



Six Months To Live?

I Don't Think So!

Judi's Journals

by Judi Seall

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Judi Seall

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These journals are dedicated to the memory of:

Paul Manchip

Bryan Frost

Gary Dennis

June Mullen

Danny de Meuleneare

Joss Cleeve

Tony Phipps

My love and thanks to

my very best friend,

St Bridget

Cast List

Sam	My husband
Bridget	My best friend and surrogate sister
Sue C.	A very special friend
Peter	Bridget's husband and a very dear friend
Tom and Louise	Bridget's daughter and her husband
Wendy	My sister
Sue and Joe	My sister and her partner
Thalia	My best friend and surrogate sister
Linda and Joss	Good friends
Lucy	Friend and creator of 'Buddies'
Roz	Acquaintance
Jane	Acquaintance
Pam	Friend from New Zealand
Lesley and Ian	Very special friends
Charles	Acquaintance
Sarah	Very good friend and neighbour
Danny, Els and Bram	My special Belgium family
Carol	Friend
Michael	Very good friend
Bob and Deborah	Friends
Lazlo	Sam's really good friend
Hugh	Always my best friend ever
Dangerous	Obviously Dangerous Brian
Amy	My very good friend and hairdresser
John and Jenny	Friends
Nick and Dale	The gamekeeper and his wife, really good friends
Lynette	Flat-coat friend
Janet and Maurice	My cousin and her husband
Ian	My nephew
Claire and Paul	My lovely niece and her husband
Graham Cox	Good friend
Clive and Sheila	Acquaintances
Brenda	Flat-coat friend

Debbi	Indianna's other mummy
Terry	Vicar
Duncan	A and D chairman
Rusty	My chemo nurse
Chris	Friend
Jonny	Sir Jonny
Angela	Good friend
Neil	My nephew
Shirley and Stuart	Friends
Alana and Brian	Friends
Steph	Friend
Glenis	Good friend
Bettina	My 'Buddies' friend

Prologue

Faced with writing this prologue and revisiting my journals has been difficult and emotional. Obviously I had put all the information in my journals at the very back of my mind and reading letters from consultants, psychologists and nurses from almost a decade ago was a huge and shocking jolt to my memory.

Diagnosed with Stage 3 non-small cell cancer, a 5.2-mm tumour in my right lung in July 2006.

With my then duties as CLA Gundog chairman at the end of July for the Game Fair, and with thousands of people 'under my umbrella', I was totally committed and just did not have time to meet with my oncologist until the latter part of August.

I did, however, with dear Bridget's help, manage to fit in MRI scans, CT scans, a lung biopsy and endless appointments before the Game Fair.

I finally met with my oncologist, instantly dubbed Captain Chemo, and any future reference to him will be just that or CC throughout.

He instantly had my attention before I could back-pedal too far and hesitate to agree to the chemo. I was told without the chemo I would be lucky to live six months – if I had the chemo then perhaps twelve to eighteen months of good-quality life – scary.

I had the chemo – it's all in here – followed by six and a half weeks of radical radiotherapy. In January 2009 after a PET scan showed mediastinal disease in my lymph nodes – I refused more chemo.

My first journal was intended to be just one for my family and friends to read after my death. That, however, did not happen, so I continued to write until 2010 and then I was surrounded, consumed, with the deaths of the people I loved and the journals came to an end.

The following pages have been meticulously typed by Jane – no mean feat reading someone else's handwriting and typing at the

same time. There are no chapters, some dates, each journal given its own place.

I hope my journals, my thoughts, my treatment, my reminiscing will be of help to others who perhaps find it difficult speaking about it, to take up pen and paper and just write it all down!

Fast-forward to 2015, what have I done in those extra life years? I jumped out of a plane to raise money for The Rowans Hospice, I moved house and now live in a bungalow – phew, no more stairs – I went to Tom and Lou's wedding. I was still around to see my great nephew at just a few days old. Sam and I had a wedding blessing on our twenty-fifth anniversary – who would have thought that? I had a big party on my seventieth birthday.

My quality of life has changed, my outlook on life has changed and even after two years of appointments with my psychologist, I still wonder why and how I am still here.

I haven't been able to drive for four years and I cannot walk unaided, nerve endings are my nemesis. However, I have wonderful friends and family who drive me – mostly to the dentist – but that is another story.

I believe I owe it all to fresh air and three litres of water a day . . .
. . . and the medication.

