

DIARY 2021/22

May 31st – Monday

Serving customers and taking in deliveries was not the blistering session that I had in mind when I put my gymnasium clobber on this morning. Unfortunately, once again the milk was late and today the baker was very late causing me to delay my departure. By that time it had become exceedingly busy in the shop and abandoning the ship at such a moment seemed a little ungentlemanly. So, I went upstairs and had breakfast instead, although I did wait for a better moment to escape.

It is difficult to compare one with another but I felt slightly less busy today but was still pretty full on, nevertheless. The Missus headed for The Farm in the early afternoon as there is picking to be done there and we hoped to have salad on our shelves tomorrow. Instead, a pal called to tell her that there was a swarm of bees in his back garden and could she come and take them away. Buying a swarm of bees can cost a lot of money and since we have a beehive almost complete and waiting for bees, she was up there like a robber's dog. She has never collected bees from the wild before, but she has a bee suit and looks the part. She got them and will collect the box she put them in tomorrow when they have calmed down from feeling silly about being caught.

By the middle of the afternoon, I gave up on being concerned about what we were running out of. I could not do very much about whatever it was anyway. I could not even see what was disappearing, although I could garner an opinion from what went across the counter. There was no point in the afternoon before about six o'clock that I was on my own in the shop. As one customer left at least one other came in. It was only after that I was able to get around for a damage report – beer and soft drinks in equal measures, devastated.

The weather was once again sublime, which will account for the flood of people who were here all day. When I was able to look at the beach, it was thronging with colourful tents and windbreaks – most of them ours I suspect. I could not tell you about the surf as I really did not have much time to notice. What I can tell you is that the easterly breeze was still with us and was exactly the best time to launch a light inflatable kayak if you wanted to be in the Isles of Scilly without any effort.

The Lifeguards decided that it was probably best if they went and advised the family that they were being whisked away by which time, I think they probably knew. Unfortunately, the Lifeguard jet ski was not able to tow the kayak back so the Inshore Lifeboat was tasked. I drove the tractor down to launch the boat and left it to my fellow very excellent Shore Crew member to hang about and bring it back in – as well as performing the washing down and putting away. He was clearly delighted that I would share the work and expressed it in words I could not quite catch. His is from Liverpool, you know, which is a bit north of Camborne and they speak a different language there.

The Missus rescued me in the later afternoon by clearing the store room of the drinks that I had ordered in and had been unable to do anything with since they arrived in the morning. We can at least start the day tomorrow with full fridges, although beer is not being delivered until tomorrow.

Apologies, dear reader. Diary entries are not likely to be up to the same dismay standard that you have come to expect and will be a bit patchwork in nature this week. I am a tad distracted.

We also note the very sad departure of a friend and neighbour who will be sorely missed.

May 30th – Sunday

It was not the ideal start to the shop day. Both the milk and the newspapers did not arrive until just about on opening time. I had to delay opening until after I had shelved the milk as it would have been impossible to do with customers in the shop. I was also quite keen to get the bacon in the fridge. We had run out of our butcher's bacon yesterday after I forgot to place a second order in the week to coincide with the weekend. Luckily, our milkman saved our bacon by having some. After all that, everyone must have had their bacon fix yesterday as we only sold one pack all day.

I managed to get the newspapers stuffed as customers were rolling in through the door. It was just about the last opportunity I had to do any backroom stuff for the rest of the morning as we had an almost continuous flow of customers from that point.

Right from the outset, the weather was darned near perfect for a bank holiday and half term, with exception of a bit of a blow coming in from the east someplace. Clear blue skies persisted the day long and down on the beach, on the sliver of sand available to us, the air was the warmest that it had been all year. There was still some power in the swell from yesterday and the spray was making it up Aire Point by quite some way and further down at Creagle. There was white water dancing a bit on top of Cowloe but other than that there seemed to be not a wave in the bay.

That easterly breeze did no end of good to our windbreak sales during the day and our stand was empty by the end of it. I eventually lost track of all the changing robes, hooded sweatshirts, wetsuits and beachware that went out of the door. I do know that I had to do a rapid order for the Missus towards the end of the day for collecting from our store to replenish the shelves. I had started our grocery order yesterday and made some headway with it while I was waiting for the milk and newspapers. After that it got abandoned and had to wait until the end of the day to be picked up again.

That easterly breeze also did no end of good for the surfers out there as the swell kicked in with some half decent waves around the low water period. Most of the

action appeared to be out towards North Rocks and being low tide, pushed the surfers way out back. It looked quite spectacular from afar with the tops of the charging waves peels back by the breeze casting spray out behind like smoke against the pure blue of the sea.

The Missus came down in the middle of the day to give me a break. By the time I came downstairs again all the pasties bar a few cheese ones had gone as had every one of our spades and most of the buckets. The Missus concluded that a run up to our store was required and I could not argue with her. We also sold out of windbreaks, which came as no surprise, and we even have sold some in advance for collection tomorrow.

The day had followed the expected pattern but the lull in the middle of the day was just a period of less busy. It took a little while to ramp up in the morning but after that we were pretty much up against it for the day. The beer fridge was emptied twice and we have now almost run out of cans of lager beer until Tuesday. We are a bit better off for ales as most of these are supplied locally and we can get more tomorrow. We were expecting to be busy and, I admit, we could have been better prepared in some areas, but even then we were bowled over by the numbers today.

When it came to counting the pennies at the end of the day it turned out that we just had our busiest day ever by turnover, even allowing for inflation. I knew that anyway because there are various bits of my creaking body telling me that it was. We restocked as well as we were able with a bit more to do tomorrow after deliveries. It is entirely expected that we will be in the same position at the end of tomorrow as well. We had better man up.

May 29th – Saturday

It was a day of western promise right from the outset. Our usually solitary walk around the block was dotted with other outdoor users right from our door. The overflowing bin in the Harbour car park, with rubbish strewn all over a twenty feet square area was more to do with a policy of emptying it every fortnight than the number of people around. It will only get worse this week.

We were stalked by the early risers and just arrivals from half an hour before we opened the shop. While we still had a cloud cover it was bright and there were definite signs of warming up. It was not long before we were busy with breakfast shoppers and newspaper gatherers but I would not say that we were particularly overrun, There were tales of the roads down being extremely busy and the going slow, although it seems that some travellers got away with it.

Our baker was understandably a little later than usual this morning with the world and her husband's third cousin and his three dogs all demanding excess products for a busy weekend. It may, however, have eased production slightly had we not had a bit of a misunderstanding over farmhouse baps. The price list I have lists the baps at

a price that clearly is for one, so when my customer required twelve that is the number I requested from the bakery. Imagine my surprise, therefore, when our delivery driver turned up with twelve packs of four baps, requiring a tray all to themselves. I reasoned that it was probably as much my fault for not asking as theirs for not telling me, so we kept them and put them out on sale. We were lucky that it was barbeque type weather and these baps ideal for burgers or sausages. We had sold most of them by the time we closed.

The day entered what I am sure will become a familiar pattern for a good weather day. We had some busyness to start the day and while people gathered what they needed for a day on the beach and dipped into a sedate pace until going home time. It was our first day of extended hours, too. I have often wondered if it provides any benefit to either us or the customer. We will be quiet for an hour before closing while people have their tea then a five minutes to closing rush. Perhaps we should hold a survey to see if people would be just as happy to have their five minutes to closing rush an hour earlier and we can avoid an hour in the doldrums.

The Missus missed all the fun by heading over to Mother's after giving me a bit of a break before she went. She had intended to mow the back garden yesterday, but it was still wet after our little bit of rain. Today looked better, so Mother's garden front and back are now fully presentable and the Missus can get back to The Farm.

Through the middle of the day a fair swell kicked in across the bay. Over at North Rocks sizeable waves were rolling in and the sea was full of surfers and swimmers doing their stuff. Later, towards high water and evening time, the sea appeared to flatten out a bit and a mist developed. I am sure it was only there to set off the setting sun and looking good for our new arrivals. What a floosy our bay is.

May 28th – Friday

Our warm and bright morning yesterday looks like it might have been a bit of a flash in the pan. This morning was grey and damp and the bleddy hound could still not get down to the Harbour beach and in fact there was less than yesterday. She will be disappointed tomorrow, too, although I have not told her yet.

Fridays this season have tended to be quite sedate as it must be a major going home day. We took the spoils of it yesterday in going home presents and had a pretty good day. It seems we must share it with Friday. We also expect it to be the calm before the storm. While the jury is still out on exactly how busy it might be we have taken the unprecedented step of ordering pasties and bread for the weekend over two days. Not only does this ease pressure on our supplier but also means we will not be getting a super huge order on Saturday morning when we are likely to be up against it a bit.

Into the afternoon, the skies started to clear and the sun came out. It seemed to coincide with quite a rapid increase in the numbers of people gathering in the street

and the numbers popping in for a shop – mainly pasties. As this came after I had placed my order for tomorrow, I spent a nervous few hours wondering if I had made a mistake in spreading the pasties over two days and sharing the volume I took in today. I am sure it did not make an awful lot of difference and I was certainly not going to deliberately throttle pasty sales today in favour of having them tomorrow when I may not sell them.

Our sunshine – and the rush – lasted a couple of hours but it was most welcome. I think that it demonstrated quite nicely that things will hot up at the weekend as expected and that we should gird our loins accordingly. I am reasonably sure that all our ducks are in a row and that we are as fully stocked as we can be bearing in mind the trouble we have getting hold of bodyboards and wetsuits.

So certain was I that there was nothing further to be done, I cast caution to the winds and went to a music concert in the evening with the Highly Professional Craftsperson. I had booked the concert in the November of last year for a date at the outset of the new year. It was subsequently postponed twice but the tickets still honoured on the third occasion.

There is still reason to be nervous about going to such things, especially after so long of not going out. For example, what did I used to wear when I went out and do I really care? I had gone to the trouble and expense of booking all four seats at a table, bearing in mind this was going to happen in January, and saw no reason to change it for now. When we arrived, the table position was diametrically opposite to where it was when I first booked it and we found ourselves next to the stage on the right instead of being near the door at the back.

The band was Hanterhir, of course, and the lead singer was genuinely delighted to be back singing live again. It is a band that expands and contracts at will and tonight they had swelled to seven members including a new rhythm guitar that made their wall of sound even wallier. They presented a couple of new songs from a forthcoming album but had not had the opportunity to practise more. It was good to note that their propensity to invent wildly different characters and sounds has not diminished.

It was a cracking good evening that I enjoyed immensely, and the venue had managed the dreaded lurgi protect aspects extremely well. The grumpy shopkeeper in me was especially pleased that the concert started and ended early and I was back home not long after my usual bedtime. If all bands pandered to aging, grumpy shopkeepers thus, I would probably go out more.

May 27th – Thursday

It was not quite into rip gribbler territory but this morning as we walked around the block, the sun was shining through a hazy sky and there was some real warmth to it. The bleddy hound had spent an unhealthy amount of time sniffing the air from the

top of the slipway in a regretful sort of way because the tide preventing her from investigating the pong at close quarters. She expressed her dissatisfaction further by slow marching her way through to the Harbour car park.

