

DIARY 2023

October 31st – Tuesday

There was me thinking that I could have a bit of a lie in, laze about a bit and still have plenty of time to stank up the hill to meet the Aged Parent. How naïve.

For a start, I could not wait to get out of bed. It was like sleeping on a concrete slab. I will have to check what sort of mattress it was so that I might avoid getting one – unless I already have got one, the one we just purchased, in which case I am in for four months of not sleeping.

The time I had in the morning evaporated more quickly than I appreciated, and I did not even have an ABH to blame for this one. Happily, it does not take me as long as I thought to get to the top of the hill, nor does it use quite as much energy as I thought I remembered from last time. I did make sure that I travelled light and that only the minimum of stuff was in the backpack, so that helped. I had meant to check where the Post Office was on the way back yesterday evening so I made sure I checked on the way up. They have a proper Post Office in Sherborne. How posh.

We had a splendid time in the morning, and I was able to get The Missus on the tablet computer so she could have a face-to-face chat with the Aged Parent as well. A while back, some faceless bureaucrat in some far away ivory tower decided that it would be a spiffing idea to drastically limit the level of sound that these devices could generate. I think it was because we were not clever enough to turn the sound down ourselves and not damage our delicate ears.

The faceless bureaucrat clearly was not deaf, had anyone they knew who were deaf or even heard of deafness or being hard of hearing. If they had they would have permitted just a little more volume than the tinny squeak that emitted from my machine. We all were straining to hear the Missus which detracted greatly from the quality of the conversation.

We repaired to Sherborne's oldest public house for a spot of dinner. It was largely empty, which is just as well because it permitted the Aged Parent and myself to shout at each other over a rather welcome meal. The Aged Parent had commented on the unevenness of the floor as we walked to our table. I told him the building dated from the 15th century. He only dated from just before the middle of the 20th century and was already creaking a bit, so it was probably no surprise.

I returned to the billet after dinner and posted my parcel at the Post Office. There was a lengthy queue, which should have been no surprise since it was the tail end of people's lunch hours. I was rather pleased with the lady ahead of me in the queue. She asked for stamps at the counter, which was a good place to ask for them but given that they were bound to have stamps of every denomination, it probably was not very helpful to ask the cashier for 'some stamps, please.' Having responded to

the probing question of what sort of stamp she wanted it was then down to the cashier again to ask, how many. I appreciated the coolness of the cashier who said nothing further when the quantity was returned as 'six or so' but went for six hoping it was sufficient. I was just happy that I now know it was not just me who suffered.

Returning to the Aged Parent in the afternoon – there has to be room for an afternoon zizz, you know – we spent a happy couple of hours taking about everything under the sun. By the time we had done this, and it was time for me to return to my billet, there was no sun and the rain that we had been expecting all day had arrived. I had brought along my almost serious full metal jacket waterproofs but found that it probably was not raining as hard as I thought it would. I wore them anyway since I would have to carry them again if I did not.

I needed them later when I went out for some tea as it had come in heavier. I settled for a pretentious burger in the pretentious bar of a pretentious hotel across from the billet. The Aged Parent and I ate there last time I was down and I do not recall it being quite so pretentious then. Still, the pretentious burger was good and the pretentious service, well, it was pretentious but well done. I paid the pretentious bill and left a very unpretentious tip.

I returned to the cottage where I was staying and watched a rubbish series on one of the streaming channels on my tablet computer. There is a television attached high up on the wall on the single, multi-purpose room downstairs but there is nowhere to sit in front of it without rearranging the furniture. I also could not see how I might turn it on. I rarely watch television at home, so it did not bother me greatly.

I read my book until I felt brave enough to go to my iron-hard bed fortified by a small glass of rather good Cornish whisky. I had brought it with me in a miniature bottle against such a contingency. Such clever preparation, and I was not even a boy scout.

October 30th – Monday

I was in the last throes of my exercise routine when ABH caught up with me this morning. It will teach me for having a lie in even if it was for just forty minutes. The situation was not helped by the sun having risen an hour earlier and cast light into the bedroom. It is light; therefore it is getting up time. It is probably a reasonable philosophy provided that we can go to bed when it turns dark again.

Since she was so keen, I took her around the block straight away. The wind had diminished a good deal, and it was brighter than yesterday, too. That did not last and just before I left for the train station, it started to rain and be miserable again.

I will give being east of Camborne its due: it is a lot brighter, drier and warmer than it was at home. The journey was smooth an uneventful, which is a complete begger if you are a Diarist and want something to write about. All the trains were running on

time and the connection at Exeter St David's even arrived a little early. I found myself in exactly the wrong place on the platform for it, which was about fifty feet ahead of where it stopped. I was not alone but it meant that there were quite a lot of us vying to get in the first available door on the first available carriage.

Being a fully trained and seasoned commuter, if a little rusty, I noted that the rear end of the train had loaded the few people who knew exactly where to stand. I also noted that the guard had stepped out of his cubby hole, or whatever it is called, and had a good view of me striding down towards him and a completely free carriage door. I hoped that he was not an ex-bus driver and keen to see the train drive off as I struggled to reach the door in time.

It was a busy service, running from somewhere to Waterloo station. I was very focused on getting off at the right stop as I had spent enough of my life being on a train coming into Waterloo and have no intention of ever doing it again.

I have discovered over the years that I have a very good sense of direction, space and location. If I have visited a place once, I tend to be able to find my way around it even some considerable time later. It had only been a year since I was last in Sherborne, but I had no trouble in finding my way from the station to the rental property I was in but I was early and sought out a café for a cup of tea to wait in.

The Aged Parent, the purpose of my visit, is at the top of the hill and I am staying at the bottom of the hill. I discovered in relatively short order that having not done any walking of note for seven months, despite visiting the gymnasium three times a week, that basic walking skills had deserted me. The fact that it was uphill as well, just made matters worse. I am going to have to do that hill five times in the next 48 hours, so I might have regained my abilities by then.

The rucksack that I brought with me, having packed only the bare necessities which included a laptop, washbag and waterproof trousers, was heavier than I anticipated. Before I went up the hill for the first time I thought it a sensible plan to empty the rucksack of all but what I would need to take to the Aged Parent. It was still heavy, but I was unable to determine exactly what it was that was so heavy. Perhaps the rucksack itself has a lead lining to shield me from errant x-rays.

It was therefore something of a delight to be presented with my grandfather's barometer and thermometer that used to hang in the hen house to take home. I stopped by at a stationers on the way back to my billet to buy some packing and tape and I shall take the package to the Post Office for the postal service to carry the burden.

The customer service arrangements in the stationery shop took me off-guard. The shop was the one that is closely aligned with the Laurel and Hardy Newspaper Company, so I should not have been surprised. I spoke to a very pleasant shop assistant who directed me to the packaging I was after. Having collected what I

needed, I sought out the shop counter which was not immediately obvious. As I move towards the door, assuming that it would be in that direction, I spotted what was apparently the till machinery but in a very cluttered counter arrangement. The shop assistance was close by doing the end of day newspapers – I mentally sympathised with her – so I looked to her indicating that I wished to pay.

I wondered at her hesitation but then, as she scanned my purchases, I realised that the till and the only method of payment, was a self-service machine. I suppose that I was lucky that there was an assistant at all – although if they have invented a machine to do the end of day newspapers, I want one – and I guess I was luckier still that it took cash. I am yet to be faced with someone that tells me they only take cards as I am longing to tell them I only carry cash.

I left it until quite late before I ventured out. I visited the Digby Tap, which I have subsequently learnt is quite famous. It is a proper pub, with proper people running it, serving beer at proper prices. It is a rarity and well worth a visit if you are ever in Sherborne. It might encourage me to visit a public house if we had one such locally.

The billet is perfectly comfortable, thank you. I retired there to read my book for a while before bed. I still feel a long way east of Camborne.

October 29th – Sunday

The early morning consequences of the going back of the clocks went almost completely unnoticed in our household. ABH seemed not to care a jot and the Missus slept through it. My smart mobile telephone that I use as a bedside clock seamlessly segued into the new regime and I awoke at my usual appointed hour. Alright, I woke up at the previous normal appointed hour, but happily snoozed through to the new one.

Of all the differences, the main one had no bearing on the time at all: it was noticeably colder than of late. It was bound to be so because the Missus decided to wash all my woolly hats last night, so I had to make do with the hood of my hooded sweatshirt when I took ABH around the block. It kept blowing off, so I gave up and just suffered a cold head. Fortunately, we were not out very long.

One of the quirks of the change in time is that the Laurel and Hardy Newspaper Company ignore it. Its supply process commences in the previous time zone, so they are late in March and early in October. I therefore had every expectation of seeing my Sunday newspapers piled up in the outside box when I went down to put out the outside display ahead of taking ABH out. Imagine my surprise (possibly spelt I-R-E) when I opened the box, and the cupboard was bare.

I had sent two notifications to the Laurel and Hardy Newspaper Company, informing it that our last day of business was Sunday, and we would not be requiring newspaper AFTER that. I had sent two as there was no acknowledgement to the first

which was eventually forthcoming after a further prompt. What level of utter incompetent idiocy is required to mess up a closure date after two reminders leaves me aghast with wonder, incredulity and a lot of other long words that I cannot spell.

I sent off an enquiry asking them to explain how "... close for the end of the season on 29th October that will be our last day of trading in 2023. Please stop all deliveries after this." might have been misinterpreted. I will no doubt have a message apologising for the delay while they assess and find the best solution.

I was luckier with the weather. I had noticed some heavy showers on the way just before I took ABH around the block. It looked like there were a good way off and we had plenty of time even though there was an ominous black cloud up ahead of us in the west. We managed to get around with only the breeze being a little playful and the rain did not occur to me after we left the flat. It was while I was making my cup of tea just as we got back that I heard the rain pounding on the kitchen skylight.

A little later, while I was in the shop doing whatever was left to do before we opened, it had rained again, this time an absolute downpour. I had not noticed at all until I drew the curtain behind the ice cream freezer and saw that the street was flooded with standing water in the gutter, queuing up for a turn to go down the drain. I spoke to a few people who had been in it, and they told me that it had been extremely heavy. Looks like I missed two showers today.

The rain cleared up after that. The sun even made an appearance from time to time during the day and the street was alive with visitors sporadically. The sporadic became more sporadic a little later when a renewed scattering of showers appeared in the middle of the afternoon. They would clear the streets and it would take half an hour for everyone to come back again. We have had better Sundays, but it did help assuage my guilt over closing.

I had not quite made it on the pasty front (sorry, MS. You get a break now until we reopen.) and we have probably a dozen left over. They cannot be frozen now and will end in the bin. The weather could have gone either way at the weekend and we were just unfortunate that the Sunday was just as bad as the Saturday in the end.

The rain increased in frequency until it was pretty much raining constantly and shut down business for the day. The sea was still ferocious nearing high water but not quite as ferocious as the last few days. Not only was the weather closing the light down, but the light was going rapidly out of the day given the new time zone. I had been momentarily confused in the morning when I came to updating the tide times. I could not quite understand why the times were earlier than the times already written down. In my defence, it was early.

The Missus dropped down in the last hour of opening intent on getting a head start on the freezers which need to be consolidated and shut down. I had been aware that our store room freezers had been getting more and more full of our own bits and

pieces rather than getting emptier as we neared closing. I had raised a warning that we might find it difficult finding room for the shop stock if it continued, which it did. The Missus got as far as emptying the ice cream freezer so it could be defrosted when she announced she had run out of space. No, of course I did not say 'I told you so', do you consider me bonkers, dear reader. I thought it though.

We had no customers at all in the last hour. I am not surprised. It was bleak and inclement out there and it being dark just about finished things off. The last hurrah was more of a last groan of acknowledgement. We did have some lovely farewells and messages of good cheer during the day, which made up for it.

We knew in advance that it would not be particularly pleasant to have a walk around the block in the evening. In fact, I voiced this opinion, but ABH is rather set in her ways and insisted. There was no rain as we went around, although I was aware it was on its way, but the wind was pretty insistent and while the little girl is happy enough with rain, the wind was a different matter. We fair galloped around the block and were back before the Missus had left to take Mother home.

The new season awaits us where I am sure you will be sick to death of hearing about The Farm before long but hopefully, you will also have tales from the building site to break the monotony, too. Oh what jollity.

October 28th – Saturday

It was the mere mention of scrambled eggs in yesterday's Diary that had it in the forefront of my mind when it came to breakfast this morning. I was very mindful of overcooking them last time I tried doing them in the oven, so I did the same thing again today. I was so close as well. They were just on the cusp on being perfect then a regular visitor walked in and had a chat.

There was still a bit of rushing in the ear 'oles again this morning but the tide was well on the way out by the time I got up. ABH was keen to get out a bit earlier this morning, so we went around in the dark. Usually, we are on our own when I have left it a bit later but this morning the world and half the cousins were out dog walking. It is enough of a distraction to put ABH off her purpose for being there, which is frustrating.

Despite the change of routine, I was still late getting downstairs. It did not matter too much as the newspapers were late today, which made me feel like I was early. The milk was late too but since we had no customers for the first half an hour of opening none of it mattered very much.

We had no customers for large parts of the morning, either. It was overcast from the start of the day and by the middle of the morning we had begin to see some showers come and go. By late morning the rain was more constant as more organised showers moved across us as the forecasters would say. This means that the

showers had come to an agreement to join together and all rain down on us at once. We have discovered through experience that many of our customers find this distasteful and stay away.

Thankfully, they all came back again once the amassed showers had passed through, although 'they all' might be misleading you, dear reader, into thinking that there were more than half a dozen, which there were not.

The sun came out now and again lighting up a beach that had become a shadow of its former self. I had noticed yesterday down on the Harbour beach that the sand had been levelled down at least a foot on our previous visit. Down on the big beach this was even more evident with a vast field of rocks laid bare from the mouth of The Valley to the OS slipway. It was no surprise after watching the waves pounding in there for some time yesterday. I had heard from various people today that the waves were coming over the sea wall in places. One customer today recounted with some amusement how his friends had been soaked as they waited by the car on the Harbour car park. I am sure they saw the funny side of it too – eventually.

I have mentioned before that the Lifeboat shop staff have an undeserved and possibly misguided opinion that I am the font of knowledge of all things Cove related. I am therefore the default destination of a lot of people with questions, queries and 'dangers' to report. Today, I was sent some foreign visitors who wished to tell me of a seal pup that had hauled itself up on the rocks in front of the fish and chip shop. They told me that it had made its own way in which suggested that it was perhaps fed up and knackered from being bounced around by boisterous waves that did not know their own strength and had come out for a rest.

Having heard their report, I was reasonably convinced of the rest theory but said I would telephone British Divers to inform them, and they could make up their own minds. The fact was that by the time someone had got here, the seal would very probably have gone either of its own volition or had discovered that the tide had overwhelmed its position. The very pleasant lady on the other end of the telephone was very professional, understood the issues and we left it at that. I had been able to give an accurate description of where the seal had been seen and there was nothing further to be done.

I probably have a wealth of experience in matters regarding not judging books by their covers. Over the years there have been all manner of tattered and ill-kempt sleeves that have revealed rich content when I have looked a little closer. Of course, this is not always the case, and I must say that it seemed terribly unreasonable that I should have been subject to two visits from battered covers where even turning to the middle had revealed nothing but torn and mildewed pages.

There was not much wrong with the first two that I could immediately put my finger on, but I was left ill at ease as one hung back while the other perused the shelves. One then left while the other remained promising that his pal would be back shortly

to buy this and that. The remaining one eventually left saying he was going to wait across the street but when I looked a few minutes later he was nowhere to be seen. It all felt very wrong indeed and had me on my mettle for the next hour waiting to see if they came back.