Judi Seall

Journal 1

12th July 2006 – 4th January 2007

The First Six Months

12th July 2006 – I went to the Doctor's today! Just had not been feeling too great and thought perhaps it was stress-related with the lead-up to the Game Fair. Also, have been coughing up some blood, which is somewhat disconcerting. Doctor recommended blood tests and X-rays.

17th July – Had blood tests.

19th July – Went for chest X-ray and was slightly concerned when the radiographer asked to see me again for a further X-ray. I asked how long it would take for the results to reach my GP and was relieved to hear that it would take two weeks so I didn't need to make another appointment with my GP until after the Game Fair – fantastic!

20th July – The following day! Received a phone call from the nearest hospital asking me to make an appointment as a matter of some urgency for a scan. Impossible before the Game Fair so have an appointment for 1st August.

21st July – Saw my GP before surgery started. He informed me there was a large unidentified mass in my right lung with a high risk of being cancer! Immediate reaction was that Sam must not know! I needed him to start his new job at Avington as it was important to me that he was settled. We had to go and meet all the staff at Avington that evening and I could not help thinking that with all the talk of the future I would not be there.

22nd July – I told my dear friend Bridget, who I know will be strong for me, and for the first time I felt really emotional but my priorities remained the same. Sam must not know until I know a bit more and he is settled at Avington.

In the evening I went to my cousin's fiftieth wedding anniversary. Wendy, Sue and myself were bridesmaids. It was a really enjoyable evening and I was momentarily distracted. However, on the way home I did wonder if I would ever see them again and it made me feel rather subdued.

23rd July – Sam's last day at Meon Springs and I was home alone all day. I started fretting a little about the dogs and who could home them for me. Would I be able to do the shooting season? Would I be rushed into hospital?

24th July – Decidedly chipper today and spent all day at Broadlands as the run up to the Game Fair gets ever closer, so I didn't dwell on my future as there was no time.

25th July – Last minute 'at home' preparations before moving on-site tomorrow and I really do want to know the prognosis now. In a strange sort of way I feel lucky to be able to have the opportunity to put everything in order before I die. Had a long talk with Jan at the Beauty Clinic (had a spray tan!). She used to be a sister on a respiratory ward and was very knowledgeable on lung cancer and explained quite a lot to me. Actually it was good to talk to her as she is not related or particularly close and I did not feel emotional at all. She said I could go and talk to her anytime after I had been to see the consultant on 1st August and I think I would like to do that.

26th July – On-site by 9 a.m. and will stay here now until Monday 31st. Hopefully I will be so busy I won't have time to dwell on the future – or lack of it! I am quite resigned to it now and just hope everything doesn't happen too quickly as I need some time to sort things out.

Too hot! Have not had much time to reflect on what will be. I had an hour of peace before everything started 'kicking off'. PA systems in the wrong place, tents and people arriving etc. Tomorrow will be worse and the only thoughts I have are just being very aware that this could very well be my last CLA Game Fair and probably the very last time I shall see some of these people, some of whom

are good friends. I shall try not to think about it and hopefully enjoy a little of what I've worked for over the past twelve months. Onwards and upwards.

27th July – My first night sleeping in the caravan and I have to say my years under canvas in the Girl Guides are long gone. I can't see me taking this up as a hobby and joining the Caravan Club! Massive thunderstorm right overhead and fitful sleep, waking with a blinding headache. Onwards and upwards.

28th July – The Anglo/Euro Challenge, followed by a barbeque at Gundog control had to be the longest, hottest day ever. Consequently a very brief entry to my diary as exhaustion set in. Plus, dogs dying from heat exhaustion and people collapsing made it a very stressy day.

29th July – The international competition got under way amidst the usual noise from the teams, who are so full of their own importance it is hard to believe. Managed to 'escape' for an hour. Then I was persuaded to go off site with a few of the team for a Chinese. I really didn't want to go, but I washed my hair and went and really enjoyed it. They were right, it did me so much good to forget everything and disappear for a while.

30th July – The last day and I already feel pretty emotional. The end of the two-day competition, get the presentation over, debrief and thank-you gifts to the 'team' and then let's see how I feel! Tuesday getting ever closer and it is now on my mind, but you know I reckon they have made a mistake and it's absolutely nothing to worry about – yeah, right! Presentation ran like clockwork, we all drank champagne until quite late and I guess that's it – over!

31st July – Clear up, pack car, go home – exhausted and wait for tomorrow's appointment and see what that brings.

It is 1.15 p.m. on Sunday 6th August and this is the very first time I have sat down with little time for myself since arriving back from the Game Fair p.m. on Monday 31st, so this week has been a

complete roller coaster and this next entry will be a combination of all subsequent days.

