

**Yesterday
was rubbish.
How can I
make today
good?**



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Today

Today I set out to write, photograph and produce a zine in 24 hours.

My first idea was to make a zine about all the things I loved. It was inspired by one of the last emails my late friend Irene sent to me. She wrote: “you could incorporate your songs into a zine which has all your favourite things, Helen, Elliott, Juju, walking, observations of the absurdities in life.” I was going to do just that, make a zine with reviews of all my books about survival at sea (a *penchant* of mine), maps of my favourite walks and odes to my partner, my son and my dog.

Then late last night, I had another idea that would still be in the spirit of Irene’s proposal. I would go on mini-missions from my home to collect content for my zine. I would go on photo-crawls, sketch-crawls, microadventures and document my day and my home town. I’m moving to Somerset in a few weeks so it would be a document of all that was good about my life in Hastings before I leave.

But then, once I started my day, this zine quickly became something else. I found that I wasn’t going on serious missions, I was doing things that I knew I would *enjoy*.

My partner and son are on holiday at the moment and for the last few days I had been finding it increasingly difficult to know how to make good use of all my spare time. The pressure to do useful things had become so much that I had had a thoroughly rotten day yesterday. It was a day when I had got out of bed late and didn’t get enough done. A day when it seemed like everything I looked at broke.

So, the title and the focus for this zine finally came to me: ‘Yesterday was rubbish. How can I make today good?’ I would simply go out and do as much as I could that would make me happy. It would be a list of suggestions to make anyone’s day a bit better or at least to remind me what I could do the next time I had a bad day. And I know Irene would have liked that.

In the following pages you’ll see photographs of what I did today to try and make it a good one. Some were more successful than others but just the simple act of trying meant it was a better day than yesterday.



Porridge

I've had a porridge renaissance in the last year or so. It was after going to my friends Griz and Emma's one night and them making porridge for me in the morning that did it. There was something so leisurely and indulgent about eating it, not to mention the extra time it took to cook compared with your low-maintenance, high-sugar cereals. This was *real* breakfast. We all sat down around their huge wooden table and chatted and slowly slopped our way through a vat of porridge.

From then on, I have had porridge for breakfast most mornings. I've even got my boy, Elliott, into it too. Not bad for a 3-year old, though he still prefers Weetabix. Although I'm not sure if he just likes saying 'Weetabix' when I ask him what he wants instead of actually liking it to eat. It's certainly a more fun, more juvenile word than the medieval-sounding 'porridge'.

Now, people in Scotland insist on using only water and salt with their oats but they're clearly overdoing the hard-as-nails thing. The correct ratio of ingredients has to be:

1 cup oats + 1 cup water + 1 cup soya milk

I'm currently of the mind that additions should be made in the form of:

