

DIARY 2025

## August 1<sup>st</sup> – Friday

'Cor blimey, mate and stone the crows. Let us see if we can twist a grumpy shopkeeper's tail by buying pasties (sorry, MS) and not letting him enough time to refill the pasty oven.' The blighters near had me, too.

The day did not start off looking very special but having said that, it was a good deal more special looking than the day before. There was plenty of blue sky above us, as yet without any sun in it, but there was some cloud, high up, out to the west, too. By the time I started talking with customers, trying to determine what weather was to follow was anyone's guess.

We never did have the showers that Radio Pasty guessed at, but we had big portions of blue sky for the sun to shine out of, some cloud where it did not matter and all tempered by a fairly robust northwesterly breeze that ruined what might else have been, perfectly good surf. The choppy sea was not enough to put off the fishing boats and there were still a small army of water revellers in the bathing area down on the beach. The upper reaches were again crowded and probably more so than previous days. Once again, it had been decided that this would be a beach day.

Before all that happened and just at the outset of the glimmer of hope that turned into a decent bit of weather, I headed off to the gymnasium. A night of foot elevation had not done much for the foot shaped balloon at the end of my leg, but I managed to squeeze it into my plimsol. A session on the rowing machine was much needed; the last few days have dispelled any doubt that a bionic knee is required on my dickie leg.

Much invigorated by a blistering session, I took ABH out for a post gymnasium walk and with not much beach to speak of, we left there and walked around the block. The car park was at least two thirds full, which I somehow did not associate with a potential increase in busyness but when we returned to the shop, the Missus told me that she had not stopped since soon after I left.

When I came back to take over, I discovered just how busy the day had become. It was about eleven o'clock and the run went through to half past one o'clock with scarcely a break between customers. This held all the potential for creating the a pasty continuity problem. I had already put a tentative half dozen in the oven before it all kicked off, just in case, but it was not much help when I could not get to them. Eventually, when the stock in the warmer got dangerously low, I had to hold the queue to go get the ones from the oven, wishing I had put in twice the amount.

As the pasty run continued it was a constant job to look for gaps in the queue at the counter to run out the back and feed the oven and transfer the heated from the oven

to the warmer. I got to the stage of having an empty warmer a couple of times and no pasties in the oven yet ready. We did not have to turn anyone away, but it was a close run thing a couple of times.

The mad manic rush at the till subsided eventually giving way to a more orderly flow of customers. Earlier in the morning, I had the foresight to stock up the Cornish biscuits and the fudge boxes. Alongside the pasty orders and beachware we also had customers with armfuls of Cornish biscuits and fudge boxes as going home gifts bringing them to a smug-looking grumpy shopkeeper. There was also plenty of preserve and marmalade buying.

I could do nothing about that because our delivery has not come yet. In a rare communication from the company, I am told it will come tomorrow. I am considering kicking the company into touch because of their lack of communications. When I place the order, I get no acknowledgement at all and am left to guess if they have received my order or not. I understand that the lead time will be variable, but it would be helpful to have an estimated delivery date even if it is approximate. Instead, I have to wait and hope. There is not any point in chasing them; if I get a response at all it is days later.

I made a valiant effort to finish the last of the stationery order during the day. I got through most of it which was hardly a triumph as there was not much left to be triumphant about. The delivery was timely, at least, as I noticed several items from it making it to the till today.

We escaped having the beer fridge emptied, although one man in a hurry managed to clear out one side of the lager cans in a five minutes to closing dash. The soft drinks, however, took a proper beating and I will have to go at it early tomorrow to resolve the situation. In readiness for the next time I ordered in some replacement stock that will arrive tomorrow during the morning.

There is normally a lull between leavers and joiners but today the two happened in one seamless flow. The only reason I knew that it had happened at all was recognising some new faces as the afternoon pressed on.

As business tailed off a little towards the end of the shop day, I allowed myself to have a bit of a warm glow about the business of the day and still being able to stand up after a particularly punishing day. The small gods of grumpy shopkeepers clearly frown upon such elevation of spirit and are keen to make adjustments. Today, they sent a family to the shop with two girls around ten or eleven. Mother asked how long it was I had been in the shop. She was delighted to tell me that it was me that she remembered when she was fifteen years old, buying sweets. I thanked her and told her that she had made a happy man, very old.

## August 2<sup>nd</sup> – Saturday

Even early doors the day looked quite splendid. It looked even better later doors and everyone I spoke with during the morning seemed to agree.

I did have as much to do as I thought I would have in the morning, so it was as well that I went down to the shop early. The newspapers were very late for one reason or another – I do not bother asking anymore – and I was still doing those when we opened. I had thought that the small gods of grumpy shopkeepers would send the milk delivery at the same time, just for fun, but that was even later than the newspapers, thankfully – although it would have been more helpful had it been much earlier.

We had a bit of a slow start for the first half an hour of the day, and then it went bananas. We were busy again right into the afternoon.

I was better prepared on the pasty front (sorry, MS) today. I put plenty in the warmer before there was even a hint of busyness and when they started to move, kept a continual flow through the oven even when the warmer was full. It worked, but it soon became clear that at the present rate of consumption, we would not have any for the next day. To try and relieve the situation, I commenced the baking off of our frozen stock. So that I was still able to heat the fridge pasties as well, I was only able to cook limited numbers of the frozen, ten at a time. I had started early enough so the fact that it took a good proportion of the afternoon mattered not a jot.

While the process went on, the fridge pasties continued to sell in abundance. Not only did it appear we would run out tomorrow, it looked increasingly like we would run out today as well including the additional pasties I was cooking from frozen. It has long been a contingency in my mind that if the worst happened, I might fall back on the Beach Kiosk for help. They have a bigger store than we and are most accommodating. I made arrangements to have the Missus pick up a couple of cases on the way home. I would not have time to do them before the end of the day but could cook them off in the morning.

As it happened, our demand dropped off like someone turning off a tap after about four o'clock. It had left us with sufficient for tomorrow, adding up the remains of the fridge stock and the ones I had freshly baked. We had also made a big dent in the cheese pasties, so I baked our frozen stock of those, too, and we are looking good for tomorrow. Disaster averted, I believe.

Just when I thought that it was safe to go back to serving customers again, the preserves and chutneys arrived. This in itself was a good thing. We had run out of strawberry preserve and the other products were looking a little thin as well. It was

most timely that they had arrived at the outset of our busiest period and, once deployed to the shelves, we need not worry about them until at least September.

What I did worry about was the three large crates that the order arrived in. Additionally, there was a couple of cobbled together cardboard boxes which I am surprised made the journey in once piece. The company had sent a message telling me that they had elected to use a different courier and because of that the order would be arriving in crates. It had not occurred to me that the crates would be left with us. We are busy, the crates are large and in the way and we have no means of getting rid of them. To say that I was somewhat irritated might be slightly understating it.

The company used to deliver its own product but more recently, a courier that brought them in their native six packs. I am sure that was inefficient but in multiples, they are very heavy. I agree they have a conundrum, but it appears in more than a couple of years, they have put no thought into it at all. It is all most disappointing and leaves the problem with us, the customer. I shall be having words as well as looking at alternative suppliers.

We had a bit of a lull in the middle of the afternoon. It might have been feasible to shut the shop and go and help launch the Lifeboat to coincide with the Cape Swim. The swim had been postponed from a couple of weeks ago due to the poor sea state and rearranged for today. The boat was due to launch just after two o'clock and I had already said that I would only attend if they were really short. Happily, for me, we had spares available to do the job.

There is some politics involved in that the Institute cannot be seen as a service for hire. The Cape Swim does have its own stewards but if the worst happened, the Lifeboat would be called and although the event is close by, we might be too late in an emergency. To get around the issue, we launch on a training exercise at the same time as the swim. Just to prove that there was no connection (or communication!) the boat launched about an hour ahead of the swim commencing – I think that there was a delay in starting the swim, so the boat was out for around three hours.

While we had stepped down from our busiest time during the day, we were still very busy when the boat launched and there was still a frequent flow of customers when it came back again. There were just enough on shore to make a decent team, and the boat was brought back on the long slip in what I was told was a textbook recovery. We are, after all, a very supportive, very excellent Shore Crew.

The sun had been shining all day, but I had the impression that there was some high-level cloud filtering it at times. It was also warm they told me, and it was certainly getting that way in the shop even with my fans running. The day, however, came into its own during the latter stages of the afternoon and early evening when the beach looked resplendent in the dipping sun.

Once again, I will have to put some effort in restocking the drinks fridges in the morning. I will also have to keep an eye on the stock as we appear to be on target to run out of beer, heaven forefend. I shall have to spend some time considering which is worse, running out of beer or running out of pasties. I feel a thesis coming on.

## August 3<sup>rd</sup> – Sunday

Gosh, I was a man on fire this morning, tearing through the various restockings across the shop. Come to think, I must have been at least smouldering yesterday morning because there was almost as much to do then as well. Mysteriously, I was two lines short for the soft drinks fridge. I could have sworn that I ordered them but when I looked at the invoice, they were not on it. There will be no great disaster because of it; it was just a tad annoying.

I even had time to finish off the preserves and chutneys. I had done two thirds of it yesterday and it was largely just the strawberry jam that was left. This too left me with a gap where the orange and ginger and the three fruits marmalades should have been. Initially, I thought that that had been plenty there when I placed the order, so did not bother. That did not seem right, so I checked my order and discovered that I had ordered them, the company just had not delivered nor had thought to say why. Unfortunately, it is another nail in their coffin.

I had an idea from the outset that we would not have quite the sunshine and loveliness we had yesterday. For a start, the morning looked dull, and the tops of the cliffs were obscured by low cloud. There was a bit of moisture in the air first thing, though it could have been easily missed if I was not paying attention. The wet returned at intervals throughout the day but it was very light, and I did not see anyone walking around with waterproofs on or umbrellas up. By three o'clock, the mist filled the bay, although it may have gathered earlier.

After a late start, we had been busy enough but not on the scale of yesterday. The weather would have played its part in that; it was hardly anyone's idea of a beach day. Having said that, of course, when I could still see the beach, there were a few camps set up along the high water line.

Given the choice, I think that I may have joined them. It was a very humid day and inside the confines of the shop and its busy fridges and freezers, it was even warmer and more humid. I had escaped the worst of it up until now but today seemed particularly uncomfortable for some reason. My clever and efficient fan gave some relief, but I was not always in its area of influence.

The heat was not helping balloon foot either. After taking some advice, I have been taking steps to fix it. If the steps do not work, I shall try something else.

Oh, please yourselves. In the later afternoon, business tailed off a bit. We still had a flow of frequent customer visits, but we were not mobbed again like we were earlier in the morning. At one point you could not get past the counter as the customers blocked off all three aisles as they perused shelves on either side. As is usual, they all came to the till at the same time. Given a fair wind, I can usually rattle through a queue quite quickly, my fingers fair flying across the keyboard on the till and stabbing at the keypad on the car payment machine – which helpfully has its numeric keypad the reverse of the one on the till. I have been known to blunder occasionally but the thing that really disrupts the flow is using a mobile telephone to pay.

It appears that in the hands of a twelve year old, the process is seamless. Anyone over that age is blighted by any number of reasons why the thing does not work. The favourite seems to be insufficient funds in the account. This requires the user to go outside to find a signal so that they can transfer funds from one account to another. Why this cannot be done before they get to the till will remain a mystery because it happens more than once to the same customer. Another is the telephone gymnastics where they have to twist and turn the telephone one way then another, press this button twice, tap that icon once, turn around, hop on one leg and swipe the screen with their nose. And saving the best until last, 'oh my phone has run out of battery'. Oddly, none of things have happened to me when I pay with money – although I have yet to be refused on the grounds that the establishment does not take it.

The mist lifted a little towards the end of the afternoon to reveal that we had a bay, which was good of it. It was particularly timely because otherwise I would have missed the dolphins. I would have missed them anyway were it not for a customer who mentioned them. After he had paid, I took out the binoculars to have a closer look. About four of them, possibly a family unit, were just to the east of Cowloe and apparently feeding. There were around a dozen gulls swooping down after leftovers, I presume. They had drawn the attention of the customer in the first place.

Talking of gulls, I had a communication from the Southern Hemisphere International Correspondent today. He tells me that they are managing well through the depths of the Tasmanian winter. I do not seem able to shake the vision I have of it being a hot and tropical place with winter being only slightly less hot. Our man tells me that there have been frosty mornings and crisp days. The thing that really surprised me was the fact that there is sufficient snow in the highlands to have an active skiing industry from June through to October.

Oddly, the Internet tells me that the Tasmanian east coast benefits from the warm East Australian Current and even in winter the sea temperatures on the east coast are reasonably temperate. The same source tells me that today the sea temperature is 13 degrees, only a few degrees lower than our own in high summer. Must be like stepping into a warm bath.

Our Tasmanian International Correspondent also tells me that Christmas in July is becoming a popular event in Tasmania and the mainland. I can understand the attraction in Tasmania with the temperature and the snow is more in line with the archetypal Christmas in books and film. However, it is still bleddy hot further north on the mainland. I suppose in a world where summer temperatures are increasing, even a few degrees make it more comfortable for celebrations.

It took a while after we closed to complete all the orders for the next morning. I will once again have to be superman to clear it all before we open. I also received an reply from the preserves and chutney company with regard to the crates and missing items. I feel a stiff letter coming on.

### August 4<sup>th</sup> – Monday

If I had been on fire the last two days, I was a blazing inferno today. Today it was two drinks fridges, milk, greengrocery, newspapers, sweet bags, collating cardboard (unfinished), sweeping the end area and the worst aisle – the others can wait - and refilling fudge and biscuit displays. I even managed to get rid of the three large crates that the preserves and jams came in.

The only thing about being a man on fire that early in the morning is that I am a man on his knees by ten o'clock. Thankfully, it was gymnasium day and a blistering session revived me in no time at all. I followed it up with a run down to the Harbour beach with ABH. When we went earlier, I noted that with the small neap tides there had been a build-up of shingle, particularly on the western side of the beach where it had been driven into mounds. For this reason, we stayed on the eastern side when we went down a second time.

There was a large, older spaniel down there already who seemed interested in having a play. ABH, who seeks to play with the most unlikely and inappropriate characters she gets to meet, usually without success, spurned her potential playmate quite rudely. I have to hand him his persistence, but ABH was having none of it. I felt quite dreadful for the spaniel later when I learnt that his long time partner, a German shepherd, had shuffled off quite recently leaving him desolate.

Talking of which, late last night, I had a message from the preserve and chutney people. They had run out of the two marmalades – well, I kind of guessed that already – and could I not give the crates to any one of our suppliers? It is easy to misconstrue meaning and tone in a written message, so I decided to give them the benefit of the doubt.

There is a thing down here called 'crate wars' where one company will filch another's crate if they can. There is obviously value to them. I put a marker in our bread supplier's crates, so the ownership is clear. The point being, I was not about to dispose of the crates that the preserves and chutney company had sent without their

express permission. The timing of the message to me meant that I could pass them on to the first company that turned up that wanted them this morning, which I duly did.

I had time to cogitate on the issues I had with our supplier overnight. It had not kept me awake, nor did I wake at three o'clock white and sweating over it. However, I did want to bring to their attention the issues that I was uncomfortable about. I explained that it would have saved us both a good deal of time if they had explained at the outset the shortage and what to do with the crates. An acknowledgment of the order and an estimated lead time would also have been useful. All now rests on their response – if I get one.

It had looked a bit grim through the window this morning. Things were not improved by going outside and it was the first day I had to take a headtorch with me. The Cove was full of mist but at least it was dry. There was, however, a robust breeze blowing in from somewhere which I later discovered was the southwest. The breeze was with us for most of the rest of the day.

The first customers I saw today were dressed in full metal jacket waterproofs, hoods up, hatches firmly battened down. I hoped that we would not get the weather they were expecting but unfortunately, later, did. The rain took its time in getting here and made some exploratory forays in the late morning before getting a proper hold for a few hours in the middle of the day. The rain was not heavy, thick mizzle really, but I am sure that I do not have to describe in too much detail what that did to our trade for the day – well, most of it.

We had to wait until nearly four o'clock for the weather to break. The wind stayed present but shifted around to the northwest. The sun came out as the clouds rolled away to the southeast and so did our customers. We were not exactly bereft through the wind and the rain; there was a reasonably unsteady flow of customers throughout. It was, however, pretty slow going and I had to make adjustments to our pasty order (sorry, MS) for the following day.

