her the truth,' I advise him, 'tell her you got mugged. After all we're not nicknamed Mugsborough, for nothing.'

'I'm so embarrassed. I haven't got money. Can you spare some shrapnel, for dog food?'

I'm pretty sure he'll feed the dog with this, but street people, especially new arrivals in the country, have been known to live on this stuff, and nobody's died of it yet. I feel bad, for I've helped Harry out on many occasions, but I have no money on me, or even a bankcard, for the hole in the wall. The rest of the audience at the 'office' have mysteriously disappeared, one by one.

Saturday 27th August

9 AM Mild Day. Warm.

I meet 'Dutch' Holland as I walk into town, to do some shopping. I ask about Tracy, my former girlfriend, who lives next door to him. He looks at me quizzically:

'You haven't heard?' He responds: 'You know I take her dog 'Lupo' out for walks. Well, she came round with him, and when my back was turned, nicked my bankcard. She'd often come with me to the shops so I guess she must have seen my PIN number, for she went to Morrison's and drew all my money out.'

'How much?' I queried.

'Never mind. A substantial amount. But she was captured on their video camera, and even pictured on Meridian TV doing the dirty deed.'

I tell him I'm sorry, but I never heard anything.

'I know she needed to score, for she was clucking badly. Anyway Old Bill got onto her and she did a runner. The last I heard she was seen in Dover.'

I say: 'I know she worked as an au-pair abroad, and can speak Italian, so she's probably trying to reach the Continent. But tell me, what happened to Lupo?'

'Well, you know I loved that dog, but my landlord wouldn't let me keep it, but I wouldn't have it put down.'

'So what did you do?' I asked.

'I went to an animal rescue centre, and they got it re-housed in a decent home.'

'Well, I suppose that's the last we'll see of Tracy,' I tell him.

'Yep, she's gone for good,' says Dutch.

It starts to rain as I walk off, and I just let it roll down my face.

8 PM

Drop into Hope, with Shaun. Full house tonight, and Bridget is holding court. She addresses the table:

'I'm afraid my rabbits are going to get gassed.'

'Who by, the Council?' asks Stretch.

'No, stupid, by the lime trees in the park.'

'Do they piss on them, or what?'

'No, they chew on them, and lime gas is very poisonous.'

'Is that a fact, but what are they doing there in the first place, Bridget?'

'Well, they sneak out through the garden fence at night, to eat the acorns and chestnuts, in the park. They don't eat rabbit food, see.'

'Why not, Bridget?'

'Because I don't give them any. They can live off the park!'

'Absolutely, but why would they get gassed, Bridget?'

'Don't you know nothing? When you use bathroom sealant it's got lime in it, so it gives off lime gas. You can smell it through the whole house.'

'Is that a fact, so is it poisonous, then?'

'Indeed, it is. They use it to bury people, who are hanged.'

'Absolutely,' says Stretch, 'but I thought that was quicklime?'

'Well, it wouldn't be slow lime, now would it?' says Bridget.

As I leave John McCullum's twin brother, Stewart tells me John died during the week. We shall all go to the funeral. He was only fifty-three.

Sunday 28th August

9 AM Mild but windy day, some sun.

On the way to Church the 'office' is full of scroats. Most are cranked up on something, but Strumpet is clucking for a drink. Ned is there and he's rattling for a fix. Seems they spent a wild night on the beach and banged up some dodgy gear.

Someone tells me Mouse popped his clogs when he choked on vomit, under the pier last night. Someone else says he was "jacked". I sense some bad vibes and scuttle off, for I feel it's all going to spark off.

The papers report another serious incident involving medical staff. Paramedic Andrew Reid has been struck off for his second incident of gross misconduct. When former postman, Tony Fenn 47, lay dying in the street with a fractured skull, he failed to appreciate the seriousness of the injury. The previous incident was at a woman's home when she had just given birth to a baby, which had slipped down the toilet. He retrieved the child, but just put it in a clinical waste bag, with no attempt at revival.

Vandals caused twenty thousand pounds worth of damage to St. Leonard's Academy by stripping lead off the roof. Lead flashing was stripped off several roofs, but later found hidden in the grounds.

Five young men in Morrison's car park attacked a thirty-one-year-old man. Hastings CID stated, 'This was an unprovoked attack and the victim was badly beaten about his head and body, and ended up in hospital.'

Last Wednesday two women fell out of windows in Warrior Square. One fell from the third floor, while the other, who tried to catch her, fell from the second.

Henry Burton 35, of Willington Avenue, Mugsborough, was fined £75 with a £198 in costs, with £15 in victim surcharge, for failing to clean up his dog mess. Denise Brown 44, of Marline Road, Mugsborough, was fined a total of £388 in her absence, for the same offence.

Finally joke of the week. Two men aged twenty-three and twenty-six, stole a 'Pedallo' from the town's boating lake. They carried it to the beach and tried to pedal across the channel to France. Police saw them on CCTV, and they were soon captured, and forced to carry the heavy load back to the lake.

Monday 29th August

10 AM Mild, humid day.

It's August Bank Holiday. Shaun is moving out tomorrow, to a house he's renovating, so we go for a drink together down the Carlisle. We have a game of

pool, and he has a few Newcastle Brown Ales. He's normally very taciturn, until he gets a few drinks in him, when he starts to communicate more.

He tells me about the first time he came to London, from 'the old country', to work as a joiner. He was working in the Trocadero, in Shaftesbury Avenue. He was part of a gang of three hundred, mostly Irish guys, working on the exhibition site there, and he was earning a hundred and fifty a day, taking home nearly a grand a week. Well, he would have been taking a grand home, if he didn't spend half of it in the pubs first. They would all finish at three-thirty, on a Friday afternoon, and then head for the Blue Angel, near Regent Street. He had helped some of his mates install a twenty-four-foot plate glass window in the premises opposite the Trocadero. It took eight of them all day long, to fit this into the front of a bookshop. He got back in his van at the Trocadero, intending to drive up Shaftesbury Avenue, but instead drove straight across the road, and right through the twenty thousand pound window he had helped install a few hours earlier.