I cannot believe just how good it feels to sit here with my feet up – ON MY OWN – luxury, at least for a minute.

Monday afternoon – I arrived home with the car jam-packed full and I did attempt to unpack some of it. Sam was here and helped me get the main things in. The dogs were mental and absolutely delighted to see me. Sorted quite a bit out, but by 5 p.m. I was completely knackered so I had a bath. What luxury after a week of cold showers in the caravan, then to sit in a proper chair and put my feet up, then my own bed – bliss!

Tuesday – The dreaded appointment with the consultant. I had built myself up for this totally thinking that I would get some answers and perhaps thinking of talking to Sam about it. How wrong could I be? Picked Bridget up and then we drove to Louise and Tom's, left the car there and got a taxi to the hospital to avoid the horrendous parking situation. Waited an hour then saw a nurse who weighed me, took some details and tested my lung functions. Back to the waiting room and another half-hour before finally seeing the consultant. Answers – no way. Scary – yes! Saw the X-ray plus one that was taken in October 2005. On that one there was absolutely no sign of the 'growth', so in nine months this has appeared. He talked a lot of jargon, Bridget took notes then he sent me for blood tests and made an appointment for me to have a CT scan on Thursday, which was forty-eight hours away – how scary was that? Suddenly remembered Pam was coming to stay so we dashed round the supermarket on the way. Oh yes, momentarily forgot that Sam started his new job today so had to keep upbeat and motivated for him, but he was fine and when he arrived home he had really enjoyed the job. It's so important that he settles there.

Wednesday – I spent the day washing, getting a room ready for Pam, unpacking the rest of the car and generally trying to organise the dogs etc., while I arranged to disappear again on Friday

morning for the CT scan! They have been so good, what with me being away for a week at the Game Fair and then constantly leaving them again for wretched hospital appointments. I so want to go privately, but the consultant does not advise it as the appointments would not be so quick.

Thursday – Drove to Bridget's then she drove to yet another hospital – St Mary's – for the CT scan. It is seriously hard to believe that this has actually happened in the past three weeks. Had to drink a pint of something really disgusting before the scan, but it was over quite quickly and I was home by lunchtime. Quick turnaround and picked up Pam from Petersfield Station.

Been home one hour and just sat down and the consultant that I had seen on Tuesday PHONED to say he had the results of the scan – from four hours ago! Still had no answers but I now have to go into Queen Alexandra Hospital on Tuesday for a general anaesthetic and a 'guided CT biopsy'(?). Followed by another appointment with him on Friday where I hope to know what is going on because I am really beginning to get stressed about not knowing and keeping it all from Sam.

Had a fairly quiet evening with Pam, which was nice and we discussed what I would do if the news was bad etc. Actually it was good to talk with Pam as she was completely unemotional and straightforward to talk to.

Friday morning – Pam took some of the dogs for a walk and I started to write my thank-you letters – what a pain! Lunchtime Paula came and picked us up and we met Danny, Els and Bram in The George for lunch, which was a nice distraction. Went to bed early – absolutely shattered – my body is complaining, but I still push to my absolute limits.

Saturday – Pam got up early and went to Avington with Sam. I did a few chores here, cleaned out the chickens etc., and then I took Hamish and Fletcher and went to collect Pam from Avington before she asked too many questions!

Sunday – Pam took the dogs out for me again and I finished off writing my thank-you letters. Just need to write my report and I can, hopefully, put the Game Fair to bed. Pam decided to go back to Carol's. She flies back to New Zealand on Wednesday, so I ran her to Petersfield Station – I wonder if I will see her again. We made plans for Blenheim 2008 – will I make it? I think, although I am being quite philosophical about this, if I am to be completely honest, I really don't believe it's happening and that next Friday I will be told it's a virus!

Monday – I generally caught up and actually did the ironing and mundane chores. First day I have had to myself for ages.

Tuesday – The dreaded lung biopsy, which was not the walk in the park I thought it would be. Had a long talk with the consultant, who did not beat about the bush and referred to the problem as 'The Tumour', and explained that the biopsy was not to find out whether it was cancer but to establish what type! Stark reality, huh? I am so worried about telling Sam, I know what he is like and I just don't need him going to pieces. Amazingly, while I was in recovery I chatted to a woman for ages and it turned out that she was a Presbyterian priest – how spooky is that! She was so nice and I would like to talk to her again. I know where her little church is – Court Lane – so I really think I may try and pay her a visit. Had a long chat with Bridget on the way home and I have asked her to be there when I tell Sam, so, hopefully, she and Pete will come up on Saturday evening with fish and chips or something and I will tell him then.