The downturn gave me the opportunity to clear the cardboard which I had not finished in the morning and, piecemeal, do a bit of topping up here and there. It is abundantly clear that I did not add enough to the last cash and carry order as we are close to running out on some things. Some of these things would be very noticeable by their absence and I might need to despatch the Missus to the Hayle store for reinforcements. In fact, that is very likely indeed.

There was one family that I did not give the chance to make a further dent in our stock. They arrived shortly after the sun came out, laden with something in a big bag. The children were carrying multiples of disposable coffee cups which I thought nothing of. That is until the adult with the bag called to me to say that his daughter had accidentally spilled her cappuccino. This was something of an understatement: she had dropped the whole cup. He said again that it was an accident, which I did

not doubt, however, I think that the risk of such an accident might have been greatly reduced by not allowing young children to carry coffee cups balanced three high as they cruised our aisles.

I initially arrived at the scene with a handful of paper roll and quickly established that it would provide me with a very limited chance of success at mopping up the spillage. Very soon after that it became clear that I would have to close the shop while I fetched a bucket filled with soapy water and a mop. To that end I even more swiftly ejected the offending party from the shop. They offered no argument.

It was quite fortuitous that I had swept that very aisle earlier or the mopping up might have been a tad messy with sand. I only had to close the shop for ten minutes to clear the mess and we were up and running again in no time.

We then resumed normal business as the day resumed being summer again. Within an hour it was difficult to remember that it had rained at all. The beach was alive with water revellers and beach users of all kinds. The wind, that had edged northwesterly, was making a mess of any surf and consequently there were few out of the shallows giving it a go. There was a swell, but the sea was choppy and not very inviting at all.

There was little in the way of ordering to do and as we approached closing time, I completed what little there was. I was immediately given a virtual wrap across the knuckles for being so over-confident. A customer came shortly after I sent the order in and purchased an abundance of dairy items, and I was forced to call in an amendment to the order I had just placed.

ABH asked for a stroll a little earlier than last time and we set out around the block with the sun in our eyes, not far off the horizon. A fair number of people were still cruising the street – which meant waiting for them to catch up – and the Harbour car park was about a third full. Again, once we get into Coastguard Row, we are usually on our own, which I find an odd thing being so close to the busy car park. That did not stop us meeting two small girls that ABH stared at until they fussed her and an old friend when we got to the end.

That northwesterly that had set in during the afternoon had introduced a chill to The Cove. It had extended into the flat and for the first time in a while and I would have reached for another top had it not been bedtime. Winter coming.

## August 5<sup>th</sup> – Tuesday

It was much lighter this morning when we went out, thanks to largely clear skies. They might have been clear blue skies, but I think I was still seeing in black and white at that stage in the morning. It had been hard enough getting out of bed at all let alone switching on colour vision.

After yesterday, I had thought that today might well have been a rebound day. This is where the assembled masses, fed up with a day of museums and St Ives Fore Street, come back to the beach in droves. It took quite a while to get going but by the middle of the day, it was, indeed, showing all the hallmarks of a rebound day.

The chores this morning were light. Yesterday had hardly made a mark on the shelves of the drinks fridges and I was all done fifteen minutes ahead of opening. Since we will have a very big cash and carry delivery this coming weekend, I decided that it would be a good plan to get cracking on the list. I fired off a message to the main man at the cash and carry to alert him to the slight increase in heavy items like water, beer and big bottles of pop. This may have a bearing on the vehicle they send, so I thought it might be helpful to give some advance notice.

I got as far as the end of the non-food items before the fight started, and I had to give up list making for the day. It did not even start with a gentle increase in the number of customers; it went all out busy, all at once. From that moment until well into the afternoon, it was all out customer serving and pasty heating (sorry, MS) with little time for much else. It was relentless, too, and not in a bad way, although I was a man barely alive at the end of it.

Our farm shop cash and carry turned up at some point in the afternoon. I helped unload it between customers. It was a big order and it blocked up the store room. Thankfully, I did not need to get down to the back of the store room because I was too busy at the counter. I made a start on trying to clear it by doing bits at the till but it was hard going; the flow of customers had me more at the till than pricing items. Even when I did manage to get a box priced, I found that I could not get it down the aisle to where it belonged because the aisle was choked with customers.

I persisted with it for more than an hour. I did manage to clear a gap through the store room, which was something, but trying to get any of it out into the shop just was not going to happen. I gave up. Then the gin arrived.

Thankfully, we had no spillages or other minor disasters to divert my attention and all went reasonably well. I am reasonably certain that we did not run out of anything, and I am now of the opinion that we will not have to do an emergency run to Hayle cash and carry, although we will inevitably run out of a few lines. The most inconvenient of these is likely to be toilet paper but having now said so, I do hope that I have not prompted a panic buying surge. I will hold back a few rolls and sell it by the foot.

The Missus was home late and almost immediately went off to her big important meeting at the Lifeboat station. I am hoping for an update on the drive-in movie in October. We need to be advertising this week as many of the people here now will be here then, too, I think.

She was still at the meeting long after I closed the shop and still there when I took ABH out for her last walk. It was not quite as busy as last night when we did our circuit and there was no one on the beach. The big beach had been as busy as I had seen it yet and the camps at the top of the beach were thick with tents and windbreaks. The tide has not been helpful this week, being high in the middle of the day and now middle of the afternoon. It made the beach look more crowded, but the groups are safe where they are at the top of the beach in the small tides.

The sea state was choppy again and the robust northwesterly that we had all day, diminished as the day went on. Despite the offshore breeze, it looked like some good surfing was to be had for the experienced few while everyone else was beaten about in the shallows.

I do not know about them, but I was beaten about behind the till and very grateful to be heading for an early bed.

## August 6<sup>th</sup> – Wednesday

It was pretty clear from the off that they day would be quite similar to the day before – at least the weather would be. I had slipped on a woolly hat to venture out with expecting an early chill from overnight, but it was exceedingly temperate and the hat superfluous. The skies were clear again and, if memory serves, some light mist around the cliffs, but I may well be making that up. By the time I came to scribble some Diary, the morning was in another country.

Before the Missus left yesterday, she had made a list of all the small things around the shop that needed topping up, such as the small toys and gifts down the gift aisle. These are things that I usually miss, concentrating on the buckets, spades, bodyboards and windbreaks. I also not no venture down the gift aisle without a safety net; small children go down there and are never seen again.

I think I must have a psychological block about such minutiae – like jigsaw puzzles and unknotting string. The Missus parked outside this morning, priced it all and set it all down among the shelves. It took her well over an hour. I think my psychological block is more fear of work.

While the Missus laboured at stocking the shop, I laboured at emptying it. I was doing rather well, too. It all went off in much the same manner as yesterday with an endless flow of customers coming from all directions. Alright, they were all coming through the first electric sliding door in The Cove, and the 'all directions; was only for dramatic effect. They kept me busy, much as they did yesterday and again with no chance of a break between them. This, as you might imagine, eventually becomes problematic and I have to choose my moment when I want to, erm, go and make a cup of tea.

Into this melee, sometime during the afternoon came the delivery of small sweet bags that I had entreated the Missus to place an order for. At least these sweets sit not far from the till, so filling up the stand is a little more practical than it would be had they been at the end of the shop. I suspect that if the sweets were at the end of the shop, for example, not only would they take more effort to top up, they would probably need topping up twice as often.

By and by through the busy rest of the afternoon, I chipped away at the stock that had arrived and by the end of the day had all the sweets deployed. I should remark that the order was not as big as it usually was and that some of the hangers were empty at the end. This was very handy because I was able to turn out the overstock and empty those boxes onto the remaining hangers. I would have struggled for space in the store room had I not. No doubt the Missus short ordered for this very purpose and even if she did not, if I told her what I had done should would have said she did.

It did not seem busier than yesterday but the till at the end of the day said otherwise. I think that we started earlier and for whatever reason, I did not feel quite as weary as I did yesterday through the day.

Each year at the very busiest times of the year, the small gods of grumpy shopkeepers like to throw us a googly. Sometimes it is making the car processing machine break down just ahead of a busy weekend but usually it is one of the fridges. This year, they chose the mission critical dairy fridge. Anything that goes wrong with that is very serious indeed at the peak of the season, we have nowhere else to place the stock.

In fairness, the fridge has been trouble from the start. It is exceedingly poorly designed and built. The doors have never closed properly and I have had to place a piece of wood in one end of the runner to stop them being pushed off their runners. Within a month of getting it, the lights blew because they are not waterproof – in a fridge, for heaven's sake. There is also an additional 'feature' that turns the fridge off when the door is open. It would be a very useful feature but for the fact it is fitted to just one door of a two door fridge. It was this feature that went awry.

I noticed that at close of play on Monday the display was showing that the feature was in use, however the door was closed. I judicial thump by the switch had the fridge back on again and I made a note to call in a non-urgent report to the maintenance company the following morning, which I duly did. Since it was not urgent, I did not expect an engineer that day, yesterday. This became a little more worrying when I noticed that in the morning it had stopped again but a universal reset – turning it off and back on again – had it working again. I had rather assumed the engineer would turn up today and as we got busier, I rather forgot about it, although I did check on the fridge now and then when I could get down there.

As is usual with these things, they will only go wrong when you cannot do anything about it. So, at the end of the day, when I could not call the company, I noted that the fridge was off again and the temperature increasing. A universal reset only gave a limit reprieve before it turned itself off again, so I called the out-of-hours number.

As luck would have it, the engineer turned up at quarter to bedtime. I told him that there was no point in fixing the pretty useless switch and disabling it was the best solution, which he duly did. I do recall we had problems with the switch when we first had the fridge and had it disabled then while we waited on a part. We should have left it that way to save me this trouble several years later.

On the bright side, I was able to bottle up the beer fridge while I waited. That is one job less I will have to do tomorrow morning.

## August 7<sup>th</sup> – Thursday

I avoided making a dairy order last night, even though we probably could have done with one, because of the uncertainty surrounding the effectiveness of the dairy fridge. One thing I did note, however, was the v-shaped hole in the neat rows I had left when I topped it up previously. This was where our clever customers had sought to extract the very freshest milk and avoid yesterday's. The v-shape almost exactly followed the pattern into which I had placed yesterday's milk, leaving the latest to either side. It gave me a very small measure of amusement and satisfaction.

We are supplying The Valley with milk this year. They came and purchased half the remaining stock, so my amusement and satisfaction were a little short lived.

The day had started out a little overcast but temperate, if a little humid. There was a breeze blowing in from somewhere northerly, but it was pleasant against the muggy air. It had not looked particularly like rain, so I was unprepared when we started to get wet down on the Harbour beach first thing. The rain was not especially heavy and after a few minutes it stopped.

The rain came back again, now and then through the morning and we sold a number of rain ponchos. I was of the opinion that the gentle nature of it probably did not warrant such protection but if people want to buy rain ponchos, I am certainly not going to dissuade them.

I will grant that it did not look very alluring for most of the day and when the mist started closing in, it pretty much closed business for the day. That is not to say that we did not have people milling about, mainly buying going home presents, but there were not very many of them. I would say that St Ives probably had the benefit of supplying most of the going home presents today.

I took the opportunity to complete the cash and carry order, so after making my list and checking it twice, I proceeded to key it into the company's order system. Mindful that with the volumes we had last time, we had been pretty close to running out of some lines. Anxious not to have that happen again, some of the volumes this time are big, big, big. The trouble with big, big, big is that we have to find somewhere to keep it and the store room shelves are generally small, small, small. I suspect that much of the overstock will sit on the store room floor until it is used. If this week is anything to go by, it will not be there over long.

I wanted to wait until the afternoon to let the Missus have a geek at the list in case I had missed something, or she had a better idea on some of the volumes – which she did, it transpired. She had gone off shopping for some essentials. We try not to have to go into town during August month as it is just too fraught but sometimes needs must and at the very least, we need to fuel the truck. In the meanwhile, I looked after ABH in the shop and since we were not very busy, she was hardly any trouble at all.

In recent weeks I had witnessed quite a volume of hooded sweatshirts coming across the counter. I was vaguely aware too of the volumes in the boxes in the store room looking a little thin. It takes some effort and particularly time to do the stock take so that I can determine what to order and thus far in the piece, the time just was not available. Handed a misty day and few customers, I leapt at the chance and started counting hooded sweatshirts.

It took a few hours. We may have had few customers but as soon as I started counting, the few that we had concerted their efforts to confound me. At some point – I think that it was one of the Saturdays when the stock room was full and I could not get to the store room sweatshirts – I had started selling the sweatshirts off the rail. We must have sold quite a few like that because there were gaps in the sizes out in the shop. As I finished each colour, I brought out what stock there was to replace the missing items on the shop rails. It made the job much longer but at least we have representation of each of the colours and sizes that we have out in the shop.

I was quite surprised at the end of the count that we were not missing all that many. What had happened was we had sold out or nearly sold out of specific sizes in certain colours, which had made it look worse that it was. I have tried to prevent this from happening by ordering more of the popular sizes in the popular colours but all that happens is next time there is a different popular size in a different popular colour.

The Missus had stepped in at the end so that I could complete the job. The remaining sweatshirts are at the back of the store room and it is not so easy to keep popping out to see if anyone is waiting at the counter from there. While she was covering she cleared the rocket that was in the fridge which was another step in emptying it altogether ahead of a mammoth pasty order (sorry, MS) tomorrow. I had

not held back on the order for today, so will not have a completely empty fridge. I will have to do some clever organising tomorrow morning to fit everything in.

At four o'clock, just before the Missus headed off to Land's End to set up for the station's fundraising team, the skies started to clear, and we saw some sunshine break through. Almost instantaneously, the street filled with all the visitors who had been hiding around corners and behind walls for the entire day. I can think of no other reason how they arrived so quickly. Thankfully, I had finished with the sweatshirts and I could focus my efforts on serving the surge in numbers.

There was even a break in the traffic long enough for me to start up the air compressor so that I could pump up some balls. I should have done this the previous evening but for some reason did not. The compressor makes some racket, so I avoid using it in the mornings lest I annoy the neighbours the other side of the wall. It is loud enough that ear defenders should be used but it is tucked around the corner in the store room and I go into the shop while it is charging the tank. By switching it off I can use what is in the tank without it recharging as I go. When the tank is empty, I start it again and so on until the job is done.

Naturally enough, we had a five minutes to closing rush but I managed to close on time and then spend ten minutes doing the ordering. We had emptied a few shelves, particularly of going home biscuits, less drinks this time and of course there was a big dairy order. I am sincerely hoping that the dairy and the pasties do not arrive together tomorrow.

Because the little girl had been stuck upstairs when the Missus headed off, I took her around the block as soon as I got upstairs. It was warm enough out that a jacket was not required. It might explain the numbers that were still on the Harbour beach and in the car park as we headed around. There must have been an element of last day beaching to it for some of the families leave during the morning tomorrow.

It was still relatively busy when we stepped out again last thing. The Missus was still not home and as I headed to bed, the fireworks up at Land's End were just starting off. She would be a while yet and I doubted I would notice her return. ABH would wait up, though.

## August 8<sup>th</sup> – Friday

We had to suffer a morning of Radio Pasty telling us how lovely the weather was going to be today. It was a while before they said that the good weather may take a while in some places. Clearly, we were one of those places that had to wait until the early afternoon for the first glimmer of sunlight.

My first mountain to climb was dealing with the milk and the pasty (sorry, MS) deliveries. These were huge. The pasties by necessity and the milk because I had deferred the previous day's order due to the potential condition of the dairy fridge.

We have survived that ordeal and now needed to get back on an even keel with milk in the fridge.

I was lucky to get away with both deliveries appearing at sensible intervals between them. I did however have an opening rush to contend with just as the milk arrived and was selling litres out of the shopping trolley. The newly delivered cases of milk had been put ahead of being transported down to the fridge. When the pasties arrived, I was better able to take my time which enabled me to make a more precise job of stuffing them into the fridge. Emptying and cleaning the fridge was my first job in the morning and in doing so I was able to visualise where the types and numbers of pasties would go. If I had just slung them in the fridge in some laissez faire manner, I would have been wanting for somewhere else to put the excess.

By the time I had finished clearing the morning orders, it was time to head off to the gymnasium. Even as I left, there was the beginnings of a change-over bubble forming along the benches outside the café. It seemed unnecessary to inform the Missus of this observation and I slunk away quickly for my truncated but nonetheless blistering session before the fight started.

