

DIARY 2023

July 31st – Monday

If we had to point any fingers of accusation as to who or what was responsible for the shocking business we bore witness to today, it would be the weather, without doubt. The bleak, grey, mizzly conditions that were blowing in last night were still with us this morning minus the wind. It proper rained a couple of times including when I was on my way to the gymnasium – obviously. We had the sort of morning in the shop that we would expect in March or April.

At least some people were enjoying themselves. I looked down at the big beach at around the middle of the day and there was a veritable army of surfers in the water crowded in around the sand bar that juts out from the middle of the beach. When I looked again an hour later, the majority were gone and so too were the waves. I am guessing that was a low water opportunity for the novices and the more experienced had their go closer to and after high water in bigger waves over by North Rocks.

We fared much better with business in the afternoon. I think that there is only so much sitting inside waiting for the rain to clear particularly if there are children involved. Most of the young ones do not care very much what the weather is doing and are happy to sit and dig holes in the sand come what may.

There seemed to be a sudden interest in wetsuits, too. The Missus sold three in the morning while I was at the gymnasium – although one of those came back later on. I sold several through the afternoon mainly to adults. I have often wondered whether the complications around selling them, the sizing, the inability to try them in the shop and the occasional return, make it worthwhile selling them. I think, on balance, it is but occasionally we can get very demanding customers who can eat up shop time with poor decision making or those who are unwilling to take advice. Sometimes we just have to give up and let the customer walk out with something entirely inappropriate and suffer the fall out later.

We had a very particular gentleman in late in the afternoon. I selected a suit very quickly that I was reasonably sure was likely to fit but we ended up looking at several others and querying why that particular suit was right for him. They were all perfectly reasonable questions but there were also a stream of other customers needing to be served waiting at the till. Happily, he was a most agreeable sort and did not mind me flitting back and forth to keep everyone happy. He came to the door later, dripping wet and smiling, showing me how happy he was with the purchase – thank heaven.

None of this was helped by the delivery of three orders we had placed recently. The postcard fudge boxes miraculously all fitted on the store room shelf where they were supposed to go because the space had not been used up with something else. The Missus had been through the store room earlier in the week and had cleared out even more space. I had done my bit too by clearing the jams and savoury biscuits

that were lurking there, which meant there was enough temporary space for the one box of toiletries I was unable to finish in time. While I was midway through all that, our much needed wine delivery arrived, just for some added spice. We have our big grocery delivery tomorrow, so the store room needs to be clear.

At the very last knockings of the day, the wheels for the windbreak stand arrived. I should have stayed to do them then and there after the shop closed because it would be problematic finding the time the following morning, but tea wall calling and so was some respite from the shop. Never do today what you can reasonably put off until tomorrow – or preferably the next day when someone might have got in there and done it for you.

Regardless of not staying late after shop closing, I was still late finishing tea and it was straight to taking ABH for a run. Unsurprisingly, the Harbour beach was empty, it being grey and howling a gale. I do not have to do very much other than deliver her to the playground and she does the rest, running around in circles and ranging on the entire width of the beach. I tried to take her off to continue our journey at one point but she was still keen to play, so I let her. It was during that second part that our neighbour and her dog turned up and the two dogs started up a whole new game, chasing across the beach.

I should not have had any preconceptions that a good forty minutes running at full pelt might have given me thirty minutes of reading my book in peace when we got back, because it did not. Those battery people and their bunny missed a trick not using our girl for its advertising campaign.

July 30th – Sunday

Do we have any fresh bread? What a question to ask a grumpy shopkeeper. What am I supposed to say when there is bread all over the bread shelves and the customer already had a loaf in his hand? I mean, they are all in date, mostly, and are all fit for human consumption, although, frankly, I would question why anyone would want to eat sourdough bread. I was intrigued as to what my customer was looking for, so I asked him to be more specific. 'I don't know' was the response, so I handed him our baker's order list so he could put in in his churchwarden and set fire to it.

After the success of yesterday, today was a rather mucky day. There were clouds of mizzle blowing through during the morning, although they did seem to stay away in the afternoon. The day was grey throughout, but folk seemed to make the best of it, and we were still busy but somewhat less so than yesterday. The beach, too, was not as crowded but there were still some people determined to get their bottoms sandy.

Today, the weather was not going to be anything other than poor. In fact, what we got was much better than I anticipated given that today was the choir on the wharf day and it is traditional that it buckets down, regardless of when it is held. Since it is in aid of the RNLI, the Missus was involved in the setting up and organising and

disappeared for a while in the afternoon to 'do things'. It coincided with an upturn in the number of people milling about, so I hardly noticed.

We had several of those upturns of business. One moment I was standing all alone in the world and the next the shop was full and the till trilling away as they lined up to be served. It made trying to get the grocery order done exceedingly tricky, but I did it piecemeal and finished off towards the end of the day along with the smaller farm shop type grocery order we do.

The Missus had brought some stock down from The Farm yesterday but had elected to unload it today when she brought the truck around. This happened rather later than was anticipated and when she decided to do it someone had parked roughly outside the shop, so we had to wait a bit longer. Even after she unloaded and we brought it into the shop it was late on when I actually managed to get it all onto the shop shelves.

There was a general flow of people and an increase in road traffic that heralded the gathering of folk for the singing on the wharf. St Buryan Male Voice Choir attended to do what I learnt later to be an excellent and well attended show. The weather held out to just being a little damp, but the breeze ramped up and it was cold down there, I heard. The Lifeboat was out on the slipway bedecked with bunting and the wharf had been similarly adorned. I could not hear the choir despite one of the members telling me that they would sing up for my benefit.

It was not long before the general flow started to ebb in the opposite direction as the choir and everyone else made their way to the OS. The Lifeboat Crew cleared up the decorations and winched the boat back into the boathouse and followed suit. The Missus went too as she holds the funds for buying the crew and choir drinks, only returning home near nine o'clock.

I had stayed behind, mainly as the choir was singing when the shop was open and later to look after ABH. She is too young to go to the OS and would have had to stay outside with an orange squash and a packet of crisps and it was not the night for that. Instead, I took her around the block, very soon realising it was not the night for that either as the mizzle has set in heavy. We avoided the beach and played at home. I was just about to take her out again before bedtime when the Missus came home. What a busy day.

July 29th – Saturday

One of our early customers, a neighbour, shared the happy news that another of our flood lights had dropped off the front of the shop. It is pretty much a metaphor of how this year is going so far. We did a quick risk assessment and concluded that it probably was not going to drop on someone's head and therefore could be relegated to the bottom of the priority list.

We must have a bunch of early birds in this week. Things started to move quite early in the morning and ramped up to really busy by the middle of the day. The beach started filling up to about the same degree as yesterday but the flow through the shop was much better today. We were beginning to sell some pasties as well to the point that I thought we would probably not have enough for Sunday. I struggled to keep up after the initial realisation that I would have to have a constant supply in the oven. I had just got on top of the demand when it all went suddenly quiet at half past twelve o'clock, which was rather weird.

The day had started off warm, bright and dry, although there was some wet on the ground from overnight. There was a bit of a breeze blowing in from somewhere in the west, but it certainly did not bother ABH and I as we made our way around the block. A lady said later that it was blowing some chill air through later on, but it helped windbreak sales and at present, each one of those make the stand lighter.

For the first time in a little while there were waves, big waves for the surfing people to play with. They were charging in and breaking late putting a lot of white water close into shore. I do not think they were for the faint hearted and I would have thought that the less experienced surfers and boarders would have had to wait for low water but that was beyond the normal end of the day. At least it made it a bit more interesting for the Lifeguards who had been bored rigid for the last few days.

Spring tides are approaching and that little crowd on the beach looked very pressed at high water today. When I looked again, it did appear that they had been thinned out considerably until I noticed they had just migrated to the entrance to The Valley along with the Lifeguard truck.

Question of the day goes to the lady who carefully studied the sign at the till that says, 'We take cash anytime, cards too if over £3' and asked, "Do you also take cards under £3".

Earlier in the week I had missed the deadline for ordering wine. I reasoned that we would probably have enough to see us through the weekend. That is until last evening when we were cleaned out entirely of white wine in the fridge leaving just a few bottles of some of the range in the store room. I had rather hoped that the hordes would be a bit kinder to our remaining supply tonight and by the way the beer was flooding out, it looked like we might get away with it. I held my breath a bit towards closing but the anticipated rush for alcohol never came, although I did have to top up the beer and the Missus' dash to the cash and carry on Thursday was most necessary.

Once again, I dragged my aching carcass around the block with the little girl straight after tea. The Harbour beach was empty and there was plenty of weed to play with and sniff at. It is pointless taking a ball down for her because she runs around and chases shadows without any help from me at all. I am only there to referee if she picks up something she should not.

The breeze had ramped up a bit during the day and it was blowing a fair bit down on the beach and as we walked back. It certainly was not cold, but it was enough to put off most of the casual wanderers and beach users leaving us to walk undisturbed – save for someone who left a bin bag where it should not be and a new arrival banging around in the back of their van. These are things that really just should not happen, according to ABH. We had words.

July 28th – Friday

As I suspected, the wheels of the new windbreak stand would be the weak point and so it proved. It is incredibly heavy when full and it is a lump even empty. I have been tipping it onto the back wheels to shift it and I think that added stress caused the problem. The hub on one of the rear wheels disintegrated as I moved it in last night. It had been difficult to move for the last couple of days.

It looked easy enough to replace but I needed to know the make and where our energetic man got them from, so I sent a text message to him. My telephone was ringing almost as I watched the text message leave it. That is the sort of supplier response that customers dream of. He told me that he had purchased the wheels from the well known Internet market place and was able to give me the exact reference while we spoke. He must also be some organised to have that at his fingertips.

I ordered the 'heavy duty' wheels this morning and they should be here by Tuesday. It should be straightforward to replace it by jacking up the stand and removing the hub nut. I think longer term, I shall look for some even more heavy duty wheels to replace them all, else I will only have the same trouble again. I will, however, try not to tip it up onto two wheels, which might help them last a bit longer – provided my back does.

It was another dickie weather day, not knowing whether it wanted to rain or shine, so it did both. Our visitors struggled to decide whether to wear t-shirts or rain jackets, so they wore both, on and off. Many, perhaps, decided to go home, although an equal number at least decided it was worth the effort to set up on the beach and make the best of it.

I could have got away with a full blistering session at the gymnasium today because it was so quiet during the morning. I decided it was probably best to stick to the plan, however, but was thwarted even in that endeavour. I was halfway through my 4,000 metre – my cut down row – when I was tapped on the shoulder by a neighbour wanting me to help start her car. I told her that I would be there in seven minutes, which at least gave me time to finish my row. I shall have to do extra blistering on Monday.

The small battery booster that I bought a couple of years ago has proved its worth several times over. It has started drained car batteries dozens of times and we even used it on our own car once. Perhaps we should have it in a communal box outside the shop like a defibrillator – with a coin slot beside it.

Those people down on the beach seemed to increase during the afternoon but they were hemmed in by the tide, which might have made them look more. There were a fair few revellers in the water close in but surfers were few as indeed were the waves. We saw many of these people during the later afternoon and early evening as they came off the beach looking for tea.

We must also have seen a number on their way to the beach around the middle of the day and in the early afternoon. These appear to be our busier times quite consistently over the holiday weeks and shortly before. It leaves the mornings exceedingly quiet after an initial small flurry of breakfast buying and even that is pretty understated these days. It still took a couple of hours to conclude my own breakfast after I came back from the gymnasium, but I did start late after pricing up some of the incoming deliveries from earlier in the morning.

There was a bit of a break in the afternoon during which I managed to squeeze in a little light ordering. I had been waiting for our stock of batteries to diminish to the stage where I could place a reasonable replacement order. We had already run out of those little square nine volt batteries, the only purpose for which appears to be to stop smoke alarms bleeping. That had been an irritation because we had been asked more than several times for them but could not make a minimum order from our supplier. The other high demand item was those small button batteries again, almost exclusively used for car key fobs. These we had only just run out of so the delivery coming next week should be timely.

On the subject of smoke alarms, they are an irritation in themselves. When we had some interior building work done some years ago, we were compelled to have ones that ran off the mains electricity. These have a battery backup, which is sensible enough, but the batteries are standard and drain over time. And, yes, bleep annoyingly just when you do not have a spare battery to hand and the bleddy local shop has run out. It would have been much more logical to have batteries that recharged off the mains and last for years.

I was just trying to think of anything else I should have a grumble about, but we had such a lovely bunch of customers during the last couple of hours of opening that it put me in a remarkably good mood. That was until I tried to move the windbreak stand back inside again. It was relatively easy moving it out, but I struggled to get it back up the slope. A very timely offer of help arrived just as I was doing it, which was most appreciated. I asked him to come back at the same time tomorrow.

Mother and another set of in-laws arrived back with the Missus when she returned from The Farm. These in-laws are here to take Mother away on her annual holiday,

which comes at our busiest time and gives Mother a change of scenery as well as to spend time with other family members. She will only be gone a couple of weeks but we will miss seeing her for her visits here for tea.

The Missus was gone taking them back home when I was finishing off in the shop. The little girl was waiting for me upstairs on her own. Unlike the bleddy hound who detested being alone, ABH does not seem to mind too much for short periods, at least. She had to wait until I finished my tea before I took her out for a spin. We started down on the Harbour beach again where she ranged, sniffing and investigating. She is quite adventurous and found her way onto the rocks at the side of the Lifeboat short slip tugging at bits of seaweed.