When the police arrived, they said:

'Can you step out of the van, Sir?'

'Why?' says Shaun.

'We have reason to believe you may have been drinking, Sir,' they replied, opening the van door, whereupon Shaun fell out, onto the floor of the Shop. He was asked to blow into the bag, (in those days) and the thing nearly melted. He was taken to Camberwell High Security nick, where he had to give a blood sample. He was seven times over the limit, (Sic) and it seems there was more alcohol in his system than blood!

This may have been the result of the twenty bottles of Newcastle Brown or the bottle of Jack Daniels chaser, but it was a day and a half before he was fit to be interviewed. He was fined two and a half thousand pounds, and lost his licence for ten years (Sic) and must undertake a medical before he gets it back. The judge said it was a miracle that nobody was walking past, or he would have killed them.

He also mentioned he wished he could ban him for a hundred years. Shaun agreed with him, but lost his job and his van, and the friendship of his mates, who had to re-install the window all over again, after clearing up the mess he left in the shop.

EPILOGUE

The story is now told, for is August Bank holiday, again, and exactly a year since I started my chronicle. Their story has been narrated, but what has changed, in the lives of the people I wrote about?

Well, everyone changes in a year, for better or worse. Have things changed since I finished editing this at the close of the year? Of course all things change with time but over the past year in Mugsborough, they seem even worse. There is the odd exception to prove the rule. 'Duvet Man' Stewart came into the Wednesday breakfast café dressed in a smart suit, without his beard. Nobody recognized him. If he could get off the streets there is hope for the rest of them. Kelvin Dobbs also found a well-paid job working as an escort in the city of London, and moved into a very expensive flat.

The '57' crew have all split up, and are no longer with us, much to their landlords relief. J.J. found responsibility, and went to look after his daughter in London. The Ducati Kid moved back to Italy, and I sometimes wonder if he'll ever bump into Tracey. They always liked each other, so between them, they could end up breeding a bunch of Italian 'reprobates'.

Big Jimbo went to live with Tweedle Dum and Tweedle Dee in Eastbourne. Rudolph finally married Layla, and the 'Tooth' left town. Wavin-Dav married Clare, a stunning six-foot blonde, and they both seem very happy.

I've still got the Jag and both the car and myself are still in one piece.

Micky and Michelle both testified at Dino's inquest. Micky told the court he had entered the flat to find Dino, face down in a pool of blood. He turned him over and performed CPR, in an attempt to revive him, but when the paramedics arrived they declared him dead. Then Dino started frothing at the mouth, but the paramedics said he was just 'purging' and told Micky it was gas from the body.

What they didn't know was that Dino had used Butane Gas earlier that evening, and the blood coming from his head could have been his recurring haemorrhage, after the alleged beating by the police as they arrested him outside the Anchor Pub. When Micky and Michelle told the coroner this, he declared the witnesses were not

reliable, as they were drug addicts. The pathologist then declared Dino had died from heroin toxicity, but could find no trace of heroin in his blood, only in his urine. Cara and Andreas were still living in a tent, until the police came and took it, together with my chairs and groundsheet and lamps, etc. They went to the cop-shop, and told them their passports and all their documents were hidden in the tent. The police told them they had stuck a Warning notice of Removal on the back of their tent, but Cara and Andreas had sofa-surfed that night, due to torrential rain and weren't aware of it. They asked where all their possessions were, and the police told them they were all dumped in the skip. When they wanted to climb into the skip and retrieve their documents the police told them, if they did so, they would be arrested for trespass.

Scouse Pete and Hippy Brian are ensconced in one of the awful tower blocks, and Debbie is still in her little box-room, with her little TV.

Shaun now sees his two kids every week, and is kipping in a house he's doing up, with a promise he can live there when it's finished.

Heavy Eddy has pulled his horns in, for he has his teenage son living with him, until he leaves school, we hope. The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence are trying hard not to indulge perpetually, for they now realize their alternative could be an 'ELE'. (Extermination Level Event)

Toadfish Tim is bigger than ever, and still goes to His Place Café every day, but no longer patronizes the Railway Tavern, as Tom and Bob Catt have moved elsewhere.

Sparky and Tanya still pursue a mercuric relationship, and we all miss Mouse, who we buried recently.

Katie still does her Charity 'runs', but her son Paul has managed to find five-hundred pounds to start a security training course, and when he finishes will get a job as a 'bouncer' (doorman) in a pub or club.

A day after having a good latté and a good laugh with Tim Harvey, he overdosed and died. We all went to the funeral in Duke Road, led by Pastor Chris as usual, and afterwards to the Azur, where J.J. 'pulled' a lovely lass. They both got drunk and went back to his place, where he tried to impress her by flinging steak knives at the toilet door. She was impressed all right, but he never saw her again.

Cannabis factories still get discovered on a weekly basis in Mugsborough, and Seaview still offer meals for a quid.

Miriam still gets woken in the middle of the night, by prayer requests, for people who still keep jumping off Beachy Head cliffs.

Jeremy and Christine still breed dozens of cats in their basement flat, and Richard their landlord, has started a Survival Group, for people like Sniffer and myself, who are worried about the Dwarf Star coming into our atmosphere in December.

Bruce and myself still go far and wide to photograph the beauties of nature, and we both run our own websites.

Everyone concerned is relieved that we have finally evicted Aggro Andy, after a year of strenuous effort, but the Hangman, who had enough, moved to a Carisbrooke Road basement flat in the heart of Mugsborough. He never got a penny of his deposit back, for his agency, Questus, claimed he held onto the keys too long, although he swears they gave him permission to keep them, for he wanted to wash the carpets. When he moved in he was astonished to see the chandelier dripping water. When the plumber inspected upstairs he came down and told them he had found fifteen Pakistanis up there for a prayer meeting. Trouble was, they all had to wash their feet before they prayed, but simply hosed themselves down, on the bathroom floor.