When I came back it was clear that my assessment was correct. There was a queue outside the café both when I left and when I came back again. I took ABH down to the Harbour beach where there were already a few families set up for the day. It was still overcast at this point, but it was warm and there was no hint of rain about. It was as good a day as any for being on the beach and probably more comfortable out of the direct sun. One mother was sensibly splashing the suncream on her young wards. Even overcast, the sun can be quite vicious here as one lady had discovered. She came to the shop asking for a remedy for the blisters around her eyes.

I was unlikely to find out, at least until the late afternoon when we had an extended quiet period. Up until that point we had been busy with little chance of doing anything except work the till and that included having any breakfast, too. The Missus had decided to hang about after I came back and disappeared into the store room. She did what she does best and stormed through the place tidying and throwing things out. She cleared the shelves that had not been touched for quite some time and produced some items that I did not know were there. There was no gold or secret treasure unfortunately, but there is some more stock on the shop shelves that there was before she started.

Earlier in the day, before I had come downstairs, I decided to stir the pot regarding my false ears. It had been a further three weeks since I had a little stir previously and I still had not heard anything – well, I probably would not with my false ears no working – from the offending company. In the meantime, the remaining working false ear had got fed up doing all the work by itself and had given up the ghost. I reported that I did not expect to hear from the company now and would it be possible to transfer without their assistance.

I had a very early response from the lady at the NHS who had been fighting my corner telling me that she would talk to the referral team. Then, out of nowhere, in the middle of the day I had a telephone call from a 'senior manager' at the company asking me to call back. Before the Missus headed off to The Farm, she hung about long enough for me to discover that my call was very important to the company, but they had a higher than expected number of calls at present and would I not mind hanging on for a bit.

Well, we had a higher than expected number of customers, and were quite busy at the time, so I decided that after a couple of minutes it would be best to forget all about it.

I come back to our quiet period I mentioned earlier. In a spare moment I redialled the company and waited. I was on the cusp of terminating the call when a very pleasant lady answered the telephone. She asked for a few details and told me that she would transfer me to the 'senior manager' which she duly did after I waited for another short while. There was no apology. The offer on the table was for a different pair of false ears. The wheel nut in the semolina was that I would need to go back to our friends in Penzance to have them fitted. I told our man that was completely unacceptable as I had no faith at all in the people there and his offer was not a remedy for their incompetence. He will call back with a revised solution. I am unlikely to be able to answer and will not waste my time waiting on the telephone because they have permanently a higher number of calls than expected.

Towards the tail end of the telephone conversation, customers were coming back into the shop. It urged me to terminate the call before it spiralled out of usefulness. We continued to get busier after that. One of the customers, who came as a pair of foreign ladies were after some wine. One of them seemed in an awful hurry and interrupted my dealing with another customer to ask if a particular wine was dry. I am not very helpful with the wines as I do not drink them. I have some idea and told her that the wine she pointed out was dry but not as dry as some others. It was hard to determine whether she wanted dry wine or was asking to avoid it.

Clearly in a hurry, she grabbed another wine that I told her was similar to a Pinot Grigio, and her and her pal rushed to the till where they hurried me to complete the sale. The lady then stopped me while she conversed in a foreign tongue, possibly Italian, with her pal. They added a pasty after urging me to provide a speedy synopsis of the contents of each type and were gone in a flash.

Speedy lady came in again a couple of hours later, so she cannot have been running for a bus as I might have guessed. She was in just as much of a hurry then, too. I think some people are in a permanent hurry and I wonder what that must feel like.

We said our farewells to another group of people we have known for years and some new ones, too. There was a very pleasant family of Belgians staying above the café next door who I am sure we will see again. They came in especially to say goodbye,

so we must have made some sort of impression on them. We then started saying hello to more families and groups who were just arriving, some of which had been absent for some years.

And so the cycle of The Cove in the height of the season continues and how very pleasant it is too – apart from the bit where I have to ship the best part of a ton of groceries into the store room early on a Saturday morning. That, someone else is welcome to.

## August 9<sup>th</sup> – Saturday

Cor and blimey! We have not had a proper rip gribbler to get our teeth into for quite a while it seems. It took a minute or two to get going but once it was in its stride, it did us proud.

I regret the lack of light in the morning. I used to very much enjoy some personal sunshine on days like these when ABH and I hit the beach first thing. It was not that this morning was unpleasant, it just that a bit of sunshine with no one else about is a bit special. We could not get onto the beach this morning, anyway; the tide was in.

It was an early start today because it is cash and carry day. I had sent a despatch to the cash and carry company setting out my expectations with regard to weight of the delivery. We were duly sent a bigger truck. For the past few times the delivery has come in cages, we have had two or three. This week there were five fully packed cages in the delivery. The normal delivery takes about fifteen minutes for two of us to unload and pack into the store room. Today, it stretched out to half an hour. There were fifteen cases of large water bottles. That may not be enough if we continue to have good weather. I put the last of fourteen cases from a fortnight ago in the fridge this morning before the delivery arrived.

That was part of the purpose of getting down to the shop early, so that I could get the bottling up done and make the maximum space available for the incoming cases of drink. We can fit twelve cases of beer in the cupboard which left the remaining twelve out on the store room floor. They will stay there probably until I have used them all up.

I also managed to finish off the newspapers. I was putting the magazine in the last title when the truck turned up. If that was not good enough timing, after we had finished, I just had time to put out on the shelves a couple items it would have been difficult to do after we opened. We love it when a plan comes together.

For the rest of the day I pecked away at the huge pile in the store room. I made good progress but at the end of the day, there was still a huge pile in the store room. I was not too hard on myself; it was a huge pile.

When we were looking down on the Harbour this morning, it was evident some swell had crept into the bay overnight. I had not paid a great deal of attention to what was outside the door for much of the day. By the time I did, the swell was big and butch and sending sizeable waves in on the beach. Over on Gwenver, it might have been bigger but that might have been deceptive. I asked one young lady who had been out in it earlier and she told me that it was not the size but the power of the waves that was most remarkable. She was only a slight thing, too.

She was one of a great many. Earlier in the tide, there was a large party going on in the shallows with more surfers out in the shore break and riding in. The upper reaches of the beach were packed in with tents and windbreaks in all the usual colours. Come the closing hours of the afternoon, they were sore pressed by the tide but a good many of them hung on until the bitter end. Later, while I sat at the table with my tea, I looked to see if the heavy swell was troubling the Harbour wall at all. There were some wetsuited youths atop it but no sign of any waves coming over the top.

Those that decided to leave the camp on the beach at high water, made their way to the shop it seemed. Having had our afternoon siesta, we were awoken to a sudden surge in busyness as people came and gathered food and drink for the evening. There was also the Harbour beach contingent, mostly locals, who were buying beer and snacks for an evening down there. The consequence was again an empty beer fridge and more interestingly, big holes in the soft drinks fridge.

The cash and carry driver and I had meticulously crammed everything into the store room to make the best of the space available. Previously, the Missus had crammed everything we already had to the back of the store room out of the way. As I looked ahead to the morning and started planning the work before the shop opened, it slowly came to me that there was a 180 kilogram wall of water between me and the soft drinks I needed to top up the drinks fridge.

Late in the day, I started to move a few strategic things out of the way to see what the best way of resolving the situation was. I will not have to move all the water but there will still be a good deal of heavy lifting tomorrow morning. There is something to look forward to.

The five minutes to closing rush was intense but mercifully short. It cleared out the remaining beers in the beer fridge just to provide me with some heavy lifting in case I did not already have some. I sense a getting down to the shop early again tomorrow morning coming on.

August 10<sup>th</sup> – Sunday

There was no mistaking the day's intentions today. The skies were clear from the outset, and it was still warm from the previous day. When the sun deigned to rise about the cliffs, it shone the day long. As rip grabblers go, it definitely was one.

There was still a hearty swell out in the bay at high water when ABH and I took our tour around the short block, in the morning. In answer to my question about waves coming over the Harbour wall, one pitiful wave came over the near end just as we came into view of the Harbour. It looked no more than someone throwing a big bucket of water over.

True to my word, I came down to the shop early to unearth the soft drinks from the back of the store room. The task required some thought as I did not want to make work for myself by simply moving everything down the store room out of the way only to have to move it back again later. I had spent a little time working on it before I came down – my creative three o'clock in the morning slot is temporarily suspended due to the overwhelming desire to sleep through it – so I had to use my normal waking hours instead. Thanks to a bit of planning, it was not the onerous task it had at first looked. It did require some heavy lifting, but I had managed to leave most of the heavy water cases in place. They will not be moving until they are needed in the fridge.

I had hoped to clear some of the delivery too before we opened but only managed to finish the beer fridge and the newspapers. I had some time during the early part of the morning to empty a few boxes and clear a few more inches of space, but after late morning, I was pinned to the counter.

Ordinarily, I might not have minded but today, some luminary on the Lifeboat fundraising committee had organised the Pendeen Silver Band to turn up to play for two hours opposite the shop. I am rather hoping that it was not the Missus.

The Pendeen Silver Band are exceedingly good at what they do and in many circles, very popular. I regret that I am not in that number, although the first long playing record I purchased with my pocket money was some big band playing songs from war movies. What was I thinking. My musical tastes have developed since then and while they are quite broad – I like classical and rock of vary sorts and even a bit of folk and country if pushed – they do not extend to the music played by brass bands.

Much of my distaste, I think, is to do with the tunes that are probably picked by necessity to fit with range and key and other technical reasons. Therefore, we had a few tunes from the movies, Bond, of course, but mostly things like Mary Poppins, Village People and 'I've got a Brand New Pair of Rollerskates' or it might have been combined harvester. An hour in, it was driving my deaf ear mad, as a good friend of mine might have said.

My musical tastes aside, the volume was also causing me some problems. I already do not hear very well, especially without my false ears. While in the general run of

things today that may have been to some advantage, I had even more problems hearing what customers were saying to me. All that said, there was a number of people who did enjoy it, as the event drew quite a crowd after it started. There was even some dancing in the street which seemed a little unnecessary but overall, it was quite the success.

It certainly drove some business for us. Throughout it all we had a constant flow of customers. Whether they would have been there anyway, we will never know but it seems likely that they were connected. We were selling pasties (sorry, MS) long into the afternoon, and but for the fact we started off with a surplus from Thursday's poor weather, I think we would have been close to getting the numbers right.

We continued to be busy for over an hour after the band shipped out, so perhaps it was not all down to the allure of Bond themes and Melanie's rollerskates/combined harvester. It was quite relentless and at times there were queues at the till which was almost smoking from the speed of my fingers brushing the keys. Despite having started nearly twelve hours previously, I was still sharp enough to answer the query, 'will these scones be alright if I freeze them?' with, 'they will be fine, but you might find them a bit crunchy'. Right over her head. Maybe it is just me, then.

We reached the end of the day with still very little of the delivery processed. To aggravate matters further, I had to place another farm shop cash and carry order, which was not due for another week. On top of that, we have unusually large bread and greengrocery deliveries tomorrow, which if timely, will keep me busy in the time before the shop opens.

The Missus having not ventured up to The Farm – she was busy directing operations for the band, and I discovered later that it was her idea (we will be having words) – she had time to cook a roast dinner. ABH only gets the one walk now and when we ventured out near nine o'clock, the street was still busy. One of the regular, extended families were gathered at Tinker Taylor for celebrations and we met others we knew around the block.

That just left time to collapse in a head and hopefully do it all again tomorrow – without a silver band annoying me deaf ear, one trusts.

## August 11<sup>th</sup> – Monday

I view coming down to the shop in the morning with trepidation after days like we had yesterday. This was especially so this morning because I had had a quick look before I closed up yesterday and it was horrific.

Two and a half hours later, the bottling up and dealing with the deliveries was done but the store room looked just as full as it had done yesterday and the day before. I

had come to the conclusion last night that even plugging away at it with every spare minute between customers was unlikely to see it clear by the end of the week. It required the nuclear option.

This comes in the form of the Missus. It took her more than two hours, and if it took the Missus two hours, it was serious. I played shopkeeper while she methodically worked her way down the store room floor. I was going to remark that it was hard to see where it all went but when I looked later, every shelf is squeezed full. Getting stuff out is going to be interesting and finding it in the first place, a bit of a challenge. The floor is clear, though. Just to round it off, as she was finishing, the soft drinks delivery turned up and she cleared that too.

We were both afforded a bit of a break today because the weather turned a little sour. I was not expecting it. I had missed that bit on Radio Pasty's forecast in the morning and only heard them talking about it getting very hot at some point. Frankly, it is warm enough, thank you very much. It was clear and rather pleasant looking first thing. There did appear to be a weather front out to the west but as the breeze had gone around to the east, I did not trouble myself with it. So, it was a bit of a surprise when we started to see some rain come through around the middle of the day. It did not seem terribly heavy and only once did we have a little rush of people running into the shop to get out of it. I heard later of thunderstorms a little bit up the line.

I had looked earlier down to the big beach. It was largely empty until later in the day and, even then, the crowd did not amount to very much. There were several small camps up on the top of the beach, but they were widely spread. The group in the shallows was sizeable and there must have been more than twenty surfers a little way out towards North Rocks waiting on a wave.

Yesterday, in the morning, the swell has still been quite evident. When I looked again during the lower reaches of the tide, it seemed like it had gone altogether. It was not until near high water that big, clean rolling waves cut in across the bay. Today, it was flat as a dish. It must be very good at hiding, because when I looked again at high water in the evening, waves were flogging over the wall.

When the day is quiet, I have more time to enjoy our customers. The lady who wanted to tell me about her old dog that she had to leave behind with a dog sitter, the recent arrival who was keen to tell me how quiet it was at the Cornwall Services at Roche, the comparisons of weather with yesterday and how much they enjoyed the band yesterday – or not. One lady arrived in the afternoon with her young daughter, ten years of age or so at a guess. They brought sweets to the counter and a tin of Mr Tarquin's rather excellent gin and tonic. I mentioned how nice it was to have sweets for the children and 'lemonade' for mother. She told me it was for later when they went to Minack for the evening performance. I asked what was on, and she told me it was 'something called, Tommy'.

Something called Tommy! Surely time has not withered and faded one of the first and greatest rock operas of all time. Surely not. Mick Townsend would be rolling in his grave – if he was dead, of course. I do not think that Roger Wood would care very much as I understand he is as deaf as me. The film did not quite do it justice but who can forget Ann-Margaret and the baked beans – certainly not a fifteen year old grumpy shopkeeper in waiting.

I do apologise, dear reader, I had to fan a flushed brow for a moment, there.

The lady I was talking to thought that she had some vague memory of it but when I mentioned Elton John and Pinball Wizard, arguably the most memorable and iconic scene from the film – apart from Ann-Margaret and the beans – she glazed over a bit. Had I not been shopkeeping until well after it started, for Tommy, I might have been persuaded to break my assertion that I would never go to the Minack again. I do hope that they do it well. See me, feel me, touch me, heal me.

The sun broke through in the later afternoon, which boded well for Tommy and at the same time, the wind went full on northeasterly, I do not know where it had been for the first part of the day, in the east very possibly but wherever it was, it was not trying to blow my face off. It got quite vigorous after about half past four o'clock.

The shop had been quiet for a good part of the afternoon. If you want to compare it to yesterday, it was quiet all through the day. We had a little spurt late in the afternoon that woke me up a bit and then it went dead again. I felt terribly guilty, as if I should be doing something. I probably should have been but could not for the life of me think what.

I took the day as a righteous day off and will start again tomorrow, if the weather is with us. If it does get very how, I suspect that will be as bad as having poor weather as our visitors will not be bothered to move about. Given that we went through one quarter of our delivered water over the weekend, we might be pressed to have enough until the next delivery.

The Aged Parent reports that it is getting gloomy by nine o'clock now in Dorset. Generally, we are a little better off here a couple of hundred miles further west. Tonight, however, there was a geet dark cloud hanging to the northwest that to me made everything look a deep purple. The last remaining dayglo flag on the Lifeboat channel markers stood out like a beacon and the swell in the bay still looked like it was not there. I thought that we might get wet at any moment, but we just got blown at instead. I will settle for that.