She struck gold on the other side of the beach in the form of a small fish carcass, a cartoon-like spine, head and tail. For once she ignored my recalls and ran off every time I got near her, the little minx. Fortunately, the bones fell apart and she did not seem compelled to eat it and eventually she came to me when there was none left to run off with.

She left the beach quite voluntarily after being alarmed by a diminutive lady emerging from the sea in black wetsuit, bathing hat and goggles. She ran away barking but her curiosity or bravery won out and she edged closer after the lady got out and stood on the beach. The whole world is still her friend, so I do not think she believed this would be any different, even if it did look like the creature from the black lagoon. I think if we did meet the creature from the black lagoon, ABH would either be toast, or we would be inviting the tamed creature around for tea.

July 27th – Thursday

We could not see The Cove when we woke up and took the air for our morning stroll. The low cloud hung about all day, coming and going but initially the air in The Cove was wet with mizzle. It was still pleasantly mild, despite that and I really did not need the jacket I was wearing. ABH still came back with wet paws.

Business took a while to get going and it was difficult to see what the day would like and how the weather would be. While the mist hung around, it was mainly offshore or around the cliffs from Aire Point to Cape Cornwall, leaving us basking in sunshine some of the time and brightness at others. It resulted in some proper busyness and a good bit of beach day that attracted quite a crowd down there by the end of the afternoon.

The Missus came down with the little girl halfway through the morning to top up the grocery shelves. She was hard at it until the middle of the afternoon, so I must have missed a few things when I did my topping up over the last few days, I cannot image how. ABH sat on her seat for a short while but quickly tired of the attention and made moves for a quick escape, especially with the Missus deeper in the shop. She spent the rest of the time in her travel basket on top of the trolley that the Missus was using

to restock the shelves, where she was still hounded by fans. It was impossible to count the number of times that the Missus was stopped and asked the breed and age. It might also have had something to do with why it took four hours to top up a few shelves.

We had placed a particularly large order for bread today, as I mentioned yesterday. As I also mentioned yesterday my expectation was that we would still have it three days later. Well, this is day one since we still have almost the same number we started with at the outset of the day. I do not expect it to shift much tomorrow either as people will be getting ready to go home. It might have been an expensive mistake.

This week, and probably last week too if I was paying attention, we have been blessed by the return of the usual suspects. These are the visitors who come year after year at this time and almost certainly predate our appearance or at least their families do. There are many who come year after year at other times too, but these weeks are particularly noticeable for having more of them together than at any other time of the year. So long have they been coming that many of the families know each other and their children have grown up, at least for two weeks a year, together.

One visitor noted how two of our older residents and neighbours were greeted as they say in their garden by many of the passing visitors. I suggested that it was probably originated back a few generations to when the early visitors lodged with residents, when there were some, and the families made firm friends. The relationships lasted down the generations and still is there today. It is only a theory, but I think it likely.

It is also likely that the crowds gather outside the shop were not here to see me but the advertised launch of the Lifeboat on a training exercise. I was and will be unable to attend training for the next several weeks as they tend to start when the shop is still open. While I could have made an appearance for recovery, most of the setting up would have already been done and there are usually more than enough bodies to cover my absence.

Later, I was able to watch as the boat returned to The Cove. From our living room window, I was well placed to observe what was clearly a textbook recovery up the long slipway. We are, after all, a very dispensable, very excellent Shore Crew.

July 26th – Wednesday

The weather gives with one hand and kicks you in the soft parts with the other foot, which is mainly what happened today. ABH and I were lucky enough to get around the block unscathed, but it had started to rain a little when we stopped to get the shop display out on the way back. By the time I came down to start work, it was raining properly. I knew this because Radio Pasty told me it was not, but it would be later on.

The local bread man's sliced bread has been doing exceptionally well, so much so that it outsells the cheap stuff. I increased the numbers of white sliced to six loaves this morning and they were all gone by eleven o'clock. I will up it again for tomorrow and find they are still there three days later. It is the way of things.

I had tried to come downstairs much earlier because I knew that the drinks fridge needed a lot of topping up after our warm sunny day yesterday. I failed miserably because ABH managed to disappear the extra half an hour with a mere wave of her paw. I did manage most of it but as it transpired, I was able to do the balance after we opened because it was so quiet. In fact, the shop shelves have never been so well stocked during the busy part of the season because I have had plenty of time to keep them that way.

Around the middle of the day, the first bit of rain dried up and it turned into a grey but otherwise pleasant late morning and early afternoon. Sadly, that did not last very long but the heavy rain that was forecast took its time to arrive and we saw some brisk business in its place. This continued in fits and starts until the later afternoon when the mizzle blew in after which things went a bit quiet.

If our customers wanted to take refuge in a bit of surfing to make the best of a wet afternoon, this was not their day either. Even over at North Rocks there was not much in the way of waves. Even those blessed with a bit of optimism were thin on the, erm, water.

Had they only taken a leaf out of the book an acquaintance from yesterday was reading, they all would have been whizzing around like mad things. Our friend was standing over by the fridge magnets with a surfboard fin in his hands. This was no ordinary fin, however. Oh no, this fin had an integrated propeller. Yes, dear reader, you did read that correctly, and integrated electric propeller – although I did not mention the electric bit the first time. Have you ever heard of such a thing. I was sure it was a revelation to me.

The device had to be activated with a magnet, hence he was trying the fridge magnets which were unfortunately not up to the task. He had left his car at the top of the hill with all the bits in it, so unless he was feeling particularly energetic, I do not think the motor would have been used that day. He told me it only lasted a short while but was enough to give you a boost on the way out. I would have loved to see one in action.

Our busyness evaporated at around half past four o'clock when the rain upped its game to a heavier cascade. I took a peek at the rain radar to discover that it was in for quite a while, so it was time to find something to do that was more entertaining than scratching my behind. I did start with the shop shelves but kept having to stop because, despite the rain, there were still quite a few brave souls dashing in and out

of the shop. In fact, the five minutes to closing rush was every bit as busy as it had been the day before.

The rain persisted into the evening but there was a break in the heavier rain towards the time I usually take ABH around the block. There was still heavy mizzle and some proper rain in the air as we came across the Harbour car park and we fair sped along. The little girl does not mind in the slightest getting wet but even she is not keen going out in the rain and she mainly ran around the circuit with me trying to keep up.

I had sent the Missus over to Hayle earlier for beer from the cash and carry, as we had run out. She left ABH with Mother and her guests while she went and picked her and them up on the way back. As a consequence, the little girl had no rest nor sleep the entire day. When it came to bedtime, she was curled up beside me and asleep before I was, which was some feat as I am no slouch at it after a summer shop day, no matter how rainy.

July 25th – Tuesday

There was a much better day in the offing when we hit the mean streets first thing in the morning, me and ABH. There was hardly a breeze, which had my pasty sign banging and twanging against the ball stand yesterday, and the skies showed some breaks in the much lighter cloud hanging about. Lo and behold! We had more customers, too.

The beach filled with the largest number of people we had seen in a while. It looked crowded but that had much to do with high water being at an awkward time in the morning as we have seen it busier. The business day took on the look and feel of a beach day with much of the custom coming through in the hours before midday as our punters headed for the beach.

Our busyness came and went in waves. Some of the waves were quite intense and for a few moments here and there, I actually felt like a real grumpy shopkeeper running a proper shop where loads of customers come and buy things. Do not fret, dear reader. I will wake dreckly and find it was all just a dream.

It looked pretty idyllic down on the beach later in the afternoon. The tide had dropped out and the numbers in the little camps at the top of the beach had increased about two-fold. There were plenty of people in the water, many in the shallows and some novice surfers to the rear on the sandbar running out from the middle of the beach. A bit more useful surf was available for the more experienced over at North Rocks, but the ensemble was a proper summer beach scene.

It paid out dividends toward the end of the day when families headed off the beach and for home. We picked up the meal trade finding that near 20 years of trying to get it right was almost paying off – with the exception of not having granola, whatever

one of those is. All the pasties bar two cheese ones had gone by that stage. We could have done with a few more because we had a number of enquiries for pasties in the five minutes to closing rush.

The two remaining cheese pasties had gone beyond saleable, but I had not had the time to remove them from the warmer – our guidelines are that hot food should be kept hot for no more than a couple of hours before being discarded. The tantalising sight of available pasties when no one else about us had them caused a bit of a stir. One lady asked when our pasties went to half price, which knocked me back a little, I do confess. I had to ask her twice as I thought that I had misheard. She told me that it was common practise at the end of the day in St Just. I reserved my judgement on the practises in St Just but told her that if I had pasties left over on this very evening, I would have been selling them at double the price given the demand.

As usual, I took the little girl for a saunter at the tail end of the evening. The Harbour beach looked deserted, so I took the chance and let her loose down there. I had not thought to bring a ball, although she is not that interested in chasing one on the beach as they are other things of greater interest. This evening, there were even more alluring smells after a day of occupation and she spent the entire time sniffing here and there with the occasional run around. When a group of children turned up it was time to head on, but we spend longer out than we might usually, which was useful.

It was a perfect evening to round off the day we had with some proper warmth left in the setting sun. I was surprised there were not more out enjoying it. We certainly did.

July 24th – Monday

Heavens to Betsy, I must have slept well. I woke up this morning and I had missed the entire season and it was autumn outside. Sullen grey skies and a blustery breeze from somewhere in the west met us as we walked around the small block first thing. Later, I placed an autumn sized pasty order for autumn sized number of customers wearing their autumn clothing.

To say the sea state in the bay was choppy was probably a bit of an understatement and the whole foreshore was a mess of white water. There were plenty of revellers close in but I would say that the two surfers heading further out were somewhat more than hopeful.

At least I could be assured that our metal sign, attached to the fencing at the end of the road would still be in place today. I neglected to mention it yesterday, but our neighbours and friends from that end dropped by yesterday and told me that the sign had fallen off its moorings. They very kindly took away some cable ties and went and fixed it on their return, which was very neighbourly for someone so far away.

Given the weather it was no particular surprise that business was depressed. I think it might even have been less busy that Saturday during all that rain. Someone very kindly told me that St Ives was heaving yesterday, which at least demonstrates that there are some people in West Cornwall. By the late afternoon we had blue skies and, looking out of the window, it looked like a half decent day. It was just when you stepped outside the door and got blow halfway down The Cove you realised that all that perhaps all was not as it seemed.

I cut down my blistering session at the gymnasium in the morning by just a little since there was no overwhelming wave of customers to worry about. Before I went, the Missus dropped down to help me put away the frozen order that had turned up. The company's turn around time is a bit of a mystery, sometimes they are here the next day after we place the order and sometimes, like today we had to wait. They are down The Cove every day, so I do not quite know what the score is, but it meant one customer being disappointed on his vegetarian sausage front.

We do try and be on top of everything but sometimes things fall through the gaps. After leaving the surf jewellery stand near empty for far longer than I meant to, I was keen that we were not in the same position again. I had used up most of the spare stock when I topped up the stand last week, so I used the free time I had today to place another order. There is no order to the process, I just keep selecting products until I think we have enough but find when I check the inline basket, I have ordered far too much. Last time I let it go but given the worrying lack of customers so far this year I decided to be a little more circumspect and deleted a good number of bracelets to pare down the order a bit. Naturally, we shall now run out when I least expect it.

I am beginning to rue this late opening lark (*Author: in the first draft I had omitted the 'late' from this sentence. I think that was closer to the truth.*). It hardly seems worth it with the customer traffic that is about. I sat around twiddling my thumbs for an hour before a very lacklustre five minutes to closing rush. I did that yesterday and the day before, as well. I am not sure anyone would be inconvenienced if we shut at the usual time. In fact, today, I am not sure that many would have been inconvenience if we had shut halfway through the afternoon. I shall put this under consideration and hope that the mere threat stirs some action from this scurvy lot.

Talking of lacklustre, the little girl seemed to have lost her get up and go in the afternoon. She slept in the cabin up at The Farm even without Mother being there and was not overly exuberant when she came back home in the later afternoon. We all have our off days, I suppose, and she was bouncing off the walls again by the time I came up from the shop, of course. I was tempted to run her down to the beach during our evening stroll but there was not much of it and too many young children about to distract her. I gave it a miss. I think that may be the case for the rest of the summer but at least she has The Farm to run about on – when she is not sleeping.

July 23rd – Sunday

There was not much by way of incoming deliveries this morning and the newspapers were on time making the morning routine quick and straightforward. It gave me some extra time to top up the grocery shelves that I had noticed last night were seriously depleted in some areas.

There were bits of blue sky in the west when we first stepped out in the morning but by the time I opened the shop it had relapsed into grey and overcast. A short while later some low cloud drifted in and forced a bit of a slow start to the business day. I took advantage by finishing off a few invoices that were left over from yesterday and by the time I finished those, we started to see customers arriving in numbers – shortly before they all disappeared again when the next shower blew through.

It seemed the model for the day but happily, the showers were few and far between and soon the customers returned. It coincided with the brightening of the skies, which was highly convenient and most welcome. It was not long before we started seeing small children running in to buy the first of the holiday toys and an abundance of sweets which are for breakfast when you are on holiday, apparently. The numbers are too great these days to worry whether parents have sanctioned such purchases.