The other incident was a gentleman who had staggered into the shop complaining that the bus driver had driven off without him. He had asked the driver to wait while he used the convenience at the OS, which the driver vouched safe to do. When he came out, the bus had gone. He arrived at the shop complaining vociferously, which I had some sympathy with initially. Happily, he did not hang around in the shop for long, but I had rather more empathy with the bus driver who had clearly felt the same as me. If I have just described your dear old, cuddly gramps who does good works the year long, I unreservedly apologise. I would suggest, however, someone gives him a bit of book binding TLC.

The waves at high water were not quite as spectacular as they were the evening before. There was more water involved as the tide was a little bigger than the one before it. It was egged on by the giant full moon I saw setting behind the wharf first thing this morning, attended by Jupiter brightly shining above it. I watched in the late afternoon as the waves rebounded off the dunes along from The Beach complex but there was now bouncing over the sea wall this evening. Unless you were foolhardy enough to drop down one of the slipways, there was probably little risk of a soaking, either.

We go through this each year, so I do not know why I still agonise over it. Well, I do, because I do not like to disappoint people who have now become more friends than customers. It is the whole closing at the end of the predominant half term but knowing that there are schools up-country who do not break up until this week. We have looked at it before and the second week would only be driven on an emotive level, not a business one. The main problem is that some of the second week residents turn up today and I feel really guilty for letting them down.

It was probably just as well that three bottles of rather good malt whisky turned up today, to help me sooth my fevered brow. The only disadvantage was that I had to purchase them myself having run out of the ones that the Missus bought me for my birthday a day or two ago – I ran out a day or two ago, not had my birthday and consumed three bottled of malt a day or two ago. Thought I best make that clear. It must be noted, however, that anyone who had felt inclined to gift such a token for some reason or other should not feel disincentivised to do so. There is still plenty of room on top the of cabinet for more.

Our evening patrol of the block, ABH and I, had us looking over the sea wall in the Harbour car park. I was debating whether I should use the word torrid or turmoil to describe the state of the sea there. Waves were hurtling down Tribbins and throwing themselves at the Harbour wall. The bit that did not quite get over the wall hurtled

back at the waves hurtling towards them. What a busy mess it was. Perhaps the sea was in torrid turmoil, there, that will do it.

October 27th – Friday

It was another morning of playing catch up. It is the lateness of light that is causing it and what I should do is go back down to the shop as soon as the newspapers arrive so I can box those off before I take ABH around the block in the daylight. That is what I should do but, you know, the tea is hot, the seat is comfortable and surely the newspapers can wait a little longer. Ergo, I play catch up.

The soundtrack to my day was a constant rushing in my ears as a very disturbed sea moved its waves about. It was punctuated by the irregular pounding of those waves as they made landfall here and there along our rocky shore. It was looking pretty awe inspiring as well when I had the chance to have a look in the light. It continued to ramp up its performance right the way through the day until the grand finale and high water later in the afternoon.

The only time during the day when I did not hear it was when I was at the gymnasium with my ear plugs in listening to a bit of Spooky Tooth. You cannot block out the rampant sounds of nature with just any old tin can pop music and Spooky Tooth's rendition of I Am the Walrus will do nicely thank you. I once again achieved top ranking on my statistics, which I am very pleased about, although I will be missing two sessions next week, so it will be interesting to see where I am with blistering sessions next Friday.

Each year I have mixed feelings about the coming to the end of the season. I definitely need to stop and cool my heels a bit after seven months of non-stop grumpy shopkeeping. There are no particular bits that I will miss; I will miss them all.

Customer: "What's this? Cornish Surf Balm."

Grumpy Shopkeeper: "Oh yes, sir. Made in Cornwall by a start-up business. Sells remarkably well and has enjoyed some good feedback. We have this one [pointing at the Cornish lip care moisturiser], the ocean friendly Cornish lip care, which is a moisturiser and this one here [pointing at the factor 50 sun block], the ocean friendly Cornish sun block, which is a factor 50 sun cream for your lips and nose should you wish."

Customer: "Oh I see. So, what is the difference between the two, then?"

Grumpy Shopkeeper: [after a brief pause to collect himself] "Ahem. I think you will find that one is a lip care moisturiser and the other is a factor 50 sun block, sir."

We have been selling going home gifts all day but sometimes the gifts are for other purposes. Today, we had a lady collecting items for Christmas stockings. I know that if I collected gifts for Christmas stockings this early, I would have no idea where there were come Christmas Eve. She told me that it was harder and harder each year making up a stocking for her 88 year old father. It tended to be preserves, she

was buying some Sisleys locally made blackcurrant, I think, and marmalades. I told her that if was fortunate enough to reach 88 and someone started putting preserves and marmalades in my Christmas stocking, I would clip them around the bleddy ear with my walking stick.

A big sea on a spring tide is quite magnificent. It was boiling over Cowloe and the Harbour wall was more buried under white water that it was out. Big waves were tumbling over each other to thump into the rocks under The Beach car park and were a good way up the OS slipway by the look of it. Creagle was getting a battering with waves halfway up the cliff, but Air Point seemed relatively unscathed – it must have been the swell direction. The fishing boats in the Harbour had been pulled up well ahead of any danger this time around. The swirling Harbour sea was still doing its best to run up the slipway to get them.

One local lady came into the shop concerned about one of the boats on the western slipway. She told me waves were reaching under the boat, which was on blocks, as all the punts are when parked. It took a while to establish exactly where but high water and the main risk had just passed in my view.

When the Missus appeared a little while later, I went and had a look. The wash from the waves was indeed reaching up the western slip – incidentally, where people often stand to get a closer view – but I did not think they posed a real threat to the boat's safety at that time. Nevertheless, with a bigger tide the next morning and the swell still threatening I contacted the owner and one of the fisherman came and dragged the boat up a little higher.

I think, at the time, the lady was a tad frustrated at my inaction. There was little I could do without all the information and, as I said, I considered the main risk to be over. I trust that I have now redeemed myself.

It had been a different story earlier when I was pulled down to the Harbour beach by a very keen ABH. I had just returned from my blistering session and as is usual, was taking her around the block. I could see what she meant, the bright sun and the perfect beach with very few people around was beyond resistance. We were not blessed with a huge amount of time, but I let her run about for a bit dragging a huge – for her – seaweed log about the place. But for the lack of people, it could have been high summer down there – although possibly not this summer just gone.

After a shaky start, we were busier than I anticipated for a change-over day and given the numbers of people I saw packing up and leaving in the morning. We were quiet during the morning, for sure, and I cannot quite remember when it started getting busy, but it certainly relieved my stress that I possibly had ordered far too many pasties (sorry, MS) for the weekend. I am now stressed that we possibly will not have enough.

Come the end of play, I debated the sense in ordering a little more milk and a few more eggs from the milkman. I concluded that if we did not sell it, I could reasonably survive on a diet of scrambled egg for a week, which I would be bound to enjoy, I am sure. It is one of the risks of grumpy shopkeeping and, as you know, dear reader, we live on a diet of danger in this job – and scrambled eggs, of course.

October 26th – Thursday

Well, that was a good start. I was expecting rain and we had some, which then stopped. I took ABH down the steps and walked straight into the only rain of the morning, sharp and cold in the face.

It rained some more in the afternoon and then some more and came back with a bit of a vengeance in the night. In between the showers the sun broke though and for brief periods the day looked like quite appealing. There was a bit of a breeze blowing in from somewhere but it did not seem too bad. It reminded me of Longfellow's poem about the little girl with a little curl in the middle of her forehead. When it was good it was very, very good and when it was bad it was horrid.

Never mind, we had enjoyed a lovely morning and had at least half a dozen customers. ABH had also had fun with a visitor's puppy while the visitor chose postcards. The Missus shipped all the boxes from the loft to the temporary store behind us while is why the little girl was there in the first place. Unfortunately, she somehow knew where the Missus was and spent half the time trying to get up the driveway to the back. On the whole, though, her tenure of the 'shop bed' is an improving picture.

This is more than could be said for the sea state. All week I had fielded questions from, predominantly, small boys about the potential for a Lifeboat launch during their visit. We sometimes do not find out until nearer the time whether we will or will not especially when the weather in in flux like it is this week. Today made that plain as the sea state changed dramatically from the day before and made safe recovery of the Lifeboat very unlikely. I could almost hear the collective 'oh's and 'aww's from the living room.

Our business picked up in the afternoon along with sporadic rain showers that cleared the streets. There was much buying of going home presents and there were long intervals between buying anything at all. Oddly, during those long periods, I seem not to have done very much. My intention was to finish counting the hats but whenever I went to do it something happened to stop me.

Toward the end of the day, I received a message from someone actually trying to buy something on the shop website. I do not think that the buyer actually wanted the items but was embarrassed by my shaming in The Diary yesterday and felt it necessary to purge the guilt. Sadly, the payment process on the website is not quite as slick as it should be. No, let me rephrase that. The payment process on the

website is downright clunky and needs addressing and will be my priority when I get sufficient time to make it a priority. In the meanwhile, the problem is still ongoing but it is a learning process for me and hopefully will help me make it better in future.

I had to abandon my work on payments for a spot of tea and a quick dash to Lifeboat training without a launch. The Boat Crew all disappeared off shortly after watching an instruction film on how to use their new block and tackle system for hauling casualties onto the Lifeboat. It has a weight limit of 200 kilograms so if you are more than that either do not go to sea or, if you do, do not need rescuing.

Since I was adding very little value to the session, I broke away early to take ABH for a run. Since the weather had turned out better than forecast, shock and surprise, we headed for the Harbour beach recently vacated by the tide. She spent fifteen minutes racing around the sand while I followed her with my spotlight. When she looked like she had finished, we headed off around the block at a more leisurely pace than we had the night before.

She was relatively calm for a while on returning home but toward bedtime, the devil slipped in. She clearly has a list in her head of all the things she is not allowed to do and all the things she is not allowed to have because she did them all. She has the potential to do great things – if she survives that long.

October 25th – Wednesday

I made it to the shop by the skin of my teeth and just in time to put out the newspapers and the put away the milk. It was not for the lack of available time, either; I always have more time on a gymnasium day. It was more that I have to wait for the daylight to arrive before I take ABH out and it then all depends on how long she takes about going around.

Today, of course she took her time. It was not all her fault. I saw her holiday boyfriend down on the Harbour beach and did not have the heart to stop her going down. He is a little older, but needs some help being socialised and she is desperate for someone to play with – every moment of every day. They were whizzing around the otherwise empty beach without a care in the world. I, however, was very cognisant of the time slipping away and when we eventually got to the top of the slipway, our pasty man (sorry, MS) was waiting for me.

It was as well I did not keep him waiting too long as we had a bit of a day on the pasties. It all kicked off around the middle of the day, emptying our full pasty warmer in about five minutes flat. It threw me into a bit of a fluster of trying to fight a rear-guard action of piling more pasties into the oven while placating customers queuing for more. I got back into my stride after about fifteen minutes and finished off the supply we had taken in earlier.

I do not know what I have started with the Laurel and Hardy Newspaper company. I had a message from 'My NewsAccount' that I had contacted a little while ago to announce our impending seasonal closure. I had to write again because I had not had an acknowledgement and eventually had one. This message was clearly from the left or right hand – the opposite to the one that had already responded – telling me how to use their online form to indicate when we were closing and, oddly, how to order tote boxes. It added all manner of other instructions that I would never need to use.

I replied, telling them that I had tried to use the online form, but it had insisted on me giving a reopen date which I did not have. It rendered the form route impossible. I also noted that I had already followed their 'how to order a tote box' instructions and they had been unable to sensibly complete the request – without assessments and head scratching to find the best solution.

I had rather thought that might be the end of it, but I had an automated response and yet another reference number. I have to hand it to the Laurel and Hardy Newspaper company; they are more entertaining than the television.

If I ever get bored with them then I always have the TV licensing people to fall back on. It has been several years since I last dedicated half a Diary to their underhand antics. I think if you were frail or vulnerable in any way, it might be a real problem. Fortunately, I am made of sterner stuff and have a big handkerchief to cry into.

It all stems from them insisting on using an entirely fictitious address for my TV licence. It is not just them, various other bodies do it too so that they can distinguish between the flat upstairs and the shop below. As far as the Post Office is concerned and all those listings online where you key in your postcode and you choose your actual address from a list, we are The Old Boathouse, and I am assuming this to be definitive.

So, the upshot is that the shop address that the TV licensing people have defined, as opposed to the flat address, does not have a TV licence. It does not need one either, as I do not have a television in the shop. Arguably, I am technically able to receive live TV on my computer but if they want to go down to that level of granularity, that would probably be every address and every business in the country. Sorry, silly argument. Of course, they would love to licence every property and business in the country.

So, to get to the point, the TV licensing people have once again told me I need a licence for the shop. If I do not need one, then I must write to them to tell them so, but I will not. This is largely because I am a grumpy shopkeeper, I have much better things to do with my time – alright, I do not at the moment but do not split hairs – and most of all, I do not like being spoken to (written to) like that. A few please and thank yous would not have gone amiss and might have encouraged me to respond. As it is, they can whistle for it and send the boys around. I am waiting.

Well, that is quite enough dour reporting for today, although I am sure I will find some more later on. Let me tell you, dear reader, of the most blistering of sessions at the gymnasium this morning. There, I shaved fifteen seconds off my personal best, post summer holidays, and twenty seconds off my rowing average of the last few months. Quite what was going on there, I know not, and I certainly do not care. I should also thank the two passers by who carried me home afterwards.

For the first time ever since it was available, we ran out of squid ink gin. This is the rather wonderful brew that comes in a copper can, intricately designed and is a proper keeper. There is a picture of it on the website somewhere. At nigh on £50 we sold more of it than any other product in the line, at which I never fail to be amazed. It had gone out of stock at the supplier when I placed the reorder and only arrived today, which is a little late. I took the risk of buying some of the miniatures which come in a little back tin with a spring clip on the lid. I am minded to put them up for sale on the online shop, you know dear reader, the one you skirt around getting to The Diary each day.

It had been a good business day long into the afternoon but the five minutes to closing rush never arrived. I think everyone was mindful that the forecast had rain from the middle of the afternoon. That never arrived either until well after the due time and we closed with it just starting to spit with rain. It was a weather front that passed by quickly but left some heavy mizzle behind for me and ABH to walk through later in the evening.

We were particularly late today because the Missus and I knuckled down to empty the loft ahead of our impending building work. It was hard enough labour, heavy boxes that we had to drop down and stack in every available place, but could have been much worse. We did all this last year just ahead of Christmas in what we know now as the dress rehearsal for our building work. We had organised the contents of the loft then into boxes and put them back as such. This made our job simpler if not much less physical effort.

I was probably grateful, then, for the shadowy characters walking off the Harbour wall in complete darkness as ABH and I crossed the Harbour car park. My headtorch picked up what was possibly a reflective jacket one was wearing – whatever it was spooked ABH and she high-tailed it for home as quickly as her legs could carry her. It meant that I had to entertain the girl for a bit longer but at least I was in the dry and on a seat indoors. I might need that extra energy to ship out those boxes in the morning.

October 24th – Tuesday

The turnout was much more impressive today; it could not have got any worse than yesterday.

The weather was a bit of a disappointment. At one point in the night after ABH had decided that I should not be sleeping, I stared up at bright stars through the skylight suggesting clear skies. Those had disappeared before morning came but it was still a bright, dry day if a little colder than of late.

My magazine boxes turned up this morning, which was another disappointment. I was hoping to get a bit more mileage out of that story. Perhaps I should not have stirred the pot. I now have four boxes, so a couple will need to go back tomorrow. There was already so little room in the storage box out at the front of the shop that one of the delivery drivers had to empty some of the less essential goods in there. It has served very well and had been proven very robust. It also has not found its way down the street in a high wind like the last one did.

I had a quick glance around the shop to see how the winding down of stock was going. Some of it we can no longer do anything about as we made our stab in the dark at the last cash and carry order a few weeks ago. Where I am struggling is with the fresh stock I can order in from local suppliers. We keep getting surges in demand for some items, so I order some more in to replace them in time for the next surge that then never happens. It is the old white bread/brown bread trick but with other products too. Not only is business unpredictably sporadic this week, but we have a bunch of fickle beggars for customers, it seems.