That haze developed a little during the day and clouded out the sun. It was still bright, however and the warmth remained. I was not long in the shop when I realised that wearing a mid layer was entirely unsuitable and swapped it out for a shirt. By this time of year I would ordinarily be in little boys' trousers and flip flops but I think we are a way off that yet. We shall see how the weekend develops, I think.

Mask wars took its first casualty today. It was disappointing to see that attitude still persisting after a year. Our rather unpleasant character was affronted at being asked to wear one and started to tell me in aggressive tones what I could and could not ask people entering my shop. I deployed this year's grumpy shopkeeper policy by cutting him off and telling him that he and his unpleasant attitude were unwelcome. Thankfully, he left without further argument. We spent far too long last year arguing the toss with people who failed the attitude test, so this year, no more Mrs and Mrs Nice-Guy. Alright, no more Mrs Nice Guy and no more Mr Borderline Tolerant Grumpy Shopkeeper Guy.

The Missus hauled herself off quite early to The Farm for another day of re-potting and planting. The bags of mixed leaf disappeared off our shelf very quickly indeed and I wonder at whether we will be able to service that sort of demand. In fact, that was demand during a particularly quiet time, it will be a least threefold that come next week. Like last year was an experiment at seeing what we can grow, this year will be the seeing how much we can grow and can we grow it fast enough.

In another example of the small gods of grumpy shopkeepers having a better sense of humour than me, our temporary freezer shelves arrived a day early. The rub was that they arrived at the end of what was a lengthy quiet period when I could have easily installed them. Subsequent to them arriving there was a continuous trickle of customers. While very welcome, of course, I was unable to deploy the new shelves and the trays that arrived shortly afterwards until much later in the day. The small gods know full well that there is no point in having new stuff if you cannot use it right now. Yes, I know that they were only freezer shelves and nothing really to get excited about, but I do not get out much.

I did get out right after the shop closed to head to the Lifeboat station for a bit of launch training. We are quite adept at launching Lifeboats but a little practise in maintaining a textbook operation does no harm whatever. It is also difficult to demonstrate our textbook recoveries without first doing a textbook launch.

Today, we had yet another new member keen to join the very excellent Shore Crew, which of course comes as a surprise to all of us. Actually, he came to join the Boat Crew but lives too far away to meet response time. Having a new member around means that we have to ensure that everything is done by the book even if we round

off some of the more stringent rules later – and we had to hide the hookah pipe. Everything went extremely smoothly and the boat launched down the slip at just after high water at around twenty past six o'clock.

When we came to operate the cradle to set up for short slip, we discovered that it did not work. We tried all our normal checks but it was adamant that it was not going to move by the usual rules of engagement. There is a fall back method by activating the system and turning the hydraulic valves manually. We have to be on our game for this as the cradle will not stop automatically when it reaches the correct points in its movements. This can be a little tricky because the person operating the valves cannot hear to stop and start commands because it is too noisy at the pump. We have to operate a chain system with someone with a radio yelling in his ear 'ole, which necessarily introduces a delay. The whole procedure relies on a high degree of training and expertise, so we rely on trial and error and pot luck.

Happily, before the boat returned we discovered a breaker that had flipped off, which resolved the problem immediately. We were match fit when the boat returned to The Cove and we took it up the short slip in what was clearly a textbook recovery. Acting in well practised unison, the boat was settled back in its place and swung back to the long slip for the next launch. We are, after all, a very well coordinated, very excellent Shore Crew.

May 26th – Wednesday

The octopi down under the wharf have begun to mature. They were humming as I tried to dissuade the bleddy hound from sticking her nose into them. Give them another week and they will be just right for her

There was a bit of light rain around first thing but that cleared away by the middle of the morning and brought on a half decent day of brighter skies and light winds from somewhere. The better weather was followed by better crowds of people and they thronged the street from the middle of the morning until well into the afternoon and we did a little trade, which was good.

I confused myself about the new whisky that we had become party to its launch day. We placed an advance order with the promise that we would have the whisky when it was first available. A friend and regular shopper asked about it first thing and it struck me that the launch was 24th May but I do also distinctly recall it being on a Wednesday, which of course did not fit. Not long after he departed, the very pleasant young lady from the distillery who looks after us came in bearing a big case of the new whisky including a couple of tasting bottles.

I thought it best not to partake at that moment given that it was shortly after nine o'clock but rather more because I was heading to the gymnasium shortly after. However, it seemed churlish not to imbibe a small quantity, so I limited myself to just half a bottle. No, of course I did not. I did however have a sniff and wet my tongue

with it. The aroma is pleasant enough and does not force the sniffer to snap their head back in shock, which was a good sign. It is also none too harsh on the tongue and although I did not have sufficient to describe the taste at the time, the aftertaste was entirely delicious ... but I would say that anyway, would I not?

I did have a proper nip just before we closed and it was every bit as good as its promise. It is from the stable of our squid ink gin in the copper flask. They may not have had any prizes yet for their product, which in my view they are worthy of, but they should definitely get top prize for continuous innovation.

After the world calmed down the other side of the café closing, I had time to look again at our mugs. Another big box of them arrived earlier and there would have been no room on the shelf had I not put a few out. We now have a display full of new and alluring fine bone china mugs to choose from. We have sold these since we first arrived and our predecessors did, too. They are a bit of an anachronism amongst our general stock but they continue to sell well each year, a bit like the hooded sweatshirts. I have to say I have never looked back after using one for my morning tea; it just tastes so much better out of fine bone china.

The weather became quite glorious into the early evening and we have high hopes for the coming days. The Missus will be hoping for rain – overnight, or course.

May 25th – Tuesday

If you go down to the beach today you are in for a big surprise. Fair play to the bleddy hound for finding it, so I have no doubt that her nose was not playing up yesterday and the two octopi under the old wharf arrived recently. They were bleddy huge dustbin lid examples of the animal, just recognizable from the few tentacles and the coat button size suckers on them. It was a bit odd as the tide would not that reached that far last night. I am rather hoping that they meet the theory they were by-catch from some passing trawler and washed up in last night's big seas. I discounted the theory that they came from above on the basis that I would not like to meet the bird that dropped them.

Our morning constitutional was conducted under blue skies and a bit of a breeze still from the northwest. We had rather expected that to last at least half the day, or all day if you were to believe one of the forecasts I looked at yesterday. I subscribed to the view that we had until the middle of the day, probably, but in reality the poor weather ran in not long into the morning, heralded by increasingly grey skies. Things had been looking up to this point with early indications of busyness. It was probably that everyone had seen the forecast and was getting their shopping done early to avoid it.

Had I only known, I would have done my enquiring today instead of trying to squeeze it in between customers yesterday. When our new freezer arrived we were disappointed, to put it mildly, that it only had four shelves and rendered about a third

of the freezer space within, unusable. I made enquiries then about getting some more shelves and was put on a back order list, I thought. I telephoned the company again a week into May as I had been told to expect delivery late April or early May but then discovered they had not arrived.

Having just taken delivery of a frozen food order and finding that we had little space to put it, I decided to telephone the company again to get an update. I was told that not only did they now have an expected delivery date of end of June but also I was not on the back order list. I explained that since I had been waiting since March and had telephoned twice as well as sending the initial electronic mail, I was a tad miffed that they had not put me on the back order list. After apologies all around I was told if I wanted to be on the back order list, could I pay for the goods. I thought this to be more than a little objectionable but on the grounds that we cannot get the shelves from anywhere else, we had little choice.

In the meanwhile, we have ordered a couple of universal shelves off the Internet and will put some trays on top to compensate for the shortfall in their size and also to fix the slipping off the shelf problem for the shelves that are the correct size. Hopefully, we will have some more product in the freezer ready for the half term.

Despite the rain there was still a trickle of customers stopping by for this and that. Most of the pasties went, which was a surprise, but I understand that the OS is still unable to cater for its demand. Even this trickle tailed off later when the rain set in properly and did not stop until after we closed. This gave me plenty of time to sort out the new mugs that arrived quite late in the day. I will have to wait until tomorrow to put them out as I ran out of time.

This dealing with deliveries as they come in and putting them neatly away is a luxury that will almost certainly evaporate at the end of the week when numbers of customers improve exponentially – we hope. It will then be slinging things into a corner and hoping for the best, a bit like I would have done today had I not been monumentally bored.

Just a last message for P who requested a 'Sennen' cabbage. The cabbage is with us and I have sent a text message twice – we possibly have the wrong number. We will have to sell it tomorrow, so please get in touch as soon as possible.

May 24th – Monday

It looked half decent as I looked out of the window in the morning if you ignored the random clouds that looked like they might drop rain on us at any moment. I knew that was a real possibility because it had dropped rain on me while I lay in bed on a couple of occasions during the night through the open Velux window. Yes, it might have been a good idea to close the Velux window but when the first shower stopped shortly after it started, it was easier to pass it off as a one off rather than get up.

My expectation of weather pleasantness was dispatched very quickly when we rounded the corner of the Lifeboat station and had the full force of a very chill north west breeze. It propped us up on the way down the slipway and pushed us back up after our run around. At least we did not get wet, which seemed more than a bit of a lottery for most of the rest of the day.

The combination of northwest breeze and sometimes heavy showers met the two out of three criteria that trigger the turning on of the first electric sliding door in The Cove. We would not have bothered for just the one shower, unless it was a particularly lengthy one, but these showers were lined up to the north west as far as the rain radar could see. That wind must have been some fierce because the showers were through before we knew it.

The sea was not playing ball either by the look of it. The inshore was completely blown out and with burgeoning springs the tide was piling in, pushed by the wind. The Lifeguards assessed it as being unsuitable for human consumption and labelled it with a red flag even from low water.

The Missus reckons not the occasional shower and headed up to The Farm early doors to fight off the guys coming to collect her beloved digger. She thought that she might get half an hour in to finish off what she had hoped to do yesterday. Later she told me that the company had arrived late and that she managed to get done all that she intended. She celebrated by planting some Chinese leaf cabbage and picking some more salad leaves.

When she returned in the middle of the afternoon she had emptied the truck, which had become increasingly full of boxes and cardboard towards the latter part of the weekend. This meant that I could reclaim the remaining space in the store room just ahead of the next delivery and using up all the space I had freed. She also came bearing leaves. These were mixed leaves of baby leaf, lollo rosso, rekkord and something else, which we bagged and are now in our refrigerator with 'Produce of Sennen' on them. It will be a bit of a learning experience on how we bag and price them, but this is a good starting point.

Business during the day had been as unpredictable as the showers that continued to blow through. We had quite a steady flow of customers in late morning but into the afternoon that seemed to dry up for a bit. There were a fair few people promenading but it was not ideal weather to be messing about outside and many people were hurrying to get to the next point of shelter, I would suggest. They did not even hang around to watch the sea that once again picked up its game as the tide increased.