It was not until the beginning of the afternoon that the day began to shape up a bit like a summer day should look. It was more than could be said for the numbers of people in The Cove. It was no surprise that the beach was comparatively empty as the beach weather had arrived very late but there were very few people wandering the street as well. Perhaps the absent ones had the right idea because the rain came back again in the middle of the afternoon.

We garnered a bit more interest in our local artisan baker. Some people were already familiar with his products from the farmers' market up at the top of the hill and were pleased they could order through us. Others were keen to try something a bit different and I explained some of the other products 'off menu' as it were from my pre-printed list. We will have quite a selection for me to sort out tomorrow morning, but it is good to see the idea coming to fruition.

The Highly Professional Craftsperson dropped by halfway through the afternoon for a chat. He went away again as it started to get busy but not before he had pointed out that the Fastnet Race was in full flight around the corner and heading north. There were hundreds of yachts up behind the ones we could see, and we heard later that they had kept the emergency services along the south coast busy with dismastings and various breakdowns and medical emergencies. We held our collective breaths until they went out of range.

There was another first for the little girl on our trip around the block in the evening. We had stopped to chat to a couple of people on the way around, which of course was a bit boring after a while when all you want to do is sniff the borders and plants. She was doing just that around the corner of Stone Chair Lane when she jumped

backwards about ten feet. I had not seen it either, but there in the bush was a grey and tortoiseshell cat. There had been no altercation, but they had come nose to nose until ABH realise the darned thing moved. I was still laughing when we got back home.

July 22nd – Saturday

I will not say that today was disappointing because we were expecting it. For once at least one of the forecasts was correct, although one visitor told me that theirs had told of a few showers and brighter later. The one I had looked at spoke of misery from early on, then worse misery later. It met my expectations.

Being very clear from the outset that it would be a particularly quiet first day of the season, I collected all the invoices that had amassed during the last two months of this quarter. I was painfully aware just how many of them there were and had asked the Missus to date order them. This she had done but had missed two thirds as they were in different places.

I had made sure that I got breakfast out of the way to sustain me through my marathon data entry task and set to date ordering more than 200 invoices. Ninety of these were extra as the milkman had started producing daily invoices this year. There was something of a morning rush for newspapers and breakfast goods but after that the flow of customers dropped to near nothing and I ploughed into data entry, which then took me the rest of the day.

The rain had started almost as soon as the shop was open. It persisted throughout the day in varying degrees of heaviness. The wind was not a major bother to us, although it was quite punchy, but from the southwest we were less bothered here than the south coast.

We still saw the arrival of some familiar faces and some new ones and enjoyed some pasty sales that were better than I had expected. Also as expected we continue to major on cheese pasties and if it were not for the weather depressing demand, we would have run out altogether. There was not much selling of anything else, even our rain ponchos were not popular as most people had left home with something waterproof to start with. No one was daft enough to buy an umbrella, but I did have one customer come in carrying one that was still intact.

The Missus entertained Mother and her visitors, in-laws – mine, not hers – for an hour or two and after they left, she went up The Farm. I did not ask what they had been up to, but ABH was not quite as tired as she was yesterday when they returned at four o'clock. ABH, who is still just skin and bone was shivering in the cold. She does eat but is not at all food obsessed. This morning she made it clear she wanted her breakfast by sitting at the kitchen door, but still remained there while I put it in her bowl and even when I placed it on her mat it took a while for her to amble over to it

and start eating. I do not think we have to worry about her becoming overweight anytime soon.

As the tide came in, the sea state worsened. I could hear the occasional whoop of the Lifeguard Tannoy as they warned errant water users. Once I looked up from my invoicing task and there was a lone swimmer in the shore break, covered in windblown surf. That looked neither fun nor safe and the churning white water was all along the beach.

I should be grateful for the day off due to the weather as I would never have had that amount of time to do the invoices; it took much of the day to process just over 200 and there are a few more left to do. If you ever wanted an example of the adage, if the world throws you lemons, make lemonade, this was it. As it turned out, end of day till did not look too bad – for a normal day. Bearing in mind, too, that it was an arrivals day we would not have been in full flight anyway.

The rain stopped by late evening, and I took ABH around the block. It was breezy and damp but not excessively cold or uncomfortable and we were all alone in the world for most of it. We hope for better tomorrow on the grounds it could not get much worse.

July 21st – Friday

It was a very solemn morning; I paid our income tax bill.

Things brightened after that with quite a bit of blue sky to the west but much cloud to the east where the sun would have been shining through but now was not. It still worked out to be a very decent day, dry despite the forecast of showers and warm with the sea state much the same as yesterday.

A neighbour came in for a box of traditional chocolates early doors. It was for her daughter who was finishing school and wanted a present for the teacher. We do not do traditional boxes of chocolates and besides, it seemed quite an excessive gift to give not to mention not terribly healthy. I suggested an apple, as that was far more traditional. For some reason this evoked a look of kind sympathetic pity.

Things got a bit wilder from the middle of the morning, so I left the Missus to it and headed for my last full session at the gymnasium for a while. It was a blistering session, for sure, and I just about managed my old form on the rowing machine. It should not take quite as long to get back to it again since I am not stopping altogether – I hope.

It was still quite busy when I got back. The little girl was in her travel case, meaning she had given up on the meeting and greeting for the day. I discovered that it was the waste collection truck that pulls up outside that upset her. It scared the fur off her

tail last week and I had quite forgotten. It is a loud, noisy thing, so it is to be expected but hopefully she will get used to it by and by.

When I came back down to the shop, the Missus wasted no time in packing up and heading for The Farm where she would spend the rest of the day. Mother has visitors from today and will not be coming for tea, so since the Missus did not have to cook, she took her time coming back.

In the meanwhile, we enjoyed another beach day with a good deal of quietness in the middle of the afternoon. I had presided over the last of the busyness before that and it was indeed showing signs of improvement. It was also showing signs of an increase of cheese pasty buyers. This only presented itself after I had placed the order for the weekend pasties, of course. The trend continued today, not letting me off the hook and I can only imagine a group of cheese pasty loving visitors, disappointed by the end of Saturday.

For some strange and probably curious reason we have also seen an increase in the number of footwear malfunctions. Whether shoe manufacturers are skimping on quality or whether our walkers are being more demanding of their products, it is hard to tell. The end result, however, is the same and we have had a number of people coming to the shop requiring a temporary solution to their problems. For most this appears to be glue of which we have two types, general purpose in a bigger tube and super glue. When nothing else will do, we also have gaffer tape which will work come what may but probably not look too alluring.

We had one such couple of ladies today, one with a flapping heel on her boot. They were from foreign parts where perhaps boots are not made so well as other places or perhaps, they walked a long way to be here. Whatever the case, I offered glue. They asked which was better, which was a difficult question given the materials involved but I suggested that super glue seemed to stick people to buses quite successfully, so it should work on a pair of boots. If this trend continues, I will have to do some research and see if I can establish the best solution to broken footwear so that I may advise correctly.

The fair weather lasted into the evening and as ever, we had quite a five minutes to closing rush. We will probably have them again for the next several weeks, but they will be an hour later as we extend our hours. This will only mean an extended quiet period before it but the later hour seems to be expected, so we will continue it while I am still capable.

Quite what the Missus had done with ABH at The Farm all afternoon, I do not know but she was on her knees when she came back and just wanted to rest. This lasted until after tea, when she had some leftovers as treats and went and finished her own tea, which had been left untouched from earlier. She was still game for a walk around the big block a little later but, again, we avoided the busy beach. By bedtime,

she had regained her enthusiasm, which was entirely the wrong time to be regaining anything – apart from hours of lost sleep. We will have to work on this.

July 20th – Thursday

Well, I was up bright and early to get a march on the day. It is more than can be said for someone else. She is really far too comfortable in that bed. I also had trouble getting ABH out.

With no milk delivery yesterday, I had managed to top up the surf jewellery that had waited so long and the sunglasses, too. This morning there was more on the delivery side that took me most of the extra time I had eked out of my early start. I am going to have to somehow arrange much earlier starts for the next five or six weeks if everything is going to get done. I would rather not be getting ABH up any earlier lest it becomes habit for her, and I certainly do not want to be getting up at half past five forever. Based on the evidence of this morning, I should have no problem at all.

When we eventually did get out of the door, the sun had risen above Sunny Corner Lane and was very bright indeed. There was warmth, too, and I really wish I had done without the jacket I was wearing. I am going to have to start carrying a man bag because the only reason for the jacket was the pockets to carry telephone, pager, the required bags and treats, Eye Spy seabirds book, pencil, sharpener, rubber, spectacles, compass, butterfly can opener, jar of embrocation, tube of glue, handkerchief, rubber truncheon, knee stocking, hip flask, telescope and rubber gloves. Anything unnecessary, I left at home.

The day went on to be a proper rip-gripler. The sea, however, decided to be as flat as a dish but strangely attracted more surfers than yesterday. It was a proper beach day, too. We sold many hats, towels and sun lotion in the run up to the middle of the day, then had the shop to myself for much of the afternoon while folk sunned themselves on the beach and dowsed themselves in the sea. This worked out quite well because the Missus dropped a consignment of goods that she had brought back from The Farm yesterday. I was able to get it all out on the shelves between the sparse customer visits.

ABH did another stint in the shop while the Missus went shopping and sat on the window seat for a good hour. She did a wealth of meeting and greeting with little in the way of rest in between. She will have to be selective on who she meets and greets or at least the level of effort she expends. After about an hour, she started to look a little fatigued, although she had not yet made a fuss or looked to get down. Every time she lay down and curled up someone else worthy of a big waggy tail and standing up for came into the shop. I felt sorry for her after a while and moved her into her carry case on the counter. Even here she had to pop her head out for people coming in until eventually she managed to get to sleep.

The Missus came back for her shortly after and they went up to The Farm again and were gone for hours.

Even during the quiet time of the afternoon, we were relatively steady. We burned through some pasties, but not huge amounts. It left me agonising over the order for the next day and the weekend. On one hand it was set to be the first big weekend of the holiday and on the other, the weather forecast for Saturday was pretty grim. In the end, I went large, as the pasties will always freeze if necessary and the forecasts are nearly always far worse than the weather will ever be.

As ever at this time of year, we had a big five minutes to closing rush. It had been busy in the run up to it as well as people came off the beach, all pink and sore and looking for hats and aftersun lotion. I was still struggling to get the shop closed five minutes after closing time as people bounded through the door in small groups.

I was late up for tea and late across the road for Lifeboat training. Fortunately, only the Inshore boat was launching this evening so I did not miss much and although not a well attended evening, we had enough to put a team on the Tooktrak. This evening we decided to test recovery from the big beach, which meant just at the bottom of the OS slipway as the tide was all the way in. The road was busy and at the OS end it was carnage for a while as taxis dropped off and picked up right on the corner at the bottom of the hill. Also a big van and truck had parked at the top of the slipway but fortunately left enough room for the Tooktrak to get by.

Since I was clearly supernumerary at the station, I returned home to walk ABH around the block. She seems to take pleasure in going around the big block even if we must miss out the beach now. If the weather is less clement, I am sure we will get down there again during the next few weeks, but when it is sunny, there are far too many people about and things going on down there to let her loose.

Hopefully an earlier and more productive start tomorrow. We shall see.

July 19th – Wednesday

A bit of calm fell upon us today, but not a lot. There were no major deliveries, which is what I mean, but the day was largely rain free, although it was not as bright as yesterday and we laboured under a layer of thicker cloud for half of it. Business was steady but not manic.

This was probably just as well because ABH did a marathon stint in the shop today. She came down with the Missus when she came to cover me for my last Wednesday gymnasium session in a while. That was just over an hour and when I returned, I walked her around the block to stretch her legs a bit before taking her upstairs with me. It was straight back down again after that and in the shop with me while the Missus went off for a further hour.

In that time, she did her meeting and greeting of a whole host of different people including many small children. There were also a few dogs to be getting along with and she took it all in her stride. Towards the end, she did seem to be tiring a little. All that shaking paws and having to meet people must take it out of you. I bet the Royals have a quick zizz in the back of the limo on the way home from events as well.

One young brother and sister spent a long time smoothing her and the little boy, seemed particularly taken. They came back later but ABH had gone off to The Farm with the Missus. The look of disappointment on the little boy's face was enough to melt the coldest heart – fortunately grumpy shopkeepers do not have one at all. The mother told me she had promised they could come back and see her if they were good. I bet they will not fall for that one again.

We were well into the afternoon when the thicker cloud gave way to thinner cloud and the sun broke through. It did not make much of a difference to our trade, but the big beach was relatively busy. I would say that there were probably more people in the water than out of it, so I am assuming that the water temperature is improving, or we are just enjoying an invasion of braver holiday makers. There were some waves in the shore break but largely the bay was calm in a bit of a westerly breeze.

For a day that was on the threshold of the peak of the season, it was remarkably sedate. It was not exactly quiet, but it certainly was not as busy as it should have been especially given that the weather was much in our favour. The information I have from a variety of holiday let owners is that there are still vacancies in August, which is unheard of. The fact that it looks like September and October are looking better for bookings rather suggests that it might be a cost issue as the lets will be cheaper then.