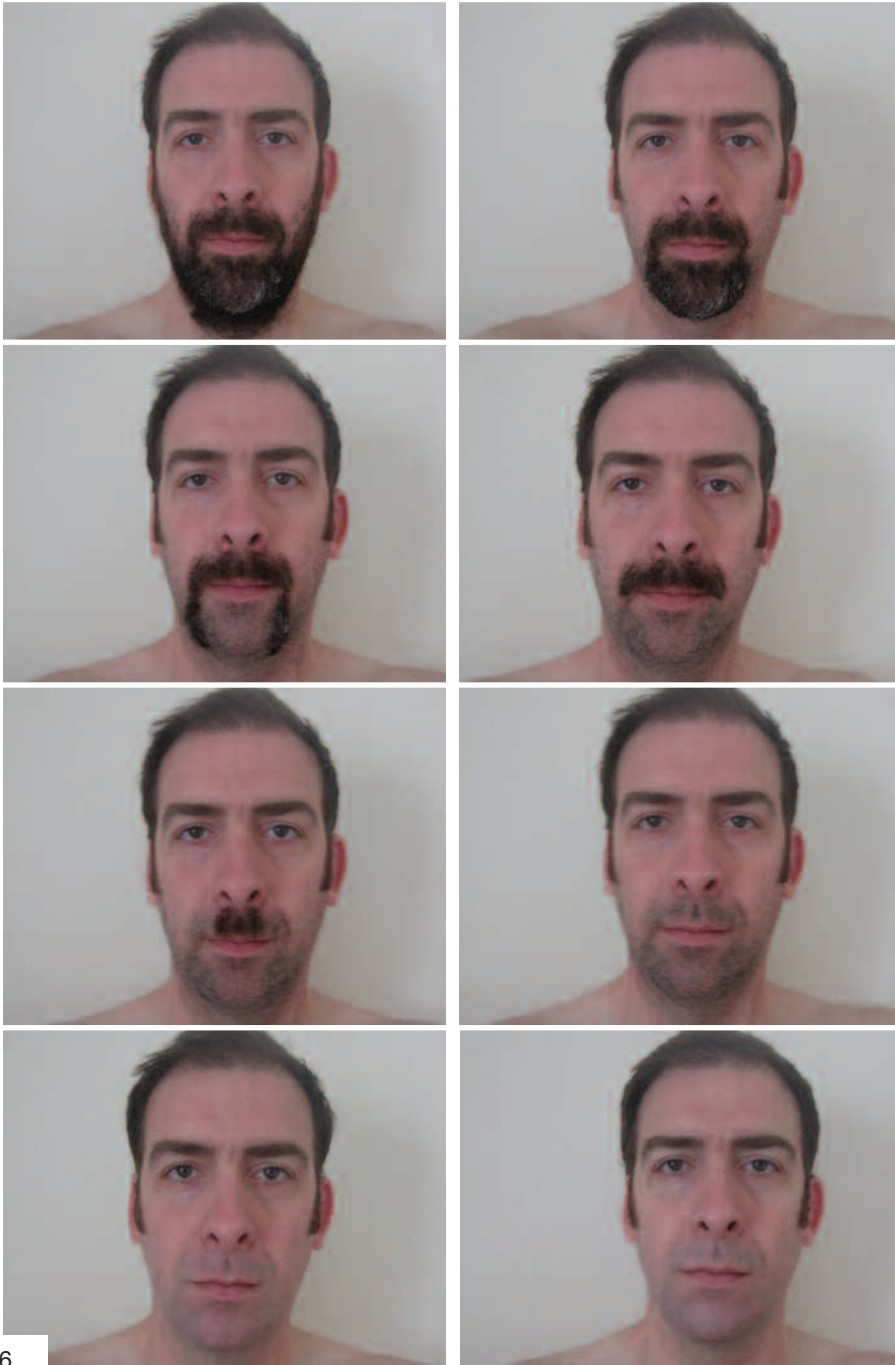
- a handful of raisins
- 1 tbsp dark chocolate chips

I have also experimented with:

- toasted pecan nuts
- maple syrup
- bananas

Top porridge tip (courtesy of Griz)

When cooking, wait for the porridge to bubble then turn off the heat and leave for 5 minutes. When you come back to the pot the porridge will have swollen to make a lovely, sticky texture which you can then reheat if necessary.



Shave

As you can see from the top left photo, shaving is not usually part of my day. Honestly, what's the point? It only grows back again. I tend to leave my face to sprout hairs for about three weeks before shaving. And when I do, I can't help but go through this process of goatee, Morgan Spurlock, Tom Selleck, Hitler, designer stubble and finally to what my partner, Helen, optimistically calls 'Miles from *This Life*'.

When I was younger I had a highly shaped goatee that looked like someone had drawn round my gob with a biro while I was asleep. I even tried a soul patch for a night out in Brighton once but I quickly shaved it off the next morning before anyone I knew saw it.

Now, I've found that my facial hair has an optimum length. It is about one to two weeks after shaving and when combined with about a week-old haircut I look my most handsome. And, literally, the next day it's too long again and I look like someone who's been found in an air pocket of an upturned boat.