As if to prove the point, I finished the stock count for the shorts and swimsuits in the quiet of the morning. Today, on not the most appealing beach day of the year all our customers wanted were children's shorts. Now, tell me that is not a conspiracy.

I had to abandon any pretence of work for a few hours after getting a message from our accountant. She is working on last year's figures and had identified two invoices from the same supplier that she could not identify a payment for. Fortunately, our credit card and bank records are available online going back that far. Unfortunately, I could not find the answer to the conundrum. As we do not have a direct debit account with the supplier, we only pay by credit card, and we cannot get the goods without paying. Those specific payments were not present, so unless the goods were included as duplicates in other invoices, I cannot see what has happened. I have a query in with the supplier to what they can uncover. I will not lose any sleep over it, but it is a problem that will not go away as the accountant will not let it rest.

Instead of a five minutes to closing rush, we had a two hours to closing rush that lasted a good hour and a half. There were all manner of sales and not just groceries as I might have expected at that hour and it boosted the coffers quite pleasingly as it had not been as busy all day.

Naturally, it being half term, we have a large number of children about the place. Many are permitted to come and shop on their own and some of these are surprisingly very young. The little ones have firm boundaries, two packets of sweets, etc., and have pennies in their pockets which limits their freedom. It works very well,

and it is a safe environment for them to practise and build confidence. If I have concerns it is with the older ones, many of whom appear not to be able to count the simplest of additions. One this evening had a ten pound note and thought that he could purchase a £9.99 item and two packets of sweets. Others have payment cards and heaven knows how they manage to keep track of their spending.

I was punished for my harsh criticism of youth by having to go out in a downpour after tea. It was so heavy and persistent that I had to reach for my full metal jacket waterproofs. ABH seemed unconcerned. The Missus had bought her a new coat, which she instantly disliked when it was fitted in a dry run indoors. She was forced into it for our evening walk, which you could see she only permitted because it was dark, and no one would see her.

The coat did a decent job and only her feet, head and rear end got wet. After a shaky start with it, she now rather enjoys being blow dried with the Missus' hair dryer on low heat. I gave up any pretence of needing a hair drier in 1987.

October 23rd – Monday

A customer late on yesterday told me that it was going to rain today, according to her 'app' she said. I was dubious because the Meteorological Office website said that it was going to be just overcast all day. There was no mention rain. I told her I had not looked at an alternative, which might have said something different. I suggested looking out of the window in the morning for a definitive answer.

It looked pretty dry to me when I looked out of the window in the morning, but it was very early. A little later, after a few spots appeared on the window, I had a geek at the rain radar that showed a big lump of heavy rain hanging just off Land's End. I revised my timetable for taking ABH out and went and dragged her kicking and screaming out of bed. We were not quick going around but even by the time we returned there was no hint that the heavy rain was anywhere near us.

Listening to Radio Pasty later, the forecast reader informed me that the rain band was moving in a more northerly direction, which explained its non-appearance. It took a good couple of hours to cover the mile from Land's End and then rained all over my parade of going to the gymnasium, coming back and taking the little girl around the block again. It continued to rain well into the afternoon when the mere notion of any sort of parade washed away down the drain with it.

Yesterday, I was caught out by the sudden surge of pasty buying (sorry, MS). Today, I was caught out by the absence of much pasty buying at all and consequently ordered far too many for tomorrow. Of course, I could be pleasantly surprised and find that my surplus is used up by another resurgence in pasty buying. Some people choose to believe in the existence of unicorns, fairies and choughs. What can you say.

What I do not believe in is the Laurel and Hardy Newspaper Company ever getting it right. For the want of something better to do, and because I realised that my blunt response to the 'update' on my request for two empty magazine boxes was sent to a 'no-reply' account, I decided to send another message to the very inappropriately named customer service team. I quoted the reference for my ongoing request and queried if they had fully understood that my request was simply to be sent two empty boxes.

I had an immediate, automated response and a few hours later a proper response from a person. It gave me a second reference number which will now generate its own chain and set of resources. A message had been sent to the 'Customer Experience Team', which is probably full of people who constantly look horrified, and was dealing with the original request. I am sorely tempted to send a new message every day asking how things are going to see how many new reference numbers I can rack up. I do believe I might also have omitted to say that I saw the driver on Saturday morning, and he dropped down the boxes yesterday – without even the suggestion of an assessment.

It is good that some of our visitors are more forthcoming with assistance. A couple who are more friends that visitors were here last week and I explained, when I had been asked for them, that we were not permitted to have air mail stickers by the Royal Mail. Clearly this struck a chord as the son is visiting this week and brought me an envelope. I did not immediately make the family connection but when I opened the envelope and discovered a collection of pages of air mail stickers therein, I knew immediately. It did bring a smile to my face as I had quite forgotten about it.

The rain eventually stopped at four o'clock after almost an entire day of business interruption. An hour later it was difficult to imagine that it was the same day. The skies had cleared to blue; the sun was lighting up the beach; and the only remaining evidence of rain was that the street was still damp. After being stirred up and restless a couple of days ago, the sea had been flat calm all day. Unsurprisingly, there was not much activity down on the beach but when the rain cleared, the surf schools were stirred into action with around a couple of dozen out there sharing a wave.

It was still relatively pleasant for a run around with ABH in the evening and we once again had the beach to ourselves. Earlier in the day she had met with a young boy who was delighted to run around with her, which is a novelty. She had clearly got running around out of her system and was content to explore here and there. She takes her time until the last 100 yards when the draw of getting back to the Missus becomes too strong to ignore. The only distraction was finding her spider crab leg that has given sterling service for about a week. The spider crab's ghost should be quite happy that it did not expire completely without purpose. So far, we have avoided having the leg brought home, but it is now 50 yards from the door and there is time yet.

October 22nd – Sunday

It was a glorious morning even before the sun rose. I was staring up at a star encrusted sky at half past six o'clock, Venus and Jupiter standing out proud and hardly a glow on the eastern horizon to dim them. There was a bit of a nip to the air, but it is almost the end of October, so we will allow that.

As is usual, I waited for a bit of light before I took ABH out for a spin. By that time she is engaged in the fruitless task of trying to wake the Missus and complains bitterly when I try and tear her away. She does not grizzle for long and is soon happy to be running ahead of me exploring what is new. Today, there were a couple of youngsters down in the Harbour. I did not pay as much attention to them as ABH, but I think they were attempting to do some fishing in a still somewhat unkind sea.

I had to wait until almost our opening time for the newspapers to arrive. I suspect they were delayed by the late rugby result. It did not matter very much as we only had one newspaper sale before half past nine o'clock. It was a bit disappointing as was the fleet of Tesmorburys trucks turning up to supply the holiday lets. It is not the fact that they are there at all, there are things we cannot supply and things that are available in bulk, so fair play. What is disappointing is that our visitors will be missing out on the local dairy produce, the local bread and other top quality, and often better value produce that we and other local, independent shops supply and with fewer road miles. One visitor once asked me why it was that some locally bought products had a better shelf life longer than the same products from Tesmorburys.

Another disappointment was that my two minutes of fame was pared down to about 45 seconds. Anyone who was expecting to hear it had to wait until the very end of the programme, although DH suggested that I probably picked up some additional listeners who had tuned in early for The Archers. It was a bit of fun doing it, no doubt, but I am going to have to find a better agent. I should thank you, dear reader, for your kind words and apologies to JH who choked on her tea as it took her rather by surprise.

We had to wait until the middle of the day before we saw an uplift in the numbers of visitors milling about the place. Even then it was sporadic. It kept me guessing on pasty numbers (sorry, MS) as I have to place orders for the next day by one o'clock. I took a stab at that and hope that we do not have an accumulation building up during the week or indeed, too few.

The Lifeguards had red-flagged the beach again today. Unfortunately, with the wind having gone around to the south, the surf was looking quite appealing if you were a little more experienced. This attracted at least a dozen surfers into the sea an hour or so after high water. This was whittled down to half a dozen a while later. The waves were big and hearty, and I am guessing that some of our surfers were slightly less experienced than they thought they were. I had seen some boards go flying into the air and that was when they were paddling out. It was just a guess, mind. By low

water, the Lifeguards had relented but by that time, so had the sea. The swimming and surfing flags flew for the rest of the day.

The tides are not the best for our beach loving visitors this week with high water moving through the middle of the day. Today, it was into the afternoon before anyone could walk along the beach and anyone wanting to be there would have had to go via the dunes. There was a bit of a gathering in the mouth of The Valley before the tide slipped away to let through a few more. In the later afternoon, it was quite busy down there, although there were no tents or windbreaks or small encampments today.

While the beach may not be as available as it might have been, we had seen an increase in business on and off during the day. I wondered how the new look Beach Bar was faring having changed its game in the recent few days. It is now open longer hours and well into the evening. They have even got proper chefs in there again doing proper food rather than heating up frozen pizzas for £20 a pop and the deer prices have been reduced. We wish them well because it is just what The Cove needs and for an added bonus it should provide some welcome competition for the OS which has needed a kick in the pants for some time now.

I have my own kick in the pants straight after tea. ABH now expects to be taken out in the evening and insists upon it by not leaving me alone the second that I have finished. I obliged, of course, and for the first time in a while we found ourselves on an empty bit of Harbour beach having annoyed a neighbour's dog sufficiently to chase him off. Sadly, none of the neighbours have dogs more her age. Nevertheless, she managed to have a rare old time chasing around by herself for half an hour. She was still just as energetic when we got home but we will persevere.

October 21st – Saturday

I did rather think that it was fifteen minutes of fame but my interview for BBC Radio 4 only seemed to last a couple of minutes. Perhaps the other thirteen minutes will come later.

It was not the best of weathers to wake up to. The wind had been howling in from the northwest, sounding worse than it was and diminishing a bit from the evening before, although it did try to refresh a couple of times. One of them was after I had determined that the rain was on the way out and it was safe to take ABH for a run. We ran into a face full of rain and wind as soon as we hit the bottom of the steps. Heading into the RNLI car park for shelter was not as effective as we thought it might have been, but we were lucky that the squall was short lived.

The weather stuck the boot into any hopes for a bit of busyness during the morning and we hardly saw another soul. It improved a good deal by the middle of the day along with the weather when some small groups of visitors arrived for a bit of rambling about.

The sea state, although calming a bit as the tide went out, remained quite severe. There was a good ten to fifteen feet draw on the Harbour beach as we passed it by, safely on the road. It would be the reason that the Lifeguards red-flagged the big beach again, I am sure. Not even creatures of the natural world were entirely happy with the situation. A neighbour reported a seal pup washed up on the big beach, hopefully just worn out from the constant pounding. An adult was patrolling a little offshore which might have been a parent, but we are used to seeing a fairly big seal up and down that stretch in stormy seas.

As the afternoon progressed, we saw fewer and fewer visitors about. It was certainly not the weather to be hanging about but at least it was not raining. I think our new arrivals were just happy to arrive and closet themselves in their accommodations. While it was not particularly busy, I think we fared better than if it had not been half term.

I was pretty grateful when we eventually closed. I thought that the wind must have changed direction because I could feel the cool breeze blowing through the doorway. I checked later and the wind had backed a few degrees to the west. How that had the frigid air blowing through the doorway, I have no idea but I can assure you, dear reader, it was not making this grumpy shopkeeper any less grumpy.

By contrast, it seemed quite temperate as we went around the block in the evening. It was a vast improvement on some of our recent runs but it is fearsome dark in the Harbour car park. It made both of us jump when someone suddenly opened a car door close to us. There was no light on when we approached and none when the door opened either. We did not hang about to find out who it was.

It was also dark along Coastguard Row, suggesting that very few of the holiday lets down there are occupied, unless they are coming tomorrow. I will be a mite disappointed if our last hurrah turns out to be a final flop.

October 20th – Friday

One of our Lifeboatmen in waiting who works in the café next door came to me in the middle of the day to ask if our Lifeboat had gone out. I told him that I had hoped not, since I knew nothing about it. His eyes are better than mine and told me that there was an orange boat outside the bay heading for the corner. A quick investigation revealed that it was on passage from Kilmore Quay, which is northwest of Camborne by a fair bit and over some water, which was handy for a boat. It was en route to Falmouth and could have chosen a much better day.

When the lights came up on our bit of world, I could see that we had quite a bit of mist filling the bay. It was accompanied by a fair bit of noise from a very unruly sea and, it is suspected, one that caught out our Harbour users and the fishermen. They were all down there at first light hauling the boats up to the top of the slipway as the

waves swirled about at the bottom of it. I do not think anyone even got wet feet except for ABH who insists on tramping around the wet grass.

The sea continued to pound and thump for most of the day and a bit of a breeze kicked up from the northwest this time. It brought with it the occasional shower into the afternoon, which was not helpful. I had been watching the waves bounding up Creagle and washing in on the beach with such abandon the Lifeguards red-flagged it. None of this spoke to me of wanting to be on a small Lifeboat cutting through waves that would be somewhat less than yielding at 23 knots. That would have been six hours of constant thumping up to Land's End. We wish them well.

It was not raining, and it was perfectly temperate as I walked off to my blistering session at the gymnasium this morning. It was still pretty pleasant when I came back to walk ABH around the block. We had got as far as the Round House before I realised something was not quite right. She had acquired a bit of a limp on the left foreleg, which looked like a paw problem. I picked her up and carried her back, which made me very glad that we have a small dog. The Missus confirmed that she has some sort of bruise on her pad rather than some foreign object, so she will have to ride it out.

I took her on a shorter walk around the back of us and although she was still limping, seemed to pay it no heed. This was even more apparent when I took her upstairs and she spent the next five minutes tearing around the living room.

The Missus ran off to get Mother not long after I came back. She had brought back the Christmas project work from The Farm yesterday because the sanding sheets on my multitool were not adhering to the block. She thought that she could use the mini rotary tool that we have had some years at home, and all was going well until that gave up the ghost as well. We spent an hour yesterday evening selecting the best replacement. Through the miracle of modern Internet purchasing and some say modern slave labour, the unit arrived on our doorstep in the early afternoon today.

It was while the Missus was off galivanting that I took a mystery call. I do not often answer the telephone to 'anonymous' callers but for some reason I decided to do so on this occasion. The very pleasant lady who spoke with me told me she was from the BBC. It was not until halfway through the call that I mulled over that it might have been a prank call but since she was not asking for money or my pin number, I thought I would continue.

She told me that there is a programme on BBC Radio 4 on Sunday mornings that I quite forgot what it was called two minutes after she told me. She was after someone who could extoll the virtues of the beach to their listeners, and I surmised that she had ended up with me after everyone else had turned her down.

Now, writing things down is one thing. Speaking to a person knowing that your words are being broadcast to a lot of people - well, it is Sunday morning, a couple of people

waiting for the shipping forecast and a nursing home in Eastbourne then – is a whole different urn of logan berries. I have written some notes and hope that the presenter guides me to what he wants me to say.

By process of elimination, where I discounted Sunday Worship and the Archers Omnibus, it looks like it is 'Broadcasting House' on at nine o'clock. Unless it is of course Desert Island Discs, for which I hurriedly looked up some books I might like to take. And one last quick aside. I listened to last week's programme, Broadcasting House, not the other one, to get a flavour of what it was about and to hear the presenter's voice. He had just finished an article on music from Walt Disney productions and ended with my favourite joke ever (best read in a Scottish accent), what is the difference between Bing Crosby and Walt Disney? Bing sings and Walt disney. Aye thang yew. I think we will get on famously.

By a cunning stroke of luck, I refuse to believe it was actually calculated, the rain started at the exact time the Meteorological Office said it would on its website. The aspect of the day had slowly degraded from bits of blue sky and brightness earlier to grey, wet and cold. Having replaced my shirt wearing for a mid layer over the last few days, I reverted to short sleeve order today only to be treated like this. That is just not cricket.