Increasingly, in the afternoon, the clouds rolled away or more likely were blown away and we returned to blue skies and a vicious wind. There were fits and starts of customer business and the whole day strung together as none too shabby by the end of the day.

There was a very pretty view from our upstairs window in the evening after we closed. It was quite hard to draw myself away from it. The Missus had to slip into town for a late appointment which left me to prepare a bit of fish from our freezer for my tea. Well, if anything was going to tear me away from the window, a bit of fresh fish, quickly fried as goujons with a bit of salad leaf would do it every time.

May 23rd – Sunday

There was plenty of beach to cavort on first thing in the morning, so we cavorted, bleddy hound and me. Just down on the waterline, a small gull – it might have been a kittiwake – had found something in the water it was trying to nab. After a few attempts, it succeeded and landed a sizeable something on a rock nearby. I watched fascinated as the gull pecked at it and quickly backed off, gathered enough courage and had another go. I do not know what it had landed but it was clearly not used to its breakfast fighting back.

The expected rain very kindly waited until we had sold most of our remaining pasties and came in during the late morning. Once it had become established it stayed for the rest of the day and pelted us with some quite heavy wet stuff. The Missus had thought to finish off the last few bits with the digger at The Farm but once she saw how heavy the rain was, she abandoned the idea and went to collect Mother for a stay in and do some knitting.

Once the rain had set in business went down the drain with it. For once, rather than idle my time away I set to with the shoes and shorts in the store room and with some help from the Missus finished both and bagged and boxed the excess for shipping up to The Farm. Bursting with enthusiasm, but mainly fear of boredom, I continued to tidy up the store room which has become a woeful mess since new stock has been arriving. I am also aware that we have mugs arriving any day now and the space that was reserved for them has been used up with other things. The trick will be not to be tempted to use the space again before the delivery arrives.

Come the appointed time, I was quite happy to close the doors and wrap up for the day. The rain, however had other ideas and stopped half an hour before we closed. This was clearly the signal for all those would-be shoppers who had been staring glumly out of their windows, to break cover and head for the shop. We were busy right up until closing and even then I cautiously eyed a couple of passers-by as I closed the first electric sliding door in The Cove – manually – in case they made a bid for the last few inches of openness.

Sat at the table for tea, we watched as the evening blossomed into blue skied loveliness for the last few hours of daylight. I could just hear the small gods of grumpy shopkeepers snickering into their goblets of ambrosia at such a jolly jape and the shags took turns to dive for fish. Bottoms up all round.

May 22nd – Saturday

As the bleddy hound and I wandered about on the Harbour beach this morning, I recall thinking that it was a half decent morning for November. The fact that it was toward the end of May was a bit disappointing. Alongside the grey and the showers that we managed to avoid once again, there was a bit of a breeze coming in from the northwest, keeping the temperature down even further. After the middle of the morning, the day blossomed into gorgeousness, but that wind kept me in a jacket behind the counter all day.

The sunshine did its job and brought our visitors down in droves. They had all apparently not eaten for a week and made a brave attempt to sell us out of pasties. This is just as well because I had been brave and ordered a good bunch for the weekend despite dire warnings about the weather on Sunday. That weather can come and do its worse because I now do not have enough pasties to cover another busy day.

There were some familiar faces who turned up during the day and children who were twice as big as we saw them last. Yes, I know that children grow up, but I find it fascinating to see their development in snapshots of twelve months. It is like seeing time elapsed pictures but very slowly.

The vast majority of people today were new to us or I simply did not recall them, which is equally likely, and they were a mix from all walks of life as far as I could tell. It was very gratifying to find that they were all pleasant and polite and happy to be here. It gives me some hope for the summer.

The Missus, when she discovered that the day was going to be sunny and dry eventually, gathered her bits and pieces and headed to The Farm with Mother. It will be the last day she will be able to use the digger, if the forecast for tomorrow is right, before it goes back on Monday. I believe that she had nearly finished what she needed to do anyway, including preparing some ground by the beehive for wild flowers. It seems that the bees are being a bit tardy on production this year, so maybe this will give them a bit of encouragement – when we have waited for them to grow.

It was not until about half past four that things started to slow down a bit. I was grateful because I could slip upstairs and make a cup of tea. I thought about getting on with the shoes or shorts – briefly – and then decided that they would best be done tomorrow on the basis of never doing today that which can be put off until then. If it is unexpectedly busy tomorrow as well, I will have to put it off again.

There was no putting things off for the Missus. She came home, made tea and headed back to The Farm leaving the bleddy hound with me. She was determined to get value for money out of the hire of that digger. It would not have surprised me in the least to find that she had chained herself to the digger to stop it being collected

but for the fact it is being collected early in the morning. The Missus does not do early in the morning.

Conversely, I do not do late evenings when the shop is open. I left her with her tea and headed to bed.

May 21st – Friday

The wind had been howling and the sea raging all night, although conceivably the wind could have stopped and the sea calmed as soon as I fell asleep and started again when I woke up. Perhaps we will never know. All I can tell you is that the wind was howling in my ear 'ole when I woke along with the bleddy hound's snores as her nose was inches from my ear.

We took a trip down to the Harbour beach where the sand had either been washed smooth by the surging sea or just blown flat by the wind that was now full on in the west. It slapped us about a bit at the corner of the Lifeboat station but was not too bad down on the beach where we had some shelter from the wall.

I was dragged down to the shop while I still had chores to do upstairs by the unexpected arrival of our fire extinguisher service man. He explained that his firm was very busy with a new contract at the hospital and they were trying to fit everyone else in around it. It was difficult to remain miffed at the untimely intrusion for too long because he is such a pleasant man and has been servicing our extinguishers since we have been here.

Instead, I took my ire out on the fish merchant who had hiked the price of John Dory. He explained that the price of fish had shot up in the last few days, so I asked he why it did not seem to have done so for the competition. He agreed to drop the price for us but if we ever see a credit note as a result, I shall be most surprised.

I relieved the stress down at the gymnasium, which took about five minutes as I do not get very stressed about such things really. It does wind me up a bit when a customer explains that he cannot wear a mask because he has a serious pulmonary disorder and then asks for a packet of cigarettes. Thus far we have avoided too many mask wars, but it is also irritating when people with masks fail to put them on until they are half way around the shop or just wear them around their chins. I mean, how hard can it be to put a mask on properly before you enter the shop and then just for a few minutes?

It was very soothing to at last sort out our shoe display. With the additional two rows of hooks we can now have each size on its own hook. The biggest problem I then had was that the little hanger that comes with the shoes had all fallen off in the box and the box will have to be emptied to sort them all out. It should not take too long and then we shall have our store room back for a while so that I can traverse it without tripping over something.

The Missus had worked her way through the shorts and swimsuits that had arrived yesterday or the day before by the time I got back from the gymnasium. They are yet to go out but I should be able to do that over the weekend as I doubt that we will be selling many yet. Her work done she went off shopping and to collect Mother while I dealt with a healthy trickle of leavers and arrivers.

By the end of the afternoon, the wind had died down to reasonable proportions. We had not expected too much in the way of busyness today and we were not disappointed. However, there was a fair amount of going home present buying and that seemed to shore up the coffers, which was all rather pleasing. This was helped in no small measure by the sale of several bottles from our broad range of gins and rums. We do love it when a plan comes together.

May 20th – Thursday

I am so glad that I have learnt to pay little heed to the weather forecast. We were promised a day of rain and ended up getting grey skies and then sunshine instead. There was some rain, in the forecaster's defence, but it was confined to an hour or so in the morning and with careful management, the bleddy hound and I avoided it completely.

There was, however, more wind than you could shake a windmill at. In fact, the windmills were probably shut down for fear of producing too much electricity at a time when it was not needed. Sadly, the weather station at Gwennap Head is no longer operating for our access to real time and accurate reporting on the windspeed is more limited than it was. However, the wind that had started in the south during the night had veered to the south west by mid morning and was gusting in at more than sixty miles per hour. We were lucky that we were so sheltered from the main blast, but it afforded us some cracking views.

None were so good as the sight of the bay with increasingly upset sea, streaked with foam lit up by the bright afternoon sun. The swell took a while to build and will come into its own tomorrow. We are fortunate that it is happening at neap tides, else the south coast towns like Fowey would be in a bit of trouble. As it was, the white water was building in intensity at Creagle and Aire Point and by high water I am sure it was having a right good time. Even by the time we closed, the bay had filled with rolling waves, stirred up foam and white caps further out with big crashing waves over Brissons.

The Missus headed to The Farm despite the wind. She reasoned that operating the digger would be perfectly safe as it was highly unlikely even the strongest wind would affect the operation. We have extended the hire for a further week, but time is running out on that now too. I had a quick look at the camera feed and the polytunnel was still there and the windbreak fence appeared to be intact. I cannot see the far

end of it, so I made the assumption it was all right and I am sure the Missus would have called to tell me, anyway.

As you might imagine, we were not as busy as we might have been, although there were a surprising number of people about despite the weather. In the lulls between customers I erected the new shoe display that arrived in the afternoon. There was a bit of cobbling together involved because the tie bars pushed the posts wider apart than the hanging bars could manage. It was a bit irritating because I asked the very pleasant lady when I placed the order to make sure that all the parts I had ordered worked together. I had considered calling it in, but I was more concerned with getting the enormous box of shoes in the store room emptied and making a fuss would have delayed it. The frame just about works but will need to be tied to the existing gondola to make it a little more stable.

What I will call in, but have to wait until tomorrow, is a complaint about our fish price. Our supplier messed up anyway by not following through on our order I placed last night on the telephone message system. They were good enough to honour it and sent out a van especially but when the fish, some perfect John Dory, arrived they were a frightful price. The company sends out a price list a couple of times a week, so I appreciate that the price can change if I did not order that day. However, I am very sure that the price did not shift nearly five pounds a kilo in just two days and, besides, the other supplier just down the road from them had a price way below that. I had problems with this supplier last time we used them, which is why I stopped. I will have to train them, I think.

The wind was already creeping around to the west when I went to bring the display in from outside. Our wheelie bin would have been half way down the road had it not been tied down. It was already straining against its tethers. It is not exactly warm but it is not freezing cold, either, which is a blessing. We had the velux windows in the flat open all night and it was not unpleasant, although there was sufficient airflow to scat pots off the top of the tumble dryer which is next to the window in the kitchen. That gave me a start just before I fell asleep but was not enough to get me up.

May 19th – Wednesday

It was a marvellously sparkling day right from the outset, if a little draughty to go with it. Down on the beach there was evidence that some of the fishing fleet had braved the wind and gone out. I spoke with one of the ones who was not so brave who had come down for a spot of ready making of his boat. He is semi-retired and will pick and choose his days.