Wednesday – Have taken to my bed – completely unheard of, but I feel really grim. Didn't sleep well as I could not get comfortable where the biopsy was done, incredibly sore for such a small area and now I am coughing up blood. I guess 'The Tumour' is annoyed at having needles thrust in it. Have decided to give 'The Tumour' a name, but haven't come up with one yet, not quite the same as naming puppies! Talking of which, I am really glad that I decided

not to breed any more – just imagine if I had the added worry of a litter of puppies! What about ET? Sounds good to me – will think about it and confirm later.

Sam is out doing the dogs and I am in bed! I so, so need him to be strong about this and I need him to continue at Avington. Not sure how I feel about Friday and the long-awaited prognosis! Whatever happens, having been fast-tracked for the last three weeks I want to take a deep breath and really think about things and consider my options. The NHS have really moved fast on this, but I would like to be transferred to BUPA once I get the prognosis, just couldn't bear to have to go into Queen Alexandra's Hospital. That's not snobbery; it's just that to cope with all this I need to feel happy about where I am.

Just gone back to the beginning of this – 12th July 2006 – less than a month ago! With the Game Fair in between – absolutely unbelievable.

Thursday, 10th August – Time flies when you are having fun – not! Feel OK today although still a bit sore. I have done the dogs and a few chores and much better really. Tomorrow should know the full SP and plan to tell Sam on Saturday evening. Don't want to tell him tomorrow as I am out judging for Paula all day Saturday and he will be home alone and brooding. Best to wait until I get back on Saturday and then Bridget can come up and be here when I tell him! So – that's the decision! Michael picking me up on Saturday, which is good as I don't really want to drive and will probably be knackered by the time I get home and will be quite nervous as I am planning on telling Sam then.

Friday – Today the reality has set in and I know I have Grade 3 terminal cancer. It has spread from my lungs to my lymph nodes around my chest, it is inoperable and chemotherapy will lengthen my life. I still have no clear answers on life expectancy or my options without chemotherapy and now have asked to be transferred to BUPA together with a week's breathing space to get my head around this. Have also decided that I will tell Sam this

evening as I cannot leave it any longer. Told Sue this afternoon and she was reasonably stoic about the whole thing and I now wonder how the hell I will tell Wendy. Dreading telling Sam, but have spoken with Lazlo today and asked him to come and see him while I am out judging tomorrow.

Saturday, 2.15 a.m. – Told Sam and now can't sleep, worried about everything now. Worried about the impact this is going to have on everything and everybody, worried that I am not going to have enough time to do everything, worried about the dogs, field trials, picking-up, my head is all over the place. I am going to die and Sam will not be able to cope. I am thinking of refusing the chemo and staying well as long as I can, do as much as I can and then, when everything is sorted, choosing my time. Hope I have the courage. Must try and sleep, judging tomorrow. Feel like shit and hope I can get through the day.

Judging. Michael picked me up at 8.30 a.m. and it was nice not to have to drive. Sam seems pretty OK this morning, although I think he is in shock. Actually had a nice day judging. I enjoyed it, but at the end I asked all the committee to stay behind and I told them the 'news' and said it was imperative they find a replacement for me asap, although my intention, with luck, was to see this shooting season out.

All in all an incredibly emotional weekend and I really don't want to cry any more, at least for a day or two.

Bridget and Pete brought fish and chips over for supper, which was brilliant – haven't had fish and chips for years! They went home early as I was completely knackered and emotionally drained and went straight to bed.

Sunday – Waiting for Bob to come and look at the Subaru. He said they would be here at 9 a.m. and it's already 10 a.m. with absolutely no sign of them – ugh! I really, really hate it when people are late! Phoned John and Jenny as I really didn't want them to hear it second hand as once the Gundog jungle drums start beating it will

spread like wildfire – bit like cancer really! Well, the upside is I won't get any more wrinkles than I have already, I won't end up in a home for the elderly and I can organise my own funeral!

It's Sue and Joe's party today, but I really don't think I can face it. Ian, Claire etc., will all be there and I really do not want to break down again. Sue phoned to say she has told Wendy. I feel guilty about not telling her myself, but I hope she will understand I just couldn't face the emotion. I will try and ring her later in the week. Fed up waiting for Bob, so going to take the dogs out now – sod it!