I am sure that some might feel the same regarding the parking restrictions in The Cove. I had a message from the much maligned council, on the grounds that I had responded to their earlier survey, telling me the outcome of their review of parking here. The enforcement of double yellow lines throughout the year instead of seasonal was said to be a trial when it was introduced last year or more ago. The message told me that after much consideration the parking restrictions would be made permanent. Given the increased parking like a complete eejit over the last two years, it is a good thing but probably will not make a ha'peth worth of difference.

It must have been a day for messages. The other one I had today was from the Laurel and Hardy Newspaper company. I had called them earlier in the week requesting some tote boxes to send my magazines back in when we close at the end of next week. I would normally ask the driver, but I had missed him all week. I had a very pleasant lady on the telephone for some time trying to get her to understand that we required empty totes and why we needed them. At the end of a very fraught conversation, I had an assurance that the boxes were on their way, and I was sent a reference number for my trouble.

Today, I received a message that read as follows: "*We wanted to provide you with an update, case number ... is taking a little longer than expected; however, we want to assess all information available to us, to be able to provide you with the best possible solution. Thank you for your patience in this matter.*"

I fear that they may have convened a project board and taken on external management consultants to ensure that the boxes are available and in most efficient

location, are the right colour and are not going to be allocated elsewhere. I do hope that they do not have to recruit any specialists to ensure that the business process is efficient and effective because I will need them by Friday as they do not deliver them over the weekends - I have to pay extra for that. I will make an effort to see the driver during next week and get a couple off him, just in case.

The weather was unrelenting during the latter half of the afternoon and any remnants of business disappeared in the gusty dampness. Although the wind was only blowing in at 30 to 40 miles per hour, it was from our exposed quarter and felt very punchy and insistent. It was worse later, laced with heavier rain, as I took ABH out for a spin. We confined ourselves to the RNLI car park that allowed some shelter but ABH was not keen and neither was I to be fair. We got back just as the Missus was leaving with Mother, so she had a trip out to St Buryan, which saved her climbing the walls inside for half an hour. I shall have to conduct some research into how to amuse a bored and energetic hound on wet and windy evenings.

October 19th – Thursday

We had to negotiate with the weather this morning because it decided to rain just about at the same time I was ready to take ABH for a walk. It apparently did not feel like budging from its position, so we had to wait ten minutes for it to stop.

The morning was fairly pleasant after the rain cleared away. Here and there blue skies were appearing by and by and there was some warmth to the day. The sea state was much the same as yesterday, looking fairly benign during the low water period but with an underlying swell that was throwing up a little white water at Aire Point, Creagle and along Nanjulian Cliff. It kept a few surfers happy for some of the day. In fact, it all looked rather splendid for a while there in the early afternoon.

Regardless of the improved weather, it seemed to make little difference to our state of busyness. There were certainly more people about, but they were mainly concerned with the café next door and none of them hung about for very long. Even those made a swift disappearance when it started to rain again a little way further into the afternoon. My cause was doomed from the outset, I fear.

It was quite welcome then that someone decided that it would be a spiffing idea to launch the Lifeboat in the middle of the afternoon. A lady had donated a significant amount that allowed us to purchase some binoculars for the station and we felt it appropriate to dedicate a launch, by way of a thank you. Ordinarily, we would have launched in the evening when more people would be available but that did not seem particularly apposite since she would not see anything.

We gathered at half past three in the afternoon and launched shortly afterwards. It was a bit of an awkward time making recovery halfway between low and high water and only just achievable on the long slipway before a bit of a wait to use the short slipway. Time was indeed of the essence.

Happily, the rain had moved away when it came to setting up the slipway for recovery. Not only had the rain moved away but the sun had come out and it had warmed up very nicely. I suddenly felt very overdressed for such operations and although wearing flip flops is frowned upon – I think the colours clash with the yellow waterproof trousers – just a t-shirt under my lifejacket would have been far more appropriate.

I did not take a particular note of when the boat came back but it had been out less than an hour, I am sure. I just had time to run ABH around the big block quickly, shoving her along if she started to tarry. I was not long back when the boat steamed back into the bay.

We had let one of our trainee head launchers loose for this operation and he did very well – under strict supervision, of course. The sun was glinting off his orange tin hat at the end of the slipway and from where I was at the top, it looked pretty close to a textbook recovery under the circumstances up the long slipway. There is no need to tell our trainee head launcher that. Not just any eejit can be a head launcher. It takes a special sort of highly trained professional eejit, like we, to do it with finesse.

Our benefactress had witnessed all the proceeding from the boat joining gantry. Hopefully she was impressed enough with our efforts that she considers her donation well spent. She and her entourage were gone by the time we congregated for our debrief but we wish them well. We are, after all, a very grateful, very excellent Shore Crew.

I made it back to the shop for the last run in to closing. There was not a great deal doing despite the late afternoon and early evening being quite glorious and warm. There was a bit of surfing going on and the beach had more than its fair share of walkers, so it was disappointing to see that our end had been spurned. When I came to pack up the newspapers, it was clear that this was not just an evening trend. We had sold three newspapers all day. I do not think that is going to pay off much of our £5.88 daily delivery charge somehow.

We did not have the western light on this evening for our walk around; we must have been later than the night before. Once again we needed to avoid the Harbour but it was pleasant enough until a big, dangerous plant spooked ABH and we had to scurry home. It is easy to forget for all its peace and tranquility, The Cove can be a very threatening place at times.

October 18th – Wednesday

There was no escaping the rain today by careful planning. It was gonna get you whatever you did – other than stay indoors. I had not even finished girding my loins when ABH appeared at the end of the corridor a good hour before I expected to see

her out of bed. The Missus had risen early and ABH followed suit. I was caught out mid cup of tea with rain and darkness to greet us when we went out.

I was luckier when it came time to go to the gymnasium, or when the Missus came down to let me go to the gymnasium, which are not necessarily the same thing. The rain had slowed to a sporadic lightness and stayed that way until I had come back and taken ABH around the block again. It was just starting to get a little heavier as we cut back across the RNL car park where I narrowly avoided her getting her teeth into a dead frog she had found. I did not think it had rained that heavily.

I am certain that it was not the result of my blistering session, but it seemed much warmer today. There was still a bit of breeze around from the east, but it must have been positioned even better than yesterday as we did not get the benefit of it at all. Some one told me that it was pretty blustery in Hayle, which is probably an improvement on it being blustery when you are in St Ives.

Having spent my pre-gymnasium time finishing off distributing the delivery the Missus brought in yesterday, I had left myself little to do when I came back to the shop afterwards. I was feeling pretty chipper after my session and felt no grievance about tucking into the remaining invoices to be keyed in. I tried not to think of the pile of new invoices that were sitting in the printer upstairs.

A few days ago, our neighbour who shops regularly with us and chats about this and that when she comes in, told me that her grandson had brought home a bag of wet fish. He works on the sardine boats mainly but brings home a bit of this and that from the offshore fleet once in a while. She told me she was freezing it, since there was so much, so I told her that I would happily vacuum pack and label it next time she has some in. It will last longer in the freeze and be fresher when it comes out.

Today, she took me up on the offer, so I managed to squeeze in the vacuum packing between all the other busyness I was at during the day, ahem. In fact, as luck would have it, I managed to fit it in right away. She even packed some extra hake for me for doing it. Since we have an abundance of hake, I packed that too and sent it back. I was grateful for something to pass the time.

The Missus was off to The Farm again as soon as she could. She has the bit between her teeth doing these Christmas things and will not let it be. Not even the renewed rain was going to stop her, mainly because she is working inside, I suspect. ABH would not be cooped up for that length of time and I fully expected to see her back soaking wet. She was, but it was as the result of being run around the field just before they came back. She was not keen to go out in it by herself and I could not blame her.

I was perusing some of the older photographs we have of her, and it surprised me first, just how much she had grown right under our noses without us noticing and secondly, how much darker she has become. She started off apricot and is now

heading towards red. She is proper, deep red when she is wet, so we have had notice of her new colouring. It does not really matter a fig to us.

At least I noticed something. It took a visitor staying here to tell me that he noticed quite a few surfers about today and also several snorkellers across the front. The sea state did not look much but there was a bit of useful swell heading in and the waves over at North Rocks looked very handy. It was very different on the south coast I had heard on Radio Pasty. The Coastguard had urged people to stay clear and only people who had business being out on the waves should go anywhere near it. When I looked at some of the south coast webcams in the middle of the afternoon, it did not look all that bad, but it was just after low water, so that would make a difference.

By about the same time, I had run out of legitimate things to do. The fish was packed, the delivery put away anything I could clean was cleaned and any stock that needed putting out was put out. I had descended into the completely unlikely things next which included completing a survey sent from my bank asking how they were doing. It was very brave of them, so I was not too unkind.

The first question out of the box was would I recommend them to my friends and colleagues. I answered no on the basis that I do not have either which prompted the response that they were sorry they had been such a disappointment to me. When they asked why, I told them that they had not really, it was just that they had not done anything to warrant recommendation nor had they done anything really to upset me. What did they expect.

The survey went on and asked daft questions such as how did I feel their support had been for my financial planning, managing my funds and so forth, none of which the bank has made any suggestion of doing for me. There again, I am rather glad they did not. I answered that they had met my expectations, which was true as my expectations had been exceedingly low in all those regards.

There is a certain expertise to writing good surveys and there are people out there who make good money from it. I could not help feeling that my bank might have fared better using one of them – or using one who was better at their job. It passed the time, which was a good thing.

Our new mattress arrived in a tall box, all scrunched up. It was extremely heavy for its size and bears the name of the mattress company in large print down the side, Emma. When the delivery driver arrived, I exclaimed, 'Ah Emma', to which he replied, 'No Adam. I am only Emma at the weekends', which was very quick, unless he had practised for that very occasion. We will need the mattress for when we move back into our flat after the building work is done. Until then we will test it out in our temporary accommodation, so it was useful that the mattress came in a big cardboard box.

I note from repeated messages from one of the trade magazines I subscribe to that this is Responsible Retailing Week. I can only assume that it was misdirected.

Anyway, enough of this frivolity. I am sure, dear reader, that you will be grateful when I actually have something to write about. As seems to be the habit, I shall end with our walk around the block after tea. We avoided the Harbour altogether as waves were lumping over the Harbour wall and never mind that it might scare ABH, it frightens the behobey out of me. There was a band of light out to the west where the cloud had cleared and the light from the long departed sun, still seeped up from the horizon. It made all the difference, and the night did not seem so impenetrable. Neither was it blowing us off our feet and we tarried a little longer here and there unlike the night before. We still seemed keen to make a dash for it down the latter part of Coastguard Row and back home. I think she has remembered the Missus by then.

October 17th – Tuesday

I did fancy that it was a bit warmer this morning. The breeze circulating around my knees seemed almost balmy as I came down the stairs. I had taken the precaution of wearing something over my t-shirt and I was quite grateful for that, but it was definitely less unkind.

There were a few flecks of rain in the wind, which I had not expected, so I checked the rain radar and noted a geet lump of rain waiting just off the end heading our way. I realised it would have to work a bit harder than normal as it was fighting a feisty easterly, but it put a fire under me to get ABH around the block before it came in. I need not have worried overly because at eleven o'clock we were still waiting. It seemed that it was breaking up as it came towards us and we ended up with hardly any at all in the morning.

It was not the last surprise of the day. Someone came in and asked about the fifty miles per hours winds due later, something else that I had not heard about and a regular Diary correspondent informed me that Storm Babet is on the way. Really? Sounds very French to me but having looked that one up it rather seems it is more a Scottish and Northern problem, which is probably the last thing the Scots need having just had some pretty severe weather just a week or so ago.

If the weather was not enough of a worry, Radio Pasty decided to scare the socks off us by having on one of the Friends of Portheras, who I thought was one of the Three Musketeers. Anyway, the Friend was going on about Portuguese man-o-war coming here, which was odd because I thought we had a big vote to stop that sort of thing happening. We were warned to be on the lookout because the tentacles gave a nasty sting and if you were in the water, they would be nigh on invisible. She also said for dogs to be careful as they would make your dog very poorly if they ate one – I think she must have been referring to ABH who will eat anything when she is out and about.

Since I had little else to do today, and there was a pressing need to make arrangements, I decided to book the train and the accommodation for my visit to see the Aged Parent in Sherborne after we close. It is a frightfully long way east of Camborne and such voyages need to be planned with meticulous detail. I would have done the booking last week or earlier, but I had to wait to determine if there were any rail strikes coming up that would derail my meticulous plans.

I very quickly discovered that it is remarkably difficult to get a definitive answer as to if or when a rail strike is going to happen. One of the main unions calling the action is the Rail and Maritime Transport Workers (RMT) but they are not alone and there is also National Union of Railwaymen, which include signalmen that can bring the rail network to a grinding halt. Then there are the individual train companies, GWR, LNER, CrossCountry and, quite possibly, the wheel tappers and shunters and a whole host of others that can get in on the act and either stop the trains directly or indirectly and then there is a whole bunch of people coming out in sympathy. I saw seven or eight industry and news websites all with differing information about strikes, although most said that there were no strikes planned, one said that strikes were planned for the week following my planned journey.

On the grounds that it was nigh on impossible to find a categorical answer, I went ahead and did some rail journey booking and hoped for the best. Unfortunately, the best was already tarnished by some sort of upset on the line.

The journey out looks reasonably straightforward with one change at Exeter. On the way back, however, I will have to make three changes, at Exeter, Plymouth and St Austell. The last is a terminus and a replacement bus service had been provided. The bus journey is estimated at one and a half hours, which is probably the outer limit for a gentleman of my age. To make matters worse, there is only ten minutes between the train arriving at St Austell, if it is on time, and the bus leaving and I know from experience that the provision of facilities at St Austell have somehow been overlooked. It could be an interesting adventure.

Returning to the here and now, I discovered that it could actually get more tedious than yesterday when I thought we could get no lower. The trouble with tedium is that it is infectious and while there were things to do in the shop, I was so bored I could not be bothered to do them. It took a supreme effort to raise myself up and do a little more stock counting and at least in doing so, I was moving about.

I was nowhere near as cold as I was yesterday. Having learnt my lesson, I closed the first electric sliding door in The Cove and settled in for the long haul. There were still a few people about and we had sporadic visits to the shop. Some, from further afield – beyond the top of the hill, that is – spoke of the wicked easterly wind that was quite punchy up there. It must have been in just the right bit of the east not to come howling into The Cove as we remained sheltered from it for much of the day.

The Missus, however, braved a visit to The Farm to pick up the remaining items on the list she made last week. When she returned home with Mother, she left me with the keys to empty the truck and distribute the goodies to our shelves. I had quite forgotten about it for one reason or another and ended up doing it nearer the end of the day. I managed to clear most of it, but some will have to wait until tomorrow.

It was not the best of evenings to be going out for a walk. It was very dark and very windy and every little noise spooked ABH a little more. I do not think either of us enjoyed it very much, but it has come to be expected after tea. It would be better to take her just before when there is a bit more light and perhaps a shorter one later. Perhaps breaking our routines just before a, hopefully, bust half term is not ideal. A matter to ponder, as if we did not have enough.

October 16th – Monday

One of our neighbours and regular in the shop is also a regular up the church. They all help out up there for church events, the next one being harvest festival. There is a buffet being prepared and our neighbour was after paper plates for the occasion, which we were happy to supply. I am not sure that we can claim 'By Appointment' but if we could it would certainly trump 'By Appointment to His Majesty'.

Anyway, I digress. Now, where was I? Ah, yes, paper plates. Our neighbour told me that they had to use disposable everything for the church events because they had no water up there and someone had to bring an urn if they wanted a cup of tea or coffee. I said that must prove a bit problematic for baptisms, but she told me they got the water from the F&L for those. I know they did a drink up there that the advertising reckons will give you wings. If I drank more water with it, I might have ended up with a harp as well.