It was much the same morning routine as ever but when I got back from the gymnasium later in the morning, the street was fair thronging with visitors. The Missus had been busy but had managed to clear the remnants of the grocery orders that arrived yesterday, clearing the store room for the next one. Before she left for The Farm in the early afternoon, she removed one of those other deliveries from

yesterday that we did not have room for and left it with me. The dear of her must have thought that I might need something to keep me occupied while she was gone.

She might have been right, too, because the busyness dropped off a bit in the afternoon. I suspect everyone had stopped for a siesta in the raging heat of the unexpected sunshine. I did notice it was warm in the direct sunlight when I walked down to the gymnasium in the middle of the morning. We also sold a few bottles of sun lotion just to underline the point.

Even so, I do not think that the world is yet ready for the myriad sun hats that were in the delivery that the Missus left behind. I am rather hoping that it will not be too long before they are needed as they eat up quite a bit of space even crushed in as they are on the display stand. The same applies to the shorts and swimsuits in the same delivery. I did not get around to doing those and putting all the shorts on hangings is a tedious and gruelling task best left to the Missus. The Missus loves tedious and gruelling tasks.

On the basis that it was not going to be too much fun taking a boat out on the briny over the next two days, our happy Coxswain of the Lifeboat decided that we should do it today instead. To ensure that the waves were at their least excited and presenting little risk to the very excellent Shore Crew getting their new boots too wet, the exercise was pencilled in for five o'clock, near low water. Unfortunately, the timing excluding me from joining in the fun for the launch but I did managed to slip in ahead of the boat coming back and just after all the hard work of preparing the slipway had been done.

Both boats had gone out as we seem to consistently get a good attendance to exercises whatever time they are called. I cannot decide whether the Boat Crew is made up of a young and dedicated bunch of volunteers or a bunch of workshy slackers. Nevertheless, there was some good training going on, we understand, in the presence of inspectors so that the crew can gain their respective badges for their blankets or wherever they sew them these days. Both boats returned to station at around seven o'clock and the big boat was brought up the long slipway for a change in what looked like a textbook recovery. We were not overly manned on the shore but there were enough of us pulling together to make light work of it. We are, after all, a very complementary, very excellent Shore Crew.

May 18th – Tuesday

I was up before the alarm and full of beans this morning. You are right, it did not last long. I shall discipline myself to wait for the bell next time and it does no good to be so enthusiastic that early in the morning.

Still, it was a bit more pleasant that yesterday taking the bleddy hound down to the Harbour beach. Today I was not nearly bowled over as I went around the corner of the Lifeboat station, although it was still a little breezy. The weed has not gone yet

but at least it has not increased. I think we will cope for now. The boats had not been out for a day or two due to the weather and this morning was the same. I did, however, spot one of the larger punts out in the afternoon when the sea state had improved a bit.

Our main grocery order arrived early, while I was still feeling keen, which was handy as it was quite a big one. I had started to work my way through it when the second one arrived. Since that had to pile in on top of the one that had come earlier, I did that first and especially because it contained some exciting new products like pesto that we have been asked for on numerous occasions last year. Naturally, we will never be asked for it again, but at least we have it now for people who do not want it.

Business was brisk in the latter part of the morning and into the early afternoon. It was busier on the street than we have seen for a while. I watched with interest a geet lump of rain creeping in from the west. It teased by sending the forerunning showers in to the north of us then the first of the bigger part split up and went north and south. It was as if the Far West peninsula had some sort of water repellent on it.

I was expecting the main body of rain to come piling through any minute but the next time I looked it had passed through. The spine of the Duchy was taking one for the team, it seemed, with heavy showers and very likely thunderstorms to boot. We did not escape the rain entirely, but it was short lived and not all that heavy. Later, it cleared up again and through it all we did not seem to have a mass exodus of visitors. What a hardy lot.

The Missus returned with a different story later from The Farm, well, Mother did. She told me that it had come down in stair rods for a while up there during the time that the Missus was on the digger. She would have dried near instantly in the polytunnel which is soaring into the late forties most days now. It is also doing its job very nicely. It does not seem that long ago I was telling you about the rekord lettuce being planted, which is now coming ready to pick. The Missus came back with a paper bag full of leaves from different lettuces which we had for tea. We had other things as well as there were not that many leaves but in a week or two I think we will be seeing some bags of mixed leaves, Produce of Sennen, appearing in the shop refrigerator.

I am hoping there will be enough room given all the stock I had already put out on the shelves during the day. We had another two deliveries arrive after that. They are in the truck as we did not have time or space to deal with them. I think the season may well be on the doorstep even if the weather is yet to catch up.

May 17th – Monday

It was difficult to know what the weather was going to do today and there was no point in looking at the forecast as that seems to be pretty much a guess, based on

last week's performance. The early part of the morning alternated between sunny spells and cloud that looked like it might make us wet any minute. The hearty breeze was the only consistent thing about the day and it looks like it might be the only consistent thing about the week, too.

For the first time in a few days there was enough beach to wander about on this morning. I was a little concerned yesterday as there was a fair run up the beach. The bleddy hound has a good sense of staying away from such waves but anyone can get caught out occasionally if they are not careful. Today the tide line was further down the beach and the sea much quieter, although I note there is some weed back but not in the same quantities as before and there is none on the big beach, so perhaps it is just an anomaly.

An anomaly is a deviation from the normal or expected so it can hardly be applied to the operating condition of the computers at the OS. On the first day that the pub was allowed to welcome people into the hallowed confines of the bar, all the computers stopped working. The one thing about computers that everyone who has spent time working with them knows is that if anything can possibly go wrong, it will and at the worst possible time. So, not an anomaly, then. The other thing that people who have spent any time working with computers knows is that a backup manual system or some sort of contingency is absolutely necessary. My informant told me that he was unable to procure a drink for love or money during the outage. From what I understand the problem did not last for long, but I hope some learning has been acquired from the incident and that they now have a biscuit tin to take real cash money into in case of emergency.

Business continues to be quite sedate for the shop, probably not helped by the café next door being closed on Mondays. It is a good job that it is not windy in The Cove else the customers that we do have would be confused whether they should tell me how windy it is outside or how quiet it is. As far as I can tell we have all been victims of the hyperbole that has insisted that we are all going to be mown down in the big rush of holiday makers coming in this direction. That is really not going to happen until the schools break up for holiday, at least not this far west. I have checked the daily figures against those from 2019, our last normal year, and we are about the same if not a little busier.

We did have an additional customer who we have been looking forward to seeing since the whole dreaded lurgi malarkey kicked off. We have, of course, seen her on and off as we have delivered goods and services over the dreaded lurgi period. Today, as the country takes a step in a new direction, she came down and attended the shop personally. If her presence were not enough, she brought presents as well in the form of a small bunch of lilies of the valley from her garden in a small pot. It must have been something of a big adventure because it has been more than a year since she was in the shop. I must have felt like Noah, but he only got a stick.

I was kept busy in the afternoon by the arrival of yet another delivery. This one was easy enough to do from behind the till as it was our surf jewellery that sells well throughout the year but particularly during the school holidays. It always helps to have something that needs to be done because it brings customers in to stop you doing it. We had quite a flurry towards the end of the afternoon – a bit of a premature five minutes to closing rush. We will settle for that.

May 16th – Sunday

Yesterday I was peeling off the layers and today I was piling them back on again. It was an unhappy turn in the weather that saw showers arriving throughout the day, a brisk breeze and big seas that washed out the surf and had the Lifeguards red flagging the beach. Even dogs were not allowed on the beach during the day – or yesterday to be factual – as the beach control order has started. Dogs are excluded from the fun between ten o'clock in the morning and six o'clock in the evening, which is better than the old regime and will only continue if owners behave themselves and tidy up after their pets.

Beaches with Blue Flag status have somewhat more stringent dog restrictions than beaches without, which have the same hours but from July to end of August. The big beach does not have Blue Flag status this year as I believe that the north coast brewery that was paying for it, is no longer doing so despite my best efforts in buying lots of its beer. The beach does have an award from Keep Britain Tidy for beach management and cleanliness. I think it is that which determines the stricter dog control order. As ever, beaches that are largely inaccessible are dog friendly all year long.

As you might imagine for such a day, we were not exactly overrun with customers, although for such a day, it was not too shabby. There was no little knot of people occupying the café benches and all the trade appeared to be in transit from somewhere to somewhere else. The downturn allowed me to complete our grocery orders ahead of schedule and we have added a few new products to the list as we expect business to start picking up now as we head into holiday season.

I was surprised by an electronic mail quite early in the morning from a visitor asking if we could deliver a week's worth of groceries to their door. We have done similar before but because it is just the two of us, we are constrained as to where we can deliver and when, so keep it to special requirements only. I did not have sufficient time to reply straight away and before the morning was out the lady in question called. She explained that her circumstances required some assistance with the shopping, and we are pleased to help where we can. I explained the simplest solution was for her to send me a list of what she required and we would go from there.

I had intended to send an updated product list as the one of the website was from last year. Before I could do so I had another electronic mail containing the lady's list

based on the old product sheet. Her shopping list is extensive and leans towards locally produced food and drink, which is right up our street. I shall enjoy tinkering with that. In the meantime, I have updated our grocery and drinks list for the website.

It was by some quirk of fate or perhaps it was because I have reached anorak status with bus timetables that I have some innate sense when things are afoot. Whatever the case, I happened to stick my head outside the first electric sliding door in The Cove just as the bus company was attending to the bus stop down the road. I am quite perceptive anyway, but with the bus company changing the bus timetables on display I reasoned quite quickly that this probably meant that the bus times were changing.

We were hit by a five minutes to closing rush shortly afterwards so I did not get to grips with what was going on until we had closed up and we had finished our tea. As well as completing the grocery lists on our website I dived into the new bus timetables affecting The Cove.

As with last year there is now a combination of buses that complete the circuit from Penzance to Penzance, taking in Porthcurno, Land's End, St Just and St Ives and operating clockwise and anti-clockwise. Unlike last year, the bus company has come up with a snazzy title for the whole service and called it the Land's End Coaster. This has all the hallmarks of becoming an iconic bus service if they get it right and they have made a very good start by making it hourly in both directions and running it for twelve hours a day. A subset of the times is now listed on the shop website under the Information Centre, which is not a million miles away from the shop's online shop where all manner of exciting products can be purchased at very competitive prices, dear reader.

As you might imagine, I collapsed upon the sofa in a state of exhaustion after labouring hard to provide such a cornucopia of essential services to the visiting public. There is no need for thanks, just bring money.

May 15th – Saturday

The bleddy hound insisted on heading down to the Harbour even though there was hardly any beach down there to wander about on. I gave in, as I could not bebothered to argue with her. The water was quite gently lapping on the shore and with a strange combination of light in the sky, the wet sand took on some weird colours and the sand under the water seemed to glow through.

Part of our morning sky was blue and bright but over towards Carn Glouce and Nanjulian, dark cloud hung ominous and brooding. This accounted for the strange colours in the sea. There was a mist on the near horizon, which is normally a band of rain but if it was, it did not head in our direction presumably because I had worn a rain jacket when I took the bleddy hound out. That cloud hung about for an hour or so just waiting to pounce, decided not to and went away.