Walk

Pretty much every day I take my dog, Juju, for a walk. Juju's about 13 years old now and doesn't walk very far or very fast. It's taking some getting used to the fact that we can't go on our 10-mile jaunts any more. We used to have proper adventures, driving out to some sunny Sussex landscape where she would be so excited just to be outdoors. No matter how long the walk was, at the end she was always up for walking some more. But, alas, age has got the better of her. For years I had to train her not to pull on the lead as she was so keen to be moving forward, to be somewhere else, but now she drags on the lead, wanting to go at her own, plodding pace. And after all the years of pleasure she's given me, it's my duty to slow down for her.

It's important that our walks together are still enjoyable though, so I'm glad there's this patch of land just down the road from where I live. Just down my street a path leads between two fishing ponds owned by the Clive Vale Angling Club. I hate seeing the scruffy old men and the rough-looking boys fishing. It's a cruel, barbarous, pointless sport. The ponds are so full of fish you could punch the water and knock out a dozen so I don't know what satisfaction they get from pulling one out on a line. But if you ignore all that it's a great (I was going to say 'beautiful' but I wouldn't go that far) place. It's like a little wildlife sanctuary. I often see herons filling their guts with the plentiful supply of fish, tossing them into their mouths with something like a practiced nonchalance, the seagulls looking on enviously. I've heard fox cubs barking for their mothers in the thick undergrowth too. I recorded them on my phone once and played it to Elliott who whooped along with them.

As a novice outdoor swimmer, every time I wander past the ponds, I wonder what it would be like to swim in them. It's a vertiginous feeling: I know a swim in those brown waters would be disgusting but something makes me want to jump in. It's the same feeling I get when I look at pictures of nuclear plant reactor pools. The only time I've seen anyone in the fishing ponds was when a police diving team searched them for a gun that someone had thrown in after a shooting. The police spent a week in there and came up with nothing but trolleys, bicycles and vacuum cleaners which they lay in a stinking pile next to the path. Maybe the murderer was a fisherman who told the police he'd thrown the gun in there so that they would clean his old fishing patch up. I still have waking nightmares about what it must have been like for the divers in there. Surely when they signed up to be professional divers that wasn't what they expected.





Cycle

I have gone for years without a bicycle. It was only at the end of last year that I decided to buy a second-hand mountain bike. I suppose it was because I wasn't walking Juju as much and I needed a way of getting out. I'd also been aware of the emerging cycling culture and wanted to be part of it. If you listen to The Bike Show on Resonance FM, Jack Thurston is effortlessly cool and makes you want to own at least five bicycles.

In one of these podcasts, Thurston interviewed bicycle designer and owner of Rivendell Bicycle Works, Grant Petersen, who said that his main aim was to design bikes that gave the user the same feeling of joy and freedom that they had when riding bikes as a child. This struck a chord with me.

I was always on my Raleigh Gritter when I was a kid. I loved it. I vividly remember the Christmas when my mom covered my eyes while my dad wheeled my Gritter into the room and sat me on it for the first time. It was bright red (although I soon covered it in stickers) with black mudguards that you could tuck under so that they rattled against the wheels to make a convincing motorbike sound. Gritters were around when BMXing was taking off so, not to be left out, Raleigh put instructions in the manual on how to make your Gritter a bit like a BMX by drilling holes in the frame and letting some air out of the tyres.

Me and my friends would make ramps over the park or we would ride over the local sand quarry and we would always play for as long as were allowed. It was just so good to have that freedom. To be able to nip over to a friend's house or to go on little trips out to the countryside. I was always falling off it though. Two separate falls led to both crank arms becoming so bent so that I was the only one who could ride it.

After buying my bicycle last year, I went on a mountain bike race in Amberley, West Sussex. And I got that same feeling as when I was a kid. I was free to ride wherever I wanted: over hills, across the grass, up dirt tracks and through as much mud as I liked. The uphill sections were tough but the downhills were sheer gut-wrenching, arm-shaking, arse-clenching pleasure; going as fast as I could, daring myself to leave the brakes off a little longer.