I fancied that perhaps it was not quite so cold this morning but after standing behind the shop counter for the first four hours in an easterly draft, I might have been mistaken. I had slipped an extra layer on when I took ABH around the block and it stayed on for the rest of the day, which was probably the right thing to do, especially as we had precious few customers through to distract me.

One of our trade feeds concerns drink and given the cold and the fact that I noted that my whisky supply was dwindling, I thought I would look at what is new on the market. There is a section of the newsletter that is dedicated to recently releases and I see that Dalmore has added a whisky to its Cask Curation Collection. It is matured in Gonzalez Byass sherry cases that would put me off even if the £30,000 price tag did not. Thankfully, Glenfiddich have their Archive 1973, which is more like in in good old American oak casks. I will have to hurry as there are only 83 bottles available at £33,500. I wonder if they might take an IOU or perhaps I should just wait to see what Santa brings along.

As far as 'goodness me' moments go, I could choose to avoid that one. The other than landed on my metaphorical welcome mat – no, of course we do not have a welcome mat, what do you take me for – was a notice from our very fine bone china mug supplier not to go around selling their products to Californians in California, which is a long way east or west of Camborne, depending on your point of view.

Our supplier very kindly explained what was going on. They tell me that the State of California has a law, called Proposition 65 (Prop 65), that requires all products that have lead in them carry warnings. Apparently, unscrupulous lawyers in the State are ignoring previous agreements between the Coalition of Safe Ceramics and the State of California and are serving notices on companies even if the products comply.

Defending companies are forced to either settle claims or expect costly court proceedings if they fight them. We are warned that should we sell to a private individual, say, from our online shop, we could find ourselves in such a position. Well, thank goodness I found out ahead of my forthcoming California marketing campaign. But, as one door closes, as they say, I see an opportunity, although it carried some not insignificant risk – bootleg pencils is where the smart money is going, cunningly disguised as biros. My future is assured.

At least such things distracted me from the icicles forming on my extremities. So distracted was I that I failed to notice just how cold I was getting, and it was not until I was well into the afternoon that it occurred to me that closing the first electric sliding door in The Cove would have been a blinding good idea several hours earlier.

I also took myself down to the far end of the shop to start stock counting. We will compress all our moveable shelves to the end of the shop when we close so we can get the furniture from upstairs down there ahead of the building work. We will therefore not have the opportunity to count the stock again until well after we had done all the ordering for the following year. I know that we have a week or so to go, one of them busy, we hope, but I am not counting on selling too many shorts, swimsuits and bikinis.

After a nice warming tea, I took ABH out as usual. The wind was still brisk and even she with her fur coat on was not all that keen on being out in it. We also cannot get onto the beach with the tide in, either. She had a right good time down there last night with a spider crab leg she had found. She is quite adept at throwing it and chasing after it herself, which lets me off the hook. There was none of that tonight and we were tucked up in the flat twenty minutes later. I will be better prepared tomorrow.

October 15th – Sunday

It was noticeably chillier this morning for the first time since the spring. With only two weeks of shop opening left, I will hang on with shorts and flipflops until the end – unless it snows. I think I mentioned that some doom monger suggested that it might

possibly snow at some point in the next couple of months. Another one, earlier in the year, told us to expect a heatwave in February. On the basis that they struggle to forecast tomorrow, I might just wait and see what happens. Whatever it is will happen anyway and I cannot see that I will have much say in it unless someone offers me a dirt cheap snow plough that I turn down just before the blizzard hits us.

I was therefore in two minds about keeping a jacket on for the Lifeboat exercise that had been planned for ten o'clock. I did not in the end, mainly because we exert some effort in making the slipway ready for recovery which can warm a person up no end. This launch was one of our reasonably regular joint exercises with Gwennap Head (windiest place in the universe) National Coastwatch Institution (NCI), dropping a buoy into the water, closing our eyes and counting to 100, and letting them guide the boat onto it. Today was a bit special because we had local artist, nationally renowned, Kurt Jackson who had created some works, Lifeboat related, in aid of the charity. The trip out was a bit of a thank you and an opportunity to do some sketches while at sea.

The RNLI had sent a photographer along to record the event for posterity and public relations and someone else had come along to take photographs from the shore and from a drone that they brought with them, I discovered later. They were lucky with the light because it was bright but heavy cloud overhead had kept the sea a dark steel grey and when the boat hit the water on launch, the white water in the splash showed up dramatically against the dark sea background.

We twiddled our thumbs while the boat was out. I went back to the shop and twiddled my thumbs between serving customers and looking to see where the boat was. I headed back at twenty to twelve o'clock as we were told that the boat would be back at twelve o'clock for low water, but we were still waiting at near half past the hour. They must have been enjoying themselves or the photographer was asking for just one more angle.

I had decided to put my jacket on for the recovery as it was still pretty chilly at the bottom of the long slipway. It was not until after I had my lifejacket on that I noticed that I had forgotten my jacket. I was too bone idle to take it off again and went down to the bottom of the slipway in shirtsleeves. The easterly breeze was quite cutting at times but when the sun came out, it was immediately warming and I could do with a bit of vitamin D.

There was hardly any swell at all at low water and the boat gently rested on the toe while we exchanged heaving line for span to be hooked up on the boat. Out catcher was on the rocks, literally, not metaphorically, although I had not asked him, so it may have been both, as the tide was only just coming off slack water when the boat arrived. While in the thick of it down there, I had time to note that it was clearly a textbook recovery up the long slipway, executed with aplomb, although I do not know where it came from.

Because we had guests onboard, the boat was hauled straight back into the boathouse to let them off. There were lots of thank yous from our guests for taking them out and from the Coxswain to the artist for raising the money while we stood by and watched from the sidelines. We are, after all, a very discreet, very excellent Shore Crew.

While it was still bright and dry for the rest of the day, we were not in the least busy again. With no discernible surf, the sea was pretty empty as well, although some kayakers took to the bay in front of the shop. They were local lads who had been on the shop earlier for a bit of fishing tackle and were out there giving it a try. I had told them they were guaranteed killers – in the right hands. I do hope they heard the small print.

I forget myself sometimes while spinning a sales line. We had a young lady in earlier with her grandmother both locals and regulars in the shop. The little girl is about six or seven years old and was choosing sweets. She had started off with cough candy and granny was suggesting that she probably would not like them very much. The Missus, who was also there told her that they tasted of aniseed, which drew a blank expression. I thought I may as well try and told her it was the same taste as Pernod. It raised a grandmotherly eyebrow, and I would have laughed my socks off if the little girls said, 'oh, right' or 'I prefer Ricard'. She went off with 'soothers' cough sweets in the end, which seem to be a 'thing' amongst children of her age for some reason.

The Missus headed off to The Farm since it was a perfectly reasonable day for such things. She is still preparing for Christmas and the carols concert, which promises to be a bigger event than last year. Hopefully we will have better weather and it really could not get much worse than it was. Perhaps that was tempting providence, so I shall be on the lookout for someone trying to sell cheap snowploughs, just in case.

October 14th – Saturday

Breakfast, my own, in the shop is a precarious affair. During the busy part of the season it is somewhat more frugal and taken in small portions between customers. The food is limited to ham, cheese or bully beef that can be taken with bread and consumed cold. Occasionally, I can utilise leftovers from the night before, which is always welcome. During the shoulders of the season and particularly at the end – because I am fed up with ham, cheese and bully beef – I can be a little more adventurous and even include hot food.

I do love my eggs and have, on occasion, successfully baked eggs in our commercial oven. If conditions are right, I can eat most of the meal hot. Since I did baked eggs earlier in the week, enjoyed some ham and finished off some bully beef there was nothing for it but to imagine another egg dish. I rather enjoy scrambled eggs done right and wondered if this might be possible in the oven. Keen to experiment and with apparently plenty of time, I greased some foil and dropped some eggs into the roughly fashioned pot.

I like my scrambled eggs just at the edge of cooked and to this end I carefully watched the oven and stirred my eggs frequently. All was going well until what I determined to be the last five minutes when I was pinned down at the counter by customers at the crucial phase of cooking. All I can say is that they were not inedible but there were a little overdone for my liking. However, I am satisfied that I have proved the concept and will be trying again in the near future.

Some people ask me – alright, no one has, but just imagine someone might - if I am not at all worried about including in the Diary my personal information. Nearly every detail of my personal life has been laid bare at one time or another. Was I ever concerned about identity theft? The fact is I cannot imagine anyone in their right mind wanting to emulate my identity. They would have to write a daily diary for one thing and after nearly thirteen years of that you start telling people how you like your eggs. No, I am not concerned at all.

There was still a fair breeze blowing around in the morning when I first went down but not so much that would prevent me from putting the ball stand out the front. I did exercise caution with the flags and decided that I would put them out later – and then did not. The day stayed breezy but the sun came out after a few showers passed on either side but the temperature had dropped quite a bit pushing people into woolly hats and warm coats.

It the brightness of the day it was impossible to ignore the glorious colours on the beach, the blues of the water and the clean white of the wave tops as they rushed in. The sand has moved around a bit lately and today it seemed it had shifted some more. Quite a bit of sand has been added to the top of the beach where already there was a rising shelf up to the dunes. Today, you could almost get to the Lifeguard station without stumbling but there is more further on from that and under Carn Keys, the black huts. All week there has been a field of rocks at the bottom of the slope roughly under the Lifeguard station that was best avoided when hidden by the tide. Today, it had largely been covered by sand. Also, it looked like it was possible to walk from Sennen beach to Gwenver dry footed, which is unusually reserved for low water on the bigger spring tides. You probably would not want to tarry on the other side today as I doubt that the passage was open very long.

I could not tarry too long gawking at the beach, either, as we were much busier than yesterday. Mind, it would have been difficult to be less busy than yesterday without being closed altogether. There was still time to have a look for a replacement for the bookcase that sits in the window alcove at the front of the shop. It is the oldest piece of furniture left in the shop and while it is still serviceable, it looks a little shabby now.

Ideally, the replacement would have wheels, but the essential element is that it must have a back to it. There are endless options on the retail furniture websites for shelves but very few have backs and fewer have wheels. None at all that I have found so far have backs and wheels. There is no pressing need, so I will bide my

time and if it is still there next year, well, so be it. Except it will probably play on my mind, I will become obsessed, and we will end up with something cobbled together to meet the specification.

The clouds had remained parted as we headed into the evening and this provided some additional light for our evening stroll. There was a sliver of beach but with the waves still a little uncomfortably strong in the Harbour, I kept ABH on a lead. While the tide was going out, we were still being pressed at the bottom of the western slip, so we headed up soon after arriving. By the time we crossed the car park the light had almost gone. It really is that quick arriving. It was also quite chilly. I think my days and evenings of little boys' trousers are numbered.

October 13th – Friday

It is quite a wonder, the risk adverse culture that pervades all walks of life. I recognise, of course, that we do not want to be risking life and limb, particularly when it is your own, but I can also understand that it might be frowned upon to risk the lives and limbs of others. The idea that you might have a tall historic tower that you might want to prevent people from climbing in a high wind, owners of exposed bridges and high sided vehicles, etc. All those things that closely align with common sense. Where many, or indeed most of us, find issue is with the “elf and safety gawn mad” stuff.

We have a couple staying in The Cove, regulars, and probably both in their seventies. You probably do not reach that age by playing fast and loose with risk: standing under trees in a thunderstorm; climbing high structures in a hurricane or walking on sea walls in a force nine storm. Conversely, you also learn that walking out in a bit of a breeze and a spot of rain, while unwelcome, is, on the whole, not going to damage you too much.

It is exceedingly likely, therefore that they would have paused for thought if crossing the causeway to St Michael's Mount looked in any way hazardous, except they did not have the chance. The National Trust, in its wisdom, decided that due to a forecast of rain and highish winds to close access to The Mount. Neither the wind or rain were due at the time of their crossing and neither did they materialise and nor were they particularly severe, not even the terribly risk averse Meteorological Office thought so. I might have understood had it been worried about its little boat being blow about in high seas, but this was at low water. They were stopping people walking across the causeway because of a bit of breeze and rain.

On a lighter note, one forecast I saw recently told me to expect sprinkles. It turned out to be entirely accurate, too.

Largely, what we had here for most of the day was sprinkles. It was enough to keep the numbers down but not quite enough to disappear our visitors all together, at least at first. The café next door was open as well, although I suspect that the usual

characters were a little jaded after their day at the races. I usually see one or two of them during the day, but they were keeping their heads down today.

The abject boredom took its toll and I stuck my head into doing another fifty invoices. This in itself is exceptionally tedious work which explains just how grim it was in the first place to make me want to do it. Up until the early afternoon, the weather had been quite benign and the prospect of inclement weather, quite remote.

It came in very quickly and it was the wind that was most prominent feature. It was not particularly severe, but it was blowing in from the unprotected northwest that made it a little uncomfortable in The Cove.

Having finished my fifty invoices, I decided to read my very exciting book that was just reaching the climax. Since there had been very few customers over the previous couple of hours, I felt that I could probably finish it. Naturally, I had only just started it when the pasty sign fell off the box at the front of the shop with a clatter. Having brought that in, we started to see a few customers arrive, which given the change in the weather was just bizarre. It went quiet again so I picked up my book once more but the quietness exaggerated the noise that the polythene on the windbreaks made, flapping around in the wind. I brought in the windbreak stand only to find that the now exposed net bucket was threatening to topple over, so I brought that in too.

I had already brought in the flags, so that only left the ball stand which has nets to stop the balls blowing out. The direction of the wind was such that it lifted the net and blew out one of the lighter balls, so I went out to bring that in as well, writing off my lost ball that was halfway down the street. I then spotted a neighbour with quite fortuitous timing stepping off his drive as the errant ball sped toward him, which he caught and returned.

With all the outside equipment now safely inside and the last of the latest batch of customers served and gone, I went back to reading my book. It was just then that our wheelie bin toppled over, so I put the book down noting my admirable restraint that I did not throw it across the shop and will finish it off tonight.

The rain was not particularly heavy, but the wind had picked up very suddenly. Land's End had it recorded at around 40 miles per hour and St Ives at 50 miles per hour. Gwennap Head, the windiest place in the universe had it coming from near due north and at 60 miles per hour. With damage to property – alright, nothing actually broke, but I was severely irritated - you would think that someone should have issued a warning about it.

I had to snigger a little. The Meteorological Office did have a rain warning in place for later on and into tomorrow on its website. Under this it showed no rain at all. I suspect it was yesterday's warning that had somehow remained in place on the screen, if I were to be kind.

At least the day ended on a high note. We had fish for tea again. The Missus had saveloys; the Missus hates fish.

October 12th – Thursday

The rain, such as it was first thing, did not last very long. I got a bit damp when I went down to put out the shop display but by the time I revisited with ABH, it was dry and so was the street mainly. It was also pretty temperate again, although we are told to expect the temperatures to drop to near normal for the time of year later in the week.

What was most unexpected was an alert for rain. The Meteorological Office had raised a yellow warning for rain later in the day but from what I could tell from Radio Pasty this morning, what was expected was some heavy showers before it passed through and became dry again. In short, it was going to rain a bit later on. I would, of course reserve judgement to see what we would get but I felt it probably not worth telephoning our timber merchant to order an ark's quantity of wood.

Quite possibly a bit more upsetting was an increased breeze from the south during the night that we would feel the benefit of tomorrow afternoon when it went around to the northwest. Laced with enough rain, it blows straight under the first electric sliding door in The Cove and floods the shop. The amount of water is unlikely to cause us damage but it is a pain in the neck under the door mat and takes ages to dry out.

The ingress is not a fault with the door installation, but a 'feature' designed to allow water in the shop to pass or be swept out under the frame. So far, the only problem we have had with water at the front of the shop has been that which has blown under the door. One day I will get around to sealing the gap – just ahead of an unexpected flood I need to sweep out, no doubt.