## August 12<sup>th</sup> – Tuesday

I should have started with this yesterday, but shame on me, I forgot. A grand old boy of the village at the top shuffled off yesterday. He was a boy, too, as he resisted

growing up until the bitter end. He was also a gentleman of the first order, and I am humbled to have known him in a small way and quite briefly. He would drop down to the Cove occasionally because we 'had the best pasties', driving an open topped sports car. I have no idea how old he was, but it was not long after he was stopped from driving it. I heard he replaced it with a mobility scooter – with go-faster stripes, no doubt – until he pranged it and they stopped him doing that as well. Last I saw him was a fortnight ago, being chauffeured and parked opposite the shop. It would have been typical of the man to make sure he came to say goodbye.

The day started with some potential to be yet another in a long line of glorious rip gribblers this year. The sun was blazing down as I got the shop ready for opening and I dared not step out into it for fear of being frazzled alive. Radio Pasty issued dire warnings. Apparently, I would be safe provided that I did not allow myself out after nine o'clock this morning when the weather warning started. I need not have worried overly, not an hour later the sun went and hid behind a layer of medium height cloud and stayed there all day.

The heat that Radio Pasty spoke of, however, was deep and humid and not pleasant at all behind the counter and next to the pasty warmer (sorry, MS). Those taking to the water probably had the best of it today, though many would have clambered into wetsuits for the pleasure of it, which eventually cannot have been good, I imagine. There were plenty who elected to be in the drink of all manner of reasons: surfers; bodyboarders; stand up paddleboarders, and just plain paddlers. I could not guess at the number, but they were scattered right across the near side of the bay with a big concentration of bodies in the shallows of the swimming zone. There seemed to be more waiting than riding surfable waves at around low water but there were enough decent waves to make it look worthwhile.

As if the water was not crowded enough, our regular yacht turned up to park overnight. I do not recall when it was last here, but I think it was March or April and there was a bit of a breeze blowing. It hung around until the worst of it was over and moved on. I may well have met the driver because they do come ashore but I would not really know.

It was an odd day. We were very busy at times and in the doldrums at others. There were some relatively long periods with very few customers, and I cannot help feeling that it might have been a little more upbeat with some sunshine around. Just to keep me occupied, the farm shop cash and carry turned up with a minimal delivery for us. Naturally, he turned up when we were busy. There was plenty of not busy a little later and I managed to clear it all apart from the soft drinks that I will do in the morning.

We pottered along for the rest of the day until, at last knocking, the Missus turned up with the contents of the list I had given her. There was everything from bodyboards and shoes to towels and spades. She had struggled to get it into the truck because she had all the paraphernalia of the RNLI fundraising events in there, too. It is Land's

End Lifeboat Day tomorrow and she will be up there early doors and all day to set up and take down at the end of the day. She will be up there again in the later afternoon tomorrow for the fireworks. This could be payback for disappearing off to shouts for extended periods over the last twenty years.

It took some time to distribute the stock she had brought back around the shop. Then she went off to make tea while I shut down the shop and made the orders for the following day. We had already endured a lively five minutes to closing rush and hour and a half before closing. I rather think it was more a pushed off the beach by the tide rush as a five minutes to closing rush was a bit of a stretch of the definition, even for me. For the purists among you, we did have a proper five minutes to closing rush at five minutes to closing that delayed me doing the orders and made me late for tea. The orders were legion, too. When I ran the till, I discovered that it was one of our busier days. I am either becoming very adept at managing our busy days or I am so punch drunk, I can no longer recognise busy for quiet. I fear it may be the latter.

I just had a momentary glimpse of the surprised look on a very old man's face as a shiny sports car just pulled up at the shiny gates he was looking after.

## August 13<sup>th</sup> – Wednesday

The sun eventually broke through our layer of cloud in the early afternoon. It promptly begged off again ten minutes later. Radio Pasty had told us, 'brighter later' and were not wrong because the sun did return sporadically later still. They also insisted that we might have some rain here and there and as one traveller from St Buryan reported, that was either here or there or possibly both because it rained some before she left.

Once again, the day was very humid and in the shop, much worse. I should avoid saying how busy it was because it seems I cannot get the assessment right. It did, however, seem less busy than yesterday but the same could not be said of the beach. All the surfers were over at North Rocks during the lower reaches of the tide; it was the only place there were any waves. The swimming zone was just as packed as yesterday and the camps at the top of the beach just as thick and widespread. I suspected – probably more hoped – that the tide, later today, would nudge the people there in our direction.

The Missus was away early for Land's End Lifeboat Day. She was gone all day after that. I heard report that she was busy up there while I was hardly pressed at any time during the day. It left me in pickle with my pasties (sorry, MS) and you should never have pickle with your pasty or any other condiment for that matter. I had ordered pasties for bigger pasty days than we had been having and today was particularly poor. I sought to iron out the surplus with a short order tomorrow but as I had to order before one o'clock, it was a guess and turned out not to be short enough. Had I known the actual end position, or been immensely brave, I would

have ordered none at all. As it is, I will have a very difficult order to make for the weekend tomorrow.

I have already indicated that the waves for surfing were getting smaller and, today, almost non-existent. I spoke with a kayaker in the middle of the afternoon who had cruised the coastline from Land's End to Cape Cornwall. He told me that it had been sublime with a hint of a breeze and a glassy sea to paddle his boat on. There has been a kayaking group here the last few days who had equally enjoyed themselves. One of them came in towards the end of the day, somewhat aromatic, redolent of dead fish. He told me that they had a bumper day on the bass, mackerel and pollack though did not say exactly where they had been.

It meant that the boys on the Lifeboat had a smooth time of it when they drifted around to Land's End to show off in support of the Lifeboat Day there. Naturally, I missed the joy of it by being a grumpy shopkeeper and not making myself available for the launch or, indeed, the recovery. The boat launched at 18:40 hours which was twenty to seven o'clock as the assembled crowd might have it. I missed the launch because I chose that moment to go and make a, erm, cup of tea. It was an appropriate moment because everyone was distracted and lining the railings instead of being in the shop and preventing me from going upstairs to make a, erm, cup of tea.

The assembled company then decided to have a celebratory shop and formed my five minutes to closing rush. This included a large and noisy family of Italians who were in the vanguard. Ten minutes after I closed, they were knocking at the door asking if they could purchase ice creams because, obviously, I would not wish to disappoint the small children. Ha! They had clearly not before come across a grumpy shopkeeper whose shop had been open for ice creams for the last ten and a half hours and who had been working for the last twelve hours without a break and had a further half an hour of ordering to do. The shrift they got has never been shorter. They would have had no more success if they had come to the door with Tiny Tim, Annie and Pollyana holding a puppy and a kitten about to be thrown to the wolves by wicked Baron Hardup.

It was a lovely evening by the way. The Missus reported that by the time the Lifeboat arrived in the waters off Land's End, Land's End had closed and everyone had gone home. The boat returned to The Cove at around high water. I heard, and have no reason to doubt, that it was a textbook recovery up the short slip. We are, after all, a very trusting, very excellent Shore Crew.

## August 14<sup>th</sup> – Thursday

We were back to grey again this morning with promises of better to come. I did not hear of any threat of rain, so that was already better than yesterday, it just did not seem very much like it.

The Harbour beach has not looked so good in a long time. Much sand was shipped in by the recent spring tides that has also kept the beach clean of weed, flotsam, old drinks containers, flip flops and plastic bags. Ain't nature wonderful. The sand is piled up right across the upper reaches of the beach and particularly under the Lifeboat slipways. For those who are not keen on such pristine sand, neap tides are on the way, and the sand will soon be cluttered with broken buckets, old shoes and fag packets.

With it being a day much in the same stamp as yesterday, I was not expecting much of it. How wrong I was. The first signs of my wrongness was a bit of a rush for breakfast goods that ran into a bit of a rush for beach goods on the way to a day on the beach. I never did get to have a geek at the beach to see just how busy it was there, but I am guessing it was one of the busier days of the week.

My main concern was to monitor the pasty situation (sorry, MS) so that I might make an informed decision about how many to call in for the weekend. I scientifically calculated - well, I did if guessing how many we would sell today and using basic arithmetic is scientific – today's throughput and came up with a number. Since it was still quite early, I decided to wait to see how things developed. It was a good plan because pretty soon I started having a gut feeling that things were not going quite the way I initially thought. I had an inkling that it could well be a pasty day and that my initial thoughts of left over pasty numbers would be over-inflated.

My troubled thinking was interrupted first by the busyness in the shop and shortly after by my Lifeboat pager going off. Some people are attuned to such things on the coast and others, it seems are blissfully unaware and surely it can wait until after they have finished shopping and paid for their goods. There is, of course, no reason why someone who has not visited the coast should be aware of such things. It must, therefore, be very perplexing to be hurried out of a shop without paying. I do hope that someone had the time to explain because I certainly did not.

While we all attend the Lifeboat station as rapidly as we legally and safely can, there are levels of urgency applied to launches. For example, a broken down boat not in any immediate danger can wait until the appropriate number or type of Lifeboatman arrives at the station. Today, with people in the water, we launch as quickly as we can with minimum crew numbers if necessary. We launched from in-house, which is slightly quicker than dropping the boat out onto the slipway first and results in the Head Launcher conducting the launch in a cloud of exhaust fumes. We also had a minimal number on shore, just two of us.

It was a service that saved six lives. One kayak of a group of five had overturned. A man and child were in the water, and the group, including other children, were drifting southwest away from Land's End. Gwennap Head Coast Watch Institute also played a part in guiding the boat onto the casualties. The children were taken on

board first in true Birkenhead drill style and the others recovered including kayaks one at a time.

After the launch, I had no idea of the time and panicked a bit when I remembered that I had not placed the pasty order before I left. I returned to the shop where the Missus had stepped in halfway through shaving ABH. With time fleeting, I had no time to intricately deliberate over exactly how many pasties to order and made an educated guess.

People had commented in the last few days how hot it is inside the shop. I have not really noticed but dress in my RNLI kit with lifejacket on, it was insufferably hot compared with outside. I would have returned to the station but had to anyway as we heard that the boat was on the way back. When I returned to the station, we had collected three more happy volunteers to help bring the boat back and having previously set up the slipway all we had to do was wait for the boat to come back.

I was at the end of the long slipway with one of our newest recruits when the boat steamed back towards us. I was in the perfect position to report that we executed what was clearly a textbook recovery with casualties on board. We were cleared away in no time and collected for a debriefing charged with emotion. We are, after all, a very intuitive, very excellent Shore Crew.

Before I went back to the shop, I ran a half shaved ABH down to the Harbour beach. It was not yet crowded but there were sufficient people there that I kept her on a lead. I thought that she might fancy a swim to cool off and took her down to the tide line. She did not fancy a swim but found something to nibble at the water's edge. I could see something at the side of her mouth and realised that it was fishing line. I picked her up and thankfully managed to get it out of her mouth. It was a baited hook, with line, and she was happily nibbling the bait. She was one very lucky bunny that somehow the hook had not caught. While it scared the bahoneys out of me, she seemed ambivalent.

I returned to a very busy shop that stayed very busy for the rest of the day. It was the sort of busy that we should be every day during these holiday weeks but if we were I think I would be no more than a little crumpled pile of grumpy shopkeeper behind the counter. It meant doing little else other than service customers but toward the end of the afternoon I was able to process some of the posh mug delivery that had unexpectedly turned up. I even managed to get some of the new stock out on the shelves and, it being a going home present day, sold three of the mugs.

The Missus ran off to Land's End again in the late afternoon to run the fundraising job for fireworks night. She would not be back until late. When I went up to check on ABH she was in bed curled up, sulking and refusing to come downstairs. So, I left her to it.

We took a walk when I had closed the shop and walked the busy street through the bust car park and back along Coastguard Row. The sun was a bright as it had been all day, shining through a thin layer of cloud that looked like smoke in the air. It was dusk when we went out for our last walk and there were still people enjoying the sea, splashing around at high water. What a day.

## August 15<sup>th</sup> – Friday

We have two card payment machines in the shop. One is used for the business and sits behind our screen and next to the till. The other is for the crew fund, donations and payment for the second hand books. This his more prominent because it is the other side of the screen and in full view, mainly so that customers can operate it themselves.

People wishing to buy shop goods by card payment gravitate to the more prominent machine, which is understandable, so I stuck card to the back of it that says, 'CREW FUND ONLY'. It made absolutely no difference. I was getting a little weary of repeating, 'not that machine, this one' innumerable times a day and, in the back of my mind, kept thinking how this might be resolved. In a blinding moment of inspiration, I thought to use one of the shelf risers in lurid colours I had purchased to place our posh mugs on, since I had spares. I have written 'CREW FUND DONATIONS ONLY' on the top of it. It sits neatly over the card terminal almost obscuring it but not so much as it would prevent someone from using it to make a donation or payment for a book.

Five minutes after putting it in place, the first person who wished to pay by card went straight to it. They were not the last.

Once again, Radio Pasty were extolling the meteorologic virtues of the day ahead and, to be fair, it was indeed a proper summer's day. That thin layer of high level, milky cloud remained, and the sun was hazy for most of the day. Early on, there was a robust easterly wind blowing. I had it in mind that it was probably south easterly because when I opened the first electric sliding door in The Cove, it was blowing straight in. It would have saved me some electric and some wear and tear on my shop fan had it persisted but within an hour, it was gone. They tell me it was hot eventually but, in the shop, it was hot from the outset.

It was also busy from the outset. I had elected to have a bit of breakfast early which was just as well because it was the last opportunity I had. The change-over day bubble was more like a change-over day weather balloon and it set the pace for the rest of the day. Yesterday, there were one or two pauses between customers. Today, there were none that I recall.

I was in two minds about my bread order the previous evening. When it arrived this morning, I wondered what I was thinking by ordering so much when it would have been better to have a clear out today and start afresh tomorrow. By four o'clock today, I was glad of the excess as we had not only cleared out what was there, we cleared out the additional bread as well.

It was not the only thing proving difficult to manage. I am sure you might envisage some catch 22 type problems with keeping the pasties (sorry, MS) flowing. Pasties in the oven that I could not get to because I was serving, not being able to get pasties into the oven in the first place and not having an oven big or fast enough to heat the pasties in tune with customer demand. I lost only a couple of customers due to pasty deficit but spent a long time with only one or two in the warmer while others cooked, barely scraping by.

The deliveries in the morning went well enough. All were timely. I was on edge the whole time while I tried to get the large order of milk into the fridge just in case the pasty order turned up at the same time. Fortunately, the pasty order was later and avoided both the milk and my breakfast. It came with 250 soft baps earmarked for the hog roast arriving for Lifeboat Day on Sunday. Lifeboat Day has been moved back this year on the suggestion that it would be busier in The Cove because on the bank holiday weekend, many people have gone home.

The Missus had intended to go to Hayle cash and carry to pick up apple sauce and other necessities for the event. I had been fretting that we probably had insufficient water to see us through until next weekend and saw an opportunity to correct the issue. I sent the Missus off with a list for additional water and cider that we have been piling through quicker than I anticipated. We also need extra toilet rolls that I hope were not related.

The first time it went quiet was after five o'clock. It gave me the chance to get down the grocery aisle to survey the damage and plug a few holes in the stock but not very many. Earlier, one of our neighbours pointed out that the big bags of crisps across the range had run out. It took me an hour and a half to get to them.

I did not get much time to gaze out at the beach. I was minded to think that it was busier still than yesterday and a customer later on said she thought that it was. The sea state that had picked up some yesterday, and caused the kayakers some problems around the corner, was back to reasonably placid again. I really could not tell you how good or poor the surfing was because I did not get the time to look in that much detail.

Naturally, we were cleaned out of beer again but at least I think I have enough to see us through until next weekend. I placed a large bread order that I hoped would be just right. It included an online order place in Germany for various loaves. The purchaser had also contacted me earlier in the week to ask if we accepted credit

cards as he and his family were arriving for a holiday tomorrow. Looking at the bread order, his family is the Waltons.

We also sold a fair bit of fish today. I am hoping that the last top up order we did will last until the end of the holiday because I do not fancy calling in more now. I simply would not have the time to pack and price it. We had an order for lobster earlier in the week that ordinarily I would have called in from our local boys and cooked it ourselves. It was to arrive on Wednesday when the Missus was up at Land's End all day, so I called it in from our crab supplier in town.

Business tailed off in the last hour or so of the day. The five minutes to closing rush was manageably early and I closed on time after inflating a trolley full of balls for the outside display. At some point during the afternoon the Missus returned with the cider, toilet rolls and water and all her bits and spent some time slicing 250 baps in half in readiness for Sunday.