As long as I can remember this childhood feeling then cycling will always be a joy.



Swim

I am a wimp. I always have been. I would never swim in the sea when I was young, I would just paddle and even then I would squeal a lot.

After moving to Brighton in my twenties I tried to swim in the sea again and still squealed a lot. It always annoyed me when people said that you got used to it once you're in. That didn't make the getting in any easier for me. And even when I was in, the thought of what might be below me made me get out pretty quickly.

Last year, for some reason, I decided that I'd like to try an open water swim and I signed up to do the 750m Human Race swim on the Thames at Marlow in Oxfordshire. And I absolutely loved it!

Although I was still scared by the thought of the hidden depths beneath me, the other swimmers there made me feel more secure and the fact that it was a race egged me on. I dug in and swam on and enjoyed every minute. I hated sport at school and it had taken this long to forget about all that and actually want to compete. Afterwards, the feeling of having taken part and achieved something was exhilarating and I was on a high for the rest of the month, if not the year.

I promised myself I would do it again and I have. This February I did the Big Chill Swim in Windermere, a 60m swim without a wetsuit. It was amazing!

It's funny, I'd always seen those weirdos who go swimming in the sea every day in Brighton and thought: they must be a certain type of person to do that. But it's my big realisation lately that they're not. The only difference between them and me is that they do it and I don't. I think this can be applied to lots of things. You see people you admire doing these amazing things and think that excitement or fulfillment like that is out of reach, but the fact is, it's not.

And you know what? You do get used to it once you're in.

TRACK-MARSHALL 70

FRESH FISH

SHOP

ALL
SAINTS
HALL

FISH
COD
FILLETS
COD
CUTLETS
WHOLE
PLAICE
PLAICE
FILLETS
HUSS
SKATE
HADDOCK
FILLETS
MACKEREL

THE
Ancient
Parish
CHURCH OF
All Saints
REV. Robert
Featherstone
7 HIGH ST. TEL. 422023

TODAYS
Catch
BEST
FISH
PRICE

PULPITT GATE

81
ANCHOR
ALL SAINTS

ROTHER
HOUSE



Friends

Just as I was rattling out the first draft of the intro to this zine, I got a text from my friend Greg to see if I wanted to meet up with him and his family. My first reaction was to say no because I wanted to get this zine done; I had my day planned and it was going to be full of very meaningful missions that didn't involve other people.

Luckily this ridiculous thought was swiftly followed by the realisation that I hadn't seen my good friend or his family in months and that today should be about having a good time and saying yes to things.

So, after shaving, taking Juju for a walk, cycling down town and going for a swim in the sea, I got in my car and drove to Bexhill to meet up with my friends at the De La Warr Pavillion.

It was great to see Greg again. When we lived in Brighton, Greg was my closest friend. We have a habit of doing things at the same time: we broke up with long-term partners on exactly the same date, just two years apart; met new long-term partners at the same time; had children within six months of each other; moved out of Brighton at the same time; and even now, have both decided that we'd rather be living in the countryside.

Good friends are those that you've been through big life events with and Greg was a big help when I split up with my first girlfriend. We consulted the *I Ching* and it came up with an amazingly relevant image of a house split in two just as me and my ex were deciding whose stuff was whose in the flat we were leaving.

I used to go over to Greg's on Thursday evenings to watch films, drink No-Caff and have meaningful chats about life and relationships or books and films or just nothing in particular and I really miss that. So I'm very glad that he texted and that I said yes.





