

June is outbursting out all over

For the person who said "Oh dear, I've realised – I have no ambition to achieve!"

What do you want to achieve, she says; the first thing that comes into your head?
A small success is still a success, as Marcus Aurelius said.

So - grow some veg, plant some trees, make my environment flowery –
cut down trees on the Peak Forest Canal where it's getting a bit too.... bowery!

Get on the airwaves, grow cucumbers; learn Spanish or publish a book:
stand knee deep in a mangrove swamp; lose a stone, by hook or by crook.

Restore Manchester's canals underground; visit the ghost boats of Purton;
run my first half marathon without going for a burton.

Use PTSD to conquer fear; conquer the last Munro in the Highlands;
honour the oldest narrowboats in a journey with horseboat Elland.

Build lots of wonderful memories in this once-in-a-lifetime year:
be outdoors more and indoors less. Be working less and fishing more!

Build boats – or steer a bigger one, or cross the Leeds & Liverpool in the one I've already got,
link up the Mosslands with local canals; start selling crochet on my own boat.

Walk the whole length of the Huddersfield Narrow, and the Rochdale Canals as well:
cycle up fleet Moss without stopping once; take my new hip to the top of Scafell.

To run ten miles and enjoy it! To do France *en velo* – 1000 miles by bike!
or spend some time in the company of lovely people I actually like.

Find contentment, do it all, be healthy and well and happy –
grow our fam'ly from 2 to 3, and willingly enter The World of Nappy.

Take control of my own career, break out of the model of institutions –
get all the partners to pull the same way; turn problems into solutions.

Buy a house, buy a boat, buy a farm in Wales, make Macclesfield a vibrant town
finally take a holiday – before I have a breakdown.

Declutter my home or my sewing space - clean up the Rochdale from litter and grime;
get my work-life balance right at last – or just get something done on time!

Stop gates restricting our canals; start plugging-in towpaths to local paths;
leave the baby with dad for a minute, and finally have an undisturbed bath.

A small success is still a success, but we want some big ones in the bag:
the first home-grown pumpkin is thrilling, but so is the first Green Flag.

Give each other a leg-up, a hand up, a thumbs up: united we float, divided we sink:
the big successes are coming by water. They're closer than we think.

Jo Bell

Mechanics Institute, Manchester, June 11th 2015

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