As to the landlords, Dr. Lera still runs her so-called "Charity", the 'Wallace Project' after evicting Darren and his cat, and the two lesbians, Kim and Amber, from St Helen's Road. They still sleep rough, under cardboard, behind Debenhams.

Richard Brabazon, with his forty houses, is still a devout Christian, whereas my friend John, still isn't.

The Jew-boys are still Orthodox 'Hasidics', and still stroll round Mugsborough, in frock coats and dreadlocks, buying up properties. When my neighbour Chris moved out of Saxon Chambers he didn't get his deposit back either, from H.A.S.

Bridget the Midget still shocks me with riveting revelations, and Captain Mannering's three sons have left home to lead their own lives. The Sally Ann has shut its soup kitchens, but Captain Mannering gave me an Honourable Discharge, and informed me I was mentioned in dispatches!

Hope Kitchen still lives in hope of finding a night shelter for those sleeping rough.

Misfit is still living on the streets and still awaiting an operation, for the plate in his shoulder. My back, and my front, and my eyes still flare up from time to time, so I still visit the House of Pain on a regular basis. Stacy is leaving his managerial job, at the British Heart Foundation, and training to be a counsellor. Susie is still a 'Crack Whore', and Kelly is still detoxing. Dave Helm seems to have disappeared. He may be on an extended 'Holiday', but nobody knows.

Mitch still goes to church, and the 'Hangman' still doesn't. Others go into prison or hospital, and come out of prison or hospital, most of the time. Pastor Michael is still 'on holiday', and still preaching, inside.

Scots Tam is still to be found every day in the Betting Shop, in London Road, opposite Saxon Chambers.

Old faces, and new faces, drift in and out of the different soup kitchens, and I visit the Crematorium at regular intervals.

The Salvation Army has shut its kitchens in St. Andrews Square, but the 'Trussell Trust' is up and running in my local church, 'Kings', on the Ridge. On our first collection outside Sainsbury's we got twenty trolley-loads of food donated. They weighed 750 Kilos, and cost about a grand.

Katie was one of our first customers, and she still visits me for Valium, and shrapnel.

Most Crisis Loans and Community Care Grants have been stopped, together with all applications for Legal Aid. A new 'Universal Credit' system is taking over where individual allowances will all be grouped together as a single credit, to 'simplify' things!

But what has the year taught me?

Well, I now realize that excessive drinking is a disease, and has nothing to do with willpower, and that anyone can get roped into drugs, if they meet the wrong people. But I also realize that even with all the sham and drudgery this world can still be a beautiful one, full of magic and mystery, and that fact is stranger than fiction. From day to day, nothing or nobody remains the same, and it doesn't matter what you're like, as long as you strive to change, and try to be better.

I still read of the Hatchett and my other friends in the local paper on a regular basis, but I miss J.J. and the Kid. I even miss 'Big Jimbo' and Dino and the 'Mouse', and I still miss Tracy, and wonder where she is, and what she is!

I miss all the people who have died, and wonder if they're better off. I loved them all, but even more, they loved me right back.

I can only say it was a privilege to meet all those people, for we were just blinks in the eyes of time, but it was their time, and it was my time. We were all just moments, knitted together in that one time.

That time was a single year: 'A year on the streets'.

CONCLUSION

Everything in Mugsborough seems to be deteriorating these days, and the area is slowly sinking as shops go out of business due to high rates and lack of trade.

The staggering incompetence of the medical and social services; the illegal aliens with their illegal drink and tobacco; the so-called bus service with its imaginary timetables; the manic cyclists swerving round the minefields of dog mess, as the 'ferals' on their huge skateboards clatter over them; the mindless stupidity of the criminal class; the Council's indifference to the homeless; the renovation of the pier, before and after it was burnt down; the blatant inefficiency of the Crown Prosecution Service, in conjunction with the abysmal other-worldliness of local magistrates in the incongruity of individual sentences with respect to the ludicrous levels of violence and mugging: all bode ill for the future.

Taxi-drivers here are still being convicted of attempted rape on female passengers. Abdul Walizada, 48, of Kenilworth Road, Mugsborough, was recently found guilty of sexual assault after a three-day trial, where his passenger had to endure the ordeal of testifying against him.

There is still the occasional armed robbery, usually at the point of a gun, or knife, but recently at the point of a hypodermic needle. Junkies have figured out that most people would prefer to be stabbed or even shot, rather than stuck with a needle, which would probably give them permanent damage, like HIV or Hepatitis.

Conversely, this is more tolerance of junkies, because if they are stopped for a street search, (see photos) they are entitled to carry their 'works' on them and the police are powerless to arrest. With knives, or blades, it's a different story.

But things haven't changed that much, for a seventeen-year-old recently got stabbed to death outside the 'Shah' pub, which is in the same road where my friend Myrium lives. His name was Jacob, and he used to live with his brother Levi, next door to Katie, in Brendon Road.

Cars and plastic bins still get burnt out, just leaving amorphous surreal works of pavement art.

Local buses still travel in convoys, leap-frogging each other at the stops, which helps to counter the increased risk of attacks on drivers. The timetables are such a

joke they should be published in some comic magazine. Recently I was waiting for a bus to the hospital, the 953, by the pier. It should run every twenty minutes, but I did not see a number '26', until ten-thirteen. I asked the driver was he the seven minutes to ten, or the thirteen past. He replied he was the seven-to-ten, and I told him he was twenty minutes late. He just grunted, until I said this service to the hospital is the only one leaving from town, and people need it be punctual or they miss their appointments. The next passenger sarcastically asked, if the bus ran every twenty minutes, or every two hours?

The driver retorted, 'I only do what they tell me, mate!'

The council still evicts the innocent with the guilty, when closing down a crack den; as recently happened to 'Giggly-Viv' and Michael, who lived in a basement underneath one, in St. Andrews Square.