It is difficult to point at one particular factor that is producing the slow down and may well be a combination of things. The number of lets increased dramatically over the last couple of years as demand increased and prices went up across the board. There may be some oversupply but that is unlikely to affect the properties in The Cove as there is no oversupply here. Those that increased their prices during the dreaded lurgi years should have dropped them again but we have heard that many did not and may now be reaping what they sowed, although that is not true in all the cases.

I was heartened a little towards the end of the day when we started to see a few regular families turning up, which was an odd day for it, but I am not complaining. When ABH stepped out in the evening, what little of the Harbour beach that was available was busy with revellers and gig attenders, so we did not bother to go down. The car park was as full as I had seen it all year, particularly at that time of the evening and there were people there milling about and all the way back home. It was a fine evening, for sure, but I am hoping that was not the only reason so many were about.

I will make an early start of it tomorrow.

July 18th – Tuesday

I was a bit up against it this morning. We always get a message from the big grocery supplier when they have finished packing the goods through the tills and onto the truck. It is a good indicator that the delivery is on its way. Since they had not delivered very early since the season began, I had not really expected too much of a change to that except they are aware of the difficulties it poses when we get busier. It is as much an advantage to the drivers as it is to us to get it here early in the morning before the fight starts.

With a potential early start at the back of my mind, I was painfully aware that because of the Lifeboat interruption yesterday, I had not managed to finish off clearing the store room. There was also a fairly large milk delivery coming, the bread, newspapers and sandwiches not to mention the pasty delivery to clear through and the message from the grocers had arrived before I even had my morning cup of tea. The van was on the way and the clock ticking.

It arrived with two fit and eager young men ready to unload and with me, relatively fit but creaking a bit, we finished off the extra large order in under fifteen minutes and well before the shop opened. I had cleared all the space we needed, which was just as well because the delivery, even piled high, filled the available floor space. All that remained now was to unpack it all and put it away. This I pecked at during the day between customers.

Some of our customers have been acting with some frostiness of late. We will get one or two during the season, but this has been more frequent of late. It happens because I am not behind the counter at the precise moment that service is required. I agree that it is the best place to be when money is being handed out but without occasionally not being behind the counter there would be nothing on the shelves to bring to the counter to purchase. Of late, I have had customers chase me out of the store room balancing boxes on both arms because a minute wait would be a minute too long. One gentleman sought me out while I was placing pasties in the oven, asking could he possibly buy the drink that he was brandishing. I told him, of course he could, in fact I insisted upon it. He walked away empty handed because he only had a payment card for the small amount he wished to part with.

Another time I had just finished putting out a box of shortbread biscuits when a lady came charging down the aisle with a newspaper voucher. She had already uttered the first words of chastisement when she noticed the empty carton in my hands. "Oh, you were working," which I took to mean that my absence from the counter was acceptable in this instance.

I really do not mind if someone needs to attract my attention when I am otherwise engaged. I can even cope with someone shouting "shop" as long as they do not mind me shouting back, "yes, it is". I am not without record for playing hooky, either. It has been known for me to slip off for a crafty cup of tea when it is quiet and return to find an abundance of customers waiting. If they have a grievance, it is genuine. It is the ill grace and impatience I could do without.

We were busy at times today and very quiet at others. That had much to do with the shower of rain that appeared out of nowhere and lingered a bit, sometimes more heavily than at others. We entertained a group of German students and their minder toward the end of the rain. They decamped into a corner of the shop and spent a good forty-five minutes browsing before a couple of the older ones came to the counter with provisions and a few of the others with patches for sewing on things. The shop seemed very empty after they left.

We finished with a flourish and a five minutes to closing rush with me trying to get a last few items unpacked and on the shelf before we closed. When I eventually shut the door the store room still looked like I had not even started on it. The Missus came down after tea and after taking Mother home and finished it off in a concentrated hour or so.

In the meanwhile, I took care of ABH and we had a mixed run down to the beach and around the block. It is becoming quite the routine. We curtailed our fun on the beach that was going so well until she found some scanky fish in the sand up by the western slip. We were having some great fun but she kept going back to it, so we cut our losses and headed for the circuit instead. She actually chilled out when we got home, so something must be working – unless I just got lucky. I will find out tomorrow, maybe.

July 17th – Monday

I am sure that the forecasters knew in their hearts that what they really meant by no rain was there would be no rain, probably, after the rain in the morning that was not worth mentioning had gone. After that it was a very decent day, thank you very much for asking. It was not quite blue skies all over as there was some higher level cloud blotting out the sunshine from time to time, but everything looked very blue and very bright apart from that and, as the day wore on, quite warm.

It was a day certainly worthy of a run down to the gymnasium for the first of the last, hopefully three, blistering sessions before I am forced to moderate the number and intensity of them due to the burgeoning busyness of the season. It is a pity as the last several sessions have demonstrated a gradual move back to form. It will be back to square one after the holidays.

In my absence, the Missus piled through the stock that she had brought down from The Farm yesterday. After she went back up to The Farm again today, I piled

through the fruit and vegetables that had arrived this morning and when I had finished that I had fully intended to get the surf jewellery stock out.

This has been nagging at me for the best part of two weeks and the stand is getting emptier by the day. There had been several attempts at getting this done and all of them had been thwarted by other things that had happened. I had just finished the immediate groceries issue when a Post Office van turned up outside with three unexpected boxes from our purveyor of local interest books. Some advance warning might have been useful, but none had been received and with the big grocery delivery arriving tomorrow, the boxes needed to be got out of the way.

I had almost finished the books and was looking forward to at last getting ahead with the jewellery when my pager went off. Again, I had to empty the shop in a bit of a hurry, lock up and head for the station. The big boat was called out for a yacht that was making headway but had engine problems, and presumably wind problems as well. By the time the Lifeboat got there it was halfway to Newlyn and managed most of the journey before being taken under tow on the last leg.

With no communications to listen to, we had to track the Lifeboat visually and take a stab at what was going on. When the tow was taken up the fact that the Lifeboat was not going to turn back was clear and we were able to estimate the return time.

We mustered at the station at four o'clock and set up for the short slipway, so I closed the shop again and went over. For a long while there were just a few of us willing enough to gather at all hours but more recently, we have a swollen team of joyful volunteers and even then some of the Boat Crew are more than happy to join in. By the time I arrived, setting up on the short slipway was in full swing, so I put on my orange Head Launcher's hat and pretended I had been there all along, directing operations.

The boat arrived a short while later and, having cleared the Harbour of splashing water lovers, we recovered the boat on the short slipway in what was clearly a textbook operation.

It was as the boat was being brought into the boathouse that we discovered that the Land's End Cliff Team had been paged for some missing boarders at Portheras Cove. The boat went on standby, and we pressed on with refuelling and preparing for launch like a well-practised Formula One pit team. With so many in attendance, some of the Boat Crew swapped around and I left to return to the shop. We are, after all, a very supportive, very excellent Shore Crew.

The Missus had returned from The Farm and had reopened the shop in my absence. We swapped over when I came back from the station and luckily, I did not have to go back as the boat was stood down a while later when the boarders were found.

Just another rip-roaring normal day in the life of a grumpy shopkeeper.

July 16th – Sunday

Glancing out of the window this morning, it looks like we will have to wait a while longer for the sunlit uplands of weather to arrive. Maybe it is because we are so low that we have to wait a bit more. We could not really get much lower, unless we were in Eastern Green, which is a bit lower than sea level. You need nerves of steel to live there or a very long snorkel.

The day was brightening up nicely and there was a hint that people were arriving in some abundance. There is a saying about a being very wary when the small gods of grumpy shopkeepers start to smile at you. Just as things were warming up and the till was ringing its merry song, the showers started to blow through. It seemed that some of these joined together to make a longer and heavier shower than all the others. Initially, the shop filled up with dripping holiday makers suddenly taken with the urge to browse the shelves of a shop. As the rain eased, the shop emptied out again without a penny crossing the counter and the street emptied soon afterwards.

It took a while for the crowds to be coaxed back out again but the afternoon brightened into something approaching gloriousness. We were quite busy for most of the afternoon as the sun shone and the cooling wind dropped to a lighter breeze. T-shirts replaced winter woollies and sun hats popped onto heads.

We had been warned that the sea state would become dangerously rough which it might well have done somewhere else, but I saw no evidence of that in the bay. It was lumping over the Harbour wall yesterday but today it appeared a little more calm. I do not think that it was the best for the surfers but around high water there were plenty of people in the water giving it a go.

The pasties went well in all the abounding busyness. I had pared down the numbers for Monday and probably will wish I had not, but we have frozen ones if I need to fall back on something. They are very good pasties, born from a breed of world champion ones at the World Pasty Championships held most years at the Eden Project. It is therefore exceedingly disappointing that at the point of selling two to a young lady, the partner appeared at the counter with a bottle of tomato ketchup.

I was aghast. The shop was quite crowded at the time, and they were aghast, too. I was very sorry that so many others had to witness this spectacle but at least there were no small children or people of a nervous disposition in the shop, although a couple of ladies at the back looked like they might faint. He was not even Australian – I asked, thinking that he may have a valid excuse. I explained that for every drop of ketchup that falls on a pasty, a fairy dies, but even that did not deter him. In the end I had to escort him from the premises for his own safety as the crowd was turning hostile – you could tell by the booing and hissing going on. It was truly an awful five minutes.

Through the busyness of the afternoon, I managed to restock the grocery shelves and do the larger than normal grocery order. We try and leave this for two weeks between orders as we are charged a grievous amount for each. Also, the whole process from arrival to shelving and storing is a huge effort. Within this fortnight, we expect – and seriously hope - demand to increase at least double when the national schools break up for the summer holiday.

I had just finished the order when it was time to start the shop closing routine. I still had the secondary grocery order to do and all the normal next day orders as well. This did not please the Missus who was preparing tea but still needed to be done and I make it a rule not to come back down to the shop once I leave it for the day. It was partially her fault anyway as she had brought a half truck load of gift aisle goods down with her from The Farm. Many of these are still in the store room, which will need to be cleared tomorrow ahead of the larger than normal delivery on Tuesday.

It was not the best of evenings to be running ABH down to the beach as there was not a great deal of it left. Also, she was not too enamoured of it yesterday and today, she was fearful of two small boys making much noise in the shallows at the end of the Lifeboat slipways.

We had delayed our excursion while an especially heavy shower blew through, and I was aware that another was potentially on its way. I was not much bothered as we were not far from home and the little girl dries quicky, but I wondered at the number of people heading up Pedn-men-du for the sunset as none had coats. We made it back unscathed but I do not think that the excursion did much to drain ABH of her energy. It had worked pretty well for me, though.

July 15th – Saturday

Well, at least ABH and I made it around the block this morning without getting wet. I did not realise at the time that was the highlight of the day, else I would have made more of it.

I was not entirely sure that I was expecting rain, but I am sure someone would have mentioned it. The main focus had been on the wind, so the rain got a little lost. The wind had kindly moved a bit more to the southwest so that we could share the effects as much as the south coast had yesterday. I left the flags off the front of the shop as the man on Radio Pasty had said it was going to improve its blowing into the afternoon.

There were a few early customers braving the day. It was good to have the company. One young lady, clearly determined to make the most of a poor lot, bought a towel and was keen to try a quick dip in the sea. She asked where the best place was to go in, so I suggested Mauritius or, failing that, the big beach as she would get maximum benefit of the breeze there – not to mention the added luxury of fewer stones underfoot on your way in. I also recommended that she take her time as it

was always best not to rush such things. Then came the clincher of, 'was it cold?'. I told her, not at all and it would be like stepping into a warm bath. It is subjective, of course, and comparative too, probably. Anyway, I just hope she does not hold it against me – even if it does warm it up.

Business was a bit stop/start through the day as the showers came and went. They arrived largely by surprise, catching out the unwary. In between, there were brighter spells and blue skies to wonder at. It was not warm, however, and we found ourselves in the middle of July selling woolly hats and jumpers.

Mind, it will be markedly better than selling newspapers in the near future. We had notice on Friday that the delivery charge will be going up from the start of September. It is expensive enough and while the Laurel and Hardy Newspaper company congratulates itself that the average increase is three percent, ours is more than ten percent. We have already had four weeks this year where we have made a loss on our newspaper sales and this increase will certainly lead to more.

We will be considering very carefully if we will do newspapers next year at all. I think that we will suffer for the lack of them to a certain degree and probably The Cornishman most of all. Overall, I think it is something people will get used to over time. In the short term and since it is so quiet this year, we may have to stop doing newspapers from September.

With all the stopping and starting throughout the day I managed to finish off the remaining wetsuits and most of the rash vests. I had hoped to get ahead of the posse on the grocery order that we will certainly need to put in on Sunday, but I ran out of time. It reminds me that I will have to clear out the store room, too, which is in a proper mess. How I am unable to keep it in some sort of order, I will never know but things just seem to arrive in there and then I need to move them in a hurry to get to something that was under or behind them. I will get the hang of it one day, but I have been practising for twenty years and seem no closer.

The little girl had apparently been very good all day. As soon as I arrived on the scene after I shut the shop, she started showing off. I took her down to the Harbour beach after tea but she seemed more distracted than usual. When we started to get a few spots of rain, she ran up the slipway a couple of times and I was afeared that she might make a bolt for home, so we packed up and went for a bit of a walk instead. The rain did not really get going, which was lucky, but the girl was a little calmer when we got home.

The Aged Parent has been reading The Keats Book of Teach Yourself Poems by the look of it. Quite poignant and bittersweet this one.