As seems to now be usual, it was still busy in The Cove when I took the girl around at half past eight o'clock. We met some friends where the Coast Path reaches The Cove. She had spotted them halfway down the cliff and we had to wait for them. She did not know them; she would wait for anyone coming down the cliff.

It was a long day and, I think, just a prelude to a few more long days to come if Radio Pasty is to be believed. I may not have got to the gymnasium this week because one thing or another got in the way but I am still ready, poised like a coiled spring, ready for anything ... [looks at notes] it says here.

## August 16<sup>th</sup> – Saturday

Radio Pasty have been banging on about this weekend all week. Hot, they said. Sun splitting the hedges, they said. Any mention of a 40 miles per hour, slap-you-in-the-face nor'easterly? Not a bleddy word.

Over the last few days any breeze we have had disappeared or diminished in the first few hours of the day. Today, it hung in there steadfast and persistent all day. It did, however, open the door to a few windbreak sales. I had to ask the Missus to go and get replacements. Today, I did get through without having to switch on my smart fan, with a wafting breeze blowing through the doorway. It helped freshen the air in the shop. I noticed a couple of days ago just how hot the shop is compared with outside, even in the heat of a hot day. I suspect that if we did not open the first electric sliding door in The Cove for a day, we would have serious problems with the fridges and freezers at the back of the shop.

It was a change in style from yesterday. We were busy from the start but there were fewer numbers and more gaps between customers. There was sufficient time after I had dealt with the milk and newspapers – which were late – to have a bit of

breakfast. I also managed to top up some of the crisps between mouthfuls and later, some of the groceries. It did not take long before I had to stop again when the aisles filled up with customers taking away the things that I had just put out. By and by through the day, though, I made quite a lot of progress which, of course, was not what we needed at all. It is quite a paradox.

I had a bit more time to look around today, unfortunately. I know that it was a change-over day, but the beach looked deserted by comparison to the last few days. I believe most of that was probably due to the pesky breeze that continued to gust into the 40s miles per hour for the afternoon. Little white caps dotted the bay making the whole body of water look like it was moving westward at some speed. It was especially not the day to be using inflatables on the beach. In the middle of the morning, I spotted a dark shape apparently surfacing sporadically. It looked like a fin or a dolphin playing but was too close in. When I got the binoculars on it, clearly it was a polystyrene bodyboard, tumbling in the wind. Next seen on the Scillies or Newfoundland or just dumped by the dunes when the wind changes.

The conditions were not the best and certainly not many people would be out in a small craft today. Therefore, when a small craft that had disappeared around Pedmen-du had not reemerged for a while, the alarm was raised. It was the duty coxswain on his way to the station who alerted me by calling through the shop doorway ahead of the pagers going off. By the time the pager did go off, I was driving down the RNLI car park in the Tooltrak. While I was able to get the Inshore boat down to the beach in record time, we then had to wait for a crew to arrive. As ever, on a Saturday, crew are thin on the ground and by chance our ex-coxswain was about and stood in.

After the boat launched and I had parked the Tooltrak on the slipway – it is best to avoid getting sand on one's wellies – I returned to the shop where a small crowd was waiting. Luckily, there was no one in the shop when I shut, although I did have to close the first electric sliding door in The Cove on some potential customers who were approaching as I slid it across. I considered that there would be time to serve a few customers since they were waiting but very soon after I opened, the boat was close to being stood down. Having excited a bunch of visitors into the welcome of the shop, I had to quite abruptly toss them out again. They took it in good heart and some even came back later.

The Inshore Boat had found the small craft in question whose occupants were quite bemused at the fuss that had been made on their account. Some friendly words of advice were no doubt exchanged for friendly indifference and the Inshore was stood down by the Coast Guard.

It was this last message that had me turning out the shop and heading for the beach. I reached there just as a couple of families headed out before me with a dog on the loose and buggies to hand, they went and stood exactly where I was headed with the Tooltrak. Several blasts on the horn seemed to elicit little in the way of reaction, so

my banksman, newly arrived, went and had a word. They retreated up the beach but when I moved the Tooltrak towards the water, the dog suddenly appeared in front of me. Erm. You do have to wonder sometimes.

The closing of the shop for half an hour must have alarmed the visitors who had not been chased off by the wind. They must have sent word to many more visitors too because when I reopened the shop for the second time, we were almost instantly busy. It lasted for most of the rest of the afternoon and then we ran into late arrivals who stormed the gates for groceries. Our German friends who had called ahead and also placed a large bread order online arrived close to five o'clock and proceeded to buy all our tomatoes, amongst all the other groceries they wanted for the initial part of their stay.

We had several large grocery purchases like that and it is heartening to know that some people at least find it satisfactory to shop with us as opposed to, or as a complement to, a Tesmorburys delivery. On Saturday evening, The Cove is busy with Tesmorburys vans going hither and thither and the sound of crates being loaded and trolleyed around.

There was no last minute dash to the shop tonight; our five minutes to closing rush happened earlier. I think that the new contingent were unaware that we closed at seven o'clock. Now apprised, they will dutifully rush out a bit later from tomorrow.

ABH and I took a late turn out and took the short run around the block. Unlike the previous evening, there was not a soul about and the Harbour waters were empty. There were lights in the holiday let windows and the flicker of television screens. We had sold logs earlier in the day and I do not think they were for barbeques. I went to bed with the wind howling in the eaves. Crikey.

## August 17<sup>th</sup> – Sunday

Lifeboat Day in The Cove. Perhaps if I had noted that before I placed my pasty order (sorry, MS) for the weekend, I would not have run out at half past one o'clock. I knew that I had over-thought it at the time. It was also a bit hurried in the middle of a Lifeboat shout. I had plenty of excuses, do not worry.

I had concerns that today would be as affected by the wind as it was the day before. First thing, before the sun had come up, the sky looked clear, but we ended up with haze again after a bright start and in the middle of the day it was more cloud than haze before recovering slightly again. The wind had moved around to just south of east and was no longer blowing through the doorway at me and I had to resort to my fan again to stay refreshed. It did not give the two RNLI gazebos any trouble over the day, although the boys an interesting time putting them up.

The hog roast arrived just before the gazebos were set up and the very pleasant man from MacFaddens in St Just, stopped to help put it up. A little while later, after leaving instructions presumably, he left the whole thing to the Missus. Then someone must have pushed the busy button.

We had been very slow to start the day. I assume people who have travelled long distances to be here were a little weary and decided to have a lie in. We started to see some action an hour into the morning then, soon after the hog roast man left, The Cove exploded into busyness. We were pushed for pasties from the very outset of it and the notion that we might just make it into the afternoon looked very notional indeed. There was plenty of bucket and spading but we also had the comings and goings associated with the crowds that Lifeboat Day had drawn.

There were some difficult moments trying to cling to some continuity of pasty provision and cooking off the remaining six frozen pasties that I did not get around to yesterday. I was also thankful that I had managed to squeeze some shelf restocking into the early morning routine, which saved me having to break away from serving to go and find things in the store room. I had also unpacked the remaining posh mugs and put them out. We sold two.

The main reason for prioritising the posh mugs was that I wanted to get the big cardboard boxes out the front of the shop alongside the commercial bin. The much maligned council recycling collectors, who baulk and refuse to collect an entire bag of plastic if a wrong colour bottle top is spotted, will happily take our commercial cardboard. I did initially point out to the operatives that it was commercial cardboard, but they shrugged and took it anyway. I am not about to look a gift 'oss in the mouth.

I did not look at the beach, either, until near the end of the afternoon and it looked a bit sparse. I have no idea whether it was crowded earlier on and now, dear reader, neither will you. I can tell that that in the warm light of the dipping sun of the early evening, it looked resplendent. Those white capped waves were still moving sideways in the bay, although one of the gazebos obscured my vision until late on. Its absence also revealed a wing surfer on his clever hydrofoil board. One customer pointed him out and I explained the theory of flight aspect of it. As if on cue, our man aptly demonstrated this by racing into the wind shortly before he fell on his face in the choppy sea. What goes up, also comes down.

The boys across the road very efficiently took down all the Lifeboat paraphernalia that they had spent some time putting up. Cleared away you would have been pressed to say anything at all happened there today. The only thing remaining is the dunk tank, a kindly donated, large skip, that our brave volunteers spent the afternoon being tipped into. Clearly, I would have been in the vanguard had I not a busy shop to run.

It was busy, too. Another near record day and I probably would have felt it in every fibre of my being had any of the fibres of my being been feeling anything at all. Gosh, let us do it all again tomorrow.

## August 18<sup>th</sup> – Monday

There was a bit of a scurrying rumpus this morning as the skip lorry turned up early doors to pick up the dunk tank in the Lifeboat station yard. Two very frantic characters were rapidly engaged with sockets sets trying to dismantle the dunking apparatus. Sadly, I was frantically engaged with milk, greengrocery, newspapers orders and busy trying to top up the beer and soft drinks fridges, otherwise I would have rushed to help.

I could have been a been more frantic still had it not been a gymnasium day. For the first time since I can remember, I overslept. ABH, we were to discover later was a bit under the weather to start the day and had elected to sleep in too. I was not overly late but the light in the room alerted me to the fact that it was later than it should be, and I woke with a start.

I did not hold back on my pasty order (sorry, MS) for today having been embarrassed at the weekend. Actually, I was not. I did not have a long queue of disappointed people haranguing me for me appalling prescience and not ordering sufficient for their needs. It was one afternoon, and I am sure people coped with a shredded pork baps instead. It is possible, however, that I missed the mood completely and people were so incensed that they returned today to exact their terrible revenge.

They waited until I had left for the gymnasium and started on the Missus first. She was in full flight with them when I returned later after walking ABH. I had to step in and refill the warmer as the Missus was beset and unable to do so herself. The onslaught continued into the afternoon and cleared out most of the stock that I had an expectation would outlast the day. Fortunately, the demand dried up before the last pasty was sold but the last few were in the warmer and the fridge was empty.

I had asked the Missus for some assistance with topping up the shelves since I could only do the job piecemeal and not very effectively. The Missus does not just do topping up, she takes the store room apart can by can and packet by packet and ensures that every line on the shop shelves it at its most complete unless we have run out of something. It took her the rest of the day and deprived the fridge of a restocking of mixed leaf lettuce.

I did however, recall, that I had left some prodigiously sized courgettes in the fridge and deployed those as some sort of sop. A local lady had the similarly grand cucumber that the Missus brought back, and we ate the other. These additional items will never be commercially viable because they will never be available in

quantity at the same time. We will continue to share the bounty with locals and friends and be content with the huge success which is the bags of lettuce and rocket.

We lost the sunshine halfway through the afternoon which seemed to indicate that we should lose our visitors too who deserted us in numbers. We were busy at times, and it appears those left chose to wander the streets in small groups, maybe against approach by desperate shopkeepers. It kept us buoyant throughout the afternoon until about half past four o'clock when even the hardy ones beggered off. I was tempted to myself.

Instead, I took the opportunity nearing closing time to prepare the various orders for the morning and to make a start on the last big cash and carry order of the season. Yes, that surprised me very much, too. One of the customers had mentioned it being bank holiday next weekend. This is traditionally the day when, at four o'clock, we see a stream of taillights going up the hill as our visitors rush back home. It may be a little different this year because the bank holiday falls a clear week ahead of the end of the month and a week and a half ahead of going back to school day.

We are scheduled to reduce our hours on the Sunday before, but I think we will play this by ear and see how busy it is. We will not be able to do this with the cash and carry order that will have to be big enough for a busy week and a less busy week but not so large that we have excess stock waiting to go out of date. It is the trickiest order of the year by far.

Radio Pasty also told me that we might expect a change in the weather over the next couple of days before it recovers again. I must say that a change to the wind would be very welcome and, by the end of the day, it was blowing itself out. They also forecast rain for the evening that never materialised but when we went out for our last walk just before nine o'clock, the street was empty and there were no revellers in the Harbour. In fact, the rot had set in during the late afternoon and The Cove no longer seemed to be in a holiday mood. It was a very odd, empty feeling. I do hope things have not fizzled out early; I just place a large farm shop cash and carry order. Rain coming.

## August 19<sup>th</sup> – Tuesday

Did I say that we had lost the holiday vibe? Just ignore me will you. It came back to slap me in the face today for being so silly, although it took its sweet time in getting here.

I am going to have to set an alarm. I overslept again this morning but not by much. It is a bit of a, erm, wake up call that I should not be complacent about it because the next time might well be longer than I could easily recover from. I think it was triggered by the sudden reduction in busyness in the shop which tricked my body

into thinking it was all over. I had hoped that the gymnasium session would jolt me out of it but clearly, I need a kick up the behind as well.

Today's boot up the bottom came in the form of someone buying all the pasties (sorry, MS) in the warmer. It had me fighting a swift rearguard action to make sure I had some more pasties lined up smartly. It was exactly the right thing to do because what followed, like yesterday, was a quick-fire pasty fest that went on for some time. Again, I was concerned when stocks looked like getting a bit low and again, the demand tailed off at the crucial moment. It is almost like I am being toyed with.

There was certainly no messing a short while later when the pasty frenzy developed into a full onslaught for most of the rest of the day. I do not know if was the threat of rain later, that never materialised – again, or some other mutually understood imperative but it was a very busy several hours.

Fortunately, it had not really taken hold when the frozen delivery arrived, else I would have been in deep trouble. We have been careful to moderate the orders to necessities with little overstock so that we are not scrabbling for space or time in trying to get it all into the freezer. I had been fortunate earlier, before we opened in having no soft drinks to top up after the work the Missus had done. I used to the time to stock the preserves and chutneys that were running low and had not featured on the Missus' list. I also filled the greetings card rack which demonstrated that I need to order more cards. That will wait until next month, I feel. I had even coped quite well with a large milk delivery before the morning crowd turned up.

Doing the milk is always fraught because it takes me to the far end of the shop where I cannot see people arriving or waiting at the till. There was a lady in the grocery aisle when I started, and I tried to keep an eye on where she was. The next time I looked, she had gone from the aisle but was not at the till either. I kept looking but there was not sign of her, so I assumed she had left. I finished the milk and pushed the trolley up the grocery aisle and found her waiting at the till. Heaven knows where she was for the intervening couple of minutes.

The wind that we endured for several days has at last left us. It has not left us with very much other than a dour sky that looks like it might rain on us at any moment. It also has departed leaving critical damage to shop frontage that we may never recover from: the flag holder on the west side of the shop has been wrecked.

I normally take down the flags if the wind looks too rough for them. I was about to say that I do not know what I was thinking, leaving them out, but it was more the point that I was not thinking at all. I am firmly on autopilot and any deviations from serving customers and stocking shelves sends the system into spasm and gets put on the too difficult pile. I was vaguely aware at some point of the flag on that side lying inert by the bin and I was eventually minded to pick it up and put it in the store with the other one. When I came to put it out this morning, it promptly fell out of the holder. Closer examination of the holder revealed that it was terminally damaged.

I have looked before, and replacements are not generally available. It is also an odd size, 20 millimetres, so it will have to wait until we slow down a bit and I have time to search for one. I also need time – and my tools from The Farm – to do the replacing. What an annoyance.

We were quiet in the last hour of shopkeeping and then had a proper five minutes to closing rush. The street was deserted after that as we returned to not having a holiday feel again. We are selling logs as the evenings can be chilly, well, not as warm as they have been. I did not feel that it was that bad when I took ABH out for her last run, but it was properly dark by then, which I think was helped along by the dark cloud to the west. I had looked at the rain radar periodically throughout the day and the big lump of rain heading our way had broken up before it got to us. The broken bits came close, so we were lucky, but I shall be claiming full credit when I see the couple I tried to put off buying rain ponchos first thing this morning. I said they would not need them.

## August 20<sup>th</sup> – Wednesday

All aboard the holiday express. We are back in the game again with sunshine and loveliness abounding. Our visitors are smiling again and what is better, they are not running off anywhere silly and instead occupying the beach in hitherto this week, record numbers. They were also occupying the water but with hardly a wave in sight, surfing was definitely off for the day.

It had been a bit of a gloomy start. It was also a dark start when I opened my eyes first thing which I did in a timely manner thanks to ABH gently waking me from my slumber at the appropriate time. She had also woken me at an inappropriate time earlier in the night on a pressing matter, but we will let that pass. By the time I had exercised and made myself ready for the day, there was sufficient light to take a walk out without a torch.