We enjoyed a bright morning and for the first time since we opened it was so warm in the shop, I had to take off my jumper. There was a bit of clouding over in the early afternoon and a bit of a shower but after that cleared away the sun came back and we enjoyed largely blue skies for the rest of the day. Oddly, it was the later afternoon that was the quietest. We had a fair bit of business through the morning and the middle of the day so it looked like something had spooked the crowds. Other than the sunshine, I will never understand what drives business down here and just when you think you have a handle on it, you get a big drop in busyness for no apparent reason.

A customer gave me a bit of a start yesterday. She asked if we were ready for the bit rush next week, which I definitely was not expecting but she explained that the holidays start next week. The holidays in Cornwall, on which we base our shop opening hours, are the last week in May but it sent me trawling through the Internet researching school holidays from other areas. Fortunately, most of our catchment areas are all in the same week as Cornwall, but it did have me going for a while there.

Just when you think you might have to wrap up an unremarkable day, a hot potato lands in your lap. My social media information provider, regular, long time visitor and old postcard collector dropped me a note in the afternoon. He had discovered that Mr Google has created a map that has all manner of ancient artefacts on it. Mr Postcard alerted me to one soupçon in particular and that was that there was a stone circle near the big beach that was visible until 1820 after which it was buried in sand. On closer inspection, the report gives a chart position, which I nailed down to being just at the bottom of Carn Barges and to the north of the main old field system. If the position is accurate, and it appears to have come from a contemporary document, then the stone circle was on land that is no longer there. All along there to Gwenver there has been much cliff erosion over the years, so I suspect our stone circle is part of the rock debris at the top of the beach adjoining North Rocks.

The Missus stayed home today. The bleddy hound has been doing her usual all night panting as the weather warms up and her coat gets thicker. She detests being groomed, we think, on the basis that she turns into a jelly-like quivering lump. She will sit still throughout but pant constantly but, move out of arms reach, and she will scarper. Once complete, she will tear up and down the hall like the Tasmanian Devil and get herself really hot. She is a strange bleddy hound.

Business dropped off sharply after about four o'clock. I spoke with one of the staff at the OS and she told me that they had been very busy since they opened again and I imagine it was no different today. When I passed by the other evening on the way back from the bone cruncher, the outside area was pretty much packed. I am told that the terrace, too, is a place of wonder and busy most nights. Heading towards summer, the sunset would be visible from the ground level area and it would have

been a cracker tonight, if a little draughty watching it. With a bit more warmth you might even confuse it for being mid May.

Just when you think there can be no more surprises in a single day a visitor came by and asked if we sold wild bird seed. I told him the birds around here really would be wild if he tried to feed them that. They were more used to geet lumps of discarded fish guts off the boats or, if they were from St Ives, pasties and ice cream and that was just the sparrows. He looked concerned; I cannot imagine why. The birds down here are a hardy sort and not to be messed.

I shall leave you with that friendly warning while I go and have a naughty curry and beer.

May 14th – Friday

It was the sort of day for putting out the flags, so I did. The flagpole holder on the western side of our frontage has been hanging off since some long forgotten storm and a year or two of erosion. I fixed it yesterday after planning to do so for some weeks. It would have been done earlier if the tools, the batteries to go with the tools and the box of screws were in the right place at the right time all together. We now have our marine grade flags of St Piran flying again for as long as they or the flagpole holders last.

It has been a few years since I renewed the flags; they were the second since we have been here. Had I been able to see into the future I would have bought two lots last time that would probably have just about seen us out. Sadly, Par Flags, as they were before they moved up country, are now more and I would not know where to start looking for another supplier. I would assume there is someone out there and we are in no hurry at present.

Ordinary looking couple.: “Do you have a vegetarian pasty?”

Grumpy Shopkeeper.: “Yes, we have a cheese pasty that uses vegetarian friendly cheese and no meat in it anywhere at all.”

Ordinary looking couple.: “Cheese upsets me.”

Grumpy Shopkeeper.: “I cannot imagine what it may have done to upset you, but we have no alternative vegetarian option in the line of pasties. Apologies.”

Ordinary looking couple.: “That’s alright, we’ll have two steak then, please.”

I have principles, if you do not like them, I have others.

I too have principles and have removed most sugary products from my diet with the exception of beer. More precisely, I have removed sugary products from my diet so that I can drink beer without adversely affecting my glucose levels. That was the principle until I discovered that there was nothing wrong with my glucose levels and that it was all a big mistake by the medical centre. By that time I had removed sugary products from my diet for long enough that I did not care to go back.

There is a point to this seemingly random venture into my sugar intake. We have recently taken on some new products and some of those are posh soft drinks. I had been meaning to take a little taste of one or two of them to see what they were like and blithely expected them to be super healthy and free from nasties such as E numbers and, erm, sugar. The one I tried has Sicilian lemons and English mint and was particularly toothsome. They only come in small tins and I could have quite happily had another.

After consuming it I thought that I would have a little look at the ingredients and nutrition information and was exceedingly surprised to note that it had added sugar in some quantity. Within a few minutes of drinking it I found myself doing a passable impression of Tigger and bouncing off the walls with excess of exuberance and energy. In the subsequent half hour or so I managed to restock the drinks fridge, unbox and shelf a delivery of biscuits and take in another sizable delivery for sorting out tomorrow. I will read the label on the can first next time.

Meanwhile, back on The Farm, the Missus has been working her little socks off. All the work that we had pencilled in for the digger seemed highly achievable at the start of the week that we had it on hire. Now, nearing the end of the period, it seems that the schedule had been a little over ambitious and she found herself trying to squeeze impossible tasks into the time left. Happily, after a conversation with the very pleasant hire people, she managed to extend the hire for a further week that should give her plenty of time to finish off the rest of the work.

When she and Mother came back in the late afternoon it was with a big beaming smile of their little faces. The Missus was flushed with the success of finishing off the job in the polytunnel, which is now fully operational. Indeed, there are many vegetables already planted and with many more left to go in.

We celebrated the success by sending the Missus off to get fish and chips, as it would have been tedious to make her cook our fish tea after such a momentous achievement. The Missus had battered sausage; the Missus hates fish.

May 13th – Thursday

We have been very lucky in the mornings, the bleddy hound and I, as we have missed any rain and unpleasantness on most of the occasions recently. Today, we had no dodging to do but it was still just as pleasurable doing the circuit under a blue sky and in some warmth. We even got around before the rather cool north westerly draught got into its stride.

Even so, the day busied up nicely, so much so that it made my pathetic pasty order for the day look pathetic. It could have been much worse, and we were not exactly overrun with requests subsequent to running out. We were, however, picked on for supply of windbreaks, with which we did rather well.

We hear from the news that Cornwall has been more or less cut off from the rest of the world by train, at least. Great Western Railway's brand new Japanese trains are falling apart at the seams, quite literally and have all been cancelled. Therefore, it quite surprised me when one of our regular visitors told me she had arrived by sleeper. It very quickly came to me that the sleeper has not been modernised since Mr Brunel built the railway and is still running. Our visitor confirmed it and the train is complete with windows you can still lean out of while the train is bowling along and doors that can be opened – by leaning out of the window and using the brass knob outside – while the train is still in motion. Ah, what halcyon days.

The weather held together for the rest of the day, which was good of it, so I spent much of the afternoon in the gloom of the store room between customers. The Missus had cleaned out the over stock from the delivery that arrived yesterday in the morning along with all the cardboard that it generated. One thing about no dig gardening is that we no longer have a waste cardboard problem. This left me to sort out the hooded sweatshirts as it is the first time we have so many that we need to take some to the offsite store.

We are still struggling with the shoes, but I have made a start at looking for a solution. There is space above the current display that we can move into and it is just a matter of finding the right equipment to utilise it. The shoe that will be displayed in that space will, of course, only be available to very tall people and the wicked shopkeeper in me suggests that we put the smaller sizes up there. The company I have approached has yet to come back to me, but it is definitely not the best time to be doing such infrastructure work.

Six o'clock was not an ideal time to launch a Lifeboat, either, as the shop was only just shutting. I was just in time to see the boat run down the slipway and splosh into the choppy waves. I lent a hand putting out the gear and readying ourselves for a short slipway recovery, given the tide was still coming in. Both boats were launched for an exercise with the Lifeguards which is all very chummy of us all.

While the boats were out, we explored our new very excellent Shore Crew kit, which is all very lightweight and very dayglo yellow. It is so bright that in the setting sun of a gorgeous day – apart from that northwesterly – we were advised to wear eye protection. The jacket has a very snazzy removable inner padded jacket, which was just the ticket on the exposed slipway during our operations.

The boats returned at around half past seven o'clock with the Inshore boat being floated onto its trailer first. The big boat came up the short slip at the zenith of the tide in what looked particularly like a textbook recovery and safely stowed away for another day. We are, after all, a very brightly clad, very excellent Shore Crew.

May 12th – Wednesday

There were some suspicious looking clouds about first thing when I came down to start off in the shop. They were all piled up in the east, so I ignored them and took the bleddy hound out without a rain jacket. Brave, huh? I always forget that I cannot see behind us, so we were immensely lucky that the geet lump of rain back there, waiting to come in, waited until we got home, which was jolly decent of it.

It rained on and off throughout the day and seemed to be better in the afternoon. By all accounts we faired better than up east, which was deluged for most of the day with proper heavy stuff. Unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately, it kept the Missus off The Farm for the day, but she found she had plenty to do here, instead.

I had just got back from the gymnasium when a mammoth delivery turned up from one of our beachware suppliers. I have taken the decision that we should call in the majority of our back order since we are better placed this year to do so. Next time I looked at the store room – I had been upstairs about my ablutions when it had turned up – it was stacked with boxes. It was a good job I managed to clear the lions' share of yesterday's delivery else we would not have had sufficient room.

The Missus and I spent the rest of the afternoon clearing the delivery and putting what we could out onto the shelves of the shop. That in itself was no mean feat as the shelves in the shop are already stacked with goodies. I had recently been looking at new shelving units to see if we could make more efficient use of space. I think that I have come to the conclusion that the only solution is to get a bigger shop.

As if to prove the point another delivery arrived in the middle of the afternoon. Fortunately, it was for the Missus and The Farm. She had ordered some small posts to make a fence around some of the growing areas to keep the bunnies out. These posts were remarkably long, in fact you could probably say that the stakes had never been higher. I told the delivery driver that the Missus had recently read a book on vampires and was preparing, just in case. No, he did not laugh, either. Perhaps he was a vampire.

We ended the day with a store room still full of boxes, but most of them waiting to be transported to The Farm. We have baskets full of shoes, however, which were another purchase made without thinking about where they were going to hang. It is a good job they were not mules, as it would be cruel to hang a mule. Horses are a different matter, they mustang somewhere. Alright, enough for one day, I am sure. The shoes are a problem as I had not realised they were individual sizes. We only have enough free hooks to put two sizes on each hanger and only three at a time. We will be forever answering questions about where the sizes are that are at the back and forever topping them up. We will need to scratch our heads about this one.