Anyway, it was not raining during the morning, and it was deathly quiet. The rain could do no more to damage trade as there was not any to damage. I suspect that the café next door being closed was much to do with this as we do feed off each other a bit. With the kiosk closed as well, not a cup of coffee was to be had at our end of The Cove and I am dubious about the other end as well. We became the day after scene of an apocalypse movie.

While I probably could have run into town, collected the replacement taillight and come back without anyone noticing, we felt it prudent that the Missus and ABH mind the shop in my absence. It was just as well because when I telephoned the Missus from town, she sounded busy.

I am glad that it was just a short trip. I have to break myself in gently at the end of the season as I am unused to mingling with large numbers of people without the safety of a counter between us. The transaction in the car parts shop could have gone smoother. I had assumed that the refund for the wrong bits would be taken off the

bits I was buying which were more expensive. The procedure, however, was to refund the wrong ones first and since I had purchased them by credit card, I should have had my card to hand to complete the transaction. I did think to use my smart mobile telephone, mainly as I had noticed that the truck was low on fuel and that was all I had with me. It would have been advantageous to test out the use of my telephone in the car shop with no one around as I had never successfully used it before. It would save the embarrassment of filling up the truck with expensive petrol only to discover that I could not pay for it.

It was a sensible precaution. I discovered that my mobile telephone card told me that I had used up all the passes on it, which was odd since I had not used it at all. I suspect it is because I have not used the physical card in a shop and entered my pin number for a very long time. The short of it is that the very pleasant lady at the till had to check with her boss that she could give the refund in cash. It would have been unnecessary if the refund could have been included in the sale. I imagine the procedure was thought of by someone in an office who had never worked a till in their life.

Unfortunately, the Missus insisted that I visit Tesmorburys for a specific bread roll to be used in the making of our tea. Had we planned such things, I would have ordered it in from Pauls Bread and kept the money local. I am sure the Missus insists these things because she knows it irritates me. Anyway, Tesmorburys did not have the proscribed roll and I had to call for instructions, which is when I discovered she was busy. I do not know what I purchased but it apparently met with approval.

I had spent a good part of the morning relearning how to input the big pile of invoices into the Making Tax Difficult system. I decided to stop at 50 which is when I discovered that there were probably more like 200 invoices in total. I considered it poor form to finish it all in one day and have nothing to do the next day. It had nothing whatever to do with abject boredom of the process, of course.

The rain had commenced in the middle of the day when it had been forecast to come in later. It did not make any difference to us really, as there were no customers to be put off. The body of rain was moving quite quickly, and the promised heavy stuff was penned in for arriving just as I closed the shop. It was marginally heavier than before but it was just rain and nothing exceptional.

There was Lifeboat training but no launch. While I replaced the second battery in the little remote switch, another of my colleagues took one of the crew through the procedure to change the starter motor on the winch. It is a procedure that we will never use but our fellow crew member is waiting to be passed out on winch operations and he might be asked then. I caught up with them after discovering that changing the battery in the switch did not work, which leaves us with one working switch.

The falling rain sounded quite severe inside the station. It is amplified by the metal roof. Outside, it was heavier but still normal rain and remained so as I took ABH out for her last spin around the block. Had she not procrastinated quite so long in the RNLI car park we might have missed the heavier downpour that arrived just as our temporary neighbours arrived back from a night out.

It was still just rain, quite a lot of it judging by the rain radar and would probably last half the night. It amounted to one inch at Land's End in five hours. I know that the Meteorological Office can still go to a red rain warning, but I think they need to be a bit more choosy about when they issue warnings as becoming inured to them will not be helpful when a real monsoon comes along.

October 11th – Wednesday

Alright, we did not have the weather we have had for the last five days. However, it was perfectly mild, hardly a breath of wind and it was mainly dry through to nearly the middle of the. I cannot imagine why everyone stayed away in their droves.

There was no particular hurry for anything this morning. Even ABH took her time ambling around the block and halfway up Coastguard Row. Probably because of this, the milkman was early, and the pasty man (sorry, MS) was on time. The Laurel and Hardy Newspaper Company, not to be left out, delivered one title very late.

It left me a little time to do a bit more planning of my journey up to see the Aged Parent after we close. I took the train last year as the Missus could not come with me and this year will be the same. We could not foist ABH on Mother despite Mother being her bestest pal ever; she would have to hide all her knitting for one thing.

Last year I stayed in a small apartment at the bottom of town, there being no room at the Aged Parent's inn. Sadly, the same place was not available this year, so I needed to look elsewhere. I did not commit to anywhere because I had not consulted with the Aged Parent to make sure there was not a holiday booked hacking through the Bolivian jungle or trekking across the Andes, that sort of thing Aged Parents do when you are least expecting it. The other pterodactyl in the orange grove was the ongoing train strikes. I learnt that the union need give no less than two weeks' notice, so I did not want to go committing money to accommodation before knowing whether I could get there or not – or back. The only problem with that is that the preferred accommodation may have gone elsewhere. I shall have to trust to luck.

Talking of luck, a lady came into the shop shortly into the afternoon and asked for a National Lottery luck dip ticket. I told her she would need to go to the shop at the top as we did not sell them. I suggested she did not bother since her luck had not stretched to us having lottery tickets even.

I definitely would not be buying a ticket either. At half past two o'clock it started raining and the street emptied, and all my potential customers disappeared. It was

not particularly heavy rain but a smidgeon wet, nevertheless. Instead, I decided to do what I meant to do yesterday and the day before and get on with the next quarter's invoices.

There was already a pile of around one hundred all of which needed to be sorted into date order. Since they are printed out in roughly chronological order, and the ones that arrive in the shop arrive the same way, you would think that was not too difficult a task. You would be surprised, dear reader, just how completely mixed up they are. It took ages.

Having finished, I discovered that I had exhausted my enthusiasm for such things and decided that I would not bother to try any inputting and to do something less tedious instead. The only flaw in the otherwise seamless plan was that I could not think of anything less tedious.

I recalled, just as the Missus drove off toward the bright city lights of our county town, that the nearside taillight on the truck was not working. Since she would have to come back past the national chain car part shop, I thought I would buy the appropriate bulb for collection and went to the company website.

What I could not recall was what this light looked like. What I should have done, of course, is looked at pictures of it on the Internet, which would have saved me a lot of time. It is actually one bulb with the brake light and had I remembered that, or looked at pictures on the Internet, I would not have been misled by the very clever but wrong website that the I was looking at. The only rear light it showed me was the wrong one which I discovered when the Missus returned home some while later. I shall have to go into town tomorrow to resolve the situation.

The more surprising aspect of this excursion was that the Missus drove 40 miles to buy some curries. The Missus hates curry – and fish. I did offer her a fish curry once out of interest. I do not recall what she said but I am sure it was a polite, to some degree, refusal. The background to this is that we used to go to an Indian restaurant in Penzance and there was one dish on the menu that found favour with the Missus. The restaurant closed but it had a sister outlet in Truro. This converted to a bar for a while, so the Missus was curryless for sometime and it was only on Monday that she discovered the bar had reverted to an Indian restaurant again.

The Missus telephoned last night to place the order. The owner remembered her, which is not a surprise because they can probably close for the night after the orders that we placed. Provided that our clientele only wanted the one dish, we could probably open an Indian takeaway ourselves for a couple of nights given what we have cooling on the freezer top in the shop. Mother is not overkeen on spicy food, but the Missus bought a selection of milder ones and Mother liked all but one of them when they had a tasting before tea.

The rain did not look too severe when I stuck my head out of the door ahead of taking the little girl around in the evening. When we set out, it was still not raining very hard even though a quick look at the rain radar has us under some brightly coloured rain indicators. I think we must have been right on the edge – which I am very much used to. The rain did pick up its pace a little on our way around but it was not severe enough to completely wet ABH's fur and she was also happy to stay out in it. We then had to spend five minutes while she stuck her head under a dripping drainpipe on the way back. She has issues, our little girl.

October 10th – Tuesday

Last night as I was walking ABH around last thing, the mist was swirling about around us. The minute drops of airborne water were clearly visible in the light of my clever headtorch. Most of that had retreated by the time I stepped out in the morning and, when I could see, the mist was hugging the cliffs all around the bay. It was much more widespread than yesterday and was with us for much of the day. I think the party is just about over by the look of it.

The day was still mild, however, but it failed to attract more than a scattering of visitors before the early part of the afternoon and even then, we were not going to set the world alight.

Those that were here had some curious ideas, but they were not alone nor just today. For example, we keep books that people have donated and ask in turn for a donation for our counter collection, a comfort fund for the crew across the road. We have had quite a range of books, and I even missed a trick by including a book by Robert Galbraith, who is a lady who writes about wizards, apparently. The lady who acquired the book told me it was at least £20 in the shops and we had a sticker on it for £5. Nevertheless, we are often asked. 'how much are your books?'. This I find quite odd because I doubt whether the enquirer would walk into those nation book shop chains and ask at the counter the same question. All our books are individually priced, as you might imagine.

The other irritation is the selection of products from our shelves that carry a best before date. To be clear, this is a date before which the manufacturer believes the product is at its best and after which the product is still consumable but may not be at its peak. A day after the best before I doubt that you would notice any difference.

Nearly always I will find tunnelling among the milk bottles where the customer had sought to reach nearer the back of the stock. I always ensure that the milk goes in with the oldest in the middle to fox such unruly behaviour – and some of you doubted that I was indeed a grumpy shopkeeper. Occasionally, I find some stock has gone out of date because all the new stock has been taken before it. Today, I was asked if a loaf of bread would be discounted today. It was on its last best before day. I gave

him a quizzical look and asked why I might be inclined to discount a product that was still in date.

I find that this attitude is rife and products on the shelf with only a day or two left do not sell and I end up throwing them away. I do not bother discounting at all, first because if it was unwanted with a day or two left then it would not be wanted at all after. Also, I am not playing the game where people will buy it a day out of date discounted but not a day in date undiscounted. They freeze and I can use them for toast. Yes, very grumpy.

It did not help at all that even into the afternoon, the numbers of shoppers barely improved. Although the ground level mist cleared, it seemed that it merely lifted a bit and the horizon was a lot closer than it usually is. It left the day somewhat gloomy and the mood on the street, dower.

It was probably apposite then that our big fish order that we had been waiting a bit for arrived in the middle of the afternoon. There were around 30 portions of hake, and similar quantities of haddock and pollock. They took around two to three hours to pack and price and are by now all frozen in our commercial freezers. Some will be on display in the shop tomorrow and anything left over we will have to force ourselves to eat during the winter. When I say 'we', I do of course mean Mother and me; the Missus hates fish.

October 9th – Monday

What is there not to like about a bit of picturesque mist clinging to the cliffs and hanging about in the valleys. It was not doing us any harm, although you might have struggled to see where you were going if you were moving about in Vellandreath Valley this morning. It disappeared eventually, but we were left with rather more cloud high above us than yesterday, rather less sunshine and a bit of mackerel sky – oh, and a very flat sea.

It was all very quiet for a good length of time in the morning, which was quite helpful when the milk and the pasties (sorry, MS) were fearfully late and arrived at the same time. It must have stopped being quiet while I was at the gymnasium because there were a fair few people milling about on the benches opposite us and a few in the shop when I came back. The little girl, who is very good at sitting on her throne by the door – except when I am left alone with her – gives me a huge welcome when I get back. She actually gives anyone a huge welcome if they make the mistake of noticing her, so I have stopped getting excited about such recognition.

While I was absent, the mattress and bed that we had put out for collection by the much maligned council collection service had gone. I assume it was the much maligned council collection service who took it but it is somewhat academic. We nearly forgot to put it out altogether. It was only that I suddenly remembered that I had omitted to post my electricity meter reading last thing before going to bed and

scurried to the computer to do it, that the message from the collection service came up. The Missus and I hurriedly yanked the items out of the spare room and bumped them down the stairs. They are gone now, and I hope we do not suddenly remember we have visitors coming to stay before we move out in November.

I spent some time yesterday drafting a letter to our much maligned council councillor regarding the cessation of the bus service to St Just. The Missus had shown me that the local community had suddenly woken up to it and had harangued our MP at a surgery session at the farmers' market on Tuesday. It struck me that since it was the much maligned council that paid the ferryman, so to speak, through subsidies it would be the better organisation to bring pressure to bear on the bus company, if that were possible. I sent the message off in the morning before I came downstairs.

Our man came back with surprising speed. In his message he said all the right words about bus reviews and portfolio holders, so I shall wait and see what happens next. When I say wait, I will not be putting anything else off while I wait else I suspect I would be doing nothing for a very long time.

Feeling brave after such a minor success – I am counting a message back from the councillor as a success – I decided to call our telecommunications provider to ask them to re-site the fibre cable ahead of our building work. I had tried using the message facility of its website, but the respondent there told me I would have to call and promptly gave me the wrong number. The very pleasant lady who answered my call and whom I could barely understand told me she did not understand what I had meant by 're-site the fibre cable'. I had chosen re-site specifically because if I used the word move they would assume I meant move house as that had happened previously.

Anyway, she gave me the correct number and I spoke to a very pleasant man whom I had difficulty understanding. I wonder why these big companies cannot use call centres in this country; I find the Glasgow accent particularly difficult to comprehend. We managed to communicate eventually after remembering some phrases like 'heng oot' and 'hen' and 'see my man, see mince' and at least he knew what re-site meant. I was deliberately vague when he asked where I wanted it re-sited to as I will have to ask the engineer on the ground what the limitations are. I suspect that the best anchor point is around the back, but I am beginning to think that it would be best to come in downstairs. I thought the fan would be a good temporary home – providing I remember not to turn it on – as no holes would need to be drilled.

He gave me a date of next week, which took me by surprise, so I told him I did not want it done until the first week in November, after the shop had closed. He told me it would be no problem and gave me a date of 6th November, which was ideal. I thanked him very much and some time later had a look at the confirmation messages that littered my mailbox. All of them stated the delivery day of 19th October, the first date he gave me. Fortunately, I was able to change it after logging into my account. What could possibly go wrong.

The sun broke through in the middle of the day and stayed with us. Even I could tell that it was warm today. Not only was it warm but it was extremely humid I noticed as I came back from the gymnasium. This will no doubt account for the mist, and we will probably have some more when the temperature drops again in the evening. The heat, humidity and flies must have done for our visitors as they all stopped doing anything during the afternoon.

The Missus, however, was very busy with her preparations for Christmas and the second Carols in the Cove concert, which are a little way off. Her plans seem to get grander every year buoyed by the success of the one before. I will not spoil the big surprises but she is working very hard at present making things for it and having very important meetings with the lady who runs the choir. October might seem a little premature for these preparations but she has already discovered an even earlier start would have been useful as one of her ideas was scotched though insufficient notice.

I do not know if she lost track of time, or the weather was so good at The Farm that she decided to 'push the envelope' a little and stay up there as long as she could. I had a sneak peak on the CCTV camera installed up there through the quiet of the afternoon. Since the Missus was not doing anything hugely interesting to watch, I sought out ABH who has discovered that having two acres of field is actually quite good fun. I watched as she ranged over the eastern half of it running and exploring nearly down to the end of the field. She was actually resting when I came up from the shop shortly after they got back. At last the Missus had found something that wore her out. It did not last very long.

The afternoon and evening were sublime. The skies were clearer than they were earlier and the few people who were left on the benches, basked in the gloriousness of it all. It could quite easily have been mistaken for a summer's evening apart from the emptiness of the street, which probably made it all the more attractive.

What was not so attractive was my Lifeboat pager going off just as I was about to lift the last morsel of my tea to my mouth. The boat was tasked to help recover a lady with a knee injury at Pednevounder beach, which is notorious for extracting damaged people from. Both boats launched because communications are also difficult in the area and the big boat can act as a relay station.

Fortunately, the casualty was picked off the beach by the Inshore boat. The sea conditions were benign, and the shape of the beach allowed the boat relatively easy access. It is also fortunate that we now have a local GP on the crew and even more fortunate that he was on the boat at the time.