We waited until the middle of the morning before the promised sunny day made a show, which was very good of it. It came eventually with quite a robust northerly breeze that seemed to be bothering no one at all. Judging from the number of t-shirts and blouses walking about, it was warm despite the breeze. The conditions made for a bit of a beach day and for the first time since the weekend we had the beach day profile of busy either end of the day and relatively quiet in the middle.

It was due to this that I managed to pack away all the hooded sweatshirts that turned up today. There were only two boxes as I had kept the order tight and not ordered excessively. It also helped that it was only specific sizes, just rather a lot of them. The delivery came with the small sweet packets from another supplier. The display was completely empty at the start of the day so the delivery was almost timely – yesterday would have been better. The trouble was that when I had finished with the

hooded sweatshirts, the shop started getting busy again and I had no chance to start on the sweets further than getting a few boxes out.

The sweets on that stand are a constant attraction and their absence caused consternation. With just a few lines out I had expected insurrection, but the small children seemed quite resigned to the lack of choice and left oddly satisfied it would appear.

Happily, small children can come to little harm choosing sweets – unless they choose rather a lot – but the same cannot be said for the fishing eels that come with very sharp, barbed hooks. I am quite surprised at the very young age some children start recreational fishing. I am less surprised by the local crowd because some of their parents are professional fishermen. However, it concerns me when I see small children I do not know rifling through the open pots of eels with their fingers, looking at the pretty colours.

There was one small lad today, left to run about the shop while the parent took a very important telephone call outside. I felt it incumbent upon me to have a word after he constantly returned to the eels to pull ones out. It happened again not long after when a family wandered the aisles again leaving a small child to play with the pretty coloured eels without supervision. Perhaps sticking a barbed hook through your finger is just kids expressing themselves.

The five minutes to closing rush, an hour before closing, soon dissipated and I was able to get all of the sweet boxes out on display. There is the overstock, which I can conclude in the morning along with all the drinks, the papers, the pasties (sorry, MS) and the greengrocery. Bring it on for I am keen, I tell you. Keen.

## August 21<sup>st</sup> – Thursday

I was really quite surprised that I was not taken to task over yesterday's Diary. At 648 words formed into sentences of meaningless drivel, it fell well short of the target 1,000 words of utter tosh. I cannot help but feel that an apology is due and that you must have felt terribly short-changed, dear reader. The problem is that I do not feel particularly confident that it will not happen again, especially the way today turned out.

We started the day with it looking quite overcast. I did not think much about it, but I had in the back of my mind a niggling suspicion that perhaps it should have been a bit brighter according to some forecast or something someone said. Still, it was mild enough and by the time we went out, it was daylight. I had no problem getting myself out of bed at the appointed hour and without assistance, either.

There was much to get through before we opened, so I made sure I was downstairs smartly. Sometimes it does not matter how early I am if the deliveries are not timely. I was still working at it an hour after we opened due in part to a large milk delivery

and an equally prodigious greengrocery drop that required much packing, weighing and pricing. The pasties (sorry, MS) came last at the tail end of a hurried breakfast. I had stuck with the volumes we had been using all week, which seemed to work. It worked today, but only just. It cleared out the fridge ahead of the big order for the weekend, which was good, but I had not necessarily planned it that way.

The first two days of the week had been a bit poor in line with the weather but better than we might have expected, even though it may not have looked like it at the time. Yesterday, while busy at the start and the end, also had not really met the mark of a good day. I had expected much the same of today that remained overcast well into the afternoon but, oh, how wrong I was. It was only later, after I had been pinned behind the counter for several hours, that a local pointed out that the weather had nothing to do with it; the forecast, however, had been for a decent day.

I had not even considered the possibility. I had not looked at a forecast for several days, but it appeared to be true, our visitors had banked on the forecast being correct and had turned up for a beach day in numbers. Just because the day did not look like the picture they had been given on their shiny mobile telephones, it was not going to deter them in the least. The upper reaches of the beach were packed for most of the day. There were still no waves, so the locals waited until high water and threw themselves off the Harbour wall. I should stress that the tossing themselves off the wall was done in the name of fun and excitement rather than surflless desolation.

Normal busy days at least have periods of quiet in them that allow me to recuperate a little. Today, it was relentless and contained a mix of beach and going home present buying. Whether it was the frantic buying, the anticipation of a bit of sunshine – that did eventually arrive – or the press at the top of the beach as the tide came in but we seemed to have more than our fair share of screeching small children. I would not have minded quite so much had the screeching not necessitated the throwing of various bits of our, as yet, unpurchased stock about the shop. If they were not screeching, they were demanding and running about the shop with disallowed contraband. It will, no doubt have been distributed about the shop for me to find should I dare to venture down the ravaged aisles.

In what may be a disappointment to some, there was no definable five minutes to closing rush as it was just busy right to the end of the day. Sure, the onslaught had diminished and calmed enough for me to cram a small tea before we closed. The Missus had once again deserted me for fundraising at Land's End and after the day I had endured, making a tea after I finished was just not going to happen. Gosh, I was weary.

The busyness had commenced in the middle of the day and had continued relentlessly until around five o'clock when it had eased a little. This is an observation, not a complaint.

I had sufficient reserves to take ABH around the block after we closed. She does not do very well in the shop and prefers to remain upstairs by herself. She more than occasionally takes umbrage against passing dogs which is difficult to manage I we are busy behind the counter, so it suits both us and the little girl that she is happy on her own in the flat. It is a pity because I am frequently asked where she is and when she might be available for an audience. We are not the only ones who miss the bleddy hound in that regard.

It was busy again as we walked around the block, which children playing in the Harbour again. Even when we went out again at last knockings, while there were few people abroad at that hour, it did not feel as deserted as it had the previous nights. There were warm glows from windows and the sound of voices in the air.

We were just in time to see the bow of the Lifeboat disappear into the boathouse having been on exercise with Penlee down at Porthcurno for most of the evening. The launch had been well attended by avid viewers tossing their top hats into the air and shouting hoorah – well, in a virtual sort of way they were. It had given me the opportunity to slip away from the shop for a moment. We are always grateful for such small mercies.

Hey, how about that, 1024 words, which is very apt on a computer.

## August 22<sup>nd</sup> – Friday

I was awoken rather earlier than I had hoped by the urgent tone of my Lifeboat pager going off. Indeed, I had barely been asleep a couple of hours at half past midnight o'clock but, no matter, needs must.

There were not a great many of us on shore or on the boat, but we launched with minimal crew to a motor cruiser, dead in the water with no radio or navigation lights on the edge of a shipping channel four miles to the southwest of Wolf Rock lighthouse. It takes 45 minutes to get to Wolf Rock and given the information we had I made the assumption that the call would result in a tow. I calculated the service time to be around four and a half hours and recommended that those of us present should return to our beds and await further information.

One of our number lives in far off Redruth and he would be arriving at the station shortly after the rest of us had gone back to sleep again. It was he who called me at half past three in the morning to tell me that my estimations were out of the window as the motor cruiser had sunk and the boat was on its way back with two casualties on board.

Those of us who had been there earlier in the night, mustered again and made ready for the boat's return. We had just finished when the boat hove into view, lights blazing so that we knew it was one of ours. The sea state was kind with only a bit of

swell on the slipway, and we brought the boat up the short slip in what was clearly a textbook recovery with minimal but experienced crew. The casualties, both in their 80s, were in good condition and our man from Redruth took them back to their home in Penzance. We are, after all, a very customer oriented, very excellent Shore Crew.

Given that it was gone four o'clock, with Jupiter and Venus rising in the east, it seemed churlish to go back to bed again. It also seemed dangerous, as I would no doubt oversleep and that would ruin my day.

I waited until it got light before taking ABH out. There was from the first a clear blue sky letting the pre-dawn sunlight fill the eastern horizon. It held the promise that all the other days were supposed to have had but fell a little short. Naturally, we cannot have a splendid bit of day all by itself, so the northerly wind got its act together and put in a better blow than it did yesterday or overnight. That stayed with us all day taking the edge off the temperature.

There did not seem to be much point in going downstairs too early but even so I was earlier than I had been all week. I made the mistake of going down the gift aisle because, yesterday, I had noticed that one of our best sellers, little display boxes of rocks and minerals had run out. I thought that I had a spare but when I opened the box this morning, I discovered that it was something else. It was a disappointment but the alternative product in the box should sell just as well. What was a greater disappointment was that there was more to do down that aisle than I had time to do and being downstairs half an hour earlier would have helped tremendously. That will teach me – well, no it will not, but it is the thought that counts.

The pasty delivery (sorry, MS) was so late that it coincided with the first increase in customer visits for the day. I tried balancing serving with putting pasties away and discovered very quickly that was not going to work. I called the Missus down to cover the till while I finished off the rest of the mammoth pasty order. Having messed around last week and found myself wanting – more pasties – I did not hold back and went large this week.

I am getting quite expert at packing them in, but I find it makes a difference who did the crimping. Someone, or maybe several someones at the bakery, crimp the pasties in short, neat packages and they fit better in the fridge than the other someone or someones who make more elongated pasties with extended knob ends or whatever you call the final twist on the crimp. These are troublesome to fit in rows, take more time to pack and result in fewer per shelf. Whatever shape the pasty, having an empty fridge to start from made all the difference.

After the initial rush and the one after that which went on a bit longer than the first one which was followed by another that went on a bit longer still, there was a bit of a pause that allowed me a few mouthfuls of breakfast. In truth, there were a few more breaks that I had yesterday, at least to begin with. The continual onslaught was not quite as long or intense but our shoppers during the afternoon did their best to make

it so. I did have enough time at one point in the day, it must have been mid-morning because the tide was out, to have a geek at the beach.

I note that the field of rocks is back making a clear delineation between the front of the beach that runs to the sea and the back that inclines sharply to the dunes. There is much sand piled up at the back that the rocks that sit at the base of the dunes are mainly covered. It was busy down there today with colourful camps of tents and windbreaks set up all along the high water line from The Beach car park to the Valley and beyond. The sharp incline made it look like they were on a grandstand of some elongated stadium.

Today, they were all chased off the beach at around five o'clock as spring tides are pushing almost to the dunes already. One shopper collecting ice creams for a couple of attendant children had a call from a party still on the beach urging him to hurry back as the waves were at their door. The gentleman was last seen running down the road towards the beach.

As yesterday, there was not much tailing off of busyness at the end of the day. We had a bit of a surge as the tide forced people off the beach and a proper five minutes to closing rush, to boot. I was doing my own bit of rushing at the time trying to clear the store room ahead of the last big cash and carry delivery of the year.

We had started the day with the store room in reasonable shape but a delivery of soft drinks and later some very fine gin from our Longrock distillery had the place in a mess again. I will need to get down early in the morning to top up the soft drinks because after the cash and carry has been, I will no longer be able to get to them. The same with the toilet rolls, which I dutifully topped up before we closed.

I try to arrange it that I do not have any other major deliveries on the cash and carry day, but we had been so denuded of groceries that I have had to call in greengrocery, milk and soft drinks. Radio Pasty and various customers tell me the weekend is set fair, so I had best gird my loins. Just so I did not get too excited by it all, the Aged Parent told me a geet storm is on the way for next week. I was about to say it took the wind out of my sails, but I suspect that it might be quite the opposite.

## August 23<sup>rd</sup> – Saturday

I had to laugh at Radio Pasty's weather forecast this morning. Apparently, we were due for the weather to break in the middle of next week when we would see some rain. They then went on to detail the next few days and ended up telling us that rain would be coming Monday night. I do not know how long their week is, but I rather assumed 'the middle of the week' to be around Wednesday.

In the meanwhile, our morning was settling in to be a bit of a rip gribbler. There were some cirrus and cumulus clouds about which occasionally got in the way but by and

large, most of the day was sunshine and gloriousness. Again, it was Radio Pasty that told us that here in the Far West we would hog all the sunshine while up the line, cloud would roll in.

Clearly, the world, the in-laws and their cousins, the cousins' pet angel fish and the in-laws' trained armadillo had also listened to Radio Pasty and turned up in numbers for their big beach day in the sun. It took a while but by mid morning we were going at it, full throttle – I thought. Midway through the afternoon I discovered that there was a fuller throttle setting as yet undiscovered. At a quiet moment, and there were precious few, I thought it safe to break out a snack of Cornish camembert and Cornish chutney. I had one morsel and did not see it again for an hour and a half. I then had another morsel and gave up.

The last big cash and carry order of the year came a little later than I would have liked but I had finished topping up the drinks by the time it did. It did not take us long to carry everything in; we are getting quite expert at it. We had also managed to pile it into quite a small footprint on the store room floor which meant that later I could not get to anything at all and had to work from the end whether I needed it urgently or no.

Not that I had much time to devote to the delivery. By the time I had got everything ready for opening and the milk put in the fridge after we had opened, we started to see some busyness almost straight away. The fact that I failed miserably to clear much of the delivery at all will come and bite me on the bottom tomorrow when I come to try and top up the soft drinks. They are all at the back of the store behind a wall of groceries.

The increased number of visitors I suppose necessitated an increase in traffic in The Cove. Arguably, if the bus service was better, there might have been fewer cars. At the very least, there would have been more people. The street tends to work with a flow of traffic but, on occasion, requires some kindly give and take by motorists negotiating around obstacles. One such obstacle, a car some eejit had parked opposite the bus stop, meant that with a bus waiting there, nothing is going to move in either direction.

The only thing to do in such circumstance is to wait patiently until either the eejit parked stupidly moves his car or the bus moves. What is not required is another eejit believing it to be his divine right to drive down the road and that anyone in the way, however impractical it may be, should move out of his way. It was the bus that had to reverse and not he. There followed an impasse of some length that caused consternation and a queue of vehicles both sides of the blockage. I believe, in the end, someone said that it was an emergency that they got through for some reason or other, that broke the deadlock.

A small part of the issue is that the double yellow lines opposite the bus stop have eroded. Belligerently minded eejits can pretend that it is permitted to park there

legitimately, despite it being obviously not. The much maligned council, claiming shortage of funds, has refused to repaint the lines. I recall an almost identical incident a few years back where, quite possibly the same eejit, parked there with the same result. He had a disabled badge and claimed immunity – from parking rules, not eejitocy. The fact that he had parked, like the car today, blocking the footpath to wheelchair users is neither here nor there.

The excitement for the day over for the time being, we all returned to station to carry on what we were doing before. This meant the Missus, having brought the truck around to the front of the shop, distributing the stock that I had asked her to bring down from The Farm. She had chosen, inadvertently, one of the busy periods and we struggled between us to clear the goods to the shelves.

Saturday is a change-over day where people leave and people arrive. Between the two there is usually a quiet period where the few that are left go about their business or head to the beach before the new ones arrive. Today, there was no such delineation and once the busyness of the afternoon took hold, it did not let go until gone five o'clock. Here, everyone took a breath before they started all over again in one final assault that swept the five minutes to closing rush before it in one scramble of confusion.

I have to admit that it was tough on grumpy shopkeeper bones. Particularly the one between his ears. The maelstrom had nearly taken me with it and only by the most determined of efforts did I cling onto the reality of it all. I discovered that as long as I maintained my focus on shopkeeping, the continual processing of the things that arrived at the counter in front of me, I was relatively safe. A distraction, such as trying to work the car parking 'app' to pay for niece's parking when she arrived, scat me sideways and struggling to conclude the most minor of purchases for minutes afterwards. One lady suffered me having to key her items five times before I was satisfied that I had it right.

I was very grateful to be able to close the first electric sliding door in The Cove at the appointed hour. I was even more grateful to put my head on my pillow not too long afterwards. My, what a day.

## August 24<sup>th</sup> – Sunday

There will be no Diary today.

The Aged Parent, maternal, shuffled off peacefully first thing this morning.

She had the good grace to prime us for a week so that it was an ordered inevitability rather than a sudden and unexpected departure. It chimed with her lifelong sense of propriety and putting others first.

I am resolved to think that she did rather well, despite some poorliness in the last years. She had been cared for exceedingly well and the other Aged Parent was there to wave her off at the end having read to her psalms and poems through the preceding days.

She was born in the heart of the east part of Somerset, went to a posh sort of school where they taught her how to speak proper, like what she passed down to me. She trained to be a nurse, which must have gone well because she became one and then met the other Aged Parent. I think I am correct in saying that you could not marry and be a nurse, so she chose the marrying bit then eventually had me and presumably instantly regretted not being a nurse.