An Ill Wind

It's Sunday so off to the beach they go,

*but leave behind them one poor soul,
in his Sunday best.*

*And it's off to the local church for him on
this day of rest
where Mother in her best attire is the organist.*

*But the ancient beast was breathless,
And who to fill its lungs but the lonely chap,
in his Sunday best, wishing he was home.*

*A sharp tap on the wood and the words blow, blow, blow
Awake him from his daydream to make the music flow.*

*Respite was the sermon when he sat in the front row,
But the break was too soon over,
And it was back to blow, blow, blow.*

(R.I.P. Lilian Emma Carne, nee Shepherd)

This grumpy shopkeeper was married in the same church, Gwithian, some 60 years later and was privileged to meet another organist who had been there when the new organ was installed. My grandmother was the first to play it – without the assistance of a small boy, blow, blow, blowing, I presume.

July 14th – Friday

It did not take very long for my Lifeboat chum to come back with an answer to yesterday's conundrum of what the sea beastie was that the lady discovered on the shore of the big beach. He either knows things or knows people who knows things and it was the latter that came up trumps. The wee beastie is a dosima fascicularis. Of course it was, and I am very surprised we had to wait until my Lifeboat chum replied. I did think that I would be inundated with your message, dear reader, but clearly your computer was broken.

The dosima fascicularis is a type of goose necked barnacle. It creates its own buoy and floats on the ocean currents living the very epitome of an aimless life, carefree until eaten by a starfish.

It was not the very best of starts. ABH and I managed to get a good soaking on our way around the small block and I had to spend ten minutes towelling her dry and warming her up. She is still just skin and bone and no matter how much she eats, does not seem to fatten up much. I believe as a consequence, she gets cold very quickly and was shivering when I got her home.

Try as I might, I cannot seem to get down to the shop any earlier. I had intended to do the drinks fridge this morning and wanted a good half an hour extra but somehow managed to fritter it away. I did manage to do the drinks fridge and all the other delivery centric chores of the morning and still open on time, so I suppose it did not matter terribly much. You would have thought, and many people do, that because I did not have any customers at all, I would be sitting idling my time away. This morning, that could not be farther from the truth as I was run ragged with deliveries, clearing the rubbish from the store room ahead of the waste collection and paying a few invoices that I had inadvertently forgotten about, honest guv.

I was still doing things when the Missus came down to let me get off to the gymnasium. I was pleasantly surprised there that the rain had not completely flooded the place because there was enough of it. It might have something to do with the lack of wind, which was coming in southerly and left us completely unaffected. A man came into the shop after I returned and told me that he was nearly flattened up at the top when he went to have a look earlier in the morning. Another good reason for not venturing past the foot of the hill.

The being kept from idle continued after I came back from my blistering session. The rain had cleared through roughly about the time I came back to the shop and thus encouraged, The Cove came alive with patrons. They flooded through the first electric sliding door in The Cove where the rain had not. There was still quite a bit of going home buying and a fair amount of breakfast goods buying as well. It kept me from my own breakfast for a good hour and more, which was a shame because I had succumbed to buying some pricey smoked mackerel from our pricey St Ives supplier. In fairness, mackerel has been at a premium for some months as it has been in short supply.

Just when I thought that I was getting to the end of my chores, a delivery of wetsuits and rash vests arrived. These need to be unwrapped, labelled and rewrapped before heading off to The Farm for storage until they are needed, or at least the wetsuits do. The rash vests will all go on the rack in the shop. The order was largely unnecessary apart from the rash vests, but the supplier was knocking a few pounds off the wetsuits, so it seemed a good idea to snap them up for next season.

I had not quite finished all of those before the Missus returned from The Farm with a truck load. She had been around the shop while I was at the gymnasium and written her own, pre summer holiday list. These were games and toys in abundance that needed to be placed around the shop for sale. We had just about finished this off when the five minutes to closing rush started and I had to abandon all else in its favour.

It had been a bit of a helter skelter afternoon, so I was looking forward to a quieter evening. Since ABH had been escalating her naughtiness all afternoon we decided to walk her down to the big beach for a run around for a change. We were just getting ready for the excursion when my pager went off.

Both boats were requested for a small group of people cut off by the falling tide on Cape Cornwall. The whole situation was a bit confused but the Lifeboats, when they arrived could not see anyone who by that time were apparently halfway up the cliff. Two Cliff Teams had been despatched to the scene and one of those teams had dropped down the cliff and found one remaining 'casualty' who needed evacuation. The Coastguard helicopter winched him out and dropped him in a nearby field for the attention of one of the Cliff Teams.

With all now resolved the boats were stood down having sat doing little in support of the operation. We had followed proceedings on the radio, for once being able to listen to both sides of the conversation, and were ready when the boats were released.

The launch had gone remarkably smoothly, with all the right team members turning up to cover all the main activities of Tooltrak driving, winch operating and boat launching. By the time everything was over, we were fully manned (and ladyied) to effect a textbook recovery of both boats. The big boat came up the long slipway at around half past eight with showers threatening on the horizon, so I made someone else go to the end of the slipway to do it. In the event, it stayed dry and the bright sun, just getting ready to set, shone in our eyes as we complete the job. We are, after all, a very sharing, very excellent Shore Crew.

July 13th – Thursday

Today was labelled, 'best day of the week' a few days ago, so I did wonder about the dark clouds and spots of rain on the ground when I stepped out with ABH this morning. I was late starting because the little girl was clinging to her bed and pretending to be asleep when I came to wrest her from it. It was the third time of trying, too, so I resorted to dragging her out in the end.

It was a pretty fair day, but there were others earlier in the week equally good, so why today was singled out, I do not know. We had also been warned by Radio Pasty that the weekend was going to be monsoonal, but when I looked at the Meteorological Office website it was suggesting nothing of the sort. Ordering pasties for the weekend is hard enough without conflicting forecasts to contend with. When in doubt, order plenty. So I did.

I had a rather interesting chat with a man buying a windbreak today. He was from Australian, the land of kangaroos, rubbish pasties (by their own admission) and alpine horns. It is also the land where you cannot get a windbreak, would you believe. Our friend told me they were a complete surprise to him and what a clever idea they were. Suddenly, I see a huge business opportunity opening up, selling windbreaks to the Australians along with some decent pasties without brown sauce. Of course, it is imperative that no one finds out about this until I have captured the market and made my fortune. My future is assured.

It certainly will beat selling pasties in Blighty. I had expected the day heralded as the best of the week to be jumping with hungry visitors, but it was merely mediocre in that regard. Happily, there were other things to buy, including Australians buying windbreaks, and the inevitable going home presents that was so prolific I had to top up the postcard fudge boxes halfway through the day. It was a wonder that I noticed that they were depleted but I suspect I went down that end of the shop on some other pretext and discovered the empty shelves.

With things foreign still in mind, I had a further communication from Austria, which we have concluded does not have kangaroos but may well have windbreaks. I was sent photographs taken from a rather posh ski lift, not like the ones you see with your legs dangling below. This one has windows and, I am rather hoping, a floor, though where your skis stick out, I have not considered. They seem to have some very radical weather there because one minute it is clear and the grass is green and the next, everything is covered in snow. It seems a bit lofty for my liking. I would elect to stay behind and look after the St Bernards.

The Missus ran off to The Farm in the middle of the day, which is like running off to the circus but with less trapeze work. I have no idea what the Missus did up there, but it did not translate to produce being returned home, just a sick puppy who had eaten something that disagreed with her. It resulted in a precautionary trip to the veterinary doctor, which may have been over cautious, perhaps, especially as when I went upstairs just before they left, she was running around quite oblivious to her supposed condition.

While she was gone off to The Farm, I was entertained by our various guests. I may have on occasion mentioned that we are asked questions from time to time and today was one of those times. A lady came in having taken her daughter rock pooling. She had a bucket of water and weed but showed me a small creature inside that she wanted to know if I knew what it was. I did not. It looked like it was attached to a small white berry that kept it afloat on the surface, and under that it had the appearance of a shrimp with a tail and, out of the water, slipped in and out of a translucent jacket.

I took some photographs and sent one off to Cornwall Wildlife Trust to see if they could identify it. I will apprise you, dear reader, at such time I have a response worthy of note.

Tea was a little late because of the trip to the veterinary doctor but the evening was still kind enough to take a boisterous ABH to the beach to unwind some of that energy. I took a ball to throw but it is much more fun to steal someone's cricket set case and run around the beach with it. Fortunately, I knew the owner, so it was a tad less embarrassing that it might otherwise have been. Said friend joined us with a few young bucks who kept the little girl busy for a while. She seems to adore young children, which is something of a relief as she will have to endure plenty during the

summer, petting her and sticking their fingers in her eyes. We shall see how she feels at the end of the season.

I left this until last, in fact until the following morning ahead of publication, just in case. We managed to avoid a fifth Lifeboat shout in five days. Training was cancelled for the evening in case you were wondering why there was no launch.

July 12th – Wednesday

First off, I must explain that it has been pointed out to me my terrible mistake regarding kangaroos in yesterday's Diary. In order to avert a major international incident, I apologise unreservedly. In my defence, dear reader, I was confused by that big horn they blow in the Alps to drown out the sound of yodelling goatherds. Ah yes, that will be it, the didgeridoo. I must also point out that it was not my fault the country was named after another with similar, if longer, name.

Moving swiftly on, the day took a similar stamp to yesterday: wet in the morning and largely dry but much more threatening in the afternoon. There were occasional big black clouds appearing here and there, very possibly dropping heavy amounts of rain on someone else. There was that westerly breeze again, but it seemed less intrusive than yesterday and causing no bother to anyone apart from the surfers.

Just in case you thought that the saga of the stamps had gone away, it has not. The last communication I had from one of the threads of enquiry, pretty much said, hard cheese. Not willing to let them have the last word, I wrote back saying, 'you ain't seen nothing yet' and resolved to write to the head honcho, a strategy that has served me well in the past. Unfortunately, they made the mistake of replying to my parting shot, so I just had to send another. This one has legs for another set at least.

And if I thought that one thread was in its death throes, the other thread responded, this time bearing fruit. They attached the two invoices that I was missing from the last two orders that I could not get hold of. I am debating whether to send them a final note telling them I have no faith at all that I will still get an invoice on my next order but I might just wait until I do not get an invoice on my next order.

My letter to the head honcho might well be doomed. The latest incumbent in the post is bailing out. In theory, he has already bailed out but has agreed to stay in post until October to allow a replacement to be found. It is unlikely that he will give a monkey's about my petty problems. Nevertheless, I will point out to him that the process in place is utter tosh, layers of unnecessary bureaucracy that must be costing the Royal Mail a fortune. It is not like they are battling legacy systems; someone actually sat down and designed it that way.

While I am being grumpy about things, you may remember, dear reader, that I had a word about the absence of traffic control officers in this neck of the woods a week or so ago. We saw one today – at nine o'clock, before anyone had the chance to turn

up and infringe and those who had infringed overnight, had moved. They would have had better pickings had they come at midnight.

Just when you thought it was safe to run a short undisturbed by outside events, your pager goes off for the fourth time in four days. This time, someone had managed to hurt themselves quite badly down at Pednevounder beach. The initial plan was to get them off that beach using the Inshore boat and whizz them around to Porthcurno beach where they could be medivaced out by land ambulance – when it eventually got there.

In the event, the casualty was too badly injured and the conditions would have posed some problems; it is always best not to drop casualties into the water while moving them. The alternative was air ambulance, once they had assessed whether the gradient of the beach was not too steep to land and Plan C, if the air ambulance could not do it, was for the Cliff Team to get down there. Happily, the air ambulance did the job, and both our Lifeboats were released.

On shore, we had been watching eagle eyed at what was transpiring and we fit an ready for the boat to come back, which fortunately coincided with shop closure, so I had no conflicting duties. Both boats returned at around half past six o'clock. The Inshore safely recovered by the Tooltrak and the big boat brought up the long slipway again at close to high water. Watching from the top of the slipway on this occasion, it was clear to see that both were textbook recoveries. We are, after all, a very thinly spread, very excellent Shore Crew.

July 11th – Tuesday

Today was always going to be an anti-climax after the excitement yesterday. Yes, running out with the little girl in the evening in rain that I thought to be not that heavy only to get soaked in a following downpour was the highlight of my day. We were never going to top that.

Theoretically, that was possible today with infrequent showers blowing through The Cove. There was some lighter rain and a short cloud burst in the early part of the morning after we had opened but ABH and I managed to get around the block first thing, unscathed.

It led to a slow morning, but things perked up a bit in the early afternoon. We had enjoyed quite a long rainless spell that gave our visitors some confidence to step out. That and it also seems to be the generally busiest time of the day, which today looked markedly better than it had at the same time yesterday.

Naturally, it would have been churlish not to have a third Lifeboat shout in a row. This one was for the Inshore Lifeboat, called to a small dinghy ill-advisedly out in a somewhat choppy bay with brisk winds blowing. The Lifeguards had responded but

required a more suitable craft to tow the dinghy back ashore with, no doubt, some expert advice given to the occupants.

All this Lifeboat activity prompted a couple of messages to the editor's desk of the venerable Cove Diary (International). One pointed out that yesterday's event, we could hardly call it a rescue, had made at least one of the newspapers for people east of Camborne, although names were not named, an obvious nod to this very organ from which they probably heard the story in the first place.