Meanwhile, back at the station, we guess that we would not be waiting too long for the boats to return and with two hours before low water, decided to set up on the long slip while we still had some light to do so. We then waited. As it got darker, it

occurred to me that I could spend the time seeing if my clever head torch could be attached to my tin hat and therefore utilised later in the darkness at the toe of the slipway. It is a torch designed to fit and indeed, the kit allowed me to perch it on the top of the hat quite securely. I do not have a chin strap on my tin hat and without it, the whole ensemble seemed a little precarious. I decided that I would be happier risking someone else's expensive head torch rather than my own but then discovered I could wear it in the traditional manner on my head and still fit my tin hat on top, which I did.

We recovered the big boat up the long slipway in what was clearly a textbook recovery lit by the light from my very clever head torch. We brought the boat straight into the boathouse at around half past eight o'clock without the usual washing down and formalities so that the casualty could be disembarked more quickly. We are, after all, a very illuminated, very excellent Shore Crew.

October 8th – Sunday

The heat of the day before had escaped in the night, free to leave by the lack of cloud cover. The morning here was chilly; the little girl was quivering when we first went out after, of course, we had waited for the light.

The early morning sky was a delight. The sun had not yet coloured the eastern sky but there was enough light there for the sky to run from light to midnight blue over the course of the available sky to the west. It was like some mad paint manufacturer's colour chart dotted with celestial objects of varying brightness.

By the middle of the day and probably much sooner, the warm had returned under a largely undiluted sun. The surf that had been sublime yesterday, was there again in the run up to high water. It was not so large it excluded the less accomplished surfer, so there were quite a few out there enjoying it. Later, when I had a better view of it, the Harbour was filled with cold water swimmers some of whom decided to stretch out further through the Lifeboat channel.

It was a good job they returned to the safety of the Harbour when they did because at eleven o'clock we launched the big boat in exercise. This was the second attempt to get our boy through his coxswain examination and to emerge as a fully fledged 2nd Coxswain to add to the other three we already have.

After the launch, we went about our ordinary business and I came back to the shop, keeping an eye on the antics of the boat as it moved about in local waters. At our debrief later we learnt that they had an awful trip. They had gone out to rescue someone in a kayak and when they got there he was very poorly and needed casualty care and swiftly after, CPR. While that was happening, an engine failed and while they were trying to fix that they had a man overboard. As if that was not bad enough, they were called to another rescue and discovered that they needed to launch the Y boat because the casualty was in water too shallow for the Lifeboat. It

was at this moment they had a fire on board that they were unable to put out and everyone had to abandon the boat.

It was surely a miracle that they managed to somehow get back on board and bring then boat back to the station without a mark on it. We could see the boat racing across the bay and had already set up the short slipway in readiness. It just required some minor tweaks to be completely ready for a recovery.

For our part, we also train members of the very excellent Shore Crew to fulfil various roles and today we had one of the crew practising the Head Launcher role under supervision. It is a role that not any eejit can perform; it generally takes a special sort of eejit. This we proved admirably by executing a textbook recovery up the short slip in good tradition of textbook recoveries.

After washing down and putting away, we settled in for a debriefing by the day's coxswain and found out shortly after that he passed his test with flying colours. We just hope that now he can take the boat out without quite so many fires and people falling over the side.

Once again, I returned to the shop. It had been busy through the morning, which was heartening and unexpected. By the time I came back we had slipped back into a bit more of a sedate pace where again, the main business was in the selling of pasties (sorry, MS). It looked like I was not far off with the order I placed on Thursday morning, which is when I need to guess the stock we require for the weekend. I did have to pull some from the freezer in the morning as it looked like we might be short, which appeared to be the right move.

The swell in the bay disappeared after high water for quite some time. It was not until late in the afternoon that some reasonable surfing conditions returned. As the sun dipped in the west, the light became warmer, matching the ambient air and the day looked even more magnificent than it had earlier. The few people left in the street all sat in the sun enjoying the last vestiges of the day and the peace of it all.

The only people not taking it easy were a group of runners who had been passing through The Cove from mid-afternoon. It must have been a big race as they were passing through for some time though where they came from, I do not know. After several opportunities to ask the runner what the race was about, I failed to determine from any of them what it was all about. It leaves my ambitions of being a top investigative journalist in tatters on the ground. Ah well, I could always write a Diary instead.

October 7th – Saturday

Even as we stepped out last night on our run around, a pall of mist was forming over Carn Olva. It had worked out where it was going when we came out in the morning and it sat comfortably over most of The Cove. We have known it to be thicker than

that and as promised by the forecasting lady on Radio Pasty, it burnt off in short order during the early part of the morning.

Also as foretold, it was a proper belter of a day with blue skies containing just the suggestion of a bit of high-level cloud. It was warm, too, I was told by several people who had been out in it and experienced it for real. I could definitely tell that it looked warm and settled for that.

As usual, it took a little while for the action to commence but certainly not as long as it did during the week. There were a few more people around, most likely attracted by the notion of a blinding weekend in the sunshine, which was looking ever more likely by the minute. Inevitably, the bikers arrived. We are very used to convoys of bikers rolling into The Cove and parking along the street opposite while they have their ice creams, pasties and whatever. What was remarkable about today was that they all parked in the car park.

What was not so remarkable was that they all wanted a pasty (sorry, MS) and one after the other came in for one or two at a time. I was once again fortunate they had caught me with my trousers on and not only did I have pasties in the warmer waiting, I also had some lined up in the oven heating up. As they came ready, I put more in the oven and continued the practise until it went quiet a couple of hours later. It does not often work out as smoothly as that and no doubt I will pay dearly for it later.

We remained relatively busy through the afternoon, which was good for business but not ideal when it came to changing over our card payment machine for the new one. It was new, too. It is an upgraded model over the previous and has one of those connectionless charging abilities. I was told they only wanted the terminal itself back and that is all I packed away. It was not until after the courier had gone that I realised all the other bits of the package should have gone with it.

Obviously, it would have been too easy for it to work straight after connecting to the network and I had already had my run of luck with the pasties. The installation, therefore, took longer than I anticipated and with customers queuing at the counter, I had to rush out the backup machine and use that, which is the whole purpose of having it.

Even after it had finished its automated configuration – a feature that many of us would have sold our first born for when I was working in IT – it still had an issue which needed to be resolved with a call to the support desk. The very pleasant lady fixed the problem in short order and also told me not to be concerned about the other items of the kit when I asked. She told me if they needed them they would send a courier, which is highly unlikely given the costs involved. My large processing fees and machine rental will no doubt cover the loss but I will have to keep all the kit somewhere just in case they do ask.

We just ticked over for the rest of the afternoon. The street cleared and we were seeing people passing by on the way home and the way back from the beach. It has been a while since we have seen groups of wetsuited people coming through, so today must have been a bit special. The few times I looked out on the bay it was clear that there was some decent surf to suit the day and on a number of occasions I caught surfers on a long ride in. Once, there were three in a line, which looked choreographed and worthy of a bit of film footage if anyone was watching but me.

I was late to the party when I took the girl out later and it was getting dark down on the beach. It looked empty and we had a bit of fun before deciding it was just too dark to carry on. Just as we were leaving the beam of my headtorch caught another pair of dog eyes to the far side of the western slip. It was the girl and her dog just sitting there in the dark, which was most disconcerting. I am glad we did not spot them earlier.

So much for our International Dark Skies effort here. I spotted just one star out to the west, very possibly Arcturus or at least that is what it said on my very clever star app on my smart mobile telephone. Well, I have to have something to amuse me while ABH chases moths and nighttime beasts in the long grass.

October 6th – Friday

The planets were less in alignment than aligned this morning as I gazed into the dark blue of the early sky. We had Venus most easterly followed by a waning moon in its third quarter and furthest in the west was a big bright Jupiter. It would have been lovely to say that I could also see Uranus, dear reader, nestled close to Jupiter but it is too distant for the naked eye. I did bring out my binoculars to have a geek but even then, it was elusive. I suppose it was comforting to just know it was there.

All the while as I gazed skywards, I could hear the sharp, high-pitched tinkle like a small chain being dropped. Close by me on the bench, a little robin perched, whistling away at me. We do so love our peace of these early mornings, robin and me.

ABH and I were very quiet, too, as we ran around the block in the morning. Once again, she was not terribly predisposed to tear herself away from the bed and the Missus, her precious. She does not, however, hold the slightest grudge and as soon as I have won by lifting her away, the bared teeth are put away and snarling ceases and we are on friendly terms again. We had an exceedingly pleasant walk around under the increasingly blue sky and she promptly returned to bed.

There were not even any wispy clouds today to get in the way of full sunshine. It was glorious. The swell out in the bay seemed to have increased again and with the breeze in the southwest it gave up a little for the surfers out there. It was pretty much just white water over by North Rocks and over Cowloe but in the nearer half of the bay it was a little cleaner.

For the second time we closed the shop for an hour or so. This time the sending off was for a Cove matriarch whom I do not think I ever met. She was house-bound for some years and looked after by the daughter and family at home, which is a fine place to end your days. We did not attend but closed the shop anyway as a mark of respect.

It did fleetingly cross my mind whether it was disrespectful to do so but I set about during the closure to remedy our possessed lighting system in the shop. One of the lights had randomly decided to switch on, and once off, autonomously and by itself and without me asking it to. It did look like it might have been connected to the other wireless lights outside as more than once it has come on when I have switched those on, but not every time. Since the unit is relatively cheap, I decided to swap that out first, although what might have been second, I have no idea.

The actual swapping was very straightforward. The new box is a slightly different shape, so I had to put it back a little higher on the wall, but it was no big problem. What took all my time was the connecting it to the network and finding that the online instruction manual that I had to eventually refer to was in Chinese. These remote light switches are a rare beast for UK lighting because we have a system that is different from just about every other country in the world. Making remote switches for the UK market is therefore not so profitable.

My Mandarin is a little rusty – I play the violin instead, now – so I had to determine what to do from the pictures. Thankfully, the password I required to access it on the network was in numerals and after half an hour of trial and much error, I got it connected to our network and my mobile telephone. I shall have to wait until tomorrow morning and then some to discover if the problem has been resolved or not.

It must be the day for technical issues. Our card payment machine has been misbehaving recently. You may recall that the Missus had to get me back from the gymnasium the other day to fix it by which time she had fixed it herself. When I came down to the shop this morning, it was sitting stuck in a loop of some kind and I had to reboot it twice to get it to work. At some point during the afternoon, I went to use it only to discover that it was performing a perfect impression of a brick.

Another reboot brought it back to life again but this time I called it in as a fault. The company are pretty good and rarely make a fuss about trying this and that first. The very pleasant man who answered the telephone just asked a few pertinent questions and arranged for a replacement to be sent tomorrow, which surprised me greatly. It will surprise me even more if it actually turned up.

The big news today, or the news that the media has made big is that the much maligned council, after around three years, managed to get its act together sufficiently to start the roll out of its fab' new waste collection disservice. They must

have finished building the anaerobic digesters for the food waste that they had forgotten would be needed for the master plan. If I wish to be less scathing, which I do not, I would add that they had not built them because they thought that Government cash was coming, which of course it was not.

The roll out has started in Mid-Cornwall and will go on to Southeast Cornwall next before coming to us. The service itself for the first rollout area starts in the middle of January, which will give ample time for people to put the unused bins somewhere safe and not be able to find them again when the collections start in earnest.

We will end up with a new wheelie bin, unless some smart Alec at County Hall deems it sensible that we get a gull-proof bag that will blow away in the first slight breeze. The wheelie bin will be able to fit three or four waste bags into it. This will be interesting because I can only fit two into the current one, three if I sit on the lid and it is bigger than the new one. Also coming are two food waste containers, one small one for the kitchen and another larger one outside that you top up when the small one is full. It is collected weekly.

When we are in full flight, we will have seven waste containers: a wheelie bin, two food waste containers, three recycling bags and a recycling box. Food waste is collected weekly and recycling and general waste collected on alternate weeks. With a system as simple as that what could possibly go wrong. I am assuming my application to build an extension to house all the additional paraphernalia will go through on the nod.

Talking of impending disaster, we ran out of fish. It had not been intentional, but I could have placed the order a bit sooner. I sent it in last week knowing that it would be delayed due to the spring tides, but I had thought it would be here by now. I had called up yesterday just to make sure they had the order but I suspect putting it in a bit early played against me and they had forgotten about it. Hopefully, it will arrive early next week, but it did mean no fish and chips for our tea for tonight and I would have to explain myself to Mother. The Missus did another barbeque, so hopefully that placated her a bit.

It seemed much lighter in the evening until it was suddenly not. We have a much bigger beach to play on now and we were doing so when ABH suddenly notice a person sitting in the gathering gloom over by the western slip. She has a dog with her which she does not let away from her side. We have seen her before and ABH will lay siege and bark almost incessantly. It spooked me too, to be fair. The young lady did not move or say anything the whole time we were there and it was an uncomfortable struggle trying to keep ABH away.

We left when it became too dark to see what we were doing and left the girl and her dog behind. I had to turn the outside and shop lights on for the Missus while we were halfway around as she had not updated her smart mobile telephone for the new lights. I still marvel at the cleverness of it all, being able to turn on the shop lights

from the other end of the car park while someone in China watches me. It is a wonder of the modern age.

October 5th – Thursday

I am so glad I did not bend to popular opinion and forsake my shorts wearing for long trouser wearing. Our warmth and a bit of sunshine were back today and although it was not completely blue sky, all that was up there was some wispy high level cloud. As delightful as it was, it still did not encourage too many early day visitors about the place, and I was left scratching my behind until well into the middle of the day.

I also scratched around for things to do and since we had not been selling very much, there was little in the way of shelf stacking to do. The Missus had also not been up to The Farm to collect the rest of the list she made, so the gift shelves would have to remain light for the time being. I had been putting off calling our telecommunications supplier to book in the move of the fibre ahead of our building work, so the hiatus in business gave me the opportunity to start the ball rolling.

I had barely picked up the ball to start rolling it when the first of a dozen or so customers decided that now was the time to make a visit to the shop. The next hour employed a grumpy shopkeeper dealing with a shopping frenzy of mugs, biscuits and tea towels alongside all manner of groceries. While it was very welcome, I shall have to pick another time to book in my fibre move.

In truth, I have been putting it off deliberately. Our latest builder was due here last week to take some of the side panels of the shop frontage to look at the top of the plinths. He did not arrive and neither has he turned up this week or contacted me. Since we have previous experience in these matters, this has not exactly filled me with confidence. I cannot leave it too late or the work will not be done in time, but I might leave it until next week, call our man to explain our trepidation and see if he gets it done.

We closed the shop for an hour or so in the afternoon. A local lad and well respected one at that was being seen off at the church at the top. He was a giant of a man in stature and character and quite the most gentle and pleasant person you could imagine. I had known him largely from the F&L but for many years he ran the garage on the main road and was known to just about everyone. I last saw him when he visited The Cove, something of a shadow of himself but full of humour. We had a chatter and laughed together without cares in the world, and I shall choose to remember him that way.

I and around thirty others could get nowhere near the church given the numbers who showed up and a smaller group of us could not hear the speaker thoughtfully placed outside. It was a beautiful and peaceful day to say goodbye, nevertheless.

We reopened the shop after I returned. I had dropped the Missus off at the top of the hill so that she could run ABH back down it, across the fields. It would be the longest stank she had been on to date and to make it even longer, the Missus diverted to the lookout at the top of Pedn-men-du rather than the more direct route down Stone Chair Lane. When she got back into The Cove, the beach was looking very attractive and quite empty to boot. She tarried for a swim and a run around before heading home. When I arrived back shortly after, the little girl was still bouncing off the walls and the Missus was on the computer running an extensive search on how to wear out a small inexhaustible hound.