Gamble

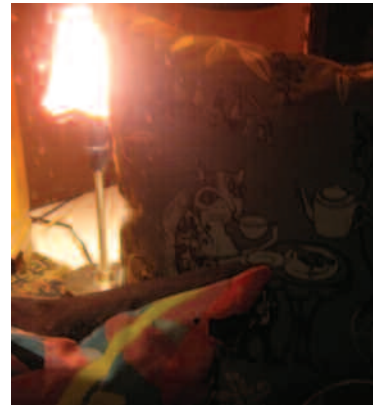
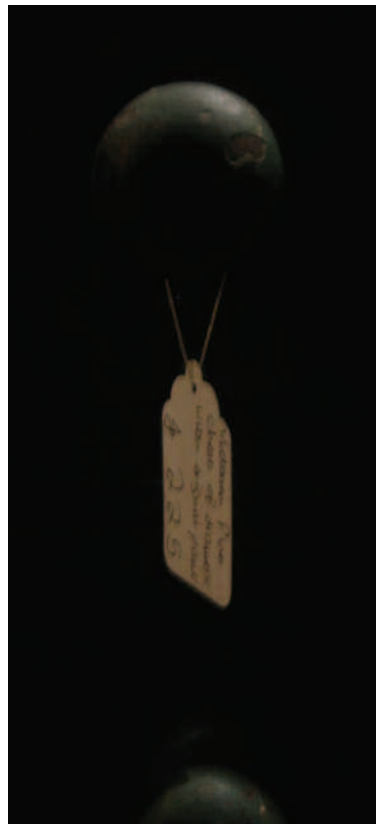
I have an admission to make: I quite like the ITV game show, *Tipping Point*. It's based on the coin-pusher penny arcade games that we all played when we were kids. It's not that I like answering the stupid questions on *Tipping Point*, and it's certainly not for the smarmy presenter, it's that watching the oversize coins drop into the machine is insanely addictive.

Hastings is full of these coin-pusher arcades. When Elliott's around we avoid them like the plague for fear of one of his paddies or of turning him into an insatiable gambler, but on the one night this year that me and Helen had without him we ran into one of the arcades and emptied our pockets of change into the noisy, spinning, flashing machines.

So tonight, while trying to think what Hastings had to offer at 8pm on a Monday evening, I headed off to the seafront arcade with 14p in tuppences that I'd found in my bedside drawer.

What a let down. I didn't win a thing! Not even one 2p dropped down for me to quickly redeposit. It's a mugs game, gambling, isn't it?

However the trip was saved by the fact that I walked through Hastings Old Town and found some real beauty in the closed shop window displays. See the next page for my photographs of them.



Yesterday was good. How can I make today the same?

I set my alarm for 7am to get this zine finished before 9am which was when I started it yesterday and to be able to reflect on my day.

When I went to the arcade last night, as I was walking from my car, just as the last light of the day was fading, a shape flew in front of my face and startled me. 'Bat!' was my first thought, then, as I saw how big it was and recognised the big round head, the silent swoop, I realised it was an owl. It was the closest I've ever been to one.

I never would have seen it if I hadn't decided to go to the arcade at 8pm. And the only reason I went was because I knew I needed some more content to fill up the last few pages of this zine. It's rare that we think like this. Even though I felt fulfilled from having a pretty full day I still managed to cram a bit more in and I had some fairly out of the ordinary experiences because of it. What would have happened if this zine was 48 pages long? Or longer still? Could I have done even more. Probably not. Maybe it would have swung the other way to become tiresome. But still, if the goal of every living thing is to fulfill its potential then the question is: *what is your true potential?*

The goal of yesterday became to make it a good one and I think I succeeded through a nice mixture of pushing myself and through serendipity. Or maybe it was through pushing myself that I became open to serendipity. Having a vague plan certainly helped but being able to adapt it helped too.

It's funny, on the evening of my rubbish day I unhappily watched a film, all the while thinking I should have been doing something else. But last night, after a day full of fun, creativity and friends, I just wanted to do nothing, to just plonk myself in front of a film, maybe even doze off in front of it.

I love that feeling of being tired it's just that I find it hard to attain. When I want to be tired and relaxed, my instinct is to do less, but the truth is that I have to exert myself to be able to feel tired. This is hard for someone as lazy as I am.

Well tomorrow I'm off to cycle round the Isle of Wight so I know that's going to be a good day or two. And it's going to make the next spare evening I have all the more enjoyable.

**Now, how
about
tomorrow?**