So broken people still wander the broken pavements, where the dealers' dogs still mess if they are not mauling some innocent cat to death. This frequently happens in Mugsborough. In fact the Hastings branch of the Royal Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) has just offered free micro chipping and neutering to all owners of Staffordshire bull terriers (the main culprits) in this area. They claim that there is such a high number being bred for profit that this is the most neglected breed. The RSPCA also state that they have to pick up these abandoned and cruelly treated dogs on a daily basis. I fervently believe there is no such thing as a bad dog - only bad owners. Only one thing, in my opinion, would alleviate the dog problem; the issue of dog licences of about fifty pounds for each animal.

In October the local paper reported the launch of 'Operation Regain', where a team of half-a-dozen street wardens would patrol the worst areas for dog fouling. They will not only hand out free poo-bags, but will be able to issue Fixed-Penalty notices of seventy-five pounds to anyone failing to comply.

The same paper also reports that Hastings' top cop, Inspector Mark Ling, who was suspended on June 7th. has finally been given a hearing date. He was suspended from all duties for four months, allegedly over a single dubious text message. (Sic) Unprovoked attacks on strangers still occur on a regular basis, always accompanied by police claims that these sorts of attacks are extremely rare. But they still happen almost every week when the town-centre clubs spill out at four-o-

clock in the morning, as the Police and the Street Pastors try to keep a lid on things.

My friends who patronize the various soup kitchens, still die off at regular intervals, usually in middle age, but some a lot earlier, while the life expectancy for the rest of the country is now rising above eighty.

Even outside that environment many others perish. My friend Julie Rappley, of Combermere Road, whom I have known for twenty years, came home on Mothers' Day to find Thomas Costello Wiseman lying dead on her sofa, from an overdose of Methadone and alcohol. He was a friend of her sons, and had stayed the night, after a party. He was only 21 years old. Like many addicts he was on Methadone to wean him off heroin, but many like him now trade their Methadone, for 'street' heroin.

Katie's husband George, who choked to death in her arms, was prescribed 100mgs. every day. As he left the chemist every day, some 'scroat' would swop him a 'ten-bag' of 'smack' for his Methadone. Nowadays the doctors insist that Methadone must be consumed in front of the pharmacist before the addict leaves the chemists. It is quite common to be queuing up in a chemist in Mugsborough when some junkie will burst through the door clamouring for his Methadone. The other customers will patiently wait, while the pharmacist supplies the bottle and everyone stands there watching him gulp it down.

Methadone is usually supplied in little dark bottles containing up to 100mgs. but more commonly in forty or fifty ml. doses. Ten mgs. is equivalent in toxicity to a ten-bag of heroin (ten pound buy), which is about two grams of heroin, but most prefer their gear 'in the flesh'. My friend, little Kelly, currently has to undergo two months of intensive residential detox for Methadone. It is harder to detox from than heroin.

At Phil Walsh's wake, which we held in 'Jurassic Park' recently, (a little seafront alcove where Yucca and Palm trees grow) I met someone who claimed he'd been tested for heroin for the past seven weeks and he had come up clean every time. He was rather upset because this means there is no opiate in the gear he's being sold, and because he's jacking up regularly he's simply stuffing his system with copious amounts of some toxic chemical.

Phil had been in the 'Inquest' for emphysema, and when Smelly Nellie visited him he had tubes up his nose, etc. He got frustrated and pulled them all out. The nurses told him he would die if he didn't let them re-insert these tubes. He didn't, and passed away shortly afterwards. In Jurassic Park we all stand in a circle and slowly pour our beers on the ground in a final sad salute to Phil. Mikie and Marion, who are there want to visit Ana Graca, (real name) who has been in a coma for a week. She was sleeping in her own flat when something went wrong with the gas boiler. It started pumping out carbon monoxide and she collapsed with double pneumonia. They had to give her a tracheotomy, and her son, who was in Finland, was told to prepare for a funeral. She was in the 'Inquest' for a month (Sic) and it was touch and go. When I saw her I suggested she sue somebody, but she cannot do so as she owned her flat.

I also went to visit Susie Crack who is currently in the 'Inquest' for a drug overdose, as someone had jacked her up in the neck with heroin, which she doesn't normally take. But she started bleeding from the nose because they hit an artery instead of a vein. She was advised to 'skin-pop' but she didn't want to wait for the hit to take effect as it would take another ten minutes. This decision nearly cost her life.

The local paper comments on the latest report from the CQC (Care Quality Commission) this September, regarding the appalling conditions at the Conquest. They have told the Trust that it faces serious consequences unless it shapes up: 'Management at the Conquest Hospital has been told, in no uncertain terms, that conditions at the hospital need to drastically improve.'

In June this year the CQC gave them two months to make 'drastic improvements' or face prosecution. They had already been given three written warnings, but if these had been ASBOs they would all have been locked up by now.

After having had a very painful operation on both eyes at the hospital this year, (recommended by one consultant and later a second opinion told me it had not been necessary), I do tend to agree with their conclusions.

Pedestrians still swerve to avoid the manic cyclists who career along the pavements. The cyclists seem allergic to using the roads as these are in a dreadful state so they make better progress off-road, even with all the dog mess.

The job situation locally is worse than chronic: a recent job in the H.M.V. music shop in Priory Meadow shopping centre amassed over three thousand applicants.

When a job is put up on the boards at 'Heroin' House job-centre it has to be taken down in a couple of hours, as many hundreds of people will apply for it.

The Underground car park in Carlisle Parade harbours the town's CCTV camera centre, and fears are rising now that doubt surrounds its future. The council has just decided to take back control of this car park, but to date the revenues from it have funded the monitoring station which is discretely hidden behind metal doors in a corner of the adjacent tunnel. Councillor Scott recently claimed that street drinkers would intimidate people walking on the seafront, if this CCTV monitoring station closed as a result of the transfer of funds.

These cameras also help track some of the ten thousand 'cloned' cars, which are currently on the roads, according to the Automobile Association. Cameras are also used to entrap those who break into 'bait cars'. The recent rise in local vehicle crime has meant the deployment of these cars by the police to catch thieves. This is done by leaving handbags or computers conspicuously displayed in the vehicles, tempting a break-in, which happens more often than not.

The buskers still sleep in wet sleeping bags in the tunnels, 'ham and egging' for a bit of shrapnel, while the rest of the world, and the years, wander by.