Monday – Why am I so exhausted? I can hardly put one foot in front of the other. I just hope I have told everyone I want to tell and I will just leave the jungle drums to do the rest. Thalia came round and the phone keeps ringing, but I am so tired! Haven't got my appointment through yet. I wonder how long I have got left. I hope there is enough time to sort everything out beforehand. I am seriously thinking of not having chemo, but how will I tell everyone? They will all want me to give it a go, but it's my body and I don't want it filled with poisons. Daft isn't it? – cancerous tumours OK, but I won't have chemicals.

Tuesday – Going to Lucy's for supper. Been at home all day, nothing much else, did housework and one or two chores. Took Kate and Fletch to vet for boosters and that's about it. Feel OK today.

Wednesday – Strange kind of day really with nothing to say about it – Wednesday just happened! Bob and Deborah came over and Dangerous stopped by for a chat – he was really sweet.

Thursday – Paula and Sue came and we stuffed and stamped 400 envelopes ready for the trials. They were brilliant. It took us two hours, but if I do it on my own it takes a week! Went to the pub afterwards and then I dashed into Petersfield to collect Rhea from the vet. She had a couple of lumps removed, but she's fine.

Having had a pretty good couple of days I'm feeling somewhat emotional tonight. Firstly, Jane phoned – she had heard 'the news' and I was a bit upset. Flowers arrived from Pam in NZ. Wendy

phoned – that was a difficult one, but not as bad as I thought it would be. Sam came home and showed me a card he got from Charles, whom he had obviously been talking to. I hope Sam is OK. He seems quite strong, but I don't think he is; I think he is putting a brave face on things for my sake.

I have an unidentified back pain, like a dull ache quite high up and not a bone-type pain, so I can only assume it is my lungs. Perhaps this is the start of it? Still no appointment from the oncologist. If I don't hear anything tomorrow I will ring. My own fault really for calling a halt to the proceedings, I guess.

Friday – Really felt unwell all day today, nagging pack pain, pins and needles in my right arm and general feeling of being unwell. Rang to see when I was supposed to see the BUPA consultant and when he rang me back he told me he was going on holiday for two weeks, but if I didn't want to wait that long he could see me next Tuesday. NO, I don't want to wait that long – I want some answers and actually I really don't feel that anyone has actually told me anything positive. Because I've been sitting around all day, I have been thinking about it all day and now feel worse and have convinced myself that there is no way I will be well enough to do the shooting season or the trials. Worried also that I am going to die so quickly I won't have time to organise everything. Worried about Sam as I think he needs more time to adjust.

Tuesday is Bridget's birthday! How can I possibly expect her to come to the hospital with me on her birthday? Shit, shit, shit. E-mailed Els, and Paula said she was worried about me. Lynette phoned, Moa has had nine pups: seven dogs and two bitches. I would have had a boy but no way now! Shit, I am so angry today. I know I smoke, but so do thousands of other people who probably smoke more than me. Although I have also worked in a bar and a betting office. Pissed off today. PLUS bloody power cut from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. so missed the *BB* final – bollocks.

Saturday – Really energised today! Went shopping, cleaned out the chucks, picked blackberries with Sam, made blackberry whisky for field trials. Will pay for this tomorrow. That's how it goes – one good day, knackered the next. Called in to see Nick and had a chat. Sue told Janet and Maurice, so spoke to Jan for about thirty minutes. I do find that I am the one comforting other people! How strange is that? Got my first BUPA appointment through with Captain Chemo next Tuesday and I want some straight answers. I know I shall get upset again, but I need to know what's what. Still determined not to have the chemo. We shall see. Phoned Roz to see if she could sort me out a cleaner. I know I shall need one pretty soon and if it's a choice I would rather use my energy picking up than hoovering.

Sunday – Felt OK a.m. then had the most excruciating pain in my back that seemed to take over my whole body and quite took my breath away. Had to stop everything and sit down. I have no idea what this pain is, it is not normal back pain and just takes over. It still lingers four hours afterwards, but not as debilitating.

Sam home again today and started pulling the ivy down at the front of the house, which drove me absolutely mad as it will now turn brown and look a complete and utter mess, as did the conservatory when he did the same to that. I do worry about how the hell he would manage without me! I really don't think he could cope! When we had the power cut the other day he didn't even know how to reset the bloody microwave! He doesn't know how to light the Rayburn and what would I get to eat if it was left to him? He said today that he hoped I would still be here in ten years' time and at the time I was quite touched – but just cannot help wondering if he would mean that if I were an invalid. Or am I being completely unreasonable?