That, however, was small beer, sorry TL, compared to the implications of receiving the second message. This came from a lady, R, who lives in a place called Zell am See which by her own admission is 'a looooong way south east of Camborne' in a place called Austria, where the kangaroos are from. She too saw the news on the BBC World Service radio, which is now available in colour on a handheld steam mobile telephone app. R has only the Boat Crew's health in mind, noting that they appear to have a predilection to sweetie bars. She observes that they would be better off with something more nutritious. She suggests a Cornish Ice Cream, but clearly this would not work too well on a bouncy boat as the top would fall off.

There are two things to note here. First, the crew do have nutritious bars and foodstuffs on board but choose to eat the sweetie bars instead. Secondly, if health was the prominent factor in their minds, they would not be getting on a small tin boat and heading out into seas best suited to animals that can breathe through their ears in the first place. We thank R for her message and trust that we may be privy to more of the fresh and interesting responses from Zell am See in the future.

As a small aside, dear reader, I would urge you to look up Zell am See on your computers as the place is utterly stunning. Many thanks to R for bringing the place to my attention in the first place.

The later afternoon blossomed a bit with proper sunshine and what looked like a small drop in the wind speed. The big beach looked busier today but that might have had much to do with high water being in the middle of the day and everyone squeezed up together. It was not the greatest surf day but there were quite a few in the water on top of the sand bar that juts out from the middle of the beach.

It also meant that there were a few people still milling about long into the afternoon. It was not the sort of busy to write home about, especially as I am already at home, but it was busier than yesterday, although it would have been difficult for it not to be. Once again, the forecast had been somewhat downbeat about the whole day. It would be delightful if just once or twice they could stick their neck out in the opposite direction and take a punt on it being lovely and gorgeous and well worth a trip to the coast.

It was still lovely and gorgeous in the evening when I had to attend a Lifeboat meeting. I thought that I may not have time to take ABH to the beach but the meeting

did not take very long and the evening sort of demanded some attention. There had been no visit to The Farm today and the little girl was clearing climbing the walls by the time I got back. The Missus was about to take her anyway just to avoid her going into meltdown – the Missus and ABH, I think.

We had a fabulous time down there. The little girl largely entertains herself and tears around like a mad thing. She even took a dive off a rock into some, unexpectedly, deep water and had to swim back to shore. She will run into the water a little way but stops short of going deeper at present. She was a much calmer ABH when we got her home and I was a much more depleted grumpy shopkeeper. I do sleep well, though.

July 10th – Monday

I was pleased as punch for the first half hour of shop opening today. I thought that I had a conundrum solved after a lady telephoned to ask if we had a pair of reading glasses handed in. I had found a pair of reading glasses on the shelf next to the reading glasses that we sell, the label was missing and so too was the little sticker on the lens that describes the magnification rating.

I was outraged that someone had removed the label and not replaced it but understood that it might have been done to facilitate testing them. To remove the sticker as well was very annoying as both the sticker and the label were now missing. The telephone call had explained that despite looking like a pair of our glasses, they were not. I told our delighted caller that I had indeed found them by the description she gave me – the shape and colour were the same – but that I was in the process of reselling them, so it was fortunate that she had called. She turned up half an hour later and burst my bubble by telling me they were not hers.

We had started the day a little grey with a noticeably pushy breeze from somewhere in the west – it was in the southwest, but that is what it felt like in The Cove. The rain started just at the end of putting out the shop display, so was extremely timely.

What was far less timely was a Lifeboat shout shortly after the Missus went off shopping leaving me with ABH. This rather hindered my response to attend the station but thankfully there were several of the very excellent Shore Crew rushing to the scene, leaving me ample time to gather the little girl and something to tie her up with over in the crew room. The rain, that had become heavier since we had opened, ensured that we were quiet enough that I did not have to throw anyone from the shop or prevent any customers from entering.

The boat was tasked to a 195 metres long, 31,000 tonnes roll on, roll off cargo vessel with engine failure and dragging its anchor, heading for Wolf Rock. There was not much our little boat could do when it arrived other than to stand by and pretty soon, the vessel rested itself on Wolf Rock just ahead of high water. This turned up to be extremely fortuitous as half an hour later it freed itself and continued to flow

northeast on the prevailing breeze. By this time Penlee Lifeboat had arrived and the Coastguard helicopter and the Scillonian that had stopped by to help out, were sent off.

While the Lifeboats bobbed about waiting for a tug that had been despatched from Falmouth to arrive, some of us had to go about some proper work. We started to see customers after the rain cleared away in the middle of the morning and for a short while we had some sunshine through the cloud. This disappeared into the afternoon when the cloud thickened and eventually it started to rain again.

As expected, this was not our finest day and the pasty day we expected yesterday, we got today. We had a few notable sales, and we were far busier than I had expected but since I had expected it to be entirely dire, that does not say very much.

Into this afternoon came the delivery of a pallet of buckets, spades and windbreaks that I do wonder if we will need. It is not like they will go off, so the Missus, who was already at The Farm laying the woodchip that she had acquired from our fuel merchant, came back to take it all up there and salt it away. Naturally, we were at our busiest when she needed to assistance in loading up the truck, but we are used to such things. It also started to rain then. We are used to that, too.

The rain rather scuppered the rest of the day but made it slightly more convenient when time arrived to recover the Lifeboat. The tug had arrived on scene but as yet had not connected a tow, and arrangements had been put in place for Penlee to escort it across Mount's Bay and to hand over to Lizard Lifeboat ahead of Lizard point. Falmouth Lifeboat would join the party a little later for the last leg of the journey.

Our boat, having been out there for seven hours, was the first to be released and it made very good time getting back to the station. So good was the time made that I was late arriving but fortunately, we had someone on station for several hours before and other earlier arrivals had everything in hand. I was there just ahead of what was clearly a textbook recovery up the long slipway and swiftly put away to let the weary Boat Crew off. As one put it later, there was about a couple of hours of interesting and five of utter boredom through which they had consumed all the sweeties on board. Someone will be over from the station for resupply from the nearest sweetie shop, ahem. We are, after all, a very comprehensive, very excellent Shore Crew.

July 9th – Sunday

Well, that will teach me to pay any heed at all to a weather forecaster pretending they know what they are talking about. The BBC and the Meteorological Office had both changed their websites this morning to reflect the new thinking that it would sunshine all day long. Any eejit can look out of the window in the morning. Rain coming, then.

This left me in a bit of a pickle with my pasties. I had baked enough that would have seen us through a day with a little rain sprinkled between the sunshine, but I was nowhere near for a day without any rain at all. We may not have had the rain, but we had the forecast of rain, which is almost the same thing. It was not busy today, and we lasted out until the middle of the afternoon with very few disappointed.

Even without it being busy, traffic control in The Cove continues to be interesting. We still await our 20 miles per hour restriction, which may not be daft, but it is certainly superfluous. There are too many cars in summer to do 20 miles per hour and no cars in the winter. What we do have is a free for all parking on double yellow lines and when they are full, the bus turning zone. We have not seen a traffic enforcement officer here for a month or two and it is unlikely we will see one before summer is out.

In the middle of the afternoon, even the double yellow parked cars cleared off, leaving me with nothing to moan about for the rest of the day. We have noticed that this year and of late, it is Saturday that is the busier of the two weekend days. That is the first year of this phenomenon and I wonder what has changed to prompt it.

There was a smaller gathering than yesterday down on the beach, too, although the numbers in the water seemed about the same. The waves, however, did not and the westerly breeze had probably picked up a mite not making conditions the best. It did not seem to bother the thirty or so bodies in the water some of whom were making a pretty decent fist of what was available.

It does not bother me very much at all, but the 'person in the RNLI shop', and I am assuming that is not necessarily the same one each time, seems to have a very, and unjustifiably, high opinion of my level of local knowledge. Any question that gets asked in the RNLI shop seems to elicit a response, 'go ask the grumpy shopkeeper'. I am not sure whether this is indeed a genuine response or just seen as the quickest way to get rid of someone. Either way, I have a frequent flow of callers asking all manner of questions, from 'is the Harbour beach dog friendly' to 'will it rain tomorrow'.

Questions such as the ones to do with the weather do make me suspicious that it is done with a small amount of malice. Surely, anyone could answer such a question. Then there was 'the person in the RNLI shop says you will know what the sea conditions will be like at Wolf Rock later on this afternoon', which definitely suggested that the high opinion was somewhat overinflated. I told our enquirer that everything would be tickety-boo, but sold them a length of clothes line and told them it would be handy if they found they had to tie themselves to the mast, should a sudden squall blow up.

I was therefore supremely grateful that the 'person in the RNLI shop' was not there today. I did not escape entirely unscathed from what unfolded, but I was spared direct contact, at least at the time. One of our neighbours and friends came to tell me

that there was an inebriated lady in the boathouse environs that she and others were trying to repatriate. They had discovered where she was staying and did I have any contacts there that might be able to help, which I did not. I was asked again twenty minutes later by another person trying to assist but again, I was unable to help.

All went quiet after that but a little while later I served a lady with a bottle of wine. She had placed it on the counter without a word, so it did not become apparent until she tried to conduct a conversation after the sale that she was very probably the lady in question. Oops.

The potential problem of her returning was resolved by my pager going off and having to shut the shop behind me when I went to answer it. The boat was tasked to seek the source of a boat's transponder beacon activated just out to the west of us. There was a fishing boat at the location, it transpired, so the boat went to make sure all was well.

It should have been a relatively swift operation once it was discovered all was well, but the boat subsequently found some flotsam nearby, big enough to cause obstruction to other craft and recovered it. The Coastguard helicopter was also in attendance and somehow spotted the offending transponder floating a little way from the original location to which the boat was called. It may or may not have had something to do with the fishing boat but the Coastguard at Falmouth overseeing the operation, deemed all was well after the transponder was recovered and sent the boat home again.

The day was just the perfect sort of day to be hanging around at the bottom of the long slipway waiting for the boat to return. We had set up in readiness when we thought that recovering the flotsam was the end of it all. We therefore had to wait until the transponder had been recovered, which involved a certain amount of impromptu sunbathing, if such a thing is possible in oilers and lifejackets.

It must have been around five o'clock that we brought the boat back up the long slipway in what was very clearly a textbook recovery. A quick washdown later and a bit of refuelling allowed me to return to the shop to replace the Missus just before closing time. We are, after all, a very tanned, very excellent Shore Crew.

July 8th – Saturday

It was looking like it was trying very hard to be glorious when I first stepped out into the big, sleepy world this morning. It did eventually succeed but not before having to fight off some high-level cloud and mistiness, remnants from the rain that we had during the night that I knew nothing of. The cloud did return a little later, but the good day had been largely enjoyed by then.

Our little furry black hole managed somehow to disappear an extra half an hour this morning and left me woefully short of time to complete all the Saturday morning

chores, which are all bigger and more intricate than the weekday chores. I made it, probably thanks to the fact that our pasty company no longer deliver on a Saturday, with minutes to spare until opening.

The day was always going to be a surprise as to what it had in store. Our neighbours reiterated that they were expecting a bigger influx than in previous weeks, but I am a cautious grumpy shopkeeper. There had been signs of something more serious than the previous weeks in the last few hours of yesterday's business, but I was still going to wait until it bit me on the bottom.

As it transpired, the day was somewhere in the middle of full on summer holiday and ordinary pre-season summeriness. I had foolishly factored in some weather forecaster's plan that it would rain a bit tomorrow and that pasty sales would be poor. I probably did not factor in enough busyness for today, either, and we ended the day having to bake some frozen pasties for tomorrow. This is not a huge problem as that is what, in part, the frozen ones are there for provided that I work out early enough that we are likely to need them.

We were lucky that it was a beach day, the standard thin in the middle and fat at both ends. The pasty situation was getting out of hand until suddenly it stopped just into the early part of the afternoon. It was not just pasties in the crosshairs but a plethora of other alluring products from across our range with the notable exception of buckets and spades. My conclusion is the youngster have not yet arrived and our new guests were either adult or older children.

Like yesterday, there was a biggish encampment down on the upper reaches of the beach. High water is currently marching through to the middle of the day and was still quite high when the crowds started gathering down there. Unlike yesterday that ended up with quite a fierce easterly breeze, today the wind was in the west again but not sufficient to be a problem for the long suffering surfers. Before the wind kicked in yesterday, there was some decent surf about. There was some more today, but not quite as good but still encouraged a small army onto the water at North Rocks and close to the sand bank that runs out from the middle of the big beach.

I was expecting a bit of a rush toward the end of the day, but it never came. The tide was no threat, so there was no urgency to clear off the beach. As for groceries and particularly drink, it is likely many arrivals were expecting deliveries from Tesmorburys and unaware of the delights of local brews and food. The smart ones had already been in earlier when it was still relatively quiet.

Closing the shop in a very orderly manner due to the lack of hardly anyone on the street, I retired after doing the only order we can do on a Saturday night, the milk. For once I had nicely predicted the milk usage for the weekend and we only needed some butter and cheese. Weekend deliveries of dairy use up much time that is needed elsewhere, so I try and avoid them.

The tide allowed us some beach down in the Harbour after tea. Since there were precious few people around, it was ideal to give ABH a good evening run for the first time in a week. We try and avoid the crowds as not everyone wants a boisterous young pup leaping all over them and it is also a distraction for her, which make the situation ore difficult to control. We were lucky to have just a few known locals down there and she had a belter of a time, rushing about and getting wet.