The tobacco raids on shops in London Road still continue with vain efforts by the authorities to stamp out the trade. These raids usually entail fifty or sixty officials including Police, Custom & Excise, Trading Standards, and people from the Border Agency, looking for illegal immigrants.

The new game in town is nicking heavy metals and copper. Metal thefts have now risen, nationwide, to over a thousand a week. Bearing in mind, that overall, only 1% of convictions result in the culprit actually being 'banged up', it must seem worth it. These thefts usually involve tearing down power cables from pylons, or ripping up the thick copper cables that join 'points' together, on railway lines. Until recently one 'perp' a week was being electrocuted, but necessity is the mother of invention and now the pylon gangs use chainmail suits, (like tree-felling operatives have to protect them against chain saws), to short out any 'bites' they might get from the electric cables. These metal suits short out the current if they hit a live wire.

The focus of interest now lies in the 'Latching Relays' on the pylons, as the contacts are made of silver. Trouble is, these endeavours black out whole sections of the local grid, leaving people without electricity and vulnerable for long periods of time. Recently 'His Place Café' where we serve free breakfasts every Wednesday to the street people, had its copper gas pipes stolen. Pastor Chris was opening up when he noticed the strong smell of gas. He immediately dialled 999 and the Gas Board arrived in ten minutes, informing him he was very lucky, because if he had switched on the lights he might have gone up in a ball of fire.

I think the latest vogue of removing heavy cast iron covers from the middle of the roads is possibly the most dangerous because anyone driving into such a gap would probably be killed. The most distressing incidents occur when brass plaques are removed from graves, and engraved-lead tributes levered from war memorials. There are currently thirty-two million people being hounded by collection agencies in England, and these people alone, owe fifty-eight thousand million (Sic) in total, to banks, etc.

In Mugsborough, street people will hover around the Post Office, ('PO'), waiting for others on benefits to cash their money. They will demand any loans to be paid immediately. Everyone runs out of money after a few days. When the payments were made weekly this didn't happen, but since the DSS (Dept. Social Security) changed to fortnightly payments to ease their work-load, no street person can make their money last two weeks. There may even be a variety of people to whom they have lent money, so there may be an assortment of debtors waiting to be paid from one person. They all realize the early bird gets the worm, and I have seen people stripped of all their money, before they even leave the 'PO'.

Even then they may still owe money to someone, but will have nothing left for themselves, for another fortnight, so they will have to start borrowing again to survive. Meanwhile they can 'ham and egg' for a spell, until someone else gets their 'Giro', and borrow off them. So the cycle continues. Most street people live like this. Sometimes, when they get desperate a few will gang up on some new arrival with no friends, or a weak vulnerable individual and simply rob him when he leaves the 'PO'. If they get away clean, with no repercussions, the same thing will occur the following week.

They are the 'Giro Hounds'. Often, when I learn of such an event, I try to ban the culprits from the soup kitchens, but am told, 'What happens on the street, stays on the street,' even if the culprits are 'bang to rights'.

Also floating outside the 'PO' will be the 'ice-cream man', awaiting clientele. When a 'welfare witch' approaches him for some 'Brown', or a 'wrap', he will take their money, ring his 'Oliver', and the client will just walk to the street corner, where the Oliver will hand over a 'wrap' of heroin, or crack.

The Oliver (a young apprentice in the best Fagin tradition) will have no money on him, so, if arrested, cannot be accused of dealing. He will be under-age anyway, but there are many feral kids in Mugsborough whose prime ambition is to be an ice-cream man with lots of money and a fancy motor.

All the phone kiosks and bus shelters have now been changed to open-plan design that allows the wind to whistle round your ankles. This is to deter any 'gentlemen of the roads' who want to kip in them overnight. This process started when one old boy peed in a phone box and got electrocuted; he then tried to sue 'British Telecom', when he got over the shock!

The local launderettes close early to deter rough sleepers, who have been known to sleep inside the giant spin dryers, until someone switched one on, for a laugh.

Street people who sleep rough have other ways of keeping warm. Wrapping newspaper around the waist is an old trick, used in the trenches during the war and really preserves body heat. So does tying up trouser bottoms with string or elastic bands to stop draughts. Using a woolly hat is 'de rigueur' as most body heat escapes from your head. Two sets of socks and gloves are great for street people to keep warm in sub-zero temperatures.

People are occasionally discovered in decomposed states months after they have perished.

Many street people would prefer to be 'banged up' for the winter, because at least they can be sure of a warm bed and a meal. For example, this Christmas, Michael Reed 50, who was homeless, was caught stealing food from Marks and Spencer. At his court hearing he declared that he didn't care if got caught because he wanted to go back to prison where at least he would be fed. Magistrates granted his wish and jailed him for six months.

Vincent Holyoake, from De Cham Road in Mugsborough, reflects the other side of the coin. He is serving seventeen years, for smuggling two million pounds worth of crack cocaine into the country (sic). He has registered a formal complaint that his prison wages at Ford prison are less than half what he was formerly getting at Maidstone prison.

As I write news is coming in that Snowflake is closing down after 2011, so this our last winter. The Snowflake Trust is trying to organize local churches to let out their premises one night per week over three winter months, to welcome the homeless with an evening meal and a bed for the night. Time will tell if this reaches fruition, but across England there are thirty-five rotating night shelters operated by Christian communities. Locally there are winter night shelters in nearby towns like Tunbridge Wells, Eastbourne and Folkestone.

This planned Shelter is based on the experience of Snowflake's soup kitchen operated from the Salvation Army Citadel in Hastings, which I have been involved with since its inauguration in 2007. We need about five hundred pounds a year for food; the hall costs eight hundred to book, because the Salvation Army rent it to us, as the 'Snowflake Trust' is a separate charity. There are other expenses, like three hundred and fifty pounds for insurance etc. The Lions Charity gives us one thousand pounds a year, so we just seem to break even. Supermarkets also used to donate out-of-date produce, which had gone past its 'sell-by' date but recent E.C.C regulations stipulate all this surplus food must now be binned.