Monday, 21st August – Appointment with my GP at 9.30 a.m. Had quite a long chat and told him I was quite concerned that Sam seemed to be withdrawing and not saying much and he said to tell

him he could talk to him. Had hair done p.m. – all cut off! Just an impulse thing, but quite like it now I have had it done.

Tuesday, 22nd August – Bridget's birthday and my first appointment with the oncologist, Captain Chemo, at BUPA. Bottom line – and it's not easy to comprehend – without chemo I would deteriorate quickly and could be talking about months; with chemo (if it works) perhaps two years! I can't take it in; thought I could, but I can't. Can't believe I may not get through this shooting season – I bloody will – I will give these dogs one last season even if I just do the mornings. *Please* let me do this season, let me do Windsor, let me make sure Sam is OK.

Wednesday, 23rd August – Vet with Rhea and took Hamish for his booster. I wish I could find somewhere for Flinn. Seriously depressed today. Didn't sleep much last night, so obviously tired. I still cannot believe that I am going to deteriorate so rapidly and I would so, so like to opt out of chemo and take my chances and do the shooting season. It just seems so unfair; I just want to give the dogs (and me) this one more season. I always said I would retire after the two days at Windsor – why can't I do that?

Sam is very quiet. I am going to have a chat with him at the weekend. He must not bottle things up; he must tell me what he wants. I still have my stash of sleeping tablets and I always said if I were diagnosed with anything terminal I would make my own decision as to when and where. But – would I have the courage? How ill would I get before I made up my mind? It's quite tempting to just give in to this. I am very aware that something is going on inside my body that is alien and making me feel so tired.

This is not the first day of the rest of my life – I'm dying – that's the first time I've said that. I've just watched a programme that I recorded called *Angela's Dying Wish* and it was about a woman who was diagnosed with breast cancer and died within four and a half months. That's how quickly it happens. I'll admit that I now feel extremely frightened for the first time. With those statistics I would be lucky to make Christmas if I don't have chemo. But even

if I do have chemo it may not work and there is a chance it won't work. I need to talk to someone before I crack up.

Thursday – Much better today, not as depressed. Took the dogs up to Butser Hill for a walk then started cleaning! Obsessively! Bridget came over and we talked through the chemo prospect and I know I have been absolutely against it, but it looks as though I am going to agree to give it a go. Thalia came over and left a chocolate cake on the doorstep. I am supposed to be meeting her and Linda tomorrow for shopping, but I am going to ring her and see if we can do a pub lunch instead. I just can't face trawling round the shops when it would be pointless buying anything! I should have rung her today, but I get too tired in the evenings and usually go to bed at 8.30!

Bridget has taken my dining-room curtains to be dry-cleaned. They were absolutely disgusting! She was so ashamed of them she made excuses at the counter! Have so much clearing-out before I die I think I should make a list and prioritise. Also, I should alter my will. I need to make some alterations, plus I need to sort out my funeral at some stage and perhaps I should think about paying for it now.

Phone rang several times this evening. Didn't answer it. Janet left a message, also Lesley. Will ring them both tomorrow – too tired for phone calls.

Friday – Didn't go and meet Thalia and Linda, but made arrangements to meet up for lunch next week. Took the dogs to Butser Hill again this morning – beautiful weather, could almost touch the IOW. Cleaning again – windows, floors, furniture etc. Still loads more to do. Was completely knackered by 12 noon so sat down for an hour then started again.

Bad back pain today and a cough plus a strange pain mid chest, almost like heartburn. Although I have never had heartburn, I guess that's what it's like.

The gardener's here today, BT phoned, Lesley, Bridget and some idiot about field trials. Hamish seems to be settling in and sleeping on the bed – there's a surprise!

Have had to sit down – this is when I know there is something wrong with me. Normally I would keep going and push myself to the absolute limit, but I can't do that any more. My chest feels tight, back hurts and I feel completely exhausted. SHIT!

Saturday – Next appointment with Captain Chemo 12th September and chemo the following week if I decide to go ahead. You know, I won't ask, "Why me?" I know why – smoking! Is there anything I wish I had done and haven't? God, yes! Parachute jump, seeing the primates. What have I achieved? Dunno, not much. Have I enjoyed my life? Bits of it – I regret loads of it. Sam has been home all day and I asked him to talk to me and he said he couldn't as he had not got his head around it yet. I can't handle that. I'm here on my own most of the time and it would be a comfort to know that when he is here we can have a discussion about it. The worst thing he can do is bury his head in the sand, but it looks as though that is the way it is going to go. I can't worry about Sam all the time; I need him to support me.