Such opportunities will be thin on the ground, I imagine, as the season kicks in. We shall have to rely on poor weather – in the evenings only and after the shop shuts. Not that we are fussy at all.

July 7th – Friday

I thought that I had better start my scribblings a bit sooner today given my last-minute panic yesterday. Of course, having done that there was absolutely no need because I was not pressed at all during the day. Everyone who had wanted a going home present must have bought one yesterday and today was slim pickings of customers with no particular needs at all – at least until the later afternoon.

Had I not been so, erm, unpressed, I probably would not have been so grumpy about a customer who asked me to get rid of his litter for him. That irks me anyway as there are public bins along the street for that very purpose. It irks even more when people try to force open our locked private and commercial bins despite having a sign on the front explaining that a public bin sits no more than twenty metres away. For maximum irkedness, however, it is the leaving of litter on the top of the bin for me to take the twenty metres to the public bin that really gets me.

Our friend this morning told me, ‘there are no bins in the street’ and ‘the two closest ones are locked’ – darned right they are. It is to stop them being full an hour after they have been emptied. I am sure that some university will have done a study and come up with a scale of levels of restraint practised by those in the service industry. I am equally sure that my level of restraint in not telling our friend that there were several bins in The Cove and that the closest was sign-posted on the very bin he was trying to prise open, was in the upper quartile of that scale. The fact that his car was parked, mounted on the pavement as close as he could possibly get it to the shop doorway indicated the level of effort he was prepared to commit to his daily existence. There were some signs of redemption in the amount of cash money he spent in the shop, which eased my pain markedly, but not sufficiently to make me want to be his personal litter slave.

Like yesterday, which I did not mention at all, it was a remarkably fine day for one that was not obviously sunny and bright. We have had a mixed amount of cloud over the last couple of days but unless you are a real sun worshiper, it really did not spoil the days very much at all. Today was much warmer than yesterday and I had the shop fan running from quite early on in the morning.

Despite the heat and the flies, I was not about to give up on my gymnasium session today, especially as I had missed out on Wednesday to the Missus' very important business meeting. It really was a proper blistering session and probably the more so for missing the Wednesday one. It will not be long now before I am forced to go to two shorter sessions a week as the main season kicks in, but I will be returning to three a week when that is over because it is better than self-flagellation - erm, I am told.

As seems to be usual, business picked up in the later afternoon. This was due in main to the arrival of new faces in The Cove, many of whom we knew from the past. It might have also had much to do with the largest gathering of beach tents and windbreaks on the big beach that we had seen in a while. From one of these families, we had our first custom bread order. I am going to have to put some fliers or advertising about the place as the little notice I have on the fish list is not prominent enough. I think it will be a popular service during the summer as it guarantees the bread people want – and will reduce my waste.

There were all sorts of shenanigans in the evening time. One of the Lifeboat crew had organised a crazy golf session at Land's End and the Missus was going up to settle the bar tab at the end of the evening. Had I gone too it would have meant making arrangements for ABH, which was too complicated for reason, so I stayed at home.

I discovered that she sleeps when she is travelling in the truck, which is handy. She is big enough now to fit into the raised car seat, which we bought for the bleddy hound because she did not travel so well. She was good as gold when I took the Missus up to Land's End and ran over to St Buryan with Mother. Sadly, the beach is still out of bounds because of the tide so we made do with a walk around the big block, which is not nearly enough for a little energy ball. There was then three hours of bouncing off the walls to content with before trying to get her to bed without the Missus for the first time ever. I will welcome the advent of driverless cars as I could have strapped her to the seat and gone to sleep myself as the car went in circles around the car park.

July 6th – Thursday

Golly G Willikins! People often ask where I find time to write The Diary, and I often wonder myself. I can promise you, dear reader, that I do not leave it overnight and find that the elves have written it for me, although casting your eye over the content sometimes you must wonder. No, I usually find the odd five minutes here and there during the day when I can carefully craft a few literarily perfect phrases, then rewrite them into utter nonsense so that they can go into The Diary page.

Today, I did not even get a single odd moment in the day to write even the briefest of passages. Now, I find that I am playing catch up while ABH vies for my time to play a few games. We shall see how far we get with that, then.

The day started perfectly without issue. Most of the morning deliveries arrived save for our fancy bread order that somehow went awry. The order was sent but the fancy baker did not receive it. In fact, they did not receive any orders after three o'clock in the afternoon due to some glitch in the collection of virtual baked bean cans and lengths of string connecting all the myriad parts of the Internet. It was unfortunate for us and a little more than that for the café next door, and I am sure that the baker himself did not feel particularly lucky, for whom the orders are quite central to their businesses. For the next few orders, we will back up the sending of the message with a telephone call or a text, just to make sure.

There had been a delivery from our stationery supplier yesterday, three boxes with lots of smaller packs of toiletries and the like within. For some reason the company no longer supplies an invoice with the order, and I must request it via their website, which I can only do once the order is complete. I am therefore compelled to look up each product on their website for its price as I come to it in the box. This takes time. I was still working my way through the three boxes when we closed in on the end of the shop day.

It was not just the slow process that held me up but the fact that we were continuously busy through the day. It was not one of our busiest days, but the customer visits were spread somewhat liberally across the day leaving little time to carry out the slow pricing work. I also had to visit the shop shelves to distribute the priced items, which was impossible sometimes with customers browsing the aisles.

While I plodded through the order, the post office decided it would be spectacularly useful to drop another three large boxes of beach clothes that I ordered a day or two before. This is clearly handy because I ordered them but not so useful because I had to find some space for them in the store room as there was no way I was getting to them before tomorrow. This was made even worse because the store room contained half a dozen boxes of waste cardboard and numerous cases of drinks cluttering up the place. I could not make a move on any of that until the stationery order had been cleared which was looking increasingly like that would be after I closed the door on the last customer.

In the end I had to admit defeat and left the last few stationery items while I cleared everything else and place the next day orders. It was a valiant effort – close, but no cigar, as someone is reported as saying once, or probably not. As is usual on a Thursday, we sold a plethora of going home presents, the core of which are biscuits and fudge. Had I been able to top up these shelves I might have been able to see what I needed to order. That was yet another thing that will have to wait until tomorrow.

It was partially heartening during being hard pressed to receive an apology from the lady in accounts. Apparently, there was never any suggestion that I had been dishonest – just the suggestion that I had not paid for goods I had received and needed to provide evidence that I had not. Aside from that, the lady in accounts did some penance in getting my online account activated again. I spoke with the driver today as he arrived with the correct case of beer. He too was not best pleased at, not being accused of stealing but being asked if he had pocketed the £90 instead of giving it to the rightful recipient.

Everything came together in the last half an hour of the day in a big scramble and rush. We even had a five minutes to closing rush to go with it just to make it interesting. We have just two more big deliveries in preparation for the main event and then we are on our own for the six weeks. Tally ho!

July 5th – Wednesday

I always reckoned that having a CCTV camera over the counter was a good idea. It has paid off a couple of times and again today. One of our drinks suppliers locked my account. There was something amiss yesterday when they failed again to swap a wrongly delivered case with the right one, they managed to get the wrong one twice. More unfortunately for me, they raise an invoice for each item with the idea a matching credit is raised when the other item is returned. Naturally, there is many a slip between delivery and return and I end up with the locked account and inability to place orders.

The severity of the issue only became apparent today when I tried to place an order online to find that I was not allowed to log in. Calling the accounts team revealed that I had apparently not paid a bill from 12th June, which was a little odd as that was the first time that had come up. I argued that being a cash customer did not allow me to not pay bills because if I did not pay, I did not get. This buttered no parsnips with our lady in accounts who told me that she would check with the driver. In the unlikely circumstance that the driver had pocketed the swag he would, of course have immediately put his hands up with a, 'it's a fair cop, guv'. The bill was for £90 and I cannot see the driver absconding to Brazil on that.

I had more confidence in the driver's honesty than the ability of the accounts team to get their numbers right, so I sought out the appropriate footage from the counter CCTV to prove my case. I could not reach the original lady in accounts, but her colleague told me all would be well and that sending the video was unnecessary. It was later in the day that the original lady in accounts called back and told me the van driver had denied all knowledge or receiving my cash. It was more likely he could not recall one customer out of twenty that day nearly a month ago, so I certainly did not blame him.

I was not best pleased to now be asked to send the evidence, the implication being she believed me to be dishonest. I sent a capture of me counting the money close up

but the video was too large to send. I received a jolly little note in response telling me how grateful she was and that now she would look at her counting, where we all knew – apart from the lady in accounts - the problem lay in the first place.

It was quite a surprise that I had managed to get through that muddle of two telephone calls and extracting the video. We were not all that busy during the morning, but I had been left with ABH to deal with while the Missus had a very important business meeting at the Lifeboat station. Quite how anything actually gets done will probably remain a mystery as whoever was involved spent a further two hours talking about what there was to be done rather than doing it. I was reminded of the organisations I had been in thrall to where meetings were the acceptable alternative to work. I was not keen on it then and I am pretty sure that the Missus is not now, either.

ABH lasted just a little more than an hour on her seat by the door, welcoming all comers, which is most commendable. She seems unphased by adults, children and other dogs at present, which is the ideal we seek. It will, however, only take one bite on the nose from an unfriendly bear to disabuse her of the fact that the whole world is her friend. We will enjoy this while we can.

The Missus ran off to The Farm with her as soon as she was able after she came back. Much of her time was spent assessing volumes of things that we thought that we might need topping up before the fight starts at the end of the month. I managed to get two of the orders away and a third is complete but not sent. It was a work of ingenuity to fit in the order making and sending into an afternoon that became increasingly busier.

The weather was in flux in the morning, although ABH and I got around the block unscathed. There were a few dickie looking clouds about, but it was not until the middle of the morning, just when everyone had gone out or set up on the beach, that one of those dickie looking clouds burst. It was not a particularly long spell of rain, just enough to soak the unwary through to the bone. Oh, how we giggled at their misfortune – well, not me, obviously, I just smiled at the number of emergency ponchos that sold subsequently.

The afternoon made a bit of a mockery of those purchases as the sun came out to play and the temperature started to buck up. By the end of the afternoon, it was full on sunshine and gloriousness. We hope for more tomorrow.

I took a stroll with BH in that full on gloriousness that extended into the evening. I had to carry her all the way to the OS slipway because walking that direction is clearly against nature. She pulled me all the way back, the way nature fills a vacuum or water finds its own level. I dragged her past the front door and we continued our stroll around the big block meeting new friends as we went. It was incredibly busy in the OS outside area, all along the road and in the Harbour car park, too. I suspect it was a sunset watching gathering and I wondered if I should have opened the shop

for the event. Perhaps I could set up a camera on Pend-men-du and broadcast it on big screens in the shop and serve canapes and beer. I will put it to the Missus to see what she thinks but might wait until she is somewhere else, first.

July 4th – Tuesday

As rainy days go, this one was not that wet, although those few visitors walking around in it may argue with that rather glib statement. I would propose that mine is the objective view from a nice dry shop. Radio Pasty had suggested that it would be more persistent in the afternoon, which it was, and some of the showers would be heavy, which, here in The Cove, they were not, well not until the very end, at least.

Whatever the level of wetness, it did not do our business much good, either before or during the rain. We often find that a poor forecast is all that is required to stick the knife in, and it does not matter if the day turns into glorious sunshine instead, the damage has been done.

Our secondary grocery order arrived halfway through the day, which gave me something to do. This supplier was a most useful find and came about after I had posted a moan about our main cash and carry supplier in the trade press. The new supplier had seen it and got in contact and the rest is history, it supplies the sorts of things, and prices, that you see in farm shops and more upmarket establishments, but we pick and choose carefully, and the lines have been very popular when we get them right. Despite having plenty of time to do it, I did not hang about as I had in mind completing some other orders that had been pressing for a few days.

The Missus headed off to The Farm again and this time spent most of her time in the store room sorting it out ahead of the big push later this month. I was a little alarmed when one of our neighbours asked if we were ready for the influx next week. I thought I had all my school dates wrong, but they were referring to some of the public and private schools kicking out, rather than the big swathe of state schools that will make all the difference at the end of the month. There will, though, be a change in the business profile from next week, so I was grateful for the reminder.

I remembered to place our special bread order in time today. I made it by the skin of my teeth yesterday and had to telephone as that was the quickest option. It was lucky I had no customers at the time, else I would have missed the deadline. The bread has been selling exceedingly well over the last few days, and some people are buying it in preference to the everyday products available on the shelf. As I was perusing their menu ahead of placing today's it struck me that it would not be too difficult to offer an ordering service.

We would still do some bread as regular on the shelves, but customers would be able to order additional products via an order sheet. This would ensure the products are supplied to order avoiding waste and also that customers will not be disappointed if we run out of what is on the shelf.

The rain reserved its best for the finale and came down heavily at around four o'clock. Even those who had braved the lighter rain during the afternoon now made a swift exit and we were left alone in the world. I had already exhausted all my ordering tasks, so I spent a little time tinkering with the new website that we hope to go live to during September or October. It is not as fully featured from the builder's point of view as the current one, but it is a whole heap cheaper to run and from the users' perspective, there will be little difference except in navigation. I will keep you fully apprised of the schedule when there is one, dear reader, and what alluring new products might appear on the online shop shelves. Ah, I forget, dear reader, those of course are the pages you skirt around to get to The Diary.

