I began my new status as a part-time temporarily contracted teacher two weeks ago. I had promised myself that I would not give in to the fear that I would be unable to support myself financially any longer but instead I would start by treating the time spare that I had as a treat.
Just because it was a treat didn't mean that I would do nothing, I knew that that way would lead me very swiftly into a whirlpool of depression which there would be no escape from. So, I set my alarm and got up at my normal working day time. I showered and shaved and completed the chores that I always, somewhat reluctantly it has to be said, start the day with.
I had checked the tides and the weather from days before and knew that the sun would begin to break through at about midday and that Low Tide was about 2.30 in the afternoon. I also knew that as we were close to the equinoxes that the tides would be at their most extreme and I also knew because of that that I was going to spend my day with my camera at Tregardock Beach on the North Cornish Coast.
Walking out of the house felt uncomfortable, as if I didn't deserve to be free on a work day, despite being fifty one and having worked for all of my life and for that reason it was good to get away to try and escape that rather nebulous feeling of guilt. I packed the car with my camera, my tripod, sandwiches and books to read if I had to wait for the light to change and also, vitally, a huge bottle of tap water. One of the side effects of the anti -depressants that I take is that sometimes I get a terrible and almost unquenchable thirst and without water to drink I become very irritable and edgy quite quickly.
It's a long drive from where I live to my destination and as I drove I made a mental checklist of all the essences of the place that I wanted to capture. There was the waterfall, the sea caves, the strangely coloured and sculpted slates, there was the great expanse of sand at Low Tide and the gigantic rocks that stood like sentinels on the cliff tops but finally there was the onrushing tide. I wonder if you have been to the sea and stood there watching the waves break and wondering what the tide is up to? Sometimes it seems to creep in but then it seems to recede. If you are patient and wait long enough you can see that on average the water is slowly moving in one direction. Tregardock, is not like that, once the sea surmounts a sand bank it rushes in, filling rock pools swiftly and eating up the sand in a way that is really quite disturbing. The water almost feels animate, voracious in its appetite and I wanted to capture that above all else.

Once there I set to work with my camera and it was good because I could see so many opportunities and yet in some way, despite feeling really creative I couldn't escape a strange nagging unease. I crossed the rock pools and walked out onto the sand. The sea was still far ahead but close by was a deep rockpool that sheltered behind one of the larger pieces of slate that were cast up onto the beach. There was no sea weed within the pool and just one rock submerged within it close to its edge. You could see the sky reflected off its calm surface and beneath that just water and sand and I knew that I wanted to swim there. You see, I am a very poor swimmer and Tregardock is not a place for poor swimmers like me especially when the beach itself is almost deserted.
But I could swim here in this pool and no harm could come to me, unless there were Weavers of course buried within the sand with only their spines exposed.
But I had no swimming costume.
But then my underwear would look from a distance like a pair of speedos and so I would look like any other sad Middle Aged man who hadn't learned to dress appropriately for his age.

I walked to the sea to help me make my mind up and all that there was on the beach were two surfers weaving in and out of the waves and one other person on the cliffs with what looked like a pair of binoculars.

I made my decision and returned to the rock pool and stripped to my underwear. A breeze had picked up and for September it felt quite cold and so I inched my way into the cool water and then began to swim. It took, I think, just five strokes to cross from where I was to the other side and then I swam back to the middle and then turned on my back, floated and looked at the sky and it was so beautiful and the feeling of unease that I had carried began to drift away as the clouds drifted by above me in the porcelain blue sky.
But I knew now that there was still one thing that I needed to do and that was to be entirely naked.
Now I am not a naturist, in fact the thought of being on a beach filled with other naked souls fills me with horror but the beach was not full, it was almost entirely empty and I wanted to feel the salt water against all of my body.
And so I walked out onto the sand, shed my underwear and returned to the water and it felt good. I swam and floated and then sat on the submerged rock and let my legs be swayed by the water as it was pushed gently to and fro by the Autumnal breeze.
The unease had almost entirely disappeared now, just a whisper, a silly whisper left and I could ignore that. I will return to the pool, I thought, when the tide brings the sea back here and the calm water is disturbed by the rushing waves and I will feel the water become colder and more turbulent again.

I head back for the cliffs and set up the camera on the tripod to record the incoming tide. I am cold because the wind is now strong but despite my shivering it is a privilege to be here and to witness the tide rush across the sand and then rapidly reclaim the rock pools back to the open sea. I stay until close to sunset moving the camera to track the light and to avoid the salt spray that is being hurled far up onto the cliffs as the large waves crash against the slate cliffs with a sound like thunder. There is still an hour until High Tide but I begin to pick my way back to the steps that lead up the cliffs. Salt spray is fatal to cameras and the slate that the cliffs are made from becomes like it has been oiled when it is wet. To slip here would be fatal not just for the camera but for me too.
Sitting on the steps is a girl in a pink bikini. She tells me that she is contemplating going into the sea. I tell her that it is far too rough and fortunately she takes my advice.

I walk to the car and drive home. It is dark when I return. Tomorrow I am back to work but my first day as a part time worker has been a special one.