I locked the first electric sliding door in The Cove on the problem and went to muse why catch-up programmes on television do not have subtitles for us deafos.

May 11th – Tuesday

There was some real warmth in the sunshine first thing and we had plenty of time to enjoy it too, as we were compelled to walk around the block and the bloody hound was walking as slowly as she could. She had intended to pull me down to the merest sliver of beach but I insisted on going the other way; she punished me with a go slow.

The clouds rolled in very quickly after we opened the shop. The sun was still shining for our almost centenarian when she arrived. Her daughter had asked me to save a paper for her and she told me today that I had been giving her the wrong one. I thought it was The Mirror but it should have been The Express; I could not have got it more wrong than that. Fortunately, she does not hold a grudge.

As the Missus was heading up to The Farm early to start again with the digger, I had a quick look at the rainfall radar for her. It seems our perfect blue skies were clouding over ahead of a geet lump of heavy rain moving in from the south west. It would be with us inside the hour. The Missus did not care very much as there was work she could be doing inside the polytunnel, so she was quite happy. I could not say the same for our customers.

The streets cleared shortly after the rain started up, followed by a few short showers of hail. The rain persisted for the best part of an hour and it was not until way after that our visitors started to return in any numbers. I had kept the first electric sliding door in The Cove shut for the duration and when I opened it again, I discovered very quickly that the wind had changed direction and was back in the east. Not only was it in the east but it was also very chilly again. I ran and got my got pretty sharpish. No more than a couple of hours later it went around to the west again, so jacket off. I just wish it would make its mind up but it appeared to be some sort of weird anomaly.

We had a bit of a time of it on the pasties during the middle part of the day. This was because I had decided not to order any tomorrow because things had been a bit slow in that department for the last few days. As things took a dive in the afternoon, I decided to introduce myself to our new chilli and lemon lentil chips. I have never been one for crisps and could not eat a whole packet but these things, my word, are very toothsome. For the last few weeks they have been outselling the potato crisps and I can now understand why. I now have to focus on not eating all the stock during the quiet days.

It did not take long for my focus to be diverted. In the middle of the afternoon, five or six big boxes arrived full of hooded sweatshirts and new t-shirts for children. The hooded sweatshirts was a top up order but a fairly substantial one and means we have the full range of sizes back again. It takes much effort to label the polybags that they come in and put them away in order so we can easily find them when they are needed. We seem to be continually increasing our stock of these as sale of them increase year on year it seems. This year we have definitely run out of space in the store room for them and some overstock will need to go up to The Farm.

Our regular t-shirt supplier has closed down after the main man retired, so we had to find another. We fell back on the same company that makes our hooded sweatshirts, which is reliable and good quality. Since it was our first t-shirt order with them there are some minor issues to be sorted out the main one being all the t-shirts arrived loose when we sell them bagged. I did a few but the Missus bagged the majority of one colour during the evening – she likes doing that sort of thing. I will look forward to doing my share tomorrow and I can hardly wait.

May 10th – Monday

There was blue sky above me when I awoke this morning and it was still there when I went downstairs to put the shop display out the front and to do the newspapers and milk. When I had finished that and opened the first electric sliding door in The Cove to go and fetch the bleddy hound, inexplicably, it had started to rain and quite heavily, too.

The bleddy hound and I got a little damp when we ran down to the Harbour beach but the heavy rain had more or less finished by then. The lumpy sea from yesterday had cleared the weed off what little of the beach we could see. Later, we could see that it had completely gone from the big beach as well, so three cheers for the big lumpy sea.

The rain returned a little later in the morning very shortly after I had told a couple that there was no more rain about. I had based my information on the Meteorological Office's website, which of course was crass stupidity on my part and very much a schoolboy error. It came down in buckets for about ten minutes before clearing away again as rapidly as it had appeared.

It rather alarmed the Missus who by this time was at The Farm keen to dig big holes. We had investigated the hire of a mini digger and it had arrived earlier in the morning. The Missus has a requirement to put a lot of earth into the polytunnel to continue her no-dig gardening. We have plenty of earth in our three acre field but the problem is that it is in the wrong place. The game plan is to use the mini digger to dig it up from various parts of the field (for all that no-dig gardening) and transport it to the polytunnel. We have the digger for a week, which relieves the pressure on having to try and squeeze all the work into a short period. It is probably more than we need but we also considered that we may be able to make some improvements to the lane as well with the additional time.

Since we are under starters orders for an increase in visitors in the coming weeks I thought it a good plan to have a bit of a tune up at the bone cruncher in town. It will almost certainly be the last opportunity I have before the fight starts and as luck would have it, they found me a free space in the afternoon. It is a new lady I am seeing there who is very good for her tender years. Not wishing to be rude, but I do

hope I never meet her in the street as I would never recognise her as I have only ever seen her in a mask.

The trip dovetailed nicely with our plan for me to head up to The Farm in the evening with the Missus to play on the new digger. It was something of a big adventure, heading into town and the sun was shining to welcome me in. The Missus had come back from The Farm cold through, but I found that even on the south coast it was sheltered from the breeze and quite warm. It is all very well organised at the bone cruncher and I am now set for the coming months.

Arriving home just in time to carry out most of the closing routine at the shop, the Missus went and fed the bleddy hound early and we headed off to The Farm bang on time so that I could have a chance to play, erm, demonstrate the effectiveness of the mini digger on the lane's bumps.

Well, dear reader, that was just about the most fun you can have with your clothes on and, I might just venture, that if I took all my clothes off and jumped on board the digger, it would be just about the most fun you can have with your clothes off, too. It took a while to get my head around the various levers and what they did and then become accustomed to using them in conjunction with one another. It took a while, but I managed to be quite effective on one section of the lane. I will try again during the week, but I suspect we will need a bigger tool to do the length of the lane efficiently. Never mind, I know what is going on my list to Santy this year.

May 9th – Sunday

It was a much better morning to open the door to today. I did not get wet for a start, although the outside display that had sat in the shop all night had dripped all over the floor. There was also no sign of the 'cow' on Cowloe today; it is such an ephemeral thing, no wonder few people are aware of it. I also understand there was no sign of the 'cow' on Cowloe in the Diary either for a while until the other reader tipped me off. Apologies for that.

Even with the upset of recent times it is this period that we see so many of our returning visitors while The Cove is still relatively quiet. One visitor who has come at this time of year for as long as we can remember turned up today. As if a little thing like the dreaded lurgi was going to stop her. She comes all the way from Camborne, or thereabouts, and usually brings the sunshine with her, so we can expect that dreckly. Today, she turned up for her newspaper and some cleaning bits for her holiday home and proudly announced that this year she is just seven months away from her 100th birthday. While a little on the diminutive side, she is sharp as a pin and jolly with it. Here comes the sun.

In the meanwhile, we had to wait for a spot of sunshine today. It stayed a bit misty and cool for most of the day but it was a sight warmer than it has been to date. Even

yesterday I had to run upstairs for a jacket half way through the day, today I managed without, so I sensed improvement.

There was also an improvement in the number of people mooching about at our end of The Cove. All the benches opposite us, the café's, ours and the ice cream kiosk's were full at one point in the middle of day. Surprisingly, we were not much more profitable today than yesterday, which had been bolstered at the end of the day by lots of log and alcohol buying.

I think that many of our potential customers were distracted by the sea state that had become quite boisterous from overnight. First thing it was lumping over the Harbour wall and later crashing up the cliffs from Nanjulian to Gwenver. With a south westerly behind it, the waves were a bit washed out for much of the day and I only spotted one surfer in the afternoon giving it a go. Later, with the tide on the push, things got serious and attracted some of the more experienced surfers. Sizeable waves were racing all across the bay, directed at Gwenver and the big beach and some curling in towards us in the south. When the sun burst through at the back end of the afternoon it was quite a spectacle.

There were two surfers left by the time we sat down for tea, taking in the break between the OS and ourselves. They were accompanied by a couple of shags diving for fish and staying under for an unfeasibly long time. No sign of the killer whales spotted off Porthcurno last week, which caused an almighty fuss. They had been here before but this time they were officially identified. We will leave it a week before the bright newspaper gets hold of the pictures and turns them into great whites.

May 8th – Saturday

It was something of a grey and mizzly morning. Thankfully, it was rather less mizzly by the time I took the bleddy hound down to the beach but it was surprisingly mild even with a fairly robust breeze from the west. The tide has had a little go at the wealth of weed on the beach and it is all now level and not so deep as it was. It may well be that it is the same amount of weed spread out, but the optimist in me rather thinks that some of it has been washed out.

If it had, it pretty much resembled the day. There were probably more people around during the winter when we were closed, as indeed we should have been today. After last weekend when we were drowning in bread and pasties, I radically reduced the order for this week. Ironically, we ran out of bread quite early on, but the pasties were still too many.

The morning before we opened was quite fraught as deliveries arrived together rather than nicely spaced out, leaving me to deal with each in order. In the midst of all that came two knocks on the door. The first was a hopeful customer that I sent packing because he wanted to browse and the second was a neighbour who wanted to point out the 'cow' on Cowloe. This phenomenon I had not seen in quite a while

and even then it is very rare to be able to see it from any other angle than from the Harbour car park in direct line of sight. Today, it was exceptionally well defined even from the railings opposite the shop. I took some photographs but it was a bit far off and the visibility poor.

Our Boathouse Farm, produce of Sennen failed to attract any bidders today, mainly as there were so few bidders about or perhaps it is because the 'Sennen' cabbages are so large they would feed a small village for a fortnight. There are only a few bits of produce starting to appear from The Farm and we are still testing the waters about how best to package and display. The whole concept of home grown produce seems to appeal to the few people we have polled on the matter. One neighbour who had one of the large 'Sennen' cabbages last week told us that the quality was top and that she was still eating the darn thing. Perhaps we should have sold it by the leaf.

It seemed a little premature, but there was an announcement today by a cycling organisation that a new West Kernow circular route had been created. It takes in Land's End, the north coast, Carn Brea and all the way down to Lizard and back. It sounded like quite an ambitious project and they have glued together existing paths along with newly agreed routes with various landowners to make up 150 miles of track. The website of Cycling UK, the organisation that created the route, says that it is expected to take three to four days to complete and will be opened in September.

Not that I expect our lane to The Farm to be part of the cycling route, unless you like flat tyres, but someone has put up a notice of application to make the lane into a bridleway. We are well aware that horses use the lane from time to time as well as dog walkers and the occasional lost soul but currently the lane has no status and no ownership. The sudden appearance of a notice, first raised with the much maligned council in December last year, rather alarmed us. First, there are people out there with ulterior motives and Machiavellian plans to be wary of and secondly, we were not exactly sure what the ramifications of making the lane a bridleway were. The notice stated that for access, we could still drive motorised transport down there but what could we not do?