Sunday – Sam home again today. I was supposed to go to Edenbridge, but that all fell through. Chap was supposed to come for Subaru, but he didn't arrive! Cleaning all morning. Took the dogs to Butser Hill and the world and his wife were up there plus every breed of dog imaginable. Fletch fell in love with a boxer called Alice! Spoke to Hugh this evening and did not get emotional at all, helps to have a couple of oceans as buffers. Sam said he would clean the windows, but he didn't. Started worrying about my soul! Having always been restless, a worrier and forward-planner, I would like to be completely at rest when I die, but I have this vision of wandering around the universe and not settling. What a terrible thought. Of course, there may not be an afterlife!

Bank Holiday Monday – I was just thinking back and I know this would upset a lot of people, but I really cannot remember a time in my life when I have been truly happy. Not that complete happiness you see in people. Bridget and Pete have it and Sue and Joe have it, but I have never had it. I always seem to be searching for something and that's what is worrying about my soul because I don't think I will ever be at rest. Janet and Maurice have it.

Took the dogs to Butser again – went really early and there was no one there. Great, they just ran and ran.

Feel really tired today. Have done some of the ironing and fully intended cleaning upstairs, but just cannot face it. Thalia rang; having lunch with her and Linda on Friday. She wanted to go to Alresford, but I really couldn't be bothered – how dreadful is that? I persuaded her to meet me at The George instead.

On my mind all the time today. I guess I need something to distract my thoughts from my death!

Spoke with Graham today. I knew there was something wrong with his e-mail and I am right. Haven't heard from him since the Game Fair and I wanted to tell him myself before the Gundog jungle drums got to him.

Tuesday – Feel like shit today, breathless, tired etc. Wendy came round. Without appearing horrible I just find constant visitors a bit wearing. Why have they come? Is it because they think I will look different? Because I don't. I just wish someone would come and offer some practical help like clearing a cupboard instead of just visiting when I feel I have to entertain them and make them drinks.

Good news – Louise came and she has agreed to come and do the cleaning. Yes! Yes! She is a lovely girl and it will be so convenient with her living on the estate. Bridget has collected my curtains, bless her. She is an absolute star and I don't know what I would do without her. Took the dogs to Butser again this morning and there was absolutely no one else there. Got home at 8.15.

Wednesday, 30th August – Woke up exhausted. Slept from 9 p.m. to 6 a.m. – that's nine hours. I can't believe how tired I feel. Not to worry – onwards and upwards. Off to Butser Hill again, will write more later – possibly!

Bonus thought for the day – I won't ever have to move from Orchard Cottage now!

31st August – Mother's birthday. I just wish that when I thought of her I didn't feel so much resentment and I still blame her for making me what I am. She really was a bully when I was a child and I blame her for making me so quick-tempered then and so rebellious. I'm sure now it was just me attention- or even affection-seeking – dunno – all I remember is her shouting and hitting and the copper stick. Then as an old woman she turned into a really pathetic person and I remembered how strong she was when I was a child. You know, I really hate how I feel about her. I know I shouldn't feel like this, but I have to be honest; I can't lie and say how much I loved her and how much I miss her, because I just don't.

Drove to Thursley to meet Sue C. for a dog walk in the heather and began to regret the arrangement when I was held up at Hindhead for thirty minutes with four fretting dogs in the back and the temperature rising! However, once there we had a lovely walk and went to the pub for lunch afterwards, which was good. Knackered now so going to wash my hair and have a sit-down.

Friday – One thing to report – sold the Subaru! Yes! Yes! Had lunch with Thalia and Linda, which was nice, and did Butser with the dogs – backache, but apart from that I'm fine!

Saturday, 2nd September – Seems longer than that since 12th July, but it's not even two months! A and D (Alan and Downland) competitive training day and barbeque today. Went to help Paula. Sarah drove me, thank goodness! It was a great day, but it made me realise just how fragile my life is at the moment because, although I hadn't really done that much all day apart from write

a few certificates and drink red wine, I was completely exhausted when I got home and was in bed at 8 p.m. It has actually made me really concerned about the two-day trial at Windsor Great Park because that will be walking up and not easy, so I am now a bit scared about that, plus all my optimism about the shooting season and field trials has taken a bit of a slump – not forgetting that on top of all this I will be on chemo cycles by then and obviously will feel worse than I do now!