Then there were years of bringing up children followed by tears of bringing up teenagers who showed their devotion and gratefulness by beggering off before they were twenty. So onerous was this task that meals were set on a weekly rolling cycle, the only variation being on a Tuesday when the leftovers of Sunday's roast dictated three different outcomes. Clearly possessed of some masochistic tendency pertaining to parenting, she also worked as nurse at an ESN school for many years. After we left, there must have been a pause, some sense of relief because it was at least four years before the first of the grandchildren turned up and it all started again.

It ended up with at least 25 years of retirement when she did not have to look after children hardly at all and somewhere in the region of 70 years of marriage. If we ever need to remind ourselves of the marked impression she had on our lives, we only need have cottage pie on a Thursday.

Let her have a bit of Christina Rossetti, I say:

*Sonnets are full of love, and this my tome  
Has many sonnets: so here now shall be  
One sonnet more, a love sonnet, from me  
To her whose heart is my heart's quiet home,  
To my first Love, my Mother, on whose knee  
I learnt love-lore that is not troublesome;  
Whose service is my special dignity,  
And she my loadstar while I go and come  
And so because you love me, and because  
I love you, Mother, I have woven a wreath  
Of rhymes wherewith to crown your honoured name:  
In you not fourscore years can dim the flame  
Of love, whose blessed glow transcends the laws  
Of time and change and mortal life and death.*

August 25<sup>th</sup> – Monday

Sunday turned out to be almost as busy as Saturday but possibly less fraught. This changed in the afternoon when it all went full throttle again dragging me under the wheels as it went. The weather was good and the temperature very warm. It turned out to be a proper beach day with tents and windbreaks crammed into the high reaches of the beach and a small army of water users, erm, using the water and not a wave in sight – well, not when I looked, anyway.

It turned out to be a proper rip gribbler of a day and went on right into the evening. When I walked ABH at last knockings, the last echoes of the sunshine glowed in the western sky and people were still cavorting in the Harbour. The warmth had gone out of the day a bit by then, but it certainly was not cold.

Before we start the day, let me just thank you and the other reader for your kind messages today. They were deeply appreciated.

It did not take much study to realise that we were in for another day much like the one before it. Not long into the morning, the temperate was beginning to climb and the sun was splitting the hedges with little in the way of cloud to spoil it. I had planned to go to the gymnasium in the morning, but it very quickly became obvious that was a really bad idea. We had started getting busy almost from the moment we opened, and I was serving customers while the milk delivery waited to be put out.

Since I had already dressed for the gymnasium, the Missus had to step in while I went and got changed. It had not occurred to me to have breakfast as soon as I realised the plan had changed. By the time I realised I should go and get the fresh mackerel delivered to us by some kindly old cove of a fisherman and lovingly cooked by the Missus last night, it was too late to eat it. The Missus, seeing my dilemma, told me to eat my breakfast before going to get changed. Unfortunately, the delay meant that by the time I came down again, we had hit peak pre-beach shopping, and it was packed out in the shop.

Had I realised this before I came back down, I would have told ABH that she would have to wait for her walk out. As it was, she had taken the view that I had obviously returned from the gymnasium and when I return from the gymnasium, I take her for a walk. It was difficult to argue with that logic, so I took her around the block.

Gosh, it was warm. It was also sunny and very busy. The car park by that stage, an hour before the middle of the day, was pretty much full. There was a long line of people carrying beach chairs, beach mats and other beach paraphernalia heading out down the road. It would seem that a good percentage of those people stopped off at the shop on the way because when I returned, there was a long of queue shoppers keen to get to the till to part with their shekels.

I made as quick a turnaround as I could and threw myself behind the counter just as the last person of the queue was heading out of the doorway. I need not have been too disappointed; there were queues that I could call my own here and there

throughout the rest of the day. In fact, it was again exceptionally busy with only a nod to the beach day etiquette of having a lull in the middle of the day when no one wants to move off the beach.

It may actually have been that no one *could* move off the beach. If I had thought that yesterday or the day before showed the limits of busyness down there for the season, I was awfully wrong. The little camps stretched from under The Beach car park all the way across the Valley entrance and petered out under the black huts of Carn Keys. It was difficult to tell whether the camp people were in the majority. There appeared to be just as many in the water and today they had waves.

There is a deep low pressure system out to the west. It will moderate slightly as it moves towards the northwest of the UK. One of the Harbour officials put out a warning this morning for anyone with a boat or kayak in the Harbour to move it further up or risk it being washed away. It is a precaution, but the wave height is predicted to be two metres on Sevenstones buoy, and it is a spring tide. Quite what the swell in the bay will look like was at that moment a mystery but little by little the swell was increasing. Our most prolific fisherman has no intention of venturing out and he has called end of season on lobster fishing and has pulled in all his pots.

I had a moment's peace as the time headed towards six o'clock. It had been momentarily busy up to that point and I had missed the bread order deadline. I have a morning of embarrassment to look forward to because there was a customer order in there as well. In my defence, it was the fourth record day in a row and significantly more record than the previous three. My cracks are starting to show. The beer fridge was empty at the end of the day, and I had already re-filled it twice. They did not quite manage to clear out all the soft drinks; they are far more of them. Happily, our little helper filled that fridge for me in the closing half hour of the day. If the first shoppers in the morning find me with my hand melted to the keys on the till, I should not be entirely surprised.

I was semi-conscious of a roaring in my ears that I did not think was the onset of madness, although the conditions in the shop today were about right for it. I could also hear the occasional thump of serious waves hitting the Harbour wall. When I had a chance to look, there were indeed serious waves dancing over Cowloe and dashing up the cliff opposite. Within the space of an hour, the bay had gone from having a surf-worthy swell to major maelstrom.

Naturally, though the waves were big and butch, the local thrill seekers were lined up along the Harbour wall. Also naturally, someone calls in 999 and the Coastguard reason that somehow the Lifeboat launching would be helpful. We were assembled, the doors opened, and the boat pulled back before someone sensible stood us down. We had just reset when the pagers went off again. This time for a yacht over at Botallack that had dropped anchor at a safe spot until the swell abated a bit, could not then retrieve the anchor. Had our boat launched we would not have seen it again

before Wednesday because even a very excellent Shore Crew would struggle to recover it in the prevailing conditions. So, we waited.

We waited some more and then, with nothing better to do, waited some more after that. Three hours later, the yacht eventually worked free its anchor and set off on its way. We were stood down ten minutes later and headed to our beds. I think I was asleep before I reached mine.

## August 26<sup>th</sup> – Tuesday

Any thoughts I might have been harbouring that our visitors may have gone home were quickly dispelled this morning. We were busy from the outset.

A few people had expressed an expectation that along with the big sea, there would be stormy weather. I had looked at both the BBC and Meteorological Office forecasts and neither were showing any big rain and poor weather heading our way, at least until later and tomorrow. The low pressure system is still a long way out in the Atlantic and the fronts and weather systems associated with it will not reach us until Wednesday and Thursday. Today, we had a day's grace.

It had started out very well. The sun was still shining in a blue sky and giving the impression that all was well with the world. The sea on the other hand was doing its best to suggest that the world might be coming adrift from its moorings at any moment. It was lumping with determined force over the Harbour wall when I took ABH out for a spin first thing. It was perhaps the roaring in the background when we were in the flat that put her off an earlier trip out. I had not pressed her and waited until she got up of her own volition – which, of course, was in the middle of my cup of tea.

Unsurprisingly, the beach was red flagged all day. Even at low water the sea was misbehaving in an outrageous manner, throwing itself up the cliff opposite and high up on Brisons. Usually, there would be one or two surfers keen to demonstrate their bravado in such conditions but today, perhaps they were not feeling quite so brave.

Even after just the one vicious tide, the big beach had been reshaped. It would have been difficult to determine what had changed had I not fortuitously taken a photograph before high water yesterday. Before I looked, I thought that the sand at the back of the beach had been scoured out a bit because the incline from the rest of the beach seemed less severe. In truth, it would appear that much sand has been deposited on the main part of the beach and the rock field that was in evidence the day before has almost completely gone.

Little by little during the day, we seemed to be getting less busy. It may have been due to the beach being red flagged but despite the weather being reasonably favourable, the upper reaches of beach were also near empty. After our early

sunshine, cloud had rolled in bit by bit and although it came bright again for a short while towards evening the day never really recovered its joie de vie. By the early afternoon, I decided that it might be worthwhile trying to close at our appointed time of six o'clock tonight.

I started the closing process at around five o'clock, by closing the first curtain and bringing in the windbreaks. Although there was quite a crowd on the benches opposite watching the increasing waves and the street was still busy with people promenading, my early warning actions prompted little reaction. We had been busy through the afternoon but that was slowly fading away and by the time I closed the first electric sliding door there was no major protest and no five minutes to closing rush. I expect that if I had looked at our cameras I would have seen a queue of disappointed customers, their noses pressed against our windows at half past six o'clock.

Instead, I was diverted by my Lifeboat pager to go and launch the Inshore boat at that time. First on the scene were three very excellent Shore Crew who knew very well that the Inshore would not be launching into the churning and crashing waters of the Harbour. I answered the station telephone by telling the caller that it was The Old Boathouse Stores which might have been important had it not been our Deputy Launching Authority telling me that the call was due to someone – very possibly the same someone – calling 999 for the Coastguard having witnessed young testosterone fuelled young men be tossed off the Harbour wall by big waves.

It is a local right of passage and generally speaking, the local lads know the limitations. On this and the previous evening the waves were particularly ferocious and posed a much higher level of risk. It is not just water piling over the Harbour wall but seriously large lumps of rock and one local lad had his head cracked by one quite recently. The deputy coxswain and a team of crew went down on the western slip to order the boys out. Subsequently, the Cliff Team arrived and were instructed to stay on station to make sure no one else ventured out.

Meanwhile, along the promenade side, some local surfer were plying the big waves. At high water, the rolling waves were perfectly formed and presented some good surfing to those who know the waters and when to stop surfing before they end up on the rock armour against the sea wall.

Me, I returned home to enjoy the best part of an extra hour sitting on my behind and doing very little, sufficiently little for me to doze off on the sofa. The end is apparently nigh.

## August 27<sup>th</sup> – Wednesday

It had the temerity to rain upon us this morning. I had not bothered to look at a forecast and neither did I notice the ink black sky to the west of us. It was only when

buckets of rain were being thrown at the window did I have a geek at the rain radar. There was a narrow band of rain moving eastwards. It took less than an hour to move through but there was a light rainy bit in the middle of it and I managed to get ABH out during that. She is not daft, she took me quickly around the back, did what she had to do and raced back.

I had already gone down to set up the shop and to get the cardboard out once the general waste had been collected. The cardboard collection sometimes comes before we are open, and I therefore need to be prepared. There is nothing worse than missing the cardboard collection especially when it comes the week after the cash and carry delivery. Thanks to having our little helper this week who has emptied every box in the place, we had five cardboard boxes of cardboard to put out. The store room has been transformed.

I was not sure what to expect from today. General trade was busy enough yesterday, compared to and expected downturn on the day before, but pasty sales (sorry, MS) did not meet expectations by some margin, and I had reduced the order for today accordingly. The weather appeared to be in flux but both main weather forecasts had the day as being bright and sunny, which it was – very. My expectation was that the beach would remain red flagged, although I wondered if the Lifeguards might relent a bit at low water – they did not, although they were less dogged about pulling young paddlers out of the shallows than they were yesterday.

Having decided to give up my gymnasium session on Monday, which turned out to be exactly the right decision, I was not going to miss out today. I cannot remember when I last went but lifting weights was a bit more strenuous than I remembered. I have cut down my rowing to 4,000 metres and broken up the fast and slow timings. It is still good exercise but does not test my endurance quite so thoroughly, which obtusely is probably the bit I need most. Anyway, something must be working because I weight in half a stone lighter than I did at the start of the summer, which might be more to do with not having quite so much time to eat.

As if to prove the point, I struggled to get any breakfast in at all when I returned to the shop. Yesterday's small downturn seemed to upturn today, although I will look at the till at the end of the day and be entirely wrong about that. Among all the busyness and at times it was very busy, there were also several quite lengthy lulls. This made it difficult to determine with any accuracy just how busy it had been today. I did note, however, that pasties were selling well above the rate of yesterday and I had to call the pasty people twice to up my order of first, pasties and then again for sausage rolls.

Our pasty buyers have been relative well behaved this season. I have only once had to show the red card to someone asking for ketchup with their order. She was very convincing when she told me it was for the sausage rolls the children were having and I do understand that children will eat nothing at all without ketchup on it. I did

have her sign a sworn oath that the ketchup would come nowhere near the hallowed crust of the pasty she had purchased.

I fear that there was nothing to be done about a lady who came in seeking a pasty and looked disappointed when I said that we had Cornish pasties and pasties with cheese in them. Her husband told me that she was looking for a pasty with curry in it. 'Good grief', said I, 'whatever next' or some such jokery. I had much the same response to a gentleman today who sought lamb in his pasty. What is the world coming to.

We were heading quite nicely for another six o'clock closing and I was just about to start the half hour process when the Missus returned from The Farm. When she left, she told me she was just going to get the items on a list I had given her, mainly buckets and spades, and return. She was much longer than I expected for such a task and when she arrived at half an hour to closing, the truck was filled to the brim with all manner of things that the shop has sold at one time or other. It rather looked like she had emptied the store and brought it down.

When I had assimilated the idea that the visiting help would process most of it tomorrow – though quite where in the shop half of it will go, I have no idea – the pair of us unloaded it into the recently cleared store room. This took the half hour that I would have used to close the shop and thus we were still fully open when we were flooded by a five minutes to closing rush at, erm, five minutes to what we hoped might have been closing time.

I eventually closed the shop closer to half past six o'clock and then proceeded to do the orders for the following day.

I had just sat down to read my book after tea when my pager went off again. Happily, it was a cancel signal from the Coastguard. They were alerted again by our trigger happy 999 caller – it has to be the same person – an hour later each day in line with the advance of the tide. Our Lifeboat Launching Authority managed to head this one off at the pass and have the Cliff Team deal with it. I note that the Harbour authority issued a warning on social media thing to warn of the dangers – and with the sea state this severe, the risk is advanced – but clearly it was unheeded.

It is deep dusk now when I take ABH around for her last walk around and a head torch is required in some places. However, the car park was still full at that hour and even fuller with the Cliff Team still in attendance, waiting to be stood down. While I feel for them, they are the right body to deal with the incident because until someone needs to be rescued from the water, the Lifeboat is pretty impotent.

I very carefully avoided the Missus' gaze when I returned. She had made a start on the three inch pile of invoices that need to be done by the first days of September. I quietly slunk off to bed, hopefully unnoticed.

## August 28<sup>th</sup> – Thursday

Hold on just a minute. I think we need to clear something up just before we start in earnest for the day. The other reader mentioned that The Cove was on the BBC News and later, when I had perchance happened upon the article on the BBC News website, I read it. Apparently, we rescued half a dozen people one night this week after they were “washed off the wall and the swell dragged them into the Harbour”.

Clearly, readers of The Sennen Cove Diary, where every word is checked for authenticity and correctness, are ahead of this one. I am not sure if asking six people, who had permitted themselves to be pushed off the wall and swimming back to do it again, if they would so good as to come out of the water because it was not a terribly bright thing to be doing in the circumstances, constitutes a rescue in anyone’s book. I can either conclude that Falmouth Coastguard were keen to guild a lily or two for dramatic effect or the BBC were – or we are just a very excellent Shore and Boat Crew.

You may conclude, dear reader, from the fact that the grumpy shopkeeper and Diarist had sufficient time to look at the BBC News website that things were a tad quiet this morning. You would be right. The situation was not improved by the occasional showers that passed through during the morning. It was hard to tell whether it was the rain or a bit of a general exodus and later I could conclude that it might have been a bit of both. My conclusion was probably not that conclusive because it might also have been the sort of overcast day our visitors went off to St Ives. Thursday would have been a bit of an odd day to do that, but I am sure stranger things have happened.