Some investigation demonstrated that the applicant was a member of the Ramblers Association. We are also aware of the recent campaign to register footpaths and the like or risk losing them and the Ramblers will be at the forefront of that. Since the sign only appeared on Friday we are unsure how long we have to raise an objection, should we wish to, or how the reclassification of the lane affects us for things like trimming the hedges and maintaining the road – as much as we have been able. Since we cannot talk to the much maligned council until Monday, we are in the dark until then.

One thing though that did raise an eyebrow is that the application not only addressed the status of the lane, which is on the Ordnance Survey map, but also references continuing the journey all the way to the gate at Brew Lane. This last half of the proposed bridleway is private land that does not even have a footpath listed across

it. Since that land is held by a farmer who, until today, was a Parish Councillor, we broached the subject with him and await a reply.

By the early part of the afternoon, I was becoming bored to the point of distraction, so I was grateful that the Missus set forth for The Farm to collect the lengthy list of stock required to refill our shelves. Naturally, by the time she came back, bored or no, I did not feel like sorting it all out since I had done so very little for most of the day. The Missus encouraged me, however, and now most of it is in its rightful place. The balls that need to be inflated will wait until tomorrow as the compressor makes an awful racket that would deafen anyone in the shop and wake the neighbours. I will do it tomorrow at around seven o'clock with the door open.

Definitely time for a beer and a hearty meal.

May 7th – Friday

There was absolutely no chance of getting wet this morning unless I wished to dive into the sea. Much as many people think that a good idea, I find the whole thing far too wet and refrain from doing so. No even the bleddy hound was interested today either and again spent the minimum amount of time on the beach amongst the weed that the tide hardly touched.

The sea looked reasonably calm at first glance and there was nothing there to dissuade our fishermen from heading out again. However, if you looked over towards Gwenver there was a fair amount of white water and at Aire Point it was crashing up the rocks. At certain times of the tide, it gave the surfers a jolly time and with a hint of offshore breeze to go with it.

You might recall that I mentioned that we placed an order for the Cornish vodka that started off our journey into local spirits. I was expecting it to be delivered today and had cleared some space ahead of its arrival. I was also expecting high hopes of it since it won 'best vodka in the world' double gold at the San Francisco World Spirits competition. While I was waiting for it to turn up I had a message from the company telling me that they had only gone and won it again for a second year running. I am now doubly excited about getting it onto the shelf and doubly expectant of its success.

Thumbing through the local news in a particularly quiet moment, I read that the Ministry of Defence had put its hands up for the "loud rumbling" that had people running into the streets fearful that the sky was falling in. I apologise for the exaggeration, I think I may have caught it from *The Cornishman* website for which the word, embellishment, may well have been created. The fact was that there was a bit of a loud jet flying around last night. Yes, it was loud enough to wake me up, take a few seconds to realise it was a military jet and go back to sleep again.

Had it crossed my mind that it was a foreign jet fighter intent on doing me harm, I think I might have still gone back to sleep on the premise that there was not much I could do about it. There is my shotgun, of course, but given my success with clays I do not think that even a low flying pigeon has much to worry about. The one soupçon in the report that was of any use was that it identified the craft as a F-35 Lightning, probably practising for the impending G7 summit here. The MOD did not venture whether it was practising defence or offence manoeuvres.

We gathered some momentum in the afternoon with a veritable throng of people filling the street from late in the morning. We became increasingly busy in the shop with a fair bit of going home presents but also signs of people arriving. This compiled with two orders arriving kept me busy one way or another until an hour or so before closing.

I was also kept busy after tea. Our neighbour came knocking asking if we had a socket set and particularly an eleven millimetre socket for undoing the nut holding the kitchen tap on. Unfortunately, DIYman was out on a message, so I grabbed his tool box from the shop and headed around next door. There, our other neighbour was under the sink with an eleven millimetre spanner which he could not get to fit or felt that the socket may be of more efficient use. Sadly, although we have the socket in question, the ratchet that drives it is broken and is up at The Farm. Our under the sink neighbour said that he would go to his workshop in St Buryan to get some more tools.

While he was gone I had a look at the problem and found that my own eleven millimetre spanner fitted the nut perfectly and while it was a bit of a begger, I did manage to get the nut off. The next problem was removing the tap from the sink. The pipe connections were so eroded that they would not undo and thus the tap was stuck where it was. The only option was to wrench off one of the pipes and pull the second through the hole.

It was at this juncture, probably the best part of an hour since I arrived, that we discovered that the new tap had fittings incompatible with the pipes it had to connect to. I suggested a plumber was required, which was probably the person who was required soon after purchasing the tap. Still, I now know that I can undo a nut while lying in a reverse crab position in a very confined space. It may be useful one day.

May 6th – Thursday

It is an outrage; an affront to democracy and I will not have it, I tell you. I will complain vociferously to our much maligned council councillor but first, I have to vote one in. Herein lies the issue: they have closed our normal polling station.

I had arranged my morning to allow sufficient time to scoot down the road to the hut with the tin roof, where, for the last umpteen voting times our voting station has been. It was cut a bit fine for one reason or another, but I arrived at the door with just

enough time to put my 'X's in a box and scamper away. Imagine my surprise, then, when I found no big Polling Station sign outside and the door locked. It was only at that point that I looked at the poll card that I had scabbled to find in a hurry and noticed that it stated that the station was up at the Community Hall – in a different village, I might add.

Had I realised the change in arrangement sooner, I might have saved myself an addition wetting. I had heard some heavy rain during the night but it seemed like it might have stopped when I looked out of the window in the morning. I confirmed that it was still going when I went down to sort the shop out and as a consequence toggged up in full metal jacket waterproofs for taking the bleddy hound out. She was having none of it and lingered just long enough for the absolute necessary before heading back up the slipway again.

The sea had calmed sufficiently to let the fishing fleet out for a spot of work. Before they left they had to clear a way through the piles of oar weed that repeated tides had rolled up into deep hillocks here and there on the beach. There is also a sizeable area of it on the big beach and my friend tells me that it is just as deep there, too. Thankfully, the tides have just jumped, heralding the advent of the next spring tide so hopefully it will be washed out again soon.

By the middle of the day it had stopped raining and it started to look much brighter. There was still a fair amount of breeze, more evident because it had gone around to the north again bringing more chill. It was an ideal time to move about a bit and take myself up to the top and do some voting. The process took a lot longer than it should because I met fellow voters and stopped for a chat about the injustice of it all. I had to hurry home after a while as I started to get a little lightheaded. I concluded later that I had not been to the top of the hill for some while, and it was probably altitude sickness. I will take oxygen next time I am there.

The oxygen had been coming at me all day and by the last knockings I was pretty much cold all the way through. I resorted to hugging the pasty warmer every now and again but it was no substitute for the real thing – pasties for tea. Unfortunately, this necessitated taking frozen ones upstairs to cook. Perhaps I will wear gloves next time.

May 5th – Wednesday

That wind from the north is bringing the temperature down nicely. It was all big coats and woolly hats today up and down The Cove and just right for sitting outside for your pint and meal. I did wish I had a somewhat thicker coat this morning when I took the bleddy hound down to the beach. That wind was a lot stronger the other side of the Lifeboat station than it was outside the shop.

If it were not enough for the sea to be eroding the sand from our beaches and putting it back at another point on the beach where it is not quite so useful, the wind has

tried to get in on the act as well. We are very used to it sandblasting our legs or into our eyes if we are the height of the bleddy hound, but it is much more unusual to see it blown into dunes. There it was, piled high against the wall at the top of the Harbour beach just ready for a remake of Lawrence of Arabia.

I was not expected much more of the world to be shifting today and I was not disappointed. I headed off down to the gymnasium in the morning just as our visitors were beginning to stir. By the time I came back to the shop, the street was quite busy and the Missus reported some good spending activity in my absence. She must have had all the action because it was all very sedate for the rest of the afternoon.

We have found an issue with our new freezer: the shelves are very slippery and things like bags of mince beef tend to fall out even from the middle of the shelf. The shelves need a lip ideally, but since they do not I decided that some sort of tray placed on top would probably do the job. So, with a bit of spare time during the afternoon I decided to scour the Internet for something that suited.

Two hours later and I had only nailed down one solution that fitted the shelf. Unfortunately, it was not exactly cheap. Everything else was too big, too small or too deep. Even the too small were not so small that you could fit two on the shelf to compensate and I did not think it sensible to find boxes that wasted any space since the shelves we have are pretty packed as it is. We will be better off when the extra shelves turn up, but we will still need to insert the tray solution for those, too. The slightly more than I wanted to spend solution it is then and if I had gone for that when I found them, I would have saved myself best part of two hours. That will teach me to be a tight grumpy shopkeeper.

While I trawled the Internet for freezer shelf solutions the Missus laboured in the kitchen. I had spotted the Goan fiery curry kit that she had bought at the shops yesterday and when she asked what we were having for tea, I told her I was having that. It is a kit you can throw anything you want into as extras, so she did exactly that. Mostly, with these shop bought curries, they are a bit tame as I suspect the makers worry about offence and litigation, so I was slightly unprepared for the taste sensation that hit my tongue when the Missus offered me a sample near its completion. I think that the makers used the word 'fiery' in the name of it because they could not think of a word that expressed just how spicy it actually was, without using rude words.

Quite what it was that made me think of the wind, I do not know, but it was obvious by its absence as I stepped outside the shop to bring in the outside display. It had not actually gone away but changed direction to one that is much kinder on us. For the first time in the day, it felt like how it looked through the window, which was bright, sunny and temperate. That will do very nicely, thank you, even if there were not so many people about to enjoy it.

May 4th – Tuesday

The howling had largely stopped from last night and the wind had moved around to the north west and moderated by the time I got around to getting out of the door. It was quite blustery still, especially as the bloody hound and I rounded the corner of the Lifeboat station, but it was nowhere near as severe as yesterday.

The sea that had been dormant for quite a little while, gave up its dead after having something of a temper tantrum last night. The beach was crowded with oar weed, though not as deep as we have seen it at its worst, although there is time yet. The sea state was still pretty lively even if it had calmed a bit since last night and it was boisterous enough for the Lifeguards to red flag the beach. It is unlikely to have upset the surfers much as the waves were all blown out in any case.

Our contrived grocery order arrived late in the day not giving me much chance to clear it before the end of the day. Ordinarily we would not have placed an order this week, but I had forgotten to include toilet rolls last week and we were about to run out. Therefore, I had spent Sunday trying to imagine what we would run out of in a week hence and ordered accordingly. We now have a lot of everything but will almost certainly run out of the things that I did not order because life is like that.

On top of this, the other half of the beachware delivery from Friday appeared. It contained the balance of the beach robes and since we have still not decided what to do with them, they can remain in their boxes until we do. Most of the rest was sunglasses, which they had managed to mess up. I had asked for a gross of men's and ladies' sunnies and got just the one box of ladies' and a whole host of children's. In our store room we have sufficient child sunglasses to furnish the needs of a large junior school several times over, as I think the same company did a similar thing last year that I let ride. This year, however, I had to pull them up as, first we would very quickly run out of sunglasses for ladies and secondly, we would still have children's sunglasses long after the sun has gone out. They are working to rectify the issue I am told.