Sunday – Quiet day. Busy morning, but have done absolutely nothing all afternoon! Still exhausted from yesterday. Sam kept insisting that I rest, but was quite happy for me to get his lunch, Hoover, make his sandwiches for tomorrow, do the washing and clean the conservatory! Perhaps that's a bit unfair – he did do the dogs for me, but he has got to realise there are numerous other chores to be done on a daily basis and he has to be able to work the washing machine etc. He hasn't got a bloody clue and can't even reprogram the microwave when we have a power cut.

Actually – last week was pretty hectic and that has probably not helped. Looking at next week, it is much quieter and I am not dashing around all over the place, so perhaps I can rest up a bit and feel better.

Monday – Nothing to write really. Felt great today and have done loads of cleaning, cooking etc.

Tuesday – Didn't sleep last night and had a rough day today. My chest feels really tight, but I still managed a hike round Butser Hill with the dogs! Clive and Sheila came round and brought me a chair for the garden that Clive had made – really kind. Wonder if I shall be here to sit in it next year. Really feel washed out today – serves me right for doing so much yesterday. This is driving me MAD. I need to get on and do things and I bloody well can't do it any more. Tell you what, I won't be able to handle this, but I do have an option. I will give the chemo a go, but if it doesn't work and the

outlook is bleak and I feel my quality of life is shit, then I will use the option. Negative thoughts today.

Wednesday – Full of energy today, gardening and cooking. I will pay for this tomorrow. Butser Hill is becoming a regular routine now and the dogs are getting really fit. Saw Nick and Dale and the baby today and Nick said I could walk the dogs there, but I think my dogs would range just a bit too far and I prefer to go to Butser, where they can really let off steam. Feel OK, no tight chest – nothing. Not even too tired today, but not looking forward to the chemo starting.

Thursday – Still feel great, full of energy – Butser, made cakes, cleaned all kitchen cupboards – have they made a mistake? I'm sure there is nothing wrong with me, I feel absolutely fine. However, what will I be like when I start chemo? This is what I mean – why start chemo and make myself feel ill when I feel OK at the moment? I shall try one cycle and if I can't carry on my life as normal, I will not carry on with chemo.

Friday – Too tired to write anything today really. Have been really busy all day. Took Fletch and Cracker to visit the inmates at Westbury p.m. Sue and Joe came etc., etc., etc. Feel absolutely fine. Phoned Wendy and hope she isn't upset, but I don't want people rushing around to visit me when they don't normally. Why don't they come when I am really ill? Why don't they take me out for dinner? Being bitchy now – obviously overtired! Knew I shouldn't have written anything today.

Saturday, 9th September – This week finally caught up with me! I did, however, walk the dogs, go to Morrisons, get all the goody-bag ingredients, clean the car and clean the chickens out before I completely collapsed in the chair and fell asleep! I seem to have a new penfriend – Brenda is having chemo and has already had five cycles and seems to be coping with it and now writes to me daily! Actually, it is quite interesting to read how she reacts. No

two people are the same and no two chemos are the same, but it does rather help to know someone else is in a similar situation.

Sunday – Went to country sports day at Tichborne with Sarah.

Monday – I'm home alone and busy, but feel knackered today. Seeing Captain Chemo tomorrow – dreading it as I guess he will want to get the bloody chemo sorted out – shit! I am scared about the chemo. At the moment I feel OK, not 100% but probably more OK than dozens of other people. I can still do everything – walking, cooking, housework, gardening etc. Now, if I have this bloody chemo is that all going to change? Am I going to be getting something that is going to make me feel ill? Is it worth it? Why don't I just carry on the way I am until I start feeling ill? And then ...?

Tuesday – Consultant Day – 5.15 p.m. and just got back from seeing Captain Chemo, who has left me in no doubt that I am going to die! However, he still maintains without chemo six months or less, and with chemo two years or more. I just cannot believe he is talking about me! I look OK, feel OK, but apparently that is what happens – that is why it is called the silent killer! So – chemo starts next Tuesday and in the meantime I have to have a kidney function test as this determines the mix for the chemo, but he anticipates mine will be OK. Oh, great – my kidneys will be OK if nothing else. Blood tests on a weekly basis plus X-rays of my chest at the beginning followed by constant monitoring to see if ET has shrunk! Apart from all that, today has been OK.

Wednesday – Today I am depressed. Ninety-five per cent of the time I am pretty focused, upbeat and OK – today is a five per cent off day. Feel sorry for myself – why me? Life full of disasters. Couldn't I just end my life without all this? I must have been really bad to deserve this. Don't remember a particularly happy childhood – my mother was a bully. Two failed marriages, early hysterectomy, hip replacement – enough is enough. But no, whoever deals the cards out there hasn't finished with me. Could easily give up today!