

My MOT, a day on my allotments, a new strimmer

Today I feel very much like a hedgehog or a hibernating animal who wakes up slowly from the winter sleep. Admittedly I have been unwell for most of the time but today I feel a new strength and vitality. I do not think I have done anything to deserve this, it is something to do with the strength of the sun.

My 2001 Volvo V70 failed its MOT so today I took it back for repair. I have now got my MOT and although I have not collected the car yet I think the bill is about £120 + the MOT charge. My ABS braking system will have to be replaced at a cost almost equivalent to getting another car. Mine is worth about £450 at the moment so if the ABS Bill is £800 there is no point. I am attached to Volvos, not this particular model. This is a major point in buying a car, the cost of spares. The same goes for printers. You can get a inkjet printer for £25 but when a set of ink cartridges cost the same or more that's when some thought has to be given.

Today, I went off and bought a new strimmer for the garden season. Basically, battery-powered or electric trimmers don't really have the power needed to whip through a garden. This is my first petrol one. The problem with Chinese products is that they are very heavy and inelegant in design. Stihl products for top-quality and are designed for professionals with a price to match. My main difficulty with trimmers of all types is replacing the cord after it has worn out so I have bought the one which is easiest to service.

You can get petrol trimmers for £60 or £75 from the Internet but I decided to spend £180 and get a decent one. If I have any problem, It would be a 10 minute drive to the workshop to get my equipment fixed and you can't do that on the Internet.

This is particularly important if you're halfway through a job and your equipment fails. My workshop will normally do it on the spot. For that, I'm happy to pay extra

As my readers know, I preside over [my local allotments](#) We have 60 happy plot holders, or at least I try to keep them happy, by giving them a good service. I signed up our latest plot holder today. Jacquie, for it is she, it has been dying to get out and have an allotment because she has a flat with no garden. It was my pleasure to give her the best plot in the place and introduce her around to one or two people. I think she will be a very happy tenant. I think allotments are underestimated as instruments of therapy and health. You are guaranteed a certain amount of social life, meeting other people, you can grow your own food without fertilisers and without chemicals if you wish and you can save a little money over buying stuff in the supermarkets and know that the quality is there. My new tenant has just paid about £24 per year for about 32 m² and you can grow much more than £24 worth of crops from that area.

Recently, I have come across two guaranteed therapeutic activities. The first is having an allotment and the second is having a therapeutic animal, perhaps a dog, to give you the love and care and attention that they are capable of. In the latter case I'm thinking of people in hospitals.

Mrs May is off to Strasbourg yet again as a prelude to her vote in the House of Commons tomorrow. The EU is being completely intransigent and Mrs May is being completely inflexible towards examination of the various alternatives for dynamic relationships with the European group. Tomorrow there is a vote and I think she will be voted down. What a mess.