Our business days currently, including today, taper fore and aft with the busiest bulge slewed toward the early part of the afternoon. There was still a trickle of business towards the end of the day but it is clear that we are back to a sedate pace for a week or two. It was such a pretty afternoon, too, for all those people to be missing and the Lifeguards even opened up the beach for the people who were not there.

There was no five minutes to closing rush today; what a disappointment. Along with the quiet of the afternoon, I was able to clear some space on our spirits shelves for some new stock coming in. Ever since they won the top prize at the World Spirits competition in San Francisco last year to make it best vodka in the world, I wanted to get it back in. Last year being a disaster for orders and supply, I did not bother but this year it would have been unforgivable. It did not do terribly well when I had it in when it was first created but that was a few years back and things in the spirit world

have changed a lot. We have high hopes for it and have also cleared a space for their ready made cocktails in a bag – just add ice. If it does not work out on the sales front you might find there will be some lost Diary weekends come winter.

May 3rd – Monday

Well, I expect that you have only opened this page, dear reader, to hear the disaster that the delivery of the washing machine became. How the people who turned up did not know one end of it from another and how they plugged the water into the mains and vice versa. So, I shall not keep you on your seat edges a moment longer than necessary but first I should tell you about today's weather.

Alright, alright, I had a telephone call shortly before nine o'clock from the driver who announced that he was just leaving Poole. Poole, I thought might be a few hours away, so I told the Missus that we had plenty of time to clear the route through the living room. I was half way through some rather pleasant Cornish brie on a chunk of multi-seeded cob when a big truck pulled up outside. They had left Pool, just the other side of Camborne at a coupe of minutes to nine o'clock.

They wasted no time at all extracting the old machine and while one deliverer was doing that the other had the other unwrapped ready to bring up. Together they lifted the machines up and down the stairs and installed the new one without fuss. They tested it before announcing that they were done. Both local boys – to Camborne by the sound of it – they were exceedingly pleasant and professional. I also discovered that they worked for a competitor of the company that lost our accounts last year and did not have much good to say about them, either.

Now can we talk about the weather, please? Thank you. Since before the weekend, today has been chalked up as being a bit of a stinker. Heavy rain all day and particularly high wind, especially around polytunnels up at the top of the hill. As is generally the case the weather did not turn out quite as bad as was stated. Although the wind was severe around the corner, we only got the tail end of the bulk of the rain that largely went through further up the line. As our pathetic tail of rain went through in the early part of the afternoon, things got a bit squally for a time and caused me to rescue our pasty sign.

The sudden turn in weather also sent all but our most hardy customers running back to their billets. It had been remarkably busy during the morning, given the forecast, but could well have been people getting out ahead of it turning poor. There was also a fair amount of going home present buying, so I must conclude there were quite a few people here just for the long weekend.

There was no heading off to The Farm today, so the Missus took the opportunity to try out her new washing machine. She came down to take the bleddy hound out, who had been relegated to the shop when the delivery happened, and she was less than happy. I am told that the 'fastwash', the one that gets used most frequently out

of the scores of other programmes that do not get a look in at all, takes fifteen minutes longer than the old machine. Not only that but the programme ends in a 1200 rpm spin cycle, which does not dry the clothes sufficiently for the tumble dryer. She can set the 1600 rpm spin cycle separately, which then takes a further twenty minutes and requires intervention that the old one did not. Lastly, the 'fastwash' will only take 2kg of clothes instead of the full 8kg the old one did. She makes the point, and quite rightly, that this last detail demolishes its super green 'eco' credentials and she will have to run four washes to the old machine's one and have to employ the tumble dryer for twice as long for each load because the clothes come out wetter.

I think that we are within our rights to send it back under the distance selling rules but when I looked for alternatives when I could not find this model locally, there was very little choice without spending a fortune. I think that we will just have to be grateful that it works. I also looked at the manual later and found it to be ambiguous. One places says there is a limit of 2kg for the 'fastwash' and in another table it says 8kg and that it will spin at 1600 rpm. Further investigation is required.

As remarkably busy it was during the morning, it was remarkably quiet in the later afternoon. I managed to clear the store room of the remaining bits of delivery we had during the last week but after that it was down to watching the tumbleweed rolling past the door, except it was not tumbleweed. Someone told me earlier that the big bin the Harbour car park was overflowing and rather than find another bin, people were just piling the rubbish on top and around the sides of it. I think that it is only emptied once a fortnight, which is woefully insufficient during busier times as demonstrated by the tumbling cascade of litter blowing down Cove Road.

It did not take long after the big squally tail of rain passed through for the sea to respond. By the time it went dark, big untidy waves were rolling into the bay. Water was sloshing over the Harbour wall and lumping up the cliffs opposite as the wind went north westerly. We would have that howling all night I expect but at least it is not the bleddy hound any more who has mainly recovered from her woes.

May 2nd – Sunday

Another glorious morning to behold and another carry of the bleddy hound up the slipway. Who needs a gymnasium when you have a heavy bleddy hound that needs hefting everywhere.

It is just as well because it looks like I will not get to the gymnasium again on Monday. I had a text message from the chain store that we purchased our new washing machine from first thing, confirming that they would be here Monday between seven in the morning and seven in the evening. A second text message narrowed it down to the morning but added a slightly worrying note at the end saying that it would be delivered by a courier company and not the chain's own drivers.

It left a contact telephone number, which I employed in a quiet moment and after five minutes battling with the IVR system, I got to speak with a human. The very pleasant lady on the other end told me that, indeed, they now routinely outsource deliveries to this courier company and that will also install the machine and take away the old one. Whilst the very pleasant lady convinced me that the chain had not got it wrong it still left me deeply concerned. The crux is that the courier company is the same one that lost our accounts last year when we asked them to deliver them to an address eight miles away. If the company cannot carry out a simple procedure that is their core business what hope do we have that they can correctly install a washing machine. I await to be amazed tomorrow, when everything will be just fine I am sure. I will keep repeating that until it is over.

We were busy again during the day. That was no surprise as the weather was just about as good as you can get given that it is early May. I had reports that it was warm on the other side of the street – the grass was presumably greener, too. There were thankfully no mask wars today and everyone was pleasant and bought many things. A grumpy shopkeeper could ask for no more, although obviously we are never quite satisfied, else we would not be grumpy. We even had the exact number of pasties required and we ran out just after the main busyness of the day.

The Missus headed for The Farm as early as she could today. Apparently, beans were on the menu and she spent time clearing the bean growing area that she set up last year and I spent some time fixing the frames for and re-stringing them. If those beans and peas grow into prize specimens, I shall expect part of the acclaim. I also sent her a list of goodies that we need for the shop, which did not materialise so she will go up again in the afternoon tomorrow.

A trip to The Farm tomorrow may just be a good idea as the forecast tells us we will have a bit of a blow from the south west. This is the direction that the windbreak is set up for so I shall be interested to see if it works. Obviously, there is nothing I can do if it does not so perhaps it will be better not knowing.

We spent tea time looking at the line of big container ships heading up the channel. Some were bound for English ports so I am hoping that at least one contains some four pole windbreaks and a big box of tennis balls with our name on it. Well, we can all dream.

May 1st – Saturday

One newspaper headline this morning excitedly stated “Hug friends in a fortnight”. Just one question – do I have to? I have kept from hugging the Missus since the bleddy hound arrived and we have not had another bleddy hound since, so it is working.

It was a wonderfully sunny morning for refraining from hugging people. The fishing fleet were out early doors to take advantage and there was a little sliver of beach to take the bleddy hound down to. She is still not right, and we are hoping that she just

needs a little time to recover but at the moment I have to carry her up the slipway. I conclude that she is going on a diet if this keeps up.

They have waited a long time for it but for the good people of the parish it is election time. For certain it is twenty years since a parish election here and I think I read somewhere it is closer to thirty years. During the intervening time the parish has struggled to find more contenders than seats and thus the Parish Council has been made up from the ten people that did not hide quickly enough.

This time around it seems that the whole village has been gripped by election fever and half of them have daintily placed their bonnets into the ring – most are ladies and throwing your hat in is so vulgar. Many of the potential councillors have hoisted their flags on social media and a few have hit the campaign trail on foot, which is what happened today. It is very rare that we see campaigning or protesting anyone in The Cove because there are so few residents here we are not deemed worthwhile. Fair play, then, to two of the ladies who knocked on the first electric sliding door in The Cove – metaphorically speaking, since it was open - to leave me a poster and beat me into submission to cast my vote in their direction.

I am sorry, but all this face to face and kissing babies stuff carries no sway with me at all. I will vote for the first candidate that drives past the shop in a van with an unfeasibly large speaker on the top and placards down the side calling out, 'vote Denzil'. The name will not matter because you will not be able to understand a word of it anyway.

As predicted, we got a bit busy today. What with the sunshine and the holiday weekend there seemed to be an influx of visitors and trippers. There was a hint of mask wars starting up again, which is disappointing. After more than a year we would have expected it to enter the common culture, but it seems some people routinely go places without one. We understand the occasional forgetfulness but an entire family here on a trip where going to a shop for drinks and snacks was probably inevitable was somewhat irritating especially when they had to be told. When we are wearing a mask for nearly ten hours a day, we do not think that insisting our customers to wear one for less than five minutes is too much to ask.

We became a little quieter in the afternoon and it gave me the opportunity to break out some of the new stock. Our supplier has introduced a towelling changing robe that we thought alluring and also quite the rage amongst bathers. They are a sight cheaper than those huge branded, quilted changing robes and should do quite well. As usual, we spent no time about thinking where they might be displayed in the shop as well as not knowing exactly how they would come packaged.

When I opened the box I was quite pleased to see that they came in an oblong pack with an integral hanger. They are, however, bulky and only three fit on a wall hanger at a time. Since there are five sizes we will forever be restocking them if we do not find a better solution in short order. Since the order was split, I only had two sizes to

play with; the rest arrive on Monday, I think. I gave up in the end and deferred to the Missus who also had no idea. Big pile on the floor for now and hope for the best.

As is usual on busy days like this with an extended lull in the afternoon, we have a five minutes to closing rush. The five minutes to closing rush was so intense today that it started twenty minutes before we closed and finished five minutes after we were due to close. It was shortly after the Missus brought back the first of this year's Boathouse Farm, Produce of Sennen in the form of two unfeasibly large 'Sennen' cabbages and a bag full of micro baby spinach.

The Missus decided, and it is not a bad idea, that we have a separate key on the till to record sales of our own produce. This was we can see just how big the gulf is between the investment we have made at The Farm and how much money we have made from it. It is the mental equivalent of beating yourself with birch twigs and is good for the soul, apparently. I shall let you know, dreckly.