I did not get the chance to add by two penneth worth to ABH's energy sap as there was Lifeboat training in the evening. There was no launch but there is training that can be undertaken on land, although not so much for the very excellent Shore Crew. Therefore, we joined the Boat Crew in practising throwing the heaving line at us from the back of the boat except we did it from the station wall at the front and the very excellent Shore Crew were represented by the car park barrier. The car park barrier is a bigger target than the average very excellent Shore Crew member but still proved an elusive target. It seems we will still have to have skills like Gordon Banks* to catch the line next time the boat comes into the long slip.

*Gordon Banks was a goalkeeper for the England football team the last time I had any interest in the names of footballers.

October 4th – Wednesday

It is taking far longer for it to become light in the morning. This, of course, means that ABH gets to lie in bed longer and longer each day because she is not keen going around in the dark – although she does not seem to mind in the evening. I am hoping that the start of the light does not catch up with shop opening time before the end of the month, else we are in a bit of bother.

There is not a great deal to be done in the morning. Just the newspapers and magazines and the occasional milk order. We are still selling lots of going home presents and that accounted for the delivery of some more of Mr Furniss's rather toothsome biscuits this morning as well. It is not actually Mr Furniss any longer as he went under a while ago. There was a brief interlude where it looked like he might be lost and gone forever but another company, Proper Cornish, took them over and have produced the biscuits ever since. They do a pretty good job of it, too and their pasties (sorry, MS) are not too shoddy, either as I recall.

I had a couple of requests for a weather forecast when I first opened the shop and for once, I was a bit nonplussed. The forecast had only just been on Radio Pasty, but I had clearly not taken any notice of it. I heard words like sunny and rain but completely missed which day which was supposed to do what. Much the same as summertime, the weather does not make a great deal of difference at this time of year – we are either quiet or really quiet. I just order minimal amounts of bread and pasties (sorry, MS) and hope for the best.

What we actually got was a bit of a nondescript greyness of higher level cloud and a bit of a dullish day. It may have looked a bit like rain early on, but it soon forgot itself and just pressed ahead with being a rather plain. The swell in the bay had diminished greatly by this morning and by the middle of the day low water it had disappeared altogether. This left nothing much to do with it and most people heading down there were those walking dogs or perambulating for the sheer pleasure of it. Clearly, there were not too many of either of those today.

The pace all day had been particularly sedate and not especially challenging. Suddenly, at around half past three we had a flurry of arrivals and chief amongst the most desired items were pasties (sorry, MS). This took me unawares but fortunately I had been well armed with stock at the time, having not sold them to anyone else, and covered all but a few orders. Into this melee came an enquiry about bus times and specifically how the couple were to get back to Pendeen.

Dear reader, there now follows another bus grumble. If you wish to avoid this, please turn to page 28.

Having a smart mobile telephone about their person, they had the misguided notion to seek succour from the First Bus app. This informed them that they should walk to Sunny Corner Lane – up the hill, turn left and stank for 500 metres – and wait for the number 8 bus that would be along dreckly. This I know because the gentleman showed the screen to my disbelieving eyes and fair doos, that is exactly what it showed.

Having become just a tad sceptical of the information issued by this company, I suggested that that information was possibly misleading if not completely incorrect. I had never heard of the 8 route that cut over from St Buryan on the back road and popped out at the turning the Missus takes to visit Mother. The couple also said that they were probably not going to make the connection anyway and elected to call a taxi instead. While they were doing that, I looked up the number 8 route and timetable.

I was a little taken aback that the bus did indeed use the back road from St Buryan and made a mental note to avoid it in future when the bus was running. I need not have worried. A quick look at the timetable and it was clear that it made one run up that lane in the morning and another at half past three o'clock in the other direction, presumably taking St Buryan and Sennen kiddiwinks to and from Cape Cornwall School. The bus that our couple were looking at was heading the wrong way.

The couple had toyed – not for long – with the idea of travelling to Penzance and picking up the Tin Coaster. Given that they had decided on the trip right in the middle of our three hour 'dead zone' where no buses run, they would have had to take the five o'clock bus from here, collected the last coaster at half past six o'clock, arriving

at Pendeen three and a half hours after they started. Oh yes, let us all save the world and leave our cars at home. Mmm.

Page 28. In case you are just joining us, dear reader, absolutely nothing has happened in the preceding paragraphs that need concern you; nothing to see here. There was also not a great deal to see during the rest of my afternoon. The world deserted me, which was probably my just deserts and I had time to book our spare double bed for collection by the much maligned council ahead of our moving home in November, which unfortunately took no time at all and was a delightfully simple process. Whether its collection will also be quick and simple, we will discover on Monday.

The absolute highlight of my afternoon was that I sold a Dunoon bone china mug for twenty pounds, and I am just sorry you were not there to see it, dear reader. The absolute nadir was a gentleman with a toy horn who insisted on blowing it repeatedly from the other side of the road, which was somewhat annoying and I am glad that you were not here to witness it, dear reader.

We actually had some time on the beach before the tide arrived in the evening. We waited until it was almost dark to make the most of it, then made our way around the block. It seemed to me that we were warming up again after a couple of days of chill. We have to be ready for anything it seems and make snap decisions about clothing on the fly. And you think we have the life of Reilly down here, dear reader.

October 3rd – Tuesday

I did not have much time yesterday to conclude my gripe concerning the deplorable action by First Bus Kernow, removing the link to St Just.

Yesterday, I mentioned that visits to the doctor out at Cape would be problematic if you did not have a car after someone highlighted it to me. Today, I had a quick look at just how difficult it might be.

There are three buses available, 06:40, 7:25 and 09:13 during school time. When the schools are out that just leaves the 09:13. Given the change at Penzance and the available buses to and from St Just your appointment would have to be between 10 am and 2 pm or 12:30 pm and 2 pm during school holidays. The times are further constrained by the availability and timing of the return and there are just two. It makes the last bus from St Just 3 pm arriving back at The Cove – if all goes according to plan – at 4 pm.

I do not know how many people rely on a bus service to get to their doctor in Sennen and I am sure whoever might be affected will raise their voice at some point. The bus company's ability to disadvantage people is quite poor enough but there is another serious issue. A few years back, when Transport for Cornwall came on the scene with its glittering promises, the community here was forced to shutdown its very

popular Community Bus service because it could not operate on a commercial route. That service cannot be resurrected on a whim, unfortunately, but then again, it should never have gone away.

On a brighter note, it was brighter today, and we could see the other side of the bay and probably a good deal further if the other side of the bay was not in the way. There was plenty of blue sky and a few while fluffy clouds. Once or twice some dark, not so fluffy clouds drifted by but did us no harm, so we did no harm to them, either.

It was not all sweetness and light. Something spooked ABH on the morning outing and she belted around the little block without stopping. I had to drag her around the back and then convince her to do another circuit but this time slower. She was not in the least impressed and still bolted the last twenty-five yards.

I was fearfully late on parade this morning. I left our pasty man (sorry, MS) languishing outside for ten minutes because I was distracted and thought he was the newspaper man. The Monday and Tuesday man arrives earlier than the others and usually opens the first electric sliding door in The Cove if it is unlocked. Had I left it like that from earlier he would have neatly packed our pasties in the fridge and gone off, good man that he is. I shall have to remind myself for next week and leave him to it.

My tardiness did not make a lot of difference as I managed to pack away the milk and the rest of the dairy along with the newspapers and magazines before the shop was due to open anyway. Even had I not, I do not think our three customers during the first hour of opening would have cared very much or indeed noticed. At least the morning's lull allowed me to carry out some chores that had been outstanding for a little while.

The sunshine and brightness of the day made all the difference. We were much busier throughout the day, after a very quiet start, and let us face it, it could not have got very much less busy than yesterday. One of the things that continue to sell no matter how quiet we get are the greetings cards and particularly ones from two of our local artists from Sennen and Pendeen. A couple of days back I had to call in a swift order from one of them as we were running low and then, today, after a bit of a sales frenzy, I had to call in an order for the other. I have had two top ups now from each of them and none from any of the others. It is most satisfying.

A long while ago now, we entertained a lady GP while my leg leaked claret all over the place before I noticed. She very kindly helped out and we have kept friendly ever since. At the outset of the season, she expressed an interest in taking the little girl for a walk, which at the time was not feasible and we agreed that we would look again at the end of the season. The good doctor has been here this week and this morning turned up with the notion of making good on her promise.

ABH had returned to bed after spending some of the morning gazing out of the front living room window from her throne there. She was not at all pleased at being rent from her bed for a second time in the morning, but as always, she softens once I have got her to the door. Our doctor friend left with a very compliant ABH along with the trappings of small dog walking hanging about her neck.

We had thought that she may head to the big beach and see what happened but did not quite get there. The outing was longer than our supposed five minutes worst case, but ABH decided she was far enough away from the Missus for comfort and wanted to head for home. We will have to seriously work hard during the winter to break down that link because it is already becoming problematic.

As usual, the later afternoon fell into a lull of occasional shopping visits. The breeze that had been quite robust in the morning and had wiped out any usable surf had diminished later in the day. As I looked out on the bay there were quite a few surfers in the water with reasonably clean surf in a few places. The swell that had sent big waves over the near end of the Harbour wall was still sending them over at the next high water, but they were considerably smaller and less powerful.

There was still commotion in the Harbour as we passed by later in the evening and a lot more light. There was a sliver of sand, too, that if the waves were quieter would have allowed some space to play. I have higher hopes for tomorrow evening. We still managed to dawdle sufficiently for it to be dark by the time we got to Coastguard Row and ABH once more used the last twenty-five yard as a racetrack. I might start training her for the doggie Olympics if she carries that on – it should be a bit hit as long as they do not hold it in St Just; nobody will be able to get there.

October 2nd – Monday

I am going to have to find a hobby that I can carry on in the shop to ward off the tedium of long intervals without customers. Today, you might determine, dear reader, was the not the busiest of the year.

Much of our lack of visitors may well have stemmed from the fact that there were very few buses running and those that were, were only running half the route. I had been asked by some worried visitors last week whether the timetable was changing and assured them that it was not having first checked the First Bus website for this week's times. Today, I checked the same timetable for the same date, and it had been changed – a great deal.

I had blissfully gone through the day unaware of this issue fomenting across the area. It was not until quite late in the day that someone had said that there were people waiting at the bus stop and the bus was very late. I checked in the live picture only to discover that anything about the A30 had been greyed out. There were no longer buses running to St Just.

I spent the next hour going through the times to redraw our window and website summary. It is not a pretty picture. The gaps between services are bizarre ranging from thirty minutes in the morning between two services and three hours in the afternoon. For carless villagers needing to visit Cape Cornwall Surgery, it is a trip to Penzance and out again to St Just, a trip that will take most of the day. For a world that is trying to get people out of their cars, this is one big step backwards.

In truth, the major setback of the day was the weather again. The mist had never really gone away, although it was far better in the morning that it had been last night. The day could not really make up its mind what it was doing, and the mist came and went, and the mizzle started and stopped. It was mild enough, in fact, very temperate for the time of year and it encouraged the Missus to take ABH down to the big beach for her first major excursion.

It was pretty close to low water, so the sea was no threat, although later there was some decent swell for the surfers who gathered in numbers out towards North Rocks. She was allowed to roam free for a bit and took the chance to splash about in the shallows but was inclined a couple of times to forget who she was with and wandered off to the distraction of other dogs. Thankfully, she is reasonably good on the recall, but the Missus slipped her back onto the lead for a bit after that. They met a friend on the way back, so she was off again but returned looking just as full of energy as when she left. There must be something we can do to wear her out that does not wear us out first.

The mizzle came in heavier towards the close of play and the light began to fail early due to the light being unable to penetrate the thick fog. I was still determined to take her around the block as it makes for a long evening, else. Thankfully, it had dried up considerably, but a bit of a breeze had kicked in from somewhere unkind. The ground sea in the bay had increased with the tide and the water in the Harbour was very agitated and waves were thumping over the Harbour wall. We sometime walk across the top of the slip but I avoided completely this time.

We skirted the car park sea wall on our way around by the light of my head torch and watched the white water crash about beneath us. It was quite intimidating that close too even though we were in a safe place and I was quite glad to pull away up the slope to Coastguard Row. There was someone up there with a torch putting out their bins, which set ABH off a bit – she is such a timid soul in the dark – but it was soon forgotten when she met some flitty creatures she could chase in the air. She missed the bats this time that fly in low and fast. You might be inclined to duck but they are quicker than your reaction, so you only see them after the near miss.

She pulled me home across the RNLI car park, sensing the home straight, and spent the last hour before bedtime demanding play when really two hours would not have been enough. I sleep very well these days.

October 1st – Sunday

The mizzle that enveloped us last night had decided to spend the night and still be here in the morning. It turned to mist by the time we opened the shop and an hour later, it withdrew slowly over the cliffs to the north and east and out to the sea in the northwest. It left a mild and grey day and while then clearly changed its mind and threw in a bit more mizzle before coming back with a vengeance.

Our first customer, almost as soon as we opened, brightened my day considerably – I think. She said that whatever I was having in my tea, she wanted some of. A little confused, she clarified by saying that in the twenty years or so she had been coming to The Cove, I had not changed at all. I am rather chuffed that I still maintain the same chiselled features of a fresh-faced youth I did all those years ago. Alternatively, she could have meant that twenty years ago I looked so ancient and grizzled a further twenty years could not make any difference – no, I did not think so either, dear reader, and thank you for saying so.

You might think that nothing much could mar a day after such an uplifting start and, indeed, the morning went rather swimmingly. It was late in the morning and into the afternoon that things started to go awry as the mist started to creep back into The Cove. By the middle of the afternoon, the beach had disappeared but not before I had managed to have a quick geek at the wide open spaces of the big beach at low water, the lowest this year. It was not quite as low as the lowest astronomical tide but at .2 of a metre or just short of eight inches off if you prefer, it was not a bad shot at it.

That, or more precisely its sister act, the high tide, had been enough for the Environment Agency to issue a flood warning for all along the coast, north and south. I cannot help but wonder whether that was just a case of bottom covering, since there was no expected major swell or wind to drive the high water onshore. Had they never heard of the story of the little government agency that cried wolf.

The Missus duly headed off to The Farm with the notion of bring back some items to make our shelves look a little less empty down the gift aisle. With the appreciation of killing two birds with one stone, she also made a list of everything else in the shop that needed topping up. I also asked if she would count our wetshoes as they also needed to be ordered in advance from our wetsuit supplier. It was quite a task altogether and she returned with the shoe count, some shoes we needed for the shop – which numbered quite a few – and some paddle bats that had broken out of their box.

There was quite enough to be getting on with in what she did bring down and the rest were not urgent anyway. The paddle bats needed a bit of a dust down, which took longer than I imagined, and my next priority was to finalise the figures for the reorder as they were long overdue for sending off. This left me a small window in which to complete the ballsaching task of unwrapping and unstuffing the wetshoes – as task much better completed by someone else. Since someone else was not there,

I laboured through the task and managed to get them finished and distributed to the shelves before it was time to complete our closing routine.

The mist that had been thickening since the middle of the day pretty much strangled off most of our trade and by the latter part of the afternoon, had killed it off altogether. That alone allowed me the time to finish off the shoes, although to be frank, I would have rather had the trade and finished the shoes the following morning – when I was at the gymnasium and the Missus was in the shop, ahem. No, I did not think I would get away with that, either.

The Cove had the look of Old London Town in the middle of a Ripper movie. Thick mist swirled about and greyed out the village lights all the way up the hill. There was still enough light to see by, but it was very dim and the grass was wet with dew-like damp. ABH amused herself with chasing the insects that darted about in the twilight and I had to turn on my clever head torch to make sure she was not chasing anything else. It has been useful on the last two nights of picking out cat's eyes in the dark and allowing me to divert ABH's attention elsewhere as we passed.

It is still irksome that we cannot get down to the beach. It had not stopped half a dozen swimmers who we met coming away from the Harbour when we went down. We were excited meeting them, then more excited meeting people in the car park and more excited still chasing the insects and getting our nose wet in the grass. All that takes time and a simple run around the block can suddenly take at least half an hour. That is half an hour less getting into trouble at home and is very precious.