Our family visitor showed up halfway through the morning to tackle the large delivery the Missus had showered upon us last night. She clearly shares the demolishing tasks in a hurry gene that the Missus has because she cleared the store room in a remarkably short time. While she did that, I was able to turn out the boxes of sweets that had been dumped in our box outside at some point after we closed yesterday. The delivery driver had decided that he would empty the contents of the box and squeeze the oversized delivery inside despite it obviously warping the sides of the box. It was fortunate that I noticed last night when I took ABH out for the last walk and was able to move the boxes inside and provide some remedial care to our storage box.

The sweets order was hastily arranged – the last delivery had lasted less than a week and the stand had been full. The Missus simply repeated the order which was the most expedient course of action. The delivery did not perfectly fit the gaps and match what remained of the previous order, but the stand is now full, which is the most important thing.

Mindful that even if today was not a major exodus day, the weekend almost certainly would be, it made the pasty order (sorry, MS) for the weekend inevitably difficult. If I

cut the order to the bone, we were bound to get a queue of people wanting to take tens of them home for family members who had asked for them. By accommodating such a notion, they would all want to take home fudge and biscuits instead. If they did go for the fudge and biscuits, I was quids in because we had a delivery of postcard fudge boxes in the afternoon that I took some time to fill the stock room shelves with.

The unpacking of the gifts that the Missus brought down from The Farm, the sweets and the delivery of postcard fudge boxes along with the wine delivery later in the afternoon generated quite a quantity of waste cardboard. With the next big collection of cardboard a week away I had to contemplate getting it away with the Laurel and Hardy Newspaper Company. The service is extremely handy but works best with small box sizes broken down that fit best in the recyclable plastic bags they provide for the purpose. If I wish to dispose of larger sizes, I have to face the fag of cutting it down. Once it has been cut down it then fills too many sacks to get rid of on one collection. I will consider my options – tomorrow.

By the end of the afternoon it was clear that we would have to wait now until October half term for another big day the likes we had seen for the last five weeks. We had only done four weeks of late closing, it had seemed much longer, but it was quite long enough, thank you. I could have continued it this week, but I think, on balance, that it was the right thing to move back to six o'clock.

We have been flexible with the closing time. Yesterday, it was largely due to the late arrival of the stock and today, thanks to a robust five minutes to closing rush that saw us still open long after our desired shutting time. Given than many people arrived well after six o'clock, our advertised closing time is neither here nor there and if people are passing and the shop looks open, they will assume it is. For now, we are happy to let that ride and this evening it paid dividends because we cleared the pasty warmer that otherwise would have gone to waste.

The Missus had already determined that she would pass on doing the RNLI collecting at Land's End fireworks evening due to expected poor weather. This proved to be the right move when Land's End cancelled the event. I had not been quite so lazy, I should have taken ABH out for a spin straight after tea now that straight after tea is earlier. It was not that much earlier given the delayed closing, so perhaps I should not feel quite so guilty but by the time it came to last run out, it was hacking down. I paid for my idleness with a mercifully brief but wet last knocking run.

We are hoping it will be clear by morning but I have a suspicion that much of my weekend pasty order will be in the freezer by Monday.

August 29<sup>th</sup> – Friday

It must have rained some in the night. There was sand over the road at the bottom of the slope up to the RNLI car park and the Harbour beach showed signs of significant run off. We were slapped in the face by a fresh northwesterly when we rounded the corner of the Lifeboat station, a breeze that stayed with us for the day. A few people expressed surprise that I had not heard the rain in the night as it had been quite ferocious. I had slept like a top, although I am not entirely certain how tops sleep to make such a claim.

We were told of showers and sure enough we had a couple. The rain was not all that heavy, in fact, the only reason that I could tell it was raining at all was that the shop was flooded with people in an instant. It was a brae bit of an over-reaction because when the visitors stepped in, I stepped out and I could hardly tell it was raining at all. I was heading to take ABH out after a blistering gymnasium session. Next week I will be returning to three sessions a week and slowly building back up to 5,000 metres on the rowing machine. I can hardly wait.

There was just enough beach to have a run on when we headed down late in the morning. There were a few bathers taking a dip and we met some more just having finished their last dip before heading home. We stopped to have a chat, as they are regular visitors, and we bid them safe home before going to have a brief cavort on the beach ourselves.

It was bright from the start today, the breeze being the only willow ptarmigan in the duck pond of an otherwise delightful day. There was a general sort of downturn in the numbers about the place, but we had been relatively busy in the shop during the morning and when I returned later, we were busy some more. There was a sizeable invasion of the shallows on the big beach now that the Lifeguards had relented and let people get wet again. With a brisk nor'westerly there was never likely to be much in the way of surfing in the bay but there were plenty of people with bodyboards having a splash. Later, we saw a couple of wing surfers leave the Harbour. The conditions were ideal for that.

Armed with windbreaks and beach shelters there were a smaller number of campers at the top of the beach than we have been used to. Still, for the tail end of the holiday, they were doing alright. I was minded to think that some more sand had been scoured out from under the dunes at the car park end as there appeared to be more rocks exposed. It would be no surprised given several days of big seas hammering up there.

It has been a long time since I had cause to spar with the Laurel and Hardy Newspaper Company and deep down inside, I must have been missing it, obtusely. Back in the middle of July, I had noticed that the credit I had received for the return of the pre-paid tickets I had collected did not match the amount that I had calculated was due. I had raised a ticket with the Laurel and Hardy Newspaper Company customer service team – which I believe to be a find example of an oxymoron. They had asked me to send all the information that I had already sent then I had received

a response telling me to wait five days for the credit note to arrive. The fact that the only reason I was able to determine that the credit I had received was less than my claim was because I had already received the credit note.

I cannot recall what prompted me to remember this outstanding query, but I found their response this morning and sent off a query asking how the enquiry about the disparity between the claim and the received amount was progressing – a bit like poking a hornet's nest, I suppose. I was quite surprised to have a speedy response, within the same day of my query. I was, however, not surprised that the response told me that the credit note had been sent in the middle of July.

I probably deserved it after daring to wake the giant. I sent back a polite note thanking them for the information and now could I have an answer to the question I actually asked. I await another response.

Our family visitor set to with the last tasks of her week with us. Today it was the newly delivery fishing tackle, biscuits for cheese and the sunglasses. There is not an aspect of the shop stock that has not received her attention, and we are now bursting at the seams – just as everyone goes home. We are now not likely to have the need to do major restocking, at least until the half term.

I was about to return to normal duties when my Lifeboat pager went off. I must remember to check the battery after all the use it has had this week. We were entreated to launch the big boat just after two o'clock as the tide was heading to low water. The Lifeboat had been called to investigate an object in the water just off Land's End. These calls generally do not take very long, so we immediately set up the long slip for the boat's return. I was heading up the slip after putting in place the span and arranging the length of the cable when we saw the boat coming back into the bay.

I continued to the top of the slip because I had left my radio there and needed my all important green flag to wave at the winchman. After the seas we have had over the last week, it was a relief to be at the toe of the slip in reasonably placid waters. The bay was choppy in the wind and there was enough swell to make the boat dance uncomfortably on the waves as it turned about to make its approach to the channel. With all the conditions in alignment, we executed what was clearly a textbook recovery with a cable length that was inch perfect. We are, after all, a very precise, very excellent Shore Crew.

After our heroics, saving the lives of six people in the Harbour earlier in the week, according to the BBC, we will no doubt be up for bravery medals for dashing off, careless of our own safety, to investigate a dangerous and life-threatening lump of weed floating off Land's End.

Things do not get much more exciting than that, so I returned to the shop to still my jangling nerves. It was just the ticket to go through a sedate and orderly arrival of

visitors, purvey the last of the holiday gifts and to provide young waifs with sweets for their journeys home lest they expire from hunger on their long voyages.

We finished the day with a grand tea for our family visitor and the in-laws who have stayed with Mother the last two weeks of the holiday. They take Mother off for two weeks then come and stay here for a further two during our busyness, which is rather good of them. Now that the fight is over, they are returning home and things will slowly return to the ebb and flow of normal daily life for grumpy shopkeeper and family at the sharp end of the peninsular. [FX: breathes a long sigh of relief.]

Last, we have had some cards and further messages of condolence for which we thank you very much. L&L and company send fond wishes from very far north of Camborne, which is lovely, thank you.

### August 30<sup>th</sup> – Saturday

Well, it started out pleasant enough. I had heard that there was a forecast for rain overnight and into the morning, so I was pleasantly surprised when I looked out on a dry street. I checked the rain radar, lest we get caught out and discovered that there was no rain for miles about. The only hitch was that ABH was not all that keen to go out.

Eventually, I convinced her that we go out but had to wait until after I had finished the morning administrative chores and we headed to the beach. We were joined by a lone swimmer who went in for a five minute dip. ABH ignored her on the way in but decided that she just must say hello as the lady made her way back to her towel. She is such an embarrassment.

We had a morning of small busyness as the leavers took their leave, picking up going home presents and food for long journeys. One couple who had come in for pasties (sorry, MS) that they had to wait for, were on their way to Ramsgate, which they told me was seven hours east of Camborne. They had come for a pasty for the journey home, and I told them that the one pasty would probably get them as far as Truro if they were lucky and that really they should have half a dozen more. I think they thought that I was joking.

We were still seeing customers when the rain started. In fact, we got busy very suddenly when the rain started but I have no idea where they all came from. I had thought that the rain would allow me to finish my breakfast in relative peace, but it was quite the opposite. Had I waited half an hour for the rain to set in properly I could have had several breakfasts without fear of interruption.

The rain continued for three hours in varying degrees of heaviness and finished with an hour of mizzle halfway through the afternoon. We had enjoyed some sporadic

business but if I was to compare it to even just the previous day, it was like someone had turned off the customer switch.

I might have fallen back on a little shelf topping up had someone not already done all that and more during her week long stay. Other than the morning deliveries, there were no other outstanding tasks for me to get on with in the absence of customers, so I decided that since we were not going to sell them, it seemed a good idea to bag most of the pasties and freeze them for another time. I had already done the surfeit of sausage rolls earlier in the day.

The shift from being monumentally busy to ambling along is very sudden and very difficult to get used to. Today, was unusually extreme but generally, placing an order for pasties, say, requires some fortitude. The new slimline order looks so pitifully small and inadequate that it cannot possibly be enough and the urge to increase it is almost overwhelming. It is the same across all the regular orders we do but ordering too much, results in much throwing away or freezing and the freezer has limited capacity. I tested this out later in the day when I froze half the remaining stock of pasties that we would never get through by the end of tomorrow.

It had been an appalling day. The rain eventually left us at half past four o'clock and some blue skies appeared. It might have just been my frenzied brain playing tricks because when I looked twenty minutes later, the cloud was back, and a cloud of mizzle was traversing the bay. We waited another half an hour and the sun broke through again and stayed with us. Another half an hour later and the street was largely dry, and you would be pressed to know that it had rained at all. Not a great deal of use to a grumpy shopkeeper trying to make a shilling but 'ansum for those waiting all day in the rain.

Quite late on, a couple came in for a few snacks and the fellow told me that he had seen a shark in the bay. It is not unheard of, but I was surprised and sounded so. It just so happened that he had taken a video with his smart mobile telephone that took videos telescopically much better than my own mobile telephone takes telescopic videos. It was remarkably clear that it was indeed a small shark and could have been either a spur dog, small mako or porbeagle. It was close inshore but even so, I could not tell exactly what it was. I told him to send the video to the Sun newspaper when it would miraculously turn into a Great White.

For the first time in weeks, I took ABH for an after tea walk around the block. The last time we had taken a late evening stroll through the car park it was teeming with people and cars were still coming and going. This evening, while there were still quite a few people milling about, it was essentially deserted by comparison. The day had been quite humid and warm and while the humidity remained into the evening, a jacket was required as I walked around.

Later, when I took her for her last run out, there was a small knot of Lifeboat people outside the station. The Coxswain told me there was a potential shout in progress so

I dropped ABH back for the Missus to deal with and attended the station with the great and the good pre-alarm receivers. There was a dog stuck over a cliff at Botallack. It was near the top and the Cliff Team were preparing to go down to get it. There was some debate whether the Lifeboat there would be helpful which, thankfully, it was decided not. After a day of doing practically nothing, my body had suddenly come to the realisation that it was exceedingly weary, and a Lifeboat launch would not have done nothing to improve matters. My bed awaited which was much more the ticket.

## August 31<sup>st</sup> – Sunday

The sea was starting to get a bit animated when ABH and I visited the Harbour beach this morning. An hour or so later, it was proper banging into the bay and making a right spectacle of itself under bright blue skies. The bay was filled with white capped waves, stark against the blue-grey of the sea and waves running into the beach flattened by the robust breeze behind them.

There was a fair amount of cloud around too. Fortunately, for the most part, they did not get in the way of the sunshine, but they threatened a bit of rain and we had a small shower just before we opened. It was the breeze that once again was a main feature. We had been blown about a bit on the Harbour beach first thing and it continued through the day. It was much lighter than yesterday's, though forecast as more robust, and it was almost due south that took the bite out of it for most of the Cove.

The big challenge of the day was the pasty order (sorry, MS). As I explained yesterday, ordering small quantities in the twenties when we have been used to ordering in the sixties just does not feel right at all. It felt even less right when we had a flurry of pasty buying just ahead of the ordering deadline. I was sorely tempted to call back and up my order, but I bravely faced it down. I will, of course, discover in the morning that the East Coventry Champion Pasty Eaters Association elected to have their annual pasty eating competition in The Cove tomorrow.

Perhaps I was compensating then, when faced with no customers at all in the early part of the shop opening hours, it seemed a very good idea to order a whole load of greetings cards. The display had been looking a bit thin for a few weeks and the ravages of the summer busyness certainly did not improve it any. I ordered from three different suppliers including our lady at the top of the hills whose cards are very popular. Her cards sell more than all the other cards put together and I order from her three or four times a year. She sells them at the Farmer's Market on a Tuesday and in a couple of other local outlets and it still does not diminish the demand in our shop. It also helps that she is an exceedingly pleasant person.

We remained busy for the rest of the afternoon. The pasties I determined to leave out of the freezer seemed to be about right. At least we did not run out and the same

for the sausage rolls. We covered most people's demands from our groceries including a request for fresh ginger, bags of lettuce from The Farm and various cheeses and beers. Occasionally, however, we do fall short.

*Customer.*: "Do you have any fresh scones?"

*Grumpy shopkeeper.*: "We have scones."

*Customer.*: "Are they fresh scones?"

*Grumpy shopkeeper.*: "They are well within their sell-by date and have not yet developed mould."

*Customer.*: "No, we want fresh scones."

*Grumpy Shopkeeper.*: "What, fresh as in baked not ten minutes ago fresh?"

*Customer.*: "That is precisely what we are after."

*Grumpy Shopkeeper.*: "I think on the balance of probability, it being a Sunday and you being at least ten miles from the nearest bakery, you are not going to get your cream tea this afternoon."

*Customer.*: "We'll keep looking, thank you."

We have also fallen short on the fish front. The order I placed at the beginning of the summer for hake, haddock and pollack, has now nearly run out. We are also taking requests for fish that I cannot at present fulfil. It is a good week to place the order because it is neap tides, and the netters will be out, but we will be better off for time next week in order to collect and process the order. Given the amount of demand, I might have to do it this week, but I will need to check with the Missus to see if she can go into town.

In the meanwhile, we ran out of scallops, so I arranged to place an order on Monday. Given that the supplier also does fish, but not in portion sizes we are happy with, I gave the opportunity for a few customers to hang a fish order on the back of our order for scallops. We now have a sizeable order, but I decided to wait for delivery on Tuesday as Monday is a poor day to have fish delivered.

It would appear that the days of five minutes to closing rushes are now over. We had a very orderly closing down this evening. The street that had been veritably thronging for much of the day was nearly deserted. The big beach was too for most of the day. The Lifeguards had it red flagged, although that did not stop two brave lads from giving it a go. I am sure they realised that there was not a surfable wave anywhere to be seen before they risked their necks getting out the back. There were a few more in the evening when the sea state was marginally improved for that sort of thing.

Towards the end of the day, a few showers blew through The Cove some of them quite heavy. I was joined by a young lady who works at the kiosk under The Surf Lodge – she was my five minutes to closing rush – and she tarried while the shower blew through. We watched a bright rainbow come and go and then she was on her way. I managed to dodge the showers later for our after tea walk but we were splattered a bit by rogue bits of sea blown in the air from the waves crashing over the

foot of Pedn-men-du. That will teach me to be over-confident and not wear a waterproof jacket.