The little girl had been at The Farm for several hours and the Missus took her on the grand tour to the bottom of the field, much of it with the girl running and jumping. Even so, she was still bouncing off the walls when I came up from the shop and when the Missus took Mother home later, I did my usual and headed for the door with her. This is the first evening where the tide had excluded us from the beach.

There is no other safe place for me to let her off the lead and run about, which I consider outrageous. I shall be writing to my MP to get something done about this tide lark. Instead, we walked around the big block and halfway across the Harbour car park where we had to dash for shelter to miss a passing shower. I had considered there had been an end to hostilities and had not brought a jacket with me. How remiss.

The walk around did little to wind down our girl, but we are lucky that she plays for some while by herself. We intervene when the barriers get pushed and things other than toys get in between those sharp little teeth. The Missus had left some jeans hanging off a low cupboard in the bathroom. ABH had the jeans off while we were not looking and emerged from the bathroom with what was then a perfectly serviceable hot water bottle. We have since discovered its value as a toy far outweighs its replacement cost, so she is welcome to it – as long as we remember which one it was come winter.

July 3rd – Monday

I struggled to get the little girl out of bed this morning. I think she did not want to be seen. As it was, when I did manage to wrest her from the bed and drag her around the little block, there was no one around anyway.

There was a very smooth morning routine waiting in the shop for me. The pasty man was very early, the milkman was there just as I was taking ABH around and I had met up with the newspaper man when I came down with the little girl still in bed. I even had time to top up the soft-drinks fridge, which badly needed doing as I had not done it over the weekend.

We saw a few customers around first thing buying breakfast goods but otherwise we were not at all pressed. The Missus had a similarly quiet time while I slipped away to the gymnasium for my blistering session. She was still quiet when I came back and took ABH around the back for a short walk. She is getting much more accepting that the walk is for purposes other than her enjoyment and exercise. At the rate she is getting treats for successful outcomes of such walks she will be waddling around. In truth, I think we have a way to go for such an eventuality, she is a skinny little thing, especially with her fur gone.

During my absence at the gymnasium, we had a few deliveries. They were stacked up on the floor awaiting my attention. I delayed any action on that front until after I had enjoyed my breakfast during which the delayed wine delivery that should have come in last Thursday arrived. Just as I was coming to the end of my repast, I had a telephone call from the cash and carry asking could they deliver today instead of their usual time tomorrow. I cast my eye over the stacked store room and told them that of course they could. I do like a good challenge.

I was warned that the delivery would probably arrive at around half past two, which gave me an hour to clear the store room and what jolly fun it was, too. It was probably just the impetus I needed as ordinarily I would have ambled through it and taken all day about it, stumbling into a rush when I realised that the day's end was fast approaching. The driver did not turn up until three o'clock by which time I had cleared the store room and availed myself of a congratulatory cup of tea. It took the pair of us ten minutes to unload the lot with only two customers interrupting the flow.

Our customers seem to wait until the latter half of the afternoon to shop in numbers for the last week or so. It is an odd arrangement as they seem to be buying things like windbreaks and other beach gear. Sure enough, they would have been chased off the beach after three o'clock or just before but you might have thought that all that equipment would have been purchased before they went down. Perhaps they had enough of a day with sand blown into their faces and decided to do something about it for the next day.

There was still enough time ahead of the rush to make a move on my stationery order. The supplier is pretty well stocked but there is always something that we were very keen on getting that they are out of stock of. It is a compromise, but they usually have an alternative similar product which we have to make do with. I was too late to make the next day delivery, but we are in no hurry for it and anyway, the store room is full of groceries at the moment.

The Missus had spent the entire day, after my gymnasium session, up at The Farm. She had collected Mother who enjoys it up there and also is essential for looking after ABH is the Missus is doing something with the tractor or something else sharp and worrying. The little girl was not only late getting up but was not that interested in her breakfast. I was told she was not that active at The Farm and when I came up from the shop later, she had not finished her tea. The Missus decided to clear the

groceries down in the shop, so I took ABH out to the small amount of beach allowed us by the tide and she was not that full of bounce then, either. Hopefully just an off day.

The Missus spent about two hours clearing the delivery and me and the little girl, at least, were ready for bed when she eventually came up. It means that the Missus will not be tied to the shop all day tomorrow and can go to The Farm instead. It also was convenient that one of us could keep ABH occupied away from the work zone. We have another grocery delivery tomorrow, so we can do it all again. What joy.

July 2nd – Sunday

I fancied that the breeze had dropped a little this morning, but it was still quite fresh for ABH and I as we rounded the corner of the Lifeboat station – the windiest place in The Cove, I reckon. I was a little pressed as my little furry alarm clock had granted me a lie in, which I very much enjoyed, I think – I was asleep at the time so I can only assume so.

There were no deliveries this morning, so I only had the newspapers to contend with and all those came together very smoothly. It had brightened by the time I opened the shop and that came and went during the day, so it was an alright day but not spectacular. Without the aid of weddings and races, we were much quieter today, which while not preferred, allowed me time to carry out the shelf restock and order for the next cash and carry orders.

This process takes a good couple of hours or all day and two people if we are busy. It then needs to be keyed in and another list made of all the things that our appalling cash and carry does not have and what we might do about it. Some things have been missing for so long it is unlikely that they will appear again, quite oddly like tinned potatoes. I remember thinking they were the best when I was a child as we would only get them when we went away on holiday.

The Missus disappeared off to The Farm with ABH and Mother. They were gone ever such a long time and returned with bags of mixed leaf lettuce. We are seeing some production, but it is just the lettuce at present. The Missus is still trying to catch up from the hiatus caused by her eye injury and we may well not get back up to full speed until it is too late. Maybe I ought to head up there after I close the shop for a few hours – but there again, maybe not.

With the bit between my teeth on the ordering front, I took advantage of my momentum and went to our stationery supplier to look at replacing some of the things that we cannot get from the cash and carry. The supplier is pretty good on pricing and does quite a range of toiletries, which is very useful. There is, of course a minimum order value to consider and I have to be very careful to make sure I have included all I need as there is no going back if I have forgotten one or two items.

I did not manage to conclude the last order as I was overtaken by the end of day and the need to order groceries and the like. I made good progress and hopefully I will be able to pick it up in the morning before that is interrupted by my gymnasium session.

As is usual, I took ABH down to the Harbour beach to try and drain some of that accumulated energy. I sure it has an effect but sometimes it is hard to detect. We will know next week because we will not be able to do it because the tide will be all over it. The Missus was back home from Mother's when we returned after a walk home around the big block. She decreed that ABH needed a hair cut as it was getting a little long and shaggy, and it is summer after all.

The Missus has a smart set of clippers with all manner of combs to accommodate different lengths of hair. She selected one of this and set about her task while I stood by, unnecessarily it seemed, to keep the girl from running off. It is the second time she has gone through the process and it appears she accepts it quite placidly. There are a few intricate bits that require the bare clippers without a comb for the shortest of cuts and the Missus left these until last.

Just as we thought that was it, the Missus noticed some errant wisps on the girl's head. I thought to say something but as I did not know precisely what the Missus had in mind I kept my own counsel. When it was plain what the Missus intended my warning that she had not replaced to comb came too late. I do not think that ABH was too impressed either, now looking like Sinead O'Connor, as she shot into her safe place under the Missus' chair. I think she may want to avoid public appearances for the next few days – or wear a hat.

July 1st – Friday

The rain had gone but the brisk breeze was still with us when we headed around the short block in the morning. It was pleasant enough but the temperature has dropped a few degrees over the last few days.

It was fair to say that we were a bit ahead of the posse this morning but ABH can make excess time disappear in a flash, and I was still downstairs later than I had hoped. It did not matter too much as there was not so much to do today, although I had ordered an abundance of biscuits and fudge as we had been cleaned out on Thursday with the number of people buying going home presents. The milkman was late but just in time for me to get that finished before I opened the shop.

The ups and downs in demand during the previous week had left me with an excess of croissants from our smart new baker. I had to throw them away this morning, which brought a tear to my eye. I had been reasonable about my expectations in demand for a renewed supply for this weekend. Clearly, I should have shown more confidence as we sold out inside the first 45 minutes of shop opening.

Before the green shoots of busyness that started quite early became apparent, I was intrigued to see another response to my ongoing saga with Royal Mail appear in my inbox. Despite seeking other routes of assistance, I have maintained the original thread with the customer services, or one of them. They respond once a week, it looks like. This one actually wrote an apology but it was soon abundantly clear that the agent had not bothered reading anything else other than it had been going on for a while. It was a duplicate of the previous response. I provided a suitably tart reply. It is too late now, but I should have just cut and pasted my last tart reply and seen if they noticed.

A regular visitor I had met on the way around the big block last evening asked what the race signs posted here and there were all about. I suggested they were left from last week's – or was it the week before that – pirate race. As this morning's busyness developed it became clear that there was indeed another race today, the Rat Race. This starts in Marazion, crosses the moors to the north coast, roughly follows the Coast Path and ends at Land's End. When I say 'roughly' follows the Coast Path I mean that the runners are sometimes encouraged to stray off it, generally to the wet side.

I met with some of the Marshalls who had been taxied from the start to various strategic points along the way. They were expecting the first runners through The Cove – along the foreshore, not the road, of course – at about midday. I was therefore somewhat surprised when two fresh faced runners appeared at the counter after sustenance. I enquired whether that had just finished the race, at which point we should be seeing them in some kind of record book but they confirmed that they were running a different race. This one starts at Land's End and follows the Coast Path to Zennor.

The clash suggests the need for an area by area register of runs and events so that two do not end up interfering with the other. Today, I just hope that the runners from Land's End meet the runners to Land's End when the latter are doing the bit in the sea. If not, there could be carnage out there. I heard later that due to the poor sea state the wet bit had been pared back, so carnage may well have ensued.

The sea state was indeed a bit of a mess. The Lifeguards had red flagged the beach from early on and the RNLI had issued a warning over Radio Pasty that any open water swimming events should be cancelled. There had been a rip running up the middle of the beach all week. Today, it was of much larger proportions with some, hopefully more experienced surfers using it as transport out the back and away from the messy surf close in.

It would have made an interesting backdrop to a wedding that was going on in The Cove today. My friend that I met on the walk around the block commented on the arrival last evening. Today I had a young lady ask if we sold lemons and came back to the till with nine of them, our entire stock. I asked which establishment she was from and she told me that she was in the company organising the wedding. I was

rather glad that she was not organising my wedding, although had I been getting married today, I would have cancelled it.

What with the runners, the wedding, a bit of sunshine and a biggish sea running, we were busy through the day. We did a brisk business in pasties, for which I was grateful since I had not factored in a dull day yesterday. We still had enough time to deploy the little bags of 50 pence sweets that turned up just two days after placing the order. This will disappear in quick time when the schools are out in August and we will probably need a top up order again before then.

Just as I was packing up the newspapers at about half past five, our pagers went off requests 'immediate readiness' at the station. This is used during developing situations where the Lifeboat may be required but no final decision had been made. I opened the station doors and checked the slipway for obstructions. There, just at the head of the toe, was a geet pile of oar weed.

In all likelihood, the Lifeboat would have probably cut through it, although it was a far larger pile than we would have risked. The real problem is that large piles of oar weed often contain other things like logs and other more solid objects. I set about clearinf the keelway and the bilge runner plates to give the boat clear passage. It soon became obvious that this was a job for more than just me and since I could not raise anyone on the radio, I went to find some other crew members. I met one on my way up the slipway who had noted my plight and was on his way anyway.

He also brought news that the Lifeboat had been signalled to launch, so our task suddenly became more urgent. The Lifeboat was fully crewed and waiting to launch by the time we made our way up the slipway and we seamlessly seagued from pitchforks for launching procedure.

Two young men had fallen and were injured on Pedn-men-du and were situated on a shelf near the bottom. It was not clear if they were climbers or just some wayward explorers but the results were just the same. The Cliff Team were concerned, given the sea state, that if either the casualties or indeed the rescuers accidentally fell into the water, they would need some assistance getting out. The Lifeboat went around to stand by and to point to the location of the casualties to make descent easier for the Cliff Team.

One of the casualties had suffered serious injury and was winched away to hospital by the rescue helicopter. The other was helped up the cliff by the Cliff Team and the boat was eventually stood down. Unfortunately, the timing could not have been worse in terms of recovering the boat. Ideally, given the boistrous sea conditions, we would have recovered on the short slip but the tide had receded a little too much to make that possible. For the next six hours, the long slipway was the only option and the tide was, first, too high immediately and secondly, too rough for that to happen.

We set up the long slipway anyway in the hope that the condition would alleviate as the tide dropped out. It was about an hour later and after a few close observations by the Lifeboat as it came in to test conditions that we eventually had our opportunity. Recoveries of this nature had to be meticulous, with the cable length fairly precise so that there is no delay waiting for slack to be taken up. Also, it must not be too short, causing delay while the Boat Crew haul more cable down the full length of the slipway. Today we executed a textbook recovery for such conditions and the two fearless characters (well, one fearless and the other clueless) should be duly congratulated – I was the one in the orange hat waving my hands about for those watching in black and white.

The whole event was concluded shortly after eight o'clock. We are, after all, a very patient, very excellent Shore Crew.