Of course Hope kitchen is also striving to establish some project but this may take a number of years, as it involves buying a premises and doing it up to suit requirements, and paying staff.

I am now involved with Kings Church, in a 'Trussell Trust' enterprise, forming a food-bank aimed at supplying three days food to those in crisis. The first day we just gave out leaflets asking shoppers to donate some food as they left Sainburys' Superstore, in Mugsborough. We got about twenty trolley loads of food, which weighed in at well over two hundred kilos. The first person we gave food to was a lady who had lived on porridge for four days, and that is just the beginning of our enterprise.

Last year, on my birthday of the first of August, local girl Kate McLaughlin died from an overdose of Ecstasy; she was eighteen years old. Now a year later things are no better; seventeen-year old Ricky Green jumped out a window to his death in Hastings. He had smoked Salvia, a drug that gives instant hallucinations. It is still street legal here in the shops, and available in different strengths; like Valium, it can also be purchased on the Internet. Hastings council recently agreed to revoke the licence of 'Marina News', in Mugsborough, after it sold Russian Vodka, which proved to be of industrial origin. All the staff have since been sacked. Three more local stores have just been stripped of their licences, as this goes to print.

The 'Pleasant' off-licence, with the 'Ararat Supermarket' and 'Sevens Mini-Market' were all allegedly selling cheap counterfeit poisonous drink. These were not only Vodka, but also Brandy, Champagne and even wine. For so many businesses to risk their licences in Mugsborough this trade must be massively profitable.

Even food in local cafes has become a health hazard here. The Council closed down the "Cosmos" along the Seafront, after a woman complained after she found a Microchip in her food. When Health Inspectors raided the place they found the remains of a dog in the freezer, and the staff then found themselves on the Dole. The woman remains anonymous, but we know the dog's name, for it was on the Microchip. This lends new credence to eating a 'Hot-Dog'. "The Cosmos" has now changed to the "Eato".

The council recently issued new work-vests to all 'scoats' doing Community Service. The general public didn't realize that these people were compelled to do odd jobs, like painting and gardening, as part of a court sentence. All the old folk saw these 'Community Service' vests and thought how noble it was that these young men should help the community in such a fashion. Now, at last, the council has twigged and changed the labels on the vests, to 'Community Payback', much to the chagrin of the 'scoats'. Trouble is, half the offenders are now given the soft option of therapy sessions, or even classes, which most don't bother to attend.

Recently these schemes were likened to a holiday camp, when the main TV channel covertly filmed offenders, making a mockery of their punishment. They were filmed sitting round smoking cannabis, drinking and playing computer games, when they should have been working.

The National Health Service seems no better as it is currently racked with scandals about old folk being abused in hospital. Doctors now have to prescribe water to prevent dehydration.

Dr. Timothy Ojo, the executive medical director of the N.H.S. that runs the psychiatric unit, 'Woodlands', adjacent to the Conquest, recently apologized for mistakes made, after three suicides there in the span of eighteen months.

A police investigation was launched into the incidents. The 'Observer' later reported, 'A catalogue of shortcomings by staff at Woodlands resulted in the death of Susanna Anley, a very vulnerable woman.' She was only thirty-five years old. The 'Observer' again reports:

'The parents of John Blair, a father of two, who hanged himself in Woodlands last October, have blasted the mental health unit for failing him.' The inquest heard he had warned staff, repeatedly, that he was intending to kill himself.

A three-day inquiry into the suicide of Police-Sergeant Richard Bexhell, who hanged himself in Woodlands over the August Bank Holiday, 2009, as I was starting this chronicle, has just concluded. The hearing at Eastbourne, heard Dr. Abdul Dar confess that neither he nor Staff Nurse Peter Owusu-Mensah had read the notes of the admissions nurse, or even carried out any risk assessment prior to Mr. Bexhell's admission to the unit. The referral papers had not been read by the admitting parties and the inquest highlighted 'completely unacceptable errors' in his treatment. His widow, Lynette Bexhell, is currently suing the N.H.S. Trust for gross negligence. Staff nurse Owusu-Mensah has since been sacked and the psychiatrist, Abdul Dar, is facing further investigation after the inquest found he did not do his job properly.

It would be farcical if it were not simply ludicrous, that the Hospital Trust, which is in staggering debt, has just spent over four million (sic) pounds for outside financial consultants in efforts to ameliorate their burden.

Conditions in the Conquest hospital seem to suffer steady deterioration and infection rates now have to be published every week. Alcoholics have been discharged from the detox unit after they were found to be drinking the hand wash fluids from dispensers; they were mixing this high-alcohol liquid with Coca-Cola, and walking round the wards oiled out of their minds.

If one has to go into hospital for an operation their admission letter stipulates, 'You must leave all valuables, including jewelry and mobile phones, at home. You may leave your wedding ring on, as we can tape over this,' but in Mugsborough you may need a roll of Duct Tape to cover yourself.

The emergency services fare no better. When Jean Foster, 79, fell recently in the centre of town she was left in agony on the cold pavement for over an hour before the paramedics arrived; she had broken her hip.

If you detest living in Mugsborough you can always do what Ed Harris 43, did and burn down your bungalow. A jury recently sent him to jail for three and a half years, because they found that he was convinced he and his partner would be re-housed somewhere else if his home burnt down. He had informed the Housing Department he couldn't stand living there any more. After the fire Mr. Harris, formerly of Carpenter Drive, Mugsborough, was found with three firelighters in his possession and arrested for arson. The court was told Harris had never worked in his life and lived on 'Disability Allowance'.

The latest census claims eighty-three thousand people live in this area, of which more than ten thousand claim Housing Benefit in the town.

The homeless street women routinely steal from charity shops. This is risk free, because charities never prosecute; not only would it be bad publicity, but the volunteer staff are reluctant to get involved with violence.

Shops like the Co-op and the Spar are just happy to get their goods back if they apprehend anyone, and sometimes don't prosecute as they could later get a brick through their window.

Supermarkets, being more secure, always prosecute and ban for life anyone caught shoplifting. They all have 'secure rooms', in which they lock offenders until the local gendarmerie arrive in force. Nevertheless shoplifting is on the increase since recent savage cuts, across the board, to social benefits have taken effect. Even rent allowances have been drastically reduced, especially to claimants under thirty-five, so the gap widens, catalysing class differentials. New regulations aim at getting this age group to share accommodation so, feasibly, total strangers could end up living together.

I know of one young lady, who supplements her meagre income by raiding charity shops on a daily basis. They all recognize her but do nothing. She has become very blasé, taking clothes off dummies on display and, as she strolls out, will lift the matching hat from off the dummies head, leaving the saleswoman glaring at her in disgust. Every Friday she brings her haul to the local 'fence', also a woman, and earns an extra tenner or two to pay the rent. She claims she has been forced into this position because Social Services at Heron House suddenly decided she owed too much on the three crises loans they'd given her. These totalled fifteen hundred pounds, which is over the limit, so they suddenly decided to deduct another ten pounds a week off each until they were paid off. She claimed this sudden thirty pounds reduction in her weekly income meant she couldn't feed her kids anymore, and it drove her to crime.

She also has to supplement her income by 'dogging'. This involves the routine of hanging around bus or railway terminals waiting for smokers to drop their fag ends when the bus suddenly arrives. Cinemas and Theatres are also excellent venues for this, as during the interval many smokers who are now forced outside, dump their half-used fags if they sense they might miss the start of the second half. She scoops up the old 'dog-ends' in a plastic bag and later retrieves the tobacco remnants from them, which she then sells on to other street people. This is best done with filter tips, which alleviates the risk of Hepatitis or worse from the previous owner's spittle, but, as the old saying proves, 'Beggars can't be choosers'. On reflection, all the street people I am acquainted with smoke dog-ends, and all go 'dogging' when they can, but most use their 'stash' for personal use as they get few other pleasures in life.

Street people will frequently 'hawk' their mobile phones to pawn shops, like 'Cash Converters' in the centre of town; they may get up to thirty quid for it, but the interest rates are high; 10% per month. So, if they want to redeem within a month, they pay back thirty-three pounds. If they haven't got enough they simply pay the interest of three pounds and leave it for another month. Many people frown on pawnshops but they are a real blessing to some, enabling them to put electricity or gas on the meter when the emergency credit has run out; or providing a tenner for

food until payday. These places can literally save your life, if you are on your 'last legs'.

Some of the street women will resort to the oldest profession in the world, but 'street-corner jobs' are the most a homeless person can offer; but it gives them a few quid for food or drink or drugs. The most they can hope for is a fiver, but punters in a car may pay more. STDs are rife in this area, especially amongst teenagers, where over half may have Chlamydia. Only the most desperate would seek out a street person, as there is so much cheap competition from the local brothels. (Sorry, escort agencies). These places now feature mostly foreign girls, mainly illegal immigrants working for a pittance. The authorities everywhere turn a blind eye to this trade, as statistics prove it alleviates rape and even child molestation. Apparently, in the U.K. one in three people, infected with H.I.V. is unaware of the fact.

There were recent reports in the press about dozens of slaves being freed from the clutches of wandering gypsies. Some had been held captive for over fifteen years. Vulnerable people had been picked up outside day-centres and soup kitchens, and the scandal only came to light when one of the captives escaped and was found wandering by local police. Most of the others, who were then freed were too terrified, or traumatized, to testify or press charges. I seem to recall my warning to clients in the soup kitchens exactly a year ago, warning of these dangers.

As I conclude this summing up, I now feel great relief that the story has been told. I feel like relaxing with a good drink; it is cold and wet and miserable out there, and I want to watch a movie, in front of my warm fire.

But Snowflake kitchen is running tonight, and someone down there needs my help. So I wander out into the cold damp night, reflecting on Robert Frost's poem: 'The woods are warm and dark and deep, but I have promises to keep, and miles to go before I sleep.'

FINI

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STREET VERNACULAR

(Terms from Cockney Rhyming Slang are noted 'CRS')

A.B.H. ... Actual Bodily Harm
Acid ... L.S.D.
Angel Dust ... PCP (Horse tranquilizer)
Alkies ... alcoholics
Accelerated Re-Possession Order ... a fast inexpensive procedure without the need for a Court hearing, to evict a tenant in 14 days. May be served during the two months notice after a Section 21 has been issued. No explanation required!
Arnolds ... Steroids
A.S.B.O. ... Anti-Social-Behaviour-Order
A.S.T. ... Assured Shorthold Tenancy
Author ... Doctor who writes illegal prescriptions
'B and B' ... Bed and Breakfast
Baccy ... tobacco
Banged up ... held in prison
Bang-up ... to Inject
Bang to Rights ... guilty as sin
Beachy Head ... notorious Suicide venue
Bevvies ... Drinks
Beef ... a problem
Being 'Assed' ... being bothered
Being 'Assy' ... being obnoxious
Brassic-lint (skint) CRS ... penniless
Brown ... Heroin
Charity Shop ... Thrift Shop
Chasing the Dragon ... Smoking Heroin
Civvy street ... civilian, after army discharge
Claret ... blood
Click ... Find mutual compatibility
Clocked ... Noticed
Clucking ... withdrawal symptoms
Cold turkey ... in withdrawal
Conquest ... Local Hospital
Craic ... Irish Humour
Crackhead ... crack addict
Crew ... Gang
Crap ... Dump
Cricket box ... male genital protection
Daddy ... boss
Decked ... Floored (knocked-down)
Devils Breath ... Scopolamine dust
Div ... mentally challenged person
Dobb in... to inform the authorities
Dog-ends ... cigarette butts

Dogging ... collecting dog-ends
 Dosshouse ... Night Hostel
 Drongos ... layabouts
 Drum ... one's residence
 Dump ... to defecate
 Dunking my juice ... drinking my Methadone
 Easy ... 'Hallo' or 'Goodbye'
 Ecstasy ... an
 Family jewels ... testicles
 Feral ... A young Scroat
 Fly-tipping ... dumping illegal rubbish
 Front ... gall, nerve
 Gaff ... home
 Gavvers ... police
 G.B.H. ... Greivous Bodily Harm.
 G.B.H. 'with Intent' ... with intent to kill
 Gear ... drugs
 Gee-Gees ... Horses
 Giro-Hound ... a Scroat waiting for someone to cash a Giro
 Giving it large ... being very loud/ aggressive
 Glasgow-Kiss ... Head-butt
 Going into one ... losing control
 GORD ...Gastro Oesophagus Reflux Disorder
 Grand (a) ... £1000
 Grass ... Weed (cannabis)
 Grass ... betray (a Judas)
 Grassed up ... betrayed
 Grief ... Trouble
 Hissy-Fit ... 'Going into one' ... losing control
 Ham and egging ... CRS for begging
 Hasidic ... Relating to Jewish beliefs or practices
 Hole-in-the-wall ... cash machine
 Hoodies ... people wearing hooded jackets to help conceal their faces
 Hope ... Hope soup kitchen
 Heroin House ... Heron House
 Ice-cream-man ... Drug dealer
 In the flesh ... in person
 'Inquest' hospital ... Conquest hospital
 Jacked ... injected
 Jacked up ... injected against one's will
 JSA ... Job Seeker's Allowance
 Leads with his left foot ... homosexual
 Loupe-de-loupe ... (CRS) ... Soup
 Mainline ... inject into vein
 Methadone ... Heroin substitute
 Minging ... stinking
 MRSA ... Multi-Resistant-Staph-Aureus (Superbug)
 Mugsborough ... St. Leonard's

Nark...a grass
Nerd ... computer geek
Nicking ... stealing
Nonce ... a sexual predator
NONCE ... 'Not allowed On Normal Courtyard Exercise' (a sign to protect prisoners in jail who may be vulnerable to attack from other inmates, because of the nature of their crimes.)
Nitrous Oxide ... Laughing Gas
Nuts ... Testicles
Give the Nod ... make aware
Office ... meeting place (bus shelter)
Offy ... Off-Licence
Oiled ... drunk
Old Bill ... Police
Oliver ... Drug dealer's apprentice
On holiday ... in prison
On the dole ... unemployed
On the pipe ... using crack
One-armed bandit ... amusement arcade machine
Out of their tree ... extremely inebriated or stupefied
Pepper spray ... anti-personnel spray, like CS Gas
Perp ... perpetrator
Pig ... Police Officer
Pig-sty ... Police Station
Pinheads ... junkies
Pins ... needles
Pissheads ... Drunks
Plastics ... PCSOs
PO ... Post Office
Ponce ... a scrounger
Popped his/her clogs ... Died
Porridge ... jail time
PCSO ... Police Community Service Officer
Puffheads ... Cannabis smokers
Pulled ... to 'Pull' ... Click with a woman/man
Rattling ... needing a drink
Referrals ... Clients, medically referred, by Doctors. Etc.
Reports ... Social and Criminal Evaluations
Resin ... solid cannabis block
Ripped off ... robbed
Robocop ... PCSO with TV Camera on his helmet
Rocking ... having a wild time
Roll-up ... Handmade cigarette
R.N.L.I. ... Royal National Lifeboat Institution
R.S.P.A ... Royal Society Prevention cruelty to Animals
R.T.A. ... Road Traffic Accident
Sally Ann ... Salvation Army
Scratching on the sausage ... Signing on the dole

Scroat ... a suspect character
 Scopolamine ... Devil's Breath
 Section ... incarcerate, usually because of mental problems
 Section 21 ... Can be issued at any time during a Shorthold tenancy. No reason needs to be given to the tenant, or the Court, but gives two months to vacate after the term of tenancy finishes.
 Sextasy ... Ecstasy used with Viagra
 Shiv ... blade, or knife
 Shoot the breeze ... Nitrous Oxide
 Shoot up ... inject
 Shooting Gallery ... place where drugs are injected
 Shorthold Tenancy ... or A.S.T is normally a six-month initial tenancy, which must be terminated by a Section '21' Notice, if Landlord wishes to regain the tenancy.
 Section '8' Notice to quit, which may be issued before a Section 21 comes into effect, but just cause must be given, for this.
 Shrapnel ... loose change
 Sign on ... the dole (unemployment benefit)
 Sin-bin ... Bin for disposing of used needles, etc.
 Skagging ... regularly using crack, or heroin
 Skank ... steal
 Skin Pop ... inject under skin
 Slagg off... disparage someone
 Slam ... to inject
 Smack ... Heroin
 Snow ... Coke
 Snowman ... drug dealer
 Sofa-surfing ... sleeping on sofas
 Solid ... doing fine
 Sorted ... solved
 S P A ...Special Police Authority
 Speed ... Amphetamine Sulphate
 Speed-freak ... devotee of methamphetamine
 Spike ... Old-style Dosshouse
 Squidgy ... Cannabis resin
 Sussed ... figured out
 Steaming ... paralytic, extremely drunk
 Stepped on ... diluted
 Strop ... a Huff
 Stretch ... A prison sentence
 Stringing me out ... winding me up
 Super acid ... Ketamine
 Sweet ... Cool
 Tatts ... Tattoos
 Tazer ... wire-fed stun-gun
 Tool ... gun
 Ten-bag ... ten pounds worth
 Tickle ... robbery
 Touch ... theft

To get pulled ... arrested
To take out (someone) ... to kill
Tooled up ... armed
Turned over ... robbed
Turned a trick ... had sex for money
TURP ... Transurethral Resection of the Prostate
Van Gogh ... CRS clear off ... leave
Wages ... Benefits
Works ... syringes
Well oiled ... well drunk
Welfare Witch ... Woman on welfare benefits
Whizz ... Speed
Wrap ... drug package
Wuss ... coward
'Y' ... Y.M.C.A.
Yardies ... Caribbean Gangsters
57 Crew... The gang who resided at